

THE NECESSARY SPIRITUAL PREPARATION: FIVE ESSENTIALS FOR LIVING THE VICTORIOUS LIFE JOSHUA 05:01–15

Introduction

Warfare requires preparation, much preparation. Before any army marches into battle, a host of things have to be done:

- => ammunition has to be stockpiled
- => weapons and equipment have to be prepared
- => food and water have to be stored
- => plans for backup supplies, provisions, equipment and ammunition have to be made
- => soldiers have to be trained and mentally prepared
- => strategy has to be planned
- => spies and reconnaissance missions have to be sent out

Groundwork and strategies have to be carried out in order to engage in war. But there is one preparation that is far too often overlooked: spiritual preparation.

The Israelites were about ready to march into war, seeking to drive out the enemies of the promised land. Would they be victorious or would they be defeated? Would they be triumphant or would they be victims? Would they conquer the inheritance promised them by God or would they themselves be driven out of the promised land?

For the Israelites, the answer lay in one preparation: spiritual preparation. The Israelites were the people of God, the people chosen to inherit the promised land and to be the witnesses of God to the whole world. It was through the Israelites that God was to send His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to save the world. Because of this, the most important preparation God's people could make was the preparation of their spirit and commitment to God. They would be victorious if they followed God wholeheartedly. But they would be defeated if they turned away from God and disobeyed His holy commandments. They would lose the promised land. For this reason, spiritual preparation was an absolute essential. This is the subject of this important passage of Scripture: *The Necessary Spiritual Preparation: Five Essentials for Living the 'Victorious Life'*, Joshua 5:1-15.

- I. Essential 1 — must cross over the Jordan River: a picture of crossing over from the old life to a new life, from the defeated life to a victorious life. (v. 1).
 - II. Essential 2 — must be circumcised: symbolized cutting away the sins of the flesh and being identified as a follower of God (vv. 2-9).
 - III. Essential 3 — must remember the Passover: a symbol of God's power to deliver His people through the shed blood of the Lamb (Jesus Christ) (v. 10).
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- IV. Essential 4 — must celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread: symbolized the urgency to be free from the world and its sin, liberated to live for God in the promised land (vv. 6-11).
- V. Essential 5 — must submit to the true Commander of God's people, to the LORD Himself (vv. 13-15).

I. *Joshua 05:01 Crossing Over the Jordan River: Symbol of Crossing Over from the Old Life to a New Victorious Life*

The Israelites had to cross over the Jordan River to live a victorious life. Note the Scripture and outline:

Crossing the Jordan is a picture of crossing over from the *old life* to a *new life*, from the defeated life to a victorious life. The crossing of the Jordan has just been discussed in detail in chapters 3 and 4. The *old life* of the Israelites had been a defeated life:

- => a life of enslavement, oppression, persecution and suffering (see notes, Exo 1:8-22)
- => a life of complaining, grumbling, murmuring and unbelief (see notes, Exo 15:22-27; 16:1-36; 17:1-7)
- => a life of distrust and unbelief, of craving and lusting (see notes, Num 11:1-35; 12:1-16)
- => a life of being negative and defeated, fearful and unbelieving, of rejecting and turning away from God (see notes, Num 13:1-14:45)
- => a life of terrible rebellion and of seeking to approach God through unauthorized approaches (see notes, Num 16:1-50)
- => a life of worldliness, of worshipping sex and of engaging in false worship (see notes, Num 25:1-18)

On the other side of the Jordan River, the Israelites had lived a life of worldliness, immorality and lawlessness. They had lived a life of self-centredness, pride, arrogance and selfishness. They were filled with a spirit of greed, of seeking more and more, and grumbling and murmuring when they did not receive more. They lived a life of covetousness and grumbling and of unbelief and rebellion against God. Even when they had plenty — all that a person could ask for — they were dissatisfied, wanting more. A deep-seated emptiness, dissatisfaction and craving gripped their hearts so that they were ever seeking and never able to experience inner rest and peace. They were seldom if ever satisfied and fulfilled. So often during their journey, they were gripped by a lack of purpose, meaning and significance in life. As stated, they were ever seeking for more and more, never being at ease nor at peace, never being fulfilled or satisfied. On the other side of the Jordan, they were living a defeated life, a life of disappointment, discomfort and frustration — a life of failure.

But now, having crossed over the Jordan River, the Israelites actually stood in the promised land of God. The promised land offered them the hope of a victorious life before God. Crossing over the Jordan meant a life of *new beginnings*, a life that could

march from victory to victory over all the enemies that opposed them. They were actually standing upon the very ground of the promised land, the wonderful inheritance God was going to give them. The future held great things for them — if they would simply trust God. The promised land was the hope of a *new beginning*, the beginning of a new life for the Israelite believers. A victorious life lay out before them. This was the hope of the promised land, the hope...

- of conquest and victory over all the enemies that confronted them
- of peace and rest, both physically and spiritually
- of security and protection throughout all of life
- of daily care and provision given by God
- of abundance and fruitfulness of the land and economy
- of inner fulfilment and satisfaction
- of a deep-seated sense of purpose, meaning and significance
- of joy and rejoicing in all of God's blessings
- of God's presence and guidance day by day
- of being rooted and grounded in God's Holy Word and in prayer

All this and so much more was the hope of the promised land that swelled up in the hearts of the Israelites. Crossing over the Jordan River represented a *new beginning* for the people of God, the beginning of a new life, a victorious life. When they crossed over the Jordan, they stood in the promised land, the inheritance given them by God. They were beginning a new life. They had left their old life behind on the other side of the Jordan River. Now, having crossed over the Jordan, a whole new beginning was taking place. They were beginning their new life with God, a life that was to be lived victoriously before Him. Any and all enemies that confronted them as they walked throughout life were to be conquered, conquered by the power of God working in and through them.

Note what happened when the LORD dried up the Jordan River and led the Israelites across the river: the surrounding nations heard about the miraculous power of the LORD and were gripped by a spirit of terrifying fear. Their very hearts melted within them, and they no longer had the courage to stand against the Israelites. They were paralyzed with fear.

Thought 1. The Israelites had to cross over the Jordan River to live a victorious life before God. The Jordan River represented the crossing over from the old life to a new life, from the defeated life to a victorious life. This is a strong lesson for us: to live a victorious life, we must cross over from the old life to a new life, from the defeated life to a conquering life. We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us, the Lord Jesus Christ. But we can conquer and live victoriously only through Him. To conquer and be victorious, we must forsake the old life and cross over to the new life that is in Christ Jesus. The blessings of the new life promised to the believer include all the blessings of the promised land given to the Israelites plus so much

more. Glance at the blessings covered in the note above and apply them to the new life given us in Christ. What wonderful blessings, blessings that give a glorious life of victory and conquest day by day as we walk throughout life.

(1) Symbolically, we must cross over the Jordan River: we must put off the old life.

We must turn away from and leave behind the old life of sin and shame.

Rom 6:6 *For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.*

Eph 2:2 *In which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.*

Eph 4:22 *You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires.*

Col 3:9 *Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices.*

Phil 3:18 *For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.*

1 Pet 4:3 *For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do — living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry.*

2 Pet 1:9 *But whoever does not have them is near-sighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.*

2 Pet 2:10 *This is especially true of those [the wicked] who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority. Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings.*

2 Pet 3:3 *First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires.*

Jude 1:18 *They said to you, “In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.”*

(2) Symbolically, we must cross over the Jordan River: we must put on the new man, the new person. We must make a new beginning, begin a new life in Christ, living a life of holiness, righteousness and purity. We must be renewed in the spirit of our minds and begin to walk in the promised land of God, conquering all that tries to keep us out of the kingdom of heaven.

Luke 1:74-75 *To rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.*

Rom 6:4-7 *We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was*

crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin — because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

Rom 6:11-13 *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.*

Rom 12:1-2 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

2 Cor 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

2 Cor 7:1 *Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.*

Gal 6:15 *Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.*

Eph 2:15 *By abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace.*

Eph 4:23-24 *To be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Col 3:10 *And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*

Eze 11:19 *I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.*

II. Joshua 05:02–09 Circumcision: A Sign of A Person's Commitment to God

The Israelites prepared themselves spiritually by being circumcised. Circumcision symbolized cutting away the sins of the flesh and being identified as a follower of God. Circumcision was a sign of a person's commitment to God, a sign of the person's covenant relationship with God. Circumcision was a symbol, a mark that a person belonged to God and was to live a holy, righteous life for God. If a person was circumcised, he was to obey God and keep His commandments.

God first gave circumcision to Abraham as a sign of the covenant God established with him and his descendants (see notes, Gen 17:9-14). The Israelite believer was to put sin

out of his life, cut it away day by day, and live for God. Circumcision was the symbol, sign and mark that he had cut sin out of his life and was a true follower of God. As a sign, circumcision identified the believer as a follower of the LORD. Circumcision was to remind the Israelite believer that he was to live a holy life, a life different from his neighbours who lived immoral and lawless lives. His life of holiness was to be a testimony to his neighbours, and circumcision was to be a daily reminder that he was to walk in holiness throughout the day.

Circumcision involved the cutting away of the foreskin of a male. Every male Israelite who was eight days old and older was to be circumcised by Joshua. Note the command of God and the two reasons given for circumcision:

1. Joshua obeyed God's command. He made stone knives and carried out the mass circumcision (v. 3).
2. Two reasons are given for the mass circumcision (vv. 4-9).
 - a. First, the Israelites needed to restore the "sign" of their commitment, their covenant relationship with God (vv. 4-8). The first generation of Israelite believers had died out in the wilderness wanderings. They had been circumcised, but their children had not (vv. 4-5). The first generation of Israelites had died out because they had committed terrible sin, broken their commitment or covenant with God (v. 6). Their children were not circumcised because God had to suspend His covenant relationship with Israel because of the parents' sin. God was forced to bar them from the promised land because of their terrible evil (v. 6).

The sons and daughters of the condemned Israelites were the second generation of Israelite believers, the Israelites who were now standing in the promised land. They had been raised up by God to replace their fathers and mothers. It was these who were to recommit their lives to God and renew their covenant with Him. All the men, therefore, were to be circumcised, identified as the true followers of God, the true inheritors of the promised land (v. 7). Note that the men were disabled while they were healing (v. 8).

- b. Secondly, the Israelites were circumcised to roll away the "reproach of Egypt." What does this mean? Some commentators feel that the reproach refers to the ridicule, mockery and contempt shown them by their neighbours. Any believer who truly follows God suffers ridicule and persecution by unbelievers. Also, the Israelites suffered ridicule when they failed God just as any other believer does (Exo 32:1-12; Num 14:11-14).

Other commentators feel that the "reproach of Egypt" refers to the Israelite slavery in Egypt. As slaves, they were definitely ridiculed, mocked and held in contempt. Now, they were in the promised land; therefore, their circumcision would symbolize that they belonged (were slaves) to God, not to Egypt.

Standing there in the promised land, the people were finally and definitely removed from the reproach of their former life. They were in the promised land of God, receiving their own inheritance of property. They were no longer slaves — no longer chained and held in contempt as a lower class of people who were often ridiculed and mocked. They were now property owners who were to inherit a mass fortune.

Thought 1. What does the ritual of circumcision say to believers today?

(1) Jesus Christ has performed a *spiritual circumcision* upon believers. He has circumcised the believer, cut away the whole sinful nature of the believer. He cuts away more than just a piece of flesh; He performs radical surgery. He cuts away the whole body of sin, all the sin which the believer has committed and for which he stands guilty.

Col 2:11-12 *In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ. Having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.*

(2) Circumcision — God’s true circumcision — is of the heart, not of the flesh. God never intended circumcision to be only a ritual, a physical sign that one belonged to the people of God. Yes, circumcision was to be a sign, but a sign of spiritual truth: a sign that a person’s heart belonged to God, totally and wholly, a sign that one was following and living for God, fully and completely.

Rom 2:28-29 *A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man’s praise is not from men, but from God.*

Deut 10:16 *Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer.*

Deut 30:6 *The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.*

Warren Wiersbe says about the believer’s spiritual circumcision:

What does all of this [circumcision] mean to Christian believers today?... We have experienced a “spiritual circumcision” (Col 2:9-12) that makes us part of the “true circumcision” (Phil 3:1-3). When we trusted Christ to save us, the Spirit of God performed “spiritual surgery” that enables us to have victory over the desires of the old nature and the old life. Circumcision removes only a part of the body, but the true “spiritual circumcision” puts off “the body of the sins of the flesh” (Col 2:11) and deals radically with the sin nature.

“This “spiritual circumcision” is accomplished at conversion when the sinner believes in Christ and is baptised by the Spirit into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13).

This baptism identifies the believer with Christ in His death, burial, resurrection and ascension, and also in His circumcision (Col 2:11-12; Luke 2:21). It is not “the circumcision of Moses” but “the circumcision of Christ” that is important to the Christian believer. (Warren W. Wiersbe. Be Obedient. (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1991), pp. 69-70.)

(3) Believers are the true circumcision who worship God in the spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus, in His power to remove sin.

Phil 3:3 *For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh.*

Thought 2. Old Testament circumcision and New Testament baptism can be compared as follows:

Circumcision: <i>the cutting away of the flesh meant that one was...</i>	Baptism: <i>being immersed in water meant that one was...</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Renouncing the flesh, all human effort in approaching God. 2. Willing to believe God and to obey God, to be identified as a follower of God no matter the pain or cost. 3. Becoming identified with the people of God. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dying to self and the past (Rom 6:3; Luke 9:23). 2. Being raised to newness of life, willing to live a new life for Christ no matter the cost (Rom 6:4). 3. Becoming identified with the followers of Christ, the church (1 Cor 12:13).

Thought 3. Romans 4:11 says that God gave circumcision to Abraham for two reasons: to be a sign of Abraham’s faith and to be the seal of Abraham’s righteousness. Note the verse:

Rom 4:11 *And he [Abraham] received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them.*

Abraham received circumcision as a sign or symbol only. Circumcision was not the road into God’s presence; it was not what made Abraham acceptable to God. Circumcision did not confer righteousness on him; it only confirmed that he was righteous.

Note that circumcision was both a sign and a seal. (See, *Circumcision*, Phil 3:3.)
Circumcision was...

- a sign of celebration: it was a picture of the joy that the believer experienced in being counted righteous by God.
- a sign of witness: the believer was testifying that he now believed and trusted God.
- a sign of a changed life and a separated life: the believer was proclaiming that he was going to live for God, to live a righteous and pure life that was wholly separated to God.
- a sign of identification: the believer was declaring that he was now joining and becoming one of God's people.
- a sign pointing toward Christ's baptism.

Circumcision was a seal in that it stamped God's justification upon Abraham's mind. Abraham had believed God, and God had counted his faith as righteousness. Circumcision was given as a seal or stamp upon his body to remind him that God had counted him righteous through belief. Circumcision was a seal in that it...

- confirmed
- validated
- strengthened
- assured
- authenticated
- verified
- substantiated

...what God had done for Abraham. Now note this fact: the Bible never says that rites, rituals or ordinances bestow anything on anyone. They are merely signs of something that has already taken place. They are merely shadows, not the substance (Col 2:16-17).

This is not to take away from the importance of rites and rituals. They are extremely important, for they are the signs and seals of the believer's faith. To neglect or to reject a rite given by God is to be disobedient, and to be disobedient is a clear sign that one was never sincere in the first place. A person who believes, who truly trusts God, is ready to obey God, to follow Him even in the rites, rituals and ordinances of the church. We must always remember that Abraham was not saved by the ritual of circumcision, for God had not yet given circumcision as a sign.

=> But Abraham was *immediately circumcised* after God established circumcision as the sign of "righteousness by faith."

Very simply said, if circumcision had existed when Abraham first believed God, then Abraham would have been circumcised immediately. He would have obeyed God. How do we know this? Because Abraham truly believed God, and when a man believes God, he immediately begins to do what God says.

Note what other Scriptures say: circumcision (and all other rituals) are a matter of the heart, not a matter of being spiritually cleansed by physical and material substances.

Rom 2:28-29 *A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.*

Col 2:11 *In him [Christ] you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ.*

Deut 10:16 *Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer.*

Deut 30:6 *The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.*

III. Joshua 05:10 Remember the Passover: A Symbol of God's Power to Deliver His People

The Israelites were spiritually prepared by remembering the Passover. The Passover is a symbol of God's power to deliver His people through the shed blood of the Lamb. Keep in mind that the Passover lamb is a symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God. As the Lamb of God, Christ takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). No Israelite man could participate in the Passover unless he had been circumcised (Exo 12:48). This is another reason why the Israelites had to undergo the mass circumcision. Hereafter, since they were now in the promised land, they were to celebrate the Passover yearly.

The Passover celebrated Israel's deliverance from Egyptian slavery. By celebrating the Passover, the Israelites would be focusing upon the power of God that had saved them from so terrible a fate. This would be a foreshadowing of what they could expect as they faced the enemies of the promised land. God's power would still deliver them even as it had delivered them in the past from Egyptian slavery. God's power would deliver them through all the conflict that lay ahead. The Passover would stir up their hopes of deliverance and victory in the promised land of God (see notes, Exo 12:1-13 on the Passover). God had the Israelites celebrate the Passover because it marked a *new beginning* for them. The Passover always marks a *new beginning*. When God delivered the Israelites from Egyptian slavery, they *began a new life*, a life of freedom and liberty. Their new-found freedom and liberty was a *new beginning* for them. Their old life was suddenly broken off, and a new life began. This was now true for the sons and daughters of the first generation who had died.

Picture the sons and daughters — the second generation — who now stood in the promised land having just crossed over the Jordan River. They were *beginning a new life*. This was a *new beginning* for them. Their old life had suddenly been left behind on the other side of the Jordan River, and a new life was now beginning. Therefore, God was instructing them to celebrate the Passover, the mark of a *new beginning*.

Thought 1. This is a picture of true conversion: the person's old life is suddenly broken off and a new life in Christ is begun. A person who believes in Jesus Christ — that He is the Passover Lamb — is saved from the bondage and enslavement of sin. As the Passover Lamb, the sacrificial death of Christ...

- saves a person from sin to righteousness
- saves a person from death to life
- saves a person from the judgment of God to the approval of God
- saves a person from hell to the acceptance of God.

The person's conversion becomes the greatest day of his life. The judgment of God passes over him: he never has to face the executing judgment of God. He begins a new life in Christ, turning away from his *old life* and beginning to live a **new life**. He lives victoriously, conquering all that confronts him in the promised land of God.

Mat 18:3 And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

John 3:3 In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

Acts 3:19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.

2 Cor 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

Gal 6:15 Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.

Eph 4:22-24 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Col 3:9-10 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices. And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

Ezek 36:26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh..

Thought 2. The Passover lamb was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God Himself. Note this fact: Jesus Christ is not only the promised seed and Saviour who was promised to Abraham and his descendants, not only the j promised seed and Saviour who was to come and save the world, Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God Himself. He is the Lamb of God who was to be slain for the sins of the world. Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God symbolized in the Passover lamb. This is exactly what Scripture proclaims.

John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

1 Cor 5:7 *Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast — as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.*

Eph 1:7 *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.*

1 Pet 1:18-19 *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

Rev 7:9 *After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.*

Rev 12:11 *They overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.*

Rev 13:8 *All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast — all whose names have not been written in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.*

Rev 14:1 *Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on the Mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty four thousand, who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.*

Rev 15:3 *And sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvellous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of ages."*

Rev 19:9 *Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'" And he added, "These are the true words of God."*

Rev 21:22 *I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.*

IV. Joshua 05:11–12 Celebration of the Feast of Unleavened Bread

The Israelites were spiritually prepared by celebrating the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This particular feast symbolized the urgency to be free from the world and its sin, the urgency to be liberated so that believers could live for God in the promised land.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread was celebrated right along with the Passover. For seven days — a full week — the Israelites were to put all leaven out of their tents or houses and out of their presence. They were to eat no bread with leaven or yeast in it. Keep in mind that leaven or yeast symbolizes evil and that unleaven symbolizes righteousness. When the Israelites fled Egypt, they had to rush. They had to flee with such haste that they did not have time to make bread with leaven or yeast in it. They simply grabbed whatever

unleavened bread they had and took it along with them on the journey. As a result of this experience, God established the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

As stated, this feast symbolized the urgency to be free from the world and its sin, the urgency to be liberated in order to live for God in the promised land. The Israelites were making a quick flight to a new life, a new life that had escaped Egypt (the world). They were to make haste, quickly march to the promised land of God. They had to get ready immediately, get ready to flee Egypt. The time had been short, very short, so short that they had to take only unleavened bread. This was the urgency of the hour.

Now, the second generation of Israelite believers were standing in the promised land of God. It was now time for them to celebrate the feast for the very first time in the promised land. Note two facts:

1. They ate the food of the land in the feast. Obviously, this was food that the local Canaanites had left behind as they fled when the Israelites crossed the Jordan River (v. 12). By eating the food of the land, this was a foretaste of God's blessings in the promised land. Blessing after blessing was to be theirs, and this first fruit, this first produce from the land, was only a foretaste of the blessings yet to come.
2. Note that the manna immediately stopped the day after they ate this food taken from the land. For over forty years God had miraculously provided this food from heaven for His dear people (Exo 16:1f).

Thought 1. The unleavened bread speaks to us today: we must sense the urgency to be free from the world and its sin. We must know that we are liberated by the power of Christ to live for God. We must sense the urgency to get ready and to get ready now, to immediately flee the evil of the world and begin to live the victorious life in the promised land of God.

There is little time to escape the judgment of God that is to fall upon this world. Consequently, we must flee Egypt — a symbol of this world — and the evil it represents. We must flee before the judgment of God falls upon all the wicked and evil of this world.

Mat 24:44 *“So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”*

Mat 25:10 *“But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.”*

Mat 25:13 *“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.”*

Luke 14:21 *“The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, and the crippled, the blind and the lame.’”*

1 Th 5:3 *While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labour pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.*

Heb 2:3 *How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.*

Thought 2. A person is to act quickly and put evil — all evil — out of his life.

(1) He is to be clean, free from all sin: cleansed by the blood of Christ.

Mat 16:6, 12 *"Be careful," Jesus said to them. "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees."....Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.*

Acts 22:16 *And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptised and wash your sins away, calling on his name.*

Rom 5:8-9 *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!*

1 Cor 5:6-8 *Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast — as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.*

2 Cor 7:1 *Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.*

Gal 5:7-9 *You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth? That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. A little [evil] yeast works through the whole batch of dough.*

2 Tim 2:21 *Those who cleanse themselves from the latter will be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.*

James 4:8 *Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*

1 John 1:7 *The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*

Rev 1:5 *To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.*

Isa 1:16 *Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong.*

Jer 4:14 *O Jerusalem, wash the evil from your heart and be saved. How long will you harbour wicked thoughts?*

(2) A person who has put evil out of his life — who has been cleansed by the blood of Christ — must begin immediately to eat the unleavened bread of righteousness, the *Bread of Life* itself. He must begin to walk in *newness of life*.

Rom 6:4 *We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

John 6:32-35 *Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it was my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” “Sir,” they said, “from now on give us this bread.” Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.”*

John 6:48-51 *“I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”*

John 6:58 *“This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.”*

1 Cor 15:34 *Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God — I say this to your shame.*

Eph 6:14 *Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place.*

1 Tim 6:11-12 *But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.*

Titus 2:11 *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.*

Hos 10:12 *Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unploughed ground; for it is time to seek the LORD, until he comes and showers righteousness on you.*

Thought 3. We must not eat leaven, must not have any part with evil. We must never...

- partake of evil
- assimilate evil
- digest evil
- take evil into our lives

Rom 12:9 *Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.*

1 Cor 10:6 *Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.*

1 Th 5:22 *Avoid every kind of evil.*

1 Pet 3:11 *He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it.*

Psa 34:14 *Turn from evil and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.*

Psa 97:10 *Let those who love the LORD hate evil, for he guards the lives of his faithful ones and delivers them from the hand of the wicked.*

Prov 4:27 *Do not turn to the right or to the left; keep your foot from evil.*

Prov 14:16 *A wise man fears the LORD and shuns evil, but a fool is hotheaded and reckless.*

Zec 7:10 *Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.*

Thought 4. Leaven symbolizes evil in the Scripture. We must put all evil out of our lives and out of our homes.

Mat 16:6 *“Be careful,” Jesus said to them. “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”*

Gal 5:9 *“A little [evil] yeast works through the whole batch of dough.”*

Eph 4:22 *You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires.*

Col 3:9 *Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices.*

Heb 12:1 *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.*

1 Pet 2:11 *Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.*

Job 11:14 *If you put away the sin that is in your hand and allow no evil to dwell in your tent.*

V. Joshua 05:13–15 Submission to their True Commander — The Lord

The Israelites were spiritually prepared for battle by submitting to the true commander of God’s people, to the LORD Himself. This was especially true of Joshua, who was the commander of the Israelites. He in particular needed a very special spiritual experience with the LORD before the enemies of the promised land were confronted. He needed to know that the LORD Himself was Commander-in-Chief over God’s people, and that the LORD had truly chosen him to be the military commander and leader of God’s people. As the commander, he was under the leadership of God Himself. What happened next to Joshua was bound to be a tremendous encouragement to him and to the people.

1. Joshua was off alone surveying Jericho (vv. 13-14). Obviously, he had walked some distance away from the camp, close enough to Jericho so that he could survey the land surrounding the great city. As with any military commander, he was sensing the strain of the upcoming battle, the pressure and tension, the stress and heaviness of the burden of war. He knew that war involved wounds and spilt blood, maiming and crippling, the loss of limbs and disfigurement, injuries and severe pain. He knew that war involved death and the loss of loved ones, terrible grief and suffering for wives, children, parents and relatives. Obviously, he was sensing a desperate need to get alone with God, to seek His sustaining grace and strength. He needed a very, very special time alone with the LORD to pray and plan. While praying, note that his head was apparently bowed. When he looked up, he was face-to-face with a man who had a drawn sword. His response was the reaction of a startled commander standing in enemy territory. He asked, “Are you for us or are you an enemy?” The man immediately identified himself as the “commander of the LORD’s army” who had come in the name of the LORD. Who was this commander of the LORD’s army?
2. Note Joshua’s response: he fell face down in submission and reverence. And he asked for the message that the LORD was sending to him. Note also that Joshua referred to himself as the servant of the LORD. Some commentators feel that this was an angelic being sent to encourage Joshua; whereas, other commentators feel that the commander was a pre-incarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ (see *Commander of the Lord’s Army*, Josh 5:13-15).
3. The message sent by the LORD was a message of assurance (v. 15). The commander of the LORD’s army told Joshua to take off his sandals, for the place where he stood was holy. These were the only words spoken by the heavenly messenger, but note that the simple message contained a world of assurance to Joshua and God’s people. The place where they stood was holy because of the holy presence of the commander of the LORD’s army and because the promised land itself was holy (see Exo 3:5). It was God’s land; therefore, the whole land was holy, to be set apart totally to God. This was enormous assurance for Joshua, for it meant that victory was guaranteed. Since the land belonged to God, He was going to claim it through His people, the Israelites. Victory was assured, for the land belonged to God.

The battle was the LORD’s, and the LORD had already won the victory. The enemy was already defeated. Joshua’s task was to believe God and march forth to conquer the enemy. Faith in God was essential; he had to believe God, trust Him for strength and guidance. But marching forth was also essential. It was not enough just to trust God; he had to march forth into battle in order to conquer the enemy. Both faith in God and personal work were necessary to achieve the victory through the power of God.

As Joshua faced the upcoming battles, he needed this fresh experience with God. But note this fact: this deep experience with God was a result of prayer. The people had actually prayed that the LORD would be with him (Josh 1:16-17).

Thought 1. Throughout life there are times when we need a special experience with God. A deep sense of loneliness, discouragement, depression, emptiness or purposelessness; some accident, disease or death; some severe problem, difficulty, obstacle or loss — many things — can create a desperate need for a special time with God. When a need strikes, our task is to get alone with God just as Joshua did. God will meet us if we will just get alone and seek His face. God will help us and meet our need. He will give us His presence and power and guidance. God will be our helper in time of need.

Heb 2:17-18 *For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

Heb 4:15-16 *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

Heb 13:6 *So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”*

Deut 33:27 *The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. He will drive out your enemy before you, saying, ‘Destroy him!’*

Psa 17:8 *“Keep me as the apple of the eye; Hide me under the shadow of thy wings.”*

Psa 27:5 *For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock.*

Psa 28:7 *The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song.*

Psa 32:7 *You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.*

Psa 33:20 *We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield.*

Psa 40:17 *Yet I am poor and needy; may the LORD think of me. You are my help and my deliverer: O my God, do not delay.*

Isa 43:2 *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.*

Psa 57:1 *Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me, for in you my soul takes refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed.*

Psa 71:3 *“Be my rock of refuge, to which I can always go; give the command to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress.”*

Psa 46:1 “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.”

Psa 84:11 For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favour and honour; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless.

Psa 115:9 All you Israelites, trust in the LORD — he is their help and shield.

Psa 119:114 You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word.

Psa 143:9 “Rescue me from mine enemies, LORD, for I hide myself in you.”

Prov 14:26 Whoever fears the LORD has a secure fortress, and for their children it will be a refuge.

Prov 18:10 “The name of the LORD is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.”

Isa 25:4 You have been a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat. For the breath of the ruthless is like a storm driving against a wall.

Isa 41:10 So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. ■

JOSHUA 5:13–15 COMMANDER OF THE LORD’S ARMY

Who is this person? There are two positions.

1. Many commentators say that the “commander of the LORD” is God, more particularly, the second person of the Godhead, Jesus Christ. He is thought to be the same “angel of the LORD” who appeared to various people throughout the Old Testament. When Moses stood before the burning bush in the desert, the angel of the LORD appeared to him (Exo 3:2, 4). The angel even said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob (Exo 3:6).

The angel of the LORD is also called “the angel of God” (Gen 21:17) and “the angel of His [God’s] presence” (Isa 63:9). The angel of the LORD appears often in the Old Testament (Gen 22:11; 31:11, 13; 48:16; Exo 3:2; 14:19; Num 22:22; Jud 2:4; 6:11; 13:3; 2 Kng 19:35; Isa 63:9; Zec 1:12; 12:8).

2. Other commentators believe the “commander of the LORD’s army” is one of the special angels who personally serves God. In this particular instance, the commander of the LORD’s army is being sent by God with the very credentials and authority of God Himself. He is being sent with a special message to Joshua from the LORD Himself. As the “commander of the LORD’s army,” he is the personal representative of the LORD. □