

Death Penalty

I shall probably alienate many Christians as I delve deeper into this chapter, dealing with life and death issues. God speaking to ancient Israel, covers what He expects from government claiming belief in Him. Consider the following: *"If there be found among you, within any of thy gates which the Lord thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the Lord thy God, in transgressing His covenant, and hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded; and it be told thee, and thou hast heard of it, and enquired diligently, and, behold, it be true, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought in Israel: Then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman, which have committed that wicked thing, unto thy gates, even that man or that woman, and shalt stone them with stones, till they die. At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death. The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you"* (Deuteronomy 17:2-7). Does God believe in the death penalty? It appears so.

When Christ came with the New Testament, He was addressing us on a personal level; that is what the New Testament is about. It was the Word of God, pre-Christ, that was delivering the statutes and laws to the ancient Israelites. When the apostle Steven was about to be martyred, he was telling the Pharisees about Christ. *"This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; Him shall ye hear. This is He, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai [also see Horeb], and with our fathers: Who received the lively oracles to give unto us"* (Acts 7:37,38). Notice that the pre-incarnate Christ was the One interacting with ancient Israel. Read also John 1:1-10. If you think Jesus is thinking differently now, consider: *"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever"* (Hebrews 13:8).

Self Defense

What about military service? Most Christians would say don't serve; or if you do enlist, do so as a conscientious objector so as not to serve in battle. I also

thought that would be my case, as I could easily give my life for my beliefs. Then the Lord asked me to think of certain scenarios. Yes, God will talk to you if you are deep in meditation and prayer. When He got to the one about self defense of my household, He said my house was taken over by terrorists; and they were sure to tie up the males to watch as the females (wives and daughters) were raped and killed. Then the males would be killed. If I knew this beforehand, would I do something? I told the Lord that He would have to forgive me; but I would try to stop it from happening—even if it meant deadly force. Then the Lord told me that it would be okay, but I was being a hypocrite. If I could defend my family, I could also defend my country and/or community.

I deducted that God looks at this life as more temporal, and life and death being less important than most of us believe. We know that David, in ancient Judah, was close to God and knew His laws and statutes. Do you think that one of David's soldiers could have claimed conscientious objector? I think not! Remember, David was dealing with the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ, just as all the ancient patriarchs were. Jesus also instructed the ancient Israelites to kill off all the inhabitants of the land they were to possess. Don't misunderstand me, war is awful and gruesome and should be completely outlawed. In a perfect world, war would be unnecessary—this isn't a perfect world. I believe if a soldier is acting on orders that he carries out in a humane fashion, he can stand before God blameless. All war will cause some innocent civilians to be killed. God does not smile on this, but it is a fact of life. Thankfully, when God establishes the kingdom of God here on earth, this will all be over and done.