OVERVIEW
Worship is the only appropriate response to God’s presence and power.

OPEN
Describe the most meaningful worship experience you have had, either privately or corporately. What made that experience so memorable and life changing?

Every day we are reminded of God’s presence in countless ways, but many times we don’t pay close enough attention to notice. In the text we will discuss today from Joshua 5, Joshua had an experience that left him with no doubt of God’s presence in his life, and Joshua’s immediate response was to bow down to God in worship. Worship is the only appropriate response to God’s presence and power in our lives.

DIG


Joshua was by Jericho because the conquest of Jericho would soon occur, a battle that must have felt daunting and nearly impossible to Joshua. Joshua may have ventured near Jericho to scout the situation and to inspect the fortifications. When Joshua lifted up his eyes, he saw a man. This man was standing in front of Joshua with his sword drawn in his hand. Joshua was in enemy territory preparing for an invasion. The drawn sword signaled potential danger. Subsequent events revealed to Joshua that this was no ordinary man.

Read Joshua 1:7-9 and 3:7 for some context. What promise had God made to Joshua, and how did He know start to fulfill it?

The commander of the LORD’s army was a reminder to Joshua that God was with him, just as He had promised. Look over Joshua 1–5, and look ahead to Joshua 6. What do you know about Joshua’s story? Why would this reminder have been important for Joshua at this time in his life?

When Joshua asked whose side this man was on (v. 14), the commander of the LORD’s army said “Neither,” meaning it was for God’s cause alone that he came. What does this remind us about our relationship with God and our purpose in this life?

Many have identified this captain of the host of the LORD with the angel of the Lord, who in some contexts cannot be distinguished from the Lord Himself. If such is the case in this situation, the Lord was appearing to Joshua during a critical time in his life to assure him that He would be with him, just as He had promised (Josh. 1:5; 3:7). The statement, “I have now come as commander of the LORD’s army,” let Joshua know that God was in control, and Joshua should make sure he was on God’s side, rather than the other way around.

When the commander of the LORD’s army revealed himself, Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down in worship (v. 14). Read Genesis 18:1-2; Exodus 3:1-6; and Numbers 22:31. What is worship, and why should it be our response to being in the presence of God?

What does Joshua teach us in his response to the commander in verse 14?
The commander of the LORD’s army told Joshua to take off his sandals, because he was standing on holy ground. How have you been reminded of God’s holiness lately?

What implications does God’s holiness have for us as His people?

The divine, or at least superior, rank of the captain of the LORD’s host may be further supported by the fact that he commanded Joshua: “Remove your sandals from your feet.” This command reminds us of Moses’ encounter with the Lord at the burning bush (see Ex. 3:5). The reason for the removal of the sandals was the same with Joshua as with Moses—the place where you are standing is holy. Every place we encounter God is a holy place. Joshua’s encounter with the Lord or His messenger must have encouraged him. As he prepared for the battle, he knew he would not be alone. Joshua received assurance that the Lord would give Israel victory over Jericho (see Josh. 6:2).

Because of the gospel, we have the same assurance Joshua did that God is with us and for us. During John’s vision of the end times, recorded in Revelation, we see a picture of Jesus in the role of commander of the LORD’s army, a picture that gives us hope when life looks daunting and our battles seem insurmountable.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ REVELATION 19:11-17.

What names did John use to describe Jesus? What do these names of Jesus tell us about Him?

Look at each one of the descriptions of Jesus in this passage. What do they tell us about the results of His second coming?

The rider’s name was Faithful and True (v. 11). Faithful means steadfast, unfailing in character. Jesus never fails. True means consistent in character. Jesus is never false and never acts inconsistently. He comes to judge the earth precisely because He is faithful and true to God’s will and His character. Verse 12 tells us that He has a name known only to Himself. Since the name stands for the person, this surely means that His person escapes complete understanding. His majesty is beyond our ability to comprehend. A third name appears in verse 13, The Word of God. The title identifies Christ as the One who accomplishes God’s will. Another name is on His robe and on His thigh (v. 16). The inscription KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS occurs in a prominent place, symbolic of His power. He is the ultimate Ruler. Together, these names tell us that Jesus is supremely above all and that His majesty is beyond our comprehension.

What hopes and fears does this triumphant picture bring out in you?

How has Christ been your Deliverer recently?

APPLY

Throughout Scripture God assures us of His presence and power at work in our lives. Read Psalm 139:7-12. In what situation do you need to be reminded of God’s presence this week?

Like Joshua, the reminder of God’s presence should move us to worship Him. What are some ways you worship God in your day-to-day life?

What is one way you can make worship a bigger part of your life in the coming days?
5:13. By subject matter and syntax, a new episode begins here. The stage is set with Joshua near Jericho. He was surprised by seeing a man standing before him “with a drawn sword in his hand.” This was a threatening sight, and Joshua’s question about the man’s loyalties should not surprise us. The exact language here—“with a drawn sword in his hand”—is found again only twice in the Old Testament, referring to the angel of the Lord: (1) in Num 22:23, 31, where the angel of the Lord stood before Balaam, barring his way, and (2) in 1 Chr 21:16, where the angel of the Lord stood before David, threatening Israel because of David’s sin. Joshua apparently did not initially recognize the man as a divine messenger. A literal translation of his acts of perception is “and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, a man was standing opposite him.” The word “behold” here indicates a change in perspective, from the narrator’s all-knowing perspective to Joshua’s more limited perspective, and it captures some of his surprise at seeing this threatening sight. We might paraphrase here by saying, “He looked, and what do you know! A man was standing opposite him.” Joshua’s question of this man reflects a natural human concern with the immediate: he was concerned with the battles ahead and whether or not he could count on this man.

5:14. Scholars disagree about whether this figure was an angel of the LORD or God Himself. Either way, Joshua recognized this man’s authority, and he prostrated himself on the ground and “worshiped” him. In either case, however, Joshua clearly knew that he was in the presence of an extraordinary superior being because he did bow down, and he did not pursue his question about the man’s loyalties any further. Rather, he humbly asked, “What message does my [lord] have for his servant?” In this response, Joshua displayed three attitudes: (1) a humble, expectant, obedient attitude, indicated by the question itself; (2) a recognition of the man’s superior (and God-sent) position, indicated by the term “my lord”; and (3) a recognition of his own inferior position and a readiness to serve, indicated by his use of the term “his servant” to refer to himself.

5:15. Even though the man refused to answer Joshua’s question, it is clear that he would be “for” Israel, not “against” it. Why, then, did he not speak more forthrightly with Joshua and tell him that he was indeed for Israel? It appears to have been to teach Joshua a lesson about priorities. God had already promised Joshua that he would be with him just as he was with Moses (1:5), so Joshua needed not worry. The lessons Joshua needed here were to be able to recognize when he was in God’s presence and when to trust in him. The man’s instructions to Joshua about removing his sandals because he was standing on holy ground obviously recalled God’s words to Moses at the burning bush (Exod 3:5). In yet another way, Joshua was now being affirmed as Moses’ successor and God’s presence was being promised to him.