

Military Battles of the Bible and Our Moral Battles

Introduction

The Lord's purpose for war is different from men's or Satan's.

Men wage war to avenge, kill, steal, and possess. War is Satan's goal for mankind: to destroy, manipulate, and possess. But God uses war to cleanse, protect, and serve. He uses war to inhibit the growth of evil. Men, in the end, align themselves with whom they wish.

Behavior on the battlefield is different from that on the Sunday-morning pew. The passage "as far as possible live in peace with all men" (Romans 12:18) does not apply to the battlefield. Turning the other cheek and "do unto others as you wish them do to you" are principles not practiced at the gates of hell (Matthew 5:39, 7:12). If one is to march into the very depth of Hades to rescue the perishing then one best be armed with the finest fire protection available. One must be ready to use every weapon in God's armory; ready to trade blow for blow with a fierce enemy who shows no quarter. Christian warriors need to understand God's armory, strategies, and battle plans.

The Reality of Warfare and Battlefields

Few understand the depth of the conflict between Christians and Satan. The Enemy's chief tactic is to blind people to the reality of warfare and the battlefields on which it occurs. Blindness prevents believers from becoming effective warriors. It obscures the battlefield and limits full

utilization of God's armory, tactics, and intelligence-gathering techniques. Offensive and defensive strategies are impossible to prepare under these circumstances.

A strong correlation exists between what takes place in physical combat and spiritual warfare. An understanding of the military campaigns found in God's Word—how the Lord trained His warriors and the tactics employed—provides much insight into how to approach the spiritual struggles of the present. Often the tactics and training taught for physical warfare by God to Israel apply to spiritual warfare in the present.

Strategies for Today

Our purpose is to examine biblical battles, geography, culture, religion, weapons, and attitudes to discern strategies for conducting warfare today. Principles of yesterday illuminate the paths of tomorrow. Knowledge about our Commander-in-Chief's purposes and goals provides insight into how God intends to use each Christian in battles with the enemy. Preparation includes understanding the enemy's tactics and weapons as well as God's counter tactics. Training for military or spiritual assault is vital to ensuring victory. Passive acquiescence is acceptable for a civilian but deadly for the warrior.

It is important to recognize the strategies employed by the enemy. However knowledge is of little importance if the skill is not incorporated into our behavior.

The Early Days: To Stop the Killing

The Flood was the first God-on-man combat encounter. The Lord challenged Satan's perversion of His creation 1600 years after Adam and Eve left the Garden. Strategies and tactics of God and the adversary are apparent. The adversary used deceit, intermarriage, and murder to pervert God's creation. The precursors to the flood occurred in the activity of Satan through Cain and his descendents. God uses reconnaissance, warning, and unconditional warfare to challenge the adversary.

Satan challenged Eve. The adversary used the central desire placed in woman by God—desire for wisdom—to entice her into disobedience. Satan then inspired Cain to murder his brother, Abel.

Tactically, Satan realized that his destroyer would come from man's seed (Genesis 3:15). The seed had to be either Cain or Able. God would not use Satan's recruit, Cain. Thus, Abel's death would end the lineage through which Satan's destroyer could come—or so the adversary thought.

In the mean time, Satan was at work inspiring rebellion and murder in the heart of all mankind in order to establish his seed (Genesis 6:5). To give the devil his due, he is successful at winning the hearts of men. For sixteen hundred years following creation, Satan stirred up in the hearts of men rebellion against God leading to the vilest of behaviors. Finally, when the evil population numbered in excess of seven billion and the Godly population numbered eight, God acted.¹

¹ Henry Morris writes, "By the time of the Deluge, 1656 years after Creation by Ussher chronology, even using conservative assumptions, the world population would have been at least seven billion people!" Henry Morris, *The Genesis Record* (Grand Rapids, Mich., Baker Book House, 1976) 144.

God Declares War

Reconnaissance on earth revealed that, “God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. God was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him in his heart” (Genesis 6:5-6).

The Lord’s war on mankind was a surprise for the demons. Perhaps they expected a rehash of the heavenly battle so many years before when a third of the angels defecting with Satan were beaten in battle and hurled down from heaven. The demons expected an earthly battlefield—but not the whole earth. (Revelation 12:7-9).

Regardless, the battle began with reconnaissance having determined the extent and nature of man’s rebellion. “Yahweh saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. Yahweh was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him in his heart. Yahweh said, “I will destroy man whom I have created from the surface of the ground; man, along with animals, creeping things, and birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them” (Genesis 6:5ff).

God wanted to warn mankind, and he used Noah to preach warnings to his generation for a hundred years. However, God’s long-suffering came to an end.

The ark completed, the Lord ordered his souls to take cover along with a protected portion of His creation (Genesis 7:13ff). The door to the ark was sealed shut. The demons roared with laughter. Seven days later, the attack began. Laughter turned to screams of terror. God used nature to create havoc. Earthquakes, volcanoes, and rain continued for forty days and forty nights. The whole earth groaned under the weight of combat. Every person died except the eight souls in the ark. Do not be deceived, God conducts unconditional warfare.

The Flood reveals important patterns in divine warfare. The goal of warfare is to strike terror in the hearts of men and demons. God fulfilled His goal. Terror was so intense among the survivors that knowledge of the flood passed down to every generation. Historically, every major ancient civilization has a flood narrative transmitted to successive generations.

Unrestricted Warfare

God does not take prisoners. He does not compromise. He does not make treaties. The lesson for modern military commanders is this: conduct unrestricted warfare.

The ability to strike terror in the enemy is the chief trait God looked for in Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Saul, David, and others. The ability to strike terror in an enemy is a rare quality.

Recent history would see the generals Sherman and Patton with this profile. The South to this day hates the name of Sherman for his burnt-earth policy during the Civil War. However, Sherman and Grant put an end to a terrible conflict that seemed to go on forever. During World War II the Germans were deathly afraid that Patton would be leading the invasion of Europe. He was seen as an implacable, unstoppable unpredictable, deadly enemy

Peter struck terror in the whole church when Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit—and the Lord struck them dead. The passage concludes with this observation: “Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events” (Acts 5:11). God’s people crave a leader who instills fear in the enemy. By chance, do you possess this quality?

The Purpose of War

However, there is another lesson here. Going to war requires a purpose. What is God’s purpose for the Flood? It indeed destroyed mankind. It created terror in the heart to the degree that every major ancient nation historically mentions the Flood in one form or another. However, these are not the reasons for the Flood.

God strikes home the point with Noah: “And from each man, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man” (Genesis 9:5-6). The purpose of this war was to stop the Satan-inspired killing. Prior to the flood neither prohibition, nor legal means, had been established to deal with murder. Now every man must account for taking the life of another.

With the advent of the Flood, the Lord created a level playing field. Prior to the Flood evil men acquired knowledge of killing. The righteous had no authority to fight back. The flood wiped out all of the ideas and inventions of evil men. God reordered the playing field.

Then the Lord showed righteous men how to create a weapon that would give equal advantage on future battlefields. Surely evil men could copy the weapon, but the point is along with the authority to fight evil, God gives righteous men a weapon to do it: the bow.

I find it incredible, when I look at the first major battle in which so many of humanity died that this very episode gives birth to the first effective weapon. The bow ruled the battlefield for the next four thousand years. It is not that the bow was unknown at the time of the Flood. Rather, that it was a very ineffective weapon with a range of perhaps twenty yards.

By following God’s design that range increased to four hundred yards or more. How did God reveal this improved weapon? By giving the discerning heart a picture of it. Yes, the rainbow is a perfect representation of how to make an improved bow. The improved arch is evident to anyone who looks at it. That arch is the key to its effectiveness. The laminated parts as seen in the various colors give it strength.

Now the unbeliever will find it difficult to connect this symbol with the weapon so familiar to all of us. But Scripture plainly notes that this is a “war bow,” seen in the skies. Ancient

literature refers to rainbow as God's war bow and the lightning as His arrows. By showing man how to make a powerful weapon He was also saying He would show the righteous man how to overcome the evil.

The tactics Abraham used to overcome evil men confirm the superiority of good over evil. What weapon today might be equal to the bow of that generation? What weapon defeats the scourge of addictive behavior?

Amazingly, God gives righteous men a knowledge about overcoming addictive behavior that is powerful in the hands of the righteous. One overcomes addictive behavior, not with the weapons of this world, but with the tools of the spiritual world.

How one may ask, what weapon? Men's cure for addiction is abstinence. Whether the abstinence managed by will power, or pharmaceuticals the ultimate means is abstinence. God's weapon to combat addiction is different. Paul warns that abstinence "is of no value in checking the indulgences of the flesh" What then does the Lord use to overcome addictive behavior?

The antidote for addiction strikes at the root of the problem and that is developing the character trait of gratitude. But just learning a skill is not enough. The skill as with any other weapon must be practiced with and used daily if the enemy is to be defeated.

So our task is to see the ancient battles in the context of their time and place and search for moral answers for our battles. We have learned thus some of the basic principles established in the beginning; do not compromise, do not surrender, use God inspired tactics and look to the Lord for leadership.