

Was Jesus a Liberal?

One of the lies of the left is that Jesus was this long-haired, revolutionary hippie, whose philosophy was anti-government and anti-authority. These were the exact same charges which the religious types of His day brought against Him. **Then the whole company of them arose and brought him before Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Cæsar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king." And Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And he answered him, "You have said so." Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no guilt in this man." But they were urgent, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place."** (Luke 23:1–5). Even today, some of these very same lies are told about our Lord (it is true, by the way, that He is the King of the Jews, which is the one charge He agrees to).

A Bruce Holden argues that Jesus is a liberal. He first wrote the following:

Jesus is a liberal. The historical, Biblically documented teachings of Jesus clearly show that Jesus is a liberal. His philosophy, based on compassion, equality, inclusion, forgiveness, tolerance, peace and most importantly, love is 100% liberal.

For the last 30 years or so, we have all witnessed the growing domination of the radical right wing evangelicals claiming a virtual monopoly on Jesus. They have redefined what He meant, and used His name to advance their radical right wing social, business, governmental, political and military agenda. Former President Bush called it their right and righteous Crusade. As Christians, we need to reject this radical right wing Republican evangelical claim that they alone represent the will, expression and blessings of Jesus. It is time that Christians stand up for the Liberal, Progressive, tolerant and independent thinking majority's position that any plain reading of His words, any genuine interpretation of his intent, outline a liberal, progressive, tolerant, loving and holistic world view.

Remember, Jesus is a liberal. He sat with the sinner, he fed the hungry, he clothed the naked, he healed the sick, and he spoke of love and peace. As Christians, we can and should do nothing less.

Yes, I know this little piece will upset many of the conservatives who dominate this board. They will throw out a few verses, quote mining a few words or phrases from the Scriptures that they think prove they are correct. They are entitled to their opinion, of course. They express it all the time! But for those who tire of that position and opinion, those of us who differ, who read His words with a different eye, it is time we speak up again and loudly. You do not own Jesus.

On a lighter note, remember, Jesus rode a donkey into Jerusalem, not an elephant.

Peace to all.

Then, when asked to backup his beliefs with Scripture, he wrote:

BIBLICAL QUOTES SUPPORTING THE BELIEF THAT JESUS IS A LIBERAL

Peacemaking, not War Making: Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. [Matthew 5:9] Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. [Matthew 5:39] I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despite-fully use you, and persecute you; [Matthew 5:44]

The Death Penalty: Thou shalt not kill [Matthew 5:21]

Crime and Punishment: If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to cast a stone at her. [John 8:7] Do not judge, lest you too be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. [Matthew 7:1 & 2.]

Justice: Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. [Matthew 5:6] Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy [Matthew 5:7] But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. [Matthew 6:15]

Corporate Greed and the Religion of Wealth: In the temple courts [Jesus] found men selling cattle, sheep and doves and other sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. [John 2:14 & 15.] Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. [Luke 12.15.] Truly, I say unto you, it will be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. [Matthew 19:23] You cannot serve both God and Money. [Matthew 6:24.]

Paying Taxes & Separation of Church & State: Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. [Matthew 22:21]

Community: Love your neighbor as yourself. [Matthew 22:39] So in everything, do to others as you would have them do to you. [Matthew 7:12.] If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. [Matthew 19:21]

Equality & Social Programs: But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just. [Luke 14:13 & 14.]

Public Prayer & Displays of Faith: And when thou pray, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that

they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou pray, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret. [Matthew 6:6 & 7]

Strict Enforcement of Religious Laws: If any of you has a son or a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? [Matthew 12:11] The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. [Mark 2:27.]

Individuality & Personal Spiritual Experience: Ye are the light of the world. [Matthew 5:14]

There are others. These are the ones that come to mind immediately.

We have to understand the historical context of the incarnation of Jesus Christ. He had come into a world where the Scribes and the Pharisees had dramatically distorted the Mosaic Law, turning it into a legalistic relationship to God. This does not mean that there is not such things as right or wrong in this world—things which God approved of or disapproved of, but the Jewish theologians over the years had *clarified* the Law to explain just what Jews could and could not do. For instance, on the Sabbath, if someone drove by you and splashed mud on you tunic, you could not clean your tunic off. However, you could wait until the mud dried, and then give it one squeeze. So Jesus was not negating anything in the Old Testament; He was correctly interpreting the Old Testament and disregarding the religious system which had been superimposed upon it. Matt. 5:17, Jesus says, “Do not presume that I came to nullify the Law or the Prophets [one of the designations of the Old Testament]; I did not come to nullify, but to fulfill [the Law and the Prophets].” The chief problem was, these religious types knew a few passages here and there, and they knew their Talmud, but they did not really know the Bible. And answering, Jesus said to them, “You are wrong, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God.” (Matt. 22:29).

In Luke 16:17, Jesus said, “But it is easier for the heaven and the earth to pass away than to void even one point of the Law.” In fact, Jesus elevated what He said to the permanence of the Bible, and therefore, the same importance: “The heaven and the earth shall pass away, but My Words shall not pass away.” (Luke 21:33).

Finally, Jesus said that the Old Testament Scriptures were all about Him: And beginning from Moses, and from all the prophets, He explained to them the things about Himself in all the Scriptures (Luke 24:27). “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these [Scriptures] bear witness of Me.” (John 5:39). We have dozens of Scriptures which Jesus fulfills in His incarnation, but probably the most dramatic instance of this is found in Luke 4:16–21: And He came to Nazareth where He was brought up. And as was His custom, He went in on the day of the sabbaths, into the synagogue, and He stood up to read. And the scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to Him. And unrolling the book, He found the place where it was written: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me. Because of this He anointed Me to proclaim the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim remission to captives, and to the blind to see again,’ to send away the ones being crushed, in remission, to preach an acceptable year of the

Lord.' And rolling up the scroll, returning it to the attendant, He sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your ears." (Jesus was quoting from Isa. 61:1–2).

My point is, Jesus was not revamping the Law of Moses; He was not teaching a new and better way; He was teaching the Old Testament; He fulfilled the Law and the Prophets, and His Own words He placed on an equal footing with the Old Testament. The problem with the Scribes and the Pharisees were twofold (1) they did not know the Scriptures and (2) they adhered to a whole system of traditions which did not conform to the Mosaic Law. The upshot of this is, if you want to call Jesus a liberal, then you are also asserting that what is found in the Old Testament is liberal theology (or, as it is more properly known today, Liberation Theology and its American offshoot Black Liberation Theology, which is taught in the church the President Barrack Obama attended for 2 decades).

Now that we have the proper historical context and background, we can deal with Mr. Holden's arguments and quotation of Scripture.

One of the first mistakes that most people make is misunderstanding the term *peace* in the Bible. This is continually and incorrectly conflated with *world peace* or *peace between nations*. Now, on occasion, Jesus did use this word in that way, e.g., in Matt. 10:24: "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword." "Do you think that I came to give peace in the earth? No, I say to you, But rather division." (Luke 12:51). However, this could also refer to a personal state of happiness, well-being and *prosperity*; and this is often used to describe the relationship between God and man, with Jesus standing between God and man. Then being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1). And He [Jesus] is before all things, and all things have subsisted in Him. And He is the Head of the body, the assembly, who is the Beginning, the First-born out of the dead, that He be preeminent in all things; because all the fullness was pleased to dwell in Him, and through Him making peace by the blood of His cross, to reconcile all things to Himself; through Him, whether the things on the earth, or the things in the heavens (Col. 1:17–20). See also Luke 7:50 8:48 Acts 10:36 Rom. 3:17–18 10:15 Eph. 6:15. There are other uses of the word *peace* throughout the New Testament, but it is often used to refer to the peace between man and God based upon the death of Christ on the cross. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1Tim. 2:5).

There is nothing more fundamental than Who Christ is and what He did on our behalf. So when Jesus says, "Blessed [Happy] are the peacemakers" He is not talking about Jimmy Carter trying to make Jews and Arabs get along but of those who take the gospel of peace between man and God throughout the world. Although we are urged in several passages to try to be at peace with all men, that is in reference to a one-on-one relationship and not someone who runs around trying to make peace treaties between mutually hostile nations. We know this simply because neither Jesus nor the Apostles attempted to elaborate on this concept (a misinterpretation of **Blessed are the peacemakers**) and turn it into some kind of a national mandate. Jesus did talk about war, however. He told us there would be wars and rumors of wars until He returned (Matt. 24:6 Mark 13:7 Luke 21:9). The book

of Ecclesiastes tells us that there is a time for peace and a time for war (Eccles. 3:8). Since Jesus tells us **the Scriptures cannot be broken**, we need to take His Word for it. However, if you need evidence of this fact, at any given time, there are generally about 10 wars going on throughout the world. We cannot look back on some random year like 1915 or 1990 and say, "That was a year of peace; let's do that again." Because world peace does not exist and will not exist until the return of Jesus Christ. And when He does return, loving Jesus will establish peace on earth by killing His enemies. **The blood will flow as high as the horse's bridle for nearly 200 miles** (Rev. 14:20). This is how nations achieve temporary periods of peace. They kill hundreds of thousands of the enemy (like at Hiroshima) and then get unconditional surrender. Peace is not gotten by some leader like Neville Chamberlain rushing to meet Hitler to sign some peace agreement, that we might have peace in our time.

Two of the verses which liberals seem to love is "Thou shalt not kill" and "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." It is as if these were the most important things that Jesus ever said. I remember going to a liberal Baptist church in Berkeley in the 70's, and the Sunday School teacher there grabbed a hold of *Thou shalt not kill* and would not let it go. He went on and on and on about how clear this was, and how there were no exceptions cited. "It says, *Thou shalt not kill*, and that is what it means. There are no exceptions. It is clear as can be."

Let's go back to the Old Testament where this word is found. Prior to the giving of the Ten Commandments, there are 5 different Hebrew words translated *kill* in the KJV—between Gen. 1 and Ex. 19, 5 different words, all rendered *kill*. However, when we come to 6th commandment in Ex. 20:13, there is a 6th which had never been used before: *râtsach* (רָצַח) [pronounced *raw-TSAHKH*], which means, in the Qal stem, *to murder, to kill, to slay* where premeditation may be a factor. Strong's #7523 BDB #953. Although Brown Driver Briggs suggests that this word could be an accidental killing, I could not find a single example of that use in the Old Testament. Therefore, **Thou shalt not kill** is more accurately translated **You will not murder**. Are there exceptions? Of course there are. About a month prior to the giving of the Ten Commandments, God killed off *all* of the firstborn in Egypt and then wiped out Pharaoh's army. As early as Gen. 9:6, God gave man the solemn responsibility of putting to death all murderers. This is reiterated in Ex. 21:12, which is the next chapter after God gave Moses and the people of Israel the Ten Commandments. In one of my favorite passages, and it ought to be your memory verse, is Ex. 22:2: **If a thief is found breaking in, and is struck so that he dies, no blood shall be shed for him**. One of the reasons I love living in Texas is, we believe in this verse. Someone breaks into our house in Texas, and we get to kill him. We who believe in Jesus Christ might give him the gospel while he lays in a pool of his own blood, but we have a right to defend our family and our property. Of course, I can give the examples of millions of people God told Israel to kill in war (sometimes every man, woman and child); but instead, I want to give you another memory verse from the psalms, which is written by David (in the power of the Holy Spirit): **He [God] trains my hands for war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze**

(Psalm 18:34). Someone really needs to write a hymn and include the words of this psalm. Or, from another psalm, also a wonderful memory verse from the hand of David: **Blessed is Jehovah my Rock** [this is *Jesus*, by the way], **who teaches My hands for war, my fingers for battle** (Psalm 144:1).

Now, I know what you're thinking...that is so Old Testament; in the New Testament, Jesus presents a better, nicer God; One Who isn't so mean and mad at everybody. And the message of Jesus is, we ought to all just become Gandhi-esque. Someone breaks into your house, don't just let them take what they want, give them the keys to your car and hand them your checkbook with 7 pre-signed checks. If someone physically threatens you on the street, you just give to them every cheek you've got for them to pummel. And when it comes to war, well, we should just sit around and let the world run wild—we should not be involved. If someone ever invades our West Coast, we need to give them access to the East Coast as well.

First of all, many liberals somehow conflate the words of Jesus with government entities, and not only distort His words, but then apply them to our government (because *we the people* are the government). As a result, those who believe in Liberation theology, want to see *the government* end all wars, feed everyone's children, and provide everyone with the basic necessities. And a learned Liberation theologian will even know about the verse in Acts where one group of believers held all of their worldly goods in common.

At no point did Jesus recommend some sort of involvement with the government, apart what is required from us (Jesus tells us to pay our taxes—Mark 12:14–17). No New Testament writer suggests that we rebel against our government if it is unjust, that we demonstrate in the streets, that we as believers try to take over the reigns of government in order to institute a plethora of liberal programs. Jesus did not advocate a social movement which was to culminate in Christians controlling the government. Jesus first offered the Jews the Kingdom and they rejected Him (Matt. 21:37–44). After His crucifixion and resurrection, He sent the Holy Spirit to baptize everyone into Christ (1Cor. 12:13) so that we are no longer of this world even though we are in the world (John 17:8–19 1Cor. 2:12). However, at this point, we might become too technical, as Jesus was on this earth during a different dispensation than was Paul.

So, apart from paying taxes, what did Jesus say about our relationship to government? Do you recall His interaction with the Roman soldier? Before we get to the Roman soldier, let's talk about the rich young ruler who comes to Jesus and tells Jesus how he is keeping all the commandments, and then Jesus tells him, "To be perfect..." and gives him a little direction. In fact, on several occasions, Jesus interacts with someone, and then tells him to do something. But not with the Roman soldier. Roman soldiers killed criminals and they killed enemy soldiers in war. When Jesus spoke to the Roman soldier, He did not say, "Now to be perfect, you need to lay down your weapon and follow Me." Jesus, instead, said, **"I have not found this strong of a faith in all Israel."** (Matt. 8:5–10).

Paul also defined our relationship with governing authorities: **Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist**

have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer (Rom. 13:1–4). I trust that you are able to understand that, the minister of judgment, the minister of God uses his sword to execute criminals, right? I don't believe the Romans paddled people with their swords.

Now, when it comes to helping the poor, there is a place for that, and it ought to be private charity. The more and more that government has gotten involved in taking care of the poor, the more and more we have developed a dependent class of people; who live off of welfare and section 8 from generation to generation. However, there is even a limit to that. As Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, **If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat** (2Thess. 3:10b). There is a place for compassion and charity, and according to studies done, right wing Christians tend to give more to non-church charities than do liberals. On the other hand, there is no place for supporting healthy, functioning adults, which is what our government does.

There is certainly much more that can be written about this topic. However, what is key, above all else, is to understand exactly what Jesus said, who He was speaking to, the historical context, and from this, we determine what He meant. Too often, liberals seize on a few verses, give them prominence over all else in the Bible, distorting both their meaning and their importance.

Postscript:

A friend of mine made the following points:

If Jesus was a liberal, why didn't he feed all of the poor? (He obviously had the ability to do so...he did it for the thousands with a few loafs of bread and a few fish.

If Jesus was a liberal, why didn't he stop the Romans from having slaves?

If Jesus was a liberal, why didn't he turn the water into wine for everyone, not just for a select few.

Along the same lines, Jesus could have healed anyone and fed anyone...but He chose not to. Why is that? If the way to happiness here on earth is cradle to grave help from the government, why didn't He kick things off Himself by making sure everyone was taken care of before He was taken up?

Bruce Holden offered up two responses (the first is posting #60):

Gary,

I surely appreciate your well thought out, and non-emotional explanation of what you believe Jesus to have meant when he spoke of peace. In your opinion, Jesus was not

talking about Jimmy Carter trying to make peace between Jews and Arabs, and others like him, but rather he refers to those who preach the Gospel of peace between God and man. You point out that Jesus' references to peace refer to one-on-one relationships rather than those who work for peace among groups, tribes, states, or nations.

Although I know that your opinion is one accepted by many conservative thinkers, It is simply not the opinion millions of other students of the scriptures, specifically those of us who see the words of Jesus as a mandate to be and act peacefully in both personal and worldly affairs. Too many conservative thinkers have used your interpretation of the Bible to justify wars that are totally and completely without merit. One might argue that stopping Hitler in WW II was an important position for the west to take, but to extrapolate that to Bush's war in Iraq, a war that was waged based on lies and false pretenses, and upon a nation that was no threat at all to the US, is a giant leap of faith that we Pacifist Christians are not willing to take. We see Jesus' words as a mandate to work for peace continually and constantly, never giving up, trying all possible paths toward peace before acts of aggression are commenced.

Again, Gary, I appreciate your sound and thorough explanation. You are a gentleman, and that is truly appreciated. Thank you for your input.

Peace,
Bruce

I have read all you have posted. You are obviously intelligent and well read. However, Gary, your opinions are still YOUR OPINIONS. By the way, I do NOT follow links posted here on classmates. If you cannot say it here, then I am not interested in reading it.

Your error, however, was in posting the following sentence...

"The problem with most liberals who want to bring Jesus into their fold is, they take a few isolated passages out of context, often giving them a meaning which they do not have; and then give these redefined passages prominence over all else."

That statement, in itself, detracts from most of the rest of what you have typed. You do realize, of course, that we can say the same about you. Just substitute the words CONSERVATIVE where you typed LIBERAL, and you will see what I mean.

Remember one very important thing. You have a right to your opinion, but so do we, the millions and millions of Christian Pacifists, who read Jesus' words and know that he was speaking to us today, both in our personal relationships, and in our relationships with all people of the world. You point out that Jesus' references to peace refer to one-on-one relationships rather than those who work for peace among groups, tribes, states, or nations. I simply state you are wrong in your assumption as to what Jesus was referencing in his word.

Gary, I have to state that you have a lot to say. But do you truly read what others say? Did you read my post number 60? It would appear that you did not read it at all.

Another comment was from Kevin Carr (message #82):

Quoting:

"At no point did Jesus recommend some sort of involvement with the government, apart what is required from us (Jesus tells us to pay our taxes Mark 12:14). No New Testament writer suggests that we rebel against our government if it is unjust, that we demonstrate in the streets, that we as believers try to take over the reigns of government in order to institute a plethora of liberal programs."

So, taking this to its logical conclusion, neither does Jesus require that we demand of government that it legislate against things such as abortion and homosexual marriage, or try and take over the reins of government to institute a plethora of conservative laws or policies. It also means that Jesus does not require us to rebel against whatever liberal, moderate, or conservative programs or policies the government holds.

In actuality, if one were to try and pigeonhole Jesus politically, he would also be AOR; what we would today describe as a moderate leaning neither right nor left when his teachings are looked at in totality.

To respond to Kevin Carr's message, where he takes what I said to the logical conclusion that we not take part in our government apart from paying taxes...

We live in a Democracy, and part of our responsibilities as citizens includes paying taxes, jury duty and voting. Voting requires that we have some knowledge of the issues and personalities involved. After watching the video at www.howobamagotelected.com I am partially of the opinion that we need to bring back some sort of basic test in order for a person to vote. I do not consider it a great thing if every American adult votes. I have no problem with someone holding an opinion different from mine; but I do have a problem with people who vote who do not have a clue as to what they are voting about. These get out the vote drives are mostly liberals finding non-voters and getting them to vote liberal.

So, Kevin, if I get the gist of your comments, we are in agreement that we ought to vote and participate in our electoral system—because that is how our government works.

To take this a step further, we deserved Bush's last few months in office, Paulson's raid on our treasury, and then Obama and Pelosi's raping of the U.S.'s economy as well. A huge number of Americans voted based upon selfish reasons and not upon principle; and we get the rulers we deserve.

Being a believer in Jesus Christ certainly does not preclude a person from any occupation, which would include politics.

In response to Bruce's postings (#60 and #74):

I did read your posting #60, and I simply chose not to take the bait of "Bush's war in Iraq." However, I will comment on the term Pacifist Christian. I was a child of the 60's and I bought into that nonsense as well, and when I believed in Jesus Christ, I viewed myself as a pacifist Christian. However, as I studied the Bible, I had to make a determination as to which authority I would submit to: the authority of my upbringing or the authority of my pastor-teacher and the Bible. I chose the latter. I had to be convinced about this, and it took awhile; but I came around to God's way of thinking, which is, the term pacifist Christian is an oxymoron.

If your family or your child was threatened, you would use any and all force necessary to defend them. That is normal. The same ought to be true of how you deal with your country, although I am sure you do not see it that way.

I am sure you have heard of the verse, "Your sin will find you out." If you look that verse up, you will find the sin referred to there is the sin of pacifism.

I gave you two references to how God taught David's hands to war.

I gave you the example of how Jesus showed respect to the faith of the Roman centurion and did not suggest that he put down his sword.

I have you the example of Paul saying, that authorities do not bear the sword in vain (the sword is used to execute and to fight wars in the ancient world).

I believe I quoted Jesus saying, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword."

Jesus also told His disciples, "But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one." (Luke 22:36).

I explained to you from the Hebrew that, "You will not kill" actually means "You will not murder" and you can confirm that with Brown Driver Briggs.

My point is, I am not simply giving you my opinion. This is what is found in the Word of God. I am telling you what these words actually mean. What a word means is not simply my opinion. What a verse says is not simply my opinion. If you disagree with what is said, then you disagree with the Bible and with the words of Jesus. Why should that be a problem? Unless you are trying to make God in your image, you can find a myriad of people who agree with your views, without having to violate Scripture.

It does not matter that millions of people have this or that view, and believe that pacifism is taught in the Bible. That just tells me there are millions of people who have taken a

dozen verses out of context, who either do not know the rest of the Bible or choose to reject the rest of the Bible.

Jesus said, "There will be wars and rumors of wars till I come." You say, we ought to be working for peace. Who is correct here? You or Jesus. Maybe if you looked at the past 2000 years, you would realize that Jesus is correct. You can wear "Visualize world peace" and participate in peace marches, and vote against people you think are war mongers, and it won't make any difference. There will be wars and rumors of wars until Jesus returns. And He will achieve peace by killing millions of his enemies. Again, this is not my opinion, this is what is in the Bible. Be honest, say, "You know, I don't agree with most of what is found in the Bible" and leave it at that. Or, how about, "I agree with my interpretation of these 5 or 10 things that Jesus said, but, for the most part, He got it wrong; so I ignore the stuff He got wrong."

Why is it so necessary for you to get Jesus to line up with your thinking, by choosing a couple verses here and there out of context, and then elevating them above every other verse in the Bible and above all else that Jesus said? Can't you simply say, "You know, Gandhi and I are in complete agreement; we both believe in pacifism. That Gandhi is a great man."

Go with Gandhi.

Peace out.

There are a couple of things which ought to be dealt with in more detail; in particular, the 2 verses:

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." (Matt. 5:5);

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." (Matt. 5:9);

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well." (Matt. 5:38–40); and

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?" (Matt. 5:43–46)

One thing which is extremely important when understanding the Bible, is, who is speaking and to whom is he speaking? The time frame is also important. Laws pertaining to the Sabbath, delivered to the Jews during the Age of Israel are not applicable to believers in

Jesus Christ during the Church Age (Col. 2:16). Furthermore, the entire context of the argument is important to know, e.g., the context of **So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God** (Heb. 4:9).

However, it is not the Sabbath which is in view in this study, but the liberal left grabbing on to a handful of verses and attributing meaning to them which is not there.

First of all, this takes place during a unique historical period of time, the Dispensation of the Hypostatic Union, which acts as a hinge, if you will, between the Age of Israel and the Church Age. The promised King, the promised Messiah, had come to His country, Israel, and had offered Himself to His people, the Jews, who, in great numbers, rejected Him. Jesus first instructed His disciples, when sending them out into the world, **“Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”** (Matt. 10:5–7). At the beginning of our Lord’s ministry, He offered Himself first to His people. However, now and again, Jesus would speak to Samaritans (remember the Samaritan woman at the well?) and to Gentiles (e.g., the Roman soldier).

What is most often ignored in the sermon on the mount is to whom Jesus is speaking. Although the crowds are looking for Him, Jesus goes up a mountain, and speaks to His disciples, primarily, and not to a multitude of people (Matt. 5:1–2 Luke 6:20). This is exactly the opposite of what many public speakers would do. Now, apparently, there was a crowd (Matt. 7:28), and although it is not clear what exactly happened, Jesus likely began to teach His disciples and people from this crowd found them, and sat down and listened as well (sort of like quietly walking into a classroom which is already in session in order to audit the course). However, it is clear by Matt. 5:1–2 and Luke 6:20 that Jesus was teaching His disciples.

Now, although vv. 3–11 sound as if they begin with a verb (*Blessed are...*), they actually begin with an plural adjective followed by the definite article and a plural noun. This is one of the several forms of the attributive position, and this should read **The meek [are] blessed [or, happy]...** (and so throughout these 9 verses). Since *blessed* has become a religious word, almost devoid of meaning, it is best to understand this as meaning *happy, contented, materially prospered*.

The word *meek* often connotes a scrawny, soft-spoken and sometimes jumpy (when frightened) Milquetoast. However, since Moses is called the meekest man on earth (Num. 12:3), and he was powerful and forceful, we have to understand *meekness* as a mental attitude instead of understanding this to refer to a *bravo dog* (as opposed to being an *alpha male*). Although Moses did not begin as an alpha male, he had to become one, and still, the Word of God called him the meekest man on earth. Let me therefore offer up the English equivalent *grace-oriented*. This both covers Moses and it covers those spoken of in this verse. Our concept of *meek men* is not necessarily that of someone who is happy or someone who is going to inherit the earth. Often the *meek* feel picked on.

A grace-oriented person understands who he is and Who God is, and understands the relationship between God and him. He understands our dependence upon God, but does not misinterpret this to mean that we just lie down take whatever God offers us. He does not walk into a group, and mentally cower before everyone. If we want to understand what meekness is all about, then we study Moses in Exodus–Deuteronomy. Moses is the epitome of meekness, which is not the same as weakness, obsequiousness, or timidity. A grace-oriented person understands his place in the plan of God. He may be a leader and he may be a follower, but you can be grace-oriented and be either one, as *meekness* (grace orientation) is a mental attitude. So, if you feel like being meek, look to Moses and the characteristics of his soul as a guide.

Those who are grace-oriented will be happy and they will inherit the earth. If you are grace oriented, then you are happy right now. In the future, you are going to play a prominent part with authority in the kingdom of heaven on earth.

Some people will resist this interpretation; however, when you try to put your own spin on this, and somehow think that God is going to gather up all of the Milquetoast's on this earth and give them the earth, there is no support for this position anywhere else in Scripture. There is no support for that understanding of the word *meek* or for the eschatological view that Jesus is giving the earth to the biggest wimps that he can find. Theologically, it will not wash.

“The peacemakers are happy; for they will be called sons of God.” (Matt. 5:9). The liberal distorts this verse to mean someone who goes out and tries to establish peace between two nations. This is presented as former President Carter trying to establish peace between Israel and the Egyptians at Camp David. Part of this agreement involved giving some measure of autonomy to the West Bank and to the Gaza Strip, which has resulted in daily small bomb attacks from these areas upon Israel. The economies of Palestinian controlled areas is abysmal compared to Israel's economy, and the more trade which is opened up to these areas, the more importation there are of bombs and weapons.

Or maybe you see a peacemaker as Neville Chamberlain, bringing back a peace treaty with Hitler and proclaiming, “We will have peace in our time.” However, peace was never achieved by Chamberlain and his worthless treaty, but by years of war which followed.

I digress.

Jesus never trained His disciples to be neutral 3rd parties to establish peace between nations. Even though the word *peace* in the Bible is sometimes used to indicate peace between nations (see (Luke 14:32), most of the time when we find this word, it refers to a different sort of peace—peace between God and man. **Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ** (Rom. 5:1). See also Acts 10:36 Rom. 3:17 Eph. 6:15. There is also a peace which God gives which is a mental attitude, e.g., is found in John 14:27: **“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give [this peace] to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”** See also Acts 12:20 Rom. 15:13 Philip. 4:7. Never forget the verse: **And the**

God of peace will quickly crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you (Rom. 16:20). Please note that the God of Peace crushes (annihilates, pulverizes, destroys) His enemy.

If we understand the *peacemakers* of Matt. 5:9 to be those who proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to a fallen world—and thus establishing peace between God and man—this understanding is both consistent with the text of Matt. 5, the great commission of Matt. 10, and with passages such as Rom. 10:15: **And how may they preach if they are not sent? Even as it has been written, "How beautiful" "the feet of those preaching the gospel of peace, of those preaching the gospel of good things."** (Isa. 52:7).

If you persist in believing that this is all about world peace, then you ought to recognize that, in this regard, Jesus is a total failure, and why study the teachings of someone who has failed so miserably?

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well." (Matt. 5:38–40).

What was happening during the incarnation of Jesus (and before) was a distortion of the Law of Moses; a distortion of the Word of God.

Here is how *an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth* was being distorted. This was incorrectly taken as God urging us to take personal vengeance against someone who has wronged us. The Old Testament never teaches that. The Old Testament develops a system of civil and criminal laws, properly applied to the theocracy of Israel, which included both laws of evidence and standards of punishment. *An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth* was a general standard to which we, ideally speaking, adhere to today—we say, the punishment should fit the crime.

This same principle of judicial standards is abused today in much the same way.

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well." (Matt. 5:38–40).

Now, what is Jesus actually teaching here? Recall that He began by teaching His disciples directly, so that the sermon on the mount is directed primarily to them. They would soon be sent out into the world to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, and they needed to understand the ground rules. As those who bear the message of Jesus Christ, they would be hated and persecuted, and Jesus is telling them not to retaliate against these types of attacks.

First of all, we are not dealing with a physical attack here. The Greek word for *slap* is *hrapizô* (ῥαπίζω) [pronounced *hrap-IHD-zoh*], and it means *to slap with an open palm*. Strong's #4474. It is only found 3 times in the New Testament, and in one passage, it is used with a similar verb which means *to strike with a [closed] fist* (Strong's #2852). This is in Matt. 26:67, where Jesus is both slapped and struck. The point is, this is not a mugging; this is not an attack upon you intended to inflict serious injury upon you; this is an open hand slap, an insult, a personal affront. Because these men will go out into the world and proclaim Jesus Christ, they are being told here to be willing to endure minor personal attacks without resorting to retaliation. Jesus is not telling them to be pacifists and if someone tries to kill them, they are to just let him do it.

The explanation which I have given here squares with the Old Testament, the New Testament and the actual verb which is used here. Extrapolating this phrase to indicate that Jesus preached some form of pacifism is giving this verse a meaning which does not square with the Old or New Testaments; nor is such an interpretation warranted by the verb used here.

In both Rom. 12:19 and Deut. 32:35, we read, "**Vengeance is Mine, I will repay!** As I have explained, God does not want His ambassadors for the gospel to be out there trying to extract their own personal justice for some personal insult.

The taking of the tunic is a related principle. People figure out that they can legally steal from others, and they do it all of the time. Although the court system is designed to right wrongs and to attain some measure of justice, some use the courts as a way to take money or things from others. Even in this, Jesus tells His disciples to just let it go. Offer them your cloak as well.

This is not a call to absolute pacifism, and we know this from several other passages.

Jesus gives a parable of a strong man defending his home and possessions with armed guards in Luke 11:21–22. Jesus spoke highly of the Roman centurion's faith without demeaning his profession (Matt. 8:10).

Also, Jesus was also very aggressive at times. Jesus went into the courtyard of the Temple and threw out the moneychangers and those who were selling *approved* sacrificial animals (Matt. 21:12–13). In today's world, let's say that ACORN set up a table inside the foyer of a church which teaches liberation theology, and you walk in there and you bodily throw them out of the church—that would be similar to what Jesus did (except, what He did was on a much grander scale than that).

Jesus continually berated the scribes, pharisees and sadducees, calling them hypocrites in Matt. 15:7 16:3 22:18 23:13–14, 23, 25, 27–28. He called them snakes and vipers in Matt. 23:33, condemning them to hell. Does this square with your idea of being meek?

Again, the interpretation which I have applied to the passage in question (Matt. 5:38–40) is in keeping with the rest of the Old and New Testaments. Those who try to make this into

some sort of a call to personal or national pacifism, which **the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures** (2Peter 3:16).

The final passage reads:

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?" (Matt. 5:43–46)

As has been pointed out earlier, the scribes and pharisees taught their own traditions as accurate interpretations of the Old Testament. This is an example of that. What was cobbled together and misinterpreted are the verses: **You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people; but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am Jehovah** (Lev. 19:18) and **I hate them with a perfect hatred; they have become my enemies** (Psalm 139:22). You will note that Jesus said, **"You have heard that it was said,"** which is not a phrase used to reference the Old Testament, but to the false teaching of the scribes and pharisees. They were teaching that hatred of the Gentiles and, in particular, hatred of the Romans, was legitimate. When Jesus spoke, Judæa was under Roman control, and the Jews were angry about this. Therefore, some of them taught that it was legitimate to hate the Romans and that it was legitimate to rebel against them (which they continued to do until the Roman crushed them in A.D. 70). However, the Old Testament does not teach that.

One of the things which confuses people is that, we may be simultaneously at war with a people, and yet have missionaries and church groups sending Bibles into that same country. People are changed in their souls, which then changes their behavior.

At one point, in the United States, we practiced this with great vigor. Germany and Japan were our bitter enemies in World War II and now they are among our greatest allies. How did this happen? In Japan, General MacArthur was sent to rule over Japan and to nation-build. He actually called for missionaries and Bibles to be sent. MacArthur said to a visiting group of evangelicals that "Japan is a spiritual vacuum. If you do not fill it with Christianity, it will be filled with Communism. Send me 1,000 missionaries." He asked U.S. missionary societies to send "Bibles, Bibles and more Bibles." This is a man who, a few years earlier, was commanding attacks against the Japanese in the Pacific and in the Philippines. This was back in the day when we better understood, as a nation, our relationship to the Word of God. In FDR's broadcast of May 27, 1941, he said, "We reassert our abiding faith in the vitality of our constitutional republic as a perpetual home of freedom, of tolerance, and of devotion to the word of God."

So, as a nation, we understood that there was a time for war, and a time for peace (Eccl. 3:8), and we loved our enemies through nation-building, which resulted in making them our greatest allies. However, while at war, we killed as many of them as we could. In fact, this is how we achieved peace with Japan. Peace was not achieved by so-called

tough-diplomacy or because peace marchers lined our streets. Nor was peace achieved by a proportional response. Peace was achieved because of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Jesus never spoke about world peace, apart from His rule over the world in the Millennium. In most of the passages quoted by liberals, Jesus is speaking to His disciples, first and foremost (as we have studied). The idea was, they would go out into the world to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is peace between man and God. They would face a great deal of opposition, and they were not to retaliate or to plot vengeance against these people who hated them. Jesus also said, “**If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it has hated you.**” (John 15:18).

To sum up, Jesus was not a long-haired revolutionary parading through the streets proclaiming “Peace now” or “Peace at any Price.” He was not calling for disarmament nor did He ever disparage the military. He was not teaching something brand new; He was correctly teaching the Old Testament and presenting Himself as a fulfillment of the promise of the Old Testament.

The views of Bruce Holden and Kevin Carr are taken from:

http://www.classmates.com/messageboards/ForumController?action=categoryGateway&org_id=137&org_type=C&sub_type=2 under the heading JESUS is a LIBERAL

You may join this group at:

<http://www.classmates.com/community/groups/groupHome?communityId=137>