

March 17, 2024 – Sermon Notes

“War, What Is It Good For?”

Genesis 14:1-24

Prel Rmks

Text ~ Title

Song that became popular in 1969

Answer? ~ Is that true?

That’s what this chapter is about – war.

“War of the kings”

First mention of war – certainly won’t be the last. (247)

INTRO

Certainly, without any question, war is horrific.

The atrocities associated with war are unimaginable.

Only those who have fought in wars, or lived in a land where a war was fought, can fully comprehend its horrors.

{I worked with a man at NW Airlines ...}

{Some of our members here this morning ... Pol Pot}

Is it true that war is never justified?

Is there no such thing as a just war?

Should we be pacifists? ...

War, What Is It Good For?

Reasons for War 1-9

Ravages of War 10-12

Readiness for War 13-15

Righteousness in War 16-24

I. Reasons for War 1-9

(1) And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations, (2) that they made war with Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). (3) All these joined together in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea). (4) Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled.

(5) In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that *were* with him came and attacked the Rephaim in Ashteroth Karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh Kiriathaim, (6) and the Horites in their mountain of Seir, as far as El Paran, which *is* by the wilderness.

(7) Then they turned back and came to En Mishpat (that *is*, Kadesh), and attacked all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who dwelt in Hazezon Tamar.

(8) And the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that *is*, Zoar) went out and joined together in battle in the Valley of Siddim (9) against Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of nations, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar—four kings against five.

The two sides in the war – vv. 1-3 v. 9 = 4 kings against 5

(1) 4 Kings – An Alliance of Oppressors

And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations,

From the east and the north – from near where Abram had come from ~ near Ur and Babylon (off the map)

Kings of territories – except for Tidal: he was over a nomadic people

They had formed an alliance – it would have been a very powerful alliance = able to maintain a strong and mobile military force

Chedorlaomer was main King – the most powerful of these 4

(2) 5 kings – Alliance of the Oppressed

that they made war with Bera king of **Sodom**, Birsha king of **Gomorrah**, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar).

These were kings over city-states (map – King's highway)

Much less powerful than the 4 kings of v. 1

They too had formed an alliance for the purpose of this war

(3)

All these 5 Kings joined together in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea).

How did this war come about?

(4) These 5 kings had been under the domination of Chedorlaomer

Twelve years they **served** Chedorlaomer,

Paid tribute to him – taxes

{In the days of Jesus – Herod's were under tribute to Rome}

Confiscate goods produced or even food

Hardship on the people

Form of slavery

and in the **thirteenth** year they **rebelled**.

Didn't pay the tribute that was demanded.

Boston tea party – Salt Sea tea party!

“Let's band together and resist this tyranny.”

“If it means war, let's be prepared to fight for our freedom.”

(5) The next year, Chedorlaomer and his allies did invade the region of the 5 kings to enforce their domination over these cities and their kings.

They came in from the north (map)

But they circled around the area of these 5 kings

In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that *were* with him came and attacked the Rephaim in Ashteroth Karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh Kiriathaim,

(6) and the Horites in their mountain of Seir, **as far as El Paran**, which is by the wilderness.

(7) Then they turned back and came to En Mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and attacked all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who dwelt in Hazon Tamar.

What was the strategy?

Cut off possible support and help for the alliance of the 5 Kings

The 5 Kings Go Out to meet them and engage them in war 8-9

(8)

And the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) went out and joined together in battle in the Valley of Siddim

(9) against Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of nations, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar—**four kings against five**.

What was the reason for this war?

One alliance of kingdoms wanted to maintain its power and domination over another alliance of kingdoms.

Lust for power – lust for economic gain and resources and wealth

The other alliance wanted its freedom from domination.

All this leads us to meditate for just a moment on the core reason for wars.

- 1. Lust for power = desire to dominate – lust for resources – lust for economic gain**

James 4:1-3 Where do wars and fights *come* from among you? Do *they* not *come* from your *desires for* pleasure that war in your members? **(2)** You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. **(3)** You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.

- 2. Covetousness – the 10th commandment**

Exodus 20:17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."

There is something wrong within man – a desire for power and wealth, and comfort and ease in life at the expense of others

There is evil in the world

There is a bent toward tyranny and totalitarianism

{Rodney King, Los Angeles – Can't we all just get along? No Rodney, we can't ...}

Reasons for War

II. Ravages of War 10-12

What does war lead to?

Here we see how this war turned out.

We see the defeat of the 5 oppressed kings.

We see their rebellion being crushed by the invading armies of the 4 kings.

(10) Now the Valley of Siddim *was full of asphalt pits tar pits*; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled; **some fell there leaped in, died near the area of these tar pits**, and the remainder fled to the mountains. **(11)** Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way. **(12)** They also took Lot, Abram's brother's son who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.

(10)

Now the Valley of Siddim *was full of asphalt pits*;

and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah **fled**; **defeat in battle**

some fell there, **death**

and the remainder **fled to the mountains**. **Displacement = refugees**

(11) Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way. **Economic loss**

(12) They also took Lot, Abram's brother's son who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed. **Hostages**

The ravages of war –

Death

In the 20th C – 108 million people were killed in wars 85 million in WW2.

13 million died in Germany because of Hitler's lust for power and conquest – 6 million Jews because of his anti-Semitism

Communism – over 20-50 million died under Stalin; and 80 million under the totalitarian government in China

Regimes that declare war on their own people

Other atrocities that are a part of war ...

Rape, torture, prisoners of war – hostages

Collateral damage

People displaced from their homes and homelands [...] {Brigitte}

III. Readiness for War 13-15

Here we see Abram entering the picture.

In a light that we don't usually think about him ...

He stayed ready for war!

(13) Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, for he dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner; and they *were* allies with Abram. **(14)** Now when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he **armed marshalled or unsheathed** them his three hundred and eighteen **trained servants retained soldiers** who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. **(15)** He divided his forces against them by night, and he and his servants attacked them and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus.

Alliances Secured

(13) Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, for he dwelt by the terebinth trees of **Mamre the Amorite**, brother of **Eshcol** and brother of **Aner**; and they *were* allies with Abram.

Genesis 13:18 Then **Abram moved his tent**, and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, which *are* in **Hebron place of association**, and built an altar there to the LORD.

Abram formed his own alliances.

Armed Strength

(14) Now when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his **three hundred and eighteen trained servants** who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit **as far as Dan**.

Astute Strategy

(15) He divided his forces against them by night, and he and his servants attacked them and pursued them as far as **Hobah, which is north of Damascus**.

The best way to avoid war is to stay prepared and be ready for war.

“Peace through strength.”

What has happened in our own country in the last 3 years.

Our allies no longer trust us and our enemies no longer fear us.

How could they? Withdrawal from Afghanistan ~ Woke military leaders ~ “out of ammunition” ~ can't meet our recruiting requirements ... now: illegal aliens **[...]**

IV. Righteousness In War 16-24

We see that in Abram and how he entered this war.

We see that there are just wars. There are just causes for wars.

(16) So he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the people.

This is incredible: Arab-Israeli War of 1948 ~ 6 Day War of 1967 ~
Yom Kippur War of 1973 David – Goliath Only one explanation ...

(17) And the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, **the King's Valley**), after his return from **the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him.**

Abram had been in Alliance with the lesser of two evils in this war

Sometimes it is necessary – U.S. and Soviet Union in WW2

Churchill – “If Hitler invaded hell, I would commend the devil to the Parliament.”

Lesser of 2 evils

(18) Then Melchizedek **king** of Salem **Jerusalem** brought out bread and wine; he *was* the **priest** of God Most High. **(19)** And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; **(20)** And blessed be God Most High, **Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.**" And **he Abram** gave him a tithe of all.

Who is this Melchizadek – King of Salem / Priest of God Most High? Abram is not the only one who is a monotheist.

World is polytheistic ~ animistic ~ paganistic

There was a remnant – left-over from the original state

He recognized that Abram was a righteous man and that he had been involved in a righteous military operation

Psalms 110:4 The LORD has sworn And will not relent, "**You Jesus Christ** are a priest forever According to **the order of Melchizadek.**"

Hebrews 5, 6, 7 = Jesus Christ

Both **Priest AND King**

(21) Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself." **(22)** But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, **(23)** that I *will take* nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that *is yours*, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich'—

Abram = righteous & magnanimous

Diplomatic = relationships for the future

(24) except only what the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men who went with me: **Aner**, **Eshcol**, and **Mamre**; **let them take their portion.**"

Again, very diplomatic, very magnanimous

Fulfillment of **Genesis 12:3** I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Implications and Applications

1. What can we expect?
2. Are there just wars? Romans 12:18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

Sometimes to protect the weak or the innocent
Sometimes to save life

3. There was a day in history when Jesus did battle with sin and with satan and with death ...
4. There is a day coming ...

Revelation 19:11-16 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. **(12)** His eyes *were* like a flame of fire, and on His head *were* many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. **(13)** He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. **(14)** And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. **(15)** Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. **(16)** And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.



Above: Adrian and Promesse fled their home when Islamists attacked. They now live in a camp for internally displaced people. **Left inset:** Brigitte and her son Patrick suffered severe injuries when terrorists bombed their church. **Right inset:** The aftermath of the bombing.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

ISLAMISTS SEEK TO ERADICATE CHRISTIANS

On Sunday morning, Jan. 15, 2023, Christians took their seats as usual in the hand-hewn pews of the church in Kasindi, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Though they couldn't have expected it, their lives were about to change in an instant.

"When the bomb went off, it was very hot," Brigitte said. "People [were] injured

and dead around us."

Kasindi is located in the northeastern DRC, an area of the majority-Christian nation where Islamists severely persecute Christians. One of the primary persecutors is the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), which after pledging allegiance to the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS) in 2018 began targeting Christians in recurring attacks. The

ADF is active in the North Kivu and Ituri provinces of northeastern DRC, and the group has openly stated its intent to eradicate Christians from the area while establishing Islamic law throughout the region.

On the day of the bombing, Brigitte was sitting in an outdoor area under the shade of a tarp. Her 4-year-old son, James, was on her back, and her 8-year-old son,

Patrick

Patrick, had just sat down next to her after singing in the church choir.

Then the bomb exploded, causing chaos among the group of believers. "We realized that some enemy of ours had come," said Moises, an assistant pastor at the church.

The bomb killed 15 people, including Brigitte's son James. Brigitte was hospitalized for months with severe shrapnel wounds to her legs, and her son Patrick was also among the more than 70 people injured in the blast.

The Kasindi church was targeted by the ADF because of its bold witness in the community. The church's senior pastor had received a threatening phone call from the group a year earlier. "We heard that you were praying against those who were doing the killings and specifically the ADF," they told him. "We are warning you that you need to leave, or you will be killed."

Christians Specifically Targeted

The DRC is the largest country, geographically, in sub-Saharan Africa. And while 90% of Congolese identify as Christians, Islam is a growing influence. "In Africa, most persecution occurs along

“ We are warning you that you need to leave, or you will be killed. ”

a southeastern trending line from Mauritania to the coastline of Kenya, ... [which] separates most of the Muslim-majority nations from Christian-majority nations," a VOM worker said. But in recent years, persecution against Christians has increased in predominantly Christian countries, such as Uganda, Mozambique and the DRC. And Islamist opposition has been especially fierce in areas where there has been a strong Christian witness.

In addition to the ADF's increased anti-Christian activity in the northeast, more than 100 other armed groups in the DRC also target Christians. A particular area of concern is the Ubwari Peninsula, where Christians have experienced ongoing opposition from Muslims. During the



Photo by Brent Skilton/Getty Images

past two decades, Muslims in this area have attempted to expel Christians from the peninsula by burning their churches and killing local church leaders. Some of these attacks have extended beyond the peninsula into the mainland.

Most Congolese are subsistence farmers, growing crops on small plots of land called *shambas*, or gardens. Their location in or near dense areas of jungle gives rebel groups like the ADF a place to



These women just completed a VOM-sponsored trauma seminar in a village where ADF militants killed 182 people in 2019.

Facing page, top: This 8-year-old child was orphaned and suffered severe burns in an ADF attack. **Facing page, bottom:** The terrorists regularly burn homes, churches and vehicles.

hide and launch surprise attacks.

"It is war," said Nuela, a 27-year-old mother of three. "People [use] the knives and machetes, cutting, killing. It is so terrible." Nuela fled from the ADF in early 2023 after the Islamists murdered 20 members of her extended family, including her brother and sisters.

Murder is not the only atrocity inflicted on Christians in the northeastern DRC. Front-line workers have reported that an estimated 40% of women and 24% of men in the region have suffered sexual violence. Ungwa, a believer who lived in the Ruzizi Valley, fled into the jungle with her four children after Muslims attacked and killed her husband. While she was hiding, the attackers found her and sexually assaulted her. She continues to suffer from the trauma of the attack, but she remains firm in her faith.

"Even today, I am very much sick," Ungwa said. "Sometimes, when I think of how my husband was killed and having to flee, I feel the sickness closing in on me. Without God, I would not be here today. The only thing that has helped me is my faith in God."

Pushing Back Darkness

Christians in the DRC have continued to reach out to their neighbors amid the suffering. Many churches have outreach ministries in Muslim neighborhoods, and church leaders are teaching their congregations to withstand the advance of radical Islam.

"If the church is not strengthened, Islam will be everywhere," explained a pastor who works to train and send Congolese missionaries throughout the country.

Their efforts are not without risk, however. Fanueli Kambale, a Christian

"The only thing that has helped me is my faith in God."

schoolteacher, was passionate about sharing his faith. While growing crops on a shamba near the forest, Fanueli used his time to teach children about the Christian faith.

In 2020, ADF militants twice warned Fanueli to stop teaching children about Christ. The third time they caught him disciplining youth, they murdered him in front of his wife, Georgine, and their 3-year-old son, Andre. They took Georgine hostage but released her shortly afterward.

When Georgine returned to work at her shamba, ADF rebels confronted her and, according to eyewitnesses, said, "We told you not to come back. We already killed your husband; now we are killing you also." And they did.

Georgine's younger sister, Juliet, began caring for Georgine's three children, and six months later Juliet's father was also murdered by ADF fighters. Juliet, a trained seamstress, then became the sole provider for her mother and Georgine's three young children. VOM has since helped her expand her sewing business into a training school.

VOM is working through a network of local churches to provide emergency aid — such as food, shelter, clothing and Bibles — to thousands of internally displaced Christians, focusing specifically in the area where the ADF is most active. The aid provides opportunities for local churches to minister with God's love in an area devastated by violence.

"When the community learned that the church was going to help, they said, 'What can the church provide?'" a VOM worker recalled. "They have only ever seen the NGOs doing any kind of humanitarian help for the suffering and never could have imagined the church



Above top: Juliet (on left with child in lap) is now raising her sister's three orphaned children.

Above bottom: Christians in the DRC treasure Bibles, especially when they have lost theirs in Islamist attacks.

itself helping. People were quite shocked to see churches working together to help those in need."

The church's witness is having an effect. Through aid provided by local churches and the global body of Christ, Nuela, who lives in a camp for internally displaced people, is able to provide for her family. "If it was not for God, I would have been killed," she said. "Thank God also for your support, because if you were not supporting us, we and our kids would already be killed back in the forest."

VOM is equipping pastors to provide spiritual care to those who have suffered trauma and may struggle with their faith as a result of the attacks. These pastors help Christians like Brigitte, who despite ongoing pain and an inability to work, recently rejoined worship services at the reopened Kasindi church. She said without the practical support she is receiving from the body of Christ, it would be hard for her to survive. And the spiritual support bolsters her faith. "The Bible teaching brings me comfort," she said. ■