

# The Graeco-Roman Military and Interpretation of the New Testament

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## Nature of Christian Existence: 2 Cor 10:3-6

For though we live in the world, we do not <sup>στρατευόμεθα</sup> wage war as the world does. The <sup>ὄπλα</sup> weapons we <sup>στρατείας</sup> fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have <sup>ὕψωμα ἐπαρόμενον</sup> divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every <sup>καθαίρειν</sup> pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take <sup>ὄχυρωμάτων</sup> captive every thought to make it <sup>καθαίρουντες</sup> obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every <sup>λογισμὸς</sup> act of <sup>αἰχμαλιζόντες</sup> disobedience, once your <sup>ὕψωμα</sup> obedience <sup>ἐν ἐτοιμῷ ἐχόντες ἐκδικῆσαι</sup> is complete.

A single sentence in Greek packed with 11 military and warfare terminologies

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## Nature of Christian Existence: 2 Cor 10:3-6

Actions of conquering soldiers

Christian existence is warfare

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.

Otherworldly spiritual weapons for the warfare.  
Formidable and resilient opposition.  
Goal of the warfare is to bring all under the subjection of triumphant Christ.  
Could be excommunication of recalcitrant opposition. But also likely, eschatological connotations of divine warfare.

- Why is Christian existence and ministry described this way?
- What was the nature of military existence and warfare?
- How did the military impact the emergence of Christianity?
- How did Christianity impact the military?
- What are the implications for interpreting the New Testament?

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## Learning Outcomes

1. Explain the relevance of the organizational structure of the Roman military in the first century for interpreting the New Testament.
2. Using the references to the word “centurion” in the New Testament as anchor terminology, trace the impact of the Gospel on the Roman military establishment of the first century.
3. Use appropriate examples from the New Testament to illustrate the use of military metaphors in the New Testament.
4. What are the advantages and limitations of knowing the first century Roman military attire for interpreting Eph 6:10-20?

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## Topics to be covered

1. Brief History of the Roman Army
2. Functions and Organizational Structure of the Army
3. The Roman Military and Jewish Messianism
4. Military Personnels in the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles
5. Military Metaphors and Interpretation of the New Testament
6. Military Attire and Interpretation of the New Testament

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## Brief History of the Roman Army

- **Republican Period**
  - Established a reputation for efficiency and fearsome brutality during the Republican period when it existed as a citizens-based militia temporarily put together for war and disbanded afterwards. So it remained disorganized, non-careered, self-financing and dependent on very good generals for its successes.
  - A major reorganization was necessitated during 400BC after the humiliating defeat by Celtic tribes so that the concept of a “standing army” was introduced by the Marian Reforms introduced by Gaius Marius in 107 BC turned it into a volunteer more mobile force but still heavily organized around their intense loyalties to powerful rival generals thus laying foundation for Julius Caesar & the civil war
- **Early Imperial Period**
  - Augustus in 30BC reorganized the army into an efficient professional, with pay and services, efficient logistics and conditions for promotion. It opened up to non-citizens auxiliary soldiers and new weapons and strategies. This led to a stable system that continued for over 250yrs.
  - Augustus also introduced oath-taking by the army so that all recruits swore (*sacramentum*) allegiance to the Emperor, and not the state or Empire. The army was characterized by command structure, severe strictness which ensured cohesive discipline. Rebellion when it occurred was invariably as group mutiny though some individuals occasionally deserted or committed suicide
  - Garrisons were established in strategic defeated territories to defend and police the borders. Thus it begun to see itself as colonizing peace-maintainers as much as conquerors. Defeated enemies were often turned into subordinate allies who soon provided many loyal soldiers to fight the next generation of Rome's wars.
- **Late Imperial Period**
  - Started declining in strength from 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD as a force, due to its overblown bureaucracy from its size, economic challenges, lack of recruitment and corruption and moral degeneracy
  - Fall of Western Empire in 476 AD marked its final demise

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## Why people joined the Roman Army

1. Stable employment, provision of some basic necessities of life such as accommodation and food, and reasonable pay in professional army
2. Some foreign-born peoples saw long term military service as a pathway to Roman citizenship
3. Reward of booty enabled some veterans to be rich
4. Loyalty to an able general that ensured camaraderie
5. Honour – Roman history of conquests ensured that veterans of successful campaigns were highly regarded, and many joined the aristocracy
6. Many veterans were rewarded with land and estates both at home in Rome or abroad in conquered provinces, e.g., Spain, Africa, Macedonia, & Achaia

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These factors for joining the army along with the army's own political history that determined the direction of the empire in the first place, enabled it to acquire a semi-autonomous status within the empire answerable only to the emperor. In return the emperors became dependent on the army as they needed to maintain the army's support to remain in power. Several assassinations and, before then, civil war was motivated by military displeasure and executed by military hierarchy.

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## Functions of the Roman Army to the Empire

- The Army created, expanded and sustained the Roman Empire.
- The Army made mobility of goods and people safe throughout empire; enabled collection of taxes, guarded prisoners and some civil service work.
- The Army built the empire, through building roads, bridges, cities, aqueduct, fortresses and palaces, new cities, estates, and other infrastructure.
- The Army maintained the peace and stability of empire through deterrence, policing and peacekeeping patrol and thus was fundamental to local and imperial economic prosperity
- The Army was a key vector for the spread of religions in the empire even though it had its own imperial religion

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The polytheistic worldview as well as intense superstitious tendencies of the average Roman soldier made them paradoxically open to incorporating foreign religious ideas and rituals into theirs. Together with their mobility, this tendency turned the Roman soldier into a major vector for the spread of religions in the Empire.

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John F Shean

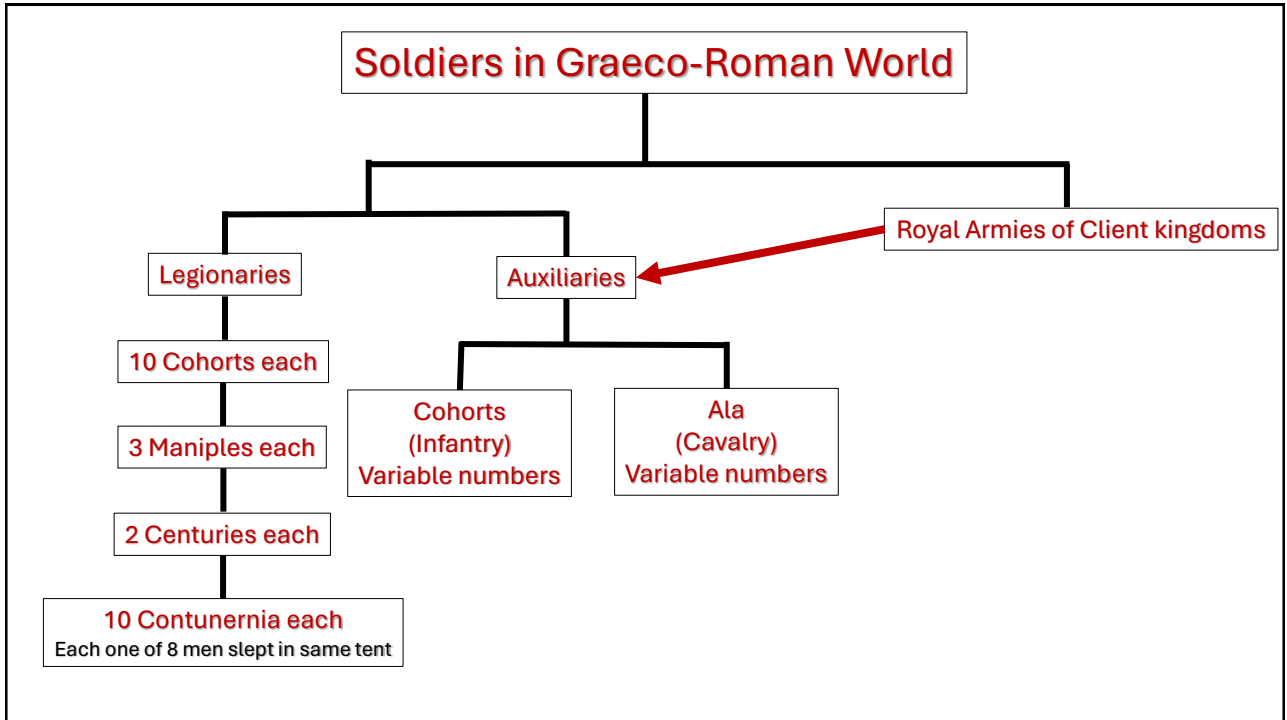
“In the course of moving from one area of the empire to another, a soldier was conscious of the fact that he could encounter and unwittingly offend various local spirits who were unknown to him but, nevertheless, could potentially harm him out of pique. To ensure peace-of-mind, soldiers recently arrived at a new, alien post would set-up altars to the *genius loci* (‘spirit of the locality’), a generic term used by Romans for any unknown spirits in a given area, however, those spirits already known by name would be directly addressed”

Shean, John F. "Soldiering for God: Christianity and the Roman army." Leiden: Brill, 2010. Page 39.

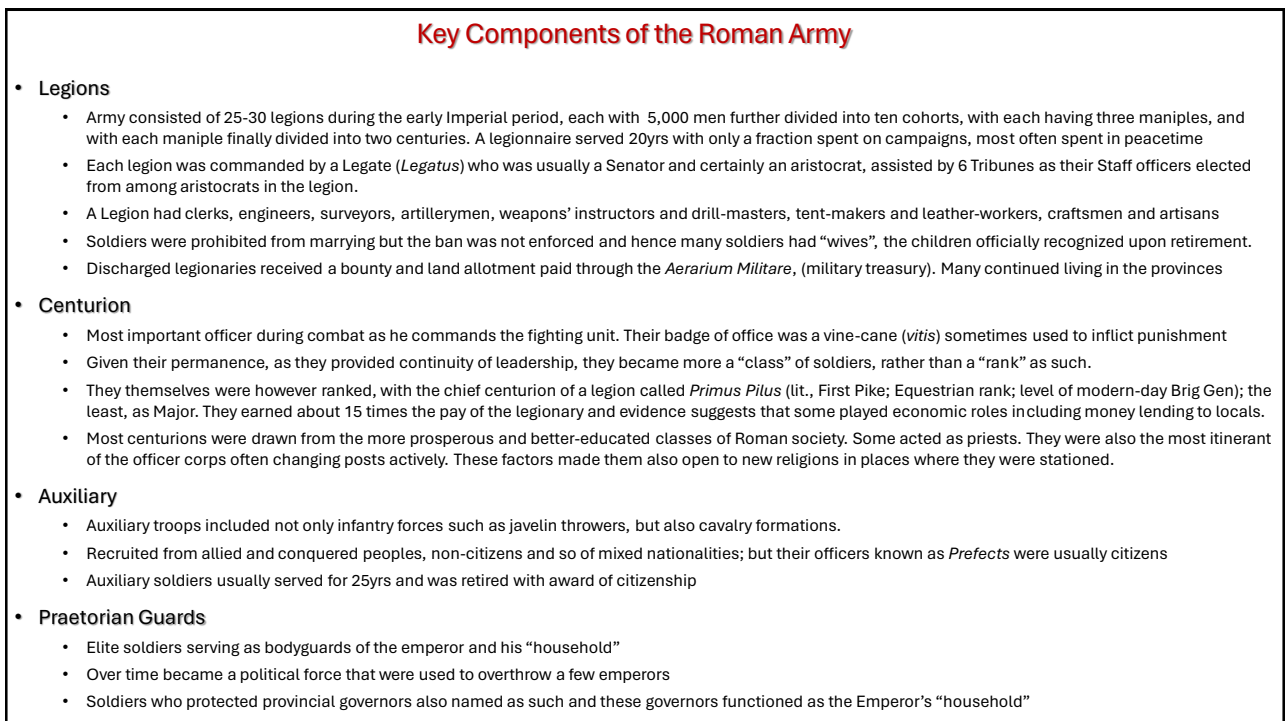
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- The Roman army of the first century must be appropriately evaluated as the prime imperial agent of colonial violence against the peoples of the Mediterranean world including the first Christians. On the other hand, they were also the principal means of maintaining the relatively peaceful environment with easier mobility that sustained the growth of the same Christian movement.
- Moreover, as individuals, Roman soldiers behaved as normal human beings of the time did. Sometimes they over-reached in their use and abuse of the immense power they had. But other times, some interacted positively or at least, less malevolently towards individuals and groups.
- The New Testament unsurprisingly portrays this ambiguous mixture of negative and positive features of the Roman military. They played a historical role in the spread of Christianity and certainly offered rich literary resource for communicating the nature of Christian existence.
- These possibilities deserve carefully reasoned consideration when interpreting the accounts of encounters between the military and New Testament Christianity.

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## Roman Legions= 5,000

**General-**  
commanded  
several legions

**Legate-** in  
charge of legion

**6 Tribunes-**  
helped Legate

**Prefect-**  
building and  
training

**Primus Pilus-**  
senior centurion  
in legion

**Centurion-** led  
a Century (80  
men)

**Legionary-**  
citizen foot  
soldier

**Cavalry-** fought  
on horseback

**Auxiliary-** non-  
citizen fighter

**Archers-** many  
came from  
Middle East

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## Jewish Army within the Graeco-Roman Empire

- Under Herod the Great, Judea acquired independence, and Herod proceeded to build a Jewish Army modelled somewhat on the Roman template.
- He rebuilt Strato's Tower as Caesarea Maritima and Samaria as Sebaste in 27 BCE, granted his veterans land plots in these cities, recruited bodyguards and mercenaries from other nations such as Gaul, and employed some Roman soldiers as trainers.
- All evidence indicates that the Judaeen governors after Herod and Agrippa I continued recruiting troops primarily from Caesarea and Sebaste, who were then stationed within Judaea's borders.
- Roth 2004:5:
  - "While there certainly were some changes, the military forces of the region remained basically the same from the reign of Herod, through his successors Archelaus, Antipas, Philip, Agrippa I and II, down to the end of the Jewish War. Even the so-called Roman garrison [i.e., auxilia] was in fact only a number of Herodian units put in Roman service. Most, perhaps all, of these soldiers were Aramaic speakers" [Roth, Jonathan, 2004. "Jewish Military Forces in the Roman Service." Paper presented at the annual meeting of SBL. San Antonio, 23 November 2004. Page 5]

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### **Jews within the Roman Army in First Century Palestine**

- Conquering Roman army often pursued a deliberate policy of rehabilitating conquered armies into their set up and recruiting from the new colonized peoples and integrating them into the Roman Army
- In many cases, the foreign members of a colonizing Roman army group were not from Italy but from other previously conquered provinces such as Syria, Spain, Africa and Asia, as well as foreign mercenaries.
- Absorption of Judean soldiers and recruitment of veterans from among them into the Roman army stationed in Palestine was significant enough to suggest that in some cases, the locals within a cohort significantly outnumbered the colonizing Roman peoples.
- The army in Palestine in the first century was thus multi-racial and multi-religious, though clearly Hellenized and Romanized as the larger empire was.
- Evidence indicate that the Romans generally didn't enforce the expectation to worship the Emperor among the Jewish recruits until later from the late 80s

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By first century AD therefore, a “soldier” serving in Palestine could be Roman, Jewish, Egyptian, Asian, Syrian, Celtic or Gaul. This multi-ethnicity must be borne in mind in interpreting New Testament passages which refer to “soldiers”. A reference to a “soldier” should not necessarily be assumed to be a Roman though they would likely be Hellenized and Romanized, like many Jews in Palestine of the time.

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## Categories of References to Military in the New Testament

1. Soldiers on Duty
2. Centurions of the New Testament
3. Metaphors of Warfare
4. Metaphors Related to Peace
5. Metaphors of Military Weapons & Attire

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## Soldiers on Imperial Duty in the New Testament

Passage	Action	Comment
Lk 3:14	Soldiers challenged to repent from corruption	Possible that some were Jewish
Mark 15:21; cf. Matt 27:32	Compelled (ἀγγαρεύουσιν) Simon of Cyrene to carry Jesus' cross.	Colonial soldiers brutally exerted their force on
Matt. 5:39-41	Soldiers had powers to force people to help carry their luggage ( <i>angareia</i> )	Jesus exhorts reverse resistance to military <i>angareia</i>
Matt 27; Mk 15 Lk 23; Jn 18-19	Mockery, humiliation and crucifixion of Jesus	The Romans were as guilty as the Jews in Jesus' crucifixion
Acts 12	Arrest and guarding of Peter	Herodian Army
Acts 21-27	Arrest and escort of Paul	Roman Army

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Roy Davies

### Interaction of Roman Army with Jesus & Paul

“[The soldiers] arrested and flogged Christ; an execution squad of a centurion and four armed soldiers crucified Him and two brigands, detained earlier in a security operation, but not Barabbas, in custody for insurrection and murder; a small picket guarded the tomb; the rest of the cohort was drawn up in full battle kit in the governor’s residence, ready to suppress any outbreaks of rioting. In Jerusalem the men of the *cohors equitata* commanded by Claudius Lysias had to rescue Paul from a lynch mob three times in twenty-four hours; he was arrested, almost flogged, released, taken into protective custody, and then sent under heavy armed escort to Caesarea for trial. The tribune wrote an official report and came to give evidence. In the capital he was first held in custody in the governor’s residence but was then put under open arrest under the surveillance of a centurion for two years. When the governor left, Paul was put back into protective custody, appealed to his successor, and was remanded in custody pending transport. On the sea voyage he was under open arrest, but the non-Roman prisoners were kept under close arrest by the centurion and escorts of *cohors I Augusta*; in Rome the latter were confined in the camp of the Praetorians by the *princeps peregrinorum* [the head of the *castra peregrina*, the headquarters of the secret police in Rome; *peregrini* were people without Roman citizenship], while Paul was kept under house arrest with one soldier for two years”

Davies, Roy W. “Service in the Roman Army”. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 1989. Pages 57.

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The military played an intricate part in the Gospels that full understanding not just of their *modus operandi*, but also how the first Christians perceived their roles in the emerging faith is fundamental for the interpretation of the New Testament

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## Centurions in the New Testament

- Most important officer during combat as he commands the fighting unit.
- Given their permanence, as they provided continuity of leadership, they became more a “class” of soldiers, rather than a “rank” as such.
- They themselves were however ranked, with the chief centurion of a legion called Primus Pilus (lit., First Pike; Equestrian rank; level of modern-day Brig Gen); the least, as Major. They earned about 15 times the pay of the legionary and evidence suggests that some played economic roles including money lending to locals.
- Most centurions were drawn from the more prosperous and better-educated classes of Roman society. Some acted as priests. They were also the most itinerant of the officer corps often changing posts actively. These factors made them also open to new religions in places where they were stationed.

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## Centurions in the New Testament

Passage	Identity	Comment
Matt 8:5-13; Lk 7:1-10	Capernaum Centurion	Man of great faith. Some suggest he was in Antipas' army, not Roman
John 4:43-54	Capernaum (Herodian) official	Disputed among scholars
Matt 27:50-56; Mk 15:33-39; Lk 23:44-49	Centurion at the cross	Eyewitness of the death of Jesus
Acts 10-11	Conversion of Cornelius	His conversion marked massive turning point for Gentile inclusion
Acts 22:22-29	Jerusalem Centurion	Intervened in flogging of Paul
Acts 23:23-35	Two Centurions lead team of soldiers	Protection of Paul – The Gospel is sent to Rome under full protection
Acts 27	Centurion Escort	Good relations with Paul the prisoner

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## The Unique Character of a Roman Centurion

“In choosing their centurions the Romans look not so much for the daring or fire-eating type, but rather for men who are natural leaders and possess a stable and imperturbable temperament, not men who will open the battle and launch attacks, but those who will stand their ground even when worsted or hard-pressed and will die in defense of their posts.”

Polybius (200-118BC) Greek Historian

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Rebecca Runesson

“Not only does [the Gaius] inscription show positive relations between centurions and civilians even as the revolt was underway, it is also representative of a long-lasting social pattern in which centurions took on patronage roles among local civilians in the provinces. These patronage roles—which, as a basic form of economic exchange, did not require strong ties—were likely the avenues through which centurions initially connected with local civilian cults. In Luke 7:5 we encounter an awareness of this, as the centurion’s presence in the cultic narrative is explained by his benefactions toward the local synagogue. Luke’s addition of the patronage relationship between the centurion and the local civilians is therefore consistent with what we know about centurion involvement in local civilian cults.”

Runesson, Rebecca. "Centurions in the Jesus Movement? Rethinking Luke 7: 1–10 in Light of the Gaius Inscription at Kefar 'Othnay." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 142.1 (2023): 129-149. Page 149.

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Centurions appeared to have played a key role as vectors of spread of Christianity during the first century, given their unique position and opportunities. The peacetime nature of the period as well as the non-enforcement of public worship of the Emperor clearly ensured that their participation in the Roman army was not considered problematic to being Christians, at least up onto the 80s AD. Evidence indicates that their situation became difficult in the second century onwards when Rome resumed more expansionary wars and public allegiance to the Imperial cult became more aggressively enforced.

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## Biblical Concept of Holy War

### • Definition

- Also called 'divine warfare', 'Yahweh's war', 'wars of Yahweh', or 'herem', it may be simply defined as physical and/or purely metaphorical military combat that is mandated by God, and fought either by him alone, or with or wholly through the agency of his people

### • Features

- God is the initiator of the war
- It involves superhuman miraculous elements
- the victory is assured and attributed to God
- It is regarded as part of the mission of God and so of His people, and because of its relationship to God's mission, the concept pervaded several aspects of the life of God's people, including the cultic, worship, and ethical dimensions

### • Categories in the Bible

- Purely cosmological spiritual combat between God and other gods, without human involvement (Exod 15; Ps 18, 24; 74, 77, 89; Job 26)
- Limited human combat that was an extension of the spiritual combat waged by God (Exod 17; 2 Kgs 6-7)
- Physical military combats against geo-political and religious enemies, but with features clearly defined as holy war (e.g. Deut 32; Judg 5; 2 Sam 22)
- Mostly apocalyptic and eschatological, depicts God as divine warrior, who wages war against his enemies (Dan 7, 10-12; Isa 11, 51, 59; Ps 2; Zech 9-14)

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## God as Divine Warrior in the Old Testament

- **Isa 42:13**
  - “The Lord will march out like a champion, like a warrior he will stir up his zeal; with a shout he will raise the battle cry and will triumph over his enemies.”
- **Hab 3:8-9**
  - “you rode your horses and your chariots to victory? You uncovered your bow, you called for many arrows”
- **Ps 35:1-3**
  - “Contend, Lord, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me. Take up **shield and armour**; arise and come to my aid. Brandish **spear and javelin** against those who pursue me. Say to me, ‘I am your salvation.’”
- **Isa 59:17LXX**
  - “He put on **righteousness as his breastplate**, and the **helmet of salvation upon his head**; he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak”
- **Isa 11:4-5 LXX**
  - “[The Messiah] will **strike the earth with the word of his mouth**; with the breath of his lips he will slay the ungodly. With righteousness will he be **girded around his belt and with truth bound around his sides**”
- **Isa 52:7\***
  - “How beautiful on the mountains are the **feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation; who say to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’**”

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## Jesus as Divine Warrior in the New Testament

- **Col 2:14-25**
  - “[Christ] having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross”
- **Heb 2:14-15**
  - “[H]e too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”
- **Ephesians 4:8-10**
  - “He ascended on high; he took many captives and gave gifts to his people.’ (What does ‘he ascended’ mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)”
- **Rev. 19:11-15**
  - “I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. ‘He will rule them with an iron sceptre.’ He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.”

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**Christian Existence as Spiritual Warfare & Holy War**

- Rom 7:23:
  - “I see in my members another law at war (ἀντιστρατεύμενον) with the law of my mind, making me captive (αἰχμαλωτίζοντα) to the law of sin.”
- Rom 4:12
  - “he is then also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also follow (στοιχοῦσιν – marching like soldiers) in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.”
- 1 Thess 2:2:
  - “We had previously suffered and been treated outrageously in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in the face of strong opposition ἐν πολλῷ ἀγῶνι.”
- 2 Cor 2:14-16:
  - “But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ’s triumphal procession (θριαμβεύοντι) and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. 15 For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. 16 To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life. And who is equal to such a task?”
- Phil 2:25
  - “But I think it is necessary to send back to you Eraphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier (συστρατιώτην), who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs.”
- Philemon 2
  - “to Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier (συστρατιώτη) – and to the church that meets in your home”.
- 2 Tim 2:3-4
  - “Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier (στρατιώτης) of Christ Jesus. 4 No one serving as a soldier (στρατευόμενος) gets entangled in civilian affairs (πραγματείας), but rather tries to please his commanding officer [who enlisted him στρατολογήσαντι].”

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**What are the implications of the Military related words in 1 Cor 14:6-8 for its interpretation?**

Now, brothers and sisters, if I come to you and speak in tongues, what good will I be to you, unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word of instruction? Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the pipe or harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes? <sup>8</sup> Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?

Σάλπιγξ  
Military Bugle

Αὐλός  
Military Flute

ἄδηλον σάλπιγξ φωνὴν δῶ, τίς παρασκευάζεται εἰς πόλεμον  
If trumpet sound is indistinct, who will prepare for the battle

Κιθάρα  
Military Lyre or Harp

**The gathering of God’s people for worship is a gathering in readiness for the spiritual warfare. The words, songs and sounds that are made must be part of stirring God’s people in readiness for doing the battle. If they are indistinct and confusing they destroy their preparedness for the battle**

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## Christian Ministry as Spiritual Warfare & Holy War

- **2 Cor 11:8**
  - “I robbed (ἐσύλησα – military despoiling or plunder) other churches by receiving support (ὀψώνιον – rations or pay of a soldier) from them so as to serve you”
- **1 Cor 9:7**
  - Who serves as a soldier (στρατεύεται) at his own expense (ὀψωνίους – pay or ration of soldier)?
- **2 Cor 12:7b**
  - “Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn (σκόλοψ – tip of the soldier’s stake or pike used for torture) in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.”
- **Rom 8:37**
  - “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors (ὑπερνικῶμεν) through him who loved us”
- **2 Cor 10:2 (NKJV)**
  - “I beg you that when I am present I may not be bold (θαρρῆσαι) with that confidence by which I intend to be bold (τολμῆσαι – military daring courage) against some, who think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.”
- **1 Tim 6:12**
  - “Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”

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## Christian Existence as Holy War in 1 Peter

- **1 Pet 1:5**
  - the word θροσροσμένοσς (guarded) is used to describe one of the benefits of our salvation.
- **1 Pet 1:13**
  - ἀναζωσάμενοι τὰς ὀσφύασ (having girded up your loin) was a classic military imager (cf. Eph 6:14)
- **1 Pet 2:11**
  - metaphor ζηραηέονηαι (wage war) in 2:11 Christian existence an internal spiritual conflict
- **1 Pet 3:14-15**
  - Christological modification of Isaiah 8:12-13 which is set with military language
- **1 Pet 4:1**
  - ὀπλίζαζθε (literally, ‘arm yourselves’) as part of the mind-set and disposition
- **1 Pet 5:8-9**
  - ἀνηίδικοσ ὕμῶν διάβολοσ (adversary the devil);
  - ἀνηίζηηηε (resist, 5:9a) in the context of spiritual warfare (James 4:7; Matt 5:39; Luke 21:15; cf. Acts 6:10);
  - ζηηεροί (literally, ‘solidly stand against’) used to describe the solid front with which the army is to stand its ground against the enemy on the battlefield

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Annang Asumang

1 Peter exhorts readers to respond to unjust suffering with non retaliatory righteous behaviour, while looking forward to vindication at the Lord's return. Although several literary theological and sociological approaches to the epistle have shed considerable light on this exhortation, a number of interpreters maintain that ultimately, the epistle engenders a paralyzing sense of passive victimhood in believers. This article examines the theological significance of several military metaphors throughout the epistle, to show that the exhortation to resist the devil in the final chapter is a climax to a consistent theme in the epistle, aimed at galvanizing spiritual warriors whose weapons are peaceful non retaliation, hope, and holiness through Christ's redemptive work. It also argues that Peter's approach is in line with the New Testament's transformation of the holy war motif of the Old Testament. Rather than being paralyzed into helplessness, the first readers of the epistle would have been emboldened by the call to holy resistance.

Asumang, Annang. "'Resist him' (1 Pet 5: 9): holiness and non-retaliatory responses to unjust suffering as 'holy war' in 1 Peter." *Conspectus: The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary* 11.03 (2011): 7-46. Page 7

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## Other Interesting uses of Military Terms & Metaphors

- **ὑποτάσσειν (submit):**
  - Used thirty-eight times in the New Testament, mostly as part of moral instruction, is used in other Greek texts for political or military subjugation
  - The Household code in Colossians and Ephesians use ὑποτάσσειν for mutual submission (Eph. 5:21), and the submission of wives to husbands (Col. 3:18; Eph. 5:21, 24) and ὑπακούειν for the obedience of children and servants (Col. 3:20, 22; Eph. 6:1, 5).
  - 1 Peter also uses ὑποτάσσειν consistently (2:18; 3:1, 5; cf. 5:5), except for the reference to Sarah (3:6)
- **1 Corinthians 15:52**
  - Musical instruments mentioned here were typically employed in the military
  - Flute (αὐλούμενον) and harp (κιθαρίζόμενον), bugle (σάλπιγξ, often translated as "trumpet") as instrument, with its distinct (ἄδηλον) sound and its call to prepare for battle (παρασκευάζεται εἰς πόλεμον).
  - Paul also used σάλπιγξ 1 Thess 4:16 eschatological setting.
- **ὀψώνια (wages)**
  - Wages (of sin Rom 6:23) means payment or provisions for soldiers.
- **μάχαιρα δίστομος (two-edged sword)**
  - In Heb 4:12 was typically employed by soldiers. The Word of God is Weapon of spiritual war

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## God's Peace following Victory

- **Jn 14:27**
  - “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”
- **Rom 16:20**
  - “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”
- **Eph 2:14-17**
  - “For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility...”
- **Eph 6:15**
  - “and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.”
- **Phil 4:7-9**
  - “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus...”
- **Col 3:15**
  - “And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.”
- **1 Thess 5:3**
  - “While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.”

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## Waging Spiritual Warfare with God's Armour: Eph 6:10-17

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.<sup>11</sup> Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.<sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.<sup>13</sup> Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.<sup>14</sup> Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled round your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,<sup>15</sup> and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.<sup>16</sup> In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.<sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

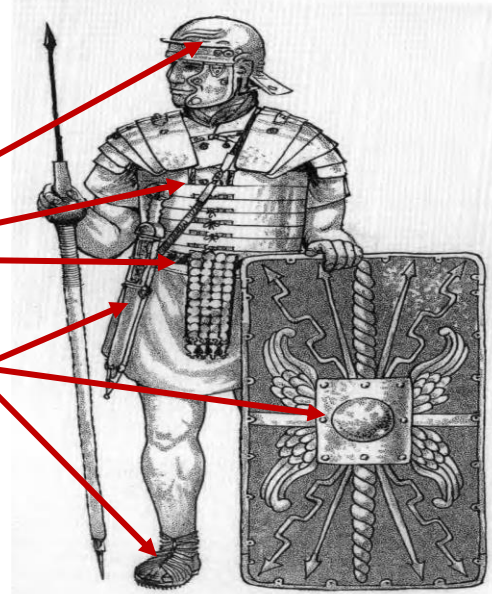
**Ephesians 6:10-20 serves as the concluding peroration of the letter. It summarizes its major themes and messages, especially in relation to Christian existence, the nature of Christ's Church as cosmic reality, and Christian ministry that nurtures spiritual growth in anticipation of the return of Christ to consummate this reality. But all this is vividly summarized within the context of spiritual warfare and holy war.**

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## Is this the Background of Eph 6:10-17?

### Eph 6:10-20

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup> Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes...Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. <sup>14</sup> Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled round your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, <sup>15</sup> and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests...Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains.



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## Is Divine Warrior the Background of Eph 6:10-20?

### Eph 6:10-20

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup> Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes...Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. <sup>14</sup> Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled round your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, <sup>15</sup> and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests...Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I

Isa 11:5LXX:  
"He be girded around his belt and with truth bound around his sides"

Isa 59:17LXX:  
"He put on righteousness as his breastplate"

Isa 52:7:  
"the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace"

Wis 5:19-20 (based in Isa 59)  
"He shall put on righteousness as a breastplate... He shall take holiness for an invincible shield"

Isa 59:17:  
"He put on...the helmet of salvation upon his head"

Isa 11:4  
"He will strike the earth with the word of his mouth"

**The armour of God in Eph 6 is God [and Christ's] the divine warrior's armour**

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## The Background of Eph 6:10-20

Paul most likely had the two backgrounds, namely, the Roman military attire and the Divine Warrior motif in mind in crafting this passage. Interpretations of Eph 6:10-20 which take just the attire of the Roman military as its background rightly emphasize the vividness of the social realities for the first readers of the letter. However, if the divine warrior motif is neglected, that completely undermines the central point of the passage. The Christian is not argued to take up spiritual imitation of the Roman warrior vivid though that metaphor might have been. On the contrary, we are called upon to put on the armour of God in Christ, in effect to let our union with Christ manifest itself in the way we wage the spiritual warfare. For the believer's armour is that which Christ Himself wears as He leads His people in the holy war. Believers are to "clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 13:14).

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## Topics to be covered

1. Brief History of the Roman Army
2. Functions and Organizational Structure of the Army
3. The Roman Military and Jewish Messianism
4. Military Personnels in the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles
5. Military Metaphors and Interpretation of the New Testament
6. Military Attire and Interpretation of the New Testament

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Questions?