

“JOSHUA AND ANGELS”

After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, it came to pass that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying: "Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them-the children of Israel..."Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:1-2,9 NKJV)

In last week's sermon on Moses and angels, I said that the LORD spoke to Moses most of the time directly without angels as intermediaries. God spoke directly to Abraham but He used angels when dealing with members of Abraham's family. With Jacob God sometimes spoke directly and sometimes used angels.

God spoke directly to Joshua. Fourteen times in the book of Joshua we read either "the LORD spoke" to Joshua or "the LORD said" to Joshua. Always the holy name of God, the LORD, is used.

Joshua is often under rated in our list of heroes in the Bible. Consider these facts about Joshua: God named the human person of His Son after Joshua – Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua. When Moses sent spies into Canaan the first time, only Joshua and Caleb came back with a faithful report; the other ten discouraged the people. Joshua led the people of Israel in conquering the land of Canaan, sometimes battling seven armies at once. Joshua was a powerful religious leader.

Now Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died when he was one hundred and ten years old... When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel. Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals; and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger. (Judges 2:8-12 NKJV)

In several places in the Bible it says that it was after the death of Joshua that the people turned from the Lord to worship idols.

1.) And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, "Are You for us or for our adversaries?" So He said, "No, but as Commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, "What does my Lord say to His servant?" Then the Commander of the LORD'S army said to Joshua, "Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy." And Joshua did so. (Joshua 5:13-15 NKJV)

This is the only direct encounter of Joshua with an angel that I could find. There were at least four momentous events that occurred directly before Joshua's meeting with this angel.

The people of Israel had just crossed the Jordan River. As God parted the waters of the Red Sea when Moses led them out of Egypt, He again parted the waters of the Jordan River as Joshua led them into Canaan, the Promised Land.

The Amorite kings who lived on the west side of the Jordan and even the kings along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea heard how the LORD dried up the Jordan River so the people of Israel could cross. They lost heart and were paralyzed with fear.

The LORD told Joshua to command that all the men be circumcised. None of the men who were born after they left Egypt had been circumcised. After all the males had been circumcised they rested in the camp until they were healed.

Then the LORD said to Joshua, "This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." Therefore the name of the place is called Gilgal to this day. (Joshua 5:9 NKJV)

After this, the people celebrated the Passover. That day the manna ceased to fall and they ate food from the crops of Canaan.

Before them was Jericho, the first place they must conquer. The angel Commander came to get Joshua's attention. But just as at the burning bush, it was the LORD who spoke, "I have given you Jericho."

2.) "I will send My fear before you, I will cause confusion among all the people to whom you come, and will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. "And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before you. (Exodus 23:27-28 NKJV)

This promise was made by the LORD through Moses to the first generation of people who had just left Egypt and were beginning their journey through the Wilderness.

"If you should say in your heart, 'These nations are greater than I; how can I dispossess them?' - you shall not be afraid of them, but you shall remember well what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt: the great trials which your eyes saw, the signs and the wonders, the mighty hand and the outstretched arm, by which the LORD your God brought you out. So shall the LORD your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid. Moreover the LORD your God will send the hornet among them until those who are left, who hide themselves from you, are destroyed." (Deuteronomy 7:17-20 NKJV)

This promise was made by the LORD through Moses to the second generation. These people had all been born after their parents left Egypt during the forty years in the Wilderness. They were now poised to cross the Jordan River to fight to conquer the Promised Land.

‘Then you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho. And the men of Jericho fought against you-also the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. But I delivered them into your hand. ‘I sent the hornet before you which drove them out from before you, also the two kings of the Amorites, but not with your sword or with your bow. (Joshua 24:11-12 NKJV)

These are the words of the LORD through Joshua to the leaders of the people of Israel. They were of the second and third generations of those who followed Moses out of Egypt. Joshua was now old and was about to die. Through Joshua God reminded them of what He did.

To repeat three times that God sent hornets to aid them in the battles means that God, whose Word it is, considered it important for them and us to remember and to think about. The Commander of the LORD’s army brought an army of angels who took the form of hornets.

When the LORD sends angels, His purposes are at stake. He may allow us to suffer or lose for our good. His eternal will must never fail.

3.) Then God's anger was aroused because he went, and the Angel of the LORD took His stand in the way as an adversary against him. And he was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. Now the donkey saw the Angel of the LORD standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand, and the donkey turned aside out of the way and went into the field. So Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back onto the road. Then the Angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on this side and a wall on that side. And when the donkey saw the Angel of the LORD, she pushed herself against the wall and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall; so he struck her again. Then the Angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. And when the donkey saw the Angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam; so Balaam's anger was aroused, and he struck the donkey with his staff. Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?" And Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you have abused me. I wish there were a sword in my hand, for now I would kill you!" So the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden, ever since I became yours, to this day? Was I ever disposed to do this to you?" And he said, "No." Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the Angel of the LORD standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand; and he bowed his head and fell flat on his face. And the Angel of the LORD said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to stand against you, because your way is perverse before Me. "The donkey saw Me and turned aside from Me these three times. If she had not turned aside from Me, surely I would also have killed you by now, and let her live." And Balaam said to the Angel of the LORD, "I have sinned, for I did not know You stood in the way against me. Now therefore, if it displeases You, I will turn back." Then the Angel of the LORD said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but only the word that I speak to you, that you shall speak." So Balaam went with the princes of Balak. (Numbers 22:22-35 NKJV)

This is a long passage of Scripture. I want you to hear/read it because the Angel of the LORD is acting or speaking in nearly every verse. It is an important passage in the study of Joshua and angels because one of the most important angels is acting on Joshua's behalf and Joshua doesn't even know about it. Moses was still alive, and Joshua was his military leader. King Balak of Moab was distraught because he saw a vast army marching toward his land. He sends for Balaam to put curses on the advancing people and army. He takes Balaam up on a mountain where he can see Joshua and the Israelites. Every time Balaam tries to curse the Israelites, it becomes a blessing.