

Quoting the Bible, Jeff Sessions and a Warning About What's Coming Next

The purpose of this article is not to discuss the current immigration controversy. I am not here to take a partisan, political position, and neither do I want to bash or defend President Trump. My goal is not to get into a lengthy treatment of Romans 13, quoted by Attorney General Jeff Sessions with reference to our immigration policies. Instead, I'm here to issue a warning on what's coming next. Prepare for the next onslaught against the Bible.

In case you somehow missed the massive, swirling controversy surrounding Sessions' use of Romans 13, the headlines are everywhere.

- In *The Washington Post*: "Jeff Sessions defended family separation with the Bible. John Oliver countered with Dr. Seuss."
- On CNN: "What does the Bible verse Jeff Sessions quoted really mean?"
- In *USA Today*: "Why is Jeff Sessions quoting Romans 13 and why is the Bible verse so often invoked?"
- In the Huffington Post: "Jeff Sessions Has Got the Bible All Wrong."
- In the *Star Tribune*: "Jeff Sessions, immigration and the Bible: The problems with citing a passage to support an opinion."

On and on it goes, almost endlessly. Just search for "Jeff Sessions Bible," and you'll be flooded with relevant links.

In short, Sessions quoted Romans 13, which calls Christians to submit to the governing authorities, to explain to "church friends" why we must uphold our "zero-tolerance" immigration

laws. His exact words were, "I would cite you to the apostle Paul and his clear and wise command in Romans 13, to obey the laws of the government because God has ordained them for the purpose of order."

Was he saying that this passage justifies all current laws, even if they're cruel and draconian? That's not what I understood. But if that was his intent, the critical response of pastor Carl Lentz was fair.

As Daniel Burke noted in the aforementioned CNN article, "Romans 13 has been cited by Nazi sympathizers and apartheid-enforcers, slave owners and loyalists opposed to the American Revolution. Modern Christians have wrestled with how to apply the passage to issues like abortion, same-sex marriage and taxes."

If Sessions was simply saying that we are a nation of laws, and the Bible reminds us of the importance of obeying our laws, he was saying nothing extraordinary or outlandish.

But again, my focus here is not on whether he properly cited the Scriptures. My focus is on what's coming next, and to me, it's quite clear. No sooner will we quote a passage from the Bible to a non-believer (or, to a believer of a different persuasion), then they will respond, "You can make the Bible mean whatever you want it to. Remember what Jeff Sessions said?"

So, in the same way that we are constantly hit with the "judge not" mantra (as if Jesus told us not to make moral judgments), in the days ahead, we'll be hit with, "You're misquoting the Bible, just like Sessions did."

Context will not matter. Sound interpretive methods will not matter. Logic and reason will not matter.

Instead, no matter what we say and no matter how accurately we say it, the rebuttal will be instant: "The Nazis quoted the

Bible too.”

Or, “You’re twisting the Bible, just like Jeff Sessions did.”

Or, even, “Yeah, you sound just like Trump!” (Let’s be realistic. This will ultimately be tied back to Trump. So, if you’re a conservative evangelical—

especially if you’re white—and you quote Scripture, you’re guilty of whatever sins Trump committed in his lifetime. I’m hardly exaggerating.)

I’ve watched over the years as anti-Bible lies become popular memes, which then become enshrined as established truth. An example would be, “You can’t trust the Bible. It’s a translation of a translation of a translation.”

Another would be, “Constantine changed the Bible in A.D. 325. We don’t have the original Bible today.”

Today, millions of people take these falsehoods to be gospel truths, while millions more misquote Jesus’ admonition not to judge. (For what He really meant, see [here](#) and [here](#).)

And despite the apparent reverence for Scripture reflected in the liberal response to Sessions’ use of Romans 13 (as if the liberal media were grieved that the Bible was misused), what we’re really witnessing is an outright hostility to Scripture. That’s why Tom Gilson wrote a perceptive article titled, “*The Washington Post Hates the Bible. If You’re Christian, It Hates You Too.*”

You can expect to see that hatred manifest in the instant dismissal of our appeal to Scripture in the days ahead.

When we quote the Word, we’ll be compared to people who want to separate children from their parents (as is happening with the immigration crisis). We’ll be likened to brainless Trump supporters (regardless of the topic under discussion). And we’ll be reminded that the Bible really has no intentional

message. "It means whatever you want it to mean."

Watch and see.