

## **HOLY VIOLENCE #9**

### **There Is An Army Rising Up**

#### **Part Two**

#### **Introduction**

We are living in turbulent times where the Church of Jesus Christ needs 2 things modeled by the men of Issachar...

#### **1 Chronicles 12:32**

**The men of Issachar (1) understood the times and (21) knew what Israel ought to do.**

The harassment and persecution that is coming against God's people has a prophetic parallel in the Book of Judges. The Midianites invaded the Land and began to harass and persecute the Israelites. They stole their crops and drove them into hiding.

There is a prophetic picture of our modern times in the stories in the Book of Judges, one of the bloodiest, most violent books in the Bible.

The last verse of the Book tells us the prevailing attitude of those times...

#### **Judges 21:25**

**In those days, there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in their own eyes.**

**The bad news is that we are living in the days of Judges.**

**The good news is that God is (once again) will be raising up an army that can overcome those who come to steal the Land.**

#### **Review**

#### **There's An Army Rising Up**

**An army for such a time as this**

**An army with unlikely new leadership (like Gideon)**

**It will be a small army but it will be qualified and selected by God Himself**

#### **I. A Small Army Qualified and Selected By God Himself**

## A. Context

1. Israel had been invaded by the Midianites who attacked and harassed them in overwhelming numbers; kind of like today.

2. Gideon gathered an army of 32,000 to face off against the Midianites who fielded a force of 135,000; but God told Gideon...

### **Judges 7:2-8**

**And the Lord said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many... 'Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.'" And twenty-two thousand of the people returned, and ten thousand remained.**

- Outnumbered 4 to 1, God sends the fearful home
- It was 135,000 to 30,000; now it's 135,000 to 10,000
  - But God cannot use the fearful!

### **Judges 7:4**

**But the Lord said to Gideon, "The people are still too many; bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. Then it will be, that of whom I say to you, 'This one shall go with you,' the same shall go with you; and of whomever I say to you, 'This one shall not go with you,' the same shall not go."**

### **Judges 7:5-6**

**So he brought the people down to the water. And the Lord said to Gideon, "Everyone who laps from the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set apart by himself; likewise everyone who gets down on his knees to drink." And the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water.**

3. What a strange way to qualify a the soldier God can use! Separate those who get down on their knees to drink from those who lap the water like a dog!

- a. 9700 men get on their knees; only 300 lap like a dog.

### **Judges 7:7-8**

**Then the Lord said to Gideon, "By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand. Let all the other people go, every man to his place."**

**So the people took provisions and their trumpets in their hands. And he sent away all the rest of Israel, every man to his tent, and retained those three hundred men.**

4. God cannot use the fearful in the fight ahead; nor can He use the undisciplined!

#### **Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament**

**The 300 men who quenched their thirst in this manner did not kneel down to drink in the ordinary way or the most convenient manner. They remained in a posture of discipline, simply taking up some water in their hands, ready to proceed without delay against the foe.**

a. Hey! You are under attack! The enemy army is approaching! This is no time to get down on your knees and see to yourself! Don't you know that the fate of the nation hangs in the balance!

b. God cannot use the fearful; nor will He use careless Christians who fall down on their knees in the presence of the enemy.

#### **Matthew Henry**

**By this further distinction it was provided that none should be made use of but men that were hardy, that could endure long fatigue, without complaining of thirst or weariness, men of neither laziness or luxury; men that preferred the service of God and their country before their necessary refreshment. God chooses to employ those passionately pursuing a good thing.**

**(Holy Violence)**

5. Gideon's army was already outnumbered at 32,000. When the fearful departed there were only 10,000. Now they are down to 300! This is a prophetic picture of how some of us feel today.

a. We were outnumbered at the ballot box.

b. The message in the mass media is almost 100% anti-Christian.

c. And now many professing Christians are giving up, going home, or even going over to the other side.

d. But the message here is: "There Is An Army Rising Up"

6. Don't worry about numbers. Don't be dismayed about how many Christians have abandoned the battlefield. In the fight to come, God can't use them anyway! God says...

**“By the 300 men who lapped I will save you.”**

## **II. The Weapons of Our Warfare**

### **A. Prophetic Lessons in Preparation For the Battle**

1. The first thing to notice is how Gideon armed the 300:

#### **Judges 7:15-16**

**Gideon returned to the camp of Israel, and said, "Arise, for the Lord has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand." Then he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet into every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and torches inside the pitchers.**

2. The natural mind might think: “Oh, great! We've only got 300 against 135,000; they have swords, spears, and chariots. And all we have are trumpets, torches and empty pitchers!”

a. Have you felt the frustration of recent days? Have you felt like the enemy has all the numbers all the power of the media and all the money?

3. But remember, our weapons are *supernatural* weapons.

a. They had no swords! So they would not defeat the enemy by physical violence. They would defeat the enemy with ‘Holy Violence’!

4. What happens next is a prophetic picture of how they won the war:

#### **Judges 7:17-18**

**And he said to them, "Look at me and do likewise; watch, and when I come to the edge of the camp you shall do as I do: When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then you also blow the trumpets on every side of the whole camp, and say, 'The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!'"**

#### **Judges 7:19**

**So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outpost of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just as they had posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers that were in their hands.**

**Judges 7:20**

**Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers — they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing — and they cried, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!"**

5. Remember the biblical pattern of the Old Testament and New Testament is 'first the natural, then the spiritual'. These natural weapons of theirs have spiritual meaning for us today.

**B. The Spiritual Meaning of the Weapons**

1. Gideon armed his men with a torch and an empty pitcher; they were to place the torch inside the pitcher. What a prophetic picture of the Spirit-filled believer!

a. What are we all but empty vessels until we are filled with the fire of the Holy Spirit?

**2 Corinthians 4:6-8**

**For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.**

b. The 'treasure' we have is light! God Himself!

**John 1:4-5**

**In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.**

**1 John 1:5**

**This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.**

c. Torches bring light and reveal truth!

**Matthew 5:14-15**

**"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.**

2. Here is a KEY POINT: The release of the light depended upon the brokenness of the vessels.

**Judges 7:20**

**Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers...**

**The Biblical Illustrator**

**The pitcher is made of potter's clay, even as man was formed of the dust of the ground. Again, the pitcher's manufacture is brittle, and easily shattered into a thousand fragments.**

a. I was blessed in my early years as a believer by the teaching of Watchman Nee in his book, "The Release of the Spirit"; that the Spirit of God is released through broken vessels.

**Watchman Nee**

**Men throw away broken things. But God never uses anything until He first breaks it.**

b. This does not mean God breaks our hearts or our spirit; it speaks of a breaking of the flesh and the self-will. Like a cowboy breaks a horse before he can ride him.

**Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on the back of a donkey;  
One of the stubbornest animals in creation!**

c. Nee speaks of man as the 'inner man' and the 'outer man'; the inner man is the born-again spirit man, a 'new creature' in Christ; the 'outer man' is the man born of the flesh, the 'old man'.

**Watchman Nee**

**Whether our works are fruitful or not depends upon whether our outward man has been broken by the Lord so that the inward man can pass through this brokenness and come forth.**

3. Jesus illustrated this great truth when He established the sacrament of Holy Communion:

**Matthew 26:26**

**And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."**

- **Jesus took the bread**
- **Blessed the bread**
- **Broke the bread**
- **Gave it to His disciples as His body!**

(Isn't this with the Father did with His Son?)

a. Brokenness means humility; meekness; the quality of being poor in spirit and refers to those who trust in God, not in the flesh.

**Watchman Nee**

**God asks for men who are totally broken and will follow Him, even to death, to work for Him.**

You can't use an egg unless it is broken; God can't use unbroken soldiers with their lights 'under a bushel'.

**2 Corinthians 3:4-6**

**We are confident of all this because of our great trust in God through Christ. It is not that we think we are qualified to do anything on our own. Our qualification comes from God. He has enabled us...**

**C. The Meaning of the Trumpets**

**Judges 7:19**

**So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outpost of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just as they had posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers that were in their hands.**

1. In a physical army, the blowing of the trumpets signified calling the troops to action: a trumpet awakes them in the morning (reveille) at dawn;

assembles them into formation; sounds a ‘charge’; blowing taps puts them to bed at night.

2. But in the spiritual army, trumpets speak the proclamation or declaration of the Word of God! Trumpets are a call to action!

**Ps 47:5-6**

**God has gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.  
Sing praises to God, sing praises!**

a. The mighty walls of Jericho, the walls that protected God’s enemies, fell at the blowing of the trumpets.

**Joshua 6:20**

**So the people shouted when the priests blew the trumpets. And it happened when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the walls of Jericho fell down flat.**

b. To blow the trumpet means to loudly declare the Word of God; it awakens God’s people while striking terror into His enemies.

**Joel 2:1**

**Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain!  
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord is coming,  
For it is at hand:**

(So here the sound of the trumpet terrorized the enemy)

**Judges 7:22** Apologetics Study Bible

**When Gideon’s men blew their 300 trumpets, the Lord set the swords of each man in the army against each other. And they fled...**

c. Side note: we are in the mess we are in because of our failure to boldly blow the ‘trumpet’ of God’s word in the Land; our pulpits have left us unprepared because we’ve made ‘an uncertain sound’.

**1 Corinthians 14:8**

**For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle?**

d. Christian pulpits in America have certainly made an uncertain sound in declaring the uncompromised Word of God. This will not be so with the

army God is raising up! It will blow a ‘certain sound’ that will encourage the Christian and confound the enemy. The great Puritan Matthew Henry sums it up:

### **Matthew Henry**

**Gideon struck terror upon the enemy and put them in confusion 3 ways; (1) with a great noise. Every man must blow his trumpet in the most terrible manner he could and clatter an earthen pitcher to pieces at the same time; the fright, even the Midianites' killing one another.**

### **Matthew Henry**

**(2) With a great blaze. The lighted torches were hid in the pitchers, like a candle under a bushel, until they came to the camp, and then, being taken out all together of a sudden, would make a glaring show, and run through the camp like a flash of lightning. (3) With a great shout. Every man must cry, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.**

## **D. The Meaning of the Shout: The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon**

1. Another old Puritan preacher gives us the meaning:

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**The battle-cry of Christianity is not merely the sword of the Lord, but the sword of the Lord and His Christ. Besides, it was literally the arm of Gideon, as well as the arm of the Lord, that gained the victory; this battle cry suggests the union of the Divine and the human in the work of the world, or the co-existence and co-operation of the Infinite and the finite.**

2. 30 million Christians did not even vote in the last election; some said they stayed out of political warfare because “the battle is the Lord’s”.

a. Others said, “God is sovereign; He will put into office whoever He wants.”

3. We lost the election because of so-called ‘soldiers’ like these; the army God is rising up will understand...

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**This battle-cry implies that the power of God is working with the power of man. Conversion is pre-eminently a work of God. It is a new creation, and God is the Creator. We are born again of God. At the same time, it is no less**

**clear in Scripture that conversion is a work in which man himself must play a part. There is an act of the Divine will, but there is also an act of the human will.**

a. No one taught the sovereignty of God in salvation more than the Apostle Paul; we are saved by grace and not by our works. But he wrote this to the Church at Philippi:

**Philippians 2:12-13**

**...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.**

b. The victory of Gideon's army came in knowing...

**Henry Bevan**

**We have thus arrived at the full meaning of that battle-cry, "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon." It is the motto of our Christian profession. It expresses in a symbol the bloodless victory of the Christian life, through Christ our Lord: the victory which is won with no earthly weapon, but with the "sword of the Spirit."**

4. Don't miss this important point: Gideon's Army won a total victory without a sword or a spear! No physical violence! A supernatural victory!

**Judges 7:22**

**When the three hundred blew the trumpets, the Lord set every man's sword against his companion throughout the whole camp; and the enemy army fled (in all directions)...**

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**It was for them a bloodless victory. The battle was won, not by their own skill in fighting, but by their obedience to Jehovah and their implicit trust in Him. "By faith" they conquered, "as seeing Him who is invisible," and their victory will remain for all time a parable to successive generations of men.**

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**This is a parable of the battle of life. The divinest success in life is achieved, not through the possession of great power, but by the faithful use of such powers as we have. If God be for us how shall we not prevail?**

### III. Close

#### A. Gideon's Army is a Picture of the Army God is Raising Up

##### **F. Elwin in The Biblical Illustrator**

Gideon's Army is a picture of the outward and visible Church of Christ militant here on earth, a representation of the various congregations of which the visible Church is composed. What is a congregation of professing Christians but an army enlisted under the banner of the Cross; soldiers engaged to contend with one common army, which would hold them in a bondage worse than Midian's?

##### **F. Elwin**

And what is every faithful minister of the gospel but the leader of this host, the Gideon of the army? And what is the preaching of the gospel but the "proclamation" which calls our people to the battle against the Lord's enemies and theirs?

##### **The Biblical Illustrator**

Every Christian is not called to the pulpit. But this is by no means the only method of publishing salvation. They who think they have no word to utter for God make a great mistake. Every man blew his trumpet. They blew together -- commander and followers.

1. If dark days come the church must speak out like a trumpet.

##### **Henry Bevan in Biblical Illustrator**

The trumpet typifies the sound of the human voice, the power with which, by precept and exhortation, by uttered principle and uncompromising assertion of truth, we carry the gospel of Christ into the world.

2. The warfare to come will expose the fearful so-called soldiers who will hide from the enemy.

##### **Henry Bevan** (1854-1935)

There are so many time-servers amongst men, who will not dare to confess what they believe to be true and know to be right, if it happens to conflict with the popular notions of society. They reserve their principles for congenial

**company, where they will be safe from contradiction, and they go about the world agreeing, like sycophants, with anything and everybody.**

**But let such men remember that the world owes its highest good to those who have had the courage of their convictions-the messengers of truth and of God.**

**"Their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the earth."**

3. And what of the fearful and the undisciplined that God could not use?  
After the 300 win the battle they all come back to share the spoil!

**Matthew Henry**

**Gideon's soldiers that had been dismissed, and perhaps had begun to disperse themselves, upon notice of the enemies' flight got together again, and vigorously pursued those whom they had not courage to face. Those who were fearful and afraid to fight now took heart, when the worst was over, and were ready enough to divide the spoil!**

4. This is the army God is raising up. Will you be in it?

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**Happy is he who is numbered among the three hundred even though he is in the minority. Many have forsaken him, many more are against him. But he is invincible for all that, as long as he does battle with but one weapon, "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon."**

**Title/Closing Prayer**