

Lifting Our Eyes

Long Beach Alliance Church • November 27th, 2011 • Pastor Chris Lankford

In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious.

~Isaiah 11:10 (NIV¹¹)

1) Ambushed!

- A) Suddenly, and without apparent warning or provocation, the Amalekites* come to attack Israel at Rephidim (Exodus 17:8). The attack was a guerilla warfare ambush against Israel (Deuteronomy 25:17-18), demanding response.

* One of the six sons of Eliphaz and a grandson of Esau, whose mother was Timna, Eliphaz's concubine (Gen 36:11, 12; cf. 1 Chr 1:36). Amalek was one of the "chiefs of Eliphaz in the land of Edom" (Gen 36:15,16). In the biblical tradition, the terms "Amalek," "Amalekite," and "Amalekites" are used to designate the descendants of Eliphaz who, like Esau, are linked with the land of Edom. The Amalekites were a nomadic or seminomadic people, descendants of Esau and one of Israel's traditional enemies. They are not mentioned by name in any extra-biblical source, so the Old Testament (OT) provides the only written evidence on this relatively obscure people. Because of Amalek's occupation on the border of Palestine, in Sinai and the Negev, these tribes were in conflict with the Hebrews from the time of their wilderness wanderings until the early monarchy. Indeed, every encounter between Amalek and Israel recorded in the OT is marked by hostility. It is likely that the other sedentary peoples near ancient Israel (e.g., Egypt, Edom, Moab) had similar problems with the Amalekites, but information on these other lands is unavailable. The hostilities between Amalek and Israel began during the Hebrew sojourn in the Sinai. Exod 17:8-13 describes this first encounter, an apparently unprovoked attack upon Israel at Rephidim. It is possible that the Amalekites feared the Israelite incursion into the region of Kadesh (cf. Gen 14:7, where this place is linked with Amalek). Perhaps the Amalekites thought the Hebrews represented competition for water or would interfere with their trade routes. At any rate, Deut 25:17-18 says that the Amalekite attacks were merciless; this harassment led to great enmity between Israel and Amalek. The Amalekites were defeated (Exod 17:13), and they were placed under a permanent ban (17:14-16; Deut 25:17-19). Memory of Amalek's opposition to Israel was still alive in the days of Samuel and Saul (1 Sam 15:2-3). Selected notes from The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary, Volume 1 (A-C), "AMALEK," pgs. 169-171

2) General Joshua, Leader Of Israel's Military

- A) We are introduced to Joshua (Yahweh is Salvation) for the first time in Scripture as Moses calls on him to lead Israel's military against the Amalekites (Exodus 17:9-10). Joshua is one of Israel's most noble and faithful men, and will play key roles in Israel's future as Moses' successor.

3) The Military Inspired By Israel's Leaders

- A) As planned, Moses "takes his stand" upon a hill overlooking the battleground with the staff of God in his hand (17:9-10) along with Aaron & Hur (both trusted leaders, cf. 24:14).

- B) As the military fought for Israel's future against the Amalekites, they could lift their eyes and see their leaders standing above them, Moses with his hands raised to God, inspiring and motivating the soldiers to victory!

4) There Are No Lone Rangers

- A) Miraculously, as Moses keeps his hands raised to God (a typical posture for prayer), Israel overcomes the Amalekites, but when his hands become tired and droop, Israel is overwhelmed by the Amalekites (18:11-12).

- B) Aaron & Hur, seeing that Moses could not "take his stand" alone, support him with a rock to lean on, and assist him by holding his arms up through the battle (18:12), leading Joshua and Israel to victory over the Amalekites (18:13).

5) The LORD Is Our Banner

- A) At God's behest, Moses records God's permanent ban against the Amalekites (17:14, 16), and builds an altar to God named "God is My Banner" (Yahweh Nisi). When in the midst of a battle, even surprise attacks, raise your eyes above your troubles, and set your eyes above on the LORD!