

# Truths From Israel's History, Part 3 - Captain of the Lord's Host

by Ed Miller

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*The sermon emphasizes the need for total reliance on Jesus as the captain of our spiritual battles and the importance of surrendering to His authority for victory.*

**Duration:** 1:05:49

**Scripture:** Exodus 3:5, Joshua 5:13 - 6:1, Luke 10:4, John 6:45

**Topics:** "Divine Encounters", "Redemptive History"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the encounter between Joshua and the captain of the Lord's host. Joshua is surprised to see a man with a drawn sword standing opposite him near Jericho. The man reveals himself as the captain of the host of the Lord and instructs Joshua to remove his sandals because he is standing on holy ground. The preacher emphasizes that this encounter was a real and frightening experience for Joshua, highlighting the importance of being open to God's surprises in our lives. The sermon also briefly mentions the key events in Israel's redemptive history, including the crossing of the Jordan, the establishment of the base at Gilgal, the taking of Jericho, and the defeat and subsequent victory at Ai.

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## Transcript

I'll ask you to open your Bibles, brothers, to Joshua, please, chapter 6. Well, chapter 5. As we come again to the study of God's Word, I remind you of that principle of Bible study that is absolutely indispensable, a principle that we often take for granted, but which we must not take for granted. If we take it for granted and view it as helpful rather than indispensable, then we're going to miss out on everything. Total reliance upon God's Holy Spirit.

It is not a mistake that the Lord Jesus was called the Word and the Bible is called the Word. Jesus is like the Bible. There are two sides, a human side and a divine side.

We need to study the human side, but if that's all you get is the human side, you'll miss the Lord. In the great message that Jesus gave on the bread of life in John chapter 6, He gave the proof that you would know for sure if you were taught of God. How do I really know I'm taught of God? John 6, verse 45 says, it is written in the prophets, they shall all be taught of God.

Everyone who's heard and learned from the Father comes to Me. That's how you know. If it leads to Jesus, then you're taught of God, if it comes to Him.

Everyone taught of the Father, everyone who learns from the Father comes to Me. You know it's possible to come to this book and miss the Lord. It is not possible to come to the Lord and miss this book.

And so, I'm going to ask you to join with me please as we pray together and ask the Lord to reign Himself upon us. Let's bow. Our Father, we thank You again for Your precious promises in the Word that You would hide these things from the wise, from the prudent, reveal them unto babes.

And we know we cannot work up an attitude of childlikeness, but You must draw us, make us as little children that we might receive from You. We thank Thee that You've hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in the Lord Jesus Christ and then invited us to come to Him. We thank You that He is a treasure chest filled and filled for us.

We pray that You would give us eyes to see, take the veil away this evening, that we might behold in reality the Lord Jesus Christ and seeing Him that we might be changed. We thank You in advance for meeting with us. We trust You now, Lord, to over-answer this prayer, not because in any way we deserve the answer, but because our Lord Jesus deserves the answer.

And we pray it in His matchless name. Amen. Well, welcome again, brothers, to our little look at this wonderful portion of God's Word.

We're looking at Israel's redemptive history from the crossing of the Jordan in chapter 3 of Joshua to the victory at Ai in chapter 8 of Joshua. By way of a quick review, we're just looking at those four wonderful events. The crossing of the Jordan River in chapter 3. The establishment of the base at Gilgal in chapters 4 and 5. The taking of Jericho in chapter 6. And the defeat and then the subsequent victory at Ai in chapters 7 and 8. We've been trying to focus in a special way in terms of those stories on the instruments that God used to get His redeemed people to the place where they could enter in and abide in and live in and off that land which pictured our Lord Jesus Christ.

The land of milk and honey. Picturing the life of milk and honey in Him. To take His people across the Jordan, He used the priests, those who had gone first in faith, who had taken a firm stand on ground that He had dried up, who just stood there holding up the ark, that symbolic representation of His throne and His kingship.

And so they went across the Jordan. And then this morning we looked at that second illustration at Gilgal. And God used the elders to carry them to His wonderful truths, His wonderful realities, which He taught at Gilgal.

Identification with Christ illustrated by the two monuments of twelve stones. I am in the land. You are in the land.

Every child of God is represented and we are all in Christ Jesus. And then illustrated by the flint knives, the truth that we are separated unto Him by covenant. We belong unto Him.

The truth illustrated by the Passover Lamb that we are brought in the same way we get out because of His work, His wonderful blood, His finished work, and we feed upon the Lamb. And we ended up in chapter 5 with the final illustration, the man with the sword drawn in his hand. The angel, the captain of the Lord's

host, the angel of the Lord, Christ Jesus Himself.

And so at Gilgal we learn and we need to teach others that we are in Christ, that we are separated unto Christ, that we are to feed on Christ and to depend upon Christ to win the battle. That's where we've been so far. Now I'd like to continue our study this evening.

How may we help others from Gilgal to Jericho to take the wonderful land? After we have crossed the Jordan and after we have learned the lessons of Gilgal, God takes us to Jericho. Now as you can imagine, since this is the first battle for the land of Canaan, and that seven-year war to possess the land, you know how God has written the Bible. And when you come to any first thing, pay close attention to that first thing, because you'll find in that first thing many principles on how that thing will be developed.

So you'll want to study the first miracle and those kinds of things. This is the first victory. And you would expect it then to be a strategic victory laying out the keys for all victory.

And indeed, that's exactly what you find here. As we looked at the priests for heaven's wisdom on how to cross the Jordan, and as we looked at the elders for heaven's wisdom on how to get to Gilgal, I'm suggesting now that Joshua, the successor of Moses, the God-appointed leader, is the one we look at so that we might learn how to take Jericho. Chapter 6 describes the conquest of Jericho, but I want to begin, as I suggested this morning, where we left off.

So if you'll look at chapter 5, the end of chapter 5, Joshua encounters the captain of the Lord's host. I'm going to ask you to follow along as we read again this wonderful text, beginning at verse 13. 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 adversary? And he said, No, rather, I indeed now am come as the captain of the host of the Lord. Joshua fell on his face to the earth and bowed down and said to him, What has my Lord to say to His servant? 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.

The appearance of the prince of the Lord's host, or the captain of the Lord's host, in my view, I think this little section, verses 13 to 15, is the single most important passage in the entire book of Joshua. It not only contains the key to the victory at Jericho, but it contains all the keys to all the victories in every battle that they're ever going to face. It's the key to the first battle and every battle.

I'd like to meditate with you on these wonderful verses. I don't think I need to spend a lot of time, if I do need to, I'm not going to, spend a lot of time on the fact that this is the appearance of the second person of the Godhead, the Lord Jesus Christ. The man with the sword in his hand is the Lord Jesus in His pre-incarnate form.

One illustration of that is in verse 15, when He said, Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place you stand is holy ground. Certainly that identifies this person with the same person who appeared in the flaming bush to Moses. Take off your shoes.

This is holy ground. Now, we appreciate the Cardinal who gave us chapter and verse division, but sometimes we quarrel with them because they break them off in places that are not good. There's one chapter in the New Testament that ends with a comma.

And you wonder why in the world they would end it that way. And I think this is one of the unfortunate breaks. I don't think chapter 5 should have ended where it did.

It should go on into chapter 6 because the one who's speaking at the end of 5 is the same one who's speaking at the beginning of chapter 6. And who is it? Chapter 6, 1. Joshua, Jericho was tightly shut up because of the sons of Israel. No one went out. But no one came in.

The Lord said to Joshua, capital L, capital O, capital R, capital D. That's the word Jehovah. Jehovah said to Joshua, see, I've given Jericho into your hand with its king and its valiant warriors. And we know then that the captain of the Lord's host is the same as Jehovah.

It's our Lord Jesus. A captain of the Lord's host appears to Joshua. And remember, he's still at Gilgal.

And so this man appears at Gilgal with a sword drawn in his hand. The next time God picks that up, this picture, is after the seven-year war in Judges 2. Listen to Judges 2 and verse 1. Now the angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochum. And he said, I brought you up out of Egypt.

I led you into the land which I've sworn to your fathers. I said I'll never break my covenant with you. He's called the angel of the Lord.

It's Jehovah. It's the Son of God. And when he comes from Gilgal to Bochum, I don't want to get into the Judges, but you understand Bochum and weeping and why they wept there.

I'll tell you why. Because at the beginning of Joshua, the angel of the Lord stood there like this with the sword drawn in His hand. And all of that symbolizes I'll fight for you.

I'll fight for God. When He appears in Judges, He doesn't appear like this. He puts the sword back in its sheath and He appears like this.

And that's why they wept. Because He says you're on your own. Fight your own battles.

And they named that place Weeping because He put His sword back in His sheath. But who is this? It's the Lord Jesus, the angel of the Lord. I told you that this is the single most important passage in the book of Joshua, not only for its relationship to Jericho, but for its relationship to the possession of the whole land of Canaan.

Who's the captain of the Lord's host? It's Jesus. What's the land a picture of? It's Jesus. And that's why this is a key passage.

It's a key passage because it's teaching us this, that Jesus must take me to Jesus. Nobody else can take me in. Only Christ can lead me to Christ.

Only Jesus can take me to the land and to the abundance and the fullness of the land. We learned about the finished work when we were at the Jordan. And we learned about the power of God to separate us and to minister to us at Gilgal.

But now we come to Him, Himself, not His work, not His principles, not His truths. But now here stands Jesus. He said, You've learned a lot.

You've come a long way. You've seen the finished work. You've understood identification.

You've understood what it means to be separated unto Me. You've understood what it means to feed on the Lamb. You've understood I must fight for you.

Now, let me, Jesus, take you to Jesus. And let me take you to the abundance. And so this chapter begins, climactically, with the Lord taking us to the Lord.

We need to understand that that's how it is. That's the final preparation. Now, let's look at Joshua as he meets this wonderful visitor.

And I want you to notice that this is an unsought-for visitation. In other words, Joshua wasn't praying to see the Lord. He wasn't seeking.

As we say, someone seeks the Lord. He was not only not seeking this, he didn't expect it. It came as a great surprise to him.

Which, if you've studied the Bible long enough, you know that the Lord gets a kick out of that. Surprising you, like He ambushed Jacob when he was all alone and just jumped out of the bush. And it must have been a frightening thing for Joshua.

Now, so that we may clearly grasp the heart of God and knowing that God has given us analytical minds and that we think logically, I hate to break up a story like this and say there are three things, there are four principles, because you can lose life. This really happened to this man. It's not an outline in his life.

This is what happened. But so that we can understand this, let me show you two things at least that he learned from this marvelous visitation of the Lord. First, try to picture it in your mind's eye.

Chapter 5, verse 13, 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. The climactic illustration, I think, of Jesus surprising someone, just showing up. I have to laugh when I read it.

Is it Revelation? Can I just picture this? This old man. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day when suddenly behind me the sound of a trumpet. Picture that.

This guy is meditating. Ta-da, ta-da, ta-da. This trumpet blast.

And then he turns around and you saw what he saw. And of course he fell at his feet as a dead man. Joshua was by Jericho.

Read it in terms of the context. He's on a reconnaissance mission. That's what he's doing.

He's the military leader. He's planning a strategy. In chapter 1, verse 9, God had told him to be strong and very courageous and not to tremble or be dismayed.

For God said, the Lord is with you wherever you go. And he's trying to do that. He's trying to be brave.

He's got these people over there and he's got to take them into the land and God hasn't dribbled out any information. Up to this point, he doesn't have a clue except he sees these tremendous walls. Now, if we can believe the archaeologists who've dug up the walls and who've written the records, Jericho had double walls, not just single walls.

We're not dead sure how high they were, but commonly accepted scholarship tells us they were about 30 feet high. 30 feet high. And they were double walls.

And the walls themselves were about 12 feet thick. And there was about 15 feet in between the double walls. And what's Joshua doing? He's out there going, whoa.

And he's walking around. He's on a reconnaissance mission and he's trying to discern some strategy as he examines the defenses of the enemy. I know from the record that Rahab's house was built on top of the wall.

And now the walls are shut up tight and Joshua's out there. How are we ever, he must be thinking, going to penetrate these fortresses? Are we going to have to scale them? Are we going to have to knock them down? Are we going to tunnel underneath them? We'll probably have to starve these people out. How in the world are we going to do that? I know when the spies returned 40 years earlier with the report, they said the people are strong.

The cities are fortified and very large. They're too strong for us. And even on the east of the Jordan when God gave victory over Og, Deuteronomy describes that.

And it says their cities are fortified. Their walls are high. They have gates and bars over the gates.

And that was just on the east. And so he's out there as a commander-in-chief would have to be and he's looking around and looking at the walls and seeing how big they are and how high they are. And all of a sudden, he appears.

You've got to get that. Just all of a sudden, there he is. And he's got a sword drawn.

My heart would sink. Because I'm being real sneaky. I'm in the bushes.

I'm looking at the wall. What am I going to do? And all of a sudden, there he is! And he's got this sword. Joshua learned some of the greatest lessons that he ever learned in his life.

To be honest with you, as I read this story at the beginning, it doesn't appear that this man was anything other than a soldier to Joshua. I mean, he just looked like another man. I don't think.

I don't know. But it doesn't look like his face was shining and his sword was flaming. And he was some deity.

I don't think he saw that. He just saw a man with a sword in his hand. And he asks in verse 13, Are you for us? Or for our enemies? Depends on your tone of voice when you read that.

John Calvin thinks that he was challenging him to a duel. Whose side are you on? Tell us! You on our side? You on their side? Speak up! Identify yourself! Who goes there? That's what Calvin thinks it was. I don't know.

There's another way to say it. My son Daniel and I were studying this and I said, How do you think he said that? And my son answered like this with his fingers crossed. That's how he said it.

And he thinks that this was an impressive sight. And he goes, Whoa! Whose side are you on? I hope you're on our side. That's how he looks at it.

Either way, Joshua's question became the occasion for this tremendous revelation of the Lord. Chapter 5, verse 13, Whose side are you on? You for us? Or for our adversary? My same son Daniel, as we studied this, he wasn't convinced that this was truly Jesus. He said, You've got to show me that.

So I went back to the 22 angel of the Lord appearances and I'm trying to show him that the angel of the Lord in the Old Testament is Jesus. I'm not convinced. Until he read this.

And then he said, I'm convinced. And I said, What convinces you? He said, He didn't give a straight answer. It's got to be Jesus.

Are you on our side? No. Are you on their side? No. Are you on anybody's side? Verse 14, No, rather indeed, I've now come as a captain of the host of the Lord.

I'm not on your side. And I'm not on their side. I'm on God's side.

That's what he said. I fight for God. And if you're on God's side, you're going to see a wonderful thing.

I'll be on your side. And if you're never on God's side, you're going to find me a formidable foe. Because I'll fight against you tooth and nail.

I'm on the Lord's side. I fight for the Lord and for all who line up with Him. See, the Lord's not on Israel's side or against Israel.

Not on Canaan's side or against Canaan. God has a purpose. God has a will.

And God has a design. And God has a plan. And God has a name.

And God has a reputation. And God has a cause. And God fights for God.

And He fights for His name and for His cause. That's the first thing that he learned. What's the second thing he learned? Not only that God fights for God.

Verse 14, No, rather indeed, I now come as Captain of the Host of the Lord. Major Ian Thomas, in his wonderful book, Saving Life. Are you familiar with that? It's just a marvelous little book.

He has one chapter on this story. And he paraphrases it this way, I didn't come to take sides. I came to take over.

Oh, exactly right. Exactly right. And Joshua had to learn that.

Remember, the angel of the Lord is talking to Joshua, the military leader. Joshua, little c, the commander-in-chief. This is General Joshua.

This is top brass. This is the successor of Moses. This is the God-appointed leader of all the tribes of Israel.

And when Jesus said, I am now come as Captain, what He is saying is, you are no longer in charge. They are no longer under your command. I want you to surrender your command to Me.

Lay down your troops. Lay down your arms. Relinquish your command.

We sort of read this, la, la, la. The angel of the Lord stood there with the sword drawn in His hand, and He said, I want you to know two things. I am fighting for God, and I've come to take over.

That's awesome. That is so awesome. Brothers, we've got to watch Joshua.

If we're going to help our brothers and sisters take Jericho, watch him respond as the angel of the Lord says, I am here fighting for God, and I'm here to take over. Let's watch Joshua because it's wonderful. We stand, I think, where Joshua stood.

Verse 14, No, rather indeed, I have now come as the Captain of the host of the Lord. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth. He bowed down and said, What has my Lord to say to His servant? Oh, brothers, this is wonderful.

He fell on his face, and he worshiped the Lord. And it was at that moment, I believe, that he knew with great relief who it was that was standing before him. I don't know what was going through his mind when he looked at those 30-foot walls.

And then he looked back at what was his army. And then someone shows up and says, I want to be Captain. Alright! Thank you, Lord! I am so glad you came.

And I'm so glad that you want the job. You got it. And I think that's how it went.

I think it was with great relief when he said, I'm the Captain of the Lord's host. He fell down in gratitude. He said, Thank you, Lord.

I didn't know what to do. And brothers, aren't we there as leaders? And God has brought before us so many people, and we feel such a burden, and we've been carrying them on our shoulders. If you're ever going to possess Christ, you better lay that burden down.

And you better just surrender all the troops to Him. And you better do what Joshua did. Oh, it's a glorious picture.

As he falls on his face, and he worships the Lord, and he praises God because he was dreading it. He was dreading trying to penetrate the walls. He was dreading trying to get volunteers from that group.

Because if you know Israel, and you've studied the record of that, I can hear Joshua arguing with the Lord, not arguing against Him, just saying, Lord, You don't know how good this is that You want to be Captain. When I was considering the geography of the land, the spies came back. They told me it's hills and valleys.

And I know hills and valleys. I'm a military man. They're easy to defend, and they're hard to capture.

And I didn't know what I was going to do. And I heard about them. They're vicious.

They're wicked people. They're violent. They know how to fight.

They're trained in war. They're giants in there. And we've been an agricultural people in the main, and wandering around, and you want to be Captain.

I gladly hand in my stripes. You have the command. Here's the key to my office.

It's yours. Glorious liberty Joshua had that day. It wasn't a hard thing.

It was a glorious thing. It was a relief for him. I can picture Joshua looking over the hosts of his flock, his people, the nation, the 40,000 troops that he had from the east side, which was only about 60% of their armed forces.

Evidently some stayed over there to defend the women and children. And then as he looked at the 100,000 or so other troops, and he says, Lord, You want to be Captain of the host? There's a host. Take them.

You can be Captain of the host. You see, Joshua had such a low view at that point, but even a low view brought him great relief. He was in for a wonderful surprise.

A wonderful surprise because he thought that was the Lord's host. That wasn't the Lord's host. It's not only the armies of men.

It's the armies of heaven and earth. And He's the Lord of hosts. The armies of heaven and earth.

The unnumbered hosts that are mentioned in Hebrews which always worshipped the Lord Jesus. His winds, His ministers, His flames of fire, His ministering spirits. Psalm 68 talks about Mount Sinai.

And it says that there were 100 million angels when God gave the law. 10,000 times 10,000. Do the math.

100 million angels just on Mount Sinai. This is the Lord of hosts. You remember Elijah prayed, or Elisha prayed for his servant in 2 Kings 6. O Lord, open his eyes.

Let him see. And He opened his eyes and the mountain was filled with chariots of fire and horses. This is the host of the Lord.

In one night, one angel killed 185,000 of the Assyrian hosts. Probably this angel. The angel of the Lord.

The Lord of hosts. Revelation 5. Before the throne of God, myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands. 10,000 times 10,000 and thousands of thousands.

I'm the captain of the Lord of hosts. I'll tell you, when Joshua surrendered to this captain, he joined the winning team. When he fell down before this captain, he said, I want to be the captain.

And he said, well, there's my host. And he said, no, that's not your host. There's my host.

And there's my host. I'm the Lord, the captain of the armies of heaven and earth. And I've come to take over.

Lord, open our eyes. Brothers, if we're going to help others to get into the land, it will only be because, like Joshua, God graces us to meet face to face with the one who has the sword drawn in His hand. And by His grace, we fall at His feet.

And we say, what has my Lord to say to His servant? I've given up guessing on how to take the wall. I've given up guessing on how to overthrow the enemy. Wouldn't you expect that that would have been enough? I mean, here's the angel of the Lord standing there.

I'm fighting for God. I've come to take over. Joshua falls down and he worships.

He's worshiping. He's on his face. He says, whatever you say, I'm going to do it.

God humbles him more. That's not enough. God humbles him more.

Brothers, we can't miss this. Verse 15, And the captain of the Lord's host said to Joshua, Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place that you're standing is holy. He had to take his shoes off.

On the low level of earth, that's a rather undignified thing for a general to do. He's on a reconnaissance mission. He's trying to figure out the strategy and all this, and all of a sudden, he's saying, take off your shoes.

Not only relinquish your hold and your authority over all of the forces and all of the people, but take off your shoes until we're on our faces and barefoot before the Lord. They're not going in. That's how God allows us to help them come in.

You see, human wisdom would think the opposite of this. Going into Jericho now, this is the day of battle. You've got to come up with some military strategy.

You're going to have to figure it all out. It's time to put on your military sandals. It's time to lace up your boots with the thickly studded hobnobs and nails.

It's time to get ready. Sharpen your swords and gird yourselves and prepare your shields. Lace up those sandals.

No. Jesus stands there and says, you really want to win a battle? You're going against Satan, you know. You're going against hell.

You're going against the forces of wickedness. You're going against the Canaanites. On your face.

Take off your shoes. Man, this is so un-military. It is so divine.

It is so wise, so prudent. This is spiritual warfare and it's won when we are barefoot and on our face before the Captain of the Lord's Host. What does it mean to be barefoot before the Lord? I know most of the commentators talk about the words, this is holy ground.

And the idea is that God is holy and the idea is reverence. And when you're in the presence of God, you should not walk the same way you walk when you're in the world. It's not common ground.

God is there. But if you applied that literally, we'd never wear shoes. If you have to take off your shoes when you're in the presence of God, when would you wear shoes? His presence is everywhere.

I traced through the Bible every time it mentions take off your shoes. Every time it mentions barefoot. Every time they took off their sandals, I traced out every reference that I could find.

And I came up with something that I think is interesting. It includes reverence. But I think it's a little more than that.

It's true that God is holy and we can't contaminate His presence. But I think it's including a little more than that. Let me give you a couple of illustrations.

When God sent Isaiah to preach against Egypt and Cush, the record of this is in Isaiah 20. You can check it out later. When God sent Isaiah to preach against Egypt and Cush, He wanted to warn them that the Assyrians were going to come and take them captive.

And one of the things they were going to do is lead them into captivity buck naked. They wouldn't have a strip of clothing on. God wanted to deliver that message.

And He said, you go out and tell them that they are going to end up as captives, as slaves, buck naked. Now I want you to illustrate it. So you take off your outer garment and take off your shoes.

For three years, Isaiah the prophet walked around barefoot preaching to these people that Assyria was going to come and lead them away naked. I can hear them saying, why are you preaching to us barefoot, prophet of God? And I can hear him saying, my feet are naked. As an illustration that someday you're going to be naked.

My God is a modest God. I'm not going to walk around naked. But I'm going to illustrate the principle of being naked with my feet.

When Absalom chased David after that insurrection, 2 Samuel chapter 15, David was ashamed. He had been exposed and he felt so bad because his son had done that. The Bible says he took off his shoes and he fled with no shoes on.

Naked feet. A principle. A picture.

Job with his tongue in his cheek. Remember his miserable counselors and how much they helped him. Well, when God turned their wisdom, He said this, Job 12, 17, He makes the counselors walk barefoot.

He makes fools of judges. He makes the priests walk barefoot. He overthrows the secure ones.

He pours contempt on the nobles. When God exposed these counselors and these priests and these nobles, He said, they're barefoot. They're barefoot.

When a person lost a loved one in the Old Testament, part of the grieving process was to take off your shoes. I can't prove this, but to be honest with you, I'm not convinced. In Luke chapter 10, when God sent out the 70, I'm inclined to think He sent them out barefoot.

It says, take no money bag. No belt. No shoes.

Now, I know some say that means no extra pair of shoes. I don't know about that. Then it would be no extra money belt too.

No extra bag. I don't know. But I know God's a modest God.

He could have said to Moses at the bush, Moses, take off your clothes. This is holy ground. He could have said to Joshua as he stood there with the sword drawn, Joshua, take off your clothes.

This is holy ground. That's how the whole Bible begins with man naked before God. And I think this principle of taking off your shoes, because God is modest, He's illustrating not only reverence, but nakedness before God, openness before God, transparency before God, coming before God open, naked.

Listen to Hebrews 4, verses 12 and 13. The Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, able to judge the thoughts, the intentions of the heart. There's no creature hidden from His sight.

All things are open and laid bare before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. And I think that was all part of this humility. The angel of the Lord stands there before Joshua, and he said, I am fighting for God.

I've come to take over. Joshua falls down on his face and he worships Him. Anything you say, speak and your servant will do it.

And he says, take off your shoes. This is holy ground. Stand before me, no faking, no playing, no acting, no kidding.

This is real. Stand before me, naked and open and exposed. You want to help the saints? Don't answer this, brothers.

But just think in your heart, when is the last time you have felt the burden, the responsibility of somebody else upon you? When's the last time you have come before the Lord naked and barefoot and fallen on your face and say, will you please take over? They're your responsibility. That doesn't mean you're not going to get up and lead the way. You're going to still be there.

You watch Joshua. But it means the burden is gone. God has taken the burden.

He has given it all over to the Lord. Well, that was the final preparation for taking people into the land, understanding who this one was and falling before Him. Now, there's much that could be said if you turn to chapter 6 of Jericho.

That battle for Jericho, you've studied it. It's well loved. It's a beautiful portion and so much can be said.

From the natural standpoint, I think this much is clear. Joshua's not in charge. The captain of the Lord's host is in charge.

He's giving the orders. It even appears foolish to the eyes of the flesh. But Joshua goes forth barefoot and worshipping, trusting in the angel of the Lord, following every command.

Now, we're not going to read the whole Jericho story. I think almost all of us know that story. Let me just tell it in my own words.

The angel of the Lord commands Joshua there's going to be a parade around the walls and there's going to be five stages, at least four, maybe five stages in this parade. In the vanguard, there's going to be the armed men, probably from the two-and-a-half tribes, 40,000 men to lead the way. Behind the vanguard, seven priests blowing seven... Did you notice the word that's used? The ram's horns.

That's a special word because that's the trumpet that was blown at Jubilee. Those are Jubilee trumpets. And this is a Jubilee.

And so the seven priests have these Jubilee trumpets. And behind the priests blasting these trumpets is the holy ark of God. It must have been something to picture from the top of the wall.

With that vanguard, all the armed forces, and then these seven priests blasting the Jubilee trumpet. And right behind is the ark of God being held up and marched around. And then behind them, more soldiers, probably from the other nine-and-a-half tribes.

And some commentators aren't sure whether all the people joined at the end of the parade or not. I incline to think they did. Many commentators incline to think the people didn't.

If you don't agree with me on this, you're in good company. And as Vernon McGee said once, you've now got a choice to make. You want good company or you want the truth? They say the ancient city of Jericho covered about eight acres.

And it's estimated that it would have taken between an hour and an hour-and-a-half to go one time around. Every day, as you know, for six days, in absolute silence, they were to make their round. First the army, and then the priests with the trumpets, and then the ark of God, and then more soldiers, and the people of God, round the city in absolute silence.

The only sound that could be heard were the short blasts of the jubilee trumpets. And if they could speak, the jubilee trumpets would be saying, And that's all they heard. And of course, it called attention.

The first seven priests, and there's the ark of God, and everybody had their eyes on the ark of God. We learn that the angel of the Lord gave Joshua this much information right at the beginning. We also read that Joshua gave the people this much information at the beginning.

They didn't know the end. They had to go in faith. Even though Joshua knew what God was going to do, he didn't tell the people.

Read the record. He didn't tell the people. And so they're marching around in faith, and I don't know what went through their mind.

It's just dumb. Walking in circles. Walking over and over the same ground with nothing happening.

Did you ever do that? How come we have to go over the same ground? Running around in circles. But the Bible says, by faith the walls of Jericho came down. Hebrew scholars think that the walls came down on the Sabbath day because they marched for seven days.

You know a Sabbath day is in there someplace because it covered seven days. It wouldn't surprise me if God gave the victory on the day of Raz. But then they would have had to start out early to finish before the bell rang, if you know what I mean.

Probably they went on the last day because they had to go seven times around on the last day. Probably ten or twelve hours on the last day. One thing that God accomplished with that, you say, why did God make them go thirteen times around the wall? Well, one thing I know for sure, they got thirteen good looks at the wall.

That's one thing that God accomplished. If they had any doubt when they started about their own inadequacy, they didn't have a doubt after they finished. After thirteen big looks at the wall.

I told you the other day that God had everyone circumcised. Picture the babies, eight days old, and they're all marching around the wall. And then on the last day, God has them march around seven times.

Say ten hours or eleven hours or twelve hours. Anybody here ever go on a ten hour, eleven hour, twelve hour hike? How would you like to go on a twelve hour hike in absolute silence? And then God says, now charge! Attack! After twelve hours, He weakened the troops. He was going to show them this was His battle and His victory.

They were so tired at the end, and now they've got to go in and fight. Amazing wisdom of the Lord. Well, you know the story.

That's how they got into the land. And though there are many other things we could meditate upon in this taking of Jericho, there's one that stands out and leads us to our next message. So with this principle, we'll close.

And I want you to see this. And I'm referring to the strange ban that was given in this first battle. The cherim.

That which was forbidden. 100% everything. With the exception of Rahab and what belonged to her, everything was to be given to the Lord.

Notice verse 17. The city shall be under the ban. It and all that's in it belongs to the Lord.

Only Rahab the harlot and all who are with her in the house shall live because she hid the messengers whom we sent. As for you, keep yourself from the things under the ban so you do not covet them. And take some of the things under the ban and make the camp of Israel a curse and bring trouble on it.

All the silver and the gold, the articles of bronze and iron are holy to the Lord. They shall go into the treasury of the Lord. Everything in battle one was dedicated to the Lord.

Every person, every animal, every trinket, every coin, every article of clothing, nothing was to be taken for personal use. Everything was given to the Lord. Why? In this first battle, He's laying down the keys.

He's laying down the principles. And the principle is this. The spoils belong to the victor.

It's that simple. The spoils belong to the victor. Who's the victor? It's the Lord.

And so in this first battle, He's to get everything in order to illustrate that it all belongs to Him. He's the one with the sword. He's the one that gets everything.

You know, brothers, it's amazing to me if you teach the battle is the Lord's, you get almost the universal amen from the people of God. But if you teach the victory is the Lord's, you get a lot of hemming and hawing. It's amazing that they can't see.

It's almost the same thing. The fact that He had the sword showed the battle was His. The fact that He got the spoils shows that the victory is His.

Joshua 6, verse 2. The Lord said to Joshua, See, I've given Jericho into your hand. Not I will give it, but I've already given it. It's a gift.

Victory is a gift of the Lord. Go to chapter 8, verse 2, please. This is the second battle.

Doesn't this sound a little strange? You shall do to Ai and its king just as you did to Jericho and its king. You shall take only its spoil and its cattle as plunder for yourself. In the first battle, God says, Don't touch

it.

It's Mine. But what's God's heart? He wants you to have the spoils. He doesn't want to keep it from you.

He wants to share it, but He wants you to know it's His. It's not yours. Don't go after the spoil.

It's Mine. Now that I have it, I'd love to share it with you. That's not the same thing.

The spoils belong to Him, and He wants to share it with us. Sometimes we forget the spoil goes to the victor. He's the victor.

Sometimes we pray about victory in an unscriptural way. Achan's problem I'm getting a little off target here, but Achan's problem in touching the spoils was that he was running after what God wanted him to have. God didn't want him not to have the spoils.

If he'd have waited one more battle, he'd have got it all. Everything he hid in the tent, he could have had. Legitimately, it was right.

God wanted to share it. But he went after the spoils, and he robbed God of His glory. His glory he won't share with another.

The victory is the Lord's. And Achan went after the victory. I hear people praying a lot.

Lord, give me victory over temptation. Give me victory over pride. Give me victory.

I need patience, Lord. Give me victory over irritability. Give me victory over this habit.

Give me victory over this particular sin. Give me victory over some lust or some pride or some unbelief. Learn it.

Learn it quickly. Really learn it well, brothers. There's no victory for you.

There's only one victor, and His name is Jesus. He gets all the spoils. Now, He'll share that with you, but that's not the same thing as you getting your own victory.

You don't get something called victory. You have Christ. And in Christ you have everything else.

He'll share it with you. That's why He'll lead you, but it's in His triumph. That's why He says, be of good cheer.

I have overcome the world. Not you shall overcome the world. That's why you reckon yourself dead in Christ Jesus.

Because you're in Christ Jesus. He doesn't want to give you a rest of your own. He says, enter into My rest.

It's the rest that He has. He wants to share the spoils. We need to follow Joshua.

We need to bend our knee to the One whose battle it is and whose victory it is. He fights for God. He's come to take over.

There's a right way to sing onward Christian soldiers, and there's a wrong way to sing onward Christian soldiers. We're going to have to advance as Joshua advanced, yielding the whole thing over to this one. We must ever relate the fight of faith with the rest of faith.

Know the difference between fighting for rest and fighting from rest. Knowing the difference between the victory that He shares with us and the victory that we think we can have. The battle is His.

The victory is His. You know what's amazing? And I will close with this. You know what's amazing? In this first battle, the enemy was shaking in their boots.

You know what's happening today? The Christians are shaking in their boots. And they're saying, Satan's out to get me and the devil's done this and I've been opposed here and this and that. What happened to this first victory? What happened to the angel of the host of armies of heaven and earth fighting for us? What happened to us falling before the Lord? They're the ones that should be trembling.

The gates of hell won't prevail against the church. We're the aggressors. We're the ones going out.

And God's people, their hearts ended up like water and melting like water. We need to understand that it's His battle, that it's His victory. And once you've learned that, He's going to dump the spoil on you.

There's so much spoil He wants to share, but you've got to get it right. You've got to learn. The spoil goes to the victor.

It's His. And that was all a down payment for what was coming. Well, we'll close there and trust God to work it in our hearts.

Let's pray. Our Father, we thank You so much that that wonderful angel of the Lord, the Lord Jesus, our Savior, You appeared to Joshua unsought, unasked for. You just showed up.

And You set that leader free. Lord, will You show up again and set Your people free? We gladly let You be captain. We relinquish all the troops.

By Your grace, we ask You to pull our shoes off. Even if You tear off our bunions, pull off our shoes, Lord, that we might be naked and exposed before You and that we might live that way. Teach us how to help others in.

We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

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