



"REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

KEEP CALM AND MARCH ON!

Marching through the Book of Joshua: Lesson 8

God called Joshua to lead His people into the Promised Land in chapter 1. In chapters 2-4, God was preparing them to enter that land. Now in chapter 5, God re-establishes two ordinances as final preparation before they actually move forward and take possession of Jericho. They had to be spiritually ready before they could claim their inheritance.

It's easy to read over this chapter and miss the significance behind what is happening. Before you begin, pray and ask the Holy Spirit to teach you all that He desires you to know. Ask Him to prepare your heart, making it fertile ground for the Word. And may His Word take root in your heart, bringing forth much fruit (Psalm 1:3).

First Day

1. Read Joshua chapter 5. What new facts do you find? Define any words that are unfamiliar to you.
2. What would you title the following sections?
 - a. 5:1
 - b. 5:2-9
 - c. 5:10-12
 - d. 5:13-15
3. Are there any repeated words, phrases, or thoughts?
4. What is the main thought of the chapter? What would you choose as the key verse?

5. Who would you say is the main character(s)?
6. What was the reaction of the Amorites and the Canaanites when they heard the Israelites had crossed over the Jordan?

The Amorites and Canaanites were probably very surprised that the Israelites were able to cross over the Jordan. Remember, the Jordan was at its fullest at this time. The enemies of Israel saw the Jordan as a natural defense for them, a protection against their foes. I'm sure they didn't expect them to cross the Jordan at the flood stage. This made them extremely fearful! They certainly underestimated God, didn't they?

We are reminded in Numbers 13:29 that the Amorites, the Hittites, and the Jebusites dwelt in the mountains, making them known as the "highlanders," while the Canaanites dwelt by the sea, along the banks of the Jordan, making them the "lowlanders." These were some of the tribes whose land was given to Israel by God. They were descendants of Canaan.

7. Who was Canaan and why was he cursed? Read Genesis 9:18-29.
8. By telling Israel to wipe out these people, was God being "mean" or "unjust"? Why or why not?

God told Abraham in Genesis 15:16 that his descendants would inherit Canaan, but not until the 4th generation, for "the iniquities of the Amorites was not yet complete."

God was being patient with the Canaanites, but when their sins reached their limit, God would use Abraham's descendants to bring judgment upon them. The Canaanites were being judged for their own sins, which included sexual sin and perversions (Leviticus 18:22-25), magic, divination, and other pagan practices (Deuteronomy 18:9-12). He wasn't using Israel to drive them out because of their own righteousness, but because of Canaan's own wickedness (Deuteronomy 9:4-5). God showed much patience with these pagan idolaters.

9. God's provision for His children still baffles people today. Have you ever seen someone's "heart melt" or be "gripped by fear" because of God's work in your life? Can you share with your group?

10. Have you ever underestimated the power of God in your own life? (Or should I say, how **often** do you underestimate Him?)

This ends our lesson for today. Tomorrow we will study the practice of circumcision and what it meant to the children of Israel, as well as to believers today. What is your "**Reason to Rejoice**"? Mine is that I don't have to be afraid of God, like the Canaanites. His plans for me are for good, not evil (Jeremiah 29:11). Isn't that a blessing?

Memory Verse of the Week: "Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy. And Joshua did so." **Joshua 5:15**

Second Day

Review your memory verse. Are you standing on holy ground?

1. Read Joshua 5:2-9.

2. What did God tell Joshua to do in verse 2 before he went any further?

3. How was he supposed to do it?

Flint is a very hard, compact, rock with sharp, cutting edges. Flint was the most common material used for edge tools and weapons, prior to the use of metals. It was noted for its hardness and peculiar sharpness of its edges when broken. Even after metal tools were in common use, stone implements were used for certain sacred purposes. Perhaps it is symbolic that the Israelites were circumcised with a rock, while true circumcision is done by Christ, who is our Rock.

4. What was the name of the place where this was done?
5. Why did they need to be circumcised? (verses 4-7)
6. When and why did God originally command them to be circumcised?
Read Genesis 17:5-14.
7. Did Abraham obey? (Genesis 17:23-25)
8. Was circumcision what saved them? Read Romans 4:1-12 for your answer.

Israel's circumcision marked a Jew as a Jew, but also marked the spiritual side of the covenant between Abraham and God. Circumcision was a cutting away of the physical flesh. This was to "mark" them as God's people. It was a sign that they belonged to Him and desired to live a life "separate" unto Him. We find the spiritual significance in Deuteronomy 10:16 and 30:6. God desired to circumcise their hearts, cutting away all their stubbornness, rebellion, and sin. God wanted them to not only mark their bodies, but their hearts as well.

Circumcision had not been performed since Israel left Egypt. Some believe that it was Israel's choice to reject that command from God, while most scholars believe that God Himself banned them from performing this ordinance. Since the "Exodus Generation" symbolized disobedience and rebellion, they possibly were not allowed to be marked as one of God's chosen people.

9. In light of Genesis 17:1-14, why do you think it is possible that God would not allow them to be circumcised?

Dale Davis said, **"The Exodus Generation were God's people, but yet were not. They remained objects of God's care and yet possessed no sign to show they were His."**

10. Why do you think circumcision was necessary before the Israelites could possess the land?

The Exodus Generation is described as circumcised, but unwilling to listen to the voice of God. Their children were uncircumcised, yet God raised them up. **"You can have all the marks of the people of God, but lack the response of the people of God."** (Dale Davis)

11. How would you explain the above statement?
12. Read Colossians 2:11-12 and Philippians 3:1-3. What does Paul mean by the "circumcision of Christ"? (Read also Romans 6:6)
13. Read Deuteronomy 30:6. What should be the result of circumcising your heart?
14. Is there anything that needs to be "cut away" in your heart so the Lord can have more of you?
15. Think about your life for a moment. Do you have the marks of a Christian, and more importantly, do you have the responses of a Christian?

Let's stop here for today. I pray that as we study God's Word, we would come to love God with our whole heart, soul, and strength! I pray that each day we would surrender more of ourselves to Him. After all, aren't we His property?

Third Day

Review your memory verse.

Yesterday we studied the meaning of circumcision. It is interesting that God told Joshua to circumcise his men, which is a painful process, right before they were to meet their enemies. I mean, it would take some time for the men to heal. What kind of military strategy was this? Didn't Joshua put the Israelites in jeopardy, or at least, at a disadvantage? What was Joshua thinking?

1. Read Joshua 5: 1-9 again.
2. Verse 6 tells us that "the Lord **swore** not to show them the land He **swore** to give them." Is God reneging on His promise?

God never contradicts Himself, or His Word. This verse simply tells us that one generation forfeited its share of the promise. Even man's unbelief cannot annul the promises of God.

3. Did Joshua hesitate to obey God's command?

I'm sure that circumcising the men did not seem like a smart thing to do at that moment because of the healing time involved. This could have given the enemies more time to prepare for the battle. We need to remember, like Joshua, that God's timing is perfect, even when it doesn't look very "practical" in our eyes.

4. Has God impressed something on your heart that doesn't look very "practical" to you? Maybe it doesn't seem like it could possibly be the right time? What lesson can we learn from Joshua about this?
5. What are some dangers of moving forward before God's time?

Ecclesiastes 3:11 tells us that God has made everything beautiful in its time. Ecclesiastes 3:1 says that there is a **time** for every purpose under Heaven. His **time** is the perfect **time**, no matter what **time** you think is the right **time**. (Got it?)

6. In verse 9, what did God say was accomplished?

In Joshua 5:9, the phrase "rolled away the reproach of Egypt" is very interesting. Most scholars believe that the Lord is referring to the ridicule by Egypt towards the children of Israel. Because of their failure to trust God at Kadesh Barnea, thus preventing them from entering the Promised Land, they were most likely subjected to tauntings and jeerings from the Egyptians. Twice Moses pleaded with God not to destroy the Israelites, because it would bring shame to God Himself, making it look like God couldn't keep His Word (Exodus 32:1-12, Numbers 14:11-14). Moses felt that God's reputation was at stake if people believed that He couldn't finish what He had started.

Now the reproach had been removed! They had entered the land! They had circumcised themselves, renewing their covenant with their God! Their enemies could no longer ridicule them.

7. As believers today, how is it possible to bring "the reproach of Egypt" on ourselves?

8. God's reputation is at stake in you. What do others think of Him as they observe your life?

Gilgal was a place of restoration for the children of Israel. God can restore us to fellowship with Him if we have been living under the reproach of the world. 1 John 1:9 says that, "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." If God is speaking to your heart in an area that you have been bringing Him shame, take this time to repent and ask Him to forgive you and cleanse your heart. Let's make our hearts right today.

9. How can we bring glory to God's name:
- as a family?
 - as a single?
 - as a wife?

We'll end here for today. Tomorrow we will study how the Israelites were once again allowed to celebrate Passover. That day must have been a wonderful "**Reason to Rejoice**"! How have you seen God work in your life today? Are you rejoicing?

Fourth Day

What's your memory verse?

- Read Joshua 5:10-12.
- The first month of the Jewish calendar is Nisan. What did the Israelites do on the:
 - 10th day? (Joshua 4:19)
 - 11th day? (Joshua 5:7)
 - 12th-13th day? (Joshua 5:8)
 - 14th day? (Joshua 5:10)
 - 15th day? (Joshua 5:11)
 - 16th day? (Joshua 5:12)

This is the third Passover ever celebrated by the Israelites. The first was observed in Egypt (Exodus 12:1-20). The second was observed before they left Mount Sinai (Numbers 9:1-14).

"For Israel, the Passover sacrifice and meal pointed backward toward the redemption from Egypt, and forward toward a full rest and redemption. When Jesus celebrated Passover before His death, He demonstrated how His own body and blood would be the sacrifice of the new covenant (Luke 22:14-20). In His crucifixion, He became the true Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7-8). Greek Christians call Easter "Pascha," from "Pesach," the Hebrew for Passover. Easter is the annual, and the Lord's supper is the most frequent, Christian celebration of the true Passover. Both feasts point back to the redemption of Calvary and forward toward the banquet in the fulfilled Kingdom of God (Luke 22:15-16, Revelation 19:9). Like Israel, we

celebrate in the midst of, and in preparation for, the battles of Canaan." (Joshua, LifeChange Series, NavPress)

3. Why didn't the Israelites celebrate Passover while in the wilderness? Read Exodus 12:48. Why is this significant?

4. On the 16th day of the month, the manna ceased. What was manna? Read Exodus 16, which describes how and why God gave manna to the children of Israel, then answer the following questions:
 - a. Why did they receive manna?
 - b. Where did they find it?
 - c. What was their reaction when they saw it?
 - d. How often were they supposed to gather it?
 - e. What did it look like?
 - f. What did it taste like?

5. Do you think they were excited to eat something else for a change? (I get tired of leftovers for two days ... shame on me!)

6. Why was the ceasing of manna significant for the Israelites? (Deuteronomy 8:2-10)

7. Did God stop providing for the children of Israel when He stopped the manna? What did they eat instead?

God provided for Israel in a supernatural way in the wilderness. Now God would supply their needs in a normal way, with ordinary means. Food was plentiful. Even though the provisions weren't supernatural, it was still GOD who was doing the providing. Often we only attribute it to God when He provides our needs in ways that are out of the ordinary. We need to be reminded to look for God's provisions in our everyday, normal occurrences of life.

Dale Davis, in his book, No Falling Words, said this: **“Most of God's gifts to people are not dazzling and gaudy, but wrapped in simple, brown paper.”**

8. Does God provide for you most often in a dazzling way or in a simple brown wrap? Explain your answer.

9. Often we overlook God's provisions for us because we simply aren't looking for them. **What can you do this week to help yourself make a conscious effort to acknowledge God's provisions daily?**

10. Take a few moments right now to consider God's daily provisions for you: food, clothing, shelter, etc. Write a short prayer to express your thankfulness to Him for all that He does.

Today we end with the restoration of the children of Israel. They had been circumcised, had celebrated the Passover, and were now ready to begin the battle. But God had one more lesson to teach Joshua before they could go. And, boy, what an important lesson that was!

Fifth Day

Write your verse by memory. Did you hide it in your heart?

Imagine with me for a minute our man Joshua, standing with his arms folded, looking out over the plains of Jericho. I bet he was trying to decide what the best military strategy would be in overtaking this mighty city. What was the best plan? When should he attack? Then suddenly, he sees someone opposite him. (I think I would have jumped about 6 feet!)

1. Read Joshua 5:13-15.

2. Who appeared to Joshua? (Was it a vision or a real appearance?)
3. From the question that he asked him, who did Joshua think this stranger was?
4. How did the stranger answer the question?

Who was this commander holding a sword? Some think that this was an angel of superior rank, as in Daniel 10:13, 20-21, 12:1. The army of the Lord refers to the angelic realm, sometimes called the "host" (1 Kings 22:19, Psalm 103:20-21). But most think this commander is a pre-incarnation appearance of Jesus Christ, or a "theophany." (An appearance of God to man, as in Genesis 18:1-8, 32:24-32; Daniel 3:25).

God often gave a specific revelation of Himself, and a promise, before some great crisis, temptation, or service (F.B. Meyer). Joshua obviously recognized Him as a representative of God, if not God Himself.

5. How did Joshua immediately respond? What does this reveal about Joshua's character?
6. What do you think was the purpose of this visit?
7. Who else was visited by God, 40 years earlier? Read Exodus 3:1-6. What are the similarities? The differences?

The Lord promised Joshua in chapter 1:9 that He would be with Him. Here God reminds Joshua that He keeps His promises. I believe that God also wanted to remind Joshua that it was not his battle, but God was the Commander in Chief. He would be the one that would lead the children of Israel into victory. He wasn't on Joshua's side, but Joshua was supposed to be on His side. Joshua accepted God's leadership and surrendered his all at the feet of His Lord, the captain of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10). We are

only "strong in the Lord, and the power of His might" (Ephesians 6:10).

There is a spiritual battle taking place all around us and we can't fight it in the flesh. 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 says that "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 ..." The purpose of this appearance, I believe, was not to give instruction, but to bring about reverence and submission to the Lord of hosts.

8. What did the Commander tell Joshua to do in verse 15? Why was this ground holy?

Warren Wiersbe said that, "Joshua was standing on heathen territory, yet because God was with him, he was standing on holy ground."

9. Do you ever think of yourself as standing on holy ground? How would that cause your behavior, attitudes, etc. to change?

Are you in God's will today? If so, you are walking on holy ground. You also have a holy calling, with a holy purpose. Knowing this should cause you to strive after personal holiness (1 Peter 1:16). Holy means to be "set apart." Would that describe you?

This place called Gilgal was a place of restoration, refreshment, and revelation from the Lord. It was at Gilgal that the "reproach of Egypt" was rolled away. Here Joshua met God alone, and once again surrendered his life to the Lord. It is so exciting to see God "roll away" the reproach in our life, restore us, provide refreshment for us, and give us revelation from His Word. I believe that we can go to Gilgal daily, as we spend time with Him in His Word. Our personal devotion time with Him is crucial to our relationship with Him. We are nothing without Him. We can do nothing without Him (John 15:5). The children of Israel often returned to Gilgal. How often are you spending time with Him?

10. What was the most important thing that God ministered to you in Joshua chapter 5? What changes in your life do you plan to make as a result?