

March 14, 2021

The Sunday View

“Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” — John 12:21

Welcome Visitors!

You are our honored guests and we are pleased that you have chosen to visit us today. Our goal is to do everything according to God's word, including respecting its silence. This is a church of Christ; we are not a denomination, not part of anything larger than this local church and we have no earthly "headquarters." The six elders oversee this work and, ultimately, we answer only to Christ. The comments you hear today are primarily aimed at our own members, as we examine Scripture and seek to be built up in our faith in Christ. If you don't understand something, please do not hesitate to ask one of the elders. We welcome and appreciate your comments and questions on any issue and especially if you see or hear anything that you feel does not correspond to God's word. We are here to serve; please help us do that.

Please fill out a visitor's card and put it in the collection plate at the entrance. Thank You

Remember to “spring forward” — turn your clock ahead one hour on Saturday night

Schedule

The Lord's Day Assemblies

Three assembly opportunities,
in the building:

9:30 AM / 10:30 AM / 11:30 AM

Livestream at 10:30 at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLEmwy2lYxrL7ZUgTiZTVqA>

Speaking today: David Posey
Dealing with Evil
Revelation Series

Young People's Classes Today

High School & Up: 5 PM
Contact David Posey for information at
(530) 558-5057

Middle School: 5 PM

Contact Dan Stegall for information
(818) 209-9810

Weekly Online Classes

Tuesday 10 AM Zoom Class (“Conformed to Christ”)

Check with David Posey at dpaulposey@mac.com
or text @ 530-558-5057

Wednesday 7 PM (Zoom Class)

Check with Jack Horak: jshorak98@gmail.com

Saturday AM Men's Breakfast

7 AM, second Saturday of the month
Contact Tyler Wade @ tyler@ppldev.com

Additional Classes

There are some smaller classes in progress.
If you are interested in participating in any of them,
please contact David Posey

Information

Website & Online Presence

Visit our website at www.folsomchurch.com for updates and material on current and past classes, and recorded sermons and classes. You will also find a directory of churches on page one. If you are a member of the church here at Folsom, see one of the deacons or elders to inquire about access to the password -protected members section. Find us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/folsomchurch>

Classes & Home Studies (Will resume soon)

Covid forced us to curtail in-person classes. In normal times, we have classes for children from 18 months and up. We'll let you know when we can resume classes; we are aiming for April 7th to resume Wednesday night classes.

Restrooms

There are two sets of restrooms: one off the first hallway to the right of the lobby and another at the end of the first hallway to the left. Ask anyone and they'll be happy to point you in the right direction. Please observe Covid-19 health protocols.

For Small Children

There is a special room for nursing mothers and a separate “cry room” at the rear of the auditorium. You enter them from the first hallway to the right, across from the restrooms.

View & Junior View

The View, Junior View and daily view are sent out weekly to our member list. Please let us know if you are not receiving any of these newsletters.

Prayer Requests & News Items

Send to David Posey at dpaulposey@mac.com
or text at 530-558-5057

“Love Your Enemy” & Military Service

“But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you...” Luke 6:27

Whether a Christian should serve in the military or in law enforcement is a question that comes up now and then. How can we serve in the armed forces and be called upon to take someone’s life and still “love our enemies,” as Jesus commands?

This question is especially interesting to anyone who has a connection with military service or who serves in law enforcement. My father served in the Army in Europe during WW II and I served in the military during the Vietnam era.

My father’s case was interesting because he insisted on being a non-combatant. It was not uncommon in the 1920’s and 1930’s for Christians to object to carrying firearms and being expected to kill another human being. My father was not a “pacifist” at heart nor, officially, a “conscientious objector,” but his upbringing led him to request non-combatant status. The Army assigned him to the medical corps. I’ve mentioned this before, but I’m proud of the fact that my father received three bronze battle stars as a medic.

In 1942, Desmond Doss was one of the first whose religious beliefs led him to make a similar request and he was assigned to the medical corps. He won two bronze stars prior to his actions on Okinawa in May of 1945. In that battle, Doss rescued 75 men on Hacksaw Ridge and was awarded the Medal of Honor.

While many Christians in the late 30’s and early 40’s believed it was wrong to serve in the military, WWII changed a lot of minds. The evil of Nazism and the attack on Pearl Harbor changed the opinion of many if not most Christians. Thinking changed from “it’s wrong to kill even a soldier of a national enemy” to “it would be wrong — even *sinful* — to refuse to defend your country against such brazen wickedness.” So, the commands not to kill and to love your enemy were balanced against the command to obey the laws of your nation and the distasteful idea that a Christian would dare enjoy the freedom that the US offers, but would not be willing to defend it.

So is it wrong or not? Can you serve in the armed forces and still obey the command to love your enemies? Here’s a summary of my conclusions on this issue:

1. One might object to killing on the basis of Jesus’ “love your enemy” command, but he or she could still serve in the military in a non-combatative role as my father and Desmond Doss chose to do. As stated above, to refuse to serve in any capacity while the freedom you enjoy is threatened seems selfish and unnecessary. That was my father’s conclusion. Later in life, after he studied it more deeply for himself, he changed his view. By the time I was inducted in 1968, he was not opposed to military service and did not object to when I was inducted into the Army. In fact, he encouraged it.

2. The command not to kill an enemy is a personal command just as “do not steal” or “do not commit adultery” (etc.) are personal commands. In the Old

Testament, even under an “eye for an eye” justice system, personally killing an enemy was not justified. That was to be carried out only after a verdict was rendered by the community. God’s law has ever condoned personal vengeance (see Romans 12:14-21).

3. If one opposes all military action and service, claiming it is God’s will, then he should be ready to explain why God sponsored and even commanded the killing of enemies in the Old Testament. Saul lost his job as king because he did not complete God’s orders to kill all the Amalekites (I Samuel 15).

4. As mentioned above, the New Testament forbids personal revenge. Police officers are typically forbidden to work on cases in which they have some personal connection. If a member of their family was killed by a perpetrator, they would not be allowed to pursue the criminal or, typically have any involvement in the case. Why? Because emotions would play a part and there could be a temptation to seek revenge.

5. When an officer shoots a perpetrator or a soldier kills an enemy soldier, the law makes a rebuttable presumption that it is self-defense or was an action taken to protect other human lives. To not kill the enemy in those cases would, in fact, be an unloving act because other innocent lives are at stake.

6. Not every enemy of the state is a personal enemy. There are many instances where soldiers are friendly, even loving, to each other after the fighting was over and sometime while the fighting continues. There’s a scene in *Gods and Generals* (a civil war film) where two men, one from the north and one from the south, meet on a bridge and share a cup of coffee and then go back to their units to resume fighting. It seems, given the prevalence of military combat in the Old Testament, that “love your enemy” and “protect your country” are two different categories of actions.

7. For me, while I still have questions, I note that neither John the Baptist, Jesus, Peter or Paul spoke against military service when they had the opportunity. In Luke John says “bear fruits in keeping with repentance” (3:8). When the soldiers say, “what shall we do” (i.e., what “fruit” proves we have “repented”), John does not say, “quit being a soldier and killing people”; he simply tells them not to use their authority to extort money and to be content with their wages (Lk. 3:14). Likewise, Jesus had several interactions with soldiers and never suggested that they should stop serving as soldiers. In fact, in one case, he commends the faith of a Centurion, saying “with no one in Israel have I found such faith” (Matthew 8:5-13). He didn’t tell him to quit being a Centurion.

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Quotes & Excerpts on Revelation

Excerpts from *“Reading Revelation Responsibly: Uncivil Worship and Witness: Following the Lamb into the New Creation”* by Michael J. Gorman. You may not agree with everything here, but it makes for interesting reading.

Revelation is fundamentally a book about Christ, worship and discipleship, and final hope for the world. So, I am tempted on some days to focus on Christ and say “Worthy is the Lamb” or “The Lordship of the Lamb,” and on other days to focus on discipleship and say “Lamb People, Lamb Power” or “Out of Empire.” Another attractive angle is highlighting the theological or even theopolitical dimension in light of Christ: maybe “The Reconstruction of Divine Power,” or perhaps “God’s Politics.” “The Commencement” has some appeal (after all, commencements always mark both an end and a beginning), and “God Wins” might also be appropriate.

So, to return to the either-or questions, Revelation is (primarily) good news about Christ, the Lamb of God—who shares God’s throne and who is the key to the past, present, and future—and therefore also about uncompromising faithfulness leading to undying hope, even in the midst of unrelenting evil and oppressive empire.

But if this is the substance of Revelation, what is the carrier of that content? What kind of literature is it? To return to the filmmaker question, what kind of movie should one make of Revelation? A documentary or a fantasy film, perhaps a science-fiction flick? Something in between? Or maybe both! This is a challenging and important question.

The Genre: Apocalyptic

It is not the language of science or logic. Rather, it is evocative, powerful, emotive language, at times more akin to poetry than to prose.

The language of Revelation “works” not by imparting information, but by helping the reader to experience what John experienced. The final book of the Bible is about the “conversion of our imaginations.” Its intent is “to purge and to refurbish the Christian imagination.”

Chapters 4 and 5 as the interpretive key to Revelation

In perhaps the most mind-wrenching “rebirth of images” in literature, the vision John receives and describes for us is not what anyone would expect. It is the vision of a slaughtered Lamb, not a ferocious Lion. “The shock of this reversal,” writes Richard Hays, “discloses the central

mystery of the Apocalypse: God overcomes the world not through a show of force but through the suffering and death of Jesus, ‘the faithful witness [martyr] (1:5).’ As a narrative whole, Revelation first builds to this astonishing image, and then everything afterwards flows from it. The image likely draws on both the Passover lamb (Exodus 12) and the suffering servant of God, who is led like a lamb to the slaughter (Isaiah 53:7; cf. Jeremiah 11:19). It is the central and centering image, the governing metaphor, the focal point of Revelation: a slaughtered Lamb, a crucified Lord.

When this witness is neglected or forgotten, trouble follows swiftly. Any reading of Revelation—and any practice of theology more generally—that forgets this central New Testament truth is theologically problematic, even dangerous, from its very inception. It is doomed, not to failure, but to success—and that is its inherent defect. Human beings, even apparently faithful Christians, too often want an almighty deity who will rule the universe with power, preferably on their terms, and with force when necessary.

Such a concept of God and of sovereignty induces its adherents to side with this kind of God in the execution of (allegedly) divine might in the quest for (allegedly) divine justice. Understanding the reality of the Lamb as Lord—and thus of Lamb power—terminates, or should terminate, all such misperceptions of divine power and justice, and of their erroneous human corollaries. Of course, both historically and today, the misperceptions persist.

— dp

“Is there no vision that can open our eyes to the abundant life of redemption in which we are immersed by Christ’s covenant? Is there no trumpet that can wake us to the intricacies of grace, the profundities of peace, the repeated and unrepeatable instances of love that are under and around and over us? For me, and for many, John’s Revelation has done it.”

Eugene Peterson, *Reversed Thunder*

“Love your enemies,” Continued from page 2

Famously, too, Peter met with Cornelius, a Centurion in the Roman army (Acts 10) — never once, with ample opportunities to do so — did he ever tell him to quit his job. At least, there is nothing in the record that he did. Furthermore, Paul uses soldiers as object lessons of what Christians ought to be — hard working and focused on the job given them by the one who enlisted them (II Timothy 2:4). If it is a sin to be a soldier, would Paul use soldiers as examples?

So, to take the position that it is absolutely wrong to serve in the military or law enforcement (a sin that condemns you to hell) seems to require that we explain God’s action the Old Testament and explain why John, Jesus and Peter did not object to soldiers being soldiers and why Paul uses men who were serving in an occupying army as object lessons. — dp