

Remnant Life Church

May 10, 2026

Familiar Stories Retold:

The Wisdom of Joshua

Joshua 6:1-17

Many stories of the OT have become so familiar that we can easily miss the true depth of what there is to learn

- The intense visual of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego being thrown into the fiery furnace can obscure the fact that they total and complete confidence in the power of God
 - But they also surrendered themselves fully to His will, whether they lived or died
- The story of Solomon and the 2 mothers who came to seek his judgement emphasized the love of a mother who would sacrifice her own desires for the good of her son
- And this morning, perhaps one of the most famous of all the OT stories carries with it much more than the spectacle of the event it self

Read – Joshua 6:1-17

- Background
 - The Hebrew people have been freed from their over 400 years of slavery in Egypt
 - They have come to the Jordan River and in **Numbers 13** we read that Moses sends one man from each of the 12 tribes to explore Canaan
 - This is the land God promised to give to the people for their own
 - The 12 returned with 10 of the spies reporting that the people had no chance to take the land (**Num 13:26-33**)
 - But 2 of the men (Joshua and Caleb) said to move on and take what God had promised them
 - The people believed the 10 and refused to advance
 - They even began to talk of stoning Moses and Aaron, selecting a new leader and returning to Egypt (**Num 14:1-4**)
 - Because they did not put their trust and faith in God, He caused them to wander in the desert for 40 until every man of fighting age (20+) was dead. (**Num 14:26-35; Josh 5:6**)
 - And so in **Joshua 6**, our reading this morning, Israel is coming to the end of their time of wandering
 - Only one major obstacle remains before they begin the campaign to occupy the promised land
 - Now because all of the men of military age who had come out of Egypt were dead for their disbelief, this new generation had never experienced the power of God
 - They had never witnessed the 10 plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, the giving of manna to feed the people or any of the other miracles of God
 - They had only heard the stories
 - IOW, the Israelites had become a shell of their former selves
 - Even the manna that God stopped supplying in **Joshua 5** had likely become commonplace to them

- But two very important events needed to take place before the people could encounter Jericho

- 1. **Joshua 3** – we read that the people crossed the Jordan on dry ground
 - Now there are four times in the scripture that God supernaturally parted waters for His people to cross to the other side
 - The first, of course, is at the Red Sea (**Ex 14:21-22**)
 - The second time was here at the Jordan River when Joshua led the people across (**Josh 3:15-17**)
 - The third and fourth times were when Elijah and Elisha came to the Jordan and then when Elisha returned after Elijah was taken to heaven (**2 Kings 2:8,14**)
 - This miracle of the parting waters was very important because it was the first demonstration of God's power since his punishment of the people when they made the golden calf (**Ex 32**)
 - God wanted them to understand that nothing in the natural was too great for His power because they were going to need this level of faith soon
 - Before they even got to Jericho, God was already at work preparing the way (**5:1**)
 - Because when 2 spies are sent to Jericho they discover that the people of Jericho were afraid

- 2. **Joshua 5** – The second thing that needed to happen was when God required the circumcision of the men born outside of Egypt
 - This was the outward sign of a people who belonged to God (**Gen 17** – the covenant with Abraham)
 - Unless they willingly entered into this covenant, they would not receive the blessings of God (**Gen 17:14**)

- All the things of the past associated with Egypt were about to end both from without and from within
 - God had physically taken the people out of Egypt
 - But it was their willingness to embrace the covenant again and make a personal commitment to follow God that meant Egypt would be fully taken out of their hearts
 - And then, the daily representation of their desert wanderings, the consequence of their sin of unbelief, would also come to an end
 - In **Josh 5:10-12** we read they celebrated Passover
 - And to do this mean they ate the food of the land and killed the lambs of their flocks
 - It was a Passover celebration that marked the beginning of their journey
 - And it would be this Passover meal that would mark the end
 - The very next day the manna stopped
 - Because God was ready to take them to a new place

- And what was true for the children of Israel is also true for us today, moving forward almost always means that you must leave the old behind
 - Now they could attack Jericho with all their might – or so they thought
- Jericho
 - One of the oldest cities of that day
 - It sits at the southernmost eastern tip of the Fertile Crescent
 - The most impressive thing about the city, besides its great age, was the heavily fortified walls
 - They were wide enough for a chariot to ride along meaning the width of the walls was at least between 12 and 15 feet
 - Impossible to breach the walls – 30-35 ft. high built on a crest
 - They were so imposing that they had become a representation and the very symbol of the strength of the Canaanite people and their gods
 - These were the same people and the same city that the spies had seen 40 years earlier

So how is Joshua going to approach this daunting task of conquering a city that had never been conquered in its long and ancient history?

- Joshua's wisdom and obedience
 - (5:13) Joshua is scouting out the city
 - What you must realize is that Joshua is preparing to do what he has always done and done very well
 - He was a great military leader and the one who God chose to lead the people after the death of Moses
 - But in this case, something unusual will occur
 - And it will challenge Joshua to move from what he knew very well to something that, quite frankly, made absolutely no sense
 - What initiated this change, we read, is Joshua's encounter with The Commander of the Army of God
 - Joshua is apparently by himself likely mulling over the task that is before him
 - At this time, it appears that God has given him no plan or instructions
 - Remember, this city had never before been conquered yet Joshua knew he would have to deal with this fortress before moving on into Canaan
 - He comes upon a man standing with a drawn sword (Josh 5:13)
 - Being a good soldier, the first thing you do is find out if a person is a friend or a foe
 - The origin of the handshake
 - And upon hearing the stranger's answer, Joshua falls facedown to worship him
 - While the identity of this heavenly being is still debated among biblical scholars, I firmly believe it was Jesus – two reasons

- An angel would never have accepted worship from Joshua
 - We see this in [Rev 22:8-9](#) when John falls down at the feet of an angel and the angel says to him, “Don’t do that! I am a fellow servant...”
- And the only other time someone was told to take off their shoes was in God’s direct presence
 - Moses at the site of the burning bush ([Gen 3:5](#))
- I have no doubt that this was Jesus!

1. Joshua then receives the “battle” plan ([6:2-5](#))

- These instructions from God went against every natural instinct and experience Joshua had
 - What must have been going through his mind as he is hearing this?
 - The capture of Jericho was central to Joshua’s entire military strategy for entering the land of Canaan
 - The defeat of the city would have shown the superior power of God over the Canaanite gods and removed their greatest physical obstacle to entering the promised land
 - Put yourself in Joshua’s shoes for just a moment
 - He must go back and tell the generals what the plan is
 - Not a brilliant military strategy but a plan that appears to not even require the army be a part of it!
 - Does it not appear to you that God went out His way to choose a rather absurd means to accomplish His will?
 - We are not given any insight into what Joshua’s plans might have been
 - Certainly, there would have been time and conversations spent with his advisors
 - They would have consulted the spies who went into the city and were hidden by Rahab so they could escape ([Josh 2](#))
 - We don’t know how elaborate his plans might be at this point
 - But following his encounter with The Supreme Commander, Joshua’s plans were thrown out and new plans were put in place
 - And these plans were unlike anything anyone had ever seen or attempted before
 - To obey God required great wisdom and obedience from Joshua
 - The marching around the city once each day for six days and seven on the seventh day were bad enough
 - But then, the soldiers were not even permitted to speak
 - They were not to say a word while they marched ([Josh 6:10](#))
 - Can you imagine the people’s reactions as the news began to filter through the camp?
 - “He is going to do what?”
 - It’s true, they would answer, we are going to walk around the city and we are commanded to march in silence
- There are a couple of fundamental theological lesson in this very simple godly strategy

- First, God is always teaching us to rely and trust in Him rather than on our own cleverness and plans
- Second, our words are of no value when compared to the words of God
 - The words of God are so important that this was satan's first challenge and temptation – “Did God really say...?”
 - And very often, our words are often what prevents us from hearing God's words
- Three things were required of Joshua and they are still required of us today
 1. **Faith** – to believe God
 2. **Obedience in Wisdom** – even in the face of a natural impossibility
 3. **Surrender**
 - This third one was then and remains today the most difficult
 - It required that Joshua give up what he knew best
 - It required him putting aside what had always worked for him
- One last thing to consider, until it was over I would think Joshua was fighting doubt the entire time
 - Not so much that he did not obey
 - Struggling and wrestling with doubt in your life is not necessarily a lack of faith
 - But it is what you do, your actions during the times of struggle that demonstrates whether you believe in the power of God in your life
- Jesus had to comfort His disciples many times especially toward the end of His ministry
- And the words that Jesus spoke to them during their last time when they were together in the Upper Room still fill us with hope and assurance
- Listen to what the apostle John records as we close...

John 14: 1- 6 - *Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”*