

Legion Siegin'

Deploying Death-Defying Faith

May 22, 2022

Today we're reminding ourselves how to fight the right fight.

So: **Who's your worst enemy?** Well, do you know the *biggest* battle you're in? Cuz you need to know *that* before you can know who your *worst* enemy really is – that *cold, cruel, heartless, and horrific tormentor* that'll still be standing when *all other* foes fade away.



The *last* enemy to be destroyed is *death*. – 1 Corinthians 15:26 NIV

That's the *only* battle that matters in the *end*. And, sorry to say, **the day you were born, the doctor delivered you to the battlefield.** But take *heart!*



The gift of *God* is eternal *life* in Christ *Jesus* [Yeshua/Salvation] our Lord. – Romans 6:23 NIV



We left off just after Jesus shut off the wind, collapsed the waves, and continued on in the darkness with His terrified boys, toward the *notorious, naked and crazy, screaming Gadarene, and a legion of demons*) in order to fulfill God's *Word to Gad*.



They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, [and] When [Jesus] arrived ... in the region of the Gadarenes, [those are *two of ten* cities in the Transjordan *region* called the *Decapolis*. And then Jesus *does* something not *found* in the *Gospels*, and quite likely to His disciples' *horror, He screams*: "Here I am! Here I am!" And] a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs ... no one was strong enough to subdue him. ... [And] when Jesus stepped ashore, he ran and he cried out, – Mt 8:28; Mk 5:1-6; Lk 8:26-28 NIV



And one of the *boys* might've cried out, "Egad – we're doin' Isaiah 65!" Cuz this *moment* is *much bigger* than we *think*. No less than the *end* of an *age* is coming. And *this* guy's gonna be the *first apostle* Jesus sends out, to start *preparing* for it. So *we* need some *context*. You see, *Jesus* not only knew the *real* enemy, He couldn't get it off of the forefront of His mind.



[For example] As He was leaving the temple, [for the very last time] one of His disciples said to Him, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!" "Do you see all these great *buildings*?" replied Jesus. [Cuz *here's what He saw*] "Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." – Mark 13:1-2 NIV



By *Roman* legions, just 40 years *later*.

[Clear back] When [John the Baptist] saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, [this is what he was referring to when] he said to them, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ... He who is coming ... [will] gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff” – Matthew 3:1-2, 7-13 NKJ



15 months before Jesus' dire warning, and shortly after sending out the Gadarene, the crowd listened in as Jesus prepared to send the boys out, to take up their cross, and lay down their life, for the cause of Christ. (Mt 10:38-39) Then the boys listened in as Jesus warned the crowd to use the Word to judge what's right to fight before going before the Judge. (Lk 12:57-58) And:



There were present at that season some who told [Jesus] [a Galilean himself] about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. [i.e. Killed 'em at the temple] – Luke 13:1 NKJ

Now Pilate only used deadly force against insurrection; but the Jews believed they'd be freed from Rome; so, zealots often rebelled. And being that Jesus and the boys are Galilean (Mk 14:70; Lk 23:6-7; Acts 2:7) in Galilee with a Galilean crowd (who think He's gonna free 'em from Rome), it's supposed that they'll be blessed with success if they're more righteous than those Galileans.

[Jesus] said to them, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; – Luke 13:2 NKJ

Those guys were just fightin' the wrong fight, having mistaken the enemy, in a doomed attempt to save their way of life by their own power. Now, Jesus had just said to this same crowd that ...

Anyone who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. Whoever finds his life [outside of Christ] will lose it, [lit. perish or be destroyed] and whoever loses [lit. perishes or destroys] his [lifeless] life for My sake will find it. – Matthew 10:38-39 NIV

[And now He says] But unless you repent you will all likewise perish. – Luke 13:3 NKJ



And yet just 15 months later, and just after Jesus said, “Not one stone ...” some of this very same crowd disregard His warning and demand that Pilate release Barabbas rather than Jesus, because:

Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, [Jerusalem] and for murder. – Luke 23:19 NIV

[Because] Barabbas had taken part in a rebellion. – John 18:40 NIV

And that type of fight is very tempting. So, tragically, they backed the wrong fighter, cuz they fought the wrong fight. And it's wrong because, to defeat the dark I must become the light. And to defeat hate I must become love. And to defeat death I must become life. And to become light and love and life we must wrap ourselves in the very nature of Christ. So:

Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not [even] think about how to gratify the [dark, hateful, deadly] desires of the sinful nature. – Romans 13:14 NIV

[Cuz] The body that is sown [down here] is perishable ... [so] the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. – 1 Corinthians 15:42, 53 NIV

Or [Jesus goes on to say] those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.” – Luke 13:4-5 NKJ

We're all in this together. **Nobody gets out of this battle alive ... without Christ.** Your enemies aren't even your enemies; they're just a tactic used to distract you, by your real enemy. But:

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. – John 3:16 NIV

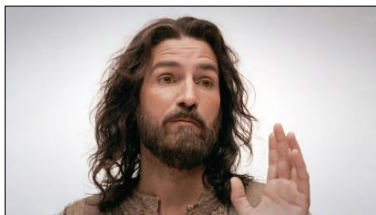
But don't confuse “should not” with “won't”. Because **we got'a do what only we can do, so the Lord can do what only He can do.** And many simply won't. Which is tragic; because, **death is dead to those alive in Christ!** That's the Fighter to back! Because:

[Jesus] has destroyed [lit. unemployed] death and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. – 2 Timothy 1:10 NIV

Because, in the Gospel – of Luke – Jesus provided the way of escape from death on that day.

[Saying] “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, [and] let those who are in the midst of her depart ... For these are the days of vengeance, – Luke 21:19-22 NKJ

When Jesus first began teaching in Galilee, He went home to Nazareth and read from Isaiah 61, and said, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” Here's the end of what He read:



“[The Spirit] has sent Me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and ... to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” – Luke 4:14-21 NIV

But then He stops just eight words short of Isaiah's full sentence, which then says: “and the day of vengeance of our God” (Is 61:2)

[But ol' Hebrews took note, and asks] How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, [by the Lamb of God] and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine” – Hebrews 10:29-31 ESV

He will be a Stone that causes men to stumble and a Rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem He will be a trap and a snare. – Isaiah 8:14 NIV

Because incredibly, the Romans used Jerusalem and the Passover as a trap, allowing the Jews to return to the city for the feast (having rejected Jesus as the true Lamb of God), but then not allowing them to leave the city. But Jesus had warned His followers when to flee to the mountains.



[In fact] He *wept* over the city and said ... “The *days* [of vengeance] will come upon you when your *enemies* [legions] will build an embankment against you and *encircle* you and *hem* you in on *every side*. [April 14, 70^{AD}. Then] They will dash you to the ground [like those Galileans] ... They will not leave one stone on another, [like that tower of Siloam] because you *did not recognize* the *time* of God’s coming to you.” – Luke 19:43-44 NIV

So whatever you do, don’t miss *your moment*! Because 40 years after Jesus’ warning to *flee*, the *moment* you see legions *surrounding* Jerusalem, it came to pass. *Those* are some of the temple stones *where they fell*. Here’s how the ancient historian and eyewitness, *Josephus* describes it:

“As the *legions* charged in ... *passion* alone was in command. ... As they neared the Sanctuary they pretended not even to hear Caesar’s commands [to spare the *renovated* temple to be *rededicated* to Caesar; but instead fulfilled Jesus’ warning] ... everywhere was slaughter and flight ... down the Sanctuary steps poured a river of blood.”



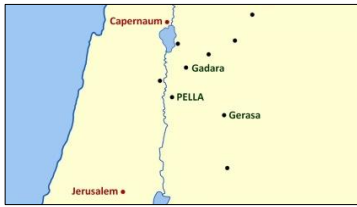
A *million* Jews were *massacred*; and 100,000 were taken captive; many found hiding in the sewers. These steps to the Temple were discovered in 2004, along with the Pool of *Siloam* where the *tower* once stood, and the storm drain under the stairs, was just as it was on that day, broken open by legions of Romans, and then left untouched for 2,000 years. The *only* group of Jews that *won* the battle, by *avoiding* the battle, were *believers* who *recognized* the *time* of God’s coming, and *repented* and *received* their *Savior*, and *believed* His *warning*, and *obeyed* His *instructions* to *flee* to the *mountains*. Whereas those who fought the *wrong fight*, didn’t *believe*, and didn’t *obey*, and didn’t *live*.

The *Galilean* massacre and the *Siloam tower* tragedy were *minor* compared to the destruction of *Jerusalem*. And *that* can’t hold a *candle* to what *death* does on a *daily* basis. And the only reason it comes as such a shock when it comes, is that **we spend too much mental effort avoiding the inevitable**. And *that’s* at the *heart* of the battle waged *against* us. Because:

The length of our days is seventy years — or *eighty*, [or even 100 like Shar’s Aunt June!] *if* we have the *strength*; yet their span is but *trouble* and *sorrow*, [Cuz *that’s* how it works down here!] for they *quickly* pass, and we *fly* away. ... [So, please Lord] *Teach* us to *number* our days *aright*, that we may *gain* a *heart* of *wisdom*. – Psalm 90:10-12 NIV

And what’s this *wisdom* we *gain* from “*trouble*” and “*sorrow*”? 1) That **our days are numbered**; and 2) that **we must daily live life in the light of eternity**. Because we don’t *know* when our number’s *up*; but we *do* know we all *die*; but *did* you know we can get a *jump* on it by dying to *sin*?

When the perishable has been *clothed* with the *imperishable*, and the mortal with *immortality*, then the saying that is written will *come true*: “Death has been swallowed up in *victory*.” “Where, O death, is your *victory*?” ... thanks be to *God*! He gives us the *victory* through our Lord *Jesus* [Yeshua/Salvation] *Christ*. – 1 Corinthians 15:54-56 NIV



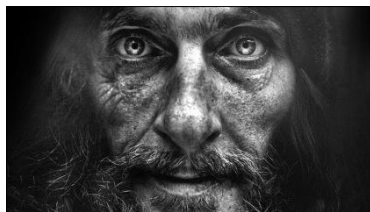
That's *anyone* and *everyone* who'll receive *Him* with their *whole heart*. Plus, for *those* in 70^{AD}, He not only prepared a *warning*, He prepared a *place of refuge* in a city called Pella, in the *heart* of enemy *territory* in the region called the *Decapolis* (ten cities), right between the *Gadarenes* and the *Gerasenes*, at the base of the Mountains of *Bashan* (*Bashan* is *now* called the Golan Heights).



And according to early Christian historians, Eusebius c. 300^{AD} and Epiphanius c. 350, there was a well-organized mass church migration. But how'd they know *which* mountains to flee *to*? Any *guesses*? The *Bible*! Like this not-so-subtle passage in Psalm 68.

¹ Let God arise, let His *enemies* be *scattered*; let those *also* who *hate* Him flee *before* Him. ... ⁴ Sing to God, sing praises to His *name* ... His name *Yah*, [*remember Him?*] and *rejoice* before Him. [*Maybe even hallelu Him! Because, as Isaiah said, regarding the Day of vengeance*] ... ⁶ He *brings out* those who are *bound* ... [*To where? Well*] ¹⁵ A *mountain of God* is the *mountain of Bashan*; a *mountain of many peaks* [*perfect for hiding!*] is the *mountain of Bashan*. ¹⁶ ... [*And for those who might be a bit slow*] *This is the mountain which God desires to dwell in* ... ¹⁹ [*Blessed be*] the God of our *Salvation!* [*Yeshua/Jesus, because*] ²⁰ ... to God the Lord belong *escapes* from *death*. – Psalm 68:1-20 NKJ

And *even* though the Decapolis was *equally hostile* toward Jews, *Eusebius* and *Epiphanius* both *tell* us how the *Gentile* Christians had *prepared to house* and *protect* and *hide* their *Jewish* Christian *brothers* and *sisters*. And according to *Epiphanius*, it seems a certain *Gadarene* had a *huge hand* in making this *happen*, after putting *his faith* in the *prized Fighter*, after seeing that *legions of darkness* – whether *deadly Romans* or *screamin' demons* – were no match for the Light of Life.



And [*so*] [*he*] *began* to tell in the *Decapolis* how *much* Jesus had *done* for *him*. And [*being notorious, and not naked, and not crazy*] *all* the people were *amazed*. – Mark 5:20 NIV

Because *this* is one *battle* we're *all in together*, from the moment we're *delivered* till the moment ... well, we're *delivered!*

And *they're* just *beginning* to see the *light!*

And I can't *wait* to tell you why!