

War Is Regrettable But...
Deuteronomy 20:1-4; 10-15
September 12, 2021

It has been twenty years since the 9/11, the day when our homeland was attacked by terrorists. Nearly 3000 people from 30 different nations died and more than 6000 people were injured in those attacks.¹ No doubt that it was a horrific day. The Manhattan skyline was permanently changed. The financial trade center for 150 nations was completely destroyed, and we waged a war against the Taliban in Afghanistan.

The lives of tens of thousands of people, here and abroad, have been forever changed because of the 9/11. It is impossible to imagine the human toll, the emotional and psychological impact this atrocity brought. Only God can weigh such matters.

Now that we have ended that war, are we any safer? Those terrorists yell “Death to America!” What could be the reasons for such hatred? To them, I am sure there are many reasons, both political and religious, as to why they hate us.

Whatever the reasons may be, we know that their hatred and their determination to destroy America and Americans, both here and abroad, will not stop. So how shall we respond?

Sometimes we have to respond with a war. That is why we waged a war against the Taliban for the last 20 years. We certainly didn't want that but will we ever engage in a war against the Taliban in the future? Maybe, maybe not. War is regrettable; but it is inevitable.

Human beings have always been at war. It is our instinct to protect ourselves, to neutralize perceived threats. Sometimes the only way to protect ourselves is to have a war whether we like it or not.

According to James Merritt, one of the Southern Baptist ministers, in 5,600 years of recorded history, there have only been 292 years of peace, or without war. In those 5,600 years, there had been 14,532 wars. I am sure the number would be higher if we count all the tribal wars. The average length of the wars was 2.6 years.

¹ <https://healthmatters.nyp.org/remembering-9-11-the-death-toll-was-too-staggering-to-whisper/>

Roughly 3,640,000,000 people have died in wars. Out of 185 generations only 10 have been without wars despite establishing 8,000 peace treaties.²

Somebody has said that “peace” is simply the brief moment between wars when people stop to reload their weapons. In other words, peace is the time to get ready for a war. Plato, the philosopher, once said “Only dead men have seen an end to war.”

As Christians, we ask ourselves, does God support wars or peace? Does God approve of war? God loves peace but sometimes God endorses war.

The Bible covers roughly 1,400 years of recorded history. In the Bible, we find 313 wars recorded. It is clear that God doesn't always oppose war. 1 Chronicles 5:22 says this:

“For many fell slain, because the war was of God” (1 Chronicles 5:22, NASB). It says “the war was of God.”

It is true that most people, especially moral people, want peace. War is a terrible thing. No one wants to be at war. This is true whether you are a Christian or not. No one in their right mind wants anything, but peace. However, sometimes we have no choice but to fight.

Ecclesiastes 3:8 says there is “A time for war and a time for peace.” There is a time for war because peace is not always possible. Romans 12:18 says, “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Romans 12:18, NIV). It says, “If it is possible”, “If it is up to you.” But as you know, a lot of times it is not possible. And a lot of times, it is not up to you.

Second thing I want to share with you is about what makes a war justifiable. What makes the war a just war? How do you fight so that you would honor God in the process? What do you fight for?

There are three things we should fight for in a war: (1) To Protect the Innocent. (2) To Punish the Evil. (3) To Promote Justice.

If God is just, then God would endorse only the wars that are just. The wars must have a cause that is recognized as right and just by the vast majority of the participants.

² From James Merritt's sermon, “*Of Peace and War*”, www.esermons.com.

The ultimate goal of war is to achieve peace. The purpose of a war should never be to expand its territory or to plunder a defenseless people. The motive must be right.

The Bible gives a very important guideline about how to engage in a war. It says, “When you march up to attack a city, make its people an offer of peace.” (Deuteronomy 20:10, NIV)

Before we engage in a war, we are to make every effort to negotiate and to use diplomacy first.

“If they refuse to make peace and they engage you in battle, lay siege to that city.” (Deuteronomy 20:12, NIV)

When all the diplomatic efforts have failed then formally declare a war. “Laying siege to a city” was the way that a government formally declared war against its enemy. Our Founding Fathers wanted to make sure that only the Congress could declare a war after exhausting all diplomatic efforts, because they did not want any one person, the President, to make that decision.

A country to go to war to protect itself and its people is the country’s obligation. To use the deadly force to protect the innocent, to punish the evil, and to promote justice is the nation’s moral obligation. War is regrettable; but sometimes it is necessary.

Even when we are engaged in a war, we need to remember who we are as Christians. William Temple gives an important guideline. He said, “We Christians in war are called to the hardest task of all – to fight without hatred, to resist without bitterness, and in the end if God so grants it, triumph without vindictiveness.”

Even while we fight, we are to pray for our enemies with a genuine concern for their souls. So that somehow God can use even war to change the hearts of our enemies and turn them toward Him.

No matter what your view of war may be, I believe this world will end with a war. Revelation 19:11 says, “I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war.” Jesus Christ will be leading that war at the end of the age. When that war is fought, I pray that you and I will be on the right side.