

Joshua 5:13-15 | David Baumgartner

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[0 : 00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, Knowing Jesus, Making Jesus Known. I happen to step on the microphone here.

I hope it still works. It sounds like it's okay. This morning we're going to be continuing our study in the book of Joshua. So if you have your Bibles, please turn with me to Joshua chapter 5. We'll be looking at just three verses this morning. Dave, we're not ready to go into Jericho. There's just one little thing that's waiting.

Israel had crossed the Jordan River. They're now camped at this place called Gilgal. They're getting ready for their first big battle in the Promised Land. And that's the Battle of Jericho.

I think there's a song written about that. But as we saw last week, the second generation Israelites, they needed further preparation. Not militarily, but other kinds of preparation.

[1 : 06] First of all, they needed to undergo circumcision. And we learned last week, that's everybody's favorite topic. That was good. Secondly, they observed the Passover.

But it seems like there's still one thing that's missing. And that's Joshua has this encounter with this mysterious figure that we see in the Old Testament.

Please read with me. You're welcome to look on your handout there. Joshua chapter 5. It's just these three verses. Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho that he lifted up his eyes and looked.

And behold, the 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?

And 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?

[2 : 18] And 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.

Heavenly Father, we're so grateful that we can come here today and be immersed in your word, Lord. We know that these words are relevant to us today. And so help us to apply them through the ministry of your spirit within us.

Thank you, Lord, that we can come here today and just be refreshed by your word. We pray for those who aren't here today for whatever reason. We ask your richest blessing on them.

We would ask your blessing on us now. Thank you for this. In Jesus' name. Amen. Let's dive right in here. This section opens with Joshua. He's by Jericho.

We're not told why, but if you'd follow along with me in your handout here, notice verse 13. It says that he lifted his eyes and he looked. It occurs to me that the text here in the Bible could say, Joshua's here and then he saw.

[3 : 25] He looked. But instead it says, he lifted his eyes. What's that all about? This is actually a common phrase that's used in the Old Testament some 17 times.

It's actually a literary device. It's a poetic way of telling us that Joshua had been looking down. And so we as readers of Scripture, we may wonder, well, why was he looking down?

Was Joshua preoccupied at the time? Was he frightened? Was he sad about something? Well, to answer this, we may think about, what do we know about Joshua at this point?

Well, verse 13 tells us, he's by Jericho. In other words, he's in enemy territory now. And he's alone. Second thing that we know about him is that despite his military experience, Joshua had never led an attack against a fortified city like Jericho.

Jericho was formidable. Its walls were some 30 feet, 35 feet high in places. Jericho could survive a siege indefinitely.

[4 : 48] Did you know that Jericho had an unending supply of spring water? And that's because it was built on an oasis. In fact, in the book of Judges, chapter 1, verse 16, Jericho is called a city of palms.

Well, Israel had no siege engines like the trebuchets, those things that hurl those big rocks at walls. Israel had no battering rams.

They had no movable towers. And so what are they going to do? The only weapons they had would have been slings, arrows, spears. nothing against a formidable walled city.

And so, perhaps Joshua was preoccupied. Well, how are we going to do this? I know the Lord wants us to do it, but how are we going to do it? Just then, the unexpected happens.

Joshua lifted his eyes, and he looked, and it says, verse 13, behold, behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand.

[5 : 57] Boy, I think at this point, if that was me, I'd say, I wish I would have stayed home. I think I'm in trouble here. Verse 13 goes on, Joshua went to him, and he said, are you for us, or are you for our adversaries?

Notice what this man says. No. No, rather, indeed, I come now as captain of the host of the Lord. And friends, this changes everything.

Notice here, this man identifies himself as a fellow soldier. He's a captain. Captain of the host. That's the army of the Lord.

But here's the best news. He was sent by God. In fact, he even uses the Lord's personal name, Yahweh. Verse 14 goes on.

It says that Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and he bowed down. Here's another Hebrew expression, to fall on your face.

[6 : 57] That means that Joshua prostrated himself in front of this man, his face to the ground. He's in adoration. He's in submission, which is the ultimate expression of humility.

And verse 14, Joshua says, what has my Lord to say to his servant? What a great question to ask. If you ever have something like this happen to you, what does the Lord have to say to me?

A great question. Well, look at what he says here. Verse 15, 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 it says Joshua did so. This phrase here, remove your sandals, what does that remind you of? Yeah, it reminds you of Moses and his encounter with the Lord at the burning bush.

This tells us here that this warrior is more than a messenger. No, most likely, this is an appearance of God himself.

[8 : 03] Theologians call this a theophany. A theophany, it's defined as a visible manifestation of God's presence. And we see these throughout the Old Testament.

For example, the Lord can appear as a man in bodily form. We see this right after Abraham was circumcised. Let me just read to you Genesis 18.

The Lord appeared to, this is Abraham, by the oaks of Mamre while he was sitting at the tent in the heat of the day. And when he lifted his eyes, behold, three men were standing opposite him.

And when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth. Boy, a lot of the same things here. The thing is, is that we have three men here.

Two of these men are angels, but one is the Lord himself. It's a theophany. How about in Genesis 32? We read about how Jacob is wrestling with this mysterious figure in the dark.

[9 : 13] And scriptures tell us that he struggled with this figure. And Israel's, I'm sorry, Jacob's name was changed to Israel at that time. One who strives with God.

He was striving with a theophany. But God manifests his presence in other ways. We see this in scripture. A burning bush.

A pillar of smoke or fire. A voice from heaven. But in all these cases, it's telling us, it's signaling us, God's about to do something.

And we want to pay attention. Well, what? Well, one possibility, notice if you have your Bible open, notice that the very next chapter in Joshua, I'm talking about chapter 6, that the Lord is about to give Joshua instructions concerning their attack on Jericho.

And so perhaps this might be the way that the Lord is going to do that. He's going to speak through this captain of the Lord's army. But I think most likely this section here highlights something more.

[10 : 25] And I believe it's this. This account points to at least three truths that I see. First of all, we must always trust in God's strength. When Joshua needed it the most, God shows up and he says, I

got this.

He makes his presence known to Joshua. And I think that this incident must have been a great encouragement to Joshua just to realize I'm not alone in this.

The Lord is with me here. Has that ever happened to you? Maybe there's some point in your life, Lord, I need to hear from you. Maybe I'm feeling alone. Maybe I'm feeling like just the stuff in front of me, I just can't do it.

Lord, I need you. I need you to show me that you're with me. The Lord is faithful. And he does. That's happened to me several times, just even moving here to St. Louis, being let go from a job that we moved to just because the system that we were with sold us to a competitor down the street.

And so we had just bought a house. And so we're just thinking, what are we going to do? They don't want me. Small town, Wichita, move to St. Louis.

[11 : 45] You're going to be moving to St. Louis. The Lord showed up. And I'll tell you about that some other time, but it was just a wonderful time in our lives. And we came here to Bethel just to be with all of you wonderful people.

So we must always trust in God's strength. When Joshua needed it the most, perhaps there's a big task that's waiting you. Maybe the stakes are high.

And so we bathe our situations in prayer and God answers. Whether you're Moses, whether you're Joshua, whether you're in leadership or not, the determining factor of our success is God's presence.

Would you agree with that? Even if Israel had massive weapons, then I would say that they still, Joshua's confidence still needed to be in the Lord.

Notice in verse 14, he asked this question, what is my Lord to say to his servant? Would that have been your words? Would that have been mine?

[12 : 53] Joshua here is a great example. He shows, he exhibits great humility, great submission to this Lord. And, you know, if you think about it, we're just verifying what is true in our lives, isn't it?

He is God. We are not. Jesus told us in John chapter 15, I am the vine. You are not.

You are the branches. He who abides in me and I in him, he bears much fruit. And then he says this, apart from me, you can do nothing.

Amazing. So, we trust in him. Secondly, we must find our holy ground. Notice here, this account opens with Joshua standing on what I would call Canaanite ground.

Right? Yet, because God is with him, he's standing on holy ground. What does that tell us? What does that say? It's because when God manifests his presence, that place becomes holy.

[14 : 09] And so, I want to ask this question here. Where is your holy ground? Where is he? Ever think about that? Personally, our holy ground is not like this.

I don't think so. Now, I do know that there are places that are considered sacred. like, like, for instance, perhaps a cemetery, maybe the 9-11 memorial, but I would say that's a different category. Let me ask you this question. Are there some places that are holier than others today? Are there? Yeah.

Good question, isn't it? Some major denominations would actually suggest that. You know, church buildings with stained glass windows, candles. To me, these are beautiful and they're works of art, and many of them have been built to honor God.

But here's the thing, that does not automatically mean that God's present there. It doesn't make it holy. I would suggest for us that holy ground is a state of mind.

[15 : 24] You believe that? I think it is. Consider this, as believers, you and I have the Holy Spirit indwelling us. And so, our holy ground is wherever the Lord is leading us.

Think about this. One of our struggles today is our tendency to compartmentalize our lives. In other words, we'll say, I have my secular life that might include my job, my recreation, my TV, my movies, my hobbies, my social activities, and then I have my sacred life.

It's coming to church, prayer, reading God's word, Bible study, sacred life, secular life. Anything wrong with that?

Yeah, there is. There is. First of all, it insists on the existence of something that's called my time. My time.

I got my time. And I'll say, God, I'll give you some of my time. I'll even consider it sacred. And we'll call that your time. But the rest of it is my time.

[16:42] Secondly, since it's my time, I don't need to change anything about it. Right? And then third, it probably leads to this false opinion.

God's not all that interested in what I do with my time anyway, right? It's only during that sacred time, his time. Friends, those thoughts are unhelpful.

All of our time is his time. The reality is that we as believers are to reckon ourselves dead to sin, but alive in Jesus Christ.

doing his will. Look at what Paul says in Ephesians chapter 2. It's in your handout. He says, he's reminding the Ephesians there, you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

but he goes on and he says, but God. Isn't that a great couple words? But God, being rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, he made us alive together with Christ.

[18:04] And then he adds, by grace you have been saved. That means that God is with us all the time. When I'm in church, when I'm praying, when I'm reading my Bible, and he's with me when I'm watching TV, when I'm walking the dog, when I'm engaged in a hobby or something, that's our holy ground.

It's a state of mind. And friends, I think the implications of that are huge. Especially when you think about what do we do with our my time?

What do we do? Paul reminds us, whether then you eat or drink, whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. And it also means that if I'm living the life that he has for me, not a perfect life, he has made provision for that, right?

He has. He sent his son to die for our sins. But if I'm living that life that he has for me, then my problems become his problems.

Amen. And that brings up the next one. We must be aware of spiritual warfare. Did you notice, we should not miss this point here, that on this occasion, at this time, with Joshua, God manifests himself as a warrior.

[19:40] Let's not miss that. And of course, Joshua's first question is, are you for us or are you against us? Huh. If you look at the answer, it seems like he didn't get an answer that he was looking for.

This warrior answers Joshua, no, I'm on God's side. Oh, okay. Yeah. The fact is, we all want God to be on our side, right?

Right? Here, let me prove that for you. Here's a question. Is God a Democrat or a Republican? Yeah. Somebody said, yeah.

Well, it depends on who's asking the question, right? If you're a Democrat, surely God's a Democrat, because he's on your side.

What if you're a Republican? Republican? Yeah, surely God is on your side. Maybe a better question is this, am I on God's side?

[20:42] Not whose side is God on, am I on God's side? Because when I say that God is on my side, am I not suggesting that my actions, my thoughts are always righteous?

Hmm? wrong. So, of course, he's on my side. Righteous. Wrong. Eh. Or else, God chose the wrong side.

No. when I say that I'm on God's side, I'm suggesting that he's completely independent and that he leads the way.

And in that case, my job is to discern what he's saying to me. What does my Lord have to say to me today? And secondly, not only discern, but to follow him in humble obedience.

because the fact is, friends, we all have battles to fight. Isn't that right? We do. But isn't it wonderful to know that if you are in Christ, that God leads the way.

[22:00] He goes ahead of us. He fights for us. As we see ourselves, you know, I'm on his side. That's how it is.

And right after the Red Sea, look at this verse with me. Right after the Red Sea, Moses sings this song about the Lord. Exodus 15, the Lord is my strength.

The Lord is my song. He has become my salvation. And this is my God, and I will praise him, my Father's God, and I will exalt him.

The Lord is a man of war. The Lord is his name. What a victory that was at the Red Sea.

And here we see right after this now, this parting of the Jordan River. And so this chapter actually begins with these truths here, that the Lord went before them and fought for them.

[23 : 04] Look with me in Joshua 5, verse 1. I want you to notice this. I really appreciate when Jeffrey brought this out last week. That it says that now it came about when all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan to the west and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea heard how the Lord dried up the waters of the Jordan before the sons of Israel until they had crossed, that their hearts melted and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the sons of Israel.

Friends, is that the way it is today? It ought to be because our Lord Jesus is victorious and Satan, he knows his time is short.

His time is coming to an end. I do hope that you can come to this revelation study starting this Wednesday. I tell you what, there's so many things to see about how our Lord is victorious and that our lives are in him.

And because of him, because of our mighty warrior, that's his name, because of him, we are already victorious.

If I can invite the musicians to come up, it is good to be reminded God's with us. I wanted to end with this account in 2 Kings chapter 6.

[24 : 35] This is one of my favorite accounts in the whole Old Testament. When I first heard this, it stuck with me like peanut butter on a cracker.

It was so good. Let me read this. I'm reading 2 Kings chapter 6. The account here is concerning Elisha and his servant.

Let me begin reading chapter 6, beginning in verse 8. Once when the king of Syria was warring against Israel, he took counsel with his servants saying, at such and such place, a place shall be my camp.

But the man of God, now he's talking about Elisha here, sent word to the king of Israel. This is Jehoram, by the way. This is during the divided period.

Jehoram is the king of Israel. Jehoshaphat is the king of Judah. And this is what he said, Beware that you do not pass this place, for the Syrians are going down there.

[25 : 40] So there's a warning. And the king of Israel sent to the place about which the man of God told him. Thus, he used to warn him, so that he saved himself more than once or twice.

Good thoughts. If you have a prophet, someone who speaks for God, someone who's wise, get counsel. You will save your life. The mind of the king of Syria was greatly troubled because of this thing.

And he called his servants and he said to them, Will you show me who is for us and who is for the king of Israel? In other words, who leaked out that information?

And one of his servants said, None, my lord. It's Elisha, the prophet, who is in Israel. He tells the kings the words which thou speak in your bedroom.

And so the king of Syria says, Go and see where he is. And seize him. And then it was told to him to go out to Dothan because that's where he was.

[26 : 50] So he sent there horses and chariots, a great army, going out to pick up this guy named Elisha. And they came around at night and surrounded the city.

You guys get the picture here? Okay. When the servant of Elisha, his name is Gehazi, and the man of God rose early in the morning and they went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city.

Oh, man. Bad news. And the servant said to Elisha, Alas, my master, what shall we do? And this is what Elisha said.

Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them. And then Elisha prayed. And he said, Lord, please open the eyes of my servant that he may see.

So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and full of chariots of fire all around Elisha.

[28 : 02] there are God's armies all over the place, friends. All over. And our problem is that we can't see them.

And so really what it comes down to is, first of all, knowing these truths, and secondly, walking by faith, because that's what God wants. Not walking in unbelief, but walking in faith.

So really, our problem oftentimes is unbelief. What if we saw the world, just like it really is, where we have all of this power and majesty supporting us, the Lord is for us, he's a mighty warrior, his name is the Lord, then we can find out that we can trust him, because he keeps his word. We can find our holy ground and we can let him lead our spiritual battles. Amen. Because the Lord is for us.

Well, now the Israelites are ready for that great battle. And we'll cover that next week. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we are so grateful that you have revealed yourself to us as a mighty warrior who fights for his people.

[29 : 35] You have revealed yourself as almighty God, the one who is the giver of life itself. You've revealed yourself that you're for us because we have trusted in you and you have sent your son Jesus to make that possible, to demonstrate once again the love that you have for us.

Lord, let us walk in the victory that you have secured for us at the cross. Let us not waver. Let us not turn our backs on that.

Let us go forth in faith, in trust, knowing that you are for us and that you got this. In Jesus' name I pray.

Amen. Amen.