

A Contradiction?

“The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is his name.” (*Exodus 15:3*)

“Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (*1 Thessalonians 5:23*)

“The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.” (*Romans 16:20*)

Six Phases of War & Peace in the Bible

I. Phase 1: Eden

A. From Perfect Peace...

^{1:31} And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. ^{2:1} Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. ² And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

(*Genesis 1:31-2:3*)

B. ...to Total War

Lamech said to his wives: ‘Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say. I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me.’

(*Genesis 4:23*)

II. Phase 2: OT Historical Books

A. God gives hints of peace

- God casts his people out, but he also clothes them (*Genesis 3:21*)
- God rains down judgment (literally), but then puts his bow in the sky (*Genesis 9:12-16*)
- God establishes the sacrificial system for Israel

¹² And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: ¹³ I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴ When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵ I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶ When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.”
(*Genesis 9:12-16*)

B. God goes to war with the enemies of his people

- The exodus: a war against Egypt and its gods (*Exodus 15:3*)
- The wilderness wanderings: an army on the march (*Numbers 1:1-3*)
- The conquest of Canaan: a holy war (*Genesis 15:16*)

C. God goes to war with his own people

“The Lord has swallowed up without mercy all the habitations of Jacob; in his wrath he has broken down the strongholds of the daughter of Judah; he has brought down to the ground in dishonor the kingdom and its rulers.” (*Lamentations 2:2*)

⁵ Woe to Assyria, the rod of my anger; the staff in their hands is my fury! ⁶ Against a godless nation I send him, and against the people of my wrath I command him, to take spoil and seize plunder, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.” (*Isaiah 10:5-6*)

III. Phase 3: The Prophetic Promises

A. God will fight the oppressors of his people

“When the Lord has finished all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, he will punish the speech of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the boastful look in his eyes. (*Isaiah 10:12*)

B. God will give his people peace

¹ For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. ² But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall.” (*Malachi 4:1-2*)

“⁶ The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. ⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸ The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder’s den. ⁹ They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” (*Isaiah 11:6-9*)

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” (*Isaiah 9:6*)

IV. Phase 4: Jesus

A. The Divine Warrior

- Temptation: a battle with Satan (*Matthew 4:1-12*)
- Ministry: an assault against evil, sin, and suffering
- Death & Resurrection: the defeat of sin and the disarming of the Devil

“¹³ And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.” (*Colossians 2:13-15*)

B. The Prince of Peace

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” (*Luke 2:14*)

“¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.” (*Colossians 1:19-20*)

¹⁹ On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” ²⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” (*John 20:19-21*)

V. Phase 5: The Church Age

A. Grace-bought peace

- A message of peace (*Romans 5:1; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Ephesians 6:15*)
- A church of peace:

“¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷ And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. (*Ephesians 2:14-17*)

B. Grace-bought war

“¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” (*Ephesians 6:12-17*)

“I make war. Cause sin never sleeps. It's got me in a trance, you can see it in my dreams. I make war. Man I beat my flesh to the death, every breath, like I beat my chest. I make war, sun up. I make war, sun down. I make war, time in. I make war, time out. I make war. Against lust, (make war) against pride (make war), against me (make war), ‘til I die” (*Make War*, Tedashii)

VI. Phase 6: The Last Day

A. Jesus wins the final battle

“¹¹ Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. ¹³ He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. ¹⁵ From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. ¹⁷ Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly

overhead, “Come, gather for the great supper of God,¹⁸ to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great.”¹⁹ And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army.²⁰ And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.²¹ And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.” (*Revelation 19:11-21*)

B. Peace is perfected

“²³ And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.²⁴ By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it,²⁵ and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. (*Revelation 21:23-25*)

Application

“Our wisdom, insofar as it ought to be deemed true and solid Wisdom, consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves.” (*Institutes*, Calvin)

- ***Who is your God?***
 - The good news of the avenging Warrior-God
 - The good news of the long-suffering God of peace
- ***Who are you?***
 - “Must I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease, while others fought to win the prize and sailed through bloody seas?” (*Am I a Soldier of the Cross?*, Isaac Watts)
 - “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (*Matthew 5:9*)

Book Recommendations

- *God is a Warrior* (Tremper Longman & Daniel G. Reid)