

Joshua at the Feet of Jesus
Mitchell Gregory
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JOSHUA AT THE FEET OF JESUS

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?" "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 commander of the LORD's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

Now the gates of Jericho were securely barred because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in. Then the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men.

Joshua 5:13-6:2

INTRODUCTION

There are a number of stories in the New Testament of various individuals either bowing at the feet of Jesus or throwing themselves on the ground at His feet. For example, the wise men from the east came to visit him and when they came face to face with the Christ child Christ, they fell at His feet and worshiped him. (Matthew 2:1-2)

Two other stories warrant our attention. The first narrative is the healing of the ten lepers. Only one returns to give thanks. This leper falls at the feet of Jesus and with a loud voice, he praises Jesus and expresses his gratitude to the Lord. (Luke 17:11-19)

In the second story, Jesus is visiting the house of Mary and Martha of Bethany, sisters of Lazarus, the man raised from the dead. While Martha was busy serving Jesus by preparing a meal, Mary sat at the Lord's feet to listen to him speak the word of truth. Jesus said that Mary had chosen the one needful thing—to listen to the Word. (Luke 10:42)

WORSHIP AND HUMILITY

This dual theme of worship and humility is also evidenced in the story of Joshua. Joshua, a commander, and courageous soldier; falls at the feet of Jesus to worship Him. Joshua is experiencing a *Christophany*—a pre-incarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus in the Old Testament.

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At this moment in redemptive history, God is ready to fulfill His covenant promise; a promise that began with Abraham. Recall that the Lord said to Abraham, “I will make your name great.” “I’ll make a great nation out of you.” Through you, all the nations of the earth will be blessed.” “I will give you a land flowing with milk and honey,” (Genesis 12:2-3, Exodus 3:8). Here in Joshua, the children of Israel are poised to enter the Promised Land.

Under Moses, God led them out of Egyptian slavery and through the wilderness. Moses died. Joshua took his place. Joshua has already led Israel across the Jordan River to occupy the Promised Land. We see as this narrative opens, Joshua is just outside the city walls of Jericho. War is imminent.

A DIVINE ENCOUNTER

Joshua suddenly sees a man, dressed as a soldier, ready to fight. His sword is in his hands. Quickly, Joshua grabs his sword rushes up to the man and he says, “Friend or foe?” Are you on our side? Or the enemy’s side? Whose side are you on? And this man says, “I am the commander of the army of the LORD.” Joshua at that moment realized that this commander is divine, and he falls at his feet and worships him. How does Joshua know this? There are clues embedded in the passage pointing us to a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ.

Joshua worships. Joshua *reveres* this divine commander. “Then Joshua fell face down to the ground in reverence” (Verse 14). The ESV reads, “He fell to the ground in *worship*.” Reverence and worship are equal. Worship remember belongs exclusively to God. Were this commander not divine, Joshua would be guilty of idolatry. But he’s not an idol worshiper. The commander is, in fact, the LORD. When an angel is worshiped in scripture, that worship is rebuffed. It’s rejected.

You recall at the end of Revelation, after John has seen the glories of heaven, he’s so overwhelmed that he bows at the feet of an angel in worship. And the angel rebukes John and says, “Worship God only” (Revelation 22:8-9). Joshua believes this person is worthy of His reverence, is worthy of his praise, his worship, and the commander does not rebuff him. He receives his worship. He accepts it because he is the LORD.

Holy ground. “The Commander of the LORD's Army replied, ‘Take off your sandals for the place where you are standing is holy’” (Verse 5). There’s nothing holy about the dirt on which Joshua's feet are planted. What makes this ground holy is the presence of the one who is himself holy. There are only two stories in the Bible where “ground” is referred to as sanctified or holy by the presence of *the Holy One*.

The first goes back to the time when Moses was called into ministry. He’s watching his father-in-law’s sheep in a Midianite desert when suddenly he sees a bush consumed with flames. But the flames do not consume the bush. It's a strange sight. Moses comes near and a voice speaks to Moses from the bush, he says, “Moses, Moses, remove your sandals from the place where you are standing is holy” (Exodus 3:4,5).

The same command is issued to Joshua because the Lord Himself is holy! The holiness of God refers both to His sovereignty and to His sinlessness. He is majestic in His supremacy, and he is burning with purity. He is unequalled in majesty and unspoiled by sin. He is both sovereign and sinless. That is in the essence of His Holiness. This one before whom Joshua bows is divine!

A divine name. “Commander of the LORD's Army.” This is a special phrase that refers to the heavenly army, the heavenly host, or to the angels. “I am the commander of the LORD' s Army” (Verse 14). The Commander simply says to Joshua, “I am the LORD of the Armies of Heaven and the Commander of the LORD's Army.”

The Divine Commander bears the title LORD. This title takes us back to the burning bush (Exodus 3). Here Moses begins to list his excuses as to why he shouldn't be asked to go and lead Israel. One of his excuses is something like, “Well, what if they ask me your name?”

And the LORD replies, “I AM who I AM. Thus you shall say to the Sons of Israel, I AM has sent me to you.” And that name I AM is translated several thousand times in the Old Testament as LORD with all capital letters. That's how you know it's the name I AM. It's a name that means “God is eternal and unchanging in his covenant love and faithfulness.”

He'll always be faithful to us. He will always fulfill his promises. For he is from everlasting to everlasting, and there's no variation or shifting shadow with him. In John eight, Jesus is having a debate with the religious leaders, and he looks at them and says, “Your father, Abraham, rejoiced at seeing my day, He saw it and was glad” (John 8:56). And they respond with puzzlement, “You're not yet 50 years old. How can you say Father Abraham saw your day?” And he looked at these people and he said, “Before Abraham was born, I AM.” I AM! And they pick up rocks to stone him because he was claiming to be the LORD of the burning bush.

Joshua’s Questions

“Are you for us or for our enemies?”

He gets an interesting answer. “Neither.” It’s not about whose side I'm going to take. The issue is not sides. The issue is sovereignty. The Commander says in effect, “Joshua, it is not my purpose to let you create your plans and how you want to go about your life, and I'll just enter

into it and bless whatever you plan. I have not come to take your side. I've come to remind you that I'm in absolute control. I'm the sovereign one. I am the Commander of the LORD's Armies. I am the LORD, and I am *your* LORD.

Alexander McClaren put it ever so well. "We have a right to be sure. God is on our side when we have made sure that we are on God's side." Joshua falls at the feet of the LORD, a courageous soldier, committing an act of total surrender to the LORD and his will.

"What message does my Lord have for his servant?"

Now there's a question! I'm only a servant. It is for me to take the posture of humility and to ask you, "What do you want to say to me? What do you want me to do? How do you want me to act?" To remove your sandals and be at the feet of Jesus in worship like the leper. To listen like Mary of Bethany. The Bible calls us to be a listening people. For our God is a God who speaks, and we are to listen.

Listen and Hear!

At the moment of transfiguration when Jesus is on the mountain with three of his disciples, suddenly and without warning, His Divine Glory breaks through and shines forth from his humanity. The disciples are overwhelmed by the Holy Glory of Christ. And a voice from heaven speaks and says, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him" (Matthew 17:1-5). In Luke 8, Jesus tells the parable of the four soils, the first three soils, hard soil, rocky soil, and thorny soil are people who superficially hear the word of God, and it does not produce a crop. But there is that fourth soil that is good soil. And listen to what Jesus says about it.

"But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart who hear the word, retain it, and by perseverance, produce a crop" (Luke 8:15). Pray that God creates in us, noble and good hearts that love to hear the Word of God, to listen to it, and to receive it and to retain it, that it might produce the fruit of righteousness in our lives.

CONCLUSION

Are you depending on the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind, to understand the word? Are you listening at the feet of Jesus? Are you worshipping at the feet of Jesus? It is what we are called to do.

Closing Prayer: Eternal Father in Heaven for the glory of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, make us more and more a worshipping people make us more and more a listening people. Help us to take the posture of humility to be before you in joyous worship and careful listening. May we be hearers and doers of the Word of God. We pray in your name. Amen.

Mitchell Gregory
Edited by ckg