

November 13, 2011

The logo for 'Light & Salt' features the words in a large, elegant, black cursive font. The ampersand is particularly decorative, with long, sweeping flourishes that extend above and below the main text. The background is a dark, solid color.

A publication of
Joppa Gospel Tabernacle
& Kinship Ministries

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Fallen Soldiers

*"Greater love has no one that this, that one lay down his life for his friends" (1 John 15:13 *).*

Your servant sometimes passes a cemetery on his "exercise break." The cemetery is dedicated to the fallen soldiers from our nation's battles. On a quiet morning with the sun shaded by the trees, he paused to look out over the thousands upon thousands of plain white grave markers.

It seemed even the birds hushed their singing as the man sat and pondered the tremendous sacrifice made by the ones who lay beneath the grass. He thought of the family and friends who lost their loved one. Surely, there is no greater human love, *"than this, that one lay down his life for his friends"* The man uttered a prayer for the ones left behind.

Over there is the son of grieving parents. Beside him rests a husband whose wife was faced with raising a family without a dad. Here, there is a wife whose husband faced the same thing. Just around the corner lies a girl's sweetheart who will never again be able to hold her love close. On the far hill, there is a chaplain who did his best to comfort the soldiers as they knew their lives were on the line. God saw fit to call the chaplain for greater duty.

Here they lay, their bodies in eternal rest; the starkness of the white markers in great contrast with the green grass.



Our nation has just observed Veterans Day. Some may remember the day as Armistice Day, or others as Remembrance Day. The important thing is that we remember and thank God for the service ending in ultimate sacrifice for us.

The “dough boys” of WW1 loved their country enough to sacrifice themselves so that we might enjoy the freedom that we have today. That generation is gone as its last survivor recently passed.

It was 1918, and the whole world was at war. As evil forces attempted to spread their influence and subdue the world, the Allied nations came together. Are things so different in our time?

Solomon reminds us: *“there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which one might say, ‘See, this is new’? Already it has existed for ages which were before us.”* (Ecclesiastes 1:9-10 *) The earthly battle between good and evil is all around us and indeed, within us.

At the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918, the fighting stopped. An armistice was observed and the war stopped. Millions on all sides of the conflict lay dead as the soldiers put down their weapons. Many a mother, father, wife, child, relative, and friend mourn the losses from that conflict.

As a nation, we are losing the respect and pride we once had for the heroes who gave all, as we stay busy under the taskmasters who demand that we sacrifice so much for the almighty dollar.



Sometimes, we chase the almighty dollar and put Almighty God on the back burner, to be used to get us out of the latest mess in which we find ourselves. God, help us slow down and remember all that have passed this way and especially the ones we should remember.

Our young people should know there are things that are bigger than their selves and things worth preserving and if need be, dying for. As Jesus tarries, they may be called upon to protect us while serving our nation in uniform. The parents of the dough boys and the GI Joes of their generation somehow instilled a love of God and others in their children, and we should do the same for our kids, our grandkids.

On Veteran's Day did we forget the terrible price paid in lost lives and mangled bodies to protect us from the physical aggression of the evil forces? They would so quickly become our masters were it not for God's soldiers. Can we almost hear the soldier's cry as they remind us to take very seriously the need for constant vigilance as the price of liberty?

The sounding of the trumpet was and is a sign to the people to wake up, to take action. The Bible makes it clear that anything getting between us and God becomes our god--be it money, position, our house, our automobile, our lawn, our golf game, our spouse, our desire to "be somebody" in the world, our day to sleep in, whatever or whoever it is.



At this very moment, only we know the obstacle between us and a closer relationship with God. If He is speaking to our heart, God help us do something about the thing that stands in our way. We need to reflect on many things, including those who are giving all for us.

Scholars tell us that we live in the last days, of which so many prophets and apostles wrote. In addition to the physical battles that rage in the world at this very hour, ours is a spiritual battle. It is fought by the forces that we cannot, without God's full armor, stand against.

*"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12 *).*

As the soldier uses his combat gear to face the enemy, for our spiritual battle, we need to put on *"the full armor of God that you may be able to resist in the evil day..."* (Ephesians 6:13 *). Few will doubt that our days are evil.



For those of us whose soldiering days are over, our duty is, *"With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:18 *).*

The ones who are responsible to feed our spirits need prayerful support. The Apostle asked the people to, *"pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (Ephesians 6: 19-20 *).*

Our spiritual leaders are not in physical chains made of strong steel, but they are chained by a greater power to the Holy Spirit, who presses them to proclaim His Word.

Here is the Good News! There is coming a day in which, *"...they will hammer their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war" (Isaiah 2:4b *).* No more fallen soldiers! No more need for a Veterans Day.

What a day, what a day that will be!

Comments by Harry Bain

* (New American Standard Bible; i.e., NASB)