



The Biblical case against nuclear weapons

There are nine countries today with nuclear weapons: the United States and Russia hold the majority of the global stockpile, but China, France, Israel, Pakistan, India, North Korea and the United Kingdom also continue to possess nuclear weapons, in spite of a recent United Nations Treaty which bans the weapons.

Christians around the world and from many different traditions have opposed nuclear weapons for decades. There are many reasons for this opposition, ranging from the cost of the weapons to their catastrophic consequences when used in Japan at the end of the Second World War.

As Christians, we look first to Jesus and the Bible for our motivation in campaigning against nuclear weapons. This short briefing is designed to set out the Biblical case against nuclear weapons and why Christians are called to make a positive difference for peace in our world.

It's what Jesus told us to do - Matthew 5:9

During the Sermon on the Mount Jesus tells the gathered crowd "Blessed are the peace makers, for they shall be called the children of God". This was towards the end of the beatitudes, as Jesus was laying out the various people who are, as he describes it, "Blessed". This means we are all called to be peacemakers, making peace both with God through Jesus, but also with our fellow humans. This isn't always easy, but as Galatians tells us, peace is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit living within us as believers (5:22). There is obviously a limit to what individuals can do in the context of international disputes, and it can often feel daunting. The most important thing we can do is pray, Isaiah commands us to give God no rest until he establishes his Kingdom (62:7) calling on God to intervene in the many situations around the world which need peace to be brought to them, and ask him to change the hearts and minds of those in power who make decisions on nuclear weapons.

Love one another – Romans 12:9-21

Love is one of the key themes running through the New Testament. When Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment He replied: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-39). Loving God must mean loving His creation, which is covered in more detail below. If we are to love others as ourselves, then we must surely do all we can to remove the threat of death and catastrophic destruction from innocent people around the world.

Writing to the Romans Paul calls on them to "Be devoted to one another in love" with other translations going on to add "outdo one another by showing honour" (12:9). As well as showing love to one another Paul tells us to "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them" (12:14). At a time when some politicians and leaders think the way to deal with people who threaten and curse is to do the same back, Paul's words to "Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all" (12:17) are a helpful reminder that Christians are called to do things differently. We are not to rely on the old thoughts of waging nuclear war and killing millions of people. Paul finishes this inspiring chapter with what would be a very succinct summary of Jesus' teaching: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (12:21).

Stewardship of creation – Colossians 1:16-17

God's creation is one of his many gifts to us. We are able to enjoy the beauty and awesome wonder of His hand, from the trees and animals around us to the awesome power of volcanoes and the

Christians working and praying for a nuclear weapons-free world



mysteries of space. Writing to the Colossians Paul reaffirms that all creation was made by God through Jesus all “things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible” (1:16). When God saw what He created He said it was “very good” (Genesis 1:31). Humans are entrusted with God’s creation not to use and abuse it but to be stewards of what actually belongs to God. David wrote “the earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it” (Psalm 24:1). This stewardship goes back to the Garden of Eden when “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it” (Genesis 2:15). Nuclear weapons are the only weapons known to have the capacity to end life on earth, as we know it. The violent destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki remind us of their devastating effect. Every day that nuclear weapons are armed, humanity runs the risk of a nuclear catastrophe, either through their use or an accident. Living alongside this threat is not being a good steward of creation.

Seeking an end to war and the means of making it – Isaiah 2:4

Hundreds of years before Jesus spoke about peacemakers in the Sermon on the Mount, the prophet Isaiah wrote that God will “beat swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks” going on to say that “Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore” (2:4). While the technology associated with conflict (and agriculture) has moved on, the message is clear. What nations currently use for causing death, God will turn into something positive for society. Isaiah goes on to talk about a future where wars will end. This future is shown even more clearly in Revelation when John writes “There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (21:4). This is the glorious future we have to look forward to when Jesus returns, but until then we all have a responsibility to turn “swords into plowshares” in our society, which means turning away from the production of nuclear weapons and arms generally, to something more socially productive and worthwhile.

Advancing the Kingdom of God – Matthew 12:28

When Jesus was driving out demons during His ministry, He proclaimed “the Kingdom of God is come to you” (Matthew 12:28). While the Kingdom of God has come to earth through Jesus and the Holy Spirit, we await the day when the Kingdom is fully come and all suffering and death ends as John sets out in Revelation. Between now and the day Jesus returns, the Kingdom of God continues to advance with every act taken by Christians around the world which pleases God and brings about peace. By working for an end to nuclear weapons we are playing our part in advancing the Kingdom of God.

These are just a few of the Bible verses which Christian CND holds closely during our work for a world free of nuclear weapons, a world free of war and a world where we can live together peaceably, as God has called us to. There are many other examples, and many other reasons why Christians have been campaigning against nuclear weapons for decades.

Our prayer is that you are inspired by the word of God to get involved in Christian CND. It is such a privilege to be doing God’s work.