

Joshua 5:13-8:35

“Conquering the Land – part one”

Introduction

- Tonight we going to continue our study in the book of Joshua
 - And as you remember from last week this book is divided into three sections

The Book of Joshua

Entering the promise land – Joshua 1-5

Conquering the promise land – Joshua 6-12

Possessing the promise land – Joshua 13-24

- God told Abraham hundreds of years before – I will give your descendants this land
 - And the book of Joshua is the story of how God keeps His promises

It also, if you remember, is a great picture for you and me to enter into all that God has for us in the Spirit filled life

- I love to see each walled city as a promise God has given me
 - That He loves me
 - That He can set me free from bondages of sin
 - That He will be faithful to His Word
- And just as the children of Israel had to take each city by faith and trust God to bring the victory
 - So you and I need to come to each promise and believe God will do what He said He will do and walk in the victory of the Spirit

Well speaking of victory tonight, we are now in the second section of the book and that deals with conquering the land

- the battle for Canaan is really divided into two parts

The Battle for the promise land

#1 – The Southern Campaign

- **Joshua 6-10**
- **Cities including Jericho, Ai**

#2 – The Northern Campaign

- **Joshua 11-12**
- **Including cities of Hazor (Galilee)**
 - **Both the Southern and Northern Campaigns took a total of 7 years to complete**

We will spend most of our time, as the text does in the Southern Campaign

- And tonight specially with the battles for Jericho and Ai as there is so much to learn from these two battles about walking with God in victory
 - But we need to start tonight with the prelude to the battle in chapter 5
 - **Read 5:13-6:5**

Joshua and the children of Israel had just crossed the Jordan River, circumcised all the men, had the feast of Passover

- but this was just the beginning, for Joshua knew and could see looming before him the city of Jericho
 - No doubt – Joshua was overwhelmed – crossing a river was one thing – dealing with war and the enemy, the prospect of defeat and failure – loomed on his mind

And so what does Joshua do – He lifts up his eyes

- so important for you and I to see

- when things get overwhelming, I am so quick to call my wife, call some pastor friends of mine, even some of you and just vent or share what is going on – get you to worry with me
- But Joshua does the right thing – He lifts up his eyes
 - You see it was why Jesus, when He was teaching His disciples to pray, told them to begin “Our Father who is in heaven”

When we recognized who it is we are talking to, who it is who holds our lives in His hands, then we start the battle on the right foot – Lord you have your way on this

- We need to lift up our eyes – because we can get so overwhelmed by circumstances, I can forget, I am a child of God
 - Joshua looks up, and what does He see
 - He sees the Lord

Now some Bible teachers believe this is just an everyday angel Joshua sees

- I don’t think so for angels in scripture always refuse to be worshiped
 - John in the book of Revelation, chapter 19, is given a vision by an angel and he begins to worship him but the angel stops him and says, ‘don’t worship me, I am a servant of God like you are
- But this guy in Joshua 5 accepts Joshua’s worship
 - He is referred to the Lord as I believe in chapter 6, is just a continuation of the conversation that began in chapter 5

I believe this is what bible scholars call a Christophany = an Old Testament appearance of the second part of the Trinity, later named “Jesus”

- We see this in Genesis 18 – where the Lord meets with Abraham to tell him he will have a son, and about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah
 - We see it in Genesis 32 – where the Lord comes and wrestles with Jacob
- And now we see it here again in Joshua 5
 - And by the way, I find it interesting to notice when he meets with Abraham who was a sojourner, a traveling man – He comes as a traveler

When he comes to Jacob, a man constantly wrestling with people in his life, he comes to wrestle

- And here with Joshua, the general of the Israeli army, he comes as a military man
 - all that to say, I love it how Jesus meets me and you right where we are
 - we don’t have to pretend, we don’t have to be fake with our Lord
 - He meets us right where we are, and then does the work of transformation that is needed
- What a God we serve!!!!

Well that aside, Joshua sees this figure before him and he asks “are you for us or for our enemies?”

- and I love the Lord’s answer
 - No – Whose side are you on??? – No – wrong question Joshua
 - I am not coming to join your side, and I am not coming against you – I have come to command
- So often we want the Lord to bless our plans for our lives
 - We want to make sure He won’t get in the way of our desires

But if we truly want to follow the Lord we need to realize He is the Commander

- and of course in our American system, I think we don’t realize the gravity of that term
 - we live in a world of checks and balances
 - the General answers to the President and the President, theoretically answers to Congress
 - and it is a good system because man is corrupt
- so our commanders don’t have total authority and we transfer that to the Lord

- oh I get it you are the commander, unless I disagree with your decision and then I will vote you out of office

No, wrong idea – Jesus is saying, I am the absolute commander – My word stands, what I want will happen

- you are not getting me on your team or hoping I won't come against your plans
 - I am the commander, the Lord said to Joshua and if we have ears to hear, God says to us as well!

Now the commander is going to lead them into battle and as God does and the Southern Campaign begins in chapters 6, I want us to notice 3 important lessons about experiencing victory in the Lord

Experiencing Victory in the Lord – Joshua 6-8

#1 – God needs to fight the battle – Joshua 6

#2 – We need to walk in purity – Joshua 7

#3 – We need to seek the Lord – Joshua 8

- Let's look at these one at a time tonight
 - Starting with...

Experiencing Victory in the Lord – Joshua 6-8

#1 – God needs to fight the battle – Joshua 6

- read all of chapter 6

The battle plan the Lord gives Joshua is interesting to say the least

- God has them walk around the city once a day in complete silence, and then on the seventh day, it gets crazy, they were to walk around seven times also in complete silence and then shout!

Can you image how Joshua's generals must have felt hearing this battle plan?

- I have heard from the Lord guys – we are to march around the city and... then blow trumpets
 - I really believe it is one of the reasons God had the children of Israel cross the Jordan so miraculously – so the leaders would say – hey God is with this Joshua guy – lets march!

But why would God have them do this?

- I have read some commentators that suggested they were marching in step and the vibrations caused the walls to weakened
 - Or the blowing of trumpets created a sound vibration with the sounding that took the walls down
 - Are you kidding me? – I don't understand how some people with so many degrees and letters behind their name can be so dumb
 - Marching in step? – please – this was not the battle plan

God was doing something else

- I suggest to you that God was having the children of Israel walk around the city for seven days so they would understand how impossible this task is in their flesh
 - They must have come across the Jordan, full of faith, full of excitement – We can do this!
 - But the first time walking around the city, in silence mind you, just with their thoughts, wow, the wall is bigger up close

Archeologist John Garstang did much research in the ruins of the ancient city of Jericho, digging in and around the walls (Jericho's walls, modern pictures 01 and 02) as you can see in the pictures as we cycle through

- but what John Garstang discovered was the city Joshua was facing had two walls (**Jericho wall picture**) – an inner wall about 6 feet across and an outer wall 12-15 feet across, and there was at least 12 feet in between them
 - you can image if you can see those little people drawings down at the bottom of

the picture how impenetrable this city must have seemed

And again I think this was on purpose, I think God wanted them to see how impossible this task was without Him

- and the Lord works the same way today as He did back then
 - maybe you are not so much interested in the walls of Jericho as you are the walls that are going up in your marriage
 - or the walls between you and you kids or you and your friend or parents
- maybe it's the walls of the situation you are in, it is overwhelming to you
 - why does this happen

Friend I believe God wants us and we need to see how impossible the situation is without Him first before He works

- because as long as we think, I got this Lord, we will keep striving in the flesh
 - I see the walls going up in my marriage, but just a little more effort, just one more present
 - I see the walls between me and my kids, but as I continue to reach out, these walls are going to come down
 - I see the walls in this situation I am up against, but I am smart enough, creative enough, I have enough ingenuity – I will figure this out
- And many times God will let you keep walking around, walking in circles until you realize
 - I can't do this
 - I can't bring these walls down
 - I don't have an answer to this situation
- The Lord will allow this because everyone of us must get to the point where we realize – The Lord has to fight this battle – I can't do it

Because if He doesn't, there is something in all of us that will take credit for His victory, that will take the glory for His win and the Lord knows that won't be good for us

- so He gets us to see

And as we surrender to the Lord – we understand this is what He has been waiting for all along

- He has been waiting for us to say, Lord this is your battle, I'm willing to do things your way, and lean on your understanding, not my own
 - Joshua and Israel came to an end of themselves and then shouted for victory and God brought those walls down
 - And in the end it had nothing to do with them and their military might, it had nothing to do with their strategies
- Their victory had everything to do with the fact they were God's kids and God was going to fight for them
 - And as you and I realize, that the battle has to be His and I lean on Him
 - Those walls will come down – because I am His child and the Lord fights for me

The walls came down

- Again the theories abound about what really happened, was it a great earthquake?
 - Well maybe, but somehow the earthquake knew how to destroy all the wall except Rahab's house
 - This was God friends
- And the men of Israel entered the city, and destroyed everything and everyone, then burned the city to the ground
 - This is hard for some to understand, it seems to be against what we know about the character of God

But remember – God was not just obtaining a land for His people and keeping them pure – He was also dealing with an extremely sinful group and sparing their children a life of abuse and misery

- remember Rahab was a prostitute in her father's house – most likely this was forced upon her, and this kind of treatment was common in Canaan in that day and age
 - God is the same yesterday, today and forever
 - We might not see it as we look on the surface, but the deeper we dig, we see it is true

Archeologist John Garstang discoveries about the walls and the city of Jericho showed us not only the structure of the walls, but he recorded that they were brought down suddenly at once and then burned with an intense fire

- exactly what we read happened in Joshua chapter 6
 - because God's Word can always be trusted
 - and this relates to the last thing we need to see in chapter 6 and that is verse 26
- Joshua said "cursed be anyone who builds this city again, it will cost him his two sons"
 - and next to this verse you may want to write - I Kings 16:34 – a man by the name of Hiel will years later build the city of Jericho again
 - but it would cost him his sons, just as Joshua said
 - the word "with", he laid the foundations with, means with the loss of, in the text

And I point this out for a very important reason – we need to know, we need to understand that God is the one who is going to bring the victory in your life – you need to trust Him for that, for the battles

He is going to bring down those walls, between you and your husband, or you and your kids – He, not you and all your efforts are going to get it done

- But listen, listen, let me be clear on this
 - when God brings down those walls, don't you put them back up again
- When God begins to work in your marriage, you have to surrender, you have to let Him do the battle, not you battling one another
 - When God begins to free you from that besetting sin and bring victory – God is going to bring down those walls
 - But listen, oh listen – when God brings down those walls – be careful, because you can build them up again
- And the reality is – many around you will give you enough bricks and mortar to get the job done
 - Oh, that's right – He is a jerk, you should be upset at him
 - That's right – I don't deserve to be that way – give me a brick

Oh it is so common to man

- But I just feel like it is a Word from the Lord for someone here tonight
 - God has brought down the wall and you are attempting to build it up again
 - Stop – because it will cost you like it did Hiel – it will tear at you and your family
- First lesson, first rule, first city – God is going to fight for you – has he made you see that? Are you at the end of your rope, good – submit, surrender, whatever God is calling you to do
 - And watch God bring down the wall
 - And don't you put it back up again...

Experiencing Victory in the Lord – Joshua 6-8

#1 – God needs to fight the battle – Joshua 6

#2 – We need to walk in purity – Joshua 7

- [Read all of chapter 7](#)

The chapter begins with the word “but” – oh why does that verse have to be there? – Things were going so good – the reputation of Joshua was spreading all throughout the land

- Why when God is working and doing things in my life, does there have to be from time to time a but!!!

Well for Israel the “but” is there because sin was in the camp

- After the great victory of Jericho, the next city Israel came to in this Southern Campaign was Ai
 - And Ai was a little city, the name literally means a heap or a dump, it’s a little dump, 12,000 people, compared to about 600,000 men Israel had ready for war – this is not a fair fight
- And so Joshua sends just a few thousand men to deal with this little dump, Ai
 - And that should have been enough – I mean God promised in Leviticus 26, five men can put 100 to flight and 100 of you will defeat 1000
 - So by that reasoning, if you brought 1,200 guys to Ai, you should be okay
- But, and here is the deal – that promise was for the nation of Israel as they walked in obedience to the Lord
 - And that was not the case in this battle

Joshua sent 3,000 men and yet, they fled before Ai, and 36 men died

- Joshua and His leaders tore their clothes, grieved before the Lord, and even if you read verses 7 and 8, Joshua even blames God for this defeat

But I love God’s response – “Get up, stop your whining”

- Joshua there is sin in the camp
 - You see, we looked at this on Sunday Morning – but Achan knew God had told Joshua, take none of the things of Jericho, for they are mine
 - Yet Achan saw, and took and sinned

And God allowed Israel to experience some defeat again because He is trying to teach His kids a lesson

- Lesson number one – with the city of Jericho – I need to fight your battles – and I will bring victory, but you, you have a role to play, what’s that?
 - well – lesson number two – I will fight the battles, you need to walk in purity

You see God had promised them in Leviticus 26 – if you walk in my ways, I will fight for you, I will bring victory and prosperity in your land

- but if you ignore my ways, if you walk in the lusts of your own flesh, you have no such promise
 - in fact God promises to hinder their victories
 - why would He do that???

Because God is a Father and He knows if He keeps blessing when you keep sinning, then you might get the impression that your sin doesn’t matter

- And though He has dealt with your sin
 - It still matters, it is still detrimental to your life
 - That is why it is sin
- Again, again, again, sin is not bad because it is forbidden, it is forbidden because it is bad
 - God doesn’t stop blessing because he thinks, “how dare you violate my rules”, or because He loves you less or He’s mad at you
 - No - He stops blessing because maybe you’ll see the correlation and stop walking in that which will destroy you

He will not allow His kids to sin without impunity, because He loves you too much

- the fruit, the effects, listen to me – will come up
 - the sin can not be hidden forever

- and the blessings of God, the victory of God cannot be enjoyed by a sinful people
- don't miss the point of this lesson

Again I really believe this is another Word from God for someone here tonight

- You are involved in sin, and though you may think it is hidden, it is not hidden from God and He wants you to know that
 - And because He loves you, not because He is mad at you
 - Because He loves you He will remove victory from your life until, as with Israel, that sin is dealt with radically

So what do you do????

- first – you need to call your sin what it is
 - notice verse 21 – Achan says, “When I saw among the spoils” – no wait a second Achan, you are not seeing things clearly – those were not spoils
 - **the word “spoils” means “rewards for the victor”** – God had said in this battle there are no spoils, everything is mine

Part of the problem Achan had, and part of the problem you and I have is we are convinced our sin isn't really that bad

- And we see that today as we, even in the church, call sin by so many sterile names
 - I miss spoke – so tired of politicians who say that – it is called a lie
 - I'm an alcoholic – no, you're a drunk
 - I'm melancholy – no you're a murmurer

And I'm sorry if that offends anyone – but maybe you need offending – because it is time we call sin what it is

- not because I don't like you, or I'm better than you, but so we can deal honestly with what is going on in our hearts
 - We need to deal honestly with sin

And then we need to repent, make confession

- Take it before the Lord, not pretending like its hidden or will go away or its not affecting you
 - It is – wake up to that reality
- The problems your facing – maybe its not everybody else – maybe its your sin
 - Life is acceptable – then how much better could it really be
 - Confess, be honest before the Lord, deal with it before it destroys you
- And then..... – chapter 8 – get up and get going again, and God will take what was a scare of sin, the valley of Achor and turn it into a place of praise as we looked at last Sunday if you missed it, check it out online, but we need to move on

Experiencing Victory in the Lord – Joshua 6-8

#1 – God needs to fight the battle – Joshua 6

#2 – We need to walk in purity – Joshua 7

#3 – We need to seek the Lord – Joshua 8

- [Read chapter 8](#)

You know after the battle of Jericho, the people have one victory, one victory they didn't even do and then they were experts on warfare

- we only need to bring a few thousand men against Ai, don't bother the whole army they tell Joshua in chapter 7
 - one victory and now they are military strategists
 - but that is always the way it is?

We have one victory, one victory we didn't even earn and now we act as if we don't need God anymore

- but friends this is so foolish, because we don't know
 - we don't have it all figured out like we think

Because the Lord is always doing something different

- we look at the battle plan for Jericho and it had nothing to do with strategy, it was all about getting their hearts right
 - and looking at that we could conclude that is how God works – He always does things completely different than man would
 - He doesn't use boats, He parts the Red Sea
 - He doesn't use weapons, He has hail stones fall from heaven
- But that is not always the case

In chapter 8 we see not a crazy, “step in the water and it will part” strategy, we actually see God give the children of Israel a brilliant military strategy that makes sense

- as I said earlier if I was one of Joshua's general, when I heard the plan for Jericho, I would be tempted to say, you are lucky we just saw the Jordan part, because without that, I wouldn't follow this plan at all
 - but as one of Joshua's generals, as I heard this plan I would think – that will work – that is brilliant military planning
 - in fact this battle plan has been studied and copied by many military generals of modern times
- This plan just makes sense (**Picture Ai Battle plan**)

God has Joshua send 30,000 men to the West of the city and wait, then Joshua sends 5,000 men to the North of the city to stop any intervention from the city of Bethel, a neighboring town and finally Joshua brings the rest of the army in from the East and they fake like they are afraid and run away, drawing the men of Ai, out of the city

- then the 30,000 troops waiting to the West of the city were to move in and burn the town and the men of Ai would loose heart and be defeated
 - and it worked brilliantly
 - it was a great battle plan

Listen - Sometimes God wants to do something that makes sense. Sometimes God wants to do something that makes no sense, humanly speaking?

- So how do we know the difference? How do we know what time it is?
 - We need to seek Him?

You see precious ones

- God will fight the battle – He will do it
 - But you have a part to play as well
 - You need to keep yourself from the things that defile
 - And you need to seek the Lord, to let Him whisper in your heart
- So when your commander says – take a step of faith and do the impossible – you say – Yes sir
 - And when the commander lays out a battle plan that makes sense to even the greatest skeptic you say, yes sir - It comes from seeking the Lord

We will get into this more next week, with the people of Gibeon who deceive the children of Israel because they are still not seeking the Lord – but I thought we would end here and worship, as they did in chapter 8 on mount Ebal – Lord thank you for fighting our battles, help us to walk in purity and to keep seeking your heart for the issues of our lives