

War And Peace

In The Light Of Scripture

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The century in which we are living is a century in which both war and peace are running their course. Two of the most disastrous wars in the history of mankind have been fought and with them talks of a permanent peace have reached a crescendo. Wars, whenever and wherever, have always brought up the topic of peace. This cycle of war and peace is as old as history, and yet there has never been a lasting peace. Today, especially with the threat of atomic or hydrogen warfare looming on the horizon, man not wanting history to repeat itself is desperately seeking a permanent world peace and yet there are wars and rumors of wars.

We teachers of the social studies must deal with this problem of war and the world's attempt at peace. To the secular historian, war is a thing to eliminate and peace is the thing for which to strive. How should we interpret war and this apparent failure to achieve peace? It is my purpose in this paper to deal briefly with these two related problems from a biblical perspective.

WAR

In any discussion of the place of war in history, one must begin with a definition of history. For purposes of this discussion, I believe that the definition found in *Principles of Education of Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School* is a good one. Prof. H. Hanko has written: "History is the temporal revelation of the counsel of God with respect to all things beginning with creation and ending with the realization of God's purpose in the new heavens and earth."

There are a few important observations which must be made in connection with this definition.

It is well that we remember that God's counsel is as He is, eternal, unchangeable, all comprehensive, and efficacious. It is the product of God's sovereign will and as such serves to glorify its maker.

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. Ephesians 1:11-12.

All the events of history are determined by God in His eternal counsel.

Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me,

Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Isaiah 46:9, 10.

This means there is a unity to history so that all the events of history work toward the one glorious goal that God has determined, namely, the glory of His name in the new heavens and the new earth. Therefore, history is not many disjointed events that are unrelated, but rather the events of history must be interpreted as part of a decreed glorious whole.

Further, God has chosen to glorify Himself in a people that He has redeemed in Christ out of a fallen human race. Central to all of history is the gathering, defending, and preserving of this people in Christ.

But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.

For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.

Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.

Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; Isaiah 43:1,3,4,5.

The goal of history then is realized in Christ as He redeems the Church and creation. All the events of history including war serve this one glorious goal.

War is one of the means through which God brings about the final coming of His kingdom in the new heavens and new earth. War is not something that just happens, or is inevitable, nor is it for the good of civilization, but war is predetermined from eternity by the all-wise God for His own purpose. I believe this is evident from Revelation 6:4 where we read: "And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword." You will recall that the focal point of the vision John received is Christ as the Lamb slain. He it was that took the scroll from God who sitteth on the throne (Rev. 4:11). The scroll was taken after the question was asked, "Who is worthy to open the book,..." (Rev. 5:2). Only Christ could open it (Rev. 5:9). The scroll represents the counsel of God as it pertains to the history of the world and the things which had to come to pass in order that Christ might realize the kingdom of heaven. The opening of the second seal brought forth the red horse. Power is given to it to take peace from the earth by means of the sword. I think it worthy of note that Christ opened the seal and He gives the power. This horse by his color represents the lust and the passion of sin which is scarlet. This evil lust for power produced war and bloodshed as we read in James 4:1-3:

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.

Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

This red horse runs throughout history and serves to keep it in constant turmoil.

It should be stated that even though God decreed war, war itself is a product of man's sinful imagination. War is the result of sin, and therefore, is a product of man who loves sin. Just as God uses sin to serve His purpose, so God uses war. God is the sovereign controller even though man is doer. "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things" (Isaiah 45:7). "The king's heart is in the hand of

the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will'' (Proverbs 21:1). (cf. also Amos 3:6.)

How does God use war in history to fulfill His purpose? God uses war in punishment for man's sins. The Old Testament is full of it. Israel sins; God punishes her by sending the nations against her. God used Israel in the same way to punish the nations around her. Man hates war because of the tremendous suffering that it brings, and yet war is always with us because sin is always with us. The Catechism discusses the idea of punishment in Lord's Day 4, particularly question and answer 10:

Q. 10: Will God suffer such disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished?

A: By no means; but is terribly displeased with our original as well as actual sins; and will punish them in his just judgment temporally and eternally, as he hath declared, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them."

War is one of the temporal means that God uses to punish man for his sins.

War serves in the gathering of the Church. It is the purpose of God in history to glorify Himself through the gathering of His Church in Christ. War serves the purpose of the gathering of the Church by protecting it. Throughout history man scoffed at God's sentence of death. Man wants a utopian kingdom of pleasure. He hates Christ and His kingdom. Man strives passionately in envy and greed to build his kingdom. He wars with his neighbor to achieve his ends. This makes a divided world. Instead of concentration against the Church, man fights his neighbor. It is while this deadly struggle is going on in the world that the Church is gathered by the preaching. If we go back to the discussion of the red horse in Revelation 6, we find that the white horse is first, meaning that the other horses serve the white horse. This white horse is commonly associated with the preaching of the gospel as it is carried on by the Church. This must mean that war serves the spread of the gospel and thereby the Church by its use in history. This idea is also substantiated in Revelation 13:3 when the deadly wound is healed and the Great Tribulation will begin (Matt. 24:9, 10). The tribulation will be so severe that even the Church institute will be destroyed (Rev. 11:7, 8). The wound of Revelation 13:3 I believe to be the one which appeared at Babel. This may also provide another reason for war. Man is always trying to heal his wound by means of war.

War serves the Church also by making it aware that this world is not our home and that our only help is in the name of Jehovah. The child of God sees man in his attempt to make peace, making war instead. He sees his children going off to fight in the ungodly attempts to bring about the kingdom of worldly peace. The Church can only say my help is in the name of the Lord and pray the prayer of Revelation 22 where Christ says, "Surely I come quickly", and the Church answers, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

God uses war to show man just how totally depraved he really is. Outwardly civilization is prosperous. Civilization has come a long way, and yet man with all his inventive genius cannot get rid of the one thing he hates most—war. Instead he finishes one war, he prepares for the next while he is arming himself for peace. Peacemaking becomes just as dangerous as warmaking. Man's peace never lasts. I believe in this connection that just as man in his capacity to sin has become progressively worse, so war has grown to such hideous proportions that an all-out war is impossible without genocidal consequences.

God uses wars to bring about His kingdom. Christ comes through wars and rumors of wars. If there were no wars, then it follows that Christ would not come. In Matthew 24:3 in answer to the question of the disciples, "Tell us when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and the end of the world?", Jesus includes in these signs, war. Christ would be a liar if he did not come through wars. Christ comes as the bearer of heavenly Peace to our sinful, war-wrecked world. Christ through love for His own brings peace and spells everlasting destruction to the world.

Finally, I believe that God uses war to show us that the end is getting close. In Matthew 24 in answer to the disciples' question, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?", Jesus says in vs. 6: "And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet." Jesus exhorts us further in vs. 42, "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." War also shows that the end is close by the way in which it expresses itself in history. War has increased in its killing power and in the sophistication of its weapons. Revelation demonstrates this in the use of seals, trumpets and vials. Each one shows an increase in intensity and destructive power of the one before so that in the seals one-fourth die, in the trumpets one-third die, and in the vials there is total annihilation.

We know that the end is getting close when the Antichrist comes as the precursor of Christ. This precursor of Christ must also come through wars. The world knows the only way to get rid of the hideous aspect of war is through one world government. Consider this idea of the philosopher Immanuel Kant:

In the absence of what he calls a "cosmopolitical constitution" or world state, "war is inevitable." In their external relations to one another, states, "like lawless savages, are naturally in a non-juridical condition," and this, according to Kant, "is a state of war, in which the right of the stronger prevails; and although it may not in fact be always found as a state of actual war and incessant hostility...yet the condition is wrong in itself in the highest degree, and the nations which form States contiguous to each other are bound mutually to pass out of it." He pictures the nations of the world "after many devastations, overthrows, and even complete internal exhaustion of their powers" as "driven forward to the goal which Reason might well have impressed upon them, even without so much sad experience. This is none other than the advance out of the lawless state of savages and the entering into a Federation of Nations... However visionary this idea may appear to be...it is nevertheless the inevitable issue of the necessity in which men involve one another."

There are also the modern day attempts of the League of Nations and the United Nations. These have failed, but there will be one that will not; a mock peace will be established. Yet there will be a battle going on between the Church and the world power. In this battle the Church is the victor. This world kingdom of which I have spoken will not last for it is to us a sign that Christ the King is coming.

And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird (Rev. 18:1, 2).

How must the child of God look at war in the light of the foregoing? First, he must see war as predetermined in God's counsel. The child of God must also see that God directs and controls war to punish the wicked and preserve the Church. Further, he must understand that wars will and must occur because they are predicted in Scripture and it is the only way through which Christ can come. Also, he must see that the cause

of all war is man himself because of his great lust for power. War is a product of the fall. The child of God must be aware that war will increase in its horrible consequences, and as it does; he recognizes it as a sign of the times. Finally, he must see war as an attempt by the world to bring about its kingdom of peace. We have in the vision of Daniel 7 types of the anti-christian kingdom. All had this in common: Each rose by force of arms, each continued to exist by arms and each was conquered by arms.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that while the world is at war there is a much more important spiritual warfare which is taking place. This warfare is by far the more important because it is a battle that rages every day of our lives. The seed of the serpent is warring incessantly with the seed of the woman. As the end approaches, this warfare will come to the forefront of history as the antichrist receives his power for a time. Yet, the comforting Word of Christ comes to us "Fear not little flock for ye are more than conquerors through Him that loves you".

PEACE

Peace is a term that has been often abused and misused by its users mainly because they have none or very little idea of what it really means. For most, it is the absence of war. They define war as "a means of attempting to settle international or civil disputes, by armed military forces,...in which each side seeks to impose its will upon the other by force." (*The Abolition of War*, page 27). It seems that force is the key word here. Most are not worried about the dispute, but it is the force used to settle it that causes consternation. Man is not so much concerned about the root cause which is his own sin, but man is concerned with the consequences of his sin.

Consequently, they have come up with various proposals for peace. The most prominent of these is to get rid of the possibility of war by forming one world government and subject all nations to a code of (international) law. This they hope will make law-abiding citizens of nations. By forcing nations to go to court instead of war, it is hoped that man will get rid of the instinct of war for more peaceful methods. The thing that strikes me most about this remedy is that man's idea of a universal government is going to be closely tied to the anti-christian kingdom. God is certainly going to allow a universal peace during the last days at the time of the healing of the wound of Babel.

Why is the world so desperately seeking peace? First, it desires peace in order to establish a great utopian kingdom which

will fill all the wicked desires of the heart. "And they said, Go to, let us build a city and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth" (Genesis 11:4). Secondly, to get rid of the ghastly horrors of war. This is why Isaiah 2:1-4 is often misquoted. Thirdly, to concentrate on the Church to get rid of it. This makes Genesis 3:15 a reality. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." (Cf. Psalm 140).

How does the child of God conceive of peace? True and lasting peace is heavenly. Christ did not come as the Prince of Peace to bring peace to the world in any earthly sense. "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34). (Cf. Luke 12:49-51). Christ was the Prince of a heavenly kingdom. We must not make the same mistake the disciples first made in believing Christ had come to deliver us from our enemies in this world. In Matthew 26 Christ reprimanded Peter after he had drawn his sword, "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. 26:52-54). Christ also answered Pilate with these words: "...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). The child of God must see that peace is accomplished through reconciliation with God through Christ. "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (Col. 1:20). (Cf. John 16:33 and Eph. 2:14). Peace on earth exists only in the heart of the child of God. "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:7). "But the fruit of the Spirit of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith" (Gal. 5:22). Therefore, the peace of Isaiah 2:1-4 and Micah 4:1-3 is the peace of heaven where the saints will have the love of Christ and will obey perfectly God and His laws (Cf. Romans 8:7; Col. 1:21, and Luke 10:19).

In conclusion, we must notice that righteousness and peace are closely related terms in Scripture. "Mercy and truth are met

together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other'' (Ps. 85:10). ''And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places'' (Isaiah 32:17, 18). (Cf. Psalm 37:37 and Psalm 119:165). The conclusion that must be reached is that peace is only for the righteous as they are clothed in the righteousness of Christ. Only in Christ have righteousness and peace kissed each other. When the elect are clothed in Christ's righteousness then they will have the peace that passes all understanding. This is the only peace which is known to Scripture. It is the peace of the new heavens and the new earth. While we have this peace now only in principle, we will enjoy it perfectly in the new heavens and the new earth.

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