

TYRANNY

- a tyrant is a person who has usurped authority that does not belong to him
- a government is evil and tyrannical when it consistently punishes the righteous and protects and rewards the wicked
 - tyranny is never accepted as a legitimate form of government by God (it contradicts his character); tyranny may, however, be permitted by God
- tyranny always usurps a divinely ordained government but is often used by God as a rod of discipline for apostate nations
 - tyranny oppresses people, is not ordained by God, and should be overthrown whenever possible
- two governments may exist at the same time: an illegitimate tyranny in power and a divinely appointed government in exile
 - the use of force to resist and overthrow tyranny is always just; e.g., Athaliah murdered her grandchildren and usurped the throne of Judah, but was overthrown (captured and executed without a trial) because the throne rightly belonged to Joash (2 Kings 11:1–21)—her overthrow was not treason but justice (cf. 11:14)

WAR AGAINST TYRANNY

- a just war can be waged in self-defense or aggressively against tyranny—including state sponsored terrorism
 - the first recorded just war is Abram's battle with Chedorlaomer (Gen 14:1–17):
 - (1) this battle was initiated by Abram from his sense of justice, not by God,
 - (2) he was not defending himself, since he was not attacked by Chedorlaomer, but was fighting against tyranny (14:4, 14),
 - (3) we find no condemnation in the Bible of his use of force against Chedorlaomer,
 - (4) his action received God's approval when he was blessed by Melchizedek (14:18–20; Heb 7:1–3)
 - *conclusions*: (1) a first strike against tyrants can be just and righteous, (2) God approves of wars that protect the innocent from aggressors, (3) Abram's use of force to free his people from enslavement and tyranny justifies all other wars fought for the same reason, (4) it is just to use force when necessary to free captive nations from tyranny (France in WW II; Afghanistan, Kuwait in the Gulf War), (5) Abram was still a Gentile, so this was not a Holy War initiated by the LORD (cf. Gen 17:5)

ASSASSINATION, SABOTAGE, GUERRILLA WARFARE, AND ARMED REVOLT

- assassination of foreign leaders is a legitimate weapon of war in the Old Testament; our ban on foreign assassinations is an executive order made in 1976 by President Gerald Ford and can be set aside without congressional approval
- freedom fighters in the Book of Judges used force to destroy tyranny: namely, assassinations (Ehud, Judges 3:15–25; Jael, 4:17–22; cf. 4:9; 5:24–27; Samson, 16:23–30), sabotage (Samson, 15:3–5), guerrilla warfare (Samson, 14:19–20; cf. 14:4, 15; 15:6–19), and open revolt by armed resistance (Deborah and Barak, 4:1–24; Gideon, 7:1–8:21)
 - these freedom fighters (judges) are heroes of the faith and examples to follow in the New Testament (Heb 11:32–34)
- the people submitted to oppression and waited until there was a reasonable hope of winning before they rose up in arms
 - on occasion they were unable to revolt due to the presence of superior forces or a lack of weapons (1 Sam 13:19–22)
 - peace was restored only after repentance and military victory (Judg 3:11, 30; 5:31; 8:28; 1 Sam 7:3–14)

PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER

- war will continue in spite of man's efforts for peace (Dan 9:26; Joel 3:9–16; Matt 24:6–7) until the Kingdom (Isa 2:4; Hos 2:18)
 - there is "a time for war," *i.e.*, circumstances that justify war (Eccles 3:8)
 - God may train military leaders for war—as he trained David (2 Sam 22:35 = Psa 18:34; 144:1)
 - prayer is the most powerful weapon of war (2 Kings 6:8–23; 1 Chr 5:18–22; 2 Chr 6:34–35; 14:8–13; 20:1–30; 32:20–23)