

Jos209 – Who is in Charge? – Joshua 5:11-15

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Open your Bibles. Title of the message, “Who is in Charge?” We are in Joshua Chapter 5 verses 11 through 15.

We ended last message with Israel in the Promised Land, celebrating the Passover possibly for the first time in forty years. By their faith in crossing the Jordan and by their obedience in the circumcision of their hearts, their close fellowship with God had been restored.

And they are about to begin to experience the blessings of the Promised Land. But first, in a very critical text, Joshua is about to clearly understand before the very first battle in the Promised Land – *who* is actually *in control* and *how* the victory will actually *be guaranteed*.

And we can perfectly apply Joshua’s lesson today to *who* is actually *in control* in *our lives* and *how our victories* in the Promised Life will actually *be guaranteed*.

Let’s pray. *Lord Jesus, would you show us, please, would you cause us to ask the question, WHO is in charge? Lord we don’t ask the question because we assume it is us. And we rise up on the throne of our lives and we puff out our chest and we say, I will, I will, I will. And we forget that Lucifer was thrown out of heaven for saying I will, I will, I will. Show us today who’s in charge. Show us today, even more importantly, who’s in charge in our lives. Show us today, Lord, for your sake and for our own lives and in your name, amen.*

I know most of you are following me in the NLT. But today we are going to look at our primary text in the ESV (because the ESV nails a couple of key words).

So Israel had just finished celebrating the Passover. And then, in Joshua 5:11-12,

Joshua 5:11–12 (ESV)

11 And the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain.

12 And the manna ceased the day after they ate of the produce of the land. And there was no longer manna for the people of Israel, but they ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

Notice, the *day after* the Passover. God’s people began to be sustained by their “new life” on the day after Passover. And by the way, when did Jesus Christ rise from the dead? ***The day after Passover...***

The day after Passover Jesus made it possible for us to live in the new life with God – the same day Israel began living the new life in the Promised Land. Don't ever let anyone tell you that the Old Testament and the New Testament don't go together.

So, before we begin this critical text today, let's review *how* God had prepared Joshua and the people so far for the battles and the life that they were about to begin living.

In **Chapter 1** – God had commanded Joshua (and the people) to be “***strong and very courageous.***”

In **Chapter 2** – God had given them great encouragement for their victory by the testimony of Rahab about the enemy being so terrified of God's people.

In **Chapter 3** – Israel had seen God's *miraculous power* as God stood up the Jordan River like a wall and all Israel followed the ark across on dry ground.

In **Chapter 4** – God had Israel *build memorials* in order to build their faith.

In **Chapter 5** – Israel prepared themselves by *cutting away the flesh* and by renewing communion and fellowship with God.

AND – they began partaking of the fruit of their new life with God.

But Jericho is still looming on the close horizon. That double walled city – impenetrable and impassable – was the next step into the Promised Life. And there was still *one critical requirement* that Joshua had to get clear in his mind. Joshua (and the people) had to be absolutely certain *who was in charge.*

Who was *genuinely* in charge?

Who was *truly* in charge

and who was in charge of *the real battle*?

And so now Joshua is (possibly) kneeling alone, outside Jericho looking at a daunting enemy and he is probably praying and planning.

How many ladders will I need to scale those walls . . . ?

How many battering rams will I need to break those gates . . . ?

And – Can a get those on Amazon Prime . . . ?

He's praying, *how* is this going to happen? *How* am I going to go about this? God has promised to “***be with me***” and he has commanded me to ***be strong and courageous.*** But now, *HOW* is it going to happen? *WHAT am I supposed to DO?*

From the ESV we read Joshua 5:13-15.

Joshua 5:13–15 (ESV)

13 When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes (possibly from a praying position) and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, “Are you for us, or for our adversaries?”

14 And he said, “No; but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, “What does my lord say to his servant?”

15 And the commander of the Lord’s army said to Joshua, “Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so.

Joshua is “*by Jericho*” and he “*lifted up his eyes*” (maybe from prayer). Suddenly a Man appears in front of him with a sword drawn in his hand.

This “*Man*” is obviously *battle ready*. His sword is out and ready for use. But... on whose side will he fight?

And so Joshua approaches him and says to him (end of verse 13), “*Are you for us, or for our adversaries?*”

And this is where the NLT and the other dynamic translations use a poor word choice. The NLT says in the answer – “*Neither one*” and that might give the impression that the Commander of the Lord’s army is not *FOR* Israel (and that is certainly not the case).

The Hebrew word is actually – “**NO**” (as the ESV states.)

Joshua wants to know if this Commander is on *his* side or the *enemy’s* side. And the Commander of the Lord’s army says, “**NO**” – *wrong question*. The Lord does not “pick sides.” The Commander of the Lord’s army is not on *your side* or the *other guy’s side*.

The question is, *are you on HIS side?*

Or is the *other guy* on *HIS* side?

It’s not “who is the Lord for?” it’s “who is for the Lord?” And so Joshua says, are you going to support my plans, or are you going to support my enemy’s plans? And the Commander of the Lord’s army he says “**NO.**” It’s the wrong question.

As followers of this same Commander of the Lord’s army we don’t ever get to say, “Lord, would you be on *my* side?”

Take a moment and consider how ridiculous that sounds to say to the Commander of the Lord's army "Will you be on my side?" Instead, we only get to say, "LORD – I am on *your side*."

The lesson is this:

The Commander of the Lord's army has not come to take sides – he's come to take CHARGE! And then we decide if we will be on his side or not.

Again, Joshua 5:14 (a).

Joshua 5:14(A) (ESV)

14 And he said, "No; but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come." . . .

Whatever else you were thinking – set it aside, because "**Now I have come**" and instantly Joshua knew exactly *who* he was talking to and he knew the only appropriate response.

Joshua 5:14(B) (ESV)

14 . . . And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped . . .

Joshua knows exactly *who* this is and he falls on his face to the earth and worships. And by the way, if this was ANY other angelic being, they would not allow Joshua to worship them because worship belongs to God alone.

SO - Who is this "**Commander of the army of the Lord**"??

MOSES had seen Him forty years earlier in the burning bush (**Exodus 3**) in a very similar situation where God said to Moses "***Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.***" (Just as he does here.)

JACOB had wrestled with Him, when He **finally broke** the "Self-Will" of the Heel Catcher (**Genesis 32**) and changed Jacob's name to "Governed by God" or "Strives with God." (Israel)

ISAIAH saw Him high and lifted up His train **filling the temple** (**Isaiah 6**)

DANIEL saw Him as the "**Ancient of Days**" who sat on a fiery throne – with wheels of blazing fire (**Daniel 7**)

And the **APOSTLE JOHN** saw Him in **Revelation 1:14-16**

Revelation 1:14–16 (NLT)

14 His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow. And his eyes were like flames of fire.

15 His feet were like polished bronze refined in a furnace, and his voice thundered like

mighty ocean waves.

16 He held seven stars in his right hand, and a sharp two-edged sword came from his mouth. And his face was like the sun in all its brilliance.

Joshua was face-to-face with the almighty Lord Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ had come *into the Old Testament* at the beginning of Israel's new life in the Promised Land to say, *now I have come and I am in charge!*

I think it was a bigger deal to the Old Testament Saints because they weren't casual about the presence of the Lord. I wonder if we have become casual about the presence of the Lord. I'm wondering if we're on our face worshiping just because of who's in front of us. Joshua is... because it's the only appropriate response. At the beginning of the new life of the people of God and the Promised Land the Lord shows up and he says, ***“Now I am here and I am in charge.”***

Can you sense how radically different your life would be? If you said, “Lord, you are actually *in charge* and I'll follow you. I'll be on your side because I tremble at your presence.”

And so to acknowledge that the Lord *IS* in charge we read the following in Joshua 5:14.

Joshua 5:14(C) (ESV)

14 . . . and (Joshua) said to him, “What does my lord say to his servant?”

“Listen, Lord, I'm worshiping and while I'm worshiping, I'm aligning my heart with yours. I'm aligning my will with yours. Just speak to me, Lord. That's all I want now. All of a sudden I understand who you are. I understand you're in charge. Just align my heart with yours. Suddenly I don't have any plans. I don't have any schemes. I don't have any devices. I'm just in awe. So tell me what to do. Just speak to me. What does my Lord say to his servant?”

And it is very likely that right here is where the Lord gave Joshua the instructions for the Battle of Jericho. Remember, there are no chapter breaks in the original writings. And just two verses later – in Joshua 6:2 – we'll read about the crazy instructions the Lord gives to Joshua.

Can you imagine Joshua goes out for a late night prayer, overlooking Jericho, and he comes back looking like he had seen the Lord and he says *Guys, the Lord has told me what to do. We're gonna MARCH around that city and blow some rams horns and the LORD is going to KNOCK the walls down and I got that plan Direct from the Commander of the Army of the Lord.*

But we've got to remember this – the Battle of Jericho – is a picture of our *spiritual battle* and this is the Commander of the *spiritual army of heaven*.

Elisha's servant saw this army of heaven in 2 Kings 6 when Elisha prayed God would open his eyes. And God allowed Elisha's servant to see into the spiritual realm where he and Elisha were surrounded by *chariots of fire*.

And this is the same spiritual army that Jesus told Peter in the Garden of Gethsemane he could call down in an instant to destroy his enemies.

Cover to cover in the Bible we see the spiritual battle raging in the heavenly realm. But – that spiritual battle is actually between the “Army of the Lord” and the “Spiritual Forces of Evil.”

And guys, since the very first year we arrived in this town we have been a part of that spiritual battle raging in the heavenly realm between the “Army of the Lord” and the “Spiritual Forces of Evil” – *in this place*. And so as we have been preparing to move into a permanent home here, the spiritual battle has been full scale and non-stop.

The spiritual battle is *real*. But the spiritual battle is also – *worship*. And so we must remember what the Lord says to Joshua here in Joshua 5:15.

Joshua 5:15 (NLT)

15 The commander of the Lord's army replied, “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did as he was told.

This place where we are standing in this battle that *belongs to the Lord* is holy ground. We are *joining the Lord's battle* and we *worship* on holy ground as we *take part* in the spiritual battle in this place.

Worshiping on holy ground and the *true spiritual battle* go *hand in hand*.

Living in the “Promised Life” is about gaining *victory* in the battles that we *fight*. The question is – do we really understand that the battle is *first* a spiritual battle? Because if we don't understand that this battle is *first* a spiritual battle then the enemy has us right where he wants us.

Our possession of the “Promised Life” comes from victories in our spiritual battles. The results show in the physical realm, but the battle is won or lost in the spiritual realm.

Jericho is a type of the mightiest spiritual enemy and it is absolutely undefeatable in our own strength. And so the Commander of the Lord's army *shows up* and says “***Now I***

have come” to take charge. If you will align yourself with *me*, if you will do what *I say*, then I will go before you and I will bring the victory on your behalf! And that is exactly what we are going to see happen in the Battle of Jericho.

Guys, we have got to see that the *true battle* is a spiritual battle and if we *try to fight it* in our own strength we will be squashed. And so, if we are going to be victorious in the battle that *belongs to the Lord*, we have got to understand clearly *how* Joshua was prepared by the Commander of the army of the Lord

#1) Joshua REALIZED this was a SPIRITUAL BATTLE

Just like his first battle under Moses where the battle was actually won spiritually by Moses raising his arms to the Lord on the hilltop.

#1) Joshua REALIZED this was a SPIRITUAL BATTLE

#2) Joshua WORSHIPED the Commander

The *moment* Joshua realized who the Commander was... immediately he fell on his face and worshiped. There is only one correct “first response” when going into the spiritual battle. No matter WHAT the situation, no matter HOW critical the crisis, *complete worship* – fully recognizing WHO the Lord is in this situation – is the only appropriate first response. Let your Jericho wait a minute and get alone and worship the Commander of the army of the Lord. Your victory starts there – do not be so quick to take action. Stop and set your eyes on the Lord and the rest will come much easier.

#1) Joshua REALIZED this was a SPIRITUAL BATTLE

#2) Joshua WORSHIPED the Commander

#3) Joshua ALIGNED HIMSELF with the Commander

AS Joshua was worshiping the Lord, Joshua said, “*What does my Lord say to his servant?*” Notice Joshua did not have to *explain the situation* to the Lord. He especially did not have to *explain his thoughts* on the matter. IN the midst of his worship Joshua was saying, “*You are my Lord, my Master, my Commander. What do you say – in regard to this Battle in my life?”*

#1) Joshua REALIZED this was a SPIRITUAL BATTLE

#2) Joshua WORSHIPED the Commander

#3) Joshua ALIGNED HIMSELF with the Commander

#4) Joshua OBEYED the Commander

The first thing the Commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua was, (*verse 15*) ***“Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so.*** But then, just two verses later, the Lord gives Joshua some instructions that were *unconventional* to say the least. And as we'll see in our next message, Joshua OBEYED them to the “T.” But the Lord's instructions are ALWAYS *unconventional* to the natural mind – *aren't they?* **Forgive – Love – Grace – Mercy** These are ALL unconventional instructions to the natural mind. OBEY them and God will go before you and give you victory in your spiritual battle.

Let's review.

Do you want victory in the battle you're in right now?

#1) Realize FIRST – This is a spiritual battle

And if you *lose* it spiritually you *will lose* it physically. You must first put on the spiritual armor so that you will be able to *stand* against the enemy.

#2) Worship

Stop everything and worship Jesus as your “Commander” – your Lord – your Source.

#3) As you worship – ALIGN your will with his

Say, ***“Lord, what do you say to your servant?”*** Learn to hear the Lord's voice first – in his Word – AND by his Spirit.

#4) Obey

Simply and completely without question trust the Lord's plan and follow it.

If we will **realize** our battle is a **spiritual battle**

If we will **truly worship** Jesus – **as our Lord and Commander**

If we will **align** ourselves - **with His purpose and His Plan**

If we will **obey** His plan – **without question**

Then we will see the Commander of the army of the Lord go before us and *he* will conquer the enemy on our behalf *allowing us* to possess the Promised Life.

Right now, as a church, we're going to take some time to recognize the Commander of the Lord's army as we leave this place and move “across the Jordan”.

Let's pray. *Lord, you're in charge. This is a spiritual battle, and we will enter it in worship. We'll enter it worshipping you. Not with our own plans, not with our own schemes, not with our own ideas, but just in worship. Lord, as we worship, we pray you*

would align our hearts with yours. And as we understand what you call us to do, Lord, we'll do it.

Lord Jesus, you are awesome in this place Lord. We're on holy ground. Lord we fall on our face before you and we say, you are overwhelming in power. Your majesty and your might are beyond words. And so we humbly bow before you. We humbly worship you in this place, Lord. And we say, Lord Jesus, you are in charge. You are the Commander of the armies of heaven. You are our Commander. Lord we align our hearts with you. Draw us close to you, Lord, change us. Put us in order with you. And Lord, as we worship we commit to do what you say. And as we leave this place, Lord, we leave it following you into a new season of life. We leave it following you as the Commander of all of heaven's armies. We leave it worshiping you and aligning our hearts with you and we leave it in obedience Lord, to where you go and what you say, we will follow you step by step, we will do what you say. We worship you Lord. We exist for you Lord. Lead and guide us, for your name's sake. Show us the way, Lord. And we'll always follow you. You've been so faithful, Lord and you always will be, God. We'll always praise you, we'll always praise you Lord. No matter what comes, we'll always praise you. It will always be on our lips, Lord; we praise your mighty name. Abounding or abasing. We'll always praise your mighty name. Lord be praised in our lives. We commit to go forward in praise and worship. Thank you Jesus. Thank you, Lord. We align our hearts with yours, Lord. Thank you, Jesus. What a God you are! We worship love and adore you. Glory be to you. Praise you, thank you. It is in your own holy name we pray, amen.