

Military Service and War

By Herbert W. Armstrong
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Here is the biblical teaching and commands of God on military service, killing and WAR.
SHOULD A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH OF GOD FIGHT,
bear arms, kill in war, or enter military service?

It is the duty of the CHURCH OF GOD, in ministering to its members,
to instruct IN THE WORD OF GOD -- to teach God's commands and instructions.

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Part One

God does not allow the individual to decide what is right, and what is wrong. GOD determines, and reveals, WHAT is righteousness and WHAT is SIN. But God compels the individual to decide WHETHER to obey or to disobey, which is to sin.

Decision YOUR Responsibility

God made man a free moral agent. He allows man to disobey His teachings and His commands, but of course GOD'S laws carry stern PENALTIES, and they are automatically enforced!

In compliance with this basic principle laid down by the Creator, His Church does not attempt to make its members' decisions for them. Each must make his own decision, and each is responsible before God for the result.

God's Church teaches, as Jesus said (Luke 4:4), that we must live by "every word of God" -- that is, guide our lives by every word of the Holy Bible.

Here, then, is the teaching of the Word of God in regard to war, killing, and military service.

At the outset, bear in mind that in the United States, for example, the Selective Service and the military authorities deal with "conscientious objectors" according to the genuine sincerity of the individual, as they, not the individual, determine his sincerity. But also God Almighty judges according to each individual's sincerity of heart -- and HE can never misjudge or be deceived!

The Church cannot stress too emphatically, therefore, the life-and-death importance to our members that each be completely honest before God, and utterly sure of and sincere in his convictions and actions, after having studied thoroughly God's instruction, teaching and commands, as shown in the Bible.

Which Has Precedence?

This whole question is one of man's relationship -- and his responsibility -- to his GOD and to his country. What is the relationship between the individual and GOD? What is the relationship -- and responsibility -- between the individual and his country? And what is the relationship between GOD and country? The Church of God herein gives you the biblical answer and teaching.

The thing called SIN involves man's relationship to his Maker. The Bible defines SIN (I John 3:4) as the transgression of GOD'S Law, which is a SPIRITUAL Law (Romans 7:14). CRIME is offense against MAN'S law, enacted by an official human legislative body.

At the outset, therefore, in determining relative relationships, it is necessary to determine WHICH law -- according to GOD'S Word -- has precedence.

Since God is the CREATOR of man -- the Supreme MAKER of those who constitute themselves, by consent of humans, as legislative bodies -- and since GOD is the AUTHOR of right and wrong -- the Ruler over the vast Universe -- God reveals that He is above man's laws.

God commands that we whom He has baptized (by His Spirit) into His Church, as His own begotten children, be loyally subject to the human government in authority over us. The human government exists by God's permission. Therefore God's Word teaches His people to obey this human government, UNLESS doing so means DISOBEDIENCE to the HIGHER POWER OF GOD -- unless it constitutes SIN against GOD! Even then we are still SUBJECT to whatever penalty our country imposes.

It is important, in this matter of relationships, that we establish thoroughly that GOD and GOD'S LAW is supreme, and has precedence over the laws of any nation. And since OUR LIVES (those in God's Church) are committed to be lived by EVERY WORD OF GOD, we look to -- and stake our lives and our eternity on -- God's Word, the Bible, for our answers.

Through Isaiah, among others, God gives us a comparison of the relative power and authority between Him and any or all nations of earth:

"O Zion, that bringest good tidings [the Gospel] Behold your GOD! Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall RULE for him Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him? ... Behold, THE NATIONS are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance ALL NATIONS before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. To whom, then, will ye liken GOD? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?" (Isaiah 40:9-10, 13,15, 17).

God is the Supreme Judge over all on earth. "... verily, he is a God that judgeth in the earth" (Psalm 58:11). "... the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth ..." (I Samuel 2:10). "And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off ..." (Micah 4:3). God shall judge the whole world (Romans 3:6). "As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:11-12).

God Supreme Over Nations

First, then, understand that GOD rules supreme, even over national governments. Every national government on earth rules only by God's permission. Yet human governments, like human individuals, are free moral agents. God allows governments to obey and reap blessings, or disobey and suffer consequences.

Perhaps humans in offices of authority over nations do not understand or accept this. But it is not a matter of human acceptance or rejection. It is FACT!

In the Creator's great Master Plan for accomplishing His PURPOSE here below, He has made man a free moral agent. He reveals the right WAY, then requires MAN to CHOOSE. He allows man to rebel, reject His rule, His truth. But of course it's a matter of CAUSE and EFFECT. What man sows, he shall reap. A day of reckoning is coming.

God's Master Plan calls for a duration of 6,000 years for man to CHOOSE whether voluntarily to accept and obey the rule of God, or to rebel and suffer the automatic penalty. Six thousand years for man to choose either to govern himself, or voluntarily accept GOD'S Government. This applies to mankind --

individually and collectively. God governs with DIVINE Law. The basis of GOD'S Government is His spiritual Law, the Ten Commandments, which is simply THE WAY to every blessing -- every desired GOOD for man (individually and nationally). Actually, the PENALTY is, simply, the absence of those desired blessings, and the penalty of eternal DEATH -- which, after all, is the absence of the blessing of eternal life.

But human nature is hostile to God, and to God's WAY, and God's RULE. Man wants the RESULT of God's way. But he wants to go the opposite WAY to get it! So mankind as a whole has chosen, these 6,000 years, to reject God's Government over him; to reject God's WAY, and to work out his own human-designed forms of conduct and of government. Few heads-of-government among the nations of history have ever acknowledged the fact that God is supreme in power over them -- that they bear rule only by His consent!

Ancient Israel

In the days of Moses, after all nations had rejected God's rule, God emancipated the Israelitish SLAVES from Egypt, led them to a country He had appointed to give them, and set them up as HIS nation, ruled by HIM, with His Government. Even so, God did not interfere with their prerogative of free moral agency. He made the proposal of this Theocratic Government. The people made their own decision to accept it. But from the very first, they griped, grumbled, complained, doubted, rebelled. After a time, they decided they wanted to switch to HUMAN government, like the other nations around them.

Here's the dramatic incident: "Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, and said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have REJECTED ME, that I should not reign over them" (I Samuel 8:4-7).

So they had a human king, Saul. He was the tallest man in their country. But they still remained bound by their covenant with God as His Kingdom -- even though He allowed them to have a human king.

God removed Saul. It was GOD who chose King David as the next human king. Then came King Solomon. But he excessively overtaxed the people. They rebelled under the burden.

When his son, King Rehoboam refused to reduce taxes, the nation rejected him as king. The former executive assistant of Solomon, Jeroboam, was set up as their king. Then the tribe of Judah seceded, in order to retain Rehoboam as their king.

So, as it always has gone in human government, the people suffered, and in due time the nation was DIVIDED! The tribe of Benjamin sided with and joined Judah. Then Jeroboam rejected the Levites, whom God had chosen as the priests. They were the top men in education and leadership. In the priesthood Jeroboam placed men he could control -- "the lowest of the people" -- illiterate men! Thereupon the Levites also became part of the Kingdom of JUDAH.

It was this Kingdom which became known as the Jews. After 19 kings in the nation ISRAEL, GOD showed that He still rules supreme over the nations of earth, causing the nation Israel to be driven into captivity and slavery by the ancestors of the GERMAN people -- the Assyrians. The Israelites were moved out of their homes, their farms, their cities, and taken as captive slaves to Assyria.

Later, when the nation JUDAH refused to obey God's laws or live God's WAY of life, God caused King Nebuchadnezzar of the Chaldeans to invade and conquer them. Then the Jews were removed from their homes and their land, and taken as slaves to the land of the Chaldeans.

The First World Empire

Nebuchadnezzar's conquests included Judah, Tyre and Egypt, and he sat on the throne of the first world empire.

But was he, and his human government really supreme? Nebuchadnezzar, in his vanity, thought so!

Now see how God revealed that THE ETERNAL is the MOST HIGH -- that God reigns supreme over nations and governments, whether men and human rulers recognize it or not.

God used the prophet Daniel to REVEAL this truth to the FIRST emperor of a world-EMPIRE -- King Nebuchadnezzar of the Chaldean Empire!

When this great king came to the throne, and had invaded Judah, taking the Jews as captive slaves to Chaldea, he also selected certain outstandingly able young Jewish men for important posts in the government. These were princes and top-flight young Jewish men -- well educated, skilled, of outstanding ability. One was the prophet Daniel.

In the very second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had an unusual dream. It frightened and troubled him greatly. None of his magicians, astrologers, or sorcerers could tell the king what he had dreamed, or its meaning. But then Daniel was summoned. By a vision, God revealed the dream and its meaning to Daniel (Daniel 2:19).

Brought into the presence of the king, Daniel said: "There is a GOD in heaven that revealeth secrets and maketh known to the king" After reminding Nebuchadnezzar of what he had dreamed -- a stupendous metallic image -- Daniel continued: "This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. Thou, O king, art a king of kings [empire ruler]: for THE GOD OF HEAVEN HATH GIVEN THEE A KINGDOM, POWER, AND STRENGTH, AND GLORY ... and hath made thee ruler over them all" (Daniel 2:28, 36-38).

GOD'S Authority Supersedes Human Governmental Authority

Thus GOD revealed to the very first EMPIRE ruler -- after the last of the two kingdoms of Israelites had been conquered, losing their sovereignty -- that GOD is SUPREME over the nations -- that GOD gave Nebuchadnezzar the power to govern -- that NATIONS govern only by GOD'S consent.

In the 3rd chapter of Daniel, is the account of a similar incident to teach this human ruler the same lesson. Nebuchadnezzar had made a huge golden idol -- some 75 to 140 feet in height. He then summoned all government officials, even from the far-out provinces, to attend the dedication ceremony. When the band began to play, all were commanded to bow down and worship this golden image.

One of the TEN basic points of God's spiritual Law forbids worship of idols. Another, with which we are concerned in this article, forbids killing (to be defined later). Here was a case history, in which GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY commanded these people to take an action that directly violated the HIGHER LAW OF GOD.

Daniel's three Jewish colleagues, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, OBEYED GOD, and refused to break God's HIGHER law by obeying the lesser human government.

In this case the Jewish lads were brought personally before the king. And even though Daniel's interpretation of his dream had revealed to him that GOD'S POWER is SUPREME and over that of man's government, the king disregarded that.

The king said to the Jewish lads, "... if you will not bow down, you shall instantly be flung into a burning furnace. And where is the god who can save you FROM MY POWER?"

A Specific Case History

The Jewish men answered,

"O Nebuchadnezzar, we need not say a word in answer to that question. THERE IS A GOD able to save us, the God whom we serve, IS ABLE to save us from the burning furnace and FROM YOUR POWER, O king. But even if he does not, understand this, O king, WE WILL NOT SERVE YOUR GODS, and WE WILL NOT BOW DOWN before the golden image which you have erected" (Dan. 3:15-18 -- Moffatt translation).

Here was a direct case of an EMPIRE GOVERNMENT enforcing its laws over subjects who insisted on OBEYING GOD'S LAW -- ONE OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS -- AS THE HIGHER POWER. This OBEDIENCE to GOD, as the Supreme Power, HIGHER than man's government, required real active FAITH! These men STAKED THEIR LIVES ON IT!

When they thus answered the king, he was filled with fury -- his face was distorted with rage. He gave orders to heat the big furnace seven times as hot as usual. Powerful soldiers bound these three Jewish young men, quickly, with all their clothes on. They quickly flung the three men into the furnace. It was so hot, the flames leaped out and killed the soldiers who flung them! The three men dropped down into the middle of the furnace!

Then King Nebuchadnezzar became frightened! He saw FOUR men, "quite free, walking in the middle of the fire, unscathed! The appearance of the fourth is like an angel" (see verses 10-25).

The king went toward the furnace and cried out to the Jewish men, "... you servants of the MOST HIGH GOD, come out, come here!" (Verse 26.) Once again, this king was forced to acknowledge that God is the MOST HIGH!

The Jewish men who TRUSTED GOD and OBEYED HIM, at risk of their lives, walked out. All government officials saw that "the fire had no effect upon their bodies, their hair had not been singed, and there was no smell of burning about them" -- even on their clothes! (Verse 27.)

Human Ruler Forced to Acknowledge God's Authority

Once again, this king was forced to acknowledge that THE ETERNAL -- HE IS GOD! He RULES over earthly governments! His Authority supersedes national governments. God made it abundantly PLAIN. But, even though he acknowledged THE FACT, this human king did not yield to OBEY God, nor accept voluntarily GOD'S RULE OVER HIM AND HIS NATION.

Nor have the governments of man from that day down to ours! God has allowed this. But this does not change the FACT!

The fourth, fifth and sixth chapters of Daniel continue to reveal to all who accept the revealed WORD OF GOD -- as Daniel's friends revealed to those rulers -- that God is SUPREME in authority and power over all national governments!

The real Christian must BELIEVE that God IS -- and that He is a rewarder of those that OBEY HIM. It requires FAITH.

Today, the matter of obeying God, above obedience to a law of human government that would cause one to SIN, might even become a LIFE-AND-DEATH matter, as it was for those three Jewish men.

No Christian should have a REBELLIOUS attitude toward his country -- an attitude of DEFIANCE -- but rather an attitude of OBEDIENCE to GOD first, and being loyal to, and willingly subject to the laws of his country, even to submission to what penalties they assess, if that be required. His attitude should be LOVE of country -- not hostility against it. It is simply a matter for each man to decide for himself that OBEDIENCE TO GOD must come FIRST!

Our young men, as they study this subject, should realize its extreme seriousness, and pray for GOD'S guidance, leading them into a right personal conviction according to GOD'S TRUTH.

What Is SIN?

The whole question of the right or wrong of military service, bearing arms, and killing, revolves on the question: "Is it SIN?" If not, we must submit to such service if so ordered by the government.

If it is SIN, then God says we must obey GOD rather than man (Acts 5:29), although still in subjection to the human authority by submitting to penalties, if imposed.

Sin began with Adam. Although, in the days of Moses at Mount Sinai, God Himself spoke the words of His Law in the hearing of the whole nation (Exodus 20), the Law had been in force since Adam. Adam broke three specific Commandments in his sin. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). And, further, "... but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses" (verses 13-14). So sin was imputed -- the Law was in full existence and force from Adam.

The Law of God is the WAY OF LIFE which CAUSES peace, happiness, abundant well-being. It is simply a matter of CAUSE and EFFECT. Rebellion -- transgression of THIS WAY -- is the CAUSE of unhappiness, poverty, strife, trouble, pain and suffering, war and death. GOD'S WAY brings the blessing everyone desires. The OPPOSITE WAY, or sin, brings every curse.

God Himself determines that transgression of His Law is SIN -- because it brings harm, evil, upon humans whom God loves. So violation is punishable by CAPITAL PUNISHMENT -- DEATH for eternity -- eternal punishment!

In respect to war, the basic teaching of God -- His basic LAW respecting war, military service, and killing, therefore, is the Sixth Commandment: "Thou shalt not kill."

God's Law, as stated in brief in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20), exemplifies the whole of the RIGHT WAY of life. They are the ten basic principles of righteousness for man, both individually and nationally.

The New Testament, magnifying the basic PRINCIPLE, says: "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (I John 3:15). Jesus, applying this law specifically to enemies, said: "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; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:44-45).

This may sound, to those who do not know GOD'S WAY, like the impractical teaching of a "square." But it is the teaching of THE ONE by whom God created the universe, and who right now is the Executive administering the Super-Government of the entire universe, sustaining this earth and all that exists by the Word of His POWER!!! (Hebrews 1:1-3.) We shall demonstrate that it is easily possible to "love your enemies."

The Two WAYS of Life

There are the two broad, general philosophies or WAYS OF LIFE.

God's WAY is the WAY of LOVE (which is outgoing concern) -- of being GOD-centered, loving and obeying God ahead of all else -- and loving fellow man (including enemies) as one's self. It is the way that believes Jesus when He says it is more blessed to GIVE than to receive (Acts 20:35). It is THE WAY of cooperation, helping, sharing.

SIN is THE WAY of vanity, self-love, self-centeredness, selfishness, greed, competition, grasping, taking, getting, accumulating, acquiring; and of jealousy, envy, malice, resentment, strife, hatred, murder. It is the OPPOSITE of God's way. It is the way of WAR.

In the SIN WAY OF LIFE, love of SELF is balanced by an equal hostility or lack of concern for others -- although the "empirical self" usually includes those one feels allied with -- such as wife or husband, one's club, team, group, or country. In GOD'S WAY, concern for others is in equal balance to love of self.

These are the two OPPOSITE WAYS OF LIFE -- opposite ATTITUDES of HEART. One is the way of righteousness, the other the way of SIN.

GOD is LOVE. His whole character is that of LOVE -- OUTGOING CONCERN. HE IS THE GIVER of every good and precious gift. In love for us humans, God GAVE His Son -- gave His Law that it might go well with us! God desires to GIVE each of us His Holy Spirit, and eternal life!

This gives you the broad, general PRINCIPLE of GOD'S LAW -- the basis and foundation of the Government of GOD.

The entire Law may be summed up in the one word, LOVE. It is love toward God, and love toward neighbor -- the two great commandments. The first four of the Ten Commandments define, in principle, HOW to love GOD. The last six, love toward fellow man. These, in turn, are applied in principle to specific cases.

Military service, bearing arms (for use against humans), killing, war, is directly contrary to God's Law in principle! It is not THE WAY of giving, sharing, helping, serving.

Specific Teaching

The one specific point of God's basic Law concerning war is the sixth of the Ten Commandments, "Thou shalt not kill."

If all nations obeyed that Commandment, and followed the WAY of LOVE toward other humans -- and other nations -- there would be no wars.

But, one reasons, that's a pretty platitude, but it's not practical -- it won't work! WHY? Because, he reasons, if our nation obeys that Commandment, and is disarmed with no military force, it would be attacked and beaten by some other nation which ignores, disregards and disobeys God's Law, and believes in WAR. We would lose our liberties, our land, our homes, our wealth -- probably our lives!

That is precisely the way all nations DO reason. But God says, "There is A WAY that seemeth right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of DEATH" (Proverbs 14:12, 16:25).

The Eternal Creator says that that reasoning is FALSE. The Creator understands human nature better than we humans do. He provided for our protection against the ungodly ENEMY! Almighty God is not impractical -- He doesn't leave those who obey and trust Him -- who accept His GOVERNMENT over them, helpless! One of the basic responsibilities of any government is to PROTECT its own subjects!

Do you, then, think the Government OF GOD is so feeble and lacking in power that it is unable to protect the individual -- or the nation -- it governs?

It's time we open our eyes to THE Facts! God did take a people to be His nation. He took a family of some two to four million helpless SLAVES -- descendants of God's friend Abraham -- and offered to set them up as a nation under His Government.

Protection From Aggression Guaranteed by God!

Notice now the specific application of the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," to military force and war. Notice how GOD says to those under HIS GOVERNMENT, that HIS GOVERNMENT -- an all-powerful supernatural and super-national Governmental PROTECT His people against any invading force.

God said to this multitude of ex-slaves, whom He had just freed by supernatural power from the Egyptian taskmasters:

"Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries. For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off' (Exodus 23:20, 22-23).

God promised supernaturally to fight any invading enemy to protect the nation and people under HIS Government. I intend to give you ample case histories to verify this.

But is it just as wrong for GOD to fight an invading army, and if necessary, take human life, as for humans?

ABSOLUTELY NOT! God is the GIVER of human life. Human lives belong to Him! He, alone, has the RIGHT to take human lives. The Sixth Commandment forbids MAN of his own volition and at his discretion to take human life!

Free Choice for Man and Nations

But did you notice -- there were CONDITIONS to God's promise of divine protection. He said He would protect them "... if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak."

During this first six thousand years, in God's Master Plan, He does not force any nation, or individual, to come under His GOVERNMENT. That decision is left to man's free CHOICE.

When God, with His own thundering voice, delivered the ten basic points of His inexorable spiritual Law from Mount Sinai, He was outlining for MANKIND the way to peace, happiness and abundant well-being.

This applies to every individual, and to every nation. Transgression of the basic Law is SIN (I John 3:4).

This Law -- the very principle of RIGHT as distinguished from WRONG -- had, of course, existed from the time of Adam. (Write for free article, "Were the Ten Commandments in Force Before Moses?")

You'll find the account of God's delivering of this Law in Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:4-22.

God had said, THOU SHALT NOT KILL! For MAN, of his own volition, to take human life is a CAPITAL SIN, punishable with the supreme CAPITAL PUNISHMENT -- that of eternal death!

Immediately after God thundered the Ten Commandments, the people were frightened and backed away, trembling -- begging Moses to stand between them and God. Then (Exodus 20:21-22), Moses moved closer to the thick darkness "where God was," and God began saying to Moses: "Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel ..." and God gave various laws and ordinances for the nation, including the specific instruction on fighting in WAR, quoted above (Exodus 23:20-23).

Israel Chose God's Government

Then, once God had restated before this vast family of Israelites His basic spiritual Law -- the foundational PRINCIPLE for all the national civil statutes, judgments and ordinances-and also basic civil statutes and ordinances, God put it to these people, through Moses, to CHOOSE whether they would accept HIS GOVERNMENT over them.

Notice the completing of the COVENANT -- the AGREEMENT between God and this PEOPLE -- to form them into a NATION under GOD's GOVERNMENT

"And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words" (Exodus 24:6-8).

Government Protection Against War

NOTICE CAREFULLY! A part of God's PLATFORM OF GOVERNMENT which He laid before the people before they became HIS NATION was the promise that HIS GOVERNMENT would protect its citizens from need of going to WAR.

That is the OPEN PROMISE OF GOD, which would apply to ANY nation. Later, God offered the SAME government, and its protection and blessings, to the first WORLD EMPIRE -- the gentile Chaldean Empire under King Nebuchadnezzar -- as we shall see.

God plays no favorites. He does not bless one nation and harm another by HIS arbitrary choice.

But human nature is human nature -- and facts are facts. And humanity had rebelled against God from the beginning before the Flood, and after the Flood.

From the time of the Tower of Babel, men had organized themselves into nations, with HUMAN ideas of government CONTRARY TO God's laws, and God's Government over them.

They had chosen other gods! Their religions were empty superstitions. And they were WAR-making kingdoms! God had dealt in an unmistakable manner with mankind, ever since Creation!

No PEOPLE, except a downtrodden SLAVE people in bondage, would have made the CHOICE to say to God, "All that the Lord hath said, will we do and be obedient."

Not only had this enlarged family of Israelites been suffering under the lash of slavery, but God had DEMONSTRATED to them HIS POWER -- and HIS LOVE in outgoing concern for them, by delivering them from slavery by SPECTACULAR MIRACLES!

By the miracles in PLAGUES upon the Egyptians, God had freed them.

Human Nature at Work

And HUMAN Nature? Yes, these Israelites were full of it!

WHY do world leaders, scientists and educators EVEN TODAY reject God, and ply their trades, professions, and interests as if God did not exist? God Himself tells us -- in HIS WORD to mankind: "Because the carnal mind [human nature] is enmity [hostile] against God: for it is not subject to the LAW of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:7).

So NOW UNDERSTAND this BASIC LAW. God has made it a CAPITAL SIN for man to take human life. God is the giver and Maker of human life. He, and He alone, has the right to take human life, if and when and by whatever means HE may use.

God forbids the people -- the NATION -- the Individual -- to kill. God renders wars and killing UNNECESSARY for any people or nation. How? GOD HIMSELF WILL DO THE FIGHTING if fighting be necessary!

"... and Leave the FIGHTING to GOD!"

The people, individually and nationally, shall OBEY HIM. To do so, they must RELY ON HIM. He is able! He has the POWER! He has the RIGHT! He has PROMISED, and He cannot lie. To doubt that He will do our fighting for us is SIN. Lack of faith is SIN (Romans 14:23). Therefore it is SIN to fail or refuse to trust God to do whatever fighting (for us) is necessary, after He has FORBIDDEN us to fight and kill and has PROMISED to do any necessary fighting for us.

Obedience and faith -- that is the duty of the people! That is THE WAY to PEACE! To do whatever fighting might be necessary -- that is GOD'S prerogative!

In God's specific instructions above quoted (Exodus 23:20-23), what the people were to do was break down the idolatrous IMAGES of these pagans -- not break down, fight, or kill the PEOPLE.

God said HE would do the fighting. He would drive them out. Notice verses 27 through 33. God said HE, not an Israelite army, would put terror in these enemies, turn their backs to the Israelites, and send hornets which would drive out these land poachers, who had no right to have taken the land promised to Israel (the "PROMISED LAND").

Notice verse 29: "I" -- God -- will drive them out, NOT all at once in one year, but (verse 30), little by little.

God's Specific Application

This is God's specific application of the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" to military organization and war. It is GOD'S instruction for mankind. He says plainly we humans must not fight -- shall not need to fight -- because we are commanded, instead, to RELY ON GOD. God has promised that, when we obey Him in this, trusting Him, HE WILL FIGHT OUR BATTLES FOR US. Spiritual as well as physical!

We shall show many case histories that demonstrate this. The PRINCIPLE applies both to physical and spiritual warfare, and to both personal and national enemies.

Next, study Numbers 33:50-56. Here we find the same teaching. When the people of Israel cross the Jordan and enter their promised land, GOD shall have delivered those idol-worshiping land-poachers (as He promised in Exodus 23:31) into their hands, and the Israelites were to "drive them out" of the land. Nowhere in this passage does God say the Israelites are to use military weapons and KILL these people. God already had promised HE would deliver them into Israel's hands, with their backs to the Israelites. Driving them out is NOT killing. What they were to DESTROY (verse 52) was the idolatrous "pictures" (margin: figured stones), and molten images (idols).

These passages give GOD'S teaching for mankind. God does not have one way for Israelites and a different way for Gentiles. God does not have one way for one time, and a different way for another time. God is no respecter of persons. He says, "I CHANGE NOT."

This is GOD'S teaching -- in His Word! ANYTHING CONTRARY TO THIS TEACHING, THEREFORE, IS SIN!

WHY Israel Did Fight

But, one may well ask, didn't Israel fight? Did not that nation arm itself and go to war? Did they not KILL? Did not God even command them to go to war and kill?

The answer is YES -- but in no way does this alter or nullify or refute the ABOVE TEACHING, as we shall show.

Few, indeed, have ever understood WHY Israel went to war. They should never have done so -- as we shall clearly demonstrate.

So now UNDERSTAND why Israel did go to war! Understand how they SINNED in so doing!

God did not intend that these people should ever need to go to war. In delivering them out of Egypt, in order that they should not SEE war, become discouraged or fearful, and want to return to Egypt, He took them on a far-around way to the Promised Land.

"When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, 'Lest the people repent [change their minds] when they SEE WAR, and return to Egypt.' But God led the people round by the way of ... the Red Sea ..." (Exodus 13:17-18, Revised Standard Version).

Even before they had reached Sinai a chain of significant incidents occurred. After the MIRACLES God had performed in FREEING them from slavery in Egypt, protecting them, blessing them, FIGHTING their military battle for them, leading them miraculously by a cloud by day and pillar of fire by night, these people began to gripe, grumble, complain and DISOBEY God.

Even in face of such incredible MIRACLES, they began, even then to LOSE FAITH.

These people -- 600,000 men, beside women and children -- came to the Red Sea. There were no ships, no bridges. They could not swim such a distance. They could not walk on the water. They were STOPPED by this obstacle beyond their own power.

They looked, and within eyesight Pharaoh's ARMY was coming after them.

How God Fights Our Battles

Right here, before they reached Mt. Sinai -- before they heard God's own great voice thundering His Ten Commandments -- God demonstrated the pattern He would follow in preserving His people from having to undergo military service, or fighting in war, or taking human life!

Here is God's living EXAMPLE NUMBER ONE! Yet even here, the people of Israel, in fright, grumbled, complained, accused -- lacked faith in God.

These Israelites had started out of Egypt "with an high hand" (Exodus 14:8). "But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his ARMY, and overtook them encamping by the sea And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt with us, to carry us out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness" (Exodus 14:9-12).

But God's PURPOSE was not to be defeated. He PURPOSED to deliver them out of Egyptian slavery. He PURPOSED to show them -- and all nations, and all humanity -- that HE would fight their battles for them.

So, in spite of their faithless complaining in this initial EXAMPLE of God's faithfulness -- in spite of their lack of faith -- He was determined to fight this battle and save them.

"And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which HE WILL SHOW YOU to day The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace" (verses 13-14).

The Israelites were not to fight -- but stand still! They were to see God save them from Pharaoh's ARMY. God was going to SHOW THEM that He would fight their wars for them! They were to remain at PEACE!

How God DID Fight for Them

Then God's angel moved behind the Israelites, and the great dark cloud moved between them and the Egyptian army. It held the Egyptian army from attacking Israel all night, but illuminated the way before Israel. Then God parted the waters of the sea, holding them back by divine MIRACLE, so that the waters formed a high wall on both sides, and the Israelites marched across on the dry floor of the sea.

Now notice the dramatic example of how God miraculously fought Israel's battle for them, as recorded in the Moffatt translation:

"Moses stretched his hand out over the sea Then the Eternal swept the sea along by a strong east wind, all night, till the waters parted; the bed of the sea was dry, and the Israelites marched through the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall to the right and left. The Egyptians in pursuit of them went into the sea, all the Pharaoh's horses and chariots and cavalry. And in the watch before the dawn the Eternal looked out from the column of fire and cloud on the Egyptian army and threw them into a panic; He clogged their chariot-wheels till they drove heavily. The Egyptians cried, 'Let us flee from the Israelites! The Eternal is fighting for them against the Egyptians!' Then said the Eternal to Moses, 'Stretch your hand out over the sea, to make the waters flow back upon the chariots and cavalry of the Egyptians!' Moses stretched his hand out over the sea. Then, as morning broke, the sea returned to its wonted flow, and while the Egyptians were fleeing against it, the Eternal overwhelmed the Egyptians in the middle of the sea; the waters did flow back over the chariots and cavalry, over the whole army of the Pharaoh, which had followed them into the sea, till not a single one of them was left. But the Israelites had walked through the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall to right and left. Thus did the Eternal save Israel that day from the Egyptians, till Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the sea shore; Israel saw the mighty action of the Eternal against the Egyptians, AND THE PEOPLE STOOD IN AWE OF THE ETERNAL, BELIEVING IN THE ETERNAL and in His servant Moses' (Exodus 14:21-31).

Their Faith Short-Lived

Yes, for a short while, the spell of AWE still over them, these people actually BELIEVED in God. Trusting God to DO what He has promised requires believing in MIRACLES, you say? OF COURSE! Salvation requires miracles! God is a miracle-working God!

After this miraculous delivery from disaster -- from a WAR -- a whole army of a then great nation destroyed -- those Israelites expressed a little temporary FAITH. With Moses, they sang a song of praise and rejoicing: "I will sing unto the Lord The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation" (Exodus 15:1-2).

But now UNDERSTAND the lesson here! Egypt is a type of SIN. God was, figuratively in type, delivering these people out of SIN. They were starting out on GOD's WAY of life.

But, UNDERSTAND!!! -- God's way of life requires FAITH. It is a life of OBEDIENCE to God. Obedience requires FAITH. We are SAVED by GRACE, through FAITH "and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of GOD" (Ephesians 2:8). But not by a DEAD faith! It is a LIVING faith that makes obedience possible.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego (Daniel 3) obeyed God's command against idol worship -- but their stout refusal to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's idol was possible only by their RELIANCE ON GOD to protect and deliver them. They TRUSTED God (Daniel 3:28). They exercised FAITH -- living faith! Empty, dead faith -- just BELIEVING that God exists -- is not the faith that saves. "The demons also believe, and tremble" (James 2:19).

But faith and obedience must ENDURE! The newly freed Israelite slaves, still under the spell of AWE after experiencing such miracles, expressed faith and sang.

But they didn't believe very deeply or for very long. When they came to Marah, they found the water too bitter to drink. This one little problem in their path brought them again to complaining and DOUBTING (Exodus 15:24). Again, by a miracle, God made the waters sweet.

The TEST of Obedience

Moses led these people on to the wilderness of Sin -- between Elim and Sinai. They had now been gone from Egypt one month. And again, "the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness and the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt ... for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger" (Exodus 16:2-3).

So God gave them a test of obedience, along with miraculously providing food. God said: "I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law or no" (Exodus 16:4).

The particular LAW God was testing them on was His Sabbath. And remember, they had not yet reached Sinai. On the sixth day of the week He would provide them with a TWO-DAY portion. On the seventh day, God's Sabbath, He commanded them to rest and refrain from going out to gather manna. On the sixth day God provided the two-day supply. Nevertheless, on God's Sabbath, some of the people, greedy for gain, went out to gather manna.

"How LONG refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?" thundered God at them (Exodus 16:28). They were neither trusting nor obeying God.

The vast congregation journeyed on and pitched tents in Rephidim. Again, there was no water. Again they griped, murmured, accused, lost faith, and tempted the ETERNAL (Exodus 17:1-2).

Now we come to the CRUCIAL INCIDENT that explains WHY Israel went to war. Regularly they had been grumbling, complaining, accusing, disobeying, LOSING FAITH -- in face of constant MIRACLES from God. Now, again, as God performed another miracle, causing water to gush forth out of a rock, the people DOUBTED that God was with them. "... they tempted the Lord saying, Is the Lord among us, or not?" (Exodus 17:7.)

Now consider what had happened. Repeatedly, God had given these people awe-inspiring and miraculous demonstrations of His intention to fight their battles for them. These were VISIBLE miracles, which the people witnessed with their own eyes. God had demonstrated His faithfulness, His POWER, His willingness, HIS WAY! Yet repeatedly, these people doubted, complained, found fault, grumbled. Repeatedly they LOST FAITH. After all of this OVERWHELMING PROOF, these people DOUBTED God's faithfulness -- DOUBTED His power -- even DOUBTED His very existence. They disobeyed. They went the way of SIN! In effect, they had their own "God is dead" movement!

Faith Gone -- Chose WAR!

At this point, Moses was distraught, his nerves shattered, his patience about exhausted. After all, Moses was only human!

"What am I to do with this people?" Moses appealed to God (Exodus 17:4); "They are almost ready to stone me!"

God answered Moses, had him move ahead of the people, and smite the rock at Horeb with the same stick he had used in the parting of the waters of the Red Sea. Then again God performed a visible MIRACLE -- water gushed out of the rock.

But, just then, Amalek, a Gentile king, came against the Israelites in great strength with an invading army. This time God ALLOWED the Israelites to write the lesson of experience. He allowed them to SIN. God does not forcibly prevent humans from sinning.

Moses, at the end of his patience trying to induce these stubborn, rebellious people to believe in and TRUST God, said to Joshua, "Choose us out men, and go out, FIGHT with Amalek" (Exodus 17:9) Lacking the faith to trust God for their protection, Moses feared they would be slaughtered. Although Moses weakened and gave the order for WAR, it was THE PEOPLE themselves who actually MADE THE DECISION for war, by their utter lack of reliance on God.

It was altogether unnecessary for these Israelites to arm themselves and wage WAR.

It was WRONG! It was SIN. But God let the decision be theirs! This incident was the turning point.

It occurred before they reached Mt. Sinai. It was after this that God laid before them His PROPOSAL for them to become His nation, ruled by His GOVERNMENT.

It was after this that God promised, conditioned on obedience and faith, always to fight their battles for them -- to protect them from war -- to give them constant PEACE.

It was after this that they accepted His Government over them. But already they had shown lack of faith and trust, even during the days when God was DEMONSTRATING His power and faithfulness by so many miracles!

They had experienced a taste of war. They could have -- should have -- turned from it, afterward, and relied on God instead of their own power.

But they didn't.

Refusal to Have Peace

Later, shortly before the Israelites, under Joshua, finally did enter the Promised Land after 40 years, Moses wrote for them -- and for us today as well -- this account of their REFUSAL through lack of faith to let GOD save them from WAR.

You'll read it in the first chapter of Deuteronomy. Here is the gist of it in the Moffatt version:

"The Eternal our God said to us at Horeb [Mt. Sinai], 'You have stayed long enough among the hills here; move on, away into the highlands of the Amorites and all the surrounding country I hand this land over to you, as far as the great river, the river Euphrates' On setting out from Horeb we passed through that wide awful desert, as you saw, on our way to the Amorite highlands I said to you, 'Now you have reached the Amorite highlands, which the ETERNAL our God is to give us; here is the ETERNAL your God handing over the land to you; march in and take possession of it, as the ETERNAL the God of your fathers has told you: FEAR NOT, neither be dismayed.' "

But the people DID fear -- and they were dismayed! They didn't BELIEVE GOD! Continue the account:

"Then you all came to me," Moses continued, "and proposed to send some men in front, to explore the land and bring back word about the route you should follow ..." instead of proceeding in FAITH on the route GOD would lead. Moses continued: "... so I chose twelve men, one for each [tribe], and they made their way into the highlands as far as the wady of Eshcol, which they explored. Then, carrying some fruit of the country, they brought it down to us, with this report: 'It is a fine land that the ETERNAL our God is to give us.' But you would not march up; YOU REBELLED against the orders of the ETERNAL your God, and grumbled in your tents, 'It is because the ETERNAL hates us that He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to hand us over to the Amorites, to be destroyed! What is our fate to be? Our friends have made our courage melt by telling us that the people are stronger and taller than ourselves, and the towns are walled up to the sky; besides, they saw giants in the land!'

"Then I said to you," Moses continued, "'Dread them not, have no fear of them. The ETERNAL your God who goes in front of you, HE WILL FIGHT FOR YOU; HE WILL DO IT ALL FOR YOU, as you saw him do in Egypt, and also in the desert, where you saw how the ETERNAL your God carried you forward, as a man carries his boy, all the long road till you reached this place.' But, for all I said, you would not trust the ETERNAL your God, who had gone in front of you upon the road, by fire during the night, and by a cloud during the day."

These Israelites simply would neither BELIEVE nor OBEY the living GOD!

By their continuous disbelief, lack of reliance on GOD, and reliance only on PHYSICAL WARFARE, they made the DECISION to be, like all the nations of the earth, a WARRING NATION!

Actually, reliance on military arms, physical force, and human allies, is SIN. It breaks God's Commandment, "Thou SHALT NOT KILL!

The fact that ALL nations have chosen this way of SIN does not make it RIGHT! And the individual Christian, today, having God's Spirit, and in God's CHURCH, must face this question and decide for himself whether he will go along THE WAY OF SIN, as the overwhelming majority are doing, or whether he will OBEY GOD, and then TRUST GOD with his life -- TRUST GOD alone!

Nations CAN Choose Peace!

Would it seem preposterous to chiefs of state today, to believe that even NOW God Almighty actually would fight our wars for us -- that OUR nations, today, could actually have PEACE -- and have it this very year?

Undoubtedly it would! World leaders today -- in ALL nations -- have gotten so far from God and God's ways, and God has become so UNREAL to them that it probably would seem ridiculous even to suggest such a thing. The scientists, the industrial and commercial leaders, the educators -- yes, and even the CLERGY -- have all departed so FAR from God and HIS WAYS, that such a thought could not even enter their minds.

Yet the ETERNAL has not left us without absolute ASSURANCE! He has recorded, in His Word, not only His promises, but three additional concrete case histories -- in addition to those already recounted in this booklet -- proving that He ACTUALLY DID DO THE FIGHTING for a nation being invaded, when that nation and its rulers TRUSTED HIM.

God's PURPOSE Stands!

Even though God ALLOWS humans to make their own decisions -- allows them to SIN -- allows nations to go to WAR -- nevertheless God's PURPOSE must stand! His PURPOSE was to settle these descendants of Abraham in the land He had promised Abraham "the PROMISED LAND."

God's promise to Abraham, 430 years before, had been made unconditional. Abraham had performed his part of that agreement. He had obeyed God, kept God's commandments and laws (Genesis 26:5). Now God's faithfulness demanded that He plant these people in that land, regardless of their conduct!

It was GOD'S responsibility to place these people in the Promised Land, driving out the inhabitants. It was Israel's responsibility to decide HOW this would be done -- whether to rely on God to do the fighting, driving out the illegal inhabitants, or to arm themselves, fight, and engage in war.

These descendants of Abraham had made their decision to be a fighting, war-waging nation.

That decision was theirs to make. And since they had made it, God used them to do the fighting in driving out the inhabitants illegally possessing the land God had allotted to Abraham's descendants. Consequently God gave orders for them to do what fighting -- and killing -- was necessary to accomplish God's PURPOSE of putting them in the land of promise!

But that did not make war RIGHT. Whether to DO right or wrong -- that is MAN'S decision! These Israelites did not need to fight!

So it was BECAUSE of Israel's faithfulness and disobedience that God ALLOWED them to SIN by taking up arms. And therefore God used them as His instruments in driving out the nations illegally in their land. Even at that later date the Israelites could have REPENTED, changed their decision, and trusted God to fight their battles for them.

God had given the Israelites every chance. They were without excuse!

But, even as in our personal and national lives today, one sin invariably leads to another. Whatever is not of FAITH is SIN (Romans 14:23.)

Having committed the sin of DOUBT, these Israelites proceeded to commit the SIN OF FIGHTING -- of WAR!

God ALLOWED THIS! And for good reason! Without free moral agency God's PURPOSE for having placed humans on this planet would be frustrated! That PURPOSE is the development of righteous CHARACTER -- and it necessitates FREE MORAL AGENCY!

God's PURPOSE must stand, even though God allows humans to rebel and sin! His PURPOSE in placing the Israelites in the PROMISED LAND had to stand -- and GOD SAW TO IT. Israel's SIN could not prevent it!

So NOW YOU KNOW the reason why the nation Israel went to war!

God's Laws Relating to War

Since Israel exercised their God-allowed prerogative of making the wrong decision for WAR, it is true that God gave them special laws relating to war. They are found in Deuteronomy 20.

But NOTICE! They are not laws of military strategy! They did not justify or glorify war. They did not teach Israelites to hate, want to kill, or become skilled in the arts and strategy of warfare or military tactics.

These laws still concerned God's fighting for them -- even though they had decided to go to war. And these laws concerned military exemption for certain reasons.

God allowed them to make their OWN WRONG decision to fight. So He said -- in these special war regulations "When thou goest out to battle," and they find themselves facing a superior military force "BE NOT AFRAID ... for the Lord thy God is with thee ..." (Deuteronomy 20:1).

When they approached the actual battle, it was NOT the army general or military commander-in-chief who was to give the orders, BUT THE PRIEST! The priest shall say: "Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them." And why? Not because Israel had a superior military force -- for they were greatly outnumbered. Not because of superior military strategy, but "for the Lord your God is he that goeth with you, TO FIGHT FOR YOU against your enemies, TO SAVE YOU" (verses 3-4).

Then this law provides EXEMPTIONS from military service. If a man has built a new house, and not dedicated it -- planted a vineyard and not yet enjoyed its fruits -- become betrothed, and not yet taken his wife to him -- he shall be sent home. If any man is faint-hearted and terrified, he is to return home, lest his presence cause others to lose heart also.

Finally, when Israel's army draws close to the enemy, they were to offer peace before fighting, and fight only if the enemy rejects peace. Quite different from the laws and rules of warfare used by any nation today!

Why God Ordered Them to War

But one may ask this question:

If war is wrong -- if it is SIN -- if it is contrary to God's WAY for man, then WHY did God, on occasion, actually order the Israelites to go to war and kill?

Consider these TWO FACTS:

- 1) Israel had sinned in a) not TRUSTING God to do the fighting for them; and b) in disobeying God's commandment against war. They had CHOSEN to be a war-waging nation. The decision was WRONG. Yet God compels man to decide WHETHER to sin. If he does, he brings on himself the penalty. THE FACT, therefore, must be realized that ISRAEL REFUSED TO RELY ON GOD TO DO THE FIGHTING; and CHOSE to be a warring nation.
- 2) God's PURPOSE must stand, regardless of what men do. It was God's PURPOSE to install Israel in, and to drive certain people out of God's holy land, which He had PROMISED to the children of Abraham, Isaac and Israel. These nations had taken and possessed that land illegally.

Since Israel was not going to rely on GOD to drive out these nations, but elected to be a WAR-making nation, God used them to accomplish His PURPOSE of exterminating these land-poachers. Therefore, He ordered them to do what was required to make HIS PURPOSE stand!

Understand this! The fulfillment of the divine PURPOSE does not depend on humans -- it depends on GOD'S action, not man's.

Actually, even though this Israelitish nation rebelled against God's command against war and killing -- even though they made their decision to become a war-making nation, like all others -- even though GOD used them in driving out nations from the Promised Land, it is still considered in GOD'S WORD that it was GOD who thrust out these foreign nations from Israel's land.

In Acts 7:45, New Testament, it speaks of "the Gentiles, whom GOD drove out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David." In the RSV, it is, "Our fathers in turn brought it [the Ark of God] in with Joshua when they dispossessed the nations WHICH GOD THRUST OUT before our fathers"

God's Right to Take Life

But, did GOD do wrong, in using the war-determined Israelites to drive out these nations, and to kill? NEVER!

Remember this basic truth: God alone has the right to take human life, since He alone is the GIVER of life.

Because of Israel's faithlessness and disobedience, God used them as His instrument in TAKING LIFE, which God had full right to do!

There is NO UNRIGHTEOUSNESS WITH GOD! But Israel had chosen the way of SIN in going to war. Even then, they could have changed their decision.

The divine GIVER of human life has the right to take the lives He gave. They belong to HIM! But for any human, or nation, of his or its own volition, on his or its own initiative, to take human life is SIN. The life he takes is not his -- but GOD'S! He not only commits murder -- he also STEALS or takes what is GOD'S. Even his own life belongs to God. The suicide takes a human life that belongs to God!

When God has made it one of the ten basic SINS for man to take human life -- and made it unnecessary for man to go to war by promising to take care of the wars Himself supernaturally, then the nation which CHOOSES to be a WAR-waging nation has committed SIN. And every individual who enters its military organization is committing SIN.

Israel had made that decision. Other nations, too -- all had made it. Since the nations of this world do fight, God allows them to commit this SIN. Yet, to carry out HIS PURPOSE, God Himself determines the outcome of wars. And since Israel already had rejected HIM as its war-making force, He even ordered them to fulfill HIS PURPOSE, which must be accomplished! But that did not whitewash Israel from having deliberately rebelled and chosen to fight in war in violation of GOD'S WAY.

ILLUSTRATION: When God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, the life of Isaac belonged to God. If GOD ordered his life taken, that was God's right. If He ordered Abraham to be His instrument in taking it, it was still GOD who was the responsible party in taking what was HIS to take. Had Abraham refused, his rebellion would have been sin. Of course, it was a test. As soon as Abraham proved his obedience, which required FAITH (James 2:20-24), God provided a lamb substitute and reversed His order about slaying Isaac.

David's Killing in War

God called David a man after His own heart. David was a warrior. David killed many people. As king, he waged WAR. But that did not make war right. God held David accountable for his blood guiltiness.

David very seriously desired to build the great Temple in Jerusalem. Notice what King David said to Solomon his son:

"My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the Lord my God. But the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth. Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; ... and I will give PEACE and quietness unto Israel in his days. He shall build an house for my name ..." (I Chronicles 22:7-10).

David was a "man after God's own heart" NOT because of his wars, his fighting, his killing.

God PUNISHED him for that! What did endear David to God was, first of all, David's willingness to admit it when he was wrong, and to REPENT. David loved and obeyed God's Law (Psalm 119:97). His ATTITUDE was right. He was humble, yet he was strong and unafraid. He was FAIR in his dealings; he respected authority and those over him; he was compassionate and merciful; he was honest and straightforward. David had many wives, but if you will research the record carefully, you will perhaps be surprised to find that he repented of this, put away his concubines, and in his latter years had only one wife. David sinned -- but he acknowledged his sins, and repented (Psalm 51)

Treating Effect -- Ignoring CAUSE!

It's just as simple as this: There is a CAUSE for every EFFECT -- yet the whole society and way of life in the world today is based on treating the effect, IGNORING the CAUSE! Our people do it in treating sickness and disease. They do it in dealing with crime. They do it in WORKING FOR PEACE!

Everybody wants PEACE -- or at least, so the nations profess! They WORK for PEACE! Yet there is no peace!

WHY? The very NEWS of all this "working for peace" was reported millenniums ago in biblical prophecy! But, it was also reported, "the WAY OF PEACE they know not ..." (Isaiah 59:8).

So, the nations and world leaders CRY for "peace" -- work for "peace," while they endorse, sanction, and continue the way of WAR! They follow the way that is the CAUSE of WAR, trying to STOP war by dealing with the effect, ignoring the CAUSE!

WHY Must There Be WARS?

Many ask, "Well, if there be a God, WHY does God allow wars?"

They argue: "If God is LOVE, He surely wouldn't want all this suffering. And if God is ALL-POWERFUL, He could prevent wars! So why doesn't He?"

The answer is, certainly God could stop it -- and in very few years will! But, why in the future? Why did He ever allow it?

Because a PURPOSE is being worked out here below! Man was put here on earth to develop righteous character! That purpose necessitates free moral agency in man. It is absolutely necessary that man be given both the prerogative and the ability to make his own choice, and exercise his own will! Otherwise -- NO CHARACTER!

There is a way that will prevent WAR, and produce PEACE -- a way to happiness, and abundant well-being for everybody!

The ETERNAL offered mankind that way -- and let mankind choose! The ETERNAL created and set in motion inexorable laws that work -- not only laws of chemistry and physics -- but also a basic SPIRITUAL LAW, which is the way to peace, happiness, abundant well-being! That LAW is the basic CAUSE of peace. Its violation is the CAUSE of war!

Yes, it's just that simple! But a rebellious humanity -- priding itself on its rational processes of "intellect" -- willingly blinds its mind to simple Truth, and embarks on a system of complicated and nonsensical ERROR!

Human nature is basically rebellious against God, and the inexorable laws of God (Romans 8:7). The Creator laid before man the KNOWLEDGE of His Law -- the knowledge of HOW TO AVOID WARS! But yielding to human nature -- vanity, greed self-centeredness -- rebellion against God's Law of PEACE - - that is the CAUSE of wars!

Nations Never Needed Go to War!

In respect to war, the basic point of God's spiritual Law is the Sixth Commandment. It says, simply, "Thou shalt not kill."

If all nations OBSERVED that command of God, and followed the way of LOVE and PEACE, there would be no war!

But, an objector argues, "That's a pretty platitude -- but it's not practical. It would never work! Any nation that would follow that command would be attacked and beaten by some other nation that was more practical."

Oh, but that way WOULD WORK! That way IS practical! I repeat, the Creator understands human nature better than we humans do! He provided for that!

Do you think the Almighty Creator is so impractical that He leaves those who OBEY HIM -- who accept HIS GOVERNMENT over them -- helpless? Understand this! God Almighty is SUPREME! He created the UNIVERSE -- and He RULES SUPREME over the entire vast UNIVERSE. He RULES over the earth -- and whatever men do in their politics -- their wars -- their setting up of their own forms of government -- is done ONLY BECAUSE GOD ALLOWS IT! He did make humans free moral agents.

Government Responsibility to Protect Citizenry

God is SUPREME in Government! Again I remind you. A prime responsibility of GOVERNMENT is to PROTECT its own subjects!

So open your eyes, now, to the FACTS as recorded in four case histories!

God did take a people -- as I have already shown -- a family of some two to three million SLAVES, children of God's friend Abraham -- and offered to set them up as a nation UNDER HIS GOVERNMENT! To any people -- whether an individual, a nation, or even all nations -- who will voluntarily subject themselves under God's GOVERNMENT, God says the SAME THING -- He is no respecter of persons! What He said to these Israelites, He says to ALL:

He said, "... if thou shalt indeed obey [the messenger that I will send], and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries ... and I will cut them off" (Exodus 23:20-23).

God promised supernaturally to fight any invading enemy to protect the nation and people that will obey and TRUST HIM!

But, did you notice -- there were CONDITIONS to God's promise of divine and supernatural protection. During the first six thousand years of man's sojourn on earth, it is not in God's Master Plan to force any nation, or individual, to come under His GOVERNMENT. That is left to man's free CHOICE!

But these freed slaves -- the Israelites -- accepted God's offer, and became His nation. They AGREED to obey Him and His Laws -- His Government -- and He agreed to give them PEACE, as long as they obeyed and trusted Him.

Case History No. 1

The Israelites -- perhaps two to three MILLION of them -- came to the Red Sea. They were STOPPED by this obstacle beyond their own power.

They looked, and within eyesight, Pharaoh's ARMY was coming after them.

Right here, God demonstrated He would preserve His people from having to undergo military service, or fighting in war, or taking human life!

In spite of their faithless complaining in this initial EXAMPLE of God's faithfulness, He was determined to fight this battle and save them.

After this miraculous delivery from disaster -- from a WAR -- a whole army of a then great nation destroyed -- those Israelites murmured against Moses and Aaron.

Repeatedly, God had given these people awe-inspiring and miraculous demonstrations of His intention to fight their battles for them. After all of this OVERWHELMING PROOF, these people DOUBTED God's faithfulness. They disobeyed. They went the way of SIN! They turned to WAR!

It was altogether unnecessary for these Israelites to arm themselves and wage WAR. It was WRONG! It was SIN. But God let the decision be theirs!

But that did not make war RIGHT. Whether to DO right or wrong -- that is MAN'S decision! These Israelites did not need to fight. Nor does any nation today!

Many people have wondered WHY, if God's teaching is that WAR IS WRONG, He actually commanded His own nation to fight in war.

The answer we have now made plain. It is that God made man with FREE MORAL AGENCY -- God not only allows humans to have a CHOICE -- He compels us to choose!

God alone determines WHAT IS sin. God does not allow MAN to decide WHAT IS sin, or WHAT IS righteousness. But He does allow man -- He actually compels man to decide WHETHER to sin.

God made it PLAIN to ancient Israel that they need never go to war. He guaranteed complete protection from outside enemies. He guaranteed PEACE -- if they would trust Him and obey the laws of His Government! He demonstrated His ability -- and His POWER! But the Israelites chose WAR. Just as ALL nations have chosen where! Just as our nations do -- needlessly -- today!

Case History No. 2

This case concerns King Asa of the Kingdom of Judah. The king of Ethiopia came against the Jews with 300 chariots and an army of ONE MILLION soldiers. They had major-size armies in those days, strange as that may seem.

In those days the Jews also had a sizable army -- but not nearly large enough to withstand an invasion of a force of a million troops.

Perhaps, had the Ethiopians come with a smaller army, Asa might have gone to war with them, relying wholly on his armed force, instead of on God. But, regardless, the FACT is that in this instance this king did rely on God for his defense!

"And Asa cried unto the Lord his God, and said, Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have NO POWER: help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord, thou art our God; let not man prevail against THEE! So the Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled" (II Chronicles 14:11-12.)

But there is an unhappy sequel to this tremendous event -- where reliance on GOD put A MILLION ARMED MEN TO FLIGHT!

In the 36th year the king of ISRAEL, Baasha, came with an armed force against the Jews. Incidentally, note carefully, the Kingdom of ISRAEL was here fighting against the JEWS of the Kingdom of JUDAH! They were two altogether different nations! The people of the Kingdom of ISRAEL never were called Jews!

This time Asa neglected to rely on God to fight off the attacking military force! This time he did PRECISELY WHAT THE UNITED STATES AND BRITAIN ARE DOING TODAY! He hired an ALLY -- the Kingdom of Syria (II Chronicles 16:1-3).

"And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa King of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the King of Syria, and not relied on the Lord thy God,

therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand. Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the Lord, he delivered them into thine hand. For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself STRONG in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly" -- JUST LIKE THE UNITED STATES AND ALL NATIONS TODAY! -- 'therefore from henceforth THOU SHALT HAVE WARS' (II Chronicles 16:7-9).

If you wonder why OUR NATIONS are continually having WARS, there is your answer!

Case History No. 3

The next case history involves Asa's son, Jehoshaphat, the next king of Judah.

Three allied armies came against Judah, with a mighty military force.

"And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the Lord

"And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court, and said, O Lord God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and RULEST NOT THOU OVER ALL THE KINGDOMS OF THE HEATHEN?" -- that is, over all Gentile nations, as well as Israelitish?

Continue: "and in thine hand is there not POWER and MIGHT, so that none is able to withstand thee? Art not thou our GOD, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel? ... And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade Behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given to us to inherit. O our GOD, wilt thou not judge them? for WE HAVE NO MIGHT AGAINST THIS GREAT COMPANY that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: BUT OUR EYES ARE ON THEE"! (II Chronicles 20:3-12).

Could God be GOD, and fail to heed a heartrending prayer like that -- coming from helpless people who were obeying and TRUSTING Him?

Immediately God answered through one of His prophets: "Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of the great multitude; for the battle is NOT YOURS, BUT GOD'S

"Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the Lord, worshipping the Lord

"Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me O Judah ... Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established: believe His prophets, so shall you prosper. And ... he appointed SINGERS unto the Lord, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth forever.

"And when they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten. For the children [soldiers] of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another. And when Judah came toward the watch tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped" (II Chronicles 20:15-24).

But would not most Americans, and British, hoot and jeer in sarcasm, if one suggested that the great and powerful United States TODAY humble itself -- and trust in the INVISIBLE God -- and WORSHIP Him, bowing our heads to the ground? Couldn't you just hear the snorts and raucous ridicule of stiff necked

proud "Great" Britons at the suggestion that they send before an armed enemy an army of SINGERS, saying, "PRAISE THE ETERNAL!" -- instead of relying on the nation's MILITARY strength?

Yes, WOULDN'T it seem RIDICULOUS to suggest that OUR proud nations do this -- BELIEVE God's prophets (not the numerous false prophets who are NOT the clergy of the true living CHRIST), and march to war SINGING praises "to the beauty of holiness"?

Well perhaps so! But that kind of "foolishness" turned out to be mighty PRACTICAL for Jehoshaphat and those Jews!

Someday -- and in not more than a few years at that -- America and Britain will be forced to WAKE UP to the sobering REALIZATION of which way is truly the "foolish way! And God's true minister is telling you, as you read this, that you'd better make the right choice NOW, before it's too late! For indeed it is later than you think!

Case History No. 4

Several years later, "After these things and these acts of faithfulness Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah And when Hezekiah [king of Judah] saw that Sennacherib had come and intended to fight against Jerusalem, he ... gathered [the people] together to him in the square at the gate of the city and spoke encouragingly to them saying, 'Be strong and of good courage. Do not be afraid or dismayed before the king of Assyria and all the horde that is with him; for there is one greater with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God, to help us and to fight our battles.' And the people took confidence from the words of Hezekiah king of Judah" (II Chronicles 32:1-8 RSV).

Continue:

"After this Sennacherib king of Assyria ... sent his servants to Jerusalem to Hezekiah king of Judah and to all the people of Judah that were in Jerusalem, saying, 'Thus says Sennacherib king of Assyria, "On what are you relying, that you stand siege in Jerusalem? Is not Hezekiah misleading you, that he may give you over to die by famine and by thirst, when he tells you, 'The Lord our God will deliver us from the hand of the king of Assyria?' ... Do you not know what I and my fathers have done to all the peoples of other lands? Were the gods of the nations of those lands at all able to deliver their lands out of my hand? ... How much less will your God deliver you out of my hand?"'

"Then Hezekiah the king and Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, prayed because of this and cried to heaven. AND THE LORD SENT AN ANGEL, who cut off all the mighty warriors and commanders and officers in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land. And when he came into the house of his god, some of his own sons struck him down there with the sword. So THE LORD SAVED HEZEKIAH AND THE INHABITANTS OF JERUSALEM from the hand of Sennacherib king of Assyria and from the hand OF ALL HIS ENEMIES; and HE GAVE THEM REST [PEACE] ON EVERY SIDE (II Chronicles 32:9-22 RSV).

War is so needless! War IS WRONG IF only OUR PEOPLE AS A WHOLE could recognize REALITY -- could understand that God IS REAL -- and would humble themselves before Him, BELIEVE Him -- RELY ON Him!

But, if our people WILL NOT, then it is decreed, we shall, in fewer years than you will believe, see OUR CITIES DESTROYED -- along with a full third of our populations -- by a foreign invasion!

The God who IS REAL says of OUR PEOPLES: "Prophecy against the prophets of Israel O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts. Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel TO STAND in the BATTLE IN THE DAY OF THE LORD" (Ezekiel 13:2, 4-5).

That is NOT a message to ancient Israel -- but to OUR NATIONS of TODAY. The "DAY OF THE LORD" - a time foretold in more than thirty prophecies -- is going to strike this generation sooner than some think! You will know, then, how REAL it is. You will wish, then, you had heeded. I am not writing foolishly, but very soberly, ON AUTHORITY of the living CHRIST!

Continue this WARNING to OUR nations TODAY: "They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The LORD saith: and the Lord hath not sent them: ... Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there [is] no peace"! (Verses 6, 10.)

Perhaps you need to read the free booklet "The United States and Britain in Prophecy" and then read this whole chapter seriously! It is a last WARNING from the ETERNAL GOD!

God says to US, TODAY: "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for WHY WILL YE DIE, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God, wherefore, TURN YOURSELVES, and LIVE YE" (Ezekiel 18:31-32).

Part Two

Is there any DIFFERENCE between God's teaching for ancient Israel, and His teaching for members of His Church TODAY?

Now we need to UNDERSTAND the relation of God's teaching, so far covered, to individual members of God's Church today.

Remember, with EMPHASIS, this basic TRUTH: Sin is SIN, whether committed between the time of Adam and the Flood, whether in ancient Israel, or today; whether by Jew or Gentile; whether by a nation, a group of people collectively, or by an individual -- regardless of time.

And for emphasis we repeat: Popular acceptance, group approval or disapproval, or national decree does not determine what is SIN -- or what is righteousness! Governments may legislate what they regard as crime, but SIN IS the transgression of GOD'S Law. SIN involves man's relationship with his Maker. And we have shown, in the beginning, that GOD and the laws of God are SUPREME in authority, even over those of nations and their human legislative bodies.

Although God's teaching directs us to be loyally subject to the government under whose jurisdiction we live, if, unhappily, there is conflict, God Almighty teaches us that we must OBEY GOD, rather than man -- even though still submissively subject to the national authority.

But Is There a Difference?

But are there certain differences, revealed and made plain by GOD in His Scriptures, between the position of the young man in God's Church today, and that of men in ancient Israel, in regard to military service?

There are certain differences which should be UNDERSTOOD. But the difference is not between the nation then, and the individual today. Nor is it between the nation then, and the nation now; nor between individuals then and now.

But there is a difference between the Old Testament CHURCH -- called The CONGREGATION of Israel, and the New Testament CHURCH of GOD. And, although sin is sin regardless, the same for the one as

the other, there still is a certain difference between the individual who is a Spirit-begotten member of the Church of God, and one who is not.

The Spirit-begotten Christian, who has received the Holy Spirit of God, and in whom God's Spirit actually dwells, has a spiritual mind. The unconverted has a natural, or carnal mind. This does not in any sense make military service a sin for one, and righteousness for the other. Sin, as stated above, is SIN -- the same for the one as the other.

Yet the one does approach this question from a certain different position than the other.

A New SPIRITUAL CITIZENSHIP

Old Testament Israel was not called to, nor offered, spiritual salvation.

But, Jesus of Nazareth came proclaiming, not the physical worldly Kingdom of ISRAEL, but the Spirit-born KINGDOM OF GOD. And He promised for His CHURCH the gift of God's Holy Spirit (John 16:7, 13; 15:26; Acts 1:8). This comes by God's GRACE, upon two conditions: repentance, and faith.

WHO, according to the New Testament, is truly and actually a Christian? Those who have received, and in whom now "dwells," THE HOLY SPIRIT (Romans 8:9), and they only! The Holy Spirit imparts, provisionally and conditionally, the very divine and immortal LIFE of GOD. It imparts a new NATURE -- the Divine Nature (II Peter 1:4). It OPENS THE MIND to comprehension of Spiritual knowledge (I Corinthians 2:11).

The natural-born MIND of man -- even the "great minds" of the world's great -- CANNOT comprehend God's spiritual TRUTH (I Corinthians 2:7-11, 14).

Once a human has received God's Holy Spirit, he has been BEGOTTEN as a SON OF GOD. Not yet born of God, because he is still an Heir -- not an inheritor or possessor. He is a JOINT-HEIR with Christ (Romans 8:14-17). Even a converted person Gentile born, becomes an HEIR of GOD, according to the spiritual (Scepter) promise to Abraham (Galatians 3:28-29).

But, at and after Christ's coming to RULE all nations, in the WORLD TOMORROW, these heirs shall then INHERIT God's Kingdom (Matthew 25:34; Daniel 7:22).

The presence of God's Holy Spirit CHANGES one -- changes his whole attitude, from one of hostility to God (Romans 8:7) to submission, obedience, and faith -- changes his outlook on life -- changes his WAY OF LIFE, so that it becomes GOD-centered rather than SELF-centered.

Israel of the Old Testament was one of the kingdoms of this world!

But the truly converted Christian, receiving and being led in his life by God's Holy Spirit, is a begotten, though yet unborn son of GOD, as surely as once, in his mother's womb, he was a begotten, though yet unborn son of his human parents.

The Gospel Jesus brought from God and proclaimed to men taught plainly that the KINGDOM OF GOD is the Divine Family into which we may be BORN (John 3:3-8). The KINGDOM OF GOD also is the supernatural divine GOVERNMENT of GOD, of which Jesus of Nazareth was born to become the KING (Luke 1:30-33).

Jesus Christ Himself plainly said He was BORN to become the KING of the Kingdom of God, while on trial for His life before Pontius Pilate (John 18:37). But, He said, "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 my Kingdom is not from hence." (That is, from this world.)

Yes, ancient Israel was one of the kingdoms -- or nations -- of THIS WORLD -- and, although no nation should fight -- none needs to fight -- they DO go to war and fight, and Israel did fight.

But Jesus made plain that HIS PEOPLE, now the begotten citizens of His KINGDOM, DO NOT FIGHT! If His Kingdom were one of this world's governments, then His servants -- His citizens would fight! As it is, His PEOPLE DO NOT FIGHT!

So, UNDERSTAND THIS! The reception of God's Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ begets one into this SPIRITUAL KINGDOM. AS long as God's Spirit dwells within him, he has SPIRITUAL CITIZENSHIP in GOD'S KINGDOM.

Now notice Philippians 3:20-21: "For OUR CITIZENSHIP [see margin] is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his GLORIOUS body ..." (See also I Corinthians 15:49-54; Revelation 1:13-16.)

The Spirit-begotten true Christian receives a NEW, a different, a SPIRITUAL CITIZENSHIP! He becomes a CITIZEN of the KINGDOM OF GOD! But, since God's Kingdom has not yet come to earth, as it shall, to RULE ALL NATIONS under the glorified CHRIST as KING of kings, this spiritual citizenship IS RESERVED IN HEAVEN, as of now!

Then, WHAT IS OUR STATUS? We are, naturally, born citizens, or subjects, of the government under which we have been born (or naturalized). As such, we are LOYAL citizens or subjects. We LOVE our country. We are SUBJECT to its laws, its authority. WE ACKNOWLEDGE NO OTHER ALLEGIANCE TO ANY EARTHLY POWER!

BUT, we now also have a spiritual citizenship, IN HEAVEN. But we are not in heaven, but here on earth WHAT THEN?

We are here on earth as "AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST" (II Corinthians 5:20). Even Abraham, whose were the PROMISES, was merely a sojourner in the promised land, "as in a strange country." He is the father of the faithful, and spiritually we are here in the same way, even though we have national citizenship, AS AMBASSADORS representing KING CHRIST who is IN HEAVEN.

This spiritual CITIZENSHIP -- to be brought, later, literally to this earth -- does make a difference between the one who HAS IT, and owes spiritual ALLEGIANCE to it, and one whose only citizenship is to a war-making kingdom of THIS WORLD.

Thus, the true Spirit-begotten Christian, in a sense, has a new DUAL citizenship. But, in his new CHRISTIAN LIFE -- his primary allegiance, above all, is to ALMIGHTY GOD THE CREATOR, and to his Lord and Savior JESUS CHRIST, coming KING of the Kingdom of God! He is completely loyal in his heart, his attitude, his sympathies, his obligations, concerning all governments of this world, to HIS COUNTRY in which he was born or has national citizenship.

Most civil government laws are based, in principle, on God's Great Law, the Ten Commandments. Laws against murder, stealing, etc., are all based on God's principles.

But, where there might be conflict, as between national obligations and COMMANDS OF GOD, as we have shown from the beginning -- for the true Spirit-begotten Christian, HE MUST OBEY GOD, even though still being subject to penalties, if need be, of his national government.

His PHYSICAL citizenship -- his EARTHLY citizenship -- his NATIONAL citizenship is wholeheartedly confined to his national country. But he also has a SPIRITUAL citizenship, which in NO WAY is hostile toward, or an enemy of, his country of this world. And he will, in most cases, make a BETTER CITIZEN for his earthly nation than those who do not have this obedient subjection to the God who is the God of our nation, after all!

As an AMBASSADOR for CHRIST, he abides loyally with all laws, rules and regulations of this earthly country, pays taxes, pays his way -- but, as the United States Ambassador to the Soviet Union does not fight in the Red Army, he takes no part in the military establishment.

Jesus did not join the Roman army, which controlled Palestine when He was on earth. Christ, today, in us, will not enter the military service. The true Christian today is like the Apostle Paul, who said: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth IN ME; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God ..." (Galatians 2:20)

God's Word teaches that CHRIST, in Spirit, MUST LIVE IN US -- "Christ IN YOU, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

Carnality in a man will fight, and think it right. His so thinking does not make it right -- because GOD, not man, defines what is SIN and what is righteousness. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of DEATH" (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25)

Sin is SIN, regardless. But we do not judge those who think military service and killing in war is right. God has not set us to be their judges. Neither do we condemn them.

The judgment of God is NOW on the House of God. The true Christian, who has this UNDERSTANDING, is held accountable, NOW! Judgment on the WORLD will come with the coming of Christ to rule! We do not say that this makes it RIGHT for the unconverted to participate in war, because he thinks it right. But God knows how, equitably, to judge each one.

Still we say, if ANY nation would OBEY GOD in His commands against killing, and war, and would RELY ON GOD, who commands, "Thou SHALT NOT KILL," God would fight its battles, and that nation would have PEACE!

Personal Application of the Command

Now notice NEW TESTAMENT teaching in regard to this command, "Thou shalt not kill."

Jesus said, "Think NOT that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matthew 5:17-18).

He set us an example, of obedience to the Law (John 15:10), that we should follow His example (I Peter 2:21). And so WE, too, must fulfill the Law (James 2:8), two of whose points are "Do not commit adultery," and "Do not kill" (verse 11).

Far from abolishing God's Law, transgression of which is SIN, Jesus put a magnifying glass on it -- so that we might see how to obey it in PRINCIPLE, and in SPIRIT, not merely according to literal letter.

Jesus Christ came into this world to "magnify" God's law and make it honourable (Isaiah 42:21). Jesus cast a spotlight as it were on the Ten Commandments, and showed their real spiritual intent and meaning in the full Christian life.

Jesus said: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire" (Matthew 5:21-22).

Here, killing, murder, war, is traced to its source -- hate, anger, self-centeredness of carnality, greed, lust, spirit of competition, spirit of aggression.

Christ declared that if personal anger filled the heart of one of His subjects, such a person is in danger of judgment. If that anger leads a man to have utter derision and contempt for his fellow human being, that man shall be "in danger of the council" -- of God's punishment. If in bitterness and scorn a man shall say of his fellow, "Thou fool," an expression which in the original Greek marked condemnation, such a man shall be "in danger of the hell of fire."

This is Jesus Christ's application of the Sixth Commandment to you and me respecting individuals. If we harbor hate and anger in our hearts, we are harboring the "spirit" of MURDER!

In a military organization, if men are not taught to hate, and to want to kill (the enemy, of course), he is not likely to be a very good soldier.

Action follows thought. First we think, then we do! The Spirit of Christ guides us not only to control our actions, but to control our thoughts and our attitudes!

In part, the New Covenant is the process of God writing His LAW in our hearts, and minds, and inward parts (Hebrews 8:10).

God spoke through Paul: "Dearly beloved, avenge NOT yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Romans 12:19).

Man is incapable of taking vengeance with proper wisdom and justice to all concerned. God ALONE has the wisdom and the power and the "right" to take vengeance on human beings -- to the extent of executing them if need be. The true Christian must learn that God is REAL -- and that His protection and His vengeance are just as real!

The Character You Should Build

How, then, should you deal with your enemies? "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:20-21).

It takes real strength of character to help and serve your fellow human being when he has directly tried to harm you! It takes the spiritual wisdom to realize that he is a fellow human being, made in the image of God, and simply misguided for the time being in his thoughts and actions.

Instead of the natural tendency to want to "get even" with one who has done us wrong, a real Christian must really LEARN the lesson that the Apostle Paul was allowed to bring to us directly from the lips of Christ: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

God is the GIVER of every good and every perfect gift (James 1:17). He has given us our lives, our strength, our minds, our abilities -- everything we have or hope to have comes from Him! In order to live happily forever as God's son, man also must learn to GIVE -- to serve -- to love. This is the great LESSON of life.

The perfect definition of this highest of all attributes -- Christian LOVE -- is given in the 13th chapter of I Corinthians. Read it. Study it.

The spirit of malice and murder is the exact OPPOSITE of this basic attribute which God requires of His sons.

Notice the Apostle John's emphasis of this point: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we LOVE the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (I John 3:14-15).

A continued lack of love in carnal human beings leads to hate. And hate leads to MURDER. God says the spirit of hate is murder!

And this "spirit" of murder is not an indefinable nothing. Doctors and psychologists have clinically proved that people in the attitude of strife and malice and hate literally become SICK physically -- and have a form of mental INSANITY if this mental attitude is not changed! And in all too many cases, these wrong emotions lead to the literal MURDER of a fellow human being.

Concerning these wrong emotions of lust and hate and covetousness, God warns us: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love 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 pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (I John 2:15-16).

The Breaking Down of Spiritual Principles

To a far greater extent than most of us realize, our modern society is literally based on a system of competition, greed and selfishness. In other words -- in plain language -- it is based on the spirit of MURDER!

You have never thought of it that way before, have you? Well, it is fact, and it is time you came out of this modern "Babylon" (Revelation 18:4) before Almighty God intervenes to PUNISH!

The spirit of God's Law as magnified by Jesus Christ is as totally opposed to every form of war as would seem possible!

Nearly all the really great religious and political leaders of the world have acknowledged the utter FUTILITY of war.

Before the outbreak of World War II, Pope Pius XII declared: "Everything is gained by peace; nothing is gained by war."

One of the most respected statesmen and military leaders of our time, General Douglas MacArthur, has stated: "Men since the beginning of time have sought peace ... military alliances, balances of powers, leagues of nations, all in turn failed, leaving the only path to be by way of the crucible of war. The utter destructiveness of war now blots out this alternative. We have had our last chance.

"If we will not devise some greater and equitable system, our Armageddon will be at the door. The problem basically is THEOLOGICAL and involves a spiritual recrudescence, and improvement of human character that will synchronize with our almost matchless advances in science, art, literature, and all material and cultural developments of the past two thousand years. It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh. "

Humanity's "last chance" is to REPENT of the sin of war before human annihilation removes every vestige of life from this planet!

General MacArthur acknowledged that the problem we face is theological -- it is a Christian problem involving a true knowledge of the true GOD! He went on to say that it involves "an improvement of human character."

All-time Greatest Statesman

The greatest statesman of all time was Jesus Christ. He was the Spokesman for the Government or Kingdom of God. Christ said: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy. 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" (Matthew 5:43-44). There is a great deal of highly respectable, cultured, and most interesting paganism abroad in the world today under the name of "Christianity." But can even this sophisticated paganism face these clear words

of Jesus Christ without confessing that His life, His teaching, and His Spirit CONDEMN the very essence of war?

More lives have been snuffed out prematurely, more suffering has been endured, more homes have been wrecked and broken, more time and property has been utterly wasted because of the scourge of war than through any other means in the history of man!

And war has NEVER solved the problems of men or brought permanent peace. Instead, it only breeds more war! "For all they that take the sword shall PERISH with the sword" (Matthew 26:52).

The Bible Teaching

Jesus Christ came into this world as a messenger of the Government or Kingdom of God.

He took no part in this world's politics or wars. On trial for His very life before Pontius Pilate, He said: "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" (John 18:36).

As we have stated, only GOD who gave life has the right to take life. Therefore, only GOD has the right to wage war! And, as Jesus taught, God does not choose to have His children wage war.

And wars fought by and for the governments or kingdoms of this world are in defiance of the higher government and RULE of Almighty God from whom all real authority proceeds.

The Apostle Paul stated to the Christians at Corinth: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not WAR after the flesh" (II Corinthians 10:3).

Through the Apostle James, God shows that war results from a type of spirit exactly opposite that which He wants His servants to have.

"From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your LUSTS that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not" (James 4:1-2).

A Lack of Real FAITH

Men do not BELIEVE that God could give them -- individually and nationally -- the material possessions that they want and need. Instead, they feel they must compete and fight and WAR to get these things.

When an aggressor attacks, peoples and nations of this world REFUSE to trust God to deliver them as He did ancient Israel at the Red Sea (Exodus 14) and in other instances.

Today, we are divided and confused in our religious, political and national loyalties. There is no modern Moses to command us: "The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace" (Exodus 14:14).

In plain language, there is no nation on earth -- including America and Britain -- that really KNOWS and TRUSTS the true living GOD for His supernatural protection in time of war!

Instead, we seem to find it easier to spend countless BILLIONS of dollars and man-hours to protect ourselves. Countless millions of lives are lost or crippled or ruined. And millions of young men are taught to become effective killers -- murderers!

Indeed, one of the most devastating indictments against war is that it breeds in whole populations the spirit of violence and MURDER.

No wonder there is so much violence, crime, adultery and broken homes in the wake of every war! More than any other one thing, war breeds the spirit of murder! And that evil spirit is growing and increasing throughout the world today!

God's Government Will End War

Jesus Christ came preaching the good news of the government or RULE of God. That rule is based on the Ten Commandments -- God's spiritual Law.

Jesus magnified that Law and showed its spiritual intent and purpose. He taught that if we even hate our brother, we are spiritually guilty of murder! Jesus taught that men should OBEY the laws of God and prepare for His coming Kingdom by yielding themselves to let God's laws -- His character -- be placed within them.

When God's Government does come very soon now to this earth, His LAW will go forth as the standard of conduct of all nations (Micah 4:1-2). At that time, God alone will wage war to punish rebellious nations in perfect wisdom and justice.

As for the peoples of the world themselves? "... nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (verse 3).

War involves learning to hate and kill! Young men will no longer be forced to LEARN an attitude which is diametrically opposed to the rule of God's law of love!

But meanwhile, true Christians must work and pray for God's Kingdom of peace, and we must realize that the spirit of war is the spirit of MURDER -- and avoid it with all of our strength.

Jesus Christ and War

Speaking before the League of Nations, Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick put this thought in a very powerful way:

"We cannot reconcile Jesus Christ and war -- that is the essence of the matter. That is the challenge which today should stir the conscience of Christendom. War is the most colossal and ruinous social sin that afflicts mankind; it is utterly and irremediably unchristian; in its total method and effect it means everything that Jesus did not mean and it means nothing that He did mean; it is a more blatant denial of every Christian doctrine about God and man than all the theoretical atheists on earth ever could devise. It would be worthwhile, would it not, to see the Christian Church claim as her own this greatest moral issue of our time, to see her lift once more as in our fathers' days, a clear standard against the paganism of this present world and, refusing to hold her conscience at the beck and call of belligerent states, put the kingdom of God above nationalism and call the world to peace? That would not be the denial of patriotism but its apotheosis."

The essence of the matter is that Jesus Christ is against the spirit of war in every form. He is against war - and someday He will put an end to it forever!

He is against all malice and envy and hate. Jesus Christ taught the dignity of man and the sacredness of human life -- "created in the image of God."

And the great Father of Jesus Christ, the Almighty GOD who governs the universe from His throne in heaven, that God thunders at an age of violence and rebellion: "Thou shalt not kill!"