

2017-07 QFR (firearms) - with scriptures and comments - Plus

In the July 2017 Study Watchtower the next-to-last article is about propaganda. It states this:

Become “thoroughly able to comprehend” the full scope of the truth. (Ephesians 3:18) That will take real effort on your part. But remember this basic fact expressed by author Noam Chomsky: “Nobody is going to pour truth into your brain. It’s something you have to find out for yourself.” So “find out for yourself” by being diligent in “carefully examining the Scriptures daily.”—Acts 17:11.

Keep in mind that Satan does not want you to think clearly or reason things out well. Why? Because propaganda “is likely to be most effective,” says one source, “if people . . . are discouraged from thinking critically.” So never be content passively or blindly to accept what you hear. (Proverbs 14:15) Use your God-given thinking abilities and power of reason to make the truth your own. (w17 7/15 p. 28 pars. 3, 4)

(Ephesians 3:18) in order that with all the holy ones you may be thoroughly able to comprehend fully what is the breadth and length and height and depth,

(Acts 17:11) Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thes·sa·lo·ni·ca, for they accepted the word with the greatest eagerness of mind, carefully examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.

(Proverbs 14:15) The naive person believes every word, But the shrewd one ponders each step.

The last article in that Watchtower is a Question From Readers regarding self protection. I have copied the entire article here and have added the referenced scriptures and my comments. The original article is fully to the left and has a vertical line on the left, while the added scripture quotes and comments are indented.

[w17 7/15 p. 31]

Questions From Readers

Would it be fitting for a Christian to keep a firearm, such as a handgun or a rifle, for protection against other humans?

While Christians may take reasonable steps to ensure their personal security, they do so within the framework of Bible principles. These advise against the use of carnal weapons, such as handguns, rifles, or other firearms, for protection against other humans. Consider the following:

This first paragraph lays the foundation for the article with the resolute statement: “*These advise against...*” As you “*Consider the following*” take note of all of the referenced scriptures that support the QFR article.

In Jehovah's eyes, life—especially human life—is sacred. The psalmist David knew that Jehovah "is the source of life." (Psalm 36:9) Hence, if a Christian chooses to take reasonable measures to defend himself or his property, he would do everything in his power to avoid taking a human life and becoming bloodguilty.—Deuteronomy 22:8; Psalm 51:14.

[it-1 Bloodguilt p. 346] (Bloodguilt) refers to guilt incurred by the shedding of innocent blood.

(Deuteronomy 22:8) "If you build a new house, you must also make a parapet for your roof, so that you may not bring bloodguilt on your house because of someone falling from it.

That verse refers to bloodguilt resulting from a failure to provide protection.

(Psalm 51:14) Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God of my salvation, So that my tongue may joyfully declare your righteousness. (excerpt from a melody of David)

(2 Samuel 11:15) He (David) wrote in the letter: "Put Uri'ah in the front lines where the fighting is fiercest. Then retreat from behind him, so that he will be struck down and die."

[w93 3/15 p. 16 par. 12] Bloodguiltiness brought with it condemnation to death. So knowledge that the God of his salvation had delivered him from bloodguiltiness in connection with Uriah would give David peace of heart and mind. His tongue could then sing joyfully about God's righteousness, not his own.

That paragraph implies that the taking of any human life causes bloodguilt. The provided scriptures do not back up that claim. The November 2017 Watchtower article *Are you taking refuge in Jehovah*, on the other hand, shows that it is only the shedding of "innocent human blood" that causes bloodguilt since it is a man that must kill the murderer in order to prevent the land from becoming polluted, and yet the executioner does not become bloodguilty. (w17.11 9 ¶3)

Although using any number of objects could lead to incurring bloodguilt, guns make it easier to kill someone—accidentally or deliberately. * [Footnote.] * A Christian might decide to own a firearm (such as a rifle or a shotgun) for hunting animals for food or for protection against wild animals. When not in use, though, such weapons are best kept unloaded, perhaps even disassembled, and safely locked away. Where gun ownership is illegal, restricted, or regulated in some other way, Christians obey the law.—Romans 13:1. [End of Footnote.] Moreover, if an attacker—who may already be tense—sees that the other person has a firearm, the situation is very likely to escalate and a death might result.

This paragraph implies that "*accidentally or deliberately*" killing an "*attacker*" would incur bloodguilt. No scriptures are given to back up that idea because it is not scripturally based. The first sentence is only accurate if the one killed is an innocent person, but that is not stated. The use of the word "*Moreover*" at the beginning of the second sentence causes you to think that the two sentences are tied together and that bloodguilt also applies to the death of "*an attacker*", when it does not. The two sentences, though incomplete, are true if viewed as unrelated. It is "*easier*" for an untrained gun owner to accidentally kill an innocent person, and a gun also makes it "*easier*" for an assailant to kill his victim. An untrained driver of a vehicle is even more dangerous, as is a driver who's intent is to run people over, but the vehicle is not to blame. "*Moreover*," the situation which is "*tense*" because a gun-carrying victim has no way to escape may escalate to "*a*" death. Yes. The death of the attacker. Resulting in the victim saving their own life.

The words *"very likely"* are inaccurate though. Criminals are actually much more likely to flee at the sight of a gun since the victim's intent is to save his own life so he is therefore much more motivated, and attackers know this. According to the National Safety Council, *"of the 2.5 million times citizens use their guns to defend themselves every year, the overwhelming majority merely brandish their gun or fire a warning shot to scare off their attackers. Less than 8% of the time a citizen will kill or wound his/her attacker."* An encounter where the attacker does not flee at the sight of a gun and is shot would probably have been a much more violent if not lethal attack given the fearless and aggressive nature of the attacker.

When Jesus told his followers to equip themselves with swords on the final night of his life on earth, he did not have protection in mind. (Luke 22:36, 38) Rather, Jesus had them bring a sword for an object lesson to teach them not to resort to violence, even when confronted by an armed crowd. (Luke 22:52)

This paragraph states that Jesus *"did not have protection in mind"* and just wanted to teach his followers an *"object lesson."* The referenced scriptures do not back up that claim.

[km 6/13 p. 1] When Jesus initially sent out his disciples, he told them not to procure a food pouch or money for their purses. However, he later revised those instructions in anticipation of future hostility toward his disciples and the expansion of the preaching work into other territories.

(John 17:12) When I was with them, I used to watch over them on account of your own name,... and I have protected them,...

(Luke 22:36, 38) ³⁶ Then he said to them: "But now let the one who has a money bag take it, likewise a food pouch, and let the one who has no sword sell his outer garment and buy one. ³⁸ Then they said: "Lord, look! here are two swords." He said to them: "It is enough."

[it-1 p. 169] The fact that two swords were available among the disciples on the night of Jesus' betrayal was not unusual for those times (Lu 22:38), and there is evidence that for Galileans in particular it was not uncommon to carry arms.

They did not have to go and buy swords because at least some of his disciples already had them.

(Luke 22:52) Jesus then said to the chief priests and captains of the temple and elders who had come there for him: "Did you come out with swords and clubs as against a robber?"

Jesus did not condemn the mob for having swords and clubs, but for intending to use them inappropriately against an innocent person. And how are swords and clubs appropriately used? Jesus tells us: *"against a robber."*

After Peter wielded one of the swords against the high priest's slave, Jesus commanded Peter: "Return your sword to its place." Then Jesus stated a fundamental truth, a principle that guides his followers to this day: "All those who take up the sword will perish by the sword."—Matthew 26:51, 52.

(Matthew 26:51, 52) But look! one of those with Jesus reached out his hand and drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest, taking off his ear. ⁵² Then Jesus said to him: "Return your sword to its place, for all those who take up the sword will perish by the sword."

That scripture covers two topics. The first is Jesus' direction for Peter to *"Return your sword to its place."* He did not say to get rid of the sword, but told Peter to return it to where it belonged, *"its place"*, which was probably at Peter's hip where one carries a sword. But one thing is for sure; Jesus was a master of speech and could have used terms that have a negative connotation regarding having or using a sword if he felt that way about it. But he did not. Instead he commanded Peter to return his sword to *"its place"*. And Jesus' statement that the sword has a *"place"* on one's person shows his endorsement for its possession.

Second: Jesus does not lie to his followers. However, viewed in the manner of self-protection, as this article is portraying it, *"All those who take up the sword will perish by the sword"* is a false statement. All people who have a firearm (sword) for self-protection are not killed with firearms. (Even soldiers who use weapons in an offensive manner in war are not *"all"* killed.) On the contrary, statistics show that a huge number of crimes such as rapes and murders are prevented with firearms. The vast majority of those who have protected themselves and their families with firearms have lived long lives not ended with being shot. And many who did not have a firearm for protection wound up dead as a result. So since Jesus was not lying he must not have meant that having a sword for protection would get you killed because *"all those who take up the sword [for self protection do NOT] perish by the sword."*

In harmony with Micah 4:3, God's people "beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning shears." This identifying trait of true Christians harmonizes with the apostle Paul's inspired exhortation: "Return evil for evil to no one.... If possible, as far as it depends on you, be peaceable with all men." (Romans 12:17, 18)

(Micah 4:3) He will render judgment among many peoples And set matters straight respecting mighty nations far away. They will beat their swords into plowshares And their spears into pruning shears. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, Nor will they learn war anymore.

Unless the nations have given up warfare and I didn't hear about it this verse is referring to after Armageddon, as the surrounding scriptural context affirms. Though we may wish that we were living in paradise today acting as though we are when we are not would be very dangerous. But we know this, which is why we make sure all of our doors and windows are locked before going to bed at night. And we don't walk up to wild animals because Jehovah has not tamed them yet and they might kill us.

Also, this scripture says that those who live through Armageddon will take *"their swords"* that they have and make plowshares out of them. It doesn't say that they will pick up the swords of those who died at Armageddon, but that they would make *their own swords* into plowshares and *their own spears* into pruning shears.

(Romans 12:17, 18) Return evil for evil to no one. Take into consideration what is fine from the viewpoint of all men. ¹⁸ If possible, as far as it depends on you, be peaceable with all men.

What is the "evil" being referred to here? If someone is being aggressive towards you and you have the opportunity to walk away or otherwise calm the situation down but instead you become aggressive as well, you are not being "peaceable". You are returning evil for evil. But what if peace is not possible?

[w07 7/1 p. 25 par. 14] "*If possible*" and "*as far as it depends upon you*" are qualifying expressions indicating that making peace with others may not always be possible.

Nowhere does the Bible say or imply that protecting oneself is "evil". And verse 18 does not say that we should be "peaceable" at all costs, but that we should be "peaceable" only "if possible, as far as it depends on [us]". So what do you do when you are unable to "be peaceable"? Well verse 18 essentially repeats itself: "*If possible*" and "*as far as it depends on you*" both mean "if you can". By repeating itself verse 18 is emphasizing the fact that peace will not always be possible. So what do you do if someone is attacking you and there is no way to escape? You stop being "peaceable"! If you have sufficient means to protect yourself then the odds are in your favor that you will save the lives of yourself and your loved ones. And as verse 17 states, such action "*is fine from the viewpoint of all men*." That includes true God-fearing, obedient servants of Jehovah.

Is it your opinion that God would never condone us committing any sort of violence? If so, then how do you think He felt about what Jesus did at John 2:13-17? Do you think that Jesus was in the wrong and that Jehovah was displeased with his actions? On the contrary, Jehovah was no doubt proud of his son for taking the time to hand-make a whip and run those men out of the temple with it, pouring out their coins and knocking over their tables in the process. (Mt 3:15; Jn 8:29) Greedy people and their money are not easily separated. Onlookers would probably have described it as a very violent and brutish act.

Despite the many troubles that Paul experienced, including "dangers from robbers," he lived by his words, never putting personal security above Scriptural principles. (2 Corinthians 11:26) Instead, he trusted in God and in the wisdom found in His Word—wisdom that "is better than weapons of war."—Ecclesiastes 9:18.

Paul was on a mission from God (Acts 13:2) and was protected from being mortally wounded until his work was accomplished. (Acts 18:9, 10) "*Likely Paul suffered martyrdom at the hands of Nero shortly thereafter.*" [it-2 p.589]

Modern-day witnesses are not individually being physically protected by Jehovah, as JW publications point out regularly. (w18.10 6:16; w15 9/15 p. 22 par. 17; cl chap. 7 p. 72 pars. 13-17; w12 7/1 p. 21 par. 1; w05 11/1 p. 19 pars. 14, 15; w03 10/1 p. 7 par. 2; w03 7/1 p. 11 par. 10; w02 12/15 p. 15 par. 10; w01 8/15 p. 21 par. 8; w96 5/15 p. 5 par. 2; w86 1/1 p. 10 par. 3)♦ (reference quotes are on pages 11 and 12)

(Ecclesiastes 9:18) Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but just one sinner can destroy much good.

Note the use of the word "better". The original Hebrew word "towbah" is translated in most other locations as "good". Here the scripture could literally be translated: "*Wisdom is (more*

good) than weapons of war", showing that both options are considered to be good since both can be used for the cause of good, one is just better, or more good.

The first half of that scripture is similar to this modern saying: "The pen is mightier than the sword." In both instances smarter is better, but regardless of how smart or wise you are, if you are being attacked with a 'weapon of war' written words will not save you and trying to talk your way out of the situation is useless if the attacker is intent on harming you. As the counter argument in the second half of that verse points out: *"but just one sinner can destroy much good."* If we added a counter argument to the modern saying like that verse has it could go something like this:

The pen is mightier than the sword, but a well written letter won't protect you if you are being attacked.

So Ecclesiastes 9:18 is in reality a recommendation not to solely rely on wisdom, but to also keep yourself armed just in case. You should always be prepared for a non-peaceable encounter. (Ro 12:18)

Christians consider life to be far more valuable than material things. "Life does not result from the things [a man] possesses." (Luke 12:15) Thus, if a mild tongue fails to stop an armed robber, wise Christians heed the principle embodied in Jesus' words: "Do not resist the one who is wicked." It may even require that we give up our inner and outer garments, so to speak. (Matthew 5:39, 40; Luke

6:29) * [Footnote.] * Regarding the matter of defending oneself against rape, see the article "How to Prevent Rape" in the March 8, 1993, issue of Awake! [End of Footnote.]

(Matthew 5:39, 40) However, I say to you: Do not resist the one who is wicked, but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other also to him. ⁴⁰ And if a person wants to take you to court and get possession of your inner garment, let him also have your outer garment;

(Luke 6:29) To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also; and from him who takes away your outer garment, do not withhold the inner garment either.

[it-1 p. 429] Here Jesus was not teaching pacifism or denying the right of self-defense from bodily harm, but he was teaching that a Christian does not need to pay back blow for blow, retaliating, taking vengeance. He was inculcating the principle of avoiding quarrels by not replying or reacting in kind. A slap on the cheek is not intended to injure physically but only to insult or to provoke into a fight.

Though life truly is *"far more valuable than material things"*, an *"armed robber"* is not there to insult you with a slap, especially once you have seen him and can identify him. Would a masked robber let you live if you gave-in to his demands? Some would and some would not. Can you tell the difference?

The best strategy, of course, is prevention. If we shun "the showy display of [our] means of life" and are known by our neighbors as peace-loving Witnesses of Jehovah, we may avoid being targeted by violent criminals.—1 John 2:16; Proverbs 18:10.

I agree with the first part, which is where the wisdom of Ecc 9:18 is applied. Expensive jewelry is an invitation for disaster, even if it is not truly expensive. The thief does not know that the large diamonds are fake or that the thick gold chain is only plated. And a dark empty alley may not be the wisest path to take.

But the second point in the paragraph says that being known as "*peace-loving Witnesses of Jehovah*" may help you "*avoid being targeted by violent criminals.*" Most criminals look for what are called "soft targets", that is to say 'easy victims'. Those who are unarmed fall into that category, which is why "gun free zones" are where most mass shootings take place. And being known as one of Jehovah's Witnesses will not help them avoid a violent attack when the world turns on them and looks for them to kill them, as JW's believe will happen.

(Matthew 10:22) And you will be hated by all people on account of my name, but the one who has endured to the end will be saved.

(Matthew 24:9) "Then people will hand you over to tribulation and will kill you, and you will be hated by all the nations on account of my name.

(Mark 13:13) And you will be hated by all people on account of my name. But the one who has endured to the end will be saved.

I came across the following photo on-line. Who's home do you think a predator is more likely to target, the home of the man who put up this sign, or his unarmed neighbor's?



If you answered "*his neighbor's*", then you understand the reality of the world we live in where criminals fear and avoid targets who protect themselves, and seek out those who don't. (Job 24:14; Ps 10:2a, 9) We may wish for a world without guns, but the wicked will continue to attack the innocent until Armageddon. And even if you are trained in the martial arts, an attacker with a "*weapon of war*" still prevails the majority of the time against an unarmed victim.

Christians respect others' consciences. (Romans 14:21) If it became known that a member of the congregation kept a gun for protection against humans, some fellow believers might be shocked, even stumbled. Love moves us to put others' interests ahead of our own, even when that means putting aside what we may feel is a legal right.—1 Corinthians 10:32, 33; 13:4, 5.

(Romans 14:21, 22) It is best not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything over which your brother stumbles. ²² The faith that you have, keep it to yourself before God. Happy is the man who does not judge himself by what he (God) approves.

Do you eat meat? Do you drink wine? Most of us do, even though that scripture counsels against it. We just don't do it in the presence of someone we know it would stumble, that is to say, we keep it to ourselves, as the writers of this Watchtower article probably also do. Also note that the verse says it is "*best*", not "*wrong*". (Ro 14:1-4)

[w78 3/15 p. 20 par. 13] So the counsel is, 'Do not force your opinion on others.' If you know that there is a question in the minds of some as to the rightness of a certain thing that you know is not wrong, you should not seek to overpower them, or make a display of your own "freedom."

Also consider that "*fellow believers*" would not be "*shocked*" or "*stumbled*" if they weren't inaccurately taught that it was wrong to be prepared to protect oneself and "*those who are his own*" with whatever force was absolutely necessary "*to ensure their personal security*".

(Romans 12:18) If possible, as far as it depends on you, be peaceable with all men.

(Luke 11:21) When a strong, well-armed man guards his palace, his belongings remain secure.

(1 Timothy 5:8) Certainly if anyone does not provide for those who are his own, and especially for those who are members of his household, he has disowned the faith and is worse than a person without faith.

(1 Corinthians 10:32, 33) Keep from becoming causes for stumbling to Jews as well as Greeks and to the congregation of God, ³³ just as I am trying to please all people in all things, not seeking my own advantage, but that of the many, so that they may be saved.

(1 Corinthians 13:4, 5) Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous. It does not brag, does not get puffed up, ⁵ does not behave indecently, does not look for its own interests, does not become provoked. It does not keep account of the injury.

You may want to read other related scriptures to get the true understanding of this matter:

(1 Corinthians 9:3, 4) My defense to those who examine me is as follows: ⁴ We have the right to eat and drink, do we not?

(1 Corinthians 10:28-30) But if anyone says to you, "This is something offered in sacrifice," do not eat because of the one who told you and because of conscience. ²⁹ I do not mean your own conscience, but that of the other person. For why should my freedom be judged

by another person's conscience? ³⁰ If I am partaking with thanks, why am I to be spoken of abusively over that for which I give thanks?

(Romans 14:1-3) Welcome the man having weaknesses in his faith, but do not pass judgment on differing opinions. ² One man has faith to eat everything, but the man who is weak eats only vegetables. ³ Let the one eating not look down on the one not eating, and let the one not eating not judge the one eating, for God has welcomed him.

(Colossians 2:16) Therefore, do not let anyone judge you about what you eat and drink or about the observance of a festival or of the new moon or of a sabbath.

Those who are looking for a reason to judge others remind me of the old story where a lady calls the police on her neighbor because out of her bathroom window she can see her neighbor walking around naked in his house with his curtains open. When the police arrive and look out the window all they see is the fence. The lady tells them: "You have to stand on the toilet."

Regarding 'respecting the consciences of others', are not those that are against wine and meat also supposed to follow this principle and 'respect the consciences of others'? As the paragraph says, should not love move them to put others' interests ahead of their own, even when that means putting aside what they may feel? Or are some in the congregation better than others and this counsel does not apply to them? The following scriptures have advice for such ones:

(Matthew 7:1-5) "Stop judging that you may not be judged; ² for with the judgment you are judging, you will be judged, and with the measure that you are measuring out, they will measure out to you. ³ Why, then, do you look at the straw in your brother's eye but do not notice the rafter in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, 'Allow me to remove the straw from your eye,' when look! a rafter is in your own eye? ⁵ Hypocrite! First remove the rafter from your own eye, and then you will see clearly how to remove the straw from your brother's eye.

(Luke 6:37) "Moreover, stop judging, and you will by no means be judged; and stop condemning, and you will by no means be condemned. Keep on forgiving, and you will be forgiven.

[w08 5/15 p. 9 par. 13] The first-century Pharisees judged others harshly, in keeping with unscriptural traditions. Any of Jesus' listeners who did that were to "stop judging."

(Romans 2:1) Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are, if you judge; for when you judge another, you condemn yourself, because you who judge practice the same things.

(Psalm 119:165) Abundant peace belongs to those who love your law; Nothing can make them stumble.

Christians strive to be exemplary. (2 Corinthians 4:2; 1 Peter 5:2, 3) After receiving Scriptural counsel, a Christian who continues to keep a gun for protection against other humans could not be considered exemplary. He would therefore not qualify for responsibilities or special privileges in the congregation. The same applies to a Christian who continues to carry a firearm as part of his secular work. How much better to seek other employment! * [Footnote.] * Further details on the question of accepting employment that involves being armed are found in The Watchtower of November 1, 2005, page 31; and July 15, 1983, pages 25-26. [End of Footnote.]

(2 Corinthians 4:2) But we have renounced the shameful, underhanded things, not walking with cunning or adulterating the word of God; but by making the truth manifest, we recommend ourselves to every human conscience in the sight of God.

Protecting oneself and one's family with whatever force is absolutely necessary is neither shameful or underhanded, nor is it walking with cunning or adulterating the word of God. (Especially since the word of God actually instructs us to do so.) And certainly if anyone does provide protection for those who are his own, and especially for those who are members of his household, he can recommend himself *"to every human conscience in the sight of God."*—(1 Timothy 5:8)

(1 Peter 5:2, 3) Shepherd the flock of God under your care, serving as overseers, not under compulsion, but willingly before God; not for love of dishonest gain, but eagerly; ³ not lording it over those who are God's inheritance, but becoming examples to the flock.

Those are good rules to follow.

How a Christian chooses to protect himself, his family, or his possessions is, of course, largely a personal matter, as is his choice of employment. That said, Bible principles reflect God's wisdom and his love for us. Out of regard for those principles, spiritually mature Christians choose not to keep a firearm for protection against other humans. They know that true and lasting security comes to those who demonstrate trust in God by living in harmony with Bible principles.—Psalm 97:10; Proverbs 1:33; 2:6, 7.

(Psalm 97:10) O you who love Jehovah, hate what is bad. He is guarding the lives of his loyal ones; He rescues them from the hand of the wicked.

He guards our *spiritual* health.♦ Our physical protection is up to us.

(Proverbs 1:33) But the one listening to me will dwell in security And be undisturbed by the dread of calamity."

Yes, the one who listens to the advice of the Bible and follows Jesus' directions will dwell in security.

(Proverbs 2:6, 7) For Jehovah himself gives wisdom; From his mouth come knowledge and discernment. ⁷ He treasures up practical wisdom for the upright; He is a shield for those walking in integrity.

Again, a *"shield"* to our *spiritual* health and not a protection to us physically.♦

The paragraph says *"spiritually mature Christians choose not to keep a firearm for protection against other humans."* Consider Deuteronomy 22:8.

"If you build a new house, you must also make a parapet for your roof, so that you may not bring bloodguilt on your house because of someone falling from it."

That scripture tells us that if you choose NOT to provide protection for your household, and something happens to any of them, THAT is when **you become bloodguilty**, because you intentionally chose not to provide protection even though you are required to do so. (De 22:8; Lu 22:36) If we shirk this God-given duty we have *"disowned the faith and [are] worse than a person without faith."* (1 Tim 5:8) We will have earned that bloodguilt and will lose our place in paradise.

The paragraph also says: *"Bible principles reflect God's wisdom and his love for us."* Yes, and God values your innocent blood much more than that of an assailant. The Insight book relates that well for us:

[it-1 Blood p. 344] Because of God's view of the value of life, the blood of a murdered person is said to defile the earth, and such defilement can be cleansed only by shedding the blood of the murderer. On this basis the Bible authorizes capital punishment for murder, through duly constituted authority.

What goes against *"Bible principles"* is valuing the life of an attacker above that of his victim. *"No matter how much sentiment or emotion may be tied up with a custom, a Christian's concern is whether it harmonizes with God's Word or not."* (w88 12/1 p. 5 par. 2; Mr 7:8) We should stop following the example of first-century Pharisees who implemented unscriptural traditions. (w08 5/15 p. 9 par. 13; Mt 15:3; Mr 7:8, 9)

Picture on page 31 "During the great tribulation, Christians will rely on Jehovah and not try to defend themselves."

The picture shows police there to arrest, not criminals there to murder. But just as Jesus' disciples would have *"all"* been killed if they tried to fight the armed authorities, we would suffer the same consequences today if we tried to stand up to armed authorities.

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♦References from page 4 showing that we as individuals are protected spiritually but not physically.

[w18.09 26:16] ¹⁶Today, too, Jehovah cares for his people as a group—spiritually and physically. He will continue to do so during the fast-approaching great tribulation.

[w15 9/15 p. 22 par. 17] God protects his people overall by providing timely warnings against Satan's crafty acts.

[c/ chap. 7 p. 73 pars. 15, 17] ¹⁵As Jehovah's worshipers, we can expect such protection as a group.
¹⁷Jehovah safeguards us through his living "word," which has the motivating power to heal hearts and reform lives. By applying its principles, we can in some respects be protected from physical harm.

[w12 7/1 p. 21 par. 1] The protection Jehovah now provides is primarily spiritual. In other words, he protects us from spiritual harm by equipping us with what we need in order to avoid danger and to safeguard our friendship with him. One way he provides protection is through Bible-based counsel.

[w05 11/1 p. 19 par. 14] How does Jehovah protect his sheep today? The Bible assures us that no opposers—demon or human—will ever succeed in eliminating his sheep from the earth. Jehovah would never allow that. However, this does not mean that our Shepherd will shield us from all calamity.

[w03 10/1 p. 7 par. 2] God helps his servants today, not by delivering them miraculously, but by giving them his holy spirit and “the power beyond what is normal” to cope with whatever situation they may face.

[w03 7/1 p. 11 par. 10] What about today? We know that he does not use his power to protect us from all calamity now. He does, however, provide something more important—spiritual protection. Our loving God protects us from spiritual harm by equipping us with what we need in order to endure trials and to safeguard our relationship with him.

[w02 12/15 p. 15 par. 10] How, though, does Jehovah guard his people? His promise of protection does not guarantee us a problem-free life in this system; nor does it mean that he is obligated to work miracles in our behalf. Nevertheless, Jehovah does provide physical protection for his people as a group. After all, he would never allow the Devil to efface true worshipers from the earth!

[w01 8/15 p. 21 par. 8] Today, Jehovah does not guarantee us protection from the ravages of death, crime, famine, or natural disaster. We are promised that Jehovah will always make available protection from things that can endanger our spirituality. He does so primarily by providing us timely warnings through his Word and “the faithful and discreet slave.” What about the threat of death from persecution? While individuals may be allowed to die, God will never allow the extermination of his people as a whole.

[w96 5/15 p. 5 par. 2] Does this mean that Jehovah’s servants will enjoy divine protection from all present-day calamity? No, it does not. Faithful ones are not immune to harm. True Christians get sick, experience persecution, become victims of crime, die in accidents, and suffer in other ways.

[w86 1/1 p. 10 par. 3] Recently in Mexico, altogether 23 Witnesses and associates were among the more than 5,000 killed by a disastrous earthquake. In Puerto Rico, seven others were numbered among the 300 who lost their lives in floods and landslides. Does this mean that Jehovah failed to provide protection for some of his servants? Not at all. We are not immune to accidents and disasters. And as to persecution, Jesus forewarned his disciples, saying: “They will put some of you to death.” Hundreds of our brothers died at the violent hands of Nazi Hitler. Jehovah will remember all of such in the resurrection.

My Thoughts

Did you take note of all of the scriptures that supported the QFR article? How many did you find? I found none. At least none that backed up the topic of the QFR.

Let's look at the four gospel accounts that are at the heart of this discussion.

(Mark 14:47, 48) However, one of those standing by drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest, taking off his ear. ⁴⁸ But in response Jesus said to them: "Did you come out to arrest me with swords and clubs as against a robber?"

Mark merely says that "*one of those standing by drew **his** sword*". He does not say that he drew **the sword**, or **one of the two swords**, as if swords were an uncommon thing among them. Nor did he imply that the sword was recently acquired and only there temporarily to make some point. And when the sword was used Jesus' "*response*" was not to criticize the one who wielded the sword, but he took the side of the swordsman and condemned those who came out to arrest him with swords and clubs as against a robber.

(John 18:10, 11) Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his right ear. The name of the slave was Malchus. ¹¹ Jesus, however, said to Peter: "Put the sword into its sheath. Should I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?"

John too records Peter as having "*a sword*" as if it were nothing out of the ordinary. And Jesus' response was not to condemn the possession of a sword, or even Peter's use of it to try and kill the high priest's slave. He told Peter to put his sword away not because he disagreed with Peter's use of the sword to protect Jesus, but because he intended to allow himself to be captured.

(Luke 22:35-38) He also said to them: "When I sent you out without a money bag and a food pouch and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?" They said: "No!" ³⁶ Then he said to them: "**But now let the one who has a money bag take it, likewise a food pouch, and let the one who has no sword sell his outer garment and buy one.**" ³⁷ For I tell you that what is written must be accomplished in me, namely, 'He was counted with lawless ones.' For this is being fulfilled concerning me." ³⁸ Then they said: "Lord, look! here are two swords." He said to them: "It is enough."

Here two topics are covered. First, provisions for their future preaching work. Notice how they were previously sent out: "*without a money bag and a food pouch and sandals*". The apostles, of course, had such items, but were told to leave them behind. Jesus' "*orders*" were for them to "*carry nothing for the trip*". (Mt 10:9, 10; Mr 6:8, 9; Lu 9:2, 3) "*But now*" if they had a money bag or food pouch they were to "*take it*". And acknowledging that most of them had swords, Jesus commands "*the one who has no sword*" to "*sell his outer garment and buy one.*"

Note that a sword is not listed among the things Christ told them to leave behind. (Mt 10:9, 10; Mr 6:8, 9; Lu 9:2, 3; Lu 22:35) And when he tells them the items to take back up he did not tell those that had left their swords behind to resume carrying them again. Why? Because that night in the upper room showed that they still had their swords. (Lu 22:38) This was in response to Christ's directions to take back up the things that they had left behind, showing that they never left their swords behind. And because Christ's instructions regarding swords were only for "*the one who has no sword*". No instructions were needed for those who had swords. (Lu 22:36)

Now Jesus would surely have known which of his disciples had swords and which did not. And his command to sell their outer garment to buy one tells us that all of the apostles who could afford a sword already had one. The only reason that any of them would not have had a sword was if they

did not have the money to buy one. He even said *"let the one who has a money bag take it"*, showing that he knew that not all of them even had a money bag.

It was now so crucial for no one to be without a sword that those who did not have one were even to sell their outer garment if they had to and buy one. The outer garment of a man on the road was so important that it could mean his death without it on a cold night. It was also used as his bedding, and provided padding and insulation against the cold ground when he slept outside and his bedding for when he slept inside. The Mosaic law even acknowledged its importance:

(Exodus 22:26, 27) "If you seize the garment of your fellow man as security for a loan, you are to return it to him by sunset. ²⁷ For it is his only covering, his clothing to cover his body; in what will he lie down to sleep? When he cries out to me, I will certainly hear, for I am compassionate. (De 24:17)

Jesus' command for them to take such a drastic measure as to sell their outer garment (Ac 20:33) showed just how serious he was about each of them having proper protection. I say "proper" because an alternative could have been a club, as some of those who came out against them had. But a club or one's walking stick is no match against a sword, which a serious bandit on the road would have.

Also, when Jesus said *"let the one who has no sword"* buy one, he was speaking only to the apostles who did not have a sword. And since he said *"the one"* it was a minority of them who did not have a sword, perhaps even just one apostle. But the rest of the apostles did have swords and Jesus knew it, so his instructions were to ensure that not even one of them were without the means to protect himself. So since Jesus knew that most of them already had swords, his command for the one without a sword to buy one must not have been for the purpose of a lesson later that night.

Take note of this very important point: When Jesus and the apostles left the upper room where he told them to buy a sword, they immediately went out to the Mount of Olives. (Lu 22:39) *"It is well past midnight."* (jy p. 284 par. 1) If the apostles were unarmed and needed to buy a sword just for the encounter on the mount that very night to provide an *"object lesson"*, as the QFR article says, how would they have sold their outer garment and bought a sword so late at night while they were following Jesus to the remote garden of Gethsemane?

Why did Jesus say *"but now"*? Because things had changed. Before, the apostles were provided for and protected♦ (Lu 10:19), *"but now"* they would have to provide for themselves and protect themselves. And emphasis was given to having a sword (sell outer garment) because they could keep on preaching if they had to sleep outside because they had no money to pay for lodging at an inn or to buy food, but they could not keep preaching if they were attacked and killed.

♦**(John 17:12)** When I was with them, I used to watch over them on account of your own name, which you have given me; and I have protected them, and not one of them is destroyed except the son of destruction, so that the scripture might be fulfilled.

The second topic covered in Luke 22:35-38 deals with the meaning of the word *"For"* at the start of verse 37. That is another way to say "because". In other words: 'Buy a sword because

prophecy must be fulfilled.' And what prophecy "must be accomplished in [him]"? Namely, "*He was counted with lawless ones.*" Here is that prophecy:

(Isaiah 53:12b) He... was counted among the transgressors; He carried the sin of many people, And he interceded for the transgressors.

We know Jesus "*carried the sin of many people*" when he died for us, but who were the "*transgressors*" that he was "*counted among*" and how did Jesus intercede for them? And when they show Jesus the two swords, why did he say: "*It is enough*"? The next verses answer those questions.

(Luke 22:49-53) When those around him saw what was going to happen, they said: "Lord, **should we strike with the sword?**" ⁵⁰ One of them even struck the slave of the high priest, taking off his right ear. ⁵¹ But in reply Jesus said: "That is enough." And he touched the ear and healed him. ⁵² Jesus then said to the chief priests and captains of the temple and elders who had come there for him: "Did you come out with swords and clubs as against a robber?" ⁵³ While I was with you in the temple day after day, you did not lay your hands on me. But this is your hour and the authority of darkness."

Transgressors are those that transgress law. In this instance the group of apostles transgressed law by violently resisting those who held positions of authority. Jesus then "*interceded for the transgressors*" and stopped the attack by saying "*that is enough*" and verbally going on the offensive in their behalf by accusing the chief priests' officers and the soldiers they brought with them of improper actions: "*Did you come out with swords and clubs as against a robber?*"

Though it was only Peter who struck, the rest of the apostles who had swords stood with him, swords drawn, ready to fight. If Jesus only needed one armed apostle to stand up to the mob, only that apostle would have been viewed as resisting. But Luke 22:37 says "*lawless ones*," and Isaiah 53:12 said he would be counted "*among the transgressors*." Those scriptures refer to multiple apostles. So all of the apostles with drawn swords were viewed by the officials as transgressors, which fulfilled Bible prophecy, (Isa 53:12) and was why Peter feared being identified in the courtyard. (Mr 14:66-71) Jesus justifiably feared for their lives. (Mt 26:52; Jn 18:8, 9)

Since Jesus wanted each of the apostles to have a sword, why did he say "*It is enough*" when they showed him just two swords? And why did Jesus say "*That is enough*" this second time, instead of "Stop" or "Don't do that"? Because when Peter tried to kill the slave of the high priest, that one act of aggression against an authority figure was "*enough*" to label them as "*lawless ones*." No more action was needed. Jesus knew what was going to happen, ♦ what "*must*" happen, (Lu 22:37) and he knew the two swords they showed him earlier were "*enough*" to accomplish the fulfillment of the prophecy at Isaiah 53:12.

♦**(John 18:4)** Then Jesus, knowing all the things that were going to happen to him, stepped forward and said to them: "Whom are you looking for?"

(Matthew 26:51-54) But look! one of those with Jesus reached out his hand and drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest, taking off his ear. ⁵² Then Jesus said to him: "Return your sword to its place, for all those who take up the sword will perish by the sword. ⁵³ Or do you think that I cannot

appeal to my Father to supply me at this moment more than 12 legions of angels? ⁵⁴ In that case, how would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must take place this way?"

Again the sword is mentioned as if it were nothing out of the ordinary, but here in Matthew's account Jesus points out that a sword has a place that it belonged, by saying: *"Return your sword to its place."* And where was that proper place? Sheathed at Peter's hip. (John 18:11)

When Peter spoke a kind word to Jesus to try and make him feel better at Mark 8:32 Jesus immediately and publically rebuked him saying: *"Get behind me, Satan! because you think, not God's thoughts, but those of men."* Yet Jesus had nothing negative to say when Peter attempted to kill the slave of the high priest. Christ even speaks positively about being armed at Luke 11:21. Nowhere does he have anything negative to say in regard to having a sword or for using it defensively. And neither does he ever tell his disciples to get rid of their swords. On the contrary, as mentioned earlier, Jesus' statement that the sword has a *"place"* on one's person shows his endorsement for its possession.

"all those who take up the sword will perish by the sword"

Now, as for Jesus saying *"all those who take up the sword will perish by the sword"*. Why did he say that? To whom was he speaking? Look at what just happened and was happening for the answers:

(Mt 26:45-47) "Look! The hour has drawn near for the Son of man to be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us go. Look! My betrayer has drawn near. While he was still speaking, look! Judas, one of the Twelve, came and with him a large crowd with swords and clubs,"

In the middle of Jesus' warning-call a large crowd with swords and clubs arrives. After a brief back and forth between Jesus and the mob they move to take Jesus. The apostles have swords and are prepared to protect Jesus, as the following verses show.

(Luke 22:49, 50) When those around him saw what was going to happen, they said: "Lord, should we strike with the sword?" ⁵⁰ One of them even struck the slave of the high priest, taking off his right ear.

(Matthew 26:51-54) But look! one of those with Jesus reached out his hand and drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest, taking off his ear. ⁵² Then Jesus said to him: "Return your sword to its place, for all those who take up the sword will perish by the sword. ⁵³ Or do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father to supply me at this moment more than 12 legions of angels? ⁵⁴ In that case, how would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must take place this way?"

Tensions were extremely high among the apostles! A large crowd with swords and clubs had come upon them in the night with torches to take away Jesus and kill him. Most of the apostles probably already had their swords drawn or were drawing them to protect Jesus when they asked him: *"Should we strike with the sword?"* It was not one man asking, or two men, it was all of *"those around him"* asking. (Lu 22:49) This also shows that the apostles had more than just the two swords that were shown to Jesus earlier. *"Those around him"* were armed with swords.

Peter, possibly additionally motivated by Jesus' previous accusation that he would betray him, draws and strikes with his sword. Immediately Jesus says to the apostles: *"Return your sword to its place, for all those who take up the sword will perish by the sword."* (Mt 26:52) They were outnumbered by a large crowd which included soldiers, professional fighting men. Jesus knew that *"all"* of his apostles that chose to fight would be killed and he did not want to lose *"a single one"*. (Jn 18:9)

The apostles were willing to lay down their lives for Jesus so his warning of death may not have been enough to stop them. Earlier Peter had even insisted: *"If I have to die with you, I will by no means disown you."* Also, *all the others began to say the same thing.*" (Mr 14:31) So to further convince the apostles to put their swords away and not fight to protect him Jesus continues to speak and says to them: **"Or do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father to supply me at this moment more than 12 legions of angels?"** The word *"or"* ties the two statements together. Let's look at that whole statement again:

(Matthew 26:52, 53) "Return your sword to its place, for all those who take up the sword will perish by the sword. ⁵³ Or do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father to supply me at this moment more than 12 legions of angels?"

The *"or"* ties *"Return your sword to its place"* together with *"do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father."*

In other words Jesus is telling his apostles:

"If you fight you will die, so put your swords away, or don't you think my Father can protect me if I ask Him to."

If they did not put their swords away it would be as if they did not believe that God could protect Jesus.

To further impress upon them not to fight Jesus adds a third argument:

(Matthew 26:54) In that case, how would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must take place this way?"

This third reason Jesus gives them is that they would be acting against the fulfillment of Bible prophecy if they did not put their swords away but instead fought to stop Jesus from being taken.

When Jesus said *"all those who take up the sword will perish by the sword"* he was not sitting under a tree on a hillside on a nice sunny day quietly teaching his followers a lesson on life. He was in the middle of an emerging battle initiated by Peter. *"All"* of his apostles who did not immediately put their swords away would get killed. The first blow of the battle had already been struck and his intent was to stop it from going any further. Jesus used three rationale to stop his apostles from fighting:

- 1) If you fight you will die (Mt 26:52)
- 2) Fighting shows distrust in Jehovah (Mt 26:53)
- 3) Fighting would be acting against Bible prophecy (Mt 26:54)

He even healed the ear of the slave of the high priest, stopping any potential retribution from the opposing side.

Nowhere did Jesus say or imply that it would have been wrong for the apostles to fight against the mob with their swords to protect themselves and Jesus. If he believed that to be so that would have been an excellent fourth reason to get them to re-sheath their swords and not fight. It probably would have been the first reason he gave.

John is the only one who named the one who struck with his sword. The other three writers didn't even deem it worth mentioning who it was that attempted to kill the slave of the high priest. Why? Because Peter was acting appropriately. He was defending Jesus from being taken and killed, which was to them a justifiable act that each of the others were prepared to emulate. (Mr 14:31)

Other Scriptures

Applying the advice from the previous article on propaganda (as stated at the beginning of this article) let's also look at the other scriptures in the Bible that relate to bloodguilt or self-protection but were not included in the Questions From Readers Watchtower article.

(Genesis 9:6) Anyone shedding man's blood, by man will his own blood be shed, for in God's image He made man.

Since that scripture dictates that a "*man*" carry out the execution it clearly is talking about an unjust or unwarranted killing by the first man, otherwise just carrying out the required execution would also incur the death penalty for the executioner. (w17.11 9 ¶3)

(Exodus 20:13) "You must not murder.

[it-2 Murder] The Hebrew word for "murder" (*ra-tsach*) here clearly refers to deliberate and unlawful killing. But at Numbers 35:27 the same term denotes an act that an avenger of blood was authorized to carry out. Therefore, the command, "You must not murder," has to be understood within the framework of the entire Mosaic Law, which authorized the taking of human life under certain circumstances, as in the execution of criminals.

Exodus 20:13 is referring to an offensive action such as vengeance, not to self-defense.

(Luke 11:21) When a strong, well-armed man guards his palace, his belongings remain secure.

No negativity is referred to in being "*well-armed*". On the contrary, he will be rewarded with his belongings remaining secure. A positive outcome.

(Exodus 22:2, 3a) "If a thief is found in the act of breaking in and he gets struck and dies, there is no bloodguilt for him.³ But if it happens after sunrise, there is bloodguilt for him.

This says a "*thief*", not a murderer or an attacker. Why? Because you are never bloodguilty if while protecting yourself or your loved ones you strike and kill an attacker. But that does not apply to just a thief. At night they could not tell the purpose of the intruder. During the day they could see if a thief, who is just there to take something and run, was not a danger to them or their

household. Killing him would have been murder. This, however, does not rule out killing an attacker during the day who's intent is to harm or kill you or your loved ones. That is a different scenario from a snatch-and-run thief.

If you will note, Luke 11:21 does not say that the well armed man kills the thief to protect "*his belongings*." Just knowing that his intended target is well armed is a deterrent to most thieves. For a thief who still gives it a go, the man may use violence with that which he is armed with to run the thief off, like Jesus did at John 2:13-17, but even the life of a thief is worth more than material possessions. Note the different scenario in the next verse:

(Luke 11:22) But when someone stronger than he is comes against him and conquers him, that man takes away all his weapons in which he was trusting, and he divides up the things he took from him.

That describes a thief who attacks his victim, so the victim would be justified in using violence to protect himself. Weapons in those days required strength to wield them. In this case the thief was stronger than his victim so he prevailed. Fortunately the weapons of today put everyone on equal footing, enabling even those who are *not* strong to defend themselves, which is why a firearm is referred to as "the great equalizer."

(Exodus 23:7) "Have nothing to do with a false accusation, and do not kill the innocent and the righteous, for I will not declare the wicked one righteous.

Again this shows that there is a difference between killing the innocent, and killing the wicked ones who are out to do you harm.

(Ecclesiastes 3:3) A time to kill and a time to heal; A time to tear down and a time to build up;

It says a time to "*kill*", not a time to murder. There is a big difference. When is the "*time to kill*"? When the lives of you or your loved ones are at risk and there is no other option. (Mt 19:18; Mr 10:19; Lu 18:20; Ro 12:18)

(Jeremiah 2:34) Even your skirts are stained with the blood of the innocent poor ones, Though I did not find them in the act of breaking in; It is on all your skirts.

If they had killed someone "*breaking in*" they would not have been bloodguilty. If someone is breaking in to your home with you inside, and they do not retreat after your warning them to leave, that means they are there for *you*, and you have the right to protect yourself.

(Matthew 24:43) "But know one thing: If the householder had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have kept awake and not allowed his house to be broken into.

It does not say the householder would 'run and hide' if he knew when the thief was coming, but that he would not allow the break-in by using defensive actions he would not be able to perform if he were asleep.

(1 Timothy 5:8) Certainly if anyone does not provide for those who are his own, and especially for those who are members of his household, he has disowned the faith and is worse than a person without faith.

As Deuteronomy 22:8 shows us, safety, security, and protection are included in what the head of the house 'provides for those who are his own.' Otherwise he would be *"worse than a person without faith."*

(Matthew 4:7) Jesus said to him: "Again it is written: 'You must not put Jehovah your God to the test.'"

When you are in danger and cannot escape will you just stand there to see if God will protect you?
(Mt 4:6)

(Revelation 13:10) If anyone is meant for captivity, he will go into captivity. If anyone will kill with the sword,* he must be killed with the sword. This is where it calls for endurance and faith on the part of the holy ones.

If you read the footnote (which says: *"If anyone is to be killed with the sword."*), and look at the original Greek, you will find that this is saying that if someone is killed with the sword that it was meant to happen. The same goes for captivity. It is not saying that if someone puts someone else into captivity that he himself will therefore be put into captivity as punishment. (Jer 15:2; 43:11) That is why this scripture is not used for the argument that you should not protect yourself and your household.

Final thoughts on self-protection

(Deuteronomy 22:8) "If you build a new house you must also make a parapet for your roof so that you may not bring bloodguilt on your house because of someone falling from it."

A parapet is an extension of the wall that acts as a railing around the top of the roof. It is a protection for those on the roof so that they do not fall to their death. A homeowner is required to provide protection for those in his home, otherwise he will be bloodguilty if someone died because he chose not to provide protection for them.

Jesus commanded the apostles who did not already have a sword to buy one, to ensure that they all had protection while on the road. (Lu 22:36) So self-defense is not restricted to the home.

And Jesus commanded them to buy, not a club or a dagger, but a sword, the best available means of self-protection at the time. And a sword is typically visible when worn so those around you would know that you are armed, which is a deterrent in itself.

His apostles did not have the time or opportunity to buy a sword while they followed Jesus to the garden of Gethsemane. This also shows that his instructions were not for later that night in the garden, but were for their future protection.

Did his orders only apply to those apostles he was speaking to in the upper room? Since his instructions were for the future preaching work, and that preaching work is still going on, were his instructions to buy protection also for his future followers who don't have protection?

Has anything changed since then? Has Jesus begun to protect us physically again, as he did for his disciples before he left earth? (John 17:12) No he hasn't. (Mt 10:28; Lu 21:16; Joh 15:20) Does

that mean that our king has commanded us to buy protection for ourselves, even if we have to sell our proverbial "*outer garment*" to do so?

I have read these scriptures many, many times and yet this is something that makes you palm your forehead and wonder why you never saw this before. Perhaps there is a change coming like at Luke 22:35, 36. Perhaps hostilities are about to ramp-up around the world, and if we want to make it through The Great Tribulation alive we need to procure the means and be willing to protect ourselves and our families.

Common response

I reckon that most Witnesses would respond to this article by saying that it doesn't matter if we get killed because we will just get resurrected. Problem solved. No need to protect ourselves or our families from extreme violence or murder.

I felt that way for decades. Then a few years ago i took a closer look at the JW teaching of the resurrection. Do you know what their official understanding of the resurrection really is? How it happens? How God is going to perform the resurrection?

The Resurrection

There are three kinds of resurrections mentioned in the Bible:

The first type mentioned was carried out by Jesus and the apostles where someone died, and soon afterward they were "resurrected" back to life. I think of that as more of a resuscitation. For instance, if someone drowns and you quickly pull them from the water and perform CPR on them, or if someone has a heart attack and their heart stops and you use a defibrillator on them to get their heart restarted, did you perform a resurrection? No, you performed a resuscitation. Now we only have a short window of time to resuscitate someone, but with God's holy spirit Jesus and the apostles had the power to heal, so combined with healing they could perform a resuscitation well after damage was done to the body due to the lack of oxygen for several hours. I think that was what Jesus was alluding to when he said "*the little girl did not die but is sleeping*". (Mt 9:24; Mr 5:39; Lu 8:52) And when he said that Lazarus "*has fallen asleep*". (John 11:11) Jesus never "resurrected" anyone that had been dead for years, though i'm sure the crowds would have been very happy to see long-dead loved ones brought back to them.

The second type (called "*the first resurrection*" at Revelation 20:5) is the resurrection to spirit form, to heaven.

The third type of resurrection will take place after Armageddon where a new body is created. These are "*the rest of the dead*" who are resurrected after the "*first resurrection*". (Rev 20:5)

Description

Here is what i found in JW publications regarding how the resurrection will be performed:

[rs p. 333] Resurrection Definition: *A-na'sta-sis*, the Greek word translated "resurrection," literally means "a standing up again" and it refers to a rising up from death. The fuller expression

“resurrection of (from) the dead” is used repeatedly in the Scriptures. (Matt. 22:31; Acts 4:2; 1 Cor. 15:12) The Hebrew is *techi-yath’ ham-me-thim*, which means “revival of the dead.” (Matt. 22:23, fn, NW Reference edition) Resurrection involves a reactivating of the life pattern of the individual, which life pattern God has retained in his memory. According to God’s will for the individual, the person is restored in either a human or a spirit body and yet retains his personal identity, having the same personality and memories as when he died. The provision for resurrection of the dead is a magnificent expression of Jehovah’s undeserved kindness; it displays his wisdom and power and is a means by which his original purpose regarding the earth will be carried out.

[REDACTED]

[it-2 p. 784] God’s ability to resurrect. For the One with the ability and power to create man in His own image, with a perfect body and with the potential for full expression of the marvelous characteristics implanted in the human personality, it would pose no insurmountable problem to resurrect an individual. If scientific principles established by God can be used by scientists to preserve and later reconstruct a visible and audible scene by means of videotape, how easy it is for the great Universal Sovereign and Creator to resurrect a person by repatterning the same personality in a newly formed body. Concerning the revitalizing of Sarah to have a child in her old age, the angel said: “Is anything too extraordinary for Jehovah?”—Ge 18:14; Jer 32:17, 27.

[REDACTED]

[kl p. 85] ¹⁵ The word that Jesus’ disciples used for “resurrection” literally means “raising up” or “standing up.” This is a raising up from the lifeless condition of death—as it were, a standing up out of the common grave of mankind. Jehovah God can easily resurrect a person. Why? Because Jehovah is the Originator of life. Today, humans can record the voices and images of men and women on videotape and can replay these recordings after the individuals die. Surely, then, our almighty Creator can record the details of any individual and resurrect the same person, giving him or her a newly formed body.

[REDACTED]

[w06 3/15 p. 4] Jehovah God, who is perfect in memory, has no problem remembering the life patterns of those who have died. (Isaiah 40:26) Since he is the Originator of life, Jehovah can readily bring back to life the same person in a newly formed body. (Psalm 36:9) Moreover, the Bible states that Jehovah God has “a yearning”—an earnest longing and desire—to resurrect the dead. (Job 14:14, 15) How glad we can be that not only is Jehovah able to bring a person back to life but he also wants to do it!

[REDACTED]

[w90 5/1 p. 5] Actually, if you accept the existence of God, you should have no problem exercising faith in the resurrection. To illustrate: A person can videotape his last will and testament, and after he dies his relatives and friends can see and hear him, in effect, as he explains how his estate is to be handled. A hundred years ago, such a thing was unthinkable. And to some people now living in remote parts of the world, the “miracle” of video recording is beyond comprehension. If scientific principles established by the Creator can be used by humans to reconstruct such a visible and audible scene, should not the Creator be able to do far more? Is it not reasonable, then, that the One who created life is capable of resurrecting a person by reproducing his personality in a newly formed body?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[g 4/04 p. 12] The dead are in the safest situation imaginable, like an infant protected within its mother’s womb. Indeed, those resting in the grave are perfectly preserved within the limitless memory of Almighty God. (Like 20:37, 38) And soon they will be brought back to life, entering a happy, welcoming world much the way a newborn is greeted by a loving, waiting family!

[REDACTED]

[w59 6/1 p. 333] also [mn (1970) p. 20] also [Lmn (1986/2006) p. 20] ³⁹ Note Jesus’ words, “Do not marvel at this.” Even so, how can one long dead be released from death, and brought back to life? Has not his body returned to the dust? Some of the particles that made up that body may even have been assimilated into other living things, such as plants and animals. However, resurrection does not mean bringing the same chemical elements together again. It means that God re-creates the same person, with the same personality. He brings a new body forth from the earthly elements, and in that body he places the same characteristics, the same distinctive qualities, the same memory, the same life-pattern that the person had built up until the time of his death. ⁴⁰ It may have been your experience in wartime that your house that you loved very much was burned down. However, you could easily have the same house rebuilt, for the pattern of all its beloved details is very clear in your memory. Surely, then, God who is the originator of memory can re-create men whom he has kept in his memory because he loved them. (Isaiah 64:8) This is why the Bible uses the expression “memorial tombs.” When it comes God’s due time to bring the dead to life again, he will perform that miracle, just as he performed a miracle in creating the first man, only this time he will perform it many times over.—Genesis 2:7; Acts 24:15.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[w21.01 p. 6] And never forget that Jehovah keeps in his memory the smallest details about his servants who die faithful to him. With that knowledge, he will resurrect them.

[REDACTED]

Scriptures

What the scriptures say about the final resurrection to earth:

(Joh 5:25-29) “Most truly I say to you, the hour is coming, and it is now, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who have paid attention will live. ²⁶ For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted also to the Son to have life in himself. ²⁷ And he has given him authority to do judging, because he is the Son of man. ²⁸ Do not be amazed at this, for the hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out, those who did good things to a resurrection of life, and those who practiced vile things to a resurrection of judgment.

(Mt 19:28) Jesus said to them: “Truly I say to you, in the re-creation, when the Son of man sits down on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will sit on 12 thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel.

Re-creation = to be created again, anew, once more.

(Re 20:13) And the sea gave up the dead in it, and death and the Grave gave up the dead in them, and they were judged individually according to their deeds.

Symbolic. Sea life have consumed any dead bodies in the ocean, and most of the bodies in graves are long disintegrated and dispersed.

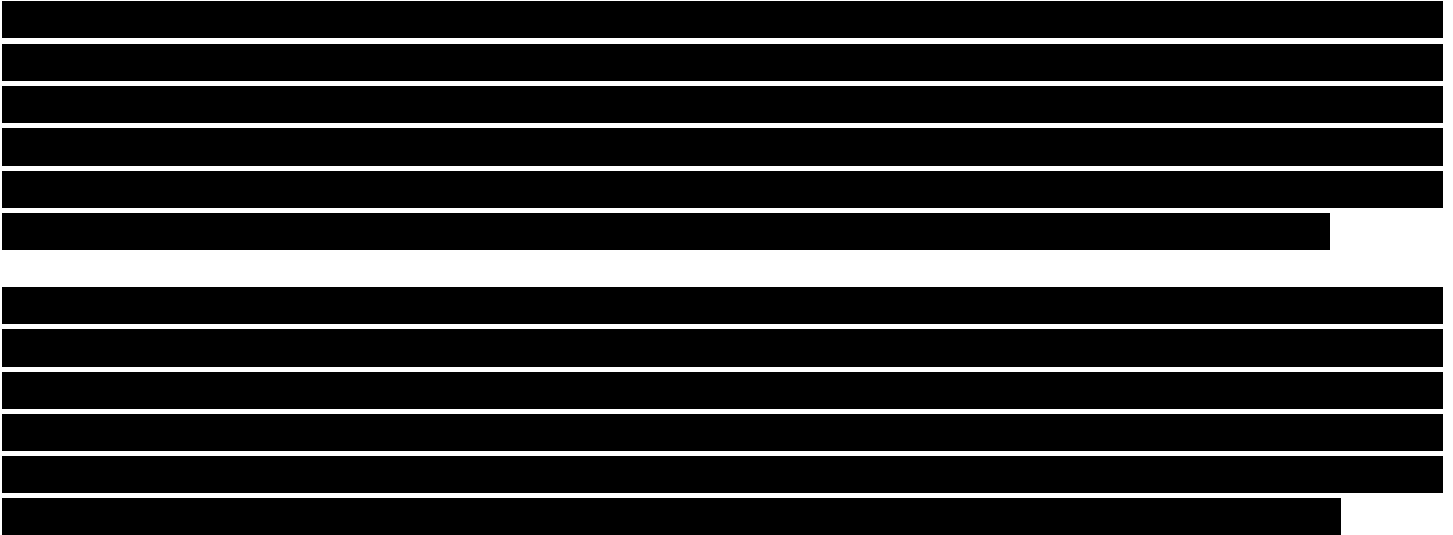
The Body

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Memories



Scriptures that tell us the Consequences of Death

(Psalm 78:39) For he remembered that they were flesh, A wind that blows past and does not return.

(Psalm 146:4) His spirit goes out, he returns to the ground; On that very day his thoughts perish.

(Ecclesiastes 3:19-21) for there is an outcome for humans and an outcome for animals; they all have the same outcome. As the one dies, so the other dies; and they all have but one spirit. So man has no superiority over animals, for everything is futile. ²⁰ All are going to the same place. They all come from the dust, and they all are returning to the dust. ²¹ Who really knows whether the spirit of humans ascends upward, and whether the spirit of animals descends down to the earth?

(Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6) For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing at all, nor do they have any more reward, because all memory of them is forgotten. Also, their love and their hate and their jealousy have already perished, and they no longer have any share in what is done under the sun.

(Ecclesiastes 9:10) Whatever your hand finds to do, do with all your might, for there is no work nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom in the Grave, where you are going...

(Ecclesiastes 12:7) Then the dust returns to the earth, just as it was, and the spirit returns to the true God who gave it.

[it-2 p. 1025] The person himself was never in heaven with God; what “returns” to God is therefore the vital force that enabled the person to live. (Spirit)

(Isaiah 26:14) They are dead; they will not live. Powerless in death, they will not rise up.

(Romans 6:7) For the one who has died has been acquitted from his sin.

(Romans 6:23) For the wages sin pays is death,

(Romans 7:2) For instance, a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is alive; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband.

(1 Corinthians 7:39) A wife is bound as long as her husband is alive. But if her husband should fall asleep in death, she is free to be married to whomever she wants, only in the Lord.

(Revelation 20:4-5) And I saw thrones, and those who sat on them were given authority to judge. Yes, I saw the souls of those executed for the witness they gave about Jesus and for speaking about God, and those who had not worshipped the wild beast or its image and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand. And they came to life and ruled as kings with the Christ for 1,000 years. ⁵ (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the 1,000 years were ended.) This is the first resurrection.

Scenario

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

my conclusions

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Self-Protection

So with this new understanding of the resurrection, how do you feel about self-protection now?

It seems to me that if we want to live forever in that paradise earth we need to procure the means and be willing to protect ourselves and our families so that we can make it through the Great Tribulation alive.

If you are one to think that with everything going on at this point in the last days that there are more important things to think about than your own safety, that is a very humble attitude but I would strongly disagree. Whether you are dead or alive, regardless of what you do, Armageddon will happen; justice will prevail; no one Christ deems a sheep will be killed at Armageddon, and no one he deems to be a goat will live through it; God's kingdom will be set up; and paradise will be restored. You cannot change or affect any of that.

The only question that matters to us individually is: Will you be there? That is the only thing we can affect. Your continued existence is the only thing that you have any control over.

Clearly it is Jehovah's will that you protect yourself and your household. And if you do so you are **not** sinning or becoming bloodguilty. It doesn't matter what tool you use to protect you and your household, it just needs to be adequate enough that you can successfully use it against an armed attacker or group of attackers. That rules out a baseball bat, a knife, or even a sword since just one attacker with a pistol would easily win out against any of those. Pepper spray has limitations even under the best of conditions, and stun guns and tasers require you to either be in direct contact with your assailant, or shoot those little darts with the wires at short range against a single opponent. And unlike in the movies, their effects don't do much against a determined attacker. Jesus wants you to have every advantage against those whom Satan sends against us, so pick a weapon that can be used against multiple attackers and can put an end to their attack.

Do you say? **"I don't need to protect myself. That is what the police are for."** Well do you keep a fire extinguisher in your home? Why? Fighting fires is the job of the fire department.

Deuteronomy 22:8 tells us that if you choose NOT to provide protection for your household, and something happens to any of them, THAT is when **you become bloodguilty**, because you intentionally chose not to provide protection even though you are required to do so. That verse also shows that God feels very strongly about it. He has given us a job, and if we shirk His God-given duties we have *"disowned the faith and [are] worse than a person without faith."* (1 Tim 5:8) We will have earned that bloodguilt, and will lose our place in paradise. (see my article "In God's Image")

Is it your opinion that Jehovah would not want his followers to kill even to save their own life? Think about what Jehovah has had His followers do back in the days of the Hebrew scriptures. He had them kill whole cities full of people. (Deu 13:15) And that was a willing act of aggression. Do you really think that He would disapprove if you were forced to kill in an act of self defense? When God's word came down to His people back then with directions to kill a certain city of people they grabbed their swords and obeyed. God's word is also here for us today and it tells us to protect ourselves and our family. What are you going to do?

Sum-Up

1. *"Never be content passively or blindly to accept what you hear."*
2. Bloodguilt does not apply to the killing of an attacker, even if you do not know his intentions.
3. An armed victim is a predator's worst fear, and the victim's best chance.
4. Jesus commanded his followers to be prepared to protect themselves.
5. *"All those who take up the sword will perish by the sword"* is only a true statement when correctly applied to the apostles that night in the garden.
6. After Armageddon we will no longer need protection so we will then beat our swords into plowshares.
7. Be peaceable if you can, but be prepared for when you can't. (Ro 12:18; Ecc 9:18)
8. Paul was physically protected. We aren't. (Acts 18:9, 10; Lu 22:36)
9. Being known as "unarmed" invites attack. (Job 24:14; Ps 10:2a, 9)
10. Don't be judgmental, and stop clinging to unscriptural traditions of men. (Mr 7:3; Ga 1:14)
11. JW's have been repeatedly told that as individuals you are only protected spiritually, not physically.
12. Jesus' command to buy a sword was not for a lesson that night.
13. The apostles had swords for their self-protection.
14. It is more important to have a sword than to have an "outer garment".
15. An armed response by his apostles was needed to fulfill prophecy. (Isa 53:12b)
16. That armed response was not condemned since it was in self-defense and warranted.

17. Jesus used three rationale to stop his apostles from fighting to protect him that night: 1) If you fight you will die, 2) Fighting shows distrust in Jehovah, and 3) Fighting would be acting against bible prophecy.

18. A sword was the best available means of personal self-protection at the time.

19. If we want to live in paradise then we need to live through the great tribulation.

20. If we do not want to be bloodguilty we must provide protection for our household.

Please re-read the referenced publications on pages 21 to 23 of this article and see if the official JW teaching of the resurrection backs up this thinking, or contradicts it. And see if your understanding of the resurrection aligns with JW publications, or if you have drawn different conclusions.

If you see any flaws in my reasoning on self-protection, **PLEASE** point out the scriptures i have misunderstood. Scriptural accuracy is **very** important to me.

And if you see any flaws in how i understand the JW teaching of the resurrection, please point that out as well.

Or if you think the official JW teaching of the resurrection conflicts with scripture, please share with me those scriptures and what you think they really mean.

Please back up any responses with scripture.

[w08 6/15 p. 30] When man's word conflicts with what God says in his Word, we "let God be found true" by trusting in the message of the Bible and acting in harmony with God's will.—(Ro 3:4)

(Galatians 4:16) So, then, have I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?

I truly hope that is not the case. As shown at Galatians 3:16, it is the minutiae of the text that provide true understanding of its meaning. How do you think the Christian congregation in Galatia reacted to Paul when he corrected their understanding of "offspring"?

:^)

your brother

Dave

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The full, un-redacted article can be found for download in a secret folder on my server.

If you are not one of those who have progressed to spiritual "*solid food*" (1Co 3:2) then please do not view the full article. Please view it only if you are a staunch and seasoned witness. (He 5:12)—see my article "Share Your Thoughts and Research + advice"

If you can figure out the following riddle you will know how to download it.

The address begins like this: da.getmyip.com/

To find out what to put at the end after the forward slash you must figure out the following lines and put the results together.

W-77-P-103-P-5-W-25

W-52-P-124-P-4-W-10

W-51-P-362-P-1-W-5