

# When God Goes to War

Biblical Israel, the Church and Military Service

By Christopher J. Patton

## The Early Kingdom of God on Earth – the Kingdom of Israel

Many Christian and Jewish people justify military service due to its use in ancient Israel with the apparent approval of God. Israel's violent history has led many to contrast the character differences of the "vengeful Father" with the nonviolent teachings of Jesus, the "Merciful Son." Other scholars have wondered how it could be the same God, who "changes not." (Malachi 3:6) The answer is found in the same verse, "therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed." God's purpose remains constant in an imperfect and changing world.

So some discussion of the Old Testament history of Israel is essential at this point. Without it, the Bible could be disregarded as inconsistent, contradictory and confusing when it comes to the issue of military service and participating in wars of offense or defense.

The Creator identified Himself to the world as the Deliverer of Israel from Egyptian bondage. (Exodus 20:2) The Exodus brought a multitude of slaves to liberty in the desert, but it was a liberty that the liberated did not recognize. From the beginning God had manifested Himself in the creation (Romans 1:20), which was followed by the judgment of the Flood during the days of Noah. By the way, God judged the world with global destruction because of the **violent** sins of humanity. (Genesis 6:5-8; Jude 14-16; 2Peter 3:4-8) This massively negative response to people harming others should clue us in on the divine perspective: God does not like violence. How could He sanction one group of persons warring against another? God does not sanction human violence, but He has permitted it.

Because of His promises to Abraham (Genesis 15:13-16), God delivered his descendants and their allies from bondage in Egypt, but the people did not understand what God was delivering them to. Yes, they agreed to go along with His plan. After all, the alternative was mostly not too attractive. The deal was not all that complicated. God was to be the king; they were to obey. As a reward, they would inherit Abraham's Promised Land and prosper as a kingdom of priests, being a holy nation. (Exodus 19:5-8)

But, the Israelites did not have the ability to fulfill their side of the covenant bargain. As history demonstrates, they were not really any different than any other family of humanity. They suffered from the same human condition of inherent good and evil natures like any other human family. They were not holy because of any innately Israelite genetic propensity to obedience or holiness. Years later, the Israelites made official what had mostly been in their hearts all along: they rejected God as their King (represented by the prophet Samuel) and became one of the fleshly nations following a human king. (1Samuel 8:4-9) God did not totally abandon them but used the history of that nation to teach us all valuable lessons. We will examine some of those regarding warfare shortly.

Since the Exodus, God has never abandoned His plan of creating a Godly kingdom of priests. In fact He actually expanded His original deal by offering this eternal opportunity to all peoples through the Israelite Messiah, Jesus. (Ephesians 2:11-14; Revelation 5:10; 20:4) John 1:12-13 states,

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Because of the good and evil character essence of everyone's human nature, it is impossible for biological humans on their own merit to please God or to become His children - His kingdom of priests. Neither the natural life force nor the creative force of human desire and decision can make it happen. Through Jesus the Creator establishes a way to participating in the New Covenant, which grows out of the basic terms and promises of the Sinai Covenant newly empowered and expanded. (Jeremiah 31:31-34) This New Covenant comes through the Son of God, who provides access to the power of the Holy Spirit, the only power capable of the purely divine nature. (John 14:16-26; Romans 8:1-17)

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## Warfare in Ancient Israel

God chose Abraham because of his faith. He later chose the Israelites by delivering them from Egypt with great drama and many mind-boggling miracles. Moses lifted his hand, and the Egyptian army was destroyed by the returning walls of the Red Sea. (Exodus 14:26-27) It seemed like Israel had it made. They would never need to fight their enemies. They would try to avoid violent confrontation, and if it came, God would intervene miraculously on their behalf. At least this is how it seemed at first.

Not too much later the Israelites had to defend themselves against the Amalekites in hand-to-hand combat at Rephidim. (Exodus 17:8-16) The victory was attributed to God because the battle went successfully for Israel as long as Moses' hands were held up by Aaron and Hur. Why didn't God just smash the Amalekites with hailstones or plague? Perhaps it was due to the fact that the Israelites doubted God's presence among them in spite of a number of most remarkable miracles. (v. 7) One can only speculate what God would have done on their behalf in this case and in many subsequent times if the Israelites had been a people of faith. The problem is, of course, that they are descendants of Adam like the rest of us.

One vital key to understanding the Bible is that a perfect God achieves His objectives (such as preserving the descendants of Abraham) by using imperfect servants during this age of material flesh. This explains why sometimes God delivers ancient Israel and Judah solely by divine miracle and sometimes by helping one side to victory through the force of arms. In either case, the written law of Israel released anyone from fighting who was engaged to be married, had just bought some land, or who was too fearful to fight. (Deuteronomy 20:1-9)

The last half of Deuteronomy 20 is one of the more often quoted sections of Scripture by those who reject the biblical God. This section lays down the rules of war and then sanctions the total destruction of the people living in the land promised to Abraham and given to the nation of Israel as she emerged from her desert wanderings under Joshua's leadership.

When you approach a city to fight against it, you shall offer it terms of peace.

If it agrees to make peace with you and opens to you, then all the people who are found in it shall become your forced labor and shall serve you.

However, if it does not make peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it.

When the LORD your God gives it into your hand, you shall strike all the men in it with the edge of the sword.

Only the women and the children and the animals and all that is in the city, all its spoil, you shall take as booty for yourself; and you shall use the spoil of your enemies which the LORD your God has given you.

Thus you shall do to all the cities that are very far from you, which are not of the cities of these nations nearby.

**Only in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, you shall not leave alive anything that breathes. [My emphasis.]**

But you shall utterly destroy them, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, as the LORD your God has commanded you, so that they may not teach you to do according to all their detestable things which they have done for their gods, so that you would sin against the LORD your God.

When you besiege a city a long time, to make war against it in order to capture it, you shall not destroy its trees by swinging an axe against them; for you may eat from them, and you shall not cut them down. For is the tree of the field a man, that it should be besieged by you?

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Only the trees which you know are not fruit trees you shall destroy and cut down, that you may construct siege works against the city that is making war with you until it falls. (Deuteronomy 20:10-20)

How could a merciful God of love destroy a whole culture? Is not that genocide?

These are deep, philosophical questions that could command volumes, but here I will briefly address some of the main principles. First of all, it is God who issues this death sentence and no ruler, judge, congress, government or jury of humans. As the Creator of all, He has the right to judge all as He sees fit. (Psalm 82)

God alone inhabits eternity, and He desires that all would dwell with Him in peace. But there is only one way to live forever in love, justice, peace and glorious joy – His way. He cannot allow anyone into the eternal realm who is not innately and intrinsically congruent with His character, or definition of love and justice.

As the true light, God invented eternity, and He knows how to dwell in it happily. Any other way eventually twists to suffering and darkness. The Ten Commandments and all of the other biblical directives are just the beginning of the boundaries to a richly fulfilled eternity. Most religious problems have come from the human additions to God's words. We often need those explanations to begin our spiritual development, but we must recognize that they are but material expressions of an infinite and transcendent spiritual reality.

With the covenant given at Sinai God sought to reveal His nature through the daily life and historical experience of one imperfect, earthly people. Israel's early history does not always set a precedent for modern behavior. In the case of their conquest of the Promised Land, Israel represented or symbolized the holiness of the Creator, even though they themselves were not holy. The ancient Israelites themselves should have been judged with total destruction. The Bible makes this point in several places. In one God offered to start His plan all over again with Moses. (Numbers 14:11-12) But Moses interceded, and God granted mercy. Still, the entire generation of adults delivered from Egypt was judged and sentenced to die in the Sinai wandering. Only the youth and a couple of faithful leaders lived to see and enter the Promised Land.

By analogy, Israel as a nation was judged and found wanting, so they all died. Because of Moses' intercession, God's grace was extended to the sons and daughters of that generation who survived to wander many years in the desert (this mortal life) prior to inheriting the Promised Land (Eternity). When God judged the Canaanites and Amorites living in the land of Israel, He also sentenced them to death for their grievous sins. They were naturally no more worthy of salvation than the disobedient Israelites that had rebelled against their divine Deliverer. God and the Creator Judge used the Israelite tribes as His sword of judgment. (Romans 13:4) He delivered His message clearly through Moses, an undisputed prophet who had been used of God time and again as proved by miracle after miracle. Anyone who doubted Moses' pronouncement of God's Word was destroyed by the command of God, not Moses.

Deuteronomy 20 obligated the Israelites to make peace with their neighbors (as opposed to those who lived in the Promised Land). If war was necessary, then the women, children and animals were to be spared. The fact that the judgment against the Canaanites and Amorites living in the Promised Land was total indicates that it was a teaching example specifically relating to God's plan of eternal salvation.

Many scriptures point to a principle of spiritual segregation for God's followers when it comes to worship, many laws, customs, marriage and child rearing. That practical side of cultural integrity or cleansing must be considered of secondary significance since the spared women and children of more distant cities would not have been worshippers of the true God either. The Israelite conquest executed God's eternal judgment on all sin. The inevitable but early deaths suffered by the Canaanites and Amorites living in the inheritance granted to the sons of Abraham revealed God's ultimate plan for humanity even as He effected an important interim stage of its implementation.

Throughout the early history of Israel, the Bible states that God's appointed political and military leaders would "inquire of the LORD." What does this mean?

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In today's world of electronic media hardly anyone has not seen programming where some religious leader or another shares or teaches his or her "word from God." Many claim to have dreams or visions from the spirit world beyond our material consciousness. Prophets throughout the ages have so claimed, including legitimate prophets of the God of Israel.

King David is the most famous warrior of faith. (Psalm 144:1) He was a "man after God's own heart," yet the God who gave him countless victories also considered David too bloody to build the holy Temple in Jerusalem. That honor was given to David's non-warrior son Solomon (whose name includes the word for "peace"). (1Chronicles 22:6-10)

The Jewish warrior chief, David, was also follower of God. He often sought to "inquire" of God's will in regards to military matters and possessed a more sure method of receiving directives from Him other than from dreams or visions. David had access to the Urim and Thumim embedded in the High Priest's breastplate. He could not only get God's permission to attack some enemy but also receive strategic suggestions. Sometimes other Israelite leaders followed this procedure as well, so it was not a special favor to David. (Numbers 27:21; 1 Samuel 23:2-4; 28:6; 30:8; 2Samuel 5:23; Ezra 2:63)

One of the most remarkable military deliverances of a Jewish King from an invading army is recorded in 2Chronicles 20. Read the whole chapter. Judah was invaded by a huge host made up of armies from several nations. Jewish King Jehoshaphat was afraid. He called a national fast and sought the LORD, acknowledging His divine rule over all nations and especially Israel and Judah. God answered, "You need not fight this battle; station yourselves, stand and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem." (v. 17)

The next day the king sent the choir out to greet the enemy. As they sang praises to God, Jehoshaphat and the entire city followed. When they arrived at the place of battle, the Jews witnessed their enemies destroy each other totally – none escaped! Perhaps even more relevant to our discussion here, the language actually implies that the option of a Godly defense instead of relying upon human troops was available to any king who asked. In other words, where God is involved the rational wisdom of the world becomes irrelevant.

## The Ambassadorial Priesthood of Believers

The Levitical Priesthood of ancient Israel never made anyone perfect; therefore, it has been replaced by the Melchizedek Priesthood. This priesthood of a higher order was established in Jesus as the qualified High Priest. (Hebrews 3:1ff) No one – Israelite born or otherwise – is qualified to volunteer for this office. But, through faith in the reality of Jesus the Living Word as revealed in the Written Word, all humans may be qualified to answer the call of this higher priesthood established in fulfillment of the divine covenants established upon the promises made to Abraham, the Father of the Faithful. (Ephesians 2:8-16) In Messiah all believers are made one holy temple when they receive the free gift of God's Holy Spirit. Through the Spirit, the faithful are placed within the structured Body of Christ or in the case of the temple analogy, built upon Jesus the cornerstone as well as the prophets of old and the apostles.

But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.

For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. (1Corinthians 12:11-13)

AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and

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prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:17-22)

As referenced above, the believer's sins are covered by the blood of the Messiah's sacrifice. By faith he or she is considered dead to the material sin life and alive spiritually in Christ. Thus, our spiritual citizenship takes precedence over our material one. The redeemed in Messiah are obligated to serve the Savior's will and purposes above the desires and values of this world. We are not to be enslaved to materialism, and we should not go to war to be so enslaved.

However, the divine treasure of God's Holy Spirit dwells in an earthly body, so we experience difficulties and challenges in life. Some of these we bring on ourselves due to our weaknesses. Others result from pressures exerted upon us by the world's system (Babylon), which is essentially anti-God by nature. Finally, there are the attacks of the devil and his demons. The latter cannot deny a person salvation, but they can create so many draining problems that the servant of God bears little or no spiritual fruit, suffering for this loss both materially and spiritually.

The Apostle Paul dealt with these issues effectively with several analogies. The net effect of his arguments is that the believer is not his or her own: the remaining mortal life belongs to Christ who purchased it with His own life. In Him we all become eternal priests after the order of Melchizedek fulfilling God's original intentions revealed in Exodus 19. Not only are we a priesthood but a holy temple that is not to be defiled by sin, which means we are also not to be defiled by violence, bloodshed or war. Paul's advice for dealing with immorality can be applied to any other sin. Only the specific manner of "fleeing" differs.

All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.

Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body.

Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be!

Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, "THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH."

But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.

Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. (1Corinthians 6:12-20)

A little later Paul commands us not to become the "slaves of men." What then, is a soldier? A bound servant of some kind of human organization. He is under orders to perform violent murder and destruction even if it results in his or her death. The warrior's life is sold for a price – wages, booty, glory, duty, etc. But the believer is not in the position of being able to sell again what has already been bought. Such an action is illegal in any culture. Thus, he or she cannot serve in the military.

Each man must remain in that condition in which he was called.

Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that.

For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave.

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You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.

Brethren, each one is to remain with God in that condition in which he was called.  
(1Corinthians 7:20-24)

In Romans 12 Paul summarizes the manner of life we are to live. Since our lives are bought, our bodies are presented in daily life to God's service, which is not the same as the state, for the Kingdom of God is yet to be established on the earth. The kingdoms of this age are the daughters of Babylon, all of them. Prophetically, they all oppose the realm of Jesus at His return, which we will examine later. Note that the believer is "not to be conformed to this world" and that Paul quotes the Sermon on the Mount at the conclusion of this section. All in all there is one exhortation to service after another that is totally incompatible with life in any military – even for purposes of self defense or "legitimate" vengeance. "So far as it depends on" us, we are to live in "peace with all men" and not to depend upon our own wisdom in trying to determine what is a "just war."

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.

Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.

**If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.**

Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.

"BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD."

**Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.** (Romans 12:1-21)  
[Emphasis my own.]

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In the following, 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans, Paul does admonish the faithful to respect and be obedient to human governments as much as possible. Although human governments fall short in the judgment of God, they do serve many necessary functions in this age. He permits their establishment and does not deny their need of funds for operation. However, God does judge secular government in regards to the just establishment of moral laws as well as their fair execution with equity. Those who govern are more answerable for these matters than ordinary citizens.

Meanwhile, the believer is to owe no one anything but love. Besides a suggestion against taking on material debt, this principle should be applied to all social interaction with others. A true Christian should not enter into any commitment that requires actions (and thoughts) contrary to the biblical definition of love. To me, this includes military service.

Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good.

But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.

Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing.

Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. (Romans 13:1-8)

Thus, the believer is to be a good citizen of his host country, yet he or she possesses a higher citizenship in heaven, which takes precedence over any loyalties on earth. This is especially true when it comes to the promulgation of the Gospel. "We must obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29)

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;

who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. (Philippians 3:20-21)

No one can see yet what God is constructing, yet the disciples are referred to as the building blocks of a holy, eternal and spiritual temple now begun in heaven. Jesus is the cornerstone of this temple and its High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. (Hebrew 1-7)

The believer is a priest in training. In the resurrection he or she will be installed formally into that office. (Revelation 5:10; 20:6) This calling requires the believer to submit to human governments but only as will honor all men and treat them as Jesus taught, "overcoming evil with good" and not mortal combat.

Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual

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house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

For this is contained in Scripture:

"BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER STONE, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."

This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve,

"THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED,  
THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone,"

and,

"A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.

But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.

For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.

Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.

For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. (1Peter 2:1-20)

Therefore, the Levitical Priesthood established by violent loyalty has been replaced by the Melchizedek Priesthood of Peace through faith. (Exodus 32:25-28) The materially temporal priesthood genetically delimited as the descendants of one man (Levi) have been superseded by a priesthood made up of all who embrace the spiritual heritage of the one Son of Man who has qualified to live forever, Jesus, as proved by His bodily resurrection from the tomb. (Romans 5:10) In receiving God's Holy Spirit, the faithful are born again to a promised eternal life by faith in the reality of the eternal Son of God's redemption and eventual transformation of our bodies from the natural sentence of certain death. In faith we testify by our words and deeds that God does still indeed intervene in the affairs of a single person, a nation and/or the entire world.

## **The Peace and Justice of the Coming Kingdom of God on Earth**

And it will come about in the last days

That the mountain of the house of the LORD



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Will be established as the chief of the mountains  
It will be raised above the hills,  
And the peoples will stream to it.  
Many nations will come and say,  
"Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD  
And to the house of the God of Jacob,  
That He may teach us about His ways  
And that we may walk in His paths."  
For from Zion will go forth the law,  
Even the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.  
And He will judge between many peoples  
And render decisions for mighty, distant nations.  
Then they will hammer their swords into plowshares  
And their spears into pruning hooks;  
Nation will not lift up sword against nation,  
And never again will they train for war.  
Each of them will sit under his vine  
And under his fig tree,  
With no one to make them afraid,  
For the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.  
Though all the peoples walk  
Each in the name of his god,  
As for us, we will walk

In the name of the LORD our God forever and ever. (Micah 4:1-5)

Many scriptures prophesy of the coming thousand-year Messianic Kingdom of peace and justice. This new age to come will finally express the perfect will of God within the still imperfect, material dimension of time and space. Even though the good and evil life force will still be present, Satan and his demonic agents will be absent. Instead of a corrupt culture in rebellion to God's ways, society will be externally conforming. The battle for righteousness and spiritual transformation will by and large be a spiritual one. I expect that the most difficult problems to overcome then will be those that come from too much of a good thing. After those thousand years comes the last judgment, which will be followed by the creation of a new heaven and new earth described in the final chapters of Revelation.

Meanwhile, what is a person who seeks to follow Jesus to do?

The key lies in understanding the three main reasons why there will be peace and justice during the Messianic Age. First, is that Satan's power over the earth will be removed. His charismatic manipulation of the life force in the air to inspire sin and evil will not exist. (Ephesians 2:1-2) Without the Tempter, there will be less temptation.

Secondly, there will be no corrupt human political organizations. They will all be replaced by a Godly government composed of mortal humans and resurrected saints under Jesus. Each family of humanity will have their own territory and legislature under a visible and accessible God. There will be no doubt as to who He is or what He commands. There will be many teachers to guide the populous in the right way to follow. (Isaiah 30:20-21)

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Thirdly, God will change the human heart through the abundant gift of His Holy Spirit. Although the prophecy below specifically refers to the descendants of Jacob (Israel), it truly applies to each person regardless of national heredity. Remember, Ephesians 2:12 shows that faith in Jesus provides access to all of the covenant promises made to Israel. There are a number of other scriptures that teach the same message such as Galatians 3:29.

Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. (Ezekiel 36:26-27)

And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise. (Galatians 3:29)

God's Holy Spirit is today accessible to everyone who believes and repents. Since we have access to this Spirit today, should we live any differently than how it will be in the kingdom to come? If the indwelling of the Holy Spirit will make it possible for people to live together in peace with justice, joy and love for a thousand years, why should it not make it possible to fulfill Paul's exhortation in Romans 12:17-21?

Never pay back evil for evil to anyone Respect what is right in the sight of all men.

If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.

"BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD."

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Until Jesus comes to enforce world peace, let these words guide us along the path of faith traveling in the midst of this jungle of an age. Don't leave the path and become entangled in the Babylonish undergrowth of material greed, sensual enslavement and spiritual confusion. Don't be enticed by the lures of its pitchmen. They offer deceitful rewards to destroy your unique identity and role in God's plan for humanity.

Religious affiliation does not identify the true disciple of Jesus. They are identified by the fruits of the Spirit in their lives. He or she will live for others instead of dying for them. Do your best to legally avoid military service. It takes work and preparation. There are a few organizations committing to help you to do it for yourself. Please use this material as it honestly reflects your own beliefs. Choose life and not death, and do not be surprised if your choice results in alienation from the popular culture and opposition from the powers of wealth and government.

I urge you to listen to the calling of God to a higher order of citizenship as a child of God and heir of His eternal kingdom. Through the joys and difficulties of your walk following His higher ways, you will come to know the Creator of all that is good. You will call friend the Redeemer who has saved you from death and who comes to liberate the world from the shackles of sin, political corruption, spiritual deceit and death.

Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:13)

Jesus laid down His life for us as the ultimate friend. We are to lay down our lives for Him. The Bible as His Word guides how we are to lay down our lives for our mortal neighbors, and it does not include violence or military service. I leave you with these other words of John, the apostle of love:

If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. (John 15:9)

Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. (1John 2:15-16)

## **When God Goes to War**

Biblical Israel, the Church and Military Service

See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. (1John 3:1)