

PASSING THE BATON NUMBER 9
'The Doctrine of War'

November 2007

Matthew 24:6,7 *"You will hear of wars and rumours of wars..."*

Though the heading of this Baton teaching is the doctrine of war, we shall actually be looking closely at the Beatitudes during the course of the study. Jesus said in **Matthew 5:21**, you shall not murder and in **Matthew 5:38,39** *"An eye for an eye, turn the other cheek, don't resist evil,"* we shall look in depth at both scriptures and how they relate to our subject today.

Every time we study the Bible we are lifting up the Lordship, the Majesty and the Supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ. As we study this whole subject, we will see emerging God's sovereignty and Lordship over history and revel in His plans and His nature. His ways are revealed to us by principles which are unchanging as this study unfolds, I bless you with joy in Him.

These studies are to equip you in order that you might go out and speak that which is truth, and that you might clearly understand the issues and what the will of God is. I aim to present these truths to you simply, expounding what the word has to say. This week we are looking at the Doctrine of War. I am spending some time on an in-depth study in order that we may fully understand the issue.

Should a Christian be a pacifist?

Is God for war or against it?

Was Jesus a pacifist?

What does the Bible say?

What principles are at work here?

I have to give all credit to Roger Price for what follows, and I am grateful for his historical research into the subject, because this session is based on his teaching.

We may all have an opinion about whether we should defend this country of ours or not, but we need to bow the knee to what the word of God says about the subject. We really cannot any longer put our heads in the sand about the things which concern the society in which we live, we desperately need to know what God has to say. This is why we have already looked at such contentious issues as homosexuality and morality, so that we may know what the Bible says, and have an answer ready for those who ask us what we believe. We are not to be militant, but we are to be informed and have an answer for those who question us on what we believe. **1 Peter 3:15.**

We will soon be examining the subject of capital punishment - the death penalty, which was abolished in this country about 50 years ago. As a so-called 'Christian' country, should we have a death penalty?

I'm not talking about public opinion, I'm talking about what the Bible has to say, in due course we will examine this issue also.

Today we are going to be looking at the Doctrine of War. After today you will know where you stand or where the Bible stands. This is not an easy study, we will have to face the fact that we are not what we may think we are as human beings, as we study the fall of man, we will look at whether what Jesus said in the Beatitudes indicated that He was a pacifist or not and finally, briefly, at the rules of warfare.

Peace in our time - is it possible?

Everyone wants peace, we want it locally and we want it internationally. Everyone wants peace.

As I walked around the orchard near us the other day, I was thanking God for peace in our time. Our hearts desire, for those of us who have gone through a world war, is that this would not come upon our children, or our children's children. But how realistic is that desire? Is not war bound up in our own hearts? How often do we fall out with our nearest and dearest? How often is murder or war very close to our own hearts? So, what **are** we looking at?

It is no good looking at the ideal, there are realities that we must face. Bob Mumford calls it 'a gang of ugly facts'. We need to face those ugly facts. As Christians we should be of all people the most realistic about the world in which we live. In these days, God would have us face a few things and He has given His Holy Spirit to reveal truth to us.

Matthew 24:6,7 Jesus is highlighting something. The disciples are asking, what will be the sign of your coming and what will be the sign of the end of the age? Jesus gives them a potted version of history between His first and Second advent. Which includes the period of time in which we now find ourselves -

"You shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, see that you are not troubled, for all these things must come to pass for the end is not yet, for nation shall rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom, there shall be famines and pestilences, earthquakes in diverse places, all these are the beginning of birth pains."

Jesus is saying that one of the things that will characterise things between my First and Second Coming, is warfare and suffering. He is saying all these things will increase as we get closer to My Second Coming. He sounds pessimistic about the future.

Setting this statement in an historical context, Jesus was speaking at a time when the Roman

Empire was reaching its height. In fact within a 150 years of this, what was known as the Pax Romana made it possible to walk all round the Mediterranean coast without a weapon - the Roman Empire had established peace by dealing with all its enemies. It has been said that this was the most peaceful time the earth had experienced - a veritable golden era.

So was Jesus wrong in what He said, or was Rome wrong? Was Jesus a pessimist because He knew something they didn't know? Are all mankind's efforts at peace just efforts - is it possible that there can be world peace?

We can look back now more than 2,000 years and say, who was right, the Roman Empire, or Jesus?

40 years after He made these remarks the Roman Empire invaded Israel and there was appalling destruction and carnage. Between 400-500 years after He said this the Barbarians came down and caused the whole Roman Empire to fall, this was a terrible time.

Jesus couldn't be optimistic about the future because He knew that wars and rumours of wars were going to characterise history until He came a second time.

One of the things the Antichrist will promise, when he is revealed, is world peace - at a price. Remember he comes on a horse with a bow in his hand **Revelation 6:2**. This signifies that he will conquer without bloodshed, he has no arrow in his hand, he will produce a political solution to the world's problems.

We will see more of the significance of this when we study the Book of Revelation next year.

There have been 300 wars in Europe alone in the last 300 years - an average of one a year. In fact, it is more than that because there hasn't been war in Europe since 1945 so that shortens the odds. Wars have characterised the last 2,000 years - and it is still going on. There is always at least one war going on somewhere in the world and sometimes there are several at once. It was ever thus.

The reason that Jesus says what He does is that He **knows** what is in man. Remember how I started - we have it in our own hearts. Jesus knew that evil came from inside, man's heart, not from outside. Man, not nuclear weapons is the danger.

Man has something within him that is causing the problem. **James 4:1** - what's the root cause of all of this? Sinful desires to get what you haven't got at the moment. They come from within.

Beloved, we blame the enemy far too much for what arises from within our own heart - he could rightly sue us half the time for defamation of character!

What's the cause of problems in a Christian group? Is it the devil, no it is not. The basic problem for all Christian groups is, that you have people there who desire to do something, to achieve

something, to get something, to establish something that they haven't at the moment got and because of that, jealousy, bitterness and division comes in.

Those of you who have been present at the Wednesday meetings will know that this is **Eros**, seeking to acquire, possess and control. We are at war with ourselves and each other. Now, apply that on a universal scale, the whole earth and we see where wars come from. Us. Man is not an innocent bystander who finds himself taken up in circumstances he doesn't understand. He is the author of the circumstances. Fallen man is the root cause of the trouble. Let us remember that the first murder ever committed was Cain who rose up against Abel because he was *jealous* of what Abel had, God's approval. Second generation and murder rears its ugly head. **Genesis 4:5 - 8.**

The fall is real:

The Bible clearly tells us that the fall is real and evil proceeds from the heart of man. What we see outwardly is a manifestation of that which is going on inside.

What I am speaking about is what is known theologically as the doctrine of the universal, or total, depravity of man. Immorality, corruption, decadence, wickedness - dictionary definition of depravity. We don't like that do we? Put another way, it is the fall. And it is real and it is extremely ugly.

Ask an atheist or a humanist where this evil comes from and he will have a problem, because his belief will be that human nature is intrinsically good and if it is intrinsically good, only good can come out of us - so with more education and understanding we will all be all right. Without a belief in the Bible and the fall of man, he will be stumped to give you an answer. He doesn't know where evil comes from. It certainly doesn't come from him, because after all, he's not a bad chap, all things considered.

We need to settle it:

Beloved, every person on the face of the globe has to come to terms with this issue sooner or later.

Is man fallen, or is man not fallen?

Is man basically evil inside, or is he not evil inside?

That is the issue.

That issue will affect your thinking on many, many subjects. For instance, discipline for children. Should they be punished at school, at home, for bad behaviour, or not? Difficult one. The issue here, is the fallen nature. Are we going to allow it to run wild in our children, or are we going to bring them up in the fear and admonition of the Lord? Will we dare to discipline? Just an example

to show you where I am going.

Those who think children shouldn't be disciplined will say they are like they are because their parenting has been bad. Partly, yes, but majorly it is the fall, or the total depravity of their nature that you are seeing.

But you will hear the argument that we mustn't discipline them because it inhibits the little dears - sure does, it's meant to. It stops them doing the things they want to do destroying themselves and others in the process.

How we have come to this pitiable state in our nation we will examine next year when we look at the rise of anarchy and rebellion.

Those of us who believe in the universal fall of man, **know** that those children are fallen from the moment they are conceived as are we all. *"Surely in sin did my mother conceive me"* **Psalm 51:5.**

The Bible says that *"foolishness is bound in the heart of a child"* **Proverbs 22:15** - in other words, he doesn't know **how** to control himself. He has ungoverned desires in there. Discipline gives a child security. He knows you love him enough to stop him, doesn't mean he won't fight you every inch of the way, he will. Children need boundaries. What we must do both as parents and if you are a teacher, this applies too, is teach them how to control what is within them, we do them no favours if we do not.

So this belief, or not, of the universal depravity of man, will affect our thinking as far as law and order is concerned, and as far as discipline as parents and in schools is concerned, and it will affect our attitude towards disarmament and our attitude to war.

The bible is clear, man is fallen, and terribly wicked.

Psalm 14:1-3

"The fool has said in his heart, there is no God.....they are altogether become filthy. None that does good, no not one."

The Bible doesn't mince it –

Jeremiah 17:9

"The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?"

It means the heart is a liar, it says one thing and does another, and it is desperately, desperately wicked. You can't even know the thing. It's the Lord who shows you your own heart. And when He does, repentance (having a change of mind and heart) is a joy. Repentance is a gift of God the scripture says *"The goodness of God leads you to repentance"* **Romans 2:4.**

Did you know you can't even *repent* unless God gives you the ability?

"Oh the depths of the riches of the goodness of God." **Romans 11:33 -36**. The goodness of God leads you to have another thought. I get a lot of people who say *'Oh well the Lord knows my heart'* my response to that is *'He sure does! Trouble is, you don't, it is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.'*

If we are wrong about the fall, we are wrong about everything else.

Paul based his whole doctrine - if you read the Pauline epistles, without the fall of man, he has no doctrine left - the *whole* of Paul's writings are based on the reality of the fall. Beloved without this, the message of Jesus would have been, *'Well you are basically not too bad, just crank up enough righteousness to meet God and you'll be all right'*. But he didn't say that He went to the cross because of the fall to redeem us.

The fall is real beloved.

The most full analysis of Paul's doctrine is the epistle to the **Romans**. Everything is in it. **Romans 3: 10-18**, here he lays out the fall of man, and you will note, mainly quotes from the Old Testament. Paul was a *'Pharisee of the Pharisees and a Hebrew of the Hebrews'* remember. He was a very educated man and he says:

*"As it is written, there is none righteous, no not one (he's quoting from the Old Testament) there is none that understands, there is none that seek God, they have altogether become unprofitable....destruction and misery are in their ways, and **the way of peace they have not known**, there is no fear of God before their eyes."*

War is in their ways.

War has come from within man.

Romans 5:12

"As by one man sin entered into the world and death all have sinned."

It is from **inside** that our problems and difficulties have come.

Unless we agree with this basic premise, we will come to wrong conclusions and therefore a wrong solution to the problem. Mankind is fallen. Look at our divorce rate, We can't even live together 1:1 let alone millions with millions.

Some years ago we had peace campaigners rampant, they seemed to be everywhere, but they were characterised by a degree of violence...

If they couldn't get what they wanted, they started hurling bricks around as well as words, towards those who didn't agree with them. What chance is there of universal peace when we can't demonstrate peacefully for peace without going into violence?

I am not condemning these people, they actually can't help it this is just an illustration of what I am talking about, fallen mankind.

What is the biblical definition of a peacemaker?

Peacemakers are those who have the ability to bring a quieting influence into a situation. It is the result of conducting yourself in a peaceful manner, what is inside you comes out.

A good test of whether or not we are peacemakers, is when we walk into a situation where the sparks are flying and tempers are short, does the situation get better or worse when we arrive? Does our peace come with us?

Peace needs to be our umpire Paul says

Colossians 3:15

"Let the peace of God rule in our hearts."

We need to develop **this** type of peace in our lives, so that we will be able to display His peace to others. This kind of peace will be an influence on others in situations in which we find ourselves.

So, Jesus isn't being defeatist when He says there are wars and rumours of wars going to characterise this particular age. He is being absolutely true and biblically consistent. And His view was based on what He knew of man, that man was actually fallen. Only when God is brought into the situation is there any possibility of peace on this earth at all.

The bible is full of God berating the false prophets who prophesy peace, when there is no peace.

Isaiah 48:22

"There is no peace", says the Lord, "for the wicked".

In other words, you can do what you like, but without falling in with God's moral standards, it doesn't matter what you do, there will be no peace.

You cannot ignore God and have peace.

You know that as a born again believer - your peace is your umpire to let you know whether or not you are doing the right thing in any particular circumstance. A person who is interested in peace is prepared to obey God's laws, to see God exalted and righteousness exalted and is

prepared to crown the Prince of Peace as their King.

These are the true peacemakers who are blessed, it says in the Sermon on the Mount. Any nation that did that would have peace. However, it is a nonsense to suggest that a society that sets aside the existence of God Himself, and tolerates everything from rebellion to abortion to homosexuality and all the rest, can expect peace within its gates.

Again, as with sexuality, our last teaching, this is a **moral** issue.

Morality is at the heart of the Sermon on the Mount. We have to face it; we have a totally immoral society around us. We live in the midst of a rebellious generation from which we are to come out and be separate. This does not mean living in a nunnery! Our separation is, as we saw last time from something to something, we are separated from the world to God. From and to. We do need sometimes to do a check up from the neck up as Joyce Meyer says, just to see how captive to our culture we have become. **Ezekiel 13:10** *'They have seduced my people'* there is a seduction going on right now. **1 Thessalonians 5:3** *'When they shall say, peace and safety sudden destruction shall come upon them.'* President Nassar, before your time, had just finished peace negotiations in the middle east years ago, died of a heart attack as he got off the plane! That's the word of God coming to pass.

Man is fallen, and if he ignores God in that fallen state, only war and evil can come from it.

To set this whole issue in context, we need to look at the four Divine Institutions:

1. Every man has **free will**, not even God will override this.
2. Marriage - this was designed to produce stability within society.
3. **Family** - once you get married, become father, mother, recognised authority is established.
4. **National Government** - instituted by God to control evil in society

Those are the four Divine Institutions that God put on the earth at the very beginning to produce a stable society within the nations.

God doesn't sidetrack the issue of man's evil nature.

The first three were given before the flood, but the fourth one was after the flood.

If ever you look at a society and there is an attack on any of these, you know there is an attack on your freedom. We don't have to look far do we, marriages breaking down, sit-coms making fun of men, families splitting up, children disobedient to parents, people laughing at government, all indicators of God's divine prescription for humanity being held up to ridicule and destroyed.

We must not be of those who do this. As Christians, we need to know what God has put in place and how far we as a nation have strayed from His divine intention.

One of the things I want you to see today is how essential it is that we don't have one third of a Bible; just the New Testament. Everything you see outworked and fulfilled in the New Testament has its roots in the Old. Jesus in the New Testament, or covenant, is the fulfilment of the Old Testament. If you do not understand the Old Testament, you will never understand the New. The Bible must be read in its entirety, not just picked at and its Jewishness must be fully understood if we are to correctly interpret it.

If the Lord will, we will look at the typology of Jesus in the Old Testament through the tabernacle and maybe covenants - these are foundational and so important to our understanding of the way God does things and how He desires that we do things.

National Government:

Firstly however, we will look at where national government began. Free will, marriage and the family began before the flood. It is after Noah's flood that we get the fourth divine institution of national government set up. We will see this again when we look at capital punishment.

Genesis 9:5,6 and we see the very beginning of national government. God is dealing here with evil, and how He wants evil dealt with by us who live on the earth.

"Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed for in the image of God He made man." NKJV.

It is the latter part of verse 6 I want, "by man shall his blood be shed *because he is made in the image of God*". Actually, here is your answer to the issue of capital punishment. This is God's requirement, but there is more to it as we will see another time.

What God is saying here is, unlike before the flood when it was God and God alone who dealt with evil doers, now he is *delegating* that authority to man - **men** were to be appointed to deal with evil in society.

Men now are going to carry out capital punishment.

That does not mean that individual men are to do it - it's not a lynch mob - it means a plurality of men to carry out this delegated responsibility.

This isn't licence for man to take the law into his own hands.

This is people in positions of authority, these are people, delegated by God, who will judge a man

for his sin and carry out the sentence.

Clearly then, God has instituted government and that is what is meant by 'national government'.

So, a king, a prince, a prime minister, a member of the police force, a magistrate or a judge, the authorities over us, are *God's ministers* in a society. It's not saying that they are born again or anything like that, but they are God's ministers within a society. Don't let us be heard murmuring therefore. We get what we deserve in terms of government.

Two new testament passages for that:

Romans 13: 1-7

"Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgement on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good, but if you do evil, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger, to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due; taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour."

Powers are ordained of God -

1 Timothy 2:1

"Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

Paul is saying pray so that we might have peace.

The primary aim of national government as instituted by God is to deal with evil ***within its society***.

It is a way in which mankind can judge and deal with its own evil. National government has been given to restrain evil. If you asked most people what is the purpose of the Government they would say it is economic or social, but that was not God's original intent.

These are important, but **first**, it has to deal with evil within society. Law and order come first. If you don't have these there won't be a good economy or society, there will be no money and therefore a breakdown in society.

National Government's primary purpose is to deal with evil and to restrain it.

So, the primary purpose of national government is to *judge evil* and to *restrain it*.

That's what verse 4 says and that's what **Genesis 9** says and that is what we have to get clear in our own minds.

Government is firstly there to *restrain* mankind's evil.

That is why, until Jesus comes, men are put in a place of authority in which they can deal with evil.

Psalm 82 says *"God stands in the congregation of the mighty, He judges among the gods"* If you ever hear anyone saying that this means we are gods, disabuse them will you – gods, small 'g' - always refers to kings, rulers or judges. God is saying here, *"I stand in the midst of your judges, judging their judgements"*.

This is quoted in the gospels – *"I have called you gods"*, He says - it is obvious, He is judging them, their authority is of Him, so a judge should be putting forward God's judgement in the situation.

They used to, but it is not so in these days as we move further and further away from being a Christian country. That's why we should honour the Queen, she is a god, small 'g' because God has put her there, same with the Prime Minister and we should honour him, because of Who has put him there in authority over us. What He is saying in **Psalm 82** is, right, now you have judged perverted judgements, now I am going to judge you. *"Judgement is Mine, says the Lord, I will repay"* don't take the law into your own hands.

So, people in authority are His representatives as far as our society is concerned.

Two aspects of evil that affect a society: inner and outer evil:

There are two areas where evil has to be restrained. Inner and outer evil. This is the duty of national government. Unless these two areas are restrained the people within the land will lose their freedom. First of all there is inner evil - not evil within your heart - but evil within the society.

This is those who are committing crimes all over the place and the government must deal with that evil.

Murder must be dealt with.

Muggings must be dealt with.

Crime must be dealt with. Through the police, magistrates and judges, the government should

deal with evil within society so that you have some semblance of peace and order.

Notice the line of authority, there has to be a chain of command. It is set there by God. And no-one as I said earlier, is to take the law into their own hands, if these appointed people are there, they have to be used, that is why they are there.

The second source of evil that has to be dealt with is outer evil.

By that I mean threats from other nations and nations who, if given the opportunity, would take away the freedom and the rights of the individual.

It is the government's responsibility, given by God, to resist outer evil as well.

This is not done through the police, they are for inner evil. You restrain outer evil through the armed services. So, the army, the navy and the air force are there as servants of the government to protect our freedom. Armed forces are legitimate as far as the word of God is concerned. So, the armed forces are there to restrain evil. They were there during the second world war to stop us being invaded by Germany and put under its authority and a very good job they made of it too. We wouldn't be sitting here in freedom today if they hadn't won the war.

Genesis 14:11,12 and we see Lot who was dwelling at this time in Sodom, carried off by Cherdorlaomer. This gets Abram's wild up and in verse 14 we see the first ever army. *"When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he armed the three hundred and eighteen trained men born in his household and went in pursuit as far as Dan."*

Note that Abram's men were already trained.

They didn't go out not knowing what they were doing.

And in verse 17 we see Abram, having got all the goods and people back, meeting with Melchizedek king of Salem. What is his response to this erstwhile warmonger? Not *"What do you think you have been doing?"* but *"Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand"* - so we see who did it. God Himself with Abram on the ground as it were.

God actually **identifies** Himself with the army of Abram, God is saying Abram was perfectly right to go and rescue his family member, Lot. So, with the arrival of the institution of national government, you have the arrival of armed forces. It would be lovely if we didn't have to be armed for war, but in the situation in which we find ourselves, we have to make a decision between the lesser of two evils. All war is horrible; its terrible, but you have to take into account the morality of the people who are threatening you.

Abram was actually acting here as a **peacemaker** because these people were evil, cruel people who took off Lot and they would have wiped out the nations around them but for his action.

Archaeological records of the Canaanites show just how evil, fierce and cruel they were. So, the number of deaths and the amount of suffering, was less than it would have been if Abram hadn't gone against them and had left Cherdorlaomer in charge. This was the lesser of two evils. It happens all the time right now doesn't it. An army is sent in as a peacekeeping force. In order to preserve the freedom of generations to come, we need to uphold national government and the armed forces. The lesser of two evils, yes, but the fall of man is real, so real. Whenever there has been a weak nation other nations take advantage of that nation.

To sum up we have seen that the primary function of the divine institution of national government is to restrain evil and to judge evil. Certain people are now appointed by God to restrain the evil done by men. Inner evil is dealt with by national government at the level of the police, magistrates and judges, and outer evil which is fallen nations threatening the national entity, is dealt with by the armed forces.

We live with a philosophy which says there are no absolute truths. Beloved, as Christians, we cannot afford to go along with this out of ignorance.

The word of God is absolute truth and we need to come back to it. For us, it is the plumb line against which everything must be measured. God's word completely covers every issue that besets mankind. We can be a loud, clear trumpet, warning the people of this earth as we study to make ourselves approved, workmen rightly dividing the word of truth. **2 Timothy 2:15.**

If God is love, He can't support war can He?

If you should get into a discussion about the whole issue of war, you will need to be furnished with some kind of reply to this question. You will get the same thing when we come to look at Capital Punishment.

After all, God *is* love.

Usually these people will also think that God is opposed to any kind of judgement too, therefore there cannot be any such thing as the lake of fire. God just isn't like that. How can a God, who is a God of love, ever see His creatures excluded from His Presence? Everyone is going to get there in the end. I confess that I thought that when I was first saved. The lady training me for baptism nearly jumped down my throat. She was right.

What does the Bible say?

It is true that in **1 John 4:8** it says that 'God is love', but have you noticed a few other scriptures? **Exodus 15:1-3**, Song of Moses. Moses wrote this to celebrate their wonderful deliverance by God from Egypt.

"I will sing to the LORD for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and his rider He has thrown into the sea!"

God doesn't seem to be too fussy about the rider or the animal! Animal rights supporters eat your heart out.

"The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; my father's God and I will exalt Him. The LORD is a man of war; (or as it should be translated, the LORD is a warrior, He is a man who goes out to war), The LORD is His name".

So, there's one verse that says He is a God of war, as well as a God 'of love. If you're not happy with that, go to **Psalm 144** - a psalm of probably one of the greatest military men who ever lived, David. He says –

"Blessed be the Lord, my Rock Who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle".

He's saying it is **God** who trains him. What an amazing thing to say! God has taught me all the military skills I have, he is saying. Bit of a problem if you are a pacifist at this point.

Psalm 18:32,34 there is a similar reference

"It is God who arms me with strength, and makes my way perfect...he teaches my hands to make war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze."

God taught David how to war, this God who is a God of absolute love, also taught David to war.

You find the same when you come to Jesus. He was meek and mild, but He was also a man of passion. Jesus was a baby meek and mild, but He was also a man with carpenter's shoulders and muscles.

Never forget, Jesus the man.

He was angry and the bible does say, be angry and sin not. There is a difference between being angry and sinning in your anger. Jesus anger was **never** sin. People often say to me, *"Oh but it was righteous anger"* when they are talking about their own anger at something - no wasn't!

First you need the mind of Christ, before you can begin to understand and move in righteous anger, which was the only kind Jesus ever exhibited.

There is one passage which describes Jesus clearing the Temple ground - **John 2:13** Let's see how meek and mild Jesus really was –

"And the Jews Passover was at hand and Jesus went up to Jerusalem and found in the Temple, those who sold oxen and sheep and doves and the moneychangers doing business."

The point here is that they were charging exorbitant prices for the things they were selling, three times or so the normal price and the people had to have these doves etc. to cover their sin and

they are having to pay above the odds for this service provided by the Temple - so this is the cause of His righteous indignation **verse 15** - the ordinary people are being ripped off –

“When He had made a whip of cords - He drove them all out of the Temple, and the sheep and the oxen and poured out the changers’ money and overturned the tables. And He said to those who sold doves ‘Take these things away! Do not make My Father’s house a house of merchandise!’”

This is the same Jesus who says the unbelievers will be cast into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. The same Jesus who is love embodied in one Person, absolute pure love, and yet, He speaks of this judgement. He is the same Man, the God-man who appears in

Revelation 19:11-16

“And I saw heaven opened and behold, a white horse and He that sat upon him was called faithful and true and in righteousness He judges and makes war...His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He ^[a]had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in ^[b]fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a ^[c]sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written:

*KING OF KINGS AND
LORD OF LORDS.”*

When a king rode into a city or approached a city on a donkey it was a sign of peace - when he came in on a horse, it always meant warfare, always.

That’s why the lookouts on the wall would always look for a cloud of dust, if there was a cloud of dust, it meant that war was about to be declared - a donkey doesn’t move that fast.

The first time when Jesus came, He rode in on a donkey, the next time, Second Advent, He comes on a horse and there is war in all His doings.

We will see more about those on horses when we come to look at the book of Revelation next year.

Notice though, it is in **righteousness** He judges and makes war, this is a **Holy war**, all wars declared by God are absolutely righteous.

So how do we reconcile these two views of the character of Jesus and of God? It is quite simple when you know the character of God. God *is* a God of love, but He is equally a God of absolute

righteousness and absolute justice and that means that when there is sin about, His holiness is offended and in righteousness He must judge the sin.

His love is shown by the death of Jesus on the cross, Jesus has provided the way out of the eternal damnation that is coming, but if men *reject* that there remains nothing for it but the wrath of God to come upon their heads.

So, in righteousness, He makes this war.

Hebrews 3:11

“So I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter into My rest”.

Talking about Israel now, their sin has come before Me and I have to judge that sin. For us, in **Colossians 3:6** talking about the judgement at the end on unbelievers *“for which things, the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience”*. There is the other side of God’s character. His wrath and His righteous indignation, so there you have the balance.

Was Jesus a passivist?

Jesus did give certain teaching which a passivist may say supports their thinking.

Matthew 5:9

“Blessed are the peacemakers”,

Therefore anyone who supports a peace movement must be blessed. But the Beatitudes deal with *inner holiness*, they do not deal with the way to run a nation.

Matthew 5:38-41

“I say to you, resist not evil”.

Matthew 26:52

“For all that take the sword shall perish with the sword.”

Against those -

Matthew 10:34

“Think not that I have come to bring peace on the earth, but a sword”.

What He is doing there is recognising the reality of the fall and He is saying that *“My message is*

one that will divide families”.

Luke 22:36

“But he that has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one”.

So was Jesus a passivist, or was He not?

Matthew 5:9 this is saying, *‘the ministry of the blessed man is the man who creates peace’.*

We are all meant to be peacemakers, not troublemakers.

If it is ‘peace at any price’, it is being a peace monger, someone who is always selling peace, we must have peace, no matter what the cost.

World of difference between a peace maker, which we are all called into, and being a peace monger - seller, dealer, or promoter.

Jesus is not saying, blessed are the peace mongers.

Sometimes those ‘selling’ peace are very violent! In the days of CND there were all sorts of riots and police had to be called because the very peace mongers were warlike. Fallen man. You would think that scrapping your weapons would produce peace, but what actually happens if you do that, as it did with the Falklands war, another country, in this case Argentina, looks at that and thinks, *‘easy meat - we’ll go in and possess, Britain isn’t going to put up a fight for the Falkland Islands.’*

Disarmament doesn’t solve the problem, other countries don’t actually follow your good example, in truth it makes you more *vulnerable* to attack, they think you are stupid.

So, the actions of someone who claims to be a peacemaker may not lead to peace it might lead to the very war they are trying to avoid.

Taking it right back to basics, one way of getting peace in the home, let the children have just what they want, let them decide, put no restrictions on them, then they won’t kick up a fuss - that’s the way of peace is it? Not for very long! You’ll have a child-ruled household in no time. You will soon find that you have bred monsters and there will be no peace for you at all.

There will only be universal peace when Jesus makes war against the devil in the last battle of time. Gog and Magog. *“Whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming” 2 Thessalonians 2:8.*

He is the blessed peacemaker indeed.

But I say do not resist an evil person...

What about **Matthew 5:38,39** then –

“You have heard it said, an eye for an eye a tooth for a tooth but I say to you, not to resist an evil person but whoever hits you on the right cheek, offer him your left cheek also”.

This verse, taken as it stands could look as though you are literally not to resist any evil whatsoever. But is that what Jesus is saying? Haven't we already seen that government and the police force and the armies are there by God's design to keep us safe from criminals and the violent? There must be something more here.

We need to see to whom the Beatitudes are written and why.

The Beatitudes are not written to nations, the world or unbelievers. They are written to us as believers and spoken to the Pharisees and Jesus' followers. What Jesus is talking about in these writings is your *inner attitude*, your heart and specifically your desire for vengeance.

What Jesus is saying here is that if someone does hit you round the face, even if you don't retaliate, be sure there is no vengeance in your heart. He is not literally saying turn the other cheek, *He is saying get your heart right and free from vengeance*. This is all about the inner man of the Spirit.

There are other passages as we have seen which speak of national issues. There is an old saying, a text out of context is a pretext, and taking verses like these to substantiate a certain position is completely wrong. We need to know how to rightly divide the word of God this does not support the passivist view.

Vengeance is Mine, says the Lord...

What Jesus is actually saying here in verses 38 and 39 is the punishment must fit the crime; this is true justice, not rough justice.

He was speaking to the Pharisees who took the law into their own hands and misquoted the law as though their taking vengeance was right.

He was saying judge righteously, don't punish people unjustly, get it right. He was reminding them of the law which they well knew. He was repeating what He said in **Leviticus 19:17,18** *“Thou shall not hate your brother in your heart...love your neighbour as yourself.”* and in **Proverbs 20:22** *“Don't say I will repay evil; wait for the Lord and He will save you”.* And in **Deuteronomy 19:21**. The maximum penalty you can impose if you punch someone and they lose an eye, is the loss of an eye yourself. Hence, a life for a life. Logical progression as we will see when we examine capital punishment. He was talking about justice **without** vengeance. What Jesus is saying is, when the law is put into action, it should not be put into action according to vengeance it must be put into

action because God's law has been broken.

You must feel no animosity at all towards those who have damaged you.

We usually want 'justice' because we want vengeance, don't we?

Doesn't this cause you to examine your own heart?

It does me.

What happens then if someone you are associated with breaks the law - what should you do? How do you get the balance right between no personal vengeance and the correct use of the law?

Romans 12:17-13:5 in the Bible there are no chapter divisions, they were put in afterwards, so chapter 13 runs straight on. In verses **17-21** Paul is saying, don't act under vengeance, and in chapter **13:1-5** you have the correct use of the law. *"Don't repay anyone evil for evil",* (be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. You must not have anything to do with vengeance in your own heart - don't hit him back if he hits you.) *"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written "It is Mine to revenge I will repay" says the Lord...everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities for there is no authority except that which God has established".*

Just a note about this phrase *"in so doing you will pour coals of fire upon his head"* this is not God's vengeance on the person.

In ancient times your fire was what you cooked with, kept you warm etc. If your fire went out, you were in big trouble. So you would take your pan, on your head, to your neighbour and ask for half of their live coals to start your fire over again - Jesus is saying, **give** them what is most important to you, don't hold back anything. Ouch! In fact, if you give half of your own hot coals away, your own brazier might go out - risky living.

You only did this to those you really loved, but here is Jesus saying, so should you do to those who actually hurt you, so that you bless them. Here is no personal animosity "You've done this to me so..." fill in your own blanks, this is all about no personal animosity, no vengeance.

Shows us where our hearts need dealing with doesn't it?

We Christians, we bear grudges all the time don't we?

It's absolutely wrong. Joyce Meyer has a super saying, *'Are you holding a grudge or is a grudge holding you?'* - it's all in the title isn't it? Of course, the grudge is holding us. Really when you suffer some kind of wrong, you should not take any account of it. The Lord says, if you don't avenge yourself, I will repay because vengeance is Mine. Paul says, don't be overcome with evil,

but overcome evil with good and then he goes straight in to talking about the police. Talking about the law system of the land. The point he is making here is that you must not take the law into your own hands - if someone has broken the law the police will deal with it, not you. There must be no personal animosity, no matter what is happening or has happened, **Romans 13** says that there are authorities, instituted by God, to deal with this situation and you must hand it over to them to deal with, otherwise you yourself are acting in anarchy and rebellion - we may look at that subject in the future too.

So did Jesus practice what he preached? **John 18:19** The High Priest hits Jesus on the cheek, but we don't see Him literally turning the other cheek. It is all about the inner attitude of the heart. Jesus felt no vengeance, he simply asked, please tell me why you hit Me. He is not seeking vengeance.

What about Paul? In **Acts 23:10** we see Paul being removed because of the crowd - the Pharisees and the Sadducees are fighting amongst themselves and Paul is in danger, so the commander removes him to the local lockup. While he's there, the dissenters 40 of them bind themselves under an oath not to eat or drink until they have killed Paul.

So, does Paul just say, well, let them have their way, peace, peace, I can't do anything? If you know the story, his nephew comes in and tells Paul about the plot, so what does he do? Paul sees to it that the plot is reported to the Captain - he's not passive in this, the result is that he is taken out under heavy guard at night and escapes the plot of the wicked. Paul is calling on the divine institution number four - of government to protect the rights of individuals. He knew his stuff. He calls upon God's rightfully authorised people to give him the protection he needs.

What about you, here the law has not been broken, someone has done something wrong to you, but they haven't broken the law. What then? You could call for the elders. But the highest way of all is to commit it to the Lord and feel no vengeance in your heart.

That is a place to come to, that is the place we are working towards.

Whenever we feel offended, affronted or the need for revenge or retaliation, we are looking at that old Eros serpent, which those of you who attend on Wednesdays will be very familiar with. That self-referential thing which wants to be petted, handled gently and soft talked all the time. Not the stuff that the Kingdom of God is made of let me tell you.

What happens when someone does something to you and the law safeguards you? For instance. Gossip. There is such a thing as the law of slander - I shouldn't think it is very much alive in this day and age, but fifty years ago you could actually sue someone for defamation of character, in much the same way as you could sue a man who let you down and didn't marry you when he promised to, could be sued for breach of promise.

Seriously, even if you could, if it is a brother or sister who is slandering and gossiping about you, you certainly don't take them to court. It's only - look at this - your personal vengeance, you want

to get your own back, your pound of flesh as we used to say. **1 Corinthians 6:6** has something to say about this -

“But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers! Why do you not rather accept wrong. Why do you not rather let yourselves be defrauded? No you yourselves do wrong and you do these things to your brothers.”

These Corinthians were still worldlings, they still sought to settle things the way the world did. If you read the two epistles to the Corinthians, you can get a good picture of newly born Christians.

They were up to everything because they had not yet got a grip on the sanctification process. Or it hadn't yet got a grip on them, would be more accurate.

So the Beatitudes deal with an individual's inner holiness - they do not deal with the way to run a nation or with national government.

Matthew 26:51 and we see Peter taking the law into his own hands and striking off the ear of the servant of the High Priest.

We know it is Peter because John tells us in his gospel account of the same thing **John 18:10**. This was a totally *illegal* action on Peter's part, the people coming to arrest Jesus were there on official business they were the proper people to arrest a possible suspect. Even if they were not, it was not Peter's place to attack and kill them, it would still have been the place of the correct authorities.

So, Jesus' words to Peter are, *not* a substantiation for disarmament, because He said *“Put away your sword, those who live by the sword will die by the sword”*. Jesus was rebuking Peter's action because it was *illegal*.

Peter had taken the law into his own hands and was using the sword to get his own way. Jesus was saying if you use violence to get your own way, you will perish violently. Jesus was not speaking against soldiers and armaments, He was talking about the illegal use of arms. So if anyone tries that one on you, you know the answer now. The word of God tells us what we need for our *real* lives.

For completeness sake **John 18:36** Jesus answering Pilate –

*“My Kingdom is not of this world, if My Kingdom were of this world, **then would my servants fight.**”*

What Pilate was interested in, was whether Jesus was a rival trying to set up an alternative society against Caesar. So Jesus tells him plainly, *“No, I'm not doing that. My Kingdom is one about which you have no knowledge.”* His is a spiritual Kingdom which is not fought over physically. The inference too is that if His *was* a physical Kingdom, His people would fight for it.

When we look at the wise men next month, we will see that Herod was nervous for the same reason, when he heard about the birth of Jesus, he thought there was another king in the offing. In fact, this Herod was a usurper to the throne anyway and he had reason to be nervous. But we will see more of that next time.

The rules of warfare:

To establish this has always been the case, we need to go into the Old Testament and specifically to the book of Deuteronomy where we see the rules of warfare. This is what they had to apply when they went into battle.

Deuteronomy 20: 1 - 4 reading from the Message - Moses speaking:

“When you go to war against your enemy and see horses and chariots and soldiers far outnumbering you, do not recoil in fear of them: God, your God, who brought you up out of Egypt is with you. When the battle is about to begin, let the priest come forward and speak to the troops. He’ll say ‘Attention Israel. In a few minutes you’re going to do battle with your enemies. Don’t waver in resolve. Don’t fear. Don’t hesitate. Don’t panic. GOD your God, is right there with you, fighting with you against your enemies, fighting to win”.

God is right there, right with them, ensuring their victory.

You can count the number of times in the Old Testament where it says *“And the Lord wrought a great victory that day”* - who’s doing the fighting? God is, the Lord of Sabaoth - the Warrior King fighting for and with Israel against their enemies.

But what went wrong that brought His judgement against them instead of His protection?

They committed spiritual adultery, they neither listened to nor obeyed the prophets He sent them, they broke covenant despite all His warnings.

Leviticus 26:23 - now this is the fourth of five cycles of discipline which the Lord warned Israel about if they didn’t buck their ideas up. Each cycle brought increasingly severe judgement upon them. We haven’t yet looked at these yet, but we will study them when we study the book of Revelation next year.

Just look at who is doing what to whom here -

Leviticus 26:23 The Message

*“And if this doesn’t work and you refuse My discipline and continue your defiance, then it will be my turn to defy you. I, yes I, will punish you for your sins seven times over. **I’ll let war loose on you**, avenging your breaking of the covenant; when you huddle in your cities for protection, I’ll send a deadly epidemic on you and you’ll be helpless before your enemies; when I cut off your*

bread supply, ten women will bake bread in one oven and ration it out. You'll eat, but barely - no one will get enough".

Here God is using war against Israel because of their continuing defiance against Him.

You can't make Jesus a pacifist with passages like that in there.

Verse 32 *"I will bring the land into desolation"* God is going to do it; He will bring enemies into their land to deal with them - this is God talking. *"I will scatter you"* this is the fifth cycle of discipline which the Jewish nation is still in. Scattered among the nations.

You will see as we go on in studying the word that God raises up nations to discipline and judge other nations. This is particularly apparent in His dealing with Israel, He brought the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians against His people, but then decreed desolation to those nations. In **Daniel 2** it says, *"It is God who raises up kings and who puts down kings"*. Today God is still in the business of raising up nations and putting down other nations. He is the great territorial Spirit. It is all His, and He distributes it as He thinks fit.

Jeremiah 50:9 Here we see God dealing with the Babylonians -

"I will raise, and cause to come up against Babylon an assembly of great nations from the north country, and they shall array themselves against her; from there she shall be captured...none shall return."

He raised up the Persians and the Medes and together they came down and ransacked Babylon.

You may look at this and say the Persians and the Medes did it, but the Bible says that God did it.

What has happened here is that the Babylonians finally became so wicked that God had to judge them - always, wickedness and evil will be judged in God's time. You only have to look at the universal flood, Sodom and Gomorrah and in the end, the Antichrist etc. Judgement will come upon the nations as surely as night follows day. What we see here is that warfare deals with ***international evil and it is God who finally deals with them.*** So, we read this phrase, time and time again, *"God gave them up into the hands of..."* fill in the blanks.

Beloved, we are so secure in this great God of ours. This should fill us with such joy. When we truly know, His sovereignty over all things and His Lordship in our lives our security is impenetrable, and our joy must be full. He is the Lord of Sabaoth, the Warrior King; He will bring all things about according to His Sovereign will - never doubt it.

Just one more **Jeremiah 21:7** reading from the NIV, *"After that declares the Lord, I will hand over Zedekiah, king of Judah, his officials and the people in the city, to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and to their enemies who seek their lives. He will put them to the sword; he will show them no mercy or pity or compassion. Furthermore tell the people, this is what the Lord says, see I am*

setting before you the way of life and the way of death. Whoever stays in this city will die by the sword, but whoever goes out and surrenders to the Babylonians will escape with his life”.

You will notice when you are reading the book of Jeremiah that God said on another occasion, if you stay put here you will be all right, but if you flee, you will be destroyed. Again, they took no notice, and they were destroyed. God always, always, warns and warns, and warns about what He will do if we don't listen and obey. He couldn't do any more. He is good.

What you are observing is the rebellious nature of fallen mankind, determined to do it their own way with disastrous results.

Because of His holiness and absolute justice, God must bring judgement on persistent rebellion. He must deal with sin on a ***national scale***. So, in the chapter we are studying, it goes on in verse 10 *“I have determined to do this city harm and not good, it will be given over into the hands of the king of Babylon, and he will destroy it with fire”.*

Just to look at this whole cycle of God's justice and judgement against nations when sin is full grown - and prophecy generally - we go back to -

Genesis 15:13 -15 - God is speaking to Abram here -

*“Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and ill-treated four hundred years. But **I will punish the nation** they serve as slaves (Egypt) and afterward they will come out with great possessions. In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure”.*

The principle here is when the cup of iniquity is full, God judges.

In the meantime, He waits.

Here is His patience and longsuffering with humankind.

He only judges when a country has gone so far, He just *has* to bring His judgement on them.

The day may come when He looks at the Britain and says, your iniquity is full, I must judge.

The Amorites referred to in Genesis, occupied the land of Canaan and in the book of Joshua you can see how God's righteous judgement was brought upon this country - and notice that it was the Lord Jesus Himself who was the commander of the armed forces. **Joshua 5:13,14.**

The Lord is a Man of War:

From what we have seen, we must come to the conclusion that Jesus definitely was not a pacifist,

that He expects us to be subject as **individuals** to the law of the land, and as a nation defend our country from attackers; and that **His** will be the final judgement of the nations.

From **Thessalonians** and **Revelation** we see that at His Second Coming, He alone is going to judge and make war, His is the robe dipped in blood -

Revelation 19:11-21.

“Then I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written

**KING OF KINGS
AND
LORD OF LORDS”.**

We will see more of this glorious King of ours in our study on **Revelation** next year.

May God bless His word to your hearts. Thank you for listening. Amen.