

THE ARMY OF THE LORD

The church is spoken of under different figures. It is referred to as: a *body* with Christians as members (I Corinthians 12:12-27; Romans 12:4-5); a *vineyard* with Christians as workers (Matthew 20:1-16); a *temple* with Christians as worshiper (Ephesians 2:21; I Peter 2:5).

One of the most striking pictures of the church is the simile of the body of Christ depicted as an *army*. There is to be a **militant** spirit characterizing the church as each member marches loyally under the banner of their Heavenly King. The purpose of this conflict is to become conquerors over Satan and evil.

The warfare spoke of it not *carnal*. It is a *moral* conflict. This is a conflict of truth against error, of knowledge against ignorance, of light against darkness, of righteousness against unrighteousness, of Christ against Satan.

In the battle against false ways and evil forces we must “*put on the whole armour of God*” (Ephesians 6:11), “*war a good warfare*” (I Timothy 1:18), and “*fight the good fight of faith*” (I Timothy 6:12). The purpose of accomplishing these things is that we may one day be able to enjoy the bliss of heaven. This is the end that Paul had in mind when he wrote “*to stand against the wiles of the devil*” (Ephesians 6:11), “*To withstand in the evil day*” (Ephesians 6:13), and “*to lay hold on eternal life*” (I Timothy 6:12). We do not have the option to enter this battle and to leave it at our own discretion and be pleasing to God. Those who are his New Testament people are either with him or against him. In this conflict between righteousness and unrighteousness, neutrality is out of the question (cf. Matthew 12:30).

As this article begins to set forth certain features about this spiritual army, let it be pointed out, with sadness, that some of our brethren are no longer fighting. Please consider the following features of this army:

The Commander-in-Chief of this Army is Christ

The commander of our salvation is without spot and blemish. He is a perfect commander (Hebrews 2:10; 4:15; 7:26; I Peter 2:22). He has all power in heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18). He is the head of all things to the church (Ephesians 1:22-23). We make no mistake by following Christ (Hebrews 12:1-3; I Corinthians 11:1). To follow Christ means that our God will supply for us that which is necessary for our protection in this conflict with evil (Ephesians 6:10-17). We must put on the armour, unsheathe the sword of the Spirit, and engage the enemy head on. To follow Christ means also that we are to be praying soldiers (Ephesians 6:18), adding the Christian graces (II Peter 1:5-11), maturing in the Christian life (Hebrews 5:12-14; II Peter 3:18), and willing to examine self (II Corinthians 13:5). With such information before us, we can say with Paul, “*For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day*” (II Timothy 1:12).

This Army is Made Up of Volunteers

One is not drafted into this army, but it is for “*whosoever will come*” (Revelation 22:17; Matthew 11:28-30). NO one is forced to serve God. Before entering this army one must decide if the cause is worth fighting for and will there be victory. The apostle Paul has well supplied the answer to such questions in Romans 6:23. Here we read, “*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*” Salvation is in Christ (Acts 4:12; II Timothy 1:10).

In order for the volunteer to become a part of Christ’s spiritual army, he must possess *faith* (Romans 10:17), he must *repent* (Acts 17:30), he must *confess faith* in Christ (Acts 8:37), and he must be *baptized* for the remission of his sins (Acts 2:38). He who will do this and be a loyal soldier, had in prospect a glorious retirement in death (Revelation 14:13).

One Offensive Weapon is to be Utilized by this Army

Every observation thus far suggests an army that is unusual in its makeup. In this

THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

“...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel...” (Amos 7:8)

DEFEATING DAILY DERISION

Text: _____

I. He _____ His Derision

Notes:

II. He _____ His Derision

Notes:

III. He _____ His Derision

Notes:

IV. He _____ His Derision

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THE BURDEN THE PROPHET DID SEE

Text: _____

I. The _____ of the _____

Notes:

II. The _____ of the _____

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III. The _____ of the _____

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main point we learn that the one offensive weapon is also unusual. The weapon referred to is the “*sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*” (Ephesians 6:17). This instrument of spiritual battle is sharper than any literal two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12). This sword will lay bare our false pride, prejudice, compromise, and friendship with the forces of evil. When the nomenclature of this weapon is very familiar to us, and then with proper use, we will be victorious over unrighteousness. When attired with truth, righteousness, the Gospel of peace, the broad shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, we become heaven’s most powerful argument against sin. However, be it known, that God knows what we are doing and what we are not doing with that which he has supplied us with (cf. Job 34:21; Proverbs 15:3; Hebrews 4:13).

A Furlough is Unknown to this Army

In the army of the land, one may take a furlough and do or not do as he pleases. In this army, however, we are always, under normal/general conditions, to be available to worship God.

Christians can take vacations and be gone from home, but this does not relieve them of their responsibility to worship (Acts 2:42; I Corinthians 15:58; Galatians 6:9; Hebrews 10:25; John 14:15). How sad it is for a Christian to think he has the right to put God out of his life for two weeks (or more) every year. Deserters from this army, without repentance, face a punishment that no court material could ever declare, the eternal Gehenna (II Peter 2:20-22; Revelation 21:8; 20:15; Mark 9:43-48).

Satan is the Deadly Opponent

There are a number of names found in the Bible for this evil opponent. The word Satan means *adversary*. This term is used in the Old Testament 19 times with 14 of them found in the book of Job. It is used 35 times in the New Testament. Satan is an adversary who lies in wait. The term devil means *slanderer* or *false accuser*. In considering just these two names we can easily see and know that we must never let our guard down. To remove the sentry while the enemy is near would render us foolish (I Peter 5:8; Ephesians 6:11; II Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:15-17). Ma we continually be mindful of Peter’s words in reference to the devil, “*Whom resist steadfast in the faith*” (I Peter 5:9).

Conclusion

One day there will be a great reunion for the faithful soldiers of Christ when He come to take us home (I Thessalonians 4:13-18). The crown will be awarded because we “*fought a good fight, finished the course, kept the faith*” (II Timothy 4:7).

-Lindon Ferguson

THE BOOK OF IMPENDING DOOM

Habakkuk, like many of the other prophets, wrote regarding the general theme of Judah's sin which would result in their destruction and captivity at the hands of the Chaldeans. However, unlike the other prophets Habakkuk does not limit his prophecy of doom to the dwellers of Judah for their sins, but likewise extends doom to the very ones at whose hands Judah would fall, Babylon. There is, therefore, a unique irony found in Habakkuk's written work in that those God used as His means of humbling His people would likewise be humbled in due time.

The prophet himself is one about whom nothing is known. Habakkuk reveals nothing of himself in this book and there is neither mention of him outside of the book. Where he is from, what he did, and how he ended up a prophet are questions completely unanswered. His name itself is not of Hebrew origin, but his inspired title "the prophet" indicates a possibility that he was a professional prophet. It is apparent that his work was done after the Babylonians' rise to world power in 612 B.C. but prior to their control of Judah beginning in 606 B.C. Therefore the prophecies recorded in the book were likely pronounced sometime in that time period or shortly thereafter.

In the first verses of the book Habakkuk's anguish of heart is seen for the extent to which Judah had fallen into sin. He longed for the iniquity to end, even if it took the wrath of God to stop it.

"O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! Even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save! Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? For spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention. Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth" (Habakkuk 1:2-4).

Habakkuk felt God was leaving sin unpunished, but failed to recognize that His love for His people caused Him to suffer long in hopes of their repentance. That longsuffering, though, has now expired and wherein the prophet believed that if God was going to bring His wrath upon the people He would do it directly, His message to Habakkuk was that the Babylonians would be His agent of judgment upon the people, then they themselves would suffer for their sins. At first Habakkuk underestimated God's awareness of current events, but he soon realized his error.

Knowing the sins of Judah that brought their demise, the question might arise regarding Babylon's specific offenses that resulted in theirs. In Habakkuk two, the prophet receives five woes pronounced against the conquering nation by God outlining their guilt. First, in verse six, Habakkuk says, "*Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his!*" They, without moral right, seized a land not theirs for the sole purpose of building up their empire and for that they would pay. Second, in verse nine, the prophet records, "*Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil!*" With greed as their only motivation the Chaldeans had built their empire through cruelty and godless gain. For their inhumanity they would suffer. Third, in verse twelve, God reveals, "*Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and establisheth a city by iniquity!*" The Chaldeans, in their conquests, built cities with slave labor and viewed life as cheap, thereby ignoring the misery of their captives. Their ungodliness would have its consequences. Fourth, in verse fifteen, upon Babylon was also pronounced, "*Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!*" Not only did these heathen physically assault the well-being of their captives, but also intoxicated them to degrade them for selfish purposes. And finally, in verse nineteen, Habakkuk stated, "*Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it.*" Lastly, Babylon was guilty as idolaters who rejected the living God for dead and dumb idols. For this and all else, Babylon would not be immune to the judgment of God, but would suffer and be no more.

Christ is pictured in Habakkuk by that which only He could provide, salvation. Three times the word is used in the book (twice in 3:13 and once in 3:18) and with each a prophecy of Christ is pronounced. Through Christ, "*...the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea*" (Habakkuk 2:14).

As the book closes, Habakkuk engages in a lengthy prayer unto the Father. In the prayer he accomplishes two things. First he seeks the Lord's mercy upon him for his doubt, and second he praises the power of God that has since time been revealed to him. May our lives be characterized with similar goals. Seek His mercy and praise His power.

-Andy Brewer