

Holy war



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Holy War Essay Holy war. How can the word holy be put together with the word war? In the Old Testament though, holy war is presented in such a good light. You were going to war for Yahweh's command. Holy war was only engaged when Yahweh summons Israel to war. Holy war was initiated when something became a threat to Israel's loyalty to Yahweh or something became dangerous to Israelites faith. War and killing was what seemed necessary to protect Israelites from swaying towards the Canaanite religion.

Holy war was only used for conquests or for the defense of the holy land. In Deuteronomy and the books of the period known as the Deuteronomistic History which includes Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1st and 2nd Samuel, and 1st and 2nd Kings, we read about a conflict between the Israelites and Canaanites which leads to the Conquest of Canaan. Being a conquest, its justified to call it a holy war. It is described as "Yahweh's battle's" in 1st Samuel chapter 25, verse 28. Never in the Old Testament is it referred to as a "holy war. Because the Canaanites were occupying the land known as the "promised land," the land meant for gods chosen people, the Israelites, to live on, Yahweh promised to Abraham's descendents that they must be exterminated without mercy. He wanted all the Canaanites killed including the women and children. The Canaanites were placed "under ban" which meant they were sacrificed to Yahweh. It was though that if they allowed any Canaanite to live, they might cause religious corruption (Harris).

One example is documented in the book of Joshua, when Israelite soldiers captured the city of Jericho and killed all men, women, children, and even livestock, all because they wanted to enforce the ban and gods orders. There were many provisions established to govern the execution of a holy war.

First it is to be understood a holy war is a religious undertaking. In theory, there should be no casualties because Yahweh is doing the fighting.

Also some basic provisions included have no standing army but only an army of volunteers when needed, no pay for the soldiers along with no spoils of war, no sex during a holy war, and you must fast going into battle. In the book of Deuteronomy chapters 20 and 21, God spells out these provisions and rules that go along with going to war. For cities distant from the Promised Land, provisions differed from those nations closest. When the army marched up to attack a city, they were to make its people an offer of peace. If they accepted, they would be forced into labor. If they refused, then both sides engaged in battle (Deut. 20: 10-12). They were ordered by God to kill all men in the city they were attacking. The women, children, and livestock were considered plunders and spoils of war. As for nations closest like the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, there are different provisions. God orders them to leave nothing behind in these nations. Completely destroy them because they are the nations that might corrupt the Israelites into worshipping other gods and sin against Yahweh.

Along with leaving nothing alive and the basic provisions, another provision deals with marrying prisoners. During the war, God allows you to marry any of the captives of the conquered nation. But you must shave her head, trim her nails, and remove the clothes she was wearing when captured. You may marry her one-month after the capture to allow her to mourn her parents. If you become displeased with her, you may let her go wherever she wishes, but you can't sell her or treat her as a slave since you have dishonored her.

In Samuel chapter 15, Samuel orders King Saul to attack the Amalekites and destroy everything that belonged to them. Put to death the men, women, children, infants, and all livestock as ordered by God. Saul obeyed and organized an army of two hundred thousand men. He attacked the Amalekites and took their king, Agag, captive but destroyed everything else. Saul spared Agag's life along with, what he deemed, the best livestock. The Lord spoke to Samuel and showed frustration in making Saul king because Saul had not followed out his instructions to kill everyone and everything.

Samuel met with Saul at a city known as Gilgal and asked why Saul let some livestock live? Saul's answer was that they would be used as sacrifices to the Lord because they were the best livestock. Samuel reminded Saul that the Lord had made him king and that he sent Saul on a mission to completely destroy the Amalekites and asked why he didn't obey the order and do evil in the eyes of the Lord. Samuel didn't accept Saul's reasoning of keeping the livestock for sacrifices and keeping Agag alive. Samuel then said that God wasn't interested in sacrifices but in obedience of his voice and commands.

Samuel tells Saul that the Lord has rejected him as king. "Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king" (Deut. 15: 23).

Saul admitted he sinned because he was afraid of the people and gave into them. Saul then asked for forgiveness but Samuel did not accept. He turned to leave but Saul latched onto him. Samuel said again that Saul was not king anymore. Saul pleaded with Samuel for him to return with him so he could worship the Lord. Samuel finally agreed and followed. After they worshipped, Samuel called for Agag to be brought to him.

Agag arrived and Samuel proceeded to kill Agag before the Lord. Samuel left for Remaha and never returned to see Saul. From that day on, the Lord regretted that he made Saul king of Israel. We see in this passage the provisions of holy war, including Saul forming a volunteer army and Saul obliterating everything of a nation. But the difference is King Saul didn't fulfill the order of God for this holy war against the Amalekites. Saul was looked down upon for not following God's orders and Samuel had to fulfill the command. There seems to be no exceptions to God's orders and provisions in holy war.

The impact this episode had on me is Saul chose to disobey God's orders of killing everything by letting some things survive. After coming to understand what holy war was, it found it to be very bloodthirsty. Innocent women and children were killed. I understand the reasoning back then though for God to feel the need to destroy nations around Israel's "promised land" because he feared his people would start worshiping other gods. The relevance of the age-old question of "If God is good, why is there so much evil in the world," stems from people questioning why wars, genocides, and even murder happen.

The reason many people ask this question is because, as a Catholic, I really hadn't been exposed to the Old Testament God as much as the New Testament God. There is a big difference in the New Testament God and how compassionate and forgiving he is, and the Old Testament God who would eradicate his enemy's and never forgive some sinners such as Saul. There's no way we can answer this question of why God allows so much evil to exist. We can try to link today's wars and conflicts with the ideas and aspects of <https://assignbuster.com/holy-war/>

holy war, but our minds still can't grasp why God allows some things to happen.

Could it be He's punishing sinners who are disobeying Him? If this is so how could you reason why God allowed the Holocaust to happen. The Jews were considered God's chosen people, so why would He allow this to happen to them. Or why is there genocide occurring in Africa to innocent people. If God is good, why does He allow these things to happen? We will ask this question forever. Work Cited Harris, Stephen L. *Understanding the Bible*. 7th ed. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2007.