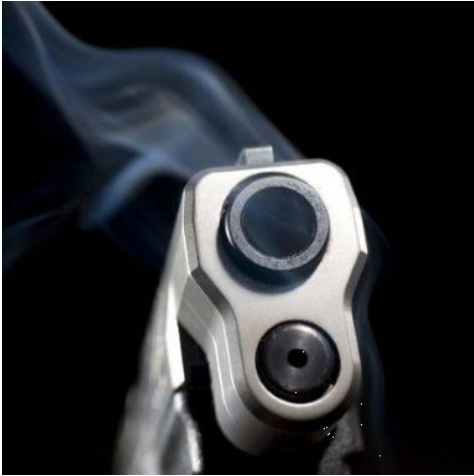


God, Guns, and the Bible (Pacifist Teachings Refuted)

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A pacifist is a person who believes that all war and violence are unjustifiable. They promote what is known as nonresistance, which is the practice and principle of refusing to resort to force even in defense against violence. There are some Bible verses that pacifists will use to support their belief that Christians do not have the right to self-protection or supporting a just war cause. They teach that Christians, under no circumstances, should take the life of any other human being.

There is an illustration which is somewhat humorous, but proves the dilemma that pacifists can place themselves in, as they support a total nonresistance approach to life.

“OK, you’re a pacifist. What would you do if someone were, say, attacking your grandmother?” “Attacking my poor old grandmother?”

“Yeah. You’re in a room with your grandmother, and there’s this guy about to attack her and you’re standing there. What would you do?”

“I’d yell, ‘Three cheers for Grandma!’ and leave the room.” “No, seriously. Say he had a gun and he was about to shoot her. Would you shoot him first?”

“Do I have a gun?” “Yes, let’s just say that you do.” “No. I’m a pacifist, I don’t have a gun.” “Well, say you do anyway. All right. Are you a good shot?”

“Yes.” “I’d shoot the gun out of his hand.” “Well, let’s say that you’re not a good shot.” “Then I’d be afraid to shoot. Might kill Grandma.”

“OK, We’ll take another example. Say you’re driving a truck. You’re on a narrow road with a steep cliff on your side. There’s a little girl standing in the middle of the road. You’re going too fast to stop. What would you do?”

“I don’t know. What would you do?” “I’m asking you. You’re the pacifist.” “Yes, I know. All right, am I in control of the truck?” “Yes.”

“How about if I honk my horn so she can get out of the way?” “She’s too young to walk. And the horn doesn’t work.” “Then I would swerve around to the left of her, since she’s not going anywhere.”

“No, there’s been a landslide.” “Oh. Well, then. I would try to drive the truck over the cliff and save the little girl.” There was silence at this point. “Well, say there’s someone else in the truck with you. Then what?” “What does my decision have to do with my being a pacifist?”

“There’s two of you in the truck and only one little girl.” The Pacifist reasoned, “If you have a choice between a real evil and a hypothetical evil, always take the hypothetical one.”

“Huh?” was the reply of the man asking the questions. “Why are you so anxious to kill off all the pacifists?” “I’m not. I just want to know what you’d do if . . .”

“If you were with a friend in a truck driving very fast on a one-lane road approaching a dangerous impasse where a ten-month-old girl is sitting in the middle of the road with a landslide on one side of her and a sheer drop-off on the other.” What would you do if you are a pacifist?”

The pacifist answered, “I would skid into the landslide to avoid the little girl, and while trying to avoid the girl, my passenger would accidently be thrown from the truck, so I would not directly be responsible for hurting him, and I would then sail off the cliff and plunge to my own death. No doubt Grandma’s house would be at the bottom of the ravine and the truck would crash through the roof and land in the living room where she was being attacked for the first and last time by the

robber. And by crashing through the living room I would accidentally kill the robber and actually save Grandma from much misery.”

I know this is a silly illustration. But what should be the Christian attitude and response toward self-protection and war? Can a Christian bear arms during war and serve the country without becoming an offender of the sixth commandment – “Thou shalt not kill?” Does the Bible sanction war? Is there such a thing as a just war? What about pacifism and our responsibility toward the government? These are some of the issues that we will consider in this study. We are going to talk about “God, Guns, and the Bible.”

Billy Sunday claimed that if you turned the pot of hell upside down you would find the words inscribed “made in Germany” stamped on the bottom. Billy Sunday made this comment because of his hatred for Communism and the evil atrocities that it committed against people. The feeling of many Christians is that the Bible condones war for just causes and that we must try to thwart evil from spreading, such as the evil of communism, whenever we can.

The Bible teaches Biblical self-defense and the need for war in a sinful and fallen society. But the pacifists will try and use verses in the Sermon on the Mount to disprove this. We want to look at these verses, among other Bible verses in this study, which have been misused to teach pacifism.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:9:

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”

Many pacifists will use such a verse such as this to promote nonresistance toward war. They claim that we must follow what Jesus said and become a peacemaker instead of raging war on our enemies. They also claim that since peace is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) that no Christian who is filled with the Spirit, manifesting His fruits, could go to war and break peace.

This kind of reasoning is not proper Bible interpretation. To equate the peace that the Spirit gives in our hearts with going to war and defending oneself from a robber is totally unwarranted. In fact, many Christian soldiers on the battlefield throughout

history have attributed their sanity to the peace of God ruling in their hearts! Biblically speaking, there is no comparison to inward peace of the Spirit and to the actual fighting on the battlefield. This is misapplied exegesis (wrongly applying Bible texts to something they do not reference). God's peace in the heart is not the same as peace between nations!

Using Matthew 5:9 ("Blessed are the peacemakers") to support pacifism (nonviolence) is a misapplication of a Scriptural text and causes the text out of context to become a pretext (not the real teaching of the text). I might repeat this several times so we can truly understand this. Jesus was talking about SOCIAL relationships between people in these verses in the Sermon on the Mount. He was not talking about NATIONAL relationships between countries or nations.

Anybody who uses the verses in the Sermon on the Mount to teach pacifism is totally abusing the teaching of Jesus. Jesus is not talking about national affiliations but interpersonal relationships between people. Yes, in our social relationships we should strive to promote peace instead of anger and division. And promoting peace is simply one way to demonstrate that we are a disciple or follower of the Lord.

Romans 12:18-19 says:

"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

As we live our daily lives, we are to practice being a peacemaker – not a troublemaker, backbiter, and retaliator seeking vengeance on others. You will note that the Bible says, "If it be possible ... live peaceably with all men." This means it is not always possible to promote peace. We cannot promote peace at any price. We should never compromise in order to promote peace (Eph. 5:11).

Again, these instructions are given for Christ's disciples to follow on a personal level. They are not given as a mandate for nations to follow. They are not teaching that America cannot retaliate against evildoers or when one nation rises up against another nation. Christ's lesson on peacemaking does not mean we must bow the knee to communism and nations that rise up against America which intend to do

the nation harm. This is misapplication of what Jesus is teaching concerning peacemaking. Yes, even nations should strive to live in peace and not war, but in a fallen and sinful world this is not always possible.

Matthew 5:39 is another popular verse used to teach pacifism:

"But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."

Did you hear about the Irishman that someone hit on the cheek and knocked down? The Irishman got up and turned his other cheek. The fellow knocked him down again. This time the Irishman got up and beat the stuffing out of that fellow. An observer asked, "Why did you do that?" "Well," replied the Irishman, "the Lord said to turn the other cheek and I did, but He never told me what to do after that."

Of course, Jesus is talking about an unjust attack on a person's character – not an attack on a person's life. The nonresistance Jesus is referring does not apply to the self-preservation of our lives, families, and our country or nation. This is because elsewhere we are given a Biblical and God-given right to protect ourselves. Jesus is teaching that there are times when we should not practice resistance or self-defense and take aggressive action against someone. In other words, we should refuse to carry out vengeance on others. This applies to non-retaliation against those who might try to shame us or take advantage of us in some non-threatening way.

The smiting on the cheek was a cultural practice which was an insult – not an attack on one's life. Jesus is teaching that in the normal social aspects of living, we should practice a spirit of non-retaliation and non-vengeance (1 Pet. 2:23). We should be willing to take some personal insults in life that are hurled against us and not react by taking revenge on others (Rom. 12:19). This should be true in our interrelationships with others.

There are times when we might be shamed, persecuted in some way, or insulted. In spite of these attacks, we should not practice personal vengeance but nonresistance toward others. Again, Jesus was not talking about personal protection (self-defense and the preservation of one's life) but seeking personal

vengeance and vendettas against others. Jesus is not talking about giving up our self-protection but giving up personal vengeance against others (Prov. 20:22).

Over the years this verse has wrongly been used to promote a nonresistance attitude toward war. At least this is the conclusion of the pacifists. The word “nonresistance” is actually based upon the word “resist.” The word nonresistance has the idea of not opposing, fighting back or retaliating against evil. We have all heard the "turn the other cheek" response by pacifists or those who are against war. In fact, I have had godless roofers quote this verse to me, as I was working with them on the job. Everybody seems to know this verse. It may very well be the only verse in the Bible that some people know!

Was Jesus really telling His disciples that self-preservation and war is wrong? Let me ask you this question. Why would Jesus even address the subject of war? Why would Jesus talk about war if His disciples were not involved with war nor even expected to become soldiers in the Roman army? We must remember that Rome viewed the followers of Christ and the later Christians of the early church in a disgraceful way and would never expect nor want them to be part of the Roman war machine. War certainly would be the farthest thing from the minds of the disciples and Jesus. For this reason, war was not an issue for Christians in the days of Jesus or the early church. Slavery was the real issue.

Of course, it is impossible for a society to restrain crime and deter aggression by turning the other cheek (Romans 13). Once again, Jesus was not giving a mandate for governments and nations to follow. But some will say that we can use these Sermon on the Mount principles to teach that Christians should never go to war or even protect themselves. But those who come to this conclusion have forgotten something. We cannot use a teaching in the Bible and turn it into a principle when it is **WRONGLY APPLIED** outside the realm of its intended use. In other words, you need to have the right interpretation of what Jesus was saying so that you can have the right application. Wrong interpretation leads to a wrong application.

Think about this: If you say that we can apply the Sermon on the Mount to war then we must also, out of necessity, apply Matthew 5:42 to our national country as well.

Matthew 5:42 says:

“Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.”

J. Vernon McGee humorously said:

“If you have a banker who says that he is living by the Sermon on the Mount, give this verse to him and see how far you get with it.”

This reminds us once again that the Sermon on the Mount was not given to structure governments and entire nations regarding giving. Could you imagine if the banks of today would have to strictly follow this rule? The banks would not be in business very long and the American economy would plummet if we had to strictly follow this principle on a national level. What if the stock market would follow this principle? We would have a Black Friday that we would never rebound from as a nation!

Again, Jesus was talking about individual responses and not national responses in these verses. Furthermore, He was simply using some common illustrations to demonstrate how we can express love to people instead of the spirit of retaliation. We can pay the fines that we owe to other people (Matt. 5:40), carry a soldier’s luggage an extra mile (Matt. 5:41) and give to others (Matt. 4:42). These are some practical illustrations Jesus gives to help us understand the principle of love instead of retaliation and vengeance. Jesus reminded the people about a higher and more loving response toward the lives of other people. It was a response that the Law also spoke about. It was to respond to people in love within our personal relationships and contacts with others (Lev. 19:18).

We must understand that Jesus forbids the taking of personal revenge in His sermon, but He is not advocating nonresistance in every area of life, such as personal protection and in the case of war to thwart evil, or protecting national borders from outside invasion. Jesus is not teaching that it’s wrong to defend ourselves and family from those who want to bring harm against us. If someone comes in my house to harm my wife or even the grandchildren, who may be visiting with us, I have every right to defend my family. God gives me that right.

Ephesians 5:23

“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.”

Christ is the Savior, deliverer, and protector of the Church and in a similar way we are called upon to protect our families. I'll save and protect my family if need be! It's my duty. To read a “no war” stance and “no guns” conclusion into what Jesus is saying in the Sermon on the Mount is committing the interpretive sin called “eisegesis” (reading things into the Bible that are not actually taught). God has called to perform “exegesis” of the Bible, which is taking the truth out of Bible texts when considering a verse in its context, setting, and when using right interpretive methods.

Again, let us not miss that Jesus was talking to individual people (“whosoever” - vs. 39 and “If any man” – vs. 40). He was not dealing with NATIONAL or INTERNATIONAL dealings among countries. This is vitally important to see as we address various verses that the pacifists will use to support their position of no war. The entire context of the Sermon on the Mount tells us that Jesus was not referring to national relationships between countries but personal relationships between people. What Jesus addressed in this section of Scripture has absolutely nothing to do with war. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is not laying down moral directives for states or nations to follow - concerning their police forces or war efforts.

In Luke 11:21 Jesus said: “...a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace.” Jesus acknowledged His approval of war for personal protection of a society. Jesus never said a nation could not defend itself from enemies and invaders. If Jesus was implying this in the Sermon on the Mount, then He would be contradicting the actions of God the Father, when He allowed Israel to destroy entire groups of people from off the face of the earth to keep the messianic line pure and make sure the Messiah was born.

Matthew 5:44 is another verse often used by pacifists:

“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”

I remembering hearing Larry King interviewing a Christian one night on national TV and Larry King was using this verse as a way to try and trap Christians from supporting the death penalty, or promoting the war cause. He believed that this was a discrepancy in the Bible. Of course, there are no discrepancies in the Bible. There are only discrepancies in the minds of those who are full of Bible ignorance and unlearned about what Jesus was talking about in the Sermon on the Mount. Once again, we must remember that Jesus was dealing with people on a personal level – not a national level, which would be like dealing with Communist China or Russia.

On a personal level, we should love our enemies enough to not retaliate and try to get even with them. Personal retaliation is never the Christian way of doing things. We should seek to demonstrate love to our enemies. We might do this by praying for our enemies that they might get saved! This is one way to curb your anger toward them.

Praying for our enemies sometimes pays off! According to an Associated Press account, in September 1994 Cindy Hartman of Conway, Arkansas, walked into her house to answer the phone and was confronted by a burglar. He ripped the phone cord out of the wall and ordered her into a closet. Hartman dropped to her knees and asked the burglar if she could pray for him. "I want you to know that God loves you and I forgive you," she said. The burglar actually apologized for what he had done. Then he yelled out the door to a woman in a pickup truck: "We've got to unload all of this. This is a Christian home and a Christian family. We can't do this to them." As Hartman remained on her knees, the burglar returned furniture he had taken from her home. Then he took the bullets out of his gun, handed the gun to Hartman, and walked out the door.

Of course, many times there is a sad ending to these types of stories. Here is the point. We cannot use Jesus' words (which deal with social conflicts on a personal level) and wrongly apply them to capital punishment, the self-preservation of life, or the government's God-given mandate to overthrow the spread of evil in the world through war.

But the pacifist may say, “How can you love an enemy and kill him at the same time during war?” I might turn the question around to the pacifist: “How can you love your wife and let an armed robber shoot her in front of your eyes without trying to protect her?” Here is the point. We can love mankind in our personal relationships and practical daily living and still be used of God to carry out His objectives on earth in relation to self-protection or fighting in a just war.

We can still love mankind and serve as a police officer, prepared to pull the trigger on a gun, when a madman threatens our life and the lives of others. We can serve in the armed forces as a Christian, desiring that people be saved, but at the same time be fulfilling God’s just purpose to stop evil aggression in the world. Certainly God loved the entire world of lost humanity by dying on the cross (John 3:16) but at the same time God Himself judges lost people after they die by sending them to hell fire and judgment (Mark 9:42-49). In fact, in the very same chapter that says God loves the entire world of lost mankind, it also states that He judges those who are lost.

John 3:36

“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

Does this mean that God no longer loves His enemies? Of course not (2 Peter 3:9). It only means that God’s justice must be meted out on people who refuse to cooperate with His plan of saving grace. God’s character of love and justice exist together. The same is true about defending ourselves and being a soldier. If we must kill someone, it does not mean we hate them, but that we are carrying out God’s mandate and right that He has given to us as human beings and nations to maintain justice on earth. God is not one-sided in His character and neither should Christians be one-sided in their approach to loving others and bringing justice against evildoers in a fallen world.

We must beware that we do not take verses in the Sermon on the Mount, which deal with personal objectives and goals in life, and make them override other verses that deal with God’s justice and righteous actions upon evildoers. In other words,

let us always remember to love our enemies and love the spread of God's justice and righteous doings at the same time!

Loraine Boettner, author of "The Christian Attitude Toward War," maintained the balance well: "But while the Christian is commanded to love his enemies, that does not mean that he cannot defend himself or his loved ones against them. Nor does it necessarily follow that self-defense and love of those who would oppress us are contradictory. The judge who passes sentence on the evil doer may at the same time have a deep sense of pity and sympathy for him."

The point seems to be this. God has both sanctioned (approved) and controlled (regulated, managed) various actions in a fallen world of sin such as slavery, war and divorce. This means that war is sometimes necessary in an imperfect world and will occur within the ranks of a fallen world. And we must understand that God has chosen to regulate these "less than ideal" practices according to His sovereign program and ways. Some matters fall within the realm of the PERMISSIVE will of God and not His DIRECT will for the lives of the human race. In no way should we view war as being part of an ideal world. But the fact of the matter is this, we do not live in an ideal or perfect world. We live in a sinful fallen world and because of mankind's own sinfulness, the Bible teaches the necessity of self-defense and war.

Dr. James Gray once said:

"As long as sin exists we will have war. All the peace palaces ever built cannot prevent this."

There is another verse the pacifists use to promote non-resistance. It's known as the Golden Rule.

Matthew 7:12 states:

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."

The "Golden Rule" is also used to promote that we do not have the right to protect ourselves nor should we use military force against any people. The argument goes like this. We would never want another nation to attack us and kill our people.

Therefore, we should never stoop so low to attack them in a military fashion and bring death upon their people. Of course, this argument breaks down when you think about its weakness. For instance, in the event of war or robbery we must consider who the “others” are that we want to demonstrate goodness toward. In other words, which person do we want to express goodness toward?

Case in point. A murderer comes in to our house to murder the entire family. Are we to place ourselves in the position of the murderous invader, who storms into our home, threatening the lives of our children, and do good to him by not killing him? Or should we put ourselves in the place of our family members who are ready to die and who need our protection and do good to them by protecting them? I can honestly say that I will do unto others (my wife and children) as I would want them to do for me, if an invader came to take my life. I will get out my shot gun and protect my family!

Do you see the point? Don't misuse or violate the meaning of the Bible to fuel your own little arguments that run contrary to Scripture. We must rightly divide the Scriptures (2 Tim. 2:15) and give valid arguments for the positions we take. Mishandling and misapplying the Scripture can result in missing God's will and purpose for one's life.

The Bible advocates protection of family and even just war. One again, Jesus was simply talking about our general dealings with others in our day to day living. He was not giving a command that forbids personal protection, nor was He giving national commands revolving around war and capital punishment. In the normal social aspects of living, we should practice treating others, as we would want them to treat us. This is still a good principle to live by in our personal marriage relationships, our neighborhood, and in the business world.

I think the pacifist is many times governed by sentiment and emotion rather than the hard Biblical facts and they overemphasize the love of God without calling attention to God's justice. They become one-sided in their approach to living without seeing the entire Biblical picture of God's mind on this given subject. Furthermore, they seem to take verses that pertain to personal relationships and

elevate them to the status of national relationships, which becomes an exegetical nightmare and wrong applications of Scriptural texts.

Did you ever hear the saying, "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition?" This is actually an American patriotic song by Frank Loesser, and published as sheet music in 1942 by Famous Music Corporation. The song was a response to the attack on Pearl Harbor that marked United States involvement in World War II. The song describes a chaplain ("sky pilot") being with some fighting men who are under attack from an enemy. He is asked to say a prayer for the men who were engaged in firing at the oncoming planes. The chaplain puts down his Bible, mans one of the ship's gun turrets and begins firing back, saying, "Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition."

In a fallen world filled with wicked sinners, Christians can praise the Lord and love the Lord, while at the same recognizing the right to protect themselves and the country they live in.

Luke 22:36

"Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one."

Imagine this! Jesus told His disciples to go and buy a sword. And Jesus viewed the sword as being so important, as a means of self-defense, that the disciples were to even sell their coats to secure one! Jesus was not an advocate of outlawing swords nor would Jesus be an outspoken advocate of outlawing guns today.

The present-day saying is true:

"If you outlaw guns then only the outlaws will have guns."

Luke 22:38 suggests that the disciples already possessed swords. Luke 22:49 supports this point. "When they (all the disciples) which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword?"

Herman Hoyt, the beloved pacifist dispensationalist, said this about these references: "This passage of Scripture is admittedly difficult. And many

commentators are uncertain of its precise meaning.” We might add that it’s only the pacifist commentators that are uncertain of its meaning! Even the pacifists, who take the Bible literally, must cough and sputter at these verses. Jesus means what He says and says what He means. He gave the disciples permission to protect themselves! Certainly if Jesus approves of self-protection, we should as well. The idea that the disciples were a bunch of chickens is not Biblical. Nor was Jesus a pacifist when it came to protection and safety for the disciples. Jesus did not promote a pacifist response to danger and trouble.

John 18:10

“Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.”

Here is another pacifist verse wrongly applied. Peter was not aiming for his ear! He was going for the head! Peter was willing to fight for the Lord Jesus Christ. Note again, that Peter had a sword and had the right to protect himself.

I recall a time when I was at a farmer’s market. I began talking to a man in order to witness to him. After a while he got on to the matter of self-defense and was trying to make a case that it was wrong to defend oneself based on this verse and the Golden Rule that Jesus gave. I mentioned to him that Jesus was not teaching about protecting oneself or about nations protecting themselves. I also mentioned how even Jesus told His disciples to go and buy a sword. He thought for a moment but eventually told me that the disciples swords were for hunting and not violence and self-preservation! Well, this is wishful thinking, especially when Peter went for the head of the servant of the high priest who was behind the arrest of Jesus!

Another pacifist argument that is advanced today is the idea that we are only commanded as Christians to fight in a spiritual warfare and not a carnal or physical warfare (Ephesians 6:12; 2 Cor. 10:4; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9). Pacifists teach that the church was called to win souls and not destroy men’s lives (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). The argument basically says that believers are only called upon to be soldiers that resist the spiritual forces of evil but not the forces of physical evil. They are called to save souls – not destroy the lives of people. I must wholeheartedly agree with the fact that we are to evangelize the unsaved (Mark 16:15) and resist

spiritual evil (Eph. 6:10-18). This is certainly indisputable and all Christians would agree. However, the pacifist creates a one-sided argument by concluding that the Bible is silent on the matter of Christians engaging in physical war (resistance) and protecting themselves from harm's way.

The argument of only engaging in spiritual warfare is a strawman argument that ignores God's view on war in a sin-fallen world. Since sin is part of our society we must not only engage in spiritual warfare but also be prepared to engage in physical warfare for the protection of our society and personal homes. Both spiritual and physical resistance or protection from evil forces are God-given rights.

John 18:36 is another popular pacifist verse:

"My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."

This is another famous verse that is often quoted to teach nonresistance. Once again, we must understand by this statement of Jesus that He was talking about individuals fighting ("my servants"). He was not speaking of battles revolving around national warfare. This is vitally important to understand. Jesus was not setting up a standard to follow which relates to modern warfare between various nations. What we must understand is why Jesus told His disciples or followers not to fight on this particular occasion. It was because the kingdom was not going to come upon the earth in that day, and also because Jesus would not need any help to establish His earthly kingdom, when He returns to inaugurate the kingdom on planet earth.

The kingdom is "not out of (according) to this world" or set up by man's achievements. It will come down from Heaven to the earth rather than originating from the earth. It will begin when Jesus comes down from Heaven to earth at His second coming and this is why it is repeatedly called "the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3, 10, 19,20; 6:10; 7:21; 8:11). Christ's point was that He and His earthly kingdom were not a threat to Rome. The reason was that God had postponed the messianic kingdom due to Israel's unbelief (Matt. 21:43).

Jesus is not teaching by this statement that it is wrong to defend oneself. Rather, He was concluding that it was wrong to try and bring in His messianic kingdom by force. This is because bringing in the earthly kingdom is His business and it was not time for the kingdom to arrive on earth. Of course, Jesus did teach a moral directive by this statement and by His reaction to Peter's violence. It's a principle that we should apply to our present day Christian living. Believers should never use physical force to advance the Gospel, promote truth, or enforce a spiritual agenda that might be needed in the world. Whenever Christians have used force within the Christian community, avoiding government regulations, there has always been shame and reproach brought on the name of Christ.

While we can biblically advocate a Christian engaging in war under the authority of the government to stop evildoers (Rom. 13), it is never right to create a Christian Mafia to blow up abortion clinics or churches where lesbian marriages are promoted and such like. Although we might want to see these atrocities eliminated from society, it is never right to rise up and become full of anarchy and take human life without God's sanction. And when we take human life, without the authority of government backing us up, it's then that we become a murderer in God's eyes.

Exodus 20:13 does say, "Thou shalt not kill." Of course, this is a key verse that pacifists will use to teach that we should never kill anyone under any circumstances. However, in Exodus 20:13, as in the Sermon on the Mount, God was talking about individual actions done apart from His divine approval. The sixth commandment refers to the individual, intentional, and the unauthorized taking of human life. By unauthorized, I mean the kind of killing that God has not condoned. The point seems to be that man cannot take human life without God's approval.

Genesis 9:5-6 says:

"And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man."

After the Genesis Flood, God began to establish human government and gave laws that were to govern society throughout the rest of man's history of ruling planet

earth. Part of this universal law was to include the death penalty for those who kill others. Those who are murderers should not be given 20 years and then released. They should be put to death according to God's universal code of ethics that He established for the human race. So, there are times that God sanctions killing without violating the sixth commandment.

Leviticus 24:17

"And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death."

Leviticus 24:21

"And he that killeth a beast, he shall restore it: and he that killeth a man, he shall be put to death."

Those who argue against the death penalty had better read their Bible and see God's view on the subject. People are ignorant of God's view about capital punishment or either they don't care what God says. America is infected with the "BI virus" – Bible ignorance!

Romans 13:4 declares:

"For he (the government) is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."

Romans 13:1-5 tells us that God set up human government to restrain evil and promote righteousness. This passage informs us that the government's sword is actually a "minister of God" in restraining evil on the earth. The government may use lethal force and take human life in the process of restraining evil (Genesis 9:6). Certainly those who are part of this God-given service to mankind which restrains evil are not violating the sixth commandment. This would be true not only when the government restrains evil inside its own boundaries (country), it would surely include the time when the government must use the sword (military resistance) to stand against a bully nation acting unjustly.

The Bible does not teach pacifism. It actually teaches activism or the need to resist evil for the self-preservation of our lives and the lives of others. The Lord Jesus did

not direct the Roman centurion to resign from his military position and service to society (Matt. 8:5-19). He did not even remotely hint that this man's discipleship involved getting out of the military. Soldiers came to John the Baptist and asked him what they should do please God. Rather than instructing them to get out of military service, or opt for noncombat duty in the military, John merely instructed them to act justly within their sphere of service, and to not abuse their position of power (Luke 3:14). Peter never commanded Cornelius, a Roman soldier, to cease his involvement in the military (Acts 10). Paul preached to Caesar's elite imperial guard (Acts 28:30-31; Phil. 1:13) but never told him to get out of the military. As we've seen, Jesus spoke to His disciples about their need for self-defense (Luke 22:36-38). Certainly Romans 13, along with these other examples, would lead us to the conclusion that serving in the military to protect our nation is not a violation of the sixth commandment.

Other Bible verses teach the same thing about government's role in protecting society.

1 Peter 2:13-14

"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well."

Government is God-ordained. Government keeps the world from becoming a world of total anarchy and chaos. The Bible reveals that God gives the government the right to bring vengeance and death upon evildoers. Again, this means that a Christian can serve under the authority of government in the role of soldier or police officer and take human life, without violating the sixth commandment, which refers to unlawful murder.

David declared that the Lord had taught him how to make warfare.

Psalm 18:34

"He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms."

Psalm 18:39

“For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me.”

Psalm 144:1

“Blessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight.”

These verses have always been in the Bible! The pacifists seem to ignore them. God is portrayed as the omnipotent Warrior-Leader of the Israelites. It is true that Jehovah is a man of war and today He uses war to accomplish His purposes in a fallen world. This means that God’s children, like David, Samson, Deborah, Gideon, and others, who were anointed by the Spirit of God to conduct war against unjust and pagan nations, can be part of fulfilling these purposes without violating the sixth commandment. God’s people have always had the God-given right to protect themselves and in doing so they did not violate the sixth commandment.

Exodus 22:2-3 reveals God’s mind on self-preservation and protection: “If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die (killed by the householder – a justifiable homicide), there shall no blood be shed for him (the householder protecting himself should not be punished for he could not tell whether he was a thief or a murderer). If the sun be risen upon him, (during the daylight hours) there shall be blood shed for him (do not kill someone when you can see in the daylight he is not out to kill you but only committing a theft, for in taking a human life in this case, you will commit an unjustifiable homicide); for he should make full restitution; if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft” (he shall make heavy compensation and restitution for his theft).

The scene depicts the breaking and entering of a home during the night in which the intruder loses his life through a justifiable homicide by the homeowner. It also criticizes the homeowner for rising up against an intruder, in order to kill him, when it is not necessary. God’s Word teaches that when we are threatened by someone who wants to harm us, we are justified in using retaliation. Such would be the case at night when the homeowner could not know the intentions of a burglar.

Of course, great care must be taken when it comes to taking a human life. We should not be quick to retaliate against someone, when there is no need to destroy another human life. We must do so only if our own personal life or family is threatened. We should always seek to preserve life whenever possible. For instance, to strike a thief after the act has occurred, or during the daylight, when we can see he is not out to take our own human life, would be considered an inappropriate use of force (Exodus 21:23–25). Nevertheless, the taking of human life is a viable option when we and others are being threatened by a murderer and evildoer.

I remember when I was in the evangelistic ministry and was holding meetings in the backwoods of Hidalgo Illinois. My wife and I were staying with a man and wife who lived out in the middle of nowhere. Well, this Christian fellow had a pistol in his home and he left me know about it. One day he said to me, “Don’t you ever come walking in to my house unannounced or I will let you have it with both barrels!” He then said that he had also trained his wife to shoot anyone who does not announce themselves. Well, I thought to myself that this will be a great week of meetings – if the preacher can stay alive!

It’s interesting that the same God who said “Thou shalt not kill” under the Mosaic Law also gave a man the right to protect his family and home without charging him as a killer or murderer. God’s Word is very clear on this.

One final set of verses that are often misused by the pacifists are as follows.

Isaiah 2:4

“And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

Joel 3:10

“Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong.”

Micah 4:3

“And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

Once again, these verses are taken out of context by the defenders of pacifism. These verses are not talking about today but are actually a prophecy about the Millennium or the future 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth (Rev. 20:1-6). This prophecy has no application whatsoever for today. This will occur in the future when Christ “shall judge among the nations” (Isaiah 2:4) and when “he shall judge among many people” (Micah 4:3) which is a reference to His Second Coming, the time when Christ rules over the earth as King. When Jesus comes back as the King, it’s only then that we can have world peace, which is described as a time when military weapons will be turned into farming equipment.

We must remember that there can be no lasting peace in this world until the “Prince of Peace” returns (Isaiah 9:6). Until the King comes back, there will be a need for war, and when He returns, there will be no more war for “He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire” (Psalm 46:9).

Here is the point. You cannot take a future *prophecy* about the earthly kingdom when Jesus reigns on earth and turn it into a *policy* that must be followed today. This is not the time for “plowshares” (farming plows) and “prunighooks” (pruning knives); it’s the time for guns and ammunition. The world will not be safe until King Jesus comes back and makes it safe. This is why we have a God-given right to defend ourselves, our family, neighbors, and country from evildoers.

Self-defense may actually result in one of the greatest examples of human love. Jesus taught this when speaking to His disciples.

John 15:13

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

When protecting one's family or neighbor, or loving your neighbor as Jesus taught (Matt. 19:19, 22:39), a Christian can unselfishly risk his or her life for the sake of others. This would mean taking the life of the evildoer who was threatening your neighbors own life.

The late Francis Schaeffer put it this way:

"The Bible is clear here: I am to love my neighbor as myself ... What if you come upon a big, burly man beating a tiny tot to death and plead with him to stop? Suppose he refuses? What does love mean now? Love means that I stop him in any way I can."

Likewise, Christian apologists J.P. Moreland and Norman Geisler observe, "To permit murder when one could have prevented it is morally wrong. To allow a rape when one could have hindered it is an evil. To watch an act of cruelty to children without trying to intervene is morally inexcusable. In brief, not resisting evil is an *evil of omission*, and an evil of omission can be just as evil as an evil of commission. Any man who refuses to protect his wife and children against a violent intruder fails them morally"

James 4:17

"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth *it* not, to him it is sin."

In short, to fail to defend the innocent is a sin! Doing good to others may sometimes mean that I must take the initiative to protect them.

Let's bring this study to an abrupt conclusion.

Jesus taught in Matthew 24:6:

"And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet."

This means that until the Millennium comes, the time when Jesus rules planet earth and brings peace, we must keep saying, "Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition."