

A Practical Study of JOSHUA

“The Path of Obedience Leads to Victory”

Study Number Five – Joshua 5:1-15

Let's start our study with the following passage of scripture:

Genesis 35:1-3

Then God said to Jacob, “Arise, go up to Bethel, and live there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau.” So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, “Put away the foreign gods which are among you, and purify yourselves, and change your garments; and let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and has been with me wherever I have gone.”

We're coming to the fifth chapter and this is the last chapter in the first part of the book. Remember we divided it into the **INVASION** of the land—chapters 1-5—and then the **POSSESSION** of the land in chapters 6-12. We're at a turning point in the study.

In this particular chapter there are going to be three things stand out:

1. the CIRCUMCISION,
2. the CELEBRATION of the Passover, and
3. a visitor from the COMMANDER of the army of the Lord.

Now what's happened in the first four chapters to bring us to where we are?

1. Chapter 1 it was the COMMISSIONING of Joshua—the Lord spoke, Joshua spoke and the people spoke.
2. Chapter 2 it was the SPYING EXPEDITION over to see the city of Jericho—and Rahab came into the story. She'll be back in chapter 6.
3. Chapter 3 we saw the CROSSING OF THE JORDAN—we called it the Jordan.
4. Chapter 4 we saw the TWO MEMORIALS—the rocks in the river and the rocks at Gilgal.

Those two memorials spoke:

Those in the river—of the DEATH OF CHRIST.

The ones in Gilgal—of HIS RESURRECTION.

The new life, the memorial of the new life we have in Jesus Christ.

We have called chapter 5—THE CONSECRATION.

There is no CONQUEST before CONSECRATION. Or if we want to put it another way:

CONSECRATION always comes before CONQUEST.

There was a little tract titled “You are Being Developed: A Darkroom Experience” and it says that God many times puts us through darkroom experiences to develop us more into the image of Jesus Christ.

This excerpt from *Streams in the Desert* really fit the thoughts that we’re going to be pursuing:

(Streams in the Desert by L. B. Cowman)

“He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.” (Mal. 3:3.)

Our Father, who seeks to perfect His saints in holiness knows the value of the refiner’s fire. It is with the most precious metals that the assayer takes the most pains, and subjects them to the hot fire, because such fires melt the metal, and only the molten mass releases its alloy or takes perfect its new form in the mould. *The old refiner never leaves his crucible, but sits down by it, lest there should be one excessive degree of heat to mar the metal. But as soon as he skims from the surface the last of the dross, and sees his own face reflected, he puts out the fire.* [Arthur T. Pierson.]

(October 29)

And then these words in poetic fashion:

(Streams in the Desert by L. B. Cowman)

*“He sat by a fire of seven-fold heat,
As He watched by the precious ore,
And closer He bent with a searching gaze
As He heated it more and more.
He knew He had ore that could stand the test,
And He wanted the finest gold
To mould as a crown for the King to wear,
Set with gems with a price untold.
So He laid our gold in the burning fire,
Tho’ we fain would have said [to] Him ‘Nay,’
And He watched the dross that we had not seen,
And it melted and passed away.
And the gold grew brighter and yet more bright,
But our eyes were so dim with tears,
We saw but the fire—not the Master’s hand,
And questioned with anxious fears,
Yet our gold shone out with a [brighter] glow,
As it mirrored a Form above,

That bent o’er the fire, tho’ unseen by us,
With a look of ineffable love.
Can we think that it pleases His loving heart
To cause us a [moment of] pain?
Ah, no! but He saw though [that] present cross*

*The bliss of eternal gain.
So He waited there with a watchful eye,
With a love that is strong and sure,
And His gold did not suffer a bit more heat,
Than was needed to make it pure.”*
(October 29)

In 1 Peter we read this:

1 Peter 1:6, 7

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

1 Peter 4:12, 13

Dear friends do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering as though something were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed.

Now to put the chapter in layman's terminology, we can call it:

CLEANING UP THE CLUTTER.

It's that closet that we hate to go to because it is a mass of all the miscellaneous, or that special place in the house where we store everything.

Before God is going to bless, the clutter has to be cleaned up, some things have to happen before they can go into the land. And so that's what's happening in our study. We've called it the CONSECRATION—let's get into it and see how that unfolds and relates to what we've had to say.

v. 1 Now when all the Amorite kings west of the Jordan and all the Canaanite kings along the coast heard how the Lord had dried up the Jordan before the Israelites until we had crossed over, their hearts melted and they no longer had the courage to face the Israelites.

“Now when all the Amorite kings west of the Jordan and all the Canaanite kings along the seacoast heard how the Lord had dried up the Jordan before the Israelites until we had crossed over, their hearts sank and they no longer had the courage to face the Israelites.”

First of all, the Amorite kings get upset. We would too if two and half million people invaded our territory. The Amorite kings have already had an experience on the east side. Heshbon and Og were the ones on the east side that were wiped out in order that the two and a half tribes could have their possession over there.

So now their anxieties and their fears have become reality. They hear of this invasion and they know that what's happened to their brothers on the other side is going to happen to them on this side. But even the news traveled some 50 miles away to the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. For we see, "all the Canaanite kings along the seacoast heard how the Lord had dried up the Jordan before the Israelites until we had crossed over."

"their hearts sank and they no longer had the courage to face the Israelites."

"their hearts sank"—what do we mean when we say somebody's "heart sank"?

We use that term to say they got discouraged. Or maybe they got demoralized, or they're defeated before the battle.

And for them this incredible happening has taken place and they just don't want to fight. If they'd have been smart, they really would have started singing "This land is your land" and high-tailing it out of there. We don't fight with God and win.

And if they'd have had a mass exodus they could have saved their lives, but they're entrenched. They're going to stay there and they're going to do battle.

What are the children of Israel thinking? In the last study when they got across the river there was sheer ecstasy. There was dancing all over the place and carrying on because they'd

been waiting all this time to get into their possession and now they're there.

What are they thinking right now when they get this news that everybody's heart sank and they're all demoralized? What do those 40,000 men from the two and a half tribes that left their family on the east bank and they're over here to fight think?

They're saying, "Joshua, get with the program! Let's go! The iron's hot! This is the moment to launch an all-out offensive! We have a bird's nest on the ground!" They're ready to throw in the towel. "We can get the land all at once—one big sweep Joshua! Come on, let's go!"

That's like us. We want to do it all the time don't we? And God just says, "Sit down. I want you to BE, not to DO. I want to work in your life first."

And it's hard for Joshua to back off from all the pressure that's put to him. And the old principle—when we're most eager to act is when we make the most pitiful mistake. Satan rushes men, God leads them. Just hold off. Let's just wait.

But there's another greater principle and it's recorded in the scripture. It always serves as a great source of irritation to believers who are learning to walk with God:

Isaiah 55:8, 9

My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith 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.

It's almost like chapter 5 is an ADD-ON—but when we get through we're going to see chapter 5 as an absolute ESSENTIAL before anything's going to take place in the land.

v. 2 At that time the Lord said to Joshua, “Make flint knives and circumcise the Israelites again.”

“At that time the Lord said to Joshua,”—pick up your swords and go to it boys! Is that what He said?

No, we're not going to do any cutting on the enemy until we do some cutting on the citizens. And the cutting on the citizens is an absolute essential requirement preliminary to going in and having any victory in the land.

“At that time the Lord said to Joshua, ‘Make flint knives and circumcise the Israelites again.’”

Alright. Now we have some things that we have to talk about.

The Lord, in essence, when He gives that command to him is saying, FIRST THINGS FIRST. We have to get right with God before He will ever bless.

Here's another one:

VICTORY comes as a result of OBEDIENCE.

See if we're experiencing victory it's probably due to some obedience. Because God entrusts the obedient heart with victory in life.

Why bring up the circumcision bit? Well, do we really understand circumcision? Do we know why it was instituted and how it all fits into the study and why the Lord would make an issue of it now that they're in the land?

Well here's a heavy passage—Genesis 17. Let's read a few verses at the time of the institution of the Abrahamic covenant. Now remember, the Abrahamic covenant involved two things:

1. It involved a SEED to two people who couldn't have a baby. And 25 years after the promise, Isaac was born.

And they are the seed. Out of Isaac has come this whole two and a half million people that are now standing here in the land—so the seed's there.

2. But the other part of it was the LAND OF CANAAN.

And now the whole covenant has been fulfilled. God has provided the seed for Abraham and now they're in the land.

But there's a problem. They don't bear the mark of the

covenant so they're not qualified—really—although they're standing in the land for the blessings of the land until this takes place.

Now listen to Genesis 17:

Genesis 17:1-14

Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be blameless. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly.” And Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I will make you the father of a multitude of nations. And I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come forth from you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. And I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; [That settles the Israeli-Arab conflict. It's still in vogue. The covenant is still intact.] and I will be their God.”

[But now, what happens when a person doesn't fulfill the requirements? Listen to what God says to him.]

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God said further to Abraham, “Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. And you shall be circumcised ... and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations...

It goes on to talk about a servant who's born in the house, a foreigner comes into the land—to come under the blessing of the Abrahamic covenant—this is the mark.

What happens when they don't? Genesis 17, the last phrase down in verse 14 says:

Genesis 17:14

that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.”

To be uncircumcised is to have broken the Abrahamic covenant and not to have come under the blessings of that and to qualify for it.

So now we're qualifying for the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant—it's just as simple as that.

What's that mean to us? Well that means:

Hebrews 4:12

The Word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword...

Why do we spend time studying the Word of God? So it cuts on Christians to get them ready to be fruitful.

And the Word of God is like a knife that circumcises the heart, that cuts away those things which are not necessary in our lives in order that we might be a more effective witness for Him. The Word of God does the divine surgery.

Hebrews 12:1

Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which does so easily beset us.

It's cutting away those things that make us not in a position of being blessed by God.

v. 3 So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the Israelites at Gibeath Haaraloth.

“So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the Israelites at Gibeath Haaraloth.”

That is a tough thing to tell all the Israelites, “Hey, this is what's going to happen before we're going to get to possess the land.”

And he had to do some tall talking. And then on top of that, he had to set up all these surgical clinics close to Gilgal at Gibeath Haaraloth—which is rightly named, “Hill of Foreskins.” And so that was the place where they put up all the clinics. Every male had to have his appointment for scheduled surgery as an outpatient. And they had to show up and go through the whole male population. It’s a rigorous right, it’s a painful ordeal, but God says that’s what is going to happen.

And so as a result of the surgery, they’re bringing themselves under the blessing of God.

There’s no longer the sensitivity of the Spirit of God and recognizing things which are wrong in our country anymore, and becoming exercised over those things which are wrong in our lives, and making them right.

Here are a few verses that make this applicable to us, and not just a Jewish right.

Deuteronomy 10:16

Circumcise then your heart, and stiffen no more.

In other words, “Don’t resist Me. Circumcise your heart. Become sensitive and tender again.”

Jeremiah 4:4

Circumcise yourselves to the Lord and remove the skin of your heart.

Romans 12:1, 2

I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice ...

Letting God cut on it.

How about John 15:1, 2? This is where it really gets down to where we live and the significance of the cutting.

John 15:1, 2

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine dresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes it away, [What is that? He cuts it off.] and every branch that bears fruit [guess what?] he prunes it that it may bear more fruit.

He cuts on it so that it can bear fruit.

Now we say, “I don’t know whether I want God cutting on me or not.” What does He cut? Colossian chapter 3—listen to some of the surgery that goes on in our lives as believers:

Colossians 3:5-11

Therefore, consider the members of your earthly body as dead

to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For on account of these things the wrath of God will come. And in them you also once walked when you were living in them. But now also, cut these things out: anger, rage, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices and put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the one who created him; ...

Those are the things that start being lopped off of our branches so that we might be fruitful to the glory of God.

v. 4 Now this is why he did so: All those who came out of Egypt—all the men of military age—died in the desert on the way after leaving Egypt.

“Now this is why he did so: All those who came out of Egypt—all the men of military age—died in the desert on the way after leaving Egypt.”

What does that say?

“this is why he did so: All those who came out of Egypt—all the men of military age—died in the desert on the way after leaving Egypt.”—They came out but they didn’t go in, see? And all of them died.

v. 5 All the people that came out had been circumcised, but all the people born in the desert during the

journey from Egypt had not.

“All the people that came out had been circumcised,”—isn’t that interesting?

All of them were under the Abrahamic covenant when they left Egypt—“but all the people born in the desert during the journey from Egypt had not.”

What’s that tell us? That tells us something we better watch out for. It’s awfully easy to surmise. It’s awfully easy to rationalize and it’s to become careless.

Who has been in the Word today? When we’re asked a question like that we immediately say, “I hope he doesn’t ask me to raise my hand.”

Why? We’re careless. And we’re saying by that lack of discipline and not being in the Word today, we’re in trouble.

They came out of there and the first little eight day old baby is born, and that guy says, “We better have him circumcised.”

“Oh we’re in the desert. We don’t have time for that kind of stuff! Let’s get on with it! That was a raunchy deal they did down there in Egypt! Forget it!”

And 40 years later we have the whole nation no longer experiencing the rite which puts them under the blessing of the land they’re going into. And the same thing happens to a

believer and it happens to unbelievers too. Unbelievers are always talking about, “My God’s really a good God. He’s a God of love. It’s no big deal. We don’t have to accept this Jesus stuff and all that and get too serious. Just hang in there and love your neighbor as yourself and be a good guy and just watch. When you get up there, God’s just going to sweep you in.” It’s rationalization.

And that same careless attitude pervades the Christian. What happens? Well we get up late one morning and so we don’t get to reading of the Word. And the next morning it’s easier than it was the morning before so pretty soon we haven’t read the Word for a month! Two months—six months—a year! And there was a while there when we were reading through the whole Bible and we were reading chapters every day. And boy we were on top of and so excited about the Lord, but now we’re way out in left field somewhere. We haven’t been in the Word for so long we have a callous heart.

Now what about our prayer life? Oh it’s just “I, me and my” now. We’re checking in with God when it’s panic city and we can’t find anybody else to listen. We have to talk to Him about our problems. How about our witness? Are we sharing our faith with anybody else?

We’re talking about something pretty personal, but we’ve probably all been there. We can get wandering around in the wilderness of carnality just like these Israelites have done and we can end up on the short end of the stick like this.

And Hebrews chapter 5 describes it—we become “dull of hearing.” (see Hebrews 5:11) We just don’t hear anything new and exciting because we haven’t heard for so long. And then we also get to that position of Revelation chapter 3 where Jesus describes it. We become “lukewarm, neither cold nor hot”— and we get out of it. (see Revelation 3:16)

It’s the same way with physical fitness. We miss a few days and it’s easy to miss a whole month. Pretty soon the old belly starts pushing out in the front and we’re in lousy shape and we’re running out of breath. And we’re saying, “How’d I get here? Well just because I missed running one day. Then I missed it for two days and three days and pretty soon it was a week and a month.” We continue to go that way and everything goes to pieces.

Our lives are hinged on that basic consistency. And when we break it and we don’t get back to it, we end up just like this. God has to make an issue of it at a critical time!

The enemy’s ready for them to take it, but they’re not ready to take the enemy because they’ve been careless in the wilderness. And some things have to happen now before they’re going to have the joy of going into the land.

Joshua makes a big issue out of this. There are several of these verses that talk about it here. It just seems like he keeps laboring the point. See verse 6?

v. 6 The Israelites had moved about in the desert forty

years until all the men who were of military age when they left Egypt had died, since they had not obeyed the Lord. For the Lord had sworn to them that they would not see the land that he had solemnly promised their fathers to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey.

“The Israelites had moved about in the desert forty years until all the men who were of military age when they left Egypt had died, since they had not obeyed the Lord. For the Lord had sworn to them that they would not see the land that he had solemnly promised their fathers to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey.”

What a sad, sober reminder. They didn't get what God had for them because they weren't obedient.

v. 7 So he raised up their sons in their place, and these were the ones Joshua circumcised. They were still uncircumcised because they had not been circumcised on the way.

“So he raised up their sons in their place, and these were the ones Joshua circumcised. They were still uncircumcised because they had not been circumcised on the way.”

No they just didn't do that.

v. 8 And after the whole nation had been circumcised, they remained where they were in camp until they

were healed.

“And after the whole nation had been circumcised, they remained where they were in camp until they were healed.”

Well the Lord just provided some down time for these guys to get well. And it had to hurt pretty bad.

The men in Israel right now can tell us that’s how it hurts and the Lord provides time for healing from their surgery before it’s time to go into the land.

Now notice verse 9—the result of their obedience.

v. 9 Then the Lord said to Joshua, “Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.” So the place has been called Gilgal to this day.

“Then the Lord said to Joshua, ‘Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.’ So the place has been called Gilgal to this day.”

Isn’t that great? Gilgal—“rolled away your reproach.”

They had their reproach rolled away at Gilgal. We had ours rolled away at Golgotha. When we come to Jesus and experience the cleansing of His blood there at Golgotha, the reproach is rolled away and the Lord’s response to the obedient heart is to begin to bless!

v. 10 On the evening of the fourteenth day of the month, while camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, the Israelites celebrated the Passover.

“On the evening of the fourteenth day of the month, while camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, the Israelites”—did what? They—“celebrated the Passover.”

They haven’t celebrated this either and they’re supposed to do that according to the Law—every year. On this very day—the fourteenth day of the first month—they’re to celebrate Passover. And during these 40 years in the wilderness they not only threw away the rite of circumcision, they didn’t bother to stop and celebrate the feast of the Passover. They let it all go!

That’s just the way it is. Satan gets a little wedge in and he gets us out of the Word, then he gets us out of prayer, then he gets us out of witnessing and he gets us away from the saints—all of our support personnel. And he gets in there and it’s like an infection he spreads. Here they hadn’t done this.

Leviticus chapter 23 told them in the Law they were to celebrate the Passover:

Leviticus 23:4-8

These are the appointed times of the Lord, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at the times appointed for them. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight

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is the Lord's Passover. [Very specific] Then on the fifteenth day of the same month there is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Lord; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work. But for seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the Lord. On the seventh day is a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work.

That's the Law and yet they hadn't done this and fulfilled it until now. The Lord rolled away their reproach and they're saying, "hey, we have to get back to this." And here they are celebrating the Passover.

At Passover the lamb's blood was shed and was put on the doorpost and the Israelites inside escaped the death of the firstborn as the death angel passed over. All the firstborn sons of the people in Egypt died. That's the celebration of the Passover.

v. 11 The day after the Passover, that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land: unleavened bread and roasted grain.

"The day after the Passover, that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land: unleavened bread and roasted grain."

Isn't that good? As soon as they get into the land then—like they're supposed to—on the day after the Passover, they eat the unleavened bread which they're supposed to eat for the whole week following the Passover. But now they're eating the

fruit and the food of the land.

Remember when they crossed the river, it said it's flood time at harvest time? The river was flooding so it's harvest time. They're getting over there, they're reaping some of the harvest already in the land.

v. 12 The manna stopped the day after they ate this food from the land; there was no longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate of the produce of Canaan.

“The manna stopped that day after they ate this food from the land; there was no longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate of the produce of Canaan.”

Charismatic brothers and sisters a lot of times really get on about this business of Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever. And they just hammer on this that the reason that we have to speak in tongues and do the things that the disciples and the apostles did was because Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever.

Here we've received three tremendous illustrations in the book of Joshua of the way God's changing His program. They were used to following the cloud weren't they? And the fire? Now what are they following? Remember the Ark is the middle of everything. They're watching the Ark and the Ark is the one that is the means of leading them. Where the Ark goes they go.

Okay, now what's happened?

As soon as they eat the first fruit of the land the manna stops. When natural means can make a provision we have no right to pray for a miracle. God ceases with supernatural provision when it can be made by natural means. The manna stops! God calls a halt to it.

“I didn't go out this morning to get mine. Did you go get yours? No! Because God has made provision in other ways for us.”

And that doesn't mean that we're any less a blessing than they were and God's provision for them on that occasion. That's the way He provided for them.

Now let's take another illustration. During the time of Christ Jesus was here, right? And they had Him in the flesh. Okay, how do we have Him? We have Him in the Spirit. He's here today. He's aware of what's going on. He's very real but we know Him spiritually because He's gone to get a place ready for us. It is not in the divine program for Him to be here in the flesh right now. We celebrate His birth, but He's not here now. He's gone.

And so we're no less for the fact that we are worshiping Him in spirit and in truth rather than having Him here in the flesh.

“The manna stopped.”

And the purpose of the manna is PAST, and so now it's time for them to eat off of the land.

v. 13 Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, “Are you for us or for our enemies?”

“Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, ‘Are you for us or for our enemies?’”

Now we come to the third thing.

1. The first was CIRCUMCISION.
2. The second was the PASSOVER.
3. And now it's VISIT FROM THE LORD.

That is in the right order. If we want to have a special visit from the Lord and a wonderful time with Him, we need to clean up the clutter in our life. Get back in the Word, get our prayer life going and we're going to sense the smile of God every time we close our eyes at night to go to bed. We're going to sense the reality of God's presence with us. He reveals Himself to the obedient heart.

And here He comes to see Joshua. What's Joshua doing out here? Well he's searching, he's scouting and he's seeking a way to get into Jericho. He's a good leader. A leader plans ahead. And he's out here—we can just see him.

What he did before he left Egypt is he checked out a whole bunch of books on warfare from Pharaoh's library and forgot to turn them in. He has them with him and he has them spread out there on the ground and he's drawing up maps and charts.

And he has all the latest means of warfare. He has ladders against the wall and people vaulting over the top and people digging underneath. He probably says to the angel of the Lord, "Come and look at my great plans! I have it all figured out. This is how we're going to take the city."

Joshua has to learn something. He has to learn something from the Lord that's very, very important. And that's why the Lord comes to have a little chat with him before He is going to allow any victory to take place in the land.

Here's a great verse that fits here. This is Nehemiah:

Nehemiah 2:11-18

So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days. And I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. I did not tell anyone what my God was putting into my mind to do for Jerusalem and there was no animal with me except the animal on which

I was riding. So I went out at night by the Valley Gate in the direction of the Dragon's Well and on to the Refuse Gate, inspecting the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were consumed by fire. Then I passed on to the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was no place for my mount to pass. So I went up at night by the ravine and inspected the wall. Then I entered the Valley Gate again and returned. And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; nor had I as yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the rest who did the work. Then I said to them, "You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem that we may no longer be a reproach." ...

He's out there scouting it out. And what needs to be done and he gets it all figured out before the time comes to actually initiate the program and proposal for the building of the wall. And that's exactly what Joshua's doing.

But somebody comes to visit. And the somebody who comes to visit is the ANGEL OF THE LORD GOD and Joshua's going to become aware of that.

Revelation 14:14-20

I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head, and a sharp sickle in His hand. And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the

cloud, “Put in your sickle and reap, because the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe.” And He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth; and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle. And another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, “Put in your sharp sickle, and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe.” And the angel swung his sickle to the earth, and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses’ bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles. ...

It is God doing the Judgment.

What we see here in Joshua chapter 5 is the same One that’s sitting on the cloud. This is Jesus Christ before He took human flesh. He is the pre-incarnate Christ, the messenger of the Lord.

Joshua says to Him:

“Are you for us or for our enemies?”

Now how does the Lord answer that? Look at that next verse. Some people don’t understand this when they read it, but it says:

v. 14 “Neither,” he replied, “but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.” Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, “What message does my Lord have for his servant?”

“Neither,’ he replied, ‘but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.’”

“Joshua, I have not come to choose sides but to take over. I am the commander of the army of the Lord. This is my battle. We’re going to do it my way, just like we did the circumcision bit earlier in the passage. It is going to be my plans Joshua. You can burn your books on Egyptian warfare and tear up all your plans because you’re not going to believe the plan I’m going to give you for taking this city.”

Just wait until the next study and we’ll get a load of that when we get into chapter 6.

Now notice what happens:

“Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, ‘What message does my Lord have for his servant?’”

v. 15 The commander of the Lord’s army replied, “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so.

“The commander of the Lord’s army replied, ‘Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy.’ And Joshua did so.”

He hurried. Know why? He was an understudy of Moses. And Moses probably told him a jillion times about the time he saw a burning bush out there and he went up and the burning bush spoke to him and said, “Get your shoes off man. You’re walking on holy ground.” And he fell on his face and had a meeting with the Lord.

And it’s exactly the same thing!

Take Exodus 3 and read it with this. The same language is being involved, and the same thing is happening.

Alan Redpath says it the best:

(Victorious Christian Living by Alan Redpath)

Surely this was the same One before whom a leper fell and worshiped in thanksgiving for having been cleansed. Surely this was none other than the Saviour at whose feet Peter fell in a fishing boat and acknowledged Him to be his Lord. He is the One of whom John tells us in the Revelation that He is “King of kings and Lord of lords.” Here is none other than Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, who has come at that moment to meet Joshua.

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This is the same One:

that met ABRAHAM at the Oaks of Mamre,

that met JACOB at Peniel,

that visited with GIDEON while he was thrashing out the wheat, and

He's the One who met MOSES in the burning bush,

Now He's the One who meets JOSHUA as they're getting ready to face the first battle.

The celestial commander comes and says exactly the same thing that had been said to Moses: "Now we're going to see what I can do."

What happens? Obedience issues in revelation. Isn't that great?

As we're obedient, we become more aware of the Lord Jesus Christ and His presence with us. If we don't feel very close to Him and His presence isn't very real to us—it's our fault not His.

The veil in between needs to be taken away and the obedient heart needs to respond. Throughout the rest of the Old Testament we find God constantly coming to say, "I'm taking

over.” And the people who have learned that lesson have the greatest victory.

Remember David in 1 Samuel 17? He had this sling and he walked out there with this big giant and he says what? “The battle is the Lord’s! I’m only His instrument here.”

Listen to 2 Chronicles 20:

2 Chronicles 20:15-18

“Listen, all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: thus says the Lord to you, ‘Do not fear or be dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God’s. Tomorrow go down against them. Behold, they will come up by the ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the valley in front of the wilderness of Jeruel. You need not fight in this battle; station yourselves, stand and see the salvation of the Lord on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.’ ...

2 Chronicles 32:7, 8

Be strong and courageous, do not fear or be [discouraged or] dismayed because of the king of Assyria, nor because of all the multitude which is with him; for the one with us is greater than the one with him. With him is the arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles.” ...

And then Deuteronomy 31, Moses said the same thing in his

farewell address:

Deuteronomy 31:5-8

The Lord will deliver them up before you, and you shall do to them according to all the commandment which I have commanded you. Be strong and courageous, don't be afraid or tremble at them, for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. ...

Revelation spells relief—R-E-L-I-E-F.

That's a relief! Moses is concerned! Two and a half million people, he has a walled city in front of him and he doesn't know what to do about possession of the land. And all of a sudden the Lord comes in and says, "Hey look, this is My deal! You know I never call you to anything but what I enable you."

What a relief! Just to be able to take Matthew 11:28 and 30 and listen to Jesus say:

"Come unto Me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I'll give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me for I'm meek and lowly of heart, and you shall find rest for your souls."

What a relief! What a glorious way to end this chapter in anticipation of the first battle that comes in our next study.

Here are lessons we get from our study:

Lesson #1: CLEANSING comes before CONQUEST.

Lesson #2: The Lord's ways are often different than our ways.

Lesson #3: If we are going to bear fruit as Christians, it is necessary for the Father to prune us.

And then here comes the big one—it's a question:

Lesson #4: Is there something that the Father wants to cut out of your life that you are resisting at this moment?

Oh let Him cut. Let Him have at it. We're missing so much of an opportunity to be fruitful.

Lesson #5: The Lord's response to obedience is to roll away our reproach.

Lesson #6: Cleaning up the clutter in our lives is critical in anticipation of usefulness.

God does not allow the bread of life to be broken with dirty hands and He doesn't give a drink of the water of life in dirty cups.

We want to be a vessel for Him to use.

Lesson #7: The miraculous is done away with when the provision can be made by natural means.

The miraculous is done away with when the provision can be made by natural means.

Understand that? As the manna stopped?

There's an awful lot of praying going on that is very meaningless chatter when the Lord says roll up our sleeves and make that provision. We're asking for a mighty miracle, that God gives us a bolt of lightning out of heaven so we can pass the exam. And God says, "Have you been studying faithfully?"

That could be reached by a natural means. And sometimes God just says, "Hey, you know, you take care of that. That could be done if you were disciplined and you gave yourself to that. Now quit praying for a miracle when you can take care of that and do it."

Lesson #8: Obedience is followed by revelation.

That's when the Lord reveals Himself to Joshua, after the obedience to the things He's asked.

Lesson #9: The Lord says, "I have come not to take sides but to take over."

Lesson #10: Obedience brings a REVELATION of our RESOURCES.

We have the Lord on our side to do the work that needs to be done.

Lesson #11: REVELATION spells RELIEF.

Lesson #12: Instant obedience is the safest policy in our relationship to God.

Well where do we find ourselves in this study? Is there a need for divine surgery? Is there a need for time in the Word again and for prayer to celebrate those special times we've had with the Lord? Or perhaps we're longing for Him to meet us in a special way and to minister to our needs.

Eugene H. Peterson in his book *Run With the Horses: The Quest for Life at Its Best* says:

(Run With the Horses: The Quest for Life at Its Best by Eugene H. Peterson)

We are practiced in pleading inadequacy in order to avoid living at the best that God calls us to. How tired the excuses sound:

I am only a youth.

I am only a housewife.

I am only a layman.

I am only a poor preacher.

I only have an eight grade education.

I don't have enough time.

I don't have enough training.
I don't have enough confidence.

or with Biblical precedence [with Moses]:

O my Lord, I am not eloquent ...

Too much is being asked of us. We cannot cope. We cannot manage. If we look at ourselves and are absolutely honest, we are always inadequate. Of course, we are not always honest. We fudge and cheat on the tests. We cover up a bit more. We bluff a bit there. We pretend to be more sure than we are.
(source unknown)

When are we going to really get down to business and let God begin to bless us because we're walking in obedience to Him and His Word? The more we do that, the more blessing He pours out upon our life.

Ron Lee Davis in *The Healing Choice* hit on it real well from his own experience. He says this:

(The Healing Choice by Ron Lee Davis)

The next day on the platform, as I awaited my turn to speak, I was filled with anxiety. My hands shook so badly I could hardly read my notes. I prayed that God would give me His peace, but no peace came. Then some words came to me through my conscience, just as though God were saying, "Ron, the reason you're so nervous is that you want to impress

people. I don't need you to impress these people. I need you to love them. Ron, I don't need a Grand Performance. I want your life to be an Act of Love."

That was a transforming moment for me. My inner obsession with obtaining praise and honor fell away like a weight. The message I shared that day was not much different from what I had planned to say, but the heart from which it flowed was beginning to be changed.

Yet my struggle is not ended. The apostle Paul, writing in Galatians 1:10, delves unerringly into my own crisis of self-acceptance with this question: "Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ." This is probably the most convicting portion of Scripture in all my life and ministry. I wrestle with the truth of Galatians 1:10 literally every day.

Today, virtually every time I get up to speak, I hear the words come back to my mind, "Not a Grand Performance, but an Act of Love."

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Read Psalm 32.

Be exercised over it because that's where David put his head together with the Lord. Some of those precious statements will be so special. He said:

Psalm 32:3-5

When I kept silent about my sin,

my bones waxed old or wasted away
Through my groaning all day long.
For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;
My vitality was drained away as with the fever-
heat of summer.
I acknowledged my sin to Thee,
And my iniquity I did not hide;
“I will confess my transgressions to the Lord”;
And Thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin.

He describes the blessing that comes because God cut away the things that needed to be cut away. And the disobedience was cleared up and forgiveness brought a restoration in the relationship.

Father, perhaps there's someone who has never received Christ. We pray that they'll trust You and accept you as their Lord and Savior. And for those of us who know You, keep on cutting. We thank You that as You do that good work as our loving heavenly Father. One of these days You will soon begin to see Your own reflection in the gold which is purified in the fire. And we'll rejoice as people begin to see the image of Christ in us. Please continue to do that good work for Your own glory and honor and that fruit might be born through our lives. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

A Practical Study of JOSHUA

“The Path of Obedience Leads to Victory”

Study Number Five – Joshua 5:1-15

NOTES

v. 1 Now when all the Amorite kings west of the Jordan and all the Canaanite kings along the coast heard how the Lord had dried up the Jordan before the Israelites until we had crossed over, their hearts melted and they no longer had the courage to face the Israelites.

v. 2 At that time the Lord said to Joshua, “Make flint knives and circumcise the Israelites again.”

v. 3 So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the Israelites at Gibeath Haaraloth.

v. 4 Now this is why he did so: All those who came out of Egypt—all the men of military age—died in the desert on the way after leaving Egypt.

v. 5 All the people that came out had been circumcised, but all the people born in the desert during the journey from Egypt had not.

v. 6 The Israelites had moved about in the desert forty years until all the men who were of military age when they left Egypt had died, since they had not obeyed the Lord. For the Lord had sworn to them that they would not see the land that he had solemnly promised their fathers to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey.

v. 7 So he raised up their sons in their place, and these were the ones Joshua circumcised. They were still uncircumcised because they had not been circumcised on the way.

v. 8 And after the whole nation had been circumcised, they remained where they were in camp until they were healed.

v. 9 Then the Lord said to Joshua, “Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.” So the place has been called Gilgal to this day.

v. 10 On the evening of the fourteenth day of the month, while camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, the Israelites celebrated the Passover.

v. 11 The day after the Passover, that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land: unleavened bread and roasted grain.

NOTES

v. 12 The manna stopped the day after they ate this food from the land; there was no longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate of the produce of Canaan.

v. 13 Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, “Are you for us or for our enemies?”

v. 14 “Neither,” he replied, “but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.” Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, “What message does my Lord have for his servant?”

v. 15 The commander of the Lord’s army replied, “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Joshua 5:1-15 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What happened to many of the residents in the land when they got the report of God’s working on behalf of Israel, according to verse 1?

3. What does the Lord command Joshua to do in verse 2?

4. Why did the Lord feel it was necessary for this to be done, according to verses 4-6?

5. What did the Israelites do, according to verse 10?

6. Describe what happened in verses 11 & 12.

7. What happens to Joshua in verses 13 & 14?

8. What is Joshua commanded to do, according to verse 15?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Cleansing comes before Conquest.

LESSON #2: The Lord's ways are often different than our ways.

LESSON #3: If we are going to bear fruit as Christians, it is necessary for the Father to prune us.

LESSON #4: Is there something that the Father wants to cut out of your life that you are resisting at this moment?

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