

Memorial Day: A Biblical Perspective

Sunday, 29 May 2016

Introduction

The observance of Memorial Day began shortly after the War Between the States. Its purpose was to honor the war dead of both North and South.

Originally commemorating soldiers killed in the American Civil War, the observance was later extended to all U.S. war dead. Most states conform to the federal practice of observing the holiday on the last Monday of May, which began in 1971, but a few retain the long-established day of celebration, May 30.

The custom itself of honoring the graves of the war dead began before the close of the Civil War. In the South, the town of Columbus, Mississippi claims origination of the formal observance for both the Union and the Confederate dead in 1866. Waterloo, New York, is cited as the birthplace of the observance in the North in the same year.¹

Beginning with the War for Independence, our military services have been engaged in 10 major conflicts:

Independence	25,324
War Between the States: North	363,020
War Between the States: South	119,110
World War I	116,708
World War II	408,306
Korea	54,246
Vietnam	58,219
Desert Storm	363
Iraqi Freedom	4,452
Afghanistan	2,326
Total:	<u>1,232,074</u> ²

Added to this total are over 1,300,000 wounded. These totals only address the major conflicts in which American forces have been or are being engaged.

¹ *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Micropaedia* (2010), 7:1040–41.

² <http://www.americanwarlibrary.com/allwars.htm> (except total for Afghanistan).

The Biblical Guide to Military Preparedness

If ever in human history there has been a land flowing with milk and honey, it is the United States of America. There is no reason for anyone of sound mind and body to be unable to share in its bounty and prosperity.

Even today you may speak with those who have lived in any foreign country for any length of time and most if not all will agree that no nation provides its citizens with the freedom and advantages as do the United States.

As a Client Nation to God, we are in debt to the God who has made and preserved us a nation. Our heavenly Father has given to us in His immutable Word the guidelines we need to preserve and maintain our freedom.

Most important and imperative among these freedoms is that of our free exercise of religion contained, preserved, and maintained in the Constitution's First Amendment.

For the preservation of our freedoms we must acknowledge and orient to the principle that there will always be warfare until the Second Advent of Christ. As a result there will always be a need to prepare for war including the courage and willingness to wage it when the safety of its citizens is imperiled.

When King Asa of Judah paid tribute to King Ben-hadad of Aram he made the strategic error in trying to preserve peace with heathen rather than depending on the Lord for protection.

The prophet, Hanani \ha-nā'-nī\, scolded and warned Asa in:

2 Chronicles 16:9 - "For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His. You have acted foolishly in this. Indeed, from now on you will surely have wars.

Put simply and to the point is the observation by Solomon in:

Ecclesiastes 3:1b - There is a time for every event under heaven—

v. 8b - A time for war and a time for peace.

Our Lord warned us that we should never expect prolonged peace among nations in:

Matthew 24:6 - “You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end.

v. 7 - For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes.

Peace treaties are ineffectual in preventing warfare. Generations pass and mind-sets change and following that change inevitably comes war.

Power lust always forces those so affected to seek control over others. Thus, the periodic rise of dictators, tyrants, and despots.

Revelation 6:2 - Then I looked, and behold, a white horse [λευκός ἵππος (*leukós híppos*)], and the rider [ὁ κάθημαι ἐπ’ αὐτός, (*ha káthēmai ep’ autós*): the one sitting on it] had a battle bow [τόξον (*toxón*)]; and a crown [στέφανος (*stéphanos*)] was given to him, in fact, as a conqueror [present active participle of νικάω (*nikáō*): dictator] he appeared on the scene of history so that he might conquer.

v. 3 - When he had broken the second seal, I heard the second angelic herald saying, “Come!”

v. 4 - Then another, a fiery red horse [πυρρός ἵππος (*purrós híppos*): flame-colored], appeared on the scene of history; and to the rider, power was given to take peace from the earth, so that they might slaughter each other; in fact, a great sword was given to him.

Revelation 6:5 - And when He had broken the third seal, I heard the third angelic herald say, "Come!" Then I looked, and behold a black horse [μέλας ἵππος (*mélas híppos*)]; and the rider had a pair of scales in his hand.

v. 6 - Then I heard as it were a voice in the center of the four angelic heralds saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius and three quarts of barley for a denarius; furthermore, do not damage the olive oil and the wine."

v. 7 - And when He had broken the fourth seal of the Doomsday Book, I heard the fourth angelic herald say, "Come!"

v. 8 - Then I looked, and behold an ashen horse; [χλωρός ἵππος (*chlōrós híppos*)] and the rider, his name was Death; and Hades [**specifically Torments**] was marching in step with him. Furthermore, authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with the broadsword, and with famine, and with disease, and by wild animals of the earth. (EXT)

In order for a client nation to protect itself from the aggression of predator nations, the Lord has given us guidelines for military preparedness:

1. All able-bodied men over the age of 20 are required to prepare for war and to defend freedom if necessary. The Lord ordered Moses to conscript a draft for military service in:

Numbers 1:2 - "Take a census of all the congregation of the sons of Israel, by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, every male, head by head

v. 3 - from twenty years old and upward, whoever is able to do out to war in Israel, you and Aaron shall number them by their armies.

Numbers 2 reveals that the armies of Israel were subdivided into 12 divisions and three corps stationed around the four sides of the Tabernacle.

The Judah Corps was made up of the divisions of Judah, Issachar and Zebulun (Numbers 2:3-10).

The Reuben Corps was made up of the divisions of Reuben, Simeon, and Gad (vv. 11-16).

The Ephraim Corps was made up of the divisions of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin (vv. 17-24).

The Dan Corps was made up of the divisions of Dan, Asher, and Naphtali (vv. 25-31).

Verse 32 gives the total number of men drafted into the Israeli army as 603,550.

Once an army is conscripted, it must be trained and prepared to do battle:

Numbers 31:3 - Moses spoke to the people, saying, "Arm men from among you for the war, that they may go against Midian to execute the Lord's vengeance on Midian.

v. 4 - "A thousand from each tribe of all the tribes of Israel you shall send to war."

v. 5 - So there were furnished from the thousands of Israel, a thousand from each tribe, twelve thousand armed for war.

Note that among 603,550 conscripted, only 12,000 were veterans prepared to do battle against the Midianites (v. 2).

Judges 3:1 - These are the nations which the Lord left, to test Israel by them (that is, all who had not experienced any of the wars in Canaan;

v. 2 - only in order that the generations of the sons of Israel might be taught war. Those who had not experienced it formerly).

v. 3 - These nations are: the five lords of the Philistines and all the Canaanites and the Sidonians and the Hivites who lived in Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal-hermon as far as Lebo-hamath.

PRINCIPLE: The Lord does not intend Client Nations to enter into alliances and treaties with aggressor nations. Anytime an aggressor nation becomes belligerent, the Client Nation is to give its military forces combat experience against its forces.

From David's final comments before his death we find this testimony:

2 Samuel 22:35 - "He trains my hands for battle, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze."

When the cause is just, God not only approves of war but accompanies the righteous into battle:

Deuteronomy 20:1 - "When you go out to battle against your enemies and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt, is with you.

v. 2 - "When you are approaching the battle, the priest shall come near and speak to the people.

v. 3 - "He shall say to them, 'Hear, O Israel, you are approaching the battle against your enemies today. Do not be fainthearted. Do not be afraid, or panic, or tremble before them,

v. 4 - for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, so save you.'"

Deuteronomy 31:6 - "Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you."

Isaiah 26:3 - "The steadfast mind you will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You.

When founding a new Client Nation, the Lord instructs it to totally destabilize the enemy. Such is what we did to end World War II with Japan and prevent it from fomenting aggressive attacks since.

Failure to bring subsequent opponents to the treaty table has ended in a stalemate with North Korea, withdrawal from Vietnam, and yet-to-be determined outcomes in the Middle East. Joshua did not fail to totally defeat the enemy once he took the land of Israel:

Joshua 11:20 - It was of the Lord to harden their hearts, to meet Israel in battle in order that he might utterly destroy them, that they might receive no mercy, but that he might destroy them, just as the Lord had commanded Moses.

v. 23 - So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord had spoken to Moses, and Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. Thus the land had rest from war.

Scripture also provides to the people and the defenders of a client nation. As the Jews were rebuilding Jerusalem, occupants of the land were planning to attack the Israelites before they could complete the city walls:

Nehemiah 4:14 - When I saw their fear, I rose and spoke to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people: "Do not be afraid of them; remember the Lord who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses."

In victory, the people of a Client Nation are to remain humble by recalling the principle that it is the Word of God, the residency of its truths in the souls of its people that enables Jesus Christ to control history on behalf of mature believers:

1 Samuel 17:46 - "This day the Lord will deliver you [Goliath] up into my [David's] hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you. And I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel,