

THE COMMANDER OF THE LORD'S ARMY

Joshua 5:13-15

God had just brought the Israelites through **three significant events**:

- *The rite of circumcision.*
- *The celebration of the Passover.*
- *The eating the produce of Canaan.*

All of these were for **Israel's edification**. Next came an extremely meaningful experience for **Joshua**. And it would eventually have an impact on the people too. **A personal confrontation with God!**

I. **GOD'S PRESENCE:** (vs. 13)

Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us or for our adversaries?" (vs. 13)...

Now that they were spiritually prepared, the obvious next step for **Joshua** and **Israel** would be the *seize* and *defeat* of **Jericho**. But since no instructions had yet come from God to **Joshua**, he went out to *scout* and *investigate* this seemingly *impregnable* city.

It's important to remember...the first report that came from the **12 spies** back at **Kadesh Barnea** stated that the cities of **Canaan** were *large, with walls up to the sky* (**Deuteronomy 1:28**).

Up until now **Joshua** had never led an attack as **Israel's** leader. And now it seemed that his first mission would be on a fortified city that was prepared for a long siege. In fact, of all the walled cities in **Palestine**, **Jericho** was probably the *most invincible*. There was also the question of *armaments*. **Israel's** army had *no siege engines, no battering rams, no catapults, and no moving towers*. Their only weapons were *slings, arrows, and spears*...which were like *chaff* against the walls of **Jericho**.

Joshua knew that **Jericho** had to be conquered. He knew that they couldn't just by-pass the city. In order to *enter* and *possess* the land that God had promised **Israel**, **Jericho** had to be defeated.

He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand...

Joshua was startled when he looked and saw a **Soldier** brandishing His sword.

Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us or for our adversaries?"...

Instinctively **Joshua** challenged the **Stranger**. In essence he was asking Him if He was *friend* or *foe*? "*Are you here to help us or fight against us?*"

But what **Joshua** was confronted by was a **Theophany**.

A Theophany: An appearance in Old Testament times of the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself...a pre-incarnation appearance of Christ.

- **Abraham** under the oak at **Mamre**...when the *three men* approached and announcement that **Sarah** was going to have a son (**Genesis 18**).
- **Jacob** at **Peniel** when he *wrestled* with God (**Genesis 32**).
- **Moses** at the *burning bush* on **Mt. Horeb** (**Exodus 3**).
- **Balaam** and his *donkey* (**Numbers 22**).

II. **GOD'S PLAN:** (vs. 14)

He said, "No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the Lord." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, "What has my lord to say to his servant?" (vs. 14)...

The response **Joshua** received was *startling* and *revealing*. Something occurred that convinced **Joshua** that this was *no earthly* or *human soldier*. It was clear to **Joshua** that he was indeed talking to the **Angel of the Lord**. This had to have been an astonishing revelation to **Joshua**. He had *heard God speak*...but now he is *confronted by God*, personally.

Joshua had anticipated a normal battle between *two opposing armies*...the **Israelites** and the **Canaanites**. He had thought that this was going to be a war that he was to be the commander. But then he was confronted by the *divine Commander* and learned that the battle was the Lord's.

No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the Lord (vs. 14)...

No...means *neither*. God was basically saying that, *I'm not here to take sides...I'm here to take over*.

The **army of the Lord** wasn't limited to the *army of Israel*, though it would have been included. Specifically, it refers to **the angelic host**:

- The same **army of heaven** that later surrounded **Dothan** when **Elisha** and his *servant* appeared to be greatly outnumbered by the **Aramean army (II Kings 6:8-17)**.
- The same **heavenly army** that included the **12 legions of angels** that Jesus referred in the **Garden of Gethsemane** at the time of His arrest (**Matthew 26:53**). Those He said were ready to defend Him if He called upon them.
- The **ministering spirits** mentioned in **Hebrews 1:14** that are described as being sent to serve those who will *inherit salvation*.

There are times that this **army of the Lord**...these **ministering spirits (angels)** may manifest themselves in a *visible* form, and there are other times they are *invisible*. But either way, they *serve* and *care* for God's children in times of great need.

That's why the writer of **Hebrews** warns us...

“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.”

~Hebrews 13:2

The Lord of Host (vs. 14)...This is the *battle name of God*. When God leads His people into battle, He is always identified as the **Lord of Host**.

The **captain of the Lord's army** had not come to be *an idle spectator* of the conflict, or even to be *an ally*. He was in *complete charge* and would shortly reveal His plan for capturing the *fortified stronghold* of **Jericho**.

Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down (vs. 14)...**Joshua**, recognizing his heavenly visitor with the **drawn sword**, *fell on his face* and *worshiped* the **captain of the host of the Lord** as **Yahweh**...acknowledging that this was His war and that the **Israelites** were but a part of **the Lord's army** (which would include *angels* and even the *forces of nature*).

What has my lord to say to his servant...In essence, **Joshua** said, *“Speak Lord, for Your servant is listening.”*

III. **GOD'S PROCLAMATION: (vs. 15)**

The reply of the Lord to **Joshua** was *brief* but *imperative*.

The captain of the Lord's host said to **Joshua**, **“Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.”** And **Joshua** did so (**vs. 15**)...

The place where you are standing is holy (vs. 15)...These are the exact words that God spoke to **Moses** at the *burning bush (Exodus 3:5)*. It's *holy ground* because of the *presence of the Lord*.

“Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”

~Exodus 3:5

This was more than a sign of *respect*...it was a sign of *submission* to a superior. The presence of holy God *sanctified* this spot even in a defiled land. By removing his sandals, he acknowledged that this battle and the entire conquest of **Canaan** was God's conflict and that he was merely God's servant.

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

When one surrenders and comes under the Lordship of Christ, God moves to take over every aspect of your life:

- **The battle that you have against the strongholds that are holding you captive and in bondage...the battles that are preventing you from living the victorious Christian life...become His battle (I John 5:4-5).**
- **He will renew your mind and establish your thoughts and direct your steps (Proverbs 4:26; Proverbs 16:3, 9; Romans 12:2).** You gain wisdom...seeing things from God's point of view...from a heavenly perspective.
- **When God works...never fail to give Him the glory, honor, praise, and worship that He is due.**