

Should A Christian Go To War? (Part 2)

Blood Guiltiness, Spiritual Citizenship, and Conscientious Objection

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Not only does this statement have physical ramifications, but also more importantly, it has eternal spiritual consequences. The standard of righteousness the Church must aim for is the ideal. Not just faithfulness, but *total* faithfulness—the faithfulness of Jesus Christ.

In Part 1 of this series on War, we saw that God alone has the right to take human life, since He alone is the Giver of life. Because of Israel's faithlessness and disobedience, God used them as His instrument in taking human life, which God had full right to do. There is no unrighteousness with God! But Israel had chosen the way of sin in becoming a war-waging nation.

The divine Giver of human life has the right to take the lives He gave. He owns them. But for any human or nation, of his or its own volition or initiative, to take human life is sin. The life he takes is not his—but God's. He not only commits murder—he also steals or takes what is God's, breaking the Commandments of God. Even his own life belongs to God. Suicide takes a human life that belongs to God. It is murder!

When God has made it one of the ten basic sins if human beings take human life—and made it unnecessary for human beings to go to war by promising to take care of the wars Himself supernaturally, then the nation that chooses to be a war-waging nation has committed sin. And every individual who enters its military organization is committing sin.

Israel made that decision, as did other nations. Since the nations of this world do fight, God allows them to commit this sin, but the penalty still comes. Yet, to carry out His purpose, God Himself determines the outcome of wars. Since Israel already had rejected Him as its war-making Force, He even ordered them to fulfill His purpose, which must be accomplished. But that did not whitewash Israel from having deliberately rebelled and chosen to fight in war in violation of God's Way.

God called David a man after His own heart. Yet, David was a warrior and killed many people beginning with Goliath. As king, he willingly waged war. But that did not make his killing or war waging right. God held David accountable for this blood-guiltiness.

But, because God is so merciful, He took into consideration the war-waging nation in

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which David lived, and its influence on David from his youth. God gave David almost an entire lifetime to repent of his warring way of life. David suffered for his warring ways by having a violent family life and God eventually punished him for his guiltiness of spilled blood.

David very seriously and earnestly desired to build the Temple in Jerusalem. But, there is an intrinsic sense of decency that dictates the purification of the worshipper from defilement when about to engage in the solemn rites of worship. David's killing and war waging made him defiled, because of the human blood that he had spilled.

Isaiah's vision of God's call to the sinful nation of Judah to repent of her wickedness speaks of blood-covered hands causing God to close His eyes and ears to man's prayers because of man's spiritual uncleanness from the sin of killing.

Isaiah 1:15-16 When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil,

God requires of anyone who has spilled blood to clean his or her lives.

Now look at what David said to his son Solomon regarding God's reason for not letting David build the temple for God.

I Chronicles 22:7-10 And David said to Solomon: "My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build a house to the name of the LORD my God; but the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'You have shed much blood and have made great wars; you shall not build a house for My name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in My sight. 'Behold, a son shall be born to you, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies all around. His name shall be Solomon, for I will give peace and quietness to Israel in his days. He shall build a house for My name, and he shall be My son, and I will be his Father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever.'

I Chronicles 28:2-4 Then King David rose to his feet and said, "Hear me, my brethren and my people: I had it in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and for the footstool of our God, and had made preparations to build it. But God said to me, 'You shall not build a

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house for My name, because you have been a man of war and have shed blood.' However the LORD God of Israel chose me above all the house of my father to be king over Israel forever, for He has chosen Judah to be the ruler; and of the house of Judah, the house of my father, and among the sons of my father, He was pleased with me to make me king over all Israel."

Notice the contrast there. God required that the man who would build His temple be a man of peace, not a man of war who had shed blood.

David was unworthy to build the Temple, because of the blood he shed in war. He had been a man of war from his youth, which, though at times, was shed in the service of God and Israel, yet made him unfit for service in building the Temple. He was less fit than someone else who had never pursued such bloody work. God, by assigning this as the reason of laying David aside from this work on the Temple, showed how precious human life is to Him. God intended that the one who built the physical temple would be a type of Him who would build the spiritual temple, not by destroying men's lives, but by saving them as Luke 9:56 states.

The Church, of which the Temple at Jerusalem was to be a type, would be presided over by One who was to be pre-eminently the Prince of Peace. Therefore, the Temple would not be represented properly by David, whose mission had been a preparatory one of battle and conquest, as it would be by his son Solomon, who would reign in unbroken peace.

David was a man after God's own heart, but not because of his wars, his fighting and his killing.

God punished him for that. What did endear David to God was, first of all, David's willingness to admit it when he found out he was wrong and to genuinely repent. In Psalm 119, David expressed how much he loved and obeyed God's law. His attitude was right in most areas of his life, other than killing and adultery. And, thanks to God's mercy and patience, David eventually overcame those great sins as well.

Even though David had many wives, he repented of this and put away his concubines, and in his latter years had only one wife. David sinned—but he acknowledged his sins, and repented as recorded in Psalm 51. Verse 14 shows David repenting of his blood-guiltiness.

God allows wars because His purpose is to develop righteous character in human

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beings on earth. That purpose necessitates free moral agency in people. It is absolutely necessary that people be given both the prerogative and the ability to make their own choice, and exercise their own will. Otherwise, no character would be developed. People would just be convinced against their will.

God offered human beings the way that will prevent war and produce peace, and let us choose. He created and set in motion inexorable laws that work—not only laws of chemistry and physics—but also a basic spiritual law of peace. That law is the basic cause of peace. Its violation is the cause of war.

But human nature is basically rebellious against God and His laws. God laid before human beings the knowledge of His law and how to have peace. But people yield to human nature, having pride, greed, and self-centeredness, which is rebelliousness against God's law of peace. That rebelliousness is sin and is the cause of wars.

James 4:1-4 Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

When people enter military service, they make themselves an enemy of God and a friend of the world because that is a friend of the world's ways.

James 4:5-8 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

That is why David was not allowed to build the temple because of his blood-guiltiness.

James 4:9-10 Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to

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mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

The phrase translated "desires for pleasure" in verse 1, is the source for the English word "hedonism," the designation of the philosophy that views pleasure as the chief goal of life. "Anything goes, as long as it is pleasurable." James pictured these pleasures as residing within human beings, there carrying on a bitter campaign to gain satisfaction. Pleasure is the overriding desire of their lives. Nothing is allowed to stand in the way of its realization—of its accomplishment. It becomes an obsession that forces a person to do whatever is against God's will.

With regard to war, the warring starts within a person in the form of lust and pride, eventually it manifests itself openly toward others. This happens on a personal level or a national level because initially they reject God's law—as Israel did as they rejected God's law and became a war-waging nation.

In respect to war, the basic point of God's spiritual law is the 6th Commandment. As you know, it simple says, "You shall not kill." Or, "You shall not murder", depending on the translation. If all nations obeyed that command of God, and followed the way of love and peace, there would be no war worldwide.

To any people—whether an individual, a nation, or even all nations—who will voluntarily subject themselves under God's government, God says the same thing—He is no respecter of persons. What He said to the Israelites, He says to all.

Exodus 23:22 says, "But if you 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."

That is an absolute promise!

God promised supernaturally to fight any invading enemy to protect the nation and people that will obey and trust Him. Of course, there are conditions to His promise of divine protection.

It is not in God's interest to force any nation, or individual, to come under His government. That is left to man's free choice. But the freed Israelite slaves accepted God's offer, and became His nation. They agreed to obey Him and His laws and He

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agreed to give them peace, as long as they obeyed and trusted Him.

Governments may legislate what they regard as crime, but sin is the transgression of God's law. Sin involves man's relationship with his Creator. God and His laws are supreme in authority, even over those of nations and their human legislative bodies.

Nevertheless, God's teaching directs us to be loyally subject to the government under whose jurisdiction we live. If there is a conflict, God teaches us that we must obey Him, rather than human beings. But we are still to submissively subject ourselves to the national authority.

What is the difference between the position of a member of God's Church today, and that of men in ancient Israel, in regard to military service?

There is a difference between the Old Testament Church—called "The Congregation of Israel," and the New Testament Church of God. Although sin is sin regardless, the same for the Old Testament congregation as the New Testament church, there is still a difference between who is a regenerated member of the Church of God, and who is not.

The Christian, who has received the Holy Spirit of God, and in whom God's Spirit actually dwells, has a spiritual mind—a sharp contrast to the unconverted person with a natural mind. This does not, in any way, make military service a sin for one, and righteousness for the other. But that is not to say the one does not approach the question of military service from a different position than the other.

Old Testament Israel was not called to, nor offered, spiritual salvation. Jesus Christ didn't come proclaiming the physical worldly kingdom of Israel, but the spiritual Kingdom of God. And He promised for His Church the gift of God's Holy Spirit. This comes by God's grace, upon two conditions: Repentance and faith.

According to the New Testament, specifically Romans 8:9, those who have received, and in whom now dwells the Holy Spirit, are true Christians. The Holy Spirit imparts, provisionally and conditionally, the divine and immortal life of God. It imparts a new nature—the divine nature. It opens the mind to comprehension of spiritual knowledge.

I Corinthians 2:7-11 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has

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prepared for those who love Him." But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

The natural-born mind of a human being can't comprehend God's spiritual truth.

I Corinthians 2:14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

But we in God's church have spiritual discernment and the help of the Holy Spirit to resist having a war-like mind. Once a human has received God's Holy Spirit, he has been regenerated as a Son of God. He is still an Heir—not an inheritor or possessor. He is a joint-heir with Christ.

Even a converted person Gentile-born, becomes an heir of God, according to the spiritual (Scepter) promise to Abraham. But at and after Christ's coming to rule all nations, these heirs will then inherit God's Kingdom.

The presence of God's Holy Spirit changes us, and it changes our whole attitude, from one of hostility toward God, to submission, obedience and faith. The Holy Spirit changes our outlook on life and changes our way of life, so that it becomes God-centered rather than self-centered—sinless rather than sinful.

In John 18:37, Jesus Christ said He was born to become the King of the Kingdom of God, while on trial for His life before Pontius Pilate.

John 18:36 "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here." [That is, not of this world.]

Ancient Israel was one of the kingdoms—or nations—of this world and, although no nation should fight, they do go to war and fight, and Israel did fight. But, Jesus made plain that His people, now the citizens of His Kingdom, do not fight! If His Kingdom were of this world's governments, then His servants—His citizens would fight! As it is, His people do not fight!

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The receipt of God's Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ puts us into this spiritual Kingdom. As long as God's Spirit dwells in us, we have spiritual citizenship in God's Kingdom.

Philippians 3:20-21 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

The true Christian receives a new, a different—a spiritual citizenship. He becomes a citizen of the Kingdom of God. But, since God's Kingdom has not yet come to earth, as it will, to rule all nations under the glorified Christ as King of kings, this spiritual citizenship is reserved in heaven, as of now.

We are naturally born citizens of the government under which we have been born (or naturalized). As such, we are loyal citizens. We love our country. We are subject to its laws, its authority. We acknowledge no other allegiance to any earthly power.

But, we now also have a spiritual citizenship, in heaven. But, of course, we are not in heaven, but here on earth.

We are here on earth as "ambassadors for Christ" (II Corinthians 5:20). Even Abraham, whose promises they were, was merely a sojourner in the Promised Land, as in a strange country. He is the father of the faithful, and spiritually we are in the same way, even though we have national citizenship, as ambassadors representing Christ our King who is in heaven.

This spiritual citizenship—to be brought later, literally, to this earth—does make a difference between the one who has it and owes spiritual allegiance to it, and one whose only citizenship is to a war-making nation of this world.

The true Christian, in a sense, has a new dual citizenship. But, in his new Christian life, his primary allegiance, above all, is to Almighty God the Creator, and to his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the coming King, of the Kingdom of God. He is completely loyal in his heart, his attitudes, his sympathies, his obligations, concerning all governments of this world, to his country in which he was born, or has national citizenship.

Most civil government laws are based, in principle, on God's great law, the Ten Commandments. Laws against murder, stealing, etc., are all based on God's principles. But, where there might be conflict, as between national obligations and commands of

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God, for the regenerated Christian, we must obey God, even though still being subject to penalties, if need be, of our national government.

Our physical citizenship is confined to our national country. But we also have a spiritual citizenship, that in no way is hostile toward, or an enemy of, our country of this world. And we will, in most cases, make a better citizen for our earthly nation than those who don't have this obedient subjection to the God who is the God.

As an ambassador for Christ, we abide loyally with all laws, rules and regulations of our earthly country. We pay taxes to pay our way—but we do not take part in the military establishment.

Jesus did not join the Roman army, which controlled Palestine when He was on earth. Christ, today, "In us", will not enter military service.

The true Christian today is like the Apostle Paul.

Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

We are not merely to have the faith David had when he killed Goliath. His faith missed the mark. We must have the greater faith of Christ.

God's word, in Colossians 1:27, teaches that Christ, in Spirit, must live in us—"Christ in you, the hope of Glory." Human nature in a man will fight, and think it right. But it is God, not man, who defines what is sin and what is righteousness.

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death. [This is certainly true for military service.]

We do not judge those who think military service and killing in war is right. God has not set us to be their judges. Neither do we condemn them. In one sense, their willingness to sacrifice themselves for their country is admirable. "Greater love has no man that this, than to give his life for a friend."

The judgment of God is now on the house of God. The true Christian, who has this understanding, is held accountable, now! Judgment on the world will come with the

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coming of Christ to rule. I'm not saying that this makes it right for the unconverted to participate in war, because he thinks it right. But God knows how to equitably judge each person on earth.

If any nation would obey God in His command, "You shall not kill," God would fight its battles, and that nation would have peace!

The next section will be an "inset chapter", so to speak, regarding the conscientious objector.

In the U.S., 500 million dollars have been wasted on the Selective Service System since 1979. And it has not even been used in the last 20 years or so! Ex-President Ronald Reagan said, "The most fundamental objection to draft registration is moral."

The true Christian conscientious objector (CO) is the person who, based on biblical understanding and sincere belief has the conviction that it is wrong to support war or enter military service. As a spiritual citizen of the Kingdom of God, he does not fight. As an Ambassador for Jesus Christ, it is inappropriate for him to fight, kill, or wage human war.

This sincere and humble commitment to his beliefs of non-aggression is part of an intimate relationship he has with his God. It is a personal relationship. Therefore, His decision to become a CO is between him and his God. This does not mean that he is not a patriot of his country, or that he has any hatred or antagonism toward the leaders or citizens of the country of his earthly citizenship. He is a law-abiding person.

Conscription assumes this nation's young people belong to the state and it is wrongly associated with patriotism, when it really represents collectivism and involuntary servitude.

Conscientious objectors will suffer persecution from various sources—by the draft board, other citizens, employers, federal or state governments or military personnel.

Here is my experience with conscientious objection in the seventies:

A year or so before I turned 18—conscription age in the US—I wrote an 8 page letter declaring my personal religious beliefs regarding military service and war. When the draft lottery for my year of eligibility came up, the order of priority was chosen by birth date—my lottery number was 22 out of a possibility of 365 as per the days of the year. In the years prior to my 18th birthday anyone with a lottery number of about 100

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and below were sent to basic military training (boot camp) and made available for export to Vietnam.

When I sat in front of the draft board, one of the first things I remember the interrogator telling me was that her son was in Vietnam fighting for his country as we spoke. That certainly put the pressure on me, having an antagonistic reviewer. Then she called me a coward and a traitor.

Some of the questions I remember the Board asking me were: Why won't you fight for your country? Who put you up to this? What are the doctrines of your Church? Can you prove that you're not just trying to get out of serving your country? Would you defend yourself, if someone broke into your house and tried to kill you? Do you still want to be a CO if it means going to prison? Are you willing to do public service?

Probably the most well known conscientious objectors in the United States today are the Amish, the descendants of the Anabaptists of 16th century Europe. They have fairly thorough records of their history that includes their conscientious objection to military service.

Herb Witmer gave me a brief historical overview of the Anabaptist position of non-resistance in times of war and peace titled, "People of Peace—Victims of Violence." I found this very interesting—because people in God's church could so closely relate to the things that they went through. I want to read some excerpts out of it, to illustrate what conscientious objectors have had to endure over the last almost 500 years.

On January 21, 1525, these "Swiss brethren" secretly met and re-baptized each other to signify their adult commitment to their faith, and a church not part of the state. Their radical acts challenged the unity and authority of both, and their refusal to serve in the military was a distinct threat to the city's safety.

The results? They were hunted down, asked to recant, had their children taken, were exiled, tortured, sold into slavery, branded, burned at the stake, drowned, or dismembered. That is the worst that I think may happen to a CO.

Regarding the American Revolution, John Hostetler wrote in Amish Society:

Their opposition to taking the oath of allegiance and joining the militia was interpreted by patriots as an alignment with the British. The Amish, unlike the

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Quakers, generally paid the war tax but disclaimed any responsibility for its use.

According to Steven Nolt in his *History of The Amish*, the Amish were caught between the Tories and the Patriots, and neither side cared to recognize the non-resistant stance of "peace churches." In some cases, contributions were made instead of military service. So they had to pay extortion demands, basically, to keep themselves out of military service.

Now let's see how the Amish fared in the American Civil War.

Their belief in non-resistance brought them under suspicion on both sides. The moral and political issues again tore some families apart, as some joined the ranks. The 1863 Federal Conscription Act allowed the hiring of substitutes, and some Amish and Mennonite communities raised thousands of dollars for those members facing the draft, who could avoid it with a \$300 "commutation fee."

Lancaster's "Tennessee John" Stoltzfus was one of the Amish who hired a substitute to take his place. According to Paton Yoder in his book *Tradition & Transition*, he "kept a blue coat in his attic...from the man he had hired as a substitute, later killed in battle. Occasionally John retrieved the coat and reverently polished the brass buttons in remorseful meditation."

In the "war to end all wars"—World War I:

The Amish declared conscientious objector status. As Albert Keim writes in "The Amish and The State", "CO's were drafted into the army and posted to military camps with the hope that they would enter noncombatant service." The question then became one of how much to "cooperate." Their resistance to wearing uniforms rather than their plain clothes, and their refusal to bear arms, resulted in harassment, beatings, and humiliation in many cases.

Menno Diener, stationed at Camp Taylor, Kentucky witnessed the bayonet stabbing of another Amish boy, and he himself suffered beatings with a broomstick. He wrote, "A few days later another boy, his face black and blue from beatings, was placed on display by a public road. Someone placed a sign on him that read, "I refused to fight for my country."

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The issue is often used that the person is not being a patriot. This stirs up the anger of the other citizens.

According to Steven Nolt in his *History of the Amish*, "Officers occasionally 'baptized' Amish CO's in the camp latrines in mockery of their Anabaptist beliefs."

In the period from 1941 to 1945—World War II:

Alternate service was required of those who were conscientious objectors, many of whom were, of course, not Amish. For many Amish, however, a farm deferment meant they could work at home. Those not eligible had to leave the community, and often worked in Civilian Public Service camps, in mental hospitals, forestry projects, or fire fighting. According to Albert Keim, one Amish man named, Ed Miller was a subject in a series of human guinea pig experiments at the University of Illinois.

During the Korean and Vietnam Wars:

Amish boys again served in hospitals or prisons. While conditions were better, there was sometimes harassment of Amish boys for their non-violent beliefs. But some boys refused even alternate service, and so were sent to prison.

By the time of the Gulf War:

The US no longer had a draft, so there was no real issue here for the Amish young people. Nevertheless, talk of a possible reinstatement of the draft resulted in some boys hurriedly getting baptized and joining the Amish church. One Amish man, Elmo Stoll, bluntly wrote in *Family Life* magazine about this situation. "What a shame if they had joined the church only to discover they wouldn't have to! It would surely be in place for church leaders everywhere to cry out against this hypocrisy. We are thankful for the religious liberty we enjoy, so that those who are sincerely conscientious objectors do not need to kill their fellow men. However, if we knowingly shelter insincere persons among us, someday we will surely have to give an account for it. We have heard from reliable sources that before long a worldwide inquest and thorough investigation is going to be made into this

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matter, among other matters. It is not a false rumor. The Bible calls it the Great Judgment Day."

Granted, there is an essential difference between God's protection of the Amish and how He works with them and His protection of the members of His true Church. I read excerpts from this series of articles to give you an idea of how this society has treated conscientious objectors over the span of several centuries, and that it's not something to take lightly. Any of these things could happen again. God may allow some true Christians to go through some of these things. We know there will be martyrs in the end time.

For those of you who are personally convicted of your beliefs against killing and military service and are nearing draft age or who are of draft age (that would be those of you who are about 16—35 years of age), I recommend that you write a letter "To whom it may concern." State your conviction and give biblical scriptures to support your claim; sign it, and have it notarized, and mail it registered mail to yourself to ensure it is sealed and dated by the post office. This will support your claim in the future of being a conscientious objector. That way the government will have a hard time saying you just became a CO to save your own skin.

If you truly are a conscientious objector, genuine in your beliefs, and have been regularly attending Sabbath services and the Holy Days with Church of the Great God, and you are an upstanding member (including non-baptized youths) of God's Church, ask us for a letter confirming your membership and association with the Church of the Great God. Then, we'll send you a letter confirming your length of attendance with Church of the Great God and that the Church's official doctrine is that killing of human beings and serving in the military is a sin according to God's written word—*The Holy Bible*.

Ex-President John F. Kennedy said, "War will exist until that distant day when the conscientious objector enjoys the same reputation and prestige that the warrior does today."

Let's get back to the question: How does the New Testament teaching differ from the Old Testament teaching in regard to the command, "You shall not murder"?

Matthew 5:17-20 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass

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from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."

Verse 17—"To fulfill" is the Greek verb pleroo (plErO), which according to Jewish scholars probably reflects the Aramaic verb qum meaning 'establish', 'validate', or 'confirm' the law. Jesus did not come to abolish the law but to confirm it and establish it. He magnified it, giving us a clearer understanding of the spirit of the law.

Jesus set us an example, of obedience to the law, that we should follow His example. And, as Christians we must also fulfill or confirm the law by doing it. James elaborated on this principle with an example of two specific laws, "Do not commit adultery" and "Do not murder".

James 2:8-11 If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

Far from abolishing God's law, Jesus put a magnifying glass on it—so that we may see more clearly how to obey it in principle, and in spirit, not merely according to literal letter of the law.

Jesus Christ came into this world to magnify God's law and make it honorable. Jesus cast a spot light on the Ten Commandments, and showed their real spiritual intent and meaning in the full Christian life. We can look at the expanding of the law that Christ taught when He spoke of murder and adultery.

Matthew 5:21-22 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder,' and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in

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danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire."

Christ shows that God's law is spiritual, and is designed to extend to the thoughts and feelings as well as the external act.

Here in Matthew 5, killing, murder, war, is traced to its source——hate, anger, self-centeredness, greed, lust, spirit of competition, and spirit of aggression. Christ declared that if personal anger filled the heart of one of His subjects, such a person is in danger of judgment.

If that anger or disregard leads a man to have disdain and contempt for his fellow human being, that man will be "in danger of the counsel"——of God's punishment. If in bitterness and scorn a man will say of his fellow human being, "You fool," an expression that in the original Greek meant condemnation, such a man will be "in danger of hell fire."

This is Jesus Christ's application of the Sixth Commandment with regard to our respecting others. If we harbor hate and anger in our hearts, we are harboring the "spirit" of murder! If we maintain an attitude of disdain and disregard for the welfare of others, we are guilty of breaking the spirit of the Sixth Commandment——the law against murder.

Matthew 5:43-46 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?"

Action follows thought. First we think——then we do. The Spirit of Christ guides us not only to control our actions, but also to control our thoughts and our attitudes. In part, the New Covenant is the process of God writing His law in our hearts, and minds, and inward parts.

Hebrews 8:10 "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LOORD: I will put My laws in their mind and

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write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

This will be a future thing that will happen. Israel did not have the Holy Spirit of God.

The way we deal with our enemies is one of the areas that make us different from the world.

Romans 12:17-19 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

Human beings are incapable of taking vengeance with proper wisdom and justice to all concerned. God alone has the wisdom and the power and the right to take vengeance on human beings—to the extent of executing them if need be. The true Christian must learn that God is real—and that His protection and His vengeance are just as real.

Romans 12:20-21 Therefore, If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

It takes righteous character to help and serve our fellow human beings when they have directly tried to harm us. It takes spiritual wisdom to realize that they are fellow human beings, made in the image of God, and simply misguided for the time being in their thoughts and actions.

Instead of the natural tendency to want to get even with someone who has done us wrong, a true Christian must really learn the lesson that the Apostle Paul taught: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." It is impossible for a person to feel that if they go to war with another individual or nation.

James 1:17 says, God is the giver of every good and perfect gift. He has given us our lives, our strength, our minds, and our abilities—everything we have, or hope to have, comes from Him. In order to live happily forever as God's son, we also must learn to give, to serve, and to love other human beings.

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The spirit of malice and murder is the exact opposite of this basic attribute that God requires of His sons.

I John 3:14-15 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

A continued lack of love in any human being leads to hate, and hate leads to murder. God says the spirit of hate is murder. And, murder is a great sin.

This spirit of murder is not indefinable. Psychologists have discovered and clinically proven that people with an attitude of contention and malice and hate literally become sick physically—and have a form of mental insanity if this mental attitude is not changed.

This is why the insanity plea in a murder case is ridiculous, because anyone with the frame of mind of willing or wanting to kill another human being is by definition "insane". In many cases these wrong, sinful emotions of hate lead to the literal murder of a fellow human being.

Jesus Christ came into this world as a messenger of the government or kingdom of God. He took no part in this world's politics or wars. On trial for His life before Pontius Pilate, Jesus revealed where His Kingdom was not.

John 18:36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."

Let me repeat an important point. *Only God who gave life has the right to take life. Therefore, only God has the right to wage war.* And, as Jesus taught, God does not choose to have His children wage war.

When Christ returns with His resurrected saints to fight against the armies of the earth, it will not be a battle of physical saints killing other physical human beings. But it will be spiritual members of the Kingdom of God carrying out God's righteous judgment by fighting against and killing sinful and rebellious physical human beings.

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Wars fought by and for governments or kingdoms of this world are in defiance of the higher government and rule of Almighty God from whom all real authority proceeds.

II Corinthians 10:3 "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh."

God's way is not the way of the world. And neither is the way of the world our way. There should be no warring in our flesh or in our minds.

Ancient Israel did not live up to what God desired of them—to faithfully trust Him to fight their battles for them. Because of this faithlessness they sinned against God. "Whatever is not of faith is sin." And, as one sin leads to another sin, they also sinned by predetermining that they would be a war-waging nation.

They had already decided they were willing to take the life of another human being, thereby breaking the spirit of the Sixth Commandment to not hate. When they entered each battle, they were already in a sinful premeditated killing state of mind. Their attitude of killing was one of premeditated murder. Their state of mind was little different than the other nations in going to war.

By the time Israel went to war, they had already broken the spirit of the law, whether or not God had commanded them to go. That means that Israel entered into war with a worldly attitude—in a sinful state of mind—guilty of breaking the spirit of the law against killing.

But, if God commanded Israel to go to war, the letter of the law, manifested by the action, was His responsibility. But, if Israel went to war without God's command, the physical and spiritual responsibility for the action of killing fell on the Israelites.

In either case, the Israelites were guilty of sinning in the spirit of the law of God because they had already decided in their minds that they would kill other human beings in the course of war. This was the premeditated spiritual side of murder. Because of faithlessness, the people of Israel predetermined that they would be a killing nation when they rejected God as their protector.

Let's take a look at James 4 again. War results from the spirit exactly opposite of what He wants His servants to have. In the case of ancient Israel, it was not only their premeditated disregard for the lives of other human beings, but their own lack of faith in God protect them.

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James 4:1-2 Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.

Human beings don't believe that God could give them—individually and nationally—the material possessions that they want and need. Instead, they feel they must compete and fight and war to get these things.

When an aggressor attacks, peoples and nations of this world refuse to trust God to deliver them, as He did ancient Israel at the Red Sea and in other instances.

In reality, there is no nation on earth—including America, Britain, and Canada, or any other Israelitish or Gentile country—that really knows and trusts the true God for His supernatural protection in time of war.

Instead, we seem to find it easier to spend countless billions of dollars and man-hours to protect ourselves. Countless millions of lives are killed or crippled or ruined. And millions of young men are taught to become effective killers—murderers!

One of the most devastating indictments against war is that it breeds in whole populations the spirit of violence and murder. To even hate our enemies is murder according to the spirit of the law of "You shall not kill." To even hate our enemy is to break the spirit of the law. Remember, as Christians we strive for the ideal!

In one generation, Americans were taught to hate the British in the Revolutionary War. Later, they were taught to hate the Mexicans and the Spanish. Still later, they had to hate and destroy the Germans and the Japanese. After that, they were pressured to hate the Russians, Chinese, and North Koreans. A short time later, they were taught to hate the North Vietnamese, followed by the Iranians. Presently, most of the Western World is taught to hate the Iraqis.

And now, the Americans are allied with the British, and somewhat with the Germans—both of whom they hated earlier. And, the Japanese and Mexicans are economic allies, as well as the Russians and Chinese. But, this is only until Americans are taught—by self-seeking, prideful political leaders and a propaganda filled media—to hate these countries and others all over again. Because the people are of a war-waging nature, as was ancient Israel, and most people are ready to comply. Most of the people in this world are more than happy to go along, because they do not have

God's Holy Spirit.

The cycle has existed from the time Cain killed Abel. This is not to say that the U.S. is worse than the other countries of the world, it is just to say that it is just as wrong when it comes to being a war-waging nation.

No wonder there is so much violence, crime, adultery and abortion in the wake of war. More than any other thing, war breeds the spirit of murder! And that evil spirit is growing and increasing exponentially today.

Jesus Christ came preaching the good news of the government or rule of God. That rule is based on the Ten Commandments—God's spiritual law.

Jesus magnified that law and showed its spiritual intent and purpose. He taught that if we even hate our fellow human beings, we are spiritually guilty of murder. Jesus taught that we should obey the laws of God and prepare for His coming Kingdom by yielding ourselves to let God's laws—His character—be placed within us.

When God's government does come, His law will go forth as the standard of conduct of all nations. At that time, God will wage war to punish rebellious nations in perfect wisdom and justice. When God reigns nations will be at peace with one another.

Micah 4:1-3 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LOORD'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 LOORD, 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 LOORD 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.

In the meantime, we have to work and pray for God's kingdom of peace, and we have to realize that the spirit of war is the spirit of murder—and avoid it with all of our strength.

War is the most immense and disastrous social sin that afflicts humanity. It is completely and irreversibly unchristian. It is a blatant denial of every Christian principle and ethic.

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The essence of the matter is this: God the Father and Jesus Christ are against the spirit of war in every form. Someday They will put an end to it forever because it is against the dignity and value of human beings and the sacredness of human life—"created in the image of God."