

I'm Listening!

"What has my Lord to say to His servant?"

Joshua 5:14, NASB

Joshua chapter 5 opens up on a brand new world! The Israelites have just crossed over the Jordan into the Promised Land, after forty long years of wandering in the desert. They now faced the high walls and daunting forces of Jericho in front, and behind them the waters of the Jordan were returned to full flood stage. There was no going back! As the newly appointed leader of this multitude, Joshua's mind was probably filled with questions, such as "What now? What's the plan, God? Tell me what to do...and quickly!" As he was out walking near Jericho, perhaps ruminating on these things, "he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand" who identified himself as a messenger from God, the Commander of the Army of the Lord. Commentators believe that this was an Old Testament appearance of the Son of God, which explains Joshua's immediate response. In a true picture of the act of worship, he falls facedown to the ground, placing his body in a position of complete humility and vulnerability (remember, his divine visitor was holding a drawn sword!). Only then does he ask the question, "What has my Lord to say to His servant?"

The Hebrew word for "to say" is "dabar", and it literally means "to speak, declare, command, promise, warn, threaten, or sing." In other words, pretty much every form that verbal communication can take! Sometimes I fall into the trap of wishing God would just tell me what to do so that I could follow the instructions and get busy about the Lord's work. Can you relate?! But Joshua is prepared to hear more than just the directions; he's ready for anything and everything that the Lord wants to speak to him.

"Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy". The first thing the Lord had to say to Joshua is probably not what he expected! The details of God's plan for the battle against Jericho came later, but the first communication recorded for us is this interesting statement. It's almost as if God was saying, "I am here; My Presence makes this very ground holy. Let nothing artificial or man-made come between you and Me; take off your shoes and feel the mystery of My Presence with all your senses".

These words from God are just another example of the heart of God for His people that is revealed to us in this chapter, evidenced by the substance of the first three conversations God had with Joshua after the crossing of the Jordan:

--"Circumcise this second generation of Israelites...", Josh. 5:2

--"Today I have rolled away the shame of your slavery", Josh. 5:9

--"Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy", Josh 5:15

Before the battle plan, before the list of instructions, God's concern is His relationship with His people and their reverence for His holiness. Follow Joshua's example and humbly ask,

"What has my Lord to say to His servant?"

Then experience His presence. Worship His holiness. Bow before Him and listen for His voice.