

HEALING ON THE SABBATH ARMOR AND WEAPONS

December 10, 2023
10th Sunday of Luke
Revision E

Gospel: Luke 13:10-17
Epistle: Ephesians 6:10-17

Today's Gospel lesson is not used at all in the West.

Table of Contents

Background: Jesus and the Sabbath Laws1491
Gospel: Luke 13:10-171495

Background: Jesus and the Sabbath Laws

The Mosaic Law concerning the Sabbath was very clear, specific and strict; and the Law had teeth in it. For example:

Mosaic Law	Reference
Complete rest was required.	Exodus 23:12, 31:15, 35:2
One could not even kindle a fire (to cook a meal).	Exodus 35:3
All cooking had to be done the day before.	Exodus 16:23-29
No gathering of wood for the day after the Sabbath was allowed either.	Numbers 15:32-36
This was one of the Ten Commandments.	Exodus 20:9-11, Deuteronomy 5:13-15
The death penalty was prescribed for anyone breaking the Sabbath.	Exodus 31:15, 35:2
One could not carry heavy loads or use pack animals to do so either. The day of rest applied to animals also.	Exodus 20:10, Deuteronomy 5:14, Jeremiah 17:21-22
One could not travel on the Sabbath but had to stay in one's place and rest.	Exodus 16:29
Later this traveling restriction was limited to "a Sabbath day's journey" of 2000 cubits ¹ (about half a mile).	Acts 1:12
No buying and selling were allowed on the Sabbath. Nehemiah locked the gates of Jerusalem to prevent Gentile vendors from selling on the Sabbath.	Nehemiah 10:31, 13:15-21

These Sabbath rules did not just appear suddenly with Moses. In ancient Babylon, even prior to Abraham, there was a Sabbath observance². It was not as strict as the Sabbath of the

Copyright © Mark Kern 2008

¹ 2000 cubits is the distance between the Ark and the people as Israel traveled in the desert (Joshua 3:4) and also the limit of the pasturelands outside the Levitical cities (Numbers 35:4-5).

² Merrill F. Unger, Unger's Bible Dictionary, Moody Press, Chicago, 1967, p. 939. The origin of the "Sabbath" went back to pre-Semitic days, and the name "Sabbath" is actually of Babylonian origin. This day was described on cuneiform tablets as "a day of rest for the soul". In Accadian times (early Babylonian), the Sabbath was a day on which certain work was forbidden.

Mosaic Law and it was also tied to astrology. Other ancient countries had Sabbath traditions also. Thus, when the Lord commanded the Sabbath observation to remember how He created the world in six days and rested on the seventh (Exodus 31:15-17, 20:9-11), this was probably what other cultures commemorated also.

Tertullian described³ the gist of the Mosaic Law as having been given in embryo to Adam in the Garden of Eden, and that if Adam and Eve had obeyed it, they would not have fallen. Thus, the Gentiles had the Law prior to Moses. This is reflected in the Sabbath laws of other cultures prior to Moses

But also tied in to the Sabbath observation was a recalling of the time Israel was being “worked to death” in Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:15). Thus, the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27). This is very apparent from a careful re-reading of the original Sabbath commands where the whole point is complete rest (Exodus 23:12, 31:15-17, 35:2; Deuteronomy 5:14).

The Sabbath was more than just rest, however. It was also a holy day (Exodus 16:23, 20:11, 31:15), and a day of gladness (Numbers 10:10). On this day, the daily offering was doubled (four lambs versus two, see Numbers 28:3-15) and the showbread was set out in the Holy Place (Leviticus 24:8) before the Lord. The Sabbaths were also to be a sign (or omen) between Israel and God “that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them” (Ezekiel 20:12, 20). Thus, there was to be a focus on the things of God and on doing good.

In the true spirit of the Sabbath, Jesus did a number of healings on the Sabbath. For example:

Healing	Reference
The paralytic (4 th Sunday of Pascha)	John 5:9
A man with a withered hand	Matthew 12:10, Mark 3:2, Luke 6:7
The man born blind (6 th Sunday of Pascha)	John 9:14
A woman’s hunchback (today’s Gospel)	Luke 13:14
A man with dropsy	Luke 14:3

When the Scribes and Pharisees criticized Jesus for these things – saying that He was working on the Sabbath – Jesus replied:

The paradoxical aspect of all this confrontation Jesus had with the Jewish leaders over the keeping of the Sabbath is that they thought they were upholding the letter of the Law while Jesus was merely doing good on the Sabbath, which is what the Sabbath was for. And Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:6-8, Mark 2:27-28) for He gave the Sabbath Law to Moses and made the Sabbath for man.

³ Tertullian, Answer to the Jews, I, iii, 2.

Work Allowed on the Sabbath	Reference
The priests work on the Sabbath in performing all the sacrifices.	Matthew 12:5
Circumcision is performed on the 8 th day, whether that day is a Sabbath or not.	John 7:22
The Jewish leaders will lead their animals to water on the Sabbath.	Luke 13:15
They will also pull their animals out of a hole on the Sabbath.	Luke 14:5
He also challenged them regarding Mosaic Law regulations for or against doing good on the Sabbath.	John 7:23, Mark 3:4, Luke 6:9
The bottom line was: He's Lord of the Sabbath. He's the One who gave the Law to Moses.	Matthew 12:8, Mark 2:28, Luke 6:5
Mercy, not sacrifice was to be the spirit of the Sabbath.	Matthew 12:7, Hosea 6:6

John of Damascus stated⁴ that the Sabbath rest was made for people who were carnal and worldly. Since they did not devote their whole life to God, the Law bound them, with stiff penalties for disobedience, to devote a small part of their week to distraction from worldly things. Those people who did devote their whole life to God are noted as sometimes “breaking the Sabbath” in doing the Lord’s will.

“The seventh day is called the Sabbath and signifies rest. For in it God rested from all His works, as the divine Scripture says; and so the number of the days goes up to seven and then circles back again and begins at the first. This is the precious number with the Jews. God ordained that it should be held in honor, and that in no chance fashion but with the imposition of most heavy penalties for the transgression. And it was not in a simple fashion that He ordained this, but for certain reasons understood mystically by the spiritual and clear-sighted”.

“God, knowing the denseness of the Israelites and their carnal love and propensity towards material in everything, made this Law: (1) in order that the servant and the cattle should rest as it is written, for the righteous man regards the life of his beast. (2) In order that when they take their ease from the distraction of material things, they may gather together to God, spending the whole of the seventh day in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, the study of the divine Scriptures and resting in God”.

“For when the Law did not exist and there was no divinely inspired Scripture, the Sabbath was not consecrated to God. But when the Scripture was given by Moses, the Sabbath was consecrated to God in order that on it they, who do not dedicate their whole life to God, and who do not make their desire subservient to Him as though to a Father, may on that day discuss the purpose of the Sabbath. Thus they may abstract a small, truly a most insignificant, portion of their life for the service of God, and this from fear of the chastisements and punishments, which threaten transgressors. For the Law is not made for a righteous man but for the unrighteous. Moses was the first to endure fasting with God for forty days and again for another forty. Thus, he afflicted himself with hunger on the Sabbaths, although the Law forbade self-affliction on the Sabbath. But if they should object that this took place before the Law, what will they say about Elijah

⁴ John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, IV, 23.

the Tishbite who accomplished a journey of forty days on one meal? For he, by thus afflicting himself on the Sabbaths not only with hunger but also with the forty days' journeying, broke the Sabbath. Yet God, Who gave the Law, was not angry with him but showed Himself to him on Horeb as a reward for his virtue. And what will they say about Daniel? Did he not spend three weeks without food? And again, did not all Israel circumcise the child on the Sabbath, if it happened to be the eighth day after birth? And do they not hold the great fast⁵, which the Law enjoins if it falls on the Sabbath? And further, do not the priests and the Levites profane the Sabbath in the works of the tabernacle and yet are held blameless? If an ox should fall into a pit on the Sabbath, he who pulls it out is blameless, while he who neglects to do so is condemned. And did not all the Israelites surround the walls of Jericho, bearing the Ark of God for seven days, in which the Sabbath was included? The observance of the Sabbath was devised for the purpose of securing leisure to worship God in order that they might, both servant and beast of burden, devote a very small share to Him and be at rest. For the carnal that were still childish and in the bonds of the elements of the world, were unable to conceive of anything beyond the body and the letter".

Gospel: Luke 13:10-17

The Gospel lesson took place in late 29 AD just before the Feast of the Dedication (i.e. Hanukkah or the Festival of Lights, John 10:22) and probably occurred in Perea on the Eastern side of the Jordan as Jesus was heading toward Jerusalem (Luke 13:22). Jesus had been teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath (Luke 13:10) and He used the occasion to give an important teaching on the Sabbath itself. There was a woman who had a severe hunchback or spinal injury such that she couldn't straighten her back (Luke 13:11). Jesus remarked that Satan had bound her like this for 18 years (Luke 13:16). This seems very similar to the affliction of the Patriarch Job by Satan, both in the destruction of his family and property (Job 1:9-22) and the destruction of his health (Job 2:4-10). It would seem like all health problems might be traceable to Satan in some way. For more discussion on this, see the Gospel lesson for the 6th Sunday of Luke.

Knowing that He would get a reaction, Jesus called the woman over to Him, laid His hands on her and said, "woman, you are loosed from your infirmity" (Luke 13:12). The Synagogue Ruler (equivalent today to the pastor of a church) rebuked Jesus publicly for doing work on the Sabbath (Luke 13:14). The Synagogue Ruler undoubtedly had the backing of the other attendants and council of the synagogue since Jesus' reply addressed a number of people (Luke 13:15). Jesus' reply compared the practice of the Synagogue Ruler and the others in caring for their animals on the Sabbath. The animals needed to be unbound from their stall and led to water; why couldn't a daughter of Abraham also be unbound? (Luke 13:15,16).

Jesus stated His reply very strongly as a confrontation, calling the Synagogue Ruler a hypocrite (Luke 13:15). The result was that the Synagogue Ruler and his attendants were put to shame while the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things done by Jesus (Luke 13:17).

⁵ That is, the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:27-32)

Cyril of Alexandria made⁶ three points in commenting on this:

1. God had commanded men to rest on the Sabbath. When Jesus gave rest to the crippled woman freeing her from diseases, and the Synagogue Ruler forbid it, plainly it was the Synagogue Ruler and not Jesus who was breaking the Law of the Sabbath.
2. Jesus did no manual labor in healing the woman. If the Synagogue Ruler wished to forbid labor of the mouth, does this mean that one can't sing Psalms or pray on the Sabbath either?
3. The Synagogue Ruler was not really angry on account of the Sabbath Law being broken, but because he saw Christ honored and worshipped as God. This was concealed in his heart and the Sabbath Law ruse was just a pretext. For this reason, he was most excellently convicted by the Lord and called a hypocrite.

On another occasion about a year and a half earlier (early 28 AD) in Galilee, the Scribes and Pharisees criticized Jesus for munching on heads of grain that they picked as they walked through the grain fields (Mark 2:23-24). They had interpreted the Sabbath regulations as prohibiting work such as "harvesting grain", even though the Law did not address such minutia as walking and munching.

Later that day in early 28 AD, when Jesus was in the synagogue, they watched Him closely so they would have witnesses against Him if He did any healing on the Sabbath (Mark 3:1-2). Knowing this, Jesus asked a man with a withered hand to step forward (Mark 3:3). Addressing the Scribes and Pharisees, He asked them: "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they kept silent. Looking around, He was grieved by the hardness of their hearts. So Jesus told the man to stretch out his hand and it was restored. The Pharisees then went out and began plotting with the Herodians (their enemies) on how they might destroy Jesus (Mark 3:4-6).

All this represents taking the Sabbath Law to an unmerciful, legalistic extreme. Christ had said, "For the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath" speaking of Himself. Referring to our humanity, He said, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28, Luke 6:5). John Chrysostom commented⁷ as follows:

"Why then was he punished who was gathering sticks? (Numbers 15:32-36) If the laws were to be despised at the beginning, of course they would not be observed afterwards".

"The Sabbath at first conferred many great benefits; for instance, it made them gentle towards those of their household, and humane; it taught them God's providence and the creation; it trained them by degrees to abstain from wickedness, and disposed them to regard the things of the Spirit. Did Christ then repeal a thing so profitable? Far from it; no! He greatly enhanced it. For it was time for them to be trained in all things by the higher rules".

Irenaeus stated⁸ that the Jewish leaders, in their desire to uphold their traditions, were unwilling to be subject to the Law of God, which prepared them for the coming of Christ.

⁶ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 97, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983.

⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXIX, 3.

⁸ Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV, 12.

“For not only by actual transgression did they set aside the Law of God, but they also set up their own law in opposition to it, which is termed, even to the present day, the pharisaical law. In this law they suppress certain things, add others, and interpret others, as they think proper, which their teachers use, each one in particular. Desiring to uphold these traditions, they were unwilling to be subject to the Law of God, which prepared them for the coming of Christ. They even blamed the Lord for healing on the Sabbath, which the Law did not prohibit. For they themselves, in one sense, performed acts of healing upon the Sabbath, when they circumcised a man on that day. But through tradition and the pharisaical Law, they did not blame themselves for transgressing the command of God, and for not keeping the commandment of the Law, which is the love of God”.

Chrysostom also stated⁹ that Jesus had prepared the Jewish leaders for His healing on the Sabbath by driving the moneychangers and merchandisers out of the Temple. In all His doings, He was clarifying to them various aspects of the Law that He had given to Moses.

“Do you see their excessive malice, and how the benefits done to others incensed them more than reproofs? At one time He said that they made the Temple ‘a den of thieves’ (Mark 11:15-19), showing that what they sold was gotten by theft, pillage, and covetousness, and that they were rich through other men’s calamities; at another time, He called it ‘a house of merchandise’ (John 2:13-17), pointing to their shameless trafficking. Why did He do this? Since he was about to heal on the Sabbath, and to do many such things, which they thought were transgressions of the Law, in order that He might not seem to do this as though He had come to be some rival God and opponent of His Father, He took occasion to correct any such suspicion of theirs. One who had exhibited so much zeal for the House was not likely to oppose Him who was Lord of the House, and who was worshipped in it”.

Tertullian noted¹⁰ that there are distinctions of “work” on the Sabbath: God’s work and man’s work. Christ sought to clarify this distinction with the Jewish leaders and included a number of examples. As the “Lord of the Sabbath”, He could have annulled the Sabbath, since it was He that instituted it, but He didn’t since God’s work continues today.

“The Pharisees were in utter error concerning the Law of the Sabbath, not observing that its terms were conditional, when it commanded rest from labor, making certain distinctions of labor. For when it says, ‘In it you shall not do any work of yours’ (Exodus 20:10), by the word *yours*¹¹ it restricts the prohibition to human work — which everyone performs in his own employment or business — and not to divine work. Now the work of healing or preserving is not proper to man, but to God. So, in the Law it says, ‘You shall not do any manner of work in it’ (Exodus 12:16 LXX), except what is to be done for any soul, that is to say, in the matter of delivering the soul¹²; because what is God’s work may be done for the salvation of the soul. When Christ wanted to initiate them into this meaning of the Law by the restoration of the withered hand, He asked, ‘Is it lawful on the

⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, XXIII, 2.

¹⁰ Tertullian, Five Books Against Marcion, II, ii, 4, 12.

¹¹ Tertullian connects this to the previous verse “all your work”.

¹² That is, saving life.

Sabbath to do good, or not? To save life, or to destroy it?’ (Luke 6:9) In order that He might remind them what works the Law of the Sabbath forbids and what it commands, He was called ‘Lord of the Sabbath’ (Luke 6:5), because He maintained the Sabbath as His own institution”.

“Even if He had annulled the Sabbath, He would have had the right to do so, as being its Lord, and as He who instituted it. But He did not utterly destroy it, in order that it might be plain that the Creator did not break the Sabbath, even at the time when the ark was carried around Jericho. That was really God’s work, which He had ordered for the sake of the lives of His servants when exposed to the perils of war”.

“He has in a certain place expressed an aversion of Sabbaths, by calling them *your Sabbaths* (Isaiah 1:13-14 LXX), reckoning them as men’s Sabbaths, not His own, because they were celebrated without the fear of God by a people full of iniquities, and loving God ‘with the lip, not the heart’ (Isaiah 29:13). He put His own Sabbaths (those, that is, which were kept according to His prescription) in a different position. By the same prophet, in a later passage, He declared them to be ‘true, delightful, and inviolable’ (Isaiah 58:13, 56:2). Thus, Christ did not at all rescind the Sabbath. He kept the Law, and did a work, which was beneficial to the life of His disciples, for He indulged them with the relief of food when they were hungry (Matthew 14:15-20), and cured the withered hand (Matthew 12:9-14). In each case, He stated, ‘I came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it’ (Matthew 5:17). He fulfilled the Law, while interpreting its condition. Moreover, He exhibited in a clear light the different kinds of work, while doing what the Law excuses from the sacredness of the Sabbath, while imparting to the Sabbath day itself an additional sanctity by His own action. In like manner, the prophet Elisha, on this day, restored to life the dead son of the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4:32-37). It was *proper employment* for the Sabbaths of old to do good, to save life, not to destroy it; Christ introduced nothing new, which was not after the example, the gentleness and the mercy of the Creator. He fulfilled the prophetic announcement, ‘The weak hands are strengthened’, as were also ‘the feeble knees’ (Isaiah 35:3) of the two paralytics” (Mark 2:1-12, John 5:1-9).

Sometime during the 1st Century, Christians began meeting for worship on Sunday rather than Saturday, which was the traditional Sabbath. This was done to proclaim the Resurrection, which occurred on a Sunday, and also to distance themselves from the unrighteous Jews. The Apostle John refers to this in Revelation 1:10, where Revelation was written in about 95 AD. Ignatius of Antioch (107 AD) refers¹³ to the Lord’s Day having replaced the Sabbath as the time for worship. The Didache also refers¹⁴ to the Lord’s Day. Sunday was seen then as comparable to the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles represented the coming of the Kingdom of God in Glory and the eighth day of the feast – a Sabbath – represented the Feast as stretching into eternity. It was on this eighth day – the Great Day – that Jesus stood up and said, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water” (John 7:37-38). Where the living water refers to the Holy Spirit (John 7:39)!

¹³ Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Magnesians*, 9:1.

¹⁴ The Didache, or the Teaching of the Twelve, from the late 1st or early 2nd Century, 14:1.

Taking the Sabbath as Christ meant it to be taken in our lives today, we as individuals often need healing on the Sabbath also. Our culture sometimes drives us to be workaholics where working harder or longer gives us the illusion that we will catch up. When demons try to bind us with this treadmill lifestyle, we should remember that the Sabbath Laws brought to mind how Israel was being “worked to death” by slavery in Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:15). We should also remember Jesus’ gentle rebuke to Martha, Lazarus’ sister, who had gotten into a workaholic state serving God: “One thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part (i.e. sitting at Jesus’ feet, hearing His Word) which will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:41-42).

The Lord used as an example of the spirit of the Sabbath how the priests under the Old Covenant worked on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:5). This was hard work also: killing, gutting, and butchering animals one after another to prepare the peoples’ sacrifices. Yet the priests also had days off to spend time with their families; they didn’t have to work seven days per week. For those of us that have to work on the Lord’s Day, we should follow their example and plan for some time off on other days to devote to Sabbath type activities.

ARMOR AND WEAPONS

December 10, 2023
27th Sunday after Pentecost
Revision E

Epistle: Ephesians 6:10-17

Today's Epistle lesson is used extensively in the West during the month of September.

Epistle: Ephesians 6:10-17	1500
Background to Ephesians.....	1500
Offensive Weapons of the 1 st Century	1501
Swords:.....	1501
Bow and Arrow:.....	1502
Sling:	1502
Spear:	1502
Defensive Armor of the First Century	1503
Shield:	1503
Helmet:.....	1503
Breastplate:.....	1504
Belt:.....	1504
Using the Armor of God.....	1506

Background to Ephesians

Paul wrote his Epistle to the Ephesians from house-arrest in Rome in about 62 AD. He had first met with and reasoned with Jews in the synagogue there in about 52 AD on his Second Missionary Journey (Acts 18:19). Although Paul did not stay there long in 52 AD (Acts 18:20), he left Aquila (of the Seventy) and his wife Priscilla there and promised to return (Acts 18:18-21). About 53 AD, Paul returned on his Third Missionary Journey and spent two years in Ephesus (Acts 19:8-10). At this time, the church took a separate direction distinct from the synagogue. On his return to Jerusalem at the end of his Third Missionary Journey in 57 AD, Paul had a very emotional farewell meeting (Acts 20:37-38) with the elders of the Church (Acts 20:17), knowing he may never return.

Ephesus had had a number of distinguished visitors over the years. The Apostle John and the Virgin Mary had gone there to escape the bloodbath of Herod (Agrippa) trying to please the Jews – which resulted in the martyrdom of James the son of Zebedee and the imprisonment of Peter (Acts 12:1-4). That bloodbath began in 44 AD and ended with the death of Herod soon thereafter (Acts 12:20-23). Apollos (of the Seventy) also was in Ephesus in 53 AD and vigorously refuted the Jews showing from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah (Acts 18:24-28).

After the death of the Virgin Mary in the mid 50's AD, the Apostle John returned to Ephesus and worked with a number of Churches in that area: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea (Revelation 2, 3). John may have been in the area when Paul wrote his Epistle.

We might note that Paul, in his humility, had been preparing the saints of Asia Minor for the Apostle John between 46 AD and c. 55 AD. When the Apostles in Jerusalem divided up the world after Pentecost and drew lots to see who should go where, John had drawn the lot for Asia Minor. But John was also constrained from going there by the Lord until the death of the Virgin Mary (John 19:25-27).

Today's Epistle lesson refers to the equipping of the 1st century foot soldier. From a quick glance at the items referred to that are applied to the Christian life, most are defensive weapons. And the one offensive weapon referred to is one the Lord uses, not us.

Offensive Weapons of the 1st Century

Considering just those associated with the foot soldier (as opposed to large battering rams and catapults), offensive weapons consisted of:

- Swords
- Bows and arrows
- Slings
- Spears

Swords:

Swords were made in many different styles and lengths but most had two edges. Many ancient armies formed the hilt of their swords in a shape representing one of their gods. Thus the term sword carried a spiritual dimension. When the Scriptures speak of the Lord sending a sword against someone, the implication is judgment and calamity (compare Ezekiel 5:17, 14:17, 21:9; Deuteronomy 32:41-43; Jeremiah 12:12; Leviticus 26:25; Isaiah 34:5). Lies and deceit by evildoers is also referred to as a tongue sharpened like a sword (Psalm 57:4, 64:3; Proverbs 12:18, 25:18).

In today's Epistle lesson the Word (Greek *rhema*: a message or matter) of God is called the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17). This is also spoken of in Hebrews 4:12, where the Word (Greek *logos*: word) of God is called living, powerful, dividing soul and spirit, and discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart. This obviously refers to the Son of God, the Word (John 1:1-14). At the end of time, the Word (Greek: *logos*) is described as having a sharp two-edged sword that goes out of His mouth (Revelation 1:16, 19:13-15; Isaiah 11:4, 49:2).

The message (*rhema*) of God, or the sword of the Spirit, is thus not the same as the Word (*logos*) of God. The Word of God is a person, the Son of God. John Chrysostom referred¹⁵ to the Word of God as the ordinance of God or the word of command and the Name of Christ!

“If we keep His commandments, we shall kill and slay the dragon, himself ‘the crooked serpent’ (Isaiah 27:1) by these. ‘You shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the evil one’ (Ephesians 6:16); that he might not puff them up, he shows them that above all things they stand in need of God”.

¹⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XXIV, v. 22.

Bow and Arrow:

The longbow was one of the principal weapons of the Hebrew armies. For example, under Jehoshaphat, the tribe of Benjamin had an army of 200,000 men armed with longbows and shields (2 Chronicles 17:17). Some of the stronger men used a longbow made of bronze (2 Samuel 22:35, Psalm 18:34) which was highly feared (Job 20:24) due to the higher velocity of its arrows (which could probably penetrate most armor and shields). Hunters today use longbows to bag big game as large as elk (up to 1200 lbs) and a separate hunting season exists in most states set aside for bow hunters. Today's hunting bows have the killing power of a high powered rifle. The same was certainly true for the bronze bow and possibly also for the longbow.

The imagery of the longbow is used in Scripture to describe the judgment and wrath of God (Deuteronomy 32:41, Psalm 45:5, 58:7, 64:7). His arrows are described as like lightning, and they scatter, confuse and rout His enemies (2 Samuel 22:15, Psalm 18:35, 144:6). For those who don't repent, the Lord has prepared fire arrows (Psalm 7:12-13). In our Epistle lesson, Satan shoots fire arrows at the righteous (Ephesians 6:16). Chrysostom stated¹⁶ that Satan's fire arrows are both temptations and vile desires; they are "fiery" in that such is the character of these desires. The righteous also are on the receiving end of some of the Lord's arrows as they go about bearing their cross (Job 6:4, Psalm 38:2).

The wicked are described in Scripture in terms of arrows also. With their tongue and by speaking lies, they are referred to as a sharp or deadly arrow (Jeremiah 9:8, Psalm 64:3, Proverbs 25:18). By their attitude, they are compared to a deceitful or treacherous bow (Hosea 7:16, Psalm 78:57).

Sling:

Most people are familiar with the account of David killing Goliath by imbedding a smooth stone in Goliath's forehead (1 Samuel 17:40-50). Not so commonly known is that the army of Israel from the time of the Judges to the time of the captivity consisted of a contingent of slingers (2 Chronicles 26:14). In a civil war between the tribe of Benjamin and the rest of Israel, an army of 26,000 men of Benjamin that included 700 left handed slingers routed an army of 400,000 men of Israel (Judges 20:15-21). Each of the 700 slingers "could sling a stone at a hair and not miss." The sling was also used by the Greek and Roman armies using lead balls instead of stones. The only other reference to the sling in the Bible is the analogy of the Lord's rejection of the wicked as slinging them out of His presence (Jeremiah 10:18, 1 Samuel 5:29).

Spear:

Spears were made in various lengths and weights in antiquity, where longer, heavier ones were used by cavalry and shorter, lighter ones were used by infantry for thrusting. Generally, a warrior carried just one spear, if any. Unlike the longbow and the sling, the hurled spear was a one-use weapon, and therefore of lesser importance. The spear, due to its slower velocity, could be dodged or avoided easier than the arrow or the sling stone. For example, King Saul hurled his spear at David twice and at his son Jonathan once and missed all three times (1 Samuel 18:10-11, 19:9-10, 20:33). Being bigger and heavier than an arrow or sling stone, it could probably penetrate shield and armor better than an arrow or sling stone.

¹⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XXIV, vv. 14-16.

The only references to spears in the New Testament are the piercing of Jesus' side on the cross (John 19:34) and for riot control when Paul was in Roman custody (Acts 23:23). In terms of our Epistle lesson, one might think of spears as just large catapult-launched arrows or fiery arrows (Ephesians 6:16).

Defensive Armor of the First Century

Defensive equipment consisted primarily of shield, helmet, breastplate, belt and greaves, all of which is generally called armor.

Shield:

Different size shields were used in antiquity. The Hebrew word *tsinnah* refers to a large shield that covered the whole body. On the other hand, the Hebrew word *magen* referred to a smaller shield that might be used for hand-to-hand fighting. The large shields were probably about twice the area of the smaller shields (2 Chronicles 9:15-16). The Greek word *thureos* in Ephesians 6:16 is equivalent to the Hebrew *tsinnah* and is the larger shield. Warriors often had a younger soldier serve as armor-bearer, where the armor-bearer's job was to carry the large shield (1 Samuel 17:21; 2 Samuel 18:15).

Most shields were made using a wood frame covered with rawhide. Some used metal covering also such as brass or copper, or even gold or silver for ceremonial shields. While a shield probably wouldn't stop a direct hit from an arrow, it will deflect the trajectory of the arrow slightly such that the body armor can deflect the arrow via a glancing angle. In order for the shield of faith in Ephesians 6:16 to quench or extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one, it would need to be one with a metal surface. An arrow striking the metal surface may penetrate the metal, but any flammable material attached to the arrow will remain behind on the metal surface and burn itself out harmlessly.

The allusion, then, implies that faith is the instrument that will extinguish or deflect the flames of the passions that the devil and his legions tempt us with.

Helmet:

Helmets in ancient times were made of various materials: quilted linen, iron and bronze. Hebrew and Philistine helmets were made of bronze (1 Samuel 17:5, 38). Roman helmets probably were also and had a characteristic 6 inch rooster plume along the top and back of the helmet. This served as a shock absorber for blows to the head as well as making the warrior look taller than he was. The helmet also had extensions that came down far enough to protect the sides and back of the neck.

Our Epistle lesson refers to the helmet of salvation (Ephesians 6:17). About 11-12 years earlier, Paul had written to the Thessalonians, encouraging those who are of the day (that is, who walk in the light – Ephesians 5:8) to put on the hope of salvation as a helmet. Isaiah also used this illustration where the Lord Himself put on salvation as a helmet (Isaiah 59:17).

The Apostle Peter wrote, “Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the Grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:13). The revelation of Jesus Christ is the hope of salvation and resting in this keeps our minds from being dragged down into fleshly activities (Romans 8:5, Philippians 3:19, 2 Corinthians 11:3). The helmet, then, becomes both hope and peace as “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7).

Breastplate:

The breastplate might also be called body armor, scale armor, or a coat of mail. However, it was not like the woven metal used in medieval times. Instead it consisted of many small metal plates sewn onto a leather garment. Traditionally, it was not worn by everyone but was worn primarily by those who did not carry a shield, such as charioteers and archers (Jeremiah 46:4, 51:3). It did not cover everything; there were some small gaps such as between the sleeves and the body especially if the arms were extended forward (1 Kings 22:34; 2 Chronicles 18:33). King Saul wore scale armor as a breastplate as did Goliath since both would be prime targets for archers. Goliath’s scale armor by itself weighed 125 pounds (1 Samuel 17:5).

Chrysostom spoke¹⁷ of righteousness as a life of universal virtue that is as impenetrable as a breastplate. Such a life no one shall ever be able to overthrow. He may be wounded, but no one cuts through him. Thus, Christ said (Matthew 5:6): “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled”.

Paul spoke to the Romans about putting on the armor of light (or scale armor of light or breastplate of light) in order to cast off the works of darkness (Romans 13:12). He defines putting on the armor of light as walking properly as in the day, putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, and making no provisions for the flesh to fulfill its lusts (Romans 13:13-14). To do so is to put on righteousness; Isaiah spoke of the Lord putting on righteousness as a breastplate (Isaiah 59:17). This is also referred to as a breastplate of faith and love – which is righteousness (1 Thessalonians 5:8). Our Epistle lesson speaks of us putting on righteousness as a breastplate just like the Lord did (Ephesians 6:14).

Belt:

To have one’s “loins girded” referred to fastening a wide leather or fabric belt around one’s waist to tie the long flowing clothes to one’s body and get ready for action. For example, when the angel appeared to Peter in prison, he told Peter to “gird yourself and tie on your sandals” (Acts 12:8); the angel then busted Peter out.

The Epistle lesson speaks of “having girded your waist with truth” (Ephesians 6:14). This implies having one’s life together. Chrysostom refers¹⁸ to the loins as the foundation of the body both above and below the waist. Girding one’s loins then, binds and holds together this foundation and supports it. Thus, the spiritual loins of our soul are girded with truth; we abhor falsehood and lying and seek out the truth in every line of life. Unbelievers, on the other hand, are incapable of entertaining one deep thought about God or anything above human reasoning because their loins are ungirt.

¹⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XXIV, 14-17.

¹⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XXIII, v. 14.

Isaiah spoke of his day as a time when: “Justice is turned back and righteousness stands far away; for truth has stumbled in the street and uprightness cannot enter” (Isaiah 59:14). He also spoke about the shoot from the stem of Jesse (i.e. Jesus): “Righteousness will be the belt about His loins and faithfulness the belt about His waist” (Isaiah 11:5). The belt was worn on top of the scale armor or breastplate to hold it in place. Thus truth and righteousness go together.

The Apostle John wrote about walking in the light as practicing the truth and walking in truth such that there is no cause for stumbling (1 John 1:6-8, 2 John 1:4, 3 John 1:1-8, 1 John 2:10). Speaking to the Pharisees, Jesus said, “You are of your father the devil, who does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him” (John 8:44). Like them, others “have strayed concerning the truth” (2 Timothy 2:18). With the belt of truth around the breastplate (or scale armor) of righteousness, we can stand against the wiles of the devil (Ephesians 6:14, 11).

Greaves and Shoes:

Greaves are shin guards and were worn to protect the lower legs. The scale armor extended far enough below the hips to protect most of the upper legs. Goliath wore shin guards made from bronze (1 Samuel 17:6). The enemies of Israel were described as having shin guards that could be burned (Isaiah 9:5); this implies a leather construction probably reinforced with metal. Shin guards do not appear in the Scripture as part of Hebrew army equipment but may have been used.

Sandals (not shoes) were worn by almost everyone in ancient times. Amos 8:6 implies that sandals were relatively inexpensive; they also could be patched and repaired easily (Joshua 9:5, 13). Sandals were generally taken off indoors and often not worn at all around one’s house. One generally ate meals barefoot (Luke 7:38, John 13:5-6); an exception to this was during the Passover when one ate with his belt and sandals on in memory of the haste in leaving Egypt (Exodus 12:11). One also removed his sandals when entering the presence of God (Exodus 3:5, Joshua 5:15) and during times of mourning (2 Samuel 15:30, Ezekiel 24:17ff).

In the Epistle lesson, part of the armor of God includes having footwear in place, ready for action. This footwear is called the preparation of the Gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:15). In his letter to the Romans, Paul alludes to this by quoting Isaiah: “How shall they preach unless they are *sent*? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the Gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!’” (Romans 10:15, Isaiah 52:7). The “sending” in Romans 10:15 is the Greek word *apostello* from which we get the English word Apostle.

John Chrysostom mentioned¹⁹ another aspect of being prepared with footwear in place. He made an analogy to Israel leaving Egypt, eating the Passover lamb ‘with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand’ (Exodus 12:11). We have an encampment in the desert, where the encampment is our body (2 Corinthians 5:1) and the desert without virtue is the earth today, more desolate than the wilderness Moses passed through. We are on our journey home and we do not lay up any treasure in the desert. If the thief should come, we must in a moment arise and depart for our Exodus. Quoting the Lord: ‘Watch, for you know not at what hour the thief comes’ (Matthew 24:42-43) thus the Lord calls the thief death”.

¹⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XXIII, Moral.

Using the Armor of God

The whole point of putting on the armor of God is so that we might be able to stand against the wiles or scheming of the devil (Ephesians 6:11). This is how we become “strong in the Lord and in the power of His might” (Ephesians 6:10). Paul points out (Ephesians 6:12) that we need the armor of God to wrestle against:

- Principalities
- Authorities
- Powers (Romans 8:38, 1 Corinthians 15:24)
- The rulers of the darkness of this age
- Spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places
- Not against flesh and blood

The Principalities, Authorities and Powers are the names of various angelic (and demonic) ranks. For more details, see the Feast Day of the Archangels, November 8.

John Chrysostom comments²⁰ on this: “Paul does not speak against the fighting, nor against the hostilities, but against the ‘wiles.’ For this enemy is at war with us, not simply, nor openly, but by ‘wiles.’ To use ‘wiles’ is to deceive, to take by artifice or contrivance; stratagems is what those who seduce us use. That is, the devil never proposes sins to us in their proper colors”.

What is the point of Satan’s scheming? He will not end up victorious over the Lord; that has already been decided. His aim, however, is to corrupt us, to ruin the Church (1 Corinthians 3:17), and to have us cast out of heaven. Assisting Satan in this endeavor are the ranks of demons, called Principalities, Authorities, Powers and world rulers of this darkness (Ephesians 6:12). Chrysostom asks²¹:

“How, if we are unarmed, shall we be able to overcome? A harder warfare is this than human warfare and a fiercer conflict. Think how long a time this enemy has been wrestling and for what it is that he is fighting, and be more guarded than ever”.

Regarding being prepared for battle, Chrysostom stated²² that our preparation hinges on knowing the Scriptures.

“This is the cause of all evils: the not knowing the Scriptures. We go into battle without arms, and how are we going to come back safe? Thankful we should be if we come back safe knowing the Scriptures, let alone without them.

The armor is needed to withstand this scheming and deception in the evil day (Ephesians 6:13). Paul had just finished encouraging the Ephesians to walk carefully, redeeming the time, for the days are evil (Ephesians 5:16; see also the Epistle lesson for the 26th Sunday after Pentecost for more on redeeming the time). Paul had written to the Galatians a decade earlier that it is the will of God the Father that we be delivered from this present evil age (Galatians 1:4).

²⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XXII, v. 11.

²¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XXII, Moral.

²² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Colossians, IX, v. 16.

The Lord had said to the Seventy: “Behold I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy” (Luke 10:19). Chrysostom comments²³ that we do this by becoming light and by becoming good, which is contrary to the darkness.

“How then, are we to wrestle with the darkness? By becoming light! How with the spiritual hosts of wickedness? By becoming good! For wickedness is contrary to good, and light drives away darkness. If we have a mind, neither will we wrestle at all, for it is because we choose it that there is a struggle, since so great is the power of Him Who dwells in us. All power He has given us, both of wrestling and of not wrestling. It is because we are slothful that we have to wrestle with them. Then let us trample underfoot the power of the devil (Romans 16:20); let us trample underfoot our sins; I mean everything that pertains to this life: wrath, lust, vainglory, every passion”.

Chrysostom stated²⁴ that arms and armor are of no use unless first the soldier were posted in his own place and aroused from within. The first step is to know how to stand, which is synonymous with uprightness.

“We must arm him from within, and then from without.” Having done that, “the very first feature in tactics is to know how to stand well. And many things will depend on that.” For example, “Watch, stand fast in the Faith” (1 Corinthians 16:13). “So stand fast in the Lord” (Philippians 4:1). And again, “Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12). And again, “That you may be able, having done all, to stand” (Ephesians 6:13). “Doubtless then he does not mean merely any way of standing, but a correct way. And as many as have experience in wars know how great a point it is to know how to stand”. In this context *standing* is synonymous with uprightness.

In combating the darkness, we stand with:

- Scale armor of righteousness, faith and love
- Held in place with a belt of truth
- The shield of faith deflects temptation
- A helmet of the hope of salvation guards our minds against deceit
- Our feet shod with a readiness to speak the Gospel to those we encounter and ready to depart if called
- Taking up the sword of the Spirit

Except for the allusion to the sword, all the above equipment is defensive. Paul continues to describe how we take up the Sword of the Spirit: “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints” (Ephesians 6:18).

Just because we have all this armor in place and functioning doesn’t mean we will never be persecuted. As Paul wrote this Epistle, he was in chains (Ephesians 6:20) and under house-arrest in Rome. He also spoke about being pressed, perplexed, persecuted, struck down, etc. (2

²³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XXII, Moral.

²⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XXIII, v. 14.

Corinthians 4:8-9), but yet at the same time being strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man. As the persecution comes, the treasure within us gets refined (2 Corinthians 4:7). And the excellence of the power is manifested as being of God and not of us.

Chrysostom interpreted²⁵ “praying in the Spirit” as “seeking for the things which are according to God, nothing of this world, nothing pertaining to this life.” Chrysostom thought of “being watchful to the end” as implying both vigils (Church service lasting past midnight) and the wakefulness of the soul.

²⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XXIV, v. 22.