

God, Country, and Me

Isaiah 46:9-10

*“I am God and there is no other;
I am God and there is none like me.
I make known the end from the beginning,
from ancient times, what is still to come.
I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that
I please.”*

May 27th

War: Does the God of Peace Condone Fighting?

(Matt. 5 & Romans 13)

GETTING THE BIG PICTURE

Would the Prince of Peace ever nuke a city? Well, actually He kind of did in the old days. Just check out the book of Joshua sometime—they obliterated everything. God and war, it is a very difficult topic. On one level there are no shortage of places in the Bible where God commands His people to wipe folks off the face of the earth. There are also numerous places where we are told to be a people of peace, not violence. So how do we put all this together; and after we do, could we apply it to conflicts like the one in which we are engaged in Iraq? Discerning the mind of God on the issue of war is a tough journey, but it is the one we will take today.

Optional Readings

Joshua

Pick almost any chapter and watch how God guides them in war

Revelation 19

The arrival of the Prince of Peace

GETTING INTO THE TEXT

Study Day(s)

READ & OBSERVE: Matthew 5:38-48 & Romans 13:1-7

Write down anything you find interesting or unique about this passage.

ANSWER

The Overarching Principle (Matthew 5:9)

1. Jesus says that “blessed” are those who are peacemakers. So blessed are they that they will be called the “sons of God”. What does it mean to be a peacemaker?
2. Would the meaning of this beatitude change if Jesus said “blessed are the peace lovers”? Why would that be any different?

The Me and My Enemies Principle (Matthew 5:38-48)

3. Give a general summary of what these verses are saying. Is this hyperbole (the use of exaggeration to make a point) or does Jesus literally want us to turn the other cheek?
4. These first few verses go beyond passive submission, they seem to teach active blessing—“let him have your cloak as well”. What is the point of returning blessings upon your enemies? How could we ever take the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 5 and not conclude that we should all be pacifists?

The We and Our Enemies Principle (Romans 13:1-7)

5. When we look around and see all the nations of the earth, what can we conclude about them from Romans 13:1?
6. Focus on verse 4 for a moment. What is the role of government as stated here? Is the punishment of wrongdoers limited to those lawbreakers within a country or is it God’s plan that one country can use the sword against another if the other is doing that which is evil? Explain.
7. If God wills that government “bears the sword” and at the same time tells Christians to “turn the other cheek”, how in the world do we put those two together?

GETTING TO THE HEART

Application Day

As we ponder these biblical truths, we live in a time where this stuff is not theory—our sons and daughters are dying in Iraq. As you personally think through the issues surrounding this conflict, what principles from Scripture are needed to guide our involvement in wars such as Iraq?

On a personal level, would you be supportive of a son or daughter going off to war (not specifically Iraq, but any war)? If you said yes, what things would have to be true of this conflict for you to support going to war?

Prayer. Let’s pray for those who today are in battle. Pray for their families and for their safety. If you personally know someone who has a relative involved in this conflict, drop them a note of support this week.