

GNITN #1214

Jesus, Genghis Khan, and the Netanyahu Firestorm

Igniting A Firestorm

In the midst of yet another fight for their survival, your leader should avoid controversy with your most ardent supporters. And yet Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu did just that in a speech he gave this week where he fully intended to defend the fighting against Iran. If you don't know what he said here is the quote blowing up the Internet now:

Jesus Christ has no advantage over Genghis Khan. Because if you are strong enough, ruthless enough, powerful enough, evil will overcome good.

In this age of looking for gotcha moments this one fits the bill quite nicely. And that is the world we live in where, as I've said before, we have death by a thousand memes. Netanyahu was off his notes and fielding questions when he said this so it wasn't even his main point if at all. And yet it is the one quote that everyone is citing to make the PM look bad. He is literally leading his nation against terrorists who want nothing more than to see him and all Jews die and who also want to see America fall as well and this short sentence is all people are talking about. It is a shame that this is happening, but it is a larger shame that the vast majority of people lack the ability to research this and figure out what is really going on here. Before I do the heavy lifting on this I turn to an [article](#) from *The Times Of Israel* where Netanyahu gives us his Mea culpa: *Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says on X that he "did not denigrate Jesus Christ" in a televised address last night, after a minor firestorm over comments he made regarding the war in Iran. Citing historian Will Durant, Netanyahu said Thursday evening that "History proves that, unfortunately and unhappily, Jesus Christ has no advantage over Genghis Khan. Because if you are strong enough, ruthless enough, powerful enough, evil will overcome good. Aggression will overcome moderation."*

In a posting in English from his official account on X, Netanyahu reiterates that the idea was Durant's.

"A fervent admirer of Jesus Christ, Durant stated that morality by itself is not enough to ensure survival," the post reads. "A morally superior civilization may still fall to a ruthless enemy if it does not have the power to defend itself."

"No offense was meant," he adds.

Do A Little Digging

In cases like this we need to know more about the person before we decide to throw him to the proverbial wolves. People can misspeak from time to time, especially when you do a lot public speaking as Netanyahu does. I know I have stepped in it more than a few times in my life. Fortunately, I don't make a habit of putting my foot in my mouth, but when I do I own up to it. And as important, people who know me know that my overall life and history prove what I really believe and they give me room to be wrong or say something out of character. In short they give me some wiggle room as it were to explain myself. If there is anyone that deserves a little room it is Netanyahu. And in this case he is being taken out of context if we actually get the whole picture which, as I mentioned, is rarely done these days. The man I've followed for much of his political life, while not a Christian has a great deal of respect for Christianity and its adherents.

The last thing he would do is offend his most loyal supporters, well the ones who aren't antisemitic, but I digress. So, when I heard this being bantered around I knew there is more to the story. As it turns out, there is.

Context Is King

That little piece of advice was given to me by more than a few Bible teachers and it basically means that taking one verse by itself to form a doctrine or belief is almost never a good thing. The same is true of lifting a sentence or two from the words of someone speaking extemporaneously in response to a question. In the case of Netanyahu, I did read his speech and then the transcript of the video and what I learned was that he was making a larger point that was made by authors Will and Ariel Durant in their [book](#) *The Lessons of History*. The portion of the book that Netanyahu was referring to is from the 7th chapter of the 128 page book and reads as follows:

Nature and history do not agree with our conceptions of good and bad; they define good as that which survives, and bad as that which goes under; and the universe has no prejudice in favor of Christ as against Genghis Khan.

The authors were making the point that morality alone won't win against evil without military strength to back it up. In a post from his [X](#) account, Dinesh D'Souza offered this view:

He's quoting historian Will Durant to the effect that this is the way of the world. History is a record of conquest, and might typically prevails regardless of who is right. Christianity is in full agreement that Satan is the prince of this world and his side often prevails.

The important thing is that the actual quote is a view of human history and the battles fought in it. When you try and make it a Genghis Khan versus Jesus and who would win in a physical fight you miss the point totally. When I perused the responses to D'Souza's post I saw post after post of people who just couldn't figure that out. And I imagine this podcast will get more of the same. In this life immoral people like Hitler need to be fought with real guns, tanks, and more. Diplomacy won't always get the job done. Let's see what the Bible says about war.

Is War Ever Justified?

Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God. (Matt 5:9, NKJV)

Let's be clear that everyone should hate war. The Bible doesn't say war is justified nor does it say it is unjustified. It doesn't deal with the topic directly, but it does more indirectly or by example. And the first war in the Bible is one such example:

Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was a religious leader of God Most High. 19 And Melchizedek honored Abram and said, "May good come to Abram from God Most High, Maker of heaven and earth. 20 Honor and thanks be to God Most High, Who has given into your hand those who fought against you." Then Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of all he had taken. (Gen 14:18-20, NLT).

This was the war where Abraham's nephew Lot was taken captive. And rather than let Lot pay for his decision to live in Sodom and Gomorrah, he put together an army to free him. This was the first "just war" in the Bible. We know this because Abraham was blessed by Melchizedek on his way back home.

God Did Not Command This War

It should be noted that God did not tell Abraham to rescue his nephew, but it was left up to his own sense of right and wrong or his conscience to decide what to do. But there is no doubt that Melchizedek's blessing was in reality God's blessing on the military action. While it is true we should avoid all acts of personal violence there are exceptions as author Robert Morey [states](#): *We have clearly demonstrated that a solid historical, theological tradition upholds the rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness as privileges given to all men by their Creator. The power of government permanently resides in the people. They may give it to whom they choose and can take it back when a tyrant arises to oppress them. The right of Christians to participate in the overthrow of tyranny is upheld not only as permissible but also as a moral obligation. This position was embraced by the clearest thinkers in the Christian Church for centuries."*

But What Of Being Peacemakers?

The scripture in the Sermon on the Mount is often cited by those who oppose war and want to use the Bible to justify that stance. But are they taking the passage out of context? The Sermon on the Mount was meant as a teaching on *personal ethics* and not meant for how nations are to govern themselves. It is your cheek that you turn, not your child's or your neighbor's cheek. So nations are to conduct themselves with justice and Jesus illustrated this when He told us to personally be peacemakers but also told us in a parable in **Luke 19:12-27** that He approved of a king who waged a just war to punish wicked people by putting them to death. And remember that God told Abraham he had to wait to enter the promised land until the cup of iniquity was full. This was 400 years later when He used the fledgling Jewish nation to drive out the barbarians who were sacrificing children to idols like Baal. Also, Jesus did drive out the money changers (see **Matthew 21:12-17**). This was hardly a passive action of a passive God. No, I think whipping the money changers and driving them out of the temple got the point across. And let's not forget that Paul in his letter to the Romans tells them in chapter 13 (see **Romans 13:1-5**) that the government doesn't bear the sword in vain. I think we can see that God doesn't want us to resist evil passively.

So, What Is A Just War?

We should take a moment and define the characteristics of a just war so we can judge if such an action is warranted.

- It is defensive in nature.
It is for the purpose of protecting the lives and liberty of those who have been plundered, attacked, or treated unjustly.
- It is waged by a legitimate government and not individuals. We are told over and over in the Bible that we are not to practice vengeance. The Bible says, *Vengeance is Mine, I will repay (Rom 12:19)*.
- The purpose of a just war is to establish a permanent peace and not personal aggrandizement. Consider the story of Abraham. He refused to take anything that didn't belong to his aggressors.
- Every effort should be made to establish peace beforehand, making war the last option.

War Is A Great Evil, But Not The Only Evil

While doing everything within reason to establish peace is our initial goal, there are times when war must be on the table as the last option. We can imagine the iconic Patrick Henry rallying his

government to follow him making sure they knew that war was a bad option but inactivity which would continue slavery, a worse option. It was in this context that he uttered the [famous war cry](#): *Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!"*