

SHOULD YOU



FIGHT IN WAR?

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What does the Bible teach us about our Christian responsibility when it comes to fighting for our country?

Is it correct, as some teach, that the Bible allows, if not *enjoins*, Christians to participate in the military and to engage in warfare, either to attack another country or to defend their own country against aggressors? Do the teachings of Christ and His followers allow, or even *demand*, that we take up arms to fight against those who want to harm and destroy us, our loved ones, or our nation?

Should a true follower of Christ participate in wars that are fought by the powers of this world, based on whatever “logical” reasoning would lead to justification for such action?

WHAT CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS SAY

Before we look at the very clear teachings of the Bible, let us review a few statements from civil and religious leaders that address this subject. Consider whether you would agree or disagree with the following quotes:

Pope Pius XII declared at the beginning of World War II: “Everything is gained by peace, nothing is gained by war.”

Shortly after the end of World War II, General Omar Bradley had this to say: “The world has achieved... power without conscience. Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing than we know about living.” He also said: “We have built the atom bomb, but forgotten the Sermon on the Mount.”

Pope Paul VI stated in 1965 during a UN assembly: “If you want to be brothers, put your weapons down. You cannot love with aggressive weapons in your hands.”

Dwight D. Eisenhower expressed his viewpoint in this way: “There is only one solution for our generation: It is the return to a life based on Christ’s Sermon on the Mount.”

Martin Luther King, Jr. said in his sermon, “The Most Durable Power”: “Always avoid violence. If you succumb to the temptation of using violence in your struggle, unborn generations will be recipients of

a long and desolate night of bitterness, and your chief legacy to the future will be an endless reign of meaningless chaos.”

On the other hand, former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt said: “You cannot rule a country with the Sermon on the Mount.”

A Catholic Catechism, published in 1975 in Switzerland, stated: “The injunctions in the Sermon on the Mount are not to be taken literally, as this would lead to unacceptable circumstances both in private and public life.”

The *Book of Common Prayers* reasoned: “It is lawful for Christian men, at the commandment of the Magistrate, to wear weapons, and serve in the wars.”

Francis A. Schaeffer said in “*A Christian Manifesto*”: “I am not a pacifist because pacifism in this fallen world in which we live means that we desert the people who need our greatest help.”

C.S. Lewis wrote in “*Mere Christianity*”: “Does loving your enemy mean not punishing him? No, for loving myself does not mean that I ought not to subject myself to punishment—even to death. If one had committed a murder, the right Christian thing to do would be to give yourself up to the police and be hanged. It is, therefore, in my opinion, perfectly right for a Christian judge to sentence a man to death or a Christian soldier to kill an enemy.”

Who is right? Would you agree with any of these?

Is it “perfectly right” for a Christian to sit in judgment over another person—be it as a judge or a juror? Is it “perfectly right” for a Christian to kill another person—be it as a soldier or as a policeman? And what about innocent bystanders—the proverbial, unavoidable “casualties of war”?

Albert Einstein noted: “Mere lip services for peace are easy, but without effect. What we need is active participation in a fight against war and everything leading to war.”

TERRIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF WAR

Throughout this booklet, we will consider some interesting quotes from famous persons who might have understood something regarding the issue of war and peace, which sadly, most people have failed to comprehend. However, regardless of the conclusions of our discussion, one fact should be clear: Every war has terrible consequences, both economically and in terms of human suffering and pain.

On October 26, 2004, the *Washington Post* reported: “Yale University economist William D. Nordhaus estimated that in inflation-adjusted terms, World War I cost just under \$200 billion for the United States. The Vietnam War cost about \$500 billion from 1964 to 1972, Nordhaus said. The cost of the Iraq war could reach nearly half that number by next fall, 2 1/2 years after it began.”

Der Stern Online published a shocking article, describing the *terrible psychological consequences* for soldiers returning from war. The article was published on July 15, 2004, and was titled, “The Trauma of War.” Doctors and scientists examined German soldiers returning from Kosovo and Afghanistan, and reported their frightening and disturbing findings: “Some say that they beat their children, when helping them with their school work—something that they had never done before... In other cases, they show no more emotions, neither joy nor sadness... Many try desperately to forget the past. They withdraw, drink or take drugs. Some become depressive and avoid their friends... In extreme cases, returning soldiers go berserk and kill others.” The article also pointed out that “traumatic developments, following experiences in war, can be proven bio-chemically in the brain.”

On May 7, 2004, ABC News published an insightful article, discussing the *horrible effects* of war. The article stated (emphasis supplied):

“The specifics of the incidents at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq [where Iraqi prisoners were tortured by U.S. soldiers] remain to be sorted out. But the answer seems apparent for experts in the psychology of war and other mental health professionals contacted by ABC NEWS—**such behavior is not uncommon in a time of military conflict and the potential to abuse others may lie in all of us.** ‘In war, things do happen, often from emotion of the moment, exhaustion, frustration—a buddy killed, a unit hurt,’ maintains Samuel Watson, a former infantry officer in the Vietnam War who is now associate professor of public health at [the] University of Pittsburgh... And Dr. Carlyle Chan, professor of psychiatry at [the] Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, says prisoner abuse is probably more prevalent than we would like to believe, **given the trauma soldiers can experience.**”

The article continued to ask: “What drives soldiers to abuse others in time of war? The key, believe these experts, is ‘the **MILITARY CULTURE**’ the soldiers and guards were immersed in. **In war, ‘the**

enemy is not represented as a similar human being to oneself, but rather as a **brute who is savage and single-minded in destructive intentions,**' says Rona M. Fields, director for cognitive sciences at the Center for Advanced Defense Studies at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. This **depersonalization,** explains Evans, is a psychological defense against the horrible events soldiers witness during war. But **once the enemy is seen as LESS THAN HUMAN, it can be easy to treat them accordingly.**

"Another motivation for U.S. soldiers to mistreat Iraqi prisoners may have been simple **RETALIATION,** suggests Dr. Paul Ragan, a Navy psychiatrist during Desert Storm and now associate professor of psychiatry at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn. "The emotional center of the brain, or the limbic system, wants to strike back..."

ABC News asked this question: "But what if the leadership itself is commanding soldiers to behave in abusive ways? Would normal individuals be willing to follow morally abhorrent orders?"

The history of man has proven that the answer, tragically, is affirmative. Nazis, working at and supervising concentration camps, defended their brutal tortures and murders with these words: "I only followed orders." And so, ABC News continued, in quoting another expert: "**Ordinary people,** simply doing their jobs, and without any particular hostility on their part, **can become agents in a terrible destructive process...** [even] when the destructive effects of their work become patently clear, and they are asked to carry out actions incompatible with fundamental standards of morality."

THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING ON WAR

What, then, is the Biblical view of war? We will first look at the very clear and decisive teachings on the issue of war and peace in the New Testament.

As a general truism, we are encouraged by Christ, as well as His apostles after His resurrection, **to live in peace with ALL men.** This includes, of course, a prohibition to fight against others, or to retaliate, or even to condemn. Romans 12:17–21 says: "Repay *no one* evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of *all men*. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live *peaceably with all men*. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to [God's] wrath; for it is

written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. Therefore, ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but *overcome evil with good.*”

We are told to overcome evil with good. We are also told that this means, NOT to avenge ourselves, but rather, to give our enemy food and drink. Obviously, this is telling us that we are not to kill him. That would be “evil.” Rather, we are to overcome evil with “good.” In feeding our enemy, we heap coals of fire on his head; that is, he will see our good deeds and he will be embarrassed when considering his animosity toward us, compared with our good will toward him.

This Biblical *principle* teaches HOW to overcome evil with good, not by using a weapon and killing the person [which is evil], but by helping and providing for him [which is good].

Romans 14:19 tells us: “Therefore let us pursue the *things which make for peace* and the things by which one may edify another.” And 1 Peter 3:8–12 adds: “Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. For ‘He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit. *Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it.* For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.”

Notice that NOT seeking peace and pursuing it is labeled as “*evil.*” Refraining our tongues from evil means to refrain from speaking evil about our enemy. **Each war begins with words, with propaganda, with hateful comments about others,** until a government’s decision to attack and fight against a foreign country—the enemy—seems to be justified in the eyes of the citizens. As a prime example, Adolph Hitler could never have convinced many Germans to approve of “total war,” if his propaganda machine, under Joseph Goebbels, had not carefully prepared them, far in advance, for such a viewpoint.

God says in His Word that He considers us to be righteous when we turn away from evil or when we refrain from saying or doing evil against others. But just refraining from evil is only half of the picture. We must

complete the picture by truly *seeking* peace by actively *pursuing* it, in effect, *making* peace. We must want peace enough to make the effort to create it, and you can be sure, such an effort will be plainly evident in both our words AND our actions.

A German TV moderator, Dr. Franz Alt, wrote a book, “*Peace Is Possible*,” in which he addressed the way to peace and the way to war, as follows: “Nothing is without consequence. Long before a war breaks out, it has been prepared, that is, it has begun before *in the minds of the people and the media*... Our history books are dominated by Alexander and Caesar, Nero and Napoleon, Hitler and Stalin. **Jesus...[is] just a footnote**... We learn the wrong things about the wrong people. **We focus too much on the representatives of violence** and too little on the important and sense-giving people... What has more reality for us—the faith in God or in weapons? Whom do we trust more—the Son of God or world powers? Whom do we hope to receive salvation from—the Spirit which makes alive or the weapons which bring death?”

THE WAY OF PEACE

Let us consider what Christ’s half-brother, James, tells us in James 3:18: “Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who *make peace*.”

Here, we see the relationship between righteousness—or right living—and the creation of peace. Christ teaches us in Matthew 5:6–10: “Blessed are those who *hunger and thirst for righteousness*, For they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the *pure in heart*, For they shall see God. *Blessed are the peacemakers*, For they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

When we *hunger and thirst for righteousness*, as evidenced by not hurting others through our words or actions, we are showing mercy toward them. *Our hearts will become purer and purer* when we live Christ’s way of mercy, compassion and peace. We will become more and more successful in substituting God’s pure word for the wrong concepts of this world, which falsely teach that anger, condemnation, and ultimately war, is the answer to our problems.

Consider these famous words from General Douglas McArthur that

he uttered at the end of World War II: “It must be of the spirit [that is, we need a *new way of thinking*] if we are to save the flesh.”

Albert Einstein said something similar, when discussing the destructiveness of nuclear bombs: “A *new way of thinking* is inevitable if mankind wants to survive and prosper.”

Sadly, the vast majority of mankind has not subscribed to this new way of thinking which was revealed in the Bible thousands of years ago.

Rather, mankind has followed the philosophy of war—a philosophy expressed, for example, by Mao-Tse-Tung in this way: “We want to get rid of war—we don’t want war. But we can only get rid of war through war. If we don’t want guns, we must take up guns.”

This wrong philosophy has not brought peace, and it will never bring peace. On the other hand, Mahatma Ghandi understood something that most people don’t when he said, “Absence of violence is not a sign of weakness, but it is the weapon of a brave heart.”

The purity of God’s doctrine will convince us to become peacemakers. Ironically, *when we advocate peace, pursue and practice it, we can expect persecution* from others who believe in and teach the concept of war. But if we want to be children of God, we must be *peacemakers*—we must teach and live the way that leads to peace. We must reject the opposite way, which only brings about war, misery and death. **As true followers of Christ, we must not participate in war in any manner, shape or form.**

Christ tells us very clearly what He means when He commands us NOT to fight our enemies—but to live in peace with them. He said in 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**, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” (Compare, too, Luke 6:27–28, 35–36.)

Let us ask ourselves: How do those teachings match up with the philosophy of hate and war—the concept that we must forcefully avenge ourselves against those who have overtaken us; who are trying to rob us of our land and possessions; who are in the process of suppressing our ideals and our philosophy?

“War or Peace—Which?”

How accustomed have we become to war? Would we agree with most people that our wars—although perhaps undesirable—are nevertheless necessities? Do we believe that our wars will solve at least some of our problems, and that they will bring lasting peace? Are we prepared to accept the death of thousands of innocent people in the course of man’s wars, thinking that these “casualties” are necessary by-products for the ultimate goal of peace?

The Bible tells us that Satan has deceived this whole world (Revelation 12:9). It is Satan, the author of war, who has caused man to think that destruction can produce construction—that war can result in peace.

Man wants peace. But, man does not know how to achieve it. Even so-called peace talks do not result in lasting peace and brotherhood. Paul tells us in Romans 3:11, 15–17: “There is none who understands... Their feet are swift to shed blood; Destruction and misery are in their ways; And the way of peace they have not known.” Peter was willing to kill with the sword to defend Jesus. His Master had to tell him: “Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword” (Matthew 26:52). This same message is repeated in Revelation 13:10: “...he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword.” When James and John, the “sons of thunder,” were prepared to call fire from heaven to devour the Samaritans, Christ rebuked them with these words, “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save

them” (Luke 9:55–56).

6000 years of human history of pain and misery have proven that our wars do not bring peace, but only result in more wars. Just looking at the last century, we know that there would not have been a Second World War without the first. And as prophecy reveals to us, there will be, in the near future, a Third World War—the deadliest of them all—caused to a large extent by the last two wars. Indeed, wars only breed more wars. Man is not capable of ending all wars!

God has given His people understanding, including the understanding that the way of peace is not found through the wars of men. God will send Jesus Christ back to this earth to END ALL WARS (Psalm 46:9). In the Kingdom of God—the government of God under the rulership of Christ, ON THIS EARTH—man will not learn to fight in war anymore (Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3). Christ is called the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), and we are told that of the increase of His peace, there will be no end (Isaiah 9:7; compare Psalm 72:7).

Christ has commissioned His Church to proclaim His way of peace to all nations (Ephesians 6:15; Acts 10:36). This means that we must be living this way ourselves! As His true disciples, we will not participate in any war fought by men AND we will not even advocate such wars. We will not allow ourselves to become deceived again, thinking that any human war is justified. Rather, we will counsel peace (Compare Proverbs 12:20: “Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil, but counselors of

peace have joy"). We will be found doing today what Jesus Christ will do when He rules on the earth: We will "speak peace to the nations" (Zechariah 9:10).

God's way of peace and Satan's way of war are total opposites. A true Christian will not practice or endorse anything that will bring destruction and pain for others—and war ALWAYS brings destruction and pain for others, as is self-evident. *Our conscience must object to human warfare.* That is why we are called "conscientious objectors." Notice Christ's commission to His end-time Church: "Behold, on the mountains The feet of him who brings good tidings, Who proclaims peace!" (Nahum 1:15; compare Romans 10:15).

Christ has enabled us to proclaim peace to others because Christ has given us HIS PEACE to dwell in us (John 14:27; compare Colossians 3:15) through His Holy Spirit. Christ guides our feet into the way of peace (Luke 1:79)—far away from the destructive road of war. We are called to "follow peace with all men" (Hebrews 12:14, *Authorized Version*), knowing that peace will be given to us if we are peacemakers (James 3:18; compare Matthew 5:9). If we ourselves "seek peace and pursue it" (1 Peter 3:11), if we make every effort, "as much as depends" on us, to "live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18), then we can be used by Christ as His ambassadors of peace. We are to represent His government, His kingdom, His rulership, and as such, we cannot participate—neither in word nor in deed—in this world's ways of war.

We are to live and proclaim a way of GIVE. The wars of this world are the result of the way of GET. James 4:1–2 tells us, "Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?... You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask."

Why does man go to war against his neighbor? Because he wants what his neighbor has, or he wants to make sure that his neighbor does not get what he has. At the same time, he does not ask God for help, and even if he does ask, he does not live the way God wants him to. God promises us in Proverbs 16:7: "When a man's ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him."

When our enemy is hungry and thirsty, we are to give him to eat and to drink, thereby heaping "coals of fire on his head" (Proverbs 25:22; Romans 12:20). The carnal mind says, "This does not work. One cannot rule a country with the Sermon on the Mount." And so, man has never really tried to live this way of life. Rather, man has chosen Satan's way of war, destruction and death, and as a consequence, man is now facing the distinct possibility of eradicating all human life from off the face of this earth.

God's disciples—His children—MUST be different. We have a unique opportunity today to preach peace to the world—by our words AND by our deeds. Perhaps some will listen and try it out in their lives. What a surprise they will experience when they find out that God's Way of Life DOES work!

Christ advocated a peaceful way of life, **leaving it to God the Father to bring vengeance upon His enemies, and we must do the same!** The Bible explains to us the only way to peace, a way which we **MUST** learn and put into practice. That way has never been taught, nor applied, by man in general. Rather, the world would have us believe that “That way does not work.” Even professing Christianity often teaches that it won’t be practical until everyone else is already living that way. But Christ tells us something altogether different and if we **SAY** that we are Christ’s disciples—the true followers of Christ—then we must **DO** what He commands. Remember what Christ said: “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do [let alone, believe] the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).

Professor Dr. Rossi, a Seventh-Day Adventist in Switzerland, wrote in *Conscience and Liberty*: “Wars begin within the spirit of man, and it is within that spirit that the battle for life and peace must be won.”

John the Baptist was called by God to teach man the way to peace. We read the following prophecy about him in Luke 1:76, 79: “And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways... To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, *To guide our feet **into** the way of peace.*”

Let us notice a striking example of *how John guided people “into the way of peace.”* When Roman soldiers came to him, asking him what to do, he told them: “Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages” (Luke 3:14). *The Authorized Version* says here: “Do violence to no man...” If they were not allowed to do *violence* to anyone, they were most certainly not allowed to *kill* their enemies in war.

Jesus Christ came to proclaim peace—and the **WAY** to peace—not war. Acts 10:36 tells us that God the Father was “preaching *peace* through Jesus Christ.” God wants man to understand the way to peace, but sadly, most have refused to accept Christ’s teachings. And it is even more sad that most people today, *professing* to be Christians, continue to refuse to actually **ACCEPT** and **PRACTICE** Christ’s teachings on war and peace. His teachings are very simple. They are not difficult to understand, but people who are not willing to accept them, have tried to make them very complicated.

At one time, Christ lamented the fact that ancient Jerusalem did not know the way to peace. This is still true today. We read in

Luke 19:41–42: “Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, ‘If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are *hidden* from your eyes.’”

The way of peace was hidden from their eyes because of not having a desire to open their eyes to see what Christ showed them. What about our eyes, our minds, our hearts? Are they open, or are they still closed?

Unless mankind allows God to open their eyes, man cannot know or understand the way to peace. Paul commented on this fact, in Romans 3:17. That is the reason we don’t have peace today. Man has pursued the way of hate, revenge and war, as so vividly described by Paul in Romans 3:10–16. The true reason for all this evil is found in verse 18: “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

The way of war is totally opposite to the way of peace. This should be obvious when we consider where wars come from, how they originate, and why.

THE ORIGIN OF WAR

James 4:1–4 clearly explains the origin of war: “*Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*”

James calls us friends of this world, when we participate in wars and fights. During times of patriotic and nationalistic euphoria—when one is called upon to be part of the crowd, the people, the nation, in order to support, advocate, and endorse “our nation’s” war—one can easily be considered to be an “enemy” when that person stands out as a conscientious objector. Doubts will arise and questions may be asked, such as, “Is that person perhaps a secret spy, a secret supporter of the enemy, a traitor, a deserter or even a coward?”

We might think in this context of the prophet Jeremiah. He taught the Jews not to fight the Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar, but rather, to surrender, as God had decreed that sinful Jerusalem should fall into

the hands of the king of Babylon (Jeremiah 27:1–22). The king and the people of Judah did not like that message, and so, they imprisoned Jeremiah, charging him wrongly with being a traitor (compare Jeremiah 37:1–16).

On the other hand, when one strongly advocates war along with everyone else, that person is immediately considered to be a patriot. But we must understand that the war-waging nations of this day and age *belong to this world*, not to God’s future world to come, when He will rule the nations. This is a world in which times of peace are the exception and times of war are the rule. This is a world that may view a particular action as a capital crime of murder in times of peace, while it may declare it as an heroic act of liberation in times of war. However, the Bible says that if we are friends with the world (the world’s ways), we will be enemies of God.

Let us quote here from another influential proponent of peace, a true Christian who was even called by national and international politicians and governmental leaders an “unofficial ambassador for peace,” and a “builder of bridges between the nations.” That man was Herbert W. Armstrong, who wrote many books and booklets until his death in 1986. We are quoting excerpts from his booklet, “*Military Service and War*,” which was written in 1967 and republished in 1985 (pp. 54, 65, 67, 68, 70; emphasis in the original):

“War is so *needless*. War is **WRONG!**... Nearly all the really great religious and political leaders of the world have acknowledged the utter **FUTILITY** of war... More lives have been snuffed out prematurely, more suffering has been endured, more homes have been wrecked and broken, more time and property has been utterly wasted because of the scourge of war than through any other means in the history of man! And war has **NEVER** solved the problems of men or brought permanent peace. Instead, it *only breeds more war!*... Countless millions of lives are killed or crippled or ruined. And millions of young men are taught to become effective killers—*murderers!* Indeed, one of the most devastating indictments against war is that it breeds in whole populations the spirit of *violence* and **MURDER**... More than any other one thing, war breeds the *spirit of murder!* And that evil spirit is growing and increasing throughout the world today... War involves *learning* to hate and kill!... we must realize that the spirit of war is the spirit of **MURDER**—and avoid it with all of our strength...”

In an earlier article of September of 1939, Herbert Armstrong stated the following (emphasis omitted): “God commands us not to fight or kill, whether for Caesar, or anyone else.... God’s laws forbid fighting, strife, or murder... Christ did condemn strife, fighting, killing, hating... I cannot personally participate in war or killing... I cannot bear arms or participate in war... Politics and war, even though the other nation be in the wrong and the evildoer, are of the world... [I object to killing because] it is sin, the penalty of which is death... It is wrong, because God condemns it, and I believe He condemns it because it only results in human suffering and misery and death. I believe no one ever WINS a war—it is, at most, only a matter of which side is the heavier loser. I believe God’s ways are RIGHT.”

KILLING IN WAR BREAKS THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Some have said that killing in war is not in violation of the Ten Commandments. However, James 4:1–2 proves that, according to the Bible, killing in war IS murder. In that passage, which deals with war, James equates war in verse 2 with “murder” when he says, “You *murder* and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and *war*.” The Greek word used for “murder” is “*phoneuo*.” Jesus uses the same word in Matthew 5:21, quoting one of the Ten Commandments (“You shall not *kill*” or “*murder*”—in Greek, “*phoneuo*.”) So both Jesus and James make it clear that **the commandment, “You shall not kill,” does include the commandment against killing in war.**

This can also be seen when considering Christ’s statement in Luke 22:36–38, where He asked the disciples to buy swords. Why did He do that? So that prophecy could be fulfilled. And what was the prophecy that had to be fulfilled? That He, Christ, would be numbered with the transgressors. What transgression were the disciples guilty of? That of attempted murder when Peter took the sword to defend the innocent Christ against an illegal arrest. (For a detailed discussion of this passage, see the accompanying box on the next page) Not that the disciples did have swords, and the fact that Peter would later use a sword to injure or perhaps kill someone else, constituted “transgression.” It constituted sin, since sin is the transgression of the law, the Ten Commandments (compare 1 John 3:4, *Authorized Version*).

Q How do you explain Luke 22:35–38? Doesn't this passage allow, if not command, Christian warfare?

A Luke 22:35–38 reads in context: "And He said to them, 'When I sent you without money bag, knapsack, and sandals, did you lack anything?' So they said, 'Nothing.' [God took care of them.] Then He said to them, 'But now, he who has a money bag, let him take it, and likewise a knapsack; and he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. For I say to you that this which is written must still be accomplished in Me: "And He was numbered with the transgressors." For the things concerning Me have an end.' So they said: 'Lord, look, here are two swords.' And He said to them: 'It is enough.'"

This passage cannot be used to justify participation of a Christian to fight in war. In fact, the passage teaches the exact opposite. First of all, "two swords" would hardly be enough for Christ's disciples to defend themselves against the coming Roman persecution. Secondly, Christ Himself makes clear why they were to buy swords. It was **so that the prophecy regarding Him could be fulfilled**. What specific prophetic saying had to be fulfilled? "And **He was numbered with the transgressors.**" What transgression did the disciples—who had swords—become guilty of?

Note, first, that sin is the *trans-*

gression of the law (1 John 3:4, *Authorized Version*). We read, in Matthew 26:51, that Peter took the sword and struck the servant in order to "defend" Christ. When he did that, he became guilty of the transgression of the spirit of the sixth commandment (Exodus 20:13; 1 John 3:15; Matthew 5:21–22; Matthew 5:43–48; Luke 6:27–36). Notice Matthew 26:51–52: "And suddenly, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. But Jesus said to him, 'Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.'"

Christ does not advocate that His disciples take up weapons to defend themselves, or others, in war. Note His clear statement, "ALL who take the sword will PERISH by the sword." When Peter took the sword to harm or kill another human being, he became a transgressor of the law. The other disciples had undoubtedly similar feelings as Peter, supporting his conduct in their minds. They were all with Christ, so then, Christ was "**numbered with the transgressors.**"

We must also realize that at that time, neither Peter nor any of Christ's disciples were converted. Their attitude and conduct changed, however,

after their conversion (compare, for example, 1 Peter 2:21–23). We also read in James 4:1–3 that the origin of wars comes from “our desires for pleasure that war” in our members. Verse 4 continues, “Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?” James tells us here that we become “enemies” of God if we are friends with this world, including joining the war machine of this world.

Returning to Matthew 26, Christ goes on to explain that His protection does not come from men, but from God. Verse 53 reads: “Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?” He continues, however, “How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?” (Verse 54). The point is, God could have protected Him, but it was not God’s time for His intervention. Jesus made a similar comment in John 18:36, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants [twelve legions of angels whom the Father would have sent for His protection] would fight, so that I would not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.” Christ was not talking here about His few disciples who had only two swords—they could hardly have prevented Jesus’ arrest by “a great multitude with

swords and clubs” (Matthew 26:47).

Christ’s disciples are not to participate in war. Our Master tells us, “Put your sword in his place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.” We who believe in Christ and His Word, are not to perish, but to have everlasting life (John 3:15).

We read a similar warning and admonition in Revelation 13:10. The context is a coming persecution of the saints by the beast power—a mighty military power bloc still to arise in Europe (verse 7). Christ introduces His warning in this way, “If anyone has an ear, let him hear” (verse 9). Then, He says, “He who leads into captivity [including through the means of war], shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword.” Christ warns HIS END-TIME CHURCH NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN WAR. He continues, “Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.”

Christ’s true disciples will have the **patience** to endure, even war, without resorting to violence and responding in like manner. They will have the **faith** that GOD can and will protect them, even in the face of adversity, and that they must never transgress His law.

So we see that Luke 22:35–38 does not teach us that we must arm ourselves to protect ourselves in war. Rather, if we did that, we would be “transgressors” in the eyes of God.

Just as John the Baptist and Christ proclaimed and taught peace, so we, too, must be willing, even in light of adversity and persecution, to actively *work* for peace. In Ephesians 6:15, Paul includes in the armor of God, which we are to wear, “feet [shod] with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” The gospel of the Kingdom of God is also called a gospel of peace, as it announces a future time of peace when there will be absolutely no more war—a time that has not been experienced in all of the history of mankind from the time Cain slew his brother, Abel!

A FUTURE PEACEFUL WORLD

Let us review some of the remarkable prophecies that reveal a time when the world will look much different than it does today. While we are reading, let us ask ourselves how those Biblical passages also apply to us in this present world. We are called to be *ambassadors of Christ*—representatives of God’s Kingdom which will soon be established on this earth. We are to be *pioneers* of a future better world! *Our lives today are supposed to reflect how all of mankind will live their lives in that future better world.*

Isaiah 28:6 explains that rather than stirring up strife or fighting in war, God’s people will “turn back the battle at the gate.” This is what God’s people should be doing now. They are to be peacemakers, not warmongers. We are to proclaim peace today, not only in words but in our actions, as Isaiah 52:7 clearly shows: “How beautiful upon the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who proclaims peace...”

When God’s reign on this earth begins, that proclaimed peace will have become reality. People will not join the military to learn how to hate the enemy and how to fight in war; rather, they will be taught how to live in peace. Isaiah 2:2–4 prophesies: “Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the LORD’S house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the LAW [including the law which says: “You shall not kill”], and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; NATION SHALL NOT LIFT UP SWORD AGAINST

NATION, NEITHER SHALL THEY **LEARN** WAR ANYMORE.”

When Christ, who is called the Prince of Peace, begins His rule on this earth, He will not allow wars to be fought any more. Yes, Christ will make an **END** to all wars, as we read in Isaiah 9:5–7: “For every warrior’s sandal from the noisy battle, And garments rolled in blood, Will be used for burning and fuel of fire. **FOR** unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the **GOVERNMENT WILL BE UPON HIS SHOULDER**. And His name will be called... Prince of Peace. Of the **INCREASE** of His **GOVERNMENT AND PEACE** There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom... From that time forward, even forever.”

If we understand correctly the purpose of Christ’s future Second Coming, we realize that Christ will not return to fight in war, but to **END ALL** wars. Psalms 46:9 states: “He makes wars **CEASE** to the **END OF THE EARTH**; He **BREAKS** the **BOW** and **CUTS THE SPEAR IN TWO**; He **BURNS THE CHARIOT** in the fire.” Christ will come to **scatter** those who delight in war (compare Psalm 68:30).

God will not help people through the means of war. Hosea 1:7 predicts: “Yet I will have mercy on the house of Judah, Will save them by the **LORD** their God, And will **NOT** save them **BY BOW**, Nor by **SWORD** or **BATTLE**, By horses or horsemen.” Rather, God will destroy all weapons and instruments of war, as Hosea 2:18 explains: “... Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth, To make them lie down safely.”

In Zechariah 9:10, God repeats this future prophecy, as follows: “I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim And the horse from Jerusalem; The battle bow shall be cut off. *He shall speak peace to the nations*; His dominion shall be from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.”

Men, at that time, will listen to God and will destroy their weapons. We read in the second chapter of the book of Isaiah that they will beat their swords into plowshares. Ezekiel 39:9–10 confirms this fact: “Then those who dwell in the cities of Israel will go out and *set on fire and burn the weapons*, both the shields and bucklers, the bows and arrows, the javelins and spears... They will not take wood from the field nor cut down any from the forests, because *they will make fires with the weapons*...”

THE CHRISTIAN DUTY—TODAY!

True Christians need to understand that they must already have

Peace on Earth?

We oftentimes hear those most familiar words, "Peace on earth, good will toward men." Leaders of the free world continually speak of this ideal of peace between nations. And yet, it seems whatever course these well meaning leaders take in this regard, peace continues to elude them.

As we examine the conditions in the world, between men and between nations, we find conflict, we find turmoil, and we find a world devoid of the peace that is so keenly desired. Why is that? Why, with so much effort being put forth in the form of negotiations between nations, and with the religious leaders in much of the world speaking continually of peace, does peace continually elude the nations of the world? Why is the reality so far removed from the ideal?

The *Authorized Version* of the Bible states that there was "...a multitude of the 'heavenly' host praising God, and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men'" (Luke 2:13–14). But what is the real meaning of this message that was proclaimed to the shepherds as they tended their flocks on that very eventful, autumn night some two thousand years ago?

The *Amplified Bible* more correctly translates this Scripture (Luke 2:14), as follows: "Glory to God in the highest [heaven], and on earth peace among men with whom He is well-pleased—men of good will, of His favor."

The *Living Bible* quotes the Scripture in a similar fashion: "Glory to God in the highest heaven ... and

peace on earth for all those pleasing him."

The *Ryrie Study Bible* notes that this phrase, "good will toward men," would more accurately be translated, "among men with whom He is pleased." *Ryrie* goes further to say: "The peace promised is not given universally to men who possess good will toward God but individually to men who are the recipients of His favor and grace."

Adam Clark's *Commentary on the Holy Bible* states, in reference to this passage which reads, "Peace, good will toward men," that "Men are in a state of hostility with Heaven and with each other. The carnal mind is enmity against God. He who sins wars against his Maker. When men become reconciled to God, through the death of His Son, they love one another. They have peace with God, peace in their own consciences, and peace with their neighbors; good will dwells among them, speaks in them, and works by them."

Jesus Christ states in the book of Matthew: "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be those of his own household" (Matthew 10:34–36). At the time of Christ's First Coming, He did not bring universal peace to this world. One of the purposes for His coming was to establish His Church, calling some out of this world to acquire and develop a different mindset. Christ predicted that

this would cause conflict with those not called by God.

But how does one receive favor and grace from Almighty God? One must learn the way to peace! Notice, from the book of Isaiah: "Their feet run to evil, And they make haste to shed innocent blood; Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; Wasting and destruction are in their paths. The way of peace they have not known, And there is no justice in their ways; They have made themselves crooked paths; Whoever takes that way shall not know peace" (Isaiah 59:7–8).

And from the book of Jeremiah: "Because from the least of them even to the greatest of them, Everyone is given to covetousness; And from the prophet even to the priest, Everyone deals falsely. They have also healed the hurt [margin: crushing] of My people slightly [margin: superficially], Saying, 'Peace, peace!' When there is no peace" (Jeremiah 6:13–14).

Ezekiel prophesies for the end-time: "Destruction comes; They will seek peace, but there shall be none" (Ezekiel 7:25). But why is this? God tells us that man does not know the way to peace. The reason is, of course, they reject the Way of God. The festival of Christmas is an example. Christmas is clearly derived from paganism, and so is Easter. While men keep pagan festivals in direct rebellion to the command of God, they also refuse to keep His Festivals, which He requires. (For more information as to what Festivals to keep, and which holidays to avoid, please read our free booklets, "God's Commanded Holy Days" and

"Don't Keep Christmas.") They observe Sunday worship, but refuse to keep God's Sabbath. They are selective as to which of God's commands they will keep and they determine for themselves how they will apply the Scriptures.

David asks the question in the Psalms: "Who is the man who desires life, And loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, And your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it" (Psalm 34:12–14).

David continues in Psalm 37: "For evildoers shall be cut off; But those who wait on the LORD, They shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; Indeed, you will look carefully for his place, But it shall be no more. But the meek shall inherit the earth, And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace" (verses 9–11). And, again, David states in Psalm 119:165: "Great peace have those who love Your law, And nothing causes them to stumble." As God's law continues to come into David's mind, he states: "LORD, I hope for Your salvation, And I do Your commandments. My soul keeps Your testimonies, And I love them exceedingly. I keep Your precepts and Your testimonies, For all my ways are before You" (Psalm 119:166–168).

Of course, we see in these words why God referred to David as a man after His own heart (Acts 13:22). Scripture tells us in Proverbs 14: "There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death" (verse 12). The way that the world

Peace on Earth continued...

has accepted and followed is none other than Satan's way, as this is presently Satan's world, but the Bible shows us that **the ways of Satan must be rejected!**

Such action, of course, requires God's intervention with the individual life, as well as with the world as a whole. In order for the world to come in line with God's Way, He will have to intervene powerfully to end Satan's hold on the earth. But the good news is that God intends to do just that! In fact, if He did not intervene at just the right time, **ALL life would cease on the earth.** What a sobering thought!

Note Christ's words in Matthew 24: "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been

since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (verses 21–22).

Christ did not come to this earth two thousand years ago to bring peace on the earth. He came in the flesh to live a perfect life for our example; He came to defeat the ruler of this world, Satan the devil; and He came to qualify as our Savior! However, when He returns, He will come as King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16), and He will establish perfect rulership on the earth, which will then embrace God's Way of life, with perfect peace forevermore! (compare Micah 4:3–5).

God's attitude toward peace and war, *knowing* that PEACE, not WAR, will be the reality of the future world under God's rule. They must lead by their good example TODAY, showing others that we *can* live the way to peace and avoid the way to war.

Clearly, we cannot participate in war—neither in a literal sense, nor in the sense of *advocating war with our lips, or even entertaining thoughts of war.* Rather, we have to bring "every thought" into captivity to the obedience of Christ (compare 2 Corinthians 10:5). That is, we must be sure that our thoughts conform to Christ's thoughts, and if we think thoughts of war, rather than peace, we must eradicate those thoughts from our minds.

This would even include the habit of watching extremely violent movies or participating in violent video games, in which war is glorified and depicted as the solution to our problems. If we are not careful, such a habit could lead to numbing our conscience to the point where killing seems normal to us. Some video interactive entertainment has been purchased and used by the military since it has been proven more effective than the military's own training programs for desensitizing the human instincts against randomly killing other human beings, including women and children. In case of a draft and an examination by the draft

board, those who claim to be conscientious objectors must convince the examination board that they are in fact convicted that they cannot participate and kill in war. A habit of watching extremely violent movies, depicting killings and murders just as a means of entertainment, may raise questions in the examination boards as to one's convictions.

The same is true in respect to what we say, because we understand, as Christ tells us in Matthew 12:34–37, that we will have to give account of every idle word we speak.

Rather than speaking words which advocate, endorse or support war, we are told in Proverbs 12:20 that “*counselors of peace* have joy.” When we advocate the way of peace, then the “God of love and peace” will be with us (compare 2 Corinthians 13:11).

Proverbs 16:7 tells us: “When a man’s ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.” Do we believe that? Or, do we think that God’s way is not practical, and we must instead do what the world has been doing for thousands of years—trying to bring about peace through war? Emphatically NO! History itself has established the fact that we can NEVER experience and enjoy *true* peace that way.

A RIGHTEOUS WAR?

Christianity Today published an interesting article on October 28, 2003, proving from ancient historical records that early Christians were opposed to military service and war. The article stated (emphasis added): “The ancient church understood that war has been around as long as human beings and [war and] SIN have coexisted. **It is a consistent tenet throughout the Christian tradition that WAR IS THE RESULT OF SIN.** The responses to war, however, have followed two basic trains of thought: pacifism, and the idea that certain wars can be just.”

The article went on to show that the very early Christian Church was preaching and practicing PACIFISM. Later, though, due to pagan influences and Christian involvement in the affairs of the state, the concept of a so-called “just war” developed.

Continuing with the article: “Pacifism is characteristic of the EARLY CENTURIES OF CHRISTIANITY like the North African apologist Tertullian (160–220 A.D.), who regularly warned Christians to DISTANCE THEMSELVES FROM PAGAN CULTURE. He wrote: ‘How will he serve in the army even during peacetime without the sword that

Jesus Christ has taken away? ... We are not allowed to wear any uniform that symbolizes a sinful act' (On Idolatry 19.3). The third-century Roman Presbyter Hippolytus wrote the Apostolic Tradition, Canon 16 (ca. 215 A.D.) which opposed serving in the military as a matter of church discipline: 'A soldier in lower ranks shall kill no one. If ordered to do so, he shall not obey, and he shall not take an oath. If he does not want to comply with this directive, let him be dismissed [from the church].'"

The article went on to say: "The Constantinian era brought about a change. Previously marginalized Christians were now involved in THE AFFAIRS OF STATE. Though there were many Christian soldiers before the time of Constantine, IT WASN'T UNTIL previously marginalized Christians BECAME INVOLVED IN THE AFFAIRS OF STATE that the church fathers BEGAN NUANCING THEIR OPPOSITION TO MILITARY ACTION. The issue then became how one could remain a Christian when the demands of the state required use of force to combat evil or prevent injury." As the article pointed out, this then led to the Catholic teaching of a "just war."

Augustine of Hippo (354–430) taught that war, although evil (!), was justifiable as a last resort, after peaceful options had been exhausted. A complicated body of rules and regulations was created, defining a "just war." Thomas Aquinas (1224–1274) was instrumental in that regard. Those man-made rules provide that a "just war" must be declared by a proper governmental (human) authority; that it has to be waged for a morally legitimate purpose (defined by man); that it must have the intention of correcting a wrong (defined by man); and that it must be fought in the right way; that is, civilians must not be *intentionally* harmed (but we all know that every war will lead to the death of civilians—the so-called "casualties of war").

Based on these ideas, the Protestant leaders of the Reformation accepted warfare. The Swiss reformer Zwingli was killed *in battle!*

Christ, however, did not approve the concept of a "just war" fought by man. He showed us very specifically that His disciples are NOT to participate in warfare in any manner, shape or form. If there ever has been a so-called righteous or just war, a war which would have been justified—or if there has ever been an action of defending oneself or others which would have been acceptable, if not recommended—then it would have been Peter's attempt to protect the totally innocent Jesus

from the illegal arrest of the Romans and the Jews.

But when Peter drew the sword in the garden of Gethsemane and cut off the ear of the servant Malchus, Christ told him: “Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword” (Matthew 26:52).

We find a similar warning and repetition of Christ’s statement to Peter in Revelation 13:10, where we read: “He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is [required] the patience and the faith of the saints [so that they do not kill with the sword in the face of persecution, but faithfully rely on God to fight their battles for them].”

Let us also remember the incident, when James and John were willing to wipe out the Samaritans who had refused to grant shelter to Christ and to them. We read in Luke 9:54–56: “And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, ‘Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?’ But He turned and rebuked them and said, ‘You do not know *what manner of spirit you are of*. For the Son of Man did not come to *destroy* men’s lives but to *save* them.’ And they went to another village.”

THE SPIRIT OF SATAN

The spirit that James and John were following at that moment was the spirit of Satan. Satan is a destroyer, especially through the means of war, as Revelation 9:11 reveals. There, a warring army is described as being led by Satan, “the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is *Abaddon*, but in Greek he has the name *Apollyon*.” The word *Abaddon* means, “Destruction,” and the word *Apollyon* means, “Destroyer.”

While Christ said that He did not come to *destroy* men’s lives, Satan is the one who is anxious to *destroy* as many human lives as he possibly can.

Satan is also called, in John 8:44, a “murderer from the beginning.” In the Greek, the word for “murderer” is “*anthropoktonos*.” It literally means, “mankiller” or “manslayer.” The same Greek word is used in 1 John 3:15: “Whoever hates his brother is a murderer (in Greek, “*anthropoktonos*”), and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.”

Therefore, whoever kills his neighbor, whether in times of peace *or in times of war*, is described in the Bible as a “manslayer” or “murderer,” and such a person does not have eternal life abiding in him.

“MY SERVANTS WOULD FIGHT...”

When Christ was asked to defend Himself before Pilate, He told him: “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here” (John 18:36).

We need to take note of several points Christ brings out in this passage: First, Christ told Pilate that **His Kingdom was not of this world**, and that therefore, **His servants would not fight in this world**. Some have claimed that Christ was referring to His human disciples, when He talked about His servants. Even if that were true, they still would not be permitted to fight in war today, as Christ’s rule over this world is still future.

In addition, let us notice that Christ said that IF His kingdom were of this world, His servants would fight “...so that I should not be delivered to the Jews.”

This was a statement that Christ made to Pilate at that time. He said, in effect: If My Kingdom were of this world, that is, if I had come at that time to establish the Kingdom of God on this earth, then My servants would fight against those who try to prevent the Kingdom of God from being established.

WHO WERE the servants Christ was talking about? Surely not His few human disciples who were with Him at that time! They would not have been a match for the Roman army.

To whom then *is* Christ referring?

Matthew 26:53 provides us with the answer from Christ’s own lips, directed at Peter who tried to fight for Him: “Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with *more than twelve legions of angels* [A Roman legion consisted of 5,000 soldiers. Twelve legions of angels would then consist of 60,000 angels]?”

When Christ talked about His servants who would not allow Him to be arrested, if He had come at that time to set up the Kingdom of God, He was referring to *more than twelve legions of angels*—who were and are much more powerful than all of man’s armies combined. He was not talking about His human disciples. He had told them earlier that He did not call them servants anymore, but friends, as He had revealed His Will to them (compare John 15:15).

In effect, what Christ was telling Pilate in John 18:36 was simply

God's 6,000-Year Plan For Man

We read in the first chapter of the book of Genesis that God created the seven-day week and the Sabbath, as the seventh day of the week. Man is to rest on the seventh day of the week, as God rested (Exodus 20:9–11). The Bible also teaches that in God's prophetic plan, one day is treated as 1,000 years (2 Peter 3:8). Adam died on the "day" he ate of the forbidden fruit (Genesis 2:17). Although he lived to be 930 years old (Genesis 5:5), he died before the first 1,000-year "day" was completed. (This was also the understanding of early Church commentators like Methodius.)

In Hebrews 4:4, 11, the seventh day of the week—the Sabbath—is pictured as a type of the peaceful "rest," when Christ has returned to this earth to rule mankind. Christ will rule for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4). Since the last "day" of God's plan—His rule over man—is 1,000 years long, the preceding six "days" amount to 6,000 years of man's rule over man.

The concept that each day of the week represents a thousand years of God's plan was known throughout history. Rabbi Elias wrote about 200 years ago: "The world endures six thousand years: two thousand before the law, two thousand under the law, and two thousand under [the] Messiah." Edward Gibbon stated in *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, that the tradition of a 7,000-year plan "was attributed to the prophet Elijah," and that this tradition was "carefully inculcated" in the early Church.

For example, the apocryphal book, "Epistle of Barnabas," although not part of the inspired Holy Scriptures of the Bible, nevertheless points out what

Jewish people believed at the time of the author's writings (probably as early as A.D. 70–79, compare *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 3, copyright 1959, "Barnabas, Epistle of."). In the Epistle, the author, calling himself "Barnabas," states: "... in six days, that is, in six thousand years, shall all things be accomplished... when His Son shall come... then He shall gloriously rest in that seventh day."

The Encyclopedia of the Jewish Religion confirms that the rabbis of Christ's day taught that the seventh "world day" would be 1,000 years of the Messiah.

Irenaeus, a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of John, later departed, to a large extent, from the truth. However, he retained the tradition of the 7,000-year plan of God. In "Against Heresis," he wrote, about 150 A.D.: "For the day of the Lord is a thousand years; and in six days created things were completed; it is evident, therefore, that they will come to an end at the [end of the] sixth thousand years."

Others, who are known of having believed in and taught the 7,000-year plan of God, include Rabbi Ketina; Lactantius; Victorinus; Hippolytus; Justin Martyr; and Methodius. In 1552, Bishop Latimer wrote: "The world was ordained to endure, as all learned men affirm, 6,000 years."

Although nobody knows the exact time of Christ's return (compare Matthew 24:36, 44), we are able to show, by using known dates and the overlapping ages of the patriarchs of the Bible, that Adam was created **approximately** 4,000 years before Christ. This means, then, that Christ's return to this earth cannot be that far off.

this: “If I had come to establish My Kingdom, My servants, the angels of My Father, would not allow Me to be captured and put to death.” But, as we understand, Christ’s First Coming was **not** for the purpose of establishing the Kingdom of God on this earth; rather, one of its purposes was for Christ to DIE for you and me! But His Second Coming will be exactly for the purpose of establishing God’s Kingdom on this earth! And so we find that the angels *will fight for and with the returning Christ* against those who will oppose Him at that time. Revelation 19:14, 21 states: “And the *armies in heaven*, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses... And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse.” A description of that battle can also be found in Zechariah 14:3–4, 12–15.

Christ’s statements in John 18:36 do not provide any justification for His human followers to fight in war. The Biblical teaching is very clear—a Christian who wants to follow Christ and His teachings, *will not fight in war*.

TRUE CHRISTIANS DON’T FIGHT

2 Corinthians 10:3–5 explains: “For though we walk in the flesh, *we do not war ACCORDING TO THE FLESH*. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God...”

Paul is describing here a *spiritual warfare* against the evil forces of the demon world, **not** a carnal warfare against other human beings. Note Ephesians 6:11–12: “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. **For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood**, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

CHRISTIANS REFUSED TO FIGHT

By no stretch of the imagination can one read those clear passages and still conclude that Christ or Paul permitted Christians to fight in the wars of this world. And so, those who have followed the plain teachings of the New Testament have, throughout history, *refused* to participate in

war, as previously pointed out. Please note these additional quotes:

Professor Rossi wrote in *Conscience and Liberty* (emphasis added): **“The Christians of the first century... were decisively against any form of war.** In the middle of the second century, the Christian Philosopher Justin declared to his pagan readers, ‘And we, who once *delighted in war*, in *murdering* each other and in all kinds of sins, we have all over the world **changed our weapons into instruments of peace...**”

Edward Gibbon wrote in *“The Triumph of Christendom in the Roman Empire,”* on page 41, about the early Church: “... they refused to take any active part in the *civil administration or the military defense* of the empire.”

In *“Of the Crown,”* Tertullian (A.D. 150–225) wrote: “I think we must first inquire whether warfare is proper at all for Christians... Shall it be held lawful to make an occupation of the sword, when the Lord proclaims that he who uses the sword shall perish by the sword?”

Tertullian is also quoted as saying: “The divine banner and the human banner do not go together, nor the standard of Christ and the standard of the devil. Only without the sword can the Christian wage war: for the Lord has abolished the sword.”

In the September/October 1985 edition of the magazine, *“Liberty,”* the following statements were made (emphasis added): “Until the end of the second century, the church appeared to be staunchly *pacifist*. **No records exist of any Christian soldier prior to A.D. 170.** A pagan named Celsus in A.D. 173 chastised Christians for their *pacifism*: ‘If all men were to do the same as you, there would be nothing to prevent the king from being left in utter solitude and desertion, and the forces of the empire would fall into the hands of the wildest and most lawless barbarians.’ Justyn Martyr, describing the early church, wrote: ‘We who formerly *murdered* one another now not only do not *make war* upon our enemies, but we gladly die confessing Christ... [Justin Martyr (A.D.100–165) also said: “We ourselves were well conversant with war, murder and everything evil, but all of us throughout the whole wide earth have traded in our weapons of war. We have exchanged our swords for plowshares, our spears for farm tools.”] After A.D. 170, however, references to Christian soldiers appear... **Worldly paganism saturated religion, and the church succumbed to its militaristic influence... Christians, alienated from the Roman Government by persecution, soon became the**

Roman Government. In A.D. 314, the Council of Arles declared that Christians could officially join the army, and by A.D. 416 ONLY Christians could join. *Emperor Constantine's conversion to Christianity helped turn Christian plowshares into swords...*"

The *Paulicians*, who lived about 550 A.D., preached against participating in war. So did the *Waldenses* in the 12th and 13th centuries. Later, some Waldenses decided that they could fight in war, while others refused to do so. One Waldensian wrote in 1655: "The Christians who allegedly fight battle for God and religion cannot justify their acts, because they do something which God did not command, yes, which Christ prohibited."

The article in *Liberty* continued: "During the Reformation and the centuries following, Mennonites, Hussites, Quakers, the Brethren, and Jehovah's Witnesses refused to take part in war. The larger Protestant bodies justified warfare as long as they were able to rationalize the justness of each conflict. The Kaiser's armies marched 'for God, the Kaiser, and the Fatherland,' while across the English Channel, Reverend Winnington-Ingram, the bishop of London, exhorted young Englishmen to 'kill Germans... to kill the good and the bad, to kill the young and the old, to kill those who have shown kindness to our wounded... As I have said a thousand times, I look upon it as a war of purity.'"

The record of history is clear. Those who followed the clear teaching of Jesus Christ regarding peace and war REFUSED both to fight and to join the military.

In the April 23, 1865 issue of the Church of God publication, "*Hope of Israel*," it was stated: "We thank God that President Lincoln... did cause to be made such laws as would deliver God's saints from participating in war." In April 1917, Andrew Dugger, president of the Church of God (Seventh Day), met with President Wilson and received exemption for Church members from combatant service. During the Korean and Vietnam wars, Herbert W. Armstrong of the Worldwide Church of God petitioned the government to recognize Church members as having conscientious objector status.

True Christians will not participate in war, nor will they advocate war! Anyone who advocates going to war bears a grave responsibility. If young people who follow such advice are killed in war, or if they kill others, including innocent civilians, widows and children (who may

even be members of a church who kill young people from the same church), and once God, the Judge of us all, declares such warfare to be sinful, He will also hold those responsible who have *advocated* the same.

Notice the following excerpts from a poem that a Mennonite wrote in 1873. This poem entitled, “*Christianity Requires Peace*,” reads:

“How can men be so blind in this
Clear peaceful gospel light,
As to believe and say, It is
The Christian’s legal right
To forge the instruments of carnal strife,
And learn the fiendish art of taking life!
With sword and gun join in the mad affray
To kill his fellow men in every way!
May God save us from this sight.
“Come, blessed time, seen from afar
By holy seers of old,
When none shall sanction deeds of war
Within the Christian fold.
Oh, when shall appear the glorious day,
When carnage and strife shall have passed away?
When all men on earth love the Prince of Peace,
And obey his gospel, then wars will cease—
‘Tis the hope we firmly hold.”

The New Testament teachings on war forbid Christians to participate in war, as the spirit of war is the spirit of murder, and it is therefore clearly in total opposition to Christ’s teachings reflected, for instance, in the Sermon on the Mount. In the future, the way of war will not be taught anymore. So then, it behooves us today to teach and live God’s way of peace, not Satan’s way of war. Christ told Peter that whoever takes up the sword, shall perish by it. He rebuked the “sons of thunder”—James and John—for their desire to destroy the Samaritans, asking them if they did not realize whose spirit they were following at that time. John later became known, however, as an “apostle of love.”

SATAN INVENTS WAR

Let us focus a little bit more on that spirit—the spirit of this world that is responsible for men’s miseries, sufferings, killings and wars. We

already saw from the letter of James that wars come from lusts that fight in our minds. *But where do those lusts come from?*

Once we fully understand who is the originator of war, we can also clearly see why we must not participate in war.

We read in the book of Genesis that God, in the beginning, created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1). When this happened, God's angels shouted for joy because this original peaceful creation was full of majesty, beauty and splendor (compare Job 38:4–7).

The Bible also reveals to us that a mighty and powerful spirit being, called Lucifer, was taught and trained by God at His very throne in heaven (compare Isaiah 14:12; Ezekiel 28:14–15), to rule over the earth. Not being satisfied with what God had given him, he **rebelled against God!** He tried to knock God off His heavenly throne—to replace God and become “like Him,” or, perhaps, even become God Himself. His coup failed, and he was thrown back to this earth, together with about one-third of all of the angels that he had swayed to his way of thinking (Ezekiel 28:16; Isaiah 14:13–15; Revelation 12:3–4; Luke 10:18). Lucifer's name was changed to Satan (Revelation 12:9), and his angels became known as demons. They are also known as evil or familiar spirits.

This ANGELIC rebellion was the first recorded battle, or war, in the history of creation! Satan—then called Lucifer—was the originator. This war ended in total destruction and the earth became void and empty—filled with death, decay and darkness. (Genesis 1:2, correctly translated from the Hebrew, reads: “The earth BECAME without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep.” For more information, please read our free booklet, “*The Theory of Evolution—A Fairy Tale for Adults?*”)

This very first war was premeditated! Yes, Lucifer had prepared his rebellion very carefully! We don't know how long it took Lucifer after feelings of lust, greed, envy and pride had begun to fill his mind, before he began to work on the angels under his command, bombarding them with his war propaganda, until they, too, were willing to follow their leader in the first violent attack against other beings. But we can be sure that it was a well thought out plan to overthrow the Creator!

Satan invented war and he is still responsible for war today. He sustains that warring spirit today by provoking nations to come against each other in wars, having absolutely no care for the tremendous loss of

human life and suffering. He also provokes the *minds* of people with the spirit of hatred and contentiousness on an individual level. True to form, he will once again—in the near future—become the originator of a universal war, this time on this earth. We also know, from prophecy, that Satan will fight another *spiritual* war against God and the holy angels just prior to the return of Christ. Revelation 12:7–9 describes that war.

The Bible records in verse 13 of Revelation 12 that Satan will again be thrown back to this earth and will be *filled* with tremendous, uncontrolled wrath and anger! (In fact, there are some indications that this event might have already taken place.) In that frame of mind, he will influence people to fight the most violent and vicious war ever fought by humans on this planet! It will be so devastating that all of mankind will surely perish unless God intervenes at the last minute, so to speak, to stop such senseless fighting. Only the returning Jesus Christ—King of kings and Lord of lords—will be able to stop Satan and prevent the ***total annihilation of mankind*** (compare Matthew 24:21–22).

Even though God will swiftly and supernaturally intervene at that time and make a stop to that war, mankind will still, at the beginning of Christ's rule here on earth, be eager to fight, motivated by their own lusts which have become part of their Satan-inspired nature. We read in Ezekiel 38 that peoples from the east will attempt to overthrow the peaceful nations of Israel. This will happen at the very beginning of the "Millennium"—a period of 1,000 years when God will rule on this earth and Satan will be bound, unable to deceive the nations anymore. These peoples will not have rid themselves of their lust to fight and murder, which they acquired from Satan. Yes, it will take a while, even in the Millennium, until physical man will be able to overcome his Satan-inspired human nature and replace it, gradually, with God's nature.

But lo and behold, even after that event which occurs at the **BE-GINNING** of the Millennium, the Bible describes yet another future war that will be fought when the "thousand years have expired" (Revelation 20:7). This war will be fought *before* the "Great White Throne Judgment" period begins, which is mentioned in Revelation 20:11–12. (For more information regarding this "Great White Throne Judgment," please read our free booklet, "God's Commanded Holy Days.") Remember, Satan had been thrown in prison so that, as we read in Revelation

20:3, he could “*deceive* the nations no more.” And what *was*, and *is*, and *will be* Satan’s biggest deception?

Revelation 20:7–10 provides us with the answer to this all-important question: “Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to *deceive* the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, **to gather them together to battle**, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And *fire came down from God out of heaven* and devoured them. The devil, *who deceived them*, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone...”

We see that man, under the influence and deception of Satan, will be willing to fight again in war. Man who wants to kill in war today, or thinks that war will solve our problems, is **deceived by Satan**. After all, we read that Satan has deceived *the whole world* (Revelation 12:9).

Man NEVER needs to fight in war. We see that in that very last future war, involving humans, God will do the fighting for His human servants, by devouring the enemy through fire. That will be the right time for God to intervene and destroy the enemy, but it was not the right time or occasion when James and John asked for fire to come down from heaven—essentially calling on God to devour the Samaritans. **We must leave all fighting to God**. It is not our prerogative or responsibility, and if we think and act differently than what God tells us, we are playing right into the deceptive hand of Satan.

After that final war or “battle” recorded in Revelation 20:7–11, **there will never be another war!** Can you comprehend a world WITHOUT WAR? A world that is **full** of PEACE and HARMONY? Revelation 21:4 predicts: “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”

WHY DID ANCIENT ISRAEL FIGHT?

All well and good, you might say. But, if war is un-Christian, then why did ancient Israel fight and kill? Good question! And here are a few more questions that warrant Biblical answers! Why did God *permit* Israel to fight in war? Why did God sometimes even *order* Israel to fight? If it is **always** a sin for man to fight in war, did David—a man after

God's own heart—*sin* when he fought in war? Did Moses *sin* when he ordered Israel to fight against Amalek?

Some might answer that it was all right for people in the Old Testament to fight, because God was their Commander. Somehow Israel was justified because they lived under some kind of a different administration. But this explanation CANNOT be correct, and, in fact, shows a ***total misunderstanding of the character and purpose of God and His law!***

God is the same throughout ETERNITY—yesterday, today, and forever. His character, His values, His way of thinking did not, and do not change! He is not a respecter of persons. If it is sin for US today to fight and kill—which it is—it was likewise sin for those in Old Testament times to fight and kill. Most of those who fought in Old Testament times were carnal—unconverted—like most people are today. Nevertheless, as Christ told Peter, everyone who kills in war must be killed in war, *unless* he comes to repentance and obtains forgiveness of his sins. Killing in war is one of those sins that a person must repent of and obtain forgiveness for.

But some in the Old Testament, like David, Moses and Joshua, who did fight and kill in war, *were converted*. They had God's Holy Spirit! They were living under the terms and conditions of the New Covenant, as we do today. Again, since it is wrong for us to kill in war, it must have been wrong for David, Moses and Joshua to kill in war; otherwise, God would NOT be the same! He would have different standards and laws for different people, in effect, being a respecter of persons—which would be against His own written Word, the Bible!

Some say, David, Moses and Joshua were justified to kill because God *ordered* them to kill. We will look into all of these arguments, but let us state here that Moses and David both killed people in some wars that were NOT commanded by God. We do not read, for example, that God commanded David to kill 200 Philistines. Rather, Saul—not God—asked David to kill 100 Philistines in exchange for becoming his son-in-law, and David responded by killing 200 Philistines (1 Samuel 18:25–27). Was *that* killing justified? If not, where do you draw the line? As we will see, David's killing in war was not in any way justified—not under any circumstances!

Let us go back, in our Old Testament survey, to the very first war that ancient Israel fought, and let us see how ***the nation of Israel decided*** to become a war-waging nation.

HOW ISRAEL BECAME A WARRING NATION

As mentioned before, very early in the recent history of the Church of God, Herbert W. Armstrong wrote a booklet, in 1967, entitled “*Military Service and War.*” In the booklet, he explains HOW Israel decided to go to war, and WHY God *used* Israel, even sometimes *ordering* them to fight.

We begin quoting from pages 24–26 of the booklet (emphasis in the original): “Right here, *before* they reached Mt. Sinai—*before* they heard God’s own great voice thundering His Ten Commandments—God *demonstrated* the pattern He would follow in preserving His people from having to undergo military service, or fighting in war, or taking human life!... ‘And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Eternal, which HE WILL SHOW YOU today... *The Eternal shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace*’ [Exodus 14:13–14]. The Israelites were not to fight—but STAND STILL! They were to *see* God save them from Pharaoh’s ARMY. God was going to SHOW THEM that He would fight their wars for them! They were to remain at PEACE!”

Mr. Armstrong goes on to explain that Israel’s faith in God’s help was only of a short duration. They soon began to doubt when they came to Marah and only found bitter water (Exodus 15:24). They also complained in the wilderness because of lack of food (Exodus 16:2–3). Also, when in Rephidim, they lost faith, tempting God (Exodus 17:1–2).

Continuing with Mr. Armstrong’s booklet, on pages 29–32: “Now we come to the CRUCIAL INCIDENT that explains WHY Israel went to war. Regularly they had been grumbling, complaining, accusing, disobeying, LOSING FAITH—in face of constant MIRACLES from God. Now, again, as God performed another miracle, causing water to gush forth out of a rock, the people DOUBTED that God was with them. ‘... they tempted the ETERNAL, saying, “Is the ETERNAL among us, or not?”’ (Exodus 17:7).

“Now consider what had happened. Repeatedly, God had given these people awe-inspiring and miraculous demonstrations of His intention *to fight the battles for them...* After all of this OVERWHELMING PROOF, these people DOUBTED God’s faithfulness—DOUBTED His power—even DOUBTED His very existence. They disobeyed. They went *the way* of SIN! In effect, they had their own ‘God is dead’ movement!...

[A]t this juncture, Amalek, a Gentile king, came against the Israelites in great strength with an invading army. This time God ALLOWED the *Israelites to write the lesson of experience*. He allowed them to SIN. God does not forcibly prevent humans from sinning.

“Moses, at the end of his patience trying to induce these stubborn, rebellious people to believe in and TRUST God, said to Joshua, ‘Choose us out men, and go out, FIGHT with Amalek’ (Exodus 17:9). Lacking the faith to trust God for their protection, Moses feared they would be slaughtered. Although Moses weakened and gave the order of WAR, it was THE PEOPLE themselves who actually MADE THE DECISION for war, by their utter lack of reliance on God. It was altogether unnecessary for these Israelites to arm themselves and wage WAR. It was WRONG! It was SIN. But God let the decision be theirs... This incident was the *turning point*... They had experienced a taste of war. They could have—should have—turned from it, afterward, and relied on God instead of their own power. But they didn’t... By their continuous disbelief, lack of reliance on GOD, and reliance *only* on PHYSICAL WARFARE, they made the DECISION to be, like all the nations of the earth, a WARRING NATION!”

On page 33, Mr. Armstrong begins to address the question why God ordered the Israelites at times to wage war: “These descendants of Abraham had *made their decision* to be a fighting, war-waging nation. That decision was theirs to make. And since they had made it..., God gave orders for *them* to do what fighting—and killing—was necessary to accomplish God’s PURPOSE of putting them in the land of Promise! But *that did not make war* RIGHT. Whether to DO right or wrong—that is MAN’S decision! These Israelites did not need to fight! So it was BECAUSE of Israel’s faithlessness and disobedience that God ALLOWED them to SIN by taking up arms. And therefore God used them as His instruments in driving out the nations illegally in their land. Even at that later date the Israelites could have REPENTED, *changed* their decision, and trusted God to fight their battles for them... Having committed the sin of DOUBT, these Israelites proceeded to commit the SIN OF FIGHTING—of WAR!”

Continuing on page 36: “But one may ask *this* question: If war is wrong—if it is SIN—if it is contrary to God’s WAY for man, then WHY did God, on occasion, actually *order* the Israelites to go to war and kill?”

Consider these TWO FACTS:

“1) Israel had sinned in *a*) not TRUSTING God to do the fighting for them; and *b*) in disobeying God’s Commandment against war. They had CHOSEN to be a war-waging nation. The decision was WRONG. Yet God compels man to decide WHETHER to sin. If he does, he brings on himself the penalty. THE FACT, therefore, must be realized that Israel REFUSED TO RELY ON GOD TO DO THE FIGHTING; and CHOSE to be a warring nation.

“2) God’s PURPOSE must stand, regardless of what men do. It was God’s PURPOSE to install Israel *in*, and to drive certain people *out of* God’s holy land, which He had PROMISED to the children of Abraham, Isaac and Israel... Since Israel was not going to rely on GOD to drive out these nations, but elected to be a WAR-making nation, God used them to accomplish His PURPOSE... He ordered them to do what was required to make HIS PURPOSE *stand!*”

There are some in certain Church of God organizations today, who justify going to and participating in war, or who claim that ancient Israel did NOT sin when they fought in war. They are wrong, as they do not understand the character of God, nor the intent and purpose of God’s Law, the Ten Commandments. Let us quote Mr. Armstrong’s alarming and challenging words from page 38 of his booklet:

“The divine GIVER of human life has the right to *take* the lives He *gave*. They belong to HIM. **But for any human, or nation, of his or its own volition, on his or its own initiative, to take human life is SIN. The life he takes is not his—but GOD’S! He not only commits murder—he also STEALS or takes what is GOD’S. Even his own life belongs to God. The suicide takes a human life that belongs to God!**

“When God has made it one of the ten basic SINS for man to take human life—and made it unnecessary for man to go to war by promising to take care of the wars Himself supernaturally, then the nation which CHOOSES to be a WAR-waging nation has committed SIN. **And every individual who enters its military organization is committing SIN.**

“Israel had made that decision. Other nations, too—all had made it. Since the nations of *this* world do fight, God allows them to commit this SIN. Yet, to carry out HIS PURPOSE, God Himself determines the

outcome of wars. And since Israel already had rejected HIM as its war-making Force, He even ordered them to fulfill HIS PURPOSE, which *must* be accomplished! But that did not whitewash Israel from having deliberately rebelled and chosen to fight in war in violation of GOD'S WAY."

Yes, ancient Israel sinned when they went to war. *THEY DECIDED* to do this, rather than waiting for God's counsel (compare Psalm 106:7–15, especially verse 13). And when man makes decisions on his own, without asking for God's counsel, he is usually wrong (Compare, for another example, Joshua 9:14). God, the Author of peace, does not want human beings to fight in war. When Christ returns, He will restore peace to this earth—a time when "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore" (Isaiah 2:4).

Man will live a way of peace as originally intended by God. Today, we are Christ's ambassadors of that future way. We are not to follow the sinful pattern of the ancient Israelites who rebelled against God's promises and clear commands. Man has *chosen* to disobey God and to sin by going to war. God, who is the same yesterday, today and forever, condemns, and has *ALWAYS* condemned, human warfare. We are to pray for our enemies and to do good to them, rather than fighting against them and avenging ourselves. We are to leave "vengeance" to God (Romans 12:19–20). The Biblical teaching on this subject is clear and consistent.

We have read about the incident when God fought for Israel and destroyed the Egyptian army so that Israel did not have to fight. Here are some additional examples in the Bible where God manifested His great power, showing that man does not have to fight in war at all, if he would only rely on God for help.

KING JEHOSHAPHAT DID NOT NEED TO FIGHT

The Bible records in 2 Chronicles 20:1–30 an incident where King Jehoshaphat fully and totally relied on God's help. As a consequence, he did not have to fight. We read in verse 4 that, in the face of an imminent attack from their enemies, the king and all the people "gathered together to ask help from the LORD; and from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD." In verse 12, the king admits that he is helpless, "nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You." Jahaziel is inspired to respond, "Do not be afraid nor dismayed because

The Way of War vs. the Way of Peace

The following representative Scriptures describe two opposite ways of life—the way that leads to war, and the way that leads to peace. By no stretch of the imagination can the objective reader conclude that both ways achieve the same results. ONLY God’s way of peace produces peace—and a Christian is to follow THAT way, while REJECTING the way of war.

The Way of WAR

“Put your sword in its place, for ALL who take the sword will PERISH by the sword” (Matthew 26:52).

“He who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword” (Revelation 13:10).

“Whoever sheds man’s blood, By man his blood shall be shed” (Genesis 9:6).

“As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women’ (1 Samuel 15:33).

“Their sword shall enter their own heart” (Psalm 37:15).

“Shall the sword devour forever? Do you not know that it will be bitter in the latter end?” (2 Samuel 2:26).

“Whoever hates his brother is a murderer” (1 John 3:15).

“Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war” (James 4:1–2).

“You have relied on the king of Syria, and have not relied on the LORD your God... In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars” (2 Chronicles 16, 7, 9).

“The LORD abhors the bloodthirsty... man” (Psalm 5:6).

“The LORD tests the righteous, but the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates” (Psalm 11:5).

“Their feet are swift to shed blood... The way of peace they have not known” (Romans 3:15, 17).

“If you had known... the things that make for your peace. But now they are hidden from your eyes” (Luke 19:42).

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood” (Ephesians 6:12).

The Way of PEACE

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh” (2 Corinthians 10:3).

“The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace” (Exodus 14:14).

“I will have mercy on the house of Judah, will save them by the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword or battle, by horses or horsemen” (Hosea 1:7).

“Some trust in chariots and some in horses; but we will remember the

name of the LORD our God" (Psalm 20:7).

"He has redeemed my soul in peace from the battle which was against me" (Psalm 55:18).

"I will wait for You... For God is my defense" (Psalm 59:9).

"He makes wars cease to the end of the earth. He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two. He burns the chariot in the fire" (Psalm 46:9).

"For unto us a Child is born... and His name will be called... Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His... peace There will be no end" (Isaiah 9:6-7).

"The Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them" (Luke 9:56).

"Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth" (Hosea 2:18).

"He shall speak peace to the nations" (Zechariah 9:10).

"Speak comfort to Jerusalem and cry out to her, That her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned" (Isaiah 40:2).

"Scatter the peoples who delight in war" (Psalm 68:30).

"They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore" (Isaiah 2:4).

"Israel will go out and set on fire and burn the weapons" (Ezekiel 39:9).

"Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).

"Repay no one evil for evil... If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves... Therefore, if your enemy hungers, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink... Do not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:17-21).

"Let us pursue the things which make for peace" (Romans 14:19).

"Let him seek peace and pursue it" (1 Peter 3:11).

"When a man's ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Proverbs 16:7).

"The LORD will bless His people with peace" (Psalm 29:11).

"Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace" (James 3:18).

"Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9).

"Counselors of peace have joy" (Proverbs 12:20).

"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace" (Romans 10:15).

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who... proclaims peace" (Isaiah 52:7).

"Live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you" (2 Corinthians 13:11).

of this great multitude, for the battle is NOT yours, BUT God's" (verse 15). The king was also told that he would "not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the LORD" (verse 17).

Since the king and the people had the required faith in God's mighty power, "the LORD set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated. For the people of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir to utterly kill and destroy them. And when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they helped to destroy one another. So when Judah came to a place overlooking the wilderness, they looked toward the multitude; and there were dead bodies, fallen on the earth. No one had escaped... And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries when they heard that the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel. Then the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest all around" (verses 22–24, 29–30).

KING HEZEKIAH DID NOT NEED TO FIGHT

Another powerful example of God's awesome intervention—in this case, on behalf of King Hezekiah and His people—can be found in 2 Chronicles 32. We read in verses 20–22 that, after Hezekiah's "deeds of faithfulness" (verse 1), the king of Assyria proceeded to besiege Jerusalem. But due to faith in God on the part of the king and the prophet Isaiah (verse 20), "the LORD sent an angel who cut down every mighty man of valor, leader, and captain in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned shamefaced to his own land... Thus the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of... the king of Assyria" (verses 21–22).

Think about what could be accomplished today if those who claim to be followers of the teachings of Jesus Christ would turn to God with a repentant heart and soul, and pray to God for protection and help, fully relying on Him and trusting in Him to do their fighting for them. Instead, we have turned so far away from the Eternal God—our Maker and Sustainer—that such a thought sounds preposterous! God has not changed, but He will not fight our battles if we don't have faith in Him, *CHOOSING* rather to rely on ourselves.

GOD FOUGHT FOR ISRAEL

Let us return to the example of the ancient Israelites. We have seen that God showed them, when He brought them out of the land of Egypt, that He would fight for them. They did not have to fight. It was never God's desire that Israel should fight. Notice what He told the Israelites: "I will send My fear before you, I will cause confusion among all the people to whom you come, and will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before you" (Exodus 23:27–28).

Later, Moses reminded the Israelites of God's intent to drive out the enemies through hornets (Deuteronomy 7:20), and Joshua 24:12 reports that this was *EXACTLY* what God did: "I sent the hornet before you which drove them out from before you, also the two kings of the Amorites, **BUT NOT WITH YOUR SWORD OR WITH YOUR BOW.**"

Even after Israel had decided to become a war-waging nation, God made it very clear *that it was not because of the sword that Israel occupied the land*. God wanted the Israelites to understand—and He wants us to understand today—how useless and wrong war is! It was GOD—and God alone—who gave them the Promised Land! God says that He did NOT give it to them by their sword.

Psalms 44:3, 6–8 explains: "For they did NOT gain possession of the land by their own sword, Nor did their own arm save them; But it was Your right hand, Your arm, and the light of Your countenance... For I will not trust in my bow, Nor shall my sword save me. But You have saved us from our enemies, And have put to shame those who hated us. In God we boast all day long, And praise Your name forever."

Even though Israel had decided to fight in war, it was still GOD who did the "main fighting." We read, for example, in Joshua 10:11, 14: "And it happened, as they fled before Israel and were on the descent of Beth Horon, that the LORD cast down large hailstones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died. *There were more who died from the hailstones than the children of Israel killed with the sword... the LORD fought for Israel.*"

GOD'S VIEWPOINT ON WAR

We Christians are to align our thoughts and actions with what God tells us in His Word. So then, let us review some additional passages in the Old Testament that show God's viewpoint when it comes to the human desire and endeavor to fight in war. And let us ask ourselves: Is that *our* viewpoint also?

Isaiah 31:1–5 states: “Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, And rely on horses, Who trust in chariots because they are many, And in horsemen because they are very strong, But who do not look to the Holy One of Israel, Nor seek the LORD!... Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; And their horses are flesh, and not spirit. When the LORD stretches out His hand, Both he who helps will fall, And he who is helped will fall down; They all will perish together... the LORD of hosts will come down To fight for Mount Zion and for its hill. Like birds flying about, So will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem...”

Human warfare will not prevail against God and His Will. And God does not need us to fight for Him, either. Notice Psalm 37:11, 14–15: “But the meek shall inherit the earth, And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace... The wicked have drawn the sword And have bent their bow, To cast down the poor and needy, To slay those who are of upright conduct. Their sword shall enter their own heart, And their bows shall be broken.”

Let us also take note of the inspired words of Abner in 2 Samuel. 2:26: “Shall the sword devour forever? Do you not know that it will be bitter in the latter end?”

WHY DID KING DAVID FIGHT?

But, what about King David? He fought in war, yet he was called a man after God's own heart. Therefore, as the argument goes, the fact that David fought must have been pleasing to God—in other words, it was not wrong for David to fight. Is that a right conclusion?

Herbert W. Armstrong addressed this issue as follows, on pages 38 and 39 of his booklet, “*Military Service and War*”: “God called David a man after His own heart. David was a warrior. David killed many people. As King, he waged WAR. But that did not make war right. God held David accountable for this bloodguiltiness... David was a ‘man after God's own heart’ NOT *because* of his wars, his fighting, his killing. God PUNISHED him for that!”

Why Christ Would *Not* Vote in this World's Governmental Elections

At a time of ensuing war, and debates on whether or not to fight in war, we bring you excerpts from Herbert W. Armstrong's article, "How Would Jesus Vote for President?" which was published in the October-November 1984-issue of the *Good News*, beginning on page 3. The emphasis is in the original. We are sure that you will agree with us that Mr. Armstrong's words, written more than 20 years ago, could not be more timely today:

"World war threatens to explode in the Middle East and other 'hot spots.' Frightful nuclear war! War that means the annihilation of civilization. The world this minute is in grave danger. The issue is a matter of government!... In the fateful test with Satan, Adam disobeyed God, accepted the rule of Satan over him—yielded to human pride, lust and greed. Thus he placed himself and his children under the rule of Satan... Satan found in one of the great-grandsons of Noah, Nimrod, the grandson of Ham, a very able and powerful man who could be used politically... Nimrod organized the present world's first government—the city of BABYLON... This BABYLONISH principle of government, intertwined with economic manipulation, has ruled the world ever since. It has ruled under various forms—whether called oligarchy, monarchy, dictatorship, autocracy, democracy, communism or Nazism—but it's the same old BABYLONIAN PRINCIPLE under slightly different modes of administration... Regardless of the form in which it appears, it is a system based upon exploitation

of the people, aggression, regimentation, delusion and deception... *Babylon* means 'CONFUSION.' Competition and strife have produced confusion in the world. *And God is not the author of confusion* (I Corinthians 14:33)...

"This is *not* a world of God's making. *This is SATAN'S world!* Satan is the invisible god of this world. He is the author of its organization, its basic philosophies, its systems of government, business, society—yes, and RELIGIONS! This thing we boast of as CIVILIZATION is, in actual fact, Satan's handiwork, not God's! Strange as it may seem, that is true! *All nations*—not just the heathen powers, but all nations, *including ours*—are DECEIVED, swayed, led, by Satan (Revelation 12:9, 18:3, 20:2–3). The Bible speaks of this world as 'this present EVIL WORLD' (Galatians 1:4, AV)... No, *Jesus did not enter into THIS WORLD'S politics!* He called His disciples *out* of this present evil world—out of all its customs and philosophies and ways—to live a life of SEPARATION from the world...

"Thus Jesus' disciples live *in* this present evil world as though they were foreigners, here merely as the guests of the nation where they reside, as AMBASSADORS for Christ and His coming Kingdom, *not* of any of this world's governments... [Foreign ambassadors do not involve themselves in] making their state [where they live] a better state, or voting, or entering their army or fighting for their cause... [T]he true Christian is one who *follows Christ*, and Christ did not vote! Jesus did not

Why Christ Would Not Vote in this World's Governmental Elections continued...

try to reform Caesar... He preached the doctrine of a radically different world to come... This is Satan's world and Jesus Christ did not come to reform Satan or improve Satan's handiwork, but to save His followers from Satan and his system. Since God's Kingdom is not literally set up as yet, the true Christian's citizenship is now reserved in heaven (1 Peter 1:4, Ephesians 2:19)...

"What, then, would Jesus do in [a time of] presidential election?... HE WOULD BE TOO BUSY PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS OF HIS COMING WORLD-RULING KINGDOM, and the way of salvation, to take any part whatsoever in the politics of this present evil world, or in any man-made form of government that is DOOMED very soon to be destroyed and replaced by the theocratic government of THE KING-

DOM OF GOD! Our mission is, as ambassadors of Christ—as advance emissaries of HIS KINGDOM—to WARN the world of its plight and present danger, to proclaim to all nations the good news of the KINGDOM OF GOD!"

The thoughts expressed in Mr. Armstrong's article, quoted above, belong to the heart and core of true Christianity. False Christianity merely adopts the mantle of Christianity and then betrays the teachings and practices one must embrace and practice if one truly believes Christ. The ability to delineate what a true Christian should and should not do is of vital importance. We either are serving God and Christ, or we are yielding to Satan and his world rule. The Church of God must be separate from the world (compare John 17:14, 16; Revelation 18:4).

But how can this be right?

We need to realize that David grew up in a nation that was *accustomed* to fighting in war. It seems that no one questioned the practice of war. And so we find that David was described as a "man of war" while he was still a very young lad (compare 1 Samuel 16:18). When King Saul asked him to kill 100 Philistines as "dowry" to become his son-in-law, David killed 200 Philistines (compare 1 Samuel 18:25–27). Something in David's nature enjoyed fighting in war. Some of us have that kind of nature, too. And as David did, we too, have grown up in an environment where it is "clear," "manifest," "self-evident," that one "HAS" to fight in war. Notice how David's time and environment was described in 2 Samuel 11:1: "It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle..."

David, then, had to *learn* from God that war was wrong and without purpose.

First of all, many of the wars that David fought were direct

PUNISHMENT for his murder of Uriah and his adultery with Bathsheba, as 2 Samuel 12:9–10 clearly reveals.

The prophet Nathan uttered the following words of God to David: “Why have you despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword [by ordering the commander Joab to forsake him in Israel’s battle with the Ammonites]; you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon. Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.”

Can we see that Christ’s words about taking the sword and perishing by it, were already in effect in David’s time? David took the sword and had Uriah killed, and so the sword would not depart from David’s house.

DAVID NOT ALLOWED TO BUILD A TEMPLE

We read very clearly in the Bible that David was PUNISHED by God *because* he fought in war and because he was willing to fight. For instance, 1 Chronicles 22:6–10 reports to us David’s own words to his son Solomon, explaining why God did not allow David to build Him a temple: “Then he called for his son Solomon, and charged him to build a house for the LORD God of Israel. And David said to Solomon: ‘My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build a house to the name of the LORD my God; but the word of the LORD came to me, saying, **“You have shed much blood and have made great wars; you shall not build a house for My name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in My sight. Behold, a son shall be born to you, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies all around. His name shall be Solomon, for I will give peace and quietness to Israel in his days. He shall build a house for My name, and he shall be My son, and I will be his Father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever.”**”

David was not allowed to build the temple because he had shed *MUCH* blood and had made *GREAT* wars.

Some have said, this passage really only means that the temple should be erected by a man of peace, rather than a man of war, but it does not mean that it was wrong for David to fight in war. But we need to realize

that God said, in effect: David is not allowed to build Me this house, because he has shed much blood on the earth. God did not want His temple to be associated with war, with the shedding of blood. WHY would this be the case, if it is perfectly all right for humans to fight and kill in war?

The obvious answer is that it is NOT perfectly all right to do so. David told the people later, in 1 Chronicles 28:2–3, why God did not want him to build the temple: “Then King David rose to his feet and said, ‘Hear me, my brethren and my people: I had it in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and for the footstool of our God, and had made preparations to build it. But God said to me, “You shall not build a house for My name, because you have been **a man of war and have shed blood.**””

David was not allowed to build God a temple because, as he himself said, he had been a man of war and he had shed blood. We don’t read here that David had shed **much** blood. It only says, that he had shed blood. Whether he had shed **much** blood or **just a little** blood was immaterial to God.

Some have argued that David was not allowed to build the temple because he engaged in *offensive* wars, not only in *defensive* wars. Again, in God’s eyes, the kind of warfare was immaterial. We read Solomon’s testimony in 1 Kings 5:2–5: “Then Solomon sent to Hiram, saying: You know how my father David could not build a house for the name of the LORD his God **because of the wars which were fought against him on every side**, until the LORD put his foes under the soles of his feet. But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side; there is neither adversary nor evil occurrence. And behold, I propose to build a house for the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spoke to my father David, saying, ‘Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, he shall build the house for My name.’”

David could not build God a house because of the *wars fought against him*. Even the fact that David **defended** himself against those who were attacking him, thereby shedding blood, was reason enough for God to prohibit him from building the temple. THAT fact should really make us think, especially in light of James 5:6: “...you have murdered the just; *he does not resist you.*”

DAVID NUMBERS HIS ARMY

Even though David understood that God did not allow him to build the temple because of his past wars, he decided once again, at the very end of his life, to commit another foolish act that was associated with his desire to still fight in war. We are referring here to David's census of his people, Israel and Judah.

From Biblical chronology, we are able to determine that this census took place *AFTER* God told David that he was not allowed to build the temple. Although David made certain preparations for the building of the temple, following the census (compare 1 Chronicles 21 and 22), it is apparent that David knew by then that, and why, he could not build the temple (1 Chronicles 22:7–8; 1 Chronicles 28:2–3).

God's punishment for David taking a census of his people was severe.

The Bible includes two accounts of this episode. One account has been recorded in 2 Samuel 24. We read in verse 1: "Again the anger of the **LORD** was aroused against Israel, and **He** *moved David* against them to say, 'Go, number Israel and Judah.'"

In the parallel account in 1 Chronicles 21:1, we are told that "**Satan** stood up against Israel, and *moved David* to number Israel."

Since the Bible does not contradict itself, we must read both passages together, to harmonize the accounts. Therefore, it was actually Satan who directly influenced David to number his army, but God allowed it, as He was angry with Israel. Although Joab objected, David insisted that his order be obeyed. We read in 2 Samuel 24:8–9: "So when they had gone through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days. Then Joab gave the sum of the number of the people to the king. And there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men *who drew the sword*, and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men."

We now read the remarkable reaction of David, in verse 10: "And David's heart condemned him after he had numbered the people. So David said to the LORD, 'I have **sinned greatly** in what I have done; but now, I pray, O LORD, take away the **iniquity** of Your servant, for I have done **very foolishly**.'"

What was David's great sin and iniquity? In what way had he acted very foolishly?

The context shows that David wanted to know how many men he

had **who could carry a sword**. He was either willing to begin a war, or he wanted to know how many soldiers he had to defend himself in a war. In either case, David considered his action later as iniquity and foolishness, and God agreed with him. He sent the prophet Gad, David's seer, to David, offering him three different predicaments as punishment for his sin. David chose a "three days' plague" (2 Samuel 24:13–14), and so "the LORD sent a plague upon Israel from the morning till the appointed time. From Dan to Beersheba seventy thousand men of the people died... Then David spoke to the LORD when he saw the angel who was striking the people, and said, 'Surely I have sinned, and I have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Let Your hand, I pray, be against me and against my father's house'" (verses 15–17).

The parallel account in 1 Chronicles 21 gives additional interesting details. We read in verse 16: "Then David lifted his eyes and saw the angel of the LORD standing between earth and heaven, having in his hand **a drawn sword** stretched out over Jerusalem."

After David had prayed to God to stop the plague, "... the LORD commanded the angel, and he **returned his sword to its sheath**... But David... was afraid of the **sword of the angel** of the LORD" (verses 27, 30).

Why does the account emphasize three times that God sent an angel **with a drawn sword** to plague Israel? **David, who was willing to take the sword in order to fight in war, saw an angel of God who was killing his people ("his sheep") with the sword**. David simply saw the law in action that Christ later revealed to Peter: "... for all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Matthew 26:52; compare, too, 1 Chronicles 27:24).

Many innocent people are likewise bound to die in war. That is one important reason why human war is so wrong—so useless—so *ungodly*.

But let us ask again, Didn't God at times even *command* certain people, including David, to go to war? Yes, He did, **only because mankind had already decided that they wanted to fight in war, trying to solve their problems through the means of war**. **MAN JUST DOES NOT KNOW THE WAY TO PEACE!** At times, David even asked God whether he should fight or not, and God told him to fight (compare 1 Samuel 23:1–4). However, David did not ask the question whether war *in general* was wrong. It was rather always the issue, whether or not he should fight a *particular* battle.

When David admitted at the end of his life, after having numbered his people, that he had sinned and acted foolishly, it appears that he finally understood that fighting in war IS wrong. But he did NOT have this understanding at the very beginning of his life. Sometimes it takes a long time—maybe a whole lifetime—before God’s disciples come to the perfect understanding on a given issue, including the issue of war and peace, and what constitutes killing, which is a transgression of God’s Law, the Ten Commandments.

WARRIORS HAD TO “DE-SIN” THEMSELVES

Let us remember that it was never God’s purpose that man should fight in war! We have already seen many passages in the Bible that make this fact very clear. Additional proof can be found when considering what the Israelites had to do AFTER they had fought in war. We read in Numbers 31:19–24: “And as for you, remain outside the camp seven days; **whoever has killed any person**, and whoever has touched any slain, **purify yourselves** and your captives on the third day and on the seventh day. Purify every garment...’ Then Eleazar the priest said to the **men of war who had gone to the battle**, ‘This is the ordinance of the law which the LORD commanded Moses: “... And you shall wash your clothes on the seventh day and be clean, and afterward you may come into the camp.””

The Hebrew word for “purify” is “*chata*.” Most of the time, this word is translated as “sin.” The *Authorized Version* translates it 167 times as “sin.”

Interestingly, this word can also convey the **opposite** meaning; that is, to get rid of sin. In that context, it has been rendered in the *Authorized Version* as “purify,” “cleanse,” “purge,” or “offer for sin.” Used in that context, it literally means, “de-sin,” or “purify from sin or error.”

What was the sin that the Israelites—the men of war who had gone to battle—had to get rid of? Some say, it was strictly the transgression of the ritual law to not *touch* a *dead* person. They refer in this context to Numbers 19:11–12, 16.

It is correct that the entire 19th chapter of the book of Numbers describes the rite of purification of a person who had touched a dead body. In order to be able to enter the tabernacle (verse 13), he had to be sprinkled, on the third and on the seventh day, with the

water of purification (the *Authorized Version* calls it “the water of separation”). This water is identified in verse 9 as a means to obtain purification from sin. Why was it necessary to be sprinkled and purified in that way, after one had touched a dead person?

The answer is that God wanted the Israelites to understand *the great distinction between life and death*. God is a God of the living, not of the dead. Death is always associated with sin. Death is the penalty for sin. Without sin, there would be no death. Once sin is removed, there will be no more death. There is also involved a symbolic meaning: We need to be spiritually alive, rather than spiritually dead.

We should also notice that the Hebrew word “*chata*,” when applied to purification, **can describe** *spiritual* purification as well, not only ritual purification. For instance, David said in Psalm 51:7: “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.” The Hebrew word for “purge” is “*chata*.” David was asking God to remove all *spiritual* sin from him, to “de-sin” him, to “purify him from sin.”

Now notice! The fact that the Israelites had to purify themselves after they had touched a *dead* person does NOT explain why the Israelites had to purify themselves from sin when they killed a *living* person.

Numbers 31:19 makes a distinction between an Israelite who had touched a *dead person*, and an Israelite who had killed a *living person*. The command that the Israelite had to be purified from sin because he had *killed* a person was a *new* command—it was not contained in Numbers 19. Why did God give it?

Here is why: Although God had commanded the Israelites to wage a particular war—to fight a particular battle—they had to purify themselves from *sin*, after they had done so. To kill a human being in war was, and still is, against the sixth of God’s Ten Commandments. It is SIN in God’s eyes. Man *decided* for himself to fight and kill in war, and God saw to it that the wars would end in the way that He wanted for His purpose. But to fight in war was *NEVER JUSTIFIED* in God’s eyes. It has always been SIN to do so.

In the German translations, the word for “purify” is much better expressed. They use the word, “*entsündigen*”—which literally means, “to get rid of sin.” They had *sinned* by killing humans in war—they had to get rid of that sin by purification.

THE RAPE OF DINAH

Let us consider still another episode showing that killing in war is sin. When Dinah, the sister of Simeon and Levi, was violated by the son (Shechem) of the ruler of Sichem (Hamor), her brothers resorted to violence. We read in Genesis 34:25–26: “Now it came to pass on the third day... that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brothers, each took his sword and came boldly upon the city and killed all the males. And they killed Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem’s house, and went out.”

Simeon and Levi’s action might appear justified to some. After all, we read, pertaining to Dinah’s violation through Shechem, in verses 7 and 31: “And the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it; and the men were grieved and very angry, because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob’s daughter, a thing which ought not to be done... But they [Simeon and Levi] said, ‘Should he treat our sister like a harlot?’”

But notice Jacob’s condemning judgment of his sons Simeon and Levi, and realize that Jacob spoke under God’s inspiration: “Simeon and Levi are brothers; Instruments of cruelty [margin: violence] are in their dwelling place. **Let not my soul enter their council**; Let not my honor be united to their assembly; For in their anger they slew a man, And in their self-will they hamstrung an ox. Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; And their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob And scatter them in Israel” (Genesis 49:5–7).

Simeon and Levi’s avenging war was, in the eyes of both Jacob and God, nothing less than murder. Every war fought by human beings is sin and constitutes murder in the eyes of God. Is it sin and murder in your eyes, too?

THE FUTILITY OF WAR

Over the centuries, some have recognized the utter destructiveness and futility of war, and have openly admitted that war only results in more war.

U.S. Civil War General William Tecumseh Sherman (1820–1891) said about war: “War is at best barbarism...It is only those who have neither fired a shot nor heard the shrieks and groans of the wounded who cry aloud for blood, more vengeance, more desolation. War is hell.”

British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain pointed out: “In war, whichever side may call itself the victor, there are no winners, but all are losers.”

The way of war is fundamentally opposite to the way of peace. The reason why we still have wars today is because people like war too much. The carnal mind does not acknowledge the law of God, nor can it be “subject to” it (Romans 8:7).

Winston Churchill wrote the following about the Confederacy’s two chief generals, Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson: “Both these men, though they habitually spoke and no doubt convinced themselves to the contrary, LOVED WAR as a technical art to which their lives had been given. Their sayings and letters abound with expressions of sorrow at the terrible decrees of which they had now become the servants. But on a long night march to a desperate battle at dawn Jackson muttered to his companion, ‘Delicious excitement,’ and Lee... observed, ‘It is well that war is so horrible—we could grow too fond of it.’”

GOD PROTECTS THOSE WHO TRUST IN HIM

In addition to his booklet, “*Military Service and War*,” which we quoted earlier, Herbert W. Armstrong published two articles in the September and October 1984 issues of the *Plain Truth* magazine, entitled, “The Sure Way to End the Fear of Nuclear War—NOW,” and, “How the West Can End the Fear of Nuclear War—NOW.”

In these articles, he said the following (emphasis in the original): “Nations Never NEEDED Go to War. Yielding to HUMAN NATURE is the CAUSE of war. Rebellion against God’s law of peace is the CAUSE of war... In respect to WAR, the basic point is the Sixth Commandment. It says, simply, ‘*Thou shalt not kill.*’ If all nations obeyed that commandment and followed the way of LOVE toward other humans, there would be no war. But, one argues, that’s a pretty platitude—but it’s not practical—it won’t work. WHY? Because, he argues, if *your* nation obeys that commandment and is disarmed with no military force, it would be attacked and beaten by some *other* nation [we might add here, or by terrorists] that disobeyed God’s law, and believed in WAR [or terrorist attacks]. Your nation would therefore be helpless.

“Oh, but it WOULDN’T. The Creator understands human nature better than we humans do. HE PROVIDED FOR THAT!... You think

the Almighty Creator-God is impractical—that he leaves those who OBEY him, who accept his GOVERNMENT over them, HELPLESS?... You think—do you?—that the GOVERNMENT OF GOD is so feeble and lacking in power that it is unable to protect the individual or the nation it governs?...

“Notice now, in your Bible, the specific application of the commandment, ‘Thou shalt not kill,’ to military force and war. Notice how GOD says to those under HIS GOVERNMENT, that his GOVERNMENT... will PROTECT his people against any invading force. God said to Israel: ‘But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries... and I will cut them off’ (Ex. 23:22–23). God promised supernaturally to fight any invading enemy [nation or terrorists] to protect the nation and people under HIS government... ”

“A *part* of God’s PLATFORM OF GOVERNMENT that he laid before the people [of Israel] *before* they became HIS NATION was the promise that HIS GOVERNMENT would protect its citizens from need of going to WAR. That is the OPEN PROMISE OF GOD, which would later apply to ANY nation...” (“*The Sure Way to End the Fear of Nuclear War NOW,*” The Plain Truth, September 1984, pp. 9–13).

Notice the following excerpts from Herbert W. Armstrong’s article, “*How the West Can End the Fear of Nuclear War NOW!*”, The Plain Truth, October 1984, pp. 20, 30: “War is *so needless!* War is WRONG! Yes, the West *could* put an END to the threat of nuclear war [or terrorist attacks] IMMEDIATELY—IF not only leaders, but ALSO the PEOPLE AS A WHOLE, could recognize REALITY—could understand that God is REAL—and would *humble themselves* before him, BELIEVE HIM—RELY ON him! But, if our people WILL NOT, then *it is decreed* we shall, in fewer years than you will believe, see OUR CITIES DESTROYED, along with a full third of our populations by a foreign invasion.”

DID GOD ORDER HIS PEOPLE TO SIN?

Some might still say: But God *ordered* them to go to war, and God would never order anyone to sin. This argument and objection seems persuasive only at first sight, but certainly fails once we understand the truth on the subject.

As we explain in our booklet, “*Angels, Demons and the Spirit World,*”

beginning on page 46, God even uses sinning demons, at times, to carry out His Will. God did not *order* the demons to sin; rather, the demons *decided* to sin. God used or “ordered” them to do what they wanted to do, but only what conforms with His plan and purpose. For instance, Jesus told the demons to “Go and possess the pigs” (compare Matthew 8:32). One might say, He gave them an order, but it is clear that the demons wanted to do that—in fact, they asked Christ whether they could possess the pigs (compare Mark 5:12–13; Luke 8:30–32).

In another example, God told Satan that he could plague Job, but only *after Satan asked permission* to do it (compare the first two chapters of the book of Job). God told the spirit in heaven who wanted to become a *lying* spirit, to go out and deceive the king (compare 1 Kings 22). It was first the demon’s decision. God then used him to accomplish His Will.

The same is true for Israel’s wars. In reading the accounts carefully, we find that many times, Israel asked God, “Shall we fight this battle?” And God’s answer was often times, “Yes.” Sometimes, though, He said, “No,” as to fight that particular battle was not within the parameters of God’s plan and purpose. We must firmly keep the truth of the matter in mind, that it was Israel who **WANTED** to fight, generally speaking, otherwise, why would they have even **ASKED** God to fight in the first place?

It was **MAN**’s decision to fight, just as it was the demon’s decision, for example, to deceive people. God **ALLOWED** and **PERMITTED** such conduct **FOR A REASON**.

Some may say that Israel was guiltless because God ordered them to fight, even killing women and children. But was the spirit guiltless who became a lying spirit in the mouth of all the false prophets? Was Judas guiltless when he betrayed Christ, under the influence and possession of Satan, although it was determined from the outset that it would be he who would betray his Master (compare John 6:64; Matthew 26:24–25)?

This does not mean, by any stretch of the imagination, that there is any wrong with God and that God acted wrongly when He commanded the Israelites to fight in war. It was Israel who sinned, not God. It is true that, at God’s command, the Israelites “utterly destroyed the men, women, and little ones of every city” (Deuteronomy 2:34).

Passages like these have led many readers to conclude that the God of the Old Testament was harsh and cruel, while Jesus Christ was gentle

and meek. The fact is, however, that it was Jesus Christ—the second member in the God Family—Who appeared to Moses and gave this command (compare 1 Corinthians 10:4). It was He—the Giver of life—Who created mankind (compare Hebrews 1:1–2; John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Ephesians 3:9), and Who rightly determined to take the lives of certain people. Christ, in His wisdom, ended the suffering of those people who lived in that evil, demon-worshipping society, knowing that God would later resurrect them to physical life in a better world—a world in which His right way of life would be taught to everyone and enforced throughout the earth (compare Revelation 20:11–12. For further information on man’s future resurrection, please read our free booklets, “*Do You Have An Immortal Soul?*” and “*God’s Commanded Holy Days*”).

Since carnal and unconverted Israel did not trust in God’s might and strength to lead them and protect them, they decided—against God’s Will—to take care of matters themselves. Rather than leaving the fighting to God (compare Exodus 14:14), they **CHOSE** to become a warring nation. Still, God used them as His instruments to carry out His Will to bring them into the Promised Land, as He had unconditionally promised Abraham.

We find, in Deuteronomy 20, certain laws regarding the principles governing warfare. Remember, God **NEVER** intended Israel to fight in war, but after Israel *decided* to be a warring nation, God gave them certain principles to go by. Those principles differ fundamentally from the cruel and merciless way in which wars are being fought today in this world.

Of course, the prerogative to take human life belongs solely to God. Only He has the right to kill a person or command someone else to do it. Angels don’t sin when they kill men, in compliance with God’s Will, as angels are higher than men (Likewise, humans don’t sin, when they kill animals for food, as they are higher than animals). Angels would sin, however, if they were to kill humans against God’s Will (as humans sin, when they kill animals against God’s Will—for example, by slaughtering them just for “fun,” without any need for food or other permissible purposes). And this is why we, once we are glorified members of the **God Family**, will not sin either, when we take **human** life in the future. In fact, as God beings, it will be impossible for us to sin, as we will always live in perfect harmony with the Will of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. But as long as we are humans, we are **not** **guiltless** if we

Did God ORDER Ancient Israel to SIN?

Q Although there are examples in the Old Testament when men decided to go to war, other passages show that God ordered them to war. If human warfare is always wrong, did God order men to SIN?

A To answer this question, it would be helpful to recall that sin begins in the mind—many times, long before the physical act is committed.

If a man lusts after a woman in his heart (mind) he has already committed the sin of adultery, in the eyes of God (compare Matthew 5:27–28). If a person hates another in his heart (mind), he has committed murder already, in the eyes of God (compare Matthew 5:21–22). The law has already been broken. Sin has already been committed.

Thus, in David's and in ancient Israel's situations, both had already broken God's law and committed sin against Him, in their hearts, when they **desired** to go to war. They had already become men of war, in their hearts—sinners, who had chosen to live contrary to God and His Way (but they might not have even realized that fighting in war is sin).

Thus, God, when He saw this was *in their heart*—men already having made the decision to sin against Him—He used their sinning attitudes to carry out what He would have done in another way. If they had only trusted in Him and had the faith to know that God did not lie when He said He would fight their battles for them, and that He was fully capable of doing that, Israel's history might have been quite different.

Many times, ancient Israel only wanted to fight in war when that fit their purpose. Generally, they were not even seeking to carry out God's

purpose—otherwise, they would not have made the decision to fight in the first place. Although King Saul destroyed the Amalekites, he and the people kept some of the spoil, even though God had prohibited them from doing so (compare 1 Samuel 15:1–21). This shows, what their general attitude was—it was not one of seeking and obeying God.

In Moses' time, God used the Pharaoh of Egypt to teach Israel reliance on Him, since it was already *in Pharaoh's heart* to commit evil anyway. At various times God used evil Gentile leaders to carry out His purpose. Although what they were doing was sin, the sin or desire to sin was already *in their hearts*. They already lived the way of sin—the way of this world. So God used them to do His Will.

A decision to live the way of war is a decision to live the way of this world. God tells us to come out of that way. But He does not force anyone to do that. It always comes down to personal will—free moral agency. God wants man to build Godly righteous character—but this requires that man understands, accepts in his heart and chooses the right, while rejecting the wrong. The development of character requires time—it cannot be created "by fiat."

Ultimately, it is also a question of God's **original intent**. God did not intend that man should fight in war or kill human life (even when Cain slew Abel, Cain was protected from

a violent death through a mark, compare Genesis 4:13–15). But man chose to live a certain way of life. And so, God would later say—at the time of Noah—that whoever sheds human blood, his blood will be shed through humans (compare Genesis 9:6). God was addressing here cause and effect—as Christ later said to Peter: “All who take the sword will perish by the sword.”

In addition, God did not intend that man should divorce, but because of the hardness of man’s heart, Moses allowed divorce and gave them bills of divorce. God did not intend that man should engage in polygamy, or that Israel should have a king. Samuel said that Israel sinned when they asked for a king, but God still directed them—“ordered” them—as to whom they should choose for their king.

And so, God’s *original intent* was not that man should fight in war. God said He would fight for them and that He would bring hornets and fear to the enemy so that they would leave the Promised Land. But when ancient Israel chose to live the way of all other nations, God used them as His instruments to carry out His purpose.

We should also realize that the New Testament commandments against fighting in war are unambiguous. Since God’s character does not change, and since it is **WRONG** to fight in war **TODAY**, it **MUST HAVE BEEN** wrong to fight in war in Old Testament times. No *true* Christian today would go out and fight in human wars, killing innocent civilians (“casualties”), including women and children. We understand this clearly

today, and God judges us based on what we understand. To whom much is given, of him much is required (compare Luke 12:48).

When James and John asked for fire to come down from heaven to devour the Samaritans, Christ rebuked them, telling them that they were, at that moment, following Satan’s inspiration. Christ refused to get involved in judging legal cases, or in carrying out a death penalty against another person. He gave us an example, in that regard, to follow His lead, and that is why we don’t serve on juries or become executioners of convicted criminals. This is not our world. In Old Testament times, Israel was a carnal, unconverted nation without God’s Holy Spirit within them. God administered or “ordered” them in a way that they could understand, to prevent anarchy.

But this was still not done in accordance with God’s *original intent*!

Laws of war only came into existence *after* Israel had decided to fight. These laws were “more humane” than any others known to man, but if Israel would not have decided to fight in war, there would not have been a need to have any laws regulating war. The same is true for laws regarding kings. Since God foresaw that Israel would ask for a king, He already placed certain laws regarding kings in the book of Deuteronomy, but the Bible says clearly that Israel sinned when asking for a king in the first place.

Some passages in the Old Testament are perhaps difficult to understand, but we must appreciate that God will judge people based on

Did God ORDER Ancient Israel to SIN? continued...

what they knew, not on what they did not know. For example, Samson is going to be in the kingdom of God (compare Hebrews 11:32, 39–40), but his entire life, as reported in Scripture, reflects little of a converted person. At the very end of his life, he must have become converted (otherwise he would not be in God's kingdom)—most likely while he was in the dungeon—but even then, he asked God to give him power to avenge himself against the Philistines (compare Judges 16:28). But somehow, his nature had begun to change—perhaps now he was finally and fully realizing that it was God Who gave him his strength. This mindset might have been sufficient for God to decide that He would resurrect Samson in the first resurrection, as God looks at the heart, and He overlooks ignorance. But today, no true Christian would ask for power from God so that he could kill others and avenge himself.

God saved the harlot Rehab, although she lied. God did not condone lying, but He appreciated her

willingness to stand up for God and save the spies. The same is true when David killed Goliath or when Phinehas killed the Israelite and the foreign woman who practiced fornication in front of others. God did not condone killing, but He appreciated their willingness to stand up for God.

If we say that Israel's fighting in war was right, because God "ordered" Israel to fight, then we must also say that it will be right for the *modern* king of Assyria to fight against the *modern* houses of Israel and Judah—and that all Christians should join his army—since God is going to *order* that future king of Assyria to go to war against modern Israel and Judah (compare Isaiah 10:5–6).

With regard to Abraham, God asked him to sacrifice his only son. We understand that this was also symbolic of the Father's sacrifice of Christ for man's sake, but the point still is that Abraham was asked to kill Isaac, quite literally. This was a test for Abraham, to see how strong his faith was, given the fact that God had promised him that through Isaac

fight in war and kill other humans. To do so would be, and is, sin.

Some have wrongly concluded that it must be pleasing to God when we fight in war, but they do not understand what happened in Old Testament times, and why. For instance, James Fenimore Cooper quoted a soldier in his historical novel, "*The Spy*," saying that since God had ancient Israel fight in war, He could not be against Christian soldiers fighting.

NO CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS!

As we pointed out earlier, originally there were no Christian soldiers. But as paganism crept into the Roman Catholic Church, militaristic ideas began to be embraced by Church leaders as well. And so we find

he would be blessed. That is why Abraham believed that God would resurrect Isaac after his death, trusting God that He would carry out His promises (compare Hebrews 11:17–19). Still, though, he was ordered to kill his son. Why would God give Abraham such a command? It is perhaps interesting to consider that Abraham had shown a willingness to fight and kill prior to that episode when he rescued Lot with his trained servants—trained for war, apparently (compare Genesis 14:13–16). So, is it possible that God was also trying to teach Abraham a lesson—what it means to kill another person—and what it means for a father when his only son is about to be killed?

The Bible does not specifically say WHY God asked Abraham to slay his own son. **But we can be quite convinced that God would never ask a true Christian TODAY—one who understands the evil of war and refuses to fight and kill—to kill his son.**

Also, God never sins. God gives human life, and He has the right to

take it. When He commanded Israel to kill others—in war or in civil situations—He did not sin. He used men—*who were willing to kill*—so the responsibility was with them. Paul said in the book of Romans, chapter 13, verse 4, that God has given the governments of this world the sword to carry out executions—to prevent anarchy—but as true Christians today, we are not to take part in those activities. Ultimately, taking human life through humans is wrong—but the governments of this world are not judged yet—but we are (compare 1 Peter 4:17).

If Adam and Eve had not rebelled against God and had therefore been expelled from the Garden of Eden, God would not have had to give them laws like “an eye for an eye.” These laws had to be given because of carnal human nature and the evil desires of man’s heart.

Thankfully, there is soon coming a time when the way of war will no longer be tolerated, and when man, because of a change of heart, will WANT to live the way of peace.

in historical records that even members of the true Church of God were at times—over the centuries—not immune from participating in war. Are we today? Or, are we going to fall into the same trap when the time of temptation comes? Unless we KNOW, and we KNOW that we KNOW that it is a SIN for man to fight in war, we MIGHT be in danger of making the wrong decision when *every nation will be engulfed in an all-encompassing future World War*, soon to come.

Let us review, at this point, the historical record in more detail.

The **Paulicians** are first mentioned in historical records in 555 A.D. Traditionally, they have been considered to be a part of the spiritual body of Christ. The word “Paulician” is a derogatory term that means,

“followers of wretched little Paul.” They preached strongly against any participation in war. But when, around 800 A.D., the Catholic Church began to persecute them, some of them began to defend themselves with weapons. Their great leader Sergius, who taught them from 801 to 835, condemned fighting and retaliation. But after his death, even those who had listened to him, began to fight. Now the Paulicians became known as a *warrior* people.

At one time, the **Waldenses** were apparently part of the body of Christ. Their founder, Peter Waldo, started to teach in 1161. He taught, among other things, that taking a life was wrong. But after his death, and that of early subsequent leaders, many of the Waldenses took up arms in 1380 when the Inquisitors invaded their areas. And in 1619, their leader, Simon Pechi, went to war in Austria, although he still taught and kept the Sabbath. His *right understanding regarding the Sabbath* did not prevent him from having ACQUIRED a *wrong understanding pertaining to killing and war!*

When we review the records of the early Sabbath-keeping Church of God in America, we find that although the Church officially condemned warfare, some Sabbath-keeping members began, as early as 1776, to participate in war.

There are indications in the Bible that members of the true Church of God, who once professed to believe it was wrong to participate in war, will soon take up arms and fight in war, because they have never fully convinced themselves that it is wrong to do so. If, and when they do think to get involved, they would do well to remember Christ’s stern warning to Peter: “. . .all who take the sword, will perish by the sword” (compare Matthew 26:52). They should also remember what God says, in effect: “My soul hates those who delight in war” (compare Psalm 5:6; 68:30). And they should recall that, “Every warrior’s sandal from the noisy battle, And garments rolled in blood, Will be used for burning and fuel of fire” (Isaiah 9:5).

At times of temptation we can keep ourselves on track in our relationship with God by recalling the Scriptures God has provided for us, rightly applying them in any given situation. Understanding God’s viewpoint on fighting and war, is one example of “rightly dividing the word of truth” (compare 2 Timothy 2:15).

Several Church organizations, describing themselves as part of the

“Church of God,” as well as certain “Christian” writers, claiming to belong to the true Church of God, have *already* officially adopted the position that it would not be a sin for a Christian to fight in war. There are others, who, although preaching against the participation of a Christian in *today’s* wars, still do not want to give up their *wrong* ideas as to *why* Israel and David fought in *Old Testament times*.

Let us quote from another article that Mr. Armstrong wrote on the subject of war. It was published in the *Plain Truth* magazine of February of 1986, one month following his death on January 16, 1986. The article is entitled, “*Why Does God Allow Wars?*”

“God’s law or way is love. Love is always away from self—not toward self. Never lust or anything of that sort. The opposite way is lust and greed, that’s all toward self—vanity! And it leads to the system in this world—competition and strife—yes, the getting way, the accumulating, the taking way. And that is the cause of wars. Why does God allow war and human suffering? We have competition. Everything is competition in this world. Everything is carried along on the selfish, the getting, basis—greed and vanity. To prevent the evils of competition and wars today God would have to cram his religion down our throats. Our way, the violation of the law of God, the law of love, is causing war, human anguish and human suffering. God had to allow it (to let us have our own way) in order to fulfill his purpose of creating holy character.

“The only way that God could stop war would be to stop the cause. He would have, in effect, to cram his religion down our throats—down the throats of all humanity. There wouldn’t be any free moral agency; there wouldn’t be any [development of Godly] character and God’s purpose could never be fulfilled. That’s why God allows wars, and that’s why God allows suffering.”

KILLING IN WAR BREAKS THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

God does not change. His character does not change. God gave man the Ten Commandments and He won’t change them. They will stay in force and effect as long as there are human beings living in the flesh. The Ten Commandments reflect God’s character; that is, how He would live if He were a man. And when God became a man in the person of Jesus Christ, that is how God DID live in the flesh. For instance, Christ kept the Sabbath, which *was made* FOR MAN (compare Mark 2:27).

Q Please explain Romans 13:3, stating that “rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil.” I could think of many rulers who are a terror to good works. Also, do we have to obey civil rulers and their laws in everything?

A Paul is talking here about rulers in general who uphold certain laws to guarantee a civil and peaceful and harmonious lifestyle among their citizens. Paul is referring to submission to and enforcement of civil and criminal laws, such as theft or murder.

Paul is not talking here about the Hitlers or the Neros, who encourage their citizens to betray Christians or the Jews so they can be killed. We need to remember Christ’s statement to OBEY the Pharisees in all that they tell the people—but later, Peter did not obey them when they told him not to preach in the name of Christ. Christ would not obey them, either, in following their rules of ceremonial washings or to have no contact with “sinners.” So, Christ and Paul were talking about matters that were not in conflict with God’s Word. (Notice, too, that John the Baptist openly rebuked Herod for committing adultery with his brother’s wife—see Luke 3:19–20. Also, Daniel refused to obey the order of King Darius, not to pray to God, while his three friends disobeyed the order of King Nebuchadnezzar to worship the golden image).

In John 19:11, Christ told Pilate, “You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the GREATER sin.” Christ is giving here an implicit forewarning of accountability and judgment on those—including rulers—who are evil. We are

to be ambassadors of Christ and of the Kingdom of God. As such, we still need to be subject to the laws of man, as long as they are not in conflict with the laws of God.

Also, in Luke 4:6, Satan states to Christ that all authority over the kingdoms of this world have presently been given to Satan, and that it is he who gives it to whomever he wishes. Christ does not dispute this claim. In fact, we read that Satan is the “prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2) and the “god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4, *Authorized Version*), who still has a throne on this earth (Revelation 2:13). He and his demons are the current rulers over this world (Ephesians 6:12), inspiring civil leaders to obey *their* will (1 Corinthians 2:7–8).

Today, the world as a whole is cut off from God and is subject to the rule of Satan. God placed Lucifer on the throne of this earth, with responsibility for properly governing it, but he rebelled and became known as Satan. When Satan inspired Adam and Eve to turn against God—to sin by going against what God instructed them—God gave mankind 6,000 years to find out for themselves that they cannot live without God [see accompanying box for more information on God’s 6,000-year plan for man]. And for that same 6,000-year duration, God has decreed that Satan would remain on his throne. That 6,000-year period will end at the return of Jesus Christ,

Who will come to replace Satan—a failed ruler—and restore the government of God on this earth. In that sense, there is “no authority except from God” (Romans 13:1), and all authority “has been given...from above” (John 19:11). God has not yet replaced Satan and his demons, but they cannot do anything that God does not ALLOW them to do.

It is with that background that we must understand Paul’s statement that human governmental authorities or rulers are “God’s minister[s]” who do “not bear the sword in vain,” and “avenger[s] to execute wrath on him who practices evil” (Romans 13:4). **This statement does not permit true Christians to be involved in this world’s system of capital punishment [either as executioners, or as judges or jurors, condemning a criminal to death] and working for the police force by carrying and using guns.** Paul’s statement in Romans 13:3 explains the fact that God allows human governments to punish criminals in order to prevent anarchy (compare Numbers 35:30–33). But, while ancient Israel was directly ruled by God for a while, all human governments are today under the direct rule or control of the “god of this world,” Satan the devil.

True Christians are no longer part of this world. They have turned their back on Satan’s rule. They are ambassadors and citizens of a future kingdom—the Kingdom of God. Their citizenship is already preserved in heaven for them.

Paul explained in 2 Corinthians 3 that true Christians are “ministers of the new covenant.” As verse 6

points out, they are to administer *life* through the administration of the Holy Spirit, even though God **allows** civil governing authorities—“minister[s]... of the letter,” which are still under Satan’s rule—to administer “the letter [which] kills.”

At times, God might even directly intervene to insure that a particular person takes over rulership in a particular country, so that God’s overall plan for mankind can be fulfilled (Exodus 9:16). But, we are not to follow them or their laws when they oppose God’s instructions for us.

The *Broadman Bible Commentary* has this to say about Romans 13:3: “...State officials as rulers deserve the loyalty of Christians only when they do approve good conduct (vv. 3–4a). The corrupt politicians who appeal to the Christian conscience to protect their unjust reign of terror and tyranny should be totally repudiated... As God’s public servant the ruler is to promote the good against the bad” (p. 257).

The German “*Lexikon zur Bibel*,” by Fritz Rienecker, points out under “governing authorities” [“*Obrigkeit*”]: “The Bible instructs us, because of God, to obey the governing authorities (Romans 13:1–7; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13–14), and to pray for them (Jer. 29:7; 1 Tim. 2:2). The reason is, that every authority is appointed by God and that it is His servant (Romans 13:1, 4)... There is, however, a limit to obedience. That limit is reached, when the instructions of the authority prevent a human being from obeying God (Acts 4:19; 5:29). This freedom, not to follow the will of the authority, Peter defends before the spiritual authority of his own people.”

Christ did not go to war. He did not enter the military. He rebuked Peter for picking up the sword to defend Him against an illegal arrest. When Christ was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to God who judges righteously (compare 1 Peter 2:23). Is this our approach to life? Is this how we think *and* act in the face of adversity?

Since God's character has not changed, we know that He felt exactly the same regarding ancient Israel and war. It is sin for a human being to fight in war today, just as it was sin in Old Testament times. It has ALWAYS been a violation of God's spiritual law, the Ten Commandments.

Some disagree, claiming that God never prohibited killing in war. They say that the Ten Commandments only prohibit "murder" ("ratsach" in Hebrew), and "killing in war" is allegedly not "murder."

We have already discussed the fact that Christ and James equated killing in war with murder. They taught that killing in war is in violation of the Ten Commandments.

THE AVENGER OF BLOOD

A brief discussion here of the provisions regarding the avenger of blood might also be helpful in showing the error in reasoning that killing in war is not murder.

A perpetrator who "accidentally" brought about the death of another person (Numbers 35:15), without hating the victim, was allowed to flee to a city of refuge to escape the wrath of the avenger of blood. He was only allowed to escape death if he acted "unintentionally" or "ignorantly" (Deuteronomy 19:4). For instance, he might have killed a person by throwing a stone at him, not realizing that the victim was there (Numbers 35:23). Or, he might have killed the victim without wanting to (Deuteronomy 19:5; Numbers 35:22). If, on the other hand, the perpetrator hated the victim in the past, or if he struck him intentionally with a stone, an iron implement or a wooden hand weapon, even though he might not have hated the victim, he was still to be executed (Deuteronomy 19:4, 6, 11; Numbers 35:20–21; 16–18).

Some misunderstand certain statements in the book of Numbers to say that *only* the person who acted intentionally, knowingly and/

or with hatred is called a “murderer” (“ratsach” in Hebrew; compare Numbers 35:16: “But if he strikes [Hebrew, “nakah”] him with an iron implement, so that he dies, he is a murderer [Hebrew, “ratsach”]; the murderer [Hebrew, “ratsach”] shall surely be out to death.”). This understanding is technically incorrect, as sometimes the perpetrator *accidentally* or *unintentionally* causing the death of a person is also called a “murderer” as well (compare Numbers 35:25; Deuteronomy 4:42; 19:4—in all these cases, the Hebrew word for “manslayer” is “ratsach,” i.e. “murderer.”). In addition, Numbers 35:30 equates the Hebrew words for “killing” [nakah] and “murder” [ratsach]. We read: “Whoever kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death...” In most cases, however, the underlying Hebrew word for “manslayer” is “nakah”—one who smites another.

The meaning of the passage in Numbers 35:15–16 [referred to above] is that a person who kills intentionally, knowingly and/or with hatred is a murderer *worthy of death*, whereas others are, although still called “murderers” at times, *not worthy of death*. Note that even the avenger of blood who was permitted—but **not required**—to kill a murderer worthy of death, is still sometimes called a “murderer” himself, compare Numbers 35:27: “... and the avenger of blood finds himself outside the limits of his city of refuge, and the avenger of blood kills [in Hebrew, “ratsach,” i.e. “murders”] the manslayer [in Hebrew, “ratsach,” i.e. “murderer”], he shall not be guilty of blood...”

The Scriptures tell us that the killing or “smiting” of another human being is wrong in God’s eyes and in violation of the Ten Commandments. The “accidental” manslayer, who did not hate his neighbor whom he killed, was not considered innocent, as his conduct, albeit unintentional or unknowing, led to the death of a person. With proper precautions, such a death could have been avoided. The accidental manslayer still had to flee to a city of refuge and stay there until the high priest died. If he left the city before the death of the high priest, the avenger of blood was permitted, although not required, to kill him.

We might also ask, in this context, how “accidental deaths” of innocent war victims, commonly called “casualties of war,” can be explained in light of these Scriptures.

KILLING IN WAR NOT MURDER?

Some point out that sometimes, the Hebrew word for “killing” in the context of war is “*harag*,” and since this is a different word than the one used in the Ten Commandments (“*ratsach*”), killing in war is allegedly not murder and therefore permitted. For instance, we read in Numbers 31:7: “And they **WARRED** against the Midianites, just as the LORD commanded Moses, and they killed [Hebrew, “*hagar*”] all the males.”

This argument is only convincing at first sight, because the Hebrew word “*hagar*” is also used to describe “murder.” Compare Psalm 10:8: “[The wicked]... sits in the lurking places of the villages; In the secret places he *murders* [Hebrew, “*hagar*”] the innocent...” Compare, too, Jeremiah 4:31 and Hosea 9:13. The Hebrew word for “murderer” in both cases is “*hagar*.”

Please note, too, that Cain *murdered* his brother Abel, as it is clearly explained in 1 John 3:12: “... Cain who was of the wicked one... murdered his brother...” But notice, too, that Genesis 4:8 tells us: “Now Cain talked with Abel his brother, and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed [Hebrew, “*hagar*”] him.” The Hebrew word “*hagar*” in this passage clearly describes “murder.” The concept, then, that the Hebrew word “*hagar*” does not describe murder is clearly erroneous. It cannot be used for the argument that killing in war is not murder, and that it is not a violation of the Ten Commandments.

Another argument is that killing is only “murder,” according to the Bible, when it is done with hate. To support this argument, some quote Christ’s words in Matthew 5:21–22, claiming that murder begins with a hateful heart. Also, they point out that 1 John 3:15 defines a person as a murderer, who “hates his brother.” It is certainly true that hate can lead to murder. This fact does not help those, however, who allege that killing in war is not murder, as soldiers are trained to HATE their enemies, so THAT they can kill them. In addition, as has been explained in our discussion regarding the “avenger of blood,” killing out of hate is *not* the *only* way in which one is labelled, Biblically, as a murderer.

With that same rationale, someone would not be guilty of adultery, as long as he or she does not lust after another person (compare Matthew 5:27–28). Adultery can begin, and many times does, with looking at another person to lust for him or her, but this is not the only way in

which one can commit adultery. Although Abraham may or may not have lusted after his wife's maid, when producing offspring through her (compare Genesis 16:1–4), this was clearly a case of adultery, and it had terrible consequences for all of the parties involved.

“FEED YOUR ENEMIES” IN PRACTICAL APPLICATION

We find a very powerful example of the application of Christ's words, to bless and help our enemies, in the sixth chapter of 2 Kings. We read, beginning in verse 14, that the king of Syria “sent horses and chariots and a great army” to the city of Dothan, to capture the prophet Elisha.

The king's army “came by night and surrounded the city. And when the servant [Gehazi] of the man of God [Elisha] arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. . . . And Elisha prayed, and said, ‘LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.’ Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha [Christ's servants—legions of angels]. So when the Syrians came down to him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, and said, ‘Strike this people, I pray, with blindness.’ And He struck them with blindness according to the word of Elisha. Now Elisha said to them, ‘This is not the way, nor is this the city. Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek.’ But he led them to Samaria. So it was, when they had come to Samaria, that Elisha said, ‘LORD, open the eyes of these men, that they may see.’ And the LORD opened their eyes, and they saw; and there they were, inside Samaria! Now when the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, ‘My father, shall I kill them? Shall I kill them?’ But he answered, ‘You shall not kill them. Would you kill those whom you have taken captive with your sword and your bow? **Set food and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master.**’ Then he prepared a great feast for them; and after they ate and drank, he sent them away and they went to their master. **So the bands of Syrian raiders came no more into the land of Israel**” (2 Kings 6:14–23).

This can be the result, if we obey God and bless those who curse us—if we feed our enemy when he is hungry and give him to drink when he is thirsty, rather than killing him in war. Is this too simplistic, too impractical? Here we see that it is not: When the king of Israel

applied Christ's words to bless his enemies, they did not again try to raid his country.

The Bible is clear that every war fought by human beings is sin. It is murder in the eyes of God. Is it sin and murder in your eyes, too?

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION

Today, most of us are not being called to fight in war. There is presently no draft in the United States of America, Canada or Great Britain, although the question of instituting a draft in the USA is being discussed. In some European and other countries, there is a draft. In any event, members, or prospective members of the Church of God must know the Biblical truth on the matter of military service. A true Christian will not join the military, as he or she is conscientiously opposed to so doing. But in order to be a **conscientious objector**, **one's conscience must OBJECT** to joining the military and fighting and killing in war. In case of a draft and an examination, those who claim to be conscientious objectors must be able to convince the examiners that they are in fact **convicted** that they cannot participate in war.

A vague answer, such as, "it is probably wrong," is not going to convince anyone. Neither will an answer like, "It was Godly to fight in Old Testament times, but it is not Godly now, because we are living today under a different administration." Such an answer will surely prompt further questions, such as, "Do you believe that a soldier who is not a Christian SINS when he goes to war, since he is not yet under the new administration?" If that question is answered with, "No," the applicant is, in all likelihood, not going to be exempted from military service.

Most countries will not recognize someone as a conscientious objector if his conscience only bothers him in regard to fighting in *selective* wars, while not being opposed to fighting in *all* wars. For instance, an American would not be recognized as a conscientious objector if he is opposed to fighting in Iraq, while he would have been willing to fight in World War II.

The Biblically correct answer to all of these questions is that ALL wars fought by humans, are, and always have been, a sin! This applies to all wars fought in Old Testament times, and it applies to all wars that have been fought since the beginning of the New Testament and on into our own recent history. To properly understand the events that

Legal Precedence Regarding Jury Duty and Naturalization

Every American citizen has a constitutional right to be excused from serving on a jury, as long as he can manifest his sincere religious beliefs, based on the Bible, that prevent him from doing so. This constitutional right has been confirmed by several Court decisions throughout the country.

At the same time, aliens desiring to become American citizens are entitled to naturalization, even though, by reason of their religious training and belief, they would not serve in the military, as long as they have established that they are otherwise attached to the principles of the Con-

stitution of the United States and that they would bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution and laws of the United States. This has been ruled upon by numerous Federal Court cases in different Circuits.

In addition, applicants are also entitled under the law, to affirm, rather than to swear, when their religious belief prevents them from swearing and raising their right hand (compare Matthew 5:33–37; James 5:12; Revelation 10:5–6; Daniel 12:7) Federal Case Law, as well as the Immigration Operation Instructions, grant applicants such rights.

took place in Old Testament times, one has to read them with “New Testament” eyes. It is foolish and wrong to attempt to read “New Testament” Scriptures with “Old Testament” eyes.

When someone is being interrogated about his beliefs pertaining to military service and war, the examiners will also look at what the person does, how he lives, how he acts and reacts in his personal life. They want to know that what the applicant says is backed up by what he does. Do your actions back up your beliefs?

HOW DO WE PROTECT OURSELVES?

The question boils down to this: What do we do for our own protection since it is a sin to fight, and even to have a vengeful spirit? Do we believe in God and rely on Him for our protection, having the faith that it is GOD who is our protecting shield, or do we think that we must have additional security in the form of a handgun or some sort of firearm?

Do we think that God is *incapable* of helping us in certain circumstances?

We should, of course, do everything that we can do to avoid getting into dangerous situations. We obviously should not go to places where gangs assemble, and we should not get involved with people who are known to be active in crimes, for instance.

In addition, Proverbs 15:1 tells us that a soft answer turns away wrath but that grievous words stir up strife. So then, we need to be peacemakers, and we need to avoid everything that would create strife. Proverbs 18:6 reminds us that a fool's lips enter into contention and that his mouth calls for violent reactions.

We are also told in Proverbs 26:17 that he who passes by and meddles with strife belonging not to him, is like one who takes a dog by the ears. The point is, **the battles of this world, which are fought by this world, are not our battles!** This Scripture tells us not to be a fool, meddling with strife not belonging to us! We are to be ambassadors for Christ (compare 2 Corinthians 5:20). We are citizens of another kingdom. Our citizenship is in heaven. Our kingdom is not of this world. **That is one of the reasons why we don't vote for leaders in this world** (see accompanying Boxes). That is one of the reasons why we don't fight in the wars of this world. Do you see how the Scriptures teach us right living?

The most important of all the things you can do to avoid using violence is to pray to God, on a daily basis: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (compare Matthew 6:13). We are to plead with God daily to NOT ALLOW a tempting situation that might be too difficult for us to bear, to overtake us.

However, we read in the Bible that righteous persons have sometimes found themselves being attacked by others. What did they do, and what should YOU do, if God allows it?

First, realize that God would NOT allow it if you were not able to bear it, as 1 Corinthians 10:13 tells us. And when God does allow it, He will also provide a **way of escape for you**. This is sometimes literally the case. Sometimes you need to actually flee, to run away! Christ did so on occasion. We read in John 10:39: "Therefore they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand."

WHAT NOT TO DO!

When we find ourselves, or others, in a dangerous, challenging, life-threatening situation, we must PRAY to God, with faith, to HELP us out of that situation. To fight our fight for us! To give us the wisdom and the power NOT to do the WRONG thing, however tempting it may be.

We must realize that no matter what harm we may WANT to do

physically in a given situation, we must not seriously injure or kill the attacker. But unless we understand beforehand, and have in our mind that we are not to do something with the intent to seriously injure or kill the attacker, we might very well do so when the occasion presents itself. If we carry a gun with us or have one handy, say, next to our bed, we will certainly try to use it, but then may be killed in the process.

People who disagree with the foregoing may ask you what you would do if you came home and a robber was in the process of raping your wife or killing your husband. These kinds of questions are reminiscent of questions asked by those who are in favor of abortion. They never address the fact that abortion is clearly wrong when used as a means of birth control. They always use the dramatic exceptions, like that of a young girl who is raped. But even in such a tragic case, the answer is clear: Abortion is always wrong! Since that is the Biblical teaching, abortion is not an option, even in such a tragic situation of rape. But there *are* solutions. Adoption might be one of them. A young girl in such a situation would need a lot of guidance through spiritual and emotional counseling, as well as physical assistance. But we do not help the girl or the unborn child, by saying, “Well, okay then, let her have an abortion.”

The same is true for an attacker threatening a loved one. Realistically, how many times does this happen? But if it does happen, do you really think that you can take a gun and shoot the attacker, and that the attacker would let you do it without any resistance? Chances are, he will use his gun first. In any case, to use a gun and shoot the attacker would be against the clear Biblical teaching of prohibiting killing. But what about just trying to injure him? In the heat of the moment, you may not be able to do just that, even if you wanted to. And if the attacker would only be injured, he would still have the chance to kill you or others who are with you.

Christ told Peter, when he pulled his sword in defense of Christ and just injured the servant, to put his sword away. Christ’s protection did not depend on human weapons. It depended on God the Father and His angels. So, too, with us. Our *real protection* comes from the same source.

Some claim that Christ resorted to violence when He overturned the tables of the money changers. In fact, He did so *twice*—at the

beginning of His public ministry and also near the end of His life here on earth. The events are described in John 2:14–17 and in Matthew 21:12–13; Mark 11:15–18; and Luke 19:45–46. A careful study reveals that Christ—the legitimate *owner* of the Temple—overturned the tables of the money changers who occupied the Temple for inappropriate purposes that were not sanctioned by the owner. We don’t read that Christ *injured* the money changers—or even, that He drove them out. He used whips to drive out their sheep and oxen—but He did not use the whips to beat the people. The *New International Version* translates John 2:15, as follows: “So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, *both sheep and cattle*; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.”

WHERE OUR TRUST IS...

The whole issue really comes down to where we place our trust and confidence for our protection, in EVERY situation.

Notice God’s promise to His people, in Exodus 34:22–24: “And you shall observe the Feast of Weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the year’s end. Three times in the year all your men shall appear before the Lord, the LORD God of Israel. For I will cast out the nations before you and enlarge your borders; **neither will any man covet your land** when you go up to appear before the LORD your God three times in the year.”

When man places his trust and confidence in God, God will protect man. Ultimately though, no matter the consequences, we must be living a life pleasing to God. We must never fear the ones who can take our physical life from us, but we must fear, or deeply respect, the One who can *refuse* to give us ETERNAL LIFE.

We must always have the attitude that Daniel’s three friends had when they were asked to violate God’s laws by worshipping an idol, and in case of refusal, were threatened with being thrown into a fiery furnace. We need to speak and act in the same way when we are being tempted to worship Satan—the god of war—by picking up a gun or a knife or another weapon to injure or even kill another person. We read their answer in Daniel 3:17–18: “... our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do

not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”

We must not serve the wisdom of this world, worshipping the power of the air and the god of destruction and war. Rather, we must always follow the PRINCE OF PEACE.

Remember what the angels told the shepherds when Christ was born: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favor rests (Luke 2, 14, NIV), or, as the NRSV renders it, “... with whom He is pleased.” (Compare accompanying box.)

When God is pleased with us, when His favor rests on us, THEN He will be our shield and protection in times of impending battles. We must trust in God (compare Psalm 56:3–4, 8–11), ***AND*** we must be willing to obey His commandments, no matter what the situation, circumstance or consequence. God tells us: “You shall not kill!” Are you listening to Him?

Q What are the Biblical reasons compelling a Christian to refuse to participate in military service and war?

A There are different Biblical principles involved. We believe that the following will best express our religious convictions against participating in military service and war:

A true Christian is a stranger, alien and exile (1 Peter 2:11; Hebrews 11:13) while here on earth; an ambassador for Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20); and a representative of God's kingdom. As such, and in being a light to the world by proper conduct (Matthew 5:14–16), a true Christian does not take part in this world's governmental or political affairs, because it is not God who presently rules this world, but Satan the devil (Revelation 2:13; Luke 4:5–6). Christians are admonished to come out of the governmental and political systems of this world (Revelation 18:4).

Romans 12:17–21 tells us that we have to overcome evil with good; that we are not to avenge ourselves; and that we even give food and drink to our enemies if we find them in need. Matthew 5:44 and Luke 6:27–28 command us to love our enemies. This tells us that we cannot fight or kill our enemies. We are told, in Romans 14:19 and in 1 Peter 3:11, to pursue the things which lead to peace. We are called to be peacemakers (Matthew 5:9; James 3:18).

John the Baptist told Roman soldiers to "do violence to no man" (Luke 3:14, *Authorized Version*). He was showing man how to live in peace (Luke 1:79). Jesus Christ came to preach peace (Acts 10:36), as man does not know the way to peace (Luke 19:41–42; Romans 3:17), living, instead, the way that brings

about bloodshed and war (Romans 3:10–18). Christ will return to make an end to war (Psalm 46:9). He will scatter all those who delight in war (Psalm 68:28–30). After His return, all will learn how to live in peace, and there will be no more wars (Isaiah 2:2–4). Weapons of war will be destroyed (Hosea 2:18). At that time, there will be no end to the increase of peace (Isaiah 9:7).

Today, as ambassadors of Christ, we are to proclaim peace and reject any kind of war (Isaiah 52:7). We read in James 4:1–4 that wars originate with man's sinful and carnal desires, which **MUST** be overcome. We must live today the way of peace, the way that all of mankind will learn to live after Christ's return. Christ told Peter to put his sword away (Matthew 26:52). We are warned that all those who use the sword will perish by it (Revelation 13:10; compare 2 Samuel 2:26). Christ told His disciples that they were not following God's instructions when they wanted to destroy their enemies (Luke 9:54–56). Christ told Pilate that His kingdom was not of this world, and therefore, His servants would not fight (John 18:36). Paul confirmed that Christ's followers are not to fight (2 Corinthians 10:3–4; Ephesians 6:12). We find that Satan is the one who deceives man to believe that he should fight in war (Revelation 20:7–10).

It is true that in Old Testament times ancient Israel fought in war. This, however, was sin. **God never intended that Israel should fight!** Israel chose to fight, lacking the faith that God could help them in times

of need (Exodus 17:7; Psalm 78:41). Since man is a free moral agent, God does not force man not to sin. God made it clear, however, that Israel was not to fight. He told Israel in Exodus 14:14: "The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace." God intended to bring Israel into the Promised Land by driving out the enemies, using hornets in several cases (Exodus 23:27-28; Deuteronomy 7:17-22; Joshua 24:12). When Israel did rely on God, then God did intervene for them and fight their battles. They did not have to fight (2 Chronicles 20:1-30; 2 Chronicles 32:1-23).

David also fought in war, but this, too, was sinful. God punished David with continued wars because of his murder of Uriah and his adultery with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12:9-10). Subsequently, God did not allow David to build a temple because he had shed blood in war (1 Chronicles 22:6-10; 1 Chronicles 28:2-3; 1 Kings 5:2-5). God punished David again at the end of his life when he numbered his army, intending to fight in war (2 Samuel 24:1-17; 1 Chronicles 21:1-30).

It is true that God, at times, ordered Israel to fight certain wars. This did not make war right. Israel had chosen to fight in war, as Israel later chose to have a king. God had foreseen that this would happen (compare Genesis 36:31). He gave them their king (1 Samuel 8:22; 9:17), stating, at the same time, that their request for a king was sinful (1 Samuel 8:7, 19; 10:19; 12:13, 19-20). God allowed divorce in Old Testament times because of the hardness of people's hearts, but it was not God's intent that people should divorce (Matthew 19:3-9). Since God's purpose must stand, and since

God promised Abraham, unconditionally, to bring his descendants into the Promised Land (Genesis 15:18-21; 22:15-18), God determined the outcome of those wars that Israel wanted to fight.

Rather than killing our enemies, we are to do them good, if it is within our power to do so. Elisha acted in that way, as recorded in 2 Kings 6:14-23, and lasting peace was the result. When we are confronted with aggression, we need to pray to God to give us strength not to violate His law by killing the aggressors. God will not allow that we are overtaken by a temptation that is too difficult for us to handle (1 Corinthians 10:13). If there is an opportunity, we can hide or escape from our enemies, as Christ did (John 10:39). Christ never fought in war, nor did He ever commit violence to any man. Neither did the early apostles and disciples after their conversion. Neither must we today. God has not changed! God promises us protection from our enemies when we do what He commands (Genesis 35:1-5; Exodus 34:22-24). If God were to choose not to protect us in a given situation, for whatever reason, we must still not violate His law by killing another human being. Rather, we must have the faith and act as Daniel's three friends did, when Nebuchadnezzar threw them into the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:14-18).

Since it is God who commands us not to kill (Exodus 20:13), we must not violate His law by taking the life of another human being, for ANY reason. We must, therefore, not kill in war, nor enter the military to carry arms, or serve as combatants. We would be able to perform alternate service work under civilian direction, when required by law.

Q What are the Biblical principles enjoining us not to serve on a jury?

A There are different Biblical principles involved. We believe that the following will best express our religious convictions against participating in jury duty:

A true Christian is a stranger, alien and exile (1 Peter 2:11; Hebrews 11:13) while here on earth; an ambassador for Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20); and a representative of God's Kingdom. As such, and in being a light to the world by proper conduct (Matthew 5:14-16), a true Christian does not take part in this world's governmental or political affairs, as presently, it is not God who rules this earth, but Satan the devil (Revelation 2:13; Luke 4:5-6). Christians are challenged to come out of the governmental and political systems of this world. Christ, knowing that God's Kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36), refused to judge a civil matter when He was asked to do so (Luke 12:14). Paul, likewise, prohibited judging those "who are outside" the church (1 Corinthians 5:12).

Further, man's judgments are concerned with the letter of the law. In contrast, God looks on one's heart, and is concerned with the spirit and intent of the law. Man's laws usually do not take into account repentance, forgiveness of sins, and other spiritual factors in the way that God does (Acts 2:38). Jesus, in looking at the heart of the accused, refused to condemn a woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11). Jesus taught that true Christians must be willing to

forgive others (Matthew 6:14-15).

Another principle against participation in jury duty is that true Christians are to learn to judge according to the law of God as seasoned by judgment, mercy and faith (Matthew 23:23). They are also to render "righteous" judgment (John 7:24). Presenting selective evidence, where facts may be suppressed for technical legal reasons as permitted in the courts, may not necessarily lead to Godly justice, mercy and truth, and to the rendering of a righteous judgment.

In following Biblical injunctions, one could not convict a person, in any event, unless the accusation is supported by the testimony of *at least* two witnesses (Matthew 18:16; Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6-7; 19:15). Since the witnesses would have to "cast the first stones," circumstantial evidence [which is many times based on human interpretation and theory] would not be sufficient under God's law for the requirement of two witnesses.

Since we may be compelled, as a juror, to apply man's laws in conflict with the law of God, we could not take the oath as a juror, as we would, in principle, agree to obeying man rather than God (Acts 5:29; Acts 4:19). Therefore, jury duty will invariably create a conflict of conscience in a Christian between the requirements of God and the requirements of jury service. A Christian who violates his conscience would be guilty of committing sin (Romans 14:23; 1 John 3:4).

Q Why do you teach that a Christian should not vote in governmental elections?

A In the context of this booklet, we need to understand that the issues of jury duty and voting for the government are both connected with the issue of military service and war.

It is inconsistent to take the position that one cannot join the military because one is an ambassador of Jesus Christ and a citizen of another government—the Kingdom of God—while at the same time serving on a jury or voting in governmental elections.

For instance, in the United States, the President is also the Commander-in-Chief, having both the right and the obligation under the Constitution, in certain circumstances, to declare war. ***How can one refuse to participate in war, while voting for a person who has the right and the obligation to declare war?*** In the past, people were disqualified as conscientious objectors because they did not refuse to serve on a jury or to vote in governmental elections. It was ruled that such an obvious inconsistency in position showed evidence for non-sincerity of the applicant.

In addition, when one votes for a particular political candidate, one votes for the “totality” of the person. Some have argued that one needs to vote for candidate X, rather than candidate Z, supposedly choosing “the lesser evil.” Following that kind of reasoning, one still would vote for “an evil,” which a Christian should not do (compare 1 Thessalonians 5:22). Somebody might want to vote for candidate X, as that candidate might reject abortion. However, the

same candidate might support the tobacco industry or pollution of the environment. A Christian could not support a candidate who might be right on one issue, but who would still be wrong on other issues. In addition, as stated above, every candidate in the United States would support his right as the future president or leader of his nation to declare war on other nations.

Another reason why a Christian is not to vote for a candidate in governmental or local council elections is because he understands the truth about this being Satan’s world at the present time. It is Satan who, with the general permission of God, places candidates into governmental offices. If we were to vote, we might involve ourselves quite directly in Satan’s system. Hosea 8:4 gives us God’s warning in this regard: ***“They set up kings, but not by Me; they made princes, but I did not acknowledge them.”***

Sometimes, in order to ensure that certain aspects of His plan are fulfilled, God Himself might intervene to see to it that the person best (or perhaps worst) suited for the job at that time gets the job (compare Daniel 4:17). How would God look at us when He intervenes directly to place a specific person into office, while we did not vote for that person, but rather for someone whom God does not want to see in charge at that time? It is obvious that our vote would be found to be in opposition to God’s Will.

To give a prophetic and an historical example, Biblical prophecy

reveals that a final political leader of the resurrected Roman Empire—the “beast”—will soon arise in Europe. According to God’s prophetic plan, this person will be placed in office in the very last days, wreaking total havoc on this planet. It is Satan, with God’s permission, who will give his power and authority to this person (Revelation 13:4–5). A Christian could not and should not vote for this person, of course, as he will persecute and kill many of the “saints” (Revelation 13:7), and he will even attempt to fight the returning Jesus Christ (Revelation 19:19). Neither should a Christian have voted for Adolph Hitler, although it is clear now that Hitler came to power, as prophesied, to bring about the ninth resurrection of the Roman Empire. This is to say that God allowed Hitler to become ruler over Germany so that prophecy could be fulfilled.

The Bible shows that God sometimes appoints directly, or permits Satan to place into office, strong or weak leaders, depending on the situation, in order to insure that God’s purpose will be carried out. For example, God allowed ancient Pharaoh, at the time of the Exodus, to be ruler over Egypt for a very specific

reason—“that [God] may show [His] power in [him], and that [God’s] name may be declared in all the earth” (Exodus 9:16).

And finally, in regard to voting in governmental elections, we human beings are incapable of looking into the heart of a person. When God wanted King Saul to be replaced, He had Samuel anoint David as the new king. If it had been left to Samuel, he would have appointed one of David’s brothers (compare 1 Samuel 16:6–13). Participating in voting for governmental elections shows a lack of appreciation for the Will of God. It also shows a misunderstanding of the fact that Satan presently rules this world (2 Corinthians 4:4), and that Christians are ambassadors of Christ, called to come out of this world, to be separate.

As Christians, we are in no way to resist our leaders whom God has allowed to be placed over us, unless it is in direct conflict with Christ’s teachings. Rather, we are to be thankful for whatever good they provide for us, and we are to pray for them so that we can lead a quiet and peaceable life (1 Timothy 2:2) and fulfill our God-given job to preach the Gospel and to feed the flock.

Relationship with God

From the Statement of Beliefs of the Church of the Eternal God in the USA, the Church of God, a Christian Fellowship in Canada, and the Global Church of God in the UK:

We believe that a Christian’s duty to God is of a superior and higher nature than our duty arising from any human relationship (Acts 4:18–20;

5:27–29). We therefore, following Biblical commands and principles, do not participate in voting for national elections or jury duty, and we do not join the military. If compelled by governments to enlist, we refuse to serve in any capacity that would violate the spirit of the sixth commandment against murder.

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The following booklets are available, upon request:

Europe in Prophecy: The Unfolding of End-Time Events

The Theory of Evolution—a Fairy Tale for Adults?

The Gospel of the Kingdom of God

Don't Keep Christmas

Is God a Trinity?

Do We Have an Immortal Soul?

The Keys to Happy Marriages and Families

And Lawlessness Will Abound...

The Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord

God's *Commanded* Holy Days

God Is a Family

Baptism—a Requirement for Salvation?

Angels, Demons and the Spirit World

Are You Already Born Again?

Sickness and Healing—What the Bible Tells Us

Jesus Christ—A Great Mystery!

Tithing—Today?

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