

## Joshua 5:10-15 TEN 'SECRETS' of SUCCESS

PRELIMS. Thinking of how we may evangelise this community, and how to make the walls of Dundee's opposition to the gospel fall down, let's look at some **principles** of God's Word regarding Joshua entering Jericho!

### No. 1 – The Importance of Keeping the Lord's Ordinances – Even When it is Inconvenient.

*“they **kept** the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening on the **plains** of Jericho”*[10] On enemy soil! As **soldiers** on **watch**! If our 'religion' is not worth keeping when it is inconvenient, it is not really a religion worth having! The word 'religion' comes from the word '**worth**'! What is it worth to you?

We have just read about the **second generation** Israelites who had not been circumcised! It was as if, God could not use them unless they were circumcised! Did you get that meaning out of it? *“Today I have rolled away the reproach (disgrace) of Egypt from you”*[9]! Did Israel think they were in a 'condition of disgrace' before God?

Today many Xns think nothing of **missing** the Lord's Supper and not baptising their children into the faith! Whatever their children may do with that privilege once they have it - at least, pass on the good news and the privileges and the **promises** of God. **APP** If we ourselves do not **observe** God's command, He will **not** use us in the community! The community will notice our own disobedience!

**No 2 – Miracles Are Exceptions!** *“the manna **ceased** the day after they ate of the produce of the land”*[11]. If we can at all provide for ourselves, God does nothing spectacular! God expects us to make full use of all possible and legitimate means to obtain the **necessities** of life. 2 million people in a wilderness, needed something special – and God provided. But once they could plant and sow and gather fruit, the special help will stop! **APP** We cannot expect God to provide for us **financially** as a Church, if we ourselves have the **means** to **earn** and **support** His Cause. We cannot expect the Church to fill up with people if we do not

evangelise the community and show our interest/love for them!

**No 3 – Prayer Will be Answered – Sometime!** Forgotten prayers were now being answered. Some time before, **Moses prayed** “*if Your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here*”. The Lord said at that time “*My presence will go with you and I will give you rest*”[Ex 33:15]! Here was God **fulfilling** that prayer and promise. Joshua was with Moses at that time, so Joshua should not have been surprised at the **appearance** of the ‘Angel’ (if he was surprised!). **APP** God has answered many more of our prayers than we realise! Let us be aware of His continued goodness to us.

The very fact that we as a congregation are still going after over 20yrs, when at least **seven** other congregations + C of S mergers in this city have **closed** down, is a mark of God sustaining grace and goodness to us. There were six here in 1984 when I first preached!

**No 4 – Trust in the Obscure God!** Look: “*a man* (not the Lord) *was standing before him*”[13b] – but it **was the Lord!** Almost all commentators believe it was a **pre-incarnate** visit of the Son of God! God works and ‘appears’ in **obscure forms!** Mary did not know Him in the Garden! Amazing! Eli (and initially the boy Samuel) did not recognise the voice of God!! And Jacob “*Surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it*”[Gen 28:16]

God, as we noticed last week, is at work in history today – and in many ‘**minor**’ incidents and events. God does not reveal Himself in a hugely public way – very often to people when **alone!**

**Transfigurations** are unique, and only for a few! So, despite great manifestations, believe in God and His Word!

**No 5 – God Works in Mysterious, Ominous Ways!** Not just obscure, but ominous ways! “*...with His sword drawn in His hand*”[13] Sometimes God seems to be doing the very **opposite** of ‘friendship’! Jacob said “*all these things are against me*”[Gen 42:36] and so it **looked!** But that is the point – God works mysteriously and ominously to **our** eyes! When Jesus came to the Twelve I a boat the middle of the night, they thought the Son of

God was a **ghost** “...and cried out *in fear*” come to hurt them! But “Behold, it is I, be **not afraid**”[Mat 14:27] Think of all those who missed their bus/train to the Twin Towers, or were taken ill, on 9/11 and thereby missed the terrorist attack?

**No 6 – Don’t Beat About the Bush!** As we meet the public in our evangelism, be **direct** and open, up-front, honest. Make ‘no bones’ about your faith. “*Are you for us, or for our adversaries?*”[13c] Say ‘Yes, I’m a Xn and a strong one. I have found nothing like the Bible which answers the problems of life and it is full of wisdom. I find it accurately describes life and mankind, and gives me great hope for the future. I love the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. What do you think about Xnity? What do you believe in?’

Be assured of your faith, and **never mock** other religions. Be **gentle** and **nice** “*the Lord's servant<sup>1</sup> must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth*”[2Tim2:24]

**No 7 – God Can Work Very Quickly!** Things can change quickly in your favour! All of a sudden Joshua just “looked up” and “*the commander of the army of the Lord*” stood before him! Think of the four lepers - how quickly the whole situation changed for Israel! Think of the Ten Lepers just a chance meeting with Jesus!

Remember, God **has** a whole host of “*ministering spirits who are sent out to serve ...those who are to inherit salvation*”[Heb 1:14]. God a large number of Angels who are **awaiting orders** to help and assist God’s people **on earth!** Some of the unexplainable events of life may well be due to God’s Secret Service Agents at work behind the scenes!

**No 8 – Humility is the Best Pre-requisite for Service to God.**

Here we have the Top Man among the People of God, Joshua, head leader in Israel, **bowing down to complete stranger** – and yet, He was no stranger! “*And Joshua fell on his face to the earth...*”[14b] **APP** In our evangelism, we will meet people whose appearance

may not be attractive. But we do not know who they are or what they will become! We may ‘despise them in our hearts’, but God may have great plans for them. They may be God’s very servants, sent **deliberately** at that **specific** time, to be the solution to your problem! We need to be **humble** before **everybody** we meet! We can be **taught** the **most important** of lessons from the **most unlikely** of sources. We need humility “*What does my Lord say to his servant?*”[14c] We must be willing to learn from anybody!

**No 9 – There Are Occasions When We Should Stop Everything and Worship!** “*Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy. And Joshua did so.*”[15] Is enemy soil, holy soil? No. But **God’s presence** does! God’s **hand** in Providence demands our worship. Some marvellous **escape** (maybe in the car). Some wonderful unexpected deliverance (some letter in the mail or a phone call), **demand**s our **acknowledgement** and **adoration** of our Lord and Saviour! Even to call the family together, and **pray/praise** for a few minutes to acknowledge His gracious mighty hand!

**No 10 – Obedience is the Precursor of Success!** “*And Joshua did so.*” – Because he knew it was the **Lord!** That friends, is **why** the **walls of Jericho fell down** in the next chapter! Obedience is **better** than sacrifice!