

The Commander of God's Army

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Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0:00] Let's begin our worship now. We're singing, firstly, tonight, from Psalm 18.! In the Sing Psalms version, Psalm 18.! The tune is Rockingham. That's on page 19.

And singing verses 1 to 6. I love you, Lord, you are my strength. A fortress is the Lord to me. My rock and my deliverer for refuge to my God I flee.

He is my stronghold and my shield, the Lord who saves me by his might. I'll call on him and give him praise. I'm saved. He puts my foes to flight.

The cords of death entangled me. Destruction hit me like a wave. Encircled by the snares of death, I faced the terrors of the grave. In my distress I called on God.

I cried out to the Lord for aid. He from his temple heard my voice. He listened to the prayer I made. These verses in Psalm 18. I love you, Lord, you are my strength.

[1:00] I love you, Lord, you are my strength.

A fortress is the Lord to me. I walk and I deliver For refuge to my God I flee.

He is my stronghold and my shield. He is my stronghold and my shield.

The Lord who saves me by his might. And call on him and give him praise.

And save me through my foes to cry.

[2:23] The thoughts of death. The thoughts of death that I will be. His heart shall live may like a wave.

And sacrifice the snares of death. I face the terrors of the grave.

In my distress I call on God. I cry now to the Lord for aid.

He confess the terrors of death. He confess the terrors of my heart. He listened to the grave I made.

And let's now call upon the Lord in prayer. Let's join together in prayer. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.

[3:56] Let's pray. Let's pray.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. and we pray that you would fill us once again with a sense of wonder that we should be able to draw near to the holy God the God who exclaims his holiness to us so frequently in his word and we thank you that that oh Lord lies upon the heart and minds of your people as they come towards you they realize that it is by your grace alone that they are able and provided for as they come into your holy presence we thank you for all that makes you holy that makes you so far above us in the life that you have as the uncreated God and we thank you for the way that in your sovereign rule over us you are unique in yourself well we bless you Lord tonight that all your attributes that are set out for us in your word many of which we find it so difficult to comprehend that they are used Lord to the salvation of your people that they are for the furtherance of your own kingdom your wisdom and your power and your love and your might your judgment that all of these things together combine to make you God and we bless you that in the unity of your being you provide such a refuge and help for your people bless us we pray as we come once again into your presence we thank you for your word that guides us at all times that teaches us that shows us the way of life and we thank you that tonight we are privileged once again to come around your word and to come seeking that your word will place itself through your spirit in our hearts and we thank you Lord for the worship of your church for the way in which we can participate together in the worship of your name and we thank you for that corporate witness that we are able to bear in every community where your people worship to the Lord who presides over all things and we bless you Lord that you have in the past seen to bless the gatherings of your people not only to themselves and as they gather but also to the world around them we pray that that will be the case in our day too that people will take note of us that we have been with Jesus that our life may be day by day transformed so that it will conform to that which your word sets out for us is fit and appropriate for your people and we thank you for every aid that you give us Lord from day to day and as we sing your praises in regard to your greatness we give thanks that you have not stood aloof from us Lord though we deserve that you should turn your back upon us and we bless you that instead you have come into this world in the person of your son and done so in such a very personal and human way and we bless you for the affinity you have with your people and for the way that not only do you understand and know their situation and condition as God but you have entered in to take to yourself our human experiences even to the extent of being tempted to the extent of suffering as you suffered in this life and we give thanks that you went as far as to give yourself in death the death of the cross for the well-being and salvation of your people

Lord we pray that tonight your blessing will be with all your people everywhere throughout the world and we give thanks that on this day many millions of people have gathered in your name like we do here and have come to seek to exalt and glorify the name of the same God we worship and we ask that your people everywhere will know your blessing in these days in which we find in our own locality and in our own nation such a downturn in the way in which people regard God and regard his day and regard his word and we do pray Lord that your kingdom will advance among us as well that you will be pleased oh God to bless your people in their witness and that you be pleased to send forth your light and your truth to draw people to yourself may many tonight Lord who have hearts closed against you and even those who publicly and vocally proclaim against you may they come to be converted and quickened and brought into your ways and may there be many Lord who will yet turn out to be great ambassadors for Christ and to that end we pray that you would raise up those who would come to preach the gospel not only in our own denomination and throughout our land but throughout the whole world that you would raise up those who will be heralds of the peace of Christ and will bring that message of the gospel to a lost world and we thank you for every encouragement you give us and we pray that we may build upon these to be all the more zealous and committed to your way and to serving you in this world and we think of those in your word who when they were confronted with your greatness and your holiness and your might not only did they come to bow in your presence and even prostrate themselves to the ground but Lord also asked you Lord what will you have me to do and so we pray that that will be the same for ourselves that our concern might be Lord to serve you faithfully and to exalt your glorious and great name bless we pray those tonight who have particular adversities and difficulties to face remember those belonging to this congregation itself who have at this time Lord difficult providences to contend with and overcome bless them we pray whether it be over the loss of loved ones or an illness or anxiety over loved ones in regard to their work or whatever else causes our anxieties from time to time oh Lord we pray that we may draw our strength from you and we pray that you would use even these times of trial affliction and difficulty for ourselves to be a means by which we will reach out and take hold of you by faith and so further our lives in relation with you bless we pray tonight the unsaved the many unsaved around us who care not for the things of God or for their own souls

Lord we ask that you would send your own spirit to quicken and to awaken many souls and to bring us Lord to a sense of a realization of eternal things and so we ask that tonight your spirit will even be working whether it be through those who are at home watching online or in some ways not at all interested in the things of God you have raised up for yourself in the past a people who in certain times Lord did not look out for you or reach out to you and yet you came into their lostness you came into their darkness and you quickened them and brought them to life and so we pray that you would be abroad amongst all our communities to that end we thank you again for your day we pray that you would enable us oh Lord to not only enjoy it for ourselves but to continue to commend it to others and where attempts are made locally or nationally to further erode the importance of your day and the sanctity of your day oh Lord hear our prayer as we pray in regard to these things locally especially at this time we ask that you would be pleased to bless the crying of your people to hear us as we pray that you would ensure oh Lord by your own blessing and by your own power that we may continue to enjoy a restful and peaceful Lord's day and that many will come yet to make it a day of worship and a day of seeking the Lord while he is to be found and calling upon him while he is near now bless all the troubled places in the world that we hear of from day to day and those we don't hear of at all bless especially where there is war and the threat of terror and the massive loss of life we pray that you would bless oh Lord the people involved in such difficulties in such stressful times whether it be in the Middle East or in Ukraine or Yemen

Lord we know that there is so much in our world that causes people to cry out in pain and so we pray that their cry may be addressed to you we pray that you would bring peace where there is war that you would bring stability where there is uncertainty bring assurance we pray where there is doubt and grant that you would reveal yourself Lord as one who is on the throne of the universe and presides over all things and is worthy that we should fall down and worship you and serve you continue with us now we pray hear our prayer and answer us we pray in Jesus name Amen I'm going to sing again to God's praise they're singing this time from Psalm 18 this time from the Scottish Psalter version and beginning at verse 27 June is Moravia that's on page 221 verses 27 to 32 for thou wilt the afflicted save in grief that low do lie but wilt bring down the countenance of them whose looks are high the Lord will light my candle so that it shall shine full bright the Lord my God will also make my darkness to be light by thee through troops of men I break and them discomfort all and by my God assisting me

[14:31] I overleap a wall as for God perfect is his way the Lord his word is tried he is a buckler to all those who do in him confide who but the Lord is God but he who is a rock and stay does God that girdeth me with strength and perfect makes my way these verses to the tune Moravia for thou wilt the afflicted save for thou wilt the afflicted save in grief and older life but wilt bring down the countenance of their blessings all their blessings and high the Lord will light my hand and his soul and he shall shine full bright the Lord my God will also make my darkness to be light by thee through troops of men I break and tear e!

e This is me, the Lord is glorified.

He is a father to all those who live in him all night.

Who are the Lord, this hope of me, who is an all-nast day?

This hope that earth did me which served and perfected my way.

[17:47] Now please turn with me to Joshua, where we're going to read God's Word this evening. Joshua chapter 5.

And we'll read through the whole of the chapter. Joshua chapter 5, from the beginning. As soon as all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan for the people of Israel until they had crossed over, their hearts melted, and there was no longer any spirit in them because of the people of Israel.

At that time the Lord said to Joshua, Make flint knives and circumcise the sons of Israel a second time. So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the sons of Israel at Gebeeth Haraloth.

This is the reason why Joshua circumcised them. All the males of the people who came out of Egypt, all the men of war, had died in the wilderness on the way after they had come out of Egypt.

Though all the people who came out had been circumcised, yet all the people who were born on the way in the wilderness, after they had come out of Egypt, had not been circumcised.

[19:11] For the people of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, the men of war who came out of Egypt, perished, because they did not obey the voice of the Lord.

The Lord swore to them that he would not let them see the land that the Lord had sworn to their fathers to give to us, a land flowing with milk and honey. So it was their children whom he raised up in their place that Joshua circumcised.

For they were uncircumcised because they had not been circumcised on the way. When the circumcising of the whole nation was finished, they remained in their places in the camp until they were healed.

And the Lord said to Joshua, Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you. And so the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day.

While the people of Israel were encamped at Gilgal, they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month, in the evening on the plains of Jericho. And the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate of the produce of the land, and leavened cakes and parched grain.

[20 : 22] And the manna ceased the day after they ate of the produce of the land. And there was no longer manna for the people of Israel, but they ate the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, Are you for us or for our adversaries?

And he said, No, but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshipped and said to him, What does my Lord say to his servant?

And the commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, Take off your sandals from off your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.

And Joshua did so. Again, may God, with this blessing, follow our reading of his word. Now we'll sing now some verses from Psalm 66.

[21 : 28] Psalm 66 on page 83, verses 1 to 7. Tune this time is Selma. Shout loud with joy to God, all earth your chorus raise.

Sing loud the honor of his name, and glorious make his praise. Speak thus to God the Lord, how great your works of power, so overwhelming is your might, that falls before you cower.

All earth bows down to you, they sing aloud your fame. They never cease to celebrate the glory of your name. Come, see what God has done, his mighty works of old, his deeds towards the human race.

How awesome to behold! To let his people pass on foot through waters broad, he turned the sea into dry land. Let us rejoice in God.

With might and power he rules, on nations sets his eyes. So let not rebels in their pride against him turn and rise.

[22 : 33] These verses in Psalm 66, shout loud with joy to God. singing singing singing Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[26 : 10] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. and now they've begun to enter the promised land and to settle in the promised land and to face the adversaries that they meet and met within the promised land.

It's the final phase of their journey towards this land that God described for them as a land flowing with milk and honey. So in chapter 3 and 4 you find an emphasis on the crossing itself, on the way in which they set up a memorial of stones.

And then in this chapter 5 we come to read about the circumcision of those who had been born since they left Egypt and also the Passover that they kept when they reached this place at Gilgal.

[27 : 42] And so all of these details are deliberate links with the past. And that's important in the teaching that you find in the book of Joshua in regard to the people coming to establish themselves under God and under Joshua's leadership in the land of Canaan.

There are links here with the past. You find it in, as we said, in the Passover, the crossing of the Red Sea mentioned, and circumcision. So everything you find now in verses 13 to 15 must fit into the emphasis that you have here of links with the past.

And links with the past are important because Joshua and Moses especially are actually linked in the passage. Things you read about here about Joshua are also things that you read about in terms of Moses and how God had used him to lead the people out of Egypt.

The conquest of Canaan begins with this supernatural appearance on the part of the man who calls himself the commander of the armies of the Lord.

And that means that it's a continuation really of God guiding his people, being with his people, leading his people, blessing his people, making them powerful in the face of their enemies.

[29 : 03] All of that follows through from the time of Moses to the time now of Joshua under his leadership too. The emphasis really is something that's very important for ourselves.

The Lord of Moses is the Lord of Joshua. The Lord of Moses' day is the Lord of Joshua's day. And the Lord of Joshua's day is the Lord of our day.

That principle of continuation of the Lord's provision for his people, the Lord going before his people as their commander, is something that's so crucial for us today as a church.

In that sense, nothing has changed. The same God who delivers his people is the God who goes before them. The God who brings them out of adversity and out of darkness is the God who goes before them in whatever remains of their journey.

And so there are all these important links with the past, but there are links that give them an assurance for the future. And isn't that how it is for yourself tonight?

[30 : 09] We look back over the history of this congregation, even not to go beyond that, or the history of our community, and can reflect upon, as we're singing, come and behold the works of God, the great things which God did in the past, the times of special blessing, the times of revival, the times of God coming in power amongst his people and bringing many others into his kingdom.

Well, that same God is our God tonight. He has not changed. And we can look to him as one, just as Joshua did in his day. He looked to him as the God of Moses, and we look to him as the same God who has always been with his people down through the ages.

And whatever's been in your own life, personally leading up to where you are tonight in the providence of God, be assured of this, that the God who has been in the past with his people is the God who will be with his people in the future.

And as you, if you're a follower of the Lord, a Christian, someone who knows the Lord as your Savior, this is really one of the precious things that you've come to know, isn't it?

That the God who was with you yesterday is the God who is with you today. And the God who is with you today is going to be with you, God willing, if you live to see tomorrow.

[31 : 30] He's going to be with you tomorrow as well. It doesn't matter what adversaries stand in the way, whether they're Canaanites or present-day equivalents. This remains very true.

And whatever changes in your providence actually come your way, however, things might change unexpectedly. This is not going to change. The same God will go before you into the future.

Well then, as you look at that, there are three things here that we can briefly look at. First of all, the passage speaks about a confrontation where Joshua comes to see this man with a drawn sword in his hand and Joshua went out to him with this question.

So there's a confrontation there. They come to meet together in this unexpected way. Secondly, you find a revelation because this man whom Joshua sees here comes to reveal himself as the commander of the armies of the Lord.

And he says to him, I am the commander of the Lord's army. Now I have come. And thirdly, there's an instruction given to Joshua.

[32 : 42] As Joshua went to him, what does my Lord say to his servant? How often do you find that in the Bible, don't you? People who come in the presence of God and virtually overtaken by the awesomeness of God, instead of actually being repelled, instead of what you might think would be that they would just fall down dumb and not really have anything to say, just here in Isaiah chapter 6, you find that same emphasis.

What will you have me to do? What does my Lord say to his servant? What command, what instruction, what information do you have for me? What do you require of me?

And the Lord answers, this man answers, take off your sandals from off your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy. And of course, that again ties up, doesn't it, with Moses in the wilderness at the burning bush, at the outset of God's revelation of himself in this way to his people, as they're in Egypt at that time.

Of course, here is God coming to reveal himself to them and to say, I've heard their cry. I've come down to deliver them. And he said to Moses, take off your shoes from off your feet, for the place on which you're standing is holy.

And just to link up again, here's Joshua, the new commander, well, the new leader, with this commander of the Lord. As we'll see, it's the Lord himself in this form. And he's given the same instruction, as if to say, God is still the same God in his holiness as he was with Moses too.

[34 : 19] A confrontation, sudden, dramatic, unusual. When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man standing before him with his sword drawn in his hand.

And it's emphasizing that it was a man. He had the features of a man. It was a human form. And although we read as you go through the rest of the chapter, it's obvious that this is God in this form that has revealed himself here to Joshua.

Something that has anticipated the coming of the Son of God permanently in human form in the incarnation, the New Testament age. But here it is, this man.

It's emphasizing, a man was standing before him. Joshua saw a man. Joshua saw a human form. There's an important emphasis in that.

It wasn't an angelic form. It wasn't anything other than human. It wasn't something different to God or to man. It was a man that he saw. So you see, there's an affinity there with Joshua and with his people.

[35 : 27] As we said, it's something that anticipates the coming of the Lord in human form as he was born as a human. And that's an important emphasis, of course, in so many ways.

It applies to Jesus especially, the Son of God incarnate, taking our human nature to himself. Now through the Old Testament, you find this figure from time to time appearing.

Very often he's called the Angel of the Lord. But he has a human form and you find him at different times revealing himself in the Old Testament. And as always for a particular reason in certain circumstances.

And theologians believe that it's right to see this as God in human form, anticipating the coming of the Son of God, Jesus, who came to be Jesus of Nazareth.

But here is something down through the years of the Old Testament that anticipates that, that prepares a way for that, that really instructs the people that God is going to come and he's going to come in a way that closely ties himself to them, even in a human sense.

[36:41] And where is there a more important truth tonight for you and for me than the fact that God has come in the person of his Son and he's taken and he's taken our human nature to himself.

He's united our humanness to his deity and he remains God and man. You see, when the Son of God came into the world, he came into the world to die the death of the cross and to rise from the dead on the third day.

But he came into the world as part of that to engage with our circumstances as human beings in this world. He was, as Hebrews puts it, tempted in all points like as we are and yet without sin.

Tonight you can go to Jesus and you don't need to be afraid that he doesn't understand your circumstances. Because whatever your circumstances are as human circumstances, as human sufferings, as human situations in this life, Jesus has been there before you.

And not only has Jesus been there before you, but he's been there before you so that he can take from that allied with and joined to his deity to be the saviour that you and I need.

[37:59] We need a saviour and we have a saviour who is himself touched with the feeling of our infirmities, who understands what we're going through and who's able to deal with it as the God-man that he is in a way that nobody else can.

Here is a man revealed to Joshua with a sword in his hand, a drawn sword. In other words, what Joshua saw here was a man ready for combat.

Somebody was just going out to take on his enemies. He's ready for action. His sword is in his hand. And that draws Joshua's mind to ask him this question.

Are you for us or for our adversaries? Now, there's a question. And you know, in the experience of Jesus, there was never a question as to whose side he was on.

But as he came into this world and went into the desert to be tempted by Satan, and you have that in Matthew's gospel and Luke's gospel, the specific temptations with which the devil came to assault the Lord, trying to get him to be deflected from the path he was on, trying to get him to leave this path of obedience to the Father.

[39:19] That's really what the temptations essentially were about. Because the devil knew if he could manage that, then he would disqualify Jesus from being a savior of his people. I'm not saying in any way that there's any danger of Jesus doing that.

Can you just imagine, let's just say, the inhabitants of these angelic armies of the Lord of which he is the commander, just imagine, if you like, as it were, as they look at the Son of God in our nature in the desert, tempted by the devil and saying, if you are the Son of God, command these stones that they be made bread.

You can just imagine them holding their breath. What's he going to do? Whose Messiah is he going to be? Whose servant is he going to be?

Who is he going to obey? The Father who sent him or the devil who's tempting him? There was never a question in Christ's mind, of course. But remember, the temptation for him was real.

Something we cannot fully enter into, but we mustn't think that because Jesus never sinned and couldn't sin in that sense that he was therefore not really subject to temptation like you and I are.

[40:41] He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. That means he was truly tempted, really tempted, tempted as a human being. And here he is, and there's the question.

Are you for us or for our adversaries? Jesus in the wilderness, tempted by the devil, is he there for his people? Will he continue in that path to the cross?

Will he capitulate to the devil and so leave us in our lostness? And of course, you know what happened. He dismissed the devil and not in any way at all, giving heed to obey his temptation.

And isn't it a wonderful truth for you tonight? Not only that you can go to one who knows your circumstances, but one who's been in them and has overcome them.

One who has faced the devil and overcome him. One who knows what it is to be tempted and yet never yielded. One who knows the power of temptation, especially in the hands of the evil one, and yet who in himself, not for one single iota of a second did he capitulate to what the devil was asking him to do.

[41:59] Now when you come to your temptations and you come like I do to have to confess to God, Lord, I shouldn't have done that. I shouldn't have listened to that. I shouldn't have capitulated and given in to the temptation, whatever it was.

You take that to the Lord. You express your sorrow. You express your repentance. You come to the Lord and how thankful and how relieved you are that the God, the Lord, the commander that you bring your concerns to, that you bring your confession to, is one who's been there and overcome and says, thank you for bringing this to me.

I can deal with the problem. Leave it with me. I will give you the capacity because that's something that I've proved already to be mine in overcoming your enemy.

this confrontation and this question then from Joshua, are you for us or for our adversaries? And then you find in answering that, that this figure said, he came to reveal himself.

There's a revelation following the confrontation. Are you for us or for our adversaries? And he said, no, but I am the commander of the army of the Lord.

[43:14] Now I have come. And that seems rather a strange answer because he didn't answer the question directly. He didn't say, no, I'm here for you and I'm here for the people that you're the leader of.

He simply said, no, but I'm the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come. Why such a strange reply? Why didn't he answer it directly yes or no?

Well, I think one of the reasons for that is that here is the Lord, as we said, revealing himself in human form, but still saying to Joshua, I am here as the commander of the armies of the Lord.

Therefore, I am here to direct you. You're not here to direct me. You ask me, am I here for you or for your adversaries? I am here as the commander.

I am here to do my will. I am here not to actually meet your questions as such because you don't control me. I control you.

[44:19] No, but I am here as the commander of the armies of the Lord. In other words, he's not bound by Joshua's questions. He's not himself duty bound to answer Joshua's questions the way Joshua would like them answered.

He's demonstrating that whatever Joshua says to him, he's not in charge of this person's life. He's not in charge of the situation. It is the commander of the armies of the Lord.

The Lord himself is in command of the armies of the angels of heaven. He's now saying, this is why I'm here. I'm the commander of the Lord, of the army of the Lord.

Now I have come. And that's an interesting reference as well. Now I have come. He is for them, but he's not under Joshua's command.

Joshua is the commander in human terms of the people. He's the leader of the people. He's taken over from Moses. He's been appointed by God. But here this person is saying to him, this figure is saying to him, yes, you're the commander of the people.

[45 : 26] That's what you've been placed as. But I am here as your commander. You don't command me. I command you. I'm in charge of the situation.

And where he says, I am the commander of the army of the Lord, the commander of the Lord's army of angels, I think he means.

It's really the same as we said earlier, a reference to the angel of the Lord, where you find that in the Old Testament described. And he says, now I have come.

And you see, again, he doesn't say, now I have come to help you. Now I have come for this or that purpose. He simply says, now I have come. And through the Old Testament, I'm sure these references and these statements lived with the people of God in their memories, those of them who could recall them.

And that itself, too, was for them a sign of hope. a sign of anticipation or anticipation of something which was going to happen as it did in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[46 : 37] And you remember how Psalm 40 puts it. Now I have come. Hebrews picks that up and says, now I have come to do your will, O Lord.

There's Jesus from the days of the Old Testament, the anticipation of Jesus, the servant of the Lord. And there is the voice put in the mouth of Jesus before he became human.

And nevertheless, it's there in prophecy. It's there in the Old Testament anticipating his coming. Now I have come. This is what the Old Testament was waiting for all these years.

And here's an anticipation of it on the lips of this commander of the army who's speaking to Joshua. You find the same thing in other parts of the Psalms as well.

Psalm 50 verse 3, Psalm 98 and verse 9. And so when he says, now I have come, as that anticipates the coming of Jesus.

[47 : 33] So you can look back tonight and say, it's actually really happened. This very act that the Old Testament anticipated through these events, it's actually happened.

It's now in the past. And it's a reality. The Lord has come. He's come as the commander of the armies of the Lord. He's come as the Son of God in our nature.

He's come into this world and He's come permanently. It's God's arrival to lead His people.

Is there anything more precious to you tonight than that the Lord has come? That this weary world so full of sin and sorrow has somebody who's come into it who is set above it, who is the commander of the armies of the Lord, who has come into this world and now permanently remains God and man in the person of Jesus?

Is there anything more precious to yourself than to know this person? Than to know this commander of the armies of the Lord?

[48 : 51] Is there anything more wonderful than to realize tonight that the Jesus you serve, the Jesus you believe in, the Jesus you've come to trust in by His grace is none other than this great figure who was seen by Joshua and by Moses and by others in the days of the Old Testament as the angel of the Lord?

Now I have come. And here He is assuring you through this very passage of Scripture and His fulfillment in Jesus that that coming is permanent, that that coming is something that's decisive and definitive in the history of the world.

It lies really as the pivotal point of history. Whatever people will say to you as the most important events in history and there are many events in history that are historic, that are really crucial events.

Many times in the history of humanity where discoveries have been made that people will say surely that's one of the pivotal moments in history, the discovery of whatever it is, whether it's some kind of cure for this, that or other or some event that demonstrates the ingenuity of human beings and their inventiveness and so on.

But here is the event. Now I have come. I have come. God has entered this world.

[50 : 18] He's done so in the person of His Son, the very God of Moses and of Joshua and tonight this reality remains a reality and will be forevermore.

I have come. Now here is something for you and for me that really surely instills a sense of dependence upon this person.

Because here you are and I am tonight without human needs. Here we are needing somebody who can understand our situation. Somebody who can appreciate what we're going through in this world whether it's temptation or suffering or whatever.

Here is somebody who knows what it is to bear the sin of his people successfully, vicariously, powerfully, permanently, forevermore in the result of it on the cross.

Here is somebody who can deal with your situation as nobody else can. Here is somebody who's saying, by these words I have come. He's saying, I have come so that you can say he's here for me.

[51 : 31] He's here for me in my situation and I can't do without him and I can't get help from anyone else the way I get it from him. Lo, I have come.

And the fact that he has a sword drawn in his hand, of course that was relevant to Joshua's situation, the people's situation then when they had to do battle with various inhabitants of the land to drive them out and to actually settle in the land and the various ways in which in the following chapters you see the defeats as well as the ways in which the overcame.

But all of that is important in this context of this man being seen with a sword drawn in his hand. In other words, Joshua has been assured that this person is here to lead them, to lead them to be the conqueror of their enemies.

And that's so true of everything you face as far as Jesus is concerned. When the Lord is your Savior, whatever you have to meet with, whatever enmity you meet with, whatever opposition you meet with, you may think, I'm never going to be able to overcome this.

The powers in the world are so great, far greater than I can handle myself, you might say. The things that I see in my life loom so large and make such a dark shadow in my soul.

[53 : 04] how can I overcome this? Well, look to this person because this is how you must always see him, with a sword drawn in his hand, ready to conquer all your foes, all your adversaries, everything that causes you concern.

I mean, in the Gospels, you find the record of the exploits of Jesus, the way in which he demonstrated himself to be someone unique, healing diseases, raising people from the dead, all of these things demonstrating that he had come, and he had come for the benefit of his people, and that such a person is worthy of your trust, such a person surely is someone whom you cannot bypass to put your trust in anyone else.

Lo, I have come, and not only for individuals, but also for congregations, for denominations as a church, who do we need tonight to guide us into the future?

Who do we need tonight? Who do we have tonight to go before us into the advance of his cause? Who do we have to take on the forces that we see are seeking to destroy the gospel and the Lord's day and the Ten Commandments and all the things that are precious to the Lord's people?

Look to Jesus, because as you see him tonight, he has his sword drawn in his hand, he's still the commander of the Lord's army, he's still the one who has the capacity to be on your side, to lead you, to guide you, to take you through.

[54:41] And that's the case for the whole church as well. One of Satan's favorite devices is to cause discouragement and disconsolation and doubt in your mind.

God's It was like that from day one when he came to Eve in the garden, has God indeed said? He wants you tonight to doubt his word. He wants you tonight to doubt the validity of the Sabbath day, of the Lord's day.

He wants you to doubt whether it's profitable anymore. Does it fit into the present day in our society? He wants you to doubt the importance of actually maintaining not just that but every other commandment in terms of your moral integrity!

And the well-being of our community and our people. And you must look to Jesus who has the sword drawn in his hand ready for battle, who's always prepared, who's never caught out, who's always fitted out to lead his people in whatever they meet with, in his life.

And Joshua's reaction is the reaction that shows he realized this was God. Joshua's response is he fell on his face to the earth and worshipped and said to him, what does my Lord say to his servant?

[56:09] Now Joshua would never have offered worship to anyone other than God. And yet he falls down before this figure and worships and says, what does my Lord say to his servant?

an instruction then comes from this figure. Take off your sandals from off your feet for the place where you are standing is holy.

holy. It is an amazing thing in many ways that a person who comes to realize the holiness of the Lord, whatever measure we're able to realize and appreciate the holiness of the Lord, it doesn't actually thwart your desire to serve him.

It's the very opposite. The better you know the Lord, the more we appreciate his holiness, holiness, the more we come to realize that this is none other than the holy God, our creator, and this commander of the Lord's army who's here before us, who actually comes to bring us into his presence, the more we realize the immensity of God, the holiness of God, the uncreated being of God, the more in realizing that properly and believably and lovingly, the more you will fall down and say, Lord, I'm here, send me, what will you have me to do?

What does my Lord command of his servant? Let that question be your question tonight. Let that request be your request and my request.

[57:52] The same God who was there in the beginning, who created all things, the God who was with his people, Israel, at the beginning of their journey from Egypt to the promised land, who was with them through the years of the wilderness, who was actually here with them as they entered the promised land, that same God, that's the God tonight who's seeking your response, who's looking for your question in your heart, Lord, what will you have me to do?

What does my Lord say to his servant? And as it assures Joshua of the continuing leadership of God, so Joshua falls down and worships.

And he hears these words, take off your sandals from off your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy. That's what Moses heard at the beginning of his leadership of Israel.

This is what Joshua hears in this new chapter, with all of these links to the past. This is what you and I are hearing tonight. Many millions of people tonight in our nation would ridicule you for believing in God.

I would think you are stupid for emphasizing the holiness of someone you cannot see physically. But friends, you know better than that.

[59 : 23] you know better than to think that this God is just under somebody's control, whatever way you want him. And there are people who use the Bible, who use Christianity for that purpose, who come to turn to God at certain moments in their lives, who maybe cry out to God in their extremities, and then when the issue is gone, when things have improved, God recedes into the background, if he's really been there realistically at all.

Hence, let's make sure tonight we're not serving God in a way that just uses him for our benefit, that uses him for our advantage, to gain something out of the moment.

if you worship God, you worship this God. If you think of God as God, then this is the God you think of.

If you really want to know what it is to serve the Lord, first of all, get to know him in his holiness. And as you get to know him in his holiness, respect him in all his ways.

And ask this question each and every day, Lord, what does my Lord say to his servant? What can I do for you today?

[60 : 48] What will you have me to do with my life today? Maybe here you're tonight here and you haven't yet started following the Lord for yourself.

Maybe you still don't know him as your own personal savior. Maybe you're hearing these words and saying, I'm, I know what they're saying, but I'm not sure. Should I or shouldn't I?

Is he for me or against me? Am I for him or against him? Well, don't leave your mind questioning. Just do what he requires. Trust in him.

Receive him. Accept him. Give your mind and life to him. Believe his word. serve him in whatever way you can.

You don't have to occupy a pulpit. You don't have to be an elder or a deacon. But in some way or other you do need to serve him. And he is calling for your service tonight.

[61 : 55] Lord, what will you have me to do? Will that not be your question? So that you also, like Joshua and the people, will go forward in the strength of the Lord.

Let's pray. Lord, we continue to worship you as God, the commander of the armies of the Lord.

And we give thanks that you did come into this world, that you fulfilled all these times of anticipation throughout the long years of the Old Testament age. We thank you, Lord, that you came in a way that was prophesied and yet in many ways unexpected, that you came to be born into this world as a human infant child, that you developed in a human body and mind and soul, that you came into this world so that you would face temptation and suffering and trial, but do so in a way that overcame.

We thank you that you never sinned. we thank you that you overcame temptation and death and the devil and the world and we thank you tonight that you are our saviour, that you are our God, that you are our commander and we pray all these things, O Lord, seeking that each and every day it may be our delight to do your will as it was your delight to do the will of the Father.

Here is we pray for your name's sake. Amen. Let's conclude our service this evening singing in Psalm 97.

[63 : 37] Psalm 97, page 128. We're singing verses 7 to 12 to Tunis Warrington. All those who worship images are put to everlasting shame.

Their worthless idols are their boast. You gods bow down before his name. All the way through the Old Testament, the prophecies, but also in the Psalms, you find idolatry mentioned so frequently because the idolatry then and now is idolatry that challenges the Lord's right to rule and challenges the uniqueness of God as who alone is to be worshipped.

So we'll sing these verses to Tune Warrington from verse 7, All those who worship images. are good to ever asking shame.

Their worthless idols are their holes new gods by hand before his name.

To Zion and Judah stand, your justice Lord, rejoice and die.

[65 : 20] love of the earth and all the God exalted in the Lord whose time he gave the youth who loved the Lord who stayed for once he will de him and from the hands of wicked may to him he liberals he will say!

upon the righteous light will shine and joy of those of our life who righteous in the Lord rejoice and to his holy name him praise I'll go to the door down to my right this evening.

Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be your portion now and ever more. Amen.