

FACE TO FACE WITH THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOSHUA 5:13-15

The older I get, the more convinced I am that life ought to come with a warning label attached!
WARNING! This story is not going to end the way you thought it would!

That is just as true whether you look at the long-term, life-long view, or a short-term view.

Whether you're considering a missions trip, a job opportunity, a marriage/family relationship, or a college degree program.

The story never ends the way we think it will!

There are always a few surprises along the way that will force us to depend on God—just when we least expect it!

Such surprises always cause a great deal of consternation and confusion!

Does God know what He's doing? It sure doesn't make sense to me!

In Joshua 5, Joshua faced some unexpected developments that he had to deal with.

CROSSING THE JORDAN 3-5:1

God's power over the flooding Jordan is demonstrated as God stops the water's flow and causes the people to cross over on dry land. 3

Remembering the event 4:1-9; 19-24

Memorial is built of twelve stones taken from the river.

Memorial will teach their children how God has dealt with His people.

Discouraging the enemy 5:1

Evidence of God's power causes fear among the opposing city-states of Canaan.

The time must be right to move in and take possession of the land.

Just when God's people are ready to rush in, God sends the first unexpected development: **God says wait.**

We often want to rush ahead, but God is in no hurry.

There's some unfinished business to handle, . . .

CIRCUMCISING GOD'S PEOPLE 5:2-9

This is strange timing! *Why now?!!*

They have crossed the Jordan and are just a short distance from Jericho.

But, they must first prepare spiritually for the conflict.

Consecration precedes conquest.

God commands the males to be circumcised.

Circumcision was a sign . . .

Of Israel's identification with Yahweh.

Of Israel's covenant relationship with Yahweh—as His people.

Only HIS people carried that reminder that they belong to Him.

God had told Abraham that fulfillment of the covenant promises is contingent upon

Israel maintaining the sign of the covenant (Gen. 17)

Blessing requires obedience.

If they want to enjoy the promised land, they must first fulfill the requirement.

Anyone who wasn't circumcised was to be cut off from God's people and would be excluded from the promises (**Gen. 17:14b**).

The previous generation had carried the sign, previous to the discipline in the wilderness. Now that generation has died.

Due to their extended time in the wilderness, the whole nation is uncircumcised (except Joshua and Caleb).

They would **all** be excluded!

The new generation has not yet taken that step of identification with Yahweh.

Before they could enter and claim God's promise, they had to obey His command.

Before Israel can claim the land as God's people, they must again identify with Yahweh by the sign of the covenant.

The command 5:2-3 The need 5:4-8 The effect 5:9

Joshua acknowledges the importance of submission and obedience –even though it would be painful– and the place and timing seems inappropriate!

What if the Canaanites attack while they're incapacitated?

Obedience to God was more important than being "reasonable" about it!

They're going to have to trust God to protect them and prepare the way.

They weren't ready to fight God's battle and claim God's promise, until they're identified with Yahweh as His people.

Joshua leads the people in obedience to God's command.

Having completed what God required, now they're ready to move on.

[Once this step is taken, they're ready to approach God by the celebration of the Passover]

CELEBRATING THE PASSOVER 5:10-12 10

Passover is a reminder of what God has already done—a look back to the Exodus.

Israel is about to experience another new beginning in their fellowship with their God.

Reminder of God's presence, provision, and protection in the past is good preparation as they trust Him for a fresh start in the land.

If God was able to deliver them from the powerful Egyptians—the most powerful empire in the world—they could trust Him to deliver the Canaanite kings into their hands!

The day after the Passover, . . .

They ate from the produce of the land. 11

[At that point they face another unexpected development in the plan, . . .]

The provision of manna stops. 12

This has been their food supply for forty years!

How can we be sure there will be enough food to eat as we travel!]

Symbol => **their stay in the wilderness is over.**

They are in the land God promised to give them.

Now they must trust God and take possession of the land God is giving them.

Previous to the first battle in the land, God adds one more important unexpected development to Joshua's orientation program.

MEETING GOD'S COMMANDER 5:13-15

Something is still missing in their preparation for the battle.

Joshua didn't even know he still needed it!

Everything seemed to be ready.

He had succeeded in leading the people across the flooded Jordan.

Now he was ready to lead them in battle against the city of Jericho.

Then God had another surprise for Joshua:

The encounter with a man with a drawn sword 13a

As he approaches Jericho, Joshua comes face to face with an armed man standing in the road in front of Him, with sword in hand.

If you were about to fight a battle in a foreign land and met an armed man standing in the middle of the road in front of you, what would you think?

The critical question: Whose side are you on? 13b

At least he asks before he acts!

There appears to be two options: theirs or ours!

The surprising answer: Neither! 14a

He introduces himself as "the commander of the Lord's army."

Joshua suddenly comes face to face with the true commander of God's armies.

Who would be qualified to describe himself in this way?

Certainly he was a superior person to Joshua (supernatural?).

Whoever He is, **He's in charge.**

Joshua might have thought HE was the commander.

But God makes clear that he is not in charge.

Joshua will not produce the victory—someone greater is in charge of the Lord's armies.

Victory in the battle will not be the result of Joshua's efforts.

They will be victorious because the Commander of the army of the Lord (GOD!) is fighting for them.

God will give them the victory!

Joshua's response to the new commander in chief 14b

Joshua immediately recognizes the importance of this Person, submits to His authority, and bows before him in reverence (worship?).

When Joshua asks the Commander for orders, he receives yet another unexpected reply.

He expects a battle command.

The Commander is concerned about holiness!

What a strange way to prepare for battle!

This is God's battle—it must be fought His way.

HOLINESS IS CRITICAL TO VICTORY!

The holiness of the site 15

Presence of the divine messenger converts the spot into holy ground!

God's messenger informs Joshua that the place where they have met is holy ground.

The designation seems to indicate that the messenger is God appearing as a man.
heophany—O.T. appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ.

It's a reminder, similar to that given to Moses at the burning bush when he was set apart as God's representative (Exod.3:5).

The same God who appeared to Moses has appeared to Joshua.

They can go up to Jericho with confidence.

GOD is with them!

Without God's presence and power, they would surely be defeated!

This isn't Joshua's battle—It's God's battle!

God will fight for them.

Armed with that assurance, they are now ready to face the battle.

[They will soon discover that the battle isn't going to happen the way they expected either!]

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS ENCOUNTER?

We are in the midst of a battle also —a spiritual battle.

If we think WE are in charge, we're kidding ourselves!

We need the help of the Commander in chief!

We will NEVER win the spiritual battle in our life by our strength!

We need the Commander in Chief to fight our battle for us!

Only He can give us victory.

He is with US, just as He was with Joshua.

Experiencing His victory still requires

acknowledging that He's in charge—not us—

and obeying His revealed will!

Our personal spiritual battle

Satan wants to distract us, detour us, and destroy us.

If we think we can fight that battle in our own strength, we're deceiving ourselves

We need the Commander in Chief

He will fight the battle for us.

Our church battles

Our financial situation [More significant yet, . . .]

Our outreach in this community and around the world

Our personal participation in ministry—"Building up to reach out!"

**In all these battles we must acknowledge our Commander in Chief,
submit to His authority and depend on Him!**