

Studies in the Life of Joshua

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Lesson 1: Introduction and Background

For centuries, the descendants of Abraham had anticipated possessing the land God had promised to the Patriarch in the Abrahamic Covenant, and then reiterated to Isaac and Jacob. Joshua is the compelling history of the fulfillment of that promise. It is the story of God's faithfulness and how, by faith in God's promises, God's people can overcome and experience His life-changing deliverance. The message of Joshua can encourage and have a wonderful impact on one's life. For that to occur, however, we need to be serious in our study of Scripture. For those who want the message of Joshua to positively influence their lives for God, the following four words are offered as food for thought:

(1) **Thirst:** The psalmist wrote, "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?" (Psalm 42:1-2, NIV). Sadly, men too often seek to fill the void in their souls with things that never truly satisfy. We were all created with a void that only God Himself can satisfy. The psalmist recognized this and after the analogy of the deer thirsting for water, spoke of the thirst in his soul that only God could fill. But then there was the question, "When can I go and meet with God?" One time and place where we can do just that is in our Bible study. The most effective Bible study occurs when we study out of a thirst to know God. May it be so as we study the book of Joshua.

(2) **Toil:** In our fast foods, mall-oriented society where we expect everything to be quick and easy, we too often approach our Bible study in the same way. Effective Bible study is hard work and requires diligence as in anything worthwhile if we want to accomplish much. "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

(3) **Time:** We can heat a cup of water in a microwave in a minute and quickly mix a tablespoon of our favorite instant coffee and have something hot to drink, but the greatest blessing usually comes from meditating, reading, and spending time in God's precious book.

(4) **Teachableness:** Again, in a world so full of man's ideas, theologies, ideologies, and philosophies, we will get the most when we come to the Scripture with a teachable spirit asking God to teach us His truth, for it is His truth and only His truth that sanctifies and sets us free (John 17:17; 8:32).

As you read this study, hopefully with your Bible in hand, may these four 'Ts' be in your mind and heart.

Overview

The book of Joshua describes the conquest and possession of the land of Canaan and may be divided into three simple divisions: (1) invasion or entrance, (2) conquest, and (3) possession or division of the land. This is the land God had promised Israel through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Here God fulfilled that promise, though not exhaustively since there still remains a rest for the people of God (Heb. 4). Joshua describes the military triumph of God's people through faith and obedience. However, unlike most military histories, in the book of Joshua the focus is on the commander's Commander, the Captain of the Lord's host (5:15). Repeatedly, as Joshua's name illustrates (*Yahweh saves*), the book demonstrates that Israel's victories were due to God's power and intervention.

Key Historical Perspective

In **Genesis**, Israel was born as a nation in the call and promises of God to Abraham (*Election* of the nation).

In **Exodus**, the nation was delivered out of bondage in Egypt, crossed the Red Sea, and was given God's Holy Law (*Redemption* of the nation).

In **Leviticus**, the nation was taught how to worship in view of God's holiness (*Sanctification* of the nation).

In **Numbers**, they were tested and numbered as a nation (*Direction and Wandering* of the nation).

In **Deuteronomy**, the law was reviewed and reiterated and closed with the assurance that Israel would possess the land (*Instruction* of the nation).

In *Joshua*, the nation crossed over Jordan and took possession of the land (*Possession* by the nation). If Moses is the symbol of deliverance, then Joshua is the symbol of victory. Joshua teaches us that faith “is the victory that overcomes the world” (1 John 5:4).

Key Verse

Joshua 1:3 “Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses”

Joshua 1:3 compares to Ephesians 1:3 in the New Testament, “... blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” Literally, “in the heavenlies”; i.e., in the realm of heavenly possessions and experiences into which the Christian is brought because of his association with the risen Christ.¹

Key Concept

The key concept of the book of Joshua is possession through conflict by the power of *Yahweh*, the Captain of the Lord’s host. In this regard, it is also like Ephesians, for though we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ, we must realistically face the fact of our enemies (Eph. 6:12) and strengthen ourselves by putting on the full armor of God (Eph. 6:10-11, 13-18). It is important to realize that Israel’s *ownership* of the land was unconditional under the Abrahamic covenant, but *possession* of the land was conditional upon faith and obedience. And so today, conflict and conquest by faith go with laying hold of that which we have positionally in Christ; the experience of our blessings in Christ comes through faith in the midst of conflict.

The Theme and Purpose of the Book

As mentioned, Joshua is the history of Israel’s conquest of the land of Canaan in fulfillment of God’s promises for the people of Israel. After 400 years of slavery in Egypt and 40 years in the desert, the Israelites finally are able to enter the Promised Land. Abraham, a sojourner and alien all his life, never really possessed the country to which he was sent. The only piece of ground he owned he purchased himself as a burial plot for Sarah and his family, the cave and field of Machpelah (Gen. 23). However, Abraham did leave both his *physical* and *spiritual* descendants the legacy of God’s covenant promises that would make them the eventual heirs of all of Canaan and the spiritual blessings we have in Christ including a heavenly city (see Gen. 15:13,16,18; 17:8; Rom. 4:12-14; Heb. 11:11; 4:1-11). In the book of Joshua that long anticipated promise became a reality.

Primary Purpose

The primary purpose of the book of Joshua is to show God’s faithfulness to His promises; that He had done for Israel exactly what He had promised (cf. Gen. 15:18 with Josh. 1:2-6 and 21:43-45). The events recorded in Joshua are selective to set forth God’s special intervention on behalf of His people against all kinds of tremendous odds. The fulfillment of God’s promises, as is so evident in the birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah and in possessing the land with its fortified cities, is the work of God and that which man cannot do no matter how hard he tries (see Rom. 4).

Secondary Purpose

The secondary purpose is to show that just **as** God had taken them out of Egypt by faith in the power of God, **so** He would take them in to possess the land through faith in the power of God. It emphatically declares the truth that though justified by faith, as was Abraham, or delivered out of bondage, as was Israel from Egypt, victory over those enemies of life that stand opposed to our walk with God must come through faith in the power of God as well (Josh 1:5-7; 3:7, also cf. Heb. 4:1-3). Joshua, then, stands in contrast to Numbers where we see Israel’s failure through unbelief and wandering in the wilderness even though they were the redeemed people of God.

The Name and Author of the Book

Unlike the first five books of the Old Testament, this book takes its name from the chief human personality of the book, Joshua, the son of Nun, Moses’ servant. While Joshua is not explicitly identified as the author, the gen-

¹ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible, Expanded Edition*, Moody, p. 1877.

eral substance of the book indicates that the author was an eyewitness of most of the events, which are described with great vividness and minuteness of detail, and occasionally in the first person ('we' and 'us'; e.g., 5:1, 6). Other factors support Joshua as the author: (1) Jewish tradition as the Talmud (*Baba Bathra* 14b) names Joshua as the author of the Book; (2) it seems evident the book was written shortly after the events happened (cf. 6:25); (3) the unity of style also suggests one author wrote the bulk of the work though some portions obviously had to have been written by others like Eleazar the priest or Phinehas, his son (note the first person "he" referring to Joshua in 15:13-17 and see also 24:29-31); (4) finally, it is specifically stated in 8:32 and 24:26 that Joshua did some writing. The evidence, then, supports Joshua as the author of the book.

But unlike the first five books of Moses, why does this book take its name from the author? First, because as the successor of the great law giver and leader, Moses, Joshua might be easily forgotten and the Lord does not want us to forget this man and his ministry as a faithful leader and servant of the Lord. In addition, Joshua also stands as a special type of Christ. This is seen in his name² and in the work he accomplished in bringing the people into the land, a picture of our 'Sabbath rest' in Christ (Heb. 4). This is the man who challenged the people at the end of the book with,

"Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. 15 And if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:14-15).

A second reason for calling this book Joshua, is found in the meaning of Joshua's name. Joshua's original name was Hoshea (Num. 13:8; Deut. 32:44) which means literally "salvation." But during the wilderness wanderings Moses changed his name to *Yehoshua*, meaning "Yahweh is salvation" or "save, Yahweh" (Num. 13:16). Joshua is a contracted form of *Yehoshua*. This amounted to a prophetic anticipation and reminder to Joshua, to the spies, and the people that victory over the enemies and possession of the land would be by the power of *Yahweh* rather than by human skill or wisdom or power. This book is given the name *Joshua* because, though Joshua was one of the world's greatest military strategist of history, his wisdom and military achievements came from *Yahweh* who alone is our salvation. It was *Yahweh* Himself who brought about victory for Israel and vanquished Israel's enemies giving them possession of the land.

Significantly, the Greek form of this name is 'Jesus,' the name Mary was instructed to give to her son because it was He who would save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21).

The Place of Canaan in the Message of Joshua

(1) **Canaan was Israel's place of rest:** Instead of their toil in Egypt and their wandering in the wilderness, Israel was to be able to settle down and find a home in Canaan where they were to function as the people of God and as a light to the nations. Possessing and subjugating the land filled with enemies was to lead to that rest and fellowship with the Lord (cf. Deut. 6:10-11 and Lev. 26:6-8).

(2) **Canaan was the place of bounty:** Here was a land flowing "with milk and honey," a "good and spacious land" (Ex. 3:8, 17; 13:5; 33:3; Lev. 20:24; Num. 13:27, etc.). Some 16 times it is called "a land of milk and honey." It was a land of extraordinary fruit (Num. 13:26,27), a land of corn and wine, kissed with the dew of heaven (Deut. 33:28; Lev. 26:5; Deut. 11:10-12).

(3) **Canaan was a place of triumph:** In Canaan were enemies and forces much mightier than Israel, yet these enemies were a defeated foe even before Israel ever struck a blow. Why? Because the victory of Israel lay not in its own skill or power, but in the power and might of *Yahweh* their God (Deut 7:2; 9:3; Josh. 1:2f). The battle is always the Lord's (1 Sam. 17:47).

The Pictures and Typology in Joshua

As you can see by the forgoing, Joshua is a book rich in pictures for the believer today. It is rich in analogies and this is supported by Hebrews 3:7-4:12 and 1 Corinthians 10:6, 11. The book of Joshua portrays the faith-rest

² Joshua is called by the name *Jesus* in Acts 7:45.

life of the believer today who experiences the blessings of his salvation through a faith that overcomes the various trials, temptations, and difficulties of life that he or she faces from our three enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil. Note some of these analogies:

(1) Though we are to appropriate our salvation and put it to work (discipline ourselves unto godliness), in Christ we do not work for our salvation or for our spirituality, but are to rest by faith in what God has done for us. Being in Christ is our place of rest, forms the basis for rest over our enemies in this life, and looks forward to a millennial and eternal rest.

(2) In Christ we are blessed with every spiritual blessing. This is our bounty (Eph. 1:3).

(3) In the world we face enemies and struggles, but in Christ we are promised victory through faith and endurance.

(4) Joshua, the leader of the people of Israel, is a type of Christ, the “Captain of our salvation” (cf. Heb. 2:10-11; Rom. 8:37; 2 Cor. 1:10; 2:14).

(5) The crossing of the Jordan is a picture of a Christian reckoning on his death and resurrection with Christ and moving into the place of growth and victory.

(6) The conquests of Canaan portray the Christian’s conflicts with the enemies of the world, the flesh, and the devil. (a) Taking Jericho pictures victory over the satanic world system that stands walled up against our spiritual progress. (b) The defeat and then victory at Ai illustrates our struggle with and deliverance over the sinful nature or our propensity to sin or to seek to live the Christian life in our own strength. (c) The deception of and experience with the Gibeonites surely illustrates our battle with Satan and his demonic deceptions.

Over and over again God’s Word faces us with our need of *the deliverance* which comes only from God. Here we are faced with the absolute necessity of the saving life of Christ. Christ is the life and the only life which saves. Without His death, giving us a justified standing with God, and without Him and His life within, all we have is man working from the source of his own weakness or temperament attempting to be Mr. Nice Guy, attempting to conform himself to some cultural or religious standard. Such is not authentic Christianity. It is a counterfeit, a distortion, and a deception. It is a trick of Satan designed to move people away from God’s solution in and through Christ in the light of His authoritative Word, the Bible.

Satan wants to blind us to the “light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (1 Cor. 4:4). And what is the gospel of the glory of Christ? It is the saving life of Christ, the fact that man is saved and delivered from himself by the glorious life and work of Jesus Christ who is the very image of God.

We are never to be the source of our Christianity. Its source is Christ. We are never to control our Christianity, but Christianity and all that is ours through Christ is to control us. We are not to try to reproduce the image of God in us. Instead, Christianity is God reproducing Himself in us through His Son, Jesus Christ, by the power of the Spirit.

In this study we will present basic spiritual truths or principles from the text of Joshua, but we will also seek to illustrate a number of parallels or analogies to the Christian life. The justification for doing this is found in passages like Luke 24:27, “And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures” and 1 Corinthians 10:4, 6, 11.

Verse 4. “And all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; **and the rock was Christ.**” The rock spoke of the presence and work of Christ.

Verse 6. “Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved.”

Verse 11. “Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”

These verses teach us that these Old Testament events were historical events that manifested the saving work of God in the life of ancient Israel. But they also provide principles, pictures, and illustrations that form warnings and teach us truth practical to the believer’s life in Christ today. They form fascinating and instructive parallels and analogies to the believer’s life in Christ as he faces a hostile and contrary world.

(1) ***Egypt*** portrays the world with all its human ideas, idolatries, mysticism, and antagonism to the salvation, deliverance, and purposes of God for His people.

(2) ***Being in Egypt*** portrays a lost condition, a slave to Satan, the world, and the flesh.

(3) ***Coming out of Egypt*** through the Passover lamb and the Red Sea portrays deliverance by the death of Jesus Christ and the mighty power of God alone. It speaks of redemption through the *saving life of Christ*.

(4) ***A believer going down into Egypt*** like Abraham did in Genesis 12:10f pictures a believer turning to the world and its substitutes and solutions rather than turning to the Lord for deliverance.

(5) ***Israel in the Wilderness*** is a type or picture of the believer in carnality. He or she is redeemed and blessed with marvelous privileges yet fails to go on in his or her life with God and is living outside of the place of maximum blessing, out of the will of God and in constant defeat, wandering about because of failure to trust the Lord and the deliverance He has promised.

(6) ***Crossing the Jordan and moving into Canaan*** is a type or picture of the believer possessing his or her possessions by faith in the power and provision of God. It portrays the believer in fellowship, faced with conflict and enemies, yet able to be delivered when dependent upon the Lord and walking by faith in the principles and promises of the Word.

(7) ***The Canaanites in the Land*** portray the believer's enemies who stand to oppose us in the Christian way of life, but who are at the same time a defeated foe though we must appropriate our God-provided victory, the saving life of Christ. Some believe Jericho may illustrate the world, Achan and Ai the flesh or the sinful nature, and the Gibeonites may illustrate the deceptions of Satan and the world system.

In preparation for this study, may I suggest the following:

- Let's carefully note where Israel was successful and where she failed. Let's humble our hearts and examine our own lives in the light of our findings in these passages.
- Let's ask questions like: Am I making the same mistakes as Israel? Am I applying the same principles as Joshua? Am I listening to God's call and challenges to my life?
- Let us rejoice in and profit by the victories of Israel for her victories can also be ours.
- Let us pray that the study of Joshua will explain some of our personal failures, encourage us in our own spiritual warfare, and challenge us to substitute the saving life of Christ for the self-life in whatever form it may exist in our lives.

Lesson 2: The Commissioning of Joshua (Joshua 1:1-18)

In a number of ways, the preparation for invasion and the conflict that lay before Joshua and the people begins in this chapter. And it is significant that this preparation in chapter one proceeds out of God's communication. First, God speaks and commissions Joshua (1:1-5) and then calls him to be strong and courageous (1:6-9). In view of this word from God, Joshua speaks to the people and gives them instructions for preparing to cross the Jordan in three days (1:10-15). This is followed by the response of the people which, of course, had its source in the Word of God (1:16-18). God's revelation should always be followed by a response that is in keeping with His inspired Word.

The Commission Given (1:1-5)

1 Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying, 2 "Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. 3 Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. 4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun, will be your territory. 5 No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you.

The victory and possession of the land which follows is a direct result of the Word of God and of man, in this case Joshua, hearing and responding to His Word. This should illustrate for us that there is absolutely no victory or chance for us to experience the blessings of our new life in Christ apart from the Word of God. Whenever any believer begins to turn away from the Word through indifference or apathy for whatever reason, he is turning away from the Lord and into defeat.

Joshua's commission comes only after the death of Moses (vss. 1-2). This is significant. The commission of Joshua and the continuation of God's purposes to move Israel into the land, for certain typological reasons, comes only after the death of Moses. Why is this?

Moses was the great lawgiver who represented the Law of Sinai, that awesome legislation which demonstrates the perfect holiness of God and the sinful condition of man who stands separated from God (Rom. 3:23). But the Law, though holy and good, could never give life or spirituality nor could it provide justification. It was instead a ministration of death that revealed man a sinner and in jail to sin (2 Cor. 3:7; Rom. 7:7; Gal. 3:19-22).

Moses portrayed the law which cannot lead us into the saving and abundant life of Christ. It was only a tutor, a temporary servant which must pass away (Gal. 3:23f). Though it did point to Christ in the tabernacle, priesthood, and sacrifices, it could not take away sin or provide deliverance from the flesh. Why? Because it was weak in that it was dependent upon man and his ability (Rom. 8:3-4). The Law provided a righteous standard, but no power or grace for the flesh or indwelling sin (Rom. 6:14; 8:3f).

Thus, Moses had to pass from the scene before Joshua could be commissioned and given orders to take the people across Jordan and into the Promised Land. A further reason is seen in Joshua's name which so clearly reminds us that "*Yahweh* is Salvation." As the Hebrew equivalent of Jesus, Joshua typifies the Lord Jesus and His saving life who provides us not only with redemption, but with the power we need to enter into the possession of our possessions in Christ.

With the mention of the death of Moses, Joshua is then told, "Now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people." By way of application for today, the words "**Now therefore arise,**" (in view of the death of Moses and what he represented) teach us the truth that no man can live the Christian life by keeping a set of laws or taboos. While the Christian life involves obedience to the principles and imperatives of the Word, it is more. It is a life to be lived by faith in the power of God. We simply cannot live the Christian life in our own energy or by our

own determination. The Christian life is not just being Mr. Nice or merely keeping a set of Christian principles and rules. It is a faith relationship with God to be lived out in the power of the Spirit and in the light of the Word.

With the Words, **“arise, cross this Jordan,”** the Lord is saying, “get out of the desert and move on into Canaan.” God’s will for the believer is never in the wilderness. It is in Canaan, the place of deliverance and conquest. “Arise, cross” by the parallel of New Testament truth says, “take up your armor, use your supernatural resources, stop trusting in yourself, trust me and move out.”

“You and all this people” illustrates that spirituality is not just for an elect few, but it is for all believers. The abundant, maturing Christian life is God’s plan and will for every single believer. It is only limited by our lack of availability to His constant availability to us. Every believer is blessed with every spiritual blessing, is a priest of God with abundant grace available for every situation. We need to remember all Israel got out of Egypt the same way—by faith in God’s grace, and they would all cross over Jordan in exactly the same way, by faith in God’s deliverance.

The words, **“to the land which I am giving you”** and in verse 3, **“every place on which ...”** illustrates the truth of Ephesians 1:3 and Colossians 2:10. “I am giving you” and “I have given it to you” shows us God was then in the process of bringing to pass that which had been theirs all along. Joshua 2:9-11 reveals that the land had virtually been theirs for 40 years. It was just waiting to be possessed. And like that, from the moment of salvation, God has provided every believer with every spiritual blessing and provision. Of course, as this book makes perfectly clear, having title deed to the land (or our blessings in Christ) does not mean our lives will be without testing, conflict, struggles, and pressures. It indeed will, but since the battle is the Lord’s, since God has done the most for us in Christ, with the testings and temptations comes God’s deliverance through faith and the application of the Word.

In verse 5, Joshua is given the promise, **“no man will be able to stand before you,”** but this promise is also a warning. While the land was theirs for the taking, it would not be taken without conflict or battle. And likewise, as the land of Canaan was full of fortified cities and enemies that needed to be driven out, so the Christian life is a life of conflict with enemies which must be overcome. Though the outcome is assured if we claim God’s sufficiency and the saving life of Christ, we must still do battle and reckon with the fact of the enemy throughout this life. This is a wake up call, a reality that must be faced: life is full of battles and conflicts. We are not in Eden nor are we in the millennial reign of Christ. Rather we wrestle with the flesh (indwelling sin), with the devil and supernatural powers of darkness, and a world system that is antagonistic to God, to His Word, and to godly living (cf. Rom. 7:15f; Gal. 5:16f; Eph. 5:15-16; 6:10f; 1 Pet. 5:8-9).

Nevertheless, the positive side is that these words, “no man will be able to stand before you ...” are also a promise of continued deliverance in battle after battle after battle. Because of the infinite sufficiency of the saving life of the Christ through His finished work on the cross, His triumphant presence at the right hand of God, our identification with Him in His death, resurrection and session in heaven, and through His gift of the Holy Spirit, there is no enemy we can possibly face which the Lord (our Joshua) has not already conquered. Our need is to appropriate what He has already done for us through the wise faith-application of His Word.

Though still active and roaming about, Satan’s power has been broken and we can resist his deceptions and attacks. Though the sin principle still dwells within or the flesh is still active in our members, its power over us has been broken through our union with Christ in His death and resurrection. This means the victory of possessing our possessions is through the gift of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 6 and 8) and the sanctifying power of a Word-filled life (John 17:17; Eph. 5:18; Col. 3:16).

Application: We all entertain the desire to live in an ideal world, where life moves along smoothly without problems or stress. In fact, we were created for such and it is not wrong to long for that time which will come with the return of the Lord Jesus, our Joshua. But the doctrines of the apostasy of the last days, the evil nature of this day and time, plus the presence of our three enemies are constant reminders that such cannot be the case now any more than we can have lasting and true world peace without the return of the Lord. We must face the facts and be prepared to face life as it really is. In Christ we are super-conquerors and through His saving life we can overcome the individual battles of life, but we must be prepared to fight the good fight.

We all like to rock along without anything upsetting our schedules or forcing us out of our comfort zones. When we attempt to get away from the struggle, God jars us back into reality through some unpleasant condition or experience and we are again faced with reality. After vacation we must go back to work and face that co-worker who

is so hard to get along with. We are going along and then suddenly, there is a threat to our health or that of our spouse or child. Or we may face the death of a loved one which brings heartache, loneliness, along with new pressures and responsibilities. Such is your life and mine, but the words “no man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life” intrudes into our lives with two realities: a warning and promise.

The words, “**just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you,**” call our attention to one of the great truths of the Bible. Israel would get into the land the *same way* they got out of Egypt. Likewise, we enter into the abundant life of Christ the *same way* we were delivered from wrath—by faith in the saving life of Christ. Just as we trusted in Christ and the accomplishments of the cross for justification and redemption, so we must reckon on those same accomplishments as the basis for our security and daily deliverance (Rom. 6:4-11; Col. 2:6-3:3).

The Call to Courage (1:6-9)

6 “Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. 7 Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. 8 This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

While the first five verses deal with Joshua’s commission to take over after the death of Moses, the major thrust of verses 6-9 concerns something that was vital to Joshua’s ability to do that. And what was true for Joshua is equally true for us.

There is a word or theme repeated at least three times in these verses that we need to pick up on and relate to. Three times God tells Joshua, “**be strong and courageous**” (1:6, 7, 9). Then later, as it pertains to their obedience to God, Joshua will relate the same charge to the people (1:18; 10:25) who will likewise face the challenges and fulfillment of God’s purposes for the nation—dwelling in the land as a priesthood nation as God’s representative to the nations.

So the issue before Joshua was a call to be strong and courageous in view of the mantle of leadership that was being passed on to him. God was calling him to a very special and difficult ministry, one with tremendous challenges and obstacles far beyond his own skill or abilities. But life for all of us is filled with such challenges so let us not pass over this without seeing the personal application this can have for each of us. Verses 6-9 are fundamental for obtaining the strength and courage anyone needs for the challenges of any ministry or responsibility.

This passage is not just for a special class of leaders like pastors or missionaries. God has called each of us to ministry. No believer is exempt. We are all gifted, we are all priests of God, and leaders in some sense with personal responsibilities to others whether elders, deacons, moms or dads, etc.

People often run from ministry or difficult situations because of fear or because of the obstacles. As the former generation of Israelites had failed to enter into the land and possess their possessions because of unbelief and fear of the giants, so we too can fail to enter into God’s calling on our lives.

Application: Without God’s strength and personal courage, we will fail to tackle the challenges or take on the responsibilities that God calls us to. Others, being overconfident in themselves may seek to strike out in their own steam, an equally wrong way to try to serve the Lord as we will see illustrated in chapter 7 with the defeat at Ai.

Biblically speaking, where does moral strength and courage come from and does it mean the absence of fear? Moral strength and courage come from (1) faith in the sovereignty and provision of God and (2) in the fact that we are convinced what we are doing is right and best and essential to life. But there is much more as this passage will show us. Courage is that quality of mind that enables men to encounter danger and difficulty with firmness and resolve in spite of inner fears (cf. 1 Cor. 2:3; 2 Cor. 7:5). In other words, courage is not the absence of fear. While not courting danger nor presuming on the Lord, Paul never evaded something if he knew it was God’s will or that it was right. In his excellent book on spiritual leadership, J. Oswald Sanders wrote:

Courage of the highest order is demanded of a spiritual leader—always moral courage and frequently physical courage as well ...

Martin Luther possessed this important quality in unusual measure. It has been asserted that he was perhaps as fearless a man as ever lived. When he set out on his momentous journey to Worms, he said, “You can expect from me everything save fear or recantation. I shall not flee, much less recant.” His friends, warning him of the grave dangers he faced, sought to dissuade him. But Luther would not be dissuaded. “Not go to Worms?” he said. “I shall go to Worms though there were as many devils as tiles on the roofs.” ...

But not all men are courageous by nature as Luther was, and that fact is both explicit and implicit in Scripture. The highest degree of courage is seen in the person who is most fearful but refuses to capitulate to it. However fearful they might have been, God’s leaders in succeeding generations have been commanded to be of good courage. Had they been without fear, the command would have been pointless.¹

So where do strength and courage come from? These concepts teach us several important ingredients:

(1) Strength and courage come through *Recognizing and Relating to God’s pleasure (His will) and having a sense of God’s calling and destiny* (1:1-2).

Knowing God’s Word, the clearly revealed will of God, plus recognizing one’s gifts, abilities, and training, all of which are a part of understanding His pleasure or will for one’s life, is foundational for finding strength and courage to accept any area of responsibility in ministry. Without this understanding, one will hardly have the motivation or courage to move into the ministries God wants to call us to.

There is a specific process to be noted here in verses 1-9. There is first God’s Word to Joshua commissioning and encouraging him. The courage that is called for here is the direct result of the Word and knowing God’s will (see Eph. 5:9-10). Also, Joshua is reminded that he had been prepared and trained for this as the servant of Moses (1:1).

Joshua being spoken to in verse 1 is equivalent to us gaining biblical insight. It is this that forms the foundation for courage and conviction and for faith and action. We need to pray and seek God’s will and wisdom. The first foundation for courage is knowing both the Word and God’s will.

Being the understudy of Moses illustrates a couple of key principles: (1) The principle of having a godly example (1 Tim. 4; 1 Pet. 5:1-3). (2) The principle of Luke 16:10 and its impact on the development of courage and motivation for ministry. Joshua had been faithful in the little things and would be faithful in much. Service in the larger areas of responsibility starts with faithfulness in smaller things. We each need to find a place to serve and grow. It may become the training ground for other areas of ministry to which God may be calling you.

“Moses my servant is dead” (vs. 2). This statement reminds us that no one is indispensable and leadership changes. If we are not training others and being trained ourselves, we leave gaping holes (2 Tim. 2:2).

“Now therefore arise” emphasizes the need for decisive action to fill the void left by the absence of Moses. And this is true for all of us in ministry for whatever reason there is a void left by the removal of the servants of God. A true grasp of the need is always a vital element to decisiveness and action to fill that need; it’s part of the root that produces the fruit. But there is another element that is vital to courage and decisiveness in doing the will of God.

(2) Strength and courage come through *Resting in God’s promises* (1:2b-6).

Please note the promises given to Joshua here were given in relation to the ministry and work to which God had called him. This applies to each of us regardless of the particular ministry God has called us to in the body of Christ. Read these verses carefully and see what application you can make from them to your life. Do you feel the tug of God on your life to serve him in a particular way, but you are afraid? Are you afraid of failure? Are you afraid of what it might cost you? Meditate on these verses.

¹ J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, Moody Press, 1967, pp. 78-79.

We might also note some of the obstacles that can be observed in this passage because in claiming the promises of God, faith must face the obstacles.

“Cross this Jordan.” In Scripture, the Jordan often represents an obstacle, an impediment to growth, ministry, progress. There is good reason to believe that the Jordan was swollen over its banks at this time of year (cf. Jos. 3:15; 4:18). Here is one of the reasons courage is needed.

Further, to cross the Jordan meant to enter into a hostile land, a land full of enemies some of whom were giants and who lived in strongly fortified cities. This was no simple challenge. Remember, the previous generation failed at Kadesh Barnea because of a lack of courage. But there is more here.

“You and all this people.” This was no small group! The very numbers made this a colossal task. But Joshua had the responsibility of leading a people who were noted for being stiff necked and throwing stones at their leaders. The word “all” reminds us that it is God’s purpose for all His people to mature and become strong, to be in His will and living victorious lives.

Nevertheless, regardless of the obstacles, God’s will had been clearly made known to Joshua. He needed to act on this fact by faith in the Lord’s person, promises, and provision.

Let’s look at the promise in verse 2b: “To the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel” (vs. 2). Also note the words “which I have given to them” (vs. 3). They were going into the Promised Land, the land promised to the patriarchs, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob or Israel by God Himself who cannot go back on His promises. In fact, He was then and had for some time been preparing the inhabitants for defeat (cf. 2:9f). The land had been theirs for forty years but they failed to enter in because of unbelief and a lack of courage.

God’s Word is filled with hundreds of promises (vss. 3-6, 9). In essence, every principle of Scripture becomes a promise because with the principle comes the inherent promise of God who is perfect veracity so that we can count on the principle. But we must know those promises and act on them by faith. God’s promises are given to carry us through the Jordan rivers of life, not necessarily to remove them but to enable us to step out in faith to cross them. They are not given so we can avoid or go around, but so we can cross them victoriously.

How do we claim and act on those promises? How do we make those promises a part of our lives?

(3) Strength and courage come through daily *Renewal* in God’s Principles (1:7-8).

Successful ministry according to a biblical definition of success is ultimately related to solid Bible teaching and study rather than to our human methods, techniques, and strategies which too often resort to pressure, coercion, and manipulation in order to achieve our own agendas or results.

The Word is intrinsically powerful and able to produce godly change in believers’ lives as it motivates, encourages, gives hope and direction, and exposes us to both our needs and God’s provision. The Word has been given to us to establish a communicative relationship with God. It is a means of fellowship with Him. But this takes time, quality time and diligence. Note the emphasis on this in these verses. “To do according to all the Law...; do not turn from it ...” (vs. 7), “but you shall meditate on it day and night ...” (vs. 8).

What’s our tendency? The average person today wants a quick fix—three easy steps. We want God to do it now. But this kind of approach does not develop a relationship with the Lord. Relationship with God, knowing Him, as with any relationship, takes time. It is this that provides us with success in ministry and in life, wherever we go and in whatever we do.

The Warning: Joshua was warned or cautioned in three things:

- To “be careful” warns against danger, calls for prudence, observation or careful scrutiny, and conscientiousness (cf. Eph. 5:15).
- To “do according to all” points to the concept of the whole counsel of the Word.
- To “not to turn from it” points to the concept of the Scripture as our objective index or standard and warns against moral relativity.

The Process: Joshua was to do three things with regard to the Scriptures:

- The Law was not to depart from his mouth; he was to talk about it (cf. Deut. 6:7). This would be a means of staying occupied with God's thoughts and ways.
- He was to meditate on it day and night; he was to think about it constantly (cf. Ps. 1:2; 119:97). In order to be able to talk about it and apply it, one must know it and see how it applies. We must have it on our mind and heart to fortify, encourage, and direct.
- He was to do everything written in it; he was to conduct his life in obedience to all its commands (cf. Ezra 7:10; James 1:22-25).

(4) Strength and courage come through *Reckoning* on God's Person and presence (1:9).

Last, but certainly not least is the promise of the ever watchful and protective presence of God. There is no situation, no problem or enemy that we ever face alone. The Lord is always there as our constant support and supply. If we are concerned about our ministries or anything else, we can be absolutely sure God is infinitely more concerned than we are. Our need is simply to walk in the light of His presence and to count on His guidance, support, supply, and care by keeping our focus on Him (Heb. 12:1-2).

"Have **I** not commanded you." What's the important point here? It's the *source* of the command and the promises. The 'I' refers to *Yahweh*. So note what follows.

"For the Lord (*Yahweh*) your God (*Elohim*) is with you wherever you go." These words stress the *nature* of the one who gave the command. They focus our attention on who and what God is like. One of the secrets to boldness and courage is an awareness of God's provision and presence, especially His presence as the one who has promised to never leave us.

Compare John 20:19 and the fear of the disciples before they experienced the presence of the resurrected Christ with the promise of His never-ending presence (cf. Matt. 28:18-20) with the boldness they displayed in Acts 4:13-20. What made the difference in the disciples? These were men who were now confident of Christ's presence (Matt. 28:18-20), knew God's will, His word, and who were filled with God's Spirit (cf. Acts 4:8). When the Holy Spirit is in control of a man's life and is instructing him in God's Word, He imparts not "a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline":

"For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline (2 Timothy 1:7).

"Timidity" is *deilia* meaning cowardice, the opposite of courage. "Power" is *dunamis*, the ability to do what we should. "Love" is *agaph*, a mental attitude of sacrificial concern for others. This means the motivation and ability to make tough choices. "Discipline" is *swfronismos* meaning sound-mind thinking, a product of biblical understanding, which holds our fears in check, changes values and priorities, and gives courage and decisiveness.

In Hebrews 13:1-3, the author reminded his readers of the need of ministry to the saints. For instance he wrote, "let love of the brethren continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, ..." God wants us to be ministering people and this takes courage and obedience, and sometimes means sacrifices. So also, he cautions us concerning our values and our sources of security and then reminds us of the promise of the presence and supply of God.

Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you," so that we confidently say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What shall man do to me?" (Heb. 13:5-6)

As we face the challenges and opportunities and calling of God, let's remember these promises of God to Joshua. With the call of God to service there is **always** the matching provision of God. The problem lies not with the Lord, but with our responsibility to follow the Lord's admonitions as given to Joshua.

Joshua Speaks to the People (1:10-15)

10 Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, 11 "Pass through the midst of the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you are to cross this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you, to possess it.'"

12 And to the Reubenites and to the Gadites and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, 13 “Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, ‘The LORD your God gives you rest, and will give you this land.’ 14 Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle shall remain in the land which Moses gave you beyond the Jordan, but you shall cross before your brothers in battle array, all your valiant warriors, and shall help them, 15 until the LORD gives your brothers rest, as He gives you, and they also possess the land which the LORD your God is giving them. Then you shall return to your own land, and possess that which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise.”

In our previous lesson, the key note was God’s revelation to Joshua concerning His promises, His purposes for the nation, the great principles of the Law, and His abiding presence. This forms the backdrop, the motivation and inspiration for this section and all that follows. Now, in verses 10-15, Joshua speaks to the people to act on the revelation and promises of God. Here the key note is Joshua’s immediate and obedient response regardless of the obstacles that lay before them. There is in this section a note of urgency, certainty, expectancy, and faith in Joshua’s commands to the people. As God had commanded the new leader was taking charge and following the Lord’s orders with confidence.

(1) He did so immediately, without delay or procrastination. There is an old adage, “strike while the iron is hot.” The longer we delay, the more reluctant we are to comply with God’s requirements. Delay is dangerous to our spiritual lives and can lead to hardening against God’s directives. Delay can also be disobedience. Procrastination can evidence a lack of heart for God’s call and a lack of concern for God’s glory and God’s people. Note Psalm 119:60, “I hastened and did not delay to keep Thy commandments.”

(2) He did so with confidence showing faith in the Lord and courage to tackle the task that lay before him. Such immediate response shows faith in the Word and confidence in the Lord.

(3) He did so with a clear understanding of what they faced. This brings out the element of his courage even more. First, by his own experience he understood what they faced, for forty years earlier he was one of twelve spies who had had been sent to search out the land. He could have remembered with pessimism the negative report of the ten and anticipated the same kind of response from the new generation. But Joshua’s eyes were solidly on the Lord. Too often we undermine our focus on the Lord and His power by thinking about all the negatives, about what might happen if we move forward. Second, Joshua may have also known what they were facing through the report of the two spies he sent into the land in chapter 2, which probably occurred before the command of verse 11.²

Regardless, Joshua and the people faced a situation that in many ways paralleled the dilemma Moses and the Israelites had faced at the Red Sea (Ex. 14). “In each case, the obstacle occurred at the beginning of the leader’s ministry. Both were impossible to solve through natural means. Both demanded implicit and absolute dependence upon a miracle-working God.”³

After forty years of wandering, thinking they had at last come to the Promised Land, they find the river overflowing its banks (3:15). They faced what was for them an insurmountable difficulty. Life is like that isn’t it? So often when our hopes are high, when things seem to be going our way, suddenly, problems loom up out of nowhere and we seem to be looking at an impossible crossing. But all things are possible for God who works all things together for those who love Him (see Gen. 18:14; Jer. 32:17; Matt. 19:26; Luke 1:37; 18:27).

Two matters had to be taken care of before they could cross the Jordan. Later, in 3:1f, Joshua will give specifics on how the Jordan must be crossed, but first, as a good leader, he responsibly surveys the situation and sees two things that need to be done.

Logistical Planning: Provisions Had to be Gathered (1:11)

The food gathered here is that which had been taken as spoils of their conquests through the wilderness. The manna was still available, but it could not be kept overnight without spoiling. They would be on the march moving from Shittim to the banks of the Jordan which was only about eight miles, but because of the number of people and all that was involved, they evidently would not be able to gather the manna.

² What is described in 3:2 may be the same as in 1:11 or may have followed it.

³ D.K. Campbell, *Joshua: Leader Under Fire*, Victor Books, Wheaton, 1981, p. 12.

Analogy: The issue here is sustenance in order to be able to cross over and possess their possessions and handle the battles they would face by faith in the Lord's power. So likewise, we need to be nourished on the Words of the faith so we can continue to enter into our blessings in Christ (cf. 1 Tim. 4:6f and Heb. 3:7-19).

Strategic Planning: A Reminder of Responsibilities (1:12-15)

In verses 12-14, Joshua reminds the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and the half tribe of Manasseh of their previous promises and responsibilities (Num. 32:16-32; Deut. 3:12-20). In this, we see a key to Joshua's success.

(1) He was obeying his commission to "be careful to do according to all the law of Moses." He was remembering and seeking to live by the principles and promises of the Word. Compare 1:13, "Remember the word which Moses ... commanded you." This had become the Word for Israel.

(2) He reminded the people of the Word. His authority for his challenge to these two-and-a-half tribes was the Word of the Lord.

"This was no natural prudence or a spirit of expediency which actuated Joshua to seek their co-operation."⁴ And it was not merely a matter of seeking more help because they would be insufficient without more resources. It was not asking this as a favor to himself. No, the appeal and authority came from the facts of the commands of the Word of God. Servants of God must learn to lean on the power of the Word to motivate and minister to others and to accomplish God's purposes.

In principle however, this order from Moses and enacted here by Joshua was promoting the concept of the people of God as **team**. Here he was delegating specific tasks to these people. Each person was needed and each needed to do his part. They would act as shock troops going before their brothers.

There is also here another factor. In the words of verse 13b, "The Lord your God gives you rest, and will give you this land" followed by the words of verse 15, "until the Lord gives your brothers rest, as He gives you, ...". Joshua was reminding them of their obligation to their people and placing an additional obligation on them based on gratitude for what God had already done for them.

The People's Response (1:16-18)

16 And they answered Joshua, saying, "All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. 17 Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you; only may the LORD your God be with you, as He was with Moses. 18 Anyone who rebels against your command and does not obey your words in all that you command him, shall be put to death; only be strong and courageous."

In any successful enterprise of God's people, the leaders must have the support of the people if the work is going to fly. We might title this section, *Joshua's Encouragement*. He had honored God's Word and now God was honoring Joshua by moving the people to respond. It is tremendously encouraging to leaders and people alike when people respond to the Word with obedience and commitment. By the same token, it can be discouraging to see the opposite. In such times, both the leaders and the people must continue to trust the Lord, examine their ministries, and look to the Lord to move them to obedience rather than resort to some form of manipulation or coercion.

The people were not only willing to obey, but they were willing to deal with any disobedience in their midst because of the demoralizing effect on others and the dishonor it brings to the Lord. This is always crucial for any people of God.

Application: This illustrates the need for the careful and loving application of church discipline in the body. Such is never easy. It requires real commitment, and must always be done with a view to reconciliation and to recover a sinning believer.

The statement, "only may the Lord your God be with you, as He was with Moses," can be taken in two ways. It may be taken as a condition or as a wish or prayer. If it is taken as a condition, they were saying they wanted

⁴ Arthur Pink, *Gleanings in Joshua*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1964, p. 50.

to see clear evidence that Joshua was being led of the Lord, that he was truly God's man walking with the Lord. If it is taken as a prayer or wish, it demonstrated their recognition of this need if they were to be successful. It stated the fact they recognized they were all insufficient for the task, but that the Lord was sufficient. They needed a leader who was in touch with the living God.

Application: In this we see the need for God's leaders to be examples to the flock (Heb. 13:7). People need and want to see mature spiritual reality in their leaders. It was because of this that Paul encouraged Timothy with the following words:

1 Timothy 4:11-16. Prescribe and teach these things. 12 Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but *rather* in speech, conduct, love, faith *and* purity, show yourself an example of those who believe. 13 Until I come, give attention to the *public* reading of *Scripture*, to exhortation and teaching. 14 Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed upon you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. 15 Take pains with these things; be *absorbed* in them, so that your progress may be evident to all. 16 Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things; for as you do this you will insure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.

Lesson 3: Preparing to Enter the Land (Joshua 2:1-24)

Introduction

Humanly speaking, how difficult was the task that confronted Joshua and the people with regard to entering the land of Canaan? What were some of the obstacles Joshua and the people faced? As the leader, Joshua faced following in the steps of a leader like Moses and leading a stubborn, stiff-necked group of people. All of them together faced fortified cities, giants, and a flooded Jordan. Everything Joshua and the people were called to do, humanly speaking, was far beyond their ability. From the crossing of the swollen and turbulent waters of the Jordan to conquering the fierce, powerful, ungodly people who occupied the land.

Regardless of these obstacles, **by believing** the promises of God, **by applying** the principles of God's Word, and **by counting** on the presence of God's person, Joshua courageously moved ahead and secretly sent two men to spy out the land to gather needed strategic and tactical information that any military commander would need to plan a successful strategy for taking the land.

Joshua Sends Out the Spies (2:1a)

1a Then Joshua the son of Nun sent two men as spies secretly from Shittim, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho."

We might wonder, why Joshua sent out the spies. Was this necessary if he was really trusting in the Lord? After all, had not God promised Joshua that He would give him success? Why didn't he just go ahead knowing God would somehow supply? After all, the battle is the Lord's ... isn't it?

Joshua had the precedent of the leadership and example of Moses for this action, an action which was the result of God's own command in Numbers 13:1-2. By application, Joshua was living and acting on the precepts of Scripture as he was commanded in 1:7-8.

While Joshua had the promise of God's deliverance, he had not been given instruction on just how God would defeat the enemies they would face. As a wise military leader, he was simply gathering information concerning the layout of the enemies defenses, the condition of their moral, and other factors that would be important to any military campaign. Moreover he was not to presume on the Lord. He was to trust the Lord implicitly, but in that trust, he was also to use the resources God gave him: the training, the men, and the wisdom he had gained. See Matt. 4:6-7.

Principle: Faith in the Lord's provision should never lead to presuming on God's decrees or sovereign actions, our intuitive feelings, or on our wants and desires. Faith looks for the principles of Scripture that might be applicable, gathers information or the facts needed in making wise decisions, and then, based on biblical principles and the facts known, moves ahead trusting in the provision and directions of the Lord (cf. Luke 14:31). If the Lord wants to intervene in some miraculous way as with Jericho, that's great, but we should never presume on His sovereign ways.

Why the secrecy? Obviously, the spies were to go into the land secretly, as spies do. Here, the reference to secrecy had to do with the people of Israel. He did not inform them that he was sending in the spies. Nehemiah did similarly when he surveyed Jerusalem. Joshua was acting on behalf of God's purposes and in the peoples' best interests. He remembered the evil report of the spies from the preceding generation and the way this disheartened the people. People are people and he didn't want them to unnecessarily get their eyes on the problems.

Principle: Sometimes it is wise for the leaders to do what is needed to keep the eyes of their people on the Lord and His promises rather than on the problems. The need is to encourage one another. We sometimes have to face the problems, but we must learn to do so through the eyes of faith in God's person, promises, principles, and purposes. This was a matter of discretion and God's leading through studying and knowing what was best in this particular situation. Sometimes it is good to call everyone's attention to the problems, other times it is not (cf. Neh. 2:4-17).

Note the text says, “especially Jericho” which shows us Joshua was particularly interested in this city. Why? Jericho lay just five miles on the other side of the Jordan and was one of the most formidable fortresses in the land. Conquering this city would not only give them a strong foothold into the land, but conquering Jericho would literally split the forces of the Canaanites by coming into Canaan in the middle hindering their communication and supply lines. This would have a further demoralizing effect on the rest of the inhabitants.

Principle: Again, this illustrates how after praying for wisdom (Ja. 1:5), we all need to assess and evaluate our own situations: Where we are, where we need to go, God’s calling on our lives, our gifts and talents, our weaknesses, hindrances, and the circumstances and forces we are facing. Then, based on this information, establish plans, goals and objectives along with priorities and attack the problem accordingly, all the while resting in God’s intervention and direction (see Prov. 16:1f). Start with the things that are the most important and work on them one by one. This includes our personal life (spiritual needs, physical needs, educational needs), our family life (relationships, spiritual needs, etc. as a family), our church life and personal calling and so on.

The Spies Received by Rahab (2:1b)

1b So they went and came into the house of a harlot whose name was Rahab, and lodged there.

Rahab is mentioned eight times in Scripture (Josh. 2:1, 3; 6:17, 23, 25; Matt. 1:5; Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25), and in six of these occurrences, her name is found with a specific descriptive noun. Do you know what it is? It is “harlot.” Why did the men go in to a harlot? Is there anything we can learn from this?

This has created problems for many. To remove this stigma because her name is listed among the ancestors of the Savior in Matthew 1:5, it has even been argued that she was not a harlot, but was only an ‘innkeeper.’

One expositor, Pink, admits that she had been a harlot, but you can tell it bothers him. He says, “They were divinely directed to that particular house, though it is not likely they were personally conscious of the fact at the first.” Then a few lines later he adds: “The house in which they sheltered was owned by a harlot, named Rahab: not that she was still plying her evil trade, but that formerly she had been a woman of ill fame, the stigma of which still clung to her.”¹

Unless Pink is assuming from 2:9f and Rahab’s statement of faith included an understanding of the Law and its statutes, I see no scriptural support for this, only a prejudice that God could and would use such a woman or draw her to Himself while she was still working as a harlot. It’s almost as though she had to clean up her act before she could get saved or before God could work in her heart.

Josephus (Antiq. V, 8 [i.2]) sought to clear the spies of any suspicion for having stayed at the house of a prostitute by calling Rahab an “innkeeper” (cf. NIV mg.). “Innkeeper” and “prostitute,” however, were synonymous terms in that culture (cf. TWOT, p. 246). Rahab’s house was the only place where the men could stay with any hope of remaining undetected and where they would be able to gather the information they were seeking. Moreover, her house afforded an easy way of escape since it was located on the city wall (v. 15). There is no indication that Rahab was a temple prostitute.²

More than likely, the two spies met her in the street where she could have been practicing her trade or perhaps, hearing of them, she was out looking for them as though she were drumming up customers as was the custom of a harlot or even an innkeeper (cf. Prov. 7:6-23). At this time she had come to believe that Israel’s God was the true God, but living in this totally decadent culture, it is unlikely she had such understanding of the Law of Moses.

Rahab may have recognized the men as strangers, and because the whole city was on alert to the possibility of spies, and because of her convictions about the God of Israel, she may have concluded they were Israelites and invited them into her house for protection and to express her faith, but not for business.

¹ Arthur Pink, *Gleanings in Joshua*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1964, p. 54.

² Frank E. Gaebel, General Editor, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, New Testament*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1976-1992, electronic media.

This wonderfully illustrates God's grace. He is no respecter of persons. He accepts and forgives us not because of what we are or might be, but because of His Son, because of what He would do and now has done and will do through those who trust Him and act in faith. It matters not what we were or have been. What matters is who Jesus Christ is, what He has done, and whether or not we will put our trust in Him.

This also points to God's sovereign control over the affairs of men and how He directs the steps of those who rest in His provision or are looking to know Him better. God had worked in Rahab's heart, He knew her faith, her longing to know God and perhaps even to become a part of God's people, so God sovereignly worked and brought the spies and Rahab together for their protection and her blessing.

God could have made the spies invisible or smote the people with blindness or used angels, but He chose to use two men and one woman walking by faith with courage to act on their convictions and He chose to use the more normal circumstances of life.

Principle: In order for us to trust the Lord, are we looking for miracles, the sensational, and asking for out-of-the-ordinary experiences before we will step out and count for the Lord? Or are we willing to step out in the normal situations of life trusting God to use us and lead us to ordinary people whose hearts He has touched?

Note that Joshua is an interesting combination of the miraculous and the ordinary.

The King Is Informed and Inquires About the Spies

(2:2-3)

2 And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, "Behold, men from the sons of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land." 3 And the king of Jericho sent word to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the land."

These verses indicate the whole city had been on alert and the spies were recognized and seen going into the home of Rahab. The fact the king did not tear down the door and storm into the house may have been a matter of oriental hospitality. They had great respect for hospitality even in this decadent city. In fact, Unger says, "Oriental custom accords an almost superstitious respect to a woman's apartment."³

The king would have assumed that the spies were staying with Rahab. In antiquity too, as in modern times, prostitutes frequently were involved in intelligence activities. The king expected Rahab to do her patriotic duty and turn the spies in. The ancient law code of Hammurabi contains the following provision: "If felons are banded together in an ale-wife's [prostitute's or innkeeper's] house and she has not haled [them] to the palace, that ale-wife shall be put to death" (S.R. Driver and J.C. Miles, *The Babylonian Laws* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1956], 2:45).⁴

Rahab Lies and Conceals the Spies

(2:4-7)

4 But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them, and she said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. 5 And it came about when it was time to shut the gate, at dark, that the men went out; I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them." 6 But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them in the stalks of flax which she had laid in order on the roof. 7 So the men pursued them on the road to the Jordan to the fords; and as soon as those who were pursuing them had gone out, they shut the gate.

In these verses Rahab conceals the spies, lies to protect the soldiers, and sends the soldiers of the king on a wild goose chase. Because to do otherwise was an act of treason and punishable by death, the king believed her to be loyal and didn't even have her home searched.

At this point, we would do well to look at two New Testament verses and one Old Testament verse:

³ Unger's *Commentary on the Old Testament*. Vol I, Genesis – Song of Solomon, p. 285.

⁴ *Expositors Bible Commentary*, electronic version.

Hebrews 11:31 By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.

James 2:25 And in the same way was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works, when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?

Joshua 6:17 And the city shall be under the ban, it and all that is in it belongs to the LORD; only Rahab the harlot and all who are with her in the house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent.

Why was Rahab saved? Because she had believed in the God of Israel. Hiding the messengers was an outworking of her faith. To hide the messengers was a calculated deception to protect them, just as many godly people hid Jews in European countries during World War II.

First, what Rahab did was a matter of faith. She had come to believe that the God of Israel was indeed “God in heaven above and earth beneath” (2:11) and she is listed in the faith Hall of Fame chapter.

Second, Rahab’s faith, which gave her strong convictions about God, caused her to act on her faith to the point of putting her life on the line. She knew eventually Israel would attack the city and destroy it because their God was the true God, and she wanted to be delivered and to become a part of Israel. She did not know a lot about Israel’s God, His laws of righteousness, or the way of salvation, but she knew He was the supreme God.

What about Rahab’s lie? Was it justified? Does Scripture condone it? Most commentaries approve of her faith, but disapprove of her lie. In essence, they approve of her hiding the spies, but not telling the lies. For instance:

Dr. Campbell writes, “To excuse Rahab for indulging in a common practice is to condone what God condemns. . . . The lie of Rahab was recorded but not approved. The Bible approves her faith, demonstrated by good works, but not her falsehood.”⁵

Dr. Unger writes, “Rahab’s lie, of course was morally wrong.”⁶

Pink agrees and says, “She failed to fully trust the Lord, and the fear of man brought a snare. He whose angels had smitten the men of Sodom with blindness (Gen. 19:11) and who had slain the fifty men sent to lay hands on His prophet (2 Kings 1:9-12), could have prevented those officers finding the spies.”⁷

But is this correct? What was she supposed to say? “If you think they are here, come on in and search the house.” Please note, this is a matter of warfare.

In 6:17 Joshua explained that Rahab was to be spared because she hid the spies, and she did this as an ally. Let’s be honest here. When you take a vacation, do you leave a light on or have the TV come on in the evening to give the impression you are home when in truth, you are gone? We do this to deceive intruders, but it’s not the truth.

Note what *Expositors Bible Commentary* says: “Rahab lied as much in what she did as in what she said. Deception is an important strategy in warfare. Espionage would be impossible without it. When Rahab hid the spies, she sided with Israel against her own people. It was an act of treason!”⁸

In preparation for D Day in World War II, we purposely let the Germans believe that we were going to invade France at, I believe, Calais when our intention was to invade the beaches of Omaha and Utah at Cherbourg France.

Rahab’s Declaration of Faith (2:8-13)

8 Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, 9 and said to the men, “I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inha-

⁵ *Joshua, Leader Under Fire*, Donald Campbell, p. 19-20.

⁶ *Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 285.

⁷ Pink, p. 59.

⁸ *Expositors Bible Commentary*, electronic version.

bitants of the land have melted away before you. 10 For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. 11 And when we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. 12 Now therefore, please swear to me by the LORD, since I have dealt kindly with you, that you also will deal kindly with my father's household, and give me a pledge of truth, 13 and spare my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters, with all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death."

First, we see Rahab's confidence and conviction in the fact of the Lord's power. Somehow she knew what had occurred at the Red Sea and afterwards and that it was the product of the sovereign power of Israel's God. It was not merely the product of Israel's genius or some quirk of nature that parted the Red Sea.

Application: This reminds us how our lives should not only be different, but there should also be that in our lives which points to God as the reason our lives are different through the things we do and say—like going to church, our concern for people and their needs, and our specific testimony giving a reason for the hope that is within us (1 Pet. 3:15-16).

Second, we see Rahab's confidence and conviction in Israel's God (Yahweh) as the one and only true God who rules over heaven and the affairs of men on earth. Her statement in verse 11, "... for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath," is more than a statement that Israel's God was a god. The idea is that He and He alone is the true God and that He is involved with the affairs of the earth and man.

Application: This reminds us of God's involvement in our lives. He is the sovereign God who holds all things together by the word of His power, who is at work in our lives. Do we live in the light of this?

Third, we see Rahab's confidence and conviction of coming judgment on her people and her desire to be delivered through aligning herself with the God of Israel (vs. 13). Note the "Now therefore ...". This indicates that this request was the product of her knowledge, conviction, and faith concerning the Lord.

Fourth, we see in verses 12-13 that she was not only concerned about herself. Her concern included her family or household. This is God's number one plan for evangelism, our network of family, friends, co-workers.

Application: How concerned and involved are we in our network—praying for salvation, reaching out to know and love them, and in eventually sharing the love of Christ.

The inhabitants of the land were terror stricken. Three times in this chapter, the word "melted" is used to describe the emotional condition or the morale of the people (vss. 9, 11, 24). Mentally and emotionally, they were a defeated people. God had already given the people of Jericho into their hands. This had been the case for how long? Since they had heard about the events of the Red sea (2:9-11).

The question is, did Israel know it? With the exception of Moses, Joshua, and Caleb, the people of Israel refused to believe the promise of God, instead they allowed the negative report of the ten spies to melt their hearts because they were looking at the problems rather than at their God.

Note the irony here: the inhabitants were looking at Israel's God and were shaking in their sandals. The Israelites, who had seen the mighty works of God over and over again, were looking at their problems rather than God and were terrorized into unbelief.

Note the following passages:

25 When they returned from spying out the land, at the end of forty days, 26 they proceeded to come to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the sons of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; and they brought back word to them and to all the congregation and showed them the fruit of the land. 27 Thus they told him, and said, "We went in to the land where you sent us; and it certainly does flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. 28 Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large; and moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there. 29 Amalek is living in the land of the Negev and the Hittites and

the Jebusites and the Amorites are living in the hill country, and the Canaanites are living by the sea and by the side of the Jordan” (Numbers 13:25-29).

26 “Yet you were not willing to go up, but rebelled against the command of the LORD your God; 27 and you grumbled in your tents and said, ‘Because the LORD hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us. 28 Where can we go up? Our brethren have made our hearts melt, saying, “The people are bigger and taller than we; the cities are large and fortified to heaven. And besides, we saw the sons of the Anakim there.”’ 29 Then I said to you, ‘Do not be shocked, nor fear them. 30 The LORD your God who goes before you will Himself fight on your behalf, just as He did for you in Egypt before your eyes, 31 and in the wilderness where you saw how the LORD your God carried you, just as a man carries his son, in all the way which you have walked, until you came to this place.’ 32 But for all this, you did not trust the LORD your God, ...” (Deuteronomy 1:26-32).

Application: How like us this is! Regardless, whether it’s the bite of a mosquito or the charge of a lion, we must learn to keep our eyes on the Lord and off the problem (see Heb. 12:1-2).

The Response of the Spies (2:14)

14 So the men said to her, “Our life for yours if you do not tell this business of ours; and it shall come about when the LORD gives us the land that we will deal kindly and faithfully with you.”

Keeping quiet about their presence and refusing to inform on them would be an evidence of her faith in the Lord and good will to the people of God (cf. Matt. 25:24f).

The Scarlet Thread (2:15-21)

15 Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall, so that she was living on the wall. 16 And she said to them, “Go to the hill country, lest the pursuers happen upon you, and hide yourselves there for three days, until the pursuers return. Then afterward you may go on your way.” 17 And the men said to her, “We shall be free from this oath to you which you have made us swear, 18 unless, when we come into the land, you tie this cord of scarlet thread in the window through which you let us down, and gather to yourself into the house your father and your mother and your brothers and all your father’s household. 19 And it shall come about that anyone who goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be free; but anyone who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if a hand is laid on him. 20 But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be free from the oath which you have made us swear.” 21 And she said, “According to your words, so be it.” So she sent them away, and they departed; and she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

Just before the spies left, they confirmed their agreement with Rahab: First, her house must be identified by a scarlet cord hung from the window. Second, she and her family were to remain in the house during the attack on the city. Third, the spies reassured her that they would be free of their oath guaranteeing her protection if Rahab exposed their mission.

This story was much like the deliverance experienced in the last plague God brought on Pharaoh and on Egypt when He killed the firstborn in every household, but He spared the Israelites because of the blood of the Passover lamb which had been sprinkled on the two doorposts and the lintel of their houses. Though it has not been identified as such, it seems the scarlet thread was a picture of Christ.

In the days of Noah, there was safety and refuge for those who entered into the door of the ark. In Egypt there was safety and refuge for those who were gathered behind the doors that were sprinkled with the blood of the Passover lamb. For you and me, there is safety and refuge from eternal judgment—but only if we enter the right door: Jesus Christ alone. As He said in John 10:9, “I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved.”

George Whitefield, the eloquent preacher of the Great Awakening in North America (1738-40), once spoke on the text, “The Door Was Shut.” There were two arrogant and disrespectful young men in the congregation, and one was overheard to say to the other in mocking tones, “What if the door is shut? Another will open.”

Later in the sermon, the evangelist said, “It is possible that there may be someone here who is careless and self-satisfied, and says, ‘What does it matter if the door is shut? Another will open!’”

The two young men looked at each other in alarm!

“Yes, another door will open,” Whitefield concluded. “It will be the door to the bottomless pit—the door to Hell.”⁹

The Return and Report of the Spies (2:22-24)

22 And they departed and came to the hill country, and remained there for three days until the pursuers returned. Now the pursuers had sought them all along the road, but had not found them. 23 Then the two men returned and came down from the hill country and crossed over and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and they related to him all that had happened to them. 24 And they said to Joshua, “Surely the LORD has given all the land into our hands, and all the inhabitants of the land, moreover, have melted away before us.”

Joshua and the men of Israel saw the words and actions of Rahab as a clear evidence of the sovereign providence and blessing of the Lord. Note their confidence, “Surely, the Lord has given all the land into our hands, ...” There are some obvious lessons from this passage:

(1) This demonstrates God’s concern and work to deliver one person or one family who will trust Him (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9). It reminds us God knows the hearts of men and will lead us to them if we are only available. It also teaches us that the work of God must take place at both ends.

(2) It demonstrates God’s protection and provision of His servants to enable them to carry out their calling and purpose regardless of the circumstances. The only thing that can hinder us in doing the will of God and fulfilling our calling is our own unbelief.

(3) It demonstrates how our faith should lead to action and ministry to and for others. Rahab reached out to both the spies and to her household (John 1:35-51; 4:28-29, 39).

(4) It demonstrates how God’s mercy and grace overcomes His wrath through the cross. Rahab was an Amoritess and according to the law of Moses there was to be no pity or covenant with any inhabitants—only judgment (cf. Deut. 7:2). Through her genuine faith, she became an exception.

(5) Rahab forms a type and a pledge of God’s purpose to save the Gentiles who, though without hope in the world (Eph. 2:12), could to come to God and be a partaker with Israel through faith in Christ.

(6) Rahab provides a lesson by noting the contrast with Israel as well as the other inhabitants of Jericho. It becomes a warning against the hardening of the heart in those who see and hear but fail to respond by faith. Just hearing is not enough. Note the applications here:

In relation to Israel:

1 Therefore, let us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it. 2 For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard (Heb 4:1-2).

In relation to Jericho:

⁹ Donald K. Campbell with Jim Denney, *No Time For Neutrality, A Study of Joshua*, Discovery House, 1994, p. 36.

9 and said to the men, “I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. 10 **“For we have heard** how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. 11 And when we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath” (Joshua 2:9-11).

In relation to the disciples:

52 for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened. (Mark 6:52).

In relation to us:

7 Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, “Today if you hear His voice, 8 Do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, As in the day of trial in the wilderness, 9 Where your fathers tried Me by testing Me, And saw My works for forty years. 10 Therefore I was angry with this generation, And said, ‘They always go astray in their heart; And they did not know My ways’; 11 As I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest’” (Hebrews 3:7-11).

Lesson 4: Crossing the Jordan (Joshua 3:1-4:24)

Introduction

Can you think back and remember a day you waited for a long time with great anticipation and excitement? Most of us can. As a child, Christmas and birthdays were such days. Later it may have been graduation day, your wedding day, or maybe earning the right to compete in some great competition like the Olympics.

Depending on the nature of the day and what it might hold, such a time might also bring about a certain amount of anxiety because of the challenge you might face. For months, weeks, and days you waited, and then finally, the day arrived. Can you imagine the anticipation and excitement the children of Israel faced as they stood before the River Jordan the evening before they were to cross over into the land?

The earlier generation had failed to enter because of unbelief and the new generation had waited a long time, for some it was close to forty years. Joshua and Caleb, who were now about eighty years old, had waited even longer. According to the promise to the Patriarchs, Jewish anticipation went back some five hundred years. But now, Joshua tells the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you" (3:5).

But if there was excitement, there must also have been some anxiety as they beheld the swollen river and thought about the fortified cities that lay on the other side. Life is like that. Often, with our hopes at their highest, there are accompanying challenges and problems that we face at the very same time.

After hearing a message at a Bible conference on how to cope with discouragement, three people greeted the speaker: a young mother who had not slept the previous night because her husband had come home at 10:30 p.m. and announced he was divorcing her; a pastor whose teenage daughter was rebelling against God; and a Christian worker whose husband had entered the hospital for treatment of a brain tumor.

Stated a pastor, "The trouble is that we are facing problems that *we* cannot solve: this customer I must sell, that exam I must take, this debt I must pay, those in-laws I must endure, that habit I must break, this marriage I must save."¹

But that is life in a fallen world. Along with our hopes and joys there are always problems for which we simply have neither the strength nor the wisdom to meet the challenge. We need strength from above. The battle is really the Lord's and this is what Israel was being taught in this chapter. Donald Campbell titles chapter 3, "Fording Uncrossable Rivers."

The Preparations Needed for Crossing (3:1-6)

1 Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and he and all the sons of Israel set out from Shittim and came to the Jordan, and they lodged there before they crossed. 2 And it came about at the end of three days that the officers went through the midst of the camp; 3 and they commanded the people, saying, "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God with the Levitical priests carrying it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. 4 However, there shall be between you and it a distance of about 2,000 cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you shall go, for you have not passed this way before."

5 Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you." 6 And Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, "Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over ahead of the people." So they took up the ark of the covenant and went ahead of the people.

¹ Donald K. Campbell, *Joshua, Leader Under Fire*, Victor Books, Wheaton, 1989, pp. 26-27.

The Preeminent Place of the Ark (vss. 1–4)

Aside from the miraculous way the river was crossed, the most important feature of this chapter is the Ark of the Covenant. Its prominence is stressed in the number of times it is mentioned in chapters 3 and 4 (nine times in chapter 3 and seven times in chapter 4) and by the nature of the commands and statements given in its regard.

What's so important about the Ark? It represented the person and promises of God. It pointed to the fact that as the people of Israel set out to cross the Jordan, invade, and possess the land, they must do so not in their own strength, but in God's for it was God Himself who was going before them as their source of victory.

And such is the case with all of life. As Paul cried out when contemplating the challenges and trials of ministry, "And who is adequate for these things?" But he then answered his own question with these words: "And such confidence we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as *coming* from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God" (2 Cor. 3:4-5).

The People Consecrated (vss. 5-6)

In verse 5, Joshua commands the people to consecrate themselves in view of the wonders God would work among them on the next day. But what does the word "consecrate" mean? This is not exactly what we might expect from a military standpoint. Today, the military leader would have said, "Sharpen your swords and spears and polish your shields!" But God's ways are not our ways. For God's people, spiritual preparation is the vital element for it is being rightly related to God that brings the power of God on our work and ministry.

"Consecrate" is the Hebrew *qadash* and it may mean, "be hallowed, set apart, consecrated" or "consecrate, set apart, prepare, dedicate." But here it is in the *hithpael* stem which is reflexive and means, "consecrate yourselves, set yourselves apart, prepare yourselves." This stem points out **personal responsibility**.

In the Old Testament this word is often used (particularly in Exodus and Leviticus) in connection with the Old Testament sacrifices, priesthood, washings, and with regard to the children of Israel as God's people. In this regard, it was especially used in connection with confession or cleansing through the use of Old Testament sacrifices, washings, and offerings (Ex. 19:10, 22; 40:13). It portrays the need to deal with sin in the life. It was used of setting something apart for use by the Lord and His purposes in the sense of cleansing, preparing, and dedicating it to the Lord (e.g., consecration of Mt. Sinai) (Ex. 19:22); preparing Aaron via the priestly garments and anointing for ministry (Ex. 28:3, 41); and setting apart for God's use through sacrifice, and anointing (Ex. 29:1, 36, 37; 29:44; 40:13).

Application: Note Joshua 3:5b, "for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you." When there is a lack of consecration through confession for the defilement of sin along with a commitment to God's purpose for our lives in service or ministry, we hinder the power of God. But there is more included here in this call for consecration. "The people of Israel were to *expect* God to work a miracle. They were to be eager, gripped by a sense of wonder. Israel was not to lose sight of their God who can do the incredible and the humanly impossible."²

Two key ideas are involved here—*Preparation and Dedication*:

(1) It reminds us of God's holiness. God is absolute holiness, completely set apart from sin. He is a holy God who cannot have fellowship with sinful man or allow sin in His presence without a solution to the sin problem.

(2) It shows the necessity of sacrifice for sin or the cross of Christ. Without faith in the cross and its cleansing, no man can be set apart for God's use or blessing.

(3) God does not use unclean vessels. For believers, those saved and cleansed by the work of Christ, this command for consecration demonstrates the necessity for cleansing through confession or getting right with God and with men in order to be used of God and to experience His deliverance. To experience God's power, protection, and deliverance, we need to prepare our hearts and deal with the known sin in our lives through confession (cf. Josh. 7:13; with Ex. 19:10, 22).

² John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck, Editors, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Victor Books, Wheaton, 1983,1985, electronic media.

(4) Keeping in mind the idea of dedication associated with this word, this command reminds us of the necessity of understanding our purpose as God's people along with a commitment to God and His purpose. It meant they were to set themselves apart to *Yahweh* to cross the Jordan so they could enter the land, defeat the enemies, and become a testimony to the nations (Ex. 19:4-6).

(5) The command, especially in New Testament theology, suggests the need of the ministry of the Holy Spirit and His control for consecrated living. This command suggests this because of the prevalence of anointing mentioned in connection with consecration of the priests, etc. (cf. Ex. 40 also). It stresses the need of the filling of the Holy Spirit as God's enabling agent for dealing with the forces arrayed against us—the flesh, the devil, and the world (Acts 1:8; Eph. 3:16; 5:18; Gal. 5:16f and 6:1).

The Promise of Passage Through the Jordan (3:7–13)

7 Now the LORD said to Joshua, "This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you. 8 You shall, moreover, command the priests who are carrying the ark of the covenant, saying, 'When you come to the edge of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan.'" 9 Then Joshua said to the sons of Israel, "Come here, and hear the words of the LORD your God." 10 And Joshua said, "By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will assuredly dispossess from before you the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Hivite, the Perizzite, the Girgashite, the Amorite, and the Jebusite. 11 Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over ahead of you into the Jordan. 12 Now then, take for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man for each tribe. 13 And it shall come about when the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off, and the waters which are flowing down from above shall stand in one heap."

These verses in essence reinforce the concept of grace. They show that crossing the Jordan and dispossessing the enemies (as in all aspects of our salvation and sanctification) is the work of God. The things we do in consecration are not works of righteousness that merit God's favor or overcome the enemies. Rather, the acts of consecration, like confession, remove the barriers to God's power, to fellowship, and so prepare our hearts to receive God's grace: they build our faith so we will put our feet in the water, cross over, and go up against the enemy.

The Promise to Joshua (vs. 7)

To be effective, leaders need the right credentials, namely, solid biblical training under men of God who truly know God and His word and the obvious hand of God on a leader's life. So it was time that God establish Joshua as His representative to guide the nation.

Note Joshua 4:14. It is significant that it was God who did the exalting. Our tendency is to exalt ourselves, but Joshua, in reporting God's communication to him, said nothing about this promise of being exalted. Rather, when reporting the words of God to Israel, he focused their attention on the fact that it was the living God who was among them and that it was He and He alone who would dispossess the enemies of the land (vs. 10).

The Commands for the Priests (vs. 8)

Since it was the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant, and since it was the ark that represented God's person and power, they alone were to take the Ark to the edge of the water and stand *still* in the water. What do we gather from this? It reminds us of our part in the plan of God. We must learn to step out in faith and obedience to the principles and promises of Scripture. It reminds us of the need to rest in God's promises. They were not to run down into the waters. This is just like the words of Moses in Exodus 14:13-14 when they were hemmed in with the Red Sea in front of them and Pharaoh and his chariots behind them.

But Moses said to the people, “Do not fear! Stand by³ and see the salvation (Hebrew, *yeshu, àa*,) of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent” (Exodus 14:13-14).

I am reminded of Isaiah 30:15: “For thus the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, has said, ‘In repentance and rest you shall be saved, In quietness and trust is your strength.’ But you were not willing, ...”

The Word of the Lord to the People (vss. 9-13)

The focus in verse 9 is on hearing the “words of the Lord your God.” In this we see the concept of Romans 10:17, “faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ.” What can we learn from this for leadership? The authority of leaders among God’s people needs to be the Scripture rather than their personality, charisma, or whatever happens to appeal to people.

To what do the words, “By this” in verse 10 refer? To the Ark of the Covenant. Note verse 11. This focused them on the truth that “the battle is the Lord’s,” or, as Joshua said, “By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will assuredly dispossess from before you the Canaanite, ...” (3:10). It is God’s presence as the one and only living God that sustains believers regardless of what life might bring. The key is staying focused on His presence and resting in Him.

During the Civil War, the town of Moresfield, West Virginia was on the dividing line, and sawed back and forth between Federal and Confederate troops. In one old house which still stands today, an elderly woman lived alone. One morning Yankee troops stomped up on her porch. Though at their mercy, she remained calm and invited them to be seated at her table.

When breakfast was set before them, she said, “It is a custom of long standing in this house to have prayers before meals. I hope you won’t mind.” With that, she picked up the Bible, opened it at random and began to read from Psalm 27 (KJV):

“The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? 2 When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. 3 Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. ... 13 I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. 14 Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.”

When she finished, she murmured quietly, “Let us pray.” As she prayed, she heard stealthy sounds of shuffling shoes. When she ended with “Amen,” she opened her eyes. The soldiers were gone! Her lack of fear had made them fearful of lingering any longer!⁴

Passage by the Power of God (3:14–17)

14 So it came about when the people set out from their tents to cross the Jordan with the priests carrying the ark of the covenant before the people, 15 and when those who carried the ark came into the Jordan, and the feet of the priests carrying the ark were dipped in the edge of the water for the Jordan overflows all its banks all the days of harvest, 16 that the waters which were flowing down from above stood and rose up in one heap, a great distance away at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan; and those which were flowing down toward the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. So the people crossed opposite Jericho. 17 And the priests who carried

³ The Hebrew word here, *ya,,s£ab*, “set, station oneself, take one’s stand,” but it is used “esp. of standing quiet and passive, to see the mighty deliverance of *Yahweh*.” (Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Oxford University Press, London, 1907, p. 426).

⁴ Campbell, p. 30.

the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan while all Israel crossed on dry ground, until all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan.

After breaking camp, as instructed, the priests, carrying the Ark of the Covenant, led the way and walked to the Jordan which was swollen over its banks. This must have been a fearful sight, but resting in the presence of the living God they stepped into the waters. Immediately, a miracle occurred.

In the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Campbell writes:

Though the place named “Adam” is found only here it is usually identified with Tell ed-Damiyeh, about 16 miles north of the ford opposite Jericho. A wide stretch of riverbed therefore was dried up, allowing the people with their animals and baggage to hurry across (cf. Josh. 4:10).

How could this sensational event occur? Many insist that this was no miracle since the event can be explained as a natural phenomenon. They point out that on December 8, 1267 an earthquake caused the high banks of the Jordan to collapse near Tell ed-Damiyeh, damming the river for about 10 hours. On July 11, 1927 another earthquake near the same location blocked the river for 21 hours. Of course these stoppages did not occur during flood season. Admittedly God could have employed natural causes such as an earthquake and a landslide and the timing would have still made it a miraculous intervention. But does the biblical text allow for such an interpretation of this event?

Considering all the factors involved it seems best to view this occurrence as a special act of God brought about in a way unknown to man. Many supernatural elements were brought together: (1) The event came to pass as predicted (3:13, 15). (2) The timing was exact (v. 15). (3) The event took place when the river was at flood stage (v. 15). (4) The wall of water was held in place for many hours, possibly an entire day (v. 16). (5) The soft, wet river bottom became dry at once (v. 17). (6) The water returned immediately as soon as the people had crossed over and the priests came up out of the river (4:18).⁵

As one studies this third chapter and marvels at the miraculous work of God displayed here, there is an important principle that should not be missed. Crossing the Jordan at flood stage with two million people had several immediate results: God was magnified, Joshua was exalted (3:5), the people were surely energized and motivated, and the people of the land, the Canaanites, were terrorized (cf. 1:9; 5:1). God was giving them the land. Indeed, He had already done so, providentially speaking (1:2-6; 2:9), but the people of the land were not going to simply lie down. The inhabitants of the land would resist with all the resources at their disposal. Crossing the Jordan and possessing their possession was not going to be a piece of cake. It would entail battle after battle. Crossing the Jordan, then, meant two things for Israel. First, they must be totally committed to going against armies, chariots, and fortified cities. But then, if they were to be successful, they must also be committed to a focused walk of faith in *Yahweh*, the only true and living God rather than, as they had done in the wilderness, a walk according to the flesh and their own resources.

For believers today, crossing the Jordan represents passing from one level of the Christian life to another. (It is not a picture of a believer dying and entering heaven. For the Israelites Canaan was hardly heaven!) It is a picture of entering into spiritual warfare to claim what God has promised. This should mean the end of a life lived by human effort and the beginning of a life of faith and obedience.⁶

Preparations for Remembering the Crossing (4:1-24)

1 Now it came about when all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan, that the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying, 2 “Take for yourselves twelve men from the people, one man from each tribe, 3 and command them, saying, ‘Take up for yourselves twelve stones from here out of the middle of

⁵ Walvoord/Zuck, electronic media.

⁶ Walvoord/Zuck, electronic media.

the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet are standing firm, and carry them over with you, and lay them down in the lodging place where you will lodge tonight.” 4 So Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the sons of Israel, one man from each tribe; 5 and Joshua said to them, “Cross again to the ark of the LORD your God into the middle of the Jordan, and each of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel. 6 Let this be a sign among you, so that when your children ask later, saying, ‘What do these stones mean to you?’ 7 then you shall say to them, ‘Because the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off.’ So these stones shall become a memorial to the sons of Israel forever.”

8 And thus the sons of Israel did, as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, just as the LORD spoke to Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel; and they carried them over with them to the lodging place, and put them down there. 9 Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan at the place where the feet of the priests who carried the ark of the covenant were standing, and they are there to this day. 10 For the priests who carried the ark were standing in the middle of the Jordan until everything was completed that the LORD had commanded Joshua to speak to the people, according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua. And the people hurried and crossed; 11 and it came about when all the people had finished crossing, that the ark of the LORD and the priests crossed before the people. 12 And the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh crossed over in battle array before the sons of Israel, just as Moses had spoken to them; 13 about 40,000, equipped for war, crossed for battle before the LORD to the desert plains of Jericho. 14 On that day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; so that they revered him, just as they had revered Moses all the days of his life.

15 Now the LORD said to Joshua, 16 “Command the priests who carry the ark of the testimony that they come up from the Jordan.” 17 So Joshua commanded the priests, saying, “Come up from the Jordan.” 18 And it came about when the priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD had come up from the middle of the Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up to the dry ground, that the waters of the Jordan returned to their place, and went over all its banks as before.

19 Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth of the first month and camped at Gilgal on the eastern edge of Jericho. 20 And those twelve stones which they had taken from the Jordan, Joshua set up at Gilgal. 21 And he said to the sons of Israel, “When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, ‘What are these stones?’ 22 then you shall inform your children, saying, ‘Israel crossed this Jordan on dry ground.’ 23 For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed, just as the LORD your God had done to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed; 24 that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, so that you may fear the LORD your God forever.”

Another title for this chapter might be, “Lest We Forget.” The concern found in the Bible over our proneness to forget the Lord, His works of salvation and sanctification and what this means to us by way of our calling, is one of the important concerns of Scripture.

Let's begin by an illustration in the life of Israel as recorded for us in Exodus 15:

1 Then Moses and the sons of Israel sang this song to the LORD, and said, “I will sing to the LORD, for He is highly exalted; The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea. 2 The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation; This is my God, and I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will extol Him. 3 The LORD is a warrior; The LORD is His name. 4 Pharaoh's chariots and his army He has cast into the sea; And the choicest of his officers are drowned in the Red Sea. 5 The deeps cover them; They went down into the depths like a stone. 6 Thy right hand, O LORD, is majestic in power, Thy right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy. 7 And in the greatness of Thine excellence Thou dost overthrow those who rise up against Thee; Thou dost send forth Thy burning anger, and it consumes them as chaff. 8 And at the blast of Thy nostrils the waters were piled up, The flowing waters stood up like a heap; The deeps were congealed in the heart of the sea. 9 The enemy said, ‘I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; My desire

shall be gratified against them; I will draw out my sword, my hand shall destroy them.’ 10 Thou didst blow with Thy wind, the sea covered them; They sank like lead in the mighty waters. 11 Who is like Thee among the gods, O LORD? Who is like Thee, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders? 12 Thou didst stretch out Thy right hand, The earth swallowed them. 13 In Thy lovingkindness Thou hast led the people whom Thou hast redeemed; In Thy strength Thou hast guided them to Thy holy habitation. 14 The peoples have heard, they tremble; Anguish has gripped the inhabitants of Philistia. 15 Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed; The leaders of Moab, trembling grips them; All the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. 16 Terror and dread fall upon them; By the greatness of Thine arm they are motionless as stone; Until Thy people pass over, O LORD, Until the people pass over whom Thou hast purchased. 17 Thou wilt bring them and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, The place, O LORD, which Thou hast made for Thy dwelling, The sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established. 18 The LORD shall reign forever and ever.”

19 For the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his horsemen went into the sea, and the LORD brought back the waters of the sea on them; but the sons of Israel walked on dry land through the midst of the sea. 20 And Miriam the prophetess, Aaron’s sister, took the timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dancing. 21 And Miriam answered them, “Sing to the LORD, for He is highly exalted; The horse and his rider He has hurled into the sea.”

22 Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. 23 And when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter; therefore it was named Marah. 24 So the people grumbled at Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?” 25 Then he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree; and he threw it into the waters, and the waters became sweet. There He made for them a statute and regulation, and there He tested them. 26 And He said, “If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the LORD, am your healer.”

27 Then they came to Elim where there were twelve springs of water and seventy date palms, and they camped there beside the waters.

In only three days this people who had seen and sung of the mighty works of God suddenly seemed to have developed a serious case of amnesia. Rather than complaining over the absence of water and then over the bitter waters of Marah, we might have expected them to say, “Lord, we remember the way you delivered us out of our slavery in Egypt and how you rolled back the waters of the Red Sea, and how you destroyed Pharaoh’s horses, his chariots and his horsemen in the sea, and now, O Lord, we know that you have brought us here in keeping with your purposes, so we are trusting you to ...”

But instead we read, “So the people grumbled at Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?” (Exo. 15:24).

Let’s note some admonitions in the Old Testament about remembering:

Lest We Forget	That We Might Remember
Ex. 12-51-13:8; Deut. 4:9-10, 23, 31.	Positive commands to remember: Deut. 6:12; Deut. 7:18, Deut. 8:2
Deut. 5:15; 15:15—remembering the negative, the life God redeemed us from as a motivation against remembering the grace of God.	Negative illustrations of remembering: Num. 11:5 which cause us to forget the positive.
Deut. 8:11, 14, 18-19;	Deut. 9:7; 16:3; 32:7

These verses comprise only a partial list of warnings and commands to remember rather than forget because of our natural tendencies. The memorial of commemoration of stones falls into three objectives:

(1) A Memorial Sign to promote encouragement and reverence in all Israel and for all time (4:6a, 7b, 24b). The name *Gilgal* comes from a word which means “a wheel,” which in turns comes from a word, *ga,,lal*, which means “to roll some object on, upon, away, against, from, unto.” Gilgal means either “a rolling” or “a circle of stones.” So, every time Israel would return to Gilgal they would see the circles of stones and remember what God had done to roll away the reproach of Egypt (note Josh. 5:9 which uses the verb *ga,,lal*). The very site of the stones was to be an encouragement, but also a reminder of the sovereign power of the Lord over nations and creation so they might fear the Lord forever and remain faithful to their purpose in the plan of God. (Compare Ex. 19:4-6; Deut. 4:1-9.)

(2) A Memorial Sign to promote instruction to future generations (4:6b-7, 21-23). In two places in the chapter, covering five verses, parents are reminded of their responsibility for the communication of God’s Word and His calling on their children, generation to generation. Parents dare not and cannot abdicate this to others. God charges parents with this privilege and responsibility. (Compare: Deut. 4:9; 6:6f; and Judges 2:1f; 3:1-7; 8:34; 21:25.)

(3) A Memorial Sign of testimony to other nations (4:24a). Here God was again reminding Israel of her purpose as a nation of priests (Ex. 19:4-6; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9-11). The application to us should be obvious. Christians are living stones of a holy temple, living memorials of the power of God. But we too face the threat of forgetting the Lord by forgetting our pilgrim character through preoccupation with the world.

By way of application, what are some of the things we regularly do and are called to do that form memorials of the saving grace of God and our calling as believers in Christ?

- Weekly assembling ourselves together (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 11:17ff; Heb. 10:23-25).
- Taking the Lord’s supper, specifically aimed at remembering Him just as were the various feasts and special days like the Passover.
- Special services at various times of the year like Christmas, New Years, Easter, form wonderful times to focus on the Lord and to make this real in the lives of our children.
- By our daily personal time in the Word, through care groups, and fellowship with others.

Lesson 5: Consecrating the People (Joshua 5:1-15)

Chapter 5 describes the consecration of the people of Israel in preparation for the great task that lay before them. As such, it stands as a bridge between the crossing of the Jordan and the beginning of the military campaigns to subjugate the inhabitants of the land. For many, however, especially to those trained in military tactics, this chapter may seem like an enigma, at least from man's point of view. And of course, that's precisely the issue here. God's ways are infinitely higher than ours. From all appearances, now was the time to attack the enemy. The people of Israel were filled with the excitement and motivation of having miraculously crossed the Jordan. They apparently knew the enemy was in disarray from the standpoint of their morale (5:1); so surely, it was time to strike. Many of the military leaders under Joshua's command may have been thinking, "For goodness sake, let's not wait! Let's go! Now is the logical time and the enemy is ripe for the taking!"

But in God's economy and plan there are spiritual values, priorities, and principles that are far more vital and fundamental to victory or our capacity to attack and demolish the fortresses that the world has raised up against the knowledge and plan of God (2 Cor. 10:4-5). Looking at conditions from our perspective of deadlines, feeling the pressure to perform and accomplish things in order to please people and sometimes our own egos, we are too often in a hurry to 'get the show on the road.' But to be successful from God's standpoint, certain things are essential if we are going to attack the various fortresses of life in His strength and according to His principles. Perhaps, a letter written by an Englishman during World War II illustrates the point:

As one man, the whole nation has handed over all its resources to the Government. We have invested the Cabinet with the right to conscript any of us for any task, to take our goods, our money, our all. Never have rich men set such little store by their wealth; never have we been so ready to lay down life itself, if only our cause may triumph.¹

Before Israel was ready to face the enemy, they too needed a similar preparation of heart and willingness to submit to God's directions that they might experience His power. To ensure victory, God took them through several events to instruct and prepare them for battle. Chapter five falls into five instructive sections, each one fundamental to victory. These include:

(1) A statement regarding the morale of the inhabitants of the land (5:1). Essential to spiritual victory is our understanding that in Christ, all the enemies we face are, in essence, defeated foes (cf. Rom. 6; Col. 2:1-15; Heb. 2:14).

(2) The renewal of the rite of circumcision (5:2-9). As a sign of God's covenant with Abraham, circumcision stood for Israel's faith in God's promises which included the possession of the land as their inheritance. It was an act of faith and spiritual preparation.

(3) The observance of the Passover (5:10). By partaking of the Passover, Israel was to relive their deliverance out of Egypt by the blood of the Lamb, but as with circumcision, this too was related to the land. As observing the Passover in Egypt protected them from the destroying angel, it also assured them of two more things: (a) that just as the Red Sea crossing would be followed by the destruction of the Egyptians (b) so likewise the crossing of the Jordan would be followed by the defeat of the Canaanites. Remembering the past became an excellent preparation of faith for the tests of the future.

(4) Eating of the produce of the land with the ceasing of the manna (5:11-12). As just seen, observing the Passover stood for God's deliverance out of Egypt and from judgment of the destroying angel, but for God's covenant people, deliverance from Egypt included the promise they would inherit the land, a land of abundance, a land of wheat, barley, fig trees, olive oil and honey (cf. Deut. 8:8-9). It spoke of their new beginning, of their new life as the people of God delivered from judgment and rock solid in the place of blessing. May I repeat the principle: the

¹ Donald K. Campbell, *Joshua, Leader Under Fire*, Victor Books, Wheaton, 1989, p. 39.

Passover not only looked back, but it looked forward to their new life in the land enjoying its abundant blessings by the power of God. Thus, eating of the produce was an act of confirmation of God's abundant blessing.

(5) Joshua's encounter with the Captain of the hosts of the Lord (5:13-15) becomes the last key event of preparation, which we shall look at later in this series.

The Condition of Canaanites

(5:1)

Now when all the Amorite kings west of the Jordan and all the Canaanite kings along the coast heard how the LORD had dried up the Jordan before the Israelites until we had crossed over, their hearts melted and they no longer had the courage to face the Israelites (NIV).

This first important statement in verse 2 shows the demoralized condition of the inhabitants of the land. They were, in essence, an already defeated foe. They were fearful of the nation of Israel because of the mighty works of God described in verse 1. However, this truth needs to be seen in light of the twofold purpose of 4:24, one for the nations, "that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty," and the other for Israel, "so that you may fear the Lord your God."

Before moving on to the renewal of circumcision, it would be well to reflect briefly on the statements of verse one regarding the morale of the inhabitants in view of the mighty works of God. There are some significant and instructive New Testament parallels here.

It is vital that God's people recognize and understand that the Lord is not only mightier than all our enemies, whether the world, the flesh, or the devil, but He has defeated them for us in the person and work of Christ, the Victorious One. In John 16:33, Jesus encouraged His disciples with these words: "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." Because Christ is truly *the Overcomer*, we too can be overcomers, indeed, we are super conquerors in Him. Our capacity, however, to overcome and tear down the fortresses raised up against the knowledge of God and their impact on us and others is always dependent on our new life in the Savior. For this reason, Paul prayed, "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph *in Christ*, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place" (2 Cor. 2:14, emphasis mine).

But being triumphant in Christ is not automatic. Overcoming through the Savior requires that we be rightly related to Him as well as focused and dependent on Him as the source of our daily walk, step by step. Our need is to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might (Eph. 6:10f). For this reason, Israel not only needed to know they faced a defeated and demoralized foe, but they needed spiritual preparation. Thus, the Lord led them through a number of important experiences to spiritually fortify and prepare them to enter into the battle that lay before them.

The Circumcision of the People Renewed

(5:2-9)

2 At that time the LORD said to Joshua, "Make for yourself flint knives and circumcise again the sons of Israel the second time." 3 So Joshua made himself flint knives and circumcised the sons of Israel at Gibeath-haaraloth. 4 And this is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: all the people who came out of Egypt who were males, all the men of war, died in the wilderness along the way, after they came out of Egypt. 5 For all the people who came out were circumcised, but all the people who were born in the wilderness along the way as they came out of Egypt had not been circumcised. 6 For the sons of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, that is, the men of war who came out of Egypt, perished because they did not listen to the voice of the LORD, to whom the LORD had sworn that He would not let them see the land which the LORD had sworn to their fathers to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey. 7 And their children whom He raised up in their place, Joshua circumcised; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them along the way. 8 Now it came about when they had finished circumcising all the nation, that they remained in their places in the camp until they were healed. 9 Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." So the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day.

In verse 2, the Lord instructs Joshua to circumcise the sons of Israel a second time. Obviously, “a second time” does not mean the men who had already been circumcised were to be circumcised again. Rather, as a nation this was the second time all the men were circumcised, the first being while the old generation was still in Egypt. During the time the children of Israel were slaves in Egypt they had not practiced circumcision, not until they were about to leave. Circumcision was an Egyptian practice with religious connotations, being reserved for the priests and upper-class citizens. Because of this, it would most likely have been prohibited as a practice for the Israelites. At any rate, every male who partook of the Passover in Egypt, native Israelite or stranger, was then circumcised (cf. Josh. 5:5 with Ex. 12:43-49). The comment concerning this circumcision in Exodus 12:50 is, “. . . then all the sons of Israel did so.”

But why the renewal of the rite of circumcision and especially at this time for it would certainly leave the men of war more vulnerable to attack because it totally disabled the men for a period of time. For an illustration of the effects of circumcision on adult men, compare the story in Genesis 34 regarding the Shechemites and the sons of Jacob. The Shechemite men, who wanted to intermarry with the Israelite women, agreed to be circumcised, but this was only a ruse to incapacitate them for battle. Genesis 34:25 reads, “Now it came about on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of Jacob’s sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brothers, each took his sword and came upon the city unawares, and killed every male.”

Man’s wisdom would have called for an immediate attack, but instead, God called for a delay for the purpose of spiritual preparation. Verses 4-9 explain the specific reasons:

(1) It was because none of the men born after they came out of the wilderness during the stay in the wilderness had been circumcised. They had failed to practice the rite of circumcision while in the wilderness (vs. 4-7). This may have been a further evidence of their disobedience and lack of faith and confidence in God’s covenant with the nation through Abraham. But more than anything else, because of what circumcision stood for, it was unfitting for them to practice circumcision in the wilderness as a judged people who would die there. Circumcision was a sign of God’s covenant promises to Abraham which included the possession of the land (cf. Gen. 17:8f). The old generation would never possess the land because of their unbelief.

(2) Circumcision, as a sign of the covenant, was the means of becoming identified with the covenant promises of God to Abraham and to his descendants, the nation of Israel. As such, it was to be a sign of faith in what God would do through and for His people. Undoubtedly, for this reason no male could legitimately partake of the Passover if he was uncircumcised (Ex. 12:43f). The Passover reminded Israel of their deliverance from Egypt, but it was a deliverance that had as its goal the possession of the land.

(3) The Lord acknowledged the completion of circumcision with the words, “Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you. So the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day” (vs. 9). As previously seen, Gilgal means a circle and referred to the circle of stones placed at Gilgal when they were crossing the Jordan as a *memorial* of God’s deliverance. But as also pointed out, Gilgal comes from the Hebrew term, *galal*, “to roll, or roll away.” The word for a wheel (a circle which rolls as used in a chariot) comes from this word. So there is a play on words here for the sake of teaching an important truth.

But what was the reproach of Egypt? Based on Genesis 34:14, Unger thinks the “reproach was the shame and disgrace of uncircumcision.”² But Ryrie, probably because of Exodus 32:12, believes it refers to “the taunts leveled by the Egyptians at the Israelites for their failure to gain their promised land.”³

A new significance was thus attached to the name Gilgal. First, Gilgal would stand for what God had done in rolling back the waters of Jordan that they might cross on dry land. But, second, it would also remind Israel of what they had done as an act of faith and obedience through the rite of circumcision. Circumcision symbolized their faith in what God would do to enable them to possess the land. Included in this was their separated commitment to Him and to His purposes for them as His people.⁴

² Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. I, Moody Press, Chicago, 1981, p. 289.

³ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible, Expanded Edition*, Moody, p. 338.

⁴ Some thoughts on circumcision:

It was these two things, the mighty works of God and their act of faith, that had rolled away the reproach of Egypt. At Gilgal the people were to remember God's covenant promises and past deliverance in order that they might live as His people and possess their possession in the days that lay ahead.

In essence, then, God was saying at Gilgal that to be victorious against the enemies of the land, you must be a holy people and trust Me to fight your battles; you must trust in My covenant promises and be committed to me as My people, ever keeping in mind your purpose as a nations of priests, My own possession among all the peoples of the earth (Ex. 19:5-6).

The Passover Celebrated (5:10)

10 While the sons of Israel camped at Gilgal, they observed the Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month on the desert plains of Jericho.

With circumcision accomplished, the people were spiritually ready and qualified to observe the Passover. It is also significant that they crossed just in time to observe it on the fourteenth day of the month. Note God's precise timing here.

This was only the third Passover the people had kept. The first was in Egypt (Ex. 12:1-28), the second was at Mt. Sinai just before they broke camp (Num. 9:1-5), and the third was here at Gilgal. But why the Passover? By partaking of the Passover, they were to relive their deliverance out of Egypt by the blood of the Lamb sprinkled on the doorposts and on the lintel of their houses in Egypt. Campbell writes:

As the lambs were slain they were assured that as the Red Sea crossing was followed by the destruction of the Egyptians, so the crossing of the Jordan would be followed by the defeat of the Canaanites. So remembering the past was an excellent preparation for the tests of the future.⁵

(1) In Acts 1:8, Stephen spoke of the covenant of circumcision given to Abraham. Circumcision, being rooted in the Abrahamic covenant, symbolized God's contract which guaranteed the everlasting continuation of Abraham's seed plus their everlasting possession of the land (Gen. 17:7-8).

(2) In this regard, Genesis 17:11 tells us circumcision is a "sign of the covenant" or symbol of that contract. It was to be an external sign of an inward spiritual reality. This meant it was to be done as a sign of faith in God's covenant promises. Circumcision was to the Old Testament saint what water baptism is to the New Testament saint.

(3) The act of circumcision itself symbolized a complete separation from the sins of the flesh, sins like immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing (Gal. 5:19-21).

(4) The rite of circumcision was to be performed once, but what it signified was to be maintained daily. This emphasis finds its illustration in the experiences of Israel in connection with Gilgal because the nation often returned there during their military campaigns. It became a place of renewed commitment and consecration. According to the New Testament it signified: (a) the righteousness of faith (Rom. 4:9-12) and (b) the putting off of the body of the flesh by the work of Christ and the believer's union in Him (Col. 2:11).

(5) Though a physical act, the spiritual nature of circumcision is clear from a number of Old Testament passages. In Deuteronomy 10:16, Moses challenged Israel, "Circumcise then your heart, and stiffen your neck no more" (cf. also Deut. 30:6; Jer. 4:4). The nation, then, was to understand that circumcision was not simply a cutting of the flesh, but it was to include an inward work of faith which touched the heart and encompassed the whole life.

(6) In view of the prophecy of Deuteronomy 30:6 and the statement of Colossians 2:11, circumcision portrayed what God would do spiritually through the cross of Christ to deal with our sinful natures that we might, by walking in newness of life through faith in Christ, live victoriously over our fleshly appetites.

⁵ John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck, Editors, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Victor Books, Wheaton, 1983, 1985, electronic media.

The Passover not only reminded them of their deliverance and redemption out of Egypt, but it looked forward to other victories—to the defeat of the Canaanites, but also to a victory accomplished in Jerusalem on Calvary. It naturally pointed to the cross where Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.

Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, just as you are *in fact* unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed (1 Cor. 5:7).

As circumcision has its parallel in baptism for the New Testament believer, so the Passover has its parallel in the Lord’s Supper. The Lord’s Supper or Communion is that act of worship where we too are to remember the person and work of the Savior as the Lamb of God who died in our place, bearing our sin that we might have life and life abundantly.

There are some significant parallels between the Passover and the Lord’s Supper:

The Passover and the Lord’s Supper Compared	
The Passover	The Lord’s Supper
The Passover was a memorial of a physical deliverance from Egypt by the sacrifice of <i>a lamb</i> (Ex. 12:1f).	The Lord’s Supper is a memorial of a spiritual deliverance in Jerusalem through the sacrifice of <i>the Lamb</i> (John 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7).
The Passover was also an anticipation in shadows and types of a future fulfillment—the person and work of Christ in His first advent, which encompassed His birth, sinless life, and death on the Cross as the Lamb of God to redeem us from the clutches of sin.	The Lord’s Supper not only points to the fulfillment of those types, but it is to be kept also in anticipation of a future fulfillment, the second advent and kingdom of God on earth when the Lamb becomes the Lion.

The first Lord’s Supper was also the last Passover, at least biblically speaking, for it instituted the New Covenant of God’s relationship with men through the Cross and closed out the Old Covenant which consisted in types and shadows (cf. Heb. 8:6-13). As one studies the Passover and how it was to be observed according to Scripture, this becomes even more evident and significant when you consider how the Passover is celebrated today by the Jewish community. When Jews today celebrate the Passover they do not sacrifice a lamb. They have only a dry bone of a lamb. They have not celebrated the Passover by sacrificing a lamb for over nineteen hundred years. Why? In Exodus 12:14 God said to Israel, “you are to celebrate it (the Passover) as a permanent ordinance.” Why do Jews fail to obey this command?

First, the orthodox Jews say, “Leviticus 17:8, 9 forbids the Israelite from sacrificing outside the temple, the prescribed place for sacrifice. Consequently, since the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. and they still have no temple, we cannot carry out God’s command to kill a lamb for the Passover.” Jewish people are faced with a dilemma. On the one hand God demands that they kill a lamb as a permanent ordinance. On the other hand, God makes it impossible for Jews to do this very thing. Why?

Because Jesus Christ is the Lamb and the answer. Paul, himself, a Jew, but one who came to faith in Christ, tells us that “Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed” (1 Cor. 5:7). Christ is the Passover Lamb and the fulfillment of the Old Testament Passover. Since His death, the observance of the Passover in the typical Jewish fashion is illegitimate. In place of the Passover we are to keep the Lord’s Supper, *a memorial that the Lamb has come and will come again*.

Let’s note Paul’s words 1 Corinthians 5:7-8: “Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, just as you are *in fact* unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” He did not say “let us keep the Passover” because it has been sacrificed for us once and for all. Instead, our responsibility lies with the feast of unleavened bread which speaks of purity of life. Thus Paul spoke figuratively saying, “let us keep the feast ... with sincerity and truth.”

Application: As it was with Israel, so today the Lord wants Christians to dispossess their enemies. Our enemies are those things that stand against our fellowship with the Lord and our fruitfulness. We too must remember that our deliverance comes from one source—the work of God for us in Christ. But this is so hard for us to grasp

regardless of what we know doctrinally because of our natural penchant to lean on our own strategies and effort to live our lives by our own means, even in spiritual matters.

Further, as Israel was to keep the Passover in remembrance of the past and with a hope for the future fulfillment of its shadows and types, so we are to keep the Lord's Supper remembering not only the victory of the cross, but in anticipation of the return of Christ: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Cor. 11:26).

The Crops of the Land Enjoyed and the Manna Ceases (5:11-12)

11 And on the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. 12 And the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten some of the produce of the land, so that the sons of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate some of the yield of the land of Canaan during that year.

Enjoyment of the Produce (vs. 11)

With verse eleven, our attention is focused on the fact they ate of the crops of the land on the very next day after celebrating the Passover. The text says, "And on the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate ..." But why? The explanation that follows answers this question.

Again, the Passover stood for God's deliverance out of Egypt and from judgment of the destroying angel. But for God's covenant people, deliverance from Egypt included the promise they would inherit the land, a land of abundance, a land of wheat, barley, fig trees, olive oil and honey (cf. Deut. 8:8-9). It spoke of their new beginning, of their new life as the people of God delivered from judgment and rock solid in the place of blessing. May I repeat the principle: **the Passover not only looked back, but it looked forward to their new life in the land enjoying its abundant blessings by the power of God.**

23 "For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come in to your houses to smite *you*. 24 And you shall observe this event as an ordinance for you and your children forever. 25 **And it will come about when you enter the land which the LORD will give you, as He has promised, that you shall observe this rite** (cf. Ex. 12:25, emphasis mine; see also Ex. 13:8-9).

As mentioned, the Passover had not been observed since Mount Sinai (Numbers 9) after which they broke camp and began their march toward the land. But at Kadesh-Barnea they rebelled and failed to believe God's promises. They became a people under the judgment of God's discipline; the old generation could no longer go into the land and so there were no Passover observances. But now the new generation had crossed over by faith in the power of God. Now that they are in the land and have celebrated the Passover in faith, they are able to appropriate the blessings of the land and taste of the goodness of the Lord.

Further, we should note they ate what is defined as "unleavened cakes and parched grain." The Passover was to be followed by the feast of unleavened bread which lasted for seven days (Ex. 12:15). Leaven is a symbol of corruption and evil in Scripture. The unleavened bread spoke of Christ who is without sin, and eating the bread spoke of fellowship with the Lord following self-examination and confession of sin so there is no known sin in the life; only then can one properly feed and draw sustenance from the Savior's life (cf. 1 Cor. 11:28f).

So, the nation ate of the produce, which was surely to be a demonstration of faith and a lesson from the Lord of the saving life of God through fellowship with Him.

The Cessation of the Manna (vs. 12)

After eating the produce of the land, our attention is immediately focused on the fact the manna ceased. There is an obvious connection here. But what is it?

For forty years, the children of Israel had eaten of the manna as God's special supply for them in the wilderness, even after their acts of rebellion and unbelief and God's refusal to allow them to enter the land. But they were still His people; they were the objects of His love, and because of that and for the sake of the younger generation who would cross over, the manna continued to be supplied.

But what was the manna? It was a supernatural gift for the *desert journey*, but it was not food for the land of promise. From now on, in keeping with their possession of their land, God would supply food through natural means, which is God's normal means of supply. When we walk with the Lord, when we focus on Him and live obediently, we are able to appropriate and taste of His goodness. Miracles like the manna are exceptions to the rule, special provisions for special purposes. While the Lord is always able to work supernatural miracles at will, we should not expect them nor should we be disappointed or think something is wrong with our walk when we do not experience them.

Finally, we need to note that tasting of the blessings of the Promised Land was only a foretaste of what was to come. Experiencing our blessings in Christ should lead to a two-fold expectation: through fellowship and faith, there is always more for us to taste of the goodness and mercy of God in this life (1 Pet. 2:1-3), but this is only a taste of richer and more abundant blessings to experience in eternity as the people of God. How exactly is the Holy Spirit defined for us in the New Testament? He is called "the earnest of the Spirit." His blessed indwelling is a promise of much more to come.

Thankfully, the Lord continues to love and care for us even when we are in the wilderness, but manna can't compare to the abundance of fellowship with the Lord.

The Captain of the Lord's Army (5:13-15)

13 Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us or for our adversaries?" 14 And he said, "No, rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the LORD." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, "What has my lord to say to his servant?" 15 And the captain of the LORD's host said to Joshua, "Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

With everything apparently prepared for the conquest of the land, the next scene opens with Joshua, God's appointed commander of Israel, not in the camp of Israel at Gilgal, but out by the city of Jericho. What do you suppose he was doing there? He was surely about the Lord's work gathering information about the city and its fortifications in preparation to launch his attack. Joshua was naturally concerned about several things. First of all, he needed a plan of action. Just how would they go about attacking Jericho, probably the best fortified city in Canaan. They had little or no experience for besieging a city like Jericho. Further, they undoubtedly lacked equipment such as battering rams, catapults, scaling ladders or moving towers. All they had were swords, arrows, slings, and spears which naturally would seem totally inadequate for the task before them. So how would Joshua prepare his army and how should they go about taking the city? He must have felt like the weight of the world was pressing down on his shoulders.

Can we fault Joshua for being at Jericho and surveying the situation? Absolutely not. In fact, another great leader, Nehemiah, did the same when faced with the condition of the walls of Jerusalem. Nevertheless, Joshua needed an encounter with the God whom he served that he might grasp afresh an important truth, one that was equally vital as part of his preparation for victory by the power of God. As all of God's saints tend to get their eyes on the enormous task facing them at times, something was missing in Joshua's perspective as he looked over the city of Jericho. Perhaps he simply needed to be reminded of some very important truth for both clarification and encouragement.

The Man's Position

With Joshua's mind engrossed in his concerns about the task before him and feeling the weight of the responsibility on his shoulders, he looks up and there stands a man with sword drawn. What kind of picture does this bring to mind and what does it mean? Standing with any weapon drawn is a military position of one who either

stands guard defensively or stands ready to go against a foe offensively. Standing with sword drawn suggested he was there to fight either for or against Israel.

The Man's Identity

Verse 14 tells us this man came as the “captain of the hosts of the Lord,” the commander of the Lord’s army. Joshua’s response in verse 14b and the statement of the captain in verse 15 shows this was a theophany, or better, based on the truth of John 1:1-18, it was a Christophany, a manifestation of the preincarnate Christ, who, as the *Logos*, is the one who reveals God. If this was only a man or an angel, he would certainly have repelled Joshua’s worshipful response (vs. 14). Compare the response of Paul in Acts 14:8-20 to those who wanted to make them into gods and the response of the angel to John in Revelation 19:10.

Here then, the preincarnate Christ appears to Joshua to teach and reinforce certain vital truths for God’s people, especially for those in positions of leadership, which really includes all believers to some degree.

Joshua’s Question

... and Joshua went to him and said to him, “Are you for us or for our adversaries?” (vs. 13b).

This was a natural response to a man with his sword drawn and expressed Joshua’s concern as well as his courage. No one from the army of Israel should have been there for evidently no orders had been given for anyone to leave the camp. So who was this stranger who suddenly appeared out of nowhere? Surely, Joshua thought, “Since he is not one of us, could he be the enemy or perhaps someone who has come to help us?”

But in view of the answer given to Joshua, Joshua’s question reveals a typical mindset that poses a threat and a hindrance to our effectiveness in the service of the Savior. What then is that mindset? We tend to see the battles we face as *our battles* and the forces we face as forces marshaled *against us* and our individual causes, concerns, agendas, and even our theological beliefs or positions on doctrine. And in a sense, that is true, if we are truly standing in the cause of Christ. But there is another sense in which that is simply not true, and that is the issue here.

The Answer Given to Joshua

And he said, “No, rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the LORD” (vs. 14a).

The answer comes in two parts. The first part of the answer is seen in a flat negation of either one of Joshua’s options. The first answer is simply a flat “neither.” Why didn’t he reply, “I am here for you and for Israel”? Instead, the man with his sword drawn said, “Neither; I am not here to take sides, yours or that of anyone else.”

The second part of the answer gives the reason. “And he said, ‘No, rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the LORD.’” In other words, “I am here, not to take sides, but to take over as Commander of the Lord’s Army.” This is vitally important and lays down two principles that are foundational for all of life and our warfare against the forces of the world and Satan. There is no question that the Lord was there with the armies of heaven to secure Jericho so God’s people could possess their inheritance (the Promised Land) and yet a certain perspective was vital for true success.

The first principle: It was not for Joshua to claim God’s allegiance for his cause no matter how right and holy it might be. Rather, the need was for Joshua to acknowledge God’s claim over him for God’s purposes. We tend to approach our battles and causes backwards; *we turn things around and try to marshal God to support us rather than to submit and follow Him*. Certainly, the battle was a joint venture, God and the people of Israel under Joshua’s leadership as appointed by the Lord (1:1-9), but Joshua, as with all of us in the army of the King, must be following the Lord, submitting to His authority, taking our orders from Him, and resting the battle in His hands because we realize it is really His battle as the *Supreme Commander*. There seems to be no question that Joshua understood this as evidenced by his question, “What has my Lord to say to his servant?” Here he was asking the Lord for orders and it was surely then that he received the directions for taking Jericho.

The second principle: As the One who had come to take charge, the Lord was also reminding Joshua (and us) of both God’s **personal presence** and His **powerful provision**, the provision of His vast hosts. The promise of God’s personal presence always carries with it the assurance of God’s personal care. Likewise, the promise of His powerful provision always carries with it the promise of His infinite supply and power no matter how impossible the problem may appear to us. So there was more, infinitely more, than Joshua’s army. There was Joshua and his army,

but there was also the myriads of God's angelic forces who always stand ready to do God's bidding and to serve the saints. Three other passages can serve as helpful examples that we might grasp the issue here and its significance to our daily walk.

First, compare 2 Kings 6:8-17. When Elisha was at Dothan with his young servant, he found himself surrounded by the army of Ben-Hadad, who, during the night had marched out and surrounded the city of Dothan. The next morning, when Elisha's servant went out to draw water, he saw the vast army surrounding the city. Being fearful and greatly distressed, he cried out to Elisha, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" Elisha responded, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Elisha then prayed a very interesting prayer. He said, "O LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." We then read that "the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha." They were not alone. With them to fight for them was a host of God's angelic forces who soon struck the armies of the king of Syria with blindness.

A second example is found for us in Matthew 26:53. With the disciples still reluctant and perplexed over the fact Christ must go to the cross, Peter drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest cutting off his ear. Jesus replied, "Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?"

A final example of God's angelic army and their ministry to God's people is seen in Hebrews 1:14, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?" In this, we see the second reason for the commander's description of himself as "the Captain of the Lord's hosts." He was assuring Joshua of God's provision through His mighty angelic army.

Joshua's Response

... And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, "What has my lord to say to his servant?" (vs. 14b).

How we each need this response—the response of worship and submission. He quickly got the picture. Joshua had been thinking of a conflict between the Israelite and the Canaanite armies. Perhaps he had been thinking of this as *his* battle. Certainly he felt the weight of responsibility on his shoulders. But after being confronted by the divine Commander, he was reminded of a truth he heard Moses declare many years earlier when they stood on the banks of the Red Sea. There Moses said, "The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still" (Ex. 14:14). Joshua learned afresh the truth that David would learn and declare when facing Goliath, "the battle is the Lord's" (cf. 1 Sam. 17:47).

But that's not all. As an outworking of his worship and submission, we see Joshua's inquiry, the inquiry of a servant looking to his Commander for direction, "What has my lord to say to his servant?" Do you remember Paul's response on the Damascus road, when he came to realize it was the glorified Lord who was speaking to him? He quickly answered, "What shall I do, Lord?" (Acts. 22:10).

What a comfort and how encouraging to know that we never have to bear our burdens or face our enemies alone. Joshua was to know that the battles ahead and the entire conquest of Canaan was really God's conflict. What is our part? We are soldiers in His army, His servants for whom He abundantly supplies the armor of God (Eph. 6:10-18).

While Dr. C. I. Scofield was pastor of the First Congregational Church of Dallas, there came a time when the burdens of the ministry seemed heavier than he could bear. All but crushed by the weight of the frustrations and problems of the work, he knelt one day in his office. In deep agony of spirit, he opened the Scriptures, looking for some message of comfort and strength. Led by the Spirit to the closing verses of Joshua 5, he saw at once that he was trying to carry the responsibilities alone. That day he turned his ministry over to the Lord, assured that it was His work and that He could accomplish it. In accepting God's leadership, Dr. Scofield allied himself with God's power.⁶

⁶ Campbell, p. 47.

Surely, these verses drive home the truth of Christ's preeminence and lordship. He is the head of the church, indeed, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

The passage also reminds us that God is not present to fight our battles or help in our causes or jump to our rescue when we get in trouble as though He were a genie in a bottle. Instead, it reminds us that the battle is His and that our role is that of soldier-servants: we are here to serve Him, to do His will, to follow Him and depend on Him completely.

The Commander's Final Revelation

And the captain of the LORD's host said to Joshua, "Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so (vs. 15).

In these last words of the Captain, there is a command, "Remove your sandals," along with an explanation, "for the place where you are standing is holy." Removing the sandals was a sign of a servant and a sign of respect and submission. The declaration of this place of encounter and revelation as "holy ground" calls attention to the special import of what Joshua had just learned and experienced. God is not only the Holy One in our redemption through the provision of the *Suffering Savior*, but He is the Holy One in our warfare through the *Victorious Savior*. We can only enter into the battle so that we experience God's deliverance when we remove our sandals and submit to His authority and His presence and power.

Here we see that the warfare of the Christian is a holy calling, but also a divine undertaking accomplished in those who humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:6-7).

Conclusion

In this chapter, Joshua had an encounter with the living *Logos*, the very revelation of God. It was an encounter that lifted a great burden from Joshua's shoulders. The experience mentioned previously of Dr. Scofield illustrates the same truth through this very passage. May we see how much we each need to be in the Word with a listening ear so God can teach us the things we need to hear.

Joshua standing and perhaps walking about the city of Jericho studying what lay before him, weighed down with the burden of his responsibility is so very much like us today! We see the things we believe God has called us to do, but we are so prone to activity and running ahead more than we are to worship and praying for divine guidance. Our need is a lifestyle that sends us out into battle mindful of the Lord and who He is to our every move and mindful of those principles of His Word that must guide our every thought and step and fortify hearts with the comfort of God. May we, then, as we look over the battles or tasks that lie before us, look up and see the Commander of the Lord of Hosts and remove our sandals.

Lesson 6: Destroying Fortresses; Victory at Jericho (Joshua 6:1-27)

Introduction

A plan for conquering the land of Canaan with its fortified cities and giants was, of course, crucial, but God never leaves His people to their own strategies. He comes to their aid with His own divinely-provided plan. Indeed, we are repeatedly warned in Scripture against leaning on our own understanding or plans (Prov. 3:5-6; Jer. 9:23-24; 17:5). Undoubtedly, the strategy for invading the land was based on the geographical lay of the land. Campbell writes:

The pattern of divine strategy for the conquest of Canaan was based on geographic factors. From their camp at Gilgal near the Jordan River the Israelites could see steep hills to the west. Jericho controlled the way of ascent into these mountains, and Ai, another fortress, stood at the head of the ascent. If the Israelites were to capture the hill country they must certainly take Jericho and Ai. This would put them on top of the hill country and in control of the central ridge, having driven a wedge between the northern and southern sections of Canaan. Israel could then engage the armies of the south in battle followed by the more remote enemy in the north. But first, Jericho must fall—and it would if Joshua and the people followed the Lord's plan of action.¹

James Boice has this historical note:

At one time the brilliant British Field Marshal Edmund H. Allenby must have studied this book, too, for Joshua's strategy was the one he adopted in his successful liberation of Palestine in World War I. Palestine is a hilly country, and the major passage through it is a connecting road that runs from south to north through the highest portions of the land. Joshua's strategy (and Allenby's) was to drive westward from the Jordan valley to that high road, thus dividing the country. Then, when the enemy forces were divided, they would first destroy the opposition to the south and then the opposition to the north. This is the outline of the campaign described in Joshua 6-11.

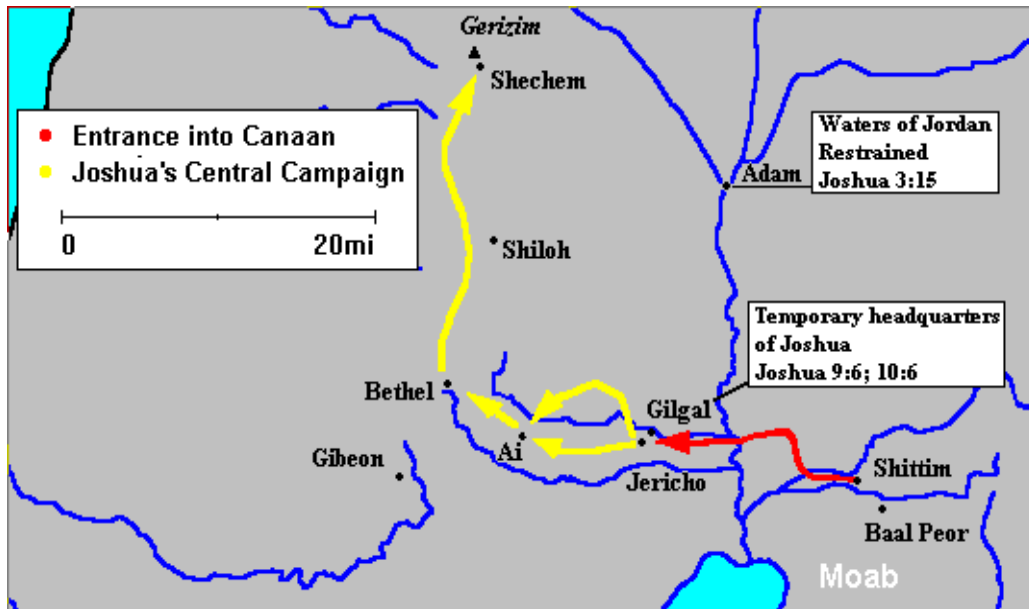
Before the country could be divided, a wedge had to be driven from the Jordan River valley to the mountains. The first obstacle was at this point: Jericho. Jericho was a military fortress built to defend the eastern approach to the high country. It could not be bypassed; to bypass Jericho would mean leaving a large military force at one's rear.²

In view of the lay of the land and the distribution of towns and fortresses, the strategic plan was to drive a wedge between the enemy's lines of defense in order to conquer the land in three campaigns: one in the center of the land, one to the south and one to the north. They thus attacked the central portion first, which prepared the way for operations to the south and then to the north. The map below, taken from the *Ryrie Study Bible*, shows Israel's movement into the central portion of Canaan.³

¹ John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck, Editors, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Victor Books, Wheaton, 1983, 1985, electronic media.

² James Montgomery Boice, *Joshua, We Will Serve the Lord*, Fleming H. Revell, New Jersey, 1973, p. 68.

³ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible, Expanded Edition*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1995, electronic media.



Our text divides easily into three parts:

1. The Plan or Strategy for Victory (6:1-7)
2. The Path or Sequence to Victory (6:8-21)
3. The Promise Fulfilled, the Sequel to Victory (6:22-27)

The Plan or Strategy for Victory (6:1-7)

1 Now Jericho was tightly shut because of the sons of Israel; no one went out and no one came in. 2 And the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and the valiant warriors. 3 And you shall march around the city, all the men of war circling the city once. You shall do so for six days. 4 Also seven priests shall carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark; then on the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. 5 And it shall be that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people will go up every man straight ahead."

6 So Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, "Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD." 7 Then he said to the people, "Go forward, and march around the city, and let the armed men go on before the ark of the LORD."

If Joshua had met with his military advisors, no one would have come up with this plan. The plan set forth by the Lord in chapter 6 certainly illustrates the principle of a number of passages from the Bible like Proverbs 14:12 and Isaiah 55:8f. God's plan of salvation and deliverance is not a plan that man would design if he could or could if he would because of his basic alienation from God and proneness to depend on his own solutions. So today, men are prone to believe in a plan of salvation and sanctification that in some way or another introduces works into the equation rather than *faith alone in Christ alone*. Such a gospel is called by some *easy believism* when the truth is simple trust in Christ is not easy; it goes against the very grain of man's makeup.

The directions given to Joshua by God for the conquest of Jericho obviously seem strange when compared to any human strategy men would devise, but only if we fail to think in biblical terms of the life of faith and man's inherent inability to accomplish his own salvation or sanctification. Joshua 6, therefore, illustrates several vital concepts for walking by faith and dealing with the spiritual enemies we face in this life.

The Preparations of Jericho (vs. 1)

Verse 1 is a parenthesis designed to introduce us to the plan for the overthrow of Jericho, but in the process, it shows us how Jericho, having stopped its normal activities, was preparing for a siege by Israel, but undoubtedly fearful with melted hearts because of the mighty works of God. They knew about the Red Sea and they had surely heard about the miracle at Jordan.

The Promise From the Lord (vs. 2)

Before the Lord outlined His plan, He graciously assured Joshua of victory. Note the emphasis: “See, I have given.” Joshua was commanded to see, understand, and so reflect on the fact, as a matter of confidence, that *Yahweh* had already given them victory. Victory is always by the Lord’s hand, and since victory is by God’s power, we should expect it to be something that bypasses dependence on man and his own strength or abilities. So with the word “see” Joshua is called to see with eyes of faith and to envision Jericho as destroyed. Likewise over and over again in the New Testament, we are assured of our triumph over sin and Satan. “But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place” (2 Cor. 2:14). See also Romans 6:1-14; Colossians 2:6-15.

The words “have given” represent a prophetic perfect in the Hebrew text which describes a future event or action as having already been accomplished. Victory was assured by the promise of an omnipotent, faithful, and immutable God.

The Principles to Note (vss. 3f)

This battle plan is highly unusual to say the least. The ordinary methods and weapons of warfare like battering rams or scaling ladders or towers were not to be used at all. Rather, Joshua and his men were to employ God’s plan of victory as outlined in verses 3-7. Each day they were to march silently around the city with the priests carrying the trumpets of rams’ horns. The city covered only about 8.5 acres. On the seventh day they were to march seven times around the city and the priests were to blow their trumpets. Though this procedure would never be employed again with other cities, it would serve to teach Israel and God’s people of all ages that though we have human responsibilities in tearing down the strongholds raised up against the knowledge of God, victory is dependent on two things: God’s power and faith and faithfulness to His directions or plan.

The number seven figures prominently in this chapter. In fact it is used eleven times. Seven priests, with seven trumpets were to march around the city seven days with seven trips around the city on the seventh day.

Seven is a significant number in Scripture: (a) It signifies perfection or completion which reminds us that God’s plan, no matter how foolish it may seem to us, is always perfect and cannot be improved upon by man (first cf. 1 Cor. 1:18f and then Rom. 12:2; 11:33-36). (b) Further, the number seven shows that the conquest was part of a spiritual exercise or process designed to set the people apart (sanctify them) for the Lord as a holy people who belong to a holy God. (c) Because of the significance of the number seven to creation and the Sabbath and the fact they were entering into their inheritance, it undoubtedly signified the beginning of a new order and the land as a picture of the believer’s rest in the Lord (see Heb. 4).

We have in this a reminder of 2 Corinthians 10:3-4, “for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. *We are* destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” We should note two things about Paul’s emphasis in these verses:

(1) The Nature of the believer’s weapons: As the walls of Jericho were brought down apart from human ability, so the spiritual weapons of our warfare are appropriated through prayer, faith, and various truths of the Word of God.

(2) The Design and Purpose of our weapons: Our weapons are designed to tear down strongholds. Strongholds are those things (human reasoning or ideas, values, and designs, etc.) raised up by a satanic world system and by fallen man that oppose the knowledge of God (biblical principles of grace, eternal values, etc.) and what knowing God intimately should mean in the lives of His people.

(3) The use of the blaring trumpets adds significant spiritual overtones. These trumpets could produce only a few notes. They were used mainly as an instrument of signal. They were used at the time of jubilee in connection with the religious feasts to proclaim the worship and presence of God and they were used in military contexts. Both concepts are applicable here. Here they signaled both God's presence and announced Jericho's impending doom. This was not just a military undertaking, the trumpets declared that the Lord of heaven and earth was present to tear down the walls of Jericho.

Application: We each have our Jericho or Ai that stands in the way of our ability to possess our possessions in Christ; virtual strongholds that impede our spiritual progress. It may be a weakness in our character, a physical infirmity, it may be indifference to spiritual things in general or to a specific area we are neglecting. It could be materialism or some life-dominating pattern. It may be a difficulty at one's place of work, in the home, with a particular personality, or it may be a financial burden. Regardless of the nature of our Jericho, we must realize victory always comes through God's plan of deliverance—never ours.

The Path or Sequence to Victory (6:8-21)

8 And it was so, that when Joshua had spoken to the people, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the LORD went forward and blew the trumpets; and the ark of the covenant of the LORD followed them. 9 And the armed men went before the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rear guard came after the ark, while they continued to blow the trumpets. 10 But Joshua commanded the people, saying, "You shall not shout nor let your voice be heard, nor let a word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I tell you, 'Shout!' Then you shall shout!" 11 So he had the ark of the LORD taken around the city, circling it once; then they came into the camp and spent the night in the camp.

12 Now Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD. 13 And the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD went on continually, and blew the trumpets; and the armed men went before them, and the rear guard came after the ark of the LORD, while they continued to blow the trumpets. 14 Thus the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp; they did so for six days.

15 Then it came about on the seventh day that they rose early at the dawning of the day and marched around the city in the same manner seven times; only on that day they marched around the city seven times. 16 And it came about at the seventh time, when the priests blew the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the city. 17 And the city shall be under the ban, it and all that is in it belongs to the LORD; only Rahab the harlot and all who are with her in the house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent. 18 But as for you, only keep yourselves from the things under the ban, lest you covet them and take some of the things under the ban, so you would make the camp of Israel accursed and bring trouble on it. 19 But all the silver and gold and articles of bronze and iron are holy to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD." 20 So the people shouted, and priests blew the trumpets; and it came about, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, that the people shouted with a great shout and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight ahead, and they took the city. 21 And they utterly destroyed everything in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword. (NASB)

These verses give us the sequence of events from the first day's march around the city to the last day and the collapse of the wall. The statement about the men being able to charge "straight ahead" calls our attention to the fact that they were able to charge in from all around the city. There were not just one or two breaches in the wall where soldiers were able to pour into the city. The whole wall around the city collapsed with the exception of the portion where Rahab's house was located.

Some interpreters claim that an earthquake caused the destruction. If so, it was a remarkable miracle of timing and localization since the camp at Gilgal (a little more than a mile away) and Rahab's house remained intact.⁴

The Prior Preparation

We should not forget that these instructions and the events of this chapter were preceded by a number of things God used to prepare the people to believe and obey Him. Israel had been prepared to trust the Lord by the events of the first chapters and their consecration to the Lord, especially in chapter 5. I am reminded of Luke 16:10, "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much." Spiritual preparation is fundamental to our ability to appropriate God's strength in exchange for our weakness.

The Priority of Silence

Can you imagine the difficulty of this? Several hundred thousand people marching around the city without a word, not even a whisper! There were the priests with their trumpets, those with the ark, the armed men and then the rest of the people. This may have included the women and children as well. If this was the case, the silence may be even a bigger miracle than the walls falling down!

The passage does not tell us why they were to be silent, but perhaps it illustrates and teaches the principle of being silent before God and just resting in Him. Does any passage come to mind? What about Exodus 14:14, "The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent." Then there is Psalm 46:10-11 which reads: "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth. The LORD Almighty is with us ..." As this Psalm suggests, the silence teaches us the need to get quiet, to stop our running around that we may rest quietly in Him as we think on Him in the midst of our trials and conquests in life. Our tendency is to gripe and complain to others or seek our comfort from people more than we talk to God and seek our comfort from Him.

The Principle of Obedience Through Faith

Regardless how unusual the plan was or how hard it was to carry out, there was explicit obedience. We read in Hebrews 11:30, "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down ..." In spite of the taunts that were perhaps hurled down at them from the walls as they marched silently around Jericho, they were willing to look foolish and simply rest in the Lord. He was their source of strength.

If we want to overcome our obstacles and testings, we must submit to God's way by faith:

For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness (Gal. 5:5).

22 And Samuel said, "Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *And* to heed than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of divination, And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD. He has also rejected you from *being* king" (1 Sam. 15:22-23).

The Principle of Endurance

Joshua's command in verse 10, "You shall not shout nor let your voice be heard, nor let a word proceed out of your mouth, *until the day* I tell you, 'Shout!'" shows the people must have understood God's plan would involve more than one day. Yet, a careful reading of the text also suggest Joshua did not unfold the entire plan at the first, but day by day gave them instructions. Each day they would go out and march silently around the city and then return with nothing happening. The walls were still standing and Jericho had not surrendered. Yet, they did not murmur or complain or question Joshua's instructions. They simply obeyed day after day until the seventh day when they marched around the city seven times. At the command of Joshua on the seventh day they gave the great shout and the walls came tumbling down by the mighty hand of God. Is it not significant that Hebrews 11:30, which says, "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been circled seven days," is followed in the next chapter, 12:1-2, with a

⁴ Ryrie.

charge to run the race set before us *with endurance* by looking unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith? This remind us that the Lord often works slowly. We want immediate deliverance, but the Lord often tests our faith and in the process builds our character and our relationship with Him so we find the Lord to be what we really need.

2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing (James 1:2-4).

Too often we want immediate solutions and all our needs and wants met so we do not have to wait on the Lord and trust Him. We want to trust in our health, our bank accounts, our position in the community, our reputation, in our talent, education, and abilities. We don't want to trust the Lord alone. For a good illustration of this compare Naaman's response when he was told he would have to wash seven times in the Jordan river (2 Kings 5:11-14). Cleansing only came to Naaman when he humbled himself and washed seven times, not four or five or even six, but seven. See also Psalm 62:1-8 and the emphasis there of the need for us to wait patiently to find rest, not in our quick solutions, but in God alone. Surely, the Lord was teaching Israel the need to wait patiently to find their rest in Him.

The Promise Fulfilled, the Sequel to Victory (6:22-27)

22 And Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the harlot's house and bring the woman and all she has out of there, as you have sworn to her." 23 So the young men who were spies went in and brought out Rahab and her father and her mother and her brothers and all she had; they also brought out all her relatives, and placed them outside the camp of Israel. 24 And they burned the city with fire, and all that was in it. Only the silver and gold and articles of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD. 25 However, Rahab the harlot and her father's household and all she had, Joshua spared; and she has lived in the midst of Israel to this day, for she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

26 Then Joshua made them take an oath at that time, saying, "Cursed before the LORD is the man who rises up and builds this city Jericho; with the loss of his first-born he shall lay its foundation, and with the loss of his youngest son he shall set up its gates." 27 So the LORD was with Joshua, and his fame was in all the land.

In these final verses we see some marvelous facts about God and His dealings with people. First, they demonstrate God's faithfulness to His Word; they remind us that God, who is immutable and cannot lie, is also absolutely faithful (cf. Jam. 1:17). The promises to Rahab were kept—she and her family were delivered. While it is not stated, evidently that part of the wall on which Rahab's house was built did not collapse.

Second, they demonstrate God's grace and mercy. God's love and plan of salvation is open to anyone who calls on the name of the Lord (John 3:16; 2 Pet. 3:9; Rom. 10:11-13).

Third, in keeping with His faithfulness to keep His promises, the prophecy against any who would seek to rebuild Jericho (vs. 26), also demonstrates God's severity and the surety of His Word. The prophecy of verse 26 came to be fulfilled in the days of Ahab (see 1 Kings 16:34). Jericho was occupied sporadically after its destruction, but never to the previous degree.

Lesson 7: Defeat at Ai and the Sin of Achan (Joshua 7:1-26)

Introduction

After such a wonderful experience at Jericho, chapter 7 is surprising to say the least. Suddenly we are presented with a series of failures that stand in striking contrast to the victories of the past six chapters. But how instructive this is if we only have the ears to listen to the message of this chapter. The thrill of victory was so quickly replaced with the agony of defeat. Here is the story of life and one we must learn to deal with in our daily walk because this passage is so typical of most of us. One minute we can be living in victory—the next in defeat.

The distance between a great victory and a great defeat is only one step, and often only a short one at that. One sad truth of reality in a fallen world is that we can be riding high on the cloud of some great spiritual success and the very next moment find ourselves in a valley of spiritual failure and despair. One moment we can be like Elijah standing victoriously on Mount Carmel and the next shriveled up under a juniper tree or hiding in a cave in deep despair complaining to God: "... I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too" (1 Kings 19:10).

Because of its strategic location, Ai was the next objective in the path of conquest. As with Jericho, its defeat was vital to the conquest of the entire land. Ai was smaller than Jericho, but its conquest was essential because it would give Israel control of the main route that ran along the highlands from north to south in the central portion of the land.

Jericho had been placed under the ban, a phrase which comes from the Hebrew word, *herem*, "a devoted thing, a ban." The verb form, *haram*, means "to ban, devote, or destroy utterly." Basically, this word refers to the exclusion of an object from use or abuse by man along with its irreversible surrender to God. It is related to an Arabic root meaning "to prohibit, especially to ordinary use." The "harem," meaning the special quarters for Muslim wives, comes from this word. So, to surrender something to God meant devoting it to the service of God or putting it under a ban for utter destruction.¹

For something to be under the ban meant one of two things. First, everything living was to be completely destroyed. This has been called barbaric and primitive and nothing less than the murder of innocent lives. The Canaanites, however, were by no means innocent. They were a vile people who practiced the basest forms of immorality including child sacrifice. God had given them over four hundred years to repent, but now their iniquity had become full (see Gen. 15:16; Lev. 18:24-28). The few who did turn to the Lord (Rahab and her family) were spared. As with Sodom and Gomorrah, if there had been even ten righteous, God would have spared the city (Gen. 18), but since He could not find even ten, God removed Lot and his family (Gen. 19). Further, if any city had repented as did Nineveh at the preaching of Jonah, He would have spared that city, but in spite of all the miraculous works of God which they had heard about, there was no repentance, they remained steadfast in their depravity.

... the battle confronting Israel was not simply a religious war; it was a theocratic war. Israel was directly ruled by God and the extermination was God's direct command (cf. Exod. 23:27-30; Deut. 7:3-6; Josh. 8:24-26). No other nation either before or after Israel has been a theocracy. Thus, those commands were unique. Israel as a theocracy was an instrument of judgment in the hands of God.²

Second, all the valuable objects like gold and silver were to be dedicated to the Lord's treasury. This was evidently to be done as a kind of first fruits of the land, and as an evidence of the people's trust in the Lord's supply for the future (cf. Lev. 27:28-29).

¹ R. Laird Harris, Editor, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., Bruce K. Waltke, Associate Editors, *Theological Word Book of the Old Testament*, Moody Press, Chicago, Vol. 1, 1980, p. 324.

² Norman L. Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the Old Testament*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1977, p. 100.

The Disobedience of Israel Defined (7:1)

1 But the sons of Israel acted unfaithfully in regard to the things under the ban, for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, from the tribe of Judah, took some of the things under the ban, therefore the anger of the LORD burned against the sons of Israel.

Chapter 7 opens with the little but ominous word, “but.” This word contrasts this chapter with the preceding, but particularly 6:27. First, there was the **thrill of victory**, but now there is the **agony of defeat**. This little conjunction of contrast is designed to drive home an important truth—the reality of the ever present threat and contrasts of life—victory is always followed by at least the threat of defeat.

Never is the believer in greater danger of a fall than after a victory. We are so prone to drop our guard and begin trusting in ourselves or in our past victories rather than the Lord. One victory never guarantees the next. Only as it builds our confidence in the Lord and develops our wisdom in appropriating God’s Word do our victories aid us for the next battle. Always, the basis of victory is the Lord Himself and our faith/dependence on Him. A New Testament chapter that deserves consideration here is 1 Corinthians 10, especially verse 12. The problem is clearly stated in the words, “The sons of Israel acted unfaithfully in regard . . .” Let’s note several things about this problem facing the Israelites as a nation.

(1) The word “unfaithfully” represents a Hebrew word that means “to act underhandedly.” It was used of marital infidelity, of a woman who was unfaithful to her husband. The sin here was both an act of spiritual infidelity, being a friend of the world rather than a friend to the Lord (Jam. 4:4), and a faithless act, seeking happiness and security from things rather than from God (1 Tim. 6:6f).

(2) We see that the Lord held the whole camp of Israel accountable for the act of one man and withheld His blessing until the matter was corrected. There was sin in the camp and God would not continue blessing the nation as long as this was so. This does not mean this was the only sin and the rest of the nation was sinless, but this sin was of such a nature (direct disobedience and rebellion) that God used it to teach Israel and us a couple of important lessons.

God viewed the nation of Israel as a unit. What one did was viewed as a sin for the whole nation because Israel’s corporate life illustrates truth and warnings for us as individuals (1 Cor. 10). As a warning for the church, it shows us we cannot progress and move ahead for the Lord with known sin in our lives because that constitutes rebellion against the Lord’s direction and control (Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19). It is a matter of loving the world—and to do so is to make one behave as though he or she was an enemy of God (Jam. 4).

Achan’s behavior also illustrates how one or a few believers out of fellowship, when pursuing their own selfish desires and agendas, can negatively impact an entire group. Such behavior can create trouble for the rest. Achan’s name, the Hebrew, àa,,kan, is a play on the word àa,,ko,,r, which means “trouble.” So Joshua would declare that the Lord would bring trouble (àa,,ko,,r) on Achan who had become a “troubler” to the nation because of his sin (cf. 7:24-25). Thus, the site of Achan’s death and grave was called, “the valley of Achor” (Hebrew, àa,,ko,,r, “disturbance, trouble”). Though the crime was committed by one person, the whole nation was considered guilty. The nation was responsible for the obedience of every citizen and was charged with the punishment of every offender. This should call to mind the following verses:

See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal (Hebrews 12:15-16).

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed (1 Corinthians 5:6-7).

The apostle Paul saw the same principle of solidarity at work in the church (1 Cor 5:6-13). Unjudged sin contaminated the whole assembly—"Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?" (v. 6).³

(3) We also are reminded how nothing escapes the omniscience of God (Psa. 139:1f). Sin never escapes His watchful eye. We can fool ourselves and others, but never the Lord. God sees the sin in our lives and desires us to deal with it, not hide it. Hiding it only hinders our progress in God's will and plan (Prov. 28:13) and creates trouble for others. Numbers 32:23 reminds us, "be sure your sin will find you out." This is similar to the idea of reaping what we sow because of the natural consequences of God's spiritual and moral laws and because of God's personal involvement. The Numbers text, however, does not just teach that sin will be discovered but that the consequences of our sin become active agents in discovering us (see Gal. 6:7-8).

(4) The words, "therefore the anger of the Lord burned against the sons of Israel," dramatically call our attention to the holiness of God. Sin is no small matter with God because sin is rebellion and rebellion is as the sin of divination (1 Sam. 15:23). Even though Christ died for our sins and stands at God's right hand as our Advocate and Intercessor, God does not and cannot treat sin in our lives lightly. It is against His holy character (His holiness, righteousness, love, etc.) and against His holy purposes for us because it hinders His control and ability to lead us.

Or do you think the scripture means nothing when it says, "The spirit that God caused to live within us has an envious yearning?" But he gives greater grace. Therefore it says, "*God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble.*" (James 4:5-6, the NET Bible, emphasis mine).

Thus, God must deal with us and the sin in our lives; He deals with us as a Father and as the Vine Dresser, but He nevertheless deals with us (John 15:1f; Heb. 12:5).

The Defeat at Ai Described (7:2-5)

2 Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-aven, east of Bethel, and said to them, "Go up and spy out the land." So the men went up and spied out Ai. 3 And they returned to Joshua and said to him, "Do not let all the people go up; only about two or three thousand men need go up to Ai; do not make all the people toil up there, for they are few." 4 So about three thousand men from the people went up there, but they fled from the men of Ai. 5 And the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six of their men, and pursued them from the gate as far as Shebarim, and struck them down on the descent, so the hearts of the people melted and became as water.

The defeat of Israel's army at Ai described here is the only defeat recorded in Joshua and the only report of Jews slain in battle. Ai was smaller than Jericho! How could such a defeat occur so quickly? The root cause, as summarized in verse one, was the sin of Achan. There are other issues involved, however, which led Joshua to go up against Ai when he should not have.

In these verses we see some of the varying consequences of sin in the life of God's people or in the life of the individual. Sin has many consequences, none of them good.

No doubt Joshua was eager to move forward for the Lord and to take more territory in keeping with God's directions and His purpose for Israel. But being a little self-confident and resting too much on the victory at Jericho, Joshua evidently failed to take time to get alone with the Lord to inquire of Him and seek His strength. If he had, he would not have remained ignorant of the sin of Achan and could have dealt with it first. Four deadly errors were the result: (a) They remained ignorant of the sin of Achan. (b) They underestimated the strength of the enemy. (c) They over-estimated the strength of their own army. (d) They presumed on the Lord—they took Him for granted.

Later, when God gave the orders for them to go up against the enemy, perhaps because of their previous self-confident attitude and their presumption, He commanded them to take "all the people of war" (8:1). With Gide-

³ Frank E. Gaebelin, General Editor, *Expositors Bible Commentary, Old Testament*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1997, electronic media.

on, however, the Lord had him reduce his forces lest they boast in their own power as the source of their victory (Judges 7:1f).

How often are we not just like Joshua here in chapter 7? Because of a workaholic mentality or an activity-oriented bent or a desire to get things done and to be successful, there is the tendency to rush off without taking time to draw near to the Lord, draw on His resources, and to put on the full armor of God. Such is not only unwise, but it often causes us to be insensitive to serious failures in our own lives and ministries which grieve and quench the Spirit and leave us defenseless against the enemy because we are operating in our own strength and wisdom. Ultimately, then, these failures stand in the way of our progress and ability to handle the various challenges in life.

The last part of verse 5 reads, “so the hearts of the people melted and became as water.” The defeat at Ai demoralized the people. This is perhaps even more significant than the defeat itself because it created misgivings and a lack of confidence in the Lord. Rather than examine their own lives as the source of their defeat, they began to doubt the Lord and wonder if He had changed His mind or if they had misread His directions. Should we have crossed the Jordan? Should we have stayed on the other side? (cf. 7:7).

In our sinful human nature, we are typically just like that. We are so quick to become **depressed, discouraged, and disoriented**. We look in every direction for a reason for defeat—except to ourselves. We blame, we make excuses, we hide and hurl, but we so often fail to honestly examine our own lives. We assume the problem could not possibly be us ... could it?

The Dismay of Joshua Depicted (7:6-9)

6 Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until the evening, both he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads. 7 And Joshua said, “Alas, O Lord GOD, why didst Thou ever bring this people over the Jordan, only to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? If only we had been willing to dwell beyond the Jordan! 8 O Lord, what can I say since Israel has turned their back before their enemies? 9 For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it, and they will surround us and cut off our name from the earth. And what wilt Thou do for Thy great name?”

The Consternation Before the Ark (vs. 6)

In this description of Joshua we see one of the great evidences of the inspiration of Scripture. God’s people, including the great heroes of the faith, are pictured with blemishes, warts and all. God does not touch up the photo. Rather, He shows us their humanness to comfort us in our own failures and to challenge us to realize He can use us greatly if we will but trust Him. Failure is unique to none of us ... and it is not the end. In fact, it can be the beginning depending on how we respond. Of course, it is always better to make a few new mistakes and learn from them than to repeat old ones. When we keep making the same mistakes our defeats have no life-changing value. In the defeat at Ai we see a real test of Joshua’s leadership. As Sanders remarks, “There are tests to leadership as well as tests of leadership,”⁴ and one of those tests is the test of failure. Failure is unique to no one. Failure, like all testings, are common to all men (1 Cor. 10:13) and thus, the manner in which a leader handles failure, his own and others, will have a powerful impact on his growth and future leadership.

A study of Bible characters reveals that most of those who made history were men who failed at some point, and some of them drastically, but who refused to continue lying in the dust. Their very failure and repentance secured for them a more ample conception of the grace of God. They learned to know Him as the God of the second chance to His children who had failed Him—and the third chance, too ...

The successful leader is a man who has learned that no failure need to be final and acts on that belief, whether the failure is his own or that of another. He must learn to be realistic and prepared to realize that he cannot be right all the time. There is no such thing as a perfect or infallible leader.⁵

⁴ J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, Moody Press, 1967, p. 159.

⁵ Sanders, p. 163-164.

Joshua, of course, was stunned by the defeat and catastrophe at Ai, and his actions and those of the elders were in keeping with the Hebrew practices of mourning and despair. Prostrating himself before the Ark of the Lord certainly suggests that he and the elders were humbling themselves before the Lord. Joshua and the elders were not guilty of callused indifference. They were showing a deep concern and their need of God's hand; they needed His intervention and wisdom. However, from the words that follow, intermingled with these feelings, there is also evidence of some self-pity and doubt.

Today we do not normally tear our clothes, fall face down on the ground, and put dust on our heads. But we do have ways of showing our consternation and pain and doubt. We may fall on our knees or put our face in our hands and sob, but if there are feelings of self-pity and depression, we may become inactive or sullen. But these responses do not remove the pain nor do they solve the problem and enable us to grow through the experience.

The Complaint to the Lord (vss. 7-8)

Finally, after a whole day on his face, Joshua verbalized his perplexity in three questions and two statements. He didn't take it out on others, nor did he try to escape or repress it. He did what we should all do—he took it to the Lord.

The First Question (vs. 7a): “Alas, O Lord God, why did You ever bring this people over the Jordan ...” The NIV translates this, “Ah, Sovereign LORD, why did you ever bring this people across the Jordan ...” The word “alas” or “ah” is a strong interjection of despair. “Ah” is practically a transliteration of the Hebrew. It often, as here, points to a mood of hopelessness and defeat. In most places it is used with “Lord God” though not always as an expression of despair (Jud. 6:22; Jer. 1:6; 4:10; 14:13; 32:17; Ezek. 4:14; 9:8; 11:13). With one breath he cries out “Ah, *Adonai Yahweh*,” which acknowledges God's sovereign authority and lordship over their lives, but with the very next breath he seems to question God's purposes and promises as the Sovereign Lord.

With the question, “why did You ever bring this people across the Jordan ...” he was acting as though God were not in control or as though God had merely tricked them or had made a mistake. How quick we are to act religious while at the very same time we can deny God's authority and power by other things we may think, or say, or do. Here is a perfect illustration of how focusing on the problem negatively affects our view of God which in turn affects our faith in His purposes, plan, and promises.

A wrong focus, on the one hand, often turns mountains into mole hills. Perhaps, trusting in their past victory instead of the Lord, they had their eyes on the smallness of Ai and saw it as just a little problem. On the other hand, with their eyes on the defeat, they turned this mole hill into a mountain that was too big for the Sovereign Lord to handle.

Whenever we are occupied with the problem, or whenever we fail to focus our minds and eyes on the Lord, we become insensitive to the Person, plan, promises, and purposes of God. At this point, it seems it never entered Joshua's mind that God may have had a reason for allowing the defeat or that they might in some way be the cause. When our focus is wrong we either forget God's promises or we question them. We then quit relating to God's person in all His divine essence. In such a condition we no longer see the Lord as our hope, instead He becomes the villain.

The First Statement (vs. 7b): “If only we had been willing to dwell beyond the Jordan!” How narrow our vision grows and how negative we become to God's purposes when we have our eyes on the circumstances and lose sight of the Lord! We go into reverse and look back. The tendency is to become nostalgic for the ‘good old days.’ We become like Israel who remembered the garlic, leeks and cucumbers, but forgot about the taskmasters and mud pits. In order to be comfortable we are willing to settle for a life of mediocrity rather than learn what the hindrances are so that we can move ahead in the pursuit of excellence.

There is the assumption here that, since they had been defeated, they could not go forward and that it would have been better not to have encountered the enemy. In their perspective, their failure had somehow weakened God's ability to give them future victories. This is a typical assumption, but one that is wrong. God is never limited by our defeats. As the Sovereign Lord, He is able to work all things together for good, the good of conforming us like His Son (Rom. 8:28-29).

The Second Question (vs. 8): “O Lord, what can I say since Israel has turned their back before their enemies?” Following the defeat of Jericho, chapter 6 ended with the statement, “So the LORD was with Joshua, and his

fame was in all the land.” Now we have this statement in 7:8 and it seems Joshua was now worried about the complaints of the people and their willingness to follow his leadership. Will this failure preempt my ability to do what you have called me to do because of their attitudes and questions? Furthermore, people were going to want some answers and he simply didn’t have any at this time. What could he possibly say to them? This was really a prayer for wisdom (Jam. 1:5).

Perhaps also, feeling a little shame or personal blame for the way the men had turned and fled, he was doubting his own ability to lead the army. He was perhaps feeling that he had let them down, that people would be blaming him for the defeat, and he was concerned about the impact of all this on his ability to lead the people.

A Second Statement and Worry (vs. 9): “For the inhabitants of the land will hear of it, and they will surround us and cut off our name ...” Joshua was concerned about the impact of this defeat on their testimony to the nations and how it could bring them down in a concerted effort against God’s people. Would this provide a beachhead for the enemy to now go on the offensive and attack Israel rather than vice versa? The world is watching us and the way we handle our problems affects the attitude of the world toward the Christian community (1 Pet. 3:13-17).

The Third Question: “And what will You do for Your great name?” Even in all his fears, we see Joshua’s character and love for the Lord manifesting itself. It appears that Joshua’s greatest concern was that the news of this defeat might somehow reduce the respect of the heathen nations for God’s own name. Joshua may have been guilty of thinking what people often think, that one failure must lead to other failures; that victory is less likely now because they had so miserably failed. True, our sin and failure may affect our testimony for a while; it may give Satan an opportunity to establish a beachhead; it may have repercussions in other ways, but God is always able to work all things together for good for those who love Him.

Nothing is ever accomplished with our face in the dirt or with our eyes on our failures and problems. First, we must confess our failures and the things that caused them when they can be determined. Then we must seek to learn from them. Finally, we need to know that God’s will is immediate recovery and faith in the grace of God. God’s will is to get up and move on (vss. 10f).

Let’s summarize the causes of failure: (1) Apparently, there was a lack of prayer or a failure to get alone with God to seek His guidance. (2) Clearly, there was reliance on human wisdom when Joshua listened to the suggestion of the spies when they returned from the spying out Ai (vs. 3). (3) Then, relying on their past victory instead of the Lord, there was overconfidence in their own ability thinking they could easily go up against such a small city when compared to Jericho (vss. 3-4).

Now with verse 10, our attention is turned to God’s response and directions to Joshua. This is highly instructive for it not only gives us greater insight into the nature of Joshua’s actions (dismay and doubt), but it provides us with God’s evaluation of what Joshua was doing (He was not pleased) and His instruction for what was to be done to correct the problem.

The Directions From God Delineated (7:10-15)

10 So the LORD said to Joshua, “Rise up! Why is it that you have fallen on your face? 11 Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. And they have even taken some of the things under the ban and have both stolen and deceived. Moreover, they have also put them among their own things. 12 Therefore the sons of Israel cannot stand before their enemies; they turn their backs before their enemies, for they have become accursed. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy the things under the ban from your midst. 13 Rise up! Consecrate the people and say, ‘Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, for thus the LORD, the God of Israel, has said, “There are things under the ban in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you have removed the things under the ban from your midst.”’ 14 In the morning then you shall come near by your tribes. And it shall be that the tribe which the LORD takes by lot shall come near by families, and the family which the LORD takes shall come near by households, and the household which the LORD takes shall come near man by man. 15 And it shall be that the one who is taken with the things under the ban shall be burned with fire, he and all that belongs to him, because he has transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he has committed a disgraceful thing in Israel.”

The Directions to Joshua (vss. 10-12)

With the words, “So the Lord said to Joshua,” we have an illustration of the personal involvement of God in the lives of His people. God cares about our lives and ministries and is ever at work to reveal Himself and teach us about ourselves and what we need to be doing as we walk through life (1 Pet. 5:6-7; Heb. 13:5-6). The issue is are we listening?

“Rise up!” This command comes with Joshua lying on his face in despair and panic with dirt on his head in typical oriental fashion. As mentioned, falling on his face demonstrated his deep concern and humility since he was crying out to God. In view of God’s response, however, it seems Joshua’s actions were primarily out of despair and the product of a spirit of hopelessness and unbelief as his words in verse 7 aptly demonstrate. Note again the word “Alas,” the Heb. *‘ahah*, an interjection, which, in this context, shows despair or deep concern.

Since nothing is accomplished with our face in the dirt, the Lord tells Joshua to rise up out of this condition. Such a condition, though very human and characteristic of all of us from time to time, is not a state we can afford to stay in—it accomplishes nothing, it dishonors God’s promises and person, and neutralizes us for ministry and for the Lord.

The KJV has “get thee up,” the NIV “stand up,” the NASB “rise up,” and the NET Bible has “get up.” The verb here is the Hebrew *qum* which often means to rise up from a prostrate position for various reasons and from various conditions. From this *literal* meaning, *qum* often has a *figurative* idea. It is used of rising as an act of preparation for action, of rising out of a state of inaction or failure, of showing respect and worship, of rising to hear God’s Word, of becoming strong or powerful, of rising up to give deliverance, of assuming an office or responsibility (as a prophet or a judge), and of rising up to give testimony. Several of these ideas are applicable here. This command calls for Joshua to rise up from his state of despair and futility, which has neutralized him, in order to prepare himself for action, listen to the Lord, take up his responsibility, and lead the people in God’s deliverance.

Application: While the Lord understands and sympathizes with our problems and fears, and while humbling ourselves before the Lord is always needed, He nevertheless never condones our being prostrate in despair nor excuses us from appropriating His grace and moving out in obedience. His word to us is get up off our face, get our eyes on Him and deal with our problems according to the principles and promises of Scripture. This is a call for decisive action that is willing to make tough decisions to deal with our sin. Feeling sorry and sad about our condition is not enough. We must be willing to deal decisively with our sins. “He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes *them* will find compassion” (Prov. 38:13).

“Why is it that you have fallen on your face?” Literally, the text say, “Why are you falling on your face?” The nature of this question carries a note of rebuke with a call for examination to get to the bottom of the problem, i.e., the cause of their failure. In effect, God is saying in view of who I am, in view of My plan for Israel and My promises to you, Joshua, what possible reason could you have for such despair? Here then is a call to get his eyes on the Lord but also to look for the cause in their own sinfulness! When failure comes, we should never think God has abandoned us or that His plan has failed. We need to ask, could I be the cause?

This, then, is a call for Joshua (and for us when this is applicable) to examine the nature of what we are doing and to look for the root causes for the defeats of life when they occur. We need to know precisely just what lessons God is seeking to teach us. Is this caused by something I did or failed to do?

The Cause of Israel’s Failure (vs. 11)

Reading verse 11 in the NASB or KJV makes it look like there are several different violations because of the way each clause is connected by “and,” but for the most part, each clause is a further explanation of the preceding. The translations of the NIV and the NET Bible seek to show this: each description is a further explanation of the problem, which goes from the general to the specific with each explanation adding more detail of what was involved.

Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenantal commandment. They have taken some of the riches; they have stolen them and deceitfully put them among their own possessions (NET Bible).

(1) “*Israel has sinned*” (this states the basic nature of their failure and ours—sin [the Heb. is *hfa*, *tfa*, *á* meaning “miss, miss the way or goal or mark”]); (2) “*they have violated*” (“violated” is the Hebrew *áa*, *bar*, “to pass over, overstep, go beyond, transgress”) “*my covenantal commandment*” (this points to the specific issue). (3) “*They*

have taken some of the riches (the devoted things); they have stolen them” (this shows how they had transgressed the covenant and just what this entailed, stealing—stealing that which belonged to the Lord as devoted Him); (4) *“and deceitfully put them among their own possessions”* (this describes the further consequences, the snowball effect of sin and brings out the selfish, coveting nature of what was done, which is the root of most sin).

The Consequences of Israel’s Failure (vs. 12)

We should pay special attention to the “therefore” that introduces this verse. The NIV has “that is why” and the NASB and KJV have “therefore.” In this way, we are pointed to one of consequences of the sin of Achan and of unconfessed sin in general—weakness, inability to serve and live for the Lord. Why? Because sin grieves and quenches the Spirit (Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:10). This illustrates the truth declared in John 15:1-7 (the need for abiding in Christ); Ephesians 4:30 (how sin grieves the person of the Spirit); 1 Thessalonians 5:19 (how sin quenches the power of the Spirit); Proverbs 28:13 (how failure to confess and decisively deal with sin keeps the Lord from prospering our walk). In Christ we have the **capacity** to live victoriously for the Lord regardless of what we face, but the **ability** to do so always depends on fellowship with the Savior in the power of the Spirit; we need to walk in the light (1 John 1:5-9).

Directions for the People (vs. 13-15)

In preparation for his ministry of leadership, Joshua is again told to “rise up.” He can’t lead the people with his face in the dirt or while moping about, depressed over the defeat. This is in essence a call for restoration to fellowship and faith in the power of God. It’s like the Lord’s words to Peter in Luke 22. Peter was warned that Satan would sift him like wheat, but then the Lord told him, “and you, when once you have turned again (restoration to fellowship), strengthen your brothers” (Luke 22:32). Peter was not to allow his failure and denials to neutralize him or keep him from being a leader and ministering to others. So later, after being restored to fellowship, Peter himself would exhort, “gird up the loins of your mind ...” (1 Pet. 1:13). In view of what follows, the examination and discharge of discipline on Achan and his family, Joshua undoubtedly communicated this same command to the people.

Next, in verse 13, Joshua was told to “consecrate the people” to prepare them to deal with the problem. He was to call their attention to the cause of their defeat. Someone had taken things that were under the ban which had caused God to withhold His power. As the Lord had emphasized to Joshua, so he was to call their attention to both the *cause* and the *consequences* of the sin. This also called for them to consecrate themselves, that is to prepare themselves for the activities that would take place on the next day. They were to set the day apart for this activity and to prepare their hearts perhaps by prayer and worship for what God would have to do.

In verse 14 specific instructions were given for purging out this sin from their midst. First, there was to be examination of the people tribe by tribe, family by family, and finally, man by man. Note how the men were the ones held responsible for their families. The examination would reveal the guilty party. Verse 15 describes the punishment that was to be carried out on the guilty party with the reason given for the severity of the punishment.

The Discovery of Achan Described (7:16-21)

16 So Joshua arose early in the morning and brought Israel near by tribes, and the tribe of Judah was taken. 17 And he brought the family of Judah near, and he took the family of the Zerahites; and he brought the family of the Zerahites near man by man, and Zabdi was taken. 18 And he brought his household near man by man; and Achan, son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, from the tribe of Judah, was taken. 19 Then Joshua said to Achan, “My son, I implore you, give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, and give praise to Him; and tell me now what you have done. Do not hide it from me.” 20 So Achan answered Joshua and said, “Truly, I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel, and this is what I did: 21 when I saw among the spoil a beautiful mantle from Shinar and two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold fifty shekels in weight, then I coveted them and took them; and behold, they are concealed in the earth inside my tent with the silver underneath it.”

The Search for the Guilty Party (vss. 16-18)

Four times we read in Joshua that he rose early in the morning to take care of important business. Joshua was no procrastinator.

Then, in verses 16 through 18 the process of discovery is described beginning with all Israel until it was narrowed down by tribes to the tribe of Judah, then by families or clans to the Zerathites, then to the family of Zimri, and from that family to Achan. Why did Joshua follow this procedure and how was he able to narrow the search to Achan? The answer is found for us in verse 14 in the repeated words, “which the Lord takes” or “selects” (NET Bible). The words “*by lot*” found in the NASB are in italics and are not in the original, but they most likely express the means used because of the words, “which the Lord takes.”

“Which the Lord takes” or “selects” in verses 16-18 refers to a choice probably based on the use of the Urim and the Thummim in accordance with Exodus 28:15, 30 (cf. Num. 27:21) and which somehow involved the casting of lots (cf. Prov. 16:33; Jos. 14:1-2; 18:6).

A key question is what was the Urim and the Thummim? They appear in Scripture without explanation, but the following may help us though several theories have been given as to their meaning.

(1) The Hebrew for this phrase probably means “the lights” and “the perfections” or “light and perfection.” The Hebrew word for Urim (‘u,ri,m, a plural noun) is probably derived from ‘o,r “be light.” Thummim, also plural, probably comes from a Hebrew word meaning “perfection.”

(2) Urim begins with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet (*aleph*) and Thummim (thu,,mmi,m) begins with the last letter (*taw*). Perhaps, as the Law which was built on the Hebrew alphabet (*aleph* to *taw*) stood for God’s moral will, so the Urim and Thummim stood for God’s guidance in special situations beyond human knowledge and ability.

(3) The Urim and Thummim appear in Scripture without explanatory identification, except that they were to be put “in the breastplate . . . and be upon Aaron’s heart” (Ex. 28:30), which may suggest that these are none other than descriptive terms for the twelve precious stones of the immediately preceding context, inscribed with the names of the tribes of Israel (vv. 17-21), and set in the breastplate of judgment upon Aaron’s heart (v. 29).⁶ Some believe they consisted of only two special stones.

(4) Michaelis (*Laws of Moses*, 5:52) gives his opinion that the Urim and Thummim were three stones, on one of which was written ‘Yes,’ on another ‘No,’ whereas the third was left neutral or blank. These were used as lots, and the high priest decided accordingly as one or the other was drawn out. Kalisch (on Exodus 28:31) identifies the Urim and the Thummim with the twelve tribal gems. He looks on the name as one to be explained by an hendiadys (light and perfection—perfect illumination) and believes the high priest, by concentrating his thoughts on the attributes they represented, to have divested himself of all selfishness and prejudice and so to have passed into a true prophetic state. The process of consulting Jehovah by Urim and Thummim is not given in Scripture.⁷

(5) They were contained in the breastplate or pouch of judgment worn on the outside of the ephod. The point is they were a means of seeking divine guidance and answers to questions and crises beyond human perception through the ministry of the priest.

Dr. Hannah in The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

How they were used in determining God’s will is unknown, but some suggest the Urim represented a negative answer and the Thummim a positive answer. Perhaps this view is indicated by the fact that Urim . . . begins with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and Thummim . . . with the last letter. Others suggest that the objects simply symbolized the high priest’s authority to inquire of God,

⁶ R. Laird Harris, Editor, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. Bruce K. Waltke, Associate Editors, *Theological Word Book of the Old Testament*, Moody Press, Chicago, Vol. 1, 1980, p. 26.

⁷ *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, electronic version.

or the assurance that the priest would receive enlightenment (“lights”) and perfect knowledge (“perfections”) from God.⁸

(6) Whatever, they were probably sacred lots and were used in times of crisis to determine the will of God (see Numb. 27:21). Every decision of the Urim was from the Lord (Prov. 16:33). The use of the Urim and the Thummim to determine God’s decisions or to find His will was to be done by the high priest because he alone could wear the ephod which contained the Urim and Thummim.

(7) In 1 Samuel 2:28 three tasks of the priests are mentioned: (a) *To go up to my altar*, i.e., to perform the sacrificial rites at the altar of burnt offering in the courtyard of the tabernacle; (b) *To burn incense* at the altar of incense in the Holy Place (Ex 30:1-10), and (c) *To wear an ephod*. This is a reference to the special ephod to be worn by the high priests. This included the breastplate or pouch which contained the Urim and Thummim, the divinely ordained means of communication with God and to make decisions all of which was somehow related to casting lots.

God gave divine direction and Achan was discovered by supernatural means. He did not come forth voluntarily to confess or repent and throw himself on the mercy of God. His failure to do so stands in contrast with the attitude of the prodigal son and the publican in the New Testament.

Lessons From Achan’s Sin (vss. 20-21)

As 1 Corinthians 10 reminds us, what happened to Achan is recorded for our warning and instruction to remind us of one of the processes to sin. The process to Achan’s sin was a familiar one. He saw, he coveted, and he took. It was the same with Eve (Gen. 3:6) and with David (2 Sam. 11:2-4) and it is the same with us. Joshua’s approach was tender, yet firm. He hated the sin, but loved the sinner. Achan’s confession while honest, was too late and it was the product of discovery. It was not an act of repentance or godly sorrow that leads to repentance (2 Cor. 7:8-11).

Certainly there are some important lessons here:

(1) Confession without repentance or a genuine change of mind is hollow. It does not restore us to fellowship not because repentance is a work we must do to gain God’s forgiveness, but because without it we retain a wrong attitude which keeps a barrier between us and the Lord.

(2) Sometimes confession is too late to stop the discipline as in the case with David. The primary purpose of confession is not to get out of trouble or to keep us out of God’s woodshed. The purpose of confession is to reestablish fellowship and turn our lives over to God because we want to walk with Him under His control, going in His direction (Amos 3:3).

Perhaps the most practical need here is for us to note the process to see if we can discover what led to Achan’s choice and sin. The fact Achan hid the plunder shows he clearly knew he was doing wrong. So, why did he go ahead and do it? Well, why did Eve sin and fall for the deceptions of the serpent?

In answer to this, we might first take note of what Achan took. He took gold and silver which suggests materialism, trusting in riches for our security and happiness. But he also took a beautiful robe which came from Babylon. This not only points to materialism, but the desire to be fashionable and gain the approbation of men, seeking our sense of significance from the praise or applause of others.

Principle: These desires (lust patterns) illustrate the various lust patterns we all face and which, if not dealt with in faith, can dominate our lives. They include things like desire for position, power, prestige, pleasure, possessions, praise or applause, and recognition, but they are nothing more than human solutions or protective strategies we use to find security, significance, and satisfaction apart from God. Jeremiah calls them broken cisterns. “For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jer. 2:13).

These lust patterns have their source in: (a) The sinful nature with its faulty thinking and reasoning (Isa. 55:8f; Prov. 14:12; Rom. 1:18f; Eph. 4:17f). (b) The world and its human reasoning or viewpoint that seeks to live

⁸ John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck, Editors, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Victor Books, Wheaton, 1983,1985, electronic media.

life apart from God and His revelation and plan (Rom. 12:2). (c) False belief structures which, thinking with man's viewpoint and believing the delusions of the world and Satan, believe that these things will meet our needs like security or happiness. (d) Unbelief in God's goodness, wisdom, and timing in the way He supplies our needs.

Achan, as with Eve, was dissatisfied, impatient, and self-reliant. He was believing, trusting and using his own protective strategies to get what he wanted out of life. Ironically, God was in the process of taking all of Israel into the land where each man would have his own land, house, and abundant blessings. But dissatisfaction caused by failure to find his happiness in the Lord produced impatience which caused him to covet and run ahead with his own solutions. Though the command against coveting is only one of the Ten Commandments, it is the root sin against which most of the others were given and the root cause behind most of our sin.

Coveting stems from being dissatisfied with our lot in life and from our failure to seek our happiness in the Lord and to trust Him as the source of our needs for **security, significance, and satisfaction**. The New Testament defines coveting as idolatry (Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5). In the final analysis, idolatry is seeking from things what only God can give. An idol may be (a) an impotent graven image made of wood or precious metal to which one prays and seeks help, (b) but it may also be **materialism**, that way of life that seeks security and significance from money, possessions, power, prestige, and pleasure. (c) It may also be **secularism**, a philosophy of life by which men seek to live apart from dependence on God, or (4) it may be the **approbation** of men, seeking satisfaction and security from the praise of others. Campbell writes:

It has been estimated that Americans are bombarded by 1,700 advertisements a day via various forms of the media. While there is no danger of our purchasing all 1,700 items, there is the possibility of our accepting the philosophy behind those advertisements—that we will have complete, fulfilled, satisfied lives if only we drive this car, use this hair spray, or drink that beverage.⁹

So, what is our need? It is to learn Paul's secret of contentment in the Lord as described in Philippians 4:12-13 (see also Phil. 3:13-14 and 1 Tim. 6:6-19).

The Death of Achan Discharged (7:22-26)

22 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and behold, it was concealed in his tent with the silver underneath it. 23 And they took them from inside the tent and brought them to Joshua and to all the sons of Israel, and they poured them out before the LORD. 24 Then Joshua and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the mantle, the bar of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent and all that belonged to him; and they brought them up to the valley of Achor. 25 And Joshua said, "Why have you troubled us? The LORD will trouble you this day." And all Israel stoned them with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones. 26 And they raised over him a great heap of stones that stands to this day, and the LORD turned from the fierceness of His anger. Therefore the name of that place has been called the valley of Achor to this day.

When we read this passage, one of the questions that comes to mind is why was God so harsh on Achan and his family? In contrast to the mercy we see in the New Testament, this seems terribly harsh. We might think of the mercy the Lord demonstrated to the woman at the well who had five husbands (John 4:18) and the woman taken in adultery who, as a Jewish woman, could have been stoned according to the Law (John 8:3f) and wonder why Achan did not receive similar mercy. We are apt to forget a couple of other New Testament passages like the death of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5) and the awesome judgments of the Tribulation where the blood of men is pictured as flowing up to the horses' bridles in the wine vat of God's wrath (cf. Rev. 14:18-20; 19:13 with Isa. 63:1-6). We might also be prone to either forget or minimize the holiness of God. God is described as holy more than by any of His other attributes, more than even His love, mercy, and grace. As a holy God, He is perfect righteousness and justice, and because of His justice, He must deal with sin (cf. Psa. 50:21; Eccl. 8:11-12).

But there is another issue here we must not ignore as we think about this passage. Who were these people and what was their purpose? They were a people called of God to be His witness to the world and through whom

⁹ Donald K. Campbell, *Joshua, Leader Under Fire*, Victor Books, 1989, p. 65.

God would give the Savior (cf. Ex. 19:4-6; Deut. 10:15f; with 1 Pet. 1:14f; 2:9-12). This involved protecting the welfare and purpose of the majority by dealing with this sin in such a way that it would cause them to realize just how serious was their calling and their walk with God. As the situation with Ananias and Sapphira occurred in the very early period of the church, so this judgment against Achan also occurred in the initial period of Israel's entrance into the land in order to strike the fear of God into the hearts of the people and to provide an example of the seriousness of what Achan had done in violating the covenant of God. The great heap of stones set up over Achan's grave seems to have been done as a memorial of warning for the generations to come.

The final stroke was accomplished by the raising of a historical marker, **a large pile of rocks**, over the body of **Achan**. This seems to have been a common method of burial for infamous individuals (cf. 8:29). It served in this case that good purpose of warning Israel against the sin of disobeying God's express commands.¹⁰

Initial possession and enjoyment of the land and its blessings and their ability to fulfill their calling as God's chosen people was dependent on obedience to God for it was He who was giving them the land with all its many blessings and responsibilities (Deut. 28-30).

We should note that though Achan did confess his sin, he only did so when he was found out and forced to. Had he voluntarily cast himself on the mercy of God, his life might have been spared, as was David when he sinned. Campbell writes: "In view of the fact that the Law prohibits the execution of children for their father's sins (Deut. 24:16), we assume that Achan's children were accomplices in crime."¹¹

Another key issue that must not be forgotten is the trouble this brought on others. God took severe action because of the serious consequences of Achan's sin on others (it was a terrible example, several lives were lost, Israel was routed, and God's honor impugned [cf. vs. 25]). The memorial of stones in the valley called Achor, which means "trouble" addressed this fact.

Conclusion

There are three concluding points that I would like to focus on from this chapter.

(1) Our sin needs to be dealt with honestly and decisively.

(2) Achan's choice grew out of the soil of dissatisfaction. How could there be dissatisfaction in view of all he had learned and seen as one of the privileged people of Israel? We don't know, but for whatever reason, Achan was dissatisfied with his lot in life because he failed to rest his life in God's providence and goodness. His failure to walk by faith led to seeking satisfaction, security, and significance in the material world so that, lusting after things, he chose to take the things under the ban. It was this spiritual condition of dissatisfaction and independent living that led him to take matters into his own hands believing he could meet his wants by his own solutions. Our failure to find our contentment in the Savior and His love and grace is surely the cause of a great deal of our own self-made misery and sinful behavior. The Lord highlighted this very thing in Matthew 6 when He warned the disciples against storing up treasures on earth and against worrying about the details of life—drink, food, and clothing. In the process, He defined the pursuit of the details of life at the expense of seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness as a simple matter of not truly trusting in God's supply. The issue is one of having too little faith. After pointing to the way God cares for the birds and clothes the grass, He said,

"But if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, *will He* not much more *do so for* you, O men of little faith? 31 "Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?'" (Matt. 6:30).

(3) It would be helpful to note that when Achan sinned and there was sin in the camp of Israel, the blessing and strength of God was halted and the nation met with discipline and failure. But once the sin was dealt with as the Lord commanded, by His grace the blessing and strength of God resumed. Again we are reminded that known sin in

¹⁰ Walvoord, Zuck, electronic media.

¹¹ Campbell, p. 66.

our lives creates a barrier between us and the Lord because it shows our commitment to go our own way and to handle our own lives by our own strategies.

Lesson 8: Victory at Ai (Joshua 8:1-35)

Introduction

How often God must engineer defeat before He can engineer victory. Sometimes success comes through the back door of failure. As we begin this chapter, I am reminded of a couple verses in Psalm 119. “Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word” (vs. 67); and “It is good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes” (vs. 72).

In this chapter we again see the grace of God and the truth of restoration. Defeats never have to be the end. They may in fact be the beginning if we will just respond to the grace of God as a loving and caring heavenly Father who works to produce spiritual growth and Christ-like changes in us. This doesn't minimize the consequences of sin, however. In the Ai incident, God's name had been dishonored, people lost their lives, and a family died the sin unto death. The momentum Israel gained was temporarily lost and God's people were filled with gloom and despair.

The story of Ai is a message of warning. It reminds us that sin cannot be tolerated in the Christian life. It hinders the blessing of God from the standpoint of productive Christian living. Sin grieves and quenches the Spirit.

The story of Ai is also a proclamation of hope. It reminds us that blessing and productivity can come when sin is confessed and dealt with.

The Call to Battle (8:1-2)

1 Now the LORD said to Joshua, “Do not fear or be dismayed. Take all the people of war with you and arise, go up to Ai; see, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land. 2 And you shall do to Ai and its king just as you did to Jericho and its king; you shall take only its spoil and its cattle as plunder for yourselves. Set an ambush for the city behind it.”

Comfort From the Lord (vs. 1a)

With the sin of Achan judged, God's favor toward the nation was restored. The next thing we read concerns God's new revelation to Joshua to both encourage him and give him directions for victory. The first words Joshua heard were “Do not fear or be dismayed.” Joshua had heard these words before. These are special words to encourage God's people when facing the enemy:

- These were the words Moses spoke in Kadesh-barnea as he sent out the 12 spies (Deut. 12:21).
- These were also the words Joshua heard from Moses 40 years later as he turned the reins of leadership over to Joshua who would then be responsible to take the nation into the land of promise (Deut. 31:8).
- Then, Joshua would hear similar words directly from the Lord as He commissioned him to lead the people into the land (Josh. 1:9).
- Later, Joshua would use these same words to encourage the nation in the face of their enemies, and they would be used on three other occasions when Judah would be facing the enemy and terrible odds (Josh. 8:1; 10:25; 2 Chron. 20:15, 17; 32:7).

This serves to remind us that God is a God of comfort who wants to comfort and encourage us through His Word (cf. Isa. 40:1; 2 Cor. 1:3f; Rom. 15:4).

Directions From the Lord (vss. 1b-2)

With God's blessing assured through the words of comfort, a few specific directions are given.

(1) Don't make the same mistake twice: God's word to Joshua was to use all the fighting men of Israel. Though the primary cause of the defeat at Ai was Achan's sin, a secondary cause was underestimating the enemy, overestimating themselves, and presuming on the Lord (cf. 7:3-4). So they are now told to take all the fighting men and to go forth at God's command trusting in the fact it was God who would give them victory.

(2) Turn the place of defeat into the place of victory: Notice what happens here. Joshua is told to again go up and attack Ai. He is to return to the place of defeat, and now, because Joshua and the people are rightly related to the Lord, God promised they could turn the place of defeat into a place of victory.

(3) The basis of victory is always the same: The words, "just as with Jericho" reminds us that victory at Ai would not only be as complete as that at Jericho, but that as with Jericho, it would come by the power of God regardless of the strategy used. God wants our places of defeat turned into places of victory. We are not to live with defeat or accept it as the norm for the Christian life. But as always, victory comes through faith in God's presence and provision.

(4) The spoils of victory promised—the irony of God's blessing: In verse 2 Joshua was told that the spoils of Ai and its livestock could now be taken by Israel. As the first fruits of the land, Jericho had been placed under the ban, but this was not the case with Ai. What irony! Achan's dissatisfaction, unsuppressed by patience and trust in the Lord for his needs, actually caused him to miss precisely what he longed for and much more. He wasted his life. "If only Achan had suppressed his greedy and selfish desires and obeyed God's word at Jericho he would later have had all his heart desired and God's blessing too. How easy it is to take matters into our own hands and go ahead of the Lord!"¹ The path of obedience and faith is always best.

(5) A change in strategies (vs. 2b): The strategy used with Ai differed entirely from that employed at Jericho. This is highly instructive for us in ministry, in spiritual battles, or in the way God leads us. "The Israelites did not march around the walls of Ai seven times, nor did the walls fall miraculously."² Israel was now directed to conquer the city through normal combat.

Principle: We should not expect God to work the same way or lead us always the same way. We need to be open and sensitive to the various ways God may lead. As the Sovereign God of the universe, He is never limited to one particular method to accomplish His purposes. When my wife and I were in seminary the Lord provided for our needs in numerous ways. Sometimes He worked in ways that seemed almost miraculous. Other times, He worked more through natural means and methods, but behind it all was the sovereign working and care of the Lord.

The Strategy for the Battle (8:3-13)

3 So Joshua rose with all the people of war to go up to Ai; and Joshua chose 30,000 men, valiant warriors, and sent them out at night. 4 And he commanded them, saying, "See, you are going to ambush the city from behind it. Do not go very far from the city, but all of you be ready. 5 Then I and all the people who are with me will approach the city. And it will come about when they come out to meet us as at the first, that we will flee before them. 6 And they will come out after us until we have drawn them away from the city, for they will say, 'They are fleeing before us as at the first.' So we will flee before them. 7 And you shall rise from your ambush and take possession of the city, for the LORD your God will deliver it into your hand. 8 Then it will be when you have seized the city, that you shall set the city on fire. You shall do it according to the word of the LORD. See, I have commanded you." 9 So Joshua sent them away, and they went to the place of ambush and remained between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of Ai; but Joshua spent that night among the people.

10 Now Joshua rose early in the morning and mustered the people, and he went up with the elders of Israel before the people to Ai. 11 Then all the people of war who were with him went up and drew near and arrived in front of the city, and camped on the north side of Ai. Now there was a valley between him and Ai. 12 And he took about 5,000 men and set them in ambush between Be-

¹ Campbell, *Joshua: Leader Under Fire*, p. 68.

² Campbell, p. 68.

thel and Ai, on the west side of the city. 13 So they stationed the people, all the army that was on the north side of the city, and its rear guard on the west side of the city, and Joshua spent that night in the midst of the valley.

The strategy for the capture of Ai was ingenious (vss. 3-9). It involved placing an ambush behind (west of) the city. God Himself told Joshua to do this (vss. 2, 8). The outworking of this plan involved three detachments of soldiers. The first was a group of commando-type warriors who were sent by night to hide on the west side of the city. Their mission was to rush into Ai and burn it after its defenders had deserted it to pursue Joshua and his army as they had previously done. This unit is said to have numbered 30,000. The presence of large rocks in the region made it possible for all these men to remain hidden, yet, this seems like an excessively large number of soldiers for this particular mission. Regarding the 30,000 Ryrie points out,

A seemingly large number for an ambush. It has been suggested that “thousand” should read “chief.” If so, Joshua sent 30 chiefs on a commando-type ambush.³

The second contingent was the main army which walked the 15 miles from Gilgal early the next morning and camped in plain view on the north side of Ai. Led by Joshua, this army was a diversionary force to decoy the defenders of Ai out of the city.

The third contingent was another ambush numbering 5,000 men who were positioned between Bethel and Ai to cut off the possibility of reinforcements from Bethel to aid the men of Ai.⁴

The Description of the Battle (8:14-29)

14 And it came about when the king of Ai saw it, that the men of the city hurried and rose up early and went out to meet Israel in battle, he and all his people at the appointed place before the desert plain. But he did not know that there was an ambush against him behind the city. 15 And Joshua and all Israel pretended to be beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness. 16 And all the people who were in the city were called together to pursue them, and they pursued Joshua, and were drawn away from the city. 17 So not a man was left in Ai or Bethel who had not gone out after Israel, and they left the city unguarded and pursued Israel.

18 Then the LORD said to Joshua, “Stretch out the javelin that is in your hand toward Ai, for I will give it into your hand.” So Joshua stretched out the javelin that was in his hand toward the city. 19 And the men in ambush rose quickly from their place, and when he had stretched out his hand, they ran and entered the city and captured it; and they quickly set the city on fire. 20 When the men of Ai turned back and looked, behold, the smoke of the city ascended to the sky, and they had no place to flee this way or that, for the people who had been fleeing to the wilderness turned against the pursuers. 21 When Joshua and all Israel saw that the men in ambush had captured the city and that the smoke of the city ascended, they turned back and slew the men of Ai. 22 And the others came out from the city to encounter them, so that they were trapped in the midst of Israel, some on this side and some on that side; and they slew them until no one was left of those who survived or escaped. 23 But they took alive the king of Ai and brought him to Joshua.

24 Now it came about when Israel had finished killing all the inhabitants of Ai in the field in the wilderness where they pursued them, and all of them were fallen by the edge of the sword until they were destroyed, then all Israel returned to Ai and struck it with the edge of the sword. 25 And all who fell that day, both men and women, were 12,000—all the people of Ai. 26 For Joshua did not withdraw his hand with which he stretched out the javelin until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai. 27 Israel took only the cattle and the spoil of that city as plunder for themselves, according to the word of the LORD which He had commanded Joshua. 28 So Joshua burned Ai and made it a heap forever, a desolation until this day. 29 And he hanged the king of Ai on a tree until evening; and at sunset Joshua gave command and they took his body down from the tree, and

³ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible, Expanded Edition*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1995, p. 343.

⁴ Campbell, p. 69.

threw it at the entrance of the city gate, and raised over it a great heap of stones that stands to this day. (NASB)

The plan worked like clockwork (vss. 14-22). When the king of Ai saw Israel's army he took the bait and pursued the Israelites who pretended to retreat in fear as they had done before. This left city of Ai unguarded. At the Lord's command, Joshua stretched out the javelin in his hand and, with this as a signal, the troops hidden in ambush on the west side ran to the city and set it on fire. This left the men of Ai surrounded with no place to flee for now Joshua and his men with the 5,000 hidden in ambush all turned to fight the men of Ai. "But before they could gather their wits they were caught in a pincer movement of Israelite soldiers and were destroyed."⁵

After killing all Ai's soldiers, Israel's army reentered the city and killed all its inhabitants (23-29). The dead soldiers and citizens totaled 12,000. Plunder was taken from the city as God had said they could do (vs. 2). The city was made a heap of ruins.

Ai's king, who had been previously spared, was hanged on a tree until evening and then buried beneath a pile of stones (cf. Achan's similar burial, 7:26). The king's body was taken off the tree at sunset because of God's command (Deut. 21:22-23; cf. Josh. 10:27). Thus Israel, having been restored to God's favor, became victorious over the city of Ai. Out of their failure came not only a second chance but a great victory along with some much needed lessons. Though we should never seek to fail, failure can be the back door to success for God is willing to forgive and restore us if we will deal with our sin as prescribed in the Word.

The Pilgrimage After the Battle (8:30-35)

30 Then Joshua built an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, in Mount Ebal, 31 just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the sons of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of uncut stones, on which no man had wielded an iron tool; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings. 32 And he wrote there on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written, in the presence of the sons of Israel. 33 And all Israel with their elders and officers and their judges were standing on both sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, the stranger as well as the native. Half of them stood in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had given command at first to bless the people of Israel. 34 Then afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the book of the law. 35 There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel with the women and the little ones and the strangers who were living among them.

After the victory at Ai Joshua did what seemed to be foolish humanly and militarily-speaking (30-31). To us it would seem best to immediately pursue the military campaign and move quickly ahead to capture and take control of the central sector of the land. But no, Joshua led the Israelites on a spiritual pilgrimage for a special time of worship. Why? Moses had commanded it (Deut. 27:1-8) because of what this event would stand for in the lives of the Israelites.

Again this illustrates the principle of first priorities: our capacity in life is always dependent on our spiritual capacity and orientation to the plan of God. Many Christians continually face defeat in their walk because they fail to take time to get alone with the Lord and reflect on Him and to put on their spiritual armor.

Therefore, without delay Joshua led the entire nation—men, women, children, and cattle—from their camp at Gilgal northward up the Jordan Valley to the place specified by Moses, the mountains of Ebal (Josh. 8:30) and Gerizim (v. 33) which are at Shechem. This was a march of about 30 miles and evidently was not difficult or dangerous because they passed through an area that was sparsely populated.

The Israelites did face a possible confrontation with the men of the city of Shechem, a fortress guarding the entrance to the valley between these mountains. Perhaps the Shechemites remained shut up in their city, fearful because of what they had heard about the victories of Israel, or perhaps Israel conquered this city on the way. Campbell

⁵ Campbell, p. 69.

points out: “Of course the Bible does not record every battle of the Conquest and the record of the capture of Shechem may have been omitted. On the other hand, the city at this time may have been in friendly hands or it may simply have surrendered without resistance.”⁶

But we might ask, why was this location chosen? These mountains are located in the geographic center of the land and from either peak much of the Promised Land can be seen. Here then, is a place that represented all the land, both at the time of entrance into Canaan and also when Joshua’s leadership was coming to a close (cf. 24:1). With his leadership drawing to a close, Joshua again gathered all the tribes to Shechem and challenged the people to renew their covenant vows to the Lord.

James Boice writes:

The Mountains, which are about three thousand feet above sea level or one thousand feet above the valley between them, are quite barren. The valley is often green, and at one place where the mountains come close together there is a natural amphitheater. F. B. Meyer describes it as a place where the mountains are hollowed out “and the limestone stratum is broken into a succession of ledges ‘so as to present the appearance of a series of regular benches.’” It is “a natural amphitheatre ... capable of containing a vast audience of people.” This amphitheater was the people’s destination, and it was here that they camped out for the ceremony.⁷

This place has outstanding acoustical properties and one person standing on one mountain can be easily heard by someone standing on the other mountain.

The ceremonies here involved three things. Campbell comments on these:

First, an altar of uncut stones was erected on Mount Ebal and sacrifices (consisting of burnt offerings and fellowship offerings; cf. Lev. 1; 3) were offered to the Lord. Jericho and Ai, in which false gods of the Canaanites were worshiped, had fallen. Israel now publicly worshiped and proclaimed her faith in the one true God.

Second, at this same place, on Ebal but perhaps referring to different stones, Joshua also set up some large stones. On their surfaces he wrote a copy of the Law of Moses. How much of the Law was inscribed is not stated. Some suggest only the Ten Commandments were written, while others think the stone inscription included the contents of at least Deuteronomy 5-26. Archaeologists have discovered similar inscribed pillars or stelae six to eight feet long in the Middle East. And the Behistun Inscription in Iran is three times the length of Deuteronomy.

Third, Joshua read ... the Law to the people. Half of the people were positioned on the slopes of Mount Gerizim to the south, the other half were on the slopes of Mount Ebal to the north, and the ark of the covenant surrounded by priests was in the valley between. As the curses of the Law were read one by one, the tribes on Mount Ebal responded, “Amen!” As the blessings were likewise read the tribes on Mount Gerizim responded “Amen!” (Deut. 11:29; 27:12-26) The huge natural amphitheater which still exists there made it possible for the people to hear every word and with all sincerity Israel affirmed that the Law of the Lord was indeed to be the Law of the land.⁸

So, Mount Ebal stood for cursing and Gerizim stood for blessing. This event between the two mountains formed a huge object lesson. What happened to the Israelites in the land, the history of Israel, was going to depend on where they lived, as it were—on Mount Ebal, in disobedience and under the curses, or on Mount Gerizim, in obedience and under God’s blessing.

Campbell writes: “From this point on the history of the Jews depended on their attitude toward the Law which had been read in their hearing that day. When they were obedient there was blessing; when they were disobe-

⁶ Campbell, p. 70.

⁷ Boice, *Joshua: We Will Serve the Lord*, Revell, New Jersey, 1989, p. 89.

⁸ John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck, Editors, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Victor Books, Wheaton, 1983,1985, electronic media.

dient there was judgment (cf. Deut. 28). It is tragic that the affirmations of this momentous hour faded so quickly.”⁹ The truth of this object lesson had already been demonstrated in the victory of Jericho and the defeat and victory at Ai. When there was obedience to the Law of God, there was victory, but when there was disobedience, it resulted in defeat. But there is more here that we should think about for no one can fulfill the law. We are also reminded in this object lesson of God’s grace and provision. The ceremony that was enacted teaches us more than the principle that obedience brings blessing and disobedience brings cursing.

What happens first in this ceremony before the writing and reading of the Law? An altar made of uncut stones was erected for the purpose of burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings, sacrifices which point to the person and work of Christ and God’s solution to the curse of the Law through substitutionary sacrifice (8:31). Note three important principles:

(1) The first thing God did was to point to grace and His solution for sin by faith. On this occasion both the importance of the Law and the future of Israel, based on their response to the Law, was held before them. It was at this time that the solution to the problem of sin and failure was the first thing set before them. Why? Because all fall short of perfect obedience to the Law.

The same was true at Sinai: at the same time God gave the Ten Commandments and the judgments, He also gave the ordinances, the sacrifices. At the same time He gave them Moses, He gave them Aaron the high priest. It was as if God were saying, “thou shalt not, but I know you will and here is your way to escape condemnation.”

(2) Moses gave the command to build the altar on Mount Ebal, the place where the curses for disobedience were to be read. But why this place instead of the place that represented blessing for obedience? Because the altar was for sinners. It was for those who acknowledge their sin and who would come not as righteous, but as sinners to the place of sacrifice.

Remember the words of the Samaritan woman of John 4? The Samaritans built an altar on Gerizim, not Ebal. The choice of Gerizim for the altar suggests they came to God not as sinners but rather in their self-righteousness (cf. John 4:20). But the Lord’s words to the Samaritan woman exposed her spiritual ignorance, “You Samaritans worship what you do not know ...” (vs. 22), and then uncovered her sin, “... You have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband ...” (vs. 18).

(3) The altar was constructed of uncut stones without any human workmanship. This was a complete negation of humanism and salvation (or spirituality) by works. It shows that human beings can add nothing to the work of God for salvation or for spirituality. It is all by grace through the work of God in Christ. This becomes a strong reminder that:

- We must recognize our sinfulness and come to God as sinners (Rom. 3:23).
- We must come to the place of sacrifice, the cross, acknowledging our need of another to die in our place.
- We must repudiate our human works for salvation: recognize there is nothing we can do or add to the work of God’s substitute for our sin, the person and work of Christ.

The worship at Mount Ebal focused the people on the Law of God as that special revelation of God that was so crucial to their future well being as the people of God. The Law pointed the nation to those righteous statutes that would enable Israel to be a holy nation, a special redeemed people, a people of God’s own possession and a light to the nations (see Ex. 19:4-6; Deut. 4:1-8). The Law pointed Israel and all men to those moral statutes that are so vital to justice and law and order within nations. But it did more. It demonstrated the holiness of God and by virtue of man’s inability to keep the Law, it showed man his sin which separates him from God. Through the tabernacle, the sacrifices, and the priesthood, it pointed forward to a suffering Savior, the Lamb of God, who must die for man’s sin that they might have a relationship with God and be the people of God in a fallen world.

But how quickly their commitment to this special revelation of God faded from their minds, for in the very next book of the Bible, Judges, we read about that which characterized the nation during the time of the judges, “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25).

⁹ Walvoord/Zuck, electronic meida.

We are no different today in our country. Though our nation was founded on the precepts of Scripture as the moral Law of God, we have basically turned away from the Bible to do that which is right in our own eyes. Because we have rejected God's Word and deny its relevance, we have turned to our futile imaginations (Eph. 4:17f). As a result, we have become like those Isaiah cried out against who are not only experiencing the perversions of our own depraved thinking, but also the judgment of God on our society:

20 Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! 21 Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, And clever in their own sight! 22 Woe to those who are heroes in drinking wine, And valiant men in mixing strong drink; 23 Who justify the wicked for a bribe, And take away the rights of the ones who are in the right! 24 Therefore, as a tongue of fire consumes stubble, And dry grass collapses into the flame, So their root will become like rot and their blossom blow away as dust; For they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts, And despised the word of the Holy One of Israel (Isaiah 5:20-24).

Just a casual glance at our society today provides clear evidence that we are in desperate need of spiritual and moral revival and a return to our godly roots as given to us by our forefathers. The moral breakdown in society and in our leadership, especially for a nation with our beginnings, is beyond imagination. We are so much like Israel in this regard. I agree with Campbell who says:

The survival of our society may well depend on the willingness of all the people, the leaders in Washington and the citizens across the land, to allow the absolutes of God's Word to become the law of the land. And Christians must lead the way. You and I must commit ourselves daily to the task of cleansing and purging the "Achan" from ourselves. We must commit ourselves to becoming people of purity, faith, and integrity, inside and out, publicly and privately. Then—and only then—will we be ready to march against the enemy fortresses that stand in our path—and *win the victory*.¹⁰

¹⁰ Campbell/ Denny, p. 129.

Lesson 9: The Peril of Walking by Sight (Joshua 9:1-27)

Introduction

In a context where the apostle Paul has been discussing his ministry as an ambassador of Christ (see 2 Cor. 4:1-5:20), he declares “for we walk by faith, not by sight.” To walk by faith is to walk in a spirit of prayerful dependence on the Lord and His guidance. So James encourages us, “If anyone of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God” (Jam. 1:5). We are always to seek God’s wisdom because we need His omniscient and sovereign guidance no matter what the issue is that faces us. Later, in his epistle, James will warn against the sin of presuming on the Lord or against pursuing our own dreams and objectives apart from seeking God’s leading and will (4:13-17).

Jeremiah declared, “I know, O Lord, that a man’s way is not in himself, Nor is it in man who walks to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23). Man does not have the wisdom or ability, nor often the will to direct his way for “There is a way *which* seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death” (Prov. 14:12). Our need is to always commit our way, our objectives, our pursuits, and our responsibilities to the Lord for not only His will and wisdom, but for His enablement (see Prov. 16:1-4, 9). The danger is that we will presume on God’s grace and strike out in our own wisdom without really seeking and searching His heart and blessing while ever realizing our total inadequacy and need of His grace.

The danger of presumption and walking by sight is amplified a hundred fold when we consider the fact we are in an age old conflict with supernatural forces that are extremely cunning and many times more powerful than are we. We see the material world, we see flesh and blood, and we can see the physical evidence and think, “I can handle it ... it’s not that difficult.” We must be ever wary because often we are not just dealing with just flesh and blood. Rather, we are dealing with an insidious enemy who uses people to promote his schemes. When we consider our weakness and Satan’s power, cunning, deception, and methods of operations, we must certainly listen to Paul’s admonition in Ephesians 6:10-18:

6:10 Finally, be strengthened in the Lord and in the strength of his power. **6:11** Clothe yourselves with the full armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. **6:12** For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens. **6:13** For this reason, take up the full armor of God so that you may be able to stand your ground on the evil day, and having done everything, to stand. **6:14** Stand firm, therefore, by fastening the belt of truth around your waist, by putting on the breastplate of righteousness, **6:15** by fitting your feet with the preparation that comes from the good news of peace, **6:16** and in all of this, by taking up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. **6:17** And take *the helmet of salvation* and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. **6:18** With every prayer and petition, pray at all times in the Spirit, and to this end being alert, with all perseverance and requests for all the saints. **6:19** Pray for me, that I may be given the message when I begin to speak—that I may confidently make known the mystery of the gospel, **6:20** for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may be able to speak boldly as I ought to speak (NET Bible).

In chapter nine, though somewhat cautious, Joshua nevertheless failed to inquire of the Lord through prayer. Looking at the evidence, he supposed he could wisely discern what they were facing. He was wrong and ultimately, he was guilty of presuming on the Lord.

In the depths of winter at Valley Forge, George Washington went to his knees in prayer, certain that unless God aided his bedraggled and discouraged army, all hope for the fledgling United States was lost.

During the Civil War, when the fate of the nation again hung in the balance, Abraham Lincoln confessed to a friend that he was often driven to his knees to pray because he had nowhere else to go.¹

In the passage before us (verses 9-10), we see the danger of failing to commit their way to the Lord (Prov. 3:5-7; Ps. 37:4-6), the peril of prayerlessness and the peril of walking by sight—making decision on the basis of how things appear.

As we have seen, Israel's failure at Ai was to a large degree the result of failing to consult the Lord. Now again the failure of the leaders to commit their way to the Lord was about to produce another crisis. It reminds us again how susceptible we are to acting before praying.

There is another related problem here. The problem of trusting in our victories and our religious experiences. The context here is most significant. The people had just returned from a mountain-top kind of spiritual experience after hearing the Word of God read to them from Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim. They had heard God's promises of blessings and had affirmed their commitment to follow the Lord (see Deut. 27:11-28:14). It had been a time of spiritual victory, a spiritual high, but this is an important time for walking circumspectly knowing that such is also a time when often Satan attacks because he knows we are apt to trust in our experiences rather than in the Lord (see 1 Cor. 10:12). The moment we let down our guard and think we have it made because of our spiritual experiences, we are most vulnerable to the devil's attacks. The judgment of God's word here is that they "... did not ask for counsel of the Lord" (9:14).

As we study this passage we should be reminded of four passages of Scripture—1 Samuel 12:23; Proverbs 3:5-6; 1 Corinthians 10:12; Ephesians 6:10-18. These verses along with this passage in Joshua remind us of four things:

- (1) As Christians, *we are involved in deadly spiritual warfare* with a power far superior to our own strength.
- (2) To be delivered from our opponent and his nefarious schemes, *we must cloth ourselves with our spiritual armor as given us in Christ.*
- (3) The offensive weapons given to us by the Lord are *the Word of God* and *prayer*. Without the Word and prayer, we are sitting ducks.
- (4) When God's people are victorious or are prospered, it seems Satan *doubles his efforts in attacks against them.*

The Alliances Against Joshua and Israel (9:1-2)

1 Now when all the kings west of the Jordan heard about these things—those in the hill country, in the western foothills, and along the entire coast of the Great Sea as far as Lebanon (the kings of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites)— 2 they came together to make war against Joshua and Israel (NIV).

The record given here is typical of Satan's strategies. Powerful alliances began immediately to form in both the north and the south of Canaan. Where tribal warfare had gone on for years, suddenly deadly enemies were brought together in alliances as they united against the invasion of God's people into the land.

When righteousness becomes aggressive and bent on an objective, it has a way of uniting the forces of righteousness and the enemies of righteousness. It happened this way when Jesus Christ launched his earthly ministry. His aggressive ministry of healing, preaching, and the confrontation of sin galvanized his own followers—but it also welded together three groups which had formerly been enemies, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Herodians. Scripture predicts that His future return will have a similar effect (See Ps. 2:2; Rev. 19:19.)

The more boldly the Christian faith advances, the more vocal and violent the opposition will become.²

¹ Campbell/Denny, p. 133.

It appears that all the city-states in mountainous regions joined forces against Israel as a means of keeping Joshua and his army from attacking one city at a time as had been done with Jericho and Ai.

Perhaps these kings were encouraged by the initial defeat of Israel at Ai. No longer would the reports of earlier victories lead them to suppose that Israel was invincible. In resisting Israel, however, they were resisting God. Their stubborn rebellion against God was eloquent testimony that the sin of the Amorites had reached its full measure (cf. Gen 15:16).³

The Deception of the Gibeonites (9:3-15)

9:3 When the residents of Gibeon heard what Joshua did to Jericho and Ai, **9:4** they did something clever. They collected some provisions and put worn out sacks on their donkeys, along with worn out wineskins that were ripped and patched. **9:5** They had worn out, patched sandals on their feet and dressed in worn out clothes. All their bread was dry and hard. **9:6** They came to Joshua at the camp in Gilgal and said to him and the men of Israel, “We have come from a distant land. Make a treaty with us.” **9:7** The men of Israel said to the Hivites, “Perhaps you live near us. So how can we make a treaty with you?” **9:8** But they said to Joshua, “We are willing to be your subjects.” So Joshua said to them, “Who are you and where do you come from?” **9:9** They told him, “Your subjects have come from a very distant land because of the reputation of the LORD your God, for we have heard the news about all he did in Egypt **9:10** and all he did to the two Amorite kings on the other side of the Jordan—Sihon king of Heshbon and Og king of Bashan in Ashtaroth. **9:11** Our leaders and all who live in our land told us, ‘Take provisions for your journey and go meet them. Tell them, “We are willing to be your subjects. Make a treaty with us.”’ **9:12** This bread of ours was warm when we packed it in our homes the day we started out to meet you, but now it is dry and hard. **9:13** These wineskins we filled were brand new, but look how they have ripped. Our clothes and sandals have worn out because it has been a very long journey.” **9:14** The men examined some of their provisions, but they failed to ask the LORD’s advice. **9:15** Joshua made a peace treaty with them and agreed to let them live. The leaders of the community sealed it with an oath. (NET Bible)

Not all were willing to openly go against Israel in view of Israel’s victories. The Gibeonites, which included a league of cities (see vs. 17), concocted a clever ruse designed to deceive the Israelites and hide their true identity—a typical strategy of Satan, the deceiver. Their goal, which was successful, was to convince the Israelites they were from a country outside the land (vs. 6). They evidently somehow knew that God had commanded the Israelites to totally destroy all the inhabitants of the land. Their claim was that they were impressed with the great things Joshua had done and so they wanted a treaty allowing them to live because they were not of the land of Canaan.

It is hard not to admire the Gibeonites for their scheme. In view of verse 9, it appears they really did believe in the power of the God of Israel much like Rahab. The Gibeonites were not cowards (cf. 10:2). They knew they could not withstand the power of God and did the next best thing in their thinking; they turned to deception through disguise. This resulted in two major approaches:

(1) They played on their sympathies by appearing as weary travelers who had been on a long journey. Their garments were dirty and worn, their food was dry and moldy (or hard, crumbly), their wineskins old and patched, and their sandals worn and thin.

(2) They played on their egos and their sense of pride. They insisted they came from a great distance to show their respect for the power of the God of the Israelites and wanted to be allowed to live as the servants of Israel. Caught off guard, Joshua and the leaders of Israel listened to the ruse of the Gibeonites and they made two mistakes:

² Campbell/Denny, p. 134.

³ *Expositors Bible Commentary, Old Testament*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1997, electronic media.

(1) They made the mistake of allowing the Gibeonites to play on their emotions. They accepted the evidence, though questionable, without further and more reliable evidence. Here we see *the peril of sight versus faith and fact*.

(2) The primary mistake, however, is not seeking counsel from the Lord. They should have sought direction from the Lord through the Urim and Thummim. Here we see *the peril of presumption through prayerlessness*.

It is always a mistake for us to lean on our own wisdom or judgment and make our own plans apart from God's direction. It was a mistake then ... and it still is. The exhortation of God's Word is:

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil (Proverbs 3:5-7).

Before entering into any alliance—taking a partner in life, going into business with another, yielding assent to any proposition which involves confederation with others—be sure to ask counsel at the mouth of the Lord. He will assuredly answer by an irresistible impulse—by the voice of a friend; by a circumstance strange and unexpected; by a passage of Scripture. He will choose His own messenger; but He will send a message.⁴

Though Satan surely knows he can never really defeat the Lord and that he is a defeated foe, he nevertheless turns to his many tricks and deceptive devices to defeat God's purposes for and with His people (cf. Eph. 4:14; 2 Tim. 2:25).

The Discovery of the Deception (9:16-17)

9:16 Three days after they made the treaty with them, the Israelites found out they were from the local area and lived nearby. **9:17** So the Israelites set out and on the third day arrived at their cities—Gibeon, Kephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath Jearim.

Within only three days the deception was discovered, but as is often the case with the consequences of sin, they would live with their decision for the rest of their lives. Proverbs 12:19b is pertinent here which says, "Truthful lips will be established forever, But a lying tongue is only for a moment." Words of truth are consistent, and stand all tests, while lies are soon discovered and exposed.⁵

The Decision of the Leaders (9:18-27)

9:18 The Israelites did not attack them because the leaders of the community had sworn an oath to them in the name of the LORD God of Israel. The whole community criticized the leaders, **9:19** but all the leaders told the whole community: "We swore an oath to them in the name of the LORD God of Israel. So now we can't hurt them. **9:20** We must let them live so we can escape the curse attached to the oath we swore to them." **9:21** The leaders then added, "Let them live." So they became woodcutters and water carriers for the whole community, as the leaders had decided.

9:22 Joshua summoned the Gibeonites and said to them, "Why did you trick us by saying, 'We live far away from you,' when you really live nearby?" **9:23** Now you are condemned to perpetual servitude as woodcutters and water carriers for the house of my God." **9:24** They said to Joshua, "It was carefully reported to your subjects how the LORD your God commanded Moses his servant to assign you the whole land and to destroy all who live in the land from before you. Because of you we were terrified we would lose our lives, so we did this thing. **9:25** So now we are in your power.

⁴ F. B. Meyer, *Joshua: And the Land of Promise*, Revell, p. 108.

⁵ Robert Jamieson; A.R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.), 1998.

Do to us what you think is good and appropriate.” 9:26 Joshua did as they said; he kept the Israelites from killing them 9:27 and that day made them woodcutters and water carriers for the community and for the altar of the LORD at the divinely chosen site. (They continue in this capacity to this very day.)

The text tells us that once the ruse was discovered, the people grumbled against their leaders because they judged them to be responsible. Apparently, in view of verses 19-21, the people also wanted them to disregard their covenant and destroy the Gibeonites. However, though they erred by leaning on their own understanding rather than consulting the Lord, they honored their agreement with the Gibeonites. Had they not been men of honor and integrity, they might easily have sought to cover their tracks by destroying the Gibeonites, but they honored their pledge because it had been ratified in the name of *Yahweh*, the God of Israel. To break the covenant would dishonor God’s name and bring down His wrath. “In fact, such a judgment from God would later come to pass during David’s reign because Saul disregarded this agreement. (see 2 Sam. 21:1-6).”⁶

While they could not go back on their pledge, the Gibeonites had deceived them, so a punishment fitting their sin had to be prescribed. First, Joshua rebuked them for their dishonesty and then sentenced them to perpetual slavery. In the ruse of the Gibeonites, they had offered to be the subjects of the Israelites (vss. 8, 11). By this they were merely offering to become Israel’s vassals. In return they expected Israel, the stronger of the two, to protect them from their enemies (see 10:6). This backfires on them and they had to become Israel’s slaves. They would become woodcutters and water-bearers for the Israelites, especially in relation to the tabernacle service. In God’s grace, this turned out to be a great blessing.

... to keep the Gibeonites’ idolatry from defiling the true faith of Israel, their work would be carried out in the tabernacle, where they would be exposed to the worship of the one true God.

As a result, the very thing the Gibeonites hoped to retain—their freedom—was lost. But the curse eventually became a blessing. It was on behalf of the Gibeonites that God later worked a great miracle (see Josh. 10:10-14). Later, the tabernacle of the Lord would be pitched at Gibeon (see 2 Chron. 1:30, and the Gibeonites (later known as Nethinims) would replace the Levites in temple service (see Ezra 2:43 and 8:20).

That is the amazing way the grace of God works. He is still able to turn a curse into a blessing. While it is true that the natural consequences of our sin generally have to run their course, God in His grace not only forgives but in many cases He actually overrules our mistakes and brings blessing out of sin.⁷

In verse 27 we read, “... and that day made them woodcutters and water carriers for the community and for the altar of the LORD at the divinely chosen site. (They continue in this capacity to this very day.)” How tremendous and gracious of God. They had the privilege of being brought close to the Lord and spiritual things on a regular basis. It is interesting that in later years, when the Israelites would go into idolatry, the Gibeonites would still be standing at the altar where the true God ordained that sacrifices should be made for sins. As a result of what they had seen God do for Israel, they became convinced, like Rahab, that Israel’s God was the true God. Like Rahab, they evidently became loyal believers.

For many years after this incident, there was war between the citizens of the land and the invading Israelites. Yet never once in the record of that long conquest do we hear of any Gibeonite defecting to his original side.⁸

⁶ Campbell/Denny, p. 139.

⁷ Campbell/Denny, pp. 139-140.

⁸ James Montgomery Boice, *Joshua, We Will Serve The Lord*, Revell, Old Tappan, New Jersey, p. 105.

Lesson 10: Destruction of the Amorite Coalition (Joshua 10:1-43)

Chapter 10 describes Israel's campaign and victory over the southern portion of Canaan. Something happened which provided Joshua with a great military opportunity for a quick victory over a number of the enemy at once rather than by a long, drawn out campaign against the cities one by one.

The Amorite Coalition (10:1-5)

10:1 Adoni-Zedek, king of Jerusalem, heard how Joshua captured Ai and annihilated it and its king as he did Jericho and its king. He also heard how the people of Gibeon made peace with Israel and lived among them. **10:2** All Jerusalem was terrified because Gibeon was a large city, like one of the royal cities. It was larger than Ai and all its men were warriors. **10:3** So Adoni-Zedek, king of Jerusalem, sent this message to Hoham king of Hebron, Piram king of Jarmuth, Japhia king of Lachish, and Debir king of Eglon: **10:4** "Come to my aid so we can attack Gibeon, for it has made peace with Joshua and the Israelites." **10:5** So the five Amorite kings (the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon) and all their troops gathered together and advanced. They deployed their troops and fought against Gibeon.

Being very alarmed over the news of the victories of Israel, as at Jericho and Ai, and hearing of the Gibeonite's covenant with Israel which was viewed as treasonous, one of the kings of the south, Adoni-Zedek (Lord of Righteousness), king of Jerusalem, gathered other kings of the region together to attack Gibeon. They had belonged to the Amorite coalition which was probably a defense coalition against invading forces. So, in retaliation and also because of fear of the united power of the Gibeonites with Israel, the five kings listed in Joshua 10:5, moved against the city of Gibeon.

The defection of the Gibeonites was cause for great alarm for three reasons: (1) it was discouraging to see such a large city with an excellent army surrender to the enemy, (2) without Gibeon the southern coalition was severely weakened, and (3) they constituted a fifth column that would fight with Israel in time of war. Though it had no king (see comment on 9:11), Gibeon was "like one of the royal cities"; it was just as strong and influential as any city-state (cf. 11:12). There is a wordplay between "Gibeon" and "good fighters," which is literally *gibborim*. Boling (p. 279) defines *gibborim* as "men trained in combat and prosperous enough to afford armament, squire, and leisure time for such activity."¹

Miraculous Deliverance (10:6-15)

10:6 The men of Gibeon sent this message to Joshua at the camp in Gilgal, "Do not abandon your subjects! Rescue us! Help us! For all the Amorite kings living in the hill country are attacking us." **10:7** So Joshua and his whole army, including the bravest warriors, marched up from Gilgal. **10:8** The LORD told Joshua, "Don't be afraid of them, for I am handing them over to you. Not one of them can resist you.

10:9 Joshua attacked them by surprise, after marching all night from Gilgal. **10:10** The LORD routed them before Israel. Israel thoroughly defeated them at Gibeon. They chased them up the road to the pass of Beth Horon and struck them down all the way to Azekah and Makkedah. **10:11** As they fled from Israel on the slope leading down from Beth Horon, the LORD threw on them large hailstones from the sky, all the way to Azekah. They died—in fact more died from the hailstones than the Israelites killed with the sword.

¹ *Expositors Bible Commentary*, electronic version.

10:12 The day the LORD delivered the Amorites over to the Israelites, Joshua prayed to LORD before Israel: “O sun, stand still over Gibeon! O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon!” **10:13** The sun stood still and the moon stood motionless while the nation took vengeance on its enemies. The event is recorded in the scroll of the upright one. The sun stood motionless in the middle of the sky and did not set for about a full day. **10:14** There has not been a day like it before or since. The LORD obeyed a man, for the LORD fought for Israel! **10:15** Then Joshua and all Israel returned to the camp at Gilgal.

The Call for Help (vs. 6)

Faced with the armies of the coalition and certain destruction, the Gibeonites sent a messenger to Joshua asking for help based on their treaty with Israel.

The Response of Joshua and Israel (vs. 7)

Humanly speaking, this was the perfect opportunity for Joshua to get rid of the Gibeonites. Why shouldn't Joshua just ignore the very people who had deceived them? Why not let the coalition destroy them and rid him of the embarrassment? There were at least two reasons he could not do that: First, as a man of integrity who honored his word, Joshua did not consider that an option. They had given their word and were duty bound to honor it. Second, this now provided a unique military opportunity. Rather than a long, drawn out campaign against one city at a time, this gave them the opportunity to defeat and destroy several armies at once.

The Promise of the LORD (vs. 8)

The fact that God now gives this promise might suggest that Joshua had inquired of the Lord and had received this answer and promise. With all these kings coming together, there was surely a certain amount of concern in Joshua's heart. The situation was urgent, and God's word of encouragement and His promise of victory were certainly needed.

The Battle Described (vss. 9-15)

Our text tells us Joshua and his men marched all night, about 25 miles and all uphill (some 4,000 feet) over steep and difficult terrain. This meant, with no opportunity to rest, his fighting men would be tired. They would certainly need the sovereign strength of the Lord. By marching under cover of darkness, Joshua was able to take the enemy by surprise and this created disorder in the enemies camp. Further, God sent hailstones to kill even more than Joshua and his army were able to put to death.

This passage provides an excellent example of the interplay between the work of God and the work of man in achieving victory. As Campbell notes: “certainly there are occasions when we can do nothing but wait for God to act; but usually we are to do our part with dependence on God to do His.”² Here, then, is another example where man's efforts and God's sovereign intervention cooperated, but the clear emphasis is on the fact it was the Lord who gave the victory. God gives us responsibilities, things we are to do. We are to pray, witness, and minister to others in many ways, but ultimately, we must understand that if there is going to be victory, it is God who gives it.

We should remember too that these Canaanites were those who worshipped nature gods. What a shock when they realized that their gods, in which they had placed their faith, were helpless against the God of Israel. Perhaps they thought that their own gods were aiding the Israelites.

With verse 12, we move to one of the great miracles of the Bible. It is often called “Joshua's long day,” or “the day the sun stood still.” This is the greatest of four miracles found in the book of Joshua: (a) The parting of the Jordan River (3:7-17); (b) The destruction of Jericho (6:1-27); (c) The hail and sword destroy the Gibeonites (10:1-11); (d) The sun and moon stand still (10:12-15). What was the purpose for this miracle?

... **the day** of the battle of Beth Horon was wearing on and **Joshua** knew that the pursuit of the enemy would be long and arduous. At the most the military leader had 12 hours of daylight ahead

² John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck, Editors, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Victor Books, Wheaton, 1983,1985, electronic media.

of him. He clearly needed more time if he were to realize the fulfillment of God's promise (v. 8) and see the total annihilation of his foes. Joshua therefore took to **the LORD** an unusual request: **O sun, stand still over Gibeon, O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon.**

10:13-15. It was noon and the hot **sun** was directly overhead when Joshua uttered this prayer. **The moon** was on the horizon to the west. The petition was quickly answered by the Lord. Joshua prayed in faith, and a great miracle resulted. But the record of this miracle has been called the most striking example of conflict between Scripture and science because, as is well known, the sun does not move around the earth causing day and night. Instead, light and darkness come because the earth rotates on its axis around the sun. Why then did Joshua address the sun rather than the earth? Simply because he was using the language of observation; he was speaking from the perspective and appearance of things on earth. People still do the same thing, even in the scientific community. Almanacs and journals record the hours of sunrise and sunset, yet no one accuses them of scientific error.³

But just how are we to explain this fourth miracle in the book of Joshua? Regarding this, Ryrie writes:

Views concerning this phenomenon fall into two categories. The first assumes a slowing or suspending of the normal rotation of the earth so that there were extra hours that day (either 12 or 24). God did this so that Joshua's forces could complete their victory before the enemy had a night for rest and regrouping. The Hebrew for "stood still" (v. 13) is a verb of motion, indicating a slowing or stopping of the rotation of the earth on its axis (which would not affect the earth's movement around the sun). Verse 14 indicates that this was a unique day in the history of the world. The second category includes views that assume no irregularity in the rotation of the earth. One such view argues for the prolonging of daylight by some sort of unusual refraction of the sun's rays. Thus, there were more daylight hours but not more hours in the day. Another view supposes a prolonging of semi-darkness to give Joshua's men relief from the blazing summer sun, accomplished by God's sending an unusual summer hailstorm. This view takes stood still in verse 13 to mean "be still" or "cease," indicating that the sun was clouded by the storm and no extra hours were added to the day. Verses 12-15 are quoted from the book of Jashar, a collection of songs praising the heroes of Israel (also in 2 Sam. 1:18).⁴

Concerning the difficulties of this passage, Boice says:

I confess that I have not great convictions as to what happened, and as I read the various articles and books available, I sense that no one else has very strong convictions on this point, either. I do not believe the words are poetry, in spite of their having been in the book of Jashar, a largely poetical book. I doubt if the earth actually stopped its rotation, even more that the sun and moon actually stopped in their passage through space. I tend to think that other phenomenal were used by God to prolong daylight, but I do not know, and all I can say is that I am content to wait until God himself reveals precisely what happened. What is certain is that God did something to give the Jewish armies a complete and decisive victory.⁵

The Defeat of the Rest of Southern Canaan (10:16-43)

16 Now these five kings had fled and hidden themselves in the cave at Makkedah. 17 And it was told Joshua, saying, "The five kings have been found hidden in the cave at Makkedah." 18 And Joshua said, "Roll large stones against the mouth of the cave, and assign men by it to guard them, 19 but do not stay there yourselves; pursue your enemies and attack them in the rear. Do not allow them to enter their cities, for the LORD your God has delivered them into your hand." 20 And it came about when Joshua and the sons of Israel had finished slaying them with a very great slaugh-

³ Walvoord and Zuck, electronic media.

⁴ Charles C. Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible*, p. 347-348.

⁵ Boice, pp. 113-114.

ter, until they were destroyed, and the survivors who remained of them had entered the fortified cities, 21 that all the people returned to the camp to Joshua at Makkedah in peace. No one uttered a word against any of the sons of Israel.

22 Then Joshua said, "Open the mouth of the cave and bring these five kings out to me from the cave." 23 And they did so, and brought these five kings out to him from the cave: the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon. 24 And it came about when they brought these kings out to Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said to the chiefs of the men of war who had gone with him, "Come near, put your feet on the necks of these kings." So they came near and put their feet on their necks. 25 Joshua then said to them, "Do not fear or be dismayed! Be strong and courageous, for thus the LORD will do to all your enemies with whom you fight." 26 So afterward Joshua struck them and put them to death, and he hanged them on five trees; and they hung on the trees until evening. 27 And it came about at sunset that Joshua commanded, and they took them down from the trees and threw them into the cave where they had hidden themselves, and put large stones over the mouth of the cave, to this very day.

28 Now Joshua captured Makkedah on that day, and struck it and its king with the edge of the sword; he utterly destroyed it and every person who was in it. He left no survivor. Thus he did to the king of Makkedah just as he had done to the king of Jericho.

29 Then Joshua and all Israel with him passed on from Makkedah to Libnah, and fought against Libnah. 30 And the LORD gave it also with its king into the hands of Israel, and he struck it and every person who was in it with the edge of the sword. He left no survivor in it. Thus he did to its king just as he had done to the king of Jericho.

31 And Joshua and all Israel with him passed on from Libnah to Lachish, and they camped by it and fought against it. 32 And the LORD gave Lachish into the hands of Israel; and he captured it on the second day, and struck it and every person who was in it with the edge of the sword, according to all that he had done to Libnah.

33 Then Horam king of Gezer came up to help Lachish, and Joshua defeated him and his people until he had left him no survivor. 34 And Joshua and all Israel with him passed on from Lachish to Eglon, and they camped by it and fought against it. 35 And they captured it on that day and struck it with the edge of the sword; and he utterly destroyed that day every person who was in it, according to all that he had done to Lachish.

36 Then Joshua and all Israel with him went up from Eglon to Hebron, and they fought against it. 37 And they captured it and struck it and its king and all its cities and all the persons who were in it with the edge of the sword. He left no survivor, according to all that he had done to Eglon. And he utterly destroyed it and every person who was in it.

38 Then Joshua and all Israel with him returned to Debir, and they fought against it. 39 And he captured it and its king and all its cities, and they struck them with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed every person who was in it. He left no survivor. Just as he had done to Hebron, so he did to Debir and its king, as he had also done to Libnah and its king.

40 Thus Joshua struck all the land, the hill country and the Negev and the lowland and the slopes and all their kings. He left no survivor, but he utterly destroyed all who breathed, just as the LORD, the God of Israel, had commanded. 41 And Joshua struck them from Kadesh-barnea even as far as Gaza, and all the country of Goshen even as far as Gibeon. 42 And Joshua captured all these kings and their lands at one time, because the LORD, the God of Israel, fought for Israel. 43 So Joshua and all Israel with him returned to the camp at Gilgal. (Joshua 10:16-43)

The five kings and their armies had left the safety of their fortified cities to fight Joshua and his army out in the open which gave Joshua a great advantage. He was determined to keep them from escaping to the safety of their walls which would prolong the campaign against that portion of the land. Verse 17 informs us that when Joshua received a report that the kings were hiding in a cave, he ordered the cave sealed with large rocks with men assigned to guard it. Capturing the five kings was an important event, but there were more pressing matters. He would deal with

them later for the more pressing concern was to pursue the fleeing armies. Here we see the wisdom of a leader putting first things first. This is seen in his statement, “But don’t you delay! Chase your enemies and catch them! Don’t allow them to retreat to their cities for the LORD your God is handing them over to you.” Note how again we see the combined emphasis in Joshua’s thinking of human responsibility and tactical wisdom along with faith in the One who really gives victory.

Only after the battle is over and Israel’s army had totally destroyed the enemy did Joshua return his attention to the five kings. In this regard, he did two major things. First, following an ancient Eastern custom sometimes pictured on Egyptian and Assyrian monuments, Joshua made the defeated kings lie down in the dust before him and his commanders. He then called his commanders to come and place their feet on the necks of the five kings, which was symbol of victory and complete subjection. But Joshua, the wise commander did more. He used this as an opportunity to focus his commanders and his army on the Lord. With the feet of his commanders on the necks of the kings, Joshua said, “Don’t be afraid and don’t panic! Be strong and brave, for the LORD will do the same thing to all your enemies you fight.” Then he executed the five kings by hanging them on five trees until evening (vs. 26). Thus, the defeat of the five kings and their armies gave complete victory over Southern Canaan.

Verses 40-43 conclude the chapter by telling us Joshua totally subdued the land according to its four regions: the hill country, the Negev (the desert area to the more distant south), the western foothills, and the mountain slopes. How did he do so? “. . . the LORD, the God of Israel, fought for Israel.” Thus the chapter closes with a familiar ring of Scripture. The battle is the Lord’s and He will fight for His people.

Our need is to keep our eyes on Him, to obey Him, and above all, to trust in His strength rather than in our own. This will usually mean expending great effort as we see Israel doing here all the while knowing that the Lord is also at work to enable and to fight for us.

I am reminded of Paul’s comments in Colossians. Speaking of his calling and the great effort involved in proclaiming the risen Christ, he wrote: “We proclaim him by instructing and teaching all men with all wisdom so that we may present every man mature in Christ. Toward this goal *I also labor, struggling according to his power that powerfully works in me*” (Col. 1:28-29, emphasis mine).

Dr. Don Campbell, in his conclusion to this chapter which he titled, *People Who Know Their God*, has a focus that really provides a fitting conclusion to this study on the book of Joshua. He writes:

Most of us learn, early in our Christian experience, that we do not just face one enemy. We face a coalition of evil forces that have banded together in an attempt to destroy us. Those enemies are commonly called “the world,” “the flesh,” and “the devil.” The world pressures us and hammers us and tries to conform us to its mold. The flesh is the sinfulness within us which betrays us and undermines us and sabotages us, even though we want to serve God with our minds and our bodies. The devil is master strategist of the assault against us and sometimes attacks us openly, sometimes craftily, but always with an unerring sense of where our weaknesses lie.

Together, the world, the flesh, and the devil make an unbeatable combination—or they would be unbeatable, if not for the saving intervention of God. Without God, victory against such an alliance is impossible. With God, victory is assured . . .

Joshua was a man who knew God above all else. The results are impressively recorded here. As Daniel later wrote, “The people who know their God will display strength and take action” (Dan. 11:32). For Joshua, for Daniel, and for you and me, the key to victory is knowing God personally and trusting Him completely.⁶

As we saw in the introductory material of this study, Joshua is the book of possession in which Israel, under the leadership of Joshua, possesses their God-given possessions, but not without having to go up against hostile forces. The Christian life is precisely like this. In Christ we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3). In Him, we are complete (Col. 2:10), but the appropriation of those blessings requires faith in the accomplished work of Christ, along with personal effort, not in the flesh, but the disciplines of godliness—things such as prayer, Bible study, meditating on God’s Word, and regular fellowship with other believers for encouragement.

⁶ Campbell and Denny, pp. 148-149.

7 So, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you hear his voice, 8 do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, 9 where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did. 10 That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, ‘Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.’ 11 So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’”

12 See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. 14 We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first. 15 As has just been said: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion.”

16 Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? 17 And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? 18 And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? 19 So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief. (Hebrews 3:7-19, NIV)

7 But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; 8 for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and *also* for the *life* to come. (1 Timothy 4:7-8, NASB)