

January 29, 2012

FOR US OR AGAINST US
Joshua 5: 13-15

You will remember that God has (miraculously) delivered the nation Israel into Canaan, the Promised Land. **They** have submitted to circumcision (which had been neglected by their fathers in the wilderness). **They** have kept the Passover. **The** manna has ceased and they are eating of the old corn of the land.

They are encamped at Gilgal on the outskirts of Jericho, which will be the first obstacle in their conquest of Canaan. **They** are NOW ready to begin their POSSESSION of the land before them.

Look at Joshua 5: 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?”**

Joshua was by Jericho. **Jericho** was destined to be Israel's first encounter with the inhabitants of Canaan. **It** was the first obstacle standing between them taking POSSESSION of this land. **Maybe** Joshua was contemplating his next move. **Maybe** he was praying. **Maybe** he was mediating. **There** is really no way to know for sure.

But, he lifted up his eyes, indicating that he was (perhaps) in some mode of contemplation, and (perhaps) startled. **He** saw a man, one indicating his readiness to fight (his sword was drawn). **And**, Joshua went to this man with his most urgent question. “**Are you for us?**” **Or**, “**are you for our adversaries?**” (i.e. “**Are you FOR us, OR are you for those who stand OPPOSED to us?**”)

Are you for US? **Who** is represented in the “US”? **It is** God's chosen/set apart nation. **It is** the nation which God had DETERMINED to POSSESS this land of Canaan. **It is** those who had been given this land in a promise to their father Abraham over 400 years earlier. **It is** those CERTAIN to POSSESS this land of Promise.

Joshua is asking this man, are you for US. **God** has brought US here to POSSESS this land. **Are** you for US in this endeavor?

And, “**Are you FOR us?**” **Will** you be using your sword for OUR benefit? **Can** we count on your support? **Are** you FOR us?

Spiritually and TYPICALLY, the “US” is those CHOSEN of God IN CHRIST and given all the benefits and blessings of grace (in Him) before the world began.

Look at II Timothy 1: 8-9 “**Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; 9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.**”

Are you FOR those chosen by God and redeemed by Christ. **Are** you FOR each of them POSSESSING, enjoying, resting in the salvation they were given in Christ before the world began?

OR, are you AGAINST us? **Who** represented those AGAINST Israel? **It was** ANY who stood in opposition to them OCCUPYING (POSSESSING) the land God had given them. **These** did not know they were standing in opposition to what God had ordained and what was CERTAIN to take place. **God** had (already) DETERMINED that Israel OCCUPY this land. He had (ALREADY) ORDAINED that they POSSESS it as their own.

In the Scriptures the question Joshua asks is (always) EITHER/OR. **When** it comes to the salvation of God, when it comes to the people of God, you MUST either be FOR us or you are (automatically) AGAINST us. **That** is what Christ told those who accused him of casting out demons by Beelzebug.

Look at Matthew 12: 30 **“He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.”**

When it comes to the people of God and their eternal well being, there is no straddling of the fence. **You** are either working IN behalf of God’s chosen people. **You** are FOR them. **OR**, you are (automatically) working AGAINST them.

You are either working FOR a salvation that sinners obtain by THEIR doing. (I.e. **You are** either encouraging sinners to DO (something) in order to get saved.) **OR**, you are working FOR sinners to POSSESS (that) salvation which Christ has ALREADY obtained for them. **Paul**, the Apostle, said that he was working FOR the latter.

Look at II Timothy 2: 10 **“Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”**

Paul never said that his work was to show sinners what THEY must do to get themselves saved. That’s legalism. **There** is something to be done. **There** is MUCH being done (BY and IN those sinners whom God has regenerated). **But**, NOTHING being done BY them or IN them is to GAIN or MAINTAIN salvation.

Joshua knew that God was FOR National Israel. **He** knew that He was FOR them POSSESSING the Promised Land. **He is** asking this **“man”**, “Are (you) FOR us, or AGAINST us?” **Has** God sent YOU as an ally or an enemy? **And**, this **“man”** responds.

Look at Joshua 5: 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?”**

In response to Joshua’s question, the man said, **“Nay”**. **I am** NOT for your adversaries. **I am** NOT for those who would oppose you. **But**, I am FOR the L O R D. **I am** FOR Jehovah who saves. **I am** FOR the carrying out of His purposes. **In fact**, I am the “Captain” of those whom God is FOR. **I am** the “Captain of His host”. **I am** God’s “Captain” sent to insure that ALL of God’s purposes are fulfilled, especially those concerning the salvation of His people.

Who was God FOR in the book of Joshua? **National** Israel/ POSSESSION of Canaan.

And, National Israel's POSSESSION of the Promised Land did (indeed) concern the (eternal) salvation of God's people. National Israel's POSSESSION of this land is TYPICAL of Spiritual Israel's POSSESSION of salvation.

God brought Israel to REST in this land they were given by Promise. **And**, He did so to TYPIFY His bringing His elect to REST in the salvation they were given in Christ before the world began.

It was (vitaly) important that the TYPE not fail in order to insure that its ANTI-TYPE would not fail. **National** Israel (the TYPE) MUST (possess) Canaan, because Spiritual Israel (the ANTI-TYPE/God's elect) MUST (possess) the salvation they have ALREADY been given in Christ.

That is why the Captain of the Lord's host has come. **The** mission standing before Joshua and Israel is VITAL. **It** MUST NOT fail. **It** MUST succeed. **And**, its success depends ENTIRELY upon God.

That is why He sent Christ, the (eternal) Captain of His host to encourage Joshua, the (temporary) Captain of National Israel's fighting forces. **He** wanted Joshua to know that God was FOR National Israel. **He** was FOR them POSSESSING this land they had been given. **He** was FOR each (individual) family POSSESSING their portion of this land.

And, NOTHING could stand in their way. NOTHING could stop their success in this matter; because: **“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?”** (Rom 8: 31). If God is FOR anyone, whether National Israel's POSSESSION of Canaan, or Spiritual Israel's POSSESSION of (eternal) salvation, who can thwart it or stop it?

Look at Daniel 4: 35 **“And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?”**

Now, when the Captain of the Lord's host made Joshua to understand who He was, and why He came, and who He was FOR, Joshua's PERCEPTION of this Person was changed. **He** saw Him to be God in human flesh.

Look back at Joshua 5: 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?”**

Joshua no longer saw this One as a (mere) man. **He** now saw Him to be God. He saw Him to be God in human flesh, (the God-man). **He** saw Him to be the One in whom **“all of the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily”**. Joshua was looking at a man. **But**, he now saw that man to ALSO be God.

And, he showed Him the REVERENCE He deserved. He worshipped Him. **Joshua** worshipped the One whom God had sent to GUARANTEE that National Israel POSSESS the land of Canaan.

God ALONE deserves such REVERENCE. **God ALONE** is to be worshipped. **When** Christ revealed Himself to Joshua (as God-man), he honored Him with worship.

öWho is God FOR in this world (in ANY generation)?ö **Who** is He FOR (right now)? **He is** FOR those who HONOR His Son. **He is** FOR those who seek Him (the Just God and Savior He is), THROUGH His Son.

How do you honor God as God? You honor His Son. **How** do you honor His Son? **You** honor His person. **You** honor His work. **You** honor His salvation. **You** honor His obedience unto death as that ALONE which enables God to justify (otherwise) ungodly sinners. **You** work in the behalf of those whom God is FOR. **You** öworshipö Him öwhom God has sent”.

That is what this age is all about. **God** is öseekingö sinners to worship Him (a Just God and Savior) through His Son. **That** is what Christ told the öwoman at the wellö.

Look at John 4: 22-23 “**Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.**

23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.”

If there are TRUE worshippers, there must also be FALSE worshippers. **If there** are those worshipping the true and living God, there must also be those worshipping ögodsö of their imaginations (**I.e.** those who worship, “**they know not what**”)

God spoke to Israel in Isaiah 45: 20 “**They have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save.”**

Who do you (**Who** do I) worship? **Is it** the God who justifies the ungodly? **Is it** the God who saves through Christ, the God-man, His finished work to put away the sin of His people and bring in everlasting Righteousness by the sacrifice of Himself (all efforts by sinners excluded)? **Is it** the öCaptain of the LORD’s hostö?

OR, is it one who claims to be, but, falls short of the criteria that would identify and distinguish him as such? **Joshua** öworshippedö this One whom he saw to be God and man in one person.

In verse 14 Joshua acknowledged this ömanö to be God. (**He** “worshippedö Him.) **In** verse 15 this ömanö made it (absolutely) CLEAR that He was God and why He came.

Look at Joshua 5: 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.”**

This is one of those pre-incarnate appearances of Christ. **He** came to Abraham on the plains of Mamre on His way to deliver Lot and destroy Sodom and Gomorrah.

He appeared to Moses in the öburning bushö. **He** wrestled with Jacob before He changed Jacob’s name to Israel.

Here, He appears to Joshua as “**a man with a sword drawn in His hand**”. **This** õmanö, (Christ), had already acknowledged His deity. **When** Joshua worshipped Him, He did not protest. **Had** He NOT been worthy of Joshua’s õworshipö, He would not have allowed it.

Here, (as He had done to Moses in the burning bush), He announces that the place He occupies is õholyö. **And**, commands Joshua to remove his shoes.

No doubt the place occupied by the God-man was holy. **It was** sanctified. **It was** set apart BECAUSE OF Christ’s presence. **They** were standing outside Jericho. And, as we will see in a later lesson, Jericho (and all that pertained to it) was utterly destroyed. **It was** destroyed because it was õaccursedö, which means it was DEVOTED to God.

But, there is another issue here. **That** issue is the GLORY of God. **All** of God’s GLORY resides in Christ. **To see** Christ is to see God. **To know** Christ is to know God. To be in the presence of Christ is to be in the presence of Him who upholds God’s GLORY. **Without** Christ (Person/work), there is no GLORY to God. **God’s** GLORY (as a Just God and Savior) is in the õface of Jesus Christö.

Look at II Corinthians 4: 6 “**For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**”

In the matter of National Israel POSSESSING the land of Canaan, it is not so much about Israel gaining/having a land to call their own, as it is God fulfilling His promise to Abraham to GIVE his descendants this land. **It is** MORE about God’s faithfulness to His promise. **It is** MORE about upholding the honor of God’s character. **It is** MORE about God’s GLORY.

In the matter of (eternal) salvation it is not so much about sinners being saved as it is about God being GLORIFIED. **It is** about God doing what HE has PURPOSED to do.

He PURPOSED for National Israel to POSSESS the land of Canaan. **He** has purposed that Spiritual Israel know and worship Him as He is. (**I.e. to know** Him as a Just God and Savior; to POSSESS the salvation they were given in Christ before the world began.)

This salvation is CERTAIN because God has purposed it; **because** Christ has done everything necessary for God’s elect to have it; **and**, because the Spirit is doing everything necessary for Spiritual Israel to POSSESS it.

Joshua was outside Jericho contemplating his next move. **And**, Christ came with His õsword drawn in His handö. **Christ** came to assure Joshua that the battle was HIS. **He** came because His Father’s GLORY was at stake. **And**, He came to command Joshua’s worship and obedience.

Christ comes to His elect in the Gospel that same way. **He** reveals Himself as the One in whom all of God’s redemptive glory rests and commands their worship and obedience.

Who is God FOR in this world (in ANY generation)? **He** is FOR those who WORSHIP Him, (a Just God and Savior). **He** is FOR those who come to Him THROUGH His Son (His finished work ALONE). **He** is FOR those who HONOR/REVERENCE the Son with õworshipö.

And, He is FOR those who REVERENCE His Son with obedience.

Look back at Joshua 5: 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.**”

This command for Joshua to remove his shoes COULD BE a command for Joshua to cease his efforts and look to the Captain of the LORD’s host. **This** battle belongs to Him. **Therefore**, the victory is already assured.

And, Joshua did so. Joshua responded with OBEDIENCE. **That** is the ONLY (proper) response to One you truly see as Lord.

Look at Hebrews 5: 8-9 “**Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;**

9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;”

He is the author of eternal salvation unto all them that OBEY Him; to all who come to Him, to all who rest in Him, to all who find all their hope of final glory in His doing and dying ALONE.

To NOT respond with OBEDIENCE to one you call Lord is a CONTRAST. **That** is what Christ said to those of His day.

Look at Luke 6: 46-47 “**And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? 47 Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like:” Context!**

That is (exactly) what sinners do who CLAIM that their hope is in Christ, but go on trying to work out salvation by THEIR efforts; THEIR contributions; THEIR faith. **They** CLAIM that their (spiritual) house is built on a rock. **But**, then, INSIST that you are NOT saved UNTIL you close the deal (with faith, reformation or good works).

EITHER Christ ACCOMPLISHED salvation for EVERY sinner He died for by His obedience unto death. **OR**, Christ just made salvation a POSSIBILITY; and, sinners must work it out (complete it/appropriate it) by THEIR efforts.

The first is the house built on the Rock; the latter the one on the sand. **To** obey God is to REST in that salvation Christ has ACCOMPLISHED for every sinner He lived and died for.

It is apparent that God saw the need for Joshua to know (without question) that He was FOR National Israel’s POSSESSION of the Promised Land. **He** sent His Son to confirm it. **He** sent Christ to remove all doubt. **He** sent Christ to make it happen (exactly) as it was purposed. **He** sent Christ to insure the GLORY of God in this matter.

It is equally important for God’s people to know that He is FOR them (each of them) POSSESSING the salvation He has given them in Christ before the foundation of the world.

So, He comes to them in the Gospel declaring who Christ is, (God-man). **He** comes to them declaring sin put away. **He** comes to them declaring righteousness established and imputed. **He** comes to them declaring salvation ACCOMPLISHED and CERTAIN to be revealed to all for whom Christ has lived and died.

He comes announcing that the battle has already been won; the victory already gained. **Christ** arose the victorious Savior of His people. **And**, He comes commanding all who hear to OBEY the Gospel. **He** comes commanding all who hear to REST in Christ in order that His sheep might be made manifest in each generation.

The õgood newsö of the Gospel is that, Christ has entered into heaven (itself), **“having obtained eternal redemption for us”** (Heb 9: 12).

The command of the Gospel is õremove your shoesö (I.e. Cease your efforts to õobtainö/work out salvation.) **God’s** GLORY in salvation depends on Christ’s work ALONE. **Rest** in the salvation Christ has ALREADY obtained for a people of God’s choosing.

God commands His preachers in every generation, **“Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature”**. **And**, Christ commands all who hear the Gospel to find their õrestö in Him.

Look at Matthew 11: 28-30 **“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.**

29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Christ appeared to Joshua in the plains of Jericho to assure him that the success of the battles that lay before National Israel was not dependent on THEIR strength and power. **The** success of them POSSESSING the land they had been given was HIS hands, (not) THEIRS. **Joshua** responded with õworshipö and õobedienceö. **By** that he gave evidence that he was one whom God was FOR.

Christ comes to every Spiritual Israelite in the Gospel, declaring a SUCCESSFUL Savior, a FINISHED salvation; sin put away; righteousness established and imputed; **God** GLORIFIED as a Just God and Savior based on Christ’s work ALONE.

Christ cannot and will not fail to bring each one that the Father has chosen, each one He has redeemed. **He** will send the Spirit to õcallö each of them to Himself. **This** is HIS (on-going) work in each generation as long as the world remains.

“All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me.” “Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them I MUST bring.”

In closing, is God is FOR you/me? **OR**, is He AGAINST us? **“How** have you responded to the Gospel?ö **Have** you seen the God-man Savior God has sent? **Have** you understood the salvation He has ALREADY worked out for those who were chosen in Him õbefore the foundation of the worldö? **Have** you RESTED all your hope of acceptance with God (all your salvation) in Christ’s finished work ALONE? Have you seen that YOUR efforts are (totally) EXCLUDED in this matter?

Our answers to these questions will tell us (WITHOUT QUESTION) whether God is FOR US OR AGAINST US.

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