

# **Rediscovering God's Church**

Message no:9, Picture #7 dated 05/11/17

## **Reading: Ephesians 6: 10-13**

So far, we have looked at six specific pictures of God's people in Ephesians: The Assembly, The Body, The Workmanship, The Family, The Temple and The Bride. Today we are going to look at 7<sup>th</sup> Picture: The Army. This last picture is a great contrast to the previous picture.

For this final picture, we will turn to the last chapter of Ephesians. As in the case of the picture of the bride (in which the word bride is not actually mentioned), the word army is not specifically used, but the implication is absolutely beyond doubt.

It reads ***“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the Power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand “.***

Here is fair warning that believers will most certainly face warfare. There will come what Apostle Paul called “the evil days”—the day of affliction, testing and satanic pressures. Therefore Paul said “*Put on the whole armor*”. Question arise, What kind of person puts on armor? Obviously, the answer is a soldier.

Indeed, the entire picture is very closely based on the battle gear of the Roman legionary in the time of Apostle Paul. The Church is compared to a Roman legion—the most effective military unit of the ancient world—one that actually conquered most of the known world for the Roman Empire.

As God's army, believers are involved in a spiritual war. There has been a war between the forces of God and the forces of Satan throughout the human history, but the coming of Jesus as messiah—the Savior & Deliverer, brought the conflict in open. At one point the Pharisees were criticizing Jesus because of His ministry of casting out evil spirits. They accused Him of being in league/alliance/association/coalition and partnership with Beelzebub, which is one of the title of Satan. {Matt 12:25-28}

*But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the Kingdom of God has come upon you”.*

What is Jesus saying here? He is saying that Satan's kingdom is not divided, and it is in total opposition to the Kingdom of God. In the last phrase, He spoke about His ministry of casting out evil spirits as the demonstration that the Kingdom of God had come on the scene. So, here we see the clash of kingdoms—the visible, manifested clash between God's kingdom represented by JESUS and the CHURCH & the kingdom of SATAN and his DEMOND.

## **Spiritual Weapons and the Battlefield**

As believers, we need to understand the weapons and battlefield of the spiritual conflict: In 2-Corinthians 10:3-5 NASB version, we read

***“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for destruction of***

*fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ”.*

Apostle Paul said we are in war in the spiritual realm and therefore we must utilize spiritual weapons—not bombs, bullets and tanks. The spiritual weapons are capable—through God’s Power of destroying Satan’s fortresses.

Verse 5 clearly reveals the battlefield: “*Destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and ...taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.*” Three key words mentioned here are “speculation” “knowledge” and “thought” and they relate to one particular realm: THE MIND.

**The mind of humanity is the battlefield of this spiritual war.** Satan has deceived human beings through their minds, taking them captive by building fortresses of unbelief and prejudice. Our assignment as God’s army is to make war with the spiritual weapons that God has committed to us. We are to release people from Satan’s bondage by breaking down the strongholds in their minds and enabling them to bring their thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Christ. **THIS IS OUR MILITARY ASSIGNMENT AS THE ARMY OF GOD.**

### **From Bride to Army.**

Let us think and consider the process by which the bride becomes the army, which is really exciting. The process is described in Songs of Solomon. Here the bridegroom is speaking to his bride—a picture of Christ speaking to His Church.

“You are as beautiful as Tirzah, my darling, as lovely as Jerusalem, as awesome as an army with banners” (Song of Solomon 6:4 NASB). This is a rather unexpected, surprising and astonishing combination of words. The words “beautiful,” “darling” and “lovely” are followed by the picture of “an army with banners”

A feminine or bridal description turns into a military one! And then, in the 10<sup>th</sup> verse of the same chapter we read “Who is that grows/appears like the dawn, as beautiful as the full moon, as pure as the sun, as awesome as an army with banners?”

Notice the beauty of the picture:

- 1) “Appears like the dawn” – rising after a night of darkness.
- 2) “As beautiful as the full moon”—the moon in its function of reflecting the Sun as the church reflects or manifests Christ.
- 3) “As pure as the Sun”—with Christ’s own purity and righteousness
- 4) “Awesome as an army with banners”—the bride becomes the army, startling/alarming/surprising both Satan and the world.

This is the order: First, Christ sees His bride as an army; then she also appears to the world in this way. This is why it is important for us to see ourselves as Christ sees us, by looking in the mirror of God’s Word. When we (believers) begin to see ourselves in this way by faith, then the Holy Spirit transforms us into what we see.

### **The Essential Feature of the Army of God.**

God’s purpose in presenting this picture of the church is to manifest God’s victory. In dealing with this tremendous theme, we need to see first of all, that the Lord is a military commander and man of war.

Exodus 15:3 reads “*The LORD is a man of war; the LORD is His name*”. Likewise, in Psalm 24:8-10 reads “*Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory.*”

The Hebrew word that is translated “hosts” is **tsaba**, which is the standard Hebrew word for an army. It is even used in the modern Israel in the present time. Therefore, God is the Lord of armies. He is also a God of battle and a “man of war”. He is worthy and capable of being our commander. It is good to know this. To have confidence in the commander is a very important element of military life. Morale always fail in troops when they lack (shortage/insufficiency) confidence in their commander. {1965 War-Lahore protection & Fall of Dhaka/Gen: Niazi surrender} But the believers-as army of God can have confidence and moral strength by the knowledge that the LORD knows His job. He is a God of battle—a man of war and the Lord of armies.

Then we need to know and remember that Christ has already won the victory. Apostle Paul said that God in Christ “disarmed principalities and powers” (Colossians 2:15) Christ dismantled/tear-apart/deprived Satan’s entire kingdom with all its authorities and rulers AND made a show of them openly, triumphing over them on the cross. The CROSS was the place where Christ once and for all sealed Satan’s defeat. Since that time, Satan has been busy trying to keep Christians ignorant of what the cross accomplished—because it accomplished his total defeat. {See Hebrews 2:14-15} Christ wants us to share in His victory and its fruits. Listen to this glorious statement: *Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.* (2-Corinthians 2:14) Notice the two adverbial phrases in the above sentence: “always” & “in every place”. Just think about it. God always leads us in triumph in Christ in every place.

### **God’s requirements of His army.**

It is our responsibility as soldiers in Christ’s army to put on our armor—Paul informed us very clearly that we are in a conflict. God has provided the armor and Paul listed six items of armor in verses 14-18 in Ephesians chapter 6.

If we look closely at this picture, we will find that we are completely protected from the crown of our head to the sole of our feet EXCEPT our back. There is nothing to protect the back except our fellow soldiers. This shows that we cannot afford to turn our backs in the battle and that we better have somebody behind us who can protect us. This requires love, relationship and loyalty with our fellow believers.

First Chronicles chapter 12, lists representatives from all the tribes of Israel who came to Hebron under their leaders, in military order, to make David King. This is a picture as to how the believers should unite with just one purpose to make JESUS KING.

The church needs to have discipline of loyalty to our king and to our fellow soldiers/believers, so that we can cover each others back in the battle. You and I must be a person that the Commander and our fellow soldiers can count on, We must be a loyal members of the army of God.

As we prepare ourselves to partake in the Sacrament of Holy Communion, let’s assess and evaluate ourselves and seek His pardon & forgiveness as well as His power & strength to become a true soldier of Christ.