

LESSON 2

March 14, 2021

Unit I: Faithful Prophets

Making Wise Choices

Devotional Reading: Hebrews 11:23-31

Background Scriptures: Joshua 5:13–6:27

Print Passages: Joshua 5:13-15; 6:1-5, 15-16, 20

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, KJV)

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The LORD said to Joshua, “See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men.” (Joshua 6:2, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Explain how Joshua acted obediently to the vision from God.
- Reflect on our inefficiencies when challenges overwhelm us.
- Commit to obeying God especially in challenging times.

KEY TERMS

Holy (5:15)—Hebrew: *qodesh* (ko’-desh): apartness; sacredness.

Jericho (6:1)—Hebrew: *Yericho* (yer-ee-kho’): a city in the Jordan Valley captured by Joshua.

Joshua (5:13)—Hebrew: *Yehoshua* (yeh-ho-shoo’-ah): “the LORD is salvation”; Moses’ successor.

Rams’ horns (6:4)—Hebrew: *yobel* (yo-bale’): wind instruments.

INTRODUCTION

Our daily lives involve making multiple choices or decisions from the time we arise in the morning until we retire at night. We could conclude that all of life is about choices because every facet our lives involves making them: Rent or buy? Relocate or stay? Marry or remain single? Crest or Colgate? Coke or Pepsi? The list of choices is seemingly endless. An important step in making right choices is identifying what is most beneficial for our overall well-being—spiritually,

physically, emotionally, and mentally. Some choices will ultimately impact our spiritual life and have eternal consequences. That is why believers should commit their choices to the direction and leadership of the Holy Spirit. Spirit-led decision making requires humility and an intimate, obedient relationship with God. There will be times when the Lord may direct us to follow a path we do not fully understand. At such times, God expects unconditional obedience. As Israel prepared to take possession of the Promised Land, Joshua, the nation's appointed leader and military commander, demonstrated the kind of obedience that pleases God.

THE BIBLICAL CONTEXT

The book of Joshua is the first of the twelve historical books in the Bible. Authorship of the book is attributed to Joshua, Moses' understudy and successor as leader of the nation of Israel. Joshua's name means "Jehovah saves" or "the Lord is salvation," and is the Hebrew equivalent to the Greek name *Iēsous*, translated in the New Testament as "Jesus." Through Joshua, God delivered the Israelites into the Promised Land, just as He would later deliver future believers to salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. God called Joshua to lead Israel's military campaign to drive the idolatrous Canaanites out of the Promised Land. Joshua was prepared for this great task while serving as Moses' servant (see Exodus 24:13). He was mentored by Moses, empowered by the Holy Spirit, specifically commissioned, totally dedicated to God, and filled with wisdom. Under God's direction, Joshua prepared God's people to cross the Jordan River and enter the long-awaited Promised Land. Their first challenge was to confront a battle at the fortified city of Jericho. Prior to the campaign, a "commander of the host of the Lord" (a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ) visited Joshua with an unusual battle plan—one that Joshua did not fully understand but faithfully obeyed.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Encountering the Commander- in-Chief (Joshua 5:13-15)

KJV

13 And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?

14 And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant?

15 And the captain of the LORD's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.

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NIV

13 Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, “Are you for us or for our enemies?”

14 “Neither,” he replied, “but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come.” Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, “What message does my Lord have for his servant?”

15 The commander of the LORD’s army replied, “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so.

After coordinating the successful crossing of the overflowing Jordan River, Joshua focused on the first major challenge to Israel’s conquest of Canaan. He had directed two spies to view the land and provide information critical to a successful invasion. As Joshua contemplated the battle at Jericho—no doubt considering the plan of attack—he was interrupted by a man with a drawn sword (verse 13). Like any good soldier or commander, Joshua wanted to know if the man was a friend or a foe. The man did not provide a direct answer to Joshua’s question but informed Joshua that he had come as the “commander of the army of the Lord” (verse 14a, NIV). This self-identification revealed to Joshua that he was in the presence of the true Commander-in-Chief, the Lord Himself. Joshua experienced a theophany, a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ in human form. Recognizing that he was in God’s presence, Joshua immediately prostrated himself at the man’s feet and requested direction (verse 14b). Although he was Israel’s military general, Joshua realized that he was secondary in the chain of command. The man did not refuse Joshua’s act of worship and instructed him to remove his sandals because he was standing on holy ground (verse 15). There are several application points in this encounter. First, those who are focused on God’s mission can trust that God will make His presence known. Joshua did not seek personal glory but God’s glory. As Joshua remained focused, God assured him that He would guarantee the mission’s success and orchestrate the fall of Jericho. Second, those whom God appoints to a task must know the appropriate approach for entering God’s presence—worship. The assurance of God’s constant presence with us should impact our behavior, attitudes, and motives. God blesses those who regard Him with reverence. The angel of the Lord’s instruction for Joshua to remove his sandals was a summons to worship. When we give ourselves to God’s work, we must present ourselves reverently to God, removing any sin or unclean thing that might contaminate our worship. God’s appearance to Joshua was designed to help him (and us) understand His holiness and our sinfulness—His ultimate authority and our dependence on Him as the commander of our lives.

What Do You Think?

How does Joshua’s encounter with God compare with that of Moses’ at the burning bush? What spiritual lessons does the text teach us?

The Commander-in-Chief's Battle Strategy (Joshua 6:1-5)

KJV

NOW *JERICO* was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in.

2 And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour.

3 And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days.

4 And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of *rams' horns*: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets.

5 And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him.

NIV

NOW THE gates of *Jericho* were securely barred because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in.

2 Then the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men.

3 "March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days.

4 "Have seven priests carry trumpets of *rams' horns* in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets.

5 "When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have the whole army give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the army will go up, everyone straight in."

Joshua's submissive response to God positioned him to receive divine assistance in the battle against Jericho. Although Joshua had previously distinguished himself as a skilled military strategist against the Amalekites (see Exodus 17), God did not leave it to him to plan Jericho's defeat. God had promised the land of God to Israel through His covenant with Abraham and He would prove faithful to that promise, no matter what. The city of Jericho was well fortified, or "shut up" (verse 1)—that is, surrounded by a double ring of walls. The outer wall was six feet thick and the inner wall, twelve. Additionally, the city sat on a hill and could only be reached by climbing a steep incline. Without God's intervention, Jericho would have been unconquerable. Without a doubt, the victory over Jericho would be a gift from God (verse 2). God instructed Joshua to assign armed men, seven priests with trumpets, seven priests bearing the ark of the covenant, and the people to march around the city once a day for six days and seven times on the seventh (verses 3-4). When they finished marching on the seventh day and heard trumpets, they were to shout. God

assured Joshua that this unusual strategy would be successful and that the walls would fall (verse 5). As indicated in verse 2, God has already given an assurance of victory; the method of conquest was designed as a visible demonstration of God's power and unmerited favor. Joshua communicated this battle plan to the people, and there is no record of their questioning or complaining against him as their predecessors had complained against Moses. They believed God and chose to do what He had commanded even though it did not make sense. As the people participated obediently, God's power brought down the walls. Whenever God calls us to join Him in His kingdom work, we must follow His directions even if we do not understand His chosen methods. God assured Joshua that He would be with him just as He was with Moses. Likewise, believers today have the promise of God's presence, power, and protection as we walk according to His will. Those who are wise enough to understand who God is do not second-guess what God does. They realize that human understanding is no match for God's unlimited authority, wisdom, and power.

What Do You Think?

Why does God call us to follow directions we may not fully understand?

Victory through Obedience (Joshua 6:15-16, 20)

KJV

15 And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times.

16 And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city.

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20 So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.

NIV

15 On the seventh day, they got up at daybreak and marched around the city seven times in the same manner, except that on that day they circled the city seven times.

16 The seventh time around, when the priests sounded the trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the army, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the city!"

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20 When the trumpets sounded, the army shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the men gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so everyone charged straight in, and they took the city.

The message of chapter 6 is succinct and to the point; the great city Jericho was defeated in the most improbable way. The weapon God used for its destruction was obedience. These verses are a recap and implementation of His unusual battle strategy. The seventh day arrived and the people obediently circled the city seven times (verse 15). We can imagine the escalating fear of Jericho's inhabitants as they nervously watched the Israelites repeat their daily march, not once but seven times. After the priests blew the trumpets, Joshua issued the command for the people to shout (verse 16). This shout was Israel's battle cry; God heard it and caused the walls to fall, and the people entered and destroyed the city (verse 20). It was observed earlier that there is no record of the people's questioning God's strategy. Perhaps this is because this new generation learned from the past mistakes of their ancestors. They had witnessed the tragic results of complaining, grumbling, and rebelling against God's commands. My pastor has repeatedly told us that we can obey our way to blessings. Some failures and defeats in the lives of believers are attributed to disobedience. Believers must realize that victorious living is not achieved through partial obedience. In fact, partial obedience is synonymous to total disobedience. Obedience, like the demonstration of agape love, is a virtue that identifies us as followers of Christ. It is also proof that we genuinely love Him (see John 14:15). We must also expect that we won't always understand God's instructions, but they are always for our good if we obey them. Victorious living is the fruit of obedient living.

What Do You Think?

What was Christ's purpose for making obedience a proof of our love for Him?

A CLOSING THOUGHT

Joshua's faith in God had been tested and refined before he faced the responsibility of leading Israel to possess Canaan. In Israel's first major military battle, God assured Joshua of victory and gave unusual instructions. Because of his confidence in God, Joshua did not challenge or question God; he obeyed without hesitation. Making wise choices is not difficult for believers who are intimately connected to God, even when His will is not clear.

YOUR LIFE

It is inevitable that we will face times in which we will have to make difficult choices. The key to making wise ones, especially in difficult circumstances, will depend on the strength of our relationship with God. The more intimate the relationship with Him, the more discerning we will be and the easier to trust Him even when we don't fully understand His agenda for our lives.

YOUR WORLD!

Obedying God without questioning is a difficult challenge, especially when what He asks us to do seems to be outside the ordinary. Recalling His past works on our behalf and internalizing the promise of His presence, power, and protection will enable us to obey His commands or directions on faith without having to completely understand them.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, thank You for giving guidance, discernment, and strength for every task to which You have called us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

CONCLUSION (Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

The focus of next week's lesson is on the need for and quest of godly wisdom. Read 2 Kings 22 in preparation for this study.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS *(March 15-21, 2021)*

Huldah: Prophet of Wisdom

MONDAY, March 15: "God Loves Covenant Keepers" (Psalm 25:1-10)

TUESDAY, March 16: "Entering God's Promised Rest" (Hebrews 4:1-11)

WEDNESDAY, March 17 "A New Covenant Made with the Israelites" (Deuteronomy 29:1-6)

THURSDAY, March 18: "Josiah Prepares to Repair the Temple" (2 Kings 22:1-7)

FRIDAY, March 19: "Josiah Seeks Guidance to Confront Disobedience" (2 Kings 22 8-13)

SATURDAY, March 20: "Josiah Leads in Covenant Renewal" (2 Kings 23:1-3)

SUNDAY, March 21: "Huldah Confirms Coming Judgment; Josiah Is Spared" (2 Kings 22:14-20); Josiah Spared" (2 Kings 22:14-20)