

## “Worship is Submission to God”

Joshua 5:13-15

*We join God; God does not join us.*

*God is the Victor  
We Submit to God*

*God is the Victor*

Joshua 5:13-14a, NKJV

*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...”*

The three things that are important in the selling of property are location, location, and location. Where a property is located dictates the amount of money that is going to be charged for it around the world. Location is important in expounding on the passage of Scripture since where Joshua was at the time spiritually and physically is as crucial as what was said and done between him and the Commander of the Lord’s army. It was “...when Joshua was by Jericho...” that he saw the Man standing opposite him.

The Israelites had crossed the Jordan as God had commanded them and were now in the Promised Land God had given to them (Joshua 3:1-17). As the leader, Joshua separated himself from the camp and went to survey the city God called them to conquer first in their conquest of the Promised Land. The challenges they faced were greater than the physical skills and resources they had as a nation. They were a nomadic nation for the last several years and slaves in Egypt over the last several hundred years before that. Now they were going to face the greatest challenge since leaving Egypt.

Joshua knew better than anyone what God set before them was greater than they could ever hope to achieve. His time alone was not of strategizing but more likely seeking how God was going to accomplish such an impossible thing. Joshua was not back in the camp ignoring the reality of what awaited them in the coming days; he took time to separate himself out to be alone with God. Joshua knew the promises of God when it came to the fight they were about to engage in and sought to understand what God was calling them to do.

God had informed the people after giving them the law on Mt. Sinai about the conquering of the Promised Land and it would be done by the Lord and not in the strength of the people. God proclaimed,

*27 “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. 28 And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before you. 29 I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the beasts of*

*the field become too numerous for you. <sup>30</sup> Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased, and you inherit the land. <sup>31</sup> And I will set your bounds from the Red Sea to the sea, Philistia, and from the desert to the River. For I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you. (Exodus 23:27-31, NKJV)*

The Lord caused the people of Canaan to have fear of His people when they were in human terms nothing more than nomadic slaves who escaped their slavery in Egypt. There was no real reason for anyone to be afraid of them, especially a great walled city such as Jericho. The people of Jericho were not so much afraid of the people, but the God of the people of Israel who was among them. It was the fear of God the people of Canaan felt. The creation around them turned against the people of Canaan as the hornet was directed by God to drive the people from the land.

Joshua understood the true victory was going to belong to the Lord which is why he was seeking the direction of God as he stood by the city of Jericho. He was coming before the Lord in prayer. It is recorded that “...he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand”. His location was being alone with God in private; his posture was bowing before God who was going to supply the victory to them against Jericho and the entire land of Canaan.

Being alone in solitude is good, but it is important that it is God’s direction that is sought in those secluded times. Courage, strength, determination, and endurance are all good things that people need to endure this life. These things are limited and fleeting if they come from within the person or motivation by some goal. It is only when courage is in the faithfulness of God’s promises that it is able to see a person through any challenge they encounter. Strength is nothing if a person is empowered by anything other than God’s Spirit within them. Determination and endurance are weak and helpless to aid the one in need if they are working against or outside of the will of God.

Time must be taken to know the will of God and make sure that His will is the center where everything else in life receives its meaning and purpose from. There is no victory over sin, death, and the grave without God having provided the means of salvation and reconciliation through Christ. Hebrews 10:19-25 records,

*<sup>19</sup> Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup> by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, <sup>21</sup> and having a High Priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup> let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. <sup>23</sup> Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. <sup>24</sup> And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, <sup>25</sup> not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (NKJV).*

There is no guarantee or hope of our salvation without the Spirit of God indwelling the hearts of His people as assurance of their confession of Christ as Lord. Apostle Paul explained it like this,

*<sup>9</sup> But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. <sup>10</sup> And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. (Romans 8:9-11, NKJV)*

*<sup>5</sup> Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified. <sup>6</sup> But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified. (2 Corinthians 13:5-6, NKJV).*

The praise for any success that is realized in life belongs to God. The Lord establishes every nation and allows them to see greatness to serve His purposes because He is sovereign over all powers. Even the evil nations of the world unwittingly do the will of God in His timing and they are crushed when they do not glorify Him. The greatest example of this in Scripture is King Melchizedek and King Nebuchadnezzar.

King Melchizedek was the priest-king over Salem which would later be called Jerusalem during the time Abram rescued Lot and his family. Melchizedek was a priest of God Most High before the Lord had ordained the priesthood of Aaron and his sons (Genesis 14:18-20). This king is referred in the inspired writing of Hebrews as a forerunner of Jesus the Christ who was from the tribe of Judah which was not associated with the priestly family of Aaron (Hebrews 7:14-17). God had raised up a priestly king before He established His nation through the descendants of Abram. Melchizedek's leadership was established by God and he honored and worshiped God even though he is merely mentioned as intersecting with the plan of God's salvation for the world through Christ who would come into the world by the off spring of Abram.

God had also established King Nebuchadnezzar who did not give God glory nor worship Him because of the power the Lord granted him and the nation he ruled over. The Lord made it clear to Nebuchadnezzar that He was sovereign over all kingdoms no matter how powerful they appeared to be in mankind's estimation. Nebuchadnezzar was warned to give God glory but when he refused the Lord said to him,

*<sup>31</sup> ...“King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! <sup>32</sup> And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.” (Daniel 4:31-32, NKJV)*

God's Word makes it clear that He is the Victor. Joshua and the people were helpless before the Canaanite's who lived in the land. The people of God could never conquer the Promised Land if they attempted to do it in their own strength. This was painfully proven to them when they attempted to go up against the city of Ai due to Achan's sin in Jericho (Joshua 7:1-26). Jesus also made it just as clear that no one can do anything for the kingdom of God apart from Him (John 15:5).

The notion of God being on anyone's side is completely against the teaching of God's Word. The Lord is the side people must choose to be part of because God does not choose sides; God comes to win the victory over all His enemies and the enemies of His people. This is exactly how the Angel of the Lord's army replied to Joshua's question of who's side He was on the way He did, "...as *Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.*" The victory is always God's and never ours. As His creation it is crucial that we submit to Him. It is we who must join the Lord in submission which is the act of worship before God.

### *We Submit to God*

Joshua 5:14b-15, NKJV

*...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.*

Obedience is simply compliance but it is one of the most difficult things people do in their lives. This is especially true when what is to be submitted to is contrary to what a person desires to do. Here we see that Joshua fell down in worship before the Commander of the Lord's army in submission. The authenticity of his worship was confirmed in two things: (1) Joshua sought the will of His Lord, and (2) Joshua did as he was commanded.

Worship as submission is revealed in action. The words of worship spoken with praise, adoration, and even confession are only words unless they are followed up by action. Joshua's bowed posture would have only been an appearance of worship if there was no action taken in confirmation of the gesture of worship. This is something that the people of Israel and Judah were convicted of doing before God throughout the centuries. Unfortunately, those of the church have been just as guilty of paying lip service to God instead of genuinely worshiping Him in spirit and truth as He has called us to do through Christ Jesus (John 4:21-24). Two of the greatest examples of this are found and recorded in the inspired writings of the Prophet Isaiah and the Prophet Malachi.

The Lord addresses the people's failure to worship Him from their hearts and only appeared to worship Him in their life during His times of conviction about how they conducted themselves when they practiced fasting. Isaiah 29:11-13 records God's conviction of His people giving the appearance of worship without genuine action to support their outward claims,

*<sup>11</sup> The whole vision has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one who is literate, saying, "Read this, please."*

*And he says, "I cannot, for it is sealed."*

*<sup>12</sup> Then the book is delivered to one who is illiterate, saying, "Read this, please."*

*And he says, "I am not literate."*

*<sup>13</sup> Therefore the Lord said:*

*"Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths*

*And honor Me with their lips,*

*But have removed their hearts far from Me,*

*And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men, (NKJV)*

The people were honoring God with their words but their lifestyles and attitudes of their hearts did not match what they said. They were being taught to fear God by those who did not fear God themselves. That is what God meant when He said, “...*their fear toward Me is taught by the command of men*”. The priesthood and the office of prophet of God had become corrupted by those who did not know God and refused to submit to His will over their own.

Malachi was inspired to record God’s accusations of His people in this way,

*<sup>13</sup> “Your words have been harsh against Me,”*

*Says the Lord,*

*“Yet you say,*

*‘What have we spoken against You?’*

*<sup>14</sup> You have said,*

*‘It is useless to serve God;*

*What profit is it that we have kept His ordinance,*

*And that we have walked as mourners*

*Before the Lord of hosts?*

*<sup>15</sup> So now we call the proud blessed,*

*For those who do wickedness are raised up;*

*They even tempt God and go free.’”*

*<sup>16</sup> Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another,*

*And the Lord listened and heard them;*

*So a book of remembrance was written before Him*

*For those who fear the Lord*

*And who meditate on His name.*

*<sup>17</sup> “They shall be Mine,” says the Lord of hosts,*

*“On the day that I make them My jewels.*

*And I will spare them*

*As a man spares his own son who serves him.”*

*<sup>18</sup> Then you shall again discern*

*Between the righteous and the wicked,*

*Between one who serves God*

*And one who does not serve Him. (Malachi 3:13-18, NKJV)*

The people went through the motions of worship but only outwardly. They spoke great things about the majesty of God, but sought the help of other nations for protection and the assistance of false gods for guidance to satisfy their fleshly desires. The one who worships God must submit to His commands and authority over their life in every area. There is no compartmentalizing in the life of God’s children. Everything about them must be sanctified before the Father so that in everything God’s Spirit has complete supremacy over all they do, say, and think.

Joshua seeking to know what the Lord wanted of him declared he was not the one leading the way, but it was the Commander of the Lord’s army. This is Christ appearing in history before the Incarnation. The request of Joshua was the first thing Moses was told when He encountered the living God in the wilderness at the burning bush (Exodus

3:1-5). It is customary in many cultures to remove the shoes before entering into someone's home as a sign of respect like it used to be in America of removing hats when coming inside a home. Joshua and Moses were both outside when they were commanded to remove their shoes because they were in the Divine Presence.

The sign of respect for God's presence in the life of His children is genuinely worshiping the Lord in submission to His commands. Joshua asked what it was the Lord wanted of Him. The Commander of the Lord's army was clear in instructing Joshua to remove his sandals because the ground was holy. The holiness was due to God's presence and had nothing to do with the physical land where he stood.

As children of God we take nothing off to show our worship and acknowledgement of God's presence but seek His will and do what He desires. Joshua obeyed without hesitation which is also the way the children of God ought to obey the Spirit of God within their hearts. When God lays upon our hearts to speak, the servant of God as an act of worship must speak whatever they are given to say. When God instructs a person to hold their tongue, the servant of God as an act of worship should hold their tongue. The perfect illustration of continual worship of God in all things is the life of Christ. Jesus said,

*<sup>19</sup> Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. (John 5:19, NKJV)*

The lifestyle of obedience and worship of Christ is the same the children of God should have in their life. The perfection of Christ will be certainly beyond reach for even the regenerated heart will still struggle with sin as long as they live in this world. Submission to God makes everything an act of worship to Him when the child of God complies with the will of the Father in all decisions. This is why everything can be and should be an act of worship for the children of God.

This submission to God in all things can seem overwhelming at first. It makes it easier when we remember that Jesus made the entire law of God easy to understand in statements like, "...whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 7:12, NKJV) and the Apostle Paul summarizes God's law in this way, "Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law" (Romans 13:8, NKJV). This applies to personal and business dealings with people, relationships between family, friends, and strangers, and gives guidance in all decisions whether great or small.

God desires us to worship Him in this manner. Worship is submission to God. Worship is words, attitudes, and actions all speaking in agreement that God alone is sovereign. Worship also helps us to deal with feelings of hurt, bitterness, sorrow, joy, happiness, anger, and every other emotion mankind is capable of experiencing in order to express them in a God honoring way.

Let it be clearly known that God is worshiped in these lives He has redeemed by the blood of His Son, Jesus. Let us worship the Lord through the submission of our schedules, emotions, words, actions, and thoughts so all that is done is a testimony to Him and demonstration of worship of God.