

THE BATTLE IS OVER!



In 1974, almost thirty years after the end of World War II, a Japanese soldier was found in the mountains of the Philippines, still keeping his post and fighting a war that had ended many years before. My emotions were mixed as a young minister when I considered the dedication this man had to a cause which he refused to believe had been lost. He refused to leave his post until the Japanese government sent his WWII commander to relieve him from his duties. I also felt very sad for him when I considered the lonely years he had spent pursuing a cause that was long since lost.

Today, many years later, I feel the same sadness for those in the church who do not know "the battle is over," and "the victory has been won" almost two thousand years ago on a hill called Golgotha, where the Son of God gave His life to destroy the devil and deliver the people from their sin. Matthew 1:21.

I am saddened every time I hear of another man who rises to some degree of prominence and declares that God has told him to "raise an army for God." I know they are not who they think they are, because they do not know the victory has been won at Calvary for everyone who believes the gospel. Romans 1:16. This is not a new phenomenon. It has happened many times in the past, always with disastrous results. Invariably their belief in "The Army of God" is based on an Old Testament prophecy in the second chapter of Joel.

"They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks: Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded. They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief. The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining: And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" Joel 2:7-11

"Joel's Army," as it is called, is an army of "spiritual locusts," which is prophesied to cover the land in the last days before the return of Jesus Christ. It is "The Army of God," in that it is His instrument of judgment against the ungodly nations, but it is not made up of the people of God. In fact, it is the demonic, devil possessed locust army described by John in the ninth chapter of Revelation. The prophet Joel called for the nation to repent because of this coming "Day of the Lord." He also told of a different result if there was true repentance. God promised to bless them, and take away their reproach. Joel 2:18-19. He promised to remove the "army" into a dry and desolate land, and cause its "ill savor (stink) to come up." Joel 2:20. Finally, God promised restoration: "And

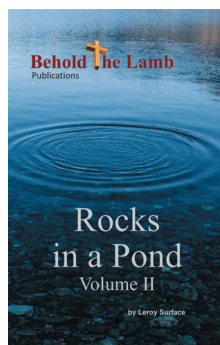
I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you." Joel 2:25. God tells us clearly that He is the one who "commands the locusts to devour the land" II Chronicles 7:13," but when there is repentance, He is the one who "hears from heaven" and "heals the land." II Chronicles 7:14.

It must be the result of "seducing spirits and doctrines of devils" I Timothy 4:1 when church leaders decide they are the one called to raise up the last day "Army of God." The "Latter Rain" movement of the past century believed they were being prepared as "Joel's Army." Many of them did not believe in the literal return of Jesus Christ, but rather believed there would come a day in which they would receive immortality, and be transformed into "Manifested Sons of God" Romans 8:19 to prepare the way for Christ to return. This movement faded into virtual obscurity in the late 1950s and 60s, making way for the Charismatic movement which followed.

The ugly head of this religious deception (Joel's Army) has raised up several times during the past fifty years, but each time it has ended in the shame of immorality and even perversion. One claimed to be the "captain of Joel's army" in the 1970s. A "company of prophets" arose in the 1990s, and a "worker of miracles" who claimed many "resurrections from the dead" arose in the first decade of this century, but these all ended with the shame of immorality and perversion in their ranks. Each of these had their own "ill savor" in the end.

There are keys to understanding who Joel's "Army of God" actually is. Remember, it cannot be God's people, it is only His army of judgment. Joel told us, "...when they fall on the sword, they shall not be wounded (Hebrew text: 'shall not be stopped')." Joel 2:8 KJV. To "fall on the sword" has forever spoken of suicide. Joel was seeing the "suicide bomber" in his visions from God. John saw a locust army of 200,000,000 having "breastplates of fire, jacinth, and brimstone." Revelation 9:16:17. That is a perfect description of a suicide belt. The scripture says they are "prepared to slay the third part of men." Revelation 9:15. The locusts are swarming even now, and only God can stop them.

The people of God are not "Joel's Army." God needs no army, but He does need His church to stand up and preach the gospel of Christ. There are no Captains or Generals in the church, and there is only one "head," which is Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:22-23. The enemy has been destroyed by Jesus Christ on the cross, and we are sent forth, not in "ranks" to "win the victory," but as ambassadors of peace, carrying the news of Christ's victory. Neither Satan nor Sin can hold anyone who will believe the truth of the gospel, because **the Battle is Over, and the victory has been won!**



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