

Joshua Chapter 5 – Title - Jesus is the commander, we are His soldiers.

So it was, when all the kings of the Amorites who *were* on the west side of the Jordan, and all the kings of the Canaanites who *were* by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan from before the children of Israel until we had crossed over, that their heart melted; and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the children of Israel. <sup>2</sup> At that time the LORD said to Joshua, “Make flint knives for yourself, and circumcise the sons of Israel again the second time.” <sup>3</sup> So Joshua made flint knives for himself, and circumcised the sons of Israel at the hill of the foreskins. <sup>4</sup> And this *is* the reason why Joshua circumcised them: All the people who came out of Egypt *who were* males, all the men of war, had died in the wilderness on the way, after they had come out of Egypt. <sup>5</sup> For all the people who came out had been circumcised, but all the people born in the wilderness, on the way as they came out of Egypt, had not been circumcised. <sup>6</sup> For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people *who were* men of war, who came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they did not obey the voice of the LORD—to whom the LORD swore that He would not show them the land which the LORD had sworn to their fathers that He would give us, “a land flowing with milk and honey.” <sup>7</sup> Then Joshua circumcised their sons *whom* He raised up in their place; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not been circumcised on the way. <sup>8</sup> So it was, when they had finished circumcising all the people, that they stayed in their places in the camp till they were healed. <sup>9</sup> Then the LORD said to Joshua, “This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.” Therefore the name of the place is called Gilgal to this day. <sup>10</sup> Now the children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight on the plains of Jericho. <sup>11</sup> And they ate of the produce of the land on the day after the Passover, unleavened bread and parched grain, on the very same day. <sup>12</sup> Then the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land; and the children of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate the food of the land of Canaan that year. <sup>13</sup> And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, “Are You for us or for our adversaries?” <sup>14</sup> So He said, “No, but *as* Commander of the army of the LORD I have now come.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, “What does my Lord say to His servant?” <sup>15</sup> Then the Commander of the LORD’s army said to Joshua, “Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand *is* holy.” And Joshua did so.

## Introduction

Before we launch into chapter 5 of Joshua we need a quick review of what has happened so far.

After the death of Moses God spoke to Joshua and told him to take the nation of Israel across the river Jordan and possess the land which had previously been promised to Abraham and his descendants.

God promised to protect Joshua all the days of his life and also promised that nobody would ever be able to defeat him. However he was told by God that the book of the Law, (first 5 books of the Bible.) was to be his constant companion. He was to meditate on these books day and night and to obey all the instructions written in it. (Joshua 1:8)

Although God had promised him success, he nevertheless operated his campaign with wisdom. He decided to send 2 spies to investigate the land that he would have to conquer.

The two spies visited Jericho and met a lady called Rahab. She used to be a prostitute but was now running a bed and breakfast and working in the flax business. God was working in her heart. She had heard about what God had done for the Israelite nation.

She also heard about the miraculous rescue of over 2 million Jews from slavery in Egypt.

She heard about the parting of the Red Sea and how the Israelites fought and destroyed two kings on their way through the desert.

She informed the spies that the whole area were afraid of the Israelites and their God.

Rahab told the spies that she believed in the God of the Israelites and she protected the spies from certain death by hiding them in the flax on her roof.

The spies told Rahab to tie a scarlet cord in her window and this would protect her and her family, if they remained in the house when the Israelites attacked Jericho.

The spies escaped and reported back to Joshua.

Last week we learnt how the people of Israel prepared themselves for the crossing of the river Jordan.

They were prepared both practically and spiritually for the new start in their life.

God wanted them to be set apart to be witness of His Holiness. We learnt that not only did the people have to be prepared but the "Ark of the Covenant" had to be in the right place.

The "Ark of the Covenant" represented the presence of God. The "Ark" had to be almost 1 kilometer away from the people so that they could see the great miracle that was about to happen. It was also important for the people to recognize that it was God Himself who would part the river Jordan. The Priests had to remain in the river holding the "Ark" until everybody had crossed over.

Finally we learnt that the people had to be prepared to follow a new leader. God used Moses to lead His people out of Egypt and now God was using Joshua to lead His people into the Promised Land.

After the Israelites crossed safely on dry ground opposite Jericho, Joshua was commanded to arrange for 12 large stones to be piled up at Gilgal. These stones, each one representing a tribe of Israel, were to act as a Memorial to what God had done in parting the river Jordan.

The memorial would be a witness to the next generation. I did mention in the application that one of the greatest enemy of "Faith" might well be "Forgetfulness".

Therefore it is a good idea to keep a little book and record all the wonderful things that God has done in your life. You can review and go over these miracles when you are going through a difficult time in your Christian Life, or before you are about to take a big step of "Faith" for God.

The God of the Bible is the same God who is working in our lives today.

He requires us to act in "Faith" according to His word.

It is all about obedience to what God wants to do in and through our lives. It is not about us, we are only servants and instruments for God to work through.

God doesn't need us, but He has chosen us in Jesus, to do good works, that He has planned in advance for us to do. (Eph. 2: v. 10) We all have a part to play in the extension of God's Kingdom. Like Joshua, meditating on God's word and personal Holiness is an important part of this plan.

The beginning of a New Life for the Israelite nation involved sanctification. The beginning of a New Life for us involves the same. The prerequisite for this life is Self- Denial, giving up our whole life in service for God.

We now come to Joshua chapter 5. There are only 15 verses in this chapter but there are lots of things that we need to learn and apply to our lives.

There are 4 significant events in chapter 5 and we will deal with them one by one.

1. Circumcision was performed on all the males. V. 2-8.

We are told in v. 5 that all the people who were born in the wilderness were not circumcised. We might ask the question why did they need to be circumcised now and why weren't they circumcised in the wilderness?

We need to go back and read Genesis chapter 17: v. 1-14.

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. <sup>2</sup> And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly." <sup>3</sup> Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: <sup>4</sup> "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. <sup>5</sup> No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. <sup>6</sup> I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. <sup>7</sup> And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. <sup>8</sup> Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." <sup>9</sup> And God said to Abraham: "As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. <sup>10</sup> This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; <sup>11</sup> and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. <sup>12</sup> He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. <sup>13</sup> He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. <sup>14</sup> And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."

Although the Israelite nation had broken their part of the covenant relationship, through disobedience, God had not broken His part of the covenant.

God was now going to give them the land that He had promised Abraham back in Genesis 17.

Therefore because God was about to fulfill his part of the covenant He required all the male Israelites to be circumcised as a sign of the covenant agreement.

Due to unbelief, the Israelite nation failed to enter the promise land and as a result they didn't want to acknowledge they were keeping their part of the covenant by physical circumcision.

(I will explain the New Testament equivalent later when we come to personal application)

0. The Passover is celebrated v. 10-11.

Israel's first Passover was observed in Egypt. We read about that in Exodus chapter 12. The second recorded Passover was in the wilderness of Sinai which is recorded in Numbers 9: v. 5. Now Israel's third Passover is celebrated in the Promised Land.

Circumcision was a pre-condition for participation in the Passover Festival.

(Exodus 12: v. 48 )

<sup>48</sup> And when a stranger dwells with you *and wants* to keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it.

The Israelites would have spent a lot of time recalling and remembering what God had done in Egypt in order to rescue them from slavery.

Even today Jewish people every year remember the Passover. They sing songs and recall the events of their rescue from Egypt. The experience is still very real in their Jewish culture.

They were rescued through the shed blood of a lamb. It was the blood that saved them from God's wrath. It was the life of an innocent animal, instead of their life.

The lamb was a substitute sacrifice.

Later I will show clearly how this act points directly to the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

0. The Israelites eat the grain of the land and the Manna Bread ceased. v. 11-12.

Something very dramatic happened in v. 11-12. They ate the produce of the Promised Land. This may not seem very dramatic as we read the pages.

However we need to remember that a whole generation of over 2 million people had been totally dependent on the miracle of God providing Manna Bread every day.

They gathered "Heavenly Bread" for 6 days of the week, but there was nothing on a Sunday. Every day of the week they were told to gather the bread they needed for the day. They were not allowed to gather more than they needed for the day.

Some people did and it went bad. However they could gather a double portion on a Saturday and it remained fresh so they would not have to go out on a Sunday and gather the bread. (Exodus 16: v. 4-26)

In the 10 Commandments God had instituted one day off in 7 so that the people could rest and do no work and keep it as a Holy Day.

After 40 years God stopped providing them with “Manna Bread” and they could eat from the Harvest of the Land. We know it was “Harvest Time” from Joshua 3: v. 15.

<sup>15</sup> and as those who bore the ark came to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests who bore the ark dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks during the whole time of harvest),

Israel would have to learn about Agriculture and Farming but for their first year they would reap without sowing. They would still need to be dependent upon God for rain and sunshine but now they had to put in hard labour in order to produce their own food.

#### 0. Jesus appears to Joshua & claims to be the Commander of the Israelite army v. 13-15.

Verses 13-15 are very important. It is what the Bible scholars call a “Theophany” which means a pre-incarnation appearance of Jesus in the Old Testament.

Yes Jesus Christ was alive and well in the Old Testament. He is part of the Trinity of God and has always been in existence. He appears in many forms, and types. In fact Jesus can be seen clearly in every chapter of the Old Testament.

In the ESV study Bible one scholar has tried to locate Jesus in every chapter of the Old Testament. If you do the 60 memory verses from our discipleship course you might want to choose this study Bible as your prize.

Let’s get back to the story. I will read v. 13-15 to remind ourselves of what happened.

<sup>13</sup> And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, “Are You for us or for our adversaries?”<sup>14</sup> So He said, “No, but *as* Commander of the army of the LORD I have now come.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, “What does my Lord say to His servant?”<sup>15</sup> Then the Commander of the LORD’s army said to Joshua, “Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand *is* holy.” And Joshua did so.

How do we know that this was an appearance of Jesus and what was the purpose of this manifestation.

#### 1. Go back to the call of Moses in Exodus 3: v. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Then He said, “Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand *is* holy ground.”

When God called Moses to rescue the Israelites from Egypt, He appeared to him from a bush that was on fire but never burnt. God told Moses to take off the sandals from his feet because the ground upon which he stood was Holy.

This convinced Joshua that the soldier in front of Him was no ordinary soldier it was an appearance of God in the form of Jesus.

#### 2. In v. 14 Joshua worshipped the Soldier.

Joshua would not have done this unless He had suspected that he was encountering someone divine. In Revelation 19: 10 John worshipped an Angel, and he was rebuked for this act. However when Joshua fell at the feet of this soldier, he was not rebuked.

This proves that it was not an Angel it was God in the form of Jesus.

3. In v. 14 the Soldier declares Himself as the commander of army of the Lord.

Who could possibly be able to command a large army into victory? Surely that was Joshua's job. Oh NO it was Jesus who was in charge of this army.

He wasn't there just to help Joshua. He was the Commander of the army.

Jesus was in charge.

Joshua must have had a burden lifted from his heart. It wasn't down to him to win all the battles. He had to do his best. But Jesus was in front fighting for them.

4. In v. 14 there was "Submission" to this commander.

Joshua would never have submitted to any other Commanding officer unless it was God Himself. However he willingly submitted to this Soldier saying "What does my Lord say to his servant"

It was a great encouragement for Joshua to know that God was in charge of the operation of destroying a nation of peoples in order to fulfill His promise and to punish the people of the land for their wickedness.

Applications from these verses.

1. We need to get some personal application from the circumcision of the men.

Don't worry men, if you are a Christian, you don't have to go through the painful process of circumcision.

First of all we need to look at two verses in Joshua chapter 5. Turn to verse 5. It tells us that all the people who came out of Egypt were circumcised. Then turn to verse 6 and we discover that all these people did not obey the voice of God.

Yes they had been circumcised, but it didn't result in their obedience.

Let us turn to Deuteronomy 10:v. 16

<sup>16</sup> Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer.

Now turn to Jeremiah 4: v. 3-4.

<sup>3</sup> For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem:

"Break up your fallow ground,  
And do not sow among thorns.

<sup>4</sup> Circumcise yourselves to the LORD,  
And take away the foreskins of your hearts,  
You men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem,  
Lest My fury come forth like fire,  
And burn so that no one can quench it,  
Because of the evil of your doings."

The physical operation of the body was meant to be a symbol of a spiritual operation on the heart.

We now need to go to Colossians chapter 2 and read verses 11-14 .( N.L.T )

“When you came to Christ, you were “circumcised”, but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision – the cutting away of your sinful nature. For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with Him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.

You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for He forgave all your sins. He cancelled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.

What God is saying here to us today is that you can have all the “Hallmarks” of the people of God but lack the proper response of the people of God.

The children of Israel who left Egypt, saw the miracles of God, the parting of the Red Sea, they ate the Manna Bread and saw water come out from the rock but their hearts were still in unbelief. They never entered the promise land because they never believed in God with their whole heart.

How about us today? Do we really believe God with our whole heart? Has the Gospel message penetrated deep into our soul? Do you really understand the Gospel message of Grace and how much God has done for you.

In Colossians 1: v. 13 it tells us that if we are a true Christian , if we have been born again, then we ARE delivered from the power of DARKNESS. It is present tense. There is no deliverance ministry needed, the work has been done on the cross. We just need to believe the TRUTH and the TRUTH will set you free.

Having said that it is no use play acting at being a Christian, it has to be real.

The only way to make it real is to encounter Jesus. Be willing to repent of your sin and trust Jesus to forgive you fully and be willing to become a disciple. This involves “Self Denial”.

## 2. The Passover points clearly to Jesus.

Jesus was the lamb of God, a male without sin. The Israelites were told to kill a male lamb without any defect.

The Israelites had to kill the lamb at the appointed time. Jesus had to die on the cross at an appointed time. It was the afternoon sacrifice in the Temple. Jesus replaced all the animal sacrifices.

The blood had to be applied to the door posts and the lintel. Unless we trust in the shed blood of Jesus, we are not safe from the wrath of God.

They were told not to break any of the bones of the lamb, why? Well because when Jesus was on the cross, the soldiers were about to break His legs but they discovered that He was dead. Instead they pierced his body.

Everything of the Passover fits perfectly into the death of Jesus on the cross. Just as the Passover reminded the Jews of God's miracle work, so Communion reminds us of God's miracle work through Jesus.

### 3. Manna Bread ceasing and the hard work of farming the land.

The Manna bread was a miracle supply for an exceptional time. However the need was still there to eat food but the provision is more normal. However it is still God's provision, but it comes in a more normal way.

#### Story

A Bible College student was traveling by car on his way to college. He was involved in a bad accident. The driver of the other car was seriously injured. The Bible College student escaped unharmed, only a little shocked. He went to see the Bible College principal and got down on his knees before him and thanked God for the wonderful miracle of saving his life.

The Bible College principal said, "I have been traveling along that road for 40 years, and I have never had an accident, that is just as much a miracle as what you have experienced today. Perhaps now you will thank God for His mercies each day"

We must never forget that behind the scenes of our own vision, God is working His purposes out, to guide and provide and protect His people according to His plan.

God is just as much the God of the ordinary as the God of the supernatural.

You don't need miracles to thank God for your mercies each day. Be grateful and thankful for the little things in life, knowing that your heavenly Father is behind all things.

### 3. The Commander of the Israelite army.

It is clear that Jesus was the Commander of the Israelite army as they were about to conquer the Promised Land.

However Jesus should be the commander of our lives as we seek to get victory over sin in our Christian life. To the Israelites it was a land to be conquered; to us it is a life to live with Jesus as our commanding officer.

First Joshua met face to face with Jesus. Then He worshipped Him and fell down and submitted to Him. He was willing to listen to Him.

If we have met with the living God, Jesus Christ, then our response should be one of submission and surrender to what He wants to do in and through our lives.

Are you willing for that today?

If you are, then maybe today is the day that you fully yield to God in your life.

Let us PRAY.