

Joshua 5:1-12

Circumcision and Passover

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Read Joshua 5:1-12

Remembering the structure of the Book of Joshua CROSS TAKE DIVIDE
SERVE

Elements of the story The reaction of the inhabitants of the land to the Israel's crossing the Jordan river – Circumcision – The reason for circumcision – The Passover

- Verse 1 reveals the reaction of the people living in the land to the miraculous crossing of the Jordan river
 1. The news about the miraculous crossing spread from the West Bank of the Jordan river (Amorites) all the way west to the Mediterranean Sea (Canaanites) – it does have global significance
 2. The kings of the Amorites and the kings of the Canaanites are not afraid of Israel; they are afraid of God of Israel
 3. Another confirmation of God fulfilling His promise regarding the land (compare with Rahab's report about the effects of the mighty acts of God)
 4. Here we have a reaction to the mighty works of God by the sinful, rebellious people
 5. The LORD God subdues the enemy while Israel remains *strong and courageous*

- With their enemies smitten by the fear of the Holy God we would expect an immediate military attack. But the LORD God, who is in command all the time, has other plans
- The verse does not refer to the military strategy, it reveals God's provision of safety and peace for the people of Israel on the west bank of the Jordan river
- The rest of the narrative speaks about God restoring His people by the circumcision and the Passover (covenant renewal)

Circumcision The LORD God commands Joshua to circumcise all the sons of Israel

- From the military point of view this is the last thing one should do – it incapacitates the army rather than strengthens it.
- Carrying through the command of circumcision by Joshua and the sons of Israel is a sign of great trust in the LORD God and faithful obedience to His covenantal stipulations
- They certainly knew that, humanly speaking, they would be vulnerable for a period of time (see Genesis 34:25)
- Yet, they trusted in the protection of the living God who was among them, whose mighty power they just witnessed during the crossing of Jordan
- There were only 2 men who were circumcised (Joshua and Caleb); earlier in 4:13 we are given the number: 40000 "ready for war"
- "The procedure" took time; then there was time needed for healing
- The circumcision took place at *Gibeath-Haaralot* which translates to *the hill of the foreskins*
- The text then gives us a detailed reason why there was a need for circumcision:
 1. The generation of the people of Israel that came out of Egypt (who were circumcised) perished in the wilderness as the result of God's judgment for their lack of faith and rebellion at Kadesh Barnea (Numbers 14:28-35)

2. Their lack of faith and rebellion was confirmed in their disobedience toward the stipulations of the Abrahamic covenant – they did not circumcise their sons
3. So this generation of the sons of Israel had to be circumcised
4. God command to Joshua to circumcise the sons of Israel *a second time* refers to the second generation
5. There is an interesting contrast provided in the text that additionally helps us to see the status of the Israelites and the need for circumcision:
 - In verse 4 we read that “all the males of *the people* who came out of Egypt” – Hebrew “am”
 - In verse 6 we read “for the people of Israel (Hebrew *sons of Israel*) walked forty years in the wilderness until all nation (Hebrew *goy*), the men of war who came out of Egypt...”
 - In verse 8 we read “when the circumcising of the whole nation (Hebrew *goy*) was finished...”
 - We have a transition from the *people of God* to the *nation* and back to the *people of God*
6. It is in the light of this transition from disobedient, rebellious, covenant breaking nation into again the people of God that we should understand God’s words: *Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you*
7. Appropriately the place where Israel heard God’s declaration of the restoration of the people of Israel was named *Gilgal* – which sound like the Hebrew word for *rolling*
8. The *reproach of Egypt* would refer to the generation that was delivered out of Egypt and yet had shown their lack of faith by wanting to return to Egypt, scorning the promises of the LORD God
9. The judgment on the faithless generation of Israel is complete. The children of Israel are renewed, cleansed and ready to receive the gift of the Promised Land, the land flowing with milk and honey.

10. There is yet another message conveyed in the verses 4-8:
 - By reminding the present generation the reason why their fathers perished in the wilderness, the passage provides a warning against disobedience
 - The possession of the land is conditioned on obedience to the Law (Deut. 28:15-68, especially 63 and 68)
 - Obedience to the Law was another reason for the circumcision – to make the present generation ready for the inheritance of the Promised Land

The Passover Children of Israel celebrate first Passover in the Promised Land

1. 4. The celebration of Passover was to remind the Israelites the miraculous passage through the Red Sea and deliverance from the house of slavery in Egypt. It should be the time of remembering of all the great deeds that the LORD performed in Egypt while bringing His people out from the house of bondage
2. The circumcision was a necessary precondition for participation in the Passover (Exodus 12:48)
3. God in His providential care arranged that His people entered the Promised Land at the exact time to get ready for the celebration of the Passover. They had time for circumcision, time for healing, and then on 14th day of the month the people of Israel could celebrate Passover
4. We have an extraordinary picture of the children of Israel eating at the table of the LORD in the sight of their enemies
5. The imagery from Psalm 23 comes immediately to mind: *You prepare a table before me, in the presence of my enemies* (Ps. 23:5)
6. There is no better illustration of God's sovereign might than His ability to protect His people so well, that they can dine without worry of danger, even though the dining table is set in front of their enemies!

7. Thus the *melting of the hearts* of the Amorites and the Canaanites had more than a military purpose: it served to provide a safe environment for the people of God to celebrate His ordinances
8. The celebration of the Passover after crossing the Jordan river completes the redemption of Israel out of the land of Egypt, out of the land of slavery; the redeeming act of God started with the first Passover in Egypt and was concluded with the second Passover in the Promised Land
9. The day after Passover the children of Israel ate the produce of the land. On the next day the manna ceased:
 - Manna was a supernatural provision from God for the time of Israel's pilgrimage to the Promised Land, to the land of rest
 - It is worth noting that the provision of manna continued during the 40 years of Israel's wilderness wanderings – 40 years of wondering of the rebellious, covenant breaking generation
 - Once they reached the land and ate the produce of the land – there was no need for the supernatural care
 - But it does not mean that the LORD God stopped caring for His people. He gave them the land flowing with milk and honey. The supernatural way of caring for the people of Israel has been replaced by the ordinary way
10. We need to remember that the LORD God is behind every ordinary means of provision
11. We also need to remember that the supernatural (miraculous) way of caring for His people is usually for a time within a redemptive history
12. Our God is always able to act according to His divine attributes, so there is nothing wrong in asking Him in prayer that His will be done with regards to our sick friend or relative, for example
13. But for the most of the redemptive history our Father cares for His children through His ordinary providence