



Earthly citizen – heavenly citizen

18

Objective As earthly citizens the confirmands strive to lead a life that is pleasing to God.

Contents Human laws – Divine commandments.
Obeying God rather than human beings.
The Tenth Article of Faith.

1 Lead-in

Tell

The three men in the blazing furnace

King Nebuchadnezzar once had a large golden statue erected. He ordered all the important people in his country (princes, governors, and judges) to come to the dedication of this statue. They came and had to look at it. The king ordered them to bow down and worship the statue. He threatened to throw them into a blazing furnace if they refused. Almost all of the people obeyed. Only Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego refused to bow down or worship the statue. A few Chaldeans noticed this and reported it to Nebuchadnezzar. The king became very angry. He had the three men come to him, ordered them to worship the statue, and threatened to throw them into the blazing furnace if they did not.

But the three men answered, “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us ... But if not, let it be known to you ... that we do not ... worship the gold image” (cf. Daniel 3: 1–18).

A student tells

The confirmands are undoubtedly familiar with the continuation of the story. They are to tell the rest of the story.

Elaborate

The three men obey all laws ...

Despite being of Jewish descent and having come to Babylon as captives these three men were among the most important people in this country. They were familiar with the laws of the country and obeyed them; otherwise they would never have attained such a high position.

... except for one

The king expected them to worship the idol. They however, professed the living God and told the king, “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. **But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up**” (Daniel 3: 17–18).

Summarise

This story shows us that we ought to respect God’s commandments more highly than those of human beings.

18

Earthly citizen – heavenly citizen

2 Human laws

The purpose of human laws should be made clear to the confirmands as well as

- who introduces them, and
- what our attitude towards them should be.

Ask

Why are there laws?

Listen to answers and supplement

Laws govern the social life of human beings.

Hint

The confirmation teacher can illustrate this using a suitable example.

Ask

Who makes laws?

Listen to answers and supplement

Laws are formulated and introduced by the authorities.

Ask

As children of God do we have to obey these laws?

Listen to answers and supplement

We too must obey the worldly authorities provided they are not in conflict with godly laws.

3 Godly laws

Explain

For us godly laws are more significant. The confirmands are to understand

- what godly laws are,
- why God gave human beings laws, and
- why we ought to obey God rather than human beings.

Ask

What are godly laws?

Workbook exercise A

The confirmands now do exercise A in their workbook. They search for examples of godly laws and write these down. Their suggestions are discussed and supplemented, if necessary.

Listen to answers and supplement

For example, God gave the law of seed and harvest, the laws that regulate the orbits of the planets around the sun, the laws of tidal changes, and the laws that govern the seasons.

Laws of nature

The Ten Commandments and ...

... the commandment of love

Through the Ten Commandments God revealed His will to His people. The Lord Jesus described the following as the greatest (the most important) commandments: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.... You shall love your neighbour as yourself” (Mark 12: 30–31).



Earthly citizen – heavenly citizen

18

Ask

Why did God give mankind commandments?

Listen to questions and supplement
God's commandments are a blessing for us

Through His commandments, God gave mankind the prerequisites for peaceful coexistence on the earth.

If we keep His commandments, His blessing will rest upon us.

Ask

When are we to obey God rather than human beings?

Listen to answers and supplement

The three men in Babylon, for instance, disobeyed the king's law because they esteemed God's commandments more highly.

As a further illustration another example is provided concerning Apostles Peter and John.

Explain

Peter and John profess Jesus Christ

The Sanhedrin (the Jews' central judicial authority) repeatedly ordered the two Apostles to no longer teach or speak in Jesus Christ's name. They replied, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4: 19–20). Later when they were again teaching in the temple the high priest asked them, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name?" (Acts 5: 28). Peter and the others responded, "**We ought to obey God rather than men**" (Acts 5: 29).

Explain

The Apostles assigned greater importance to the mission they had received from Jesus Christ than to the order of the Sanhedrin. Both of these examples clearly indicate that there are instances when we ought to obey God rather than human beings.

Ask

Which human laws or teachings could be inconsistent with God's commandments?

Listen to answers and supplement

It has happened repeatedly and continues to happen that religious freedom is restricted or not accorded by law. So-called customary and unwritten laws also exist, such as the law of revenge (returning like for like).

There are also conceptions that oppose the gospel and, by extension, violate divine commandments, for example:

- God is not the Creator of heaven and earth.
- Human beings do not possess an immortal soul.
- Jesus Christ is not the Son of God and did not die for our sins.

18

Earthly citizen – heavenly citizen

Ask

Why do we not have to be afraid if we obey God rather than human beings?

After listening to the confirmands' answers the teacher supplements them using the following example:

Tell

God opens the eyes of Elisha's servant

The Syrian army besieged the city of Dothan. Elisha's servant was afraid, but Elisha said, "Do not fear for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." After Elisha had prayed his servant could see that the mountain was filled with horses and fiery chariots. (cf. 2 Kings 6: 15–17).

Explain

God is almighty

The Holy Spirit drives away fear

The three men in the blazing furnace, the two Apostles, as well as Elisha's servant all experienced that God is mightier than all the powers of this world. Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8: 31). Each of us can come into a situation in which we are afraid to stand up for our faith. However, using the power within us and the Holy Spirit we can overcome such fears. This ought to then bring us to the point where we trust our heavenly Father completely. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12: 32). Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power" (2 Timothy 1: 7). And to the Romans he wrote: "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear" (Romans 8: 15). For us this means that if we love our heavenly Father wholeheartedly and trust Him completely we do not have to be afraid. Laws and teachings that do not please God are not to prevent us from

- heeding God's commandments
- believing in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit
- loving God and our neighbour
- remaining faithful to God
- becoming more and more like Jesus Christ
- praying without ceasing.

We gladly do God's will

4 The Tenth Article of Faith

Confirmands do exercise B and a student reads aloud

I believe that I am obliged to obey the worldly authorities provided no godly laws are thereby transgressed.

Explain

This Article of Faith obliges us to obey the laws of the state, however, these laws must not violate divine commandments.

The main points

I also want to ...

... obey God rather than human beings!

Homework

The confirmands learn the Tenth Commandment by heart. In the Bible they read Acts 2 and prepare to retell what they have read.