

Hope Christian Church
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Sermon Series: Bright Beginnings, Part 6

Topic: A New Way To Fight

Proposition 6: The Lord Will Fight Your Battles

Who Fought the Battle of Jericho?

Joshua 5:13 – 6:27

The Commander of the Lord (5:13-15)

5:13 When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword 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; but I am the commander of the army of the LORD. Now I have come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, What does my lord say to his servant? 15 And the commander of the LORD's army said to Joshua, Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy. And Joshua did so.

Last week we read Joshua chapter 4, which relates the account of one man from each tribe taking a stone out of the middle of the Jordan and setting up a memorial on the other side of the Jordan so that Israel would remember forever the miracle of the Jordan crossing.

We're going to skip over most of chapter five. Chapter five recounts the renewal of the covenant of circumcision and the first Passover in the Promised Land (at which time the manna ceases). We will begin today with the last two verses of chapter five. Remember there are no chapter and verse divisions in the Hebrew text. These last two verses tell the story of Joshua's encounter with "the commander of the Lord's army" and appear to belong with chapter 6.

In these verses we are told that Joshua is "by Jericho" (5:13). Joshua is by himself. Perhaps he is out for an early morning stroll, inspecting the city and examining the walls. Perhaps he is formulating a battle plan. While he is out, he "lifted up his eyes" (5:13), that is he "looked up" and sees a man standing in front of him a little ways off with a drawn sword (5:13). Joshua goes to Him and says, "*Are you for us or for our enemies?*"

Things are simple for Joshua. You're either for Israel or against Israel. Joshua wants to know who this guy is and whom He's working for. This guy has a drawn sword. He's ready for battle. He does not give Joshua the answer he was looking for. Joshua asks, whom are you serving them or us? He responds, "*No; but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come*" (ESV, 5:14)

It seems to be our tendency to automatically divide people into two groups; those who are for us and those who are against us. Sometimes love requires hard things to be done which might appear to be "against you" but that is really loving. I'm not convinced that is always helpful to force people into these two categories. The NIV translates His answer as, "*Neither, but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.*"

His answer is quiet revealing. It reveals to Joshua whom the **Warrior** does and does not serve. This Warrior is commander of the Lord's army. This warrior receives His orders from Yahweh. He does not serve Israel nor does he serve Israel's enemies. And most certainly Joshua is **not** His commander. The answer politely says, "Joshua, I don't take orders from you."

This commander serves the Lord alone and no one else and He is ready for battle. He carries the orders of the Lord of the universe. This is no ordinary man. This is the commander of the Lord's army and in the role of commander He has come. He has come for battle and He didn't come alone. He has brought the Lord's army with Him (Elisha 2 Kg 6:17).

Suddenly, there is a shift in Joshua's position. At first, Joshua is pretty bold. He runs up to this man and demands to know whose side He's on. This commander lets Joshua know that he's not the boss. Yahweh is in command and this Commander only takes orders from Yahweh. Joshua is a smart boy. *He quickly moves from an in-your-face questioner to a facedown worshipper.*

Joshua realizes he is not in the presence of a simple warrior. He is in the presence of God. Joshua is not in the presence of someone He can command but he is in the presence of someone who has authority to command him.

And rightly so, he falls on his face to the earth. When you are in the presence of God, being facedown is the right place to be. So Joshua the commander gives way to Joshua the servant and he asks, "What does my lord say to his servant?" (5:14)

Take Off Your Sandals

Who is this Commander? Who is the Capitan of the Lord's army? I believe this is a theophany¹, which is a visible manifestation of God. I believe this is the pre-incarnate Christ. He is certainly not an angel. When men fall down and worship angels, angels correct them by explaining that God alone is worthy of worship (See Rev 19:10; 22:9). This "man" does not do that. If he were merely an angel he would have corrected Joshua's misplaced worship.

That this Commander is God is further confirmed by His next command (vs.15), "*Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.*" This is almost verbatim of what the Lord said to Moses at the burning bush (Ex 3:5). Joshua quickly obeys this command.

The Lord is the Commander & He Is Near

These two verses are sweet to me because it demonstrates the fact that the God of the universe is not so busy that He can't show up when we need Him. My guess is that Joshua is pretty concerned about this high-walled city called Jericho. I think he really believes that God will give them the city as the two spies reported (2:24). However, I think he has no idea exactly how that is going to happen.

¹ From the Greek *theos* 'god' and *phainein* 'to show.'

Then, right at that moment, the moment of Joshua's greatest need, the Commander of the Lord's army shows up. Right at the moment that the battle is about to begin, the Commander of the Lord's army shows up with fresh troops. And these are no ordinary troops. These are angelic forces of heaven come to help Israel take this land.

Lift Up Your Eyes

This is Jesus keeping His promise, *"I will never leave you nor forsake you"* (Josh 1:5; Matt 28:20). He is not far away in the moment of battle. He is near. We just have to "lift up our eyes" and look to Him.

Jesus stands as a Warrior to help us overcome our greatest battles IF we will but lift up our eyes away from the sin or temptation or doubt or fear that we are fighting and look to Him.

He is the Commander. He commands the resources of all of heaven. He is the only Son of the God of this universe and He possesses all authority (Matt 28:19). There will be sins we will face that will appear to us absolutely impossible for us to overcome and we will feel hopeless in fighting them. However, every sin we will ever battle has already been defanged by Jesus who has already felt the full power of all temptation and He has won the battle.

In our weakness, we must lift up our eyes to the Commander of the Lord's army and run to Him and fall on our faces and say to Him, *"What does my lord say to his servant?"*

God is Near

James 4:7 says, *"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you."*

This must have been sweet encouragement to Joshua. To know that God had not forsaken him must have been at that moment a breath of fresh air. He found out that God was not far off, but very near. Surrender to the Lord. Draw near to Him and He will draw near to you.

See, I Have Given Jericho Into Your Hand (1-2)

6:1 Now Jericho was shut up inside and outside because of the people of Israel. None went out, and none came in. 2 And the LORD said to Joshua, See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and mighty men of valor.

On the view that verses 13-15 of chapter five belong with the first paragraph of chapter six, verse one then forms a parenthetical expression with the conversation between Joshua and the Commander continuing in verse two.

Verse one gives us the facts about Jericho. The city is "walled up to the heavens" (Dt 9:1).

"Hear, O Israel: you are to cross over the Jordan today, to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourselves, cities great and fortified up to heaven" (Dt. 9:1)

Archeological excavations of Jericho have revealed that the walls of Jericho reached about 40-50 feet high.² The city is locked up tighter than a drum and no one is going in or coming out. Jericho bolted and barred the gates and doors and they are locked up and prepared for battle. And Joshua is walking around looking at this mighty fortified city.

Then the Commander of the Lord's army says, "*See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and mighty men of valor.*"

This is *not* what Joshua "saw." What Joshua saw was a high-walled city that looked virtually impenetrable. This is the point of verse one. Joshua very well might have answered, "No, that's not what I see. What I see is city surrounded by walls that look pretty imposing and in fairly good condition. And I don't see that it has been given in our hand at all."

The author wants the reader to understand that it was humanly impossible to conquer this city. Even if they could find a way in there awaits them a king and army of mighty men of valor. Its one thing to only deal with high walls, but its another to deal high imposing walls and mighty men of valor who intend on defending those walls. And yet, the Commander says, "*See, I have given you this city with its king and its might men of valor.*"

God Sees Things Differently

From this we should learn that the way we look at things is very, very different from the way the Lord looks at things. Isaiah 55:8-9 comes to mind here.

Isaiah 55:8 *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

We will miss much of God's blessings if we seek to live our lives based solely upon what we alone can see. We must pray that the Lord will give us "eye to see" like He sees. This is why Paul prayed in Eph 1:18 that the "eyes of our hearts" would be opened. This is why Elisha prayed, "*O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see.*" (2 Kg 6:17)

Won't you begin to pray this? Even right now?

The Lord Will Fight For You

The phrase "I gave them into your hand" is repeated 45 times (43 in Old Testament and 2 times in the New Testament) in the Bible and it always refers to God's sovereign choice in deciding to whom He grants the victory.

God's participation is decisive. The only way Israel could conquer the Promised Land was because it had been given to them by God. God handed ownership over to them. Remember Deut 9:1 that we read a moment ago. That verse said that these nations were "*greater and mightier than yourselves*" and

² See <http://www.answersingenesis.org/creation/v21/i2/jericho.asp>.

yet with God fighting for them, they could be victorious. This is exactly what God had promised them. He had promised that He would fight for them.

Deut 1:30 *The Lord your God who goes before you will Himself fight for you.*

Deut 3:22 *You shall not fear [the Canaanite nations] for it is the Lord your God who fights for you.*

How amazing is it to have the God of the universe fighting for you? What an incredibly undeserved blessing!!! This is the benefit of becoming a child of God. He fights for his children.

It Was Not A Fair Fight

One example of this is found in Joshua 10. Joshua and the children of Israel come up against five kings of the Amorites. So it's five against one. That's not very good odds. It's not a fair fight. Those 5 kings didn't have a chance. The Lord says to Joshua,

"Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands. Not a man of them shall stand before you."
(Josh 10:8)

That day God fought for Israel by "throwing down hailstones from heaven" (10:11). Joshua even prayed that God would grant them more light so they could finish them off and God made the sun stand still (10:12-13).

"There has been no day like it before or since, when the Lord obeyed the voice of a man for the Lord fought for Israel." (10:14)

What an unbelievably gracious blessing to have the Lord, the God of heaven & earth fighting for you. And God fights for us when we are following the His lead and obeying His command. This does not mean that there will be no battles or that God will do whatever we want Him to do. It means that we will be effective in whatever *God* wants us to do. There were still battles to be fought in the Promised Land. This side of heaven will still mean that we will have battles.

If the apostles are any example to us, the Lord may call us to death for the sake of the gospel. If that is the battle that He calls us into, then He will fight for us and we will be able to die in such a way that brings glory to Jesus.

Ask the Lord to fight for you.

Ask the Lord to lead you and to give you the strength to follow Him.

Ask Him for the humility to obey Him in all things.

Crazy Instructions: Winning By Walking (6:3-5)

6:3 *You shall march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once. Thus shall you do for six days. 4 Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. 5 And when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, when you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people shall go up, everyone straight before him.*

Verse three through five and eight through eleven give us the specifics of the instructions that Commander of the Lord gave to Joshua. These crazy instructions indicate that this battle will be won by walking and not by fighting. And at the center of the walking will be the Ark of the Covenant.

They are to walk not fight. They are to carry trumpets not swords. And they are not to say one word (Josh 6:10).

Can you imagine the shock of the military when they hear this? “OK Joshua, what’d God say? What’s the plan?!?” Joshua replies, “We will march around the city in a column with the Ark in the center one time each day for six days in a row, then on the seventh day we’ll march around the city seven times, then blow a long blast on the trumpet, shout, and the walls will fall down.”

Military leaders all drop their jaws! “What?”

Joshua says, “That’s what the Lord said, and that’s what we’ll do.”

Military leaders respond, “Are you serious?”

Joshua says, “Yes, obedience is serious.”

The point is this. ***God expects us to obey Him even when we don’t understand Him.*** And in this text, Joshua is not offered an explanation nor does he demand one. He simply obeys. He obeys every day for seven days.

I wonder how many taunts Israel received as they marched in silence around the city? And they were not to respond one word. This is similar to what happened at the Red Sea. Listen to what Moses told Israel (Ex 14:14).

Slide: Ex 14:14 *The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.*

It’s good to be quiet and rest in peaceful trust upon a mighty God. He is able to do all things.

The Seventh Day (15-21)

6:15 *On the seventh day they rose early, at the dawn of day, and marched around the city in the same manner seven times. It was only on that day that they marched around the city seven times. 16 And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, **Shout**, for the LORD has given you the city. 17 And the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the LORD for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent. 18 But you, keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction, lest when you have devoted them you take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel a thing for destruction and bring trouble upon it. 19 But all silver and gold, and every vessel of bronze and iron, are holy to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD. 20 So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before*

him, and they captured the city. 21 Then they devoted all in the city to destruction, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys, with the edge of the sword.

Shout! No Wait!

The shout command is given in 6:16b. I expect to read next “and the people shouted” but that is *not* what we read.

- What we read next is a reminder that the city has been given, i.e. a reminder of the sovereignty of God.
- A reminder that everything in the city has been devoted to the Lord (ownership)
- A reminder of how Rahab is to be treated and why (salvation)
- A warning not to take any of the “devoted things” (purity)
- And finally, Instructions on what to do with all the silver, gold, bronze, and iron. (no greed)

Why does the author do this? If all Israel had been instructed to “shout!” when the command was given I imagine that as soon as they heard the word ‘shout’ they would have shouted. Yet, the author lists all of these instructions and warnings just after the word ‘shout.’ Why does he hold us in suspense?

Because “what Joshua says in verses 17-19 is more important than Jericho’s walls falling down (v.20).”³ All of the things have to do with how Israel is to personally relate to God. This emphasizes the fact that obedience to God is more important than mighty miraculous victories. “*To obey is better than sacrifice*” (1 Sam 15:22).

Application

Being in a right relationship with God is more important than miraculous victories. There are only two verses are given to the actual battle (20-21). This amazed me when I discovered this. This whole chapter is about obeying the Lord not walls falling down. *The walls fell down because Israel obeyed her God!!!*

How many walls will fall down in your life and my life when we start obeying Jesus??? How will those walls fall? They will fall by faith.

Heb 11:30 *By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. 31 By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.*

Conquest depends upon faith. Any battle to be fought must be fought in faith. The walls will fall when we begin to believe with all our hearts that obedience to the commands of Jesus are GOOD for us, better anything sin has to offer.

Oh, Jesus let us believe that obedience is better for us. Oh, God give us obedient hearts, please! Take away our stubborn rebellious hearts and give us tender childlike hearts that want to obey You.

³ Dale Ralph Davis, p. 55.

The Salvation of Rahab (22-25)

But to the two men who had spied out the land, Joshua said, Go into the prostitute's house and bring out from there the woman and all who belong to her, as you swore to her. 23 So the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab and her father and mother and brothers and all who belonged to her. And they brought all her relatives and put them outside the camp of Israel. 24 And they burned the city with fire, and everything in it. Only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD. 25 But Rahab the prostitute and her father's household and all who belonged to her, Joshua saved alive. And she has lived in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

Rahab's House

If you remember Rahab's house was situated within the wall of Jericho and she had a window that opened to the outside wall. It was through this window that she let down the spies. Well, if the walls fell, then how did Rahab survive?

In the early 1900's a German archeological team excavated the Jericho site. On the north end a stretch of wall was found that did not fall.⁴ Inside this section of wall, houses were built. This could have been the location of Rahab's house.

Rahab was saved because she believed in the God of Israel. The Bible tells us that we are saved by faith (Eph 2:8-9). God will save all who will believe in Him just like Rahab did. Salvation is available to anyone who would call upon the name of the Lord. God saves all who have faith in Him, not just Israelites.

Won't you put your faith and trust in Jesus?

Who fought the battle of Jericho? God fought the battle of Jericho and Joshua took the city because he obeyed his Commander. Will you surrender your life to Jesus? Won't you gladly obey Him?

In closing, I'd like to share some observations that I wrote down as I sat & prayed over this chapter. I pray they will be beneficial to you.

Observations to Remember

- 1) God always keeps His promises.
- 2) I will face impossible situations and spiritual strongholds that appear impenetrable.
- 3) When I face them, my Lord will be there with me.
- 4) What He commands me to do may not make sense to me, but if I trust Him, in the end it will be very good for me.

⁴ See <http://www.answersingenesis.org/creation/v21/i2/jericho.asp>.

- 5) He may require me to DO something, but my doing will only be effective as I act in faith in His strength & abilities and not my own.
- 6) God can win the fight without a word. I should pray more than I should talk.
- 7) With God's presence in the center of my life I will not be afraid to look like a fool for my God.
- 8) Hero's of the faith got up early in the morning.
- 9) Keeping myself from things that could lead to my destruction is more important than winning great battles. "Pure & undefiled religion is this..."
- 10) It's better to obey the Lord than possess great wealth.
- 11) If I obey Him, He will lead me to victory (even if it means that I must die).
- 12) It's all or nothing with the Lord; don't flirt with sin.
- 13) The Lord saves people who don't deserve salvation.

Total Destruction??

For some people the command to destroy everything in Jericho & the other cities in Canaan is a stumbling block. How can a loving God give this kind of command? I will deal with this in a mid-week email. So sign up for the intranet.