

Joshua 5-8 • Chapter Study

The Circumcision at Gilgal • Ch. 5

¹ 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.

They assumed the Jordan was a barrier protecting them from invasion.

What fords there were along the length of the River were fortified.

But when word reached them Israel had crossed over via a miracle, they realized both

- 1) A massive force with a terrifying rep was now camped on their doorstep
--AND--
- 2) That force's God favored them with assistance of the miracle-kind!

² At that time the Lord said to Joshua, "Make flint knives for yourself, and circumcise the sons of Israel again the 2nd time." ³ So Joshua made flint knives for himself, and circumcised the sons of Israel at the hill of the foreskins.

Here's a flint knife, if you want to check it out afterward.

It's not **THE** knife, but it is **A** flint knife. [sharp]

⁴ 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. ⁵ 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. ⁶ For the children of Israel walked 49 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." ⁷ 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.

Circumcision was the distinctive mark of the covenant God made with Abraham and his descendants.

The **WHY** for their failure to practice it during the wilderness wandering is more evidence of their waywardness and why that generation had to die off.

We wonder why Moses didn't enforce circumcision. We're not told. This, the 1st we're hearing of it.

We assume circumcision was being practiced till we read this.

I'm going to venture a guess the reason Moe allowed them to lapse in this was because he had to pick his battles.

It was a constant struggle leading the people. They were often on the verge of rebellion.

So it may be he let circumcision lag because there were more pressing matters.

Another reason may be the nature of their lives in the wilderness; they had to be ready to move when the pillar set out.

A newly circumcised infant needed to be able to rest for a few days.

In any case; it was time to renew this practice.

And that meant ALL males, no matter what their age, had to be circumcised.

⁸ So it was, when they had finished circumcising all the people, that they stayed in their places in the camp till they were healed. ⁹ 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.

Gilgal = Rolling Away

The **Reproach of Egypt** was their slavery.

This new gen is free of the slave mentality that marked their fathers & mothers and that fueled their unbelief.

It's provocative that the first thing God does with Israel after crossing Jordan, is **incapacitate** them.

Right after reading that the Canaanites are freaking out, Josh sets out to make Israel **incapable** of defending themselves.

Lots of lessons there.

A Paul tells us in 1 Cor. 10, from the Exodus, thru their conquest of Canaan, all that happened to Israel has parallels to our walk with God.

- Deliverance from bondage in Egypt by blood of PO lamb = Our deliverance from bondage to sin by Jesus.
- Red Sea = Baptism
- Mt. Sinai = Learning abt God; His Will & Ways
- The tabernacle = How to Worship
- The priests = the Role & Work of Jesus in mediating our rel. w/God.
- The Manna & Water = God's Word & Spirit
- Crossing the Jordan = Another Baptism; this time by the Spirit,
- Which issues us into the PL, where we walk in the Spirit and so overcome all that which would keep us from knowing God's blessing and a flourishing life.

So: The death of the gen that left Egypt represents the **slave-mentality** we have to leave behind if we're to enter into the PL.

Xian, hear me: To **truly** walk with God we have to let go of our old nature.

What Paul in his NT letters calls **the Old Man**.

Rom 6 = **Reckon** the old man dead.

Eph 4 & Col 3 = **Put off** the old man.

James warns us in ch1 of his letter about being **double-minded**.

Are you a Christian or a Sinner?

Do you belong to Egypt or the PL; the World or God?

Think of this: Israel DIDN'T belong to the Wilderness.

The Wilderness was just something to "get through;" a temporary passage to shed their slave-mentality and realize who they REALLY were = The Covenant People of a Holy & Mighty God.

What ought top have been a trip of a couple months ended up taking them 40 yrs

Because they **clung** to that Slave-ID.

Now that they're all dead, their children officially sever all ties to it by literally cutting it away.

What they did, we must do – Be Circumcised; ALL of us; men and women.

Because it's not a work of thing of the flesh; it's of the heart.

Romans 2:28–29 • ²⁸ For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh; ²⁹ but *he is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter ...

Xian: Don't live in the wilderness!

Jesus saved you out of the World to bring you into the Promise of the Spirit-filled Life.

Don't be a half-way believer.

Another powerful lesson from Gilgal is how God sometimes lays His servants low in the face of a great challenge.

After seeing the Jordan dried up so they could cross, they were probably thinking, "Conquering Canaan's going to be a piece of cake."

So God incapacitates the men, the fighters – warriors, to remind them of how utterly dependent on Him they are.

I've said it before; I'll repeat it every chance I get Success is dangerous. [explain]

It's good to be reminded how much we need God.

¹⁰ Now the children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the 14th day of the month at twilight on the plains of Jericho. ¹¹ 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. ¹² 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. Now that they're in a place where crops are grown, they no longer need the miraculous provision of God.

They could enjoy the bounty of the land.

Remember now, Canaan reps the Spirit-filled life of walking with God.

The wilderness reps our spiritual *infancy*, when we get spiritual nourishment by what others provide; as Israel was fed by manna.

Spiritual *maturity* isn't dependent on others to sustain growth.

The mature woman or man is able to "fend for him/herself" in terms of spiritual nourishment.

Babies have to be fed. **Adults** feed themselves.

Same is true of believers.

It all comes from the Lord, it's just that the route alters as we mature.

Conquering the Enemy • Chs. 6-12

The central campaign • Chs. 6-9

Chs6-12 chart the course of Israel's conquest of Canaan.

Chs. 6-9 lay out the Central campaign.

¹³ 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.

Between the Jordan & Jericho, the land is flat & fertile. It's 6 mls between River & City.

While camped at Gilgal, Joshua heads out to assess their 1st challenge; the mighty fortress of Jericho.

He meets a man with a drawn sword.

And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, "Are You for us or for our adversaries?"

Joshua knew the uniform of the soldiers of Jericho.

This Guy wasn't wearing that.

But He wasn't glowing either, so Joshua doesn't peg him as an angel.

He's a warrior, but He's alone.

So Joshua asks who's side he's on.

¹⁴ So He said, "No, but *as* Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come."

His reply isn't really an answer to what Joshua asked.

Joshua asked, "Whose side are you on?" The answer = "No! Those aren't the only options."

"You want to know whose side I'm on? The Lord's! In fact, I commander Yahweh's army."

As we saw last week, one of Joshua's main goals was to keep the alliances of Canaan from forming.

That's why his first strategy was to cut straight across to the coast – so he could keep the N from reinforcing the S.

Now a potential ally for Israel appears! And what an Ally! Oh, Happy Day!

And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, "What does my Lord say to His servant?" ¹⁵ 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.

Joshua realizes this is God, so he worships. // It's clear this is God by what we read next ...

Ch6

¹ Now Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel; none went out, and none came in. ² And the Lord said to Joshua: "See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, *and* the mighty men of valor. Jericho's formidable defenses are all set to outlast a siege.

The city is shut tight and well-stocked. // But God says, "No problem!"

Then He gives Joshua the battle plan.

That's why Joshua had gone to observe the City; to devise a plan of attack.

God gives it to him. // It's unconventional – to say the least.

³ You shall march around the city, all *you* men of war; you shall go all around the city once. This you shall do 6 days. ⁴ And 7 priests shall bear 7 trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. But the 7th day you shall march around the city 7 times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. ⁵ It shall come to pass, when they make a long *blast* with the ram's horn, *and* when you hear the sound of the trumpet, that all the people shall shout with a great shout; then the wall of the city will fall down flat. And the people shall go up every man straight before him."

Depending on the size and preparation of a city, your typical siege could last from a few days to over a year.

A besieging force feared 3 things:

- 1) An ally of the city coming to their aid.
- 2) Running out of supplies. (Foraging)
- 3) Disease; like dysentery.

Jericho had plenty of warning of Israel's approach and was well-prepared.

They figured they could outlast a siege.

But the siege of Jericho only lasted a week.

Without her walls, the City had no real defense.

⁶Then Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, "Take up the ark of the covenant, and let 7 priests bear 7 trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the Lord." ⁷And he said to the people, "Proceed, and march around the city, and let him who is armed advance before the ark of the Lord." ⁸So it was, when Joshua had spoken to the people, that the 7 priests bearing the 7 trumpets of rams' horns before the Lord advanced and blew the trumpets, and the ark of the covenant of the Lord followed them. ⁹The armed men went before the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rear guard came after the ark, while *the priests* continued blowing the trumpets.

While the women and children stayed at Gilgal, the army marched around the City.

It seems they used the pattern they'd used in the wilderness; 6 tribes in front, 6 behind.

The ark and priests in the middle.

¹⁰Now Joshua had commanded the people, saying, "You shall not shout or make any noise with your voice, nor shall a word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I say to you, 'Shout!' Then you shall shout." ¹¹So he had the ark of the Lord circle the city, going around *it* once. Then they came into the camp and lodged in the camp. ¹²And Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the Lord. ¹³Then 7 priests bearing 7 trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the Lord went on continually and blew with the trumpets. And the armed men went before them. But the rear guard came after the ark of the Lord, while *the priests* continued blowing the trumpets. ¹⁴And the 2nd day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. So they did 6 days.

Think of all this from the perspective of the people of Jericho, watching from the walls.

An eerie sight. Not a word, just the mournful sound of several shofars.

Why did God have them march around Jericho 6 days? Why not get it over with in a day?

We're not told; but we can venture a guess.

Archaeology tells us Jericho's walls were massive.

Reinforced by huge towers.

In fact, it was a double wall. [explain]

As they marched around it, in silence, the reality of just how formidable those walls were came home.

No talking; **no** distraction = LOOK at those walls!

Yep: Jericho's a nut too tough to crack, a foe beyond our skill to conquer.

The only sound was the call of the horn from their center; where the Ark was. **Where God was!**

The Wall // God. [repeat]

¹⁵But it came to pass on the 7th day that they rose early, about the dawning of the day, and marched around the city 7 times in the same manner. On that day only they marched around the city 7 times. ¹⁶And the 7th time it happened, when the priests blew the trumpets, that Joshua said to the people: "Shout, for the Lord has given you the city! ¹⁷Now the city shall be doomed by the Lord to destruction, it and all who *are* in it. Only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all who *are* with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent. Jericho was to be put to the torch.

The only thing exempt from destructions was Rahab's household because of the vow the spies made her.

¹⁸And you, by all means abstain from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.

This phrase "accursed things" refers to pagan paraphernalia = idols & things associated w/their worship.

The destruction of Jericho & its people wasn't just because it was in the way.

God brought Israel to Canaan for 2 reasons ...

1) To fulfill His promise to Abraham to give his descendants the land.

—AND—

2) To be the agent of His judgment on the absurdly wicked Canaanites.

In Gen. 15:16, God told Abe his descendants would return when the wickedness of the Canaanites reached its zenith.

Joshua warns his people not to take as spoils anything connected to their evil.

¹⁹But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, *are* consecrated to the Lord; they shall come into the

treasury of the Lord.”

The only thing kept out of the spoils is metal that can be melted down, so purified.

²⁰ So the people shouted when *the priests* blew the trumpets. And it happened when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat. Then the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city. ²¹ And they utterly destroyed all that *was* in the city, both man and woman, young and old, ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword.

When the wall fell, the army rushed in to carry out a more conventional conquest.

Every living thing was put to the sword.

Critics attack passages like this asking, “How can a God of love command such bloodshed?”

Because he’s also a God of justice.

Does the Judge who sends a mass-murderer to the gallows lack love? Hardly!

Justice demands the guilty be punished.

Wait: It wasn’t just evil men who were killed here; it was women and children too.

Right! The women weren’t innocent. They were complicit.

Sacrificing their children to Baal.

Sealing them in jars and putting them in a new wall in the belief it made their house secure.

The Children? **Infected** w/the corruption of their parents Idolatrous Canaanites in training.

God gave the Canaanites hundreds of yrs to repent.

He sent prophets to them with His msg; calling them to repent, as the story of Balaam & the book of Job shows.

But they refused waxed worse.

Rahab makes clear **anyone** in Canaan **could have** turned & been saved.

Those who died chose NOT to.

The fall of Jericho means God sometimes uses war to chasten & destroy nations that forget Him.

²² But Joshua had said to the 2 men who had spied out the country, “Go into the harlot’s house, and from there bring out the woman and all that she has, as you swore to her.” ²³ And the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father, her mother, her brothers, and all that she had. So they brought out all her relatives and left them outside the camp of Israel. ²⁴ But they burned the city and all that *was* in it with fire. Only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the Lord. ²⁵ And Joshua spared Rahab the harlot, her father’s household, and all that she had. So she dwells in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

Matthew’s Gospel tells us Rahab’s family was absorbed into the Tribe of Judah.

²⁶ Then Joshua charged *them* at that time, saying, “Cursed *be* the man before the Lord who rises up and builds this city Jericho; he shall lay its foundation with his firstborn, and with his youngest he shall set up its gates.”

Joshua laid a curse on the site lest Jericho be rebuilt.

He intended it to be a perpetual reminder of God’s judgment.

He knew whoever rebuilt the City would be a godless fool who ignored history’s lessons.

So, he’d repeat Jericho’s sin.

In 1 Kings 16:34 we see Joshua’s prophecy fulfilled.

In his days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho. He laid its foundation with Abiram his firstborn, and with his youngest son Segub he set up its gates, according to the word of the Lord, which He had spoken through Joshua the son of Nun

It was a Canaanite practice to mix the blood of a child with the mortar of their walls.

Though Hiel lived hundreds of years **after** Joshua, the Israelites aped the ancient wickedness.

Those who do not learn the lessons of history are doomed to repeat them.

²⁷ So the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame spread throughout all the country.

Ch7

¹ But the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things, for Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed things; so the anger of the Lord burned against the children of Israel.

A little **foreshadowing**.

² Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which *is* beside Beth Aven, on the east side of Bethel, and spoke to them, saying, “Go up and spy out the country.” So the men went up and spied out Ai. ³ And they returned to

Joshua and said to him, “Do not let all the people go up, but let about 2 or 3000 men go up and attack Ai. Do not weary all the people there, for *the people of Ai are few.*” ⁴ So about 3000 men went up there from the people, but they fled before the men of Ai. ⁵ And the men of Ai struck down about 36 men, for they chased them *from* before the gate as far as Shebarim, and struck them down on the descent; therefore the hearts of the people melted and became like water.

Not a man had been lost in the conquest of Jericho // At the little town of Ai, 36 are killed.

Imagine, they take **LA** and don't lose a soul. // Then attack **Saticoy** and lose 3 dozen.

⁶ Then Joshua tore his clothes, and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the Lord until evening, he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads.

Joshua understands this defeat for what it is; the lack of God's presence and blessing.

If tiny Ai can send Israel running, it won't be long before the faint-hearted Canaanites get their hearts back and attack.

⁷ And Joshua said, “Alas, Lord GOD, why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all—to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Oh, that we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan!

⁸ O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turns its back before its enemies? ⁹ For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear *it*, and surround us, and cut off our name from the earth. Then what will You do for Your great name?”

Sunday we'll take a closer look at the several times Joshua has to be told to Be Strong and Courageous.

While we honor him as a mighty man of great valor and he's gone down in history as a great general and warrior, it seems that was NOT his natural disposition!

This confirms it.

After the intense miracle of Jericho, he falls apart in the face of a set-back at Ai.

“Why did you bring us here? // Do You want to kill us all? // We shoulda' stayed over there.”

He's boo-hoing and God's not good with it

¹⁰ So the Lord said to Joshua: “Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face? ¹¹ Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived; and they have also put *it* among their own stuff. ¹² Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, *but* turned *their* backs before their enemies, because they have become doomed to destruction. Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you.

God rebukes Joshua because he's jumped to unwarranted conclusions.

Israel wasn't defeated at Ai because God wanted to destroy them as Joshua suggests in v7.

The blame for their loss doesn't belong in God's lap, though Joshua's tirade puts it there.

The cause of their defeat ought to have been figured out by Joshua.

God's rebuke makes that clear. ISRAEL has sinned! // He then tells Joshua how to deal with it.

That launches us into the story of Achan, which is too good NOT to look at on a Sunday.

So we'll save vs13-26

Ch8

In this ch we read how Joshua defeated Ai.

He sent a large force in secret behind the city to lie in ambush.

Another force of 5,000 was sent to block reinforcements coming from nearby Bethel.

Then he staged another attack like the first, acting all timid.

When the men of Ai came roaring out, the forces of Israel turned & ran as before.

This drew all the men out of Ai. Spoils!

Once the city was empty of defenders, those waiting in ambush attacked.

When the men of Ai realized their city was on fire and turned to defend it, those they'd been chasing turned on them. Gotcha! They were caught between the 2 forces.

²⁸ So Joshua burned Ai and made it a heap forever, a desolation to this day. ²⁹ And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until evening. And as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his corpse down from the tree, cast it at the entrance of the gate of the city, and raise over it a great heap of stones *that remains* to this day.

Israel has carved out a secure beach head in Canaan.

So Joshua moved to do something God had commanded them to do when they entered the Land.

³⁰ Now Joshua built an altar to the Lord God of Israel in Mount Ebal, ³¹ as Moses the servant of the Lord had

commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses: “an altar of whole stones over which no man has wielded an iron *tool*.” And they offered on it burnt offerings to the Lord, and sacrificed peace offerings. ³² And there, in the presence of the children of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written. ³³ Then all Israel, with their elders and officers and judges, stood on either side of the ark before the priests, the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, the stranger as well as he who was born among them. Half of them *were* in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel. ³⁴ And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and the cursings, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. ³⁵ There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, with the women, the little ones, and the strangers who were living among them. Deut27-28 are Moses’ instructions for all this.

Mts. Ebal & Gerizim face each other with a little valley btwn them.

Moses said to build an altar on Ebal, put half the tribes on each mtn with the ark and priests btwn.

They were to write the Law on massive white-washed boulders, and read them while the people pronounced blessings on obedience, curses on disobedience.

These twin hills lie in the geographic center of the land.

The idea is that God’s Word is to central to and for them.