

Why did people go to war in 1642?

Case study 1: 1637-39 – Source 4

An announcement from Charles to the people of Scotland, May 1639

(Catalogue ref: SP 45/10/225)

What is this source?

This is an extract from a proclamation (announcement or order) made by Charles at Newcastle on 14 May 1639 telling people in Scotland what he wanted them to do. He was trying to end rebellion in Scotland.

Charles was king of England and Scotland. He wanted the English and the Scots to obey the same laws and he wanted the English and Scottish churches to be run the same way.

What's the background to this source?

Charles had been facing rebellion from his subjects in Scotland since 1637. The Scots refused to accept changes that Charles wanted to make to the church in Scotland.

- Throughout the 1630s Charles and his Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, brought changes to the organisation of the church and also to the way people worshipped in church. Charles and Laud wanted to make the clergy, especially bishops, more important and powerful. Many Protestants in England and Scotland disliked these changes.
- In 1637 Charles and Laud tried to force the Scots to accept a new prayer book. The Scots refused. (Religion was a very important issue to everyone in Scotland and England.)
- In February 1638 the Scottish rebels formed themselves into a National Assembly. They signed a Covenant (agreement) banning the new prayer book.
- The Covenanters (rebels who supported the Covenant) then went on to get rid of other changes brought in by Laud. In November they abolished bishops altogether.

- Charles would not put up with this challenge to his authority. In November 1638 Charles raised an army and tried to crush the Scots, but he failed.

It's worth knowing that ...

Charles raised an army to fight the Scots in 1638. By May 1639, when this proclamation was made, Charles did not have enough money to continue the fight. This meant he had to try and reach an agreement with the Scottish rebels.

Although Charles threatened to invade Scotland, he did not have a good enough army to do this. He did not have enough money for a large, well-equipped army. To get the money he needed, he would have to ask his Parliament. However, Charles did not like working with Parliament. He ruled without it from 1629-40. By the time he did call Parliament in 1640, many MPs were anxious to tell the king why they were unhappy about many aspects of his rule. Plus his conflict with the Scots dragged on until October 1640.

Your turn: What can we learn from this source?

1. What did the king offer the Scots?
2. What did the Scots have to promise in return?
3. How would you describe Charles's attitude towards the Scots?
4. Does this source give us any clues about why the kingdom went to war in 1642?
5. Study the notes that support this source.
6. What problems caused the rebellion in Scotland?
7. What other problems did the Scottish rebellion cause for Charles?



Source 4

By the King.



CHARLES by the grace of God, King of ENGLAND, SCOTLAND, FRANCE, and IRELAND, Defender of the Faith, &c.

To all Our loving Subjects whom it shall or may concerne, Greeting. Whereas We are thus farre advanced in Our Royall Person with Our Armie, and the attendance of Our Nobilitie and Sentry of this Kingdome, and intend to be shortly at Our good Towne of Barwicke, with purpose to give Our good people of Scotland all just satisfaction in Parliament, as soone as the present disorders, and tumultuous proceedings of some there, are quieted; and will leave Us a faire way of coming like a gracious King to declare Our good meaning to them. But finding some cause of Impediment, and that this Nation doth apprehend (that contrarie to their professions) there is an intention to invade this Our Kingdome of England. We doe therefore to cleare all doubts, that may breed scruples in the mindes of Our good Subjects of either Kingdome, reiterate this Our just and reall Protestation: That if all civill and tempozall obedience be effectually and timely given and shew unto Us, We doe not intend to invade them with any hostility. But if they shall without Our especiall Authoritie and Command raise any armed Troups, and draw them downe within ten miles of Our Border of England, We shall then interpret that as an Invasion of Our said Kingdome of England, and in that case doe expressly command the Generall of Our Army, and Our superiour Officers of the same, respectibely to proceede against them as Rebels, and Invaders of this Our Kingdome of England, and to the utmost of their power to set upon them and destroy them, In which they shall doe a singular service, both to Our honour and safety.

Given at Our Court at Newcastle the fourteenth day of May, in the fifteenth yeer of Our Reign.

God save the King.

