

The Army of God

As the Israelites took the land of Canaan for God it was as His army. There was much bloodshed sanctioned by God at that particular time in history.

As the newly Spirit-filled Disciples and Apostles took the land again many years later it was the same. They were an army fighting for their true and promised inheritance. This time though the example had already been given;- *Kill everyone that won't submit to God's rule.*

... that sounds a little vicious and I don't record Paul or Timothy having a running battle....

Well, then may I gently point out that if you read Scripture you will find this.....

2 Timothy 1 [3] *Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. [4] No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.*

Philemon 1 *Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother. To Philemon our beloved fellow worker [2] and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house:*

Philippians 2 [25] *I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier,*

The whole language of the New Testament is one of war, battle, army, fighting, armour, and the culmination of time as we know it, and the universe as we now perceive it, will end in the battle of all battles, the war of the kingdoms.

Revelation 17 [13] *These are of one mind and hand over their power and authority to the beast. [14] They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.*

The point of the first wars was to clear the Promised Land of all those who would pollute Israel, who would lead them astray from God.

1 Samuel 15:18 *The LORD sent you on a campaign saying, 'Go and exterminate those sinful Amalekites! Fight against them until you have destroyed them.'*

There were those who did not die – some who submitted freely to Israel and were added into the number. Rahab and her family are one example.

Joshua 6:25 *Yet Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, her father's family, and all who belonged to her. She lives in Israel to this very day because she hid the messengers Joshua sent to spy on Jericho.*

However the job was not completed as per God's instructions and Israel were indeed led astray.

Judges 2:2-3 *but you must not make an agreement with the people who live in this land. You should tear down the altars where they worship.' But you have disobeyed me. Why would you do such a thing? At that time I also warned you, 'If you disobey, I will not drive out the Canaanites before you. They will ensnare you and their gods will lure you away.'"*

God isn't taking any chances on the final battle. Neither Moses nor Joshua will be at the head - Jesus Himself will lead us in. God wants everyone in His kingdom, but none will be allowed to enter who won't bow the knee voluntarily. It will be their last chance.

As the final war draws near, we are daily in the skirmishes and minor battles. Now, we may be on the front line, or we can be in support. Every army has a vast array of recruits. Snipers, bombardiers, infantrymen, medical teams, tacticians, and even clergy! But no one, not one, goes *active* in the army of God without training and instruction – everyone the same at first – and then tailored to their specific role. And who decides where you fit into the ranks?

1 Corinthians 12 [1] *Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. [2] You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. [3] Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit. [4] Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; [5] and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; [6] and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.*

It is no surprise then that as the battle is essentially a *Spiritual* one and not a *physical* one that the gifts and abilities are portioned out by the *Holy Spirit*. He is the ultimate Recruiter, Trainer and Task Appointer. This physical world, although it seems to be our present reality, is the one that will pass away, and the eternal kingdom is the only non-temporal permanent, spiritual, eternal one.

If you are called to be an infantryman you would be out of order to go sniping. If you are a medical orderly, tending to the wounded, you would be foolish to pick up a gun and rush onto the front line. God has appointed leadership, and one of their main tasks is to help the recruit to find their place in the ranks.

One of the most rewarding things that we can ever do as a Christian is to find our place in God's army. When we do we find a place of peace, reward, service and more but probably not comfort.

It should also come as no surprise that there is so much in the New Testament about healing. If we live in a war zone between the two opposing kingdoms then we are going to get hurt from time to time.

What seems to have happened in the 20th Century is that the church at large has so been flooded with the hurting, the drowning, the sorrowful and the spiritually oppressed and depressed, it has largely forgotten her first calling. We have become so used to coming to church to be comforted from worldly troubles, to be encouraged and to be built-up, we have forgotten what the first call was.

The churches **first call** was mission! And you know what that means.... it means to be **sent out**. Jesus sent out the 12, the 70 and then everyone in what has been dubbed *The Great Commission*. See the word "Co-mission" ... mission together sent out all together to what? "Make disciples of all men".

To do this we must work out our place in the ranks, get our basic training, and then..... rest in the barracks for the rest of the war complaining that your boots hurt?

NO! You get specialist training and go out and fight the good fight!! "Onward Christian Soldiers" and all that!! The end of the liturgical service is called as you know the *Dismissal*.

This does not mean that you can go home for a cup of tea because you are no longer required in the church building. The root of the word is the same as *mission* – the dismissal is the "sending out" to *go and do what you have learned ... to put into practise the kingdom principles* that you have been reminded of or have learnt new.

So how exactly do we go out and kill our enemies? Well, specifically NOT with a gun. We made that mistake during the Crusades and it did God's kingdom not one bit of good.

We do it with **the truth of the gospel – the good news, and in love.**

All our enemies are only deemed such because they have believed a lie – they have been sorely deceived that hedonism is the "way", that "everything will be all right in the end", that "if I'm a good person surely God will accept me into heaven when I die", that "God is dead and there is only blackness after death", and many, many more lies.

This is why we should love our enemies and pray for them. They simply have been lied to, and have believed it.

But make no mistake. Most of them have lived that way all their lives. Over 90% of them don't *want to know* the truth. The truth will kill their false dreams, will kill their relationships, will kill their ambitions and will ultimately kill their very way of life. We say "**Well good**" most will say "**Get lost, I'm OK as I am.**" The other few percent that receive what you have to say will thank you for all eternity!

Remember too that as they are wilfully under Satan's rule, he is their king and he isn't going to let them go without a fight. Satan will get his day, but for now he too is building an army and he doesn't want us messing with the heads of his recruits! He will react you can be sure!

2 Thess [9] *The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, [10] and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. [11] Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, [12] in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

Revelation 12 *"Now the salvation and the power and the **kingdom** of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. [11] And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the **word of their testimony**, for they loved not their lives even unto death. [12] Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!"*

I have spoken before and you should know how God will do the actual fighting for us if we will do things His way, acknowledge Him, love Him, respond to Him, obey Him, etc. Remember Gideon. That doesn't mean we can stay in the barracks – far from it – we still go to the front lines with our weapons and armour, but **He routs the enemy**. Our **true** enemy is Satan himself. Once God routs Satan his followers are released from bondage to enable them to receive God's truth, us, Himself, Scripture etc.

So as the Israelites took the Promised Land by putting to death those who opposed God and His ways, so too must we take the enemy's territory by ensuring the death of all that opposes God – even in our own lives!

Romans 8:13 *(for if you live according to the flesh, you will die), but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live.*

Colossians 3:5 *So put to death whatever in your nature belongs to the earth: sexual immorality, impurity, shameful passion, evil desire, and greed which is idolatry.*

1 Peter 3:18 *Because Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, to bring you to God, by being put to death in the flesh but by being made alive in the spirit.*

For us to honour God and grow up into Christ then anything that opposes God and His ways must be put to death within us. All the more so in those who have not yet heard the gospel of the Kingdom.

Ephesians 6 [10] *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. [11] Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. [12] For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. [13] Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.*