

PLEASANT SPRINGS CHURCH • SERMON • THE CONQUERING KING,
PART ONE

Conquering the Heart

The battle belongs to the Lord — the Captain of the host, the unseen realm, and the sword of the Spirit

Conquering the Heart

A Sermon on Joshua 5:13–15 — The Battle Belongs to the Lord

By A Disciple of Jesus Christ • Pleasant Springs Church • July 19, 2026

Key Texts: Joshua 5:13–15 • Ephesians 6:10–18 • 2 Corinthians 10:3–5 • 1 Peter 5:8 • John 15:1–10

Joshua stands before Jericho, wondering how Israel will ever take such a great walled city — and a Man appears beside him with His sword drawn. “Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?” The answer changes everything: *Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come.* This sermon looks behind the visible battle at Jericho to the real war in the unseen realm, and to the only posture that wins it — a heart on its face before the King.

THE BIG IDEA

The Captain of the Lord's host does not come to take our side — He comes to establish His own rule. Before Joshua could conquer Jericho, Joshua himself had to decide who was King. The real battle is never against flesh and blood, and it cannot be won with earthly weapons; it is fought on our knees, with the sword of the Spirit. And every battlefield in Scripture finally leads back to one — the human heart.

THE SERMON TEXT — JOSHUA 5:13–15

Joshua 5:13–15 (KJV)

“And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.”

THE SETTING

Joshua is standing, surveying Jericho, no doubt wondering how they were going to take and conquer such a great walled city. Then he sees a Man next to him with His sword drawn in His hand. Joshua asks, are you for us or for them — and the Man replies: no, neither; but I am here as Captain of the host of the Lord!

Joshua is not simply fighting Canaanites. He is entering territory occupied by nations living under rebellious spiritual rulers. The Captain of the Lord's armies has arrived because **this battle belongs to Heaven before it ever reaches Earth.**

THE LORD'S RESPONSE

He did not come to take a side.

No. He didn't come to take Joshua's side — He came to establish His own rule.

WHO IS THIS MAN?

Many conservative scholars understand this to be a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ, because He receives worship, declares the ground holy, and speaks with divine authority.

Why do we assume this? Joshua falls to his face in worship and asks what He would like to say to him. The response is what is important, because it identifies Who he is speaking to: “Remove your shoes, for the place you stand is holy!” **These are the same words God spoke to Moses at the burning bush** (Exodus 3:5), right before God commissioned Moses with the task of leading His people out of bondage.

The next thing is the sword drawn in the hand of the Lord. Why is this important? Because the battle does not belong to Joshua — or to us — but to the Lord. It shows who the enemy really is: not Jericho, but the powers and principalities in high places.

Ephesians 6:12 (KJV)

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

Israel fought physical enemies, but Scripture later reveals those earthly conflicts were part of a greater conflict involving rebellious spiritual powers operating behind the nations (Deuteronomy 32; Daniel 10; Ephesians 6).

WHOSE SIDE ARE WE ON?

In the Lord’s response, He doesn’t take sides. The real question is: **are we on His side?**

JOSHUA'S RESPONSE

He didn't ask any more questions.

He didn't argue.

He didn't negotiate.

He didn't defend himself.

Before Joshua could conquer Jericho, Joshua himself had to decide who was King. He worshiped!

A GLIMPSE INTO THE UNSEEN REALM

In these passages we see a glimpse into what we refer to as the spiritual, or unseen, realm — where these powers and principalities operate.

2 Corinthians 4:18 (KJV)

“While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

Hebrews 9:23–24 (KJV)

“It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:”

Hebrews 11:1 (KJV)

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

THE ENEMY'S TACTICS — DIVIDE AND CONQUER

Oftentimes the enemy will exploit or hijack things in the physical realm — finances, sickness, family problems, discouragement, and depression — to overcome both believers and unbelievers. These things often lead to **isolation**, and reinforce the old tactic of divide and conquer, which is exactly how the enemy forces operate.

1 Peter 5:8 (KJV)

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:”

A lion rarely charges the whole herd — instead, he isolates one. Lions follow the herds, seek out the weak, the young, the old, and the vulnerable, then move in, separating them from the herd for the kill.

Christ unites — Satan divides.

Christ gives life — Satan kills.

This is why we are encouraged not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, that we may strengthen one another (Hebrews 10:24–25). But more importantly, we are called to **abide in the vine** — Christ being the vine, and also the Word (John 15:1–10; John 1:1) — because separated from Christ we can do nothing.

Notice the sword drawn in the hand of the Lord. He is actively holding it! What did Jesus use when He was in the wilderness and tempted of the devil? The Word of God — the Scriptures. What does He return with in Revelation that goes forth from His mouth? A sword — the Word of God!

What is the lesson for us? Just as we are not fighting against flesh and blood, we cannot use earthly weapons — we must fight on our knees, in prayer.

2 Corinthians 10:3–5 (KJV)

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;”

Ephesians 6:10–18 (KJV)

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;”

As we examine these examples, pictures, and imagery, we see God is not only reclaiming territory, but **the hearts of man** — showing Himself faithful.

CLOSING — HE IS AHEAD OF THE BATTLE

Looking at the posture of the Lord with the sword drawn, we must recognize the battle has already begun, and He is well prepared. He is never surprised, never caught off guard, but ready and ahead of the battle!

With that being said, let us come to Him in full assurance, looking unto Him.

Philippians 2:13 (KJV)

“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

SO WHAT?

Over the next several weeks we’re going to discover that every battlefield in Scripture eventually leads back to one battlefield — the human heart. The wall you are staring at may be Jericho; the war behind it is always for the throne of you. So fall on your face before the Captain, take up the sword of the Spirit, and let Him establish His rule where it matters most.

AFTER THE SERMON — AUTHOR & AUDIENCE

To read Joshua 5 well, it helps to know who first received it and the moment it describes. The following background is offered for deeper study — the same Author-and-Audience approach we use across the Discipleship School, with the Septuagint (LXX) and ESV set beside the preached text.

The book takes its name from **Joshua son of Nun**, Moses' assistant and commissioned successor (Numbers 27:18–23; Deuteronomy 34:9), whom Jewish tradition (Talmud, *Bava Batra* 14b–15a) credits with writing it. His Hebrew name **Yehoshua** — “Yahweh saves” — is the very name rendered *Iesous* in Greek, from which we get **Jesus**. It is fitting that the book which shows us the Captain of the Lord's host is authored by the man whose name is the Savior's own.

The command “loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy” (Joshua 5:15) is a deliberate echo of the burning bush, where God said the same to Moses (Exodus 3:5) before sending him to deliver Israel — a signal to the reader that the One speaking to Joshua is the same God, and that a new commissioning has begun.

The first hearers were the **second generation of Israel**, born in the wilderness (Numbers 14:26–35) and now, around **1406 B.C.**, camped at Gilgal just across the Jordan. They had just been circumcised and had kept the Passover (Joshua 5:2–12); the manna had ceased. On the eve of the conquest they needed to learn the lesson every generation of God’s people must learn: the war before them was never merely against walls and men.

Joshua 5:14 (LXX & ESV) — The Commander of the Lord’s Army

ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῷ Ἐγὼ ἀρχιστράτηγος δυνάμεως Κυρίου νυνὶ παραγέγονα.

“And he said, ‘No; but I am the commander of the army of the LORD. Now I have come.’”

LXX word worth keeping: archistratēgos (ἀρχιστράτηγος) — “chief commander, captain of the host.” The same title is used in Daniel and later of Michael the archangel, but here the One who bears it receives worship and calls the ground holy — which no created angel would allow (compare Revelation 22:8–9). The preached text follows the KJV (“captain of the host of the Lord”); the Greek and ESV are set alongside for study.

The threads in this sermon — the Captain of the host, the unseen realm behind the nations, the whole armour of God, and abiding in the vine — each open into a fuller study. Keep growing:

SAME SERIES

Holy Surrender

The week before — “sanctify yourselves” and the cleansing that must come before the conquering. Joshua on holy ground, part six.

THE UNSEEN REALM

Paul & the Deuteronomy 32 Worldview

The rebellious spiritual powers operating behind the nations — the cosmic geography that makes Jericho more than a city.

ABIDE IN THE VINE

Rooted in Christ

The Seed, the Blood, and the Fruit — what it means to abide in Christ (John 15), “for apart from Him we can do nothing.”

THE CROSSING

The Stones of Remembrance

Where the campaign began — the Ark going before Israel into the Jordan, and the memorials God builds for the next generation.

“Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come.”

Joshua 5:14 (KJV)