

## Pursuing Peace in a World of Conflict

(Article 16: Peace and War)

*Matthew 5:9 - Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God.*

**Article 16: Peace and War**<sup>1</sup> - "It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war. The true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord. The supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of men and nations, and the practical application of His law of love. Christian people throughout the world should pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace.

*Isaiah 2:4; Matthew 5:9,38-48; 6:33; 26:52; Luke 22:36,38; Romans 12:18-19; 13:1-7; 14:19; Hebrews 12:14; James 4:1-2.*

**I. What is Peace?**<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew word for peace is beautiful – "Shalom". This word is expressed in the word, "Jerusalem" – city of peace. Hebrews greet each other with "*Mah Shalom Kah*" which means "Is it peace with you?" This word means much more than the absence of war or conflict. When two Jews meet each other or part from each other, they say, "Shalom! Peace!" but they mean much more than, "May you have no battles!" The biblical meaning of peace is to experience total well-being in every aspect of one's life – spiritually, emotionally, mentally and physically.

## II. What are the Fundamental Facts about Biblical Peace?

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1. **God is the source of all peace.** (see Judges 6:24; Isaiah 9:9; Luke 2:14)
2. **Jesus is God's peacemaker through the blood of the Cross** (Colossians 1:20)
3. **The Holy Spirit is the Producer of peace in the believer's life** (Galatians 5:22)
4. **The enemy of peace is sin.** (see Genesis 3:8; Romans 5:1)
5. **Christians are the instruments of God's peace.** A Christian is called to make peace with six groups:
  1. Between himself and another person – Matthew 5:23-24
  2. Between two other people.
  3. Between groups such as black and white, young and old.
  4. Between factions in the church – Ephesians 4:3; Psalm 133:1
  5. Between nations
  6. Between sinful man and a holy God (see 2 Corinthians 5:17-18)

<sup>1</sup> From the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, <https://bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000>.

<sup>2</sup> Bill Bennett teaching material.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

### III. What is the Reward of a Peacemaker? Jesus says that peacemakers will be called or recognized as the sons of God.

### IV. A Christian's Historic Response to War<sup>4</sup>

Through the centuries, Christians have adopted three major positions regarding Christian participation in war and the proper attitude toward war. **Activism** affirms that Christians are morally obligated to participate in all wars in which their government commands their services. **Pacifism** sees no place for Christians to engage in any type of warfare at all. **Selectivism** advocates that Christians may participate in just wars.

#### In order for a war or a use of arms to be justified:<sup>5</sup>

- The effort must have a just cause (the use of force must be defensive, not offensive).
- The force must also be employed with a just intention to secure a fair, lasting peace for all parties.
- War must also be understood as a last resort, when all other legitimate means of settling a conflict have been tried and have failed.
- A just war must limit objectives to what is necessary to establish a just peace
- The use of force be approved by legitimate authority.
- Only proportionate means be used.
- Noncombatants be protected whenever possible.
- There must also be a reasonable chance of success and a realistic hope that the conflict will lead to a superior, lasting peace.

### V. The Reign of the Prince of Peace<sup>6</sup>

Christians understand that war is the result of human sinfulness. Thus, the scourge of war is another reminder of why Christ died and why true and permanent peace can come only when Jesus Christ returns and subjects all powers to His authority. Until then, Christians are to be agents for peace—real, righteous peace.

**"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." — Isaiah 9:6**

Jesus is indeed our Prince of Peace, and the angels at Bethlehem announced Christ's birth by declaring, **"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" — Luke 2:14**

As The Baptist Faith and Message states, "The true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord." The ultimate achievement of peace will not come by an international conference or a peace treaty but by the victorious reign of Christ (see Rev. 17:14).

**"These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful." — Revelation 17:14**

***St. Francis prayed, "Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace. Where there is hate, may I bring love; Where offense, may I bring pardon; May I bring union in place of discord."***

<sup>4</sup> Taken from Daniel Akin, "Peace, War and Religious Liberty" [www.danielakin.com](http://www.danielakin.com).

<sup>5</sup> Charles S. Kelley Jr. (2013). *The Baptist Faith and Message*. LifeWay Press. Retrieved from <https://read.lifeway.com>

<sup>6</sup> Kelley, *Ibid*.