

Picture 7: The Army



Seven Pictures of God's People
(Part 9)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we continue with our theme for this week, "Seven Pictures of God's People." In this series we've been looking together into the mirror of God's Word to find out what kind of people we really are as God's redeemed people. The particular section of the mirror that we've been looking into has been Paul's epistle to the Ephesians. We've been discovering an amazing variety in what we've seen there. God's people have many different functions here on earth, and each different functions presents a different aspect. This corresponds to what Paul himself says in Ephesians 3:10:

> "God's intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms." (NIV)

I pointed out earlier that the church is designed to be the demonstration of God's manifold wisdom to the entire universe. I prefer to translate that word "manifold", "many-sided." So each different aspect of God's people presents a different aspect of God's wisdom. We need to be on our guard against focusing on any one aspect to the exclusion of the others. One main purpose of this series of talks is to show you how many aspects there are to God's people and how dangerous it is to become one-track in our approach and only see one aspect of God's people, because we're going to be missing out on a great deal of what God has for us unless we can somehow fit ourselves in with all the purposes and functions, and find our place in each one of the aspects that are presented here by Paul in this epistle to the Ephesians.

So far, we have looked together at six specific pictures of God's people in Ephesians. They are as follows: the assembly, the body, the workmanship, the family, the temple, and the bride. Today we're going to look at the seventh and last of these pictures in Ephesians. And this last picture is as great a contrast as it could possibly be to the previous pictures. The sixth picture was the bride. What do you think the seventh picture is? Well, I'll tell you. It's the army. What two things could be less like one another than a bride and an army?

For this final picture of the army, we turn to the final chapter of Ephesians, chapter 6, verses 10 through 13. As in the case of the picture of the bride, the bride was not actually

mentioned. So in this passage the word "army" is not actually used but the implication is absolutely beyond doubt. This is what Paul says to us as God's people in Ephesians 6:10–13:

> "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm. Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand." (NIV)

That's a fair warning that as believers we're going to face warfare. There's going to come what Paul calls "the evil day", there's going to come the day of affliction, of testing, of satanic pressures against us, and we've got to be prepared. So Paul says, "Put on the whole armor." What kind of person puts on armor? Obviously the answer is, "a soldier." Indeed, the entire picture is very closely based on the Roman legionary and his armor in the time of Paul. So, we are really compared, in a sense, to a Roman legion, the most effective military unit of the ancient world, one that actually conquered the known world for the Roman empire. So we are involved in a war. We are God's army. You see, there's been a war between the forces of God and the forces of Satan throughout human history. But the coming of Jesus as Messiah, Savior, Deliverer, brought out into the open the war between these two opposing kingdoms.

Listen to what Jesus says in Matthew 12:25–28. Now Jesus was being criticized by the Pharisees because of His ministry of casting out evil spirits. They accused Him of being able to do it because He was in league with Beelzebub, which was one of the titles of Satan. This is Jesus' answer to them:

> "Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, 'Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself, and if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.'" (NIV)

It's that last verse I want to focus on. "But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you." Just before that, He'd been speaking about the kingdom of Satan. He says that Satan's kingdom is not divided; He's implied that it's in total opposition to the kingdom of God, and now He speaks about His ministry of casting out evil spirits as the demonstration that the kingdom of God has come on the scene. So here we have what I call "the clash of kingdoms." The visible, manifested clash between God's kingdom represented by Jesus and then by the church, and the kingdom of Satan, represented by demons, and so on.

Now we need to understand a little bit about the weapons and battlefield of this conflict. The best passage I know for that is 2 Corinthians 10:3–5, where Paul says this:

> "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh; for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." (NASB)

Paul says we are in a war, but the war is not in the fleshly, the physical, the material realm—it's in the spiritual realm. And because the war is in the spiritual realm, we have the appropriate weapons—not carnal, physical, material weapons, not bombs or bullets or tanks, but spiritual weapons. And these weapons are capable, in dependence of God, of destroying Satan's fortresses.

And then that 5th verse is very revealing, it brings out the battlefield. Paul says, "We're destroying speculations and every lofty thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God. We are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." Take those three words: speculation, knowledge, and thought. They all relate to one particular realm; very obviously, the realm of the mind. So the mind of humanity is the battlefield of this war. Satan has deceived humanity through their minds, has taken them captive, has built his fortresses of prejudice and unbelief and so on in their minds. Our assignment as God's people, as God's army, is to make war with the spiritual weapons that God has committed to us, break down Satan's strongholds in the minds of the people, release them from Satan's captivity, and bring them into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

In closing my talk today I just want to speak for a moment about the process or the exchange by which the bride becomes the army. This really appeals to me. It's so clearly set out in scripture, it's almost a kind of special revelation. We find the process or the change in the Song of Songs, the Song of Solomon 6:4 and 10. In the first case, the bridegroom

is talking to his bride—Christ is talking to His church. And He describes the church as He (the bridegroom) sees her:

> "You are as beautiful as Tirzah, my darling, as lovely as Jerusalem, as awesome as an army with banners."

That's a rather unexpected combination. The words "beautiful" are used, "lovely," the very affectionate word "darling"—and then at the end, this beautiful person appears as an army with banners. That's somewhat different, isn't it? That's military. And then in the 10th verse there's a kind of comment on the appearance of this bride in this characteristic. I suppose it's what we would call the "chorus," or the spectators, that make this comment in Song of Songs 6:10, referring to the bride, the church.

> "Who is this that appears like the dawn, as beautiful as the full moon, as pure as the sun, as awesome as an army with banners?" (NASB)

See, that's the church. But the spectators, the world, are amazed to see the church appearing as an army. Notice the beauty of the picture: "appears like the dawn"—rising after a night of darkness. "As beautiful as the full moon"—the moon, in a certain sense, particularly represents the church because its function in the heavenly bodies is to reflect the sun which represents Christ. "As pure as the sun" -- with Christ's own purity and righteousness. And then, "awesome as an army with banners." So the bride appearing as the army is going to startle both Satan and the world. And you see the order. First, Christ sees His bride as an army, then she also appears to the world that way. And that's why it's important that we see ourselves as Christ sees us, through looking in the mirror. Because when we begin to see ourselves that way in faith, then the Holy Spirit transforms us into what we see.

All right, now the two-fold application: the essential feature, what's required of us. The essential feature, I think, of the army is clearly a demonstration of God's invincible power against all the forces of evil.

What's required of us? The answer clearly is military discipline. This is something which I think Christians have got to give a great deal more heed to in the days that lie ahead. If we're ever going to be an army, we've got to submit to divine discipline.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be giving a general summary and application of all seven pictures.

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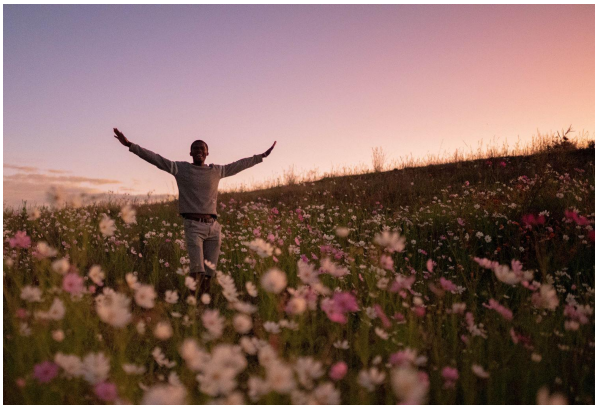

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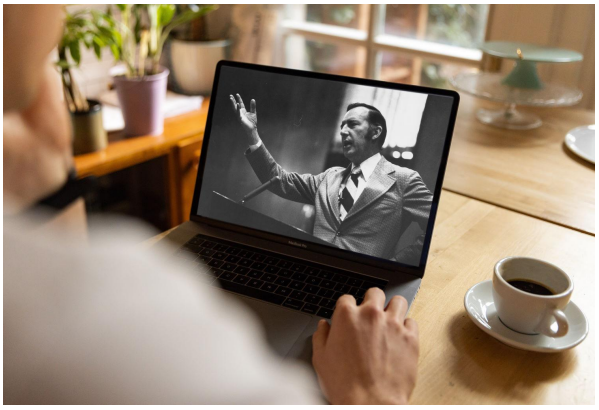

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