

## Jesus our Joshua (7)

### **The Preparation** Joshua 5:2-8, 13-15.

The spies returned from their dangerous mission of checking out Jericho and there was an optimistic spirit-a-foot. (Joshua 2:24). On the fourth day after the people of Israel had crossed the Jordan the first thing, they did was to keep the Passover. (4:19 & 5:10)

Then as a taste of the new future they enjoyed the rich provisions of the new land. The old generation had gone, the new world was before them. This was a dramatic sacramental moment. Knowing the hazards yet to come, Joshua re-instated the Covenant sign of circumcision. (Exodus 12:44-48) This was a sign of their willingness to re-accept God's covenant terms of submission. The shame of their old desire for idolatry was dealt with.

It could be said that before wielding his sword against the people of Canaan, in a sense God used it on his own people to remind them of their identity. Since the time of Abraham circumcision had been a sign of total commitment to God. (Genesis 17) God called Israel to affirm their commitment, to show they belonged to him, body and soul. *'It is calculated that of those who did not need to be circumcised more than 50,000 were left to defend the camp if they were attached.'* J.F.B Commentary, 1966.

Mathew Henry says, ***"Their circumcision rolled away the tainted idolatry and reproach of Egypt. They were hereby owned to be the free-born children of God, having the seal of the covenant in their flesh, and so the reproach of their bondage in Egypt was removed."***

It was like a renewal of dedication and purpose within another generation. There are times in church history when one period closes and God raises up a new expression, a new era of church to face new horizons.

### **The Drawn Sword.**

There was an unexpected encounter, a surprise, mysterious encounter with a divine messenger (Joshua 5:13-15). It was similar to the way that Moses encountered a burning bush and when he removed his shoes (5:15). Here a person described as ***"the commander of the army of the Lord"*** ('The Prince of the Lords host'; *Amplified*) appears to the new leader Joshua. In chapter 6:2 it appears he is called *Jehovah / Lord*. To Abraham he had appeared as a 'traveller,' to Moses as a 'burning bush', (Exodus 3:5) to Joshua he appeared, in a field as a 'man of war.' The real character of this person was declared by his accepting the homage and worship of Joshua.

Joshua needed an overhaul, a change of thinking. This was not his battle. He needed to learn that the future was not of his own making. From that moment every time Joshua went into battle he was assured of the assistance of an unseen invisible army. Every obstacle could be faced, even the stout wall of Jericho.

Joshua was on holy ground. No wonder he fell on his knees and worshipped. The New Testament records Jesus saying that he could have called on 10,000 angels in his hour of need (Matt 26:53) and we are assured of triumph over our spiritual enemies. The Lord who helped Joshua is also with us. (Matt 28:20, John 16:33)

Today as God's people living among others who are not Christian what do we need to re-learn? Do we need more education, the tools of social media, the ability to cope with opposition or perhaps new helpful methodologies?

It has been said that the thing most needed is to yield to the Lord's way. This could mean a new willingness to fall on our knees and to surrender to the commander of the army of the Lord by dying to our own entrenched ways. We need to know that unless we are buried with Christ, we do not have new life and we can't speak sincerely in Jesus name. We need to know we are as those who fully identify with Christ. We are indeed those equipped with the sword of the Lord to do spiritual battle and to advance the kingdom.

### **Questions:**

(1) Divided loyalties were not an option for Israel (5:8 and 24:14-15) or for Jesus (Luke 16:13). Today, what preparation does God require of the Church (the new Israel)? Is it a new methodology or a new heart? What might it mean for us today to relearn and yield to a radical obedience?

(2) Recount contemporary stories of God's remarkable intervention. Biographies such as *C.T. Studd*, Norman Grubb. *'Tortured for Christ,'* Richard Wurmbrand. *'The Heavenly Man,* Paul Hattaway. *'The Case for Christ,'* Lee Strobel, *'The Cross and Switchblade'* etc.

(3) There are times when we must be ready to learn. Joshua realised that 'the commander' was a divine person not just another man. What do these passages have in-common and what can we learn from them? Josh. 5:15, Exod. 3:5, Luke 5:8-11.

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