

Forgotten Pictures of God:

Session 1 - God is a Warrior

Why This Study Matters

For Personal Growth

The divine warrior motif shapes discipleship by:

- **Encouraging spiritual vigilance** - Understanding our battle against spiritual forces
- **Framing personal struggles as spiritual warfare** - Seeing our challenges in eternal perspective
- **Emphasizing communal resistance to evil** - Standing together against darkness

For Church Renewal

Churches can recover this biblical imagery through:

- **Hymns celebrating Christ's victory** - Worship that proclaims triumph over sin and death
- **Prayers acknowledging spiritual warfare** - Honest prayer about real spiritual battles
- **Re-introduction of biblical concepts** - Teaching the warrior in God's army imagery

For Cultural Engagement

Divine warrior theology guides engagement with:

- **Injustice** - God fights for the marginalized
- **Violence and militarism** - Understanding righteous vs. unrighteous warfare
- **Spiritual warfare in contemporary context** - Discerning spiritual battles today
- **False religions and moral equivalency** - Truth matters in spiritual warfare

Ancient Near Eastern Background

Egyptian Divine Warriors

Key Figures:

- _____ - Falcon-headed sky god who battled Set, establishing cosmic order (ma'at)
- _____ - Lioness goddess executing divine vengeance against Egypt's enemies
- _____ - War god accompanying pharaoh into battle
- _____ - Sun god leading nightly sky battles against chaos forces
- _____ - Protector of Amun-Ra against Apophis the chaos serpent

Common Features:

- Animal-headed deities wielding weapons
- Gods presenting weapons to pharaoh
- Standing on bound enemies symbolizing dominance
- Solar imagery representing protective force
- Divine warriors mounted on boats battling cosmic serpents

Canaanite Divine Warriors

_____ - The Quintessential Divine Warrior:

- Wielded lightning-spear and thunder-club
- Rode clouds as divine chariot
- Established kingship through combat victories

- Ensured fertility through victory over death (Mot) and chaos (Yamm/Sea)

The Baal Cycle reveals:

- Battles against Yamm (Sea) - representing chaotic waters threatening creation
- Victory over Mot (Death) - embodying sterility and the underworld
- Establishment of palace on Mount Zaphon - securing divine kingship

YHWH: A Distinctive Divine Warrior

What Makes YHWH Different

1. Sole Warrior

- Unlike ANE gods who fought alongside divine armies, YHWH needs no other deities to help Him win (Exodus 15:3, Isaiah 63:5)

2. Moral Combat

- Warfare guided by covenant ethics rather than mere power struggles
- Fights for justice, not just national interests

3. Historical Battles

- Divine warfare manifested in actual historical events, not just cosmic mythology

Biblical Development of the Divine Warrior

Patriarchal Narratives

- God afflicts Pharaoh with plagues to protect Sarah (Genesis 12:10-20)
- Abraham's rescue of Lot followed by Melchizedek blessing "God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand" (Genesis 14)
- "Terror of God" falling on Canaanite cities to protect Jacob's family (Genesis 35:5)

The Exodus: YHWH's Definitive Warrior Victory

"The LORD is a man of war; the LORD is his name." (Exodus 15:3)

- **Combat Against Egypt's Gods** - The plagues systematically defeated Egypt's pantheon (Exodus 12:12)
- **Sea Battle Imagery** - Like Baal's battle with Yamm, YHWH defeats the sea itself, using it as a weapon against Pharaoh's army
- **Song of the Sea** - Israel's victory hymn employs explicit divine warrior language

Conquest Narratives (Joshua)

- The "commander of YHWH's army" appears to Joshua (5:13-15)
- Divine strategy topples Jericho's walls (6:1-27)
- Cosmic warfare as God hurls hailstones at enemies (10:11)

Theological Implications:

- Israel's battles are actually YHWH's battles
- Victory depends on covenant faithfulness
- Human warriors are secondary to divine action

Period of Judges and Kings

- **Judges Era** - Spirit-empowered judges serve as YHWH's human agents
- **Davidic Kingdom** - David's victories attributed to YHWH fighting for Israel
- **Divided Kingdom** - Prophets reveal YHWH's invisible armies and supernatural warfare

Divine Warrior in the Psalms

"The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name." (Psalm 24:8)

Types of Warrior Psalms

- _____ **Psalms** - Celebrating YHWH's victory (Psalms 47, 93, 96-99)
- _____ **Psalms** - God fights for the Davidic king (Psalms 18, 20, 21)
- _____ **Laments** - Calling on God to wage war against enemies (Psalms 44, 60, 74)

Key Themes

The psalms simultaneously praise God's past warrior victories and anticipate future divine warfare, creating a framework for understanding Israel's present struggles in light of God's ultimate triumph.

Prophetic Development

The Day of YHWH

Two Directions:

1. God Fights Against Israel

- Amos and Isaiah announce YHWH's warfare against Israel for covenant violations (Amos 5:18-20, Isaiah 2:12-22)

2. God Fights Israel's Enemies

- Zephaniah and Joel describe scenes where YHWH fights against all nations in universal judgment (Zephaniah 1:14-18, Joel 2:1-11)
- Zechariah showcases YHWH fighting for Jerusalem in apocalyptic final battle (Zechariah 14:1-9)

Isaiah's Comprehensive Vision

Isaiah 1-39:

- YHWH marshals Assyria as His weapon (10:5-19)
- Divine warrior defeats cosmic sea monster Leviathan (27:1)
- Supernatural battle against Assyria (37:36-38)

Isaiah 40-66:

- God as warrior-shepherd leading His people (40:10-11)
- The "arm of YHWH" as divine warrior weapon (51:9-11, 52:10)
- The bloodstained divine warrior returning from Edom (63:1-6)

Climax: The Suffering Servant transforms the warrior motif toward redemptive suffering (Isaiah 52:13-53:12), followed by final victory and kingdom of God on earth.

Jesus: The Unexpected Divine Warrior

Messianic Identity

- Proclaimed the kingdom of God while refusing violent revolutionary methods

- Fought spiritual battles rather than political ones

Spiritual Combat Focus

- _____ **Narrative** - Confronts Satan in wilderness, showcasing divine combat against spiritual ruler
- Exorcism **Ministry** - Demonstrates divine victory over demonic forces, described as "binding the strong man" (Mark 3:27)
- _____ - Zealous action recalls God's zealous defense of sacred space

Cruciform Victory

- **Achieved victory through sacrificial death** rather than inflicting death
- **Cross portrayed as triumph** over spiritual powers (Colossians 2:15, John 12:31-33)

Divine Warrior in the New Testament

Pauline Theology

Christ as Victor:

- Death and resurrection interpreted as military victory over sin, death, and demonic powers (Colossians 2:13-15)

Triumph Imagery:

- Roman triumph procession metaphor applied to Christ leading captives in His wake (2 Corinthians 2:14-16)

Divine Armor:

- Believers equipped with God's own armor for spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:10-20)

Revelation: The Final Battle

Christ as Warrior:

- The slain Lamb who conquers (Revelation 5:5-6)
- The rider on white horse whose name is "Faithful and True" (Revelation 19:11-16)
- The warrior whose weapon is the word of truth

Final Victory:

- Decisive defeat of beast, false prophet, and dragon
- Establishment of New Jerusalem where God dwells with His people

Discussion Questions

1. How does understanding God as a divine warrior change your view of spiritual struggles?
2. What parallels and differences do you see between ancient Near Eastern divine warriors and modern "warrior" imagery in culture?
3. How does Jesus fulfill the divine warrior concept?
4. In what practical ways can the church recover this "forgotten picture" of God?
5. How might divine warrior theology provide hope for those facing evil today?

Key Scripture References for Further Study

- **Exodus 15:1-21** - Song of the Sea
 - **Joshua 5:13-15** - Commander of YHWH's army
 - **Psalms 24** - The King of glory
 - **Isaiah 59:15-20** - YHWH as warrior
 - **Ephesians 6:10-20** - Armor of God
 - **Revelation 19:11-21** - Christ the conquering warrior
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Conclusion: Recovering the Forgotten Picture

By recovering this forgotten picture of God, we gain:

- **Biblical Understanding** - A key to unlocking numerous passages throughout scripture
- **Spiritual Insight** - Language and imagery for confronting evil in all its forms
- **Eschatological Hope** - Confidence in God's ultimate victory over all forms of evil

The God who fights for us and through us offers both comfort in suffering and courage for engagement with the world's brokenness.