

A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

Session 5:
War pt 2

February 15, 2023

Review/Summary

- Not a political discussion; biblical/spiritual
- Four Basic Christian Responses to war:
 1. Pacifist – War is never an option
 2. “Just-War” – War is rarely an option, but sometimes necessary

Review (cont.)

3. Often Necessary – War is political, not spiritual; always support political leadership

4. Holy War – in war, we are fighting against the evil forces opposed to God and God's will

- Discussed strengths/weaknesses of each view

Ecclesiastes 3:1,8

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven:...

A time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.”

- A specific biblical passage that states that there is “a time for war”

Interpretation of Ecclesiastes

- Many commentaries do not delve into the question of war; accept the verse at face value
- Some say this verse, while stating there are times for war, does not answer the question of “when” war is appropriate

Deuteronomy 20:10-18

“When you march up to attack a city, make its people an offer of peace. If they accept and open their gates, all the people in it shall be subject to forced labor and shall work for you. If they refuse to make peace and they engage you in battle, lay siege to that city. When the Lord your God delivers it into your hand, put to the sword all the men in it.

Deuteronomy 20:10-18 (cont)

As for the women, the children, the livestock and everything else in the city, you may take these as plunder for yourselves. And you may use the plunder the Lord your God gives you from your enemies. This is how you are to treat all the cities that are at a distance from you and do not belong to the nations nearby.

Deuteronomy 20:10-18 (cont)

However, in the cities of the nations the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes. Completely destroy them...as the Lord your God had commanded you. Otherwise they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshiping their gods, and you will sin against the Lord your God.

Understanding Deuteronomy 20

- First, God says offer peace, but the peace here is a statement of subjugation (“subject to forced labor and shall work for you”)
- Second, if they refuse, start the war (no negotiations, no turning other cheek, etc.)

Understanding Deuteronomy (cont.)

- Third, in cities God is giving Israel as inheritance, KILL EVERYTHING (“if it breathes, completely destroy it”)
- WHY? If they do not destroy/kill, those people will corrupt them spiritually

1 Samuel 15:1-3

Samuel said to Saul, "I am the one the Lord sent to anoint you king over his people Israel; so listen now to the message from the Lord. 2 This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt.

1 Samuel 15:1-3

3 Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy all that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.””

1 Samuel 15:1-3 (cont.)

- Saul and his armies follow these instructions, except that they spared the king-King Agag and his sheep and cattle
- Samuel tells Saul that God is grieved that they did not kill Agag; Samuel killed Agag

Interpretations of OT Passages

1. Karl Barth – We cannot constrain God's freedom to command; God might command violence for a greater good
2. Some – Texts are more symbolic (not to be taken literally); teach us to remove all sin from lives.

OT Passages (cont.)

3. The Interpreter's Bible – “The ideas behind the conception of the ban cannot be accepted as the Word of God for the modern Christian, but they may well have been so for Israel.”

It does seem that the OT validates the use of armed violence by the people of God under some circumstances

Matthew 5:38-45

“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.

Matthew 5:38-45 (cont)

Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. You have heard to '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 the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Interpretations of Matthew 5

- Offers a vision of life in the future Kingdom of God; this teaching is not to be taken literally for the present time (Reinhold Niebuhr)
- Words literally forbid self-defense, but they do not preclude fighting in defense of an innocent third party (Augustine)

Interpretations (cont.)

- Words are a “counsel of perfection,” they apply only to those who aspire to belong to a special class of holy Christians (monks, clergy)
- These words serve to show how impossible it is to live up to God’s standard of righteousness; therefore, they convict our consciences and show that we are sinners in need of grace

Interpretations (cont.)

- What does it really mean to turn the other cheek?

It is an act of non-violent defiance, *not compliance or spinelessness*. It does not mean to be a doormat.

Other NT Passages

- **Luke 9:51-56** – James & John want to call down fire from heaven; Jesus rebukes them
- **Luke 3:10-14** – Soldiers were not told to leave the military
- **Romans 13:3-4** – The government and the use of force

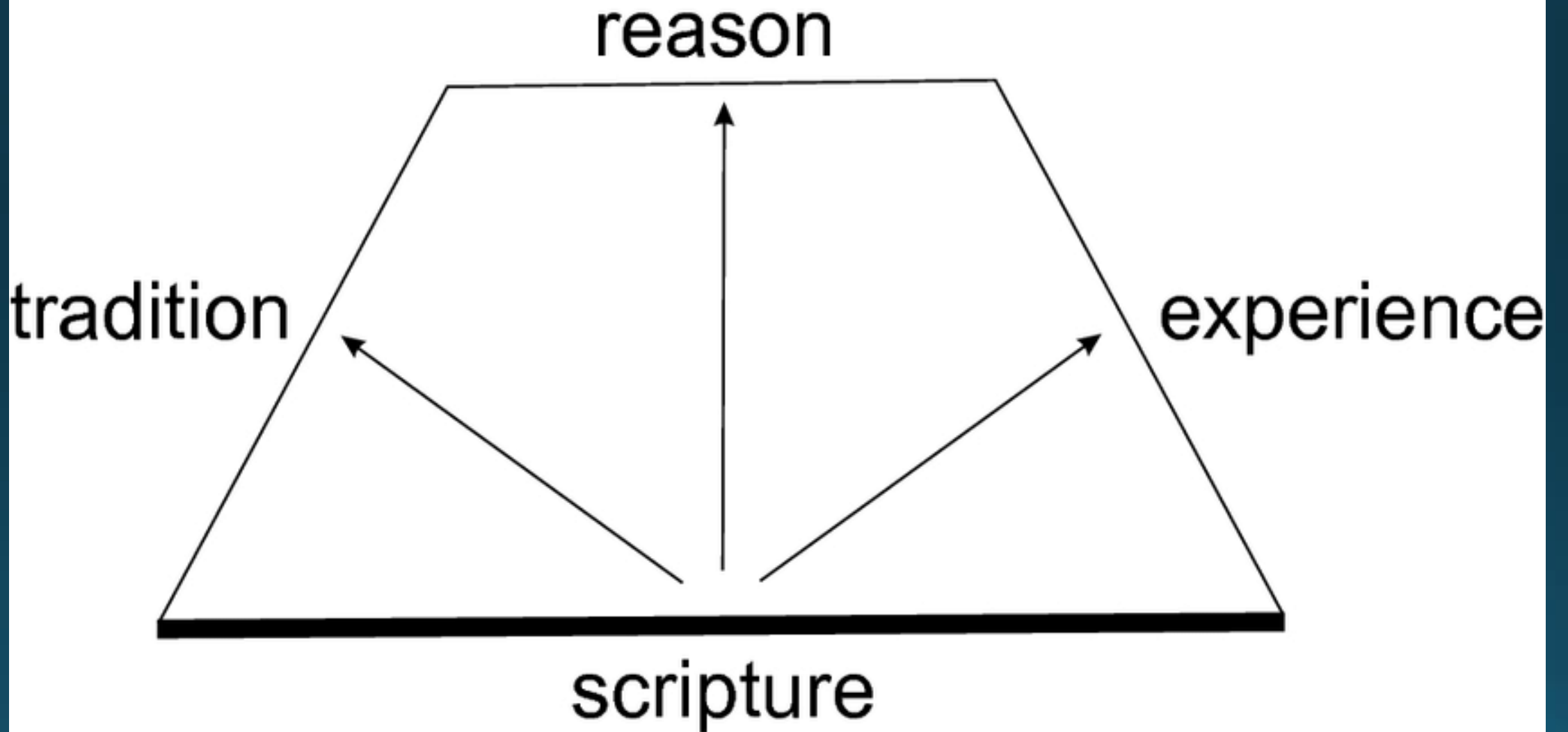
Other NT Passages

- **Luke 10:25-37** – Rich young ruler + The Good Samaritan
- **The Book of Revelation** – The Slaughtered Lamb vs the Beast
- Consistent Biblical theme to care for those who need help, but at the same time never advocates for violence

So how do we...

- Synthesize the teachings of the Bible?
- Apply these texts to our lives in the here and now?

The Wesleyan Quadrilateral



The Wesleyan “Quadrilateral”



Final Thoughts – The Biblical Picture

1. The use of force in resisting and punishing violence is entrusted to governments.
2. Such uses of force are to be drastically limited to what is necessary in securing peace and justice.
3. Vengeance is thereby ruled out, along with all aggression; love and mercy must temper justice.