

Exegetical Notes, Joshua 5:13-15

“The Commander of YHWH’s Army”

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Joshua 5:13-15

Verse 13

Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, “Are you for us or for our enemies?”

- Joshua, the commander of Israel’s army, had gone to scout out Jericho, the first major stronghold in the Promised Land.
- On this expedition, Joshua encountered another armed person. This person’s sword was drawn. He appeared to be prepared to fight.
- Joshua asked the person if he was “friend or foe.”

Verse 14

“Neither,” he replied, “but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come.” Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, “What message does my Lord have for his servant?”

- The warrior declared that he was neither friend nor foe. The warrior was above personal commitment to Joshua or Israel. He then told Joshua who he was. He was the commander of God’s army. This warrior was the Archangel Michael.
- The importance of the visit of the commander of God’s army to the commander of Israel’s army was to make a clear distinction between who was who. Israel’s place was to serve the interests of God. God was not there to serve the nation of Israel.
- That Joshua got the message on the visit is clear from his behavior. Joshua fell down with his face to the ground in submission to the Archangel. He asked Michael to tell him what God wanted from him.

Verse 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 so.

- Joshua is then commissioned as was Moses (See Exodus 3:5). He is told that he must bend to the will of the Lord by showing humility and respect before God. Removing one's sandal is a sign of respect and humility.
- Through this, Joshua understands that he is God's man and must follow the orders which come to him from God.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *The Commander of YHWH's Army*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Interim Senior/Lead Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by *Cornerstone Fellowship* & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. They are used here by permission.)