

# The War Question

By Pastor Kelly Sensenig

What is to be the Christian attitude and response toward war? Can a Christian bear arms during war and serve the country without becoming an offender of the sixth commandment – “Thou shalt not kill?” Does the Bible sanction war? Is there such a thing as a just war? What about pacifism and our responsibility toward the government? These are some of the issues that we will tackle as we look at the war question. And they are the issues that have been disputed for centuries within the church.

The early church fathers living in the immediate centuries following the apostles had disagreements on this issue of war. Origin taught that Christians should not engage in warfare. His thesis was that Christians are taught to engage in a spiritual warfare but not a physical or carnal warfare. Tertulian concluded that when Jesus disarmed Peter that He was disarming every soldier. Augustine was the greatest of the Latin Fathers and he argued that Christians could engage in what he termed as a just war. He taught that war could be fought to restore peace and to obtain justice. Augustine also taught that a just war must be conducted in an honorable manner.

The New Testament does not directly talk about the issue of war as it does slavery simply because it was not a pressing issue for Christians. Christians were not forced by Rome to serve in the Roman army and there was no need to openly address this issue. Furthermore, Christians were initially looked upon as a breed of people separated from Rome. They were often the objects of attack and ridicule and would be used as the scapegoats for many catastrophes. The Roman government did not look upon Christians as being worthy of serving in the positions of civil service. Instead of Christians enlisting for war they were actually the objects of war! Furthermore, believers would not join the Roman army within the second and third centuries because it involved taking an idolatrous oath of allegiance to the emperor.

This same issue kept Christians from serving in other governmental positions. The Christians refused to take part in the civil state because of the paganistic and idolatrous oaths required to be taken for these positions and the inhumane torture and wickedness that Rome demanded from many of the civil servants. For a Christian to serve in these capacities would violate the scriptural principles of idolatry and worship of the one true God (Matt. 4:10) and condone the treatment of people in a barbaric way. Therefore, the early church and the church in the following centuries chose to remain separate from all governmental positions and areas of civil service by echoing Peter's words in Acts 5:29, "We ought to obey God rather than men." In fact, there is no record or evidence of any Christian soldier until around 170 A.D.

The Romans did not have compulsory enrollment and there was no pressure for Christians to serve. But toward the end of the second century the situation began to change and there are records of Christians in the army even when the theologians were condemning them for doing so. Many soldiers were being converted to Christianity as the Christian faith continued to grow and they decided to remain a model Roman Citizen while following Christ. When the Emperor Constantine made Christianity the official religion in the early fourth century much of the church modified its position concerning warfare.

Then there were the crusade wars, which took place in the 11<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, which tried to free the Middle East from pagan powers. These so called "Holy Wars" erupted which were determined to free the Holy Land from paganism. Crusaders wanted to reach Zion and experience the millennial conditions of peace, prosperity and joy. Knights captured Jerusalem in 1097 but the crusades and "Holy Wars" continued on as Constantinople was captured in 1204 and as other crusaders fought against the papal foes in Europe. History tells us that this movement actually continued into the fifteenth century.

During the Middle Ages there was a tendency on the part of many Christians to accept war as a necessary part of the condition of society. The Turks were fought and seen to be enemies of the faith in Western Europe. When the Protestant Reformation rolled around in the early sixteenth century Protestant leaders such as Luther, Zwingli and Calvin accepted the use of violence and warfare. The European

wars that were going on for so many years discredited the Reformation in many areas. However, there was one group of Reformers, the Anabaptists, who did not accept the use of violence. They were said to be more radical than the other Reformers and rejected the state church. Beginning about 1560 the Anabaptists embraced pacifism because they felt Christ had initiated a new order of love and meekness, which would prevent violence from being demonstrated. Churches today who follow the Anabaptist tradition such as Mennonites, The Church of the Brethren and Quakers are opposed to war and can find no just cause for war. But most of the denominations historically have adhered to a just war interpretation in Scripture.

Billy Sunday claimed that if you turned the pot of hell upside down you would find the words inscribed “made in Germany” stamped on the bottom. Billy Sunday made this comment because of his hatred for Communism and the evil atrocities that it committed against people. The feeling of many Christians is that the Bible condones war for just causes and that we must try to thwart evil from spreading, such as the evil of communism, whenever we can.

But as we study this subject today, we must cast all feelings aside and ascertain what God’s word really says about this matter of war. We must come to the Scriptures dispensationally and with an open heart in order to find out the answers to these questions. What is God’s mind on the subject of war? And do Christians sin when they take the life of another human being while fighting in war under the government’s authority and jurisdiction?

There are many verses pacifists will use to support their belief that Christians should never go to war.

### Pacifist Arguments Against War (Nonresistance Approach)

1. The Decalogue is used to support pacifism.

The sixth commandment is the first and most obvious verse that is used to promote a pacifist response to war. “Thou shalt not kill.” The pacifist will conclude that no person can argue with God’s mind and

conclusion about this matter? Well, I'm not going to argue with God on this matter. I believe what God says! But we must remember that the same God who said "Thou shalt not kill" in Exodus also gave permission for capital punishment in the Bible book of Genesis. And the same God who said that you cannot kill gave permission for people to be stoned and killed under the Law dispensation for child sacrifice (Lev. 20:2), adultery (Lev. 20:10), wizardry (Lev. 20:27), cursing God's name (Lev. 24:14, 16) and gathering sticks on the Sabbath (Numb. 15:32-35). The same God who said, "Thou shalt not kill" also gave His people the authority to protect their families.

Exodus 22:2

"If a thief be found breaking up (secret search or burglary), and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him."

I remember when I was in the evangelistic ministry and was holding meetings in the backwoods of Hidalgo Illinois. My wife and I were staying with a man and wife who lived out in the middle of nowhere. Well, this Christian fellow had a pistol in his home and he left me know about it. One day he said to me, "Don't you ever come walking into my house unannounced or I will let you have it with both barrels!" He said that he had also trained his wife to blow somebody off who does not announce themselves. Well, I thought to myself that this will be a great week of meetings – if the preacher is not dead! I suppose if the evangelist does not show up one night for the meeting that the people might as well call the funeral director! In any event, we do read how God allowed for His people to protect themselves from crooks and criminals and did not look down upon an individual who killed a thief while trying to protect his family.

So the same God who said "Thou shalt not kill" also gave a man the right to protect his family and home under the same Law without charging him as a killer or murderer. And God certainly would not charge man today, as being a killer, if he protects his family from a murderer who is stalking throughout his home. Furthermore, it's also interesting to note that the same God who said, "Thou shalt not kill" told the same nation (Israel) in Deuteronomy that He would allow them to destroy the heathen nations of the land.

Deuteronomy 7:2 says:

"And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them."

God did not say, "Thou shalt not under any circumstance whatsoever go to war with any nation." If God had said this then He would have never given instruction for His people to destroy other nations. Obviously God has a different mindset than the pacifist who says that the taking of human life is always wrong! Obviously a person is not charged with killing in God's eyes when He (God) ordains the action to be done.

Let us understand that all of these statements about not being able to kill and then being able to kill were written by Moses under the Law. Furthermore, all of them were commands given by the same God and all of them were addressed to the same people (Israel). Is this a contradiction in the Bible? Well, there are no contradictions in God's Word when we rightly divide the truth. These opposite statements and conclusions tell us that God only holds a person responsible for killing when they individually murder somebody without God's authority and when they fail to execute His justice in the world. For instance, when David went to recover the borders of Canaan in Second Samuel chapter eight we read about how God was with David as he claimed the Promised Land and how David was victorious as he went to execute God's justice and plan on earth (2 Sam. 8:1-11). But in chapter twelve when David plotted to kill Uriah the Lord condemned him for this action and said that he was a killer (2 Sam. 12:9).

An even more striking understanding of "Thou shalt not kill" is when Moses came down from the Mount carrying the commandment ("Thou shalt not kill") and then saw the wickedness of the people. Immediately, as God's spokesman, he acted on God's behalf and called for the death of those who would not comply with God's standards.

Exodus 32:26-28 says:

"Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered

themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.”

Obviously a person carrying out God’s justice on earth is not seen to be a murderer or killer in God’s eyes. They do not violate the command; “Thou shalt not kill.” There must be a distinction between killing without God’s authorization and killing with God’s authorization and not being charged as a murderer before God.

The Hebrew word for kill in Exodus 20:13 is “ratsach,” which could also be rendered murder. Of course, even murder is killing and it seems a mute point to argue that murder is different than killing. This particular Hebrew word is one of seven different Hebrew words used for killing and this particular one is used many times in the OT and can have a broad meaning. This word is even used of an animal killing a man (Prov. 22:13).

You can accidentally shoot somebody, while deer hunting, or plan to kill somebody and accomplish your goal. But whether you accidentally kill somebody or plan to kill somebody it is still killing. So the understanding of the Word does not seem important to the issue as some suggest. This word is actually used of both intentional and unintentional killing in the Hebrew language (Numbers 35:11). However, the reference in Exodus 20:13 implies an intentional unlawful killing not ordained by God. The sixth commandment refers to the individual, intentional, and the unauthorized taking of human life.

By unauthorized, I mean the kind of killing that God has not condoned. The point seems to be that man cannot take human life without God’s approval. To help preserve society and because people are made in God’s image (Gen. 9:6), the Israelites were commanded not to take another person’s life without the approval of God. But you will note that the text says man cannot kill. It does not say that God cannot kill! Obviously, the sovereign God who created

human life has the right to take human life, even when man is forbidden to perform such an act. And as we will see in our study, God in His own justice has authorized man to take human life and ordained it to be acceptable in His sight. He has chosen to use man as His instrument of justice on this earth.

Genesis 9:5-6 says:

“And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.”

After the flood God began to establish human government and give laws that were to govern society throughout the rest of man's history of ruling planet earth. Those who argue about the death penalty had better read their Bible and see God's view on the subject. People are ignorant of God's view about capital punishment or either they don't care what God says. America is infected with the BI virus – Bible ignorance! We have also turned into a nation that could care less what God thinks.

America wants answers to societies ills but they don't want God's answers! And the people who want to talk about how inhumane the death penalty is for these cold-blooded murderers would change their tune about the electric chair, if they had a knife to their throat or they were threatening their son or daughter with death. The death penalty is a transdispensational command. This means that God has allowed this dispensational feature of the death penalty to be carried through the succeeding dispensations. We know this to be true by later revelation. We also know that when Israel went into their covenant relationship with God that He condoned capital punishment under their Mosaic Law.

Leviticus 24:17

“And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death.”

Leviticus 24:21

“And he that killeth a beast, he shall restore it: and he that killeth a man, he shall be put to death.”

Deuteronomy 19:21

“And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.”

Exodus 21:22-24

“If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.”

Exodus 22:21-24

“Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.

As we will see in our second viewpoint about war, the government in our present dispensation is also granted by God to take human life and act on God's behalf while doing it, as they seek to maintain justice in this world (Romans 13:1-5). So in the changing dispensations we see how God has ordained leaders of government and officials working in connection with the government to execute God's justice on earth. This frees them from the charge of being killers in God's eyes! And this is because the killing is seen from the approval and perspective of Heaven. Therefore, it's God who actually takes the responsibility for being a just or righteous killer (Romans 2:5; Rev. 15:3-4; 16:4-6)! And God's judgment is always just, true and righteous. God is a just killer! And if He ordains people to carry out His just killing on earth then man is not responsible for the killing. God is held responsible for it.

When God gave the commandment, “Thou shalt not kill,” He was talking about killing man in an unauthorized way without God's authority and without acting on the behalf of God's justice. What God did say in Exodus 20:13 was that man could never kill without His authority and approval. What God did not say was that man could



never kill since we have seen how God sanctions certain killing through the institution of law and government.

We must also understand that the commandment “Thou shalt not kill” was not given to govern national life. This is rather obvious since the nation of Israel was given direct commands by God to go and destroy pagan nations and even their little children, as we will see on the other side of the issue. So, the command “Thou shalt not kill” was given to govern personal lives. It was not a command given to direct national theocracies or nations. The command was given to the individual and not to the nations or world governments.

One man should never rise up and kill another man unlawfully without the government’s approval to stop evil aggression. No person should ever act independent of God’s governmental institution and plan to kill another person. However, the command, “Thou shalt not kill” has nothing to do with a soldier’s service in the army as he acts under the government’s jurisdiction, which is carrying out God’s justice on earth. It has nothing to do with the execution of a criminal by a government official who is carrying out the justice of God through the ordained system of government.

The sixth commandment basically concerns the conduct of an individual acting independently of God’s authoritative justice system on earth. The command does not relate to national war, which is used to implement God’s righteous justice on earth, since God gave Israel the commands to destroy whole cities and pagan people on a national basis. A nation and its government are given the authority to carry out God’s justice within the world and protect life by taking human life. However, no individual is given the right to act independently of God’s ruling authority, which is invested in the government, and rise up in hatred to independently take human life. However, we do see that you cannot base pacifism on the sixth commandment.

2. The millennial verses are used to support pacifism.

Isaiah 2:4

“And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their

spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

Joel 3:10

“Beat your plowshares (hoes) into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears (pruning knives): let the weak say, I am strong.”

Micah 4:3

“And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

These verses have long been used by pacifists to stop Christians from participating in the war effort. Of course, only a non-dispensationalist could use these verses to support pacifism. This is because these verses clearly deal with the future millennial reign of Christ and have absolutely nothing to do with governing the nations of our present day. Some people think that they can dissect the Bible like some kind of frog in the science classroom. They want to only look at one eyeball or one ear without seeing how the frog is connected together. But when they study the Bible like this they become confused about God’s dispensational workings. If you argue for no guns and only garden hoes today, then you should also be able to send your child out to the den of rattlesnakes and let them play with the snakes and go to the zoo and play with the tiger and lions.

Isaiah 11:6-8

“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den.”

My friend, if you want to put us in the Millennial Kingdom then you must take everything that comes with the Millenium. I suppose that this would not be so bad, now that I think about it! But the fact of the

matter is this. We are living in the dispensation of God's grace (Eph. 3:1-11) and not the kingdom! Why don't some folks get it straight? Pacifists have us in the wrong dispensation many times. They have us living in the future.

Psalm 46:9

"He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire."

This is a millennial verse that deals with the future kingdom on earth. Today God is not making wars to cease! Read the newspapers. Furthermore, in our present dispensation, God has not forbid believers to obey the government and fight in a war for national protection or for the purpose of stopping the spread of evil aggression. We must get our dispensations straight in order to arrive at proper conclusions in connection with the way God is working today and the way He will work in the future (see Isaiah 9:7). The same is true in regards to the believer's response to war.

Dispensationally, we know that wars will cease in the future kingdom. Until then war will be part of a sin-cursed world and even mandated by God to stop the spread of evil. By the way, even in the coming kingdom there will be death by capital punishment, as the Lord Jesus enforces His rigid rule of absolute justice and righteousness (see Isaiah 11:4; 65:20). So to argue that we should not allow for killing of any kind by using eschatological verses dealing with the kingdom is rather indiscreet and absurd.

Since God's dealings with mankind have been different from one dispensation to the next, we need to beware of those differences as we seek to apply the Bible to our present living. We cannot take one feature from a dispensation and apply it to our own dispensation if it's not revealed that it will be carried over into the new dispensation through the new revelation of Scripture. Furthermore, we should never view a past dispensation (the Law) or a future dispensation (the kingdom), when Jesus Christ will rule this earth, and try to govern our present day society by the same exact mode or standards of these different dispensations. Some things will remain the same throughout

the dispensations such as the government's right to avenge evil doers on the behalf of God (Romans 13).

It's also interesting that nine out of the Ten Commandments (excluding the Sabbath) are reiterated in the revelation of the New Testament epistles, which deal specifically with church truth for the present dispensation. God's moral code and other various programs of God will remain in tact throughout the changing dispensations. But other things will change throughout the dispensations such as dietary laws (Lev. 11 with Acts 10:9-16) days of worship (Exodus 20:8 with Col. 3:16) and the matter dealing with national fighting or war (1 Samuel 15:2-3 with Isaiah 2:4).

The pacifist problem with rejecting war for the present day is many times a dispensational problem! My friend, we cannot rightly understand or interpret the Bible unless we view it literally as dispensationalism does and see God's different economies with their varying structures and promises (2 Timothy 2:15). You might say that you don't believe in the dispensational approach to the Bible, but I would beg to kindly differ with you. Did you bring a lamb to church this week to be sacrificed?

3. The Sermon on the Mount is used to support pacifism.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:9:

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."

Many pacifists will use such a verse as this to promote nonresistance toward war. They claim that we must follow what Jesus said and become a peacemaker instead of raging war on our enemies. They also claim that since peace is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) that no Christian who is filled with the Spirit, manifesting His fruits, could go to war and break peace. But pacifists have forgotten that in a sin-cursed and fallen world there are times when peace can only come about through the process of war. Furthermore, to equate the peace that the Spirit gives in our hearts to war is totally unwarranted. Many Christian soldiers on the battlefield throughout history have attributed their sanity to the peace of God ruling in their hearts! There is no relationship to inward peace of the Spirit to the actual fighting on the

battlefield. Once again this becomes a misapplication of Scriptural texts and causes the text to become a pretext. In addition, as we are going to mention later, Jesus was talking about social relationships in these verses and not national relationships. Yes, in our social relationships we should strive to promote peace instead of anger and division. And this is simply one way to demonstrate that we are a disciple or follower of the Lord.

Romans 12:18-19

"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

All of this is true. However, we should never seek peace without purity and peace by doctrinal compromise. This is always wrong. What Jesus is talking about in the Sermon on the Mount are practical ways that we might demonstrate our discipleship before a watching world. Generally speaking, we should be a promoter of peace in our social relationships. This should be our goal in life as we deal with people and seek to live among mankind in our practical day to day relationships.

In Matthew 5:39 Jesus says:

"But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."

These verses are said to promote a nonresistance attitude toward war. The word "nonresistance" is actually based upon the word "resist" as it appears in verse thirty-nine. The word "resist" has the idea of not opposing, fighting back or retaliating against evil. We have all heard the "turn the cheek" response by pacifists or those who are against war. I have had roofers quote this verse to me, as I was working with them on the job. Everybody seems to know this verse. It may very well be the only verse in the Bible that some people know! But was Jesus really telling His disciples that war was wrong? Let me ask you this question. Why would Jesus even address the subject of war? Why would Jesus talk about war if His disciples were not involved with war nor even expected to become soldiers in the Roman army?

We must remember that Rome viewed the followers of Christ and the later Christians of the early church in a disgraceful way and would never expect nor want them to be part of the Roman war machine. War certainly would be the farthest thing from the minds of the disciples and Jesus. Because of this, war was not an issue for Christians in the days of Jesus or the early church. Slavery was the real issue. But some will say that we can use these Sermon on the Mount principles to teach that Christians should never go to war. But we have forgotten something. We cannot use a principle in the Bible when it is wrongly applied outside the realm of its intended use. In other words, you need to have the right interpretation of what Jesus was saying so that you can have the right application. If you say that we can apply the Sermon on the Mount to war then we must also, out of necessity, apply Matthew 5:42 to our national country as well.

Matthew 5:42 says:

“Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.”

Could you imagine if the banks of today would have to strictly follow this rule? The banks would not be in business very long and the American economy would plummet if we had to strictly follow this principle in a national way. What if the stock market would follow this principle? We would have a Black Friday that we would never rebound from as a nation! My friend, don't you see that Jesus was talking about individual response and not national response in these verses? And He was simply using some common illustrations to demonstrate how we can express love to people instead of the spirit of retaliation. These are some practical illustrations Jesus gives to help us understand the principle of love.

Jesus reminded the people about a higher and more loving response to the lives of other people. It was a response that the Law also spoke about. It was love. The people had forgotten about the love that God also wanted them to express while living under the Old Covenant. There was to be a practical outworking of love even under the Law. The people should not only focus on the “eye for an eye” and “tooth for a tooth” spirit but the spirit of love. They had lost the balance in their lives. Beware that we do not lose the balance.

Leviticus 19:18 says:

“Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.”

You see, the people had forgotten that the Law also expressed the need for love instead of instant retaliation. In fact, there were court systems designed to control the instant angry retaliation of people (Ex. 21:22; Numbers 35:9-34). The people had forgotten that the Law promoted loving your neighbor instead of trying to avenge your neighbor. The Law not only taught a spirit of vengeance but also non-vengeance or non-retaliation. But let us not miss that Jesus was talking to individual people and not dealing with national or international dealings among countries (“whosoever;” - vs. 39; “If any man” – vs. 40). This is vitally important to see as we address various verses that the pacifists will use to support their position of no war.

The entire context of the Sermon on the Mount tells us that Jesus was not talking about social relationships between nations but personal relationships between people. In the Sermon on the Mount, like Exodus 20:13, Jesus was talking about individual actions done apart from God’s approval. And Jesus was simply saying that individual retaliation responses to insults and persecutions for Christ were seen to be wrong. Jesus forbids the taking of personal revenge in His sermon but He is not advocating nonresistance in every area of life such as personal protection and in the case of war to thwart evil and protect national borders from outside invasion.

The Jews practiced the custom of insulting people by smiting them on one cheek of their face. This was a humiliating practice but not a mutilating practice. In other words, Jesus was not saying that you must sit back as a Quaker or pacifist and allow someone to mutilate your face. I will tell you today that if somebody comes after me with their fists flinging that I am not going to stand around like a bump on the log. “I might go down” as the boxer said, “But I will go down fighting!” Even in your personal life, Jesus was not saying that it was absolutely wrong to defend yourself. As we have seen, the Law gave ample provision for personal protection (Exodus 22: 2). Jesus was saying that if you are humiliated as a Jew by a slap on the face then you could turn your face the other way and allow yourself to be

humiliated even more. And why did Jesus say this? It's because the law of love would lead somebody to suffer humiliation rather than practice retaliation.

I think we need to learn this "turn the cheek" principle in our own lives today. We might be personally insulted at work for being a Christian and in the back of our mind we are thinking, "I hope that guy gets a flat tire on the way home from work today." I've caught myself thinking that I wish I had some kind of ray gun that would disintegrate a slow driver off of the road. He was going 25 in a 50-mile an hour speed zone. That was real spiritual! But there is no such thing as Christian road rage! You see, these thoughts, and even our actions, can translate into the spirit of retaliation, instead of love. We might have somebody rub us the wrong way because of what they say about us or the way they act. We might think how we could humiliate them in return and pay them back with some kind of embarrassment.

This spirit can also exist in a marriage relationship where love is not abounding. All of these actions and feelings are the kind of retaliation that Jesus is talking about. Jesus is not talking about national retaliation but personal or individual retaliation. Nor is Jesus saying that it is wrong to protect your life from physical harm. What Jesus is saying is that we must be able to take humiliation or persecution and not be ready to fire back at somebody immediately when they insult us. Of course, the same would be true about not getting even with somebody, just because they are throwing beer cans in your yard or allowing their Great Dane to conveniently use your yard as a bathroom stop! Boy, now I'm getting down to where we need to practice what Jesus is saying (see Romans 12:19-21; 13:8). Even the Old Testament Law had a higher view on personal relationships – it was love instead of vengeance.

What Jesus addressed in this section of Scripture has absolutely nothing to do with war. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is not laying down moral directives for states or nations - concerning their police forces or war efforts. If Jesus was implying this in the Sermon on the Mount, then He would be contradicting the actions of God the Father, when He allowed Israel to destroy entire groups of people from off the face of the earth, while living under the same Law dispensation. And may I remind you that the Sermon on the Mount is



Law to the nth degree, meaning that it was given under the Old Testament Law – all 613 commandments.

Jesus gave a higher meaning to the law by saying that you could even lust in your heart and commit adultery on the inside (vs. 27-28). This blew the religious socks off of the “holier than thou” Pharisees who viewed spirituality only from the outside and forgot about the need to stay pure on the inside. Think of this. The Lawgiver came and reinterpreted the Law and gave it even a stricter meaning than it first had in the minds of the people. In any event, Jesus was giving these Sermon on the Mount directives to inform people how to deal with personal problems in their lives and demonstrate love to those who are even their enemies.

Matthew 5:44

“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”

I heard Larry King interviewing a Christian one night on national TV and he was using this verse as a way to try and trap Christians from supporting the death penalty or promoting the war cause. He thought that this was a discrepancy in the Bible. Friend, there are no discrepancies in the Bible. There are only discrepancies in the minds of those who are full of Bible ignorance and unlearned about what Jesus was talking about in the Sermon on the Mount.

Once again, we must remember that Jesus was dealing with people on a personal level. We should love our enemies enough to not retaliate and try to get even with them. Personal retaliation is never the Christian way of doing things. We should seek to demonstrate love to our enemies. We might do this by praying for our enemies that they might get saved! This is one way to curb your anger toward them.

According to an Associated Press account, in September 1994 Cindy Hartman of Conway, Arkansas, walked into her house to answer the phone and was confronted by a burglar. He ripped the phone cord out of the wall and ordered her into a closet. Hartman dropped to her knees and asked the burglar if she could pray for him. "I want you to

know that God loves you and I forgive you," she said. The burglar apologized for what he had done. Then he yelled out the door to a woman in a pickup truck: "We've got to unload all of this. This is a Christian home and a Christian family. We can't do this to them." As Hartman remained on her knees, the burglar returned furniture he had taken from her home. Then he took the bullets out of his gun, handed the gun to Hartman, and walked out the door.

In any event, we need to understand that this loving directive for our lives is not given to overthrow God's governmental dealings concerning capital punishment or the government's God-given mandate to overthrow the spread of evil in this world through war. But you may say, "How can you love an enemy and kill him at the same time during war?" My friend, I will leave the Christian servicemen answer that question who have actually fought in war. There are some questions you cannot answer unless you have gone through the experience! But evidently we can love mankind in our personal relationships and practical day to day living and still be used of God to carry out His objectives on earth in capital punishment or war.

We can still love mankind and serve as a police officer, prepared to pull the trigger on a gun, when a madman threatens our life and the lives of others. We can serve in the armed forces as a Christian wanting people to be saved but at the same time be fulfilling God's just purpose to stop evil aggression in the world. Certainly God loved the entire world of lost humanity by dying on the cross (John 3:16) but at the same time God Himself judges lost people after they die by sending them to hell fire and judgment (Mark 9:42-49). In fact, in the very same chapter that says God loves the entire world of lost mankind, it also says that He judges those who are lost (John 3:36).

Does that mean that God no longer loves His enemies? No, it only means that God's justice must be meted out on people who refuse to cooperate with His plan of saving grace. We must remember that God's plan of love others does not override His plan for justice. God is not one-sided and neither should Christians be one-sided. Many people view God and even Christians as only being one sided in their philosophy and way of thinking.

We must beware that we do not take verses in the Sermon on the Mount, which deal with personal objectives and goals in life, and make them override other verses that deal with God's justice and righteous actions upon evil doers. In other words, let us always remember to love our enemies and love the spread of God's justice and righteous doings at the same time! The God who told me to love my enemies has also told me to love His program of justice and His righteous actions to thwart evil aggression and the work of madmen in a society or nation. God's love and justice are part of God's character and cannot be separated. The two are not incompatible but work together in a wonderful harmonious relationship because God is not one-sided in His dealings with men.

Likewise, Christians do not have to be one-sided in their dealings with men. I can have love for my enemies and I can shoot my enemies because of God's dual program of love and justice going on in the world. Paradoxically, I can love my enemies and at the same shoot my enemies during war and when protecting my family, knowing that God's justice is being accomplished and not thwarted in the world. I can do this in the same way that God can love people but send them to hell because they bypass the love of God and reject salvation through Christ.

Likewise, a Christian can love the people that he is going to war against and at the same time he may have to destroy them to promote God's justice and stop evil aggression from running rampant. No, man is not God. But sometimes he must execute God's justice as God would even though he loves all people as God does. We can love our enemies and with a **BROKEN AND SYMPATHETIC HEART** have to destroy our enemies through the process of war to stop evil aggression in the world.

Lorraine Boettner, author of "The Christian attitude Toward War," maintained the balance well: "But while the Christian is commanded to love his enemies, that does not mean that he cannot defend himself or his loved ones against them. Nor does it necessarily follow that self-defense and love of those who would oppress us are contradictory. The judge who passes sentence on the evil doer may at the same time have a deep sense of pity and sympathy for him. We are, indeed, to love our enemies; but we cannot love them in the

same way nor with the same intensity as we love our friends. We can love our enemies in that, while we are convinced that they are in the wrong and desire to injure us, we nevertheless bear them no hate, we wish them well and would honestly like to turn them from their evil course and to persuade them to a better way of life, the way of righteousness. That does not mean, however, that our love is to express itself by our placing ourselves, or those who have been committed to our protection, at the mercy of the enemy while he remains unrepentant.”

The point seems to be this. God has both sanctioned (approved) and control (regulate, manage) various actions such as slavery, war and divorce within a cursed and fallen race of humanity. Furthermore, God did this because of the wickedness and hardness of the human heart, which was bent on going its own way. But God has not necessarily from the beginning of creation condoned these practices (slavery, war and divorce) as an ideal part of a society.

War is never an ideal situation. Nevertheless, war is sometimes necessary in an imperfect world and will occur within the ranks of a fallen world. And we must understand that God has chosen to regulate these “less than ideal” practices according to His sovereign program and ways. Some matters fall within the realm of the permissive will of God and not His direct will for our lives. In no way should we view war as being part of an ideal world. But the fact of the matter is this. We do not live in an ideal world. We live in a sinful fallen world. And because of mankind’s own sinfulness, he brings on the necessity of war.

Dr. James Gray once said:

“As long as sin exists we will have war. All the peace palaces ever built cannot prevent this.”

Jesus said that there would be “wars and rumours of wars” as the tribulation unfolds (Matt. 24:6) and we can even see these events taking shape in our own day as the world, like a roller coaster ride, speeds toward the commencement of the tribulation period.

God’s ideal world will one day be free from war during the millennial kingdom. But until then, as human hearts are able to outwardly

manifest their total depravity or wickedness, there will be the continued spread of war. And God will approve of war to fulfill His sovereign purposes. God will continue to execute judgment on evildoers through the implementation of war all because man continues to follow his own human nature and commits such wicked atrocities against the human race.

Matthew 7:12

“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.”

This so-called “Golden Rule” is also used to promote that we should never use military force against any people. The argument goes like this. We would never want another nation to attack us and kill our people. Therefore, we should never stoop so low to attack them in a military fashion and bring death upon their people. But this argument breaks down as you think about its weakness. For instance, in the event of war or robbery we must consider who the “others” are that we want to demonstrate goodness toward. In other words, which person do we want to practice goodness toward? Are we to place ourselves in the position of the murderous invader, who storms into our home, threatening the lives of our children, and do good to him by not killing him? Or should we put ourselves in the place of our family members who are ready to die and who need our protection and do good to them by protecting them?

Dear friend, I will do unto others (my wife and children) as I would want them to do for me, if an invader came to take my life. I will get out my twenty-two long shot and protect my family! You see the point? Don't abuse the Bible to meet your own little arguments that run contrary to Scripture. We must rightly divide the Scriptures and give valid arguments based upon the whole picture that the Bible presents. And the Bible advocates protection of family and even just war as we are going to see in our next response to war. Jesus was simply talking about our general dealings with others in our day to living. He was not giving national commands revolving around war and capital punishment. We should practice treating others, as we would want them to treat us. This is still a good principle to live by in our personal marriage relationships and in the business world.

But once again, we must remember that all of these pacifist Sermon on the Mount arguments deal with the time of the Law. Incidentally, this was the same stewardship of time that God allowed for war and even justifies war by wiping out whole nations of peoples, including their babies. Certainly we cannot use these texts to justify a pacifist position on war. The Author of the Law (God), who talked about nonresistance, allowed for His covenant people to destroy whole nations to stop evil from abounding. Certainly God, through the sayings of Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount under the Law, is not contradicting Himself and His earlier actions and His attitude about war in a sinful world.

I think the pacifist is many times governed by sentiment and emotion rather than the hard Biblical facts. And they overemphasize the love of God without calling attention to God's justice. They become one-sided in their approach to living without seeing the entire Biblical picture of God's mind on the subject of war. Furthermore, they seem to take verses that pertain to personal relationships and elevate them to the status of national relationships, which becomes an exegetical nightmare and wrong applications of Scriptural texts.

4. The church mission and spiritual warfare is used to support pacifism.

This is another example of the wrong application of Scriptural text. Pacifists teach that the church was called to win souls and not destroy men's lives (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). Since the kingdom was to be postponed an interim time would exist where God would call out people to be saved and become part of His body of believers – the church (Acts 15:14). The pacifist argument concludes that saving souls is the primary business of the church. We should seek to save souls and not destroy lives and see men lose their soul in hell for all eternity. Military effort would destroy men's lives and exhaust our time and effort in winning the lost to Christ.

In response to the first part of the argument, we must agree that seeing people saved is the primary outreach of the church. But this must not be interpreted as meaning that a Christian cannot hold a military job position, police position or judges position and be deemed as a failure in the soul winning department. After all, Christians engage

in soul winning efforts in the normal functions of society, as they go into “all the world” to proclaim Christ to a lost society.

1 Thessalonians 1:8 says:

“For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.”

A believer is to be a witness for Christ in every place where they might hold a position and wherever they have the opportunity to witness for the Lord. I have personally talked with Christian policemen who were bold witnesses for Christ on the job even though they had a gun by their side to protect both you and me from evil aggressors. They truly had a heart for people since they have seen how deplorable the lives of people really are. I have also talked with servicemen who were genuine Christians and who wanted to be a faithful witness for the Lord as they maintained their military position and served their country.

To conclude that those who serve their country cannot be interested in the lost souls of mankind is a preconceived and biased notion. The door for witnessing is wide open in the military, like it would be in some other secular job position that Christians would hold, in order to survive and meet their families needs. Serving in the military or having a government job that requires the possibility of taking human life in no way keeps Christians from being a witness for Christ. In fact, these jobs might give more opportunity to talk to people about the brevity of life and their need to have assurance of salvation (James 4:14).

Coupled with this pacifist argument is the idea that we are only told as Christians to fight in a spiritual warfare and not a carnal or physical warfare (Ephesians 6:12; 2 Cor. 10:4; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:9). The argument says that believers are only called upon to be soldiers that resist the spiritual forces of evil but not the forces of physical evil. I must wholeheartedly agree with the fact that we must resist spiritual evil. This is certainly indisputable and all Christians would agree. But this is a rather one sided argument taken from the notion that the Bible is silent on the matter of Christians engaging in war and protecting themselves from harms way.

In another portion of this study we will see that the Bible actually supports the truth that believers should live under the authority of the civil government to the point that they can engage in war and have God's approval of their actions. The argument of only engaging in spiritual warfare is a one sided argument that ignores God's view on war in a sin fallen world. Since sin is part of our society we must not only engage in spiritual warfare but also be ready to engage in physical warfare for the protection of our society and personal homes.

Along with this spiritual argument there is the thought about the church being a spiritual people, who have a heavenly hope and not an earthly national people like Israel, who had earthly promises. It's true that Israel and the New Testament church are not the same group of people before God (1 Cor. 10:32). It's also true that the nation of Israel, through Abraham, were given earthly or land promises which God began to honor by allowing His people to conquer nations in order that they might enter Canaan. The focus of Israel is earthly whereas the focus for the church today is heavenly, since we are seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus and are told to keep our eyes on the heavenly Christ in order to manifest His life (Eph. 1:3; Col. 3:1-3).

All of these things are true but seem to be misapplying New Testament truth to back up a personal argument. The church is a heavenly people with a heavenly calling and has a heavenly hope (1 Peter 2:11) but at the same time the church is to live and dwell here upon planet earth in obedience to all of God's commands which includes obedience to governmental authorities (1 Peter 2:12-15). A heavenly people should manifest their heavenly citizenship by obedience. The same passage that talks about our pilgrim journey here on earth as a heavenly citizen also tells us to "submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." This would include the need to honor our government's request to fight in a just war where evildoers are thwarted and peace is sought to be maintained in the world. This will be brought out in our next section.

In any event, the fact that the church is a heavenly people of God does not negate our responsibilities on earth which involve engaging in earthly programs and events to promote God's purpose, glory and honor among mankind. And Peter says that when Christians obey the



government's authority they do so for the sake of the Lord's honor and glory. Obedience to the God ordained human government brings honor to God since He has ordained the government to fulfill His will on earth even in the times of war designed to stop evil aggression. So a heavenly people (the church) needs to fulfill God's earthly will on planet earth, as they submit to the government's authority.

Then too, pacifists will tell us that as a spiritual people we are never to conform or mold ourselves to the world (Romans 12:2). We are told to separate from the things of this world and be spiritual (not worldly) in our living. Of course, this argument assumes that the events taking place on earth such as warfare with other nations is worldly. But the scriptural usage of the term "world" (world system) refers to that which is against God and His program on earth (1 John 2:15-17). The world system does not necessarily refer to every earthly event that occurs on planet earth. If this were true, then none of us could do anything today or go anywhere because everything that we do and every move that we make would be considered worldly. We could not even sit on a chair without becoming worldly because the chair was made in the world.

The point is this. When some earthly event is not clearly condemned in the Bible it does not have to become worldly to our hearts and lives. Again, I ask, "Where do you find in the Bible, "Thou shalt not go to war with other nations?" As we have already discussed, there is no warrant to say that war is something that is not ordained by God, as we see God's attitude and mind about war all throughout the Scriptures. Therefore, we must not conclude that all war is worldly simply because it is war. When God ordains war for a just case to stop the spread of evil and promote peace we must surrender to the fact that God has ordained the higher powers to act on His behalf. Even though war takes place on planet earth it does not have to be something that is worldly. War does not have to be that which is part of the world system, that is against God's plans and wishes for the Christian life, if God has ordained the war to be fought for just reasons.

5. The kingdom saying of Jesus is used to support pacifism.

In John 18:36, we find these words:

“Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now (since the nations rejection of Him) is my kingdom not from hence.”

Pacifist will claim that Jesus did not promote war and He confirmed that he did not promote war in light of this famous kingdom saying. But we must understand why Jesus did not promote war. Jesus did not promote war, since He was not in the position to promote war. He came as the suffering Messiah instead of the military Messiah to establish His kingdom. Jesus will not establish His kingdom until He returns to earth after the tribulation period of seven years (Matt. 2:44). Only then will Jesus, as the King, wage war on a rebel world (See Revelation 19:11-21).

In other words, Jesus did not come to establish His kingdom among Israel at the present time of His earthly ministry because of their rejection of Him (John 1:11; 6:15). Therefore, Jesus said that His “kingdom is not of this world” at the present time period and told Peter and his subjects to lay down the swords and not try to maintain the kingdom by force. This is because the kingdom was not going to be inaugurated at this particular point in time. Furthermore, Jesus did not need any help from this old world of mankind to bring in His kingdom.

John 18:10-11 says:

“Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear (but he was aiming for the head). The servant's name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”

Peter was not to use force to prevent Christ's death and bring in the kingdom. This was because God's timetable was different than Peters. Christ was scheduled to die before He would inaugurate the earthly kingdom. Therefore, there was no need to fight in order to try and bring the kingdom upon the earth in Peter's day. Trying to bring in the kingdom was a losing cause. This is what Jesus was teaching when He told Peter to put back his sword. In fact, our Lord made it clear that He did not need any earthly help in bringing in the kingdom.

Matthew 26:52-53

“Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?”

Since His kingdom is not of this world or literally “out of this world” or “according to this world” (John 18:36) Christ will not need the help of the world to establish His kingdom. Jesus is saying that it will not be established by human means. The kingdom’s arrival will not be brought in by the military efforts of man. In essence, Jesus was saying this. “My kingdom will not be established on planet earth at the present time by human means since I am rejected as the King. The kingdom will be postponed. Therefore, put away your swords and don’t try to establish the kingdom through your own human agency, since I will establish the kingdom by my own power and in my own time.”

So this statement of Jesus (“my kingdom is not of this world”) was not given as a mandate to stop all war. It was given to teach a dispensational truth about the kingdom’s postponement and its later arrival on God’s timetable. Peter could not fight in order to bring in the kingdom, since God had postponed its arrival and ordained His Son to die upon the cross. But this does not mean that Jesus was giving Peter the commandment to never fight and protect himself until the kingdom arrives. It’s interesting to note that Peter was not a pacifist because he actually had a sword to protect himself. In fact, the other disciples also had swords to protect themselves from the very same people that Paul called: “perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren (2 Cor. 11:26).

Jesus had told His disciples that they should keep a sword handy for protection from the enemy. This would be especially true, as the disciples would begin to fulfill the Great Commission and encounter all kinds of terrible and wicked people in the unpoliced and lawless age of their own time.

Luke 22:36 records:

“Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.”

Imagine that! Jesus told His disciples to go and buy a sword. And Jesus viewed the sword as being so important, as a means of self-defense, that the disciples were to even sell their coats to secure one. Jesus was not an advocate of outlawing swords nor would Jesus be an outspoken advocate of outlawing guns today.

The present day saying is true:

“If you outlaw guns then only the outlaws will have guns.”

Luke 22:38 suggests that the disciples already had two swords on them. This would indicate that the others would also possess swords and carry them for protection. Luke 22:49 supports this point.

“When they (all the disciples) which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword?”

Herman Hoyt, the beloved pacifist dispensationalist, said this about these references: “This passage of Scripture is admittedly difficult. And many commentators are uncertain of its precise meaning.”

We might add that it’s the pacifist commentators that are uncertain of its meaning! Even the pacifists, who take the Bible literally, must cough and sputter at these verses. Jesus meant what He said and said what He meant. Hoyt talks about the possibility of Jesus warranting self-defense in some “limited sense” but finds it difficult to even write the words. Others try to wiggle out of the notion of retaliation, by way of defense in this present day, by only equating it to the future time of the kingdom. But even as a dispensationalist, I have problems with this view, since we are told that the kingdom will be a time of peace and safety for the Jews (Isaiah 55:12). They will have no need to protect themselves. Actually, Jesus was giving the Sermon on the Mount in the Law dispensation and was telling the disciples how to live in light of the coming kingdom.

In addition, kingdom truth was soon giving way to grace truth, when the disciples would be commissioned to preach repentance to all the world without any kingdom message (Luke 24:47). This is why the disciples were warned about the coming conflicts (Luke 22:35-38). They would embark on a new journey taking the Gospel to the entire world. This would bring them face to face with many dangers and involve their need for personal protection. The pacifist simply cannot get around what Jesus said to His disciples. He told them to protect themselves. Why is that so hard to accept? Like Hoyt, most pacifists have a hard time reconciling this with what Jesus said in Matthew chapter five. But as we have already noted, this sermon is talking about personal acts of retaliation for the sake of vengeance. It is not talking about self-defense or protection from enemies.

The idea that the disciples were a bunch of chickens is not biblical. Nor was Jesus a pacifist when it came to protection and safety for the disciples. Jesus did not promote a pacifist response to danger and trouble. And Jesus was not a weak, inoffensive and harmless dove as so many depict Him to be. Furthermore, we must suggest that the words of Jesus to Peter do not indicate that Christians can never bear arms for protection or in times of war because Jesus simply told Peter to “Put up thy sword into the sheath (John 18:11).” Jesus did not tell Peter to get rid of his sword! Why do so many people miss this little point? Jesus was not implying that it was wrong for Peter to use a sword to protect himself. Rather Jesus was saying that this particular instance was not the proper time and place to use the sword since He was going to make a voluntary surrender and give His life for the sins of the world.

John 18:36

“My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.”

Once again, we must understand by this statement of Jesus that He was talking about individuals (“my servants”) fighting and not battles revolving around national war. This is vitally important to understand. Jesus was not setting up a standard to follow in connection with modern war between various nations. Jesus used the illustration elsewhere that “a strong man armed keepeth his palace” (Luke

11:21) acknowledging His approval of war for personal protection of a society. Furthermore, we must once again remember why Jesus told His disciples or followers not to fight. It was because the kingdom was not going to come upon the earth in that day and also because Jesus would not need any help to establish His kingdom when He returns to inaugurate the kingdom on planet earth. The kingdom is “not out of (according) to this world” or set up by man’s achievements.

Nevertheless, Jesus did teach a principle by this statement and by His reaction to Peter’s violence that we should understand for present day Christian living. And the principle is this. Believers should never use physical force to advance the Gospel, promote truth or enforce a spiritual agenda, which is needed in the world. Whenever Christians have used force within the Christian community, avoiding government regulations, there has always been shame and reproach brought on the name of Christ. While we can biblically advocate a Christian engaging in war under the authority of the government to stop evildoers, it is never right to create a Christian Mafia to blow up abortion clinics or churches where lesbian marriages are promoted and such like.

Although we might want to see these atrocities eliminated from society, it is never right to rise up and become full of anarchy and take human life without God’s sanction. And when we take human life, without the authority of government backing us up, it’s then that we become a murderer in God’s eyes. Evidently Peter had to address this very issue of murder with some believers. Some of the saints were tempted to rise up and commit this awful act of cruelty and be charged with the sin of murder because they wanted to retaliate against those who were persecuting them.

1 Peter 4:15

“But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters.”

Once again we must understand that we are no longer living under the Law dispensation and cannot haphazardly carry out the laws of the Old Testament without the authorization of human government which is ordained by God. The difference in the dispensation, given to

govern national Israel, and our present dispensation, inevitably allows for many changes in our present day relations among society. We cannot just go out and stone adulterers, homosexuals or those who break the Sabbath. Those who seek to advocate the penalties of the Old Testament Law upon present day society are called Theonomists. Reconstructionists will tend to endorse that the Old Testament Law should be instituted once again for our present day civil authority. However, to do this would certainly be another dispensational error that would cause God's present day purpose in the world to be thwarted. It would also bring us back under the Law, which was a burden and bondage with all of its 613 commandments!

We must remember that our country, no matter how many Christians live in it, can never become the equivalent to Old Testament Israel living under her theocracy, which was directed by the Mosaic Law. Therefore, since the church is not national Israel, functioning as an individual nation under the dispensation of the Law, it is erroneous to think that we must try to legislate Christianity to become an official state religion and ban all other religions. As we have already seen, Jesus said that His kingdom was not of this world or would not be established by human force in the present time (John 18:36). His kingdom would not become a visible bureaucracy until He returns and establishes it upon planet earth. To try and institute the kingdom upon earth today through the Old Testament Law is a dispensational error of the worst sort! We are not to try and establish the kingdom today by becoming a people who dictatorially legislate society.

Surely we must do what we can to promote a better society to live even as Joseph, Deborah, Gideon, various judges in Israel's history, Daniel (Dan. 4:27), Nehemiah and John the Baptist (Matt. 14:1-2) all did. And they did this by speaking out against the evil atrocities in the governments of their own times. However, the church is not to become a ruling government by itself as the false system of the Roman Catholic Church did in the past Inquisition and sought to become a tyrant government system murdering millions of people for not following their faith. The church is not commissioned by God to establish a new social order that will legislate society through the strict rules of Old Testament Law. This is because the church is not Old Testament Israel functioning as an independent nation. The church is not designed by God to sustain itself through the process of

governing world nations. Instead, the church is commissioned to win souls for Christ and seek to impact society by our changed lives and by seeing others saved, so that their changed lives will also impact society for the better. Changed lives are what will impact a society until the King returns.

So Jesus said:

“...My kingdom is not of this world...”

Dispensational pacifists will conclude that since the millennial kingdom is not of this world or present in this world today, no physical force is to be meted out on any person in order to try and maintain the kingdom. However, since the kingdom of peace is not part of this world today, there will be the need for war, in order to maintain some kind of decency and keep evil aggression in check! The kingdom will be a time of unprecedented peace when it finally arrives on earth.

During the kingdom reign there will be no need to engage in war to maintain order for the undisputed King (Jesus Christ) in this future day will enforce order and promote a war free society. In fact, the servants will not have to do the fighting to bring in Christ's kingdom because Jesus will bring in the kingdom with His own power and force (Rev. 19:11-15; Daniel 2:27). In this interim period of time, before the arrival of the kingdom, it might be necessary to protect yourself from harms way. Likewise, it will be revealed later on in the New Testament epistles that believers can engage in national warfare under the authority of the government.

This statement by Jesus means that we do not have to fight in order to maintain the kingdom since the kingdom was postponed (Matt. 21:43). But this statement by Jesus is not given as a mandate to never fight in order to maintain justice and the spread of evil in a world contaminated by sin. These comments by Jesus in no way indicate that it is wrong for a believer to engage in war. Jesus was simply painting the picture that His kingdom had not yet arrived on earth and that there was no need to protect the kingdom since the king was going to first be the Lamb and die upon the tree.

Once again we see the need to ascertain the dispensational significance of Bible statements in order to arrive at Biblical



conclusions about present day national relationships under a new and different dispensation. In any event, this kingdom statement cannot be used to promote a pacifist argument against all military war, since the kingdom of peace has not yet arrived on this earth. Since kingdom peace does not exist on planet earth at this present time, there will be the continuing need to try and maintain justice and relative peace among humanity. A Christian soldier may fight in a war realizing that he is not fighting to bring in the kingdom as Peter was and as postmillennialists teach. But he may engage in battle with the goal to promote justice and thwart, to some degree, the spread of evil in a wicked world.

6. The life of Jesus is used to support pacifism.

The life of Christ is sometimes used to promote pacifism. It is sometimes argued that we must follow the Christlike conduct of the Lord who was nonresistant to all mankind and never at anytime engaged in warfare. If believers must behave in a manner opposed to Christ by fighting in war, then they cannot be right or proper in their actions. It's argued that Jesus came to save and not destroy men's lives.

Luke 9:54-56

“And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.”

This seems to be another verse that pacifists hang upon to promote their nonresistance for the present day in which we live. Let me respond to this argument. First, we must remember that Jesus was responding to the wrong attitude of the disciples who were not concerned about the souls of lost mankind. He wanted to stress to them that we should be more interested in seeing people saved than destroying them from a physical standpoint. I think this should always be the Christian attitude in life and even the attitude of the Christian soldier, who is working on behalf of the government, to carry out God's will to stop evil aggressor's in this world.

Even when a Christian is a soldier his overall attitude, aim and desire should be to promote peace and see people saved from a spiritual standpoint. Believers should not have a warlike attitude toward mankind. Second, we must remember why Jesus made this statement. Jesus made this statement in order to clarify to the disciples the purpose of His first coming (“the Son of man is not come.”) This is a dispensational statement that revolves around Christ’s purpose for His first coming into the world. The first coming of Jesus was not connected with the physical destruction of men’s lives but to offer salvation to lost humanity (John 3:17). This was the intent of His first coming. And this purpose was beautifully illustrated by what Jesus said in the synagogue of Nazareth while reading the prophecy of Isaiah.

Luke 4:17-20

“And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.”

You will notice that Jesus stopped reading the portion of Isaiah after addressing the matter of the “the acceptable year of the Lord” which is connected with His first advent to earth and his gracious plan of salvation for lost mankind. If you will look at Isaiah 61:2 the next part of the verse reads “and the day of vengeance of our God...” If Jesus would have failed to stop reading Isaiah’s prophecy at the appropriate place that dealt with His first advent (grace) and continued to read about His second advent to earth (wrath), then He would have immediately ushered in the kingdom by bringing His vengeance upon mankind. And we would have all been doomed because the cross would not have come to fruition!

Think of it. We were saved because Jesus closed the book or scroll of Isaiah at the appropriate time and failed to finish quoting the rest of the Scripture. We were saved by a comma! If Jesus had kept reading

we would have all been doomed. Well, I refer to this account because it illustrates that the purpose of Jesus during His first coming was not to destroy men's lives but to bring salvation into their lives (Luke 9:54-56). This statement from Jesus was a dispensational statement that pointed to His purpose for His first coming. However, we find that His Second Coming will be altogether different when He comes to establish His kingdom.

When Jesus returns to earth in this day there will be the blood of man upon His vesture (Rev. 19:13; Isaiah 63:1; 11:4). Thus, this saying of Jesus in Luke 9:54-56, cannot be used to promote a nonresistance attitude toward war since it is intended to convey God's dispensation purpose for Christ's first coming into the world. What Jesus said has nothing to do with the present day affairs of wars between nations, which can be designed by God to uphold His justice in the world and stop the spread of evil. This statement by Jesus merely points to God's earthly purpose connected with Christ's first coming.

But pacifists will also remind us that Jesus went about doing good and healing (Acts 10:38) and when He was reviled He did not respond with retaliation (1 Peter 2:23) but ended up dying upon the cross (1 Peter 2:24). Believers are exhorted to follow His example (1 Peter 2:21) and to walk as He walked (1 John 2:6). Since there is no record of Christ using force on the objects of men then we must also follow this example. If we are going to be like Christ we will not use physical force on any segment of mankind by engaging in war of any kind.

My response to this argument is that Christians are to follow the nonresistance example of Jesus on a personal level of life in all of our social relationships. However, it must be noted that this example of Jesus was not intended to embrace national warfare, dealings between nations and personal defense. Like the Sermon on the Mount, we can practice nonretaliation on a personal level as Jesus taught and be like Jesus (Matt. 5:39). However, neither the Sermon on the Mount nor the example of Jesus dying on the cross can be legitimately used to promote nonresistance in warfare or in the case of personal defense. This was never the intent of the Sermon on the Mount and the example of Jesus. These examples were given to guide our personal and individual relationships within our everyday

living as they pertain to insult and retaliation. They were not given to promote the international relationships between nations but the personal relationships between mankind. Nor were these instructions given to denounce self-protection. The principle of non-aggression and nonresistance was given in the context of personal relationships among people. It was not intended to be a blanket guide to direct national affairs and sustain God's justice on planet earth.

We must remember once again that we cannot use a principle in the Bible (nonresistance) when it is wrongly applied outside the realm of its intended use. This will always breed confusion and is the direct result of wrongly dividing the Scriptures (2 Timothy 2:15).

An additional response to these conclusions would be that conforming our lives to Jesus does not mean that we must perform the exact same tasks that Jesus accomplished while walking upon earth. For instance, Jesus went in and cleansed the Jewish temple in protest. Are Christians expected to do this to the Jewish places of worship today in order to be like Jesus? Jesus also turned water into wine and healed all those who were brought to Him. He even raised the dead! Must Christians perform these similar tasks in order to be like Jesus? The point is this. We do not have to accomplish all of the same tasks that Jesus did during His earthly ministry in order to be like Jesus Christ. We can follow His example by looking at the principle behind what He did and apply it to our personal relationships among humanity and church life as we interact with the saints.

Likewise, we can perform other tasks in this life that Jesus did not necessarily perform and still be like Jesus. This may mean working a job that Jesus never worked or becoming a soldier to protect our nation and people. Jesus sought to help people and in today's world we can help multitudes of people when carrying out God's program of justice to stop evil aggression. I thank the soldiers who have helped protect me and who have fought to protect my own hide! I thank those soldiers who are attempting to help war stricken people who have been tortured and abused by madmen. Surely these actions would be like Jesus! In addition, we must remember that being like Jesus does not negate our responsibility to obey what Jesus said about honoring Caesar and placing ourselves under the authority of

the government (Luke 20:25) to stop evil aggression in this world (Romans 13:4).

Again I must emphasize an important point. Jesus did not fight in war during His earthly ministry simply because there would be a misunderstanding about His earthly mission to become the sacrificial lamb instead of the conquering king and the subsequent establishment of His kingdom. It's interesting that those who teach we should follow the example of Jesus only emphasize his past earthly life. What about when Jesus returns to earth once again in the future? When Jesus returns to earth He is going to be a king of war and tread "the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (Rev. 19:15).

So which life of Jesus are you going to pick, in order to be like Jesus; His past earthly life, or His future earthly life? Do you see the dilemma the pacifist places himself in as He seeks to look at the life of Jesus? It's obvious that being like Jesus does not necessarily involve recreating all of His past and future practices. Yes, we should in our daily relationships, seek to practice nonresistance and a nonaggressive attitude toward people like Jesus did. But in our allegiance to the government and the authority ordained to spread God's justice upon earth, we need to sometimes engage in war, even as Jesus will do when He returns to earth. If Jesus is going to destroy millions of soldiers when He returns to earth with the brightness of His own radiance (Zch. 14:12) then surely we can carry out His justice on planet earth as we act on the behalf of the government and accomplish God's plan on earth.

When a person looks at the total response of Jesus to humanity in the past as well as the future he will realize that being like Jesus involves compassion for the lost but also involves justice on evildoers. Both are compatible if we want to be like Jesus in His past earthly life as well as His future life.

#### Just War Response (Resistance Approach)

1. God's justification of war in the Old Testament is used to support a non-pacifist viewpoint toward war.

The Old Testament teaches that God aggressively used war as an instrument for His justice. God is not a pacifist in any sense of the term. It was God who allowed His people to destroy whole nations of people including their babies and children. The question of genocide in the Old Testament centers upon God's moral justice. Genocide is the deliberate and systematic extermination of a national, racial, political or cultural group. In the Old Testament we see God giving the command to exterminate whole races of people. Now remember, this is God giving the command to destroy wicked nations! And it is God taking the responsibility for these wholesale destructions of human beings.

1 Samuel 15:3

"Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass."

Joshua 10:8

"And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee."

Joshua 10:28

"And that day Joshua took Makkedah, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and the king thereof he utterly destroyed, them, and all the souls that were therein; he let none remain: and he did to the king of Makkedah as he did unto the king of Jericho."

Joshua 10:30

"And the LORD delivered it also (Libnah), and the king thereof, into the hand of Israel; and he smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein; he let none remain in it; but did unto the king thereof as he did unto the king of Jericho."

Joshua 10:32

"And the LORD delivered Lachish into the hand of Israel, which took it on the second day, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein, according to all that he had done to Libnah."

Joshua 10:36

“And Joshua went up from Eglon, and all Israel with him, unto Hebron; and they fought against it:”

Joshua 10:39

“And he took it, and the king thereof, and all the cities thereof; and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed all the souls that were therein; he left none remaining: as he had done to Hebron, so he did to Debir, and to the king thereof; as he had done also to Libnah, and to her king.”

Joshua 10:40

“So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the LORD God of Israel commanded.

Joshua 24:8 says that God actually took the responsibility for these wholesale slaughters: “And I brought you into the land of the Amorites, which dwelt on the other side Jordan; and they fought with you: and I gave them into your hand, that ye might possess their land; and I destroyed them from before you.

The modernist calls God a dirty bully for doing these things. But this is no surprise since modernism wants God to be only one-sided in their liberal theology. The liberals only express God’s love instead of His holiness, wrath and justice. Because God is holy He has the right to execute judgment upon sin and sinners. These commands to destroy wicked people involve the moral character of God.

War in the Old Testament is always related to God’s judgment upon wickedness. God has the right to send justice upon evildoers according to His own plan and directives. God has sufficient reasons for all that He does. Whenever wholesale destruction was inflicted upon people it was done righteously according to the God who always acts righteously. The Lord is the righteous judge (2 Tim. 4:8).

Revelation 16:7 says:

“And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.”

Genesis 18:25

“... Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

So why did God destroy whole nations of people? First, God commanded these people to be destroyed because God is holy and has the right to judge sinners. He can judge them as He sees fit and whenever He decides to judge them God will be just in His actions acting as a holy God. War is God’s judgment upon evildoers and sin in this present life whereas hell is God’s judgment upon evildoers in the next life. The side of God’s grace does not favor any of these judgments but the side of God’s justice deems them necessary in order to uphold His own righteousness and holy nature.

Second, God commanded these people to be destroyed in order to preserve the religious purity of the nation of Israel. If Israel would mix with these pagan people, they would become corrupted from a spiritual standpoint (see Exodus 34:11-16; Deut. 7:1-4; 12:2-3).

Deuteronomy 20:16-18 clearly says:

“But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth: But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee: That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the LORD your God.”

God was concerned about the purity of His national people and the promise of the coming Redeemer which could only come to fruition through a pure line. Failure to destroy the pagan peoples of the land would lead to moral corruption and even the disintegration of His spiritual people and the promise of a coming Redeemer through the promised seed.

Leon Tucker wrote:

“In destroying the Canaanites God was preserving the race of whom the Messiah should come, and the ultimate blessings of all the earth in Him, also the final overthrow of the kingdom of this world’s darkness.”



Another point to ponder is this. God in His actions was not only fulfilling His justice and plan for purity for the nation of Israel but in another sense He was fulfilling His mercy. Why do I say this? It's because of the babies and young children that were killed in these wholesale destructions. If the children would have grown up in their environment of wickedness and idolatry they would have died and gone to hell like the rest of the pagan people. But the actual destruction of all the people, including the children, demonstrated God's mercy in that when babies and young children die they are spared from spiritual judgment and taken into the presence of the heavenly Father (note 2 Samuel 12:23; Matt. 18:3).

We must remember that these people were devoted to judgment because of their vile wickedness and rejection of God's light. There was no possibility of redemption because of their utter wickedness and rejection of truth (Romans 1:18-21). There is a line which people cross because of their rejection of God and His ways. I must confess, I don't know where that line is and neither do you. But God knows and He can justly destroy people because of their utter rejection of Him.

The Canaanites in the period of Joshua and Judges degenerated in their religious living to such a degree that they led their religious devotees (both sexes) into demoralizing religious prostitution, serpent worship and child sacrifice. These people were spiritually and morally contaminated to such a degree that God judged them by commanding their destruction. And because of this God was known as a man of war.

Exodus 15:3 says:

"The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name."

David declared that the Lord had taught him how to make warfare.

Psalms 18:34

"He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms."

Psalm 18:39

“For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me.”

Psalm 144:1

“Blessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight.”

I'm sure that no pacifist has these verses hanging in their bedroom. But it is true that Jehovah is a man of war. We must admit that God is not a hater of war. It's interesting to note that Jehovah was always said to be destroying these cities (Joshua 6:2; 24:8). It's also of interest to note that the children of Israel were simply the instruments in the hands of God to execute His determined judgment upon earth.

This ties in with the New Testament principle of executing judgment upon evildoers under the government who is ordained by God to suppress the spreading of evil in the world. God has an end to His longsuffering and can in His justice choose to judge people on earth by war whenever He pleases to do so. There are many examples of God judging people in the Old Testament. In Judges chapter six God directed Gideon to deliver His people from Midianite slavery and actually sent Gideon to war with the Midianites (11-16) and told Gideon that He would be with him in this war (Judges 6:12, 14, 16). Other accounts would be of Othniel going to war under God's approval (Judges 3:9-10) and Ehud (Judges 3:15-30).

The lesson of the Old Testament teaches that God is a man of war and He has chosen to use war to accomplish His own objectives on planet earth. We have seen that God sends war upon people on planet earth as a way to punish evildoers. God uses war as a way to bring punishment upon wicked nations. This was true even when God allowed the Babylonians to conquer His own people.

Ezekiel 5:17 reveals:

“So will I send upon you famine and evil beasts, and they shall bereave thee; and pestilence and blood shall pass through thee; and I will bring the sword upon thee. I the LORD have spoken it.”

Ezekiel 14:21

“For thus saith the Lord GOD; How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast?”

God obviously sends war as a way to punish various people who progress in evil even as He used the Babylonians to judge His own national people. America, look out! The Lord is a man of war! The message of the Old Testament teaches that God uses war to punish evildoers. Thus, we see that God gives His approval on various wars to punish those nations and people who are evil and we must inevitably conclude that all war is not sin in God’s eyes. This leads us to our next defense of Christians participating in war for a just cause.

2. The government’s approval by God to execute judgment upon evildoers is used to support a non-pacifist viewpoint toward war.

Romans 13:1-4

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation (judgment). For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.”

We have been referring to this section of Scripture throughout our study. The text is very clear on several matters. First, the government is ordained by God (vs. 1). This truth is alluded to in the book of Daniel (see Daniel 2:21; 4:17, 25, 34-35). Of course, this does not mean that God is responsible for the sins of tyrants nor approves of all that they do. It only suggests that the authority of kings and governments to rule originally come from God. Nebuchadnezzar had to learn this lesson the hard way. God was in control of his ruling position. Even though we cannot always respect the man in office, we must respect the office, for government was ordained by God.

Paul was writing when the worst ruler of Rome was on the throne – Nero! And yet he wrote about obeying the government and respecting the institution that God had established. There is the need to show respect toward the ruling positions that God has ordained to maintain order within a society. One of the worst rulers of Jewry was Pilate. As Jesus stood before Pilate, John 19:11 records the Lord as saying these words: “Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.”

Jesus recognized that the authority to rule was granted to Pilate by God. And this is what Paul is saying. All government, even the most wicked and vile rulers of government have been placed upon the throne by God to serve His purposes on planet earth. Because of this, we must respect the institution of government and abide by the laws established, which do not clearly contradict the Bible.

Second, we discover in this text that God has ordained the government in this world to stop evil aggression and prevent anarchy (vs. 4). In fact, two times in this verse (v. 4) we are reminded that the government acts as the “minister” or servant of God to execute His judgment in planet earth. In verse six the governments in the world are once again called “God’s ministers.” Nebuchadnezzar was called God’s servant (Jer. 25:9), the Assyrian soldiers His rod (Isa. 10:5) and King Cyrus His anointed one (Isa. 44:28; 45:1). Even though government officials may not be believers, they are still the “ministers of God” because He has established the authority of the state to carry out His purposes on earth – one of them being to curb evil aggression. The government acts as a representative of God upon earth. The government is a divine institution. We must never forget this truth.

Dr. Albertus Pieters said:

“There are two independent sovereignties both ordained of God: Church and State. The State is truly a divine institution as the Church. The state is the trustee of the law, the Church of the Gospel; the former bears the sword for forcible restraint of sin, the latter holds the secret of the only remedy for sin. The former (state) compels men to abstain from the grosser forms of open sin; the latter (church) inspires

them with a hatred of secret sin and a love for holiness. Both are necessary, and neither has the right to interfere with the other.”

Governmental force, properly used, helps prevent tyranny and executes God’s justice. The government can restrict the practice of evil by punishing wrongdoing. National governments are a moral necessity and are ordained by God for the orderly working of a society. Anarchy would be the only result if no governments would abound. God expects government to carry out His plan of justice on earth, which would not only include judgment upon those who sin against society but those nations who commit hate crimes against mankind. Only exaggerated ignorance could miss this point in the Bible.

As the ministers or servants of God, rulers are expected to promote the “good” (Romans 13:4) of the people - their security, tranquility, and general welfare. Even Paul appealed his case before Caesar’s court recognizing that the government has the right to take human life for evil doing and to protect society from evil men (Acts 25:10-11; see also Acts 22:25-30). If any man insists on breaking the law, he can expect to pay for it, because the government has the authority to bring him to trial and punish him.

In the expression “he beareth not the sword in vain” (Rom. 13:4) we have a strong statement concerning the power which God vests in the government. The sword is not just a symbol of ruling power. If that were the case, Paul would have used the term scepter. The sword speaks of the ultimate power of the ruler or acting authority or government to inflict capital punishment. Verse four also explains that those in authority act as “a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” In other words, in addition to being a minister of God to us for good, the ruler or government authority also serves God by dispensing punishment to those who break the law.

The implications of this are very important. It tells us that the government and those in authority can inflict punishment upon those who are evil. This authority would extend not only to the state level but also to the national level in the time of war. Since the government is ordained by God to execute His wrath on evil, it can act as a buffer to stop other nations from carrying out some evil agenda or scheme.

A government can do this by proclaiming war on another country for its evil atrocities or by protecting its own borders from attack and evil aggression. Furthermore, those working on the behalf of the government, and who are under its jurisdiction or authority, can bear arms in obedience to the government's command, knowing that they are stopping some evil aggressor from raising havoc among the world.

The believer, as a soldier, can act as a representative of the government, which has been given the God-given authority to execute vengeance upon evil aggression in the world. And the punishment of evildoers, in the time of war, must not be considered as individual murder. Soldiers, who are serving under the government in the time of war, must be viewed as committing an authoritative and "just killing" while they act upon the government's mandate and God-given authority to stop evil aggressors. Therefore, the Christian soldier is freed from the charge of murder as he acts on the behalf of the government to fulfill God's program of justice upon the earth. The soldier can take human life under the government's authority and have God's sanction in doing it since he is killing with God's divinely established authority represented in the government.

Peter was also reminded of the government's authority to thwart the spread of evil in the world by bringing vengeance upon evildoers.

1 Peter 2:13-15

"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men."

We see the repeating thought that God has given the government authority to take human life as it seeks to stop the spread of evil in the world. One cannot miss this unless they are wearing their pacifist eyeglasses. When God ordains the government as working on His behalf to stop the progression of evil in the world we must accept this truth. And God has ordained soldiers or police officers to carry out the government's wishes to protect human life and stop evil from

spreading. God uses government to at least curb evil aggression in the world in some measure.

This is why we must respect those who serve under the government's authority and risk their lives for us to protect us from evil aggressors in our own neighborhood and in the time of war. We should not view soldiers as mass murderers when they are serving a government that is fighting for a just cause to stop evil. As we have seen in the Old Testament, God does not hold soldiers responsible for murder, while fighting in a war that He has ordained or sanctioned. Government and war is a necessary part in a world that is fallen and prone to evil.

Herbert Lockyer said this:

“War is ruthless, hellish, inhuman and heartbreaking; and any man who creates and loves it is a child of the devil. War is to be loathed with the most utter abhorrence. Yet a hatred of war does not mean consent to the implications of pacifism, as we know it today. Living as we are in a Satanically controlled world that has little sympathy for the teachings of the Prince of Peace, human government must of necessity be founded on force. The sword must devour the sword until Christ returns to fashion swords into ploughshares.”

Two phrases in this section of Scripture in Peter are important: “the will of God” (1 Peter 2:15) and “the servants of God” (1 Peter 2:16). When we do something in the will of God and as the servants of God, then we are doing it “for the Lord's sake.” God has willed that we silence the critics by obeying the government, not by opposing the authority. We should “silence” the pagan critics of the world by our obedience to the government's laws and wishes. Even Jesus acknowledged that Caesar has his rights over our lives and certain claims on the Christian life (Matt. 22:21 with Romans 13:6-7). Therefore, when the government asks us to serve in the military to stop the spread of evil in the world the Christian can become a soldier acting on the behalf of God's established justice system on earth and serve in the military.

The believer can hold a government position where they must take human life when the government sanctions the taking of life (“the sword”) for maintaining a society of order and when the government is trying to suppress evil from abounding in the world. Peter remind

us that we are the servants of God (1 Peter 2:16) doing the will of God (1 Peter 2:15) which in this context involves obedience to the government established by God and those in authority over us. This would involve obedience to the draft during times of war crisis as the government seeks to maintain protection, order and stop evil from running rampant in society.

The Bible teaches that the Christian is to be a law-abiding citizen and obey the government's rules and regulations in every area which do not go against the clear commands of Scripture. The government that provides services, protection and regulation for an orderly community also requires its subjects to live as law-abiding citizens. And this is what God expects of Christians who want to possess a good testimony before those that are lost or outside the community of believers (1 Timothy 3:7).

But you may say, "My conscience bothers me about taking the life of any man. Therefore, I think I will refuse to serve in the military even if the draft comes about during a war crisis. I will never obey the government and go fight in the military." But before we make this decision we must consider what the Bible says and educate our conscience according to the truth of God's Word.

Romans 13:5

"Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake."

This verse is actually teaching that our conscience should be pricked when we do not obey the government and participate in those areas that we are commanded to follow. The Scriptural motivations for obeying the government is "for wrath's sake" (Rom. 13:4), "for conscience sake" (Rom. 13:5) and "the Lord's sake" (1 Peter 2:13) which means to maintain our testimony for Christ and uphold the reputation of His name. Good citizenship contributes to our Gospel witness. We must never forget this. And if we want to be a conscientious objector during the time of war we must override what the Bible clearly says about Christian obedience to the government in the time of war, when a war is aimed at thwarting evil aggression in the world.



A conscience correctly guided by the truth of Scripture will not become subject to weakness in the time of war if the person has rightly understood about God's authority invested in the government to stop evil. There will be no misunderstanding and misapplication of Scripture to misdirect the conscience and cause the individual to deny participation in the war effort. God is not looking for conscientious objectors but conscientious Bible obedience that leads to honoring the government's cause to maintain God's justice on earth during the time of war. Christians should be ready and willing to obey the government and be loyal during the war effort as the government seeks to maintain righteousness and stop evil from abounding in the world. A Christian might be a conscientious objector but not a scriptural conscientious objector.

Of course, if the government interferes with the conduct of true Christian living, then the Christian must obey God rather than man (see the examples of Acts 5:29; Daniel 1:6; 3:16-18; Exodus 1:15-21). If the law of the state opposes the law of God, the law of God must take precedence. But when the law is right the Christian must learn to obey, even in the time of war, if he is to keep a good conscience toward God and remain a good citizen who maintains a Christian testimony in the world (1 Tim. 1:5, 19; 3:9; 4:2; Acts 24:16). This is not to say that war is ever an easy thing for Christians. I would find it difficult to pull the trigger and take human life. I must be honest with you on this matter. But God can give needed understanding and grace in the time of the war effort.

During the Civil War Christians actually fought on both sides and both thought that they were fulfilling God's just cause on earth and following His will in the war cause. It's obvious that both sides in the war were not right. And the issue of slavery that erupted the Civil War should have been viewed from a Biblical viewpoint by the South. In addition, a deluded communist leader might claim to be doing God's bidding when massacring thousands of people and greedily attacking another country for his own greedy profit. Nevertheless, the misunderstandings of present day deluded leaders about fighting holy wars, which God has supposedly ordained them to fight, must not override the clear responsibility of the believer to be loyal to a government that seeks to maintain true peace, order and stability in a fallen world.

Every believer must view the situation of each war and determine if the war is for a just cause, which will help thwart evil aggression in the world. For instance, no believer should engage in a Hitler cause where millions of lives are brutally destroyed in pure hatred. War will always have its innocent casualties but there is no just cause in hating races and exterminating them or destroying lives out of pure hate. When war erupts because of pure hatred and when human lives are carelessly wasted for no reason other than hatred then the believer has the right to refuse involvement in war.

I think the instructions and foreign policy procedure that God gave to Israel about invading those nations outside Canaan is appropriate for our nation to follow today when it comes to anticipating war with modern nations in the world. They were instructed to seek a peaceful solution before invading a country.

Deuteronomy 20:10-12 says:

“When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee. And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it.”

The first measure that Israel took toward these nations was to proclaim peace. It seems that a nation should always try to promote a peaceful solution before engaging in any war. We should seek to be promoters of peace before we lock horns with other nations. This is good foreign policy today. It might prevent the loss of human life from occurring. I think I can safely say that America as a nation has primarily been concerned about keeping peace in the world. We have tried to be promoters of peace. Also, the battles we have fought as a nation in the past, we have fought in order to spread justice throughout the world from evil aggression and keep relative peace in the world.

In any event, the Bible does teach the principle that a nation can protect itself from evil aggressors (2 Chronicles 14:9-12) and pronounce war on those nations that are against God and which practice wicked and evil atrocities among mankind as evildoers (Deut.

20:1). In a world wrecked by sin, a national government can declare that the “sword” be brought against another nation because of its unfair and wicked treatment directed toward its own nation and because of its wicked atrocities being committed in the world abroad (Romans 13:4).

Even Jesus recognized the need for such action in His illustrative statement found in Luke 11:21: “When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace.”

3. The acceptance of a soldier’s profession by Jesus and others is used to support a non-pacifist viewpoint toward war.

Matthew 8:5-10

“And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.”

In this section of Scripture, Jesus talked to a centurion, who was a soldier in the Roman army. This particular man had soldiers under him and was a captain. But once again it’s interesting that Jesus never reprimanded him for having this particular job as his profession. In fact, his faith led Jesus to say this about the centurion:

“Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.” The believing centurion or soldier received no rebuke from the Lord because of his profession. This response by Jesus to this soldier would indicate His approval of the profession and position. This is because Jesus viewed this position as a necessary part of a society that was cursed by sin. Jesus did not condemn this soldier for doing his duty. Jesus did not tell the soldier to throw away his sword and stop serving in his profession. Jesus recognized the need for war and

those who protect society by the use of force. And this is also understood by His statement to his disciples to sell their garment in order to buy a sword for protection (Luke 22:36). It's understandable that in a society warped by sin there will be the need to protect ourselves and keep the wickedness of man in check.

Luke 3:14

“And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.”

In this passage the soldiers wanted to know what they could do in order to give evidence of genuine repentance. John the Baptist taught them that they should do their duty honorably and not abuse their authority by unjustly doing violence against any man. They were to be content with their wages as a soldier and perform their duty effectively and wisely. It's interesting that John the Baptist recognized this profession as a necessary part of a fallen race to keep law and order in the country. He simply reminded them not to abuse their authority but to act justly and righteously. I find in this an endorsement for soldier activity, which is understood to be ordained by God to stop anarchy in the world.

Acts 10:1-2

“There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always.”

Cornelius was a centurion, a Roman officer in charge of 100 soldiers, in the Italian Regiment, consisting of 600 soldiers. He was highly ranked to have these soldiers under his authority. In the New Testament centurions are consistently viewed in a favorable light for their profession. In this Scripture we see how Cornelius was a God fearing man who was about to enter into the wonder of New Testament salvation – crossing over from the Old Testament into the New Testament.

Evidently Cornelius attended the synagogue and to the best of his knowledge and ability followed the Old Testament Scriptures. In any

event, we see how a soldier could be a God fearing man and hold a respected military position in a society. Certainly this adds weight to the argument that soldiers, who protected society and fought in war, could be God fearing people who loved God and wanted to do what was right. It was Peter who welcomed into the church this God fearing soldier (Acts 10:34-35). All of this suggests that the profession of serving in the military was never looked down upon. It was seen to be a necessary part of society.

In all of these favorable responses to centurions or soldiers by Jesus, John and Peter give an indication of God's mind on the military profession and the need for the government to protect society with the use of force and to protect itself through the act of war. God has ordained the government to protect society and use the sword whenever necessary to stop evil aggression in the world. The Bible teaches the God-given right of the government to use force on evildoers. It also promotes the "just cause" of war for national protection from evildoers and for the defeat of evil aggression in the world.

During a favorite hymn night in our church a little fellow raised his hand and requested that we sing the Star Spangled Banner. As I sang this hymn I noticed the words of one verse in particular that spoke about the just war cause and supports the Biblical position on war. It goes like this.

"O thus be it ever when free men shall stand,  
Between their loved homes and the war's desolation!  
Blest with victry and peace, may the heav'n rescued land,  
Praise the Pow'r that hath made and preserved us a nation!  
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,  
And this be our motto; 'In God is our trust!'  
And the Star-spangled Banner in triumph shall wave.  
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave."

This treasured American hymn supports the Biblical position on war as we have studied it – war for a just cause. And it is my prayer that God, who is working in His own sovereign way over the affairs of this world, might guide America in the battles that will need to be fought in the future. These are battles that will help stop evil aggression and

maintain relative order in a world that is warped by sin. And I want to say that it should be a privilege to serve in the American military and represent a country that is concerned about thwarting evil aggression in today's world. It should be an honor to serve a national government that is not seeking to spread communism and promote the unnecessary killing of innocent lives.

It is a privilege to serve in the American military, as we see soldiers going abroad to help other people in other countries, who are savagely treated by madmen. These soldiers become fitting examples and representatives of a nation that is seeking to help people and promote peace in a world full of evil aggression, hostility and wickedness. I have always honored and respected those men who have stuck their necks out for me in times of war. I have always been thankful and appreciative of those people who have given their lives to protect me and who are obedient to Scripture by submitting to the government in the times of war and national crisis.

History has already shown us that even morally wicked nations can in some measure curb more wickedness and evil aggression from taking place in the world. Such was the case with other historic nations of the past, who kept a certain amount of order in the known world of their own day. And such is the case with America today. Even though wickedness abounds in this country there is still that desire of America to stunt anarchy from within and without its borders so as to provide a better world to live. God bless America!

Chaplain Howel M. Forgy, at Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941 had the Biblical view of war in mind when he said: "Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition!"

## Acknowledgments

Barclay, Oliver (Editor), "Pacifism and War," Inter-Varsity Press, 1984

Contributors: Catherwood, Sir Robert; Clark, Robert; Holmes, Arthur; Kreider, Alan; Peck, John; Summerton, Neil; Swartley, Willard

Boettner, Loraine, "The Christian Attitude Toward War," WM. B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING COMPANY, 1940

Brown, Dale, "Brethren and Pacifism," Brethren Press, Elgin, Illinois, 1970

Clouse, Robert (Editor), "War – Four Christian Views," BMH Books, Winona Lake, Indiana

Contributors: Brown, Harold; Augsburgur, Myron; Holmes, Arthur; Hoyt Herman

De Haan, Kurt, "What Do I Owe the Government," Radio Bible Class Publication, 1988

Evans, Robert, "Why God Does Not Destroy The War Gangsters," Robert Evans, no date

Evans, Robert, "The Christian in a Warring World" (A Message for the Times), Robert Evans, no date

Evans, Robert, "Why God permits War in His Own World," Robert Evans, no date

Millard, Lind, "Christ And War," Peace Problems Committee (Mennonite General Conference), 1956

Macgregor, G. H. C., "The New Testament Basis of Pacifism," The Fellowship of Reconciliation, New York City, 1940

McQuilkin, Robert "Why It Is Right For A Christian To Fight"

Moyer, Robert, "The Christian and War," Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1949

Snider, Harold, "Does the Bible Sanction War," Zondervan Publishing House, 1942