

Questions about War

1. Introduction to the 'How to Respond To . . .' series:

- We live in a fast moving, fast changing culture.
- People are looking to the church (that's you and me) for a response.
- This series will offer Biblical responses to some of life's contemporary challenges and issues.
- The goal is not to 'indoctrinate' or give the answers, but rather to start the discussion and provide a resource.

2. War: Why this question?

- There is disagreement with-in the Christian Church about the War in Iraq. So, it raises the question: *Is it Scriptural and God-pleasing for Christians/Countries to be at war?*
- How do we respond from a Christian/ Lutheran perspective when asked about war?
- Our purpose is to present Scripture on the subject of War, address some common questions and stumbling blocks people have surrounding this topic, and enable you to know with confidence and speak with clarity what the Bible says about this topic

3. What does Scripture say about War?

- The Song of Moses and Miriam refer to the Lord as warrior (Exodus 15:3-4)

³ The LORD is a **warrior**; the LORD is his name. ⁴ Pharaoh's chariots and his army he has hurled into the sea. The best of Pharaoh's officers are drowned in the Red Sea. ^[a]

- Amalekites attacked the Israelites at Rephidim. (Exodus 17: 8-16)

⁸ The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim ⁹ Moses said to Joshua, "Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands."¹⁶ He said, "For hands were lifted up to the throne of the LORD. The LORD will be at **war** against the Amalekites from generation to generation."

- As the Israelites begin to take-over the promised land Moses references the "Book of the Wars" (Numbers 21:10-14)

¹⁰ The Israelites moved on and camped at Oboth. ¹¹ Then they set out from Oboth and camped in Iye Abarim, in the desert that faces Moab toward the sunrise. ¹² From there they moved on and camped in the Zered Valley. ¹³ They set out from there and camped alongside the Arnon, which is in the desert extending into Amorite territory. The Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites. ¹⁴ That is why the **Book of the Wars** of the LORD says:

- David's psalm and song remembers God's glory and power. Times and cultures change, but God is always majestically present as defender and provider.
(Psalm 68:30-31)

³⁰ Rebuke the beast among the reeds, the herd of bulls among the calves of the nations. Humbled, may it bring bars of silver. Scatter the nations who delight in *war*. ³¹ Envoys will come from Egypt; Cush will submit herself to God.

- Solomon's observations about life, which includes war. (Ecclesiastes 3: 1,3 & 8)

¹ There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: ³ a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, ⁸ a time to love and a time to hate, *a time for war* and a time for peace.

- Daniel says that wars will take place until the end times. (Daniel 9:25-26)

²⁵ "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree ^[a] to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, ^[b] the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. ²⁶ After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. ^[c] The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: *War* will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed.

- Matthew quotes Jesus saying that there will be wars. (Matthew 24:6 -7)

⁶You will hear of *wars and rumors of wars*, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁷Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places.

- The author of Revelation speaks of God who comes with justice and war (Revelation 19:11)

¹¹I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. (See also Revelation 6:1&2 and 16:16-19:1)

4. What does scripture say in opposition to war?

- Ecclesiastes 9:18... "Wisdom is better than weapons of war"
- Proverbs 16:32... "Better a patient man than a warrior"
- Luke 6:27 ... "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you"
- Matthew 26:52... "All who draw the sword will die by the sword"
- Matthew 6:89 ... "If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also"
- 2 Corinthians 10:3... "Do not wage war as the world does"

5. How does a Christian reconcile the two ethical positions, to War or not to War?

- "The wars of the Lord" came at a unique time in the history of God's people and were the Lord's battle and victory.
- War is the result of man's sinfulness and a way for God to deal with it.
- God gave His people guidance both on when to go to war and how to conduct oneself in war.

- God's judgment was swift when kings or generals went beyond God's instructions.
- War is used by God to serve His own good purpose.
- War will come to an end, when Jesus the Messiah returns a second time.
- Wars and rumors of wars are signs of the immanent return of Jesus Christ.
- Spiritual warfare is going on now, will end in the ultimate, final defeat of Satan and his evil forces.
- A "Just-War" position has been developed by the church to bridge two historical extremes of pacifism and the crusades. Dr. Johnson in a Lutheran Witness article dated January 2003, helps us bridge the gape. He says regarding the Lutheran Confessional writings...

"While the Lutheran confessional writings do not treat the subject of war at length, they do contain significant references to it (for example, in Luther's commentary on the Lord's Prayer in the Large Catechism, in Article 21 of the Augsburg Confession, and in Article 4 of The Apology of the Augsburg Confession). Most important, perhaps, is the specific reference to just-wars in Article 16 of the Augsburg Confession: "Christians may without sin...engage in just-wars, serve as soldiers..." Lutheranism inherited the just-war doctrine. For Lutherans, of course, its theological foundations lies in the analysis of the Christian's life in "two kingdoms." This teaching was based on the tension between Christ's rejection of violence in the Sermon on the Mount and those passages in Scripture that admonished obedience to secular governments Rom. 13:1-2; 1 Peter 2:13-14).

For Luther, God ordained the spiritual kingdom by which the Holy Spirit produces righteous people under Christ, and He also ordained the temporal kingdom by which wicked are restrained and outward peace maintained. "No Christian," Luther wrote, shall wield or invoke the sword for himself and his cause. On behalf of another, however, he may and should wield it and invoke it to restrain wickedness..."

- **The classical "Just-War" tradition involves seven points which can be grouped into two categories - one governing the choice to go to war and the other governing proper actions during war.**
 - **A Just Going to War (*Jus ad Bellem*)**
 - i. Just cause
 - ii. Declaration by proper authority
 - iii. Right intention
 - iv. Reasonable chance of success
 - v. End proportional to the means used
 - **Just Conduct in War (*Jus in Bello*)**
 - i. Discrimination
 - ii. Proportionality

6. Today's Question's

- What does it mean to have a just-war in an era of "weapons of mass destruction"?
- Can nuclear, or biological, or chemical war be a just war?
- Does the unprovoked "first strike" against another country challenge the application of the historic just-war doctrine?

Truths to take home and live out as Lutheran Christians we ...

- Are called to responsible service “in” the world, politically and militarily, for the sake of others.
- Should pray for wisdom, and especially for those in positions of governmental authority.
- Should be willing to discuss issues of war and peace with others and listen carefully to a variety of view points.
- Should encourage avenues of peaceful conflict resolution.
- Pray for peace and have a passion for peace.
- Above all remember true freedom comes from the Gospel promise that our destiny with God is His free gift of grace in Jesus Christ and not our own works. (John 3:16,17 & Eph. 2:8 & 9)