

When DARKNESS FALLS

INVESTIGATING RELIGION'S HISTORY OF EVIL

PART 1: PROLOGUE OF PEACE

INTRODUCTION – The Headless Body Of Christ

Acts 9:4-5; Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 11:29; 12:12-27;
Ephesians 1:22-23; 3:6; 4:11-16; 5:23; Colossians 1:18, 24; 2:19; 3:15

The earliest Christ-followers believed that in _____
they were the continuing physical manifestation of Jesus on earth.

HORROR OF HISTORY: The Slow Decapitation

- Jesus teaches enemy-love and creative nonviolence (**Matthew 5:38-48; Luke 6:27-36**). He also proclaims the inauguration of God's "Kingdom", which will advance through organic growth rather than by force, politics, or power (**Matthew 13:31-33**).
- No writer sanctions Christian involvement in the military for the first 300 years of the faith. Most also challenge Christian involvement in government. (e.g., Justin Martyr, Ignatius of Antioch, Clement of Rome, Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus, Polycarp, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cyprian, Origen, etc.)
- Military service is seen as wrong for 3 reasons: a) Ethical: Violence is not an option for Christians; b) Philosophical: War is based on the State's goal of self-preservation or self-advancement rather than the Christian's goal of self-sacrifice. c) Spiritual: Military service demands too much loyalty, leading to idolatry.
- Creative nonviolence is encouraged under the banner of *patientia* (Lat., "patience; steadfast endurance"). Similar to Gandhi's *satyagraha* ("truth force") or *ahimsa* (absolute nonviolence). The real enemy is not our human adversary, but the conflict between you. Therefore, direct your energies toward removing the conflict itself, not your adversary. *Patentia* means enduring evil so as not to commit it, rather than committing evil so as not to endure it.
- Christ's Kingdom of love is thought to be present in the world through peaceful, benevolent communities that represent a contrast society, the dawning of a new world order (**Isaiah 2:1-4; Micah 4:1-7; Luke 17:20-21; Acts 2 & 4**).
- Constantine (306 – 337 C.E.) converts to Christianity.
- Christianity is now officially tolerated. It is made the official religion of the empire in 380 C.E.. Christians are awe-struck and begin to view the "Holy Roman Empire" as the fulfillment of God's Kingdom on earth.
- Earthly Kingdoms need to be maintained, defended, and expanded with violence.
- Augustine (354 – 430 C.E.) & later Aquinas (1225 – 1274 C.E.) support a "just war" theory for Christians, based on existing Roman and Greek thought.
- Scripture is refocused (Old Testament emphasis) or reinterpreted (e.g., **Luke 14:23**) to support the use of force.
- Jesus nonviolent teaching is explained as: a) an ethic for clergy only; b) an ideal for the future; c) an ethic for one's personal life, but not one's civic life; d) an inner attitude, different from one's actions.
- Christians are now encouraged to join the army and be involved in government.
- By 416 C.E., all Roman soldiers are *required* to be Christian.

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS: Seeking First His Kingdom

Matthew 6:33

1. The Kingdom is within reach of everyone. No building, organization, or institution contains it.
Matthew 4:23; 6:33; 9:35; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:60; 17:20-21; Acts 1:3; 8:12; 19:8; 28:23, 31
2. The Kingdom is a realm of _____ and _____.
Colossians 1:13-14
3. The Kingdom of Christ operates differently than kingdoms of this world.
Romans 12:14-13:7
4. The Kingdom is best experienced in _____ of _____.
Acts 2:41-47; 4:32-35

CONCLUSION – Staying Connected To Our Head

Colossians 2:19

HOME CHURCH QUESTIONS...

WARMING UP...

1. After briefly reviewing this week's message, share one thing that most challenged, encouraged, or perplexed you.

LOOK TO THE BOOK...

2. Review Paul's distinct teaching about the roles of the church and state in **Romans 12:14-13:7**. a) What verse stands out to you the most? Why? b) List as many ways as you can see that the mission of the church and the role of the state are different. c) List the ways that the church and state might relate to one another. d) What might be the unique struggles of a Christian who chose to serve: i) in the military or police force, ii) in political office? e) Have you ever lived out any of the principles of **12:14-21** in a challenging relationship? What results did you experience?
3. Read about the experience of the early church in **Acts 2:41-47; 4:32-35**. a) What verse stands out to you the most? Why? b) Some people contend that a large church is not relational enough. How did the early church take care of that problem? c) Given our cultural context today, in what practical ways could we best apply the principles of **2:44-45; 4:32, 34-36**? d) Note **2:41, 47**. Why do you think the early church grew so fast?
4. The early church believed the prophecy of **Micah 4:1-7** had come true in and through their Christian communities. a) In what ways do you think they were right? b) In what ways could this be said to be true of our compassion communities today?

SO WHAT?...

5. Take a few moments (2-3 minutes) to meditate on **Romans 12:19-20** as it applies to *your* life. (If you like, after meditating share any new insights or old reminders that have come to mind.)
6. Who in your life makes it most hard for you to live according to the principles of **Romans 12:14-21**? What could you put into practice this week to help you grow in this area? Pray for each other regarding this.

Bruxy Cavey @ THE MEETING HOUSE – Sunday, September 26 / October 3, 2004

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