

Joshua 1- 5: Preparations to Take the Land of Canaan

INTRODUCTION.

- A. When we finished our study of Deuteronomy, we left off with the death of Moses and the children of Israel on the verge of taking the land of Canaan. God had passed the torch of leadership from Moses to Joshua, the son of Nun.
- B. The Book of Joshua picks up with the Israelites camped out to the east of the Jordan river. This book is the first of twelve books dealing with the history of the Israelites upon taking the land of Canaan. The central figure in the book of Joshua is Joshua, the son of Nun.
- C. The book of Joshua covers a span of approximately 15 years. It ends with Joshua's death at the age of 110 years.

I. GOD APPOINTS JOSHUA TO LEAD THE ISRAELITES. (1:1-18)

- A. After the death of Moses, the Lord commanded Joshua to lead the Israelites across the river Jordan. (1:1-9)
 - 1. The Lord told Joshua, *“Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.”* (Joshua 1:3, KJV)
 - 2. The boundaries of their land was to be as follows: (vs 4)
 - a. *“From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates,”*
 - b. *“all the land of the Hittites,”*
 - c. *“and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.”* (KJV)
 - 3. The Lord commanded Joshua to be strong and courageous because the Lord would deliver the Israelites as long as they abided by the Law commanded them by Moses. (vs 6-9)
- B. Joshua began the preparations to enter Canaan. (1:10-15)
 - 1. Joshua sent the word for the Israelites to prepare to cross over Jordan in three days. (vs 10-11)
 - 2. Joshua reminded the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh of their promise to Moses. These tribes had promise to help conquer the land of Canaan although they had already settled on the east side of the Jordan river. (vs 12-15)
- C. The people of Israel agreed to follow Joshua just as they had followed Moses. (1:16-

18)

II. JOSHUA SENDS TWO SPIES INTO THE LAND OF CANAAN. (2:1-24)

- A. Joshua sent two spies to the city of Jericho. The spies found lodging with a harlot named Rahab who protected their presence from the king. (2:1-7)
- B. Rahab asked the spies to spare her family since she had hid them from the King. The spies agreed to the request. (2:8-14)
- C. Rahab helped the spies to escape by lowering them out of her window. The spies told Rahab to tie a scarlet cord to her window so that the Israelites would know which household to spare. Those of her household had to be in the house in order to be spared. (2:15-21)
- D. The two spies hid for three days in the mountains and then returned to Joshua and the camp of the Israelites. (2:22-24)

III. THE CROSSING OF THE JORDAN AND THE MEMORIAL. (3:1 - 4:24)

- A. Instructions for crossing the Jordan. (3:1-13)
 - 1. After three days, the officers went through the camp giving the Israelites the following commands:
 - a. When the people saw the ark of the covenant and the priests, the Levites, they were to go and follow them. (vs 3)
 - b. The people were to follow 2000 cubits (3000 feet, 1000 yards, 10 football fields) behind the priests and the ark of the covenant. (vs 4)
 - c. The people were not to go near the ark of the covenant. Since their path would take them through new area for, the Israelites were to follow far behind. (vs 4)
 - 2. Joshua commanded the people to sanctify themselves. Joshua also gave the order for the priests to take up the ark and to pass before the people. (vs 5-6)
 - 3. The Lord told Joshua that He would magnify Joshua before the people. (vs 7)
 - 4. The Lord told Joshua that the priests were to carry the ark to the Jordan river and they were to stand still in the Jordan. (vs 8)
 - 5. Joshua called all Israel together and told them that God was going to deliver the land of Canaan into their hands. Joshua explained that the ark of the covenant would pass before the people to the river Jordan. Once the feet of the priests bearing the ark rested in the Jordan, the water of Jordan would stop flowing and would separate, leaving the ground dry. (vs 9-13)

- B. The Israelites left their camp to follow the priests who bore the ark of the covenant. Just as God has promised, when the priests stepped into the Jordan river, the waters that came down from up stream stood still, cutting off the flow of the Jordan river. All of Israel crossed over on dry ground. (3:14-17)
- C. After all the people had crossed through the Jordan, the Lord told Joshua to select twelve men, one from every tribe, to gather twelve stones from the Jordan. These twelve men were to carry these stones and leave them at their new camp. These twelve stones were to serve as a memorial of the Lord cutting off the river Jordan so that Israel could cross over. (4:1-9)
- D. After all the people of Israel had crossed over, including the men of Reuben, the men of Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh, some forty thousand prepared for war, the priests were told to come out of the Jordan river. Once the priests' feet left the water, the Lord returned the flow of the Jordan river. (4:10-18)
- E. After the people came up from the Jordan river, "they camped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho." Joshua set the twelve stones up in Gilgal. (4:19-24)

IV. CIRCUMCISION IS PRACTICED / THE COMMANDER OF THE LORD APPEARS. (5:1-15)

- A. The news of the parting of the Jordan river for the Israelites caused the hearts of the inhabitants of the land of Canaan to melt with fear. (5:1)
- B. At this time, the Lord commanded Joshua to make flint knives and "circumcise the sons of Israel again the second time." (5:2-9)
 - 1. All the men who had left Egypt, but had died in the wilderness, had been circumcised. However, all the men born in the wilderness had not been circumcised. (vs 2-6)
 - 2. Joshua circumcised the men who were born in the wilderness. Once the circumcisions were finished, the men stayed in "their places in the camp till they were healed." (vs 7-9)
- C. The Israelites camped in Gilgal, kept the Passover, and they ate of the produce of the land. The manna stopped "on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land." (5:10-12)
- D. While by Jericho, Joshua saw a Man with His sword drawn. When asked by Joshua who He was for, the Man replied that he was the "Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come." The Commander of the army of the Lord told Joshua to remove his sandal for he was standing on holy ground. (5:13-15)

V. LESSONS LEARNED.

- A. Soldiers of God should always be strong and courageous. (1:6-9)

1. The Lord told Joshua to be strong and of good courage. (1:6-9)
 2. As soldiers of Christ, we should also be strong and of good courage. (Ephesians 6:10-18)
- B. You never can tell who will choose to believe in God. (Joshua 2:1-24)
1. According to the Biblical text, Rahab was a harlot. Despite her status and occupation, Rahab had heard enough about the Israelites and their God to know in whom she should believe. (2:9-11 emph. verse 11 - “. . . *for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.*”)
 2. We should never be judgmental regarding who we try to introduce to God. A person’s race, economic standing, political position, occupation, looks, etc. should never hinder us from attempting to tell them about Jesus Christ and salvation. Consider the example of the apostles:
 - a. Matthew was a tax collector - a friend of the Roman government.
 - b. Peter was a simple fisher man.
 - c. Simon the zealot belonged to an extremist group who stood opposed to the Roman government.
 - d. Let us not forget Paul who persecuted Christians.
 - e. All of the above were chosen by Jesus Christ.
- C. We are to be led by our covenant with God.
1. The Israelites were to follow the ark of the covenant. The ark of the covenant contained a copy of God’s covenant with the Israelites. (3:3-4)
 2. Christians are under the new covenant of Jesus Christ. They are to follow after Him who bears the new covenant of salvation, Jesus Christ.
 - a. Hebrews 8:7-13
 - b. Hebrews 9:11-15
- D. We should follow our Commander.
1. Joshua saw the Commander of the Lord’s army. (5:13-15) The Hebrew word translated as Commander (Captain, KJV) is *sar* {*sar*} which means “1) prince, ruler, leader, chief, chieftain, official, captain.”
 2. Christians have a great Commander, Jesus Christ.
 - a. Jesus is our Prince. (Acts 5:31)
 - b. Jesus is our Ruler. (Matthew 2:5-6 - prophecy from Micah 5:2)

- c. Jesus is our Leader. (Revelation 7:16-17 - Jesus leads us to the living fountains of waters.)
- d. Jesus is our Lord and King. (I Timothy 6:12-16 - emph. on verse 15.)

CONCLUSION.

- A. While there are many lessons to be learned from the life of Joshua, let us remember the once covered in today's lesson.
 - 1. Soldiers of God should always be strong and courageous.
 - 2. You never can tell who will choose to believe in God.
 - 3. We are to be led by our covenant with God.
 - 4. We should follow our Commander.
- B. If you are not a Christian, please give strong consideration to joining the Lord's people and the Lord's army today.

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