

Joshua 5

This passage serves 3 purposes

- First it is a history of Israel's conquering of the Land.
- Second it is an illustration for the Christian who seeks to overcome the obstacles to his or her faith.

Just as Israel was given promises but had to overcome obstacles in order to participate in them, so the child of God is given great promises but must overcome difficulties in order to experience them.

3 important Principles regarding spiritual warfare

1. We Wrestle not against flesh

Ephesians 6:12

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

We are in a battle against forces of darkness and the weapons of our warfare are not natural.

2 Corinthians 10:3-4

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds

Isaiah 54:17

No weapon formed against you shall prosper, And every tongue which rises against you in judgment You shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, And their righteousness is from Me,"Says the Lord.

2. We Wrestle against flesh

Galatians 5:17

For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

The greatest enemy to the Christian's success is himself.

Mark 14:37-38

Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

If we are going to succeed in our walk with God we must learn to do battle against the flesh and its desire for complacency and sin

3. God's ways are different than ours, and they are better

Isaiah 55:8-9

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.

Joshua will illustrate for us that the secret to success will be found in doing God's work God's way

We will learn about how to do battle in the kingdom, but from the very outset we need to recognize that His ways and our ways differ greatly.

- Third it is a picture of how God develops a congregation

God will reveal what is essential for victory.

Not every battle in their future will be like his one, but these principles must be established from the get go

4 scenes are developed in this chapter.

The first has to do with the canaanites

The remainder take us into the camp of Israel as they prepare to conquer the land

Scene 1

Joshua 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.

Over the past several months the canaanites had witnessed the great exploits of this new congregation.

- They defeated Sihon and the Amonites as well as Og King of Bashan who had several other kingdoms under his rule.
- They crossed the impossible barrier of an overflowing Jordan river
- And now they set up camp in Gilgal, only a few miles from Jericho.

News of these great feats had spread like wildfire throughout Canaan and filled the inhabitants with great fear

When the spies hid in Rahab's house they heard her say,

Joshua 2:8-11

... "I know that the Lord has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath."

She states that the people's hearts had melted and their courage was gone. This same truth is confirmed in Joshua 5:1

- Their hearts melted
- There was no spirit in them any longer
- The desire to fight or even defend themselves was ripped from them

If we were writing the story this would be the perfect time to attack. Israel has just witnessed God do the impossible by parting the river and the enemies are cowering in fear. This might be the perfect time to "strike e He iron is hot."

- I once over heard a high school volleyball coach whose team had just gone up 2 - 0 in a best of 5 series say, "we've got the serpent by the neck it is time to step on it."
- I suppose every general would take advantage of the enemies fear and strike a decisive blow.
- But as we have already seen God's ways are above our ways

Scene 2

Joshua 5:2

At that time the Lord said to Joshua, "Make flint knives for yourself..."

Joshua reports to the Lord to seek direction for how to fight.

We must learn to fight in prayer first.

Battles are won in the prayer room before the battlefield

I can imagine when Joshua first heard this that he thought to himself, "Flint knives, primitive but effective. We can roll with that."

But what he heard next must have been a shock to his system

Joshua 5:2

"Make flint knives for yourself, and circumcise the sons of Israel again the second time."

These knives were designed not for the canaanites but for Israel. Before they could ever win on the battlefield the first cut must be inward

The Bible is referred to as the sword of the Spirit. It is not referred to in this text but the text does illustrate that in the congregation and the individual Christian we must let the first cut be inward.

If we want to see God's word impact the lives of others we must let it impact our life.

If we want to see our children walk with God we must pattern His for them

These knives were to be used to perform circumcision on the congregation.

In Genesis 17 God establishes the covenant of circumcision

- God reminds Abraham of the covenant.

Genesis 17:7-8

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. 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. 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.” 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.

Remember this passage illustrates the life of the believer and the formation of the congregation

Before battles can be won, commitments must be made

- Israel could not have the promises of the land without the commitment of their lives
- The same is true for us. Too many want to claim the promises of the Bible without committing their lives to the Lord.

If we want to be victorious in our individual lives and as a fellowship of believers it starts with surrender and commitment

Paul put it his way

2 Timothy 2:19-21

Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.

We are vessels and when God is looking for who to use, He is looking for he ones that have been prepared through sanctification

Sanctification means to devote over to.

Just as certain household items are dedicated and should not be used outside the purpose they were designed for, so the child of God should

dedicate himself and the members of his body as Instruments for the master's use

It will not be through clever strategy that Israel defeats Canaan, but rather through a renewed commitment to Christ

Before we go on, let's be sure we have taken care of that

Joshua 5:8-9

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

The reproach of Israel was removed

- The reproach of Israel may refer to the way they were treated by Egypt as slaves, but that seems unlikely since they will continue throughout their history to be reproached.
- It is more likely that this refers to the reproach associated with living apart from the promises.

They had amazing promises of a blessed life yet they were enslaved in Egypt. Now, they have devoted themselves to God and are about to walk in the life of God.

Sometimes we receive reproach because we are failing to live the way God intended. We are complaining about our circumstances, blaming others for our woes or envying what another has. In these cases the world looks on with reproach wondering why they should give anything to become like us if all we do is live like them

This reproach is removed when we commit all to God

Scene 3

Joshua 5:10-12

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. 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. 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.

After recommitting themselves to the Lord Israel remains encamped at Gilgal awaiting further instructions from the Lord. What comes next is also a great surprise

They kept the Passover and ate the produce of the Land.

We can assume this must have been a festive occasion.

For 40 years the Passover had been kept in the wilderness, now for the first time it is happening in the Land.

They are able to look back and celebrate their deliverance from Egypt, but this time they are able to do it while eating from the land flowing with milk and honey.

Numbers 13:23

Then they came to the Valley of Eshcol, and there cut down a branch with one cluster of grapes; they carried it between two of them on a pole. They also brought some of the pomegranates and figs.

Imagine the joy of finally partaking of the fruit.

But something else takes place

Joshua 5:12

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.

The Manna ceased!

We know that Israel complained about the Manna over the years but we also assume they had become quite used to it.

It seems ill advised to cut off the people's food supply just prior to sending them into battle.

It seems that God has purposely put them in a place where they must trust Him

Remember we are learning lessons about how to walk with God and how to develop a congregation. In both cases we must learn to trust the Lord.

None of us like to be in a situation where if God does not intervene we are hopeless, but God often leads us to those places.

It is in our nature to want things planned out, but that is not how God leads.

Exodus 19:4

"You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself.

God's desire is more about bringing us into fellowship with Him than He is about accomplishing a task.

If He were only interested in results He certainly would not have chosen the people He did

- Abraham an unknown man from Iraq
- Moses a disgraced Egyptian leader
- Gideon a man hiding in a cave
- David the overlooked youngest son of a shepherd
- The 12, a group of men from a tiny obscure village in northern Israel
- And the rest of us are in a group referred to by Paul as

1 Corinthians 1:26-28

For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,

Scene 4

Joshua 5:13-15

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?"

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?"

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, like any good leader is taking the time to examine the situation and strategize as to what would be the most effective method for taking Jericho.

As he does, once again the Lord appears to Him.

Joshua asks:

"Are You for us or for our adversaries?"

The Lord responds:

"No, but as Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come."

Joshua reacts

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

It is at this point that Jesus gives instructions regarding taking Jericho

Before the battle can be won Joshua must surrender to the Lord and to His ways. Joshua could never March around a city and blow trumpets if he does not first decide to walk in the ways of the Lord

When it comes to overthrowing the obstacles we face as believers we must understand that the Lord's methods are different than ours. Success will be found in abiding. Abiding is accomplished by devoting time for your relationship with God

- Morning devotions

- Church attendance
- Christian fellowship
- Replacing influences
- Putting what we learn into practice

Let's recap

- Have you surrendered to Christ or are you wanting promises without commitment?
- Are you walking in faith?
- Are you submitted to His ways?