

Dear Jon,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You asked why God initiated war in the Old Testament.

The idea that God initiated war in the Old Testament, especially with all its gore and sometimes even the slaughter of innocent women and children is a difficult concept for Christians to grasp. After all, Jesus taught us that God is love and that we are to love even our enemies. Why, then, did God himself initiate war?

Sin entered the world when Adam disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden. God cursed Adam and his progeny with pain, suffering and death. Over time the course of sin led humankind to become more and more depraved. But God had a plan in place since the foundation of the earth (Revelation 13:8) that would result in man's redemption through a redeemer. "For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:21-22) That redeemer, Jesus Christ, would come from a people especially chosen by God—the Jewish race. Therefore, God gave the Jews the Law to keep them pure, thus setting them apart from the pagan nations that surrounded them. The Law Covenant not only defined what sin was, but also set in place a means of punishment for those who disobeyed.

Because God knew the weaknesses of the fallen flesh, He needed to keep the toxic influences of other peoples from the Jews. God said to Moses, "In the cities of the nations the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes. . . . Otherwise, they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshipping their gods, and you will sin against the LORD your God." (Deuteronomy 20:16, 18) This scripture tells us why God initiated war against the nations that surrounded the Jewish nation.

It is interesting to note that war not initiated by God was considered a flagrant violation of the covenant between Israel and God and was usually punished by God employing a foreign nation as his instrument of war against Israel (Isaiah 10:5-6). Israel could not be successful in battle without the approval and participation of God. God wanted to demonstrate to the Jews that the battle was his, not theirs. "Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's." (2 Chronicles 20:15) Since the LORD was the strength of Israel, any initiative on the part of her leaders to participate in wars, relying on their own strength was doomed to failure and the wrath of the LORD. (See Isaiah 30:1-5; 31:1, 3; Amos 2:13-16.)

If redemption were not possible for all those who died in wars that were initiated by God, we, indeed, would be hard-pressed to defend or even understand God's actions. But we know that these people will be recovered in the Millennial Age and have an opportunity to learn righteousness and have everlasting life on earth. God's action on them was in no way a final judgment.

Why did God initiate war in the Old Testament? He did it to demonstrate to the Jews how the Law that defined sin was to be used in a sinful world where wars exist. God, in his wisdom, allowed the course of sin to continue so that His chosen people would learn through experience

that evil and death are the results of a sinful life. God also initiated war to keep the Jewish nation pure from the influences of the pagan people that surrounded them. Lastly, God initiated war to teach the Jews that the battles were His and not theirs to determine.

If God had not planned to send his only begotten Son as a Ransom, all humanity would have been doomed to die with no chance of redemption. But, Jesus paid that price at Calvary, assuring us that every person who has ever lived will have the opportunity for life either in heaven or on earth. Knowing that God had a well-devised and thought out plan in place since the foundation of the earth helps us to understand why He would sometimes order the extermination of every man, woman and child. We can be comforted believing that all those who died will come forth from their graves and have an opportunity for everlasting life in the Millennial Age.

We hope we have shed some light on your question. Please write us again.

Sincerely,
Christian Questions Radio