

Message #8**Joshua 5:1-12**

There is a principle that is seen in every successful organization and that is to be successful, you need “all” people working together to accomplish the objective. From the people at the bottom to the leader at the top, all people must operate as a unit. You cannot have traitors, or those who are insubordinate or those who are running around doing their own thing with their own agenda.

When we come to Joshua 5, we cannot help but notice the emphasis on “all.” That word shows up eight times in eight verses (v. **1(2x); 4(2x); 5(2x); 6, 8**). The word “all” (kal in Hebrew) is one that refers to the totality or the whole of something (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 396).

This is obviously a key word and a critical factor to this context. Clearly God wants us to understand that if a person, a church or a nation is to enter into the deep blessings of God and move forward for God, the whole or the totality of the individual, church or nation must be dedicated to that objective.

The point of these verses is clear:

BEFORE GOD WILL PERMIT TOTAL VICTORY TO HIS PEOPLE, ALL PEOPLE MUST BE UNITED AND FOCUSED ON REMEMBERING AND OBEYING THE WORD OF GOD AND MOVING FORWARD TO ACCOMPLISH HIS WILL.

At this point the entire nation Israel was in the Promised Land. They had miraculously crossed the Jordan. But now all were required to face some things and deal with some things so they could go deep into that land and accomplish everything God would want them to accomplish.

When a person believes on Jesus Christ, he becomes a child of God. But that person can, metaphorically speaking, sit on the banks of the Jordan for years and never go much further. Until one is willing to dedicate himself entirely and completely to obeying God’s Word, he/she will not go much further. But if one is willing to entirely and completely yield to God, God will take that believer deep into His blessings.

Now there are two main parts to these verses that comprise this part of the Joshua narrative:

PART #1 – Joshua records the response of all the Amorites and all Canaanites to Israel entering the land. **5:1**

Now the Amorites and the Canaanites were the two main political power houses who controlled the Promised Land. The Canaanites controlled the western side of the Promised Land by the sea and the Amorites controlled the eastern side of the Promised Land by the mountains. By mentioning both groups here, we learn that these two groups had possession of all land west of the Jordan.

When these two groups heard that God had dried up the waters of the Jordan so Israel could cross into their land, “their hearts melted and there was no spirit in them any longer.” Actually Rahab had told the spies that when God parted the Red Sea, it produced the same response (Josh. 2:11).

Now it is obvious that these Amorites and Canaanites were counting on the Jordan River to slow down or stop the Israelites. But their plan didn’t work. God shut down the Jordan (something no NBA team could ever do).

Notice that “all” the Amorite and “all” the Canaanite kings had the same reaction. They all realized they were in serious trouble. Their minds flashed back to Israel’s leaving Egypt and what God did to the Egyptians when He dried up the Red Sea. It is no wonder that they lost their courage. They realized God was coming at them and He was against them. They also realized to go against God means you lose.

One thing we do see here and that is God is able to change the minds and attitudes of even our strongest enemies to fear God and fear us.

There are two practical observations to make from this part of the narrative:

- 1) Even though their hearts melted and even though they lost their spirit and even though they knew they were about to face the power of God, **they would not and did not willingly submit or surrender.**
- 2) Even though the land was ripe for the taking, God would not permit Israel to take it until they took care of some things.

The stage is set for a tremendous conquering and victory, which to this day has not been completely accomplished; but before any of it could begin, Israel needed to take care of some personal and practical matters.

Do not expect your enemies to willingly submit to the will of God when they know you are presenting and demonstrating the true will and power of God. Most people do not willingly submit themselves to the will of God.

PART #2 – Joshua gives the prerequisites of God for Israel conquering the land. **5:2-12**

The Amorites and the Canaanites were afraid, but before God would permit victory to His people, there were three prerequisites that they needed to meet:

Prerequisite #1 - Before Israel could conquer the land all must be circumcised with a flint knife.
5:2-8

Now keep in mind that this is a key preparation moment for an upcoming attack on Jericho.

Now to enter a foreign land and to ask your entire military to be circumcised, is putting the nation at great risk because you are going to, as Dr. Gangel said, “incapacitate the entire army.” Here you are in the Promised Land, very near an enemy city Jericho, and your military is down for a few days because you have circumcised all the men. **But you see the real risk in survival is not the enemy; the real risk is not doing the will of God.**

It is true that this would make them vulnerable to the enemy, but they are not vulnerable when they are carrying out the Word of God because they have God’s protection and blessing.

Now it is specifically stated that this must be carried out by a “flint knife.” We might wonder what is the significance of this. For one thing, this was the same kind of knife that was used to circumcise Moses (Ex. 4:25). Flint knives were knives made from stone, not iron or steel. According to William Gesenius, this word “flint” not only refers to a knife made of stone, but also a knife that is very sharp (*Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 706).

Now to circumcise all males, many knives would need to be made and used. So apparently there were enough of these stones in the area that would make this possible. It is interesting that flint knives are still considered to be some of the best knives that are made. They are better than steel because they do not need as much sharpening if you are using it on skin. They are actually very expensive. A good flint knife will easily cost more than \$100.

Now the reason why it was necessary to circumcise the men was because all who had been circumcised had died in the wilderness (**5:4-5**). For forty years the children of Israel had wandered in the wilderness and during this time children were born who had not been circumcised.

Now circumcision was an inspired and important sign of the covenant between God and Israel and it was specifically connected to her receiving her Promised Land (Gen. 17:7-14). This was a covenantal Israeli sign that God initially gave to Abraham.

In the course of the years of wandering, Israel totally forgot about circumcision. An indifference or apathy existed among the fathers and the children were not circumcised. This apathy was precisely that which cost their Fathers the Promised Land. Even though the people just forgot about this, God had not.

When the children of Israel obeyed God, **verse 9** says God “rolled away” the reproach of Egypt and the place of circumcision was called Gilgal, which comes from a Hebrew word that means to “roll away.”

The reproach of Egypt was that Egypt mocked Israel saying God had brought them out of Egypt to slay them in the mountain (Ex. 32:12). The Egyptians and probably most of the rest of the world mocked Israel for not having taken the land. But that mockery would all stop here. Israel’s decision to start obeying in this circumcision matter would mean that God would do a powerful thing against these mockers.

There are five observations we want to make:

- 1) Just because we forget what God's Word says doesn't mean God forgets what His Word says. God does not forget one point of His Word in the O.T. or the N.T..
- 2) Even though one generation had neglected the responsibility, God saw to it that the next generation was brought face to face with their responsibility.
- 3) Circumcision with a sharp knife was a necessary prelude to going deep into the blessings of God. Circumcision physically meant the removal of the skin of a male. Metaphorically it speaks of a heart that is pure and right before God (Deut. 10:16; 30:6).

The Apostle Paul picked up on this metaphor in the book of Colossians (2:11). In that context he speaks of getting rid of certain things (Col. 3:5-10). Dr. Ironside said that every believer must deal unsparingly with any of these things.

Until a believer is willing to pursue Biblical purity and get things out of his or her life, he/she will not grow deep into the blessings of God. Each person and each church is responsible to take a sharp knife and, spiritually speaking, cut out things of the flesh. We may forget about certain fleshly things, but God doesn't and He will not give great victory until those flesh things are gone.

- 4) Perhaps you have been mocked for some failures in your life as a believer. You make a decision to start doing what God's Word wants you to do and God will roll away your reproach.
- 5) Our greatest hindrance to accomplishing everything for God is not our enemies; it is our obedience.

Prerequisite #2 - Before Israel could conquer the land all must partake of the Passover.
5:10-11a

Prior to this moment, Israel had celebrated the Passover two other times:

- 1) Before being delivered from Egypt (Ex. 12:1-28).
- 2) Before leaving Mt. Sinai after coming out of the land of Egypt (Num. 9:1-5).

There is no evidence that she celebrated the Passover again for the next 39 years after this one.

Now she was to celebrate this a third time before leaving Gilgal to conquer the Promised Land (Josh. 5:10-11a).

We know from Joshua 4:19 that the people came from the Jordan on the 10th of the first month. We know from Exodus 12:3 that this was the date the preparation was to begin. We also know that the animal is to be killed on the 14th day of the month (Ex. 12:6), which is precisely the day the Passover was celebrated in Joshua (Josh. 5:10). God had the children of Israel at the exact spot He wanted them to be at the exact time.

They were on God's clock and before battle, they needed to get their focus on God and they needed to worship God.

We may make two observations:

- 1) God demands precise conformity to His Word before we receive great blessings.
- 2) Conquering or accomplishing anything for God is due to the shed blood of the sacrifice.

Prerequisite #3 - Before Israel could conquer the land all partake of the blessings of the land.
5:11b-12

For nearly 40 years God has supplied manna to this nation, even when the nation didn't want it (Ex. 16:4-5). For the first time, Israel was on the right side of the Jordan and one of the things God promised was that when they were in the Promised Land they would find a land flowing with milk and honey and would be able to eat a feast there (Ex. 13:5-7).

Israel was now in the land and she was now able to enjoy some of the blessings even before the major conquering began.

The God who had saved her was the God who would provide for her.

When Israel crossed the Jordan with a focus on God's Word and obeying it, the blessings started.