

**“The Captain of the Lord's Host”**  
**Joshua 5:10-15**

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**by C.W. Powell**

“10 And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho.

11 And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the selfsame day.

12 And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

13 And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said

unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?

14 And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant?

15 And the captain of the LORD'S host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so." (Joshua 5:10-15 AV)

You remember that the spies had returned from Jericho and reported what Rahab had told them. The people of Israel had heard that the people of the land were frightened because they had heard what God had done for Israel when they came out of Egypt and during their wanderings in the desert. It was about forty years since they had come out of Egypt but it seemed that now God was again doing great things for Israel. Two great kings had been defeated east of the Jordan

River. A spirit of fear and despair had settled into the land of Canaan. This, the spies reported.

New wonders were to follow. According to the word of the Lord given to Joshua, the armies of Israel passed over the Jordan River at flood time. The priests carried the Ark of the Covenant down to the river and the waters upstream piled up into a great heap so that an empty channel appeared before the priests. They carried the Ark of the Covenant out into the channel and stood there until the entire army had passed over. Then the priests and the Ark passed on over and twelve men took up twelve stones out of the channel where the priest had stood to build a lasting memorial to these event for the instruction of future generations. Then the waters returned to their natural flow.

The army camped at Gilgal before Jericho. You can imagine the terror inside the city of Jericho. To the wonders mentioned before this new thing had occurred, the opening of the Jordan River. It

also shows that signs and wonders of themselves will not bring people to repentance. It would seem that the men of Jericho would be crawling out on their hands and knees to submit to the God of Israel. But no, they stand behind their fortifications. Desperate though they were, they were ready to fight to the bitter end for their delusions and idols. Without God's Spirit, man's heart is exceedingly hard.

At Gilgal before the city of Jericho there is a pause. Things happen in the kingdom of God according to the purpose and plan of God and at His timetable. At length the city of Jericho would be given to Israel, but it would be in the way and at the time appointed by God. There were four important events that must take place before God would bring out the fall of Jericho.

**The first of these we saw last week:** the renewal of circumcision, that had not been performed since the return of the first spies. Long ago, Joshua and Caleb had returned from

spying out the land of Canaan with the ten other spies. The ten spies brought up a report of giants and great walled cities. Israel did not believe and wanted to appoint another ruler for themselves and return to Egypt. Except for the prayers of Moses God would have destroyed Israel. Instead, God had condemned to wander forty years in the desert until all of that generation had passed away and only Caleb and Joshua would remain.

Because of their unbelief God removed from them the sign of circumcision, which had been a sign of Abraham's faith, although the other ceremonies of the Law of Moses continued with them. God continued to dwell with them, even though, they did not bear the sign.

Now the sign of the covenant that God made with Abraham is renewed, and the men of Israel were circumcised before the walls of Jericho. It would take some days for their wounds to heal. How mysterious are the ways of God. We are

always safe when we follow Him, even if we are waiting outside the walls of Jericho for our wounds to heal. As David said, “Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemy.”

**The second thing was this:** the keeping of the Passover. I do not believe that they did not keep the Passover during these forty years. Rather, with Calvin, I believe that they had kept it all those years, for not all the evidences of God’s favor were removed from them. Only circumcision. The Passover was the festival they kept in remembering their wonderful deliverance from the Angel of Death in the land of Egypt, when the Angel passed over their houses where the blood had been put over the door and on the door posts.

**The third thing was the ceasing of the manna.** From now on they would eat the grain of the land of Canaan. The miracle of the manna would cease and Israel would be supplied with

their daily bread by the ordinary tilling of the land. Their first grain would be the old grain of the land that would be found in the storehouses of the cities that would fall before their arms. There is an important lesson here. God certainly can provide us bread from heaven, but his ordinary method is for us to work with our hands and use the natural things that He has provided for us. His provision is enough for us, and it is no less His providence to bless the works of our hands than it is for him to send manna. There has never again been any manna from heaven to feed the people of God. It ceased before the walls of Jericho.

The manna, of course, was a figure of the Lord Jesus Christ, the true bread which came down from heaven to give His life for the world. Israel ate manna and died. Not so those who eat of the bread of life by faith in Christ. Manna only gave life for the body; the Lord Jesus Christ gives life for the soul, and those that believe on him have everlasting life. Death has not power over them,

but only removes from us that part that is of Adam, the corrupt body that goes into the grave and the sinful nature that was condemned at the cross of Christ. If we live in Christ we will be raised with glorious bodies like that of the Lord Jesus, we will have no more conflict with sin, and we will be in the presence of the Lord Jesus forever and ever. This the people of Israel had only in a figure; we have this in our souls through our Lord Jesus Christ. Far better is our manna than that which was supplied by Moses.

**The fourth thing is before us today:** the appearance to Joshua of the Captain of the Lord's Host. We read the account in verses 13-15. What a marvelous story is this! The Captain of the Lord's Host appeared only to Joshua. He would inform the rest of the people.

I. I think that Joshua was praying for wisdom from the Lord.

A. Some say that he was looking over the city of Jericho. I doubt that he was alone



on a reconnaissance mission. But it doesn't matter. Whatever the cause, the encounter was with God and him alone.

B. He was alone and saw this commanding figure, perhaps on a crest of a hill. He had the appearance of a man, with a sword drawn in his hand. He must have stood at a distance, because Joshua "lifted up his eyes."

## II. The encounter

A. Joshua certainly knew the account that Moses had written in the first five books of the Bible. He knew that angels appeared in human form. Such had appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I do not believe that Joshua would have been completely surprised at this visitation.

B. Joshua walks up to him, and says, "Are you for us, or against us?" The answer of the man would let Joshua know what sort of being this person was. "Nay." I

am not either for or against—not in the sense that I am either an Israelite or a Canaanite. It was a denial of being a human being.

- C. He was captain of the Lord's Host: in a twofold sense: of the children of Israel and of the angels of God.
- D. Joshua knew who He was, and fell to worship Him. This is God himself, yet distinct from God. This is none other than the Word of God, the captain of the Lord's Armies, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- E. The Lord Jesus has many crowns upon His head. He has many aspects of His authority. He appears as a warrior with a sword in His hand. He appears in the robes of a rabbi, teaching the people. He is a servant and washes the disciples' feet; He is the Head of the church, and the king over all the nations. In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and in Him the people of faith find all that they need.

- F. What an important question this is. I would suspect before you go to war, it would be a good idea to try to find out whether God is for you or against you. Very often people go to war in self-will and pride. There is nothing more common in the world or in the history of the church than for people to be convinced that they have the Lord on their side. Jesus said that persecutions would arise from those who would think that they were doing service to the Lord's.
- G. Notice the progress of Joshua's awareness: A man with a sword; the captain of the Lord's Host; the LORD [6:1]

III. Joshua's submission: "What saith my Lord unto His servant?"

- A. No one is fit for command until he has learned to serve. Joshua had been faithful to Moses as the servant of the

Lord for forty years. He did not get caught up in the rebellion of Korah; the murmuring of Aaron and Miriam; the defection of the other ten spies. He had shown that he was fit for authority because he knew how to live under authority.

B. Submission, however, is not as a man-pleaser but because it is the will of God—the direction is always toward the Lord. We do not serve men as men, but as the servants of the Lord.

i. The catechism is clear on this:

Q104: What does God require in the fifth Commandment?

A104: That I show all honor, love and faithfulness to my father and mother,[1] and to all in authority over me,[2] submit myself with due obedience to all their good instruction and correction, and also bear patiently with their infirmities,

since it is God's will to govern us by their hand.[3]

ii. This applies to all in authority.

1. Wives to husbands.

2. Members to elders:

3. “Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waiteth on his master shall be honored. As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.” (Proverbs 27:18-19 AV)

4. You don't tend everybody's fig tree: you tend your own—your own master.

a. Keepeth: guard, tend, observe, preserve.

b. Waiteth: guard, tend, have charge of.

c. Does not mean a men pleaser.

iii. Joshua knew what the nature of authority was. His submission was to

God and therefore He would not be a men pleaser.

1. Jesus spoke of men-pleasing here:
  - a. How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?” (John 5:44 AV)
  - b. We serve men, because we serve the Lord. It is in the service of God that we submit to proper human authority.
2. The inheritance of Israel would come under the authority and direction of God, not Joshua, but Joshua would command the troops.
3. In serving the Lord, Joshua would serve the people of God.

Authority is not over, but under.  
“I am a man under authority,” was what the centurion told Christ. To be under authority is to serve with meekness and humility. The world

counts this as weakness, but the world knows nothing of Christ or the power of Christ.

#### IV. Application.

a. The Lord Jesus is our captain:

i. “For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” (Hebrews 2:10 AV)

ii. “Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.” (Isaiah 55:4 AV)

iii. “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. 12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. 13 And he

was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. 15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” (Revelation 19:11-16 AV)

b. Our submission is first of all to Him and to His commandments. We do not belong to ourselves; we do not belong to men.

i. We are all in submission to Him and our submission to Christ must rule every human relationship. Your submission to Christ will be manifest in all your human relationships. You will not mistreat the



people of God if you are in submission to Christ.

1. Enter into your closet: It is your private devotion and service to Christ that will rule all your relationships with men. Joshua was alone with God.

2. If you are empty in your private devotion to God; the emptiness of your life will be seen across everything you do. If you are rich toward God, those who seek true riches will recognize the richness of your life, even if the world doesn't.

- ii. We are to submit one to another in the fear of God as Paul tells us. Illustration:

1. The father submits to Christ in accepting responsibility for His family, for the needs of His wife and children. HIS wife and children. If he does this, he will have very little time to meddle in the affairs of others.

2. The wife submits to Christ in trusting Christ that it will be well with her to live in submission to her husband and his authority.

3. Both are servants of Christ and serve each other, but in different roles. You will have no problem with authority if you understand the servant principle.

4. The elders submit to Christ in the exercise of their office, not presuming too much or lording it over the congregation, but settling disputes, keeping peace, and watching for wolves and thieves that would destroy the people of God.

iii. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;

13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.

14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.

15 See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.” (1 Thessalonians 5:11-15 AV)

1. Do not speak evil of things you don't know anything about. Often people don't know those who have the rule over them. Their information comes from others who are as ignorant as they are.

2. This is a puzzle to me and has been for years. People say, “I don't even know so and so. They never talk to me.” Well, have you talked to

them? He who has friends must show himself friendly.

3. Do you esteem them very highly.

A woman should esteem her husband very highly for his works sake.

Member should esteem their elders very highly for their work's sake. If you hear someone speak ill of the elders of this congregation you should rebuke them as subversive of the kingdom of God and for the love of Christ's sake. I would rebuke an elder who speaks ill of members of the congregation and I will rebuke a member who speaks ill of the elders, for in doing so they speak ill of the Captain of the Lord's Host.

4. Don't make their job harder. They do it for love's sake, and they seek a heavenly reward. It is the kingdom of God that we seek, not the kingdom of men. The responsibility is two-way. They have a

responsibility to know you, and you have a responsibility to know them.

5. You are to be at peace among yourselves. You should seek peace. You should settle your own disputes. The unruly are to be warned—those who cannot make peace among themselves. Illustration: “I just can’t get along with so and so.” Well, what’s wrong with you? Warn the unruly. Comfort the feebleminded—those who have been whipped by life; support the weak, add your strength to theirs; be patient. Do not render evil for evil. Follow the good to each other and all men.

6. We are not our own; the church is not ours; the agenda is not ours and the glory is not ours, but Christ’s  
Amen and Amen..

May God bless you.