

Joshua 07-02-23b

Let's resume our study now in Joshua chapter 4. What is the idea, as these people have crossed over the Jordan, now we are looking back. They are on the west side. They are finally in the land.

The hoped for objective for a generation. Forty years they have been waiting to get on this ground. The first thing they do is look back.

The Lord spoke to Joshua and said, Take for yourselves these twelve men from the people. They have been mentioned before. One from every tribe.

They are going to go into the midst of the Jordan. You know, it is one thing to have come through, looking around to see, well, you know, there is going to be this mighty wall of rushing water. This river is inevitably going to come back at some point.

Everybody is across. Take for yourselves from the place where the priest's feet stood firm. Carry them over with you and leave them in the lodging place where you lodge tonight.

Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed. Now, God didn't designate these men. God said, Joshua, you pick them.

What kind of a man do you think would Joshua choose? Who would appeal to him as somebody that could be counted on to do a trustworthy job? One from each tribe. Joshua has been with these people for forty years in the wilderness. Do you think he knows who the mature men are? Who the leaders are? Who the guys are who can be counted on? They are going to be men like himself.

Men of faith. Men of valor. Men of stable courage.

And so these are the go-to guys. When you need somebody to count on, when you need somebody by your side when the chips are down, these are the guys. And Joshua calls them in.

And these guys know each other. And respect each other. And this is a hearty band of the most mature men in Israel.

And Joshua looks them in the eye and says, look, I want you to go back into the riverbed. Go right to where the priests were standing. Get a rock as big as you can carry.

That's why they have to put it on their shoulder. This is not like a beach rock. It's not a little hand-axe-sized rock.

This is a boulder. The heaviest thing they can carry. Each one of you take a stone on his shoulder according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel that this may be a

sign among you when your children ask in times to come saying, what do these stones mean to you? And we ask the question before the break, what is the whole idea here of these stones? Why make a memorial? Because answering that question will tell us what the analog is in the life of believers today, in our lives, right? And we get some help on this because Joshua himself says, your children are going to ask you, well, where did this rock come from? And you're going to give them the answer that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, the ark of the testimony of the Lord.

When it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel, Laolam, unto the ages. I fully expect that this pile of stones will be in evidence in the Millennial Kingdom.

Actually, it's Ad Olam here. I knew I was misquoting that. The idea being, an episode that you have witnessed, an episode that you have experienced, that you have personal knowledge of, is going to be memorialized in such a way that people who haven't seen it ought to have their faith encouraged because the focus of it is the ark of the covenant of the Lord.

What does Jesus say to Thomas in the upper room when Thomas gets a first-hand personal experience of the resurrected Christ? Sticks his finger into the wounds. And he says, My Lord and my God. And Jesus says, You believe based on what you have seen.

Blessed are those who, not having seen, believe based on the testimony of those who were there. These rocks are a testimony. A testimony to what? The waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord.

Another way of putting this, Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. The power of God is greater than the power of the water. The chaotic, uncontrollable forces of the raging river are quiescent, are heaped up 15 miles away.

This pile of stones came from the riverbed. Ken was pointing out on the break, and it's a good point. You tend to think, well, this is kind of a shallow little depression where the river was running.

This riverbed is a gorge. It's a deep ravine. And so you can imagine that as the priests go down into the center of that, how deep was the Jordan at the deepest point in these days when it was at flood stage? I don't know, but it was deep.

Too deep to ford. It had to have been 20, 30, 40 feet deep, perhaps more. I have no idea.

But normally when the Jordan was at its usual levels, there was a ford here, meaning you could get across and it was maybe 10, 15, 20 feet deep, something fordable, where you're not swimming for very far. But in flood, the Jordan overflowed all of its banks. It's impassable.

So again, we ask ourselves the question, what does this mean? Well, you look at the idea of a memorial. Setting up stones as a memorial is a relatively common thing to see in the Bible. We saw it in Exodus 28.

The stones in the breastplate of the high priest, each stone represents a tribe. There are gemstones, brilliant, expensive, valuable stones. Those go into the breastplate.

Each one has the name of a tribe of Israel on it. And they represent those tribes before the Lord as a memorial. God sees the high priest coming into His presence and sees this golden breastplate.

And here are the 12 tribes. In 1 Kings 18, we once again have 12 stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, Israel shall be your name. And with the stones, Elijah built an altar.

This is a little-remembered feature of the Mount Carmel episode. That altar that Elijah built and dunked all the water on and built a trench in the moat around it and filled it with the water and poured it on and the prophets of Baal and so on, that begins with Elijah taking 12 stones, one for each tribe, and building an altar out of those stones. It is a memorial.

Why should God demonstrate His power in front of all of these people? It is on behalf of the nation of Israel. One stone for each tribe. All 12 tribes come across, even the two and a half that are going to reside on the far side.

The idea here is that it should not be forgotten. There is a great heap of stones raised in a number of different places. You remember between Jacob and Laban, they set up a heap of stones.

They said, this is a memorial to our agreement. We won't forget our bargain and our testimony. Achan, when he gets stoned for plundering the sacred things that God said don't take any of it, they're going to raise up a heap of stones over him.

We're going to see that later on. Here's the point. It's a testimony.

It is a witness. It is a reminder. Memorials are important.

The feasts of Israel were a memorial and a reminder. We found that out in Exodus 12. The stones on the shoulders of the high priest were a memorial.

God looks down and He sees these stones. The two stones on the shoulders of the ephod are memorial stones for the sons of Israel. Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord on his two shoulders as a reminder, as a memorial.

In Numbers 16, remember after the strange fire got offered and the people got incinerated when fire went out from the Lord? And they took their censers and

hammered them into plates and put them on the altar of the Lord to be a memorial to the children of Israel that no outsider who is not a descendant of Aaron should come near to offer incense before the Lord. So he would not become like Korah and his companions. In Psalm 111 and 4 you have the principle.

God has made His wonderful works to be remembered. God has made His wonderful works to be remembered. What is the heritage of those people in the first generation? God put the nine plagues on Egypt and then the Passover of the firstborn, making ten.

God parted the Red Sea. God brought them out into the wilderness and right away they started forgetting. God provided manna and they forgot.

God provided water and they forgot. God gave them military victory and they forgot. You brought us out here to die.

This is the principle. This is the answer to the question. What do the stones mean? You can sum it up in two words.

Don't forget. Don't forget the grace of God. Don't forget the power of God.

Don't forget the Word of God. Thy Word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee. Don't forget what God has done.

Why did He put the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone? As a memorial. As a reminder. Don't forget.

Well, it's a testimony. It is something that we can communicate. And people who will hear and heed that testimony are blessed.

Jesus told Thomas. So, in this case, it is the children who are to be taught by the parents. When your children ask you where these rocks come from, you tell them this story.

Teach your children to respect the power of God. They're going to have to take your word for it because they weren't there. The children of Israel did so just as Joshua commanded.

Took 12 stones from the midst of Jordan as the Lord had spoken to Joshua according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel. How many times has that been emphasized? One rock for each. You know what this puts me in mind of? When you go to Washington D.C. and they've got the wall.

What's on the wall? It's the names of the 150,000 odd men who died in the Vietnam War. What do people do when they go and visit the wall? They take a piece of paper and a pencil and they walk up and down the wall. Things are on there alphabetically.

And what do they do? Here's Uncle Fred. Or here's my relative. Here's someone in my

family who was KIA in Vietnam.

And they take a rubbing of the name. They know the guy's name. And they know the name is on the wall.

But what do they do? They want a souvenir. They want something to remember their visit and to document the fact that that name is on that wall. Lots of people could say, don't forget the sacrifice that was given in Vietnam.

But there is a tangible reminder that means a lot to people who know someone or are related to someone whose name is carved in that wall, right? Do we have the same level of commitment to remembering the grace of God, remembering the work of Christ? Is it as real and as important to us as such a memorial? People save things from their forebears. Here's great-great-great-grandpa so-and-so's sword that he waved in the Civil War. Here's grandpa's purple heart from World War I. Here's my father's stuff from World War II or Korea or Vietnam.

And the children weren't there, maybe separated by many decades from those experiences, but they honor and remember that experience and that sacrifice. That ought to be the kind of heritage that persists in the body of Christ, in the fellowship of believers, the grace of God. Look at what great things God has done.

And keeping that memory fresh will avoid the mistakes that the first generation made in the wilderness. Now, notice, what about this in verse 9? Joshua 4, verse 9. We've already seen the children of Israel did just as Joshua commanded. They took up the twelve rocks out of the Jordan, according to the number of the tribes, carried them over with them to the place where they lodged, and they laid them down there.

Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests who bore the ark of the covenant stood, and they are there to this day. Somewhere in the deepest part of the Jordan, across from Jericho, there is a stack of twelve stones. Wouldn't it be fun to unearth that in some way? All of this nonsense about how there was no real exodus, there was no real conquest of Canaan.

It's all mythology that was dreamed up during the time of the Babylonian exile and the Ezra and Nehemiah generation made up a history so that Israel could be proud. Why would you do that? Why would you be proud of a myth and a legend? It's like saying, well, I'm descended from... who's the guy with Tinkerbell? Yeah, Peter Pan. Our state was founded by Peter Pan.

Peter Pan went to Neverland and conquered Captain Hook. What kind of pride are you going to take in some sort of a fantasy myth type of thing? Perpetrate some sort of a thing. Do people in England say, the reason we're great is King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table and Goliath and Guinevere and all that? People can't found anything and

base anything on a myth.

It's absurd. But there is this intellectual arrogance that says, well, the poor, benighted, dumb clods that lived in the old days, they just had to make stuff up because they didn't really have any history. They didn't have any way to know truth from fiction.

They just made it all up so that they could be proud. It's so arrogant and it's so condescending to look down on people who are probably a lot brighter than any of us. They were a lot closer to Adam and I think they had a lot more neurons firing.

Memorized huge portions of the Word of God verbatim. Could recite it for hours at a time. Recited their history verbally.

Incredibly intellectually gifted men. And people in the modern day look back and say, oh, they were these poor, dumb, agricultural guys behind a plow who dreamed by the fire that they were former days of glory. It's utter nonsense.

By the way, we'll have more to say about that aspect of Joshua here before long. Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan. And if you could dam up the Jordan and expose a couple of miles of it there east of Jericho, somewhere down there in the silt there's a pile of twelve big old stones that are there to this day.

So the priests who bore the ark stood in the midst of the Jordan until everything was finished. Now notice, once again, Hebrew storytelling. The priests have already come out.

The men have gone in and gotten the rocks. Joshua's gone in and put a pile of stones there. Now we're backing up.

The priests who bore the ark stood in the midst of the Jordan until everything was finished, that the Lord had commanded Joshua to speak to the people according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua. And the people hurried and crossed over. We're back over on the eastern side.

The priest crossed 3,000 feet into the middle, stood there. Joshua recited the words of the Lord to the people while the priest stood there, sweating, no doubt. That wasn't water I felt on my foot, was it? Ahab, do you see upstream? Do you see anything coming? They're standing there.

Joshua recites all of the words of the Lord to the people. Then the people hurried and crossed over. It came to pass when all the people had completely crossed over.

Do you see this retelling? Retelling of a story with a different emphasis or a different depth is a common, common feature of Hebrew literature, Hebrew communication. And it's just stunning that modern scholars want to say, oh, there was multiple authors and

multiple accounts that were improperly stitched together. They do the same thing here, by the way.

If you read any kind of a modern commentary on Joshua, oh, the editor has got several traditions in front of him and he's stitching them together in a very inept and poor manner. And you can see the exposed edges here. This is a different account from a different place that he's inserted.

Nonsense. It's the way they tell stories. Why does he retell this? It's a summary.

What did we just get through seeing? You're supposed to remember this. You're supposed to rehearse and recount and retell what God did for Israel on this day. It's huge.

And that's what he's doing. It came to pass when all the people had completely crossed over. The ark of the Lord and the priests crossed over in the presence of the people.

The ark leaves, stands in the middle. Joshua tells them the words. The people come over, pass the ark at a distance.

God said, respect the ark, don't get close to it. So they had to pass, I would guess, either downstream or downstream and upstream of it, but not near it. Come back up.

The twelve men, carefully chosen from Israel, are the only ones who go where the priests were standing. There's no multitudes of tracts in that area. It's just the feet of the priests.

These twelve men retrace the path of the priests and pick up large stones from right where they were standing and come back out and pile them up. And Joshua accompanies them. And while they are picking up stones, he is heaping up stones.

Remember in Ecclesiastes, I think it's chapter 3, where it says there's a time to cast away stones and there's a time to gather stones together? Well, while these other guys are hauling stones out, Joshua is piling them up at that very spot. I can only think that at some future point those stones are going to be exposed. Else, why would they be there? Possibly purely for symbolic value, but I think one of these days somebody is going to see those stones again.

Came to pass, all the people crossed over. Then the ark and the priests crossed over in the presence of the people. They all get on the other side and they make a way.

They part. In the same way the Red Sea parted, the Israelites passed through, the people part, and the ark of the covenant, born by the priests, passes through. They're still respecting God's command.

Stay half a mile away from the thing. A couple of million people. They open a mile-wide

path and it goes right down the middle.

And the men of Reuben, the men of Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh crossed over armed before the children of Israel as Moses had spoken to them. They kept their word. This is not an idle note.

It speaks of the character of the people. They are people who keep their word. They are people who keep covenant.

Forty thousand prepared for war crossed over before the Lord for battle to the plains of Jericho. On that day the Lord exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel, and they feared him as they had feared Moses all the days of his life. Once again, responsiveness of the people.

They recognize God's commission and they respect it. Now the Lord speaks to Joshua again. Verse 16, Command the priests who bear the Ark of the Testimony to come up from the Jordan.

Joshua commanded the priests saying, Come up. We've backed up again, haven't we? We've backed up in the storytelling because we had them come through and pass through Israel, and now they're back in the middle. The Lord spoke, Command the priests to come up.

And the priests who bore the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord had come from the midst of the Jordan, and the souls of the priests touched the dry land. The waters of the Jordan returned to their place. He backs up again so that we can see this emphasis.

Each time the story is retold, there's a different emphasis. One time it is on the passage of the people on dry ground, the power of God. Another time it is on the hearing of the words of the Lord while the priests are standing in the middle.

Another time it is the importance of the memorial. Here it is the clear evidence that just as at the beginning it was the presence of God's mercy seat, the Ark of the Covenant, that held back the water, as soon as it leaves, the water comes back. And that is emphasized by backing up, rewinding, to see a different element.

Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month. What do you know about the tenth day of the month Abib? What happens on that day? Tenth day of the first month. Well, I'll help you out.

What happens on the fourteenth day of the month Abib? What is the fourteenth day? It's the Passover, right? That's the sundown of that day when the Passover lamb was slain. That's when Jesus was crucified. So, what happens four days before that? What is Israel supposed to do? Oh, you're hurting me.

After we went through all those chapters in Leviticus. Take the lamb, pick the Passover lamb, and pen it up, and you look at it for four days, and examine it to make sure that it is acceptable. This is the tenth day.

This is the Passover lamb day. Now, what happened in the final week of the Lord's life on this earth on the tenth of the month? He was crucified on Thursday, the fourteenth at sundown. That makes Wednesday the thirteenth.

It makes Tuesday the twelfth. Monday is the eleventh. And Sunday is the tenth.

What happened on that Sunday? Tragic entry. Triumphant entry. Palm Sunday.

The Lord rides on the foal of an ass. What was supposed to happen on that day? If the kingdom was actually coming in, if the generation had been accepting the Lord, what would they have recognized? This is God's man. There was a superficial, small demonstration of hosanna.

But when Jesus comes to the temple on that day, and He looks around, what does He see? Nobody there. It isn't real. It's superficial.

Kind of like the first generation saying, we'll go into the land after Moses says, the Lord says, you're not going in for forty years. And they say, oh yes we are. God says, go into the land, they don't want to go.

God says, you can't go into the land, and then they want to go. They're perverse. Jesus goes in, and stands in the temple.

Why is the temple built? What's the whole centerpiece of the temple supposed to be? It wasn't by this time, but what was supposed to be there? The Ark of the Covenant, right? On the tenth day of the month, God's man of the hour, the Deliverer, Yeshua, the men have got the identical same name, are associated with the Ark of the Covenant on the tenth day. It is on the tenth day that this Yeshua leads people out of the wilderness, out of the years of wandering, and into the place of fulfillment of God's covenant promises. Yes? What was supposed to happen in that last week when Jesus came in on the tenth day, the final and greater Yeshua comes? What was supposed to happen? The people were supposed to be with Him and enter into the place of fulfillment, of covenant promise and blessing.

And when He looked around in the place of the Ark of the Covenant, the Ark wasn't there, the people weren't there, and Jesus had to turn around and leave. And so He is going to become, four days later, the Passover Lamb. It's very significant here.

The people came up from Jordan on the tenth day of the first month. They camped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho. Gilgal is very close to Jericho.

Very close. It's about a mile and a quarter. If you're in Jericho, what kind of a border does Jericho have? It's got walls, right? That's where Rahab lives.

She lives in the wall. And it's a high wall because the men didn't just leap out the window and run away. They had to be let down a rope.

Jericho's got high walls. Do you think somebody standing on top of the walls of Jericho could see Gilgal? What do you think? Absolutely. There's a formula they taught us when I was a midshipman about how far you can see on flat ground.

This is the plains of Jericho. And the bridge of a destroyer is 35 feet above the ocean surface. And you can see, I believe, if I remember correctly, the distance to the horizon that you can see from that elevation is about 13 miles, if memory serves.

So, that's only 35 feet up. If the walls of Jericho, even if they're only 20 feet high, do you think they can see a mile and a half or so and see two million people camped in Gilgal? Do you think they can see the smoke of their campfires? Do you think they can probably hear the occasional shout and so on? What do you think has to be going through the minds who they've always thought, well, we don't have to worry about them until later on in the summer because they'll never get across the Jordan. Yeah, we're fearful and we've heard all these things about the God of the people of Israel, but hey, we've got a couple more months to get ready because, you know, nobody's going to be able to cross the Jordan.

I mean, come on. That's not going to happen. And then suddenly, on the tenth day of the first month, runners start appearing.

The Israelites are crossing the Jordan. People say, no, they're not. Yes, they are.

No, are you kidding me? I don't know how it happened, but the waters of the Jordan have dried up and here they come. Somebody just came in a caravan from up there at Tel Adiyah and the waters have all stacked up up there in a heap. Here's another question for you before we totally leave the crossing of the Jordan.

You know how it is in the crossing of the Red Sea? Ten Commandments, Thessalbe, Demil, you've got that wonderful special effect and all the water piles up on each side and you've got people sticking their hand in the waters they go by, fish goggling out at them from these clear walls of high water. It doesn't happen that way at the Jordan. When the children of Israel cross, they don't see the wall of water at all.

It's 15 miles upstream. It's dry as far as the eye can see. And I ask myself, why is that? Why does the Bible tell us that the waters were stacked up way up there at Tel Adiyah? Why would that be? What has been the theme of this? Remember the passages I read to you earlier, the promises that God made in Exodus and Deuteronomy when He said, I will send My fear before you.

The battle will be fought and won before you ever get there, essentially. It is done before the priests ever step into the water. How do you get rid of 15 miles worth of river water? God had stocked it up before the priests ever started marching.

I don't know what the speed of the current was, how many knots it was flowing at, but God had already solved the problem before they could see it. It's already done. And what a great principle the Bible tells us that before we ask, God will answer.

He anticipates our needs. He knows what we're made of. He knows what's coming up in our lives, and He's already made the provision.

And that's the great message. This is one of the differences in the Red Sea. You didn't have a current.

You have an ocean type of situation. And the water is stacked up on both sides. You can pass safely, even though you're surrounded by this representation of evil.

Here, getting ready to move in and conquer and achieve victory and seize and lay hold of the promises of God, God says the battle is already won. The victory is already taking place. Evil has already been dealt with before you got there.

It's defeated 15 miles away. And if you just swing that ark around, the Canaanites in the land are already defeated 15 miles ahead of you. It's done before you get there.

You just have to have the faith that it's done. You've got to believe what you can't see. It's out of sight.

But you've got to trust it. And you've got to move your family through this dry riverbed, not knowing if a sudden huge tide of water is going to come rushing down and blow them all away. You have to trust that God has not only stopped that great natural force, but that He's going to keep it stopped until you're safely on the other side.

And the symbol of that is His presence standing there. Those priests were in the river longer than anybody else by far. They were in there before the first Israelite crossed.

They were there after the last Israelite crossed. They were there until Joshua called them out. So, they camped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho.

And all the people of Jericho were lining the eastern wall of the city looking out toward Gilgal. By the way, you should have your map in front of you there. But if you don't, I can draw you a little air map.

You think about the northern tip of the Dead Sea. And if you draw a line at exactly 10.30 or 11 o'clock, a northwest line going up from that, you can put on that line first Gilgal, then Jericho, then Ai, and then Bethel. They're in almost a straight line northwest from the northern tip of the Dead Sea.

And you have to kind of take a 90 degree at Jericho to go down to Jerusalem. Jerusalem is south of that line, south and west of that line. So, the line of progression is going to be Jericho, Gilgal to Jericho to Ai.

And if they kept going, they'd end up in Bethel. What's Bethel notable for? Oh my goodness, what is it not notable for? Jacob named the place because that's where he saw the ladder, angels ascending and descending. Abraham was at Bethel.

I mean, there's so much history there. And they're making a beeline for it from the Jordan, aren't they? Because that's the first place where the promise was affirmed to Jacob. And Jacob has got all the odds stacked against him.

He's fleeing for his life, he's got no possessions, he's just got the robe on his back, heading in the wrong direction seemingly, much as the Israelites had been doing as they could not make the southern approach to Canaan. But they're making a beeline for Bethel. They're headed right on that road.

So, they camped in Gilgal. Now, remember, tenth day of the month, what's coming up four days later? Feast of Passover. Once again, you have the emphasis.

Joshua spoke to the children of Israel and told them the same thing we've just reviewed. When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What are these stones? You shall let your children know, saying, Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land. For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed over.

And maybe Caleb was standing there. But remember, there are people between the age of 40 and 60 who crossed over the first time. There's nobody in Israel, except Caleb and Joshua, older than 60 years.

Everybody 20 years old and younger was not under the curse of dropping in the wilderness. So, now that it's 40 years later, the entire population of Israel is anywhere from 60 down to 40, and those would be people who crossed the Red Sea, or were born very soon after. And then everybody after that doesn't know the Red Sea.

They don't have a pile of rocks from the Red Sea. God didn't tell Moses, Take up 12 rocks from the Red Sea and pile them up. That's a previous generation's deliverance.

This is their deliverance that they are going to testify to. That all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the Lord. God is going to be glorified in the nation of Israel.

That the hand of the Lord is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever. That brings us to chapter 5. So it was, when all the kings of the Ammonites were on the west side of the Jordan, all the kings of the Canaanites were by the sea. Heard that the Lord

had dried up the waters of the Jordan from before the children of Israel.

Everybody was saying, we don't have anything to sweat for a couple of months, because they'll never ford the Jordan. They hear this, their hearts melted. There was no spirit in them any longer because of the children of Israel.

At that time, now remember, this would have gone on for several weeks after the crossing. How long is it going to take for this word to filter all through Canaan? Several days at least. But now we're going to back up.

At that time, the Lord said to Joshua, make flint knives for yourself and circumcise the sons of Israel again the second time. Joshua made flint knives for himself and circumcised the sons of Israel at the Hill of the Foreskins. This is Gibeah Ha-Aralot.

And unsurprisingly, in Hebrew, that means the Hill of the Foreskins. This is the reason why Joshua circumcised them. All the people who came out of Egypt, who were males, all the men of war, had died in the wilderness on the way, after they had come out of Egypt.

All the people who came out had been circumcised, but all the people born in the wilderness on the way as they came out of Egypt had not been circumcised. Whose fault was that? Israel hadn't been out of Egypt but a few months when God gave the law. And you could say, well, maybe it didn't take well.

What about the ritual of circumcision? What does that date back to? Abraham, Genesis 17. And in slavery, in captivity, the Israelites had circumcised their eight-day-old sons. The men who came out of Egypt, remember that, they were circumcised.

You go back and find this in Numbers 26. All of the men who were initially numbered with Moses and Aaron the priest, when they numbered them in the wilderness of Sinai, died in the wilderness. There was not a man of them left except Caleb and Joshua.

They were circumcised. But when they got into the wilderness, they didn't circumcise their sons. And for 40 years, the sons born in the wilderness, that generation of parents was disobedient.

You can only imagine, if they abandoned this long-standing practice going all the way back to their father Abraham, it becomes a little more understandable why God had them drop in the wilderness. No faith, no conviction, no obedience to the most fundamental sign of the covenant between themselves and the Lord. Now, these people are about to come in and receive their inheritance.

The inheritance of the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That inheritance comes to them how? By covenant. What is the sign of the covenant? Circumcision.

They have not been circumcised. How can they lay claim to God's side of the covenant

when they have not kept their side? God told Abraham, anybody who isn't circumcised has to be cut off from their people, i.e., cut out of the will. No inheritance.

No part and parcel in the land of promise. So, Joshua took flint knives and circumcised the sons of Israel all in one place. Children of Israel walked 40 years in the wilderness till all the people who were men of war came out of Egypt consumed because they did not obey the voice of the Lord.

They did not obey the voice of the Lord. Why those piles of rocks? Don't forget the mighty power of God on our behalf. That ought to motivate obedience.

Recognition of God's power, recognition of God's grace ought to motivate obedience. They were consumed because they did not obey the voice of the Lord to whom the Lord swore that He would not show them the land which the Lord had sworn to their fathers that He would give us, a land flowing with milk and honey. Joshua circumcised their sons whom he raised up in their place for they were uncircumcised because they had not been circumcised on the way.

You know what's fascinating about this? When you go to the New Testament and you see Paul talking about circumcision of the heart and how the tree of blessing and fruitfulness that God has raised up, the branches of Israel were broken out because of faithlessness and wild olive branches were grafted in. And Gentiles who did not partake of the circumcision of Israel were circumcised in the heart. There is a picture here of dispensations, dispensational truth.

The first generation, the generation of Israel that dropped in the wilderness during that 40 years represents the nation of Israel itself through its history. Coming up to the time of Christ and they drop and fall short of the land except for two witnesses. Two witnesses from that generation survive.

An uncircumcised group raises up in their place. God raises up an uncircumcised group in their place and they willingly receive circumcision. Now listen to this.

They've just crossed into enemy territory and their first three days in the land they disable themselves at God's command. Nobody can fight. Do you remember the story of Reuben and Simeon and Levi and that whole thing with Dinah, right? You'd circumcise somebody, they're helpless, they can't fight.

This would be like the beachhead at Normandy or something. Everybody lands and then everybody stops and is incapacitated for three days. That's what Israel does.

Is this a step of faith? That this spiritual sign of covenant with God supersedes practical wisdom? Do you think there might have been somebody saying, is this really the right time? Why didn't we think of this before we came across? Now we're here backed up against the Jordan which is now flowing at flood stage. We've got no avenue of retreat.

We're here at Gilgal.

Pinned in this little corner. If they start driving us south, here's the Dead Sea and the Jordan and we could be annihilated. And the first thing they do is circumcise all of the warriors and they have to stay in place for three days.

This is like the church who didn't see the mighty works of God for the first generation. We didn't see the miracles that God has done for Israel. We are the uncircumcised.

We come across and we take the land of promise that they could not take. That's our great opportunity. That's our great daily challenge.

To seize and lay hold. To advance. To win the victories that are going to secure for us an inheritance in the land of God's promise.

Remember, the power of God is what makes this possible. That's what the pile of stones represents. And it is by keeping covenant with God and trusting in things that may seem counterintuitive.

You have to depend on God and you have to trust His promises in order to receive this inheritance. You have need of faith and patience so that after you have worked through the challenges, you inherit. It's our great opportunity.

Well, we're out of time for tonight. We'll pick up in Joshua chapter 5 verse 8 next week. Father, thank You for this incredibly detailed picture of the situation that we find ourselves in and by Your grace.

We thank You for the opportunity to receive an inheritance and we pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress these truths in our hearts so that we can do so. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.