

Christians Respond Variously to the Killing of bin Laden

Dear Teacher,

While many people consider the death of Osama bin Laden at the hands of U.S. Navy SEALs a good thing, or at least a necessary evil, the spontaneous celebrations that broke out in many places in the United States struck some observers, including many Christians, as troubling.

So what is the appropriate response -- the Christian response -- when an enemy of much of humankind meets his end? That's the question we'll consider in this installment of **The Wired Word**.

Remember, if you wish to provide your class members with an abbreviated copy of the lesson, [click here](#), and you can send them a copy via e-mail today.

May God bless you as you teach the Scriptures this week.

The Editorial Team of **The Wired Word**



Christians Respond Variously to the Killing of bin Laden

The Wired Word for May 8, 2011

In the News

Shortly after the news broke Sunday night that Osama bin Laden had been killed by U.S. Navy SEALs, spontaneous celebrations broke out in communities across America. Many of those gatherings had both a party atmosphere and a patriotic tone -- with people singing the national anthem and "God Bless America," waving American flags and touting U.S. prowess. The common mood was exuberance, and the crowds were nonviolent.

As a member of *The Wired Word* team put it, bin Laden "may not have been the Wicked Witch of the West, but he was the Wicked Warlock of the Middle East, and he was responsible for the loss of 3,000 lives in the United States, and he's responsible for the slaughter of Muslim innocents as well." Thus, that team member and many other people across this country saw the public rejoicing as understandable and even acceptable.

Some other Americans, including many Christians, weren't so sure. While almost no one expressed any sorrow over bin Laden's death, many Christians wondered if rejoicing in the death of an enemy is in line with Christian teachings and biblical standards.

A subscriber to *The Wired Word* wrote in to say, "I've ... heard comments made by other Christians that they 'hope [bin Laden] burns in hell like he deserves.' In my opinion, we as Christians do not have the right to say such a statement about anyone as we all deserve hell but are saved by the grace of God. Do we have the right to be happy about the death of someone?"

Some other Christians framed their uneasiness about the celebrations less in terms of what individuals deserve and more in terms of Jesus' instruction to "love your enemies" or his act of forgiving his executioners while on the cross.

Some Christians viewed killing itself, and therefore the rejoicing over it, as wrong. A statement from the Friends Committee on National Legislation said, "The U.S. assassination of Osama bin Laden announced on Sunday night continues the violence initiated by al Qaeda's attacks on the United States and the reciprocation of war in Afghanistan and Iraq. While many people in the United States may feel closure or vindication in the death of the man who claimed to be the intellectual author of the September 11 attacks, for many others it is a failure of imagination and of political will that led to answering violence with more violence."

Still other Christians sought a middle ground. Writing in the Christian publication *World*, Warren Cole Smith said, "Governments are established by God. Punishing evil is their job, and we should take satisfaction in our own government's role in seeing that justice was done. So, given this, there is certainly no reason not to celebrate Osama bin Laden's death."

He went on to say, "I certainly think we can and should celebrate the excellence, professionalism and courage of the Navy SEALs who accomplished their mission. I think we should be grateful that an evildoer is now no longer able to do his evil in the world. But I also think we should be careful not to gloat. We should guard against triumphalism and pride."

Wired Word team member Frank Ramirez is a pastor in the Church of the Brethren, which, along with the Mennonites and Friends (Quakers), is known as a peace church, consistently opposed to war. Regarding the killing of bin Laden, however, Ramirez said, "From our perspective there is a difference between military and police actions. I expect that civil authorities where I live will work to arrest drug dealers and to track down child molesters. Was the raid in the same category? No analogy is perfect; however, I belong to the world community. The individual in question is responsible for the deaths of [thousands] around the world, including the deaths of hundreds of Kenyans, and the blinding of over a hundred in an embassy bombing."

Ramirez continued, "It seems to me that an attempt was made to bring a criminal to justice, one who was ruthless and did not value human life. Is this sin? Probably. Would it have been better to simply leave this person to continue to devise plots to kill others? I'm not so sure. I recall that Ezekiel spoke about the watchman, and if the watchman failed to do what was proper the guilt fell on his head."

Ramirez went on to say, "I'm not happy with the glee. However, biblically, there seems to be some recognition that this at least occurs. ... I am comparing the glee I observed at the baseball game and in front of the White House with the more subdued reaction of New Yorkers. Some out-of-towners seem to be standing near the cameras on the networks, but others are speaking solemnly into the microphones or stolidly proceeding on their way to work after walking by the Ground Zero site."

One other *Wired Word* team member observed, "There is no doubt some glee, but I think the emotional range is much larger and more complex. Many people have felt fear and threat ever since 9/11, and killing bin Laden may feel to some like taking back a little of the security they felt before 9/11. Bin Laden had also become a symbol of a lot that is wrong in the world, and striking at him is a hit at the symbol for some. Some of it is patriotism, I think, and there's probably a lot more going on in the emotions of many as well."

Still another team member said, "I am queasy about the public celebrations, but I am becoming increasingly queasy about all the hand-wringing about the sense of satisfaction that we have from this. Let it go. We're glad he's got his just deserts on earth, and we'll now let God take care of his immortal soul."

More on this story can be found at these links:

[What Is the Christian Response to Bin Laden's Death? *World*](#)

[Yes, Justice Has Been Done in the Killing of Osama bin Laden. *Christianity Today*](#)

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[How Should Christians Respond to Osama bin Laden's Death? *Christianity Today*](#)

[Hate Osama, But Do Not Rejoice in His Death. *HuffPost*](#) (a Jewish response)

[Muslim Reaction to Osama bin Laden's Death. *The Siasat Daily*](#) (responses from several Muslim groups)

["Osama bin Gotten": The Case for Joy. *The New Republic*](#) (a nonreligious response)

The Big Questions

1. Is there only one possible response that is actually "Christian"? Can there truly be various responses that are all in keeping with the spirit of Christ? Explain your answer.
2. While Jesus said to love our enemies, do particularly monstrous enemies such as bin Laden belong to a "special case" where the usual Christian responses don't apply? Explain.
3. Should we hear the news about the death of bin Laden as followers of Jesus, as citizens of the United States or as inhabitants of the planet earth? All of the above? Should there be a ranking taking place here? Is it possible to separate our responses as citizens of the United States from those as citizens of the kingdom of God? What might be accomplished by attempting to do so?
4. How does the killing of bin Laden play out against the Old Testament passages where the people of Israel understood that they were to kill all the inhabitants of certain towns as they conquered Canaan?
5. Do we reveal our faith in how we individually feel about the death of bin Laden, or in how we act regarding it? Are feelings themselves neutral, while only actions can be right or wrong?

Confronting the News with Scripture

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

Proverbs 24:17

"Do not rejoice when your enemies fall, and do not let your heart be glad when they stumble ..." (For context, read 24:17-20.)

Several of the online responses from Christians quoted this verse, though to read it by itself is to take it out of context. The whole proverb includes verse 18 as well, and reads *"Do not rejoice when your enemies fall, and do not let your heart be glad when they stumble, or else the LORD will see it and be displeased, and turn away his anger from them."*

In context, the proverb assumes that God is ultimately the cause of the enemy's stumble and fall, and that God might cease to trouble them if God's people rejoice over their calamity. The implication, however, is that God's people should not celebrate the calamity of others because that is what the wicked do. In other words, they should not sink to the level of those they consider to be wrong.

Questions: On 9/11, we saw some people in other parts of the world chanting and celebrating the injury to the United States, and we didn't like it. Does our chanting and celebrating when we have just killed someone make us the same as the 9/11 celebrants? If not, how are we different?

Exodus 15:1

"I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea." (For context, read 14:26--15:21.)

This is the opening line of a song of celebration Moses and the people of Israel sang following the drowning of the Egyptian army when the Red Sea closed in on them. In the Old Testament, the song goes unchallenged by God, but in the collection of ancient rabbinic writings called the Talmud, God rebukes the Israelites, saying, "My children are drowning in the sea, yet you have now decided to sing about it?"

Question: What does God's comment as recorded in the Talmud suggest about God's attitude toward sinners?

Ezekiel 33:11

"As I live, says the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live ..." (For context, read 33:10-16.)

The Bible tells of specific cases where God approved conquest and ordered the death of wicked persons. But this needs to be viewed against the backdrop of God's "godness," his root character, which, as the verse above affirms, is not bloodthirsty. What God wants is for all to live. He does not override our free will, however. Those who choose wickedness are not protected from the consequences.

Question: What should we do with our feelings of pleasure -- if we have them -- at bin Laden's death?

Nahum 1:8

"He will make a full end of his adversaries, and will pursue his enemies into darkness." (For context read 1:2-11.)

Nahum is nobody's favorite book of the Bible. It celebrates the impending doom of an evil nation, Assyria, which had oppressed Israel. It revels so much in the destruction to come that some biblical commentators have wondered how it made its way into the Bible. The prophet Nahum views God as a righteous and terrifying judge who will come with avenging wrath to devour an evil people.

Nahum lived in Judah during the last years before the Babylonians conquered his nation and marched the people off to exile in Babylon. Before the assault by Babylon, however, Judah had had to contend with another enemy, the Assyrians. In Nahum's world, the Assyrians, marching from their capital of Nineveh, were the embodiment of human evil. They had embarked on a path of imperial expansion that embraced ruthless military methods and trampled on all previous standards of human decency and kindness.

And they had been successful. During this time, the people of Israel were split into two kingdoms, and the northern one had been utterly defeated by Assyria and the people carried away. Judah, the southern kingdom, was eventually saved only because the Babylonians defeated Assyria.

Nahum wrote after the fall of the northern kingdom but before the defeat of Assyria by the Babylonians. In fact, it is this defeat that he envisions in his prophecy and which he describes with such glee.

A closer reading of Nahum, however, reveals another theme: a warning that the Assyrians' fate will be Judah's also if the Judahites do not turn away from sin and toward God.

Question: In what ways is the celebration of another's downfall a warning to those rejoicing?

Matthew 5:43-45

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous." (For context, read 5:43-48.)

Matthew 5:43-48 is Jesus' primary statement about how his followers should relate to their enemies. It also appears in Luke 6:27-36.

Questions: Do you think that Jesus meant this statement to be an absolute command? Might he have made exception for mass murderers? If we express love for murderers, are we, in fact, showing contempt toward their victims? What do you think Jesus would say about our reactions to the death of bin Laden?

Romans 12:19

"Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.'" (For context, read 12:9-21.)

Paul warns Christians to avoid seeking revenge, and, quoting Deuteronomy 32:35, he reminds them that God is the final settler of scores.

Questions: Do you think most revelers in the streets were viewing the killing of bin Laden as an act of revenge or of justice? Which do you view it as? Why?

For Further Discussion

1. What effect do you think the killing of bin Laden will have on our overall security?
2. Do you think bin Laden's death will bring closure to the 9/11 tragedy? Why or why not?
3. Did bin Laden deserve an Islamic burial? Why or why not?
4. React to this: Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, writing about a Jewish response to the death of bin Laden, said, "A member of the Taliban who cuts off a woman's nose and ears or an Al Qaeda terrorist who flies a plane into a building has cast off the image of God from their countenance and is no longer our human brother. They deserve not amnesty but abhorrence, not clemency but contempt. And since humans cannot bestow life, neither can they act in the place of God and forgive those who take life."
5. React to this, from a *Wired Word* team member: "If we don't think this jubilation is appropriate, we'd best not read the Psalms for a while, nor the closing triumphal chapters of Revelation. When evil is vanquished, there is cause for rejoicing ... Of course evil has not been

vanquished yet, but one of its princes has, and now we continue to pursue the other evildoers."

6. How important is it to hear all the voices surrounding this event, including those we agree with and those that alarm us? What are you hearing? What are you saying?

Responding to the News

The killing of a major evildoer like bin Laden is not an everyday occurrence, but the news about it gives us a chance to think about our response to those in our lives whom we consider troublemakers or personal enemies, and consider how Jesus would respond to them.

Closing Prayer

Thank you, O God, that one of the doers of great wrong has been removed from our world, so that he can threaten it no more. Though your Word tells us that you take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, we ask that you allow this act to be a building block toward a more peaceful existence. Comfort those for whom the killing of bin Laden brings back memories of terrible personal loss on 9/11. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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So what is the appropriate response -- the Christian response -- when an enemy of much of humankind meets his end? That's the question we'll consider in our next class.

If you wish to start thinking about our topic in advance, below is some introductory material.



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The Big Questions

Here are some of the questions we will discuss in class:

1. Is there only one possible response that is actually "Christian"? Can there truly be various responses that are all in keeping with the spirit of Christ? Explain your answer.
2. While Jesus said to love our enemies, do particularly monstrous enemies such as bin Laden belong to a "special case" where the usual Christian responses don't apply? Explain.
3. Should we hear the news about the death of bin Laden as followers of Jesus, as citizens of the United States or as inhabitants of the planet earth? All of the above? Should there be a ranking taking place here? Is it possible to separate our responses as citizens of the United States from those as citizens of the kingdom of God? What might be accomplished by attempting to do so?
4. How does the killing of bin Laden play out against the Old Testament passages where the people of Israel understood that they were to kill all the inhabitants of certain towns as they conquered Canaan?
5. Do we reveal our faith in how we individually feel about the death of bin Laden, or in how we act regarding it? Are feelings themselves neutral, while only actions can be right or wrong?

Confronting the News with Scripture

We will look at selected verses from these Scripture texts. You may wish to read these in advance for background:

Proverbs 24:17-20

Exodus 14:26--15:21

Ezekiel 33:10-16

Nahum 1:2-11

Matthew 5:43-48

Romans 12:9-21

In class, we will talk about these passages and look for some insight on the big questions, as well as talk about other questions you may have about this topic. Please join us.

Proverbs 24:17-20

¹⁷Do not rejoice when your enemies fall,
and do not let your heart be glad when they stumble,
¹⁸or else the Lord will see it and be displeased,
and turn away his anger from them. ¹⁹Do not fret because of evildoers.
Do not envy the wicked;
²⁰for the evil have no future;
the lamp of the wicked will go out.

Exodus 14:26-15:21

²⁶Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers." ²⁷So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the Lord tossed the Egyptians into the sea. ²⁸The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. ²⁹But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. ³⁰Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. ³¹Israel saw the great work that the Lord did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the Lord and believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

¹⁵Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord: "I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea. ²The Lord is my strength and my might, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. ³The Lord is a warrior; the Lord is his name. ⁴"Pharaoh's chariots and his army he cast into the sea; his picked officers were sunk in the Red Sea. ⁵The floods covered them; they went down into the depths like a stone. ⁶Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power— your right hand, O Lord, shattered the enemy. ⁷In the greatness of your majesty you overthrew your adversaries; you sent out your fury, it consumed them like stubble. ⁸At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up, the floods stood up in a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea. ⁹The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them. I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.' ¹⁰You blew with your wind, the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters. ¹¹"Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendor, doing wonders? ¹²You stretched out your right hand, the earth swallowed them. ¹³"In your steadfast love you led the people whom you redeemed; you guided them by your strength to your holy abode. ¹⁴The peoples heard, they trembled; pangs seized the inhabitants of Philistia. ¹⁵Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed; trembling seized the leaders of Moab; all the inhabitants of Canaan melted away. ¹⁶Terror and dread fell upon them; by the might of your arm, they became still as a stone until your people, O Lord, passed by, until the people whom you acquired passed by. ¹⁷You brought them in and planted them on the mountain of your own

possession, the place, O Lord, that you made your abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, that your hands have established. ¹⁸The Lord will reign forever and ever." ¹⁹When the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his chariot drivers went into the sea, the Lord brought back the waters of the sea upon them; but the Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground. ²⁰Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing. ²¹And Miriam sang to them: "Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea."

Ezekiel 33:10-16

¹⁰Now you, mortal, say to the house of Israel, Thus you have said: "Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?" ¹¹Say to them, As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel? ¹²And you, mortal, say to your people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not save them when they transgress; and as for the wickedness of the wicked, it shall not make them stumble when they turn from their wickedness; and the righteous shall not be able to live by their righteousness when they sin. ¹³Though I say to the righteous that they shall surely live, yet if they trust in their righteousness and commit iniquity, none of their righteous deeds shall be remembered; but in the iniquity that they have committed they shall die. ¹⁴Again, though I say to the wicked, "You shall surely die," yet if they turn from their sin and do what is lawful and right— ¹⁵if the wicked restore the pledge, give back what they have taken by robbery, and walk in the statutes of life, committing no iniquity—they shall surely live, they shall not die. ¹⁶None of the sins that they have committed shall be remembered against them; they have done what is lawful and right, they shall surely live.

Nahum 1:2-11

²A jealous and avenging God is the Lord, the Lord is avenging and wrathful; the Lord takes vengeance on his adversaries and rages against his enemies. ³The Lord is slow to anger but great in power, and the Lord will by no means clear the guilty. His way is in whirlwind and storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. ⁴He rebukes the sea and makes it dry, and he dries up all the rivers; Bashan and Carmel wither, and the bloom of Lebanon fades. ⁵The mountains quake before him, and the hills melt; the earth heaves before him, the world and all who live in it. ⁶Who can stand before his indignation? Who can endure the heat of his anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, and by him the rocks are broken in pieces. ⁷The Lord is good, a stronghold in a day of trouble; he protects those who take refuge in him, ⁸even in a rushing flood. He will make a full end of his adversaries, and will pursue his enemies into darkness.

⁹Why do you plot against the Lord? He will make an end; no adversary will rise up twice. ¹⁰Like thorns they are entangled, like drunkards they are drunk; they are consumed like dry straw.

¹¹From you one has gone out who plots evil against the Lord, who counsels wickedness.

Matthew 5:43-48

⁴³“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. ⁴⁶For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Romans 12:9-21

⁹Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; ¹⁰love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹²Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. ¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. ¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. ¹⁷Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. ¹⁸If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” ²⁰No, “if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.” ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.



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What is the Christian response to bin Laden's death?

Written by [Warren Cole Smith](#)

May 3, 10:28 AM



Associated Press/Photo by Charlie Litchfield (Idaho Press-Tribune)

On Sunday night I was checking Facebook and email one last time before heading for bed. Both my profile and my in-box were lit up with messages saying that President Obama would address the nation at 10:30 p.m. Well . . . so much for an early bedtime.

I ended up watching the speech announcing Osama bin Laden's death and writing a couple of articles about it. One of the stories summarized reactions that almost immediately started coming in from around the world (see sidebar to [Mindy Belz's Web Extra report](#)).

But the next day I said to myself: Yes, these are the reactions of our politicians and pundits, but what should be the appropriate Christian reaction? As it turns out, this is not so easy a question. The Bible has much to say on the subject, some of it difficult to reconcile. Consider this:

“The authorities are God's servants, sent for your good. But if you are doing wrong, of course you should be afraid, for they have the power to punish you. They are God's servants, sent for the very purpose of punishing those who do what is wrong” ([Romans 13:4, NLT](#)).

The Psalms, too, have much to say about the punishment of evildoers. In the interest of brevity, here's just one verse of many:

“At the time I have planned, I will bring justice against the wicked” ([Psalm 75:2, NLT](#)).

Governments are established by God. Punishing evil is their job, and we should take satisfaction in our own government's role in seeing that justice was done. So, given this, there is certainly no reason not to celebrate Osama bin Laden's death.

On the other hand, we must acknowledge that bin Laden, as violent and reviled as he was, was surely just a man like me. As distasteful as it is to contemplate, none of us is so different from him. Compared to a holy God, my righteousness and bin Laden's alike are as "filthy rags." Further, Scripture is clear that we are to love not just our friends, but also to "love our enemies." God, I'm sure, takes no pleasure in the death of someone who has rejected Him. In fact, he so much as says so here:

"As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, people of Israel?" ([Ezekiel 33:11, NIV](#))

Clarence Darrow once said, "I've never wished a man dead, but I have read some obituaries with great pleasure." Darrow is, as usual, winsome and witty—and completely opposed to Scripture. If God takes no pleasure in bin Laden's death, should we? I'm guessing not.

So what should our response be? I certainly think we can and should celebrate the excellence, professionalism, and courage of the Navy SEALs who accomplished their mission. I think we should be grateful that an evildoer is now no longer able to do his evil in the world.

But I also think we should be careful not to gloat. We should guard against triumphalism and pride. As a young man, Osama bin Laden drove fast cars and played soccer. There was a time when he was not so different from you and me.

Somewhere along the way pride overtook his life. It became his undoing. He became his own final authority. We should not think that we are immune from these same corrosive effects of pride. If we do, we may come to a time in the future when we find ourselves—both as individuals and as a country—committing the same kinds of monstrous evil that became bin Laden's undoing.

So can we celebrate that justice was done? Said more bluntly: Can we celebrate Osama bin Laden's death? I think the answer to that question is yes. But let us remember his ignominious death with grateful and even humble hearts, mindful that but for God's grace, so go we all.

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The following article is located at: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2011/mayweb-only/osama-celebration.html>

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[Christianity Today, May \(Web-only\), 2011](#)

SPEAKING OUT

Yes, Justice Has Been Done in the Killing of Osama bin Laden

But our response as Christians must be marked by knowledge of our own depravity.

Gideon Strauss | posted 5/02/2011 01:13PM

"I have never wished a man dead, but I have read some obituaries with great pleasure." I will confess that this witticism, attributed to Mark Twain, was the one to which I nodded a "yes" last night as I scrolled through my [Twitter](#) feed upon discovering that [Osama bin Laden had been killed](#) by U.S. Navy Seals in his compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan.

Moments later this reminder followed on Twitter, from someone quoting Proverbs 24:17, giving me pause: "Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles" (ESV).

I have no doubt that in this military killing the United States' government exercised its divinely ordained [task](#), wielding the sword to administer justice and constrain evil. I believe this to be so largely because I am one of those Christians for whom the question of the proper task and character of government cannot be answered without reference to Romans 13: "Rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. ... [The ruler] is God's servant for your good [H]e does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer."

Because of this conviction, I resonate with the statements by [President Obama](#), [Secretary of State Clinton](#), former [President Bush](#), and former [New York Mayor Giuliani](#), when they say that in this killing, "justice has been done." It will be important in the days (and years) ahead to learn more about the prudential judgments that informed this military action. What were the immediate intentions with the action: to capture or assassinate? What are the military purposes that this action will advance? Beyond just retribution, what are the proper political purposes that this action will serve? But as to the fundamental justice of the action, I suffer from no ambivalence.

The question that does trouble me is how we as Christians should respond to the news of this death, especially those of us who are citizens or friends of the United States of America.

The immediate response to the news was rejoicing in the streets. Online, some of my friends and acquaintances expressed sentiments of the "O-B-L, roast in hell" variety. And I understand this response, and have at many times in my life felt similar sentiments when faced with the perpetrators of intentional grievous harm to others. The Christian Scriptures themselves show, in particular in imprecatory prayers like Psalm 137, that the people of God often feel a desire for vengeance, and take a sometimes shockingly expressed delight in the prospect or realization of punishment for enemies and evildoers:

Remember, O Lord, against the Edomites
the day of Jerusalem,
how they said, "Lay it bare, lay it bare,
down to its foundations!"
O daughter of Babylon, doomed to be destroyed,
blessed shall he be who repays you

with what you have done to us!
Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones
and dashes them against the rock!

But beyond this immediate response, understandable as it is, I believe it is necessary for Christians to pause, and to consider the death of Osama bin Laden within the deeper perspective of human sin and divine grace. In the end, no death should give us pleasure. Another Scripture passage coming across the Twitter transom has been Ezekiel 18:23: "Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?"

Whenever I take delight in the punishment of an evildoer, I am reminded of the words attributed to the 16th-century English Protestant and martyr John Bradford, who said from his imprisonment in the Tower of London, watching a criminal being led to execution, "There, but for the grace of God, goes John Bradford." And then I am reminded of a prayer attributed to Tim Keller, who has been a help to all of us as we tried to make sense of the events of 9/11:

Lord Jesus Christ, I admit that I am weaker and more sinful than I ever before believed, but, through you, I am more loved and accepted than I ever dared hope. I thank you for paying my debt, bearing my punishment and offering forgiveness. I turn from my sin and receive you as Savior.

Rejoicing in the death of another, however wicked, involves forgetting the depths of our own depravity and the astonishing reality of our own salvation.

Our best next response, I believe, to the news of Osama bin Laden's death, after we have sought our own hearts for the wickedness that resides in all of us, and have thanked God for his amazing grace that has rescued us from our own evil, is to join President Obama on May 5, this year's National Day of Prayer, "in giving thanks for the many blessings we enjoy" and "in asking God for guidance, mercy, and protection for our nation." And perhaps we can add a prayer for our enemies, that God may win them to himself and in his own good time bring into the relations between this nation and those who now seek her destruction some foretaste of the just peace of his world to come.

And as we gain some distance from the events of yesterday, we do need to continue in serious conversation, with one another as believers and with our fellow citizens and friends, about war and justice, about life and death, about retribution and peace. Not everyone who reads what I write here will agree with me that the actions of the American government in the killing of Osama bin Laden were just. Neither will everyone agree with me that rejoicing over that death, understandable as it is, is inappropriate for those of us who know the depth of our own sinfulness and the scope of God's grace. But once again these events illustrate the tension in being both citizens of the United States of America (or any political community) and citizens of the kingdom of God.

Gideon Strauss is CEO of the Center for Public Justice and editor of Capital Commentary. "Speaking Out" is Christianity Today's guest opinion column and (unlike an editorial) does not necessarily represent the opinion of the publication.

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Episcopalians contemplate implications of Osama bin Laden's death

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Celebratory mood viewed with understanding, concern

By Mary Frances Schjonberg, May 03, 2011



[Episcopal News Service] As some people in the United States and elsewhere in the world took to the streets to celebrate the killing of Osama bin Laden May 1, Episcopalians began offering notes of caution and reflection to those reactions.

"I am not sorry that Osama bin Laden is dead ... But I don't celebrate his death, either," the Rev. Jay Emerson Johnson wrote on his [blog](#).

"That distinction, though subtle, is an important one for Christians who claim to be an 'Easter people,'" Johnson wrote, noting that the al-Qaeda founder's death came one week after Christians marked

Easter. "Easter celebrates God's decisive victory over death. We taint that celebration if we find anyone's death a cause for celebration and jubilation, and perhaps especially when that death is violent."

Johnson, who teaches at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California, co-chairs the theological resources [subcommittee](#) of the Episcopal Church's [Standing Committee on Liturgy and Music](#).

Bin Laden was found and killed during an operation by U.S. military and intelligence members in a large compound in the city of Abbottabad, about an hour's drive north from the Pakistani capital, Islamabad. Just after 11:30 p.m. May 1, President Barack Obama went on national television to [confirm](#) reports that began circulating about an hour earlier about the military action and bin Laden's death. "Justice has been done," Obama said.

The president, noting that he was echoing the words of his predecessor President George W. Bush, said that "our war is not against Islam" and he said bin Laden "was not a Muslim leader; he was a mass murderer of Muslims."

[Diocese of Southern Virginia](#) Bishop Herman "Holley" Hollerith [told](#) the Virginian-Pilot newspaper that "my initial reaction was relief."

"Then I found myself feeling very solemn about the whole thing," Hollerith said. "I think the death of any human being is not to be joyfully celebrated. At the same time, I do believe that justice was done in this regard."

Diocese of Newark Bishop Mark Beckwith wrote on his [blog](#) that "justice may sometimes involve violence; vengeance is always directed by violence -- of one sort or another. And the desire for vengeance lies close to the surface in everyone."

Crowds began to gather in front of the White House, at the site of the World Trade Center towers in lower Manhattan and in Times Square, among other places, before Obama spoke, and they later grew in size. People in celebratory moods chanted "U.S.A., U.S.A.," in tones that some reporters described as more common after an Olympic victory.

"I am deeply uneasy with the gloating and the cheering outside the White House, and elsewhere, as if this was a Super Bowl victory," the Rev. Jim Richardson, rector of [St. Paul's Memorial Church](#) in Charlottesville, Virginia, [wrote](#) on his blog May 3.

About 15 minutes after Obama concluded his announcement, Diana Butler Bass, a writer and educator, asked on her Facebook [wall](#), "What if we responded in reverent prayer and quiet introspection instead of patriotic frenzy? That would be truly American exceptionalism."

Fifteen minutes later she wrote: "Sometimes I realize that I'm really a biblical literalist at heart: 'Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles.' (Proverbs 24: 17)"

The Very Rev. Samuel T. Lloyd III, dean of [Washington National Cathedral](#), said in a May 3 [statement](#) that those at the cathedral "share with our fellow Americans a sense of relief that Osama bin Laden's life of hatred and violence is over."

"As followers of the Prince of Peace, however, we Christians regret profoundly the necessity of this killing," Lloyd added.

[Diocese of Central Pennsylvania](#) Bishop Nathan Baxter [said](#) that while he understands the desire to celebrate bin Laden's death, he urged caution "lest we lose [sight] of the most important work of peace and understanding in the politically named 'War on Terrorism.'"

"The work of everyday Americans, especially Christians, is to live into the best of our faith teachings, resist extremists' abuse in any religion, and guard the dignity of our neighbor, especially Muslims," he wrote.

In [Maine](#), Bishop Steve Lane [wrote](#) on his blog that he was having trouble sorting out his emotions about bin Laden's death until he woke up May 2 to read that a mosque in Portland had been vandalized with graffiti

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equating the al-Qaeda leader with Islam. That act, he wrote, put his feelings in sharp focus.

Saying he is a pacifist as well as a Christian, Lane wrote that "every person, however sinful, is a child of God for whom Christ died."

"I trust that God is attending to bin Laden in a manner that surpasses my understanding," Lane wrote.

The bishop called for "prayerful reflection on Jesus' call to love our enemies" and "prayers for peace and for all the victims of the spiraling violence in Iraq, Afghanistan, and all across our globe."

Some Episcopal Church parishes reflected on bin Laden's death during regularly scheduled worship services or special gatherings. During the daily noon Eucharist May 2 at [All Saints Episcopal Church](#) in Pasadena, in the Diocese of Los Angeles, the Rev. Susan Russell changed the readings from the propers for the upcoming Sunday, as is All Saints' custom, to ones centered on peace and reconciliation. They included Micah's prophecy of a time when all people would gather in peace on the mountain of the Lord, Psalm 85's prediction that righteousness and peace would one day kiss each other and Jesus' call in the gospel of Matthew to love one's enemies and pray for one's persecutors.

The Rev. Ed Bacon, who is on sabbatical, sent a statement on behalf of himself, the wardens and the vestry to the parish which Russell read during her [homily](#). The statement said that bin Laden's death "presented an important moment of reflection, prayer and action for peace-loving people around the globe."

"We understand and share a sense of relief and visceral satisfaction that bin Laden's physical voice is silent," it said. "A mass murderer is dead."

The statement noted that "Jesus calls us to a new way of being" that involves praying for enemies.

"The nature of the global network of care demands that perpetrators be captured and brought to trial under the rule of law," it said. "The rule of law must prevail over the rule of war... We must see today the dangers and distractions of triumphalism and celebrations of another's death."

Bacon and the lay leaders called for a united global effort to "replace policies of retaliation and humiliation against enemies with passionate, imaginative diplomacy."

Russell, whose son serves in the U.S. Army, said earlier in her homily that she had wrestled with complex emotions after hearing about bin Laden's death. "I am more grateful at this moment than I have words to express that I have a liturgical container for all of the complicated thoughts and feelings, anxieties and fears, reliefs and all the rest of it," she told the congregation.

At the [Parish of St. Clement](#) in Honolulu, Hawaii, the Rev. Liz Zivanov invited members to a gathering on the evening of May 3 to discuss a Christian response to the death of Osama bin Laden."

-- *The Rev. Mary Frances Schjonberg is national correspondent for the Episcopal News Service.*

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What is a Christian Response to Bin Laden's Death?

POSTED AT: MONDAY, MAY 02, 2011 09:45:49 AM

AUTHOR: [JAMES MARTIN, S.J.](#)



As someone who worked at Ground Zero in the days and weeks following 9/11 I rejoiced to hear that Osama Bin Laden's long reign of terror, which had dealt death, destruction and untold misery to millions across the world, had finally come to an end. As a Christian, though, I cannot rejoice at the death of a human being, no matter how monstrous he was.

On the morning of Sept. 11 2001, I was working at my desk at America magazine in Manhattan. My mother, who lives in Philadelphia, called me to tell me that a plane had hit the World Trade Center. When I ran out of my office and looked down Sixth Avenue, I could see the towers smoldering, inky black smoke pouring out of their tops. Already sirens were blaring, and men and women were running through the streets weeping, frantically trying to make calls on cell phones to loved ones.

The next few days were a horrible blur for me, and for all New Yorkers. For all Americans. On the night of Sept. 11, I worked at Chelsea Piers in New York, along with firefighters, rescue workers and chaplains. We awaited survivors who never came. On the morning and afternoon of Sept. 12, I sat with numbed family members in a large room at the New School in downtown Manhattan, poring through hospital lists of survivors, of whom there were almost none. Then, on Sept. 13, while working at Chelsea Piers, a police officer offered me a ride to Ground Zero, then called simply "the site." [There I spent](#) the next few days and weeks, in between my assignments at work, and along with other Jesuits, ministering to rescue workers amid the smoldering and stinking wreckage, in some places still in flames, before the mass grave. We walked over the awful detritus of the attacks; we prayed with firefighters who had lost friends; we counseled EMTs who had seen horrible things; we celebrated Mass in the rubble; and we emerged covered in the gray dust of Ground Zero every day.

So I am not blind to the death and destruction caused by Osama bin Laden.

Yet Christians are in the midst of the Easter Season, when Jesus, the innocent one, not only triumphantly rose from the dead but, in his earthly life, forgave his executioners from the cross, in the midst of excruciating pain. Forgiveness is the hardest of all Christian acts. (Love, by comparison, is easier.) It is also, according to Jesus, something that is meant to have no limit. No boundaries. Peter once asked him how often he was supposed to

forgive. Seven times? “Not seven times,” answered Jesus, “but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.” In other words, times without number. “Forgive your brother or sister from your heart,” he said. This is not to negate the place of judgment and justice in God's eyes, for such a denial would mean that we believe in a God who cares not for human affairs. But judgment and punishment, says Jesus, is up to God.

So the question is whether the Christian can forgive a murderer, a mass murderer, even--as in the case of Osama bin Laden--a coordinator of mass murder across the globe. I'm not sure I would be able to do this, particularly if I had lost a loved one. But as with other “life” issues, we cannot overlook what Jesus asks of us, hard as it is to comprehend. Or to do.

For this is a “life” issue as surely as any other. The Christian is not simply in favor of life for the unborn, for the innocent, for those we care for, for our families and friends, for our fellow citizens, for our fellow church members or even for those whom we consider good, but for all. All life is sacred because God created all life. This is what lies behind Jesus's most difficult command: “I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

It is also what lies behind the Vatican's statement today, which balances the desire for an end to terror with the sanctity of life, no matter how odious the person: “Osama bin Laden, as we all know, bore the most serious responsibility for spreading divisions and hatred among populations, causing the deaths of innumerable people, and manipulating religions for this purpose. In the face of a man's death, a Christian never rejoices, but reflects on the serious responsibilities of each person before God and before men, and hopes and works so that every event may be the occasion for the further growth of peace and not of hatred.”

And it is behind the most Christian of acts by Pope John Paul II, beatified on the same day that Osama bin Laden was killed. Perhaps the confluence of events is providential. As someone who lived under Nazism and Communism, John Paul was no stranger to terror or murder. But he also was a Christian who knew the centrality of forgiveness, even for the most grievous of crimes. In 1980, he was the victim of an assassination attempt by Mehmet Ali Agca, a Turkish ultra-nationalist. One of Blessed John Paul's first acts after his recovery was to journey to Agca's jail cell and offer him the costly grace of forgiveness.

Osama bin Laden was responsible for the murder of thousands of men and women in the United States, for the deaths and misery of many thousands across the world, and for the deaths of many servicemen and women, who made the supreme sacrifice of their lives. I am glad he has left the world. And I pray that his departure may lead to peace.

But as a Christian, I am asked to pray for him and, at some point, forgive him. And that command comes to us from Jesus, a man who was beaten, tortured and killed. That command comes from a man who knows a great deal about suffering. It also comes from God.

James Martin, SJ

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Comments

1. Maybe when Jesus prayed, "Father forgive them because they don't know what they do," it was a moment in which he himself could not forgive and he asked his Father to do it for him.

[Report comment](#)

Posted By [Molly Roach](#) | Monday, May 02, 2011 10:03:17 AM

2. I agree with Father Martin, but he may have to forgive me for celebrating this death as a victory that many have suffered and sacrificed to achieve.

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Posted By [Benefield](#) | Monday, May 02, 2011 10:03:44 AM

Thank you, Fr. Jim, for your heartfelt and wise post. I agree wholeheartedly with your comments here and with the statement released by the Vatican. As I said last night in my post, "[Death of Bin Laden: Not a Time to Celebrate. A Franciscan's Prayer for Peace](#)," I can understand the temptation to be swept up in the fervor of the catharsis experienced by so many U.S. citizens, yet as a Christian I cannot ever rejoice at the violent death of another human being. Either all life is sacred or no life is sacred. And I wish to echo your statement above:

3. "I am glad he has left the world. And I pray that his departure may lead to peace. But as a Christian, I am asked to pray for him and, ultimately, to forgive him. And that command comes to us from Jesus, a man who was beaten, tortured and killed. That command comes from a man who knows a great deal about suffering. It also comes from God."

Peace and all good!

[Report comment](#)

Posted By [Daniel Horan, OFM](#) | Monday, May 02, 2011 10:05:22 AM

Front Porch Republic (h/t Andrew Sullivan) has a worthwhile perspective on Bin Laden's death from Russell Arben Fox:

4. The moral plane of the universe is not somehow improved by the killing of a man. "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he is overthrown"—the author of Proverbs had it right. I believe all that ... but I still think he deserved it.

[Here's the full link.](#)

[Report comment](#)

Posted By [Steve Schewe](#) | Monday, May 02, 2011 10:33:25 AM

Fr. Martin,

5. I need help in dealing with my anger with terrorist leaders like Chesapeake Energy CEO Aubrey McClendon who aggressively poison the environment with the collusion of the state and federal governments they control. They have the power to ruin vast parts of



A MAGAZINE OF EVANGELICAL CONVICTION

ChristianityToday Politics Blog

May 8, 2011

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May 1, 2011 9:35PM

How Should Christians Respond to Osama bin Laden's Death?

Sarah Pulliam Bailey

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President Obama announced tonight that Osama bin Laden, leader of the group responsible for the September 11 attacks, was killed during an operation in Pakistan.

"On nights like this one, we can say that justice has been done." He emphasized Al Qaeda's distinctions from Islam. "The United States is not and never will be at war with Islam." Here's [a transcript](#) of the address.

It wasn't long before some Christians began tweeting about [Rob Bell's ideas](#) by wondering whether Osama bin Laden is in hell. Here's a sample of some other Christian pastors, bloggers, tweeters' reactions on Twitter along the themes of celebration/justice:

[Derek Webb](#): don't celebrate death, celebrate justice

[Jared Wilson](#) "the LORD had made them rejoice over their enemies." (2 Chron. 20:27). #prooftextingiseasy #theologynotsomuch

[Ed Stetzer](#): Now that bin Laden is gone, can we have our civil liberties back, send home the #TSA and restore the 4th Amendment?

[Esther Fleece](#): What's up with Christians tweeting verses like they are fortune cookies? This is not a simple discussion.

[Eugene Cho](#): May the world be united in pursuing peace. Blessed are the peacemakers.

[Jordan Sekulow](#): Crank this up as you celebrate the termination of bin Laden <http://t.co/N7K9X8u>

[Cameron Strang](#): I was with the president in the East Room 13 days ago with some Christian leaders. A tad less significant than what happened there tonight.

[Caryn Rivadeneira](#): Proud to be an American. Proud of the US special forces. Glad to see justice served. Not a fan of the cheering crowds.

[Abraham Piper](#): Osama Bin Laden is dead? I want to see the long-form death certificate.

[Rachel Held Evans](#): Trying to keep in mind that how I respond to the death of my enemies says as much about me as it does about my enemies.

[Mark Driscoll](#): The cheering crowds remind us that justice is glorious & comes ultimately through Jesus cross or hell. Justice wins <http://ow.ly/4KUXP>

CONTRIBUTORS

- [Sarah Pulliam Bailey](#)
- [Ted Olsen](#)
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Update:

Mark Tooley sent CT the following statement:

"All persons of good will can rejoice that the U.S. military has successfully ended Osama bin Laden's career of terror. Sadly, since 9-11, many church voices have insisted that Christianity mandates pacifism. Hopefully there will be greater appreciation for The Church's historic stance that God ordained the state to punish the wicked."

Justin Taylor: The Government's Sword as an Instrument of God's Wrath | "[A governing authority] not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer."
—Romans 13:4

CT did a cover story in 2002 on "[Islam a religion of peace?](#)"



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Posted by Sarah Pulliam Bailey on May 1, 2011 9:35PM

COMMENTS

We should never celebrate the death of another human being. Certainly, feelings of relief are appropriate. However, I would argue that as a Christian we should never have felt anxious or revengeful in the first place. Although his death was of top priority in this war and consequently seen as a victory, Christians should remember that whether or not Osama was of evil nature, God created him. Let us not rejoice in taking the life of God's creation for that is savagry. Nor should we take pride in a nation; our citizenship is in Heaven.

Posted by: Teresa at May 1, 2011

"I've never wished a man dead, but I have read some obituaries with great pleasure." - Mark Twain

Posted by: Mark Twain at May 1, 2011

America wins! FATALITY!

Posted by: Dion at May 2, 2011

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This is a tough place to draw a line...on the one side, a man's life has been taken. On the other hand though, a man who murdered hundreds and led many to follow him in these killings is now no longer a threat- not only to the U.S. but to the world.

I feel at peace with this news; and while I will not cite a memory verse like a "fortune cookie," I will say that I believe God wants us as Christians to take a stand against evil; to support, protect and care for the poor and orphaned. To guard those who are unable to guard themselves. In this act, we have done that. I congratulate the men and women who served this country in bringing that man to justice.

I do however, not agree with the way one newscaster explained the news this evening...He said that vengeance has been served. I do believe that vengeance is the Lord's and that we shouldn't have solely been seeking Osama out in order to enact vengeance. Again, he needed to be stopped, so that his thoughtless genocide did not continue.

Posted by: [Multnomah Mel](#) at May 2, 2011

Ezk 18:32 No death should ever be celebrated. The fact that these leaders in the American Church are celebrating death is revolting and they deserve a harsh rebuking. Who are we to not love our enemies? We are all enemies of the Lord, yet he loved those who put him up on the cross. Honestly the Word is the most powerful tool in discernment and is not a fortune cookie, contrary to popular belief.

Posted by: [Nicholas Nierste](#) at May 2, 2011

I think the first comment from Teresa is absolutely correct. Osama bin Laden did many evil things and did not know the love of God. Yet, as Christians we can never take delight in anyone's death, but we must mourn that Osama bin Laden never came to a relationship with Jesus Christ. God will now justly judge Osama bin Laden, yet just like with Israel in the Old Testament, God wishes that Osama bin Laden would have turned from his evil ways (Ezek. 33:11). Let us not celebrate, but mourn for a life who never accepted Jesus.

Posted by: [Danny](#) at May 2, 2011

Great minds must think alike, I just posted on my blog on the same topic. I have repented about my initial reaction and have used it to illustrate Jesus' love.

Posted by: [A New Creation](#) at May 2, 2011

Osama bin Laden chose to reject Jesus Christ while he lived. Instead, he chose terrorism as a way of life. Therefore, he gets exactly what he deserves, i.e. eternal death in hell forever. That is the truth taught in the Bible.

Posted by: [Andrew](#) at May 2, 2011

Obama indicates we are not at war with Islam, well somebody better be, the whole WORD Jihad is a Holy war waged against Christians and Jews. Obama is a fool, look what he has done to America since he has been in office, he deserves what bin laden recieved. Obama symphathizes with muslims and he does not deserve to be president of this nation. 6669.org
Wake up America! Repent, the time is at hand. Fo real.

Posted by: [stuxnet](#) at May 2, 2011

stuxnet: I absolutely do not agree with you. Contrary to what many unenlightened modern Christians may think, some sins ARE bigger than others, and there is scripture that supports this claim which I would be happy to e-mail to you if you'd like.
There are sins that completely destroy the lives of thousands; there are sins far more diabolical than what you've described. Do not say that crooked politicians are just as guilty as Osama. Although God IS the

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Hate Osama, But Do Not Rejoice in His Death

Posted: 05/ 2/11 01:11 AM ET

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A few moments after hearing that the United States military had killed Osama bin Laden, I quickly tweeted congratulations to President Obama, the American military, and the American people for having neutralized this monster. I added a second tweet that quoted the Bible, "Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles" (Proverbs 24:17). I mentioned that Bin Laden's death was not a cause for celebration or parades but rather a time for thanks and gratitude to G-d that evil had been rooted out and that innocents had been protected via the elimination of a cold-blooded killer intent on murdering the defenseless.

Within minutes my close friend Rosie O'Donnell tweeted to her followers, "Do rabbis condone violence -- war -- murder?"

The exchange between me and Rosie sparked a huge debate over Twitter. It's an important debate and I want to clarify my position as well as offer the Jewish values take on bin Laden's death.

Judaism stands alone as a world religion in its commandment to hate evil. Exhortations to hate all manner of evil abound in the Bible and God declares His detestation of those who visit cruelty on His children. Psalm 97 is emphatic: "You who love G-d must hate evil." Proverbs 8 declares, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil." Amos 5 demands, "Hate the evil and love the good." And Isaiah 5 warns, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil." And concerning the wicked King David declares unequivocally, "I have hated them with a perfect hatred. They are become enemies to me." (Psalm 139) Hatred is a valid emotion, the appropriate moral response, to the human encounter with inhuman cruelty. Mass murderers most elicit our deepest hatred and contempt.

On the other hand, the Bible also says that we are not to celebrate our enemy's demise. We do not dance over the body of a murderer like Osama bin Laden. Indeed, at the Passover Seder we Jews, upon mentioning the Ten Plagues, pour wine out of our glasses ten separate times to demonstrate that we will not raise a glass to the suffering of the Egyptians, even though they were engaged in genocide. Likewise, after the Red Sea split and drowned the Egyptians, Moses and the Jewish people sang 'The Song of the Sea.' Yet, the Talmud says that G-d himself rebuked the Israelites: 'My creatures are drowning in the sea, yet you have now decided to sing about it?'

We wish there never was evil in the world. It would have been far better for there never to have been a Pharaoh, a Hitler, or an Osama bin Laden. When Hitler blows his brains out in a Berlin bunker we give thanks to G-d that his unspeakable evil has finally come to an end. But who could possibly rejoice after so many innocents have died?

The same is true of 9/11. Three thousand people died. Are we now going to jump for joy that their killer has been brought to justice? No. This is a time to give thanks to G-d and show gratitude. But who can celebrate? Their families are still bereft. They are still missing. American soldiers continue to die in Iraq and Afghanistan. We do not gloat over the triumph over evil because its very existence must forever be mourned.

Many readers wrote to me that on Purim Jews celebrate the death of Haman. Incorrect. We celebrate the deliverance of an innocent people from genocide.

But for those who go further and quote to me Jesus' injunction that we are to love our enemies, I respond that to love murderers is to practice contempt against their victims. Those who do not hate bin Laden have been morally compromised. A member of the Taliban who cuts off a woman's nose and ears or an Al Qaeda terrorist who flies a plane into a building has cast off the image of G-d from their countenance and is no longer our human brother. They deserve not amnesty but abhorrence, not clemency but contempt. And since humans cannot bestow life, neither can they act in the place of G-d and forgive those who take life.

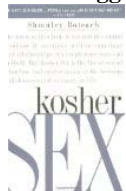
To my Christian brothers and sisters I say, as a Jew who has just completed a book about Jesus that is thoroughly sourced in the New Testament, that Jesus never meant to forgive G-d's enemies. His words are specific. He says to love your enemy. Your enemy is the guy who steals your parking space. G-d's enemies are those who blow up airplanes. Likewise, in advocating turning the other cheek Jesus never meant that if someone kills 3000 American citizens you are to allow him to kill 3000 British as well. Rather, Jesus meant to forgive petty slights rather than monstrous evil.

I do not believe in revenge, something the Bible explicitly prohibits. The ancient Jewish understanding of the Biblical injunction of 'an eye for an eye' was always financial restitution for the lost productivity of an eye rather than the barbaric taking of an organ itself. But I do believe in justice, and forgiving murder or loving a terrorist makes a mockery of human love and a shambles of human justice. The human capacity for love is limited enough without us making the reprehensible mistake of directing even a sliver of our heart away from the victims and toward their culprits.

Ecclesiastes expressed it best. There is not just a time to love but also a time to hate. I hate Osama bin Laden but I will not rejoice in his death. It would have been better for the world had he never been born. But once he was, and once he directed his life to unspeakable cruelty, it was necessary for him to be stopped and killed. And for that I give thanks to G-d and the brave soldiers of the American military for making the world a safer, more just, and innocent place.

Rabbi Shmuley Boteach is the author of 'Judaism for Everyone' and is founder of 'This World: The Values Network', which is now launching 'The American Institute of Jewish Values' to promote universal Jewish teachings in American media and culture. For more information write to info@ThisWorld.US

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[Kosher Sex: A Recipe for Passion and Intimacy](#)
by Shmuley Boteach



Report on Rabies death submitted

Rajhmundary, April 08: East Godavari collector M Ravi Chandra has sent a preliminary report to the government on the death of P Anusha.

The girl who was bitten by a stray dog on March 25, died on May 4 due to rabies. It was alleged that though her parents B Srinivas and Lakshmi took the girl to the government hospital soon after she was bitten by the dog, rabies vaccine was not administered to her due to lack of stock.

Anusha who was admitted to hospital with hydrophobia on Tuesday night, died after a few hours. In his report, the collector said there was no entry of Anusha's case in the hospital register in March. Her parents claimed that they took their daughter to the hospital on March 26 for administration of rabies vaccine. Later, they got a TT injection administered to her by a private doctor. Her parents said they could not afford to buy the injection.

The report said there was no stock of anti-rabies vaccine in the hospital between April 4 and 27. Earlier, the chief minister directed the collector to conduct an inquiry into the death of Anusha due to rabies, and submit a report.

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'Osama bin Gotten'

The case for joy.

Leon Wieseltier May 2, 2011 | 12:28 pm



A few days after September 11, 2001, my wife and I walked down to the White House. The city was stilled with grief and fear. It was not yet clear that the danger had passed. The airport was closed. On television the doomed planes kept crashing into the towers and the doomed towers kept collapsing, until the horror began to feel a little unreal. The flood of words, the immediate eruption of understanding and analysis, the unseemly triumph over shock and silence, was having a similar effect. To preserve the sting of reality, we left the house for the nervous city. Lafayette Park was almost deserted. The quiet knew nothing of peace. The empty sky was an emblem of dread. There were snipers on the roof of the White House, which suddenly had the aspect of a target. We sat on a bench as a small expression of resolve, as an act of solidarity with the normal life that seemed under threat, and with the struggle that was to come. The American insulation had come undone. It was one of those moments—our strong and lucky history has spared us many such grim epiphanies—when you recognize again how

much your country, how much this country, matters.

I thought of that bleak hour in Lafayette Park last night, when I stood in the same spot amid the reveling crowd. The news of Osama bin Laden's death had brought thousands of people, and hundreds of flags, to the gates of White House. They were young, diverse, and giddy. There were soldiers, Marines I think, among the cheering civilians. One smiling young man carried a small piece of paper that read "A Happy Muslim." Another sign, which caused no controversy, read "Brings the Troops Home," as nearby a big black man with a tiny trumpet played "When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again." A witty young woman held up the back of a pizza box on which she had written that Donald Trump wants to see Osama bin Laden's death certificate. Almost everybody was Twittering their excitement. (A Twittering mob is a less terrifying mob.) A lot of beer was drunk and spilled. The scene was boorish, of course. Triumphalism is often not a pretty thing. But still distinctions had to be made. This crowd burned nobody in effigy, nobody's flag, nobody's books. It had assembled to celebrate an entirely defensible act, whose justice could be proven on more than merely nationalistic grounds. After all, Osama bin Laden killed even more Muslims than Americans, and represented one of the most poisonous ideas of our time: the restoration, by means of sanctified violence, of a human world without rights. There is no decent man or woman anywhere—and the democratizing Arab street has shown this most starkly—who does not wish to see this armed political theology defeated. If any death justifies rejoicing, the death of Osama bin Laden does.

While I was satisfied with the universal grounds for the joy of the crowd, I confess that I was not desperately seeking it. The explosion of patriotism in Lafayette Park seemed to me also like a moral expression. For one thing, I was surprised, and delighted in a dark way, to discover that the wound of September 11 was still so fresh, not least for people who were young when the attack occurred: the pressures of American materialism, and of the manic American way of life, upon American collective memory are immense, and not even the two wars that we are fighting abroad, both of them legacies

of September 11, seem to have focused American attention for very long on the principles of our conflict with medievalist tyranny. Bin Laden himself no longer posed the threat that a decade ago he did; he was by now mainly a symbol of his evil, a figure whose power was chiefly mythic. But symbols and myths are also real, and the revelers in Lafayette Park had not forgotten the atrocity of a decade ago; and they knew, too, that, whatever the deterrent effect of bin Laden's destruction, justice had been done. The operation in Abbottabad was an act of revenge, certainly; but no mob had ever appeared at the gates of the White House calling for such revenge. It came only to affirm it when it was done. "Osama bin Gotten," as one sign said. The kids last night were not bloodthirsty. They were merely aware that we have enemies. There was nothing awry with their feeling that the enemy of their country was their enemy, too.

I did not go to Lafayette Square only to watch; I went also to join. I have always believed in the moral character of counter-terrorism (and in the attendant calculus of means and ends, of course); and I was elated by this vindication of counter-terrorism, boldly but also scrupulously executed. I reacted viscerally to President Obama's announcement, and in this case I have no apologies to make for my viscera. When the crowd outside the gates of the White House sang, more than once, more than twice, "The Star-Spangled Banner" and "God Bless America," I sang with them, more than once, more than twice. (I took a pass on "We Will Rock You.") No, the killing of Osama bin Laden is not a great strategic accomplishment. In the last ten years, the forces of reaction in the Muslim world have changed their configurations, and defeating them, which cannot be the work only of the United States, will be more difficult even than finding Osama bin Laden. There are many complicating things to say about the practical consequences of the action in Abbottabad. But we must not diminish what was achieved by three American helicopters yesterday. This symbolism—this evidence of the United States not desisting—is also real. Strategic objectives—security for the United States, liberalization for the Muslim societies—cannot be pursued when the sense of their purpose is frayed or exhausted; and insofar as the death of Osama bin Laden refreshes our memories, it refreshes our reasons. We would be small to think otherwise.

Leon Wieseltier is the literary editor of The New Republic.

Articles on the death of Osama bin Laden: Dalton Fury on the [near miss at Tora Bora](#); Lawrence F. Kaplan asks if we'll overestimate [the importance of bin Laden's death](#); Heather Hurlburt on the reasons [the U.S. was able to kill bin Laden](#); James Downie on the [legal justifications](#); Jonathan Kay on the [emergence of conspiracy theories](#); Paul Berman on [the symbolism of bin Laden's death](#) in the history of American democracy; Sean Wilentz asks if [bin Laden's demise will loosen the grip paranoid politics has on America](#); David Greenberg on [the only satisfying resolution possible](#) to the story of 9/11; Louis Klarevas asks if [the loss of bin Laden will hasten Al Qaeda's demise](#); Jonathan Chait on [what bin Laden's death means](#); a photo essay on [how America responded to the news](#) of bin Laden's death.

TNR Classics on bin Laden and Al Qaeda: Peter Bergen on [the Bush administration's failed attempt to capture bin Laden at Tora Bora](#), on the [troubling merger of the Taliban and Al Qaeda](#), on [Al Qaeda's revolt against bin Laden](#) (co-authored with Paul Cruickshank), how [bin Laden beat George W. Bush](#), and on [bin Laden's activities before 9/11](#); Nicholas Schmidle on [what the murder of a bin Laden confidant says about Pakistan](#); Michael Crowley on [Robert Gates](#); David Cole on [Obama's war on terror](#).

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