

Is a “Just War” Possible?

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | March 3, 2022



One of our online members asked the following: *What is your view on the just war theory?*

In discussing the “just war” theory in this blog, we are speaking only of warfare—not police action, such as using power to restrain individuals from committing crimes against others, but of a military engagement upon or between people groups, tribes, nations, and kingdoms.

The just war theory is the idea that one can justify war, that one can make the case that there are some situations in which war (the use of physical might to compel, coerce, force, destroy, and kill) is morally justifiable.

Justice is doing what is *just* or *right*. What determines what is just or right? The law. For example, it is just or right to punch someone in boxing but wrong or unjust to do so in a soccer match. The rules or laws of the various sports, nations, kingdoms, organizations determine what is just or right.

Thus, the question about just war requires us to ask: Through which law lens are we answering the question—human imposed law or God’s design law?

God is the Creator, the builder of reality, and His laws are the [design laws](#) upon which reality operates (gravity, laws of physics, health, and the moral laws).

Humans cannot build reality; therefore, sinful humans make up rules that require external enforcement through inflicted punishments.

If we use the human imposed-law lens, rules requiring the infliction of penalties, to answer the question of the just war, then we immediately conclude that justice requires the appropriate use of power or force to hold accountable and punish those who do wrong. In this model, war can be found justifiable if one can identify sufficient wrongs that cannot be remediated in any other way. But, as human history documents, the “wrongs” that justify war change based on the mindsets, culture, beliefs, and values of the people in power, because human laws are merely made-up rules.

But if one views things through God’s design law, one realizes that arguments for just war are a trap to ensnare people into engaging in warfare in order to destroy the hearts and minds of people. The true war between Christ and Satan is a spiritual war, not a physical one. God could have destroyed Satan and his followers as easily as dropping a pebble to the ground, but rebellion, distrust, and selfishness cannot be overcome with force. What God desires cannot be achieved with might or power.

God wants our love, trust, loyalty, devotion, friendship; and loving, trustworthy friends cannot be obtained by threats, inflicted punishments, or killing those who don’t obey. That is why the Bible teaches: “‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty” (Zechariah 4:6 NIV84). This Spirit is the Spirit of truth and love.

Those who are reborn into the kingdom of God wage a different kind of warfare than the world:

For though we live in the world, **we do not wage war as the world does.** The weapons we fight with are **not the weapons of the world.** On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV84, emphasis mine).

We present truth in love and leave others free. We do not fight physical wars for lands, resources, or power over others; we fight to free hearts and minds from fear and selfishness, which cannot be achieved through military might. The true war is not to save our mortal bodies; it is to save souls for eternity.

The methods of warfare we use reveal whose side we are actually on and whom we become like in heart, mind, and character. Choose the methods of this world—violence, force, coercion, killing others—and we injure ourselves, harden our hearts, and become more like Satan, “who was a murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44). But reject the methods of this world and practice the methods of Jesus and God’s law is further imbedded upon the heart and people are solidified in character to be like Christ.

Satan deceives people into pursuing “justice” through human law and coercive enforcement, including war, as a means to reproduce his own character in people. In my blog [“Prepare! The King of the North Is Coming,”](#) I describe how all the kingdoms of the world are Satan’s and how he pits them against each other to do various injustices in order to inflame fear, outrage, anger, and helplessness in people to inspire them to join one of his forces and seek to destroy with violence those who are seen as having done wrong.

Choosing to go down the human warpath corrupts the character of those who embrace and practice the methods of force and violence. Killing other people injures the person who kills; it hardens the heart. Such damage to the soul can absolutely be healed through repentance and receiving God's grace, but wouldn't it be better to never suffer such soul injuries in the first place? And sadly, many who have been damaged by participation in war, rather than turning to God, seek to numb themselves through various substances to avoid the suffering the trauma has caused.

War, the mass killing of other human beings, is contrary to God's design for humanity. It cannot be done without traumatizing the heart, mind, and soul of the people who engage in it. The mind and heart naturally recoil from killing another person. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is the *natural* response to the *unnatural* experience of war. God would have people never experience the horrors of war. Thus, there is never a godly just cause for war, only an earthly "just cause."

The entire effort (propaganda) behind justifying a war to a populace is because it is unjustifiable. The arguments used to justify war are made because people don't want to feel the guilt and shame that comes from killing other people. The just war arguments are human rationalizations to make the warmongers feel they are doing right when, in fact, they are doing wrong. They want to make a case that in some circumstances, it is virtuous to use force to either compel or kill others in order to advance one's own way. But it is all a lie of Satan.

Does Peace Require War?

From a human-law perspective, "just war" is a discussion of "the greater good," "the lesser of two evils," to decide when it is "just" to send *others* to war to kill *others*; rarely do we find those who order people into war going into battle themselves—if somehow that always occurred, it is likely we would have less war. There has never been and will never be a human war in which injustices do not occur—from both sides. Further, even if one claims a "just cause," the people sent to war are always harmed—not always physically, but always emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. The more "action" they see, the greater the harm. God doesn't want anyone to experience this type of injury. All war is instigated by Satan.

Because we live in a world of sin, Satan will inspire his agents to do injustice at every level of human existence—abuse in families, crime in communities, exploitation in churches, corruption in governments, profiteering in business, and war among nations.

The godly who occupy seats of authority in government are to take actions designed to avoid and prevent war, but not at the cost of colluding with or enabling evil—the exploitation of the innocent. The righteous seek to restrain those who seek to do evil, not force the evil to do good. On an individual level, we do this with police powers and imprisonment. But the same principle is used by nation-states.

Roman general Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus famously said, "*Igitur qui desiderat pacem, praeparet bellum,*" which means: *If you want peace, prepare for war.* This is because the unrighteous are governed not by love for others, but by fear and selfishness, by the survival drives, the strong dominating and taking from the weak. Thus, what prevents the unrighteous from going to war is fear, not love, the conclusion being that war would be too costly and they would lose more than they gain.

So, in this world of sin, if a wicked person takes their nation to war, what is the "just" response of the righteous? To act in ways that bring the war to an end as quickly as possible, with the most effective interventions in order to reduce the number of injuries, damage, and harm. The war is still unjustifiable;

the action to end the war is justifiable.

But the Christian must always recognize that the real war is a war for hearts and minds, for the kind of people we will be, for what kind of character we develop. Will we be like Jesus, or will we be like Satan? Which law, methods, and principles will we choose to embrace and practice in how we treat others? Not just when times are good, but when times are bad, especially in the face of injustice. One of Satan's best strategies to win recruits to his army is to do real injustice, incite outrage in response to it, and get those wronged to seek to do "justice," to make it right, by using Satan's methods of force and violence in return upon others.

But Jesus said,

My kingdom is not of this world. **If it were, my servants would fight** to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place (John 18:36 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Those who are members of God's kingdom do *not* wage war as the world does. We do not fight with the weapons of the world. To do so is to join the army of God's enemy:

You have heard that it was said, "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I tell you: **Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.** He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:43-48 NIV84, emphasis mine).

If we want to be part of God's family, we must rightly represent Him. We must live to honor Him. We must carry out His law, His methods, His design, His protocols for life in how we treat others.

You have heard that it was said, "Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth." But I tell you, **do not resist an evil person.** If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you (Matthew 5:38-42 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Satan cannot force people to sin. He cannot make people choose him or practice his methods. He must get people to choose his methods, to prefer them. Thus, Satan inspires the wicked to do real injustice, which tempts the righteous with outrage and into embracing his methods to do "justice" by using ungodly methods, to punish, to fix things with violence. And when people do so, they become less like Jesus and more like Satan.

Jesus is clear: Those of His kingdom love their enemies and do not use violence to advance it.

There is a justifiable war—it is the war of truth against lies, of love against fear, of liberty against coercion; of forgiveness against resentment; it is the war being waged for every soul. We do not wage war as the world does; we use the weapons of truth, love, and liberty to destroy the false beliefs and fears that hold minds captive. We model ourselves after Jesus and the apostles who, despite the injustices of a pagan Roman empire, did not use violence but warred against Satan’s kingdom and the injustices of the corrupt human governments by winning people to live in harmony with God’s law. The goal of wielding God’s weapons is to turn our enemies into our friends:

Anyone who is joined to Christ is a new being; the old is gone, the new has come. All this is done by God, who through Christ **changed us from enemies into his friends and gave us the task of making others his friends also.** Our message is that God was making the whole human race his friends through Christ. **God did not keep an account of their sins, and he has given us the message which tells how he makes them his friends.** Here we are, then, speaking for Christ, as though God himself were making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ’s behalf: **let God change you from enemies into his friends!** (2 Corinthians 5:17-20 GNT, emphasis mine).

In the final days before Christ returns, Satan’s forces will increase their assault, there will be more injustice, more abuse, more crime, greater calls for “just war”—all intended to draw in the saints of God into choosing to join with one of Satan’s forces and embrace and practice his methods to advance “justice” to make the world better.

It is a trap.

God’s people will refuse and, instead, will advance truth, love, and liberty, trusting God with their lives, fortunes, and futures, even if it means going into the fiery furnace or the lion’s den. For in the last days, the people of God, empowered by the Holy Spirit, “overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death” (Revelation 12:11 NIV84).