

Preparation

Joshua 5

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In our last episode of Israel's conquest of Canaan...

- God dried up the flooding Jordan
- The people crossed near Jericho; retreat cut off
- Camped & set up memorial stones in Gilgal

Chapter 5 – Theme: Preparation...

- Canaanites, to be defeated
- Israelites, to be God's representatives & take the land
- Joshua, to lead God's people

God often ordains a time of preparation for us

- Joseph spent time as a slave & prisoner before PM
- Moses spent 40 years on the back side of the desert
- Jesus fasted for 40 days in the wilderness

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 courage failed; and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the children of Israel.

Amorites

- descended from one of the sons of Canaan (Genesis 10:15–16).
- Amorites kings Sihon and Og were under Moses' leadership (Deuteronomy 31:4)
- 5 Amorite kings were defeated (Joshua 10-11)

Canaanites

- a wicked, idolatrous people
- descended from Noah's grandson Canaan, son of Ham
- Canaan was cursed because of his and his father's sin against Noah (Genesis 9:20–25)
- land of Canaan corresponded to what God promised Abraham's descendants (Genesis 12:7)
- Moses' spies reported that Canaan was too strong for them with fortified cities and even Nephilim (giants)
- Only Joshua and Caleb were confident that God would help them defeat the Canaanites.
- Because of their unwillingness to trust God, that generation of Israelites was denied entry into Canaan
- Jericho was the strongest fortified Canaanite city

We are reminded here that it was the Lord who dried up the waters of the Jordan

- Supernatural – a miracle – God was on Israel's side

their courage failed

They probably thought they had plenty of time to prepare
Joshua 3:15 – *the Jordan overflows all its banks during the whole time of harvest*

God promised to do this on their behalf: ...Exodus 23:27 – *I will send My fear before you, I will cause confusion among all the people to whom you come, and will make all your enemies turn their backs to you.*

- God made use of phy-ops way before modern armies
- God had appropriately prepared Israel's enemies for them to be defeated

When spiritual enemies see us trusting in God and willing to step out in obedient faith (even when it seems crazy) they lose confidence...

Romans 8:31 – *If God is for us, who can be against us?*

That was the preparation of the Canaanites; let's look at the preparation of the Israelites...

Joshua 5:2-7

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

Make flint knives for yourself

- Knives – plural so Joshua had help
- Did this all in one place (*hill of the foreskins*)
- Public display of complying – in solidarity with God
- Odd thing to do on the eve of battle – but nonetheless part of their preparation
- Why flint? An implement of the land

Mass circumcision of the sons of Israel second time

1st: before 2nd Passover at Mount Sinai (Num 9:1-3)

Exodus 12:48 – *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.*

Circumcision instituted pre-Law – associated with Land Genesis 17:7-12 (God speaking to Abraham) – *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. ⁸ 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. ” ⁹ And God said to Abraham: “As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰ 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; ¹¹ and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. ¹² 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.*

Apparently not observed while in Egypt – not in the Land

- The 1st circumcision confirmed the promise of the land, the 2nd was part of a thankful celebration on the eve of the fulfillment of that promise

Abrahamic Covenant: Genesis 12

- He would make Abraham’s name great
- have numerous physical descendants
- father of a multitude of nations
- the world will be blessed through descendants
- unconditional

Mosaic Covenant (Deuteronomy 11; et al.)

- Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) and the rest of the Law, which contained over 600 commands
- Conditional...
- blessing for obedience; cursing for disobedience

amplified the land aspect of Abrahamic Covenant

- disobedience: scattered around the world
- 70 AD; consequence for rejecting Messiah Jesus
- eventually restore the nation; obedience, prosperity

What does that tell us that Israel is back in the land?

#1 sign God is preparing to work through Israel again

- The Church Age is about to conclude
- Not a good time to be without Jesus

More signs of Israel...

- Maintained their culture despite Diaspora, atheism
- Resurrected Hebrew language; dead in Jesus’ time

New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34, others)

- made first with Israel, ultimately, with all mankind
- God promises to forgive sin, there’s be a time of universal knowledge of the Lord.

Jesus Christ came to fulfill the Law of Moses (Matt 5:17) and create a new covenant between God and His people

- Jews & Gentiles free from the penalty of the Law
- salvation is a free gift: grace through faith

How do we know biblical Christianity is true?

- Soteriology: study of the doctrine of salvation
- By grace through faith vs salvation by works

Circumcision – for the sons of Israel

a powerful act of consecration to God...

- It says: “I’m not like the other nations. I listen to God and do what He says I should do.”
- It is: stepping out in faithful obedience
- It: yourself as one of the Lord’s people
- It was symbolic: renouncing the flesh & the world
- It was: dying to self and living to God

died in the wilderness on the way

- all the fighting men of the generation born in Egypt – 1st circumcision – did not enter Canaan

people born in the wilderness, had not been circumcised

- only had the one national Passover sacrifice
- not needed as a mark of distinction – separated from other nations
- not considered obligatory – not in the Promised Land
- God suspended it – unsettledness of their condition
- representative of their unfaithfulness & murmuring

walked forty years in the wilderness – Prep for New Gen

- time to raise up another generation
- unbelieving generation would die off
- God molded them into His nation

did not obey the voice of the Lord

- there are consequences for disobedience
- Lesson learned: the wise know God's Word & apply it

a land flowing with milk and honey

- Promised Land: paradise compared to the wilderness
- Milk: plenty of grazing land
- Honey: plenty of bees for agriculture

So, circumcision of the generation entering Canaan was part of their preparation reminding them of God's covenant promising the land to them...

Joshua 5:8-9

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.

stayed in their places in the camp till they were healed

- suicidal from a military standpoint
- vulnerable & unable to fight for several days
- They knew this from history...
Genesis 34:24-25 – Simeon & Levi killed all the men in a city after tricking them into getting circumcised so they couldn't fight properly. This was in retaliation for the prince of that city having raped Dinah, the sister of Simeon and Levi.

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.
- They were in a place where they could trust in nothing but God alone — a hard place, but a good place.

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.

rolled away the reproach of Egypt

- shame of their degrading slavery
- bore the mark of free-born children of God
- they had the seal of the covenant in their flesh

name of the place is called Gilgal

- means rolled away
- their reproach was rolled away

This is the same work God wants to do in us, rolling away the dishonor and shame of our previous sin and rebellion, and seeing ourselves as who we are in Jesus.

So, rolling away Israel's reproach for having been slaves in Egypt was part of their preparation...

Joshua 5:10-12

¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ And they ate of the produce of the land on the day after the Passover, unleavened bread and roasted 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.

kept the Passover

- there was power in remembering God's deliverance
- likewise: we remember our redemption at Calvary
- Perplexing to Canaanites: Joshua opens the campaign with one act of religious devotion after another
- Passover: ...Psalm 23:5 – He prepared a table for them in the presence of their enemies

ate of the produce of the land

- Observed Firstfruits (the day after the Passover)
- God's provision shifted from manna to produce
- Entered into a new partnership of trust

manna ceased

- God miraculously provided the Israelites with "bread from heaven"
- Psalm 78:24 refers to manna as "grain from heaven," and the next verse calls it "bread of angels."

Far more important than manna's physical qualities was what manna foreshadowed.

- Manna is a type, or foreshadowing, of Jesus. After Jesus fed the 5,000, they wanted Him to "give us this bread always" (John 6:34). Jesus tried to get their focus off physical bread and onto the true "bread of life."
"Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. ...I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst" (John 6:32-35).

Sadly, the people could not get their minds off of physical bread long enough to understand the spiritual truth Jesus was declaring (John 6:36-59).

- They were more concerned with the condition of their stomachs than the condition of their souls.

Just as God provided manna to the Israelites to save them from starvation, He provided Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls.

- The literal manna temporarily saved the Israelites from physical death.
- The spiritual manna saves us from eternal death.
John 6:49-50 – *Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.*

Created with a hunger for relationship with our Creator

- People try to satisfy with all manner of worldly things
- But nothing satisfies as knowing Jesus as Savior

We should also point out: Jesus fulfilled the feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits.

So, the Israelites were further prepared for the conquest of Jericho by remembering God’s deliverance...

Joshua 5:13-15

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. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, “Are You for us or for our adversaries?”* ¹⁴ *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?”* 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.*

when Joshua was by Jericho

- A reconnaissance
- he was all alone, fearless, sure of divine protection
- meditating and praying ...seeking direction
- observe its fortifications: inspiration for how to attack

Man stood opposite him

- this was the Lord Jesus Christ
- a Christophany – pre-incarnate appearance every theophany wherein God takes on human form foreshadows the incarnation, where God took the form of a man to live among us as Emmanuel, “God with us”

Other theophanies?

- Genesis 12:7-9 – The Lord appeared to Abraham on his arrival in the land God had promised to him
- Genesis 18:1-33 – Abraham had some visitors: two angels and God Himself. He invited them to come to his home, and he and Sarah entertained them.

- Genesis 32:22-30 – Jacob wrestled with what appeared to be a man, but was actually God
- Exodus 24:9-11 – God appeared to Moses with Aaron and his sons and the seventy elders.
- Deuteronomy 31:14-15 – God appeared to Moses and Joshua in the transfer of leadership to Joshua.

Interesting...

- Appeared as a soldier to Joshua, a soldier
- Appeared as a traveler to Abraham, a traveler

with His sword drawn

ready for war – commissioning Joshua for war

Are You for us or for our adversaries?

Assumed He was just another soldier in the field

No (Neither – NIV)

Not the right question – who are you?

as Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come

- implies that the armies commanded are angelic
- this is a Being who commands angels
- Could possibly apply to an archangel like Michael
- But Joshua worshipped Him and he wasn’t rebuked
 - John was rebuked for this (Rev 22:8-9)

Joshua refers to the Man as *my Lord*

- command to remove his sandals... Exodus 3:4-6
- the Man was the voice from the burning bush

Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped

Cheerfully submitted to Him as the commander in Chief

What does my Lord say to His servant?

- Sought direction from Him
- Was ready to receive the Lord’s operation order for the siege of Jericho – next week
- God directly prepared Joshua to lead His people in the conquest of Jericho

Prep of Canaanites, Israelites, Joshua; next: marching orders, execution of the plan

What applications or take-aways do you see?

- God’s ways are not our ways – expect Him to work outside the box
- Being in a place of total dependence on God is a good place to be
- We can expect victory if we are on God’s side
- God helps us prepare for what He calls us to do