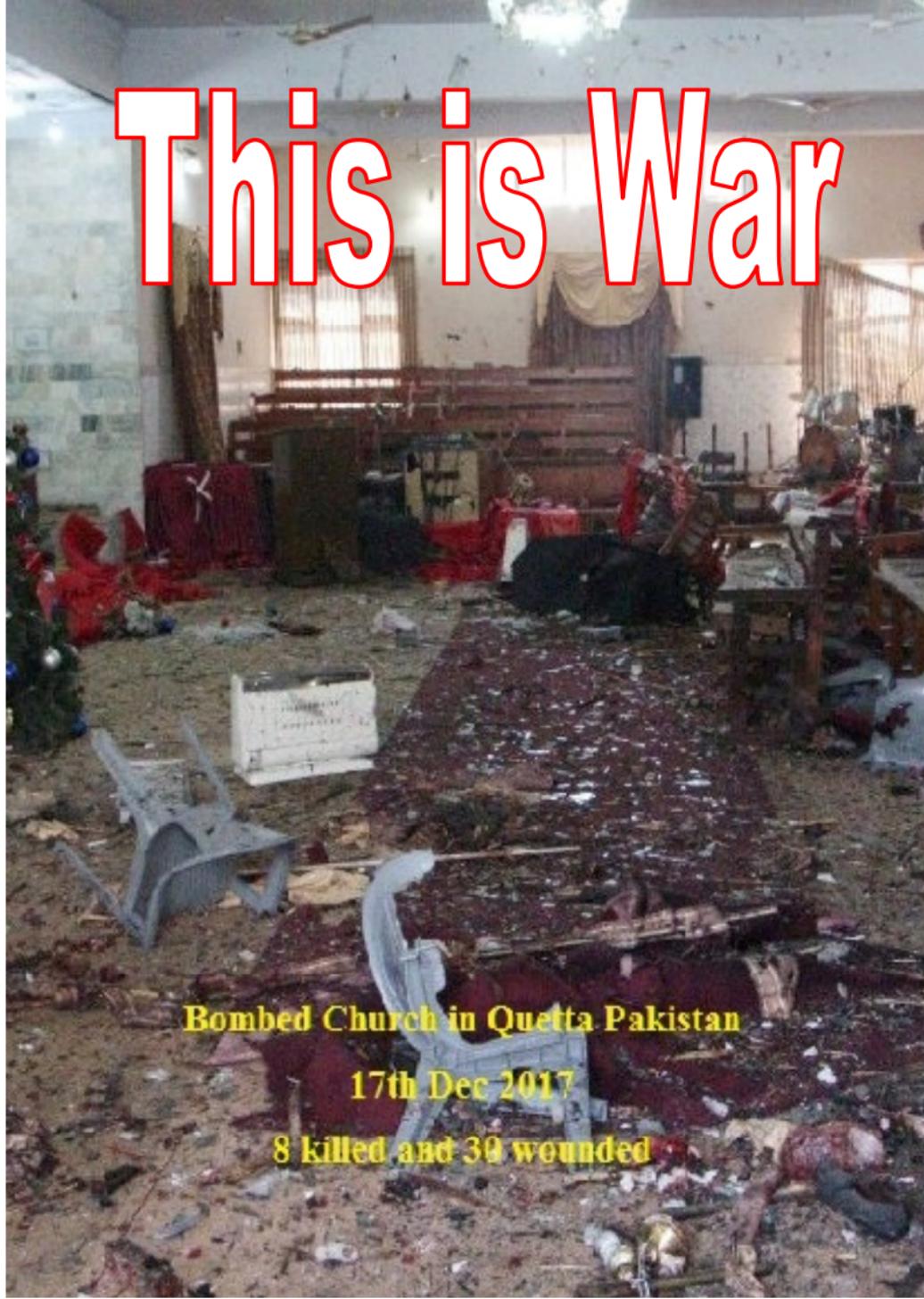


This is War



Bombed Church in Quetta Pakistan

17th Dec 2017

8 killed and 39 wounded

This is War

The soldiers of the Lamb

The forces of evil are set up against the power of God in a battle for the souls of men and women.

All who believe in and obey Jesus Christ are automatically included in the army of God on earth. They are automatically included because they immediately come under attack from the devil, so they need to quickly learn how to defend themselves against the forces of darkness.

'You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that

he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.'

2 Tim 2:1-4

God is the spiritual military trainer of all those who take up their cross to follow Jesus and obey all He has commanded. This training is called discipleship. Discipleship requires training in righteousness and the process of training others, because all disciples are to train their own disciples in the war against evil.

The battlefield is the sinful world. It is also the training ground for righteousness and the place where evil is confronted in a battle to the death. As He has done many times, God uses what is not right in the creation to train His people in righteousness so that although they may suffer, they will be victorious. The Israelites held in captivity in Egypt is a good example.

Gen 50:20

We have the ultimate Commander. A winning Army needs to know they have the best Commander and the best training. Confidence

in the Commander is a most important aspect to winning on the battlefield. The Commander of the winning Army knows the enemy as well as He knows Himself. Our Commander requires that we also know our enemy as much as we know ourselves.

The enemy is the devil

The good soldier must know his enemy. Satan is not equal with God as he would have us believe. Satan is a created being who is opposed to God's majestic authority. Satan is the dragon who employs the beast of the sea and the beast of the earth to wage war on the Church.

Rev 13:1-18

In the beginning Satan led a heavenly revolt against God and was then cast down into the earth. (Luke 10:18) His name means “adversary.” He is the enemy of God, of all God does and of all God loves. He is also called “the devil” meaning “false accuser” or “slanderer.” Satan is also known as the tempter, (1 Thess 3:5) the wicked one,

(Matt 13:19, 38) the accuser of the brethren. (Rev 12:10) Satan is the ruler of this world, (John 12:31) the god of this age, (2 Cor 4:4) and the prince of the power of the air. (Eph 2:2) Satan also disguises himself as an angel of light, (Cor11:14) which points to his capacity and inclination to deceive. Satan is the great counterfeiter who copies the things of God to deceive the world.

Satan is like to a wolf, (John 10:12) and a roaring lion. (1 Pet 5:8) Satan is the “great dragon, that serpent of old,” (Rev 12:9) the serpent who deceived Eve. Gen 3:1

Now we are in a spiritual war

We are engaged in a spiritual war which goes on behind the scenes of everyday life. The evidence of that battle is in the behaviour of people who live as children of darkness in opposition to God; or in followers of Christ who reflect the fruit of the Spirit's righteousness.

Behind the scene we fight against spiritual forces of darkness, not against flesh and blood. But it is mostly through flesh and blood that the spiritual forces of God or of darkness that we become aware of whose power is at work.

'Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armour of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.'

Eph 6:10-12

People say and do things according to their spiritual inclination and the power controlling their lives. If we are not inclined to worship and obey God, then we are agents of God's enemy, the devil, who is the ruler of the world. *'It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and*

authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him.' Rev 13:7

The battlefield is the world

The perfect place to be trained as a soldier of the Lamb to is to live by faith in the world of darkness, and the world of darkness is the world we live in every day.

In the military, the training ground is not where the battle is engaged. But in God's army, the training ground is the battlefield. This is on the job training. The soldiers of the kingdom don't have to leave home to be engaged in warfare, the enemy is not slow to try and gain the advantage. The enemy will begin his work in the home. *"Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; and A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD."* Matt 10:34-36

If God's soldiers can be compromised before they are ready to fight, they become obstacles, not winning assets. The corruption of the world not only gives us the opportunity to grow into Christ, but also the motivation to passionately seek the kingdom of God.

All compromise is rebellion against God. We must be on guard when nice people suggest a little change. The undercover agent presents themselves as part of the family of the Lamb. No one would listen to a monster of the deep darkness so they come to us as nice people. Secret agents aren't fools, if they are to have any success; they have to fool us first, and they do that without too much difficulty.

The way for disciples to grow in righteousness is to refuse to compromise God's truth in order to be an overcomer who shares in the inheritance of Christ.

The good soldier of the cross of Christ learns to be proficient by being trained to fight in a way that wins. The training ground for a good

soldier requires that he learns to identify the reason for possible defeat and act in a way that overcomes in order to win. Winning is the only way to stay alive. The soldier's aim is not only to win the battle, but to win the war.

The battle field is covered in minefields. One step out of place can prove deadly. The battlefield is a dangerous place where many lose the battle to live. One moment of inattention can result in catastrophic events that not only take out the soldier, but all those in his company. One momentary closing of the eyes on guard duty means the enemy has an open door to company headquarters.

There are no neutral observers

The spiritual war means there are no free agents. There are no neutral observers. All those on earth either have the seal of God, or the mark of the beast which show ownership. We come under the command of God or Satan.

The teaching of the Bible, our training manual, will keep us safe from the deceitful attacks of the evil one by training us in righteousness.

If we treat everyone as if all people are basically good, we have been working in the dark and we are not familiar with the training manual of God. Jesus gives us many teachings about the hypocrisy of man and the double standards and false teachers

Taking people on face value without spiritual discernment is a promoted deception of the evil one who also insists he doesn't exist either. He argues it's just an old wives story.

To help us drop our guard, we are often urged to make small allowances for the way we live as Christians just to keep things humming along in the community. We are also told we need to make the church more attractive to outsiders to enable them to join us on their terms, because in this way we take the gospel to the world. We need to be on guard. The

true soldier has taken up his cross daily to follow the example of Jesus Christ. The true soldier of God will obey all His commands.

We are under attack from the dragon and the beast of the sea and earth

The great dragon in Revelation chapter thirteen takes his stand on the seashore; the sea represents the multitudes of the nations of the world, "like the sand on the seashore." (Rev 20:8) The beast is in his image and he bestows his authority and malicious power on the beast to wage war. (Rev 13:1-2, 7) The gruesome and dreadful description of the beasts and the extent of their power should give us some idea of what to expect from the devil's agents. The sea represents all of rebellious human society, Governments, organisations, and movements from where the rebellion of the masses against God's people arises.

This beast and its extensive persecuting power continue to be active today. The beast not

only bears the image of the dragon but also imitates the Lamb. (Rev 13:3) In the war of the world the beast will conquer the saints. (Rev 13:7 Rev 11:7) So God calls on the Church to endure suffering with perseverance. *'If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints.'* (Rev 13:10) The beast will wage war against the saints, and, as far as the world can see, it will overcome the saints by killing them. Imprisonment and martyrdom are part of God's plan to purify His church in this evil age. Because suffering is inevitable for the church on its way to glory, the saints must demonstrate enduring faith.

The Church belongs to God's kingdom but its journey passes through the desert of affliction, and our responsibility is endurance. (Rev 1:9) The persistence of our testimony in the word to the Lamb is the means of our victory over

the dragon who gives power to the beast.

Rev 12:11

The beast from the earth is also called the false prophet. (Rev 16:13, Rev 19:20) This religious entity is a counterfeit of John the Baptist and the way of Elijah. This false prophet calls down fire from heaven, (Rev 13:13) and uses this performance to promote worship of the beast.

The beast from the earth commands the world to construct an image of the beast, and he imparts 'spirit' or 'breath' to the image, counterfeiting God's creation of man, so the image could speak blaspheming words and boasts of divinity. (Rev 13:14-15) The beast directs that all people receive the mark of the beast as a sign of his ownership, and commands those who are not deceived and refuse his mark to be destroyed. (Rev 13:15-16) This mark of the beast, like the seal of God on those in the Church, (Rev 7:1-3) is not an outward branding but a symbol of the beast's ownership and control of their thoughts and

deeds, as the Spirit should control the thoughts and deeds of faithful Christians.

Gal 5:16

The dragon unleashes his beasts onto the woman's seed, which is the Church. The Church is called on to endure in faith and hope until the end. This is their victory "*the perseverance and the faith of the saints.*"

Rev 13:10

The truth is this. The saints may be killed bodily, but spiritually they cannot be hurt by physical death, because the saints are protected by God and will rise again to come with the Lord of host to bring judgment on earth. What may appear as defeat actually results in victory. *'After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the*

throne, and to the Lamb.” “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Rev 7:9-10, 14

"The beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction. The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast." (Rev 17:11-13) "These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful."

Rev 17:14

The Lamb's Church is under attack

The Lamb's Churches suffer persecution in countries where they are a minority. In Christian majority countries where the church seems to be doing well, it suffers from

materialism, it suffers from false teachers, it suffers from indifference and from lax or none existent church discipline.

Those in the minority who are persecuted by frontal assault are aware they are in a war. They suffer disadvantage in employment. They are bullied and robbed financially, and in some cases they pay for their faith with their lives.

In majority countries and places of affluence, Satan doesn't bother with a frontal assault, he just allows the principle of "me first" to do his dirty work as he passes temptation before the eyes of the church.

Satan helps establish many idols with names familiar to the world. These idols are called, my money, my comfort, my career, my possessions, my reputation, my future, my good works, my sport, my holidays and my safety. He encourages devotion to the pursuit of these things so much that people have little time for anything else, especially the work of

God. Church attendance and giving their financial due helps them feel they have done their bit for the kingdom of God.

For these who are blind to the war, Satan has used their weakness of the flesh to do his work of defeating them. Those who are self indulgent are also often enticed to get involved with the occult, never giving a thought that it is an offence to God and will exclude them from the Lamb's book of life.

Those who are comfortable looking after their vested interests don't know they are facing a war for their souls. They, more often than not, have more than they need. They enjoy a life style those in countries of a majority religion other than Christianity can only hope to dream for in heaven to come.

The persecuted Christians have to struggle to survive in a world that often takes advantage of them just because they are good workers. Many cannot gain access to adequate medical services.

Our King wages war

'And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." Rev 19:11-16

The saints need discipline

The victorious Army learns to follow the training instructions automatically for when

the pressure is on in the heat of battle, there is no time to ponder as to what should be done.

Every Christian needs to be aware that the war is on and unrelenting. To live as if what we see is all there is, is naive and foolhardy. All God's soldiers must be able to see the darkness of the enemy's ways but persevere to make their stand in the light of the Son of God. To be unaware of the war is to be asleep on guard duty.

When we are confronted by someone disposed to the darkness, Jesus says, "*But I tell you, do not resist an evil person.*" (Matt 5:39) We cannot change the person by frontal assault. The real problem is behind the scenes as they are manipulated by the devil. Reacting to bad behaviour motivated by the devil is one of his cunning plans to get us out of the way and reduce our effectiveness as soldiers of God. Instead of giving like for like we respond according to the love of God motivated by the Holy Spirit.

Satan's great deception is that people are just people, and besides, you have the right to stand your ground. You should take things into your own hands and teach them a lesson. But taking things into our own hands is to act in direct defiance to God, who has told us vengeance is His to hand out according to the deeds committed.

Self discipline is absolutely necessary if we are to avoid being deceived. If we are in God's army we obey all He has commanded us to do. We are never given the opportunity to act on our own initiative, as if we are free agents.

The effective soldier of the Lamb

The Christian soldier is self-sacrificing. To protect his people the soldier must expose himself to the enemy. To serve his king he must be ready to lay down his life by taking up his cross. A soldier does not follow his own desire for pleasure or comfort. He lives under new rules. His life is concerned with its

given duties he must obediently carry and not be concerned with his own will.

The Christian soldier has a heavenly ambition. He looks forward to a crown that can never fade; he loves his King who is worthy to be served. His motive to please his King moves him to follow His King's example and the Holy Spirit encourages him to be unconcerned with self sacrifice.

The good soldier witnesses to the Lamb's sovereignty in the spiritual kingdom and on earth. He has entered into solemn covenant with the Lamb, pledging to declare to all and everyone that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. The Christian soldier's heart is full of loving devotion for his Commander King. He remembers Jesus is the Son of God, "Wonderful, the Counsellor, Mighty God."

The good soldier remembers what Jesus did for him, how much He loved him, and how He gave Himself to die on the cross for him.

He remembers Christ is in heaven, enthroned at the right hand of the Father, where God has exalted Him with a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.

The good soldier is an alert soldier eagerly seeking for the time when the Crucified Lord shall come in all His glory. He remains alert to the time of coming so that he is ready for his Lord. To overcome the devil with Christ is his one passion. He is determined that he will win his fight or die on the battlefield. A truly good soldier of the Lamb gives little regard to the difficulties of life; they are just things to be overcome in order to gain victory.

During the Second World War, well trained Australian soldiers were in short supply, so the Government decided to send part time weekend warriors into New Guinea to hold back the well trained and battle hardened Japanese soldiers. These part timers were

called chocolate soldiers because it was felt they would melt in the heat of battle. However, against all odds they managed to hold their ground.

Unfortunately, today we cannot expect part time chocolate Christian soldiers to be able to claim the achievements of others in the past. Generally speaking, a lack of proper training and discipline will most probably end in defeat.

In the spiritual battle we face in the world, this is even more so, because most chocolate soldiers don't even realise there is a war at all and never consider the possibility of needing to stand and fight the dragon. We are warned. *'But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.'* 1 Tim 4:1

We must be prepared or we may lose the battle as our King wages war with the prince of darkness. We need to be ready!!

Living Water Resources

Come to the River

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