

Preparing For The Conquest

Joshua 4 & 5

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It was A.W. Tozer that said "The Christian life is not a playground, it is a battleground." Certainly, that is true for Israel, as it is true for every Christian. Israel now, with the Jordan behind them, the rivers. had combat clothes, and the fortress city of Jericho before them, they are now on battleground. And you would think that at this time, Joshua would say to all the mighty men of Israel, "Pull out your swords, get them ready, we're going to go take the city of Joshua." But yet there were things that needed to be done in their lives to prepare them for the battle that lie before them. Do you know that God's thoughts are not our thoughts and God's ways are not our ways? And God's timing is not our timing. I don't know how many times I've prayed, "Lord, I pray that you'll do this, and Lord, I need you here." And guess what? God didn't do what I told him to do. (congregation laughing) You ever found that to be true? As I go, "God, are you listening? God, do you know what's going on? Did you know that I needed the money yesterday? God, what are you doing?" And in that still small voice, God will always speak and say, "Son, I am God. I am on the throne. I am in control. Trust me." "Yeah, yeah, that's easy for you to say, You're God, You're in heaven, but I'm down here. I got to pay the bills." (congregation laughing) I wrestle with God just like you do. It's like, "Lord, where are you? What are you doing? Why haven't you answered prayer?"

Many times as we face our battles, God has to first work in our hearts. And the lesson that we're going to learn today in these sections of Joshua is that God is more concerned about who we are than in what we do. Write that down, don't forget that. What we do is important, but who we are is even more important. And what we do has to come from who we are, a godly man, a godly woman, godly character. And so God is going to prepare the nation of Israel for battle. In chapter three, we saw the people sanctified, we saw Joshua had been magnified, we saw the Lord was glorified, and the word of God was verified, but now they are going to deal with the city that is fortified, and Joshua needs the Lord's help preparing the nation for battle. And I think that the same elements that God gave to the nation are important for us. God wants to prepare us for battle. Someone said, "Be kind to everyone you meet because we're all facing battles." I believe that. Everybody you meet, everyone in this sanctuary is facing a battle of some kind, some way. Let's be kind to one another. Let's pray for one another. Let's encourage one another. I believe that God wants us to be prepared, as Israel, to face our battles. There are three things that I want to point out that prepared them for this battle. The same three things prepare you and I for the battles that we face in life. If you're taking notes, you can write them down.

Number one, write this down. Remember God's past faithfulness. Remember God's past faithfulness. This is so important. We so easily forget what God has done for us in the past. I want to pick it up in chapter four, verse 19, and you follow with me as I read. In verse 19, "the people came out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border at Jericho." Now the first day of the tenth month, or excuse me, the tenth day of the

first month is the tenth of Nisan, which is our April, May, March, April, excuse me. And so this was when the Passover would take place. Notice verse 20, "And those twelve stones, which they took out of the Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal...". I'm going to come back to that and explain that. "And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask the fathers in time to come, saying, 'What mean these stones?' Then you shall say to your children, that then you shall say...", excuse me, "...Let your children know saying Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. For the Lord God dried up the waters of the Jordan from before until you passed over, as the Lord your God did in the Red Sea, which he dried up from before us until we had gone over. That...", verse 24, "...all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord that it is mighty, and that you might fear the Lord your God."

Now what you don't get by starting at verse 19, I want to fill in. The children of Israel have crossed the Jordan River on dry ground. God parted the way and they went across. Now leading them were the priests, four priests, holding the Ark of the Covenant, which represented the presence of God. And they stepped into the water, the water parted, they got out in the middle of the Jordan, and they stayed there holding the Ark as the people of Israel all filed by keeping their distance as they looked at the Ark, which represented conquering the impossible, keeping your eye focused on God. Now, when they had all clean past over, God gave Joshua this instruction. God says, "I want you to get twelve men, one from each of the tribes of Israel. And I want you to go back down into the river where the feet of the priest had stood. And I want each man to take a stone." I picture it being a pretty good-sized stone. These guys must have been pretty strong. They picked up one of these rocks and they carried it out from the riverbed of the Jordan. And then they lugged it about 25, 30 miles all the way to Gilgal. That's why I said these guys must have been pretty buff to carry a big rock that distance. And so twelve men from each tribe pick up a rock, carry it off, and then they made a monument or a memorial in Gilgal. Joshua took twelve stones. Doesn't record the Lord telling him to do this, but he took twelve stones, and Joshua himself piled them up in the Jordan where the priest had stood. Now the water would come back over and cover those 12 stones. I think there's significance there. And then there would be the twelve stones piled up in Gilgal.

Now the question that we need to ask is, why would God, once he did this miracle getting him through the Jordan, and they need to go conquer the city of Jericho, why would God say, "get a bunch of rocks and pile them up?" Here's the answer. God wanted them to remember the miracle. God wanted them to remember what they had done. Why? Because you know as well as I do how easily we forget, right? The older you get, the more you forget. And we just have a natural kind of ability to forget the past, forget God's blessing, forget God's goodness, forget God's deliverance, and we freak out about what's going on right now. The God who did deliver us is delivering us right now, and he will yet deliver us. Amen? But we forget that. And often we are freaking out when we're in a battle and we forget, have you forgotten that God delivered you last week or last month or last year, or 10 years ago, or 30 years ago? How God worked in your life, you go, "Oh yeah, I forgot about that." The God who has delivered is delivering and shall yet deliver us. But in this passage, we find some practical connecting points on why the memorial stones. We find first of all, in verse 21 to 23, that the parents were to instruct their children from these memorial stones. Notice in verse 21, "And he spake unto your children...", "speak to your

children,” excuse me, “...of Israel, saying when your children asked their fathers in the future, time to come, saying, ‘what mean these stones?’ Then you should say to your children...”, verse 22, “...saying that Israel came over the Jordan on dry ground. For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan from before you until you were passed over, As the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which dried up from before us until we were clean gone over.”

So this is what would happen. The kids would say, “Mom, Dad, why those big pile of 12 stones?” And Dad would say, “Well sit down son, I want to tell you about it. Years ago when we came through this Jordan, we came into the Promised Land, God parted the waters. And we miraculously passed over. God made a way through the Red Sea, and God parted the Jordan, and the joy of the Lord.” And you can see their little eyes get big and like, wow, that's awesome. And they would share with their children, and I believe they're grandchildren. What a joy to have grandchildren, and to be able to share with them the great acts and mighty works of God. What God has done in the past. Do you know that Christianity is only one generation from extinction? Only one generation, your children may not follow the Lord if you do not communicate to them the great things that God has done in your life. It's a parent's responsibility.

I'm so glad that I was raised in a Christian home. My mom and dad met in Bible college. They were Christians before they married, raised in the church, Sunday school, youth group, raised in the church. There was a period of time when I rebelled against that but the Lord saved me and brought me back. But I believe that I'm here today because of the influence of my parents. I can't tell you all the stories that my dad told me as a little boy. Not out of the Bible, but out of his own life, when he went into the war, World War II, and he was stationed in the Aleutian Islands, and he was aboard a ship, and how God protected him, and watched over him, and took care of him. And I love growing up to hear those stories, and then how he would call upon the Lord, and the Lord would deliver him, and the Lord would be with him. And he used to always tell me, John, you never need to be afraid, God will never leave you, He'll never forsake you. John, you can always trust in God. John, you can always put your faith in God. God will never let you down. And as a young boy, I grew up watching my parents trust God and believe in God. And I saw the miracles in their lives. And it just made an impression on me indelibly.

If you're a parent, you need to be able to have memorials with your children and communicate to them, this is what God did for me, this is how God protected me, this is how God watched over me, how God delivered me and saved me. So as parents, we need to communicate that and our testimony to our children. I've heard of people that make a scrapbook and they'll sit down with their kids or their grandkids and show them pictures and say, “Yeah, the Lord really came through here. You know, we needed help or healing or we needed provision. God provided for us and God did this for us and God did that for us.” And just that those little minds and hearts would soak up what God has done. Let us not forget, yes, God has worked in your life, but don't you want him to work in your children's life? Don't you want your children and your children's children to have the same experience with God that you did? So we need to impart that to them. They need to communicate that to them. They're also, to pile up these stones, verse 24, to remember God's power. Notice in verse 24, “that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord that it is...”, what? “Mighty.” That the hand of Jehovah, Yahweh, that

it is mighty, that God has power that God can deliver.

My mother used to keep a little blouse. I have a younger sister, two younger sisters, So my youngest sister was laying in the front yard one time at the neighbor's. So a few houses down the street, she's laying in the grass or playing in the grass. And the people that lived there were backing out of the driveway. For some reason, they pulled off the driveway into the yard, didn't see her laying there, and ran right over her with a car. And she was about 10 years old, 10, 11 years old, and the tire mark went right across her blouse. And eventually pushed her into the grass, the car passed over. Not a scratch, not a broken bone. Nothing. And my mother kept that blouse for years and would show it to her, "See how God took care of you? See how God saved you?" That was her pile of stones. Do you have a pile of stones?

When I was 17, I was driving in my Ford Econoline van. I wish I had that sucker back. '66 Ford Econolite panel van, you know, it was a surfer wagon. It was really cool. And in the back, all they had was a mattress thrown in the back. And the shotgun seat was a 7-up box, a wooden 7-up box with a pillow on it. (Congregation Laughing) Seat belts, what are those? We don't have seat belts. We don't think about seat belts. And we're headed south down the 5, just a little past the San Fernando Free Power Plant. We're on our way to have a surf trip for the week, you know, and I'm driving my bus or my van with a friend riding shotgun and two friends in the back on the mattress. And unbeknownst to us, a big giant diesel truck was coming behind us, tried to change lanes, couldn't change lanes, jumped back in and clipped the rear end of my van. And it went over on its side and started to tumble and roll, and rolled about four times off the freeway. Well, what happened, this is amazing, is the back doors were blown off the hinges. When it hit the van, it thrust forward, the back doors blew off, and the mattress flew out the back with all my friends on it. (Congregation Laughing) You talk about magic carpet ride. (Congregation Laughing) They're like, whoa, groovy dude, you know. (Congregation Laughing) It landed on the freeway. And they're like looking around like, what happened, what happened? They get up and they see the van down the street, up on its side, I'm still in the van. I held on the steering wheel. I just actually held on to the steering [wheel]. On those seatbelts, I went upside down about three times. I saw the windshield break out. When it landed on the right side, I stood on the shotgun door and walked out the windshield of this man. And I'm like, whoa, what happened? You know, I don't even know what hit us. God saved my life. Amen? (Congregation Applauding) I have a picture, I should have brought it today for the screen. I have an old black and white picture of that view, all crunched and mangled up. I thought I hung onto that thing and went upside down and walked away without a scratch. I actually believe to this day that God was saying to me, "John, I have a plan for you. I have a purpose for you." And I share that with my kids, I show them the picture, check out grandpa's van, they got all messed up. (Congregation Laughing) How God saved my life.

A few years ago I was in Los Angeles and was kidnapped. Not everybody has that experience. I had that experience. I was kidnapped at gunpoint. And they car jacked us, held guns to our heads, threatened to kill us. And God obviously delivered me. I'm here today to tell about it, amen. And I have all these monuments. I love to tell the stories to my kids and my grandkids. And they know, hey, God's hand is on our dad, God can take care of us. And when times I pray

for my kids as they're out driving on the highway, my grandkids, I say, "Lord, you took care of me. You watched over me. You protected me. Now protect my children. And Lord, may they come to know your power and your ability to deliver." And even the world, the heathens around us can see the hand of God on our lives. That you may know God's power.

Then notice at the end of verse 24, a third reason for the pile of stones, "...that you might fear the Lord your God forever." That you might know his mighty power, and fear him forever. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of what? Wisdom. So you want to be able to pass that on to future generations. Now, we as Christians, and in the church today, We have two memorials. We have two memorials. One of them is water baptism. It is a pile of stones. It is a memorial. And people will say, "Why are you baptizing people?" I love public baptisms. And this is what I want to do here at Revival. We got to set up a public baptism. We got to go to the beach, and we got to baptize in the ocean. We're going to throw you off the end of the pier. (Congregation Laughing) If you make it back, you're saved. (Congregation Laughing) I'm just kidding. We can stand on the floor, that one saved, that one didn't, we're going to make it, that one doesn't. (Congregation Laughing) But anytime I've done a public baptism on the beach, people always come up and inquire, "What are you doing? Why are you dunking those people in the ocean? What's going on?" And we share the gospel and people have always gotten saved that are just sitting on the beach, watching what's going on. It's a memorial, it's a testimony of the great things that God has done for us. And baptism is an outward showing of an inward work. That we bury the old man and we're risen again with Christ.

The second memorial that we have is communion. We're going to do this Wednesday night, by the way. And did you know that Jesus commanded us that we need to remember him? Don't forget, remember that I died for you on the cross. And when you hold that bread and you drink that cup, it is a remembrance, it's a memorial service. And I love to be gathering with the saints and to remember simply God's love and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ who died in the cross. And you need to remember that. One of the reasons why you need to be at a communion service is to remember, we so easily forget. Did you forget that he that died for you, that [he's] going to keep you and He's going to protect you, and He is going to watch over you? Have you forgotten that Jesus shed his blood for you? How much more will He provide for you and take care of you?

We need to remember God's past faithfulness. I love that old hymn, Great is thy Faithfulness: "Great is thy faithfulness, morning by morning, new mercies I see. All that I've needed, thy hand hath provided. Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me." But what you want is your kids. I want my kids, I want my grandkids to know how good God has been to me. So build those memorials. Maybe make a scrapbook, maybe put them on Christmas ornaments, put them on the tree, and at Christmas time when the whole family is gathered together, talk about the things that God has done for you in the past.

There's a second thing that we need to do as we face battles. Not [just] to remember God's past deliverance, but secondly, we need to reaffirm our present consecration to God. God has made a covenant with us in the blood of Jesus Christ and we need to reaffirm that consecration, that commitment, that covenant with God.

Now go with me to chapter five and notice in verses one and two, "It came to pass that when all the kings of the Amorites, which were on the side of Jordan westward and all the kings of the Canaanites, which were by the sea, when they heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan from before the children of Israel. Until they were passed over, in their hearts, they melted. Neither was there any spirit in them anymore because of the children of Israel." Now jump with me down to verse eight, verse eight of chapter five, "It came to pass. Then when they had done circumcising, all of the people that they had in their places in the camp until they were whole. So they abode...", excuse me, "...in their places until they were well." And then verse nine, "The Lord said unto Joshua this day, have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from before you? Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day, which means a rolling away. And so the children of Israel...", verse 10, "...they encamped in Gilgal. They kept the Passover on the 14th day of the month at evening in the plains of Jericho. And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow the next day, after the Passover and leavened cakes, parched corn in the self-same day. And the manna...", verse 12, "...stopped on the next day after they had eaten of the old corn of the land, neither had the children of Israel manna anymore, but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year."

Now verse one of chapter five tells us that all of the Canaanites and the Amorites, they were filled with fear knowing that God, the Lord, Jehovah, the God of Israel, parted the waters for children of Israel. For those critics that think that this was a natural occurrence, I point that out, even the heathens recognize this was a divine miracle of God. The God of Israel parted the waters and brought them through; their hearts melted, and they were filled with fear.

Now, the first thing God tells Joshua to do is that before the sword of combat, there's the sharp knife of circumcision. And I want you to notice it in verse two, "the Lord said unto Joshua, make thee a sharp knife and circumcise again the children of Israel a second time." What is happening here? Remember when they came out of Egypt; for 40 years they wandered in the wilderness, and they didn't enter into the land. All that were 40 years and older, the older generation all died off. Now that they're in the land, only two, Joshua and Caleb, were slaves in Egypt. And while they were in the wilderness, the entire younger generation had not been circumcised. They didn't reaffirm the covenant that God made with Abraham, which was the mark upon their body that they were to be a separate people, a sanctified people, a holy people. So here's the point. Before they can go into battle, they need to reaffirm the covenant. Before they can fight with the sword, there must be a knife, and there must be circumcision in order to prepare their hearts for the battle. Warren Wiersbe says this: "Through the ritual, the Jews became marked people, because they belonged to the true and living God." This meant that they were under obligation to obey Him. The mark of the covenant remained in them and in their bodies that they belonged to the Lord and were not to be used for sinful purposes. See, Israel was dwelling a bunch of pagan people. They had pagan, licentious practices. That mark of circumcision on their body was a reminder to them that they were to be separate people, a holy people. Every time circumcision is referred to in the Bible, it has a spiritual significance. It's not the right, it's not the ritual, any more than baptism, which is a right or a ritual, and communion. It's the working of God in the heart. You can be baptized, but if you're not born again, it won't do you any good. You can take communion, but if you haven't been regenerated

or saved, it won't do you any good. So they were to reaffirm this covenant that they are to be a separate people devoted unto God.

Unfortunately, the Jews made the outward physical covenant a right, more important than the inward spiritual truth that it intended to teach. Now the lesson for us as Christians, Colossians 2, verse 10 to 13: "You are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power...", referring to Christ, "...And in whom...", that is in Christ, "...you were circumcised with the circumcision made without hands and the putting away of the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." So we as Christians have a spiritual circumcision. Our bodies belong to God. You know, in our pluralistic culture that we live in today, there are people that foolishly conclude that we can love God, we can be devoted to God, but it doesn't matter what we do with our bodies. That's not biblical Christianity. Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. And did you know that you have a covenant with God? That you've entered into a marriage with God? That you belong to God? How would it be for a husband to say to his wife, "Now, we're legally married, and we have a covenant, but my body's my own. I can go with other women, I can chase other women, I can do whatever I want with my body sexually, or I can give myself however I want to. And so, well, I'm married to you, but you don't have my body." How would that be? Or wife to a husband? When you marry somebody, guess what you get, all of them, right? Read 1 Corinthians chapter seven. By the way, if you're a married person, Read 1 Corinthians chapter 7. Your body's not your own, it belongs to your spouse. Not your own. And guess what? You are married to Christ. As a Christian, you are married to the Lord Jesus Christ. How would it be to say, "Okay, Lord, I love you, I've received you as my savior, but my body's mine, I'm going to do whatever I want with it." No, that doesn't work.

The spiritual circumcision means the cutting away the fleshly desires of your heart, and that you are to be devoted to God, that you're to be separated unto God, that your actual body is to be used for holy purposes. Your thoughts, your attitudes, your actions are all to be used for the glory of God. You are to live for God. So let God have your heart and reaffirm your consecration, your commitment, your covenant with God.

It was also done to the children of Israel, verse eight, the circumcision, to test their faith, which I think is interesting. They circumcised who? Fighting men, soldiers. There's a battle to be fought. What a dumb thing to do, right? Joshua says, "Okay, Lord, what's the plan? Go in and start chopping heads off, get the men going and fighting." He doesn't know first you got to circumcise these dudes. He's thinking, "Are you crazy? They're going to be a little messed up for a few days. They're not going to move too swiftly after this, Lord. I need them for battle." The Lord says, "What you are is more important than what you do. What you are is more important than what you do."

Churches make a big mistake when they push people in the ministry and don't take consideration of their character. Or they make a man a pastor, but he didn't have the character to back that up. Or they get people involved in ministry, and what they are is more important than what they do. They don't have a circumcised heart. Before you serve the Lord, before you battle for the Lord, before you are used from God, circumcise your heart and get right with God.

This was a step of faith. This took faith to have these guys all laid up for a couple of days and not go rushing right into battle.

Then thirdly, verse nine, it removed the reproach from them. In verse nine, it removed their reproach: "And the Lord said unto Joshua, this day of I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you." What is the reproach of Egypt that was rolled off of them? Just this, that when they came out of Egypt in the Exodus, but God did not take them into the Promised Land immediately, the Egyptians were mocking them and their God. Oh yeah, God with a strong arm, God takes you out, but he can't take you in. God can't deliver you and take you into the Promised Land. So the reproach of Egypt was that which Moses prayed about when he said, "Lord, if you don't take us into this Promised Land, the heathen, the Egyptians, they're going to mock you and say their God was able to take them out, but He can't take them in." He was concerned for the glory of God. And so this reproach, listen very carefully, the world is watching you. You're unsafe neighbors, you're unsafe coworkers, you're unsafe family members. The world is watching you. They're watching us as a church. They're watching me as a pastor. And we should never want to do anything to bring a reproach against the name of God.

So he says, I'm going to roll away that reproach, and I want you to walk in obedience and holiness. I'm going to remove this reproach, and I believe that God also wants to remove that reproach from us. That if we circumcise our heart and we devote to God and we live for him. But it also qualified them for the Passover meal, verse 10 and 12, or 10, 11 and 12, says they ate the "corn of the land," verse 11, on the next day after they passed over, they ate "unleavened cakes and the parched corn of the self-same day."

So they finally again have the Passover meal, which was a memorial. It looked back at God's deliverance, just as communion does for us. But the manna stopped, verse 12, and they ate the actual corn of the land. Now, never again in their history did God rain manna down from heaven. Now they're eating the corn of the land and the fruit of the land. They're entering into this land of abundance that God has for them. Here again is the lesson. What we do is more important, or what we are is more important than what we do. God looks at our heart. So before you face the battle, before you go into battle, before you get into serve the Lord, make sure your heart is right with God.

Here's the third and last thing we need to do to prepare for battle. We need a fresh revelation of God. Verse 13 to 15 of chapter five: "So it came to pass that when Joshua was by Jericho...", and the Hebrew indicates he was right up close to the city of Jericho, spying it out, "...that he lifted up his eyes and he looked and behold, there stood a man over against him with a sword drawn in his hand. And Joshua went unto him and said unto him, 'Are you for us or for our adversaries?'" Are you for us or our enemies? "And he said, 'No, but as captain of the host of the Lord, I am now come.' And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped him and said unto him, 'What saith my Lord unto his servant?' And the captain of the Lord's host...", verse 15 "...said unto Joshua, 'Loose thy shoes from off thy feet for the place where you're standing is holy ground. And Joshua did so.'"

Now we see the aloneness of leadership. Joshua's all by himself. Joshua's all alone. And Joshua goes away from the people. He goes up to the city of Jericho and it's [a] dark night. And Joshua's probably praying and he's seeking God. He's thinking, "Okay, what can we do? Should we make a battering ram? Shall we make a catapult and throw soldiers over the wall? I don't know what will happen when they land on the other side. I don't know if that will work. Shall we start it on fire? How are we going to take Jericho?" By the way, don't miss next Sunday, the walls of Jericho come down. And you've heard the song, "Joshua fought the battle of Jericho." No, he didn't. God fought the battle. We're going to see the walls come down. But he's there in the night. He's praying. He's all alone. And all of a sudden, he hears a rustling in the bushes behind him.

Now at that point, if I were Joshua, what would I do? Run for my life. If I'm out in the woods and I'm all alone, I'm praying to God, oh God, and I hear a little rustling, I run. Years ago, I was a young Christian, I was up on a mountain someplace and I was praying, "God, I need to hear your voice, I need you to speak to me, God, I just need you to come to me." I'll never forget this, I'm praying, "Oh God, just come to me, meet me here on the mountain," and I heard something rustle in the bushes behind me. I freaked out. I just about died. It was a big lizard. I said, "Never mind, Lord. I don't need you to come right now." Scared me to death. I almost died, went to heaven. I would have seen the Lord right there.

Joshua turns and he sees this figure in the night and his sword gleaming, his drawn sword. And Joshua, instead of freaking out and running the other direction which I would have done, Joshua pulls out his sword and walks up to the dude. Like, are you crazy? And Joshua says, "Are you for us or against us?" And I love the answer, "No." Are you for us or for our enemies? No. But captain of the Lord's host, I have come. I believe with all my heart that this is an appearance of God, theophany, or more strictly speaking what's called a Christophany, an appearance of Christ in the Old Testament, pre-incarnate before he became a man, that he appeared, manifested himself to Joshua. Isn't that amazing? Joshua's facing this battle, this fortress of Jericho. How are we going to conquer it? And Jesus shows up with his sword. I got a plan. Trust me. Take care of it. Put your trust in me. I can take care of it.

Now, I believe that this is none other than the Lord who appeared to Joshua. Go back down into chapter 6. The Lord is still speaking to Joshua. Same person. I believe that Joshua, when he fell down and began to worship him, indicating it's the Lord that manifested himself to Joshua. What an awesome experience this was. What do we need before we face the battles? Before we serve God? We need a fresh experience and revelation of God and His presence in our lives. This profound experience of God's presence revolutionized Joshua's life. Joshua was now experiencing the reality of his promise all the way back in chapter 1, verse 5, we read it. Jesus said, the Lord said to Joshua, "I will be with you as I was with Moses, I will be with you, I will not fail you." Now the Lord shows up. You know, there's nothing that we need more to equip us to deal with the battles in life that we face than the sense of God's presence in our lives. There's nothing we need more than to see His face, to hear His voice, to know that He is with us and sense His presence.

How I urge you to take time to get alone with God and say, God, I need to see you. God, I need to hear you. God, I need to experience you. I know you're real. I know you're with me, but God, I don't sense your presence. God, I need a sense of your presence. I need to feel you. I need to see you. Lord, I want you here in my life. Nothing more important for you as a Christian. Joshua had that and you can have that. It's amazing how God often suits the revelation of himself to the needs and circumstances of his people. Joshua was the general of the Lord's army. And as a general of the Lord's army, he appeared to him as captain of the Lord's host. Abraham was a pilgrim and a stranger living in a tent. And how did the Lord appear to Abraham? As a traveler. Jacob was a schemer and God came to him as a wrestler. And I love the story of the three Hebrews, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They were thrown into the fiery furnace. We had one of those Friday night on the parking lot for the kids. It was awesome. Throws him into the furnace bound and nothing burns but the ropes and they're walking around and the king comes to check the scene out and he goes, "How many people did we throw into that furnace?" He said, "Three." King says, "Well, I see four and the image or the likeness of the fourth looks like the son of God." Guess who showed up into the fire? Jesus did. Isn't that awesome? When you pass through the fiery furnace, guess who shows up to meet you there? Jesus does. And they're walking around, they're singing praises to the Lord, clapping, having a hot hallelujah meeting, you know? And the king had to say, "Hey, come on out." You had to ask him to come out. The minute I landed in the furnace and the ropes were broken, I go, "Woo, I'll be out of there. I'm out." In the fire, you want to hang out for a little bit, right? "Lord, good to see you, this is awesome. Nice time for you to show up." Guess when the Lord meets us with the most wonderful sense of His presence in the fires, in the furnace. God whispers in our joys, but He shouts in our pain. You might be in the furnace of affliction right now. You might be going through a fiery trial. Guess who will meet you in that time? Jesus will, and He will come to you, and He will manifest Himself to you.

When the disciples were at sea on the storm, and they thought they were going to be drowned, guess who came walking to them on the water? Jesus did. In the darkest night, in the fiercest fires, Jesus comes to meet us in our hour of need. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "I will not leave you comfortless. I will not orphan you. I will come to you." And the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, is that comforter. And what does He do? He comes alongside of us. I'm never alone. He comforts me. So Joshua meets the captain of the Lord's host.

There's some important lessons in conclusion I want you to get that we need to learn. Joshua learned by meeting the captain of the Lord's host that he is second in command. We need to learn that we are second in command. I, as your pastor, am second in command. I am not the pastor of this church. Jesus Christ is the pastor of this church, amen? I'm an under-chef. He's the one that's in command. You're not the head of the house, guys. If you're walking around strutting your stuff, like I'm the man of the house, I'm in command here. No, you're not, buckaroo. (Congregation Laughing) You're second fiddle. Jesus is the head of this house. He's the Lord of this house. And you need to have an attitude of humility before the captain of the Lord's host. You can't be the husband God wants you to be. You can't be the Christian leader God wants you to be without submitting to Christ as the captain of the Lord's host. He is the one that's in command. Remember Jesus said in John 15 verse five, "Without me you can do..."

What? – “Nothing.” - Nothing. - Nothing. Notice that Jesus didn't say, “Without me you can't do much?” (Congregation Laughs) What if He said, “You know, without me you can't do a lot?” Jesus said, “Without me you are a zero, buckaroo. You are a big zero.” How does that prepare me for battle? You have to trust him. You have to rely upon him.

The second lesson he learned that God had already a battle plan. God already had the battle plan. Joshua was spying out Jericho. He's looking at this big fortress silhouetted against the night sky. And the Lord showed up to remind him, “I have the battle plan. Don't worry about it. Don't sweat it. I am in control.” You know when it comes to Christian ministry, a lot of times churches will invent a program or a ministry, and then they give their hardest work to try to make it happen. Not a good idea. Or sometimes we'll think of something we can do for God, and then after we get it all planned out, we go, “God, would you bless what we're going to do for you?” You know what the best thing to do is? To meet the Lord first of all, and to seek Him, and say, “Lord, you are the captain of the host, you're the leader of this church, what is your plan? We'll follow it. And Lord, can we be a part of what you want to do?” Find out what God wants to do and then align yourself with the purposes of God. Just say, “Here am I Lord, use me.” Instead of trying to create ministry for God and asking Him to bless your ministry, find out what God wants to do with your life and say, “God, here am I, use me.”

Then thirdly, Joshua learned this lesson, very important, the battle was the Lord's and he had already overcome the enemy. God was going to fight for them, God was going to take care of them. The battle belongs to the Lord, amen. And this opened up Joshua's eyes. Before there was sword on sword, before they went in and took Jericho. God had opened his eyes, “I am the one leading the battle. Look to me, trust in me, wait on me.” The same thing is true of you in every battle you face in life. God is the one who fights for you. God is the one who will battle for you. God is the one who's going before you. He will take care of you. If God before us, who can be what? Against us. Can you imagine how pumped Joshua would be after this encounter? Go back to his soldiers. Guess what, man? Jesus just showed up: “Oh Lord, Jehovah just showed up and He's going to help us fight this battle. He already had his sword drawn.” You don't have to fight your battles. God is going to fight for you.

Now in closing still, I want you to notice Joshua's response. There are four things Joshua did. He surrendered. Verse 14, “He fell on his face.” He fell on his face and bowed before the battle. We always need to bow before the battle. Joshua did. Secondly, he worshiped, verse 14, “...and did worship.” Worship in private before, victory in public. Worship in private before, victory in public. And then thirdly, he obeyed, he said, verse 14, “What saith my Lord unto his servant?” What is your plan? What is your will? What is your word to me? If you're going to stand in the battle, you need to know God's word and be ready to obey. And then, fourthly, he walked in humility and holiness. Look at it in verse 15. The captain of the Lord so said unto Joshua, “lose the shoes from off your feet for the place where you're standing is...” what? –“Holy ground.” This is another reason why I believe that this is God speaking to Joshua, meeting Joshua. Because when Moses encountered the burning bush, And remember God spoke from the burning bush? What did God say to Moses? Take off your what? Your sandals, your shoes. Why? Because you're on holy ground. That's what God says when you're hanging out with Him.

God says, take your shoes off. This is holy ground.

So before you can go to battle, you need to have humility and you need to have holiness. Lord, I'm going to walk in obedience and holiness to you. Humble worship, holy walk, heavenly warfare. What a blessing to know that God is in control. There's a man by the name of Robert Murray McShane. He's one of my favorite devotional writers, a pastor of yours, a Scottish pastor. And one of his letters of Murray McShane. He was writing to a missionary friend that was discouraged and wanted to give up. He said these words. He said, "Remember you are God's sword, his instrument. I trust a chosen vessel unto him to bear his name. A great measure, in great measure, according to the purity and the perfections of the instrument will be the success. It is not great talents that God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God." How true that is. Three things we need to do, remember, don't ever forget what God has done for you in your past. And secondly, re-consecrate your life to God. Say, Lord, I want to renew my covenant. Reaffirm your covenant with God. And then thirdly, ask God for a new revelation to yourself. I want to see you, I want to hear you, I want to know you, I want to know you're with me. I know how discouraged you can be and how ready to give up you can be. You know what you need? God to just meet you. And God will meet you in your hour of need if you'll seek Him. Let's pray.