



Week 10 Session Guide

Jehovah-Nissi “The Lord is My Banner”

“Thanks be to God! He gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Corinthians 16:57

Old Testament

Israel had left Egypt and had begun their trek through the Sinai desert toward the Land of Promise. They weren't in the desert very long when they started complaining and remembering the “good old days” of their captivity when at least they could eat onions and cucumbers. They had tested God at Marah, the waters of bitterness, and God “healed” the water and made it drinkable.

In Exodus 17, the Israelites arrived at a place called Rephidim. Interestingly, the name “Rephidim” means “Rests” (plural). They were not able to rest long however. It often happens that just when we think things are going pretty well and we can relax, a new obstacle to our peace appears seemingly out of nowhere. Israel had entered the territory of the Amalekites who were not at all pleased with the travelers and began a series of raids against them. Moses knew it was time for his ill equipped and untrained people to eliminate this threat and that their only option was to go to war. He called Joshua to assemble an army to attack Amalek. Moses climbed the hill and raised his staff which began the battle. As long as Israel could see the rod raised above Moses, they prevailed in battle. But as Moses' arms grew weary and he let his arms down, the Amalekites were able to push Israel back. Eventually, Aaron and Hur had Moses sit on a rock while they kept his arms raised until sunset and God gave them the victory.

Moses built an altar and named it **The Lord is My Banner**; and he said, “Because hands were raised up against the Lord, the Lord will have war against Amalek from generation to generation.” In essence, God's got our back - forever!

The Hebrew word transliterated as “Banner” is “Nes” and Strong's Concordance defines it to mean “a standard, signal, or sign”. In this case Moses' staff, the rod that God caused to turn into a snake, to strike Egypt with multiple plagues, to split the Red Sea and to strike the Rock that produced water became that standard. Israel's faith soared when they saw that rod, that “banner” above Moses' head because they knew it was more than an old dead branch of a tree. They had seen JEHOVAH do powerful miracles through Moses' use of his staff and the sight of it reminded them of God's faithfulness to protect, defend and provide for His people. They were confident that the LORD would give them the necessary victory in their battle against the Amalekites. But God knows that the heart of man is quick to give credit for the unexplainable to something tangible to our senses even if it's just a “stick” so He had Moses build an Altar (of rocks) and called it JEHOVAH NISSI (The LORD is My Banner). God defined Himself as the “Banner” who would lead His people into war against enemies bent on their destruction and would be the sole source of the Faith they needed to be victorious. God wanted His people to look to Him and trust that He would never fail to give them victory over their enemies!

New Testament

Just as Amalek in the Old Testament was the sworn enemy of God's people and made every effort to prevent them from obtaining the land promised to them by God, we too have an enemy. 1 Peter 5:8 warns us to "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." Satan will relentlessly make every effort to destroy us. He will try his hardest to keep us from obtaining the inheritance promised by God to those who put their faith in Him.

In John 10:10, Jesus warns us that, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy". To accomplish this Satan attempts to steal the Word of God from us so that faith can not even take root. When God's promises are understood and accepted the "thief" often will then use trouble and persecution would destroy the faith of some and that others would be harassed by "the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things" that will choke one's faith in God's Word.

But 1 John 3:8 tells us that Jesus "The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil." But He is not content to only defend us. In order to completely destroy the works of the devil, Jesus empowers his disciples (including us) in Luke 10:19, "Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you." He then commands us to, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. These signs will accompany **those who have believed**: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

What is the secret of our victory? It is the same as Israel's triumph over Amalek: 1 John 5:4-5 tells us, "this is the victory that has overcome the world (including the demonic forces who control this world)—**our faith**. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"

Israel's faith in JEHOVAH NISSI soared when they looked UP and remembered God's promises and His faithfulness. Interestingly, Jesus is referred to as "The Branch" several times in the Old Testament. As we look UP to "The Branch" (Jesus) and cause our faith to grow as we meditate on His Word and spend time in His Presence, we too can be assured of victory over "all the power of the enemy". Israel had a part to play. They had to fight, they had to engage the enemy. We too do not have the option of avoiding confrontation with a fierce and merciless enemy. God promises to be our Banner and our victory however as long as we trust Him and continue to fight.

Study Questions:

- 1) Clearly, God could have destroyed Amalek before Israel ever had to fight them. What do you think are some possible reasons that He instead had them go to war?
- 2) What are some ways the enemy harasses you and tries to destroy you or your faith?
- 3) In what ways have you seen God as JEHOVAH-NISSI (The Lord is a Banner)? What are some areas of your life that you believe God wants to give you victory in NOW? Make sure to pray for each other.
- 4) What role did Aaron and Hur have in obtaining the victory? What lessons can we learn from them?