

THE ANGEL & THE HORNET

INTRO:

THE ANGEL AND THE HORNET.

- That's a title I'll explain towards the end of the message today.
- For now, take a moment to picture an epic battle scene in ancient Israel.
- Imagine that you are in the ranks.
- Opposite of you are a fearsome foe that includes giants of Goliath's reputation and stature.
- Suddenly there's a sound going ahead of you before the armies collide... sounds like bees buzzing.
- And unseen with your natural eyes, but very real before you, stands the angel of the Lord.
- What happens next?

God has good plans for our lives.

- In the year 2026 AD (year of the Lord), God's people can still look forward to the goodness of God.

Psalm 27:13 ESV

¹³ I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living!

God has a 'promised land' for each of us.

- a. the promise of heaven—the eternal kingdom of God
- b. the promise of purpose in his plan today
- c. the promise of his blessings as we walk with him in those purposes

Ask yourself the questions as we begin 2026:

- What does God have for me (to do)?
- Who does he want me to be (become)?
- How am I supposed to accomplish these things?
- What OBSTACLES or 'giants' stand in the way?
- EXAMPLE:
 - "Make me a better man today than I was yesterday... and a better man tomorrow than I am today... For who I was yesterday isn't enough for today and tomorrow."
 - 3 fold focus:
 - Better son/servant of the Lord
 - Better family man (husband & father)

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- Better pastor
- Notice for me, the focus is more on the 'who I become' rather than 'what I can accomplish.'
- Ironically, the better man I can become (for the Lord, my family, and the church), I'll more than likely accomplish a thing or two along the way.
- The obstacles are often: distractions, fear, temptations, selfishness, pride, etc.

About 3400 years ago, Israel stood near the Jordan River, on the east side (across from Jericho) with both excitement and anxiety as they looked beyond the river and into the land where God was calling them and giants awaited their swords.

- What battles would have to be fought?
- Where would each tribe and family settle?
- What challenges would they face?
- What good things and blessings were in front of them?
- What would be required of them in order to walk in the promised blessings of God?

Numbers 33:50-56 ESV

⁵⁰ And the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho, saying, ⁵¹ "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you pass over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, ⁵² then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you and destroy all their figured stones and destroy all their metal images and demolish all their high places. ⁵³ And you shall take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given the land to you to possess it. ⁵⁴ You shall inherit the land by lot according to your clans. To a large tribe you shall give a large inheritance, and to a small tribe you shall give a small inheritance. Wherever the lot falls for anyone, that shall be his. According to the tribes of your fathers you shall inherit. ⁵⁵ But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then those of them whom you let remain shall be as barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall trouble you in the land where you dwell. ⁵⁶ And I will do to you as I thought to do to them."

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1: THE PROMISED LAND REQUIRED A FIGHT

THEY WERE CALLED TO DRIVE OUT (DISPOSSESS) THE INHABITANTS

- Who were the inhabitants of Canaan?
 - Many of the tribes were said to be clans of giants.
 - These are the descendants of the Nephilim, Anakim, Rephaim
 - They were not merely large, but demonic in nature.
 - These were not to be tolerated, but destroyed.
 - Other tribes were steeped in idolatry and immorality
 - God had told Abraham that he would give the land to his descendants at a future time for the sin of the canaanites was not yet full.
 - Now in Moses' and Joshua's day... the fullness of their sins had reached heaven and God was ready to act (for he will only tolerate sin so long)
 - These were to be defeated and driven from the land and expelled

THEY WERE TASKED WITH DESTROYING ITS IDOLS

- It was important to completely remove the idols and false religions so that they wouldn't be ensnared in them also.
- Listen: false religion (lies) are powerful in deceiving and capturing people—(but truth is more powerful)
- Idols give our wayward natures a direction to pursue.
 - We're created to worship the Lord
 - But our hearts and flesh can be tempted to worship other things (mainly the self)
 - Things that gratify the self that promise pleasure, comfort, prosperity
 - But all these idols don't 'god' very well and lead to death.

Q: Why did God want them destroyed or driven out?

- The giant clans were a menace that sought to destroy (Goliath is an example)
- The other Canaanites and their idols attempted to lead Israel away from Yahweh and into their plurality.
- A: God wanted his people to thrive in the land and walk in faithfulness to Him!

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GET YOUR FIGHT BACK (STEP INTO THE FIGHT—AWAKEN YOUR COURAGE AND DEVOTION)

- Living in God's blessings (his best for you—the promised land) requires you to fight righteously.
 - You've got to eliminate that which is hostile to God and his plans for you!
 - You cannot tolerate things that when full grown will destroy you!
 - ELIMINATE (in your own life):
 - Sins, known temptations (don't put yourself in harms way), ungodly influences, idols, false religions and their practices.
 - HOW?
 - Pick up your sword – the word of God
 - Pray and pray often
 - Surround yourself with godly influences who inspire and encourage you
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2: THE PROMISED LAND REQUIRED FOCUS

THE NATURAL TENDENCY IS TO SETTLE BEFORE THE JOB IS FINISHED

- Subduing the enemy for a time is different than eliminating or driving them off and far away.
- Partial victory is good and encouraging, but never the finish line.
- Sometimes we get weary in doing good
- Sometimes we hesitate to pay the price (again) – obedience is costly (especially to the self)
- Sometimes we just have ADD and get distracted
- Other times we let GOOD become the enemy of BEST
 - We get sidetracked on GOOD things and end up neglecting the BEST things.
 - We get caught up in TASKS or ACCOMPLISHMENTS and neglect the PEOPLE (CHILDREN/SPOUSES) He put the priority on.

GOD WARNED ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT COMPLETING THE TASK

- Letting your sins to 'live and fight another day' is usually a strategy that doesn't payoff.
- V55: 'barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides.'
 - LXX: 'splinters in your eyes and darts (javelins) in your side'
- V56: "And I will do to you as I thought to do to them"
 - Israel would be dispossessed and driven from the land—this is exactly what would happen (Assyria, Babylon)

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- In our case:
 - the promised land would become spoiled
 - our plans and efforts will be frustrated and come to ruin
 - we will find ourselves fighting God rather than with him
 - we will find ourselves defeated and broken by our sin
 - Don't be fooled: Sin always has consequences.
 - Sin CAN BE forgiven, but not all consequences can be removed (although God is gracious and merciful and helps us)

GET YOUR FOCUS FIXED

- Like a target locked on, be relentless.
 - If your focus is off, allow the Word and Spirit of God to correct it.
 - We will get unfocus and distracted (its human nature)—but its important to get refocused quickly.
 - LOCK IN!
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3: THE PROMISED LAND REQUIRED FAITH & FAITHFULNESS

REMINDER THAT THE INHABITANTS OF THE LAND WERE GIANTS & STRONG PEOPLES

- At no point do we get the idea that this will be as easy fight.
- In fact, these giants remained because the previous generation lacked the faith—were given to fear
 - Fight, not just for life, but for the generations who follow you.
 - Break the cycle so your family can know a righteous 'normal' – free from alcoholism, pornography, infidelity, greed, etc.

Exodus 23:20-31 ESV

²⁰ "Behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. ²¹ Pay careful attention to him and obey his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression, for my name is in him. ²² "But if you carefully obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. ²³ "When my angel goes before you and brings you to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, and I blot them out, ²⁴ you shall not bow down to

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their gods nor serve them, nor do as they do, but you shall utterly overthrow them and break their pillars in pieces. ²⁵ You shall serve the LORD your God, and he will bless your bread and your water, and I will take sickness away from among you. ²⁶ None shall miscarry or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days. ²⁷ I will send my terror before you and will throw into confusion all the people against whom you shall come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. ²⁸ And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites from before you. ²⁹ I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the wild beasts multiply against you. ³⁰ Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased and possess the land. ³¹ And I will set your border from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates, for I will give the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you.

THEY NEEDED TO BELIEVE AND TRUST IN GOD'S PROMISES FOR SUCCESS

- As large as the task was (defeating giants), the promise for God's help matched it and superceded it.
 - God would send his angel before them!
 - I will be an enemy to your enemies.
 - I will send my terror before you (the hornet)
 - I will gradually help you conquer the land (not all at once) until you have increased and possess the land (until you grow into it).
- In other words, God told them that THEY must do some things, HE would do the rest.
 - THEY had to pick up the sword and march
 - HE would send his angel and his hornet ahead of them.
 - THEY had to destroy the idols and high places
 - THEY had to worship the Lord and serve him
 - HE would bless their bread and their water and give them good health, children, and long lives.
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 - If we do our part... he'll help us in ways we can't always fathom or see.
 - He'll go before us and fight battles on our behalf.

COVENANT FAITHFULNESS WAS REQUIRED FOR THEIR BLESSING AND SUCCESS

- V21: Pay careful attention to him, obey his voice (my name is in him)
- V24: You shall NOT bow down to there gods nor serve them

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- V25: You SHALL serve the Lord YOUR God
- If they would love and obey God, he would bless them.
- If they would disobey God, they would ultimately come to ruin.
- God would help them, empower them, they just needed to walk faithfully with him.

GET YOUR FAITH ON FIRE

- The promised land is full of distractions: the good and the bad.
- Your love for the Lord is the key to your success and living in God's blessings.
- No one else can be responsible for your faith—its yours.

RESPONSE:

I want to pray a biblical prayer of blessing over you as we begin this year.

As you take up the fight of faith, a focus on God's best and highest calling, and seek to walk in the faith...

Numbers 6:24-26 NIV

²⁴ " ' "The LORD bless you and keep you; ²⁵ the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; ²⁶ the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace." ' "

- May he give you a righteous indignation to fight the fight of faith.
- May he give you a clarity of focus; the ability to discern 'best' from 'good'
- May he give you a passion and love for him as you walk with him in faith