

Soldiers for the Lord

Since 1891, our church has always been a home of love, a hospital of healing, and a school of sound doctrine. This is our salt, this is our light, to the community God has set us in, and to the world beyond.

For 120 years we have loved because the Lord first loved us. We have healed because by Jesus' stripes we are healed. We have taught the truth in love because our Lord is truth. Surely 120 years would earn us accolades from God if we decided to call it quits, and besides, 120 is a nice round number. As the apostle Paul once said, I speak foolishly.

No, we must soldier on, and moreso as we see the day of our Lord's return approaching! Now more than ever, we and our church must charge into the fray and save as many as we can. How we end for the Lord means more than how we began.

Jesus is Our Model of a Soldier for God

Jesus is God's first soldier. Ephesians 1:3-5 says that before the foundation of the world was laid God asked Jesus to redeem and rescue mankind, and Jesus became the model to us of a sacrificial soldier, who gave His life in the great battle with Satan so the souls of man might live in liberty and love with God forever.

We know that in the battle for our souls, Jesus was severely wounded; but one critical detail of His death must be clearly stated...He did not "lose" His life...He *GAVE* it willingly...and that gift paved a path to eternal life with God in a kingdom of love, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Jesus is the model for all soldiers of the Lord to give their lives willingly to save others, whether that means sixty years of kingdom work and dying of old age, or being speared like Jim Elliot on a riverbank in Ecuador at the age of 28 along with four other young missionaries, as they tried to bring the Gospel to the Waorani natives, a tribe of 600 that afterward accepted Christ as their savior (see the films *Beyond the Gates of Splendor 2004*, and, *End of the Spear 2006*).

At the point of Jesus' death, the story of what He did would be a wonderful hero saga to tell our children. But death was not the end of what Jesus did, nor is it for you and me as soldiers for the Lord. What we do for Christ lives and thrives long after we are gone. Happily, God raised "the Captain of our salvation" (Heb. 2:10) back to life to see the souls He saved. And likewise, you and I will be raised to see the souls we have "snatched from the fire", Jude 1:23!

Jesus was the Protecting Pillar for Israel and is for Souls Today

From Exodus 13:17-22, we see the Lord guided Israel through the wilderness in a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. But He was also a pillar of protection that blocked Egypt's chariots from attacking Israel at the crossing of the Red Sea, Exodus 14:9-31.

Ex. 13:21 And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: 22 He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

Jesus was the Protecting Guardian in Nebuchadnezzar's Fiery Furnace

Jesus is also seen by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar as a guardian in the fiery furnace protecting Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, where the king declares there is a fourth person in the fire who looks like the son of God, Dan. 3:24-25.

Jesus was the Protecting Warrior Against Satan in Persia

One like the son of man is described by Daniel in the same way John describes Jesus in Revelation 1. Compare Dan. 10:5-6 with Rev. 1:13-15.

Daniel records that Jesus came to him and revealed He was held up in getting to Daniel by the evil prince (archangel) of Persia. Michael, the chief prince (chief archangel) of Israel, see Dan. 10:21; 12:1, came to help Jesus in the battle, see Dan. 10:13, 21. What was at stake was the transition of power from Persia to the Greek empire, a transition that we now know would set the stage in the Middle East with a common market language that would enable the universal communication of the Gospel.

If Jesus was a Soldier, His Followers are Too