

Studies in the Book of Joshua
Lesson 4 - Joshua 5:1-12
The Abundant Life
Final Preparations

The Jews were no sooner safe on the other side than God commanded them to receive the mark of the covenant, circumcision. Collectively as a nation they had gone through the experience of “death” in crossing the river. Now they were to apply that “death to self” individually.

Throughout the Bible, physical circumcision is always a picture of a spiritual truth. Unfortunately, the Jews made the physical rite more important than the spiritual truth it taught. Circumcision pictures putting off that which is sinful, and in the New Testament it illustrates putting off the “*old man*” of the flesh. It is not enough for me to say, “I died with Christ”; I must make this truth practical in my daily life by “*putting to death*” the deeds of the flesh. The Old Testament Jew put off but a small portion of his flesh. Through Christ, however, the New Testament Christian has put off “the body of the sins of the flesh.” This operation at Gilgal, then, is an illustration of the truth that each believer must live “*crucified with Christ.*”

The Jewish males had not received this mark of the covenant during their years of wandering in the wilderness, and for a very good reason: their unbelief had temporarily suspended their covenant relationship with God. When they refused to enter Canaan because of their unbelief, God “*gave them up*” to years of wandering until the old generation died. Now the new generation was to receive the mark of the covenant. Their unbelief did not glorify God.

The new generation crossed the Jordan, but they did not immediately attack Jericho. Many of today’s Christians would have rushed right into battle! But God knew that His people needed to be prepared spiritually for the battle that lay ahead, so He caused them to wait and to rest. While waiting, they celebrated the Passover. It had been forty years before when the nation was delivered from Egypt on that first Passover night. The main lesson is clear: there can be no conquest without death to self (crossing the Jordan) and identification with Christ’s resurrection (the two memorials of stone). Before the Jews could get victory over the enemy, they had to experience victory over sin and self.

1. What did the Amorite and Canaanite kings hear about the God of Israel?
(5:1)

2. What was the last thing the Israelites had to do before they could enter the Promised Land?

3. For what reasons was it necessary to circumcise the Israelites again?
(5:4-7)

4. What does this passage reveal about the expectations the Israelites had about the Promised Land? (5:6)

5. How did the Lord respond to the Israelites' obedience to His command to be circumcised? What issue was reconciled through the circumcision of the Israelites?

6. How was the Israelites' celebration significant in light of what they had just done? (5:10)

7. For what reason had the manna stopped appearing for the Israelites?

8. What do the actions of Joshua in this passage teach us about submission and obedience?

9. What does this passage show us about the reliability of God's promises?

10. How do you think the Israelites felt about their relationship with the Lord while they were wandering in the desert?

11. Circumcision, the Passover, and eating from the land were the Israelites final preparation before confronting the Canaanites. Summarize what these events should have taught and accomplished for the people.

12. What does 5:1-12 teach you about God's nature and character? How is Christ for us like both manna and the fruit of the promised land?

The Power is in the Word

Jon Courson

Then the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land; and the children of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate the food of the land of Canaan that year. Joshua 5:12

It is interesting to me that it was in the Promised Land, a picture of the Spirit-filled life, that the miracle of manna ceased. If there was ever going to be manna from heaven, I would think it would be when we're Spirit-filled, when we're moving in the arena of the miraculous, when we have the anointing of the Holy Ghost. But this passage tells me differently, for when the Israelites were in the wilderness, which speaks of carnality and dryness, miracles abounded. But now that they're in the Promised Land, the manna stops.

In the Azusa Street Revival of the early 1900s, during which there was a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the leader of the movement prophesied that three things would cause the movement of the Spirit to be quenched: more attention given to the Holy Spirit than to Jesus Christ, more attention given to praise than to prayer, and more attention given to the gifts of the Spirit than the fruit of the Spirit.

When they were released from Egypt and as they wandered in the wilderness, the children of Israel saw more signs and wonders than any other group of people in history. Yet it was unbelief that kept them from entering the Promised Land (Hebrews 3:19) because faith doesn't come through seeing miracles. It comes from hearing the Word. Therefore, the new generation would eat the formidable fruit produced in the land of God's promise rather than the manna of the miraculous.