



# The Bible For Our Times

“WEeping MAY ENDURE FOR A NIGHT, BUT JOY COMETH IN THE MORNING.” PSALM 30:5

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Should we be in...

## The LORD'S Great Army?

*“And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army...my great army...The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble...” Joel 2:11,25,10*

Whose army would you rather be in if you had to choose? How could you go wrong by being in the LORD'S army? What will be expected of the soldiers? What will be the results of this apocalyptic tour of duty? Who signs you up? Who is the enemy? What happens to the casualties? Can this army lose?

No army of the LORD could lose — or fail God's good purpose in His wonderful Plan for all mankind. But the Prophet Joel actually graphically portrays four divisions of His army that “executeth his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?” (Joel 2:11)

### Four Units of the LORD'S Great Army

The army is described as four units: “the palmerworm,” “the locust,” “the cankerworm” and “the caterpillar” (Joel 1:4; 2:25). However, can this prophecy be about literal locusts before which “the earth shall quake...the heavens shall tremble”? How could the literal heavens tremble because of plagues of insects?

Bible language is often stated in symbolic terms. In Scripture, “earth” represents the *existing social order*, while the “heavens” depict the *spiritual or ecclesiastical order* of things. Another prophet describes a similar universal trauma: “I will shake the heavens and the earth; and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the gentiles...” (Haggai 2:20,21) This army under the LORD'S providence will overthrow the kingdoms of the nations (“earth”) as well as false



spiritual leadership (“heavens”)—in order to get man ready for God's righteous Kingdom rule.

### Where is This Army?

But where is there such an army ready for the great and very terrible “day of the Lord”? Just as Jesus is portrayed as a lamb for his guileless innocence and Satan as a roaring lion for his pouncing fierceness—these plagues of insects represent a relentless, devastating “army” of people bent on devouring. “The land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them” (Joel 2:3).

Could this be an army of true Christians doing this warfare for the LORD? Hardly—rather than being the LORD'S “great army,” such Christians are described as a “little flock” (Luke 12:32). Their weapons are not carnal, their only weapon is the “sword” of Truth of His Word (Ephesians 6:17)—and their “warfare” is principally against their own flesh (2 Corinthians 10:4, 5). The weapons of warfare described in Revelation 19:14-16 are also Judgments of the Lord Jesus, who is pictured there on a “white horse” with his “armies” (Psalm 149:5-9).

### Armies in the Past—and Today

In the past, God used the forces of godless peoples to bring judgments against His people. In the period of the Judges of Israel, numerous times He brought the peoples from the surrounding nations (such as the Moabites and the Ammonites) to inflict his punishments. He called

Assyria, “the rod of mine anger.” These instruments of judgment, of course, were always willing instruments—often too willing. God dealt with them subsequently (Zechariah 1:15).

Do any of earth’s armies today fit Joel’s prophetic description? This army is highly disciplined: “They do not press one another, every one on his beaten track do they go forward; and they pass through between warlike weapons, and change not their purpose.” (Joel 2:7,8 *Leeser*). Is it a Russian army? Perhaps a European Union army? Or is it the army of the United States or China, Iran, India, Pakistan or Indonesia? Are they fighting each other—or their own governments?

There is always the possibility of an army refusing to obey the central authority or turning its power against its own governmental authorities instead of upholding and preserving them. In order to quell the popular uprising in Tiananmen Square in China, in 1989, the local divisions of the army were purposely not brought in. Divisions from remote areas were pressed into service to preserve the status quo. The government was careful not to use local troops who might have shown sympathy for local, peaceful protesters. But elsewhere (Eastern Europe) that is exactly what happened. Those troops did rebel and support the people instead of the governments.

Similarly in 2011 the Egyptian Army essentially protected the people—at the opening of the “Arab Spring.” But protests can become violent and spill over into full-scale riot where the protestors even attack each other—as in Greece. That kind of behavior can become full-blown anarchy. More than likely, the results of the Arab uprisings will result in more Sharia (Islamic) Law being imposed on the people—as was stated by the anti-Gadafi leader in Libya in the days following the death of that dictator.

### **Armies of Discontents Mustering Around the World**

The LORD’S Great Army, in fact, appears to be mustering all over the world—in the Christian world as well as in the non-Christian world. The LORD’S Great Army is disciplined, not in the usual sense of the word, but



only in the sense that its collective purpose is riveted on one objective: bring down the ruling “power elite” of the “heavens” and “earth.” It is the army of discontents, discouraged with the economic crisis—including college grads with no jobs.

Since a half million took to the streets in Madrid (May 2011), over 80 other countries have voiced their frustrations with their own “*Los Indignados*” (“The Outraged”)—including those claiming to represent the “99 percent” in America. In twenty-five US West Coast cities and forty-five East Coast cities. This “Occupy Wall Street” cry has been called by commentators (and ironically by one repressive arrogant dictator, with a note of sarcasm) an “America’s Spring.”

Revolutionary demonstrations or revolts have the potential to lead to anarchistic consequences within the fomenting ranks. While Socialist programs in democratic societies have met with limited success, they have created new problems. Nevertheless, they postponed violent reactions by labor against capital more prevalent at the end of the 19th Century. The preferable change by “ballot” instead of by “bullet” was the rule in the US, Europe and other Western democracies. When, Soviet Communism collapsed at the end of the 20th Century, Russia and its “satellite” countries went their own way. Various scenarios followed because change is difficult. Economic frustration can open the door of a destabilized society driving governing powers to re-impose totalitarian control.

### **Waves of Travail**

The “day of God’s wrath” is a progressive trouble—in waves as described in Joel 2—as well as “travail upon a woman with child” (I Thessalonians 5:1-3). The “locusts” seem to assault in “waves.” What the first does not accomplish, the second does, and what the second does not, the third does...and so on. But while progressive, there is also a sense of climax....

In the climactic assault of God’s judgments as portrayed in the Book of Revelation (16), it appears that the religious part of Christendom (called “Babylon”) falls *before* the civil/secular part. This sequence is obvious because the “kings” and “merchants” who

supported Babylon are very upset that the religious part is collapsed: “The kings of earth...shall bewail her...when they shall see the smoke of her burning...and the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her” (Revelation 18:9-11). Jeremiah too indicts Babylon-Christendom in his prophecy even mentioning, “The LORD Almighty has sworn by his own life that he will bring many men to attack Babylonia **like a swarm of locusts**, and they will shout with victory” (Jeremiah 51:14). Yes, God’s greatest judgments lay against the Christian nations because of their greater responsibility. And He will use His Great Army in His judgments.



End-Times when all peoples will be assembled as in the “the valley of Jehoshaphat” against Israel. God will be the “hope of his people and the strength of the children of Israel” (Joel 3:1-20). Thus the final result is that God “will be known in the eyes of many nations” and God’s spirit poured upon the house of Israel (Ezekiel 39:29).

The prophet in Zechariah (14:1-3) also depicts “all nations” gathered against Jerusalem. The ironic twist is that after God fights for Israel and delivers Israel, peoples from those same nations will have to go to Jerusalem for instruction and help if they want God’s favor and wish to prosper (Zech. 14:16; Isa. 2:2,3). “At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it...neither shall they (the gentile nations) walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart” (Jeremiah 3:17).

### Final Blast on Israel

But while the trouble and distress of this day of the Lord will be first and specially upon the Christian nations—and later upon all nations—the final blast will be upon Israel.

The Prophet Ezekiel (38 & 39) describes the “army” of “Gog,” “even a great company with bucklers and shields” coming against vulnerable Israel which is dwelling safely in “unwalled villages.” The armies representing the collapsing governments of earth will come to take a “spoil” of Israel. But when God fights for Israel—an insurrection will dissolve the enemies of Israel into anarchy and thereby complete universal destruction of earth’s governments.

The ancient attack against King Jehoshaphat of Judah (2 Chronicles 22:15-23) was actually prophetic of the

### God’s Disarmament Program

Psalms 46 describes this revolutionary, anarchistic “army” by yet another figure, that is, a roaring “sea.” But the Christian is not to fear when he or she sees these events fomenting: “Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea...the nations raged, the kingdoms tottered; he uttered his voice, the earth melted” (Psalm 46:2-6 NAS). Again, the thought is not literal mountains and sea. In fact, the chapter itself interprets by linking the “sea” with the raging peoples of the “nations” and “mountains” as “kingdoms” (vs. 6). In the Joel prophecy when God “shall utter his voice before his army,” a “desolate wilderness” results. In the Psalm 46 prophecy, when “He uttered his voice, the earth melted,” and also “desolations” result.

The Christians are “glad” (Psalm 46:4)—but not because they will be snatched out of the whole mess—rather because they know what lies beyond the “desolations.” God will establish his own Peace Process when “He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth.” He will set up his own disarmament program. The same armies of “gentiles” that raged will exalt God! “Be still and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen; I will be exalted in the earth.” As for the damage done by the “locusts,” a period of restoration will follow. And instead of a few Christians in the world’s population having God’s spirit as “sons and daughters,” God’s spirit will be poured upon “all flesh” (Joel 2:28).

### THE BIBLE STUDENTS CONGREGATION OF NEW BRUNSWICK—WHO ARE THEY?

The Bible Students Congregation is a completely autonomous, non-denominational Christian fellowship. This fellowship has no central head, office or central publishing house. It maintains an association through conventions and enjoys a fellowship that is worldwide. We welcome all to share with us in the study of God's Word. There is no organization to join and no creed to affirm. Our services are as simple as the church in the days of the Apostles. Our congregation benefits from the prayer support of one another and our fellowship is warm and friendly.

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This issue...

**Should we be in...**

**The LORD'S Great Army?**

## Preparation to Bless All Families of the Earth

God's ultimate goal in using His Great Army, of course, is not just the destruction of governments and religious society. The purpose is to prepare for His Kingdom and the blessing of all the families of the earth. "Yet once, a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth...I will shake all nations, and the **desire of all nations shall come...**and in this place [Jerusalem] will I give peace" (Haggai 2:6-9).

What do the discontented, discouraged and distraught of the earth really desire? Peace, healthy bodies, a loving environment, meaningful lives and equal opportunities to grow and develop. Whether they know it or not—they are waiting for God's Kingdom on earth!

Christians—rather than being part of this discontented 'army' clamoring for redress from the inequalities and the injustices of society—are asked to "be patient" and wait on the LORD'S time (James 5:1-8). And that time is very soon when Christians, as the "sons of God" (Rom. 8:19-22), will be able to end the waiting of the poor, groaning creation—and bless all the people who were once part of such a Great Army.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

SUNDAY SERVICES	Metuchen NJ 10:00AM BIBLE STUDY: The Time is at Hand 11:30AM SERMON or Topical Bible Study
WEEK-NIGHTS	Middlesex County, NJ & Somerset County, NJ
Internet	Website: <a href="http://www.bible411.com">www.bible411.com</a> Email: <a href="mailto:info@bible411.com">info@bible411.com</a>
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