



## "Cross Connection"

Radio Ministry of Hope Wesleyan Church and Wells of Salvation Ministries  
Ultimate Oldies Radio – FM 97.7 and 101.5, Huber Heights, Ohio



Series: Christian Messages In Secular Music

12/04/08

Programs 60 & 61     **"With God On Our Side"**     © 1963 Bob Dylan

Think of this... the football teams from opposing Christian high schools gather in their respective locker rooms for prayer before the big game. Each team petitions God to bless them with a victory. Does God take sides in confrontations? How about in connection with wars among the world's nations? Does He still mete out judgments across our world through natural disasters? How would we know? Should it matter? In today's featured song, Bob Dylan asserts that he was taught that God sided with the United States throughout a series of wars. Let's consider what the Bible says.

### The Song <sup>1</sup>

- Written by Bob Dylan, released in 1964 album *The Times They Are A-Changin'*
- Lyrics generally address the common belief that God takes sides in war
- Written before conflicts in Viet Nam, Afghanistan and Iraq
- Dylan was accused of plagiarizing the melody from an Irish folk song
- Rarely performed in public by Dylan
- Covered by the Neville Brothers and Joan Baez, among others

### The Artist – Bob Dylan

- Legendary American songwriter who began career in folk music
- Sang "With God On Our Side" as duet with Joan Baez at 1964 Newport Folk Festival
  - Can be viewed on YouTube <sup>2</sup>
- See notes for programs 17 ("I Shall Be Released") and 32 ("I Believe In You") for additional background information on Bob Dylan

Oh my name it is nothin'  
 My age it means less  
 The country I come from  
 Is called the Midwest  
 I's taught and brought up there  
 The laws to abide  
 And that land that I live in  
 Has God on its side.

"When Christians say, "God bless America," they understand there is a connection between personal responsibility and faithfulness to God and the experience of divine blessing. This connection is explicit in God's promise in 2 Chronicles 7:14:

*"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."*

This promise originally applied to the believers in Israel but now applies to believers wherever they reside. It is not exclusive to Americans—it could apply to believers in England, Germany, Korea, Japan, Brazil, Guatemala, Mozambique, South Africa, or anywhere else."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/With\\_God\\_On\\_Our\\_Side](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/With_God_On_Our_Side)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lbw2GD0t3T4&feature=related>

<sup>3</sup> <http://erlc.com/article/what-does-god-bless-america-really-mean>

Oh the history books tell it  
They tell it so well  
The cavalries charged  
The Indians fell  
The cavalries charged  
The Indians died  
Oh the country was young  
With God on its side.

Oh the Spanish-American  
War had its day  
And the Civil War too  
Was soon laid away  
And the names of the heroes  
I's made to memorize  
With guns in their hands  
And God on their side.

Oh the First World War, boys  
It closed out its fate  
The reason for fighting  
I never got straight  
But I learned to accept it  
Accept it with pride  
For you don't count the dead  
When God's on your side.

When the Second World War  
Came to an end  
We forgave the Germans  
And we were friends  
Though they murdered six million  
In the ovens they fried  
The Germans now too  
Have God on their side.

I've learned to hate Russians  
All through my whole life  
If another war starts  
It's them we must fight  
To hate them and fear them  
To run and to hide  
And accept it all bravely  
With God on my side.

But now we got weapons  
Of the chemical dust  
If fire them we're forced to  
Then fire them we must

- Dylan tracks through several wars – including with Native Americans, the Civil War, Spain, and the two world wars

Does God “take sides” in these conflicts? Why or why not?

*“Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,  
the people he chose for his inheritance” – Psa. 33:12*

- When our leadership refers to another nation as being part of an “axis of evil”, what does that mean? What does that infer about our nation?
- Some theologians believe Satan’s hierarchy of minions includes territorial assignments (e.g., the “Prince of Persia” [see Daniel 10:13] who resisted an angel sent to minister to Daniel, requiring intervention of Michael the archangel)

- It is commonly asserted that our nation has migrated into a “Post-Christian Era”.

- Today our laws:
  - Permit killing unborn children on demand
  - Sanction taking the lives of “partially born” children
  - Allow destroying human embryos for research
  - Sanction prostitution (Nevada)
  - Support homosexual unions
  - Prohibit prayer in public school

People generally equate “legal” with “moral”. What are the implications of the above to our nation?

What does the Bible say about “double-mindedness”? (see James 1:5-8; James 4:7-10; Psalm 119:113)

*“I don't know where the unbiblical belief comes from that says a nation can live any way it pleases, can reject God and His ways – even mock Him – and not receive His judgments.” – Dutch Sheets<sup>4</sup>*

Consider for discussion...

- God used Assyria and Babylon to judge Israel
- God used the forces of Ai to route Israel in response to the disobedience of one man (Achan); see Joshua 7
- King Josiah and his forces were defeated by the King of Egypt (Neco) when God was “on the other side”. See 2 Chronicles 35:20:24

<sup>4</sup> From article “Dutch Sheets’ response to the recent Presidential election”, <http://www.dutchsheets.org/index.cfm>

One push of the button  
And a shot the world wide  
And you never ask questions  
When God's on your side.

In a many dark hour  
I've been thinkin' about this  
That Jesus Christ  
Was betrayed by a kiss  
But I can't think for you  
You'll have to decide  
Whether Judas Iscariot  
Had God on his side.

So now as I'm leavin'  
I'm weary as Hell  
The confusion I'm feelin'  
Ain't no tongue can tell  
The words fill my head  
And fall to the floor  
If God's on our side  
He'll stop the next war.

- What of Judas?
- Did God love him?
- Did Judas ever have "God on his side"?
- Why or why not?

What are our individual responsibilities with respect to war?

During the military draft, many declared they were "conscientious objectors" – i.e., to military service

*"Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God. So anyone who rebels against authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and they will be punished."* – Romans 13:1-2

*"...Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's..."* -- Mark 12:17

### **Final thoughts:**

Bob Dylan was only 22 when he wrote "With God On Our Side", yet he raised thorny issues that are continuously debated yet today. We may not have all the answers, but God's Word gives us some solid truths...

- God blesses nations "whose God is the LORD"
- He judges disobedience / ungodliness
- He does not tolerate double-mindedness
- He responds favorably to nations (no specific one) when His people repent and call on Him

*"...If God is for us, who can be against us?"*  
– Romans 8:31b, NIV

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