

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Joshua: God's Faithful Giving Of The Promised Land To Israel

Part II: God's Giving Israel Victory Over The Canaanites, Joshua 5:13-12:24

A. God's Call To Follow Him For Victory Over Overwhelming Obstacles (Joshua 5:13-15)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

At times, life can hand us seemingly overwhelming, worrisome obstacles to our welfare or happiness:

(1) A recent editorial in The Wall Street Journal ("President of Pique," April 13, 2015, p. A10) told how U. S. "Secretary of State John Kerry's interpretation" of President Obama's "'framework' nuclear accord differs substantially with that of Iran Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei," and that the Ayatollah was "the one who first said that the Obama Administration was spinning what was in the framework." U. S. Senator John "McCain then said he was inclined to believe the Ayatollah more than Mr. Kerry," and The Wall Street Journal editor added, "(W)e also believe the Ayatollah more than Mr. Kerry, since he's the Iranian who will have to abide by it." (Ibid.)

Crowds in Tehran, Iran routinely call for "death to America," so if their supreme leader is more to be believed than our own government's officials, many Americans understandably are concerned about their national security!

(2) Robert Siciliano's article, "Warning: Check Your Facebook Settings . . . Again!" (Bottom Line Personal, March 15, 2015, p. 3-4) explained that if you have a "Facebook" page, "(i)n some cases, visitors to your page might be able to see embarrassing things that your friends posted about you," and that "the apps that your Facebook friends use might be accessing" information "about you from your Facebook account." The lack of unwanted publicity for innocent users of Facebook can be a seemingly insurmountable hurdle to their privacy and thus to their peace of mind.

(3) Locally, people struggle with obstacles to their welfare: (a) when I was in my house typing the first draft of these sermon notes, a believer visited my wife and voiced a concern in private to her as they spoke with one another outside on the front porch, and (b) several other cases with similar concerns were made known to me this last week.

Need: *So we ask, "If I face an overwhelming and worrisome obstacle to my welfare, what should I do about it?!"*

I. Surveying Jericho, Joshua faced a humanly overwhelming, worrisome obstacle to his welfare, Jos. 5:13a:

- A. After crossing the Jordan, Joshua found himself backed up against the flooded river, having no choice but to fight Jericho that lay before him, so he had gone out to spy on the city to plan his attack, Joshua 5:1; 3:16 NIV.
- B. However, this city presented a humanly overwhelming, worrisome military obstacle to Joshua (as follows):
 - 1. Its location gave Jericho access to all of Palestine as a trade center, so invaders had long viewed the city as a place to conquer in order to control the whole region. (history-world.org, "The Ancient City of Jericho")
 - 2. Jericho's inhabitants had thus greatly fortified their city: they built up a mound about its hill, with a 12- to 15-foot retaining wall at its base topped by a free-standing, 6-foot thick wall 20 to 26 feet high and a mound behind it sloping up to a second free-standing wall some 70 feet away. (answersingenesis.org, Bryant Wood, "The Walls of Jericho") Houses were built both behind the second wall and between the two walls, with Rahab's house being built lit. "in the city wall" where the wall comprised her home's back wall, Jos. 2:15b; Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. 323! If soldiers could even scale the outer wall, they faced tough house-to-house combat while exposed to fire from soldiers lining the second wall above them!
 - 3. Besides, Israel had never defeated a city with such complex fortifications, and she had no experience in making or using equipment that could scale Jericho's walls, Bible Knowledge Commentary, O. T., p. 339.
 - 4. Also, Jericho was ready for a long siege: "(a) copious spring" of "water . . . lay inside the city walls," and archaeologists have found there "large jars full of grain . . ." (Ibid., answersingenesis.org.)
 - 5. It was harvest time (Jos. 3:15b), so Jericho was set for a multi-year siege (Ibid.), time Israel could not afford as she did not possess enough land to harvest the food for her own needs in conducting a long siege.
 - 6. However, Joshua could not temporarily bypass Jericho to attack lesser fortifications for land and food lest he leave Israel's women and children backed against the Jordan and vulnerable to attack from Jericho, Ibid.
- C. Thus, as he viewed Jericho's seemingly invincible walls, Joshua saw he was in a humanly, overwhelmingly difficult position, in need of defeating Jericho, and soon, but not knowing how he could possibly do so!

II. At this moment of great personal need, the Preincarnate Lord Jesus Christ appeared to Joshua to call him to follow His lead for victory over the humanly overwhelming obstacle of Jericho, Joshua 5:13b-15:

- A. Joshua had possibly dropped his gaze to the ground in deep thought about battling Jericho, but when he lifted his eyes to view that difficult fortress once again, he saw a man standing in front of him, Joshua 5:13b.

- B. This man was armed, with his sword drawn in his hand, so Joshua as a brave soldier approached him to ask if he was with Israel or with her foes that he might know how to respond to the armed man, Joshua 5:13c.
- C. The man's reply was unusual, and we translate it from the Hebrew text: "No, because I Myself (emphatic pronoun, *'ani*) am now come as the Captain of the Hosts of Jahweh," Joshua 5:14a. (Ibid., Kittel, p. 327)
- D. Given the wide Bible context, this statement was full of meaning and encouragement for Joshua and Israel:
 1. Back in Exodus 23:20-23, God had told Israel that He would send His Angel before her to protect her in the wilderness and to bring her into the Promised Land, that she was to obey Him since He had God's Name in Him, meaning this Angel was God! (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Exodus 23:20)
 2. We hold this One to be the Preincarnate Lord Jesus Christ (Ibid., B. K. C., O. T.), that He was signaling by His word, "No" that He was not just an ally or a foe of men, but the Sovereign Creator God **HIMSELF** Who would *lead* Israel to defeat the Canaanites in *judgment*, meaning Joshua was to **follow GOD'S** lead as the **battle was GOD'S -- NOT JOSHUA'S or ISRAEL'S**, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, 1971, p. 212.
 3. God had initially told Israel's patriarch Abraham that the iniquity of Canaan's inhabitants was not yet full enough for God to judge them in Abraham's time (Genesis 15:16b). However, 400 years later, the Canaanites were now ripe for judgment, so **God** was *leading* Israel as *His tool* to *punish* the *Canaanites!*
- E. With all of his concern over the humanly insurmountable obstacle of Jericho, this news was a great relief to Joshua, for he saw that the battle of taking Jericho was not his, but God's fight, so he bowed to the ground in worship of the Lord as God's servant and asked, "What saith my Lord unto his servant?" (Joshua 5:14b KJV)
- F. In further direction and encouragement, the Preincarnate Lord Jesus Christ then told Joshua, "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy," Joshua 5:15a KJV. In its wide Biblical context, this statement is also rich in direction and encouragement for Joshua and all Israel (as follows):
 1. Back in Exodus 2:23-3:5, God gave the same order to remove his sandals to Moses when He called him to lead Israel out of a 400-year-long, humanly insurmountable Egyptian bondage to the Promised Land.
 2. In that event, God had clarified to Moses that He was the God of the fathers Who had promised the Abrahamic Covenant, that He was aware of Israel's Egyptian bondage and suffering, and that He would use Moses to deliver Israel in the Exodus so the Lord could give her the Promised Land, Exodus 3:6-10.
 3. Thus, in application to Joshua, the Lord was now calling him to heed Him as his Superior, that God was aware of Joshua's concern about defeating Jericho, but that the Lord Himself would give him the victory over not only that immediate city, but over the entire land of Canaan in line with the Abrahamic Covenant!
- G. Deeply grateful for this direction and rich encouragement that was full of meaningful precedent in the life of his former earthly master Moses, Joshua obeyed, loosing his sandals from off of his feet! (Jos. 5:15b with 1:1)

Lesson: *When Joshua faced the humanly overwhelming, troubling obstacle of defeating the city of Jericho, the Preincarnate Lord Jesus Christ appeared to him, indicating that the battle was His, not Joshua's, that He was fully aware of Joshua's concerns about defeating Jericho, but that if Joshua submitted to Him, God would give him victory over not only Jericho, but the entire land of Canaan in line with His Abrahamic Covenant!*

Application: *(1) May we trust in the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved, John 3:16. (2) If we face overwhelming, troubling obstacles to our welfare, may we like Joshua (a) cease viewing it as our battle, but instead (b) yield to the Lord that He might take the lead in the battle for us. (3) We must thus simply obey Scripture on how to proceed in terms of the practical steps God wants us to take, what we will see Joshua do in our next study in Joshua 6:1-27!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

Donald K. Campbell, former President of Dallas Theological Seminary, in his book, Joshua, Leader Under Fire, 1981, p. 39 (cited in bible.org, "The Captain of the Lord's Army") wrote of C. I. Scofield, author of the Scofield Reference Bible and a pastor in Dallas, Texas, regarding an experience he faced as pastor of the First Congregational Church of Dallas many years ago. At one point in that ministry, the problems he faced seemed so overwhelming that Reverend Scofield shut himself in his study, opened his Bible and sought God's guidance from His Word.

The passage that Lord impressed upon him was this section that we studied today, Joshua 5:13-15. C. I. Scofield realized that he like Joshua of old needed to turn over his ministry to the Lord, for his pastorate at the First Congregational Church of Dallas was not his battle any more than defeating Jericho had once been Joshua's fight. Reverend Scofield thus prayerfully committed his pastorate to the Lord, and God used him mightily in his generation!

May we like Scofield and Joshua before him and in turn Moses before Joshua handle our overwhelming burdens by submitting to God's lead, realizing that the battle is the Lord's, that we might gain the victory!