FBS “One Hit Wonders: Just War & Christian Ethics” 6-11-17

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**Intro.** (Walk up during walk up music—“Purple People Eater”). Ever since the rise of music on television & radio, especially during the Billboard’s Top 40, there have been thousands of songs to make the list. Some of them, however, are what we call “One Hit Wonders”—2 of the more popular ones from the 1950s include “Earth Angel” by the Penquins (1955) or “Purple People Eater” by Sheb Wooley (1958). So what does “One Hit Wonders” have to do with the Bible? There are 5 books in the Bible which are so brief, they are but a single chapter. The authors were not necessarily “One Hit Wonders,” but the books are & that’s what we’ll look at the next few weeks. Today, we look at Obadiah & discuss the topic of “Just War & Christian Ethics.”

Theme: Judgment & hope

Background: Many scholars believe Obadiah prophesied shortly after Jerusalem’s fall to Babylon in 587/586 BC. His prophecy was directed at Edom, a nation to the Southeast of Judah. They were descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob, both sons of Isaac. As cousins to Judah, Edom should have come to their rescue, but they did not. Instead, they mocked them & the Lord said they would be punished for it.

* Edom lies in what is now Southwestern Jordan. The reference to “Sela” or “rock” (3) probably refers to Petra, an ancient wonder which has been discovered in the last couple of centuries. The siq, a narrow passageway into the city, is surrounded on each side by numerous clefts in the sides of the canyon walls, so they could easily pick off invaders with arrows or spears (show Petra 1-4 pictures)—this impenetrable dwelling caused them to swell with pride & trust in themselves
* Yahweh was so displeased with their lack of concern for Judah & Jerusalem that He prophesied their own destruction through war & future kingdoms, like the Nabatean Arabs would overthrow Edom
* This text lends itself to something of a call for holy warfare, what Christians have called “Just War.” Moreover, we aren’t just dealing with an OT ethic, but a NT one, so what should we think about “Just War & Christian Ethics?”

**Just War Principles – Summary** Found at the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (erlc.com) from July 1, 2006

**Principles for Engaging in War (*jus ad bellum*—the right to go to war)**

1. Just cause—the cause of initiating war must be just.

2. Competent authority—war cannot be initiated justly except by those who hold the proper authority and responsibility.

3. Comparative justice—the moral merit on our side must clearly outweigh the moral merit on the other.

4. Right intention—the intention of going to war must be to obtain or restore a just peace. Desires to punish or humiliate are not adequate intentions.

5. Last resort—all non-violent alternatives must be exhausted before resorting to war.

6. Probability of success—if the prospect of success is hopeless, war is not justified no matter how just the cause.

7. Proportionality of projected results—the good expected must be greater than the estimation of anticipated costs.

8. Right spirit—war should be regarded as a tragic necessity.

**Principles for Conducting War (*jus in bello*—right conduct within war)**

1. Proportionality in the use of force—no action should be taken that generates more harm than good.

2. Discrimination—a strong distinction must be maintained between combatants and non-combatants. Non-combatants must never be deliberate or primary targets of military action.

3. Avoidance of evil means—no use of evil means (even for a just cause).

4. Good faith—as much as possible, the enemy must be treated in good faith in order to keep open the possibility of reconciliation.

* With that kind of understanding, let me give you some **Responses to “Just War & Christian Ethics”:**

**1. Don’t take vengeance in your own hands for an injustice done to you, but depend on the state to come to your defense (1; cf. Matthew 5:38-39; Romans 12:17-13:4)**

* Christians often point to Jesus’ words in the Sermon on the Mount about “turning the other cheek” instead of “an eye for an eye” and “a tooth for a tooth”—Jesus is talking to individual Christians & calls you not to fight back immediately when first hit
* I don’t believe he is saying “let someone keep beating you up,” because you won’t have more than one cheek to turn to the aggressor
* Nor is Jesus saying, “If someone attacks your family, sit back & let them”—He speaks to you as an individual

Illus: If someone hits me, and I’m thinking about what Christ taught, I shouldn’t hit back. But if you hit me again or if you attack someone else, I should be ready to come to their defense, out of loving your neighbor as yourself (cf. Matthew 22:39)

* Paul reminds us in Romans not to take personal vengeance, but the state has been ordained by God to administer justice

**2. Support just war principles, because the Lord may use war to judge a certain people (1-14)**

* Some people are against war, because of what Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, but that is addressing individual Christians, not nations—the fact that Jesus is returning in military triumph (& He noted a place for Caesar, Matthew 22:21) & in light of Paul’s recognition of governmental servants of God, including military personnel, war can be the Lord’s tool to bring judgment on a people, like He did during Edom’s day

Illus: Not every war is a just war, but the war against Napoleon, US Civil War, WWII & the like are just wars—had America not gotten involved in WWII, Europe & the world would look much different today

**3. Stand with Israel, so long as their cause is just, because they are God’s people (10-14, 17-18)**

* Certain Christians today try to say the Church has replaced Israel, but they don’t take seriously the words of Paul in Romans 9-11, where Paul tells us God still has a plan for His people & that includes opening their eyes to see Jesus as the Messiah

Illus: The Lord continues to stand with Israel & that has been proven through their fight for Independence in 1948, when all the surrounding Muslim nations tried to overthrow them; it was also demonstrated during the 6 Days War where they expanded their borders & in numerous other battles & skirmishes—Christians must stand with Israel & encourage our political leaders to do so, because God still has plans for His people

**4. Set your hope in the Lord because He will right every wrong through deliverance & destruction (15-21)**

* Many wars are not just & numerous injustices are done by nations & individuals—some fail to support Israel & many times, Christians are persecuted

Illus: Though secular media often leaves it out of their reports, follow any world Christian news source & you will discover Christians are being persecuted for their faith every day—throughout the Middle East, North Africa & SE Asia, especially—Christians have been driven out of Iraq & Syria & in places like Bethlehem, where Jesus was born—because Jesus was mistreated & persecuted in this world, we as His followers should not be surprised when we face persecution, but if we hope in the Lord, He will right every wrong by delivering His people & destroying those in the wrong

**Final Application:**

* **As an individual Christian, be prepared to do the hard things**—not retaliate, go the extra mile, move over in your seat, give up the best parking spot, speak to strangers
* **As a citizen who is a Christian, be ready & willing to support your country, when necessary, in just war**—through enlistment, prayer, encouragement

**Conc.** You may be sitting there thinking, “What does it matter whether I believe in just war or not?” It may not matter as much for you personally, but if you are raising a child or grandchild who may find themselves in positions of influence in the future—politically or educationally—it could make all the difference in the world. A teenage boy once learned about anti-Semitism from one of the country’s greatest influencers & during a time when the country struggled to find its identity in early 20th century Europe, too many Christians had learned to become pacifists from liberal & neo-Orthodox preachers, so when Adolf Hitler rose to power & gained a following, no one was there to stop him from his quest to wipe out the Jewish people. How you think & how you feel & what you do as an individual Christian & citizen really make a difference. How you make an eternal difference begins with a personal relationship with Jesus through turning from sins & trusting in Him.