

ARE CHRISTIANS AUTHORIZED TO KILL IN WAR?

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CONSIDER THESE VERSES

- **Matthew 7:12** – *"Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."*
- **Matthew 5:38-45a** – *"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away. You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven."*

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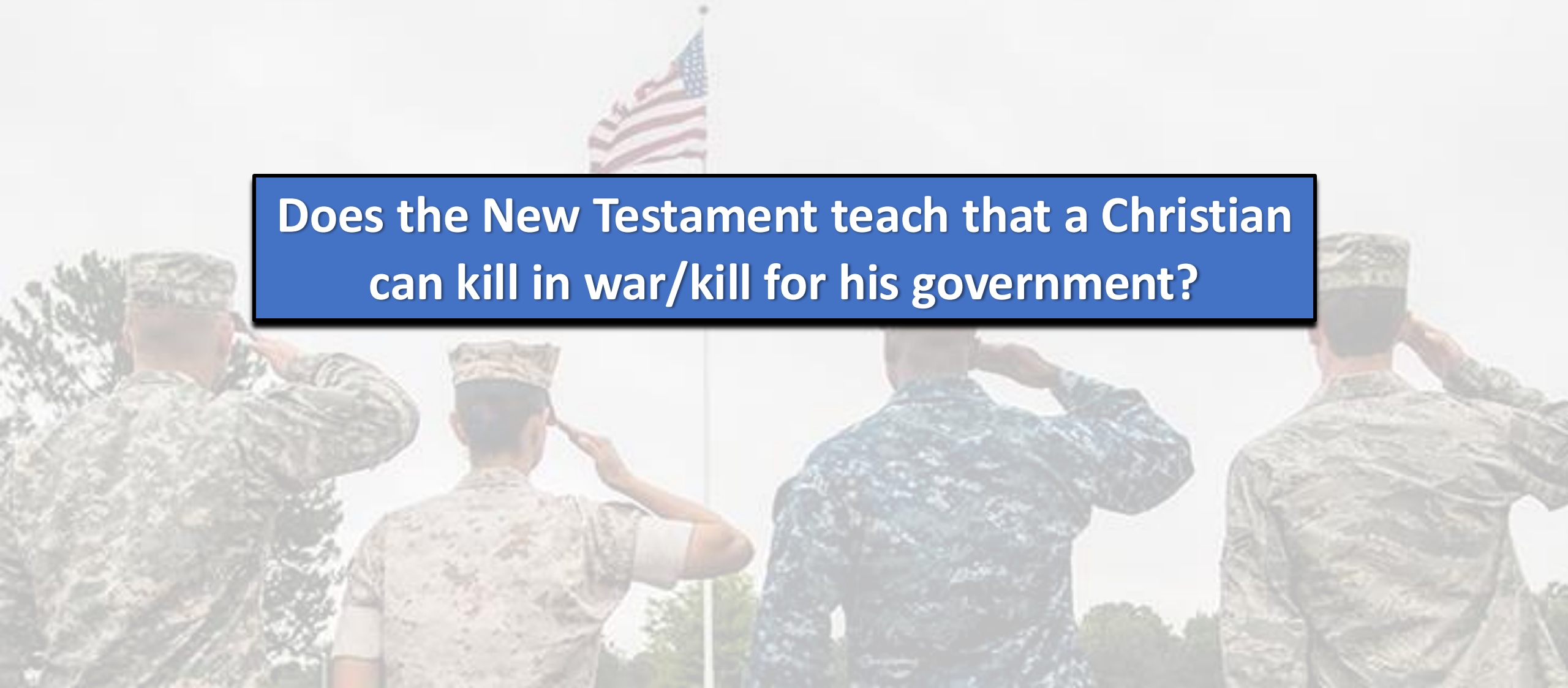
- **Matthew 26:51-52** – *“And suddenly, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. But Jesus said to him, ‘Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.’”*
- **John 18:36** – *“Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.’”*
- **Romans 12:17-21** – *“Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. Therefore ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”*

CONSIDER THESE VERSES

- **Matthew 5:9** – *"Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God."*
- **Romans 14:19** – *"Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another."*
- **2 Corinthians 10:3-4** – *"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal."*
- **2 Timothy 2:24a, ASV** – *"And the Lord's servant must not strive, but be gentle towards all."*
- **Ephesians 6:12, NLV** – *"Our fight is not with people. It is against the leaders and the powers and the spirits of darkness in this world. It is against the demon world that works in the heavens."*

NOW, ASK YOURSELF . . .

**Does the New Testament teach that a Christian
can kill in war/kill for his government?**



OBJECTION #1: It Was Okay Under the Old Testament

- It is indeed true that God authorized His people to kill under the Law of Moses (**Exod. 20:13; Num. 35:12; Lev. 24:20; 1 Sam. 15:3, 33; etc.**).
- However, we are not under one single law from the Law of Moses (**Col. 2:14**).
- If we bind so much as one law from the Old Covenant, we lose our salvation (**Gal. 5:1-4**).
- We are strictly under the Law of Christ, and Christ taught the exact opposite of what the Law of Moses allowed (**Matt. 5:38-44**).
 - If you read through **Matt. 5** in its entirety, you can see six examples of how Jesus's New Testament laws vary greatly from the Law of Moses.
- Inflicting violence upon others under the Law of Moses, which permitted killing, still came at a cost for David (**1 Sam. 18:7; 1 Chron. 22:8**). Imagine the repercussions for killing someone while living under the Law of Christ, which does not permit killing!

OBJECTION #2: We'll Lose Our Freedom

- Are earthly liberties worth potentially killing another Christian who might be in the opposing army? Are those liberties worth killing the innocent, whether directly or indirectly?
- God raises nations / kings up and brings nations / kings down (**Dan. 2:21; Rom. 13:1**).
 - If it is the Lord's will that this nation (or any other nation) crumbles, then there is nothing that I or any other person can do to prevent that from happening.
- What I can do is heed Paul's admonition in **1 Tim. 2:1-2**: "***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.***"
- If we truly believe that "***prayers of the righteous availeth much***" (**James 5:16**), and if we truly desire that God's will be done on earth as it is in Heaven (**Matt. 6:10**), then this particular objection should not be one that causes us much concern.

OBJECTION #3: Only a Coward Would Refuse to Kill Someone Who Wants to Kill You

- Does **Isa. 53:7-9** describe **Jesus** as a coward for not killing his murderers?
- Was **Stephen** a coward for not killing his murderers in **Acts 7**?
- Was **Peter** a coward for obeying Jesus when the Lord commanded Him to put his sword in its place (**Matt. 26:52**)?
- Was **Paul** a coward for not fighting back against those who plotted to kill him in **Acts 23:12-22**? Was he a coward in **Acts 9:23-25**? How about in **Acts 13:50-52**? Or **Acts 14:19-20**? **Acts 21-22**? **Acts 23**?

None of these men were cowards for obeying the Lord's commands; neither should we ever call someone a coward for doing the Lord's will.

Objection #4: If I Get Drafted, I Don't Have a Choice

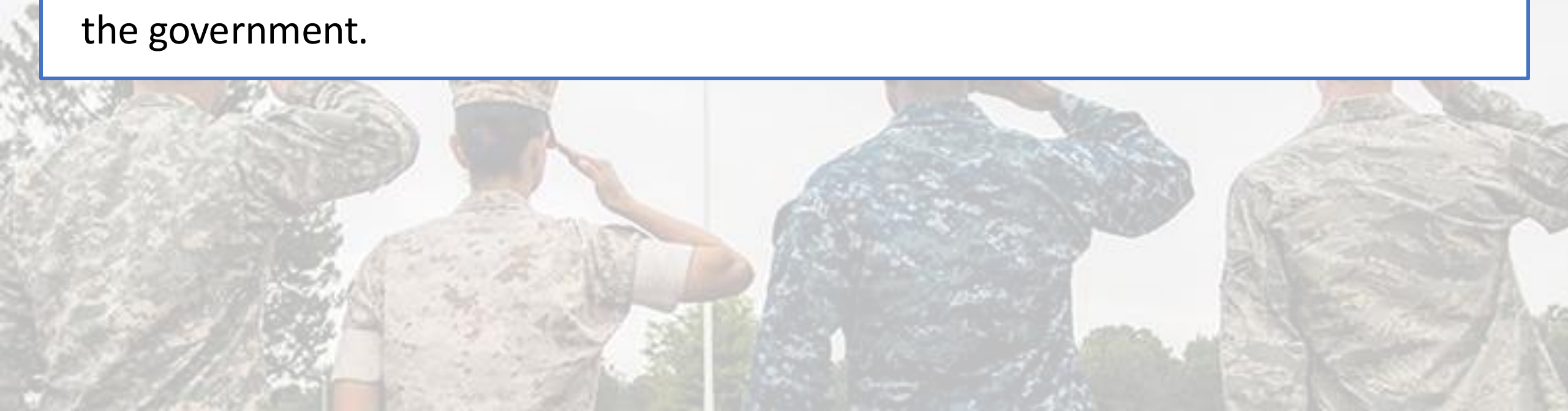
- We always have the ability to choose good rather than evil (**James 4:17; Rom. 12:2; Isa. 7:15; Deut. 30:15; etc.**).
 - Now, no one ever said and the Bible certainly never teaches that it is always going to be easy to choose good rather than evil.
- It certainly could not have been easy for Peter and the other apostles to defy the demands of their governmental leaders in **Acts 5**. Yet, when required to do something contrary to the Word of God, they still responded by saying, "***We ought to obey God rather than men***" (**Acts 5:29**).
 - Why would God expect us to respond any differently today if the government demands we violate His commands?

Objection #5: Government Can Kill, But I Can't?

- **Rom. 13:1-7** teaches the government is a tool for God's purpose in punishing evildoers on earth. However, what God authorizes the government to do does not extend to what He authorizes for an individual person.
- Consider a parallel: **Church vs Individual Christian Responsibilities**
 - Passages like **1 Tim. 5:16** and **Acts 5:4** show there is a difference in what an individual is authorized to do by the New Testament and what the church is authorized to do.
 - For instance, an individual is required to render his wife the affection (sexual needs) due her, according to **1 Cor. 7:3-5**. Does this mean the church is authorized to build a honeymoon suite for Christians to fulfill the Lord's commands?
 - Of course not; just because individual Christians are authorized to do something does not automatically mean the church has authority to do something.

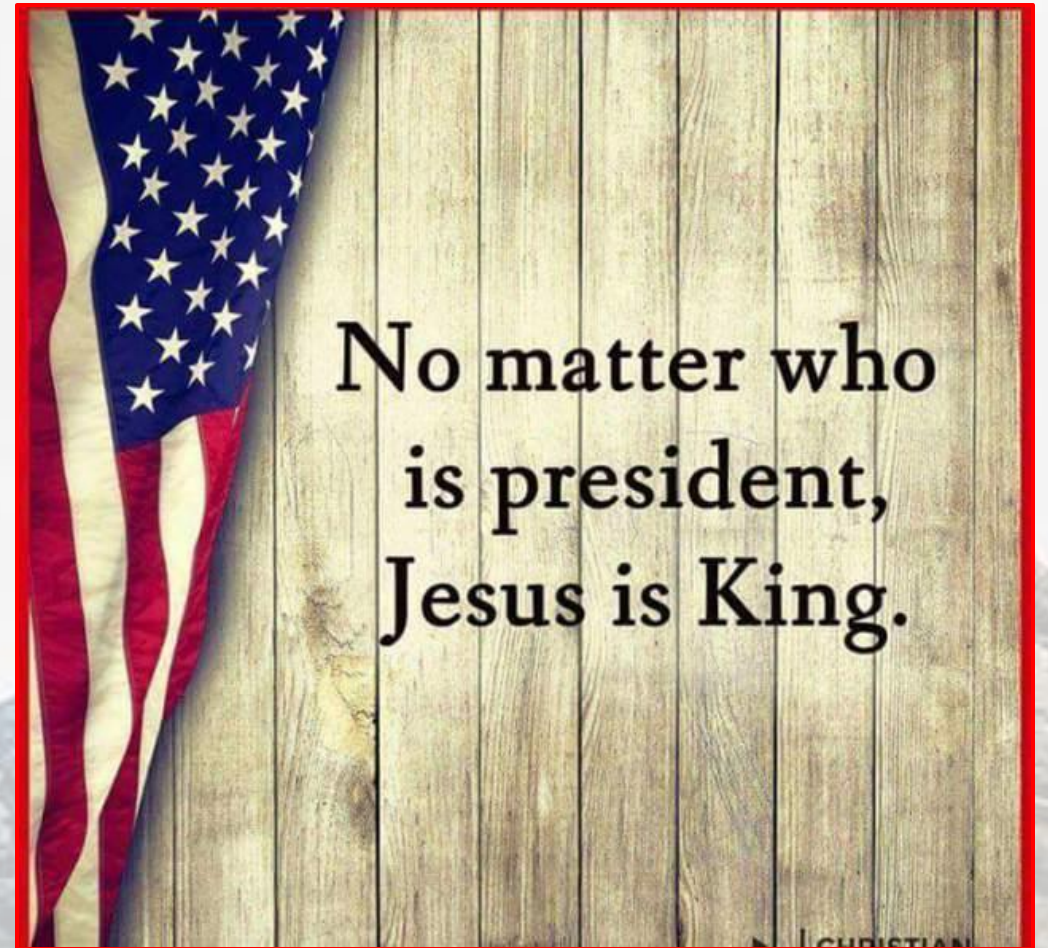
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- Now, let's apply that logic to [Rom. 13:1-7](#) and we can see how just because God has granted authority to earthly governments to punish evildoers does not mean He has granted individual people this same authority.
- Jesus commands individuals, "***Do not resist an evil person***" ([Matt. 5:39](#)), drawing a clear distinction between what the individual is authorized to do in comparison to the government.



Objection #6: You Don't Love Your Country

- I cannot answer for every person, but I know personally - despite all its flaws - I love my country.
- However, the Lord has declared that a Christian's primary citizenship is in Heaven and not any country on this earth (**John 18:36; Phil. 3:20**), so my foremost priority is pleasing the King of Kings and not the kings of this land (**Matt. 6:33**).



Objection #7: The Majority of Christians Disagree

- It is true that the majority of Christians in the United States likely disagree with the position I am advocating.
 - However, Just because the majority believes something does not mean they hold the correct view (**Matt. 7:12**).
 - Not all Christians throughout the world share the same view as most American Christians.
- The primary reason most Christians today advocate for Christians serving in war is because 20th and 21st century America is a militaristic society. However, pre-WWII, the prevailing thought among conservative Christians was the pacifist view.

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 - Not all Christians across the world share the same view as most American Christians.
 - Pre-WWII, the prevailing view among conservative Christians was pacifism.
 - Men like David Lipscomb, Alexander Campbell, Tolbert Fanning, P.S. Fall, B.U. Watkins, Moses Lard, J.W. McGarvey, Robert Milligan, W.K. Pendleton, T.M. Allen, etc. all advocated for pacifism and opposed Christians serving in the military.

Objection #7: The Majority of Christians Disagree

- Consider the following statements from second century Christian apologists:
 - “We who were filled with war, and mutual slaughter, and every wickedness, have each through the whole earth changed our war-like weapons, – our swords into plowshares, and our spears into implements of tillage, – and we cultivate purity, righteousness, philanthropy, faith and hope” (Justin Martyr, AD 110~165 - Dialogue with Trypho).
 - “We have learned ... not to return blow for blow, nor to go to law with those who plunder and rob us, but to those who smite us on one side of the face to offer the other side also, and to those who take away our coat to give likewise our cloak” (Athenagoras, AD 177 - A Plea for the Christians).
 - “There is no agreement between the divine and the human sacrament, the standard of Christ and the standard of the devil, the camp of light and the camp of darkness. One soul cannot be due to two masters - God and Ceasar ... How will a Christian man war, nay, how will he serve in peace, without a sword, which the Lord hath taken away? ... The Lord ... in disarming Peter, unbelted every soldier” (Tertullian, AD 145~220 - Apology).

Objection #8: Well, What Would You Do If . . .

- No amount of hypothetical situations or questions will ever change what the truth of God teaches (**Matt. 22:23-33**).
- If a person dies on the way to the baptistery, it does not change what **Mark 16:16** says.
- If a person is a wonderful moral human being who would "give you the shirt off his back" but is an atheist, neither does his circumstance change what **John 3:16** teaches.
- Therefore, no amount of hypotheticals will ever change what Jesus said when he taught "*love your enemies*" in **Matt. 5:43-48**.

**He did not say love your enemies unless the government tells you otherwise;
He simply said "love your enemies," and love our enemies we must.**