

The Holy War Study Guide – Week 14

Resist the Devil, and He Will Flee From You

What primary Bible passages come to your mind as you read this assignment?

To what degree does the story accurately reflect Bible teaching?

This section is largely a testimony of victorious measures taken by the Mansouliaus. Because of a heightened understanding of the realistic nature of the threat on the town by the Diabolonians and the looming potential for the return of Diabolus, the citizens worked in an almost frenzied state of spiritual alarm. They certainly are energized to renewed obedience.

The reading begins with the skillful and loving work of one Mr. Prywell who has learned the place (Vile-hill) where the fleshly Diabolianians are prone to meet. He has become somewhat expert to the nature of the flesh, and he had made it his business to listen for news or watch for signs of treason to the town of Mansoul. He is willing to be an honest spiritual detective with Mansoul's condition and her spiritual peril. What he hears is not simply the news of the Diabolonians' desire to reign again in Mansoul, but he learns of their desire to do what with the citizens?

Holy jealousy and careful examination will detect the plans and devices of Satan. We cannot watch and pry too narrowly when we consider the deceitfulness of sin and of the heart (*The Holy War*, Illustrated with notes by George Burder, Reiner edition, 338).

Mr. Prywell's news landed on the Lord-mayor Mr. Understanding's desk and prompted immediate reaction. Mr. Understanding's communication with Mr. Conscience is so quick as to be nearly instantaneous, who almost as quickly put the whole town on alert. The situation had not changed at all, but the Mansouliaus themselves have been put on heightened internal alert. Recall a time when your understanding and conscience were put on high alert because of some invading sin? How did you respond? Are you right now suppressing their message of spiritual alarm to you about a particular spiritual threat? Are you able to agree honestly with the spiritual assessment of Prywell and the Conscience (below) about the impact of entertained sin on your soul?

“Sirs, it is not irrational for us to believe it for we have provoked Shaddai to anger, and have sinned Immanuel out of the town. We have had too much correspondence with Diabolonians, and have forgotten our tender mercies; no marvel, then, if the enemy both within and without should design and plot our ruin and what time like this to do it? The sickness is now in the town, and we have been made weak thereby. Many a good meaning man is dead, and the Diabolonians of late grow stronger and stronger.”

Though the understanding and the conscience are on the alert, all of the spiritual resources available to Mansoul are not operating in her at full strength. Bunyan alludes to the Lord Secretary (the Holy Spirit) being “ill at ease.” The Spirit had truly been grieved by the town’s continued regard for its sin, and His apparent work in her has been dulled. Scripturally we recognize that it is the Spirit that is working conviction in the heart of Mansoul.

Another feature of Mansoul’s spiritual sorrow is their willingness to renew their entreaties to Immanuel, and even to call the preachers (captains) of the town to lead them in renewing their spiritual attentiveness. The impact on the preachers is remarkable. They seem themselves to have grown somewhat comfortable or at least discouraged with the spiritual progress of the city, but the repentance in the people moves the preachers to heightened zeal. Together the captains encourage the populace in what six spiritual disciplines (support each with Bible passages)?

Mr. Prywell’s discovery proved to be only the beginning of his role in the town. They so valued his service to them that they made him Scout master-general, an indication that they sensed the value of honest self-examination and watchfulness as they never had before. Due to his watchfulness and aggressive scouting, he learned more of the dangers lurking against the town, and he was able to detect one of the chief instruments in the danger. What former prisoner and now escaped outlaw of the town had Diabolus put in charge of designs against them?

“The design of Satan was to overwhelm the soul with doubts and fears, in consequence of sin indulged. Incredulity, therefore, or unbelief, is, with great propriety, appointed general of the army, for the doubts and fears of serious persons usually arise from unbelief” (*The Holy War*, Illustrated with notes by George Burder, Reiner edition, 343).

Aggressive, honest self-evaluation compels us to recognize the necessity of mortifying our flesh and entertained lusts. Remembering earlier efforts gains little present victory. Only present action will do. Appropriate action involves brutal honesty that is willing to identify sin by its true character, rather than letting it pass under pseudonyms. In some cases, open confession of sins was necessary to enjoin greater watchfulness, accountability, and appropriate fear of sin.

How unwilling though is our flesh to be subdued! Bunyan picturesquely depicts the flesh’s evasiveness of spiritual scrutiny:

“But though they [Mansoulions] could plainly see their footing, and so follow them by their track and smell to their holes, even to the mouths of their caves and dens, yet take and do justice upon them they could not, their ways are so crooked, their holes so strong, and they so quick to take sanctuary there” (*The Holy War*, Illustrated with notes by George Burder, Reiner edition, 345).

The scene shifts from spiritual vigor to the strategies of the wicked. Diabolus is willing to ply all his tools to devour those whom he seeks, and he is willing to organize his attacks carefully for greatest injury. He appoints nine counter-captains – nine captains to counter the nine appointed by Immanuel. What does an army of Doubters look like?

Shaddai’s Captains	Diabolus’ Captains	Color	Scutcheon (shield w/ coat of arms)	Standard - Bearer	Troops
Boanerges (Mark 3:17)					
Conviction (Deut 33:2)					
Judgment (Mt. 13:41-42)					
Execution (Mt. 3:10)					
Credence					
Good-hope (Heb. 6:19)					
Charity					
Innocent					
Patience (Heb. 6:12)					

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*Sulphur (or brimstone) typically is considered yellow. Why Bunyan uses blue, I'm not sure.

**Bunyan lists a Captain Cruel later in the reading as one specially assigned to attack Feel-gate, but Captain Cruel is not in the initial list of captains.

What is the connection between the identity of Diabolus' captains and the standard-bearer of each one?

What do the troops serving under each captain represent?

What can a simple comparison of the names of Shaddai's captains and the names of Diabolus' captains suggest?

The authority structure of Diabolus' army fleshes out the realities of Ephesians 6:12, alerting us to the reality that we do not fight against flesh and blood, but against authorities and the rulers of the darkness of this world. Behind the faces of these captains are rulers of darkness energizing them in their deeds. This is very much in keeping with what we see in Isaiah 14:4; 12-15 (where the king of Babylon is energized by Lucifer) and Ezekiel 28:12-19 (where the prince of Tyrus is portrayed in language that really can only be true of Satan).

Diabolus - King

Mr. Incredulity – Lord General

Seven Superior Captains (Rulers of Darkness)

Reformadoes (Fallen angels)

Nine Captains

Diabolus' army's initial and rebuffed assault focused on the Ear-Gate, the most strategic point of defense of the city. The stones hurled from the slings within the city resisted him until he retreated (James 4:7). His second approach was more sustained and sought to build up entry mounds by which he might besiege the city, but this foray was also rebuffed by the slings. The four mounds are named for himself and three other characters, each of whose names is drawn from mythology.

Diabolus opts for a less-combative policy and adopts an approach designed to wear down the Mansoulians' resistance. First, his obnoxious drummer inundates the town with incessant noise. Second, Captain Sepulchre, who is the very image of death itself,

attempts to paralyze the Mansoulans with fear of him, though the townsmen are wise not to give him heed as Immanuel has effectively taken the ability to sting away from death.

The continuing threats propel the Mansoulans to petition the Lord Secretary (Holy Spirit) for a renewing of His work in them. His tepid and still wounded response depressed them and left them even more vulnerable. Would He not come immediately to their assistance? Ahh, but His wait drew out their faith a bit more, and they studied his enigmatic answer until they had faith enough to believe He had not utterly forsaken them, but would actually come to their aid in a timely manner.

The bolstered faith of the Mansoulans leads Diabolus to try yet another tactic from among his many strategies. What strategy, very unlike his raucous roaring, does he employ?

“but having all so besugared his lips; he seemed to be a very sweet-mouthed, peaceable prince, designing nothing for humor’s sake, nor to be revenged on Mansoul for injuries by them done to him; but the welfare, and good, and advantage of the town and people therein, was now, as he said, his only design.”

Mansoul’s sustained resistance motivates Diabolus to more intense degrees of assault. He positions his captains at various gates, with one of his primary aims being to disable Mouth-gate by filling it with dirt. What seems to be the point of this move?

All of Mansoul’s watchfulness and diligent obedience keeps Diabolus aloof, and disheartens his captains and troops. The greater the assault, the more the Doubting Army was greeted with resistance and shows of open allegiance to Immanuel, even when their resistance resulted in debilitating wounds. They refused to succumb to doubt and disbelief, and in turn, dealt the Doubting Army deathly blows.

Lord Willbewill’s searching, diligent effort to rid the town of all Diabolonians nets even the capture of Mr. Anything, the character who long ago brought Mr. Tradition, Mr. Human Wisdom, and Mr. Human Invention to serve in Immanuel’s army (Lesson 5). Mr. Anything, represents “indifference about religion—a conformity, or opposition to it, as convenience requires” (*The Holy War*, Illustrated with notes by George Burder, Reiner edition, 367).

The victorious overtones hold great promise for Mansoul’s future, if she can simply continue in the things she has learned and has been assured of Yet, we must all remember Paul’s warning to those who think they stand: *Take heed, lest you fall* (1 Corinthians 10:12).

Vocabulary:

- Bonny – pleasing to see
- Blithe – having a carefree, happy, lighthearted spirit
- Jolly – as a name, Jolly is being used in a negative connotation of preoccupying merriment
- Griggish – not entirely sure 😊
- Rake-all – someone enslaved to immoral conduct. Rakes are frequently stock characters in novels. Often a rake is a man who wastes his (usually inherited) fortune on wine, women and song, incurring lavish debts in the process (Wikipedia).