



God Commands Joshua

Joshua 5:10-15; 6:1-5,20 Matt 4:1-11 Rev 19:11-16

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Do you remember the story of the Exodus¹?

The Israelites were in bitter slavery to the Egyptians, and they cried out to God for help. God heard their prayer, and He called Moses through the Burning Bush to be their deliverer. Moses goes to Egypt, but the Pharaoh would not let the Israelites leave. So, God sends the 10 plagues, culminating with darkness and the death of the firstborn. The Israelite firstborn are saved from death by sacrificing the Passover Lamb and putting its blood on their doors. Death “passed over” them that night. The next day Pharaoh lets the Israelites leave. They crossover the Red Sea on dry ground and arrive at Mount Sinai to receive the 10 Commandments of God.

God intends to take them to Canaan, the land He promised to Abraham their forefather 400 years earlier. Moses sent 12 spies into the land; and when the spies came back, 10 of them were negative. 10 of the spies insisted that they should not enter the Promised Land because the inhabitants are mighty warriors. Only Joshua and Caleb trusted God's Word and said that they should proceed into the Promised Land. Israel listened to the 10 negative spies, and in doing so, rebelled against God. They rejected God's promise. As a result that entire generation would wander in the wilderness for 40 years until everyone 20 years old and older had died, except Joshua and Caleb → the two spies who had trusted in the Lord and His Promise.

In our story today from the Old Testament, it is now the end of the 40 years in the wilderness. *This is the end of the Exodus.* Moses has died, Joshua is

¹ The riveting story is told in the Old Testament books of Exodus and Numbers. It's the great OT salvation story. It is a story of God's great love and power in saving His people as He led them out of Egypt and to the Promised Land. It is also a heart-wrenching story of people rejecting God. It's worth your time to read and to know the story of the Exodus!

the leader, the Israelites have crossed the flooded Jordan River on dry ground – just like they crossed the Red Sea on dry ground 40 years earlier. They have celebrated a Passover, and they are now camped a few miles from the Canaanite fortress city of Jericho. Jericho is a military city, and it stands between the Israelites and the Promised Land.

It is here where God appears to Joshua. Joshua is given a *Theophany*; a “*God appearance*”. Specifically, it is the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, who appears on earth before His birth in Bethlehem². Joshua is considering his attack on Jericho when the Lord appears to him. The Lord appears as the “*Commander of the Lord’s Army*.” Joshua was on holy ground; he takes off his shoes and bows low before the Lord God Almighty.

The Lord Himself will lead Israel into the Promised Land; the Lord Himself will fight for them and give them the victory over Jericho.

Notice that the *Commander of the Lord’s Army* does not give Joshua a *military strategy*, but rather He gives *worship instructions*! Joshua is to circle the city with his army once a day for 6 days – with 7 priests leading the way with the *Ark of the Covenant*³. On the 7th day, they were to circle the city 7 times, blow the trumpets and yell! Joshua and the Israelites obeyed God's Word and the walls of the mighty city of Jericho fell down. The Lord had fought for His people, and He had given them the victory.

² The Son of God is the “speaking God” – the *logos* – The “Word” of God who interacts with His People to save them. *Theophanies* are the *pre-incarnate* Son at work on behalf of His People. God the Father is never seen, only heard, as at Jesus’ Baptism and Transfiguration; and God the Holy Spirit is only seen in the form of a dove at Jesus’ Baptism; and tongues of fire at Pentecost. But the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, interacts with His People to save them! In the Old Testament, those times are called “theophanies”.

³ The “Ark of the Covenant” was a gold covered chest with two outstretched angels on either end. It was the **Throne of God** among the Israelites. This “Ark” was kept in the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle, and later the Temple in Jerusalem. See Exodus 25:10-22 for a description of it. In this story with Joshua, the Ark leading the way indicated the Lord was leading this battle, and fighting for the Israelites!

We know the *Commander of the Lord's Army* today as the **LORD JESUS CHRIST**, and He is our Savior! He fights for us in an even greater way than He fought for the Israelites! It is not fortified cities and mighty warriors that are our enemy, but *the devil and his demons*.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Ephesians 6:12

We have no way to combat *the devil and his demons*; this is spiritual warfare way beyond our understanding and abilities. We need someone to fight for us!

So the *Commander of the Lord's Army* fights for us! Jesus is the One who went out to battle against *the devil and his demons* for us and on our behalf. Jesus engaged the enemy immediately after His Baptism. Jesus was tempted by the devil for 40 days in the wilderness; yet He never sinned. He was tempted in every way throughout His lifetime – but He never sinned. His temptations culminated in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the Cross of Calvary. Jesus takes our place in the battle, and wins! He perfectly resisted temptation every single time for us and our salvation.

On the cross, Jesus crushed Satan just as He crushed Jericho in Joshua's day. In His Resurrection, He gives you the victory!

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil Hebrews 2:14

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. 1 John 3:8

Jesus is the *Commander of the Lord's Army* Who takes our place in battle! The victory is His; and He gives it to you as a gift of salvation!

His victory means that your sins are forgiven! Your guilt has been removed from you and you have peace with God. Your spiritual enemies have no power over you!

His victory means that you will live forever! Death is no longer your final enemy; you have been given the gift of eternal life. At the instant of death, you will be with Christ in Heaven; and on the Last Day, even your dead body will rise, be glorified, and live forever in the Kingdom of Heaven!

His victory means that the devil's lies and temptations can no longer enslave you. You have been set free! The devil does not control you; nor are his temptations too powerful for you! When you resist the devil with the Word of God, he flees from you!

His victory means that You have been given the gifts⁴ of salvation! **Righteousness, peace, faith, salvation**; these are the **Truths** of the **Word of God**! These are the victory gifts that have been given to you --- you are to wear these things like Armor to protect yourself from *the devil and his demons*! When you are tempted, when you feel attacked, when you are discouraged or depressed, when you feel weak and weary, stand firm in these gifts of salvation! Fill your mind and your thoughts with **righteousness, peace, faith, salvation**; the **Truths** of **God's Holy Word**!

Since the *Commander of the Lord's Army* has already fought the battle, all you need to do is stand firm in the gifts He has given to you!

The Lord Himself led Israel into the Promised Land; the *Commander of the Lord's Army* fought for them and gave His People the victory over Jericho. This same *Commander of the Lord's Army*; Whom we know as the Lord Jesus Christ, gives you the victory over your enemies too! Satan and his

⁴ The gifts of salvation that the Lord graciously and freely gives to you in Holy Baptism are described as the "**Armor of God**" in Ephesians 6. The Armor of God are the objective gifts that God gives to you in Christ, by grace, and in the waters of Holy Baptism. Truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation; even the Word of God all point you to your Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who has already defeated Satan by His life, death, and resurrection!

demons have been defeated: **THEY HAVE NO POWER OVER YOU!** stand firm in His victory, and live a holy life! Amen!