

The Christian and Civil Government (8th)

(In this lesson, we continue to look at the relationship of civil government and the Christian as taught in the Scriptures. Today's study is concerning their relationship to war and the Christian soldier as referenced in Luke 3:14.)

Today we will address the issues of the Christian and civil government and their connection with war. The confessions say, "... so for that end they may lawfully now under the New Testament wage war, upon just and necessary occasions." The verse of Scripture referenced by both Protestants and Baptists in their confessions regarding this matter is Luke 3:14. This is where John the Baptist addressed the question of the soldiers as to what they should do. It reads as follows: "And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages."

Before we consider this verse it should be remembered that sin is the cause of all wars. While there are just wars, if it were not for sin there would not be any wars. Equally, war is a horrible thing. There is no virtue in the death of men or in the maiming of bodies as a result of war, especially when often wars are created by wicked and unjust men who do so for industrial profit. That is another story which we cannot discuss at this time. Nevertheless, war is often demanded and is essential in the society in which we live.

Many say that the Bible is against war and that all wars are wrong. Time will not allow us to do a detailed study on the subject of war, but I would like to bring a few passages from the Scriptures to supply a brief introduction the topic.

First and foremost, the Lord is described in Exodus 15:3 as "a man of war." This is recorded in the song that Moses and the children of Israel sang upon the Lord destroying Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea. The song further describes the judgment of God in the destruction of the Egyptians in verses six through eight: "Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, *which* consumed them as stubble. And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, *and* the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea."

In the first chapter of Numbers, God identified and counted the men who were to go to war. And in Numbers chapter thirty-one, God instructed Moses to arm men to go to war against the Midianites, Numbers 31:3. Here we clearly see that God commanded war; and, every Bible reader knows that there were many other times where the Lord commanded Israel, as well as other nations, to go to war. As we know God judged Israel several times by sending wicked nations to destroy them and take them into slavery and captivity. The people in the land of Canaan were destroyed in war due to the wickedness of the various tribes living there. In fact, God told Abraham hundreds of years before that He would not only judge Egypt, but that his seed would not inherit Canaan until "the iniquity of the Amorites" was full, Genesis 15:14-16. (A study of the Scriptures show that when nations are involved in wars, especially unjust wars, it is an indication of God's judgment on that nation. The nation may be conquering other counties, but ultimately it will be destroyed by the unjust hostilities.) God hardened the heart of Sihon, king of Heshbon, to go to war against Israel so that he would be destroyed, Deuteronomy 2:26-35. Later, during the time of the judges, God left some nations in Israel to teach war to the young men in Israel, as well as to teach them to obey the Lord. Listen to the Word of God: "Now these *are* the nations which the LORD left, to prove Israel by them, *even* as many *of Israel* as had not known all the wars of Canaan; Only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof; *Namely*, five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the

Sidonians, and the Hivites that dwelt in mount Lebanon, from mount Baal-hermon unto the entering in of Hamath. And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the LORD, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.” Judges 3:1-4. The Scriptures teach us that war is in heaven, Revelation 12:7, cf. Daniel 10:1-13. I Kings 22:15-23 pulls the veil back and gives us a scene in heaven where God allows a lying spirit was sent to Ahab’s prophets to persuade him to go into battle to be killed. Therefore, no Bible believer can say that the Bible condemns all wars following this short overview of the Scriptures concerning war directly.

I further believe that other passages support this principle as well. I Timothy 5:8 says, “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” While this verse is teaching directly that widows should not be supported by the congregation when she has relatives that are capable of doing it, the principle of providing for the home is stated. Provision for the home or family is more than providing food, clothing, shelter, etc., but it included protection from foreign invaders. Such intruders may range from dangerous animals to thieves and other aggressors. I know some of late have taught that if a man breaks into your house and assaults your wife you should not do anything physically to protect or defend your wife. This is not only against the Scriptures but it is also against nature. Obviously, if an animal were attacking a loved one any caring husband or father would stop the intruder, so likewise, should those who act like brute beasts should equally be destroyed, cf. II Peter 2:12-13. If a home is to be defended from invaders, equally, the homeland or country is to engage in warfare to guard and protect itself from the enemy.

Now we will look particularly at our text under consideration. Again, Luke 3:14 says, “And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.” As previously stated, this verse is referenced to support the confessions regarding civil magistrates waging “war, upon just and necessary occasions.” While the verse does not specifically mention waging war, there is a truth affirmed by John that soldiers may lawfully be in the army and still honor God in the kingdom of heaven. Also, I would like to take this opportunity to discuss the role and lifestyle of a Christian soldier.

Remember that John was preaching repentance in “all the country about Jordan,” Luke 3:3. Many classes of people went to him to be baptized and he spoke to the multitudes (particularly the Pharisees and Sadducees, Matthew 3:7-10) saying, “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham,” Luke 3:7-8. After this, “the people” and “the publicans” asked John what fruits should be in their lives that would manifest that they could be baptized. To the people, John said, “He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise,” verses 10-11. Regarding the publicans (tax collectors), John declared, “Exact no more than that which is appointed you,” verse 13. Afterwards, John answered the soldiers regarding their lifestyle. Notice that John did not say to the soldiers that they should get out of military service. He instructed them as to how they should live as a soldier to honor the Lord and manifest fruits of repentance. Three things were required: (1) Do violence to no man; (2) do not accuse any falsely; and, (3) be content with their wages.

The Greek word for *violence* is only used here in the New Testament, though it is found in the Septuagint and in ancient Greek. It means to shake thoroughly. I believe John Gill gave a good description of the meaning here. He said, “or ‘shake’ him, or put him, into bodily fear, by threatening, hectoring, and bullying him, and drawing the sword upon him, which is usual, upon the least offence.”

The Greek word for *falsely* is unique in that it is a combination of two words. One is the word for *fig* and the other for *to make known*. It is used here where John tells the soldiers not to accuse anyone falsely and again in Luke 19:8 when Zacchaeus says he would restore fourfold anyone whom he had taken from him by “false accusation.” A study of the origin of this word is worth the time but lest we stray too far from our purpose it is best, I believe, that we not do so at this time. However, the word came to mean *to*

slander or *accuse falsely*. Our English word *sycophant* is derived from this Greek word. Among the many definitions, *sycophant* carries the meaning and idea of a “toady, leech, sponge, ... flatterer or self-seeker” ... a parasite that “applies to one who clings to a person of wealth, power, or influence or is useless to society.” The Greek Demosthenes describes one as follows: “He glides about the market like a scorpion, with his venomous sting all ready, spying out whom he may surprise with misfortune and ruin, and from whom he can most easily extort money, by threatening him with an action dangerous in its consequences. ... It is the bane of our city that it protects and cherishes this poisonous brood, and uses them as informers, so that even the honest man must flatter and court them, in order to be safe from their machinations.” *Word Studied in the New Testament* by Marvin R. Vincent, Vol. 1, p. 285. Again, allow me to quote from John Gill regarding this. He stated, “or play the sycophant; who, in order to flatter some, bring malicious accusations against others; and which was a vice that too much prevailed among the Jewish soldiery; who either to curry favour with the Roman officers and governors, would wrongfully accuse their fellow soldiers, or country men, to them; or in order to extort sums of money from them, that they might live in a more luxurious manner than their common pay would admit of.”

While we are reluctant to stop here while studying Luke 3:14, I believe it best not to extend our session beyond our normal time limit. The Lord willing, we will continue this in our next broadcast: farewell, and God bless.