

Jerusalem, Christians, and End-Time Methods

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | December 8, 2017



Last week, the Trump administration officially recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The world is divided on the wisdom of this decision. For instance, many Christians in America are ardent supporters of this step, while leaders from many nations have voiced concerns or outright condemnation.

But what I find interesting about the support of at least some of these Christians is that it is not based on the principles of democracy, statecraft, national security concerns, or that it makes good political sense. Rather, many are basing their support on their religious beliefs and how they interpret the Bible.

Let me be clear: My point here is not to argue for or against Trump's decision or to dissect Israel's role in end-time prophecy. Instead, my point here is to examine this news in light of God's methods in fulfilling His purposes, contrasting His ways with the methods of this sinful world—as violence and angry rhetoric continue to play out from this action.

God's Kingdom and the Kingdoms of Earth

God is love, and His methods are the methods of truth, love, and freedom. God wants His children to love and trust Him—and love and trust can *never* be instilled by the threat of punishment or by the infliction of punishment. Love and trust are won by truth, presented in love, and leaving people free to

decide.

We cannot overcome evil by the exercise of might and power. Evil is only overcome by good. One of the most influential men in history, Martin Luther King Jr., knew this well. He said,

The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence you may murder the liar, but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish the truth. Through violence you may murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. In fact, violence merely increases hate. So it goes. Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.

Our world operates on a system of imposed rules in which the strong enforce their will on the weak. Sadly, many people view God as running His universe no differently than sinful human beings run their earthly governments. They see God as an all-powerful being imposing His will on His weaker subjects. Therefore, many people read the Bible and claim that God said He was going to give a certain land to the genetic descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and then God would use His power to make it happen. Thus, many Christians in America advocate for the use of coercion, force, pressure—whether economic or military—to enforce this outcome, to enforce what they see as God's will.

Yet is God actually going to accomplish His goals by the use of might and power? Or, are Christians deceived by a subtle lie of the evil one—to pursue what may indeed be godly goals by using satanic methods?

As God said through Isaiah, His ways are not like our ways:

Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth (55:7-10 NIV84).

God freely pardons; love overcomes evil. Do we freely pardon—or do we demand punishment for wrongdoing? God sends the snow and rain and sunshine to everyone, not just to those who do good. Do we love everyone, including our enemies, as Jesus taught? (See Matthew 5:44.) Do we love without discrimination?

The ways of God are not the ways of the world. We cannot win God's cause by using the methods of the world. The apostle Paul expands on this idea:

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV84).

How does the world wage war? Physical might, power, killing those who oppose us; intimidation, threats; economic sanctions, financial ruin, poverty, starvation—modern-day sieges; propaganda, falsehood, distortions, lies.

Would you endorse these methods for a cause you believe in? Would Jesus ever use these methods? Or are we being set up to employ and love “beastly” methods? (Remember, earthly governments are described as beasts. See Daniel 7, 8; Revelation 13.) Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place” (John 18:36 NIV84).

Jesus explicitly stated using force, fighting, or coercion was not part of His kingdom—and His followers would not employ such tactics. Christians are not to wage war like the world; we are not to use weapons of coercion, force, and intimidation. Why? Because our weapons are to demolish hate, selfishness, and evil out of hearts and instill love, truth, and righteousness. And love cannot be won by threat, hate cannot be destroyed by violence, trust cannot be established by might, friendship cannot be achieved by taking from another what they do not freely give.

Thus, God said through Zachariah, “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit” (4:6 NIV84).

And the Spirit is the Spirit of truth and love! It is only through truth, presented in love—while leaving people free to choose for themselves whom they will serve—that love wins, that truth overcomes. This is the method of the true Christian. This is the way of God’s kingdom. This is the power of God to transform the world. “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16 NIV84).

Regardless of our interpretation of Bible prophecy, what we believe about how end-time events will unfold, we must ask ourselves: Whose methods will I use? The methods of God—truth, love, and freedom, or the methods of the world—threat, coercion, violence and intimidation?

As Christians, let’s commit to using God’s methods alone.