

## Live Strong. Facing Life with Faith

### The Victory of Faith/Week 4 Notes/Joshua 5 & 6

#### I. Preparing for God's Victory

Israel has crossed the flooded Jordan River. They are now on the west side of the Jordan, three miles from Jericho. Certainly, they are anticipating all that is ahead. Probably, the fighting men are ready for battle after the wonder of the Jordan River crossing. But remember, a life of trusting obedience is a new thing for this nation. God wants to continue moving them toward complete surrender to Him before moves them into the conflicts and the victories of the new land.

#### A. Ready to Renew (Joshua 5:1-5, 8-9)

For the Jew, circumcision had always be a physical mark to indicate a spiritual condition and relationship with God. It was a sign God introduced in Genesis 17 to signify His covenant with Abraham and Abraham's descendants. Other nations practiced circumcision, but only in Israel did it carry spiritual meaning. Over the centuries, the Jews came to trust in the mark itself instead of the relationship with God that it represented.

Joshua 5 is a passage about renewing their covenant with God. It is not a different covenant. This generation of Israelites was born in the desert during the 40 years of wandering. They had not been circumcised. The disobedience of their fathers had created a breach in their fellowship with God. Circumcision was act of obedience and renewal of their commitment to God. And in the act of circumcision, God is leading them to trust Him completely.

Think about it. The nation is inside the Promised Land. The enemy is just three miles down the road. And God is requiring the entire army of Israelite men to be incapacitated for 5-10 days. Wouldn't this exercise in renewal have been easier to do on the OTHER side of Jordan? Maybe. God, however, is taking Israel into a mature faith, a faith of complete trust and obedience. And while they are still and healing, God pours out His mercy on them. Verse 9 says, "*Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.*" *Reproach* means stigma, shame, contempt. From this day forward, the shame of slavery will not hang over them. The shame of disobedience in the desert will not accompany them. God has rolled it all away. The enemy will have no contempt for them because they see the greatness of Israel's God. God names the place they are camped Gilgal which means *to roll*. It is a verb, an action word. God is one who has rolled away any shame that lingers.

Oh what good news for us as well. We are under a new covenant and yet spiritually our hearts have been circumcised, the old cut away, the mark of Christ on our lives in the person of the Holy Spirit residing in us. (Colossians 2:11) Christ, through His death and resurrection has dealt with the penalty of sin (Colossians 2:13-14). Our past has been forgiven. There is no condemnation for those who trust Christ (Romans 8:1). Christ has rolled away the reproach of sin, we are holy and blameless before Him, clothed in His righteousness. Each day we humbly surrender ourselves to Christ, thankful that the penalty of sin has been paid, and living in obedience so the power of sin has no grip on our lives.

## **B. Ready to Remember (Joshua 5:10-12)**

While the men recuperated, the entire nation observed the Passover for the first time in 40 years. The Passover was a holy observance to remind them of God's deliverance from Egypt. They were to remember that night when the tenth plague, The Angel of Death, was poured out on Egypt. The Israelites were instructed to put the blood of a lamb on the doorposts of their house, and the angel, seeing the blood, would pass over the house. They were to roast the slain lamb, not breaking any bones and they were to eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, reminding them of the bitterness of slavery from which God is delivering them (Exodus 11-13).

Every aspect of the ancient Passover meal points us to Christ. We are under the blood of Christ, our salvation eternally protected. We have been *brought out* of slavery to sin and He leads us into a new life in Christ. For Israel and for us, a humble act of worship, remembering our salvation and the centrality of THE LAMB, refocuses us on the great grace of God. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Additionally, as Israel is healing in Joshua 5, they eat some of the produce of the new land. The next day the manna dries up, never to appear again. The manna would always remind them of the desert. And while it was God's provision in the wandering years, God has a new life full of abundance for them. The old has passed away and the new has come.

For us too. When we come into the family of God, there is a new and abundant life. 1 Corinthians 5:17 says, *"If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature, the old things passed away, behold new things have come."*

## **C. Ready to Respond (Joshua 5:13-15)**

Joshua is looking at Jericho. Evidently he is alone when he sees a man in battle array with sword drawn. Joshua is on high alert and asks the man if he is for Israel or for their enemies. The man identifies himself as the captain of the hosts (army) of the Lord. This is no ordinary man. This is the Lord Jesus.

Several times in the Old Testament, there is a sudden physical appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ. John 1:1 tells us Jesus has always been. He is eternal. When Jesus is born in Bethlehem, He becomes the incarnation of God. He is God with skin on. But Bethlehem is not the beginning of Jesus. He has always been and therefore shows up in the Old Testament. These appearances are *before*, or PRE incarnate (in the flesh). Theologians call these physical appearances a theophany.

Jesus appears to Joshua in the way that Joshua needs—He comes as the Commander in Chief. Joshua knows that God has not come to take sides, God has come to take over and in reverent response, Joshua bows in worship. Joshua understands that he is not in charge, God is in charge. And while Joshua will lead, he leads under the direct command of the Almighty. Joshua is completely surrendered to the Commander.

Over and over we are reminded that we can do nothing apart from Christ (John 15:5). We are also reminded that we cannot be successful in the battles and conflicts of life in our own strength. We must be equipped with the strength of Christ (Ephesians 6:10).

The battle was ahead for Joshua and Israel, but they were ready. They were surrendered and equipped for conflict, fully trusting in God. But there would be no sideline cheering. They must participate in the victory which God has promised. And so must we. We participate as we trust and obey.

## **II. Participating in God's Victory (Joshua 6)**

### **A. The Plan is the Lord's (Joshua 6:1-19)**

God always has a plan. For Israel, God's plan included dealing with the enemy—even before Israel engaged in battle. Joshua 5:1 and 6:1 tell us the enemy had no courage left. They were cowering in fear, knowing they were already defeated and ultimately doomed.

Dear one, God has dealt with our enemy. At Calvary, the enemy was dealt the death blow promised in Genesis 3:15. In His death and resurrection, Christ has secured victory over sin, death, and hell (Colossians 2:13-15, Ephesians 1:19-23). In God's sovereign plan, Satan and this world system operates with limited power. But be certain, they are operating today as defeated foes of God. God is in charge.

God has a strategy for battle. He tells Joshua exactly what Israel is to do. The plan is certainly unique, never again repeated in Scripture. The people are to silently march around the city of Jericho once a day for six days. The Ark of the Covenant carried by the priest accompanies them and the priests sound the shofar, ram's horn as they march around the city. On the seventh day they are to silently march around the city six times, on the seventh time around the priests are to give a long sound of the ram's horn. The people are to shout. The walls will fall. What an unusual plan, and yet we understand that God wanted their obedience even when they did not completely understand the ways of God. He wants the same from us.

- God's ways are not our ways
- His timing rarely lines up with ours (God is never late and rarely early)
- Accomplishing His plans has nothing to do with our strength, our ingenuity, or our abilities (Ephesians 6:10)

### **B. The Battle is the Lord's (Joshua 6:17-21)**

Doing battle God's way is always a matter of obedience. God had already promised victory (Joshua 6:2) so they are not fighting FOR victory...they are fighting FROM victory. They are not attacking a city. They are instead taking possession of what God has given them. Taking possession required their participation, with the understanding that God was totally and completely in charge. Two key commands are spelled out in verse 18 and 21.

- Keep yourselves from.. (verse 18)
- Utterly destroy... (verse 21)

The city was under the ban, meaning everything in the city belonged to the Lord and the Israelites were not to touch anything except the items that were to be put in the tabernacle treasury. The warning was to guard themselves from coveting the beautiful things they would see inside the city. In other words, KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF!

Additionally, they were to destroy every living thing in the city. (Except for Rahab the harlot and her family) Why such harsh instructions?

The Canaanites had rejected God. They had heard the same truth Rahab had heard and they rejected it. They were God's enemies. Their culture was filled with grotesque idolatry, child sacrifice, witchcraft, and evil. As a result, not only were their minds polluted, but their bodies were filled with disease (Deuteronomy 18:9-13). God did not want His people to imitate, intermarry, or cohabit with wickedness. Because there could be no compromise with sin, God said wipe them out. These were not innocent people. Everything about their way of life was detestable to Holy God and God would protect His people from the influence of the Canaanites.

Listen carefully! God has not changed. The Canaanites always represent sin and God still hates sin. He cannot look on it. He is Holy. We cannot ask the question, "Why would a loving God kill innocent people." They were not innocent. Our question needs to be, "How far will a loving God go to protect His own?"

Our greatest spiritual battles in the Christian life are with sin. This world is infected with sin and our sinful nature is drawn to the things of the world. Sin is as appealing as the beautiful things under the ban in Jericho. God says, "Keep yourselves from... so that sin does not have a grip on our lives (1 John 2:16). Like the Israelites, we must be surrendered to the Lord, trusting Him explicitly with unwavering obedience. We live this life in the strength and power of Christ but we must be on the alert, guarding ourselves from the seduction of sin. (Ephesians 5:15, 2 Thessalonians 5:21-22, 1 Peter 5:8) Satan hates God and he will try to harm the people God loves by enticing us to sin. But we must be firm in our faith—trusting God enough to obey Him. (1 Peter 5:9)

Likewise there can be no compromise with sin. We cannot rename sin so that it is more palatable. We cannot cohabit with sin. We cannot excuse sin. We cannot ignore sin. We cannot allow sin to gain a foothold in our lives. Instead we fight God's way. We surrender to Him and participate in the victorious Christian life through obedience (Romans 6:11-14). We are equipped to do this by the power of the Holy Spirit living within us (Ephesians 3:16-20). And we allow the Holy Spirit to use the Word of God to teach us, refocus us, correct us, convict us so that sin has no place in our lives (2 Timothy 3:16-17, Hebrews 4:12)

### **C. The Victory is the Lord's**

Jericho was demolished, not because Israel was a mighty army but because God is a mighty God. Dear one, only God can tear down the Jericho's in our lives. He designed us to live in His victory, but sin cannot be a part of that. He dealt with sin on Calvary but we must participate in the victory through obedience. Sin does not have to have a grip on our lives. We can live in freedom but freedom only comes by faith—trusting God enough to obey Him. 1 John 5:3-4 says, "faith is the victory that overcomes the world." Victory over the world comes as we surrender to the Commander in Chief, trusting Him completely, and obeying Him fully. This is where the victory lies—not in our strength, but His.