

Are Military Service and War Proper Activities for God's People?

At the time of this writing another war has erupted on earth, that of the United States against the Afghanistan Taliban regime, the militant Islamic sect that has imposed a repressive rule upon the citizens of that mountainous enclave. This war erupted out of the terrible terrorist attack upon the World Trade Center Towers in Manhattan, New York City, on September 11, 2001, when several Middle Eastern men commandeered two airliners in flight and rammed one plane into each tower. They burned and within a short time collapsed into a heap of dust and rubble. Up to 5,000 people were feared dead in the attack.

Not far away, in Washington, D.C., another airliner was accosted under similar circumstances and slammed into the Pentagon, nerve center of the U.S. armed forces and intelligence services, killing dozens and causing a devastating fire. Another airliner around the same time was overtaken by hijackers south of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, and flown towards Washington, D.C., before it was either overtaken by passengers or shot down by a U.S. fighter jet.

In response to these terrible killings by pro-Islamic radicals, likely trained in Afghanistan and supported by Iraqi, Palestinian, and Saudi Arabian organizations, U.S. and British government leaders responded with a plan to attack Afghanistan military targets, and attempt to locate and exterminate Taliban mastermind Osama bin Laden. Troops and equipment were airlifted to that region, aircraft carriers and cruisers were dispatched to the coast of Pakistan, and the carnage began as fighters, bombers, helicopters, and special forces began the task of uprooting the Taliban regime.

Did the U.S. and Britain respond to this terrible atrocity properly by sending troops and armaments to kill and maim soldiers and civilians half ways

around the world? Is there a better response than this one? What does God Almighty say should be the response for a people committed to serving Him despite what other nations throughout history have done: conquer territory and terrify citizens through a force of arms?

The Current State of Our Nations

Citizens of many countries throughout the world are required to go through military training as part of the price for their citizenship. Young men — and sometimes women — in Israel, Switzerland, Norway, and other nations must leave their homes and study the art of war for a period of months. In the United States a volunteer armed service has been adapted, but at times, such as during World War I, World War II, The Korean War, and the Viet Nam War a draft was instituted to coerce young men to fight battles for the sake of government policies. As a result of these declared wars and the participation of millions of soldiers with their guns, rockets, bombs, and knives, multiple millions of lives have been lost ... lives whose loss brought untold anguish to widowed wives, fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, sweethearts, and friends of the victims. The nations' leaders laud these dead soldiers as patriots worthy of great honor ... but some skeptics will question what glory there is in being butchered on a battlefield or in a bunker for the self-centered, elite government leaders who devise wars for particular selfish agendas.

For example, there are some who will claim that the present war in Afghanistan is an effort by the Roman Catholic Church, in particular through its Jesuit order, to try and reverse the effects of the Protestant Reformation, and move the entire earth's belief system under the Pope's umbrella. Some

authorities even suggest the Archbishop of New York had a direct hand in the destruction of the World Trade Center so that America would be brought into a war against the Moslem masses — a group of “apostates” they would rather have eliminated. In the process, the blood of innocent American Protestants would be shed, and the stage may be set for the bombing of the Temple Mount mosque by a disguised renegade group, to allow rebuilding of a new “Vatican Temple” on the present site of the Dome of the Rock. Then the Pope would be able to sit on his throne at the “center of the earth” as potentate over all peoples, wresting control of religious power. Israel and the so-called Jews would be embroiled in a war against Palestine, Arabs, and Moslems on several fronts while the United Nations, a Roman Catholic-promoted organization, would be given control over Jerusalem, and perhaps Afghanistan. Of course, there is the issue of opium production in Afghanistan — and who will control it and its distribution and profits — for well over half of all the illegal opium poppies are grown in that country for the world drug market.

Other conspirators involve Masonic, Zionist, and Illuminati agendas, but they all have one focus: the ascendancy of Satan to control all the earth, and to put down the saints — God’s people in the Spirit — but also to put down physical Israel, the covenant-bearing descendants of Abraham whose promises the Lord God is committed to fulfill. The current upsurge in blatant witchcraft and occult activity is a sure sign of the times we live in, and the power that Satan is expending throughout the earth to capture mankind — God’s pinnacle of creation — to promote his own devices.

What About Killing One’s Fellow Man?

Was man made to be a butcher of his fellow man? The essential commandment on this issue is found in Exodus 20:13 and Deuteronomy 5:17:

“You shall not kill”.

The word for kill in this scripture is *ratsach* (*Strong* 7523), which means “to dash in pieces, i.e., kill a human being, specifically to murder”. Does

this mean that it is alright to kill another person within a so-called “enemy nation” when sent by a government leader into war with that people ... but it is not alright to murder one’s fellow man down the street in one’s home town? What is the difference? They are both creations of God, made in His image.

The Eternal living God states that we are to love both God and our neighbor, as so stated in Matthew 21:36-40:

“‘Master, which is the great commandment in the law?’ Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets’”.

This scripture indicates we are to love our neighbor, and treat him even as we would like to be treated. The *entire meaning* of the Law and the Prophets is summed up in this very concept: Do unto others as you would have others do unto you (Matthew 7:12). How, then, can the idea of even possibly killing another human being enter into the minds of God’s Spirit-begotten people? It cannot! Notice Jesus Christ’s admonition to the disciples in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:38-48):

“You have heard that it has been said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth!’ But I say unto you, Resist not evil, but whoever will smite you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue you at the law and take away your coat, let him have your cloak also. And whoever will compel you to go a mile, go with him two miles. Give to him who asks you, and from him that would borrow of you do not turn away. You have heard that it has been said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy!’ But I say to you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them

that spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love them that love you what reward do you have? Do not even the publicans the same? And if you solute your brethren only, who do you more than others? Do not even the publicans? Be therefore perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

We are instructed by God to *pray* for, and *do good towards*, those who are our enemies. We are to set an an example of righteous living for them, to be lights to the world “... that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). How can killing one’s brother enter into one’s thinking if all thoughts are directed towards uplifting him? Our admonition is to love our brother who is in need.

“But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother has need, and shuts up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him?” (I John 3:17).

“If there be among you a poor man of one of your brethren within any of your gates in the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not harden your heart, nor shut your hand from your poor bother; but you shall open your hand wide unto him, and shall surely lend him sufficient for his need in that which he wants” (Deuteronomy 15:7-8).

The commandment to not murder has its origins in the history of mankind on earth from the very beginning of this aeon. Cain murdered Abel and was thoroughly castigated by God for this heinous act ... showing that God’s laws have been in force from the very beginning (Genesis 4:3-12).

We as Christians are literally commanded to *lay down our lives* for our needful brethren, as Jesus so clearly specified,

“Hereby perceive we the love of God,

because He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (I John 3:16).

“Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

While John 15:13 refers to the righteous giving their lives for commandment keepers (verse 14), we must remember that, having Christ’s mind, a son of His will have the attitude of literally laying down one’s life for all of lost mankind who are presently caught up in their sins ... as Paul stated in Romans 5:7-8,

“For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commends His love towards us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

How can one have this attitude of Christ, to give one’s life for even Bible-hating, envy-possessed, anger-sated Moslem terrorists by killing these misguided people? The very idea flies in the face of Christ’s teachings.

Vengeance Belongs to God!

Moreover, God’s people are commanded not to mete out vengeance themselves should there be the need for some sort of reprisal upon an individual whom one might term an “enemy”. Romans 12:17-19 states,

“Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine; I will repay,’ says the Lord. Therefore if your enemy hungers, feed him, if he thirsts, give him drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good”. (See

also Deuteronomy 32:35; Hebrews 10:30; Proverbs 20:22; 24:29; Psalms 94:1; I Corinthians 4:12; Luke 6:29; I Peter 3:9; I Thessalonians 5:15; Matthew 5:39, 44.)

We as human beings do not have the proper wisdom and justice within us to peer fully into the mind of another person and so judge him to the extent that we might execute him. Our lives are limited by the degree of spiritual might that God gives us, but we certainly cannot read people's minds like God can. Therefore, we cannot fully and in total righteousness judge the other person when it comes to life and death matters ... except the cases where a person has been proven by two or more witnesses to have committed an act worthy of death; then that person is to be killed after thorough examination (see Exodus 21:12-29 and Leviticus 20:1-27).

Rather than mete our vengeance, God tells us to do good towards our enemies and feed them. We are to express total love to God and to our neighbors (Leviticus 19:17-18, reiterated in Matthew 21:36-40). The commandments of Exodus 20:1-17 reveal how God's people are to live, the first four dealing with the way to love God (see Deuteronomy 6:5) and the last six showing how we are to love our neighbor (Leviticus 19:18). Numerous references show how to treat our enemies with kindness, such as the following:

“If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he be thirsty give him water to drink” (Proverbs 25:21).

“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that spitefully use and persecute you” (Matthew 5:44).

“Therefore if your enemy hungers, feed him, if he thirsts, give him drink, for in so doing you shall heap coals of fire on his head” (Romans 12:20).

“But I say unto you that hear, love your enemies, do good to them that hate you ... and do

good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Highest, for He is kind unto the unthankful and the evil” (Luke 6:27,35).

A case to illustrate the above point is succinctly elucidated in Biblical history, in a conflict that occurred between Elisha and the Syrian army. Notice II Kings 6:18-23:

“And when they [the Syrian army] had come down to him [Elisha], Elisha prayed unto the Lord, and said ‘Smite this people, I pray you, with blindness.’ And he smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha. And Elisha said unto them, ‘This is not the way, neither is this the city: Follow me and I will bring you to the man whom you seek’. But he led them to Samaria. And it come to pass, when they had come into Samaria, that Elisha said, ‘Lord, open the eyes of these men that they may see.’ And the Lord opened their eyes, and they saw, and behold, they were in the midst of Samaria. And the king of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them, ‘My father, shall I smite them? Shall I smite them?’ And he answered, ‘You shall not smite them; would you smite those whom you have taken captive with the sword or with the bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master.’ And he prepared great provision for them; and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.”

Notice that rather than jump at the chance to destroy this contingent of Syrian troops, Elisha and the Israelite army *fed* them and sent them away unharmed! What a far cry this method of treatment is to what most commanders would recommend, but the result was immediate and long-lasting: peace with neighboring Syria. This same attitude ought to be shown to other nations with which the United States deals.

More On the Command to Not Kill

Men reason that if they obey the commandment to not kill in military conflicts they will be disarmed, and be taken over by another nation that does not keep the commandments. There is always a way that seems right to man, by the ends of those thought processes lead to death (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25). If a person is on God's side, living within His governmental structure, then God guarantees protection for that individual, as should any nation protect its citizens. God renders war and killing unnecessary for the welfare of any people or nation. It is wise to examine what the Eternal has done for His people through the millennia in the face of invading forces.

Destruction of the Egyptian Army

When Moses led Israel out of Egypt they had been thrust out by the Pharaoh. Ten terrible plagues had reduced the nation from great riches to utter devastation as their crops, livestock, and even their firstborn children were destroyed. The hand of God was with these people who had been slaves under the strong hand of Egyptian taskmasters.

When Israel — 600,000 strong plus women and children, perhaps 4 million in all — had reached the Red Sea they found themselves barred from advancing further by a mountain. Frightened and demoralized, these people had only one hope for deliverance: Almighty God. The Pharaoh was determined to return this slave labor to Egypt.

“...all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army ... overtook them encamping by the sea And when Pharaoh drew near the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the Eternal. And they said unto Moses, ‘Because there were no graves in Egypt have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore have you dealt with us, to carry us out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, Let us alone that we may serve the

Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians than we should die in the wilderness’” (Exodus 14:9-12).

Since God's purpose cannot be thwarted, through Moses He told the Israelite people,

“Fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord that He will show you today The Eternal will fight for you and you shall hold your peace (Exodus 14:13-14).

God put *Himself* on the line to save this special nation — the descendants of Abraham — to whom He had granted a special covenant. The Israelites were not to so much as lift a finger to bring about this salvation — except to move forward as God directed — for the Eternal Himself did the saving. At that point God's angel moved behind the Israelites and a dark cloud separated the army and Israel all night, but Israel had a pillar of light to illuminate their activities. Then God parted the waters of the Red Sea.

“Moses stretched his hand out over the sea, and the Eternal swept the sea long all night with a strong east wind, until the waters parted. The bed of the sea was dry, and the Israelites marched through the sea on dry land, the waters forming a wall on the right and left. The Egyptians pursued them into the sea, all the Pharaoh's horses and chariots and cavalry. 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 until they drove heavily. The Egyptians cried, ‘Let us flee from the Israelites! The Lord is fighting for them against the Egyptians!’ Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Stretch out your hand 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 normal course, and while the Egyptians were fleeing against it the Lord overwhelmed the

Egyptians in the middle of the sea; the waters flowed back over the chariots and cavalry, and over the whole army of the Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea until 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 the right and left. Thus did the Lord save Israel that day from the Egyptians until 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 His servant Moses” (Exodus 14:21-31).

Would God step in to destroy an enemy of a modern nation just as He did for ancient Israel? Of course He could if He so purposed, for a people that bowed down to Him and obeyed Him. The key to Israel’s response was to “Fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord!” The nation to gain God’s protection has the commission to rely totally on His power for protection, but such protection does require obedience to His commands, as will be elaborated upon later.

Protection for Entering Canaan

Not many days after the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea, Israel was given the law at Mt. Sinai, together with the statutes and judgements, which would form the basis of this unusual nation of kings and priest (Exodus 19:5-6). The commandments were thundered from a smoking Mt. Sinai, and all of Israel bowed down and worshiped this great and powerful God.

Yahweh said He would send an angel before them to keep them safe on their journey into the Promised Land:

“Behold, I send an Angel before you, to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place that I have prepared [in Canaan]. Beware of Him and obey His voice; provoke Him not, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for My Name is in Him. But if you will indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak,

then I will be an enemy to your enemies, and an adversary to your adversaries. For My Angel shall go before you and bring you in unto the Ammorites, and Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites ... and I will cut them off” (Exodus 23:20-23).

The Israelites were not to be protected by their own power, but by the powerful hand of God’s Angel that would go before them to cut off the strong enemy powers that were occupying the land. God gives the land to whomever He wills (Ezekiel 11:17), and these inhabitants of Palestine were living on the land that God had ordained to be occupied by His covenant people Israel. He made the land and prepared it for them; now He was going to move out the “squatters” without Israel having to fight and kill them. After all, they were stronger than Israel (Numbers 13:31).

After admonishing Israel not to bow down to and worship any fake gods of the land, God said He would mightily bless the nation, and also that *He* would drive out the other nations.

“I will send My fear before you, and will destroy all of the people to whom you shall come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. And *I will send hornets before you*, which will drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before you ... Little by little I will drive them out from before you until you are increased, and inherit the land” (Exodus 23:27-28, 30).

God would send hornets — stinging wasps (Hebrew *tsirah*, *Strong* 6880) — before the people to force them from the land. He would fight their battles for them, even using the small but painful stings of wasps to motivate an exodus from Canaan that the Eternal had reserved for His covenant people. The Israelites would have to kill no one! God alone has the right to take life, for He is the One who gives it ... who made mankind in the first place (Genesis 1:26-27). The sixth commandment “You shall not murder” was given by God for man’s guidance in living a peaceful life amongst all nations on

Rewards for obedience

“And I will give you peace in the land, and you shall lie down and none shall make you afraid; and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land” (Leviticus 26:6).

“The Lord will cause your enemies that rise up against you to be smitten before your face; they shall come out against you one way, and flee before you seven ways” (Deuteronomy 28:7).

earth.

The Requirement of Obedience

An understanding that “You shall not murder” is meaningless unless the people adhering to this code are obedient to the entire code of conduct that the Eternal has devised for the good of mankind. The entire nation — or should we say a goodly portion of them — must obey God to truly bring the protections He has guaranteed upon the land. That obedience involves a total confidence in God to carry through His guarantees. A lack of this sort of faith is identified as sin by the Almighty (Romans 14:23), so *it is sin* to fail to trust in God to do whatever fighting and killing is necessary for our protection, since He has promised to fight for us.

This requirement of faith in God for protection on the part of the people of the nation points to their duty to obey the Almighty Creator of all things. After all, faith without works (doing the good deeds that the law specifies) is dead (James 2:20). Notice the rewards for obedience and the curses for disobedience as they relate to war and conflict for God’s people ... or for the people of any nation for that matter (see page 7).

Canaanites to Be Driven Out

Curses for disobedience

“And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant; and when you are gathered together within your cities, I will send the pestilence among you, and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation And I will scatter you among the heathen and will draw out a sword after you, and your land shall be desolate and your cities waste” (Leviticus 26:25, 31, 33).

“The Lord shall bring a nation against you from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flies, a nation whose tongues you shall not understand; a nation of fierce countenance that shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favor to the young ...” (Deuteronomy 28:49-50).

Let us look now at the instructions that God gave Israel when they were to enter the land of Canaan. This was 40 years after the time that Israel had first been instructed to enter the Promised Land, when they rebelled after the evil report of the spies sent into the land (see Numbers 14). Of all the Israelites living at that time only the children and people less than age 20 — plus the righteous and fearless spies Joshua and Caleb — lived to enter Canaan.

God’s directions to Israel are stated in Numbers 33:50-56.

“On the steppes of Moab beside the Jordan, opposite Jerico, the Eternal gave Moses these orders for the Israelites: ‘When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, you must evict all

the natives from the land, you must shatter all their figured stones and all their metal idols, and you must demolish all their shrines; then take possession of the land and live there, for I have given you possession of it. Divide the land among yourselves by lot, clan by clan, assigning more land to the larger clans and less to the smaller. As the lot falls for a man’s sept, so he shall hold his property; the division is to be made by clans. But if you will not evict the natives from the land, those you allow to remain will worry you like a speck in your eye or a thorn in your side, they will be a trouble to you in the land, and as I meant to treat them so will I treat you.’”

The native tribes of Canaan at that time were horribly evil, sacrificing their children to Baal and Molech on burning altars, committing unspeakable sexual practices, and in other ways profaning God’s

universal laws so profoundly that ...

“... the land is defiled; therefore I visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomits out her inhabitants. You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgements, and shall not commit any of those abominations, neither any of your own nation nor any stranger that sojourns among you (for all those abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled); that the land spew you not out also, when you defile it, as it spewed out the nations that were before you” (Leviticus 18:25-28),

This is essentially a reiteration of God’s pledge to “drive them out before you” written in Exodus 23:31. No military weapons or need to kill are mentioned in this command to drive away the Canaanites. The Hebrew word *yaresh* (Strong 3423) for “drive them out” means “to occupy by driving out previous tenants, and possessing in their place”. They were to destroy the images, pictures, and high places of these tribes, but the act of evicting them did not involve killing. Of course, if God desired that method of removal He was free to use it, though He did not specify that method to be used by His people. Because God is the same for all times and places, then these teachings must apply today as much as they did in Moses’ time (see Hebrews 13:8 and Malachi 3:6).

Israel Eventually Did Fight

Israel eventually did fight battles with other tribes and nations, but they should not have. In doing so the nation sinned. If only they would have expressed proper faith in the Almighty God of all power they would never have had to lift a finger in their own defense, but the lure to conform to the nations around them proved to be very strong.

After being saved from the Egyptian army, the Israelites had faith in their Savior for a short time (Exodus 15:1-2). Shortly thereafter, though, they began complaining at the waters of Marah (Exodus 15:24), which bitter waters God healed. Then they

complained about their dire straits in the wilderness, and were given manna (Exodus 16:2-4). They complained again about a lack of water, and the water was provided, but **then the people tempted God by saying, “Is the Eternal among us, or not?” (Exodus 17:7). This was a major turning point in the history of military conflict for Israel.** The doubting and grumbling was clearly faithlessness — sin — on their part, especially after having been miraculously delivered from the Egyptians through the Red Sea, for Yahweh had them all under His wing ... and His care is without failure.

Moses then appealed to God by saying, “What am I to do with these people?” (Exodus 17:4). God had him smite the rock at Horeb and water came out, but clearly the people by this time were exhibiting blatant faithlessness in Yahweh Elohim to preserve and protect them. Soon a great army of the Amalekites came, and God allowed Israel to sin by selecting and equipping an army to fight them. God does not force men to avoid sinning, but certainly admonishes them to avoid sin at all costs ... but the people would not listen. They desired to mould themselves to this world’s image wherein nations have armies to protect them.

Men of Israel were chosen to fight Amalek (Exodus 17:9), but this unfortunate turn of events would not have had to happen. It was a most unfortunate decision for Moses and Israel to not rely upon God for their deliverance. Forty years later the people still grumbled and were willing to fight and kill opposing armies despite His guarantee to fight the nation’s battles. Yet, the Lord had made a promise to Abraham 430 years earlier to give the land of Palestine to his descendants. Abraham had done his part and kept the commandments and laws (Genesis 26:5). Now God would perform His part of the agreement by bringing the Israelites into Canaan regardless of their conduct. In spite of the fact that Israel had decided to use armaments to kill opponents themselves — opposed to God’s laws — God did not force them *not* to fight. That is His way with men, as He is the great One that *leads* men). He does not *force* men to obey. The erroneous decisions of a faithless and disobedient people to wage war does not make war and killing right!

Now, rather than use hornets and other means

to move out the Canaanites from Palestine, God used the Israelites themselves as instruments to accomplish the task. As a result of their decision to wage war, God gave the special laws that governed warfare, covered in Deuteronomy 20. Within these laws were the provisions and exemptions listed below.

(1) Do not be afraid of the enemy (Deuteronomy 20:1).

(2) The priests were to give the orders for war and encourage the people (Deuteronomy 20:2-4).

(3) There were exemptions for service, such as if a man had built a new house and not dedicated it, had planted a vineyard and not eaten from it, had betrothed a wife and yet not been married, or was fearful of battle (Deuteronomy 20:5-8).

(4) For cities beyond Israel's borders, peace was first to be offered to an enemy, and if they accepted peace they were to be tributaries; otherwise the males were all to be killed but not women and children. Also, goods could be kept (Deuteronomy 20:10-15).

(5) Cities within Israel's borders were to be utterly destroyed; no peace was to be offered. All of the people and livestock were also to be destroyed; no trees were to be cut down in the surrounding countryside, however (Deuteronomy 20:16-20).

When God Ordered Israel to Battle ...

What about situations where God actually ordered the Israelite people to go to war? Does this justify war and killing and nullify everything said in this paper so far? Not hardly, for Israel had chosen the way of other warring nations ... not to let God fight her battles. God accepted that decision — as wrong as it was — but still worked with His covenant people. His purposes still had to be accomplished for His chosen people regardless of what their decisions were. These people thus became instruments in His hand for fulfilling His purposes. Thus, we read of God speaking of Himself as driving out the people before Him when Israel's armies conquered a nation; the soldiers were His instruments (see Acts 7:45 and 13:19).

Israelites were allowed to die in battle since God has the right to give and take life. We see how God ordered Abraham to sacrifice Isaac; in this case God directly spoke to Abraham, a situation hardly similar to orders to kill given by commanders in today's fighting forces. David killed many people, but his killing in battle did not make it right. Though a man after God's own heart because of his love and obedience to God's laws (Psalm 119:97), and his willingness to repent (change) when shown his errors, he was also a "bloody man" who was not allowed to build the Temple during his reign as king. David's many exploits on the battle field did not exonerate him from the reality of God's law against killing.

God Still Helped Israel's Armies

Despite the great error of Israel in choosing the way of war and killing, God still performed profound miracles for the nation when the leaders bowed to Him. Then Yahweh would at times remove the need for a sword to be lifted against an enemy. Note the case of King Asa of Judah who faced a million-man army commanded by Zerah the Ethiopian. The Ethiopian army was superior in numbers and strength, so Asa cried to God and said,

"Lord it is nothing to You to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power; help us, O Lord our God, for we rest on You, and in Your Name we go against this multitude. O Lord, You are our God; let not mortal man prevail against You" (II Chronicles 14:11).

At that point *the Lord* smote the Ethiopians, and they fled before Judah. Notice it was the *Lord* that struck the enemy army, not the Judahites. Once the Lord smote them the armies of Judah and Benjamin pursued the remainder of them and went on to further destroy the cities of Gerar (II Chronicles 14:12-15), but due to the righteousness on one leader the Lord stepped in and spared the army of Judah great trouble and loss of life.

Later, King Asa had an issue with the northern tribes of Israel, and rather than turn to God as

before he asked Benhadad the king of Syria to ally with him against Israel (II Chronicles 16:1-3). That failure to trust God cost him dearly: from then on he would have wars, a verdict announced by a prophet sent to him. That prophet proclaimed God's words:

“Because you have relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the Lord your God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of your hand. Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubians a large host, with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet, because you relied on the Lord He delivered them into your hand. For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him. Herein you had done foolishly; therefore from henceforth you shall have wars” (II Chronicles 16:7-9).

Jehoshaphat, Asa's son, faced a combined Ammonite-Moabite-Mt. Seir force. Rather than rely on his own strength he implored the Eternal to help him and Judah in the face of the oncoming battle. He said,

“Behold, I say, how they [the combined armies] reward us, to come to cast us out of Your possession, which You have given us to inherit. O Our God, will you not judge them, for we have no might against this great company that comes against us, *neither do we know what to do*, but our eyes are upon You” (II Chronicles 20:11-12).

A prophet of God answered Jehoshaphat's heartfelt request, stating that the next day “You shall not need to fight in this battle; stand you still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you Fear not, nor be dismayed ... for the Lord will be with you” (II Chronicles 20:17). The next day these armies turned upon each other and virtually destroyed themselves! Note also that Jehoshaphat appointed singers to go out before the army, praising the beauty of God's holiness. When they sang the Lord caused the internal strife within the oppo-

nent's armies to erupt, and all of the enemy were destroyed (II Chronicles 20:21-25). Rather than fight and kill the enemy the Judahites *sang* before the enemy! God did the killing. That is *His* responsibility — not man's — to mete out vengeance upon the enemy.

In another case Hezekiah relied on God to protect Judah and Jerusalem against Sennacherib, king of Assyria. In this virulent thrust upon the nation, after the servants of Sennacherib had spoken to the people of the city about how they would utterly destroy Jerusalem, Hezekiah and Isaiah “... prayed and cried to heaven” (II Chronicles 32:1-2). Soon after the saving hand of God intervened.

“And the Lord sent an angel, that cut off all the mighty men of valor, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land. And when he had come into the house of his god, they that came forth of his own bowels slew him there with the sword” (II Chronicles 32:21).

Here again we see the intervention of Almighty God to save a nation whose leaders and citizens supplicated themselves before Him. God did the killing on his terms, not men. He gives life, and He takes it as He pleases, even the lives of kings and princes.

War Is Wrong and Needless

Ever since the Garden of Eden men have relied on their own power — usually raw physical power — to resolve conflicts. Thus, we read in Ezekiel 3:1-5,

“This word from the Eternal came to me: ‘Son of man, prophecy against the prophets of Israel, and give them this prophetic word from the Eternal. The word the Eternal declares: Woe to the fools of prophets who only prophecy from what they feel, without a real vision! O Israel, your prophets are like jackals burrowing among the ruins! Your prophets never man the breach, you never

build walls for the folk of Israel, to make a stand upon the day when the Eternal summons to the fray.”

On the other hand, God implores Israel and its leaders to give up their transgressions and quit sinning ... quit warring and living the life that leads to death.

“Repent and give up all your transgressions against me, and get a new nature, a new spirit, for yourselves. **O Israel, why will you die? I have no desire for anyone to die**, says the Lord the Eternal. So repent and live” (Ezekiel 18:30-32).

Our True Citizenship in Heaven

In this world every person lives within the confines of a particular country’s jurisdiction. He is therefore considered by that nation to be a citizen of that country whether begotten by God’s Spirit or not. Thus, Paul claimed Roman citizenship on two occasions within Scripture despite the fact that his citizenship in God’s eternal realm took precedence; see Acts 16:37 and 22:25. God’s people naturally love the country within which God has placed them, and they will obey the rules of that nation as long as they do not conflict with God’s will. As Peter said in Acts 5:29, “One must obey God rather than man.”

The ultimate and true citizenship of God’s people, however, is in heaven (Philippians 3:20-21; Ephesians 2:19). We cannot serve two masters, so must always claim our citizenship in heaven and follow its government ... Christ being the head of the ecclesia (Matthew 6:24; I Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:23). We live on earth as ambassadors for Christ (II Corinthians 5:20), and sojourn on this earth as strangers and pilgrims, not yet having received our inheritance on the earth; neither did Abraham and the other patriarchs and prophets during centuries past (Hebrews 11:13). That Kingdom of God will be established on earth sometime in the near future, for all of the prophets spoke of this glorious renewal of Eden upon the earth as outlined by Christ’s many parables concerning the Kingdom,

and as Peter spoke of in Acts 3:19-25.

Therefore, while the government claims every naturalized resident is a citizen of the country, yet God’s people possess only a heavenly citizenship. When there is a conflict between man’s government and God’s authority His people must obey Him. Normally such a view on authority makes a person an even better citizen of the country than without having God as one’s guide, because the Spirit-led servant of God will strive to please God and keep the commandments, which code for goodness in a person’s life and care for one’s neighbor. After all, most of man’s laws are based on God’s laws. Yet, **like an ambassador from a foreign country the Spirit-led son of God does not fight in the army of the country in which he resides.** Jesus Christ never joined the Roman Army that controlled Palestine at the time He lived there. It may be truthfully said that Christ living in and through us today will not enter into military service!

The Perversity of Military Life

Any young person contemplating entering the military should recognize that its system of government is totalitarian. Once enlisted within its ranks the person must submit to the regime, without Constitutional freedoms of speech, assembly, privacy, and other rights Americans take for granted. Life is ordered around a dictatorship in which the soldier is a replaceable cog in the heartless military machine. People stepping outside the system are subject to severe penalties, even death if the infractions are serious enough. The person can be ordered to a war zone and be killed ... for as the purpose of the military is to kill, so is the object of opposing military forces to kill you. There is no mercy within the ranks of forces trained to kill and destroy. A soldier is a pawn of the system, his life hanging in the balance of the command structure ruled by men, to be thrown away in battle at the whim of a commander’s orders. As Napoleon Bonaparte once said, “Soldiers are for killing”.

It is a direct affront to the Creator God to place young men, made in His image, within the confines of the military’s totalitarian structure to become a killing machine. God designed people to in kind-

ness and service towards one's fellow man. As Jesus said clearly in Matthew 20:25-28,

“You know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister, and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant, even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

We must strive to live within the governmental structure that God designed for mankind, to build the environment within our families that He has intended for us from the beginning. The military encourages the opposite structure and lifestyle, one of hatred towards one's fellow man and life within an austere, loveless environment. From personal experience this writer has noticed that military bases and living quarters are bereft of beauty and dignity, and the lifestyles of many soldiers are rife with sexual immorality, drug usage, drunkenness, profanity, and other abuses. Members of the military are discouraged from thinking for themselves, and over time become total pawns of the command system, without the normal desires to perfect individual talents and seek answers from the Spirit. The military's ranks are swollen with those unable to make a life for themselves in normal society. Orders to move a person and his family to other locations may come at any time, wrenching them from one base to another, sometimes thousands of miles away. Lives must be rebuilt continually, and the permanence of families in communities is severely disrupted..

What, Then, Is a Young Christian to Do?

Wars utterly fail to accomplish their stated purposes, and end up killing and maiming untold numbers of soldiers and civilians, wrenching fathers away from wives, children, and homes — which is essentially government-sponsored home-wrecking — and snuffing out the careers of many who could

contribute immensely to their families, communities, and nations. Supplies of food, energy, and other necessities of life are disrupted or rationed for the sake of the war effort. Most of all, peace of mind of most citizens is compromised as fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, and grandparents, and friends await the possible tragic news of “killed in action,” or “wounded and crippled for life.” Soldiers returning home are often haunted for months or years by the indelible atrocities of war's horrors, or the debilitating after-effects of chemical weapons, vaccinations, and injuries.

War breeds more war. Whole generations can be brought up in a spirit of violence and murder, as we see today amongst the Palestinian youth who are taught to hate Israelites, and to glory in becoming a suicide bomber.

The Christian of today — like men of God throughout history — are to wait on God to fight their battles, never taking vengeance on their enemies. They are to love their enemies and do good to them (Romans 12:20-21) ... but destroy the idols of foreign nations, not their people. That task can be accomplished by showing them love and concern, feeding and clothing them when in need, and preaching the message of Christ's people to them (Matthew 28:19-20), not sending them missiles and bullets.

We might consider granting imprecatory prayers towards enemies that we know are dedicated to our destruction, like the Taliban army is to Americans. Imprecatory prayers are prayers invoking God's wrath upon the wicked. David, who would not even lift up his hand against Saul, his worst enemy — even when Saul was delivered directly into his hand (see I Samuel 24 and 26) — nonetheless prayed against his enemies. These messages are recorded in Psalms 7:11-17; 35; 58; 69; 83; and 137. New Testament instances of imprecation are in Acts 1:20; 5; 8:20-23; 13:10-11; Romans 11:9-10; and II Timothy 4:14. Certain people are “born wicked” (Psalm 58:3), and they are not going to turn from their evil ways unless God intervenes in their lives. He is the One to take vengeance upon them, and it is to that end that His people must pray.

Jesus Christ's example is as vivid today as it

was nearly 2,000 years ago. Every one of His people is admonished to walk in His footsteps (I John 2:6; I Peter 2:21), and fulfill His calling to accomplish the law in one's life (Matthew 5:17-18). Jesus Christ came to magnify the law and make it honorable (Isaiah 42:21) ... and if He did so ought we. He said we need to obey the law of love (John 15:10), not kill (James 2:8, 11), and not so much as even be angry with our brother.

“You have heard that it was said by them of old time, ‘You shall not kill, and whoever shall kill will be in danger of the judgement’. But I say to you, ‘Whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgement; and whoever shall say to his brother, Raca [vain fellow], shall be in danger of the council; but whoever shall say, “You fool”, shall be in danger of gehenna fire” (Matthew 5:21-22).

These qualities of hatred towards one's fellow man are fruits of the carnal flesh, and those who practice them will not inherit the Kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21). To hate your brother is to literally kill him (I John 3:14-15). James succinctly points out that the source of killing and war are the lusts that lurk within the hearts of men:

“From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not even from your own lusts that war in your members? You lust and have not, you kill and desire to have, and cannot obtain; you fight and war, yet you have not because you ask not” (James 4:1-2).

In military training, young men and women are taught to hate the “enemy”, whoever the government decides that enemy should be. If the recruit does not learn to hate, then he is not likely to be a good soldier. God says we must love our fellow man ... even our enemies. With God's law within our hearts (Hebrews 8:10), we cannot conscientiously take part in a military organization whose objective is to kill a so-called enemy whom we are instructed to love.

The Nature of Christ

When Jesus Christ lived on the earth he never once struck anyone physically. He instead used words to uncover evil and make it plain to those who opposed Him. He was, and is, the **Word** ... and that Word is

“... quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

Christ revealed to us that words are to be used to settle disputes, but truthful and peaceable words, not exclamations that incite people to physical conflict. When He appeared to John in Revelation 1:16 — and again in Revelation 19:15 — He had the semblance of a two-edged sword coming from His mouth ... a symbol that our wars must be fought using His words, not with a literal sword to harm the flesh. Ephesians 6:17 makes it clear that the “sword of the Spirit” is God's word. He said we must personally confront someone else with whom there is a conflict — one who “trespasses against you” — and tell him the fault in private. If that discussion will not solve the problem then discuss the matter before witnesses who can verify and help sort through the matter (Matthew 18:15-17). While this instruction is referring to a true Christian brother dealing with another brother, yet the principles of confronting evil with the offending party are operable for all people. Jesus is showing that, rather than come to physical blows, we must communicate with those who oppose us and strive to live in peace and do good works toward our fellow man (Romans 12:18; Galatians 6:9-10). If such peace is not possible, then God can quite handily remedy the problem through His own methods of justice ... but we as Christians do not need to lift a finger against the guilty party. Let God Himself mete out justice.

When confronted with the threat of physical conflict, Jesus avoided it. Notice in John 8:59 and 10:39 how He miraculously escaped from crowds of His opponents, likely through the Father or an

angel blinding them temporarily. We likewise can call on the Father to deliver us from those who may threaten us physically, without our need to fight back. Christ had the power to call upon legions of angels to assist in His escape from the throes of a horribly painful crucifixion (see John 18:36-37 and Matthew 26:53), but since it was His time to be crucified He allowed His own capture and death (John 7:44).

When the mob came to capture Jesus at night, Peter drew His sword and struck off the ear of Malchus. Peter was condemned by Jesus for such a warlike act, and immediately healed the ear of his adversary (Matthew 26:51-54; John 18:10-11; Luke 22:47-51). What a beautiful display of how we are to act towards our enemies who might be prone to cause us physical harm: heal them and do good to them in the ways we are able.

A Look At *Resists* in Romans 13:2

Note also Romans 13:1-2, where it is stated,

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resists the power resists the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.”

Although most Bible translators and commentators think that “higher powers” refers to physical governmental authorities, such a view falls short of the intent that Paul had in this scripture. Certainly everyone must be subject to almighty God, not to governmental people; *we are not to fear and be in servitude to man* (Psalm 146:3-4; Proverbs 29:15; Isaiah 51:12). The fact that God is all-powerful is stated in the second sentence of Romans 13:1, followed by the statement that the governmental powers on earth are *ordained* and *ordered* by God [Strong’s 5021, *tasso*, “arrange in an orderly manner”].

Then this scripture states that whoever resists the power [of government personnel] resists the *ordinance* [Strong 1296, *diatage*, “arrangement or institution”] of God. The two words translated *resists* in

this verse are different. In the first case the word *antitassomai* [Strong 498] is used, which means “to range in battle against”, or “to set an army in array against, to arrange in battle order” [Spiros Zodhiates, *Word Studies*]. This indicates actual armed battle using physical weapons like guns, bows and arrows, or spears to hurt or kill one’s adversary. In the second case the word *resists* is translated from the Greek *anthistemi* [Strong 436], which means “to set oneself against, withstand, resist, or oppose”, not with physical weapons but with one’s will and words as God commanded we should oppose evil with His wisdom and words. Note Ecclesiastes 9:18:

“Wisdom is better than weapons of war, and one sinner will destroy much good.”

King James, who commissioned the 1611 version of the Bible so commonly used today, was a believer in the divine right of kings, and influenced his translators to make it appear that the Scriptures taught that since God chose and backed up the king’s commands, then people ought unswervingly to obey the king. Thus, it makes sense from King James’ viewpoint that the “higher powers” to which every person ought to be subject are the king and his government ... not the “Higher Powers” of God and His realm which is the intended meaning of this verse.

It is clear, then, that the first two verses of Romans 13 reveal that we as God’s people must not wield physical weapons to harm our neighbor, for to do so resists the divine order [ordinance] of God. Instead, we are to withstand any evil promulgated by authorities within government by using God’s word and wisdom, like Jesus Christ did, and allow His Holy Spirit to repel the many Satanic forces so prevalent in society around us.

No Part in Man’s Government

Jesus Christ took no part in the world’s politics and wars, but came as a messenger of the Kingdom of God ... God’s government to be established on the earth. **Wars fought by the governments of this world are in defiance of the higher rule and**

authority of Almighty God!

Some might say that a person is “chicken” or a “wimp” to avoid fighting in a war. However, the opposite is usually true ... not saying there are not some young men who are deathly afraid of being killed in war action and who thus try to avoid the military. We have already seen that man’s government should provide them an exemption from service. When war is being waged and a military draft is in force, it takes genuine courage and strength of character to stand up to the government and say, “I stand by the laws of my God, and I will not fight in this nation’s wars!” Such a stand takes considerable moral fiber. Ridicule might be placed upon such dissent from the government as military and political officials attempt to enforce their views upon potential draftees. Yet, the man of God will not flinch in the face of such concerted pressures, and instead will echo the sentiments of Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego when facing death in the fiery furnace:

“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, 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” (Daniel 3:16-18).

These three young Hebrew men were saved from the sure death of a blazing incinerator because of their faith in Yahweh. How much more should God’s people today be saved from having to enter military service when the legal mechanism even exists to avoid such service. The choice belongs to the individual, not to other people in the government who pretend to rule over us. All of God’s people are sovereign citizens of the heavenly Kingdom governed by the Father. We all must make a personal decision on this matter, but the point of view of God on whether one of His people ought to be involved in military service is clear. War and killing are not for God’s people. May people of all nations soon learn that lesson, and pray diligently

for the swift fulfillment of the beautiful prophecy in Micah 4:1-4:

“Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, ‘Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.”