



Joshua 5:13 6:5

Captain of the Host of the LORD

God had led the people of Israel across the Jordan into the Promised Land (Joshua 3 4). It was a miraculous crossing. Imagine two million people, including women and children, crossing a swollen river at flood stages.

Joshua was out surveying city of Jericho and planning his battle strategy. How would he take this tightly shut, fortified city with its king and valiant warriors?

Suddenly there was a dramatic, unexpected appearance of a mysterious man with a drawn sword in combat readiness. Joshua immediately went over and asked him, "Are you for us or for our adversaries?" (v. 13). Joshua had been waiting forty years; he was ready to fight.

Joshua asked the wrong question. The man replied, "No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the Lord" (v. 14). How often do we go in to God asking the wrong questions?

Who was this "captain of the host of the LORD"? A "host" in the Bible is an unseen army, invisible to the human eye that surrounds the throne of God. It is an angelic host. Cf. 2 Kings 6:17ff; Psalm 148:2; 103:21. Christ said twelve legions of angels were ready to defend Him.

Joshua immediately recognized the supernatural character of this visitor. Joshua was in the presence of God. "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?'" (v. 14b). Joshua fell on his face and worshiped. The worship paid to this messenger of the LORD is directed to Yahweh Himself. Who is this person? It is sin to worship angels and men (Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5-8; Revelation 19:10; 22:8, 9). The total impact of the context of the passage indicates that a superhuman person is present. He is in the presence of Deity. The commander of the army of the LORD is God Himself. Yahweh has come to lead and fight for His people. All distinctions between the messenger of the covenant and the LORD Himself evaporate in the context.

Verse fifteen removes any doubt as to who this "captain of the army of Yahweh" was. "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." In the Bible only things, places and people can be called holy because they are set aside for God or claimed by Him.

Joshua did not have any problem with obedience. Jesus said, "If you love Me you will keep My commandments." If you love Him, you will obey Him. You don't turn 18 and no longer have a need to obey Him. It is a question of love and Joshua obeyed.

This is a theophany, or more correctly a Christophany. This "captain" is the angel of the covenant appearing in human form to take command of the

angel of the covenant appearing in human form to take command of the armies of Israel. Our Joshua was under His command! Israel's deliverance comes from only one source just as our deliverance comes from only one source -God for us in Christ.

This is "a preliminary manifestation of the Eternal Word of God, who, in the fullness of time, 'became flesh and dwelt among us,'" declared Alexander Maclaren. It is a preincarnate appearing of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. We always find Him revealing God. In the Bible the Triune God is alone seen or manifested in Christ. Cf. John 1:18; 14:9; Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3).

Yahweh had come to lead His people to victory. Yahweh is our salvation. The captain of the LORD's host is none other than the Great Captain of our salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ. The angel of the covenant of the Old Testament is Jesus Christ in the New Testament. He is Immanuel -God with us. Moreover, the captain's army is nothing short that the LORD Himself.

We cannot help but make the comparison between Moses and the burning bush that would not burn, and Joshua and the Captain of the host of the LORD (cf. Exodus 3:1ff). I believe it is there on purpose for the people of Israel and Joshua. "Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you" (Joshua 1:5).

This is the same person we meet in other theophanic manifestations by God the Son in the Old Testament. Sometimes we meet Him in the form of the angel of the LORD and at other times in the form of a man. He is called "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," "the God of Israel" and "the Angel of the covenant."

It was God the Son who thus appeared in human form to Hagar (Gen. 16:7), Abraham (Gen. 18:1), Jacob (Gen. 32:24-30), Israel (Judges 2:1), Gideon (Judges 6:12-18), Manoah (Judges 13:21). He is also called "the Messenger" or "Angel of the Covenant" and "Lord of His temple" (Malachi 3:1).

A promise of God's personal presence always carries with it the assurance of God's personal care and provision. God is not our personal genie. The battle, Joshua is reminded, is the LORD's. We are here to serve Him in His battle for righteousness. We are here to do His will. He is not here to serve us. Christ is our victorious Savior.

It was a humbling experience for Joshua, and a reminder that most of us are too big for God to use. He has to show us who is in charge and bring us to our knees to worship. "Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." Where ever God is there is holy ground. Let's humble ourselves and walk in His ways.

If you need help in becoming a Christian here is [A Free Gift for You](#).

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