

**The Leap of Doubt: Examining Seven Toughest Objections to God and Christianity**  
**Objection 4: “The church is responsible for so much injustice”**  
**October 11, 2009 by Kevin Haah**



**I. Introduction**

Skit

Now, how do we respond to the allegation that the church is responsible for so much injustice? That's a tough one. Because I believe that it is true. The church has a horrible history of abuse, torture, and injustice. It's not just in the past, it's in the present. I think the skit pointed out several of the issues.

This message is really a tough one to deliver because it is an indictment of the church. I am going to offend some of you today. Also, it is a tough message to deliver because there is a lot of nuancing to do. There are various perspectives on this question. I am going to give you one perspective, which is not often heard, but I want you to know that there are other perspectives on this question.

I believe the church in America has fused the cross and the sword. We are sold out to the culture of this world. I think more and more people are beginning to see it. This might be new to some of you. I want you to see this from the Bible and how it lines up with the word of God.

**II. Let's look at the Bible.**

Matthew 20:25-28.

Some people were fighting about power position and Jesus said:

25Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 26Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— 28just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

He's not saying that you have to work yourself up. He is saying that the greatest is the one who serve. What Jesus brings is a radically different Kingdom. It is an upside down kingdom compared to the kingdom of this world. The power comes by serving people with the power under people and not lording over people.

Matthew 26:51-54 (kingdom of God) They were waiting for a Messiah who was waiting to kick Romans out, Jesus said:

51 With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

52 "Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. 53 Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?"

In the moment of crisis, they wanted to turn to the power of the sword. Jesus rebuked them and said my Kingdom is not about cutting off the ear of someone, it is about healing the ear of someone, even when that someone has declared himself to be your enemy. The Kingdom will go forward by me going to the cross. That's how kingdom is going to be won, by me demonstrating unsurpassable love towards my enemies by letting them crucify me. That's the unique authority and the character of the Kingdom of God as opposed to the Kingdom of the world.

John 18:36 (my kingdom of this world) When Jesus was before the Pilot and in the course of their conversation, Jesus said:

36 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."

If my Kingdom was another version of the Kingdom of this world, he is saying this Kingdom of God is different. We are going to do something opposite of that.

We are called to imitate Jesus. The word Christian means we imitate Jesus. Ephesians 5 says, imitate God. Look to Jesus. What does that mean? Live in love. What does that mean? It's the cross. You mimic the cross. That's the distinctive character is the kingdom of God.

Luke 14:27, Jesus said, "And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."

## **Background, History, and How to approach the issue now.**

### **Background:**

I may raise more questions than I answer.

In the Bible, you find two kingdoms talked about that oppose one another: you see the Kingdom of God vs. Kingdom of this world.

Distinctive character of the kingdom of the world: it has coercive behavior. Not just talking about violence. Through law and threat of punishment. That's the nature of the kingdom of this world.

Kingdom of God is the opposite of that. It has power by the power-under. It comes under people. It is not primarily concerned about people's conformity to a certain behavior, but rather a transformation of the heart, which the law can never do. Which something threats can never do. It seeks to transform people by laying down your life for them. It is power under, rather than power over.

The kingdom of this world can be characterized as the kingdom of the sword—the power over kingdom, whereas the kingdom of God is the power of the cross—the power under kingdom.

The kingdom of the world is not all together bad. All governments are a variation of the kingdom of this world because they have to operate by having power over others. They need laws which are good most of the time.

In the fallen world, there are a lot of people who will not do the right thing for the right reasons; so, you have to coerce or threaten them to do the right thing for wrong reasons. We need criminal laws. The bible tells us Romans 13 that God uses the Kingdom of the world to keep order. God uses them. Some do it better than others, and I think America does it best. The Bible tells us: Live in peace with people and government. Pay taxes. Obey the laws of the land. Pray for peace. Pray for the leaders. The kingdom of this world is important.

But, it is NOT the kingdom of God. It is radically different than the kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God has to operate as power over. Kingdom of God person has to have a healthy suspicion of the Kingdom of this world.

God uses the Kingdom of this world, but the devil also uses the Kingdom of this world, the Bible tells us.

1 John 5:19 says: “the whole world is under the control of the evil one.” The whole world. Satan has influence on everything. That includes this government.

Ephesians 2:2 talks about Satan as the ruler of the kingdom of the air, and in chapter 6:12, Paul says: “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the

authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

That rulership applies to government. As kingdom of God, there is a diabolical influence.

When Jesus was tempted, the devil comes (in Luke 4:6-7), he took Jesus to a high place and showed the kingdom of this world to Jesus and said: “I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given me and I can give it to anyone I want to. So, if you worship me, it will all be yours.” Jesus was tempted to give in to the ways of the Kingdom of this world.

He is the ultimate power-over master. Kingdom of God person has to know that the kingdom of this world has evil influence in them. Not all evil, but there is evil.

Now, there are two points I want us to get out of this:

(1) Jesus didn't come to *tweak* the kingdom of the world, didn't come to *change* the kingdom of the world, didn't come to *reform* the kingdom of this world, didn't come to *take over* the kingdom of this world. He didn't come to give us *a new way to have a power over kingdom*. **He came into the power-over kingdom to establish a power-under kingdom.** He came to give us a radically different way to do everything. Because this is about power-under.

(2) However you participate in the kingdom of this world, you got to know that your ultimate allegiance to the kingdom of God. We should never give up our uniqueness as the kingdom of God people for a kingdom of this world agenda. In fact, the Bible tells us in 1 Peter 2, that we are to see ourselves as exiles and aliens. Our citizenship is in the household of God. Our citizenship is in heaven. Your king is our Lord. We are to follow his order. Our battles are not of the kingdom of this world, rather our battle is in the spiritual realm. If it is flesh and blood, you have one job: demonstrate outrageous love for them. Our enemy is not the Democrats, the Republics, not liberals or conservatives, not ACLU, not Abortion protestors, not gay rights activists, not family value activists, they are not Taliban; the enemy is the principalities in the heavenly realms. To all, we are called to demonstrate outrageous love like our Lord Jesus Christ.

Your ability influence the government is not it, your ability to fight for your right is not it. It is how you can love whom the society undermined, the criminals, the perverts, the pimp and prostitutes and tax collectors.

Kingdom of God is not found in conquering Caesar; it is found in the crucified Messiah.

It is not found in picking up the sword, but pick up the cross when you can pick up the sword.

## **History**

The Constantinian revolution: “The Church Triumphant Militant”

During the first four centuries, the church miraculously spread. Then in 4<sup>th</sup> Century, Emperor Constantine said he became a Christian. He legalized Christianity and later on, it has become the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Then, people began to say that the teaching of Jesus regarding picking up the cross or turning the other cheek is a provisional thing. Now, we have power. We can enforce Christianity. After Christianity became the official religions, the first heretic was put to death one year later. Unbelievers put to death. Heretics. Crusades. Inquisition. There was always a strand of the church that critiqued the church but they often got killed.

We have to see the demonic irony in this:

In the name of one who taught us to love our enemies, the church burned our enemies.

In the name of the one who told us to put away the sword, we swung the sword and killed.

1 Corinthians 13: it tells us what love is. Now, we have a history of people killing people. It's insane. How did it come to this?

I believe we should be open and criticize the church as Kingdom people when we have failed.

I want to ask you this: where has the church succeeded in conquering the culture where it continues to be the church? Give me one example of where we conquered or used force to get people to behave or believe and the church actually thrived? There is no example of any church triumphant and militant being the true church when we took power? In Europe, there has been hundreds of years of bloodshed and fighting and the church has taken over Europe. The church has been fused with the state, and now, there is not much of a church left. In all of the countries where we succeeded in taking over the state, Christianity is virtually dead.

Everything hangs on our willingness to hold on to the radical distinction as the Kingdom people. To give up power over to seek power under. Everything hangs on our willingness to trust in the power of the cross. Even when it looks like we are losing, even when it looks like our rights might be denied. Even when it looks like we can lose our lives.

## **How we approach this now in the present**

My concern is that we have not learned from history, that we have not learned from our Lord. Not that we necessarily trust in violence but that we believe that the government can solve our ultimate problems.

We have in so many ways fused the cross with the sword.

If we just wield the sword the right way, we'll get this place to be right.

Since our ways are holy and just, we should take power and legislate laws to enforce our values.

Our goal is to establish a radically counter-cultural kingdom he came to establish.

**This doesn't mean that the church should withdraw from engaging with the Kingdom of this world. No, it calls us to bring the Kingdom of God to this world.**

Jesus didn't say we should just be complacent towards the evil of the Kingdom of this world or the needs of the Kingdom of this world.

Jesus calls us to bring the Kingdom of God down here. We are carriers of the Kingdom of God to earth. We are to bring his reign and dominion to earth.

In fact, that's one of our purposes: to extend the Kingdom of God. I talk about that all the time. Thy Kingdom come and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

How?

Separating the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of this world does not mean we don't care about what happens in this world. It does not mean we should not try to influence the kingdom of this world. It does not mean that the church's role is only about "spiritual things" NO.

Jesus brought the kingdom ethics down to earth. He was a revolutionary on social issues, so his followers are to be revolutionaries on social issues.

- Jesus entered into solidarity with the poor, so his followers are to enter into solidarity with the poor.
- Jesus revolted against racism by the countercultural way he treated and spoke about non-Jews, so his followers are to revolt against all forms of racism.
- Jesus revolted against classism by the way he embraced social and religious "rejects," so his followers are to revolt against classism.

- Jesus revolted against sexism by the counter-cultural way he treated women — even women of ill-repute — so his followers are to revolt against sexism.
- Jesus revolted against legalistic religion that oppressed people, so his followers are to revolt against legalistic religion that oppresses people.

Jesus was a radical social activist, so his followers must be the same. But, his focus was not on taking over the Kingdom of this world and wielding the power of the sword to get people to change. The way we do it is by the power of the cross—the power of self-sacrificial love—not the power of the sword. We're to trust the power of Calvary, not Caesar. And this is why I believe those who spend their time and energy trying to control the political arena “in Jesus’ name” often miss the point. Our job is to love, serve and sacrifice for sinners – not argue about passing laws against them. For we are to know that, whatever sin we see in others, our sin is much worse (Mt. 7:1-3).

This does not mean that you should withdraw from the political arena. We live in a democratic society and our participation is important. There are things we can do to reduce suffering in this world. There are things we can do to better distribute resources in this world. There are things we can do to help reduce systemic evil. There are things we can do to help the poor. There are things we can do to create a better future for tomorrow through our political process. But, we have to be weary of fusing the power of the sword and the church. We have to be wary of saying that the standard we want to enforce is the Christian agenda.

Our ultimate hope is not in government and the power of the sword. It is in the power of the cross to change people’s hearts, and therefore, our behavior and our community. Political arena is an important arena to engage in; it is important dig into the systemic evil in the political arena; however, beware of the thinking that the best way to change the world is through gaining power over people in the kingdom of this world.

**STRUGGLES:** how to deal with government that is doing injustice. You have to figure this out on your own.