

FPFWC Christian Development



Faithful Prophets

March 2021

Spring Quarter

March 13, 2021

Lesson #2 – Prophet of Conquest

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Joshua 5:13-15; 6:1-5, 15-16, 20

ICE BREAKER –

1. How do we strengthen our obedience to the Lord?
2. What can we expect from God when we obey Him?

Key Verse: “The LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour.”—*Joshua 6:2*

LESSON BACKGROUND

We think of Joshua’s role as a military commander before that of being a prophet—if we think of him at all as a prophet. He is remembered much more for his actions with the sword than for his proclamations of God’s messages to the Israelites.

But was Joshua a prophet? For one thing, he was Moses’ successor, and Moses was called “a Prophet” (Deuteronomy 18:15; see lesson 1). Further, God spoke through Joshua to give directions to Israel, and that is one characteristic of a prophet (Hebrews 1:1). Joshua challenged the people to put away their idols and commit themselves fully to the Lord (Joshua 23:1–24:28), a common task of prophets. And Joshua may be considered a prophetic forerunner of Christ. The names *Joshua* and *Jesus* both mean “the Lord is salvation.” As Joshua led ancient Israel into the promised land of Canaan, Jesus leads generations of God’s faithful people into the promised land of Heaven.

The first mention of Joshua in Scripture is in Exodus 17:8–16, a context not long after the exodus and the parting of the Red Sea. So by the time of the events of today’s lesson text, Joshua had witnessed many mighty works of God.

The book of Joshua begins with the Lord’s exhortations to Joshua following Moses’ death—repeating several times the directive for Joshua to be strong and have courage in fulfilling his sacred duties (Joshua 1:6, 7, 9, 18). Joshua had been assured of the Lord’s presence, just as the Lord had guided Moses (3:7). God’s presence with Joshua also points to Joshua’s calling from God, an event that precedes a true prophet’s ministry. The book of Joshua goes on to trace the Israelite’s entry into the promised land (Joshua 1–5), conquests and settlements in it (chapters 6–21), and covenant renewal (chapters 22–24).

Christians have come to consider the book of Joshua to fit the category of “history” in the Old Testament’s 5-12-5-5-12 arrangement of its 39 books (5 books of law, 12 of history, 5 of poetry, 5 by major prophets, 12 by minor

prophets). But to Jewish readers the book of Joshua was part of the Former Prophets (along with Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, and 1 & 2 Kings). Though the Former Prophets are very different from Latter Prophets (like Isaiah or Hosea), these books are concerned with God's guiding the people through His chosen leaders. The first such leader in this section being Joshua, followed by the judges, etc. The writer of the book is unknown, though it is likely he was a prophet or a priest himself.

Joshua 3–4 records how the Israelites crossed the Jordan River on dry land, much as the previous generation had crossed the Red Sea on dry land under Moses' leadership. Following further spiritual preparation of the people—including circumcision of those men who had not been circumcised during the wandering in the wilderness (Joshua 5:2–9) and through the observance of the Passover (5:10)—the Israelites were almost ready for the task of conquering the promised land.

LESSON COMMENTARY

The Supreme Commander Meets with Joshua (5:13–15)

5:13–14. In this confrontation with a divine being, **the captain of the host of the LORD**, one wonders if Joshua bared his own blade. Apparently, this visitor was not much alarmed by Joshua. Joshua asked: **Are you for us or for our adversaries?** The visitor gave no direct answer.

He answered, literally: "No, because I am the Captain of the army of YHWH; now I have come." Joshua then prostrated himself. Joshua recognized his visitor as a divine being. It was not a matter of whose side the visitor was on; it was a matter of whose side Joshua was on. The text reads, literally, "Joshua fell to his face to the ground and he prostrated himself." The word translated **bowed down** by the NASB is translated in the HCSB by "worship," suggesting that the HCSB translators view this being as a theophany (manifestation of God) or a Christophany (appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ), the more likely possibility here. He was the captain of an army belonging to another: Christ the Lord Himself.

5:15. Joshua's second question (v. 14) was followed by what was probably to Joshua an unexpected answer: **Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.** This language is similar to that of the call of Moses (Ex 3:5): the word "ground" is missing. There would be no need for "holy ground" when Joshua was prostrate in the Holy Land. In a sense, the whole area is holy ground.

By the parallel with the story of the Moses' commission, Joshua has filled the sandals of Moses. From this point forward, Moses will receive less frequent mention excepting his written legacy, the Torah. Joshua has become the new Moses. He will lead his people in government and military, and he will empower the priesthood to do its work.

For believers, there are times when a leader will apply the authoritative Word of God to a new situation, and others will follow cooperatively. But

sometimes a new leader arises with a new direction for the Word to be applied, and the people of God might resist. In both situations, the leaders and the people must be careful to maintain close communion with the Lord in order for Him to accomplish great things. Believers are called to be holy if they would have these times of close communion with the Lord and would recognize His direction through others.

II. Conquest of the Land in Three Major Theaters of Engagement (6:1–12:24)

Israel had entered the promised land with the door closed behind her; the people's only path was forward. Jericho, at nearly the lowest point on earth, had to be conquered. The conquest of the land after Jericho was both literally and metaphorically all uphill from there.

A. Jericho and the Central Campaign

The first fortification encountered after crossing the Jordan was Jericho. It had to be subdued to gain access to the highlands because it guarded the fords of the Jordan and sat astride a major east-west road.

6:1. The author signals the start of a new episode by repeating a phrase used earlier in reference to a city or its gates being “shut” or secured (cf. 2:5, 7). The city was shut tight, indicative not only of the terror of the inhabitants, but also their vigilance. The camp of Israel was visible in smoke by day and ominous campfire glow by night. Were anyone to wander out, there were 40,000 Israelites from east of the Jordan to confront (cf. Jos 4:12–13).

6:2. God speaks of the conquest as an accomplished fact: **I have given Jericho into your hand.** Older commentaries refer to this verb as a “prophetic perfect.” The action is certainly viewed as if it were completed in the past with its results continuing to the present from God's standpoint. It was worded this way to give Joshua confidence.

6:3–5. The approach to the “coming assault” is perhaps counterintuitive. It may appear “senseless” (Donald H. Madvig, “Joshua.” Vol. 3 of EBC, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992], 278); but God's program sometimes may appear silly when it is the perfect plan. The Canaanite people were paralyzed in terror (2:9, 11; 5:1), and Jericho was no exception (6:1). It must have been unnerving for the people of this small fortress to see tens of thousands of Israelites parading just out of bow-shot. God's plan, as always, was brilliant. On the final day they were to rise early, march around the city seven times and at the last blast of the trumpets, the warriors were to shout.

6:15–20. The number of events were increased and complicated on the seventh day. The armed men and the priests rose early in the morning in order to complete seven circuits. This sounds like a staggering amount of ground to cover for the Israelite soldiers, but Jericho was only about 350 yards long north

to south, and about 180 yards wide east to west. At the final circumnavigation, Joshua commanded them: **Shout! For the LORD has given you the city.** In v. 20, the trumpets blasted, the warriors shouted and the “wall fell down under it” (author’s rendering, cf. v. 5). The HCSB has “collapse”; it likely indicates that the walls fell outward and down the slope. In Garstang’s archaeological records (excavated from 1930–36), more recently vindicated by Bryant Wood (see bibliography at the end of this chapter), there is evidence for such a collapse. Perhaps vv. 17–19 reflect commands given earlier to leaders and passed down through the ranks.

The city was to be destroyed and burned. All the people and livestock were to be killed. Gold, silver, bronze, and iron, were to be devoted to the Lord and placed in the tabernacle treasury. This destruction had been ordered by God (Dt 7:2; 20:16–18) because He wanted these people eradicated: indigenous pagan survivors would bring compromise and syncretism to Israel. These people were unredeemable, exterminated for their wickedness. God had told Abraham four hundred years earlier that “the sin of the Amorite was not yet complete” (Gn 15:16). Now it was. Besides their horrific religious practices including ritual prostitution and child-sacrifice, these people were involved in wickedness in their day to day lives. If Lv 18 reflects Canaanites practices, they were regularly involved in incest, adultery, child-sacrifice, sodomy, and bestiality (Lv 18:6–23). God calls these practices the most heinous sin. It cannot be demonstrated that these practices contribute anything positive to society. Israel was not to do any of these practices (Lv 18:24–30). They were to kill or to drive the Canaanites into exile (Dt 20:16–18).

Amidst the chaos of battle, God’s grace came to one believer and her family. Rahab was spared along with anyone wise enough to separate from their countrymen and join with Israel. The walls fell down and the city was easily captured. A short battle narrative does not mean there were no casualties. No matter how certain the engagement, there will be the happenstances of war.

LESSON NUGGET – God calls you to do His work, He will tell you how to do it. His plans may seem foolish to you, but they always work if you obey by faith (Isa. 55:8-11). As we today seek to conquer territory for the Lord, we do not follow the same procedure Joshua used, but we must obey the same principles of faith and obedience. We use spiritual weapons to break down the barriers in men’s minds and to claim them for Christ (2 Cor. 10:1-6).

Sources: Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary and Wiersbe Expository Outlines on the New Testament