



Teaching Letter 39

Jehovah-Nissi, The Lord My Banner

*“When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him”
(Isaiah 59:19 NKJ).*

For thousands of years, people have understood the meaning of lifting up a standard. Armies have carried banners to symbolize the nation or group for whom they fought as well as to take the lead in battle to direct and to inspire the soldiers. Opposing armies each had a standard, and the one left standing in the end represented the winner of the struggle.

Throughout history, a nation’s standard has been a very powerful symbol. Francis Scott Key penned the words to “The Star-Spangled Banner” which many of us have sung. Key wrote: “. . . And the rockets’ red glare, the bombs bursting in air, gave proof through the night that our flag was still there. . . .” Though the battle raged, the enemy had not conquered.

Isaiah used this familiar symbol to convey an important spiritual truth to his readers. It is vital to understand, however, the major difference between the banners of nations or groups and the standard which the Spirit of the Lord will raise. This standard not only *represents* the Lord’s presence, His leading, His conquering might and power, and His salvation, but He *is* the standard. Thus, the name “Jehovah-Nissi, the Lord Our Banner.”

When our enemy Satan, comes against us, God Himself—who is always with us—rises up against him. When necessary, we will find Him to be “mighty in battle,” as David wrote (Psalm 24:8 NKJ). Like the standard which would go in front of the troops, God goes before us into spiritual battle. We do not fight alone. That is important to remember and to keep in the forefront of our thinking in each difficulty we face.

The first introduction of God’s name, “Jehovah-Nissi,” is in Exodus 17:15: “And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-Lord-Is-My-Banner.” This followed Israel’s victory over Amalek, a nation who intended to destroy them. God intended otherwise.

Before the battle, Moses told Joshua: “Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand” (Exodus 17:9 NKJ). In verse 11 we read, “And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.”

Because the battle continued all day, Moses needed the support of Aaron and Hur to keep the rod of God raised. They helped, and Scripture says: “So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword” (Exodus 17:13 NKJ). This victory was won due to the help of God when the standard was raised.

The rod, however, was not simply an inspiration or encouragement to the army. It was not man’s banner. It was the rod of God. It represented the presence of God and His mighty power raised against their enemies.

With that rod, Moses conquered Egypt. With the same rod the Red Sea parted, and with it water poured out of a rock in the desert. Now, when attacked by fierce enemies, Israel found the battle turned in their favor when they lifted up God’s standard. When they depended on God for their help and not simply their own strength, cunning or ability, victory was certain.

God wants us to know He will fight for and with us. The Spirit of the Lord has raised a standard against our enemy Satan. With God victory is certain.

Many years after Moses and Isaiah, Jesus was lifted up on the Cross of Calvary as the final standard ever needed against our enemy. The Cross looked like a terrible defeat, but it was a most glorious victory—won *by* Jesus *for* us. It not only demonstrated God’s victory over our enemy, provided the final means of forgiveness of sin and opened the door to eternal life for us, but it also demonstrated how we may overcome Satan’s attacks now.

Just as Moses raised the standard of God and Amalek was defeated, we are to trust in Jesus as our victory in every situation. When Satan attacks and I forget I have Jesus going before me and fighting for me, a feeling of panic arises in my soul. When I am able to return my gaze to Jesus and remember Who is on my side, my fear fades.

Paul wrote: “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31 NKJ). David wrote: “You have given a banner to those who fear You . . .” (Psalm 60:4 NKJ). He ended this Psalm with “Through God we will do valiantly, for it is He who shall tread down our enemies” (v. 12). David knew his fighting was effective because God fought for him—and because it was a battle of the Lord’s choosing.

I remember one incident in which Moses warned Israel not to move forward with their battle plans. Israel had disobeyed God and He had pronounced judgment. In God’s mercy, because Moses prayed, God did not completely destroy the entire nation. God, however, said they would wander in the wilderness for forty years because of their unbelief and disobedience.

Not liking God’s pronouncement, suddenly the people decided to follow God’s original command and to go ahead and enter the land of Canaan. However, God’s judgment upon them would stand. Thus Moses warned them: “Do not go up, lest you be defeated by your enemies, for the Lord is not among you” (Numbers 14:42 NKJ). They did not listen to Moses, and that is exactly what happened.

This is a sobering example of how important it is to know when the battle we fight is sanctioned and led by Jehovah-Nissi.

I conclude this discussion of “The Lord My Banner” with a different use of the word “banner” in Scripture. It is found in Song of Solomon. The Shulamite maiden spoke, referring to Solomon: “He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love [for love waved as a protecting and comforting banner over my head when I was near him]” (Song of Solomon 2:4 AMPLIFIED Version).

Many of us fast forward through the Song of Solomon or read it with puzzlement or even embarrassment at certain points in the text. Some believe the book may be a drama written by Solomon depicting his real-life encounter with a young shepherdess with whom he had fallen in love. No one knows for sure. Many like to read it from the perspective of viewing God’s love and interactions with His people who love Him in return.

Nevertheless Right alongside “The Lord Mighty in Battle”—which one might find very fitting on a banner ascribed to Jehovah-Nissi—stands also the inscription, “Love.” Is that amazing or what? Maybe not, for doesn’t the God who fights our battles for and with us do so because He loves us? And what greater power is there than love?

“For God so loved the world” **SH**

GOD’S WORD FOR TODAY
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