

A The parties in conflict:

❖ The Prince of God's army.

- As Joshua prayed near Jericho seeking divine direction to take the city, a warrior with his sword drawn stood before him (Josh. 5:13).
- When questioned by Joshua, this man denied his affiliation with any earthly army. He was the Commander of God's army (Josh. 5:14).
- By demanding worship, he showed that he was God himself, in the person of Jesus—known as Michael in the book of Daniel (Josh. 5:15; Dan. 12:1).
- The prayer had been answered. To Joshua's relief, God himself took command of the operation. As Israel's visible commander, Joshua was to follow only the orders of the true commander-in-chief: God.

❖ The prince of the army of evil.

- We can say that he invented war. He was born a prince; a cherub of the highest rank; at the very side of God; walking on burning coals; precious; perfect... (Ezek. 28:12-15).
- Endowed with free will – like all intelligent beings created by God – Lucifer decided to rebel and usurp God's throne (Is. 14:12-14).
- Although his rebellion failed, the universe has been engulfed in war ever since. Having taken over the Earth, Satan and his angels have a single purpose: to thwart God's plans to save the human race.
- The conquest of Canaan was an important battle in this war.

❖ The most powerful warrior.

- God himself is presented as a “man of war,” the most powerful warrior in battle (Ex. 15:3; Ps. 24:8).
- But God is not at war with human beings, but with the spiritual powers to which they cling. Therefore, the plagues are presented as a war against the gods of Egypt, that is, the demons (Ex. 12:12; Deut. 32:17).
- God desires to eradicate evil from the Earth. Therefore, He expelled from Canaan those who had chosen to side with Satan, and granted the land to the people who had sided with Him.
- Today the war continues, but not over territory. The fight is for each family, for each individual. There is no neutral ground. We are either with God or with the enemy.

B The strategies of conflict:

❖ God fighting for us.

- God's original plan was to conquer Canaan by supernatural means, without Israel having to fight (Exod. 23:28). If it hadn't been for the people's unbelief, this would have happened.
- The Bible records some examples of what God can do to deliver His people without them having to take up any weapons against their enemies: He sank the Egyptian army in the Red Sea. (Exod. 14:24-28); He used hail against the Canaanites (Josh. 10:11); He destroyed those who despised Elijah (2 Kings 1:9-10); He sent bears against those who mocked Elisha (2 Kings 2:23-24); He obtained peace by blinding the Syrian army (2 Kings 6:14-23); He made the Ammonites and Moabites fight each other (2 Chronicles 20:15-17, 22-24); He killed 185,000 Assyrians in one night (2 Kings 19:35); He sent a deadly disease on Herod (Acts 12:21-23).

❖ We fighting for God.

- As with the antediluvians, or with Sodom and Gomorrah, the Canaanites had overstepped the bounds of grace, and had enlisted themselves with Satan (Gen. 6:5; 18:20-21; 15:16).
- They were all destined for the second death, eternal death. Prolonging their lives here would not change their final destiny. And God allowed Israel, on this occasion (the capture of Canaan), to take an active part in the slaughter.
- Why not do it Himself, as He had planned? Because of their unbelief. Israel's first taste of war was after declaring, “Is the LORD among us, or not?” (Exod. 17:7-9).
- By taking an active part in the battle (physical for them, spiritual for us), we develop an unconditional trust in God's help.