



## Preachers: God's battle axe

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### Abstract

This paper focuses on "Preachers: God's battle axe" is a reflection on the book of Prophet Jeremiah 51:21 – 24. It was emphasized that Horses and their riders, man and woman, shepherds and flocks; Husbandman and his yoke of oxen, Captains and Rulers, Babylon and Chaldea would be dealt with by God's axe. It delves into prevailing circumstances under which the battle axe must work such as death, inflation, looting, retrenchment, insecurity and spiritual. However, for effectiveness God's battle axe needs to demonstrate faith, filled with Holy Spirit, abide in Christ, dwell richly in the word of God, dedicated and committed with humility to fight successfully in the expansion of God's Kingdom here on earth.

**Keywords:** preachers, god's battle axe, shepherd and flocks, circumstances, abide in Christ for success

### 1. Introduction

Preachers have been God's battle Axe from generation to generation to pull down, scatter, demolish and to break the strong hold of the forces of darkness thereby depopulating kingdom of Satan and populating the kingdom of God. To do justice to this topic "Preachers; God's battle axe" the following tracks shall be followed: Introduction, definition and explanation of the key words, Biblical references on the use of axe, those to be destroyed with axe during Jeremiah's time. The scope of the battle field. The prevailing circumstances in the battle field today, what we need to do to be effective God's battle axe and conclusion.

### Preacher

A preacher is typically regarded as a person who delivers sermons or gives homilies, generally on religious topics <sup>[1]</sup>. It involves making speech about religion in a church or other public places, is from Latin word "Praedicare" meaning: to proclaim, make known, declare and reveal <sup>[2]</sup>. Although one can also preach on any of the components of any worldview or philosophy. There can also be preachers who has been accredited by a Church to lead worship and preach on a regular basis. Preacher p s an important role in the Church of Great Britain and other churches historically linked to it, and have also been important in English Social history.

### Axe

Axes are strong iron implements or tools capable of splitting and cutting down wood, flesh and bones. The handle can be of iron or wood. It is common in our community. Saw millers, wood carvers, farmers, carpenters and warriors always use axe.

### 2. Biblical References on the use of Axe

1. In 1st Samuel 13:20-21, the Israelites knew the importance of axe during the war; hence they always file their axe in preparation for the war. "But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his saw, and his axe..."
2. In 2nd Samuel 12:31 David fought the people of Rabbah the children of Ammon with axes, and defeated them. "And he brought forth the people that were therein and

put them under saws, and under harrows of iron, an under axes of iron thus he did unto all the cities of the children of Ammon"

3. This scenario was also documented in the book of chronicles 2. Chronicles 20:3 David conquered the people of Rabbah the Ammonites and their king with saws and axes
4. Jeremiah described the sound of Egyptians fleeing from their enemy, like the voice of serpent for they shall march with an army and come against her with axes, as hewers of wood (Jeremiah 46:22).
5. Ezekiel was trying to emphasize that axe is capable of breaking down the strong towers. "And he shall set engines of war against your walls and with his axes he shall break down your towers" (Ezekiel 26:9).
6. David was emphasising that use of axes makes man famous. "A man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees" (Psalm 74: 5 – 6).

### 3. Those to be destroyed with axe during the time of Jeremiah

A considerable numbers and categories of people were mentioned by Jeremiah to be destroyed by axe.

1. **Horses and their riders:** This was emphasized in Jeremiah chapter 51 verse 21. That the horses and their riders shall be destroyed with axe. It shows that no matter how fast and powerful the opposition may be, axe is capable of defeating them in their numbers.
2. **Man and woman:** Nor matters the sex or gender of the opposition group, axe is capable of breaking them into pieces. Jeremiah 51:22 "with thee also will I break in pieces man and woman, young and old, and with thee will I break in pieces the young man and the maid"
3. **Shepherds and flocks:** Jeremiah further stressed that shepherds and flocks would not even be spared from destruction with God's battle axe, if they fail to do the will of God. I will also break pieces with thee the shepherds and their flocks (Jere. 51:23a)
4. **Husbandman and his yoke of oxen:** Among those to be destroyed were the husbandman and his yoke of oxen. The battle axe of God is indeed powerful to that extent see (Jeremiah 51:23b)

5. **Captains and Rulers:** The battle axe of God can also destroy captains and rulers no matter their strength and wisdom and where they come from. "And with thee will I break in pieces captains and rulers (Jere. 51:23c)
6. **Babylon and Chaldea:** These great nations and powers; Babylon and Chaldea were also listed among those to be destroyed by God's battle axe. "And I will render unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight saith the Lord" (Jere. 51:24).

#### 4. The scope of the battle field, where battle axe would be used

The scope of the battle field where God's battle axe would be used starts from our individual homes, stretched to the next street, our home town, and neighboring towns. It extends to the whole state and neighboring states. It also covers the whole country and neighboring countries. The scope spreads to our continent and the whole world at large. "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Act 1: 8). No wonder, Isaac Watts composed the Hymn 272 stanza 1 (580 in Yoruba).

*Jesus shall reign wherever the sun,  
Doth it successive journeys run  
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore  
Till sun shall rise and set no more*

#### 5. The prevailing circumstances in the battle field today

There are a lot of prevailing circumstances in the battle field today. That we must take note of as God's battle axe.

1. **Death is Ravaging As Many As Possible On Daily Basis:** The first quarter of the year 2016 (January – march 2016) witnessed death of many ministers up to fifteen ranging from Archbishop, Bishops, Presbyters and other ministers in Methodist Church Nigeria. This was why the Prelate, His Eminence Dr. S.C.K. Uche. Declared 21 days fasting and prayer during which Psalms 1 to 21 were read one per day. Strong and powerful people also died e.g Boxer: Mohammed Ali also died and buried in Kentucky. Those who engaged in physical exercises on daily basis also died e.g Stephen Keshi and Amodu Shaibu, respectively. In Florida, Orlando, 49 people were shut dead recently and more than 50 sustained injuries. On 27/6/2016 there was a great flood that swept off 25 people in West Virginia, Also in Igbo Olomu in Ikorodu axis, avengers killed some of the villagers from time to time. The Boko Haram insurgency, and Fulani Herdsmen are killing people everywhere in the middle belt, in Benue over 50 people were reportedly killed by the Fulani Herdsmen. People are dying on daily basis. William Walsham However composed the Hymn 832 (Yoruba 616) stanza 8.

*From earths wide bounds, from oceans farthest coast  
Through gates of pearl streams in the countless host  
And singing to Father, Son and Holy Ghost Alleluia.*

We are battle axe in the hand of God even in the midst of death scenario.

2. **Inflation of the prices of all commodities:** This year witnessed inflation of the prices of all commodities

starting from fuel price of petrol per liter jumped from N86 to N145 and more in other places. Tomatoes small basket that used to be N9, 000 has risen to N36, 000. A bag of Rice that used to be between N9, 000 and N10, 000 has risen to N14, 000 and N15, 000 or more depending on where you are buying it and the type you want to buy. It was reported recently that there was unnecessarily struggles between Police men and Soldiers who were to maintain peace and order where relief materials including rice were distributed to the victims of circumstances. It was unfortunately that the Police and Soldiers started shooting themselves because of bags of rice.

3. **Selfishness and stealing of public fund (looting treasury):** Due to selfishness of some leader's huge and colossal amount always disappear from the nation's treasury and traceable to some individual's account. Thank God for the Government of Mohammad Buhari, that is revealing some of them now. Money for arms were stolen and distributed. Money for workers not paid, money for Road construction was misappropriated. Money for community development were not duly expended, Preachers indeed God's battle axe is also expected to work successfully in such prevailing circumstances.
4. **Retrenchment is another issue:** People are being retrenched from time to time from Banks, Industries, it is obvious that with technological advancement, machines like ATM would do the work of at least four people together, hence workers' retrenchment is inevitable. From the Military, over one hundred top military officers were reportedly retrenched recently thereby compounding the unemployment situation in the country. God's battle axes have a lot to do in such circumstances.
5. **Insecurity all over the places:** Currently in the country, nowhere is safe. In the house, on the road, in the market, in the office, even in the church and mosque nowhere is safe. Right in the church in Ijebu Igbo recently gun men entered the church and killed somebody. Children in school were taken away in Chibulk. Something similar also happened recently in Ikorodu. A landlord was in his house, he was taken away to an unknown destination, likewise a musician was kidnapped recently for singing to attack the politicians in hausa language. The spate of insecurity is alarming.
6. **Inter and intra religious unhealthy rivalry:** In some parts of our Society today, we could see a lot of terrible things happening to those who profess Christ. For example, those who are in some of the northern parts of this country have no freedom of worship, showing one's identify as a Christian in any form can cause the life of such a person to be terminated. A story was told of one Rev'd Paul Chukwu, in the face of religious crises in the north identified himself as a Christian and he was immediately burnt alive. We have challenges within and without religious sects. Currently, there is the Boko Haram saga with bomb blasts in various parts of the country especially in the north. We can understand the role of one Kareem Sokoto and others in this regard. Besides, there is intra religious problem as a result of divided Christian witness in the Church life in Nigeria that is imported from Europe and North America. The different denominations' campaigns and propaganda in order to win convert has led to competition and unhealthy rivalry <sup>[3]</sup>. This competition for converts among the

Christian denominations could be compared to the scrambling for Africa by some European powers after the Berlin Conference in 1855 [4]. We also have sectionalism in the Church today, thereby creating problem for the effectiveness of the preachers as God's battle axe. Sectionalism has to do with one section of a group or community as distinct from others or from a whole [5]. This indeed is the attitude of some Churches seeking their own parochial interest to the exclusion of others. "Ijab" crises in Osun state is another current issue that God's battle axe should take note of.

7. **Spiritual challenges:** This is one of the challenges and prevailing circumstances facing the Church today especially in her stride to accomplish the mission of soul winning for Christ. Ephesians 6:12, "For we are not contending with flesh and blood but with principalities and powers and spiritual forces". The preachers need not only to contend with, but overcome such spiritual forces.
8. **Black hole discovery a big threat:** The research carried out in Maryland University by a team led by Erim Kara revealed that a black hold has been discovered and it is capable of swallowing light. It was first discovered in 2011 and it has swallowed some stars. The black hole is expanding every day and the size now is million times the size of sun. Invariably, if the sun goes near it, it can swallow the sun. There would be complete black out in the whole world, if kept for long, all plants would die, then no more food, and everybody will die. This could bring a big disaster to the whole world.

#### 6. What we need to be effective god's battle axe

1. **Faith:** If a preacher as God's battle axe has faith though small as grain of mustard seed he/she can move mountains. Faith in Jesus Christ is very vital for success (Eph. 6:16). Preachers should not only have but exercise faith. Paul, in his epistle, II Timothy 3:6 tells the young preacher that anyone who is eager to be a Preacher must be mature in faith, so that he will not swell up with pride, and be condemned, as the Devil was. You cannot share the good news of salvation with others if you are not convinced that you have been saved by Christ. Gresham Machen, emphasizes that very different is that conviction of sin which leads a man to have faith in Christ and the men and women of whom Jesus said in the Gospel: Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace", all had very definite needs that they trusted Jesus to relieve [6]. One was sick, one was deaf, one was blind and when they came to Jesus they were not merely convinced that He was in general a powerful healer, but each of them was convinced, more or less firmly, that He could heal his peculiar infirmity, and each of them sought healing in his own specific case, so it is with us today. It is not enough for us to know that Jesus is great and good, it is not enough for us to know that He was instrumental in the creation of the world and that He is now seated on the right hand of God. These things are indeed necessary to faith, but if we are to trust Jesus, we must come to him personally and individually with some needs of the soul which He alone can relieve. God's battle axe must be strong in faith.
2. **Holy Spirit:** Preachers as God's battle axe need the Holy Spirit for empowerment to enhance success in every endeavour. (Acts 1:8), You shall receive power when the Holy spirit come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the whole world. The

Spirit of God will bring boldness and courage for effectiveness. It requires courage to stand at the pulpit and denounce the sins of what we call "high society". Whatever, Preacher would do in any specific area of our Church life today, he needs the courage to teach and preach what they believe to be right and which is in accordance with the will of God [7]. The courageous preacher will not be fearful of any vengeance. Roberts Liardon however, sees the Holy Spirit as Spirit of unity and love. God is raising up people in every land who are reaching out for more for God and saying come and help us, we want the Spirit of love [8].

3. **Abide In Christ:** Preachers and indeed God's battle axe need to abide in Christ, who is the true vine while we are the branches. Through the vine, Preachers and leaders can be properly nourished for efficiency in the mission of soul winning. If we abide in Christ, success is sure, but if we separate ourselves from Jesus then we are down fall, for apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5).
4. **Word of god:** The Word of God is highly significant in the life of Preacher. This is one of the basic discipline consecration and personal price required from every man who desires to be a "mouth piece" and God's battle axe in this generation. According to Gbile Akanni some are for noble use, others for ignoble; some lasting very long in ministry, others appearing only to disappear, what does God necessarily demand of His servant to do is to build a platform for the Lord for Him to encounter our lives and imprint His image permanently there upon [9]. The altar is the place set aside for the study of the word of God and communion with God over all that God wants to accomplish in the life of individual life. It is a place where God's dealing, His revelation and promises in our lives, are firmly established. Preachers and indeed Christians need to be deeply equipped with the word of God which is not only light unto our path but the sword of the spirit. (Eph. 6:17).
5. **Dedication and Commitment:** There is need for absolute dedication, zealous and commitment of all Preachers and God's battle axe to enhance success and effectiveness in church mission. His or Her commitment, zealousness and dedication will open doors of success in the Preaching ministry (I Cor. 16:9). But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost for a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries. In the midst of numerous adversaries, we need to be dedicated and committed.
6. **Prayer:** Prayer is communication between man and God, the creator of mankind. It is the act of asking of our mind desires from God. Preacher, God's battle axe, needs to be fervent in prayers. A prayer less preacher is a powerless preacher while a prayerful preacher is a powerful preacher. It is with prayer that preacher can combat the militating forces against us. (Ephesians 6:18, John 15:17). Jesus our role model and prototype prayed. He went further to say "If two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them (Matt. 18:19-20). As we pray together corporately or individually, we need to claim the presence of Christ in our midst, expecting Him actually to be present by His spirit as He promised. We need to trust Christ to take charge of us because He is the Head of the church. In

practical terms, we are completely waiting for Christ to change each of us as He sees fit. Also, there should be willingness to allow Christ to bring us all into harmony with the father and thus into harmony with one another [10].

7. **Humility:** The axe should be humble and not boast in any form, hear what Isaiah says; “shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth there with? Or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood.” (Isaiah 10:15)

## 7. Conclusion

Preachers and indeed God’s battle axe can never be underated in the expansion of God’s kingdom here on earth. Historically, Preachers male or female from generation to generation will continue to be relevant not only in propagation of the gospel, reaching the unreached; but also in contributing to the development of the society or community they belong. If the work is well done, and souls are won to the kingdom, thereby populating the kingdom of God and depopulating the kingdom of Satan; three-fold, joy will emerge, joy in the heart of the beneficiary (John 3:16) joy in the heart of the vessel (Preacher) (Matt. 19:29) and joy in heaven. (Luke 15:7, 10). May be the best way to conclude is to ask the question as reflected in the Hymn MHB 820 (Yoruba 714)

*“Who is on the Lord’s side?  
Who will serve the King/  
Who will be his helpers?  
Other lives to bring?  
Who will leave the world’s side?  
Who will face the foe?  
Who is on the Lord’s side?  
Who for him will go?  
By thy call of mercy, by thy grace divine  
We are on the Lord’s side, Saviour we are thine.*

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