

A Lord's Day Snippet!

Biblical and Southern Studies

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SBSS

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When God, our Leader, shines in arms,
What mortal heart can bear
The thunder of his loud alarms,
The lightning of his spear?

He rides upon the winged wind,
And angels in array
In millions wait to know his mind,
And swift as flames obey.

He speaks, and at his fierce rebuke
Whole armies are dismayed;
His voice, his frown, his angry look,
Strikes all their courage dead.

He forms our generals for the field,
With all their dreadful skill;
Gives them his awful sword to wield,
And makes their hearts of steel.

[He arms our captains to the fight,
(Though there his name's forgot;
He girded Cyrus with his might,
But Cyrus knew him not.)

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

The Majestic God is a Man of War

*“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

Stephen Charnock gave us a good reminder of God's prowess: “Nothing is so weak, but His strength can make victories; nothing so small, but by his power He can accomplish His great ends by it; nothing so vile, but His might can conduct to His glory; and no nation so mighty, but He can waste and enfeeble by the meanest creatures.” Our God is as a Man of War and He makes use of his infinite wisdom and power. “He brings princes to nothing, and makes the judges of the earth as vanity” (Isa. 40:23-24). He may make use of insignificant things: He may send a plague of locusts (Joel 1:6-7); He may send, as on

Egypt, plagues of lice, frogs, locusts etc.; He may send hornets to drive out the Canaanites (Ex. 23:28); He may send Samson with a jawbone and slay a thousand Philistines; He may send an earthquake, disease, storms, etc. this is our warrior God.

First, note that Jehovah shall go forth “as a mighty man.” He is compared to the acts of a mighty man, which is an *anthropomorphism*. An *anthropomorphism* is when God, in order to express a truth, uses a human reference to express something divine. Jehovah thus expresses Himself as “a mighty man.” The word translated “go forth” is a technical term for going forth to do battle (2 Sam. 11:1). This sets the stage: God is about to make one of His mighty exercises of power against His enemies. Thus, Jehovah goes forth in battle array and who can withstand Him. Remember what happened to proud Nebuchadnezzar? Jehovah drove him from among men to act like a beast of the field by eating grass as an ox “until [he knew, or became sensible of or understand] that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will” (Dan. 4:32). After a period of grazing and his hair growing like eagle feathers and his nails like bird claws, then he learned and came to confess—“at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion [or rule of Jehovah] is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation; And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou” (Dan. 4:34-35). Now! Nebuchadnezzar knows who rules in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth. Jehovah as the mighty man of war conquered proud Nebuchadnezzar. “Thus humbly did the proud Nebuchadnezzar bow before the Lord, and confess before all men that the Lord alone is God. If he was not a converted man, he certainly wrote like one. Let us shun his pride, and if we have been guilty of it, let us henceforth imitate his humility” [C. H. Spurgeon]. Also, please consider that the Hebrew word “mighty man” is another title for “warrior” or “Godlike warrior” (Isa. 9:6-7).

Second, “He shall stir up jealousy like a man of war” (Isa. 42:13). This “smoldering jealousy” was stirred till it burned “into a bright flame.” Jehovah can orchestrate perfect war against His enemies for in His almighty power and infinite wisdom He makes everything work His perfect will. Jehovah is often represented as a man of war—“The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name” (Ex. 15:3). “Man of war” means “A mighty warrior, a resistless conqueror; for all ... the Egyptian army were destroyed in one moment by his omnipotent arm,” [Brown].

Third, Jehovah “shall cry, yea, roar” in anger (Isa. 42:13). “Going forward to the attack, ‘He breaks out into a cry,’ ‘yea, a yelling cry’ (Zeph. 1:14)” [Delitzsch]. Again, there is the

picture of the warrior who enters the battle with a loud shout which stimulates one's personal courage and strikes fear in the enemy.

Fourth, Jehovah “shall prevail against his enemies” (Isa. 42:13). “In the words, ‘He will show Himself as a hero upon His enemies,’ we see Him already engaged in the battle itself, in which He proves Himself to possess the strength and boldness of a hero. The overthrow which heathenism here suffers at the hand of Jehovah is, according to our prophet’s view, the final and decisive one” [Delitzsch]. He shall excel or overthrow or be victorious over His enemies; yes, by His omnipotent power and determination He always has victory over every enemy. Yes, He shall rule over them with a rod of iron and smash them in pieces as a piece of pottery (Ps. 2:9). Andrew Bonar said that he remembered on one occasion when he met his friend Robert M. M’Cheyne and was asked what text he had preached on last Lord’s Day and Bonar replied, “The wicked shall be turned into hell.” M’Cheyne asked him, “Were you able to preach it with tenderness?”

Franz Delitzsch gave a beautiful overview of our verse: “In ver. 13 there follows the reason for this summons, and the theme of the new song in honor of the God of Israel, namely His victory over His enemies, the enemies of His people. The description is anthropomorphically dazzling and bold, such as the self-assurance and vividness of the Israelitish idea of God permitted, without any danger of misunderstanding. Jehovah goes out into the conflict like a hero; and like a ‘man of war,’ *i.e.* like one who has already fought many battles, and is therefore ready for war, and well versed in warfare, He stirs up jealousy (see at ch. 9:6). His jealousy has lumbered as it were for a long time, as if smoldering under the ashes; but now He stirs it up, *i.e.* makes it burn up into a bright flame.”