

## Joshua: Prophet of Conquest

Wendell Lee looked out over the empty chairs. It was a Saturday morning, and he had come to the sanctuary to pray for his church members and the upcoming pastors' conference.

Pastor Wendell had been praying for God to grow his church. It had gone from 35 to 50 people in three years. The church held neighborhood outreach activities in the diverse surrounding communities, but in his mind, it had yielded little return.

At one of the conference sessions, Pastor Wendell sat next to a white pastor from the same county in St. Louis, Missouri. Pastor Rick had a white congregation of 75 people, and they were at a standstill, too. His church had also been praying for growth.

After the conference, the two men stayed in touch and began visiting one another's churches. Six months later, Pastor Wendell and Pastor Rick were out having lunch.

"So what do you think?" asked Pastor Rick.

"I think my congregation would be open to talking about our two churches merging," replied Pastor Wendell.

"I think my church will be on board with it," added Pastor Rick.

"What we want to stress to everyone from the beginning," offered Pastor Warren, "is that we want to see what God wants to do. It is all about Him."

"Agreed," said Pastor Rick.

**1.** *Why isn't it natural to seek God's agenda in our daily lives?*

**2.** *Why should we seek God's agenda for our lives?*

**3.** *Why does God's agenda for our lives bring glory to Him and not us?*

## Joshua Encounters the Commander

*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.

*Joshua 5:13-15, NIV*

<sup>13</sup>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?"

<sup>14</sup>"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?"

<sup>15</sup>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.

As the battle of Jericho approached, Joshua went out for another look at the city's towering wall. Thoughts of how to conquer the city likely occupied his mind before he encountered the stranger with a "drawn sword in his hand" (vs. 13).

Joshua did not recognize his divine visitor at first and understandably sought to know if He was for Israel or her "enemies." The response of "neither" might seem confusing to us at first (vs. 14). Why would the Lord not be on the side of His people whom He had commanded to conquer the land?

However, the proper question for Joshua to consider was not whether the Lord sided with Israel, but was Joshua on the Lord's side? Was he willing to follow God's plan for the upcoming battle?

Joshua's reverence and obedience to the Lord's command

to take off his sandals showed he had come to recognize the divine nature of his Visitor (vs. 15). Perhaps he remembered that when God appeared to Moses, He also commanded that he take off his sandals. In both cases, the Lord's presence made the ground beneath their feet holy (Exod. 3:5-6).

**4.** *Why might Joshua have gone to the vicinity of Jericho ahead of the battle?*

**5.** *Why did the commander of the Lord's army respond with the word "neither" to Joshua's question regarding whose side He represented?*

## Joshua Receives Unusual Instructions

*Joshua 6:1-5, KJV*

1 Now Jericho 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

*Joshua 6:1-5, NIV*

<sup>1</sup>Now the gates of Jericho were securely barred because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in.

<sup>2</sup>Then the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. <sup>3</sup>March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>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

*KJV*  
every man straight before  
him.

*NIV*  
collapse and the army will go up,  
everyone straight in.”

Despite the wall surrounding them, the inhabitants of Jericho feared the Israelites so much that they took the unusual step of shutting up their city so no one could leave or enter (vs. 1). Perhaps the successful visit of the spies (Josh. 2) caused them to block all entry to and exit from their city.

God assured Joshua of a total victory over Jericho before revealing His unusual instructions for the upcoming battle (vs. 2). He instructed Israel’s army and seven priests, along with the ark of the covenant, to march around the city once each day for the upcoming six days. On the seventh day, they were to encircle the city seven times before the priests would sound a long blast on the trumpets and the soldiers gave a loud shout.

One can imagine the ridicule of the city’s inhabitants on the first day as Israel’s army silently marched around Jericho but did not attack. While the unusual strategy might have brought the enemy’s scorn at first, what might they have thought on the seventh day as the army paraded around the city seven times?

**6.** *How might the unusual battle plan have tested both Joshua and the Israelites?*

**7.** *How might the repeated circling of the city have affected the inhabitants of Jericho?*

## Joshua Obeys the Lord

*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.

*Joshua 6:15-16, 20, NIV*

<sup>15</sup>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. <sup>16</sup>The seventh time around, when the priests sounded the

*KJV*

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.

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*

trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the army, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the city!

<sup>20</sup>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.

Joshua's prompt obedience to the Lord's instructions (Josh. 6:6-7) confirmed his trust in the Lord. He, along with Israel, displayed great faith in the Lord as they carried out God's plan for the battle (see Heb. 11:30).

The Israelites needed to rise early on the seventh day in order to complete the seven trips around Jericho (Josh. 6:15). By the seventh time, those inside the city would have seen rows of soldiers encircling the wall, followed by the priests blowing horns and accompanying the ark of the covenant, and then another large group of soldiers.

In accord with Joshua's command, the trumpets sounded and the army shouted (vs. 20). The wall "collapsed" as God removed Jericho's protection. The stunned inhabitants could never have imagined that their wall would just collapse for no apparent reason.

The significance of the soldiers charging "straight in" (vs. 20) is that it left no part of the city unconquered and allowed no one to escape. Since the army of Israel had virtually surrounded Jericho, they easily defeated the shocked inhabitants. The text does not record any opposition as they captured the city.

**8.** *How did the battle plan leave no room for anyone to escape from Jericho?*

## It's Not about Me!

I can't remember a time I wasn't planning my life agenda. Even at age 10, I was planning which junior high school and high school I would attend. Living in Detroit during the 60s required me to plan ahead to guarantee the best education as a black child. But, even then, God started to whisper to me that my agenda was not to be about me, but about Him.

My plan was to attend Cass Technical High School, the best high school in Detroit, as a Science and Art honor student. Despite my high GPA, my average standardized test scores kept me from the honor program. But I was accepted into the Chemistry/ Biology major. This major made me depend on God more for the grades I needed for university study.

Howard University was my dream school, but God made it clear that I was to accept admission at Western Michigan University (WMU). It was there that I learned the importance of the Holy Spirit in my walk with God and how to share my faith with others. In my first year, I led my roommate to the Lord and had a great small group Bible study.

My present position as director of a special needs school in Nigeria clearly demonstrates that God's agenda is about Him, not me. My agenda was to return to Nigeria at the age of 62 after retiring from the Los Angeles Unified School District, take care of my husband, and write books. But before I returned to Nigeria, the Director of Open Doors for Special Learners asked me to take over her position because she had been diagnosed with Parkinson's. My first response was "No!" But she told me every time she prayed about who was to take over for her, God gave her my name. Once again, God was teaching me that His agenda for my life was not about me, but about Him.

**9.** *Why do you think God's agenda is about Him, not us?*

**10.** *How can we know that our agenda is about God and not us?*

**11.** *What role does prayer and reading God's Word play in knowing God's agenda?*

## Refocus

Whether using a professional camera or a simple phone camera, focusing to get a clear picture can be difficult. The same is true when we focus our lives on our agenda instead of God's agenda. If God is not in the center, then you need to refocus your agenda so that it's about Him and not yourself.

► *What can you do to refocus your agenda to God's agenda? Take time now to pray for God to direct you on what you need to do in order to live His agenda in your life.*

### KEY VERSE

And 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

Then 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

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

#### Week of March 15 through March 21

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Psalm 25:1-10—God Loves Covenant Keepers.
- Tues.** Hebrews 4:1-11—Entering God's Promised Rest.
- Wed.** Deuteronomy 29:1-6—New Covenant Made with the Israelites.
- Thurs.** 2 Kings 22:1-7—Josiah Prepares to Repair the Temple.
- Fri.** 2 Kings 22 8-13—Josiah Seeks Guidance to Confront Disobedience.
- Sat.** 2 Kings 23:1-3—Josiah Leads in Covenant Renewal.
- Sun.** 2 Kings 22:14-20—Huldah Confirms Coming Judgment; Josiah Spared.