

“The Lord is a man of war”

Written by K B Napier

Sunday, 17 February 2013 10:39

Those who are biblically-ignorant and spiritually-anaemic forever say that God is a God of love and peace (which He is). Any notion that God is wrathful and warlike is, to them, anathema! Yet, God is called a “*man of war*”, regardless of man’s wishful thinking and selective understanding.

Exodus 15:3

“The LORD [is] a man of war: the LORD [is] his name.”

The error of these ignorant fellows is to only accept what THEY want God to be like. They have formed an image in their minds of what they wish God to be, and refute anything that sullies that image. Frankly, their images are irrelevant! God is whatever He says He is, and He does whatever He does. We neither control these things nor are expected to hold a different view based on our own faulty ideas.

The words are actually part of a song or poem, raised by Moses and the whole congregation, after God destroyed the whole Egyptian army and Pharaoh in the Red Sea. By no stretch of the imagination could this wholesale killing justify any man in thinking God is NOT a “man of war”! It was by God’s warlike actions that the Jews knew peace and salvation (verse 2). Very often war is needed to rid a nation of evil men and their armies, and enemies in general. And, in this case, as in many others, the warlike actions were committed by the Lord Himself, or by His direct command. “*The LORD (is) a man of war: the LORD (is) his name.*”

Both uses of the word ‘LORD’ refer to Jehovah (‘the existing One’, the One True God). He is referred to as a “man”, *‘iysh*. In this text it is used to describe God as full of valour. It also shows us that God is ‘male’ (which he must be, because female is subservient to the male in terms of headship, and God cannot be subservient). His Name is Jehovah, and His ‘Name’, *shem*

, stands for His glory and honour, His fame and reputation. It is also a memorial to Jehovah, something He wishes to be remembered for. “War” means war, battle! Not the airy-fairy notions held by effete Christians today! We are called to fight with Him!

Therefore, when Jehovah cut down the entire Egyptian army and Pharaoh, He did so as a sign of His superiority and greatness, as a matter of honour, for He promised His chosen nation He would protect them. It was also a sign of His wrath against all who oppress His people and reject Him, right up to the last day and judgment. Even today, enemies of us and God laugh in

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derision, and say with the Egyptians, *“I will pursue, I will overtake... my lust will be satisfied upon them... destroy them,”* (verse 9). Is this not the sentiment at the cross? (Mark 15:29-31; Luke 23:35).

Those of us who stand by the Lord, willing to die for Him, are also like Him in valour. See 1 Samuel 16:18. But, note what King Saul thought of the young David’s ability to beat a mighty foe: *“And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou [art but] a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.”* (1 Samuel 17:33). He missed the point – that when we fight on the Lord’s side, the size and power of the enemy is irrelevant. The Church today thinks like him.

What matters is our obedience and trust! David was incensed by the arrogance of Goliath, who dared to face the army of the people chosen by God. (Verse 36). One small stone, one big enemy! But, God guided the stone, and the sword that cut off Goliath’s head afterward. It was done this way to show that the means used by us are not what vanquishes an enemy. What beats him is God, Who uses His faithful servants to do His bidding (verse 47).

In this historic and amazing account we see that when a man stands against the foe alone, in God’s Name, God wins the victory. Thus, we can say that God is a mighty man of war, even when His servant wields the sword. What the man of faith does on God’s behalf is God Himself in action. As David said, men would know it was God, not him.

We can say, then, that whenever we stand firm against an enemy, God enters the battle as champion. Our means will then be *His* means; our valour will be His valour; our strength will be His strength. We do not battle in our own name and power, even if we have such human strength and ability. Rather, God clothes us in Himself, and we win... for God can never lose! Indeed, *“The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies.”* (Isaiah 42:13).

As a man of war God promises enemies no respite or compassion. Today, we see this man of war at rest, but it will not always be so: *“I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, [and] refrained myself: [now] will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once.”* (verse 14). Let all enemies of us and the Lord beware – God is stirring and will soon devour you, even in the midst of your mockery.

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God will not be mocked. He is indeed a God of love and peace – but He is also a man of war. Do not underestimate this and do not think that He is pacified by mere words. He hears our cries; He sees our anguish; He knows what the enemy is doing, and listens as they mock us and Him. He holds His peace a long time before striking out in His wrath... and His wrath must come before we enter into our eternal peace.

The LORD is a man of war! Bear your sword with honour.

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