

Joshua 5:13-6:5
Meeting Jesus Before Jericho

13 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?"

14 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?"

15 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.

NKJ Joshua 6:1 Now Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel; none went out, and none came in.

2 And the LORD said to Joshua: "See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor.

3 "You shall march around the city, all you men of war; you shall go all around the city once. This you shall do six days.

4 "And seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. But the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets.

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

The Veggietales series of Kid's videos by Big Idea productions are very clever, and I really enjoy them whenever they are addressing non-biblical subjects. But I have to admit I get very uncomfortable when they handle biblical stories, because they inevitably ended up creating a parody of a very important subject and end up teaching a morality story instead of directing kid's to salvation by faith alone. They also tend to sanitize the bible in a way that makes serious sins very trivial. For instance, David's Adultery with Bathsheba and Murder of Uriah is retold in the story of King George and the Ducky with the King simply being selfish and wanting someone else's rubber ducky when he already had plenty. In the end the King learns not to be selfish, the man he took it from gets it back, and everyone lives happily ever after. A big difference from God's declaration that "Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house" and so on.

But the Veggietales that most makes me most uncomfortable is "Josh and the Big Wall" and not because of the sin minimizing that again goes on or that the Jerichites become French Peas who throw Purple Slushies from the wall, but because of its retelling of this encounter between Joshua and the Commander of the Army of the Lord in which the Commander is lampooned as a bumbling Asparagus. Now it would be bad enough if it was just an angel of the Lord who was being parodied in the video, but who is this that Joshua is really meeting with? *Lets look at what the word tells us to find out and then I think you'll see why the parody makes me particularly uncomfortable...*

Like any good commander Joshua has gone up to Jericho to take a look at the enemy position and you can imagine him trudging up towards the city from Gilgal only to suddenly look up and see directly in front of him a Man with a sword in his hand. You can imagine his surprise he probably jumps back, but he doesn't immediately draw his own sword, because apparently this man doesn't look like an Israelite or a Canaanite. In fact, Joshua is so confused he asks him "Are you for us or for our adversaries?"

Are you an ally or a foe? Asks Joshua but the man answers entirely differently – No he says. He doesn't fit into either one of Joshua's categories. He is something else entirely, he is in fact the commander, the

prince, the chief of the Army of the Lord. And here host of the Lord, or tsaba Yahweh, is not the Angelic host, although that is probably also included in the idea, but literally the Lord's Army which he himself has brought over the river to the very gates of Jericho. This Man appears and announces that He is Joshua's *prince*.

Joshua, unlike the animators at big idea, immediately grasps what He is saying and who He is. He falls to the earth face down and offers him worship and acknowledges his sovereignty over Him asking for him to command Him as He will:

"What does my Lord say to His servant?"

Then the prince the commander says to Joshua, ***"Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy."***

Now where have you seen that phrase before? The answer of course is many years before in Exodus 3:5 when God is addressing Moses and giving him His commission to go and free his people from bondage to Egypt. Just as God appeared to Moses then to instruct him on how He would be used to supernaturally destroy Egypt and deliver his people out of bondage, so God is now appearing to Joshua to instruct him how He will supernaturally destroy Jericho and allow his people to enter into Canaan – because of course Jericho was the southern gate keeper of the Land and unless the city fell, the people could never safely enter in.

So the Lord tells him to take off his Sandals, Joshua is standing on Holy Ground – not because this patch of land is particularly Holy, but because the Lord himself is present here. It is a theophany, a visible manifestation of God in human form. So which person of the Godhead are we speaking of here. Well the word he used to announce himself was "The Captain or Prince of the Army of the Lord, who is the Captain of the Army of the Lord, the Head of the Church, the Prince of princes and king of kings? It the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one who many years later will tell Peter ***"do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?"***

Now, I believe that Commentators like Calvin and Dale Ralph Davis are right to say that we should understand 5:13-6:5 to be one unit, one discourse, and verse 6:1 to be a parenthetical aside. So that the exchange between Christ and Joshua begins in 5:13 and continues on through 6:5 that is why we simply read in 6:2 ***"And the LORD said to Joshua: "See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor."*** The Lord continues to speak to his servant answering Joshua's question: ***"What does my Lord say to His servant?"***

Why then do we have the narrative comment in 6:1 ***"Now Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel; none went out, and none came in."***?

The answer is because the scriptures want to make sure you understand how hopeless the situation really is from a military point of view. The city is shut securely. They can't get in by a raid, and they are totally unprepared for siege warfare. The best they could hope for under normal circumstances would be to encamp around the city and try to starve the Jerichites into submission, something that would have taken weeks or months, and the chances are slim that the Canaanite kings wouldn't send an army to relieve the city in that time.

But God simply says to Joshua, there isn't going to be a siege or a battle. The Lord will do the fighting for his people, the Lord will deliver the city and everything in it into their hands. All they need to do is follow his commands and be faithful and courageous.

They are to circle the city 6 times and then on the seventh day they shall circle it 7 times and the priests shall blow their horns and the people will shout and the wall will fall down. Not in, not out, but straight down and the people will go straight in and put the city to the sword.

The Lord will do this by his power. Now we could speculate on the symbolism here, 7 is the perfect number, God created the earth in 6 days and on the seventh he rested. In revelation the angels have 7 trumpets which they blow one by one heralding judgment on the earth and certainly 7 is the number that presages the completion of the Lord's work, but the speculation would be pointless.

Anyway, so you see now why I am so uncomfortable with Josh and the giant wall, it is Jesus the Prince of the Lord's Armies that Joshua is meeting with, and parodying the second person of the Trinity is not a good thing.

But it is not surprising that they get it so wrong because we tend not to think of Jesus as warrior:

Rev. 19:

11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.

12 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.

13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.

15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

16 And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

The application of these verses is almost too obvious to require comment.

The first victory:

1 Cor. 15:57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Col 2:13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,

14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

The Second victory:

The triumph of the one seated on the horse... the armies follow him
There isn't even a battle