



BATTLEFIELD EARTH

This week, we have been reminded once more that we live in a world that is under attack from violent people. More than 150 people were killed (including five Americans) and 370 people were wounded – many of them visitors from other countries – when gunmen attacked ten civilian targets in Mumbai, one of the largest cities in India. Indian authorities suspect that Muslim militants were involved in the surprise attack that resulted in a three-day gunfight with Indian commando units.

One foreign official said, “Our world is under attack. It doesn’t matter whether it happens in India or somewhere else. There are Islamic extremists who don’t accept Western values.” There are many world leaders who see terrorism as a war being fought by people who feel that their religion or national culture is being threatened by the expansion of Western civilization in their region. They have decided to protect their culture by any means necessary, including violence and terrorism against innocent and defenseless persons. Most of the current armed conflicts in many parts of the world today can be traced to a clash of different and incompatible cultures.

Culture is the sum of the customary beliefs, social forms and material traits of a racial, religious or social group. Everything that makes a nation a nation and a people a people is connected to their culture. Nations and peoples are defined by their shared cultural identity. We have seen the dire consequences of forcing peoples who don’t share a common culture into forming one nation, even though they share a common geography. The terrorist attack in Mumbai can be traced back to the bloody separation of India and Muslim Pakistan after their liberation from their British colonizers. The vast religious and cultural divide between them prevented the creation of one nation.

The Bible says that a state of war has existed on earth since the fall of humankind in Eden. The war between the dark world and God’s Kingdom has been fought and continues to be waged mainly in the unseen spiritual realm (**Eph. 6:12**). But this clash of these two kingdoms is often manifested in the physical world in a war of cultures. The battle for earth is a battle for culture. The fight for human hearts and minds is waged in the cultural arena. And because we are part of God’s royal family, we are engaged in this cultural warfare.

Our values will dictate our attitudes, behavior and world-view. As citizens and warriors of the Kingdom of Heaven, we are admonished not to live like the citizens of this world (**Rom. 12:2**).

We are to reject the values of the world, like physical pleasure, visual craving and pride in achievements and possessions (**1 John 2:15-17**). Although these things may satisfy us for awhile, they will not last. Kingdom citizens operate with eternal values because they think and act with eternity and heaven in mind.

Our values will also define our priorities in life. Christians must always keep the Kingdom and its advancement as their first and foremost priority (**Matt. 6:31-33**). Today’s society has adopted the culture of consumerism. Acquiring material things has become the priority of many people. Many times, they’re willing to sacrifice everything they have for misplaced priorities. They fill their lives with the stuff of the world, thinking that they would enjoy life, but in the end, true life still eludes them. They end up losing what is really most important to human beings.

Too often, the world promotes a “me first” mentality. Much of today’s business practices and economic models are based on dollar bottom line, and no longer about serving the customers. Success is often defined by how much you have and how many people work for you. Wisdom is defined by how many people you outsmart and take advantage of. Christ taught His followers that His Kingdom is about servanthood. He modeled for them a selfless life that was offered for the benefit of humankind.

Our contemporary culture worships physical beauty. Much of the world’s wealth and resources are used for beautifying people. Cosmetics and clothing are really big businesses in the developed countries. We have beauty contests galore! Good-looking people are glorified for their physical appearance while true goodness is seldom recognized. The Bible teaches that Kingdom citizens should value inner beauty because it never fades and it is precious to God (**1 Peter 3:3-4**).

Our society is also pre-occupied with food – exotic-tasting, gourmet food. Eating is not only a major event in the lives of people, it is also a big industry. We live in a country that is now full of overweight adults and children. Much of the advertising in the media is about food products that being marketed to the public. The apostle Paul said that *“the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”* (**Rom. 14:17**)

If we are to represent God’s Kingdom here on earth, we have to be engaged in the battle to promote the culture of Heaven. Instead of conforming to the world system, we must continue to work to transform it by demonstrating the life of Christ everyday,