

Pacifists hoping for worldwide peace should heed the Words of Jesus:

"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword." Matthew 10:34

For the man who believes that God's commands of the Old Testament, which require capital punishment for murderers and military self-defence for nations, could be abolished by the coming of our Lord - Jesus said:

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them." Matthew 5:17

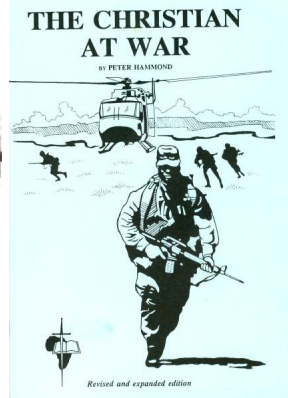
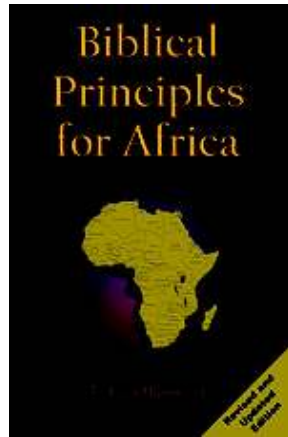
For those who believe that Jesus is a pacifist, the Scriptures teach that

"With justice He judges and makes war... He will rule them with an iron sceptre. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty... King of Kings and Lord of Lords."

Revelation 19:11,15,16



This message is also available in Afrikaans, German and Spanish.



WAR and the CHRISTIAN

Today, much debate and controversy rages over military service; whether Pacifism is the answer to violence, or whether a Christian should be involved in the active military defence of his country. **Can a Christian be a soldier?** Is it ever permissible to take another's life? In all these matters of faith and conduct the Word of God is our authority, and so we turn to the Bible to answer these questions:

DOES GOD EVER KILL?

Yes, the Creator of all life (Gen. 1; Jhn. 1:1-3; Heb. 1:3) *"determines whether you live or die"* Daniel 5:23. God killed everyone on earth, except Noah, his family and the animals - in **the Flood** (Genesis 6:5-7; 13; 7:4; 23). God killed every Egyptian first-born son as a judgment on Egypt and in order to free the Israelites on the night of **the Passover** (Ex . 12:12, 29). God destroyed the Egyptian army in the **Red Sea** (Exodus 14:13-31; 15:1-18). The Lord caused the earth to open up and swallow the Hebrews who had rebelled against Moses (Numbers 16:20,21; 23-35). God killed Annias and Sapphira because of their lying (Acts 5:1-11); and Herod because of his pride (Acts 12:23), and God continues to use *"My four dreadful judgements - sword and famine and wild beasts and plague"* Ezekiel 14:21, in order to lead sinful people to repent.

HAS GOD EVER COMMANDED MEN TO KILL?

Yes. *"Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed."* Genesis 9:6.

"Anyone who strikes a man and kills him shall surely be put to death. If a man schemes and kills another man deliberately, take him away from My altar and put him to death... Anyone who kidnaps... must be put to death... You are to take life for life". Exodus 21:12; 14; 16; 23.

"Do not allow a sorceress to live." Exodus 22:18



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False prophets were also to be executed (Deut.13:1-5)

"A prophet who presumes to speak in My Name anything I have not commanded him to say or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods must be put to death." Deut.18:20.

The God who commanded individuals in the Sixth Commandment - **"You shall not murder"** Exodus 20:13, also commanded the Nation of Israel, as a whole, to annihilate the Hittites, Gergashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. **"When the Lord your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them and show them no mercy."** Deut.7:2.

God's commandment to the individual is to "Not murder": God's command to the nation was to **"destroy them totally"** because their evil debauchery and sinfulness had made them God's enemy. Killing by an individual (out of selfish motivations, vengefulness and greed, etc.) is always prohibited, but killing by a nation (for self-defence and justice) is commanded.

DO GOVERNMENTS HAVE AUTHORITY FROM GOD?

Yes, Jesus emphasized that civil authority is delegated by God when He said to Pilate: **"You would have no power over Me if it were not given to you from above."** John 19:11.

Paul wrote: **"Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good."** Titus 3:1.

"Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities because there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves... he is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience." Romans 13:1-5.

It is worth noting that Paul wrote that Scripture during the reign of a particularly ruthless pagan government (that of Nero) which persecuted the Church!

Like Daniel, or Joseph, Christians are to serve God worthily within the framework of any system of government under which he is called to live. Joseph rose to be the governor of pagan Egypt without compromising his faith and was mightily used to save the Hebrews from starvation. Daniel fearlessly testified to God's power and sovereignty within the pagan courts of Nebuchadnezzar, Belchazzar and Darius, rising to the highest levels of government.

"The Most High is Sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone He wishes." Daniel 4:17.

"He sets up kings and deposes them." Daniel 2:21.

God raised up Pharaoh (Romans 9:17); Cyrus (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1-4); and Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2:37,38). Even Pilate received his position and power by God's perfect sovereign will and design (John 19:11).

Hence Jesus taught: **"Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's."** Mark 12:17. This teaches our dual responsibility. As citizens, we are responsible to obey the laws of the land, pay our taxes and defend our country. As members of the Church, we are responsible to love God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind, obey His Commands and seek first God's Kingdom.

Only if the state forbids obedience to God may we say with the Apostle: **"We must obey God rather than men!"** Acts 5:29. When the state forbids prayer to God (Daniel 6:6-13), forbids

evangelism (Acts 5:40-42), or commands us to worship false gods (Daniel 3:12-18), then we must say:- **"Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God."** Acts 4:19.

So, with such exceptions as worship, education and evangelism, Christians are commanded to:

"Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by Him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right." Peter 2-13 14

CAN A CHRISTIAN BE A SOLDIER?

Yes. Much of the Bible is written by soldiers and for soldiers. **Joshua** was a mighty man of God and a mighty soldier commanding the Israelite army in battle against the Amalekites (Exodus 17:8-16), and in the conquest of the promised land (Joshua).

King **David** was **"a man after God's own heart"**, and the writer of much of the Psalms, as well as a great soldier (1 Samuel 17:45-47; 18:5; 7; 17; 2 Samuel 5:17-25; 8:1-14; 10:12; 12:26-29). Hence David was able to say:-

**"Praise be to the Lord, my Rock,
Who trains my hands for war,
my fingers for battle.
He is my loving God and my fortress,
my stronghold and my deliverer,
my shield, in whom I take refuge.
Who subdues peoples under me."**

Psalm 144:1, 2

Abraham resorted to military action to rescue Lot from four heathen kings (Genesis 14:11-16).

Deborah and **Barak** were led by the Lord to conquer Sisera and the Canaanite armies (Judges 4:14,15).

Gideon was commanded by God to defeat the Midianites and rescue Israel from their power (Judges 6:14).

God gave **Samson** the power to defeat the Philistines and keep Israel safe for twenty years (Judges 14:19; 15:14,15,20; 16:28-30).

The four centurions (Roman officers) mentioned in the New Testament are all commended in one way or another (Luke 7:9; 23:47; Acts 10:2; 27:43). The Centurion at Capernaum was praised for his faith. Cornelius and the Italian Regiment of the Roman Army had the great honour of being the first Gentiles to be baptised by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ.

Throughout the Bible, the work and calling of soldiers are frequently mentioned, yet never with any suggestion that it could be, in and of itself, dishonourable or unchristian. John the Baptist, in answering the soldiers' question of what they were to do, never suggested that they should leave the army. He merely replied, **"Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely - be content with your pay."** Luke 3:14. John told them to be good soldiers.

The Christian life is often likened to many acceptable and honourable occupations, such as that of a farmer, athlete, worker, citizen, pilgrim and soldier (1 Tim.6:12; 2 Tim.2:3,4; Eph . 6:11-17). Many of the aspects of a soldier's life, such as his spirit of self-sacrifice, discipline and loyalty are commended. As Jesus said:

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