

A BIBLICAL STUDY ON FEAR

LESSON TWENTY-SEVEN: JEHOVAH NISSI

by Sandy Harber

"Thou has given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah." Psalm 60:4

God has given to those who fear (reverence) Him a banner. The Hebrew word translated "banner" means "a flag; standard; pole." A flag is a symbol. It stands for something. For example, the American flag symbolically represents the United States of America. Soldiers wear the American flag symbol on their uniforms to identify them as warriors fighting for the United States of America. Throughout history armies have carried the flags of their nations into battle. Believers in Jesus are part of an army, as well. This banner that God has given shows that we are part of His army. We are identified with Him. We fight under His standard. We belong to Him.

Christians are engaged in a spiritual battle (Eph. 6:10-18). The enemy is powerful, crafty, numerous, ancient, and invisible! But they are real, nevertheless. Mortal man cannot defeat this enemy in his own strength. But God has equipped believers for the fight by providing spiritual armor. We are equipped with the Truth, righteousness, faith, and assurance of salvation (Eph. 6:14, 16, 17). We have instant access to our Commander-in-Chief (Eph. 6:18), under Whose banner we march.

When Moses led God's people out of Egypt to settle the land that God had promised to their ancestors, the first enemy that they encountered were the Amalekites (Ex. 17:8-16). During the battle that ensued Moses stood on a hill holding aloft the rod of God. As long as his hands were up the Hebrews prevailed. But, when he grew weary and lowered his arms, the Amalekites prevailed. Aaron and Hur held Moses' arms up through the fighting so that God's people were victorious. The rod of God held aloft in Moses' hands was the "banner" under which they fought. To commemorate the victory, Moses built an altar and called it Jehovah Nissi, the Lord, our Banner.

What does the Psalm say that we are to do with the banner? Lift it high for all to see. Display it proudly. Why? Because it represents Truth. In the Psalm, that Truth takes the form of deliverance for God's beloved (us) and the destruction of our enemies (Psalm 60:5, 12). For Christians, the Truth takes the form of the Good News (the Gospel). What Truth shall we hold high? That Jesus died a substitutionary death on the cross, was buried, and rose again the third day. (I Cor. 15:3-4). And whoever believes this shall not perish in hell but, instead, shall live eternally with God (John 3:16).

The same Hebrew word translated "banner" in Psalm 60:4 is translated "pole" in Numbers 21:8. God directed Moses to create an image of a fiery serpent, put it on a pole (banner), and raise it up before the people. Why? Because the people had sinned against God with their complaining (Num. 21:5). God sent fiery serpents among the people and many died (v. 6). The cure was simply to look up at the serpent on the pole and live (v. 9). Jesus used this incident in His discussion with Nicodemus, explaining that He would be lifted up like the serpent on the pole, and the people who believed on Him would live eternally (John 3:14-15). Jesus was literally Jehovah Nissi, the Lord, our Banner, lifted up on a cross for the world to see the Truth: "Truly this man was the Son of God" (Mark 15:39).

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." John 3:14-15