

The Earth's Second Standing Army

'In the days before World War II, television comedy writer and producer Frank Galen reported for his Army physical when his draft notice came. When he finally reached the front of the line, the sergeant read his papers and said "So you're a comedy writer, huh? Say something funny". The [then] young man thought for a moment, turned to face the long line of recruits standing behind him in their underwear and yelled, "The rest of you men can go home now. The position has been filled".'

Well, whatever laughter his funny remarks elicited certainly died after a few seconds when the sergeant instantly barked a countermanding order. I wonder if Frank Galen had to make any kind of amends for his humorous wisecrack. After all, he technically was just following orders. But it does point out the fact that few people relish military service. Russia's current criminal and inexcusable attempted takeover of Ukraine has spotlighted this aversion. Hundreds of thousands, even millions, of Russian men have fled their country to avoid being drafted. Such that the infamous Wagner (Mercenary) Group, is now Putin's strongest force. It's drawn recruits by commuting prisoners' sentences in return for six-months active service at the front. But most don't return alive, or if they do, they're crippled from battle injuries. Despite that,

many Wagner recruits jump at the chance to supposedly prove their manhood in battle, who revel in the barbarism of unrestricted, all-out, no rules violence, leaving behind trails of mangled corpses, ravaged women and traumatized children, “lucky” to still be alive. I assert, such “men”, some even given medals as heroes, have not only not proven their manhood, they’ve actually lost their humanity, having given themselves over to demons. And satan laughs hysterically!

But what if there was a truly righteous army? One that operates with a clear set of rules, only engaging in battle when a Godly, good resolution was assured. Would you willingly serve in such a force? Would you answer a call to duty even if you were busy, or otherwise occupied with other things, even just normal concerns of life? Or, would you even acknowledge receiving the summons? Or worse, would you be so engaged in personal pursuits that you wouldn’t even hear the call?

Ezekiel is one of the Bible’s greatest prophets. We just read one of his most well-known prophecies. And this one has been fulfilled, and freshly so. Even within some of our lifetimes, it has all come to fruition. Would that everyone had known their Bibles so well as to have immediately recognized when Ezekiel 37 was being fulfilled right in front of their eyes. As Germany suffered hyperinflation after World War I, prices rose literally astronomically. In 1919, \$1 U.S equalled 9 marks. In 1920, it was 65 marks. As 1923 began, \$1 was worth 18,000 marks. Six months later, it was

350,000 marks. Four weeks later it was 4,620,000 marks per \$1. One German postage stamp from 1923 cost 50 million marks! (Parenthetically, as bad as Germany's experience was, Zimbabwe less than 20 years ago reached a monthly inflation rate of 79.6 billion percent, when it issued a 100 Trillion Dollar bank note!) With 1920's Germany's economic collapse, is it any real wonder that a strongman like Hitler promising to fix things could be elected führer, chancellor, and then the unchallenged supreme leader and dictator? He claimed basically everything was the Jews' and Jewish bankers' fault. They had to get rid of the Jews! We all know what happened. The "final solution" failed, though definitely not for lack of trying. Did you ever notice that even as the Nazi regime was collapsing, they sped up the executions of the Jews? Killing off the Jews was Hitler's prime directive. Satan was desperately trying again to eliminate God's Chosen People. Why?

The Holocaust exterminated fully one-third of the world's Jews. More than 6 million Jews perished, along with hundreds of thousands of other "undesirables". When Holy Spirit showed this vision to Ezekiel 2,600 years ago, can you imagine his reaction? Horrible it was beyond comprehension. His mind saw the aftermath as all dry bones. The entire nation, seemingly all God's people, were gone. Lifeless, hopeless, dead, never to rise again. Yet, what did Holy Spirit tell him? "Prophecy to the bones, and then to the breath!" Do you see that it was Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Prophecy, speaking through Ezekiel's words, which set in mo-

tion the rebirth of Israel? It took nearly 2,600 years, but in 1948, May 14, a new nation, Israel, was born in a single day! Just as Isaiah 66:8 had prophesied. And when Ezekiel prophetically called the breath of life from God to come into the lifeless bodies, they came alive, and stood on their feet—a great army! Did you notice what they are called? A great army! Not just a great crowd of people. Nor just a reborn nation. Not just an armed nation fielding a military. Not even just any run-of-the-mill army. God says they are a *great* army!

This clearly implies that Israel, in total, is to function as a *great* army. After the near annihilation of the Jews in WWII, God made reborn Israel a powerful force. Tiny Israel has fought off attack after attack. The day after its Declaration of Independence, the Muslim Arab nations surrounding it on every side tried to kill it. They failed, miraculously. Israel defeated Egypt in the 1956 Suez War. It prevailed in 1967's Six-Day War. Again in 1973's Yom Kippur War. 1981's Lebanese War. 1992's attacks in the Gulf War, and from Iran's proxies in Lebanon and the Palestinians in 2006 and since. Israel has functioned as a great army essentially to defend itself. But this is not the end game. Far from it.

When Israel was first born as a nation under Moses, God sent them to the Promised Land. Why there? Under Joshua they became a great army to cleanse the land of the abominable sins the many Canaanite tribes had polluted it with. The Canaanites' sins had fully ripened. They were evil beyond hope. The land

cried out for God's judgement. And God's instrument of judgement upon them was Israel, the earth army that was the Hebrews, the Israelites. In this beginning, they were mostly successful in their mission. But with time, they became ever less an army of God and more of a crowd of distant, dysfunctional relatives than no one ever hears from anymore. They finally stopped listening to God completely, ignoring Him, forgetting Him. Worst of all, they "replaced" Him with new, exciting, more likeable false gods that tempted them with enticing, deceptive ideas, just as the serpent had done to Eve and Adam in the Garden of Eden. The once mighty God-infused, God-with-them, God-fighting-for-them, army had decayed into ragtag bands of refugees, bereft of homes, possessions, families, and often their very lives. The very curses that Moses had prophesied in Deuteronomy 28 would fall upon them if they deserted the Lord came to pass upon them in full measure as they steadfastly turned their backs on God. No longer an army, they were prey, coming dangerously close to extermination.

But God had an everlasting covenant with them. His plans foresee every eventuality, and at just the right time, He sent the Savior, the Messiah, Who offered Himself as the only perfect, blemish-free, sin-free human ever to walk the earth, as the once-and-for-all-time complete sacrifice for all humanity's sin. When He willingly gave up His life on the cross, the penalty for all sin was paid in full. The Court of Heaven ruled. Thence, all who would accept Christ Jesus' blood sacrifice on themselves are for-

given and cleansed of their sin, and full fellowship with the Father restored, just as God had freely walked and talked with Adam and Eve in Eden. Lord Jesus became the new, second Adam, so we who give Him our lives, are adopted into God's family as His younger children, His "second" army. While ancient Israel failed and went AWOL, Christ raised up His second army—us! So, are we standing, ready for service at His beck and call?

Note: we, the Gentile Christians, are the second army. We have not replaced the first army. The Bible makes this clear, especially when God recommissions 144,000 Jews from all 12 tribes to spread the Gospel during the darkest days of the soon-coming Tribulation, when the last chance for salvation and eternal life will be offered to those still on earth. The first army will then complete their original assignment they deserted nearly 3,000 years ago. For the promises of God are irrevocable, Romans 11:29. And He is faithful even and despite when we are faithless, II Timothy 2:13.

'After the congregation sang, "Like a mighty army moves the church of God", the pastor drew a comparison between wartime armies and the armies made up of "Onward Christian Soldier" types. "Can you picture a soldier saying, 'Captain, I was out late last night, so I couldn't come to the parade grounds this morning. However, I was with you in spirit'?" "Do you think a soldier could get by with, 'Sorry, but I have a golf date this morning' or 'I've got guests, so don't expect me on the drill field today'?" Are you part of a standing army, or just another lounging dropout?

