

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
1-18-23

Joshua 5

A Radical Obedience – Verse 1

¹ Now when all the Amorite kings west of the Jordan and all the Canaanite kings along the coast heard how the LORD had dried up the Jordan before the Israelites until they had crossed over, their hearts melted in fear and they no longer had the courage to face the Israelites.

5:1 The Amorites and Canaanites were the two major groups living in Canaan at the time of Israel's invasion. The Canaanites worshiped a variety of gods, but Baal was their favorite. Canaanite culture was materialistic, and their religion, sensual. The Israelites continually turned to Baal after entering Canaan. The Amorite gods also infected Israel's worship and turned people away from worshipping the true God. Worshiping these false gods eventually brought about Israel's downfall.

5:1 The Israelites spent 39 years in the wilderness unnecessarily because they were terrified of the Canaanites. They underestimated God's ability. The Israelites' first attempt to enter the Promised Land had failed (Numbers 13–14). Here Israel saw that the Canaanites were terrified of their army. The Canaanites had heard about Israel's great victories through God (2:9-11), and they hoped that the Jordan River would slow Israel down or discourage them from entering Canaan. But news that the Israelites had crossed the Jordan on dry land caused any courage the Canaanites still had to melt away. Don't underestimate God. If we are faithful to God, he will cause great opposition to disappear. God can change the attitudes of those who oppose him.

Circumcision And Passover At Gilgal – Verses 2-3

² At that time the LORD said to Joshua, "Make flint knives and circumcise the Israelites again." ³ So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the Israelites at Gibeath Haaraloth.

5:2-3 The rite of circumcision marked Israel's position as God's covenant people. When God made the original covenant with Abraham, he required that each male be circumcised as a sign of cutting off the old life and beginning a new life with God (Genesis 17:13). Other cultures at that time used circumcision as a sign of entry into adulthood, but only Israel used it as a sign of following God.

Circumcision And Passover At Gilgal – Verses 4-8

⁴ Now this is why he did so: All those who came out of Egypt—all the men of military age—died in the wilderness on the way after leaving Egypt. ⁵ All the people that came out had been circumcised, but all the people born in the wilderness during the journey from Egypt had not. ⁶ The Israelites had moved about in the wilderness forty years until all the men who were of military age when they left Egypt had died, since they had not obeyed the LORD. For the LORD had sworn to them that they would not see the land he had solemnly promised their ancestors to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey. ⁷ So he raised up their sons in their place, and these were the ones Joshua circumcised. They were still uncircumcised because they had not been circumcised on the way. ⁸ And after the whole nation had been circumcised, they remained where they were in camp until they were healed.

5:4-8 They stayed in their places in the camp till they were healed: Obviously, this was suicidal from a military standpoint. All the men of fighting age were made completely vulnerable and unable to fight for a period of several days, till they were healed.

5:4-8 Till they were healed: So, not only did Israel cross over the Jordan at a militarily undesirable place (right in front of Jericho, the strongest military outpost of the Canaanites), they also incapacitated their army for several days. They did this because they trusted God, and His directions, instead of their own wisdom. God only asked this of them after He showed His greatness by the Jordan River crossing. When we remember all the things the power of God has done in our lives, we are willing to trust Him in radical obedience.

God Rolls Away Their Reproach – Verse 9

9 Then the LORD said to Joshua, **“Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.” So the place has been called Gilgal to this day.**

5:8-9 Located about two miles northeast of Jericho, Gilgal was Israel’s base camp and their temporary center of government and worship during their invasion of Canaan. Here the people renewed their commitment to God and covenant with him before attempting to conquer the new land. At Gilgal the angelic commander of the Lord’s army appeared to Joshua with further instructions for battle and encouragement for the conquest (5:13-15). After the conquest, Gilgal continued to be an important place in Israel. It was here that Israel’s first king, Saul, was crowned (1 Samuel 11:14-15).

A Redemption Remembered – Verses 10-11

10 On the evening of the fourteenth day of the month, while camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, the Israelites celebrated the Passover. **11** The day after the Passover, that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land: unleavened bread and roasted grain.

5:10 This joyous Passover was the first to be celebrated in the Promised Land and only the third celebrated by Israel since the Exodus from Egypt. The last time was at the foot of Mount Sinai, 39 years earlier. This celebration reminded Israel of God’s mighty miracles that brought them out of Egypt. There they had to eat in fear and haste; here they ate in celebration of God’s blessings and promises. (See Exodus 12 for a description of the night the angel “passed over” the Israelites’ homes.)

God Stops The Manna – Verse 12

12 The manna stopped the day after they ate this food from the land; there was no longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate the produce of Canaan.

5:11-12 God supplied manna to the hungry Israelites during their 40 years in the wilderness (Exodus 16:14-31). In the bountiful Promised Land they no longer needed this daily food supply because the land was ready for planting and harvesting. God had miraculously provided food for the Israelites while they were in the wilderness; here he provided food from the land itself. Prayer is not an alternative to preparation, and faith is not a substitute for hard work. God can and does provide miraculously for his people as needed, but he also expects them to use their God-given talents and resources to provide for themselves. If your prayers have gone unanswered, perhaps what you need is within your reach. Pray instead for the wisdom to see it and the energy and motivation to do it.

The Fall of Jericho – Verses 13-15

¹³ 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?” ¹⁴ “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^[e] have for his servant?” ¹⁵ 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.

5:13-14 This was an angel of superior rank, the commander of the LORD’s army. Some say he was an appearance of God in human form. As a sign of respect, Joshua took off his sandals. Although Joshua was Israel’s leader, he was still subordinate to God, the absolute Leader. Awe and respect are the responses due to our holy God. How can we show respect for God? By our attitudes and actions. We should recognize God’s power, authority, and deep love, and our actions must model our absolute reverence for God. Respect for God is just as important today as it was in Joshua’s day, even though removing shoes is no longer our cultural way of showing it.

5:14-15 Before Israel could conquer anything else in the Promised Land, they had to be conquered by God — and Joshua’s total submission shows that they are conquered by Him. This is the missing element in a life of victory for many Christians; they have not been, and are not continually being, conquered by God.