

Wars, Rumors of War, and the Christian

By Michael Clark

[As a Child of God], what is my take on this war with Iraq? I feel about this one the way I feel about all the wars that are started by the worldly kingdoms of men. Our warfare is not of this world any more than our kingdom as followers of Christ is not of this world.

Recently a sister in the Lord asked me what my take was on this coming war with Iraq. Some of the rest of you might have been wondering the same thing. Here is what I wrote in reply.

Stefanie,

You asked me the other day what my take on this coming war with Iraq is. Well, I have one question back. Was Jesus a patriotic flag waving Jew? I think the answer is all too obvious to anyone who has ever read the gospels with an open heart.

The Jews hated the Roman occupation of their country and expected the "true" Messiah to come and lead a revolt and cast off the yoke of the Roman Empire and eventually make Jerusalem the capital of the world, restoring the glory of the earthly kingdom of David. This thinking was behind all the hullabaloo on what we call "Palm Sunday," His "triumphant entry" into Jerusalem the week before this same mob was calling out for his death. Why did they change their minds about Him? He rained on His own parade and told them that He came there to die, not establish the present Jewish leaders as the heads of a new world order. Because Jesus didn't come as a military leader and would not even speak out against Rome, the Jewish leaders rejected Him as their Messiah. In fact, to make matters worse, He constantly criticized the Jewish hierarchy and cast doubt on their legitimacy as those who sat in Moses' seat and even on whether they were of the seed of Abraham!

You see, He knew where His kingdom was and it was not of this world. He was other worldly and He expected His disciples to be the same. For years I was a dyed-in-the-wool AMERICAN. I put God and country on the same plane. To be an

American was to be a Christian and to be a Christian was to be a good flag waving American. I served this country in Vietnam and came home to "the real world," only to find the anti-war protesters calling us names as we left our ship in Alameda, California. The problem was that it soon became obvious that THIS was not the real world at all. The America I left three years earlier was not the one I came back to in 1967.

This started me thinking. I hated the left and the anti-war crowd for the way they aided and supported our Vietnamese enemies, the Cong and the NVA. Does anyone remember Hanoi Jane and Joan Baez and their trips to North Vietnam to entertain and support their troops? I do. I also hated President Lyndon Johnson for the way he tied the hands of the US military from really fighting that war over there. We were put in harm's way without permission to really fight. It was all too obvious that the real goal was to prolong that war as long as possible to buoy-up the economy back home.

Well, that hate in me grew and grew until one day my wife came to me and told me that my hate was killing her love for me and it was hurting the children. I stewed on those words for three more months until one day I came out of my little straight-laced, flag waving Free Methodist church on a Sunday morning and found a handbill on the windshield of my car. It read, "Jesus People Army - Revolutionary Youth Movement..." Well, this I had to see! I thought, "Jesus, a revolutionary? NOT!" You know the church Jesus... gentle Jesus, meek and mild, right? That was how I saw Him. The American compliant Jesus who went along with everything a "good patriotic American" could want, "a chicken in every pot, and an new car in every garage," right?

Well, I went to the meetings that this handbill was announcing and I saw something other worldly. For the first time I saw some Spirit filled Christians who were ALIVE! They looked like the very hippies that I had grown to hate, but shone all over with the love of God (Funny how God loves to use the foolish and weak things of this world to confound the wise and the mighty). They were speaking of a revolution in terms of the REAL Revolutionary, the REAL Jesus Christ. The same Jesus Christ that did not come to pat the world establishments on the back, but rather to bring the people His Father created back to Him and HIS kingdom, the Kingdom of Heaven. That very same Jesus who told Pilate that His kingdom was not of this

world, the one that turned over the thieving money-changers tables in the temple and told the temple hierarchy that they had turned His Father's house into a house of thieves. Now THIS Jesus, I could get excited about! He was other worldly and THAT made sense!

I surrendered to Jesus with all my heart and cast off all my hopes for a man-made heaven on this earth that week at one of those meetings in June of 1970. I, too, became "other worldly" and swore to pick up my cross and follow Him. Needless to say, all my hate for those whom He created in His image, whether they be right wing, or left, communist or Republican, black or white, etc., was all gone. For the first time in my life I had been set free and Jesus the revolutionary had done it.

Yes, Jesus the REVOLUTIONARY-- the very One who said, "[Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be those of his own household. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it. He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.](#)" (Matthew 10:34-40, NKJV). Yes, He also said, "[But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.](#)" (John 14:26-27, NKJV).

So you ask, "Isn't this a contradiction?" No. What is contradictory is a Christendom that says it follows Jesus but is more concerned about being a "good American citizen" and has given its heart over to enjoying all the perks that go with that citizenship, instead of denying its flesh and giving its whole heart to Jesus and the kingdom of His Father.

Jesus DID bring a sword on this earth. THAT sword is the one that divides soul from spirit, bone from marrow that discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart ([Heb. 4:12](#)). It also divides our loyalty from the things of this world and sets our hearts on

a heavenly kingdom. This heart change, I was soon to discover, set me at variance with my relatives and friends. As He had told His disciples, "[Who are my mother, my brother and my sister? Those who do the will of My Father are my mother, my brother and my sister.](#)" All the while He left his mother, brothers and sisters standing outside and kept on teaching those who were following Him. It was to THESE that He came to bring peace, not the world systems of men. Only as we leave our worldly kingdoms behind and follow the Son can we all know the peace of His Father's kingdom where there is no longer "Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female" but ONE new man in Christ Jesus.

We who are His are to know no man after the flesh or even after his nationality ([2 Corinthians 5:16](#))! We are to look upon all as God does, upon their hearts. To dwell on politics or nationalities or even be prejudiced against a certain extremist religious sect is to miss an opportunity to reach out in the love of Christ that calls all to His Father's kingdom. It is the lack of this other-worldly heart that has made the missionary efforts of American churches such a dismal failure. We have been going forth with another gospel, the gospel of American Christianity instead of the gospel of the kingdom of God that bids all to leave all ties with this world, its families, denominations, organizations and governments behind--for the gospel that Jesus preached. Let us all who name His name go forth and do likewise. Remember, this world is not our home. We are just passing through.

So Stefanie, what is my take on this war with Iraq? I feel about this one the way I feel about all the wars that are started by the worldly kingdoms of men. Our warfare is not of this world any more than our kingdom as followers of Christ is not of this world. As Paul told the church in Corinth, "For the weapons of our warfare [are] not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled. Do you look at things according to the outward appearance? If anyone is convinced in himself that he is Christ's, let him again consider this in himself, that just as he [is] Christ's, even so we [are] Christ's."

[These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they](#)

were strangers (aliens) and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. (Hebrews 11:13-16, NKJV).

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