

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

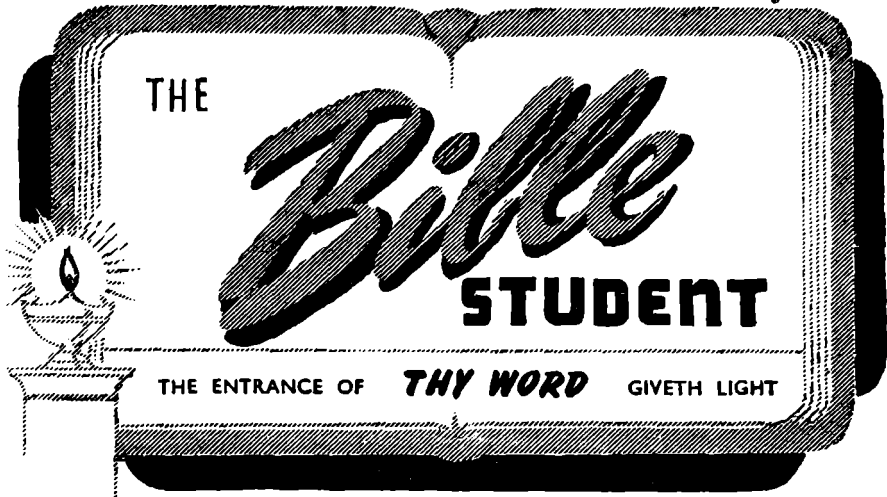
<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Bible Student* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bible-student_01.php



New Series
Vol. XXIII. No. 1

JANUARY
1952

CONTENTS

'GIVE HEED TO READING . . .'	...	...	...	1
THE WISDOM LITERATURE OF THE BIBLE	...	...	...	5
THE THEOPHANIES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT	...	...	...	9
NOTES ON HEBREWS	...	...	...	14
WORD STUDIES IN THE N.T.	...	...	...	22
THE HEBREW PSALTER	...	...	...	25
WITNESS TO THE WORD	...	...	...	29
SEVEN OLD TESTAMENT FEASTS	...	...	...	31
CHRIST AND THE BIBLE	...	...	...	37
EXEGETICAL STUDY OF COLOSSIANS	...	...	...	43
POINTS FOR YOUNG PREACHERS	...	...	...	Cover 2-3

Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD

THE THEOPHANIES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

By ALEX SOUTTER

V. Joshua and the Man with the Sword

Having assumed the burden of national leadership, Joshua's responsibilities had greatly increased. He had served under Moses for forty years. The benefits of this Mosaic training are epitomised in the name Moses gave to him on an earlier occasion. In the dark days of Egyptian bondage, Nun gave his son the name of Oshea which means 'help' or 'salvation'; Moses (Num. 13:16) changed it to Joshua—'Jehovah is Saviour'. In other words, Moses brought God into his name. This was fitting, for had not Moses brought God into Joshua's life as well? When we considered Moses at the burning bush we saw how by divine revelation, he learned the significance of the name Jehovah. In introducing it into Oshea's name, Moses has given us to see how much he dwelt in the good of that early revelation.

Joshua chapter 1 records the new leader's commission; chapter 2, Rahab and the spies; chapter 3, the passage of Jordan; chapter 4, the memorials that commemorated Israel's crossing; and in chapter 5 Israel is seen in a new setting, first in relation to the doomed nations (v. 1), second in relation to their own spiritual exercise as circumcised sons of Abraham (vv. 2-9), and third in relation to their communion with God when they kept the passover and ate the old corn of the land (vv. 10-12). All of which provides a fitting background for the Theophanic manifestation recorded at the end of chapter 5.

Joshua was alone when the Lord appeared. So it was in each of the other cases we have considered. Hagar, Abraham, Jacob and Moses were all alone when God appeared to them in human (or angelic) guise: Alone with God, with Israel's tents pitched near by on the sacred ground of Gilgal. There was now no way of retreat. If Joshua did not burn his bridges it was simply because there were none to burn. No bridges spanned the Jordan's overflowing waters. Forty years before this, Israel stood with the waters in front and Egypt's armed might behind. Now the waters were behind and Canaan's armed might before. But retreat in either case was impossible. And just as there was no way of retreat so there was no room for thoughts of self-sufficiency. A

little later the campaign was partly marred (at Ai) by a display of self-confidence; but not here. Joshua's sufficiency was of God. Nor was there any sign of hesitancy. When he saw the Man with sword in hand he did not quail or run away. Courage filled his heart—not fear. With stout heart he faced the armed Stranger. And as for the possibility of neutrality, that did not so much as enter Joshua's mind. This Man was either for or against—nothing in between was possible. No retreat (Luke 9:62). No self-sufficiency (2 Cor. 3:5). No hesitancy (2 Cor. 1:17). And no neutrality (Matt. 12:30).

Joshua beheld a Man. The Lord Who, some 450 years before this, had appeared to Abraham on the high ground of Hebron overlooking Gilgal, now returns to the Land on a different mission. Joshua must have drawn much encouragement from the discovery that he and his divine Captain had entered the Land simultaneously. God's interpositions are always perfectly timed. He gives grace to help just when we need it (Heb. 4:16). The Lord appeared in the right place at the right time with the right communication: 'As Captain (Prince) of the host of the Lord am I now come'. Who composed that host? The men of Israel, who were by human reckoning but grasshoppers, but a veritable host in God's sight. In Gideon's day the 300 who lapped the water like dogs were the Lord's host (Judges 7:20). In a later day the feeble few who resembled 'two little flocks of kids' (1 Kings 20:27) composed the Lord's host and they put to flight Ben-hadad's armies. It is the weak things that God chooses to confound the things which are mighty (1 Cor. 1:27). Our weakness is our title to God's heritage of strength.

The Lord *in the Land!* When we read the epistle to the Ephesians we make the same discovery as Joshua did. We discover that the Lord is in the Land—the Heavens—when we enter there. In Ephesians the Heavens, or Heavenly Places, are mentioned five times. Our spiritual blessings are there; our Lord is there; we are there; the angels are there and our foes are there (see Eph. 1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12). Our foes may be strong in their efforts to contest our right to enter that heavenly heritage, but since our Captain is there, all is well.

The sword was in *His hand*. Against whom would He use it? Against the Canaanites. Why? Their cup of iniquity was now full (Gen. 15:16). On a later day that sword awoke against *Him* (Zech. 13:7).

'Jehovah bade His sword awake;
O Christ, it woke 'gainst Thee.'

By using it against the Canaanites He brought salvation to Israel; by suffering its stroke (on Calvary) He brought salvation to the Israel of God. In a day yet to come He will use the sword in judgment against a disobedient and rebellious world (Rev. 19:15). That final use of the sword is in keeping with the Baptist's words, 'Whose fan is in his hand and he will throughly purge his floor'—an act of judgment that is followed by the mention of unquenchable fire.

This Theophany really prepared the way for Israel's Theocracy. A new nation had been brought into being. A new land—the promised land, had been assigned to them. A new form of government (a Theocracy) had been determined by God for them. God was to be their King. His laws were to be their code. His truth was to mould their conduct. The land they were to settle in was God's gift to them. He was to fight their battles and therefore He Himself appeared on the scene at the commencement of the campaign, and He did not leave off fighting for them until the conquest was over. Then the Commander became the Ruler. The Prince of Israel's Host became the King of Israel's Commonwealth.

The Lord was *in supreme command*. 'The battle is not yours but God's' (2 Chron. 20:15). That lifted a tremendous load off Joshua's shoulders, and in its place it laid upon him a sweet but solemn obligation. The battle was God's! Therefore Joshua need not try to bear the unbearable load of winning the war in his own might. The battle was God's! Therefore Joshua must needs lean in utter dependence on his heavenly Leader. He forgot this at Ai, and again when dealing with the Gibeonites, but in the main he learned to lean hard on his Lord. Have we learned this lesson? Oftentimes the servants of God bear burdens they were never called to bear simply because they leave God out of their reckoning. The warfare they wage is waged on the assumption that it is *their* warfare, and all the while it is *God's*. We would all be saved many a sigh and many a tear if we would but remember this basic fact. The words 'My vineyard' need no elaborate explanation. They just mean, 'The vineyard that *belongs to Me*.' Similarly 'My church', 'My kingdom', 'My servants', all bear the same simple meaning. All are His. We are His. Our work is His work. Ours it is to fulfil His word and appropriate

His strength. And since the work is His we may rest assured that His interest in it is deeper than ours; His power to carry it on is greater than ours; and His plan and purpose regarding its completion is immeasurably better than ours.

Did Joshua's prestige go down after he took the second place? It rather went up. Shortly before this the Lord had magnified him in the sight of all Israel; and shortly afterwards his fame spread still more over all the country (Josh. 4:14; 6:27). Greatness does not come through self-importance, but through self-abasement. If God does not make a man truly great, he can never do it himself. Moreover, the absence of self-assertiveness on Joshua's part did not rule out the use of nature's endowments. His personality was not driven underground by his obedience. On the contrary, God used his gifts to the utmost limits in the prosecution of this great campaign. Note these examples: In matters of *strategy* he excelled (see Josh. 8:4-8); his strategy was divinely sanctioned and divinely used in the overthrow of Ai. In *courageous leadership* (10:8-27)—he stands out prominent in the pages of Israel's history. What foresight, what initiative, what drive, what courage he displayed! These consecrated gifts were all used by God for Israel's deliverance. His *spirit of comradeship* also was magnificent. When Caleb came to him and asked for Hebron (Josh. 14:6-13), he received him right royally. These two old comrades-in-arms were great friends. And the *tactfulness* he wielded in dealing with his own tribesmen (the sons of Joseph—Josh. 17:14-17) is a lesson for all time as to how leaders should handle the men they are called upon to lead. Joshua's gifts were used to the full as he served under his Captain.

The marks of *Deity* shine out clearly in this Theophanic passage. (1) The Captain of the host was *worshipped* by Joshua. By receiving the worship of His servant, He unveiled the insignia of His Godhead. Peter in Caesarea and the angel in John's vision alike, resolutely refused to receive this homage for it belongs to God alone (Acts 10:26; Rev. 22:8). God guards with holy jealousy the divine right of receiving the worship of His creatures (Ex. 34:14). (2) The Captain of the Host also bore the *name of Jehovah*. In Exod. 3 the Angel of the Lord in the bush was identical with Jehovah. The I AM Who appeared to Moses is the selfsame Lord Who now appears to Joshua and the name He bears (Jehovah) points to the blessed fact that He Who now stood with sword in

hand was 'the same yesterday, today and for ever.' (3) The *Godhead* of the Captain of the Host is further confirmed by the command, '*Loose thy shoe*'. Why loose his shoe? Because the ground was holy—made holy by the footprints of Jehovah.

This command to loose his shoe must have come to Joshua with startling forcefulness. He would at once recognize its implications. He would realize how similar his experience was to that of Moses at the burning bush. Moses removed his shoes on the eve of his going forth to bring Israel *out of* Egypt. Joshua now removes his on the eve of his going forth to bring Israel *into* the length and breadth of Canaan. The two acts formed a perfect whole. Moses began the work; Joshua finished it. It was as if the Lord was saying to Joshua, 'I am calling on you to do what I called Moses to do. He performed this act of reverential homage before he set out to work for my people; you must perform it as you set out to wage warfare for my people.' The tasks assigned to these two great leaders were complimentary to each other.

'Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy'. For us the lesson is plain. An attitude of reverential fear and of adoring worship befits those who serve a thrice holy God. As we go forward to possess our possessions and to enjoy our spiritual heritage in the heavenlies in Christ, we do well to cultivate that attitude of heart that is symbolised by the removing of the shoe. Face-to-face dealings with our Lord furnishes the secret of this godly attitude. Grace poured upon us from above provides the needed power. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. (Heb. 12:28).

When Dr Bonar was a student in Edinburgh he frequently met on his way to the University an old man who was often seen to lift his hat from his head as he walked on the road. After a time the young student approached him and asked why he did this. 'God is sometimes so close that I have to uncover before Him', was the reply. Would that we too lived in this same atmosphere of adoration and worship!

'Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou,
That every knee to Thee should bow'.