

mentioned in Scripture (**Numbers 31, I Samuel 30:22-25, I Chronicles 26:27**).

JUST AND UNJUST WARS

The term “holy war” does not occur in the Bible but the principle is there. God promised military victory to His people if they were obedient to His law (**Leviticus 26:6-8**). Warfare is a divine activity. Israel fought for God against Amalek, His enemy (**Exodus 17:8-16**). In **verse 16**, the Lord Himself said He would war with Amalek. This was a religious war led and instigated by God. The very first time the word war is mentioned in the Bible (**Genesis 14:2**), Abraham waged an offensive war to deliver his nephew Lot, and God blessed him and honored him (**verses 13-24**).

CONCLUSION

In holy wars, there must be a holy cause (**I Samuel 17:29**) by a holy people (**Deuteronomy 23:9, II Kings 17:11**). Any other type of war is unjust and unholy. Nehemiah fought a defensive holy war (**Nehemiah 4:11-14**). But the defensive war of **Jeremiah 27** was unjust because God was judging His people with an invading army. The Benjaminites waged a defensive war against the other eleven tribes of Israel to protect some sodomites and God judged them. It is unjust to protect wickedness. Not all offensive or defensive wars are just. Again, the cause must be holy in order to have a holy war. If it is not, it is only legalized murder and the earth has had its fill of that, Amen.

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.”

Revelation 19:11

The RICHIES

OF GRACE

Robert W. Reed
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"hath appeared to all men." Titus 2:11

WAR

“The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name.”

Exodus 15:3

+ Biblical Warfare +

The biblical doctrine of war is a much-needed study in the society in which we live. There is a variety of opinions and ideas in every direction possible concerning the subject of war. Many people are divided on this issue, from warmongers to pacifists. Thousands of wars have been fought over the centuries and many peace treaties have been signed and broken. War has killed millions of people and brought hardship to many nations. The Scripture has much to say about war and the word war is mentioned over three hundred times in the Bible. Shall we approach this subject carefully and prayerfully, Amen.

“Blessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight.”

Psalms 144:1



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*“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,
and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”*
Acts 16:31

This article will consider the Biblical doctrine of war and military regulations and exemptions. We will also take a look at just and unjust wars.

THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF WAR

According to **Exodus 15:3**, “*The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name.*” If all wars are wrong, why is God referred to as a man of war? The context (**Exodus 15:1-21**) is speaking of the great victory God gave to Moses and the children over Pharaoh and his army as they were delivered out of Egypt. The Lord fought their battle and they rejoiced in song and dance.

War is a consequence of sin but is not sin itself. In other words, not all war is evil. God uses war in His justice and divine vengeance. Please understand that there is a proper and right use of war. God makes war with the wicked (not the righteous) in order to punish sin. There is such a thing as holy war which will be discussed later. Religious wars were fought on behalf of God (**I Samuel 21:14**) and many times before a battle was actually fought there were religious ceremonies held (**I Samuel 7:9-10**). In **Psalms 144:1**, the Psalmist David said that God taught him how to fight and make war, “*Blessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight.*” David was not only a warrior (**I Chronicles 18:6, 13**) but he was a man after God’s own heart (**Acts 13:22**).

Israel fought with the sword but it was God who destroyed their enemies (**Psalms 44:1-3**). God is called the “Lord of Host,” a name of the Lord meaning the Lord of the armies (**I Samuel 15:2, 17:45**). In **Joshua 5:13-15**, Joshua went out to survey the situation before going to Jericho and the captain of the host met with him, who was none other than the Lord Himself. God used war to bring Israel out of Egypt (**Deuteronomy 4:34**). It was God that fought for Israel (**Deuteronomy 1:28-30**). The **book of Numbers** is a book dedicated to war. In **Numbers 21:14**, there is reference to the book of the wars of the Lord, which included all the battles from the Red Sea to the conquest of Canaan. These wars are said to be the wars of the Lord, that is, they were His battles. The doctrine of war is seen throughout the Scriptures.

MILITARY REGULATIONS AND EXEMPTIONS

Israel had more of a militia than a standing army. In **Numbers 1:3**, the age limit began at twenty years old and upward to go to war, “*From twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel: thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies*” (**verses 20, 22, 32-34, 36, 38-40, and 45**). The tribe of Levi (priests) were exempt from fighting, (**verses 47-50**). The **book of Deuteronomy** in **chapter twenty** describes several regulations and exemptions. In **Deuteronomy 20:1-4**, faith played a major role in warfare. The Lord promised His people that He would go before them in battle and that they were not to be fearful, even if out-numbered by the enemy. The priests were to speak to the people about faith and courage before each battle (**verses 2-4**). According to **Hebrews 11:32-34**, it was through faith that kingdoms were subdued and men were valiant in fighting.

Some exemptions are listed in **Deuteronomy 20:5-8**. If a man had built a new house, planted a vineyard or betrothed a wife, and had not married her, he was exempted from military duty for a period of time. A man who had married was exempted from war the first year of his marriage according to **Deuteronomy 24:5**. One other exemption is found in **verse 8**, the faint-hearted was exempt because fear is the opposite of faith and battles are to be fought in faith (**verses 1-4**). Most of these exemptions were a safeguard for families on which society is built. It gave young men the opportunities to enjoy the blessings of God as His covenant people. It protected them from the possibility of dying early. More regulations are given in **verses 10-20**. Before making a declaration of war on another nation, peace was to be offered (**verses 10-18**). This was to avoid unnecessary bloodshed. The only exception to this were the nations mentioned in **verse 17**, for they were under the curse of God. In **verse 12**, instructions are given if a nation refuses peace. The purpose for killing the men only in **verses 13 and 14**, is so they would not have to fight the same people again; so, they were to fight to win. War was not to be waged against innocent people. That culture would become non-existent and the women and children would be integrated into another nation. Also, war was not to be waged against God’s creation (**verse 19-20**). There was to be no scorched earth policy or total destruction of a land. Man is the sinner, not nature; therefore God’s creation was not to be fought against. The law of booty is also