
BIBLICAL STUDY OF WAR

(The NT)
George Battey

QUESTIONS:

- 1) What made Israel different from any other nation on earth?
- 2) Who is the only Biblical writer to call the church the “kingdom *of heaven*” and why did he call it that?
- 3) What is a pilgrim?
- 4) Is there any example showing that “national patriotism” must give way to heavenly citizenship?
- 5) What is important about the pronouns found in Romans 13?
- 6) What is the “Just War Theory”?
- 7) Did Israel fight “just wars” under God’s guidelines?
- 8) On the tombstones along the border of Germany and France, what is found inscribed on those stones – in both German and French?

INTRODUCTION

William Paul:

"The time for Christians to think about participating in war and what the Bible teaches about it is now, before it is too late. It is easy to pray for peace now, but virtually unthinkable to pray for anything but victory, at any cost, in the heat of battle."

(William Paul, *A Christian View of ... Armed Warfare!*, p. 28.)

This is certainly true and hence the reason for our study today on this subject.

In this study we wish to examine the NT Scriptures as they relate to warfare.

ISRAEL WAS UNIQUE

In our last study we made note of the unique position held by Israel. Israel was a combination of both church and state. She was a theocracy. Most importantly, she was a theocracy by divine intent.

Some nations have combined with some churches in the past and they claim divine authority for such combinations, but inspiration tells us only one such combination was divinely sanctioned -- Israel!

Because Israel was a physical nation as well as a spiritual nation, it had to maintain both:

(a) A police force

(b) A military force

Any physical nation must maintain both of these forces to control carnally minded men from within the nation and without the nation.

The USA, because it is a physical nation must maintain both of these forces or else it will collapse.

When either force weakens in a nation, that nation becomes overrun with either:

(a) Violent criminals from within

(b) Violent, aggressive nations from without

The very nature of a physical kingdom requires waging physical warfare to protect her borders. This explains why Israel used police and military force during the OT dispensation.

If everyone in all the nation were spiritually minded, there would be no need for a police force. If every kingdom were a spiritual kingdom there would be no need for an army.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

In contrast with Israel, a physical kingdom of the earth, the OT looked forward to the coming of God's kingdom which would be a totally spiritual kingdom.

Daniel 2:44

⁴⁴ "And in the days of these kings [the Roman kings] the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; ...

When John the Baptist came preaching he announced:

Matthew 3:2

² and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

Notice this carefully! John said the coming kingdom was the kingdom "**of heaven.**"

Do you know that the expression "kingdom of heaven" is used only by Matthew. This expression is found 32 times only in the book of Matthew. Every other NT writer calls it the "kingdom of God."

Q: Why is that?

A: Matthew was writing to Jews -- Jews that were God's coming kingdom to be a physical kingdom of the earth. But consistently Matthew, the Gospel written to the Jews, reminds them that God's coming kingdom was a kingdom "of heaven" -- a spiritual kingdom.

The Lord's kingdom was not a physical kingdom in any sense. His kingdom was to be a spiritual kingdom wherein everyone was spiritually minded!

Jeremiah 31:33-34

³³ "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

³⁴ "No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

This is "spiritual Israel" -- the Lord's church!

John 18:36

³⁶ Jesus answered, "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."

Listen to this carefully! If Jesus' kingdom were "of this world" His servants would fight in physical warfare.

Q: Why?

A: Because physical kingdoms, by their very nature, require physical warfare to maintain their existence when opposing kingdoms threaten them.

Physical warfare requires physical armor:

- a physical girdle
- a physical breastplate
- physical shoes
- a physical shield
- a physical helmet
- a physical sword

Physical war requires physical violence and physical hatred!!

But to maintain a spiritual kingdom men must engage in spiritual warfare with spiritual armor. Because Jesus' kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, it is not threatened by physical nations. This is why we read:

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

³ For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.

⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,

⁵ casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

As citizens of this spiritual kingdom we do not hate, or attack anyone physically. Instead we hate and attack the spiritual enemy that works within men:

Ephesians 6:11-13

¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

¹² 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.

¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Finish reading that chapter and you'll see that all the weaponry and armor is spiritual.

Physical Kingdom	Spiritual Kingdom
(1) A physical kingdom is threatened by hostile physical forces.	(1) A spiritual kingdom is threatened by hostile spiritual forces.
(2) A physical kingdom engages in physical warfare to maintain its existence.	(2) A spiritual kingdom engages in spiritual warfare to maintain its existence.
(3) A physical kingdom hates its physical enemies.	(3) A spiritual kingdom hates a spiritual enemy.
(4) A physical kingdom would collapse if operated by spiritual principles.	(4) A spiritual kingdom would collapse if operated by physical principles.

OT PROPHECIES OF PEACE

The OT prophesied of and anticipated a time when physical warfare among God's people would no longer be sanctioned because His people would become citizens of the spiritual "kingdom of heaven"!

A time was coming when God's people would no longer fight and kill to maintain a physical kingdom!

Isalah 2:3-4

³ 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, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

⁴ 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.

Q: Who shall "beat their swords into plow shares"??? All men on earth?

A: NO!! Those within the "mountain of the Lord."

Citizens of the kingdom "of heaven" would not war with others in physical warfare, because the existence of their kingdom would not be threatened by physical nations.

NOTE: A spiritual kingdom cannot be threatened by a physical nation!!!

ILL: Jesus taught that physical enemies cannot harm the spirit of man within us (Mt. 10:28). Therefore, we should not fear those who can destroy the body.

Likewise, the kingdom "of heaven" cannot be threatened by any physical nation on earth. It can exist in every physical nation.

Isalah 11:6-9

⁶ "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them.

⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze; Their young ones shall lie down together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

⁸ The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den.

⁹ They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea.

Q: Where would the "wolf and lamb" lie down together? Just any old place?

A: NO. Within God's holy mountain (church).

(Within God's kingdom, men who formerly had ferocious spirits will dwell peaceable with men of gentle dispositions.)

THE PROPHECIES FULFILLED

Q: Did these predictions of peace within God's kingdom ever take place??? Listen to what Paul wrote:

Ephesians 2:11-19

¹¹ Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh; who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands;

¹² that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,

¹⁵ having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,
¹⁶ and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.
¹⁷ And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.
¹⁸ For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.
¹⁹ Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

Paul confirms what Isaiah prophesied would happen. The hatred and violence between Jews and Gentiles ended when both races of men became members of the kingdom!!!

HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP

Look at verse 19 again:

Ephesians 2:19

¹⁹ Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but **fellow citizens** with the saints and members of the household of God,

When we obeyed the Gospel we became "fellow citizens" of a new kingdom. The physical kingdom in which we were born no longer matters for we are citizens of a heavenly kingdom now.

In relation to earthly nations we must begin viewing ourselves as "pilgrims and strangers."

Hebrews 11:13

¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were **strangers and pilgrims on the earth**.

1 Peter 2:11

¹¹ Beloved, I beg you as **sojourners and pilgrims**, ...

We today abide by American laws because we are "sojourning" thru life in American territory, but our "citizenship" is in heaven (Phil. 3:20 -- NKJV).

No "pilgrim" fights for the country thru which he is passing. He fights only for the country of which he is a citizen!

The Lambeth Conference in London wrote this:

"Each of us belongs by his birth to some one of the many nations of the world. But the Christian belongs by the second birth to one holy nation which is God's own possession. When Loyalty to his own nation causes conflict with the loyalty to that holy nation of which Christ is king, a Christian can have no doubt which loyalty gives way."

(The Lambeth Conference in London, 1922; via John M. Drescher, *Why I Am A Conscientious Objector*, p. 51.)

JERUSALEM'S DESTRUCTION

Q: Is there any Biblical evidence to support this idea that national patriotism must always give way to the heavenly citizenship?

When the Jewish nation rejected their Messiah which God sent to save them, that was the straw that "broke the camel's back."

Matthew 23:34-36

³⁴ "Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city,

³⁵ "that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

³⁶ "Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

Jerusalem would be destroyed and the nation forever scattered because of their wickedness.

In Matthew 24 Jesus gave His disciples signs to watch for so they would not be caught up in the destruction that would come upon Jerusalem.

When these signs were fulfilled, what did the Lord instruct the disciples to do?

Matthew 24:16

¹⁶ "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Listen to that! The disciples were warned sternly by Jesus to flee the battle site.

(1) They were not to stay and fight in defense of Jerusalem.

(2) They were not to join in with Rome and help destroy the city.

They were instructed in such a way as to **remain neutral** in the conflict!

The disciples were "**pilgrims**" of the earth. They recognized that war was inevitable among physical nations, but they themselves were neutral and refused to join in the conflict.

SEPARATING CHURCH & STATE

This theme of "separating church and state" was one theme of the Gospel preached by Christ.

As He was preaching the "Sermon on the Mount" this is what He said:

FIRST: Concerning police action:

Matthew 5:38-39

³⁸ "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'

³⁹ "But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.

The Lord was not saying this "law of retaliation" was useless now, or that it should not be used by physical nations in their police activity.

He was separating church and state! His people use to administer this "law of retaliation," but no more! The evil doer would be resisted, but not by disciples!

SECOND: Concerning military action:

Matthew 5:43-44

⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

⁴⁴ "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,

Jesus was not saying that war should never be fought by any nation under any circumstances. Jesus was separating church and state!

Because the nature of the kingdom has changed, what use to be true for physical Israel is no longer true for "spiritual Israel."

The church will administer spiritual law.

The state will administer civil law.

We do not want civil governments stepping into the church and administering our spiritual laws. Neither do we want Christians stepping into civil government and administering their laws!

CIVIL LAW

In view of what Jesus taught concerning the nature of His new kingdom and love for all men the natural conclusion is that a Christian cannot participate in law enforcement either locally, or nationally!!!

Q: If God does not want His people to fight in carnal wars and enforcing civil laws, did He intend wicked men to be punished?

A: Yes, but He ordained civil government to do that. Notice in Romans 12 the Lord specifically told Christians:

Romans 12:19

¹⁹ Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

How will the Lord "repay"? How will He take vengeance on ungodly men? He tells us in the very next chapter if we would just listen! Civil rulers would be used by God to take vengeance on violent offenders:

Romans 13:1-6

¹ Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.

² Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

³ For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.

⁴ For **he** is God's minister to **you** for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for **he** does not bear the sword in vain; for **he** is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.

⁵ Therefore **you** must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake.

⁶ For because of this **you** also pay taxes, for **they** are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing.

Now ... the Holy Spirit was very careful in how He worded this!! He worded it in such a way so as to make it impossible for a Christian to be involved in the process of taking revenge.

Notice the pronouns in this passage.

Christians are specifically told:

- "Recompense to no man evil for evil" (Rom 12:17)
- "Avenge not yourselves" (Rom 12:19)
- "Give place to wrath" (Rom 12:19)
- "Overcome evil with good" (Rom 12:21)
- "Turn the other cheek" (Mt. 5:39)

THE "JUST WAR" THEORY

In spite of all the evidence pointing to pacifism, some maintain that Christians may participate in war provided it is a "just war" -- hence we have the "just war" theory.

Augustine was the scholar who first formulated the "just war" theory. He gave four criteria which a war had to meet before a Christian might participate in that war:

1) War is permissible only after all other efforts have failed.

2) The intention of the war must be good.

For example, it should be for the restoration of law and order, not for economic or exploitive advantage of any kind.

3) There must be no burning, massacre, or killing of innocent victims.

Targets must be military, not civilian.

4) The force used must be proportionate to the goal sought.

War should not destroy more than is gained. (Drescher, p. 21)

If you will think about these criteria, the wars of Israel in the promised land were "unjust."

- Rather than exhausting all other efforts, Israel went directly to war.
- Their wars were for economic and exploitive advantage.
- There was massacre of innocent victims.

On the one hand proponents of war use OT Israel to justify Christian involvement in war and then turn around and reason that Christians may fight only if the war is a "just war" which contradicts Israel's method of warfare.

(You cannot have it both ways! Either we shall justify warfare on the basis of what Israel did, or on the "just war" theory, but you cannot have both at the same time.)

"JUST WAR" THEORY ANALYZED

Now ... what about this "just war" theory? What's wrong with it?

1) This theory has never worked!

This theory was first thought up in the 4th century to show that on some occasions war might be an exception to the law of the Gospel.

In actuality, this theory has been used to justify every war that was ever fought since the days of Augustine!

2) This theory assumes that one side is just and the other side unjust!

Men on both sides in war think their cause is justified! Obviously there is much injustice on both sides during war and a nation is not an unbiased judge of its own actions.

3) This theory assumes a nation will truthfully present all the facts to its people and allow its citizens to make up their own minds and then either participate, or refrain.

(If you think that's the way civil rulers manage their governments, you are a deceived person!)

No mention is made by any of its proponents how Christians can tell if their government is reporting the truth and what Christians should do if their government is in the wrong!

4) This theory assumes a Christian (usually an 18 year old boy) has the wisdom and discernment to make a correct judgment on the matter!

Richard McSorley:

"The just war theory is the only attempt at a moral justification of war by Christians. If it is rejected, then the Christian is left with the Gospel, which rejects killing as immoral."

(via Drescher, p. 22)

SUMMARY

In summary, what is the matter with Christian involvement in war? On what grounds shall we say that it is sinful for Christians to contribute either actively, or passively in war?

1) A Christian is to view himself as a citizen of heaven and in relation to the country in which he was born he is to now view himself as a "stranger and pilgrim" (Heb 11:13; 1 Pet 2:11).

As a "pilgrim" the Christian:

- Prays for the country thru which he "sojourns" (1 Tim 2:1-2)
- Pays tribute to the king of the country (Rom 13:7)
- Obeys the king of the country (1 Pet 2:13-14)

He prays, pays and obeys.

2) A Christian is to seek the salvation of men, not their destruction!

Every person involved in war, on both sides, is either a Christian, or a sinner.

- a) If the enemy is a Christian, and we kill him, we are destroying a brother in Christ whom the Scriptures say we should "lay down our lives" for (1 Jn 3:16).
- b) If the enemy is a sinner, and we kill him, we are destroying a soul rather than saving a soul -- and our mission is to save souls (Lk 19:10).

3) War is inherently antagonistic to the spirit of Christianity!

John Drescher said it better than anyone:

"War offers death instead of life, hate instead of love, judgment instead of forgiveness, retaliation rather than reconciliation; it sets out to search and destroy instead of to seek and save. It aims lethal weapons against the very persons I'm told to give the Gospel. To me, engaging in war is the supreme denial of the Great Commission and all Christ said and did."

(Drescher, p. 38)

4) There is no direct revelation from God instructing nations when, where and how to conduct warfare!

This is what made Israel's wars most unique. They were not free to engage in war based on their own wisdom.

But there is no direct revelation and guidance today like this. Revelation has ceased! Men today are only guessing when they think God wants their country to go to war.

One man:

"Along the frontier of Germany and France one can see tombstones bearing the identical inscription: 'For God and the Fatherland.' Some are in French, marking the graves of those who died fighting for France; some are in German, over those who died fighting for Germany. Troops from both countries included persons claiming to be Christians, who believed God was on their side as they battled each other. Both sides believed their nation was waging a just war."

(Drescher, p. 17-18)

CONCLUSION

Jesus taught us in the "sermon on the mount" that times have changed. The Lord separated the church from the state and "what God has separated, let not man join together"!!!

Jonathan Dymond in 1824 wrote:

"If we will not be peaceable, let us then at least be honest, and acknowledge that we continue to slaughter one another, not because Christianity permits it, but because we reject her laws."

(Drescher, p. 30)

May this never be among us. God haste the day when we as a brotherhood stand united for peace and non-involvement in war!

WORKS CITED

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