

# Ekklesia

*The Church Militant*  
(Part IV of V)

*“The Church’s One Foundation” (Stanza 2) with Scripture Proofs*

The church shall never perish!  
Her dear Lord to defend  
To guide, sustain and cherish  
Is with her to the end;  
Though there be those that hate  
her,  
And false sons in her pale,  
Against or foe or traitor  
She ever shall prevail.

Though with a scornful wonder  
Men see her sore oppressed,  
By schisms rent asunder,  
By heresies distressed,

'Mid toil and tribulation,  
And tumult of her war,  
And the great church victorious

"Upon this Rock will I build my Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt 16:18)  
"Lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world." (Matt 28:20)  
"Marvel not if the world hate you." (1Jn 3:13)  
"False brethren." (Gal 2:4)  
"Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy! when I fall I shall arise." (Micah 7:8)

"By reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." (2Pe 2:2)  
"I hear that there be divisions among you." (1Co 11:18)  
"Watch unto prayer." (1Pe 4:7)

"We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, and against powers,"etc. (Eph 6:12)

# The World Militant

On Oct. 7, 2023, a group claiming to be  [Hamas](#), according to all “reputable” sources, savagely and brutally killed over 1,200 people in Israel, including people from America and dozens of other countries. In response,  [Israel](#) has called up 360,000 reservists and are swearing to obliterate Hamas from the face of the earth. Of course, in one sense, Israel always seems to be fighting someone. But whether they like it or not, this time all indications are that this is different. These are not little skirmishes. War seems to be upon them. And it may soon come to the rest of the world. The reason I put “reputable” in quotes a moment ago is because it’s hard to know what’s going on in such a world as this.

When  [Donald Trump](#) became president, one of the first things he did was create a trope around the MSM news conglomerates that today is common speech, but back then was profoundly offensive to nearly everyone. He started calling them “ [fake news](#),” and has said repeatedly since then that they are the enemy of the Republic, literally at war with the people and the nation.

According to the *Wikipedia*, in 1999, “ [American far-right conspiracy theory and fake news](#)” reporter  [Alex Jones](#)

began a website he called *InfoWars*. Whatever you think of Jones, whether he's a tinfoil hat-wearing nut-job or a kind of prophet of our age, the title of his show is a fascinating glimpse into the state of modern warfare. Jones knew long ago that this is the era of information warfare. What side is he on?

In 2022, the 24<sup>th</sup> U.S. national security advisor, publicly humiliated and relentlessly trashed by the MSM felon who was later pardoned by President Trump, retired lieutenant general [Michael T. Flynn](#), wrote a book in which he details the [five generations of warfare](#) since premodern times: (1) pre-gunpowder, (2) weapons with gunpowder, (3) flying machines, tanks, rockets, trench warfare, (4) atomic and nuclear, state and non-state actors, terrorism, and (5) hybrid, irregular, unrestricted warfare to affect the *cognitive* battlespace: the belief system of civilians and other targets. In other words, fifth generation warfare is an infowar, a war for the mind, and this is why people are so profoundly confused about what's going on around them, which includes even Flynn himself and the things he says about what's really going on.

[Not one](#) of the four things I've said so far [is without controversy](#). Not one of them hits very many people neutrally.

People have strong and emotionally visceral opinions about Israel and Hamas, Donald Trump, Alex Jones, and General Flynn. Each are among the most polarizing things one can possibly talk about today. And isn't it curious that the way I've put everyone one of them and the things I've talked about regarding them have all centered on information and warfare: how we get our information, whether it is true information, warfare over the very idea of information. We live in a day of deep suspicion, confusion, indeed, I believe *the fog of war*. We *are* at war, and it is every bit as real as WWI or WWII ever were, it's just that (so far), it is a different kind of war than the world has really ever seen.

## The Church Militant

Now then, nearly every *systematic theology* out there mentions something related to all this as it regards the church. We teach our kids to sing, "I'm in the Lord's *Army!*"<sup>1</sup> "Onward, Christian *Soldiers*, marching as to war."<sup>2</sup> "From vict'ry unto vict'ry his *army* he shall lead, till ev'ry foe is vanquished and Christ is Lord indeed."<sup>3</sup> It's called *The Church*

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<sup>1</sup> "I May Never March in the Infantry." Origin unknown.

<sup>2</sup> S. Baring-Gould, "Onward, Christian Soldiers," (1864).

<sup>3</sup> George Duffield, "Stand up, Stand Up, For Jesus, Ye Soldiers of the Cross," (1858).

**Militant**, that is, the church on earth. This is distinguished from the Church Triumphant, that is, the church in glory in heaven. There's all kinds of songs about the Church Militant, including parts of our song: "The Church's One Foundation." "Mid toil and tribulation, and tumult of *her war...*" The *church* is at war.

But **what kind of war?** I think a lot of people think it is warfare related in one way or another to that described above. And why not? It is almost automatic to think of **the Crusades**, where thousands of Europeans headed down to Jerusalem to free the city from the Turks. Or perhaps the **Spanish Inquisition** comes to mind—even though *nobody expects the Spanish Inquisition*, which targeted Protestants and other heretics. Or, maybe you think of the **Thirty-Years War** or other wars between different Christian groups fought on battlefields? This, of course, all goes back long into history. The **Holy Roman Emperor** is this fusion of religion and state, and he had the power to persecute anyone he wanted. And, they've controlled the information, so what all can we believe? That last one is a question that many people are asking today and they are deeply suspicious of organized religion and church because of it.

But for some, it may go back even farther, especially as people think about Israel—the wars of Moses and Joshua, Samson fighting the Philistines, David fighting Goliath. Someone might also think of the future with Israel fighting Antichrist or other kinds of wars they see depicted in Revelation. And, of course, this is exactly what many people this very moment are thinking as it regards this sudden attack on the modern State of Israel, whether for right or for wrong.

Scripture speaks a lot about us being at war. John says it this way, “For everyone who has been born of God overcomes *the world*” (1Jn 5:4). Paul says this, “For the desires of *the flesh* are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do” (Gal 5:17). And Peter says, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary *the devil* prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” (1Pe 5:8-9). Did you hear the three famous words here? *The world, the flesh, and the devil*, each associated with warfare.

Now, Ephesians does not let you misinterpret the first two. In perhaps the most famous of all passages about biblical warfare the Apostle says, “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” (Eph 6:12). This is called knowing your enemy. If you are going to wage war, you need to make sure you are fighting the right enemy. When law enforcement does their target training, they will have **fake targets**—a mommy pushing a baby in a stroller, kids running through the street, civilians interspersed with the real bad guys. You don’t shoot the civilians. You shoot the enemy.

Of course, it helps *to believe* that there *are* such supernatural creatures, if this is truly what our warfare is against! Sadly, many do not, and many who say they do *act* as if they truly do not. Nevertheless, biblically speaking our warfare is **not physical**, but **spiritual warfare**. As John continues, “**And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith**” (1Jn 5:4). As Peter continues, “**Resist [the devil], firm in your faith**” (1Pe 5:8-9).

When we fight against the world, it is not as one nation fights against another. The church may have done this often, but this was wrong. We fight to rescue not to murder. We fight to save, not to destroy our fellow man. As evil as they may be and become, biblically speaking they are not our enemy. As we just saw, our enemy prowls around like a roaring

lion; he is the devil. These humans, they themselves are **hostage to the devil**, just like we all were before Christ rescued us.

Listen to Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635 – 1711), the Dutch Reformer of the second generation talk about this.

The *church militant* is upon earth having the *devil* and the *world* as her **external enemies**, and her *flesh* as her **internal enemy**. The *devil* is a murderer from the beginning, who from the moment that the promise concerning the Seed of the woman was given, has with evil hatred opposed it and all those who believe in it. He does all in his power to torment them, and if it were possible, to prevent them from coming to Christ. And if they have come, he strives to draw them away from Him, thereby obscuring the glory of the church. Against this the church puts itself in array, battling these enemies with spiritual weapons as described in Ephesians 6:11–18.

The **church and the world** bear mutual contempt for each other for several reasons: the members of the church are of a more excellent spirit than those who belong to the world; they convince and condemn the world by the truth, and with their holy lives; they desire to dwell alone, separating themselves from the world, unwilling to intermingle with the world. In fact, in all aspects the church and the world are a

contrast to one another as far as nature, objectives, and manner of life are concerned. All of this results in activity whereby both parties seek to mutually protect themselves from the other and to prevent being adversely affected by each other.

The world uses physical weapons, inflicts damage to property, scorns and taunts the reputation of the godly and uses fire and sword against them, doing all this to draw them away from the faith and the practice of godliness. The world seeks to bind the church in every respect to itself, and thus make the church conformed to itself.

The church seeks the salvation of the world, and by way of faith and repentance to draw it to herself. To this end the church does not use physical weapons, which as the church she does not possess. Rather, she uses spiritual weapons: the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God, the totality of her confession, a sanctified life, a vigorous protection of the truth, and a steadfast patience to endure everything for Christ's sake. God's Word makes very frequent mention of this warfare: "Fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12); "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 2:3); "After ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions" (Heb. 10:32). The *flesh* within is the enemy which does most harm. Without its cooperation the others would not gain a foothold. While holiness is the ornament of the church, sin disgraces the church. Every true

member of the church, due to having Spirit and life, hates sin, and sets himself in array against it so as to conquer rather than be conquered by sin.<sup>4</sup>

Now, this does not mean that *a Christian* might not fight wars or physical battles against people, but that's different from *the church* fighting them; we'll talk about that later. Yet, this point is related here with Ephesians 6 as both are often **misunderstood**. You see, Paul begins this statement about not wrestling against flesh and blood by saying, “**Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God...**” (Eph 6:10-11). When almost all American Christians hear these words, whom do they think about? *Themselves*. “**Did I put on the armor of God today?**” But the verbs are **plural**, not singular. “**Be strong**” is a plural verb. “**Put on**” is a plural verb.” “**That you**” is a plural pronoun. You see? “**We do not wrestle against flesh and blood...**” We. Plural. Paul is talking to the church, not to individuals.

This continues throughout. “**Therefore, take up...**” This is **plural** verb. “**Take up the whole armor of God, that you...**” That's a plural you. “**That you may be able to withstand in**

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<sup>4</sup> **Wilhelmus à Brakel**, *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, ed. Joel R. Beeke, trans. Bartel Elshout, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 1993), 42–43.

the evil day” (13). I’m of course not saying it is wrong for an individual to take up the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit—the word of God in prayer and supplication. By definition, no group can do something unless the individuals do it. But **Paul’s words are to churches**, to the church visible everywhere. The reason we’ve seen the kind of physical bloodbaths throughout history taken up in under the sign of the cross is because the church has fallen prey to the enemy and has forgotten who the real enemy is. We, the church, have turned on our fellow man, often even our own brothers, while simultaneously no longer even believing the devil exists.

As I hinted at a moment ago, it is easy to talk but much more difficult to act. For as soon as we start dealing with people, especially evil people, some kind of action is required. I’m not saying that for a Christian there isn’t a time and a place for warfare to be physical, that it is only in every sense spiritual and against Satan. No. That isn’t true. But the church is different than the individual. And this is **where our heads must be at the start** if we have any hope of moving forward into battle the way Jesus would have us march in his infantry.

To that end, [today](#) we are going to look at [The Church Militant](#). Our last in this series will look at the Church Triumphant. I'll begin now by thinking about [some ways that we wage war as the church against these enemies](#). Then, I'll move briefly into more murky waters as it comes to more difficult areas. I think in both of these, you will find much food for thought. But my prayer in this is that you would learn to think about the vital importance of the church in God's world today, and, how you might find your place in the army of God.

As I was figuring out how I wanted to outline this five week series, I of course thought of [our song](#). But it wasn't systematic enough to be a great guide. Rather, it gives only segmented and dispersed lines that deal with the various topics throughout. It is a song after all, not a systematic! And we will see a bit more of it today.

So I started looking through [Systematic Theologies](#). When I came to Millard Erickson's Systematic, I saw that he had a section called "[the Role of the Church](#)." By this he meant the things that she is to do in this world. In what follows, we are going to be thinking about some of these roles.

He lists the following as the church's roles: *Evangelism, Edification, Worship, Social Concern, The Gospel, Our Character, Willingness to Serve, and Adaptability*.<sup>5</sup>

Strangely, Erickson never once uses the language of the Church Militant in his Systematic. Yet, in giving these roles or “functions” of the church, it became apparent to me that this is precisely what the roles are—they are **how we wage war**. I simply bring this list up here as a way to begin talking about this, and I do so wanting your mind to think about how these words can relate *to warfare*. I won't go into depth on them all, but I want to begin with what I think is our most important thing we do together. We worship.

## Worship as Spiritual Warfare

The **chief end of man** is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. But this is also the chief end of the church. Have you ever thought about **worship as spiritual warfare**? One professor has said, “**Worship is one of the most important things human beings can do, not because it feeds God's ego but because it lines us up with him against our enemy, Satan. Worship is an act of war. It is also an act of participation,**

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<sup>5</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998), 1061.

strengthening our relationship with God and with each other. Satan cannot stand worship. He hates us, especially when we partner with God to exalt God and to state our position with him. In worship we declare that we are on God's side. We declare this to God, to ourselves, to other people, and to the spirit world.”<sup>6</sup> Peter Leithart said, “Worship is part of the Church's engagement with the world, one of the chief strategies in our combat.”<sup>7</sup>

In Acts 16, Paul and Silas were imprisoned, so what did they do? They began to worship. They “were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened” (Acts 16:25-26). I don't cite this to suggest that when we worship God we will free everyone from their chains, but rather that in response to being imprisoned, which was an act of war by the state against them, their response was not to fight back, but to worship. This was their corporate act.

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<sup>6</sup> Charles H. Kraft, *Worship: Beyond the Hymnbook* (Eugene, OR: Wipf&Stock, 2015), Introduction. I don't know a lot about Kraft other than he taught at Fuller Seminary and was into deliverance ministry stuff. But this quote is certainly spot on.

<sup>7</sup> Peter J. Leithart, “[Worship is Warfare](#),” *Credenda Agenda* 13.2 (2001): 17.

In **2Chr 17:10**, the good king Jehoshaphat was protected by God from all his enemies. But in **ch. 20**, God removed his common grace and the nations were allowed to attack. “The Moabites and Ammonites ... came against Jehoshaphat for battle” (**20:1**). What was the king’s response? “Then Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah assembled to seek help from the Lord” (**3**). And the king said, “O Lord, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? Do you not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations? In your hand are power and might, so that no one is able to withstand you” (**6**). **The king worshiped.** He also remembered, as Moses before him, that God drove out the enemies and gave the people the land (**7**). And he concluded by asking God to remember them (**12**). But not before he had worshiped.

But something happens in our worship that often goes unnoticed in spiritual realms. If our warfare is in fact spiritual, then it is imperative to learn about how when we worship as the church on the Lord’s Day, that **angels are present** with us. I briefly mentioned this a moment ago, but let’s think more specifically about it.

**At Sinai**, angels descended upon the mountain (**Deut 33:2**). **In the temple**, angels filled the holy place (**Ps 68:17**),

as was even depicted at the command of God in the cherubim being woven into the curtains (Ex 26:1) and molded on the lid of the ark of the covenant (Ex 25:18). Thus, Hebrews says that when we come together, we come in part to “**enumerable angels in festal gathering**” (Heb 12:22).

In the liturgy of the Psalms, the psalmist commands them, “**Praise the Lord from the heavens ... Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his hosts!**” (Ps 148:1-2). Yet also, “**Praise the Lord from the earth**” (7). “**Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, o Zion!**” (147:12). Thus we command in worship for the very host of heaven to worship God with us in “The Doxology.” Why? Because we sit, as someone has said, “**under the same roof with the angels.**”<sup>8</sup> Another says, “**As you assemble to lift up praise to God, you are joined by the invisible angelic hosts. Worship is a truly supernatural event. It is a heavenly event.**”<sup>9</sup>

Gregory Nazianzen said of the church’s worship, “**Sing His praises with the angels; join the choirs of the archangels. Let this festive occasion join the powers of those in heaven and those on earth. For I am certain that they are rejoicing today and celebrating this feast together with us**” (Gregory

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<sup>8</sup> Gilbert Van Dooren, *The Beauty of Reformed Liturgy* (Winnipeg: Premier Publishing, 1980), 13.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Engle, *Discovering the Fullness of Worship* (Philadelphia: Great Commission Publications, 1978), 57.

Nazianzen, *Oration* 39.17).<sup>10</sup> Maximos the Confessor says, “The church’s liturgical song [is] being coordinated now with the angels’ heavenly doxology” (Maximos, *P.G.* 692 C). And Chrysostom said, “Although, my good Christian, you are clothed in flesh and bone and in a multitude of weaknesses, nevertheless, you are made worthy together with the Bodiless Powers to praise and glorify [Christ]. And despite your personal weaknesses, when you wish with all your might, then ... through the Holy Spirit you are accompanied by the Cherubim in the Thrice-Holy Hymn and with them—peacefully—you glorify the All-holy Triune God. A common heavenly and earthly feast is being set up; one is the Thanksgiving, one the exultation, one the joyful choir” (Chrysostom *P.G.* 56, 97-98). In fact, it is said that a priest once told him that he had “witnessed a large number of angels clothed in bright robes luminous like the sun. He said he was carried up to the altar offering their help, bowing their head in great respect, and then surrounded the Holy Table. At times they stood in silence and others chanted liturgical hymns along with the chanters uplifting their melody.”<sup>11</sup> Angels are with us when the church worships God.

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<sup>10</sup> This is the citation from the internet. Something approximating it appears not in 39.17 but 39.14 in the Church Fathers English translation.

<sup>11</sup> Gregory Hiermonk, *The Divine Liturgy: A Commentary in Light of the Fathers* (Columbia, MO: Newrome Press, 2020), 178.

The point of this is not only to help you understand the supernatural overlap between the two realms when we worship, but to do so *in the context of warfare*. For David not only commands the angels, but the gods—the fallen creatures, to praise him too. “Before the gods I sing your praise” (Ps 138:1). “Worship him, all you gods!” (Ps 97:7). “Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars!” (Ps 148:3). If, when we worship, not only angels are present but other creatures see it too, then when we command them to worship, we are engaging in the most fearsome of spiritual battles possible. We are demanding that Satan bow down to the Lord. And we do it as the army of God.

### *Music as Spiritual Warfare*

Let’s look at some specifics in our worship. When Jehoshaphat finally went into battle, he did something truly astonishing. As he assembled everyone for battle, on the frontline he positioned the troops. But they were not cavalry or army. *They were singers.* “And when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the Lord and praise him in holy array, as they went before the army, and say, ‘Give thanks to the Lord , for his

standfast love endures forever” (21). Martin Luther said of music,

Music is a fair and lovely gift of God which has often wakened and moved me to the joy of preaching ... Music drives away the Devil and makes people [happy] ... Next after theology I give to music the highest place and the greatest honor. I would not change what little I know of music for something great. Experience proves that next to the Word of God only music deserves to be extolled as the mistress and governess of the feelings of the human heart ... My heart bubbles up and overflows in response to music, which has so often refreshed me and delivered me from dire plagues.<sup>12</sup>

In this way, it ought not surprise you now why so many songs in the Bible have warfare imagery (Ex 15; Ps 18; 24; 55; 89; etc.).<sup>13</sup>

This also ought to impress upon your mind the importance of singing appropriately and rightly to God. Too many songs in contemporary worship are shallow, sentimental, and sometimes downright blasphemous. Song is one

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<sup>12</sup> Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (Nashville: Abingdon Press reprint, 2013), 266. For more see John Piper, “Ambushing Satan with Song,” *Desiring God* (Jan 20, 1985), <https://sixoneministries.org/worship-as-warfare/>.

<sup>13</sup> See also Douglas Wilson, “Worship is Warfare,” *Table Talk: Conquering the World* (Jan 2001), 58-59; Scott Hahn, “Worship Is Warfare,” ch. 2 in *The Lamb’s Supper: The Mass as Heaven on Earth*, First Edition (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday, 1999), 130.

of those things that God has given to men to rouse and awaken them, for good or for ill, for his army or the devil's. You see it in concerts, when crowds grow wild. You see it at stadiums at just the right moment to get the team and fans ready for the most important play. If worship is what we have said in regard to warfare, **we dare not sing anything other than** song that praises God, teaches us truth, and makes us ready to do battle. Music matters. More than any of us can ever know. It is itself an otherworldly phenomena given to men to link the realms together.

### *Baptism as Spiritual Warfare*

Last time, we looked at the two sacraments as means of grace. Remember that the means of grace are the Gospel and the Gospel is the power of God to salvation, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile (**Rom 1:16**). Let's think about the **sacraments in the context of spiritual warfare**. The first is **baptism**. Water baptism is regarded as a sign and seal of the righteousness we have by faith in Christ. As a sign, it typifies the spiritual baptism we underwent when the Spirit descended upon us in salvation. Baptism corresponds to baptism.

But baptism is also regarded as the **entry rite into the church**, just as it was the ordination rite of the priest. This is pictured for us in the OT in the tabernacle. As one walked through the eastern gate into the courtyard, the first thing you would come to was the altar. Here, you would have your sins forgiven through the blood of the sacrifice. Next, you would approach the water basin (or Sea in Solomon's Temple). Here, you would wash yourself (in the case of a priest, there was a once-for-all ordination washing and then regular daily washings) and only then (so long as you were a priest), could you enter the tabernacle-temple, that OT type of the church. So notice the order. First you receive the sacrifice; *then* you are washed; *then* you enter the Holy Place.

While the symbolism of cleanliness is easy to understand, and the idea of ordination is not far behind, **the warfare symbol of baptism** often gets passed over. In the **Book of Common Prayer** the question is asked to the convert, “Dost thou ... renounce the devil and all his works, [and] the vain pomp and glory of the world?” This idea goes all the way back to the earliest church. Tertullian said, “**When we are going to enter the water, but a little before, in the presence of the congregation ... we solemnly profess that**

we disown the devil, and his pomp, and his angels” (Tertulian, *The Spectacles* 4). Why?

It has to do with what Peter says. “Baptism ... now saves you, *not* as a removal of dirt from the body but as an *appeal* to God for a good *conscience*, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1Pe 3:21). The key words are “*appeal*” and “*conscience*.” Heiser explained this well. “The word most often translated ‘*appeal*’ (*eperōtēma*) ... is best understood as ‘*pledge*’ here, a meaning that it has elsewhere [BDAG, 285]. Likewise the word ‘*conscience*’ (*suneidēsis*) does not refer to the inner voice of right and wrong in this text. Rather, the word refers to the *disposition of one’s loyalties*, a usage that is also found in other contexts and Greek literature.” In other words, “Baptism, then, is not what produces salvation. It ‘saves’ in that it reflects a heart [change]: a pledge of loyalty to the risen Savior. In effect, *baptism in New Testament theology is a loyalty oath*, a public avowal of who is on the Lord’s side in the cosmic war between good and evil.”<sup>14</sup> This is why Paul tells Timothy to remember his baptism, when he “*made the good confession*” in the presence of many witnesses (1Tim 6:12).

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<sup>14</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible*, First Edition (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 338.

As an oath, and as a renunciation, it is a categorical **frontal assault** on the gates of hell. The Christian is making plain their loyalties by faith alone.<sup>15</sup> Loyalty to whom? To King Jesus and his Father in heaven. This was actually pictured for us in **Israel's great second baptism** as a nation. Paul says that the Red Sea was a baptism (**1Cor 10:2**). If that is true, then surely **the crossing of the Jordan** through the same miraculous parting of the waters would be too. In that story, however, just like with Josaphat, **Joshua put on the front lines, the priests**. He sent the ark of the covenant, the very throne of God on ahead of the people, carried by the Levites (**Josh 3:3, 6**). With the ark in front, God himself fought for Israel, with the priests simply attending to the duties of the throne—an act of worship through baptism. They passed through the waters and went on to encircle Jericho seven times where at that devastating moment the horns blew, the walls collapsed, and the enemy was undone. As such, **baptism is a very clear means of spiritual warfare that belongs to the church**, not to the individual alone, which is why it has

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<sup>15</sup> See for example **Matthew Bates**, *Salvation by Allegiance Alone* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017). Without going into the deep word study of Bates, Sproul certainly agreed that there is some kind of link between faith and loyalty. See R. C. Sproul, "Linking Faith and Loyalty," Ligonier (Jun 1, 2009), <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/linking-faith-and-loyalty>.

always been a sacrament of the church and not private ceremonies. The early church even went to the point that they would often do exorcisms before performing it!<sup>16</sup>

### *The Supper as Spiritual Warfare*

The second element that always follows baptism is **the Lord's Supper**. It is easy to see what the Supper has to do with our warfare by looking at the story of **Abraham and Melchizedek**. Abraham had just gone out to war to rescue his nephew Lot, who had been taken in the giant wars of Genesis 14. On his way home from defeating Chedorlaomer, Melchizedek king and high priest of Salem, who for various reasons I believe is the Angel of the LORD whose capitol was there in what would become Jerusalem, “**brought out bread and wine**” (**Gen 14:18**). And Abraham gave him a tenth of all he had (**20**), an early form of a tithe to God.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> “At the time determined for baptism ... when the elder takes hold of each of them who are to receive baptism, he shall tell each of them to renounce, saying, ‘I renounce you Satan, all your service, and all your works.’ After he has said this, he shall anoint each with the Oil of Exorcism, saying, ‘Let every evil spirit depart from you.’”<sup>16</sup> Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition* 21:6-10. For more, see Douglas Van Dorn, “The Good Confession: Godliness and Baptism, a Sermon on 1 Timothy 6:11-15,” RBCNC (3-27-22), <https://uploads.documents.cimpress.io/v1/uploads/3af08940-ea16-4d77-809b-32d2c82e3b7e~110/original?tenant=vbu-digital>.

<sup>17</sup> For more on Abraham and Melchizedek, see Matt Foreman and Douglas Van Dorn, *The Angel of the LORD: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Study* (Dacono, CO: Waters of Creation Pub., 2020), 262-64. Also, the speculations of the Essenes at the Dead Sea in my sermon

In 1 Corinthians, Paul talks about how partaking of food sacrificed to idols can be, for the weaker brother, a participating of communion with demons (these are the shedu-demons, the guardian demons of **Deut 32:17**, not the demons of the NT), and thus **an act of allegiance** to the gods of the nations. Heiser again,

It's pretty clear that Paul was worried about sacrificing to demons with respect to the whole issue of meat sacrificed to idols. The meat wasn't really the issue; being involved in the sacrifice was. Apparently some in the Corinthian church had gone beyond eating the meat to actual participation, assuming that since an idol was just a piece of wood or stone, their participation wouldn't offend God. Paul had to teach them that this wasn't true, and used the Lord's Table as an analogy (1 Cor 10:14–18).

For Paul there was no middle ground. Participation at the Lord's Table meant solidarity with and loyalty to Yahweh. The Lord's Table commemorated not only Jesus' death (1 Cor 11:23–26) but the covenant relationship Yahweh had with the participants. Violating that relationship by participating in sacrifices to other gods was tantamount to siding with the gods of the nations.<sup>18</sup>

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Douglas Van Dorn, "The Priesthood of Melchizedek: A Priest Forever, A Sermon on Hebrews 7:1-8," *RBCNC* (Feb 1, 2016), <https://uploads.documents.cimpres.io/v1/uploads/b45f02db-6d18-4653-a444-7f7ece1fecc6~110/original?tenant=vbu-digital>.

<sup>18</sup> Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 341–342.

So, the **church's worship**, her prayers, her songs, her baptisms, and her Supper are all means that God gives her not only to strengthen her faith, but to perform her spiritual act of service—**her spiritual warfare**, especially against the Devil. This ought to show you just how important such activities are in this world of men. For though we may not understand it all, though we may not be able to see what's really going on with our eyes, if we are in a real war, and if these are our chief weapons with which to fight as a church, then if we are weak on using them or forsaking them altogether, then the church is by definition losing its battle. But how can any of this be done apart from the church? These are what we do when we gather together. And if the church refuses to gather or silences herself by cutting out her own tongue with inappropriate song or chopping off her own arm by refusing to take the means of grace, or by mixing her worship with syncretistic practices or even other gods, **what kind of outcome from this war can we even expect?**

## Evangelism as Spiritual Warfare

Another role the church has is the evangelism of the nations. Evangelism comes from the word *evangel*—**Gospel**.

To evangelize it literally to give the gospel to someone. It is to tell them about the good news of Jesus Christ. I probably should have focused on preaching first and foremost in the talk about worship, as it is through preaching that the nations convert and the saints are kept pure. But there is a method to my madness.

**Preaching** certainly belongs to means God has given the church for the regular washing of her with the word in worship. However, I want to focus here on **preaching to the nations and evangelism** as spiritual warfare. What is said about evangelism to the nations remains true for all believers in Gospel preaching worshipping churches.

Paul says of his own **missionary** endeavors, “**How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone *preaching*? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”**” (**Rom 10:14-15**). Belief in the good news of Jesus isn’t possible without hearing about it. But what is this kind of activity? Later, he will talk about himself being “**a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the *priestly service* of the Gospel of God**” (**Rom 15:16**). I needed to bring up

the priests earlier to make sense of this. Priestly service of Evangelism reminds us of those priests who came to the Lord's side and with Moses, stopped the golden calf apostasy, stopped the Midianite prostitution apostasy, and became the tribe of warriors that lead the people through the Jordan into Jericho.

You must understand that the sword of the Spirit in this war is the very Gospel of Jesus. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom 1:16). The Gospel is itself a power, a power from heaven. And that power has the ability, through the work of Christ in conquering sin, death, and the devil, through the life-breathing Holy Spirit, to liberate and free captives in the bonds of all three forces. The sting of death is sin and sin is taken away in Christ's atoning death and in his life, we are given eternal life, victory over the grave and hell. At the same time, Jesus' conquered the powers of hell, defeating them by conquering death and the devil. Jesus' defeat of Satan means he has the power to free any from satanic slavery whom he chooses, and he chooses to do this by the power of the Gospel.

This is what makes our church planting and missionary endeavors so vital. This is the work of true warriors on the

frontlines. And, it is the work of the church militant who together work towards the end of the salvation of souls, plucking them out of the hot fires at God's will by delivering to them the only news that has in itself the power to do what it promises. By itself.

## Fellowship as Spiritual Warfare

Another role the church has, that it can only have **corporately**, is that of edification that comes through **fellowship**. We saw last time that fellowship is not just talking about the game last weekend, but mutually encouraging one another in all the comforts and benefits of the Gospel to us now. The first question of the *Heidelberg Catechism* (and Hercules Collins' *Orthodox Catechism*) gets at this well. Q. “**What is your only comfort in life and in death?**” A. “**That I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven; in fact, all things must work together for my salvation. Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy**

Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.”

Christians constantly need to be **lifted up in the battle by their comrades** in arms. Many struggle so continuously with the warfare that without the church, they fall apart. Many do not even understand that this is why their life becomes an out-of-control trainwreck as they forsake the weekly gathering. They are missing not only the means of grace and warfare, but the edification and help that comes to them through their brothers and sisters who are in the midst of the very same battle. When a soldier is hit by a stray bullet of sin or the shrapnel of temptation, those who are still in one piece lay all on the line to run into the heat of the battle to rescue them and get them to safety. That's one of the chief reasons we assemble. We are not disembodied spirits, we are not brains in a vat, we are **embodied human beings**, living in enemy territory, constantly waging war, and Christians need to be near where others are fighting, rather than running off alone.

## Fighting in the World

A last piece I want to give us is some thoughts about doing all this in the context **of the world**. The kingdom of God

that Jesus talked about is in fact a reality today. As he said, it is in the midst of you. And we are part of that kingdom. But it is only as near as the church in its corporate form. The church, that is the corporate entity not the individual, holds the keys of the kingdom. Those are Jesus' words (**Matt 16:19; 18:18**).

But though we can taste and see the kingdom through the church, Jesus still has us **live in this world**. We are citizens of two countries, but whose loyalties belong solely to King Jesus. This means that we must still live in the world of men, in the place of evil people, surrounded by demonic and satanic creatures that mean us harm, including our own flesh, which itself wages war against the Spirit.

This is all captured well in our song. “**There be those that hate her**” (the church). The **church is battered** like the walls of a castle that has been under bombardment from trebuchets and catapults. There are “**false sons in her pale.**” The church is infiltrated from within, like Odysseus' Trojan Horse. Some are **against**. Some are **foes**. Some are **traitors**. **With a scornful wonder, men see her sore oppressed. By schisms rent asunder, by heresies distressed. 'Mid toil and tribulation, and tumult of her war.**”

What is our duty in the Church Militant here, and what about as individual Christians? I said earlier that our enemy is **not flesh and blood**, and this is true. However, we must understand this in terms of captives and slaves of the devil. They do his bidding because **they belong to him**. He is their master. Sin is their master. The flesh is their master; they know not the Spirit and freedom of the children of God.

We have a moral obligation as the church **to speak up in the face of moral atrocities** perpetrated in God's world, no matter who is committing them. The church is far too often these days not only silent, but often willingly complicit in allowing moral evil to go unchecked. This was most certainly not the view of the Reformers, or many of the Church Fathers. These men confronted kings and queens, went before senates and parliaments, stood up to Popes and Inquisitions. They were not silent, either in the pulpits or in their jobs. **The church must recover its voice to the culture**, for where there is no prophet speaking truth, civilization collapses. This is a warfare that we fight with words. In a way, it is infowar. We speak truth to lies, light to darkness, good to evil, right to wrong, objective morality to subjective relativity.

I do not believe the **church** ever has the right to go to a **physical war**. However, **individual Christians** do. This is the distinction. The church represents the kingdom of heaven alone. But a Christian, though part of this, is also in a nation. And as such, he can represent either the church or the nation, and has a right to go to physical war or to defend himself and his family under the right circumstances. Confusion of these two things has led to opposite problems of Crusades and utter pacifism. But since we are talking about the church today, let's continue thinking about her.

Sometimes, the enemy makes its ways into our very midst in the church: **infiltrating, lying, deceiving**. Congregations have been taken over this way. Entire denominations have been taken over this way. Sometimes, friends become deceived and fall so badly, that they bring ill repute on the name of Christ. In all instances of where we are dealing with the church, **our weapon is discipline**.

The church holding the keys to the kingdom is discussed in the context of church discipline (**Matt 18:18; cf. 16:19**). **Whatever you bind on earth is bound in heaven, whatever you loose on earth is loosed in heaven**. Often in cases of discipline, be it within a congregation or between entire movements, both sides claim the high ground and relegate their

opponent as the enemy. It seems to me that that true Christian spirit is that **discipline is never carried out in anger or hatred**, but in love. It's goal is not the happy damnation of the evil-doer, but the hopeful **repentance to restoration**. Yet, it is also to **maintain corporate and public purity** in the church. It is an act of spiritual warfare, and must be treated soberly as such.

I don't have time to get into other areas, such as how the church can show forth the love of Christ in the world. But it is enough to say that not only did Jesus not take us Christians out of the world, he also left the church in it. Thus, by definition, **by our very presence, we make a difference either for good or for bad, whatever we do**. Should not our aim then be to be a force for good, for help, for service to those in need? We may have differences of opinion on the best ways to do these things. But to not fight for good in the world is surely to give up the battle on that front.

Church, it's time to **recover the Church Militant**. This has been one of the great rallying cries for God's people for more than three millennia. Though it has taken different expressions, the worst expression is one that doesn't understand or think about it at all. It begins by admitting that we are at war. You are at war. Satan holds you captive to do his

will if you are not a follower of Christ. It's time to [hear the word](#) and come to the Lord's side. It's time for the church to rally around the banner of Christ and go forward into battle again, renewed in determination, strengthened in resolve, fortified with battle plans that come from the word of God alone. Not in physical skirmishes, but in spiritual battle. If we do, then the gates of hell (a military metaphor if ever there was one) do not stand a chance against Christ's church.

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