



ANGELIC CONFLICT

- most human wars are a part of the Angelic Conflict—the spiritual warfare going on between Satan and God (modern examples are World War II, the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, Gulf Wars I and II, and Islamic terrorism)
- the raid on Job's livestock and servants by the Sabeans and Chaldeans was part of the Angelic Conflict (Job 1:6–17)
- angelic forces protected Elisha and the city of Dothan from the Syrian Army (2 Kings 6:8–23)
- the last war is between earthly and heavenly armies (Rev 16:13–16; 19:11–21)
- war often seeks to impose a tyrannical government on people to suppress freedom of religion—evangelism, Bible teaching, spiritual growth, worship, and missions (a good example is the Armageddon Campaign)
- evil governments controlled by Satan bring bondage, oppression, and tyranny; godly governments give freedom (2 Cor 3:17)
- war was directed primarily against human enemies in the Old Testament; conversely, war is directed primarily against demons and the people they control in the New Testament (a logical result of positional truth, 2 Cor 10:3–5; Eph 6:10–17)
- God is the "LORD of Hosts"—commander of the armies of heaven (1 Kings 22:19; Luke 2:13) and earth (1 Sam 17:45; Isa 13:4)
- in spiritual warfare we must pray that God will remove the demons protecting evil leaders such as Adolf Hitler, Saddam Hussein, and Osama bin Laden
- we must fight to win battles against evil now, but we won't win the war against evil until Christ returns

INDIVIDUAL AND NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

- commands to individuals are not all applicable to the state; and, commands to the state are not all applicable to individuals
- God has given powers to the state that he has not given to individuals; for example,

(1) individuals are not allowed to avenge themselves, but the state must avenge acts of crime against its people (Rom 13:3–4), and

(2) individuals are commanded to love their enemies (Matt 5:44) but states are never commanded by God to love other nations

- the state has a unique set of rules to guide its behavior

PACIFISM

- the Sermon on the Mount discusses personal ethics, not national or international ethics

- applying the personal ethics of the Sermon on the Mount to the state results in pacifism: the belief that war is always wrong, be it defensive, preemptive, or aggressive war, and it is never right to participate in war (Anabaptists, Mennonites, Quakers)

- verses used to support pacifism:

(1) “Blessed are the meek (*praus*)” (Matt 5:5), but meekness is not weakness: Moses was “very meek (*praus*), more than any other man on the face of the earth” (Num 12:3 LXX) but he engaged in warfare;

(2) “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Matt 5:9), but Caesar was called “the Peacemaker” because he won and maintained peace by using military force;

(3) “Do not resist him who is evil” (Matt 5:39) prohibits retaliation for personal insults, not self-defense (Luke 22:36) or foreign attack (1 Sam 23:1–5);

(4) “love your enemies” (Matt 5:44) refers to personal, not national enemies;

(5) “Thou shalt not kill” (Exod 20:13) prohibits murder, not killing in self-defense (Exod 22:2), capital punishment (Gen 9:6; Exod 21:12; Matt 21:40–41; Rom 13:4), or killing in war (Psa 144:1)

- pacifism is at best morally naïve and at worst morally delinquent: in failing to defend good, pacifists aid evil

- pacifists refuse service in the armed forces while enjoying all the benefits of armed protection

PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER

- war is not incompatible with love, justice, righteousness, or truth (Rev 19:11)

- it is not always possible to live in peace with everyone—personally or nationally (Rom 12:18)

TYRANNY

- a tyrant is a person who has usurped authority that does not belong to him
- a government is evil and tyrannical when it consistently punishes the righteous and protects and rewards the wicked
- tyranny is never accepted as a legitimate form of government by God (it contradicts his character); tyranny may, however, be permitted by God
- tyranny always usurps a divinely ordained government but is often used by God as a rod of discipline for apostate nations
- tyranny oppresses people, is not ordained by God, and should be overthrown whenever possible
- two governments may exist at the same time: an illegitimate tyranny in power and a divinely appointed government in exile
- the use of force to resist and overthrow tyranny is always just; e.g., Athaliah murdered her grandchildren and usurped the throne of Judah, but was overthrown (captured and executed without a trial) because the throne rightly belonged to Joash (2 Kings 11:1–21)—her overthrow was not treason but justice (cf. 11:14)

WAR AGAINST TYRANNY

- a just war can be waged in self-defense or aggressively against tyranny—including state sponsored terrorism
- the first recorded just war is Abram's battle with Chedorlaomer (Gen 14:1–17):
 - (1) this battle was initiated by Abram from his sense of justice, not by God,
 - (2) he was not defending himself, since he was not attacked by Chedorlaomer, but was fighting against tyranny (14:4, 14),
 - (3) we find no condemnation in the Bible of his use of force against Chedorlaomer,
 - (4) his action received God's approval when he was blessed by Melchizedek (14:18–20; Heb 7:1–3)

- *conclusions:*

(1) a first strike against tyrants can be just and righteous,

(2) God approves of wars that protect the innocent from aggressors,

(3) Abram's use of force to free his people from enslavement and tyranny justifies all other wars fought for the same reason,

(4) it is just to use force when necessary to free captive nations from tyranny (France in WW II; Afghanistan, Kuwait in the Gulf War),

(5) Abram was still a Gentile, so this was not a Holy War initiated by the LORD (cf. Gen 17:5)

ASSASSINATION, SABOTAGE, GUERRILLA WARFARE, AND ARMED REVOLT

- assassination of foreign leaders is a legitimate weapon of war in the Old Testament; our ban on foreign assassinations is an executive order made in 1976 by President Gerald Ford and can be set aside without congressional approval

- freedom fighters in the Book of Judges used force to destroy tyranny: namely, assassinations (Ehud, Judges 3:15–25; Jael, 4:17–22; cf. 4:9; 5:24–27; Samson, 16:23–30), sabotage (Samson, 15:3–5), guerrilla warfare (Samson, 14:19–20; cf. 14:4, 15; 15:6–19), and open revolt by armed resistance (Deborah and Barak, 4:1–24; Gideon, 7:1–8:21)

- these freedom fighters (judges) are heroes of the faith and examples to follow in the New Testament (Heb 11:32–34)

- the people submitted to oppression and waited until there was a reasonable hope of winning before they rose up in arms

- on occasion they were unable to revolt due to the presence of superior forces or a lack of weapons (1 Sam 13:19–22)

- peace was restored only after repentance and military victory (Judg 3:11, 30; 5:31; 8:28; 1 Sam 7:3–14)

PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER

- war will continue in spite of man's efforts for peace (Dan 9:26; Joel 3:9–16; Matt 24:6–7) until the Kingdom (Isa 2:4; Hos 2:18)
- there is "a time for war," i.e., circumstances that justify war (Eccles 3:8)
- God may train military leaders for war—as he trained David (2 Sam 22:35 = Psa 18:34; 144:1)
- prayer is the most powerful weapon of war (2 Kings 6:8–23; 1 Chron 5:18–22; 2 Chron 6:34–35; 14:8–13; 20:1–30; 32:20–23)

ACTIVISM

- the activist position believes it is always right to participate in war (the position held by most evangelical Christians): we must obey our government and fight in every war our government enters—"My country, right or wrong!"
- human government has been ordained by God, and to disobey the government is to disobey God (Rom 13:1–2; 1 Pet 2:13–14)
- disobeying the government leads to anarchy, which is a far greater evil than participating in a war—even an unjust war
- leaders of a nation bear full responsibility for the justness of a war, since citizens are seldom informed of all the facts
- *rationale*: since the government of the United States is based upon Christian principles, and since these Christian principles make America an enemy of tyranny and injustice, all wars fought by the United States are just wars
- but this position is based on the assumption that the United States can never err in calling upon its citizens to wage war
- loyalty is given first and foremost to the state instead of to God; but, the state is less than perfect: the standard of right and wrong is found in God, not the state
- it was this blind obedience to the state that gave rise to the terrible atrocities committed by the Nazis during World War II

SELECTIVISM

- the selectivist position believes it is right to participate in some wars—some wars are just (2 Chron 13:2–20) and some are not (Judg 11:4–27; 2 Chron 35:20–24); therefore, Christians should fight in just wars but not in unjust wars

- taking life is not always murder: it may be permitted or even commanded by God; e.g., capital punishment (Gen 9:6; Exod 21:14, 23; Rom 13:4), self-defense (Exod 22:2; Luke 22:36–38), and just warfare (Judg 3:1–2; Heb 11:34; Rev 19:11)
- if bearing arms to defend yourself is permitted (Luke 22:36–38), surely bearing arms to defend your nation is permitted
- it is not always right to obey the government (Exod 1:15–21; 2:1–3; Dan 3:4–18; 6:6–13; Acts 4:18–20; 5:27–29)
- criteria for a just war:
 - (1) a war to defend the innocent is just, such as wars against aggression (Gen 14:1–17);
 - (2) a war to execute justice is just, such as punitive wars of retaliation against countries that engage in terrorism or harbor terrorists (Taliban in Afghanistan);
 - (3) just wars must be declared and fought by governments—the sword is not given to individuals (Rom 13:4);
 - (4) military objectives are limited in a just war—don't destroy a country's ability to sustain life after the war is over (Deut 20:19–20);
 - (5) a just war must be fought justly—without theft, murder, torture, starving prisoners, or rape
- unjust commands given in war should not be obeyed—especially commands to commit war crimes: submission to higher authority was the defense made by Nazi war criminals at the Nuremberg trials after World War II, but was rejected by the tribunal: soldiers are responsible for their own actions and must not perform immoral acts under orders from superior officers (also the shooting of babies in their mothers' arms in the My Lai incident in Viet Nam)
- evil is evil—whether commanded by superior officers or by a government

PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER

- nations can rob, rape, and murder and are brought to justice through warfare (Judg 6:1–6; 8:18–21)
- a preemptive strike or preventative war tries to forestall an evil that has not yet occurred: it anticipates an act of aggression

- warfare does not involve personal hatred with intent to murder, so it is not a violation of the sixth commandment (Exod 20:13; Deut 5:17)
- if good men do not resist evil men, then evil men will prevail in the world: "all that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing"
- the fear of the LORD is the best deterrent of war (2 Chron 17:10)