

Joshua 5:1-12

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[0 : 00] Take your Bibles, go to the book of Joshua, Joshua chapter 5. Joshua chapter 5. We'll only be looking at the first 12 verses, so that'll leave just a little bit of the fifth chapter of Joshua.

But Joshua chapter 5, verses 1 through 12, this evening will be our text. If you remember, Joshua chapters 3 and 4 are the last two chapters which we covered, which were very significant chapters because it is the crossing of the Jordan River into the land of Canaan.

So now after 38 years of wilderness wanderings, after their rebellion at Kadesh Barnea, the people of God, the nation of Israel, has now crossed the Jordan River and they're into the Promised Land. God has fulfilled His promise. God has fulfilled His desire of bringing them out in order to bring them in.

So God led them out of Egypt in order to bring them into the land of promise and now they are there. We've seen in the third and fourth chapter how they set up memorial stones, they set up these things, this memorial that would testify to them of the event and how God was faithful to His Word.

[1 : 10] And now we get into the fifth chapter and we see what they did as soon as they got there. And some of it is amazing, but we'll see how things go. Because we know Joshua chapter 5, the end of it, we have the meeting of the captain of the Lord's army, which is just a great theophany or Christophany, a picture of Christ in the Old Testament.

And then we get in Joshua chapter 6, the battle of Jericho, which is really not much of a battle, walking around the walls of Jericho. Before we can get to those historical events, we have to pause here in the first 12 verses of Joshua chapter 5.

The Word of God says, Now it came about when all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan in the west and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea heard how the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan before the sons of Israel until they had crossed, that their hearts melted and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the sons of Israel.

At that time the Lord said to Joshua, Make for yourselves flint knives and circumcise again the sons of Israel the second time. So Joshua made himself flint knives and circumcised the sons of Israel at Gebet, Herah her loth.

That's a hard word for me to say. This is the reason why Joshua circumcised them. All the people who came out of Egypt who were males, all the men of war died in the wilderness along the way after they came out of Egypt.

[2 : 33] For all the people who came out were circumcised, but all the people who were born in the wilderness along the way as they came out of Egypt had not been circumcised. For the sons of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness until all the nation, that is the men of war, who came out of Egypt perished because they did not listen to the voice of the Lord, to whom the Lord had sworn that He would not let them see the land which the Lord had sworn to their fathers to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey.

Their children whom He raised up in their place, Joshua circumcised, for they were uncircumcised because they had not circumcised them along the way. Verse 8. Now when they had finished circumcising all the nation, they remained in their places in the camp until they were healed.

Then the Lord said to Joshua, Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you. So the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day. While the sons of Israel camped at Gilgal, they observed the Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month on the desert plains of Jericho.

On the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. The manna ceased on the day after they had eaten some of the produce of the land, so that the sons of Israel no longer had manna.

But they ate some of the yield of the land of Canaan during that year. Joshua 5, verses 1 through 12. I want you to see from our text this evening, first things first.

[3 : 58] Joshua chapters 3 and 4 tells us of the entrance of the nation of Israel. And they are called a nation once they cross the Jordan River.

The entrance of the nation of Israel into the promised land. Really, they have finally achieved that end to which the Lord God had led them out. And they are going fully into His plans and purposes. And they are following Him. And the theme throughout the book of Joshua is that faith wins the victory. So they are moving forward in faithfulness. They are moving forward. If you remember, when the Ark of the Covenant moved, they moved.

When the Ark went into the middle of the Jordan River and stood still, the waters were dried up. It says piled up in one heap about 19 to 20 miles away from there in a town called Adam. And they crossed on dry ground.

They came through on one particular day, the 10th day of the first month. All the nation crossed through. And they're there. And they are about a mile and a half or a mile and a quarter away from Jericho.

[4 : 55] And they're waiting. And they're in this place. They've set up these stones which they have taken out of the middle of the Jordan River. They crossed it at flood stage. All these things tell us with accuracy the time of the year it is.

Because we understand even before the Lord tells us the exact date that it was in the springtime. In a time where they were the least likely to cross the Jordan River. In a time when the inhabitants of Canaan would have least expected someone to come in and to invade their land.

And here we see that they come in now. And they have entered into the land which the Lord had determined a long time ago. Through the Abrahamic covenant that this is where his people would be.

God is literally fulfilling his word before their eyes. And we come to this place now where it seems as if God is just going to move forward in rapid succession. And as we read the book of Joshua we see them conquering and conquering and conquering.

And they're moving forward until they inhabit all the land. But before we get to the battles. Before we get to the faithfulness in war. We need to see first things first here in Joshua 5 verses 1 through 12.

[6 : 01] And as we see this they stop and they pause. And the first thing we notice is that there is a resisted opportunity. Because it tells us in the first verse that when the kings of that area heard.

When the kings noticed what the Lord their God had done for them. It says that when all the kings of the Amorites and all the kings of the Canaanites heard how the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan before them.

So we understand that their entrance was something that was known. Right? People heard about it. And they would have heard about it because it happened in such an unlikely manner. It happened at such an unlikely time.

And they didn't just hear that the people had arrived. They heard how they got there. They heard it. They didn't just ford the river. They came because the Lord had dried up the river. And when it says how they heard how the Lord done it.

Now pay attention to this what the people heard. They didn't hear how they crossed the river. They heard how the Lord had dried up the waters so that they could cross the river.

[7 : 03] See it wasn't the fear of man that was causing the hearts of the kings to melt. Rather it was the power that was on display because of the Lord's working. Remember this is one of the testimonies that these stones were to testify to.

To remind them of the Lord's power and authority and ability. And this is the very thing that the inhabitants of the land were hearing about. And we read this wording that sounds much like.

At least it's not much like. It is actually exactly like what Rahab says. The hearts of the kings and the inhabitants of the land melt. And there's no strength in them.

The very news that the two spies brought back. Because the inhabitants of the land were losing their strength. Because of what they had heard about the Lord their God. And now as they come into the land.

The people's hearts are melting and they're losing their strength. Because they had heard how the Lord had dried up the Jordan River. And it looks at least from all outward appearances. That this is

the opportune time to attack.

[8 : 02] It looks like this is the right moment at the right time in the right setting. When everybody else is losing strength. When everybody else's hearts are melting. When everybody else has literally the fear of the Lord upon them.

God's people at least from all militaristic plannings should be pressing on. Right? Get them while they're scared. Get them while they're weak. Don't give them time to regroup. Don't give them time to think about it.

Don't give them time to prepare. Because by the time they get to Jericho, Jericho is fortified. That's why they just march around the city. Because the walls are completely shut. Right? They had time to do that. But rather than moving forward at what seems to be a great opportunity.

God's people stop. Stand still. And they resisted the opportunity that seemed to be before them. Because God had something else that they needed to do. And see, this very clearly teaches us that not everything that appears to be the best thing is actually the right thing.

[9 : 07] Not every opportunity that comes our way is the opportunity that we must take. Sometimes opportunities must be resisted. Because God had another plan.

God's calling and God's covenant and God's relationship was more important than the advantage which they seemed to have over the inhabitants of the world.

They weren't going to win the victory because they caught them off guard. They were going to win the victory because the Lord their God was going to deliver them into their hands. See, they were not going to win the victory because these people are now weak.

They were going to win the victory even when they were strong because the Lord their God was stronger. Faithfulness was greater than opportunity.

And this is something that even today, God's people must learn and must walk accordingly.

Sometimes great opportunities are before us.

[10 : 16] But we must understand that faithfulness to the relationship with the Lord our God is more important than the opportunity before us.

We've always heard that sometimes the good things are not the best things. There's a lot of opportunity to do good. But we must do the good right.

And that's where God's people had to stop. And they resisted the opportunity because first things first, don't look at what it seems like. All the world says is right.

Make sure in faithfulness that we're right with the Lord our God. Which leads us to the second thing, a renewed covenant. The reason they stopped is because in the second verse, God speaks to Joshua.

Now this is God's idea, not Joshua's idea. Joshua is not a religious leader. He's a political leader, right? Joshua is a military leader, not a religious leader. Eleazar, the son of Aaron, is the religious leader at this time.

[11 : 23] So God stops the, at least military campaign here. He stops the people in their track because Joshua is their leader. And he says, make for yourself flint knives and circumcise again.

It says for the second time, which seems to be kind of odd. But it explains it to us in the text of the nation of Israel. And the reason it's again or a second time is because all those who came out of Egypt had been circumcised.

But those that were born in the wilderness wanderings were not circumcised. Those who had been circumcised had all died. As a matter of fact, only two that were of military age, 20 and over, were still alive.

And that was Joshua and Caleb. All of those who had been born during the wilderness wandering had not been circumcised. And they had not observed the Passover, by the way, because we'll see that in just a moment.

Those things had not happened. Because they broke covenant with God at Kadesh Barnea. God had commanded them to go into the promised land. God had told them to go and take possession of the land.

[12 : 22] They refused to go into the land and they broke covenant. Now, God is faithful, right? God is patient because man's failures do not overrule God's purposes and plans.

God will do what he has determined he will do. And he's not on the timetable to do it. He wasn't caught off guard. We understand this. He is omniscient. He's omnipotent.

He's powerful enough to make it happen. But they had broken covenant, so God waited. He waited. And he commanded Joshua here.

Now, there's a lot of discussion because by this time they would have had bronze and iron. And why make flint knives? And maybe because it was, some say, well, maybe it was more sanitary. Some, maybe it was sharper. All we know is that God commanded him.

God gives very clear details, right? Maybe it was more accessible and he could have made more knives. We don't understand. Now, again, let's just look at this. From a military point of view, this makes no sense whatsoever. And we know this makes no sense whatsoever because we know that this very same strategy had been used to defeat some people at one point in the book of Genesis.

[13 : 25] To convince the men to be circumcised and go to them on the third day when they're sore and slay all the men. Remember that? Simeon and Levi did that very thing.

That was their idea. So they literally, as a military, were about to render themselves powerless for a number of days. Makes no sense.

Other than the fact that God commanded them to do it. Again, faithfulness is more important than reasoning. Because God says, this land is not your land until you are in a right relationship with me. The promises of God and even God bringing his people to the land were dependent upon the covenant relationship he had with his people. And they needed to renew that covenant because circumcision was a sign of the covenants.

And while uncircumcised, they are no longer walking in the benefits and underneath the symbol of that covenant relationship. It is for this reason that Moses was met on his way back to Egypt.

[14 : 38] And the Lord, the Bible says, intended to slay him because his children were not circumcised. Remember that? And his wife had to circumcise their children. Blood of the covenants.

It is the sign of the covenant relationship that God requires his people to enter into. So God says, first, stop. Don't always look at what may be possible.

And then secondly, let's restore our relationship with one another. God's faithfulness is not always a guarantee of a right relationship because God's people still had something they needed to do.

So they renew this covenant. Third, we see this pause is not only resisting opportunity and renewing a covenant.

Number three, they remember the past. Remember, they came in on the 10th day of the first month, which was the day in which they would choose the lamb for the Passover. God brought them in at the right time.

[15 : 39] God always does things at the right time. So he brought them in at the right time.

Circumcision would have rendered you very sore and powerless for at least three days. And we understand that more than that, possibly.

But on the fourth day, after their entrance, on the 14th day, the very evening of the 14th day, it says that they observed the Passover. First time they observed the Passover since they're at Mount Sinai. Now, mark this.

They observed the Passover for the first time as they are preparing to leave Egypt. And the first thing they do when they get into the promised land is observe the Passover.

This is the bookends. God brought them out in order to bring them in. He brought them out in order to bring them in. And in observation of the Passover, they would have had opportunity to look back and to remember the sparing that the blood of the lamb over the doorposts of the houses would have, when the death angel moved through the camp or moved through the land of Egypt, the sparing of their children and their redemption.

God says, the firstborn belong to me now. And there's this blood of redemption. And there's this reminder of God's faithfulness and goodness and kindness and his deliverance. And also his promises kept.

[17 : 00] Because by remembering the past, they would be renewed for the present and the future. There is this opportunity to stop and to be still and to recall just how great their deliverance was.

That God was, it says here, rolling away the reproaches of Egypt. That's why it's called Gilgal.

To roll away. He was removing that reproach. Now, no one really knows what that reproach was.

Some have presumed that the reproach was that which they were known as slaves in Egypt and how they were mocked and put down because they were nothing but slaves, nothing but slaves.

Some have presumed that maybe that reproach was the fact that they had wandered around and the Egyptians would say, well, you left us, but you've got nowhere to go for 38 years, right? You're

just walking in circles and all this.

But all we really know is that according to the scripture, that God finally got Egypt out of them. No longer are they former Egyptian slaves. Now they are a nation of Israel in the land of Canaan.

[18:13] God was removing that reproach. And it's at this Passover, this celebration of remembering what happened in the past and that circumcision now is leading them into the future.

And they recount what God did in faithfulness so that they can be renewed as they move forward in their own faith. That they are depending upon him, he who delivered them to be the one who raises them up victorious.

There is this pause. Because first things first, we need to make sure that we don't necessarily move forward in what looks to be the best thing, but we renew that covenant relationship.

We remind ourselves of God's deliverance and his faithfulness to us and the blood which covers us. And then finally, we see in this text the resources enjoyed.

Because it says the day after the celebration of the Passover, they ate for the first time of the produce of the ground. Some, I think, very accurately say that they eat very simple provisions.

[19:19] Unleavened bread, some charred grain, very simple meal. But they eat of the produce of the ground. And it says in the day after that, the manna ceased.

No longer was the manna there. Because, see, the God who provided the manna is also the God who provides the produce of the ground. The miraculous provision of the manna is replaced with the miraculous provision of the ground's crops.

This is what God has said. You will eat in a land flowing with milk and honey. So now they no longer are expecting this renewed provision each morning as they wake up and the manna is on the ground.

Now they are relying upon God's faithfulness of sending the rain so that they eat from the produce of the ground. Because it says that they eat from the land of Canaan for the rest of that year. A little bit more work involved in their part.

They had to actually gather it and collect it and prepare it and all those things. But sometimes God provides supernaturally in very natural ways. Because he who provided the manna is also he who provided the produce.

[20:31] And they're enjoying God's provisions in the land that God has prepared for them.

Because sometimes, sometimes the way God provides for us seems so ordinary to the outside world.

But whatever he has given us to enjoy is really the resources he has provided, not we. They may have found these things in the land.

But they are relying upon he who provided it for them to enjoy. See, we see this reality. That the first thing they needed to do when going into the promised land was to be still.

And to make sure their relationship with the Lord their God was where it should be. That they were in a right standing with him. The world was saying, hey, now is the time.

Move. Now is the opportunity. Everybody's hearts are melting. Now is the opportunity. Move forward. Go. And God is saying, first, make sure we're right.

[21:41] Make sure we are where we should be. And part of that was the renewing of the covenant. Remembering the past. And understanding these resources that God had given them to enjoy.

Then, then they moved forward. Because sometimes I believe God's people get a little ahead. We say, well, now is the opportunity. Let's go.

So scripture tells us to be still and know. Right? To be still and know. And that's what they did at Gilgal. They stopped. To us, it doesn't make a lot of sense. Because if I went in and I heard that my enemy was scared to death, now is the opportunity.

But they stopped. Because faithfulness with the Lord their God was more important than moving forward according to the world's standard.

And this is what we see in Joshua 5 verses 1 through 12. It was very quick tonight because we've got business to talk about. But I'm really excited because in the 13th verse we're introduced to the captain of the Lord's army.

[22:46] And as so many people say, and I kind of give you, I mean so many Bible scholars and biblical interpreters will say. That we find there that God doesn't come to take sides. He comes to take over. And Joshua's confronted with that reality.

