

Lesson 4: World War II (1939-45)

The most destructive war in history: 50 million died, \$13 billion in damages, whole countries decimated
 Unlike WWI, having no just cause or clear “bad guy”, WWII is a “just war” due to fascist aggression and atrocities.

Two Political Sides

Axis (“Pact of Steel”):

1. Germany – Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich (“kingdom”)
2. Italy – Benito Mussolini
3. Japan – Emperor Hirohito

Allies:

1. Great Britain – Prime Minister Winston Churchill (one of the best leaders of the 20th century)
2. United States of America – President Franklin D. Roosevelt
3. United Soviet Socialist Republics – Josef Stalin

France was defeated early by Germany (1940) and given a puppet government (Vichy France).

Famous US Generals: Eisenhower, Patton, and MacArthur

Two Moral Sides

Victor Davis Hanson:

World War II can be understood in terms of two competing arguments regarding the nature of man. One argument views man primarily as part of a collective, shaped in decisive respects by race or class. This led to the invasion of peaceful lands and the organized slaughter of millions. The other argument views the human soul as free—never to be governed without consent. The unflinching insistence on this view led to liberation.

Allies:

Two democracies and a communist nation – as postwar conditions revealed, strange bedfellows!

Axis:

Germany and Italy – fascist

Germany and Japan – racist

Note: Fascist vs. Communist – both socialist, but nationalistic vs. international

History of World War II

“The Last Battle of WWI” – due to the fiasco of Versailles

Germany was blamed, fined, demilitarized, and forced into a democratic straitjacket (the Weimar Republic).

Immediate Causes and Steps to WWII:

Causes – “British appeasement, American isolationism, and Russian collusion” (Hanson)

Neville Chamberlain: “peace for our time” (September 1938) vs. Winston Churchill’s warnings

Steps – Japanese invasions (1930s); German annexations, militarization, and secret pact with Russia

Two Theaters of War

	Europe	Pacific Ocean
Initial Stages	Blitzkrieg into Poland (September 1, 1939) Miracle of Dunkirk (May 27 – June 4, 1940) Fall of Paris (June 14, 1940) Luftwaffe Bombing of London (1940) Nazi Invasion of Russia (1941)	Imperialistic Japanese Invasions Attack on Pearl Harbor (December 7, 1941) Loss of the Philippines (1942) MacArthur: “I shall return.” Japanese Atrocities
Lessons Learned (V. D. Hanson)	Overestimation of Air Power Key: Ground operations	Overestimation of Battleships Key: Aircraft carriers with flexible fleet
	Goals: Destroy industrial capacity and occupy the enemy’s capital	
Turning Point	D-Day (June 6, 1944) – invasion of 156,000	Battle of Midway (June 1942)
Final Stages	Allied Invasion of Italy (September 1943) Failed Attempts on Hitler’s Life The Battle of the Bulge (Winter 1944-45) V-E Day (May 8, 1945)	Island Hopping (Mt. Suribachi, Iwo Jima) Bombing of Tokyo (May 8-10, 1945) Atomic Bombs (Hiroshima, Nagasaki) V-J Day (August 15 and September 2, 1945)

Sum: While wars are part of the “beginning of birth pangs” (Mt. 24:7-8), we thank God for a free world victory.