

## SWORDS

Eph. 6:17 "Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is God's word."

Hebrews 4:12 "For the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating as far as to divide soul, spirit, joints, and marrow; it is a judge of the ideas and thoughts of the heart. No creature is hidden from Him, but all things are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account."

Rev. 1:16 "In His right hand He had seven stars; from His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was shining like the sun at midday."

Joshua 5:13-15 "When Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in His hand. Joshua approached Him and asked "Are You for us or for our enemies? Neither, He replied. I have now come as commander of the LORD's army. Then Joshua bowed with his face to the ground in worship and asked Him, What does my LORD want to say to His servant? The commander of the LORD's army said to Joshua, Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy. And Joshua did so."

## DISGRACE FROM THE PAST

## PROVISION FOR THE PRESENT

## PROSTRATE BEFORE THE FUTURE

In an earlier lesson, we discussed how the LORD told Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the disgrace of Egypt from you." Joshua 5:9 In Joshua 5:12, the Israelites ate their Passover on the plains of Jericho. They ate from the produce of the land of milk and honey, and the manna ceased from that point on. Their provision from the past was gone. Now, as Joshua approaches Jericho, he comes upon a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword. General Joshua first asks who he is and comes to recognize him as the Supreme Commander. Barefoot soldier Joshua bows in worship to this appearance of the LORD Himself through this angelic messenger. It is with that barefoot, prostrate exposure of his being before the LORD that Joshua recognizes the need for spiritual preparation before this Jericho battle...the first of many battles that loom ahead for this Joshua generation. It is interesting to note that the name "Jesus" is derived from the word "Joshua" in the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint. Joshua's name means "Yahweh is salvation." And here, on the plains of Jericho, before the very first battle in the Promised Land, 40-something Joshua meets the preincarnate Jesus. Yahweh, the Father, who had brought Joshua and this young Israelite nation through the wilderness and saved them, was now bowing before Yahweh, the Son. We see in this appearance to Joshua the preincarnate Jesus, who later in the book of John, would be called the Word (John.1:14 "the Word became flesh...").

In the hand of the commander of the LORD's army is a drawn sword. A sword is a weapon of battle, an instrument of life and death. It can cut the cords of bondage to loose a captive. Or a sword can cause instant death when piercing through a victim's flesh. You handle a sword carefully. A well-polished sword is a visual sign of strength and beauty. It represents its warrior and the battles fought. It

protects and warns. And in the hand of this commander of the LORD's army, it beckons Joshua to a place of holiness in the battle before him.

Hebrews 4:12 "For the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating as far as to divide soul, spirit, joints, and marrow; it is a judge of the ideas and thoughts of the heart. No creature is hidden from Him, but all things are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account."

Jesus, who is The Word Himself, now holds an icon of Himself: the sword. Joshua, the assistant of Moses, is now being ordained before the LORD Himself for the battle. The Sword, the very Word, is penetrating the ideas and thoughts of Joshua's heart at this holy moment. Joshua may have slowly bent over to remove his sandals from his feet as he slid down on his knees and then onto his belly before the messenger. Here we find Joshua, facedown in worship of Yahweh, at this holy place. The warrior's bare feet represent his naked exposure before the LORD. With his face down to the ground, Joshua asks Him, "What does my Lord want to say to His servant?" The commander of the LORD'S army reminds Joshua that this Promised Land is holy, the Promise to Abraham now becoming fulfilled. But to acquire the Promise, it would require spiritual preparation prior to any military formation on a battlefield.

**I've just returned from a trip to Jacksonville, North Carolina, where my Marine son is stationed. On a warm Sunday morning in August, we attended the Protestant Chapel at Camp Lejeune. It is a magnificent building, filled with historical and beautiful paintings and God-honoring artifacts. The chaplain's message was stirring. My husband and I were blessed to see so many young Marines quietly come in a sit alone or with another Marine and worship God. Many of them carried their Bibles. Some wives with small children sat in front of us, and we were aware that their beloved Marine was on duty's call this Sunday. Songs were sung, prayer requests were spoken, the Word was broken before us. It was a service I won't forget. I was captured by the large stained-glass windows around the beautiful structure of this house of worship. Each window depicted a large angel with his name, and each angel carried a sword. At this large military base, where hundreds of thousands of men and women have been trained to become warriors in past and current settings, I found a holy place where angels still stand guard with their swords. Michael, the angel prince of Israel, and Gabriel, the messenger of God, are depicted in this setting. Each angel holds a mighty sword. And these young Marines held in their hands their sword, the Word of God, possibly not quite understanding the power that they held**

#### QUESTIONS

1. When Joshua was approaching Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him. Did he recognize him as anything significant at first?
2. When Joshua saw the drawn sword in the hand of the man, what do you think Joshua's question meant, "Are You for us or for our enemies?" Do you think Joshua had his hand on his sword?

Was Joshua ready for a standoff before the Jerico battle?

3. What do you think of the answer to Joshua's question: "Neither. I have now come as commander of the LORD's army."?
4. Can we always tell on "whose side" God is in a battle? How do you discern God's will in war? Is that possible?
5. Micah 6:8: God "has told you men what is good and what it is the LORD requires of you: Only to act justly, to love faithfulness, and to walk humbly with your God." How do you determine what "act justly" means? Does God give us insight into what justice is?
6. A warrior carries out the requests of his commander. What if a commander's orders are not just? What does that do to a warrior later in life?
7. How does a warrior retain a "holy place" in his personal life? Can a warrior remove his sandals, as Joshua did? How can a warrior take off his boots before the Lord? What could this naked exposure of the warrior's callouses and blisters before the Lord do for the warrior?
8. How does exposure to God's Word (His sword, Eph. 6:17 "Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is God's word.") protect us in our spiritual battles?

## Thy Word

Thy Word is like a garden, Lord,

With flowers bright and fair;

And every one who seeks may pluck

A lovely cluster there.

Thy Word is like a deep, deep mine;

And jewels rich and rare

Are hidden in its mighty depths

For every searcher there.

Thy Word is like a starry host

A thousand rays of light

Are seen to guide the traveler,  
And make his pathway bright.  
Thy word is like an armory,  
Where soldiers may repair,  
And find for life's long battle-day  
All needful weapons there.  
Oh, may I love thy precious word;  
May I explore the mine;  
May I its fragrant flowers glean;  
May light upon me shine.  
Oh, may I find my armor there;  
Thy Word my trusty sword,  
I'll learn to fight with every foe  
The battle of the Lord.

Edwin Hodder, Sourcebook of Poetry

Taken from Swindoll's Ultimate Book of Illustrations & Quotes, Charles R. Swindoll,  
Published in Nashville, Tennessee by Thomas Nelson, Inc., page 46.