

General Church Education



Joshua Meets the Commander of the Lord's Army

Joshua 5:1, 10-15

Lesson 7

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 4: The Lord Is the Hero

For ages 9-10

Joshua Meets the Commander of the Lord's Army

Joshua 5:1,10-15

Teacher Background

When the children of Israel entered the land of Canaan people were already living there. These nations did not know about the Lord and worshiped false gods. They watched the Israelites arrive and saw the miracle of the parting of the Jordan River and were terrified. Entering the land of Canaan pictures making a fresh start to live from the Lord. When we choose to make positive changes, old habits still remain, ready to attack when we are off-guard. Just as evil nations had to be driven from Canaan for the Israelites to live there, old habits must be rooted out if we are to change our lives.

Immediately on entering the land, the children of Israel re-dedicated themselves to the Lord. While this part of the story is not included in the reading, it reminds us that we must continually re-commit to the Lord on our spiritual journey. While enemies might have attacked as the children of Israel crossed over and established themselves in the land, the Lord protected them at this vulnerable time. And the Lord appeared to Joshua in the form of the captain of the Lord's army, as He had appeared to Moses in the burning bush. He asked Joshua to take off his shoes as he was on holy ground. With the sword of truth in His hand, the Lord showed Joshua His power to conquer Israel's enemies. He has the same power over our spiritual enemies too, when we are willing to follow Him and obey His commandments.

Key Ideas

- The Lord's power would bring victory for Joshua and the children of Israel.
- The Israelites had to fight enemy nations in the land in order to take full possession of it.
- We must use truth from the Lord's Word to fight selfish thoughts and feelings and gain heaven.

From the Writings

Wars mean spiritual conflicts or temptations. The Lord alone fights and overcomes evils with a person when fighting in temptation even though to the person this does not appear to be so. For evil spirits have no power at all to influence a person unless they are permitted to do so, and angels cannot act to avert anything unless enabled to do so by the Lord. The Lord alone endures every conflict and overcomes. This was represented by the wars that the children of Israel waged against the nations. See *Arcana Coelestia* 1664.

'Joshua' represents truth that engages in conflict. Truth directly from the Lord does not engage in conflict but is peace itself, since it goes forth from the Divine Goodness of the Lord's Divine Love. To become militant it flows into angels with a burning zeal for what is true and good, and when roused they go into battle. This is the origin of the truth engaging in conflict that is represented by 'Joshua'. Because such truth was represented by 'Joshua' he became the leader of the children of Israel after Moses led them into the land of Canaan, and fought the nations there. This also explains why, when he came into Canaan, the Angel of Jehovah appeared to him with his sword drawn in his hand, and called himself Commander of Jehovah's army. 'His sword drawn in his hand' means God's truth, which engages in conflict, in its power. See *Arcana Coelestia* 8595.

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Vocabulary

twilight—the soft light between sunset and night time

plains—flat land

adversary—enemy, a person or group who attacks you

Israel's Enemies Were Afraid

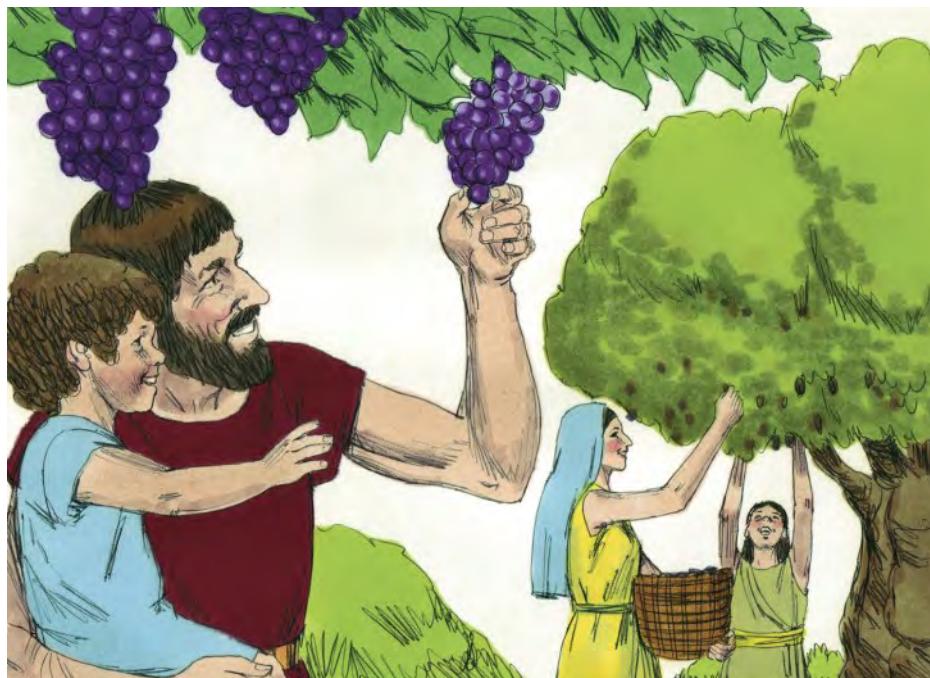
The two spies who visited Jericho learned that everyone in Canaan was terrified of the children of Israel. They had heard about Israel's great victory in battle against the Amalekites many years before. They knew the Lord had miraculously sent manna in the wilderness for forty years. And now they had seen the Lord's power in parting the rushing river Jordan during the spring rains.

You can imagine that Israel's enemies were not eager to get too close. The Word tells us, "their heart melted; and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the children of Israel" (Joshua 5:1). This fear helped the Lord protect the children of Israel from harm at an important time. It gave them time to settle into the land and remember the wonderful things He had done for them.

Read Joshua 5:1.

Celebrating the Passover

After the children of Israel left Egypt, the Lord sent them manna throughout the forty years they wandered in the wilderness. He took care of them every day and they were never hungry.



The children of Israel entered the Promised Land at the start of a new year. Each year, on the fourteenth day of the first month they celebrated the Passover with a feast. The feast helped them remember how the Lord rescued them from slavery in Egypt. As they ate special foods, they talked about what had happened. While they celebrated the feast each

year they traveled through the wilderness, this year they would celebrate in a new land—the Promised Land. They had looked forward to this for many years.

The day after the feast, the children of Israel ate food which grew in Canaan for the first time. The next day the manna stopped. From that time on the children of Israel ate the wonderful fruits of the land 'flowing with milk and honey'.

Read Joshua 5:10-12.

The Commander of the Army of the Lord

The children of Israel could not take the land until they had driven out the enemy nations living there. Jericho was the first city they must conquer. It had high walls and strong gates. It stood on the flat plains by the river blocking access to the land beyond.



In the Old Testament, the Lord sometimes appeared to people He called to be His leaders. Sometimes he appeared as an angel and at other times in other forms. Do you remember where Moses was when the Lord called him to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt? He was tending flocks in the wilderness. The Lord appeared to him in a burning bush. He was not to come near the bush, but was told to take off his shoes because the ground he stood on was holy (Exodus 3). Once Moses did this, the Lord talked to him and told him what he should do.

As Joshua prepared to lead the children of Israel into their first battle, the Lord appeared to him, too, in the form of an angel. At twilight Joshua saw a man of war standing opposite him, with a sword in his hand. Joshua was not afraid. He went right up to the man and asked if he was a friend or an adversary. As soon as Joshua realized he was speaking to an angel he dropped to the ground ready to listen. The Lord asked Joshua to take off his shoes for the ground he was standing on was holy. That sounds similar to the way the Lord spoke to Moses, doesn't it?

Read Joshua 5:13-15.

The angel was the Commander of the Lord's army. He came to tell Joshua he was not to forget that when he led the children of Israel to victory, it was the Lord's power that would fight and conquer Israel's enemies. We must never forget that the Lord's power is what overcomes our selfish

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thoughts and feelings, which are our spiritual enemies. “Taking off our shoes” means we must set selfish thoughts and feelings aside to do what the Lord is asking us.

The Angel's Power Was from the Lord

Angels are men and women who once lived in this world. They would never want us to worship them. They know we should only worship the Lord. Angels have great power from the Lord. The Word tells us they can chase away evil spirits, no matter how many there are, because the Lord is with them. In the Word angels sometimes appear to bring messages from the Lord. When the angel appeared to Joshua, he fell down because he knew the angel was speaking for the Lord. We know this because Joshua said, “What does my Lord say to His servant?”

Moses and Joshua Were Heroes for the Lord

The Lord called both Moses and Joshua to do great tasks. They were heroes for the Lord. Moses and Joshua were able to do great things because the Lord was with them. Moses brought the people out of slavery in Egypt, made them into a nation and led them to the Promised Land. Joshua’s job was to conquer the Promised Land, divide it among the tribes and settle the people to live in peace. In calling Joshua to this great work the Lord said,

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 1:9)

Discussion Questions

- Who appeared to Joshua at twilight?
- Why did Joshua take off his shoes?
- The angel told Joshua to take off his shoes because the ground he was standing on was holy. What does being “holy” mean? What makes something or someone holy?
- The angel held a sword in his hand. Joshua was a warrior leader who fought with the sword. What power does a sword have? Why might the angel have carried a sword?
- Compare the power of a sword with the power of a rod, such as Moses used. How are a rod and a sword different? Is one more powerful than the other?
- What is the “sword of truth”? How can it help us?
- How did Joshua know the angel was really the Lord speaking to him?
- When does the Lord appear to us?
- How can we “take off our shoes” before the Lord?

Activity Overview | Joshua Meets the Commander of the Lord's Army

Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

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 5:15

Projects

Choose one or two activities.

- Venn Diagram Comparing Moses and Joshua
- Alignment with the Lord's Way
- Picture to color—Joshua Kneels before the Commander of the Lord's Army (Joshua 5)

Additional Activity Ideas

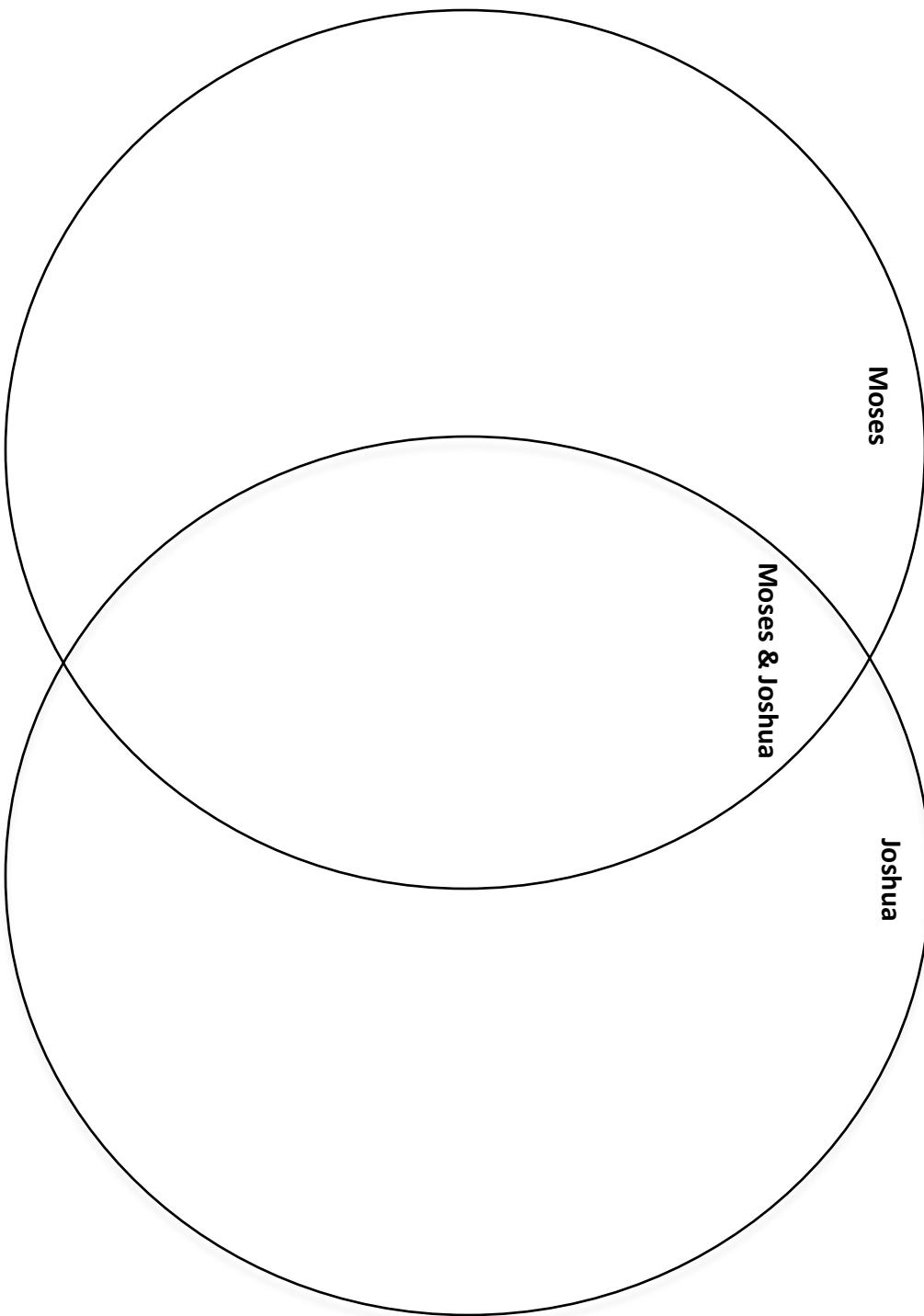
- Joshua saw an angel, the Commander of the Lord's Army with a sword *in his hand*. The sword stands for true ideas that can fight selfish thoughts and feelings. A hand corresponds to power. When a sword is in a person's hand it represents true ideas in the power of fighting falsity and evil. Hands help us do things. We use them all the time, without even thinking. Imagine what it would be like not to have hands. Approximately 30 million people are living without hands. Experience what this may be like by eating a snack and taking a drink without using your hands. (You can use your wrists.) Discuss how important hands are for giving us the power to do what we want to do.

Activity 1 | Venn Diagram Comparing Moses and Joshua

Read the story of Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3:1-6.

Read the story of Joshua meeting the Commander of the Army of the Lord in Joshua 5:13-15.

Fill in the circles noting details about only Moses or Joshua, and details that are the same in each story. Think of where, when and how things happened words spoken, and actions done.



Activity 2 | Alignment with the Lord's Way

Experience aligning yourself with the Lord by untangling different types of yarn or string.

Materials Needed

open space for creating yarn tangles
15-30 feet (5-10 meters) gold or red yarn or ribbon to represent the Lord's way
25-50 feet (7-17 meters) yarn, ribbon or string in different colors to represent each person's way
tape that can be safely removed from walls or furniture



Preparation for Activity

1. Clear space in a room. Create “the Lord’s way” by taping one end of the red or gold yarn or ribbon to a worship center, copy of the Word or a window at approximately waist height. Stretch the yarn from one side of the room to another and fasten to a wall or furniture, etc.
2. Create “each person’s way” by fastening one end of other lengths of yarn near an end of “the Lord’s way” yarn. Then wind the yarn around the room, over and under pieces of furniture, etc. Tape the other end to a wall or piece of furniture away from “the Lord’s way”.

Directions for Students

1. Introduce the activity by reviewing Joshua’s question to the angel, “Are You for us or for our adversaries?” The angel answered, “No, but as the Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.” The angel did not say he was for Joshua or his enemies. He was there to represent and fight for the Lord. For Joshua and the children of Israel to take the land of Canaan they would follow the Lord’s commands. They would need to *align* themselves with the Lord. (Align means to “line up”. The Israelites had to *make their actions line up with* what the Lord told them to do.)
2. We need to *align* our lives with the Lord’s way too. That is how we can find happiness and eventually enter our own promised land—heaven.
3. Run your hand along each piece of yarn. Which one is easiest to follow? Which one is most difficult? The straight red (or gold) yarn stands for the Lord’s way. The other pieces of yarn represent ways people can stray from the Lord’s way and get all tangled up.
4. We are going to align all of the tangled ways with the Lord’s way. Leave the Lord’s way in place. Untape one end of each piece of yarn, and unwind it back to where it is fastened. Then re-align it with the yarn representing the Lord’s way. Stretch it out straight and re-tape the end.

