

Joshua 07-03-02a

This is Friday, the 2nd of March, 2007. We continue tonight our study in the book of Joshua, resuming at chapter 5. We'll take a moment, as is our custom, to go before the Lord individually as believer-priests, representing ourselves before His throne of grace. And this is possible because of the ministry of our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, who has made it possible for us to not only have eternal life, but also to grow in grace and knowledge in this life through the ministry of God's Spirit and the study of God's Word.

So let's take a moment to ensure that we are in a condition where God can minister His Word to our hearts. Shall we pray? Father, we are grateful for another opportunity to spend time in fellowship in the study of Your Word. We recognize that You have distributed gifts amongst us and that each of us is in a position both to bless and to be a blessing when we gather in the name of the Lord Jesus.

We ask Your blessing on us as we study this great section of Your Word. May each of us find in it those truths that will guide us and enable us for the task at hand. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. At the end of Joshua chapter 4, we saw the Israelites come across the Jordan River in a miraculous fashion. Two sets of twelve stones were moved around.

Twelve went out and twelve went in, so to speak. And the twelve that came out, what is their purpose? Why would you take out of the dried-up River Jordan, you remember that, all the Israelites are over there, the priests have to march in faith because there is no Moses standing on the hill and there is no arm stretching forth the rod. Behold, and zoom, back rolls the water and here is this nice corridor.

Everybody says, oh, well, okay, now that I see this great dry path, I'll step across. When Joshua says, forward, and the priests take off with the Ark of the Covenant, there is just a raging torrent of spring flood river out of its banks, toiling and broiling and tree stumps and paraphernalia rolling down in it. And the priests are marching, carrying the poles of the Ark, it's all covered up with the colored curtains and so on, and they get closer and closer and here is the raging broiling river, trees floating by, small Canaanite dog houses and things floating down the river and they get closer and closer and closer and it's just raging and flooding and flooding.

And it isn't until the first priest, first sandal, slaps the edge of the water that suddenly the waters disappear. And we find out that they have stacked up in a heap 15 miles upstream, but that didn't happen until the first priest, first foot slapped into the water and it dried up and it got stone dry. And so this is when you want to be the priest in the back.

Normally in the military, you want to be in the front because all of the dust that the platoon stirs up or anything else. There was nothing worse in my mind than a Monday morning platoon run when I was in Okinawa because as a platoon commander, I would be in the back, you know, to make sure everybody goes where I tell them to go. And all of these guys have been out carousing and carrying on the night before and they come in early in the morning and there's just these fumes of stale beer and whatnot coming back and the dust and you didn't want to be back in the rear, you want to be up front where the air is fresh.

Well, but in this case, I think it would have probably been safer to be a priest back on the back end of those poles because the first two priests are going closer and closer and I think their eyes are just getting bigger and bigger and, you know, it's a real test of faith. So they get there and the thing dries up and they march all the way across. Remember, they're a mile and a half in front of the rest of the Israelites, right? 3,000 yards.

And so it's a lonely trip. It could be kind of a, I mean, you can imagine the entertainment value for the Israelites if they march out there and just get swept downstream. Everybody says, well, so what's plan B? We lost the priests in the ark.

But no, instead, it is a great and impressive demonstration because everyone is well back and they're not suffering from myopia. Everything is not too close. It's not where they're only seeing trees and not the forest.

They're standing a mile, am I right, a mile and a half back? 5,000 yards? Yeah, roughly. So they've got a nice panorama and they watch the thing get smaller and smaller as it goes down there and also, as Ken pointed out a week or two ago, they go down. It's a riverbed.

And so they go down and then they march out and the next thing the Israelites see, they're out in the middle and they're standing there. And now the Israelites come forward and they stream around probably on both sides because there's no water for 15 miles upstream. They come all the way across.

Then Joshua and the 12 handpicked men come back and they get the stones right there where the priests have been standing. And Joshua piles up 12 stones in the riverbed. The men each heist a stone as heavy as he can carry on his shoulder and carry it back out and they make them into a circle on the other side.

And we asked ourselves the question, what is the purpose of the 12 stones that are heaped up where the priests stood? Because once the miraculous intervention ceases and all those flood spring melt-off waters come flowing down again, those stones are going to be underwater and invisible. So why are they there? And of course, the Bible does not specifically say, but in the speculations of my mind, I think the wicked are like the troubled. See how many passages, how many places, how many books, every single

study seems like sooner or later we get to the troubled chaotic forces of darkness represented and symbolized by these uncontrollable waters, these chaotic waters.

The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. So when those waters come boiling back down again in the muddy Jordan, what it reminds me of is, maybe people can't see those stones anymore, but the unseen principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of this age still get a testimony down there in the bottom of the river.

None of those dark murky river waters can flow by without seeing those stones. And not only is there a memorial above ground for Israel to tell their children about, but every dark demonic force has to contend with the fact that God is going to deliver His people and God can stop them 15 miles away whenever He wants. So that's kind of my take on the rocks in the river.

So they come to the other side and they stack those stones around in a circle of 12 stones. And the name of the place is what? What's the name of the place where the stone memorial is? It's Gilgal. Gilgal.

And it's the word in Hebrew and in all the ancient Semitic languages that has the idea of a circle or a wheel or something that rolls. And the purpose of it is memorial. Do not forget.

And the principle, the point of application for us, it's a wonderful thing to experience God's deliverance. It's a great thing when God delivers. But there are many days where you don't have a miraculous deliverance.

And we're supposed to remember the grace of God. Remember that God is there. God is not going to miraculously demonstrate His presence with us all the time.

He may do it from time to time, but we are supposed to be aware and remember that He's with us all the time. And so we store God's word away in our hearts. We remember the great and mighty things that He has done for His people and has promised to do again.

We don't expect that kind of thing to happen every two and a half hours or every two and a half weeks or every two and a half years. God has demonstrated that He's there. These are symbolic acts.

He does it at the beginning of each age, doesn't He? He did miraculous acts when He brought Israel out of Egypt. And then there was 38 years where He didn't do any miracles. Now He's bringing these people, this generation, into the land of Canaan.

And He's doing mighty acts. And He's going to demonstrate that He is with them. And they're going to have to remember that because God's not going to keep on knocking

down every city's walls.

He's not going to part every creek. He's not going to rain down manna every day anymore. People should know by now that God is with them.

Those demonstrations are to emphasize and establish that fact. Once it's established, God shouldn't keep having to do so. Did you hear that there was an airport and former Vice President Gore was going to go give a speech on global warming and somebody said, Oh, well, Mr. Vice President, how are you doing? They took him and didn't take him through security.

And some of the other security guys said, No, nobody gets out of here without going through security. And they ran him all the way back and made him go through the pat-down and the x-rays and everything else. And you would think, I mean, there's an argument on both sides.

On the one hand, you say, Hey, you know, you could be a terrorist. We need to check you out. But there's another part that says, How many times do you have to prove that you're former Vice President Al Gore? I mean, once you've established your ID, do you have to keep showing your ID card and saying, You know, I'm really the Vice President.

Look at this film clip from back in the... I mean, you know, once you establish an identity, you shouldn't have to keep establishing it over and over and over again. The military recognizes this with treatment of officers. When you're a junior officer or enlisted, and you see the colonel or you see the major, you see the captain the first time of the day, you pop a salute and say, Good morning, sir.

Well, then every other time you see him that morning, you don't say, Good morning, sir. Good morning, sir. You say it one time, and that's good morning for the whole morning.

You've given him this good morning for the day. That's the only one he gets. And you know he's the captain.

You know he's the colonel. And you've acknowledged him. And if you're circulating around the area, you don't keep popping a salute every time you happen to cross paths.

Once is sufficient. Well, I'm belaboring this point, but it's important because we have Christians today who think that God has to keep reestablishing his bona fides every other day, that he's going to keep on doing miraculous things. Miracles are God's ID card.

And God hands that ID card to messengers from him. Here is my prophet. Here is my king.

Here is my anointed. Here is my apostle. And you know he's my apostle because here's

some miraculous acts.

Now, once the apostle Paul has established his apostolic credentials by healing, once Peter has established his apostolic credentials by walking by and a shadow falls on somebody and they're healed, once Elijah the prophet has gone to glory, and Elisha is around, and then Elisha dies, and they bury Elisha's bones, and some guy hides in the cave with a dead body, and the dead body touches Elisha's bones, and the dead guy comes back to life, people say, that Elisha was a prophet of God. Don't forget it. When you read those accounts of what he said and what he did in the books of the kings, don't forget it.

That's God's man. That's God's prophet. So, Israel is coming across, and God has miraculously parted the water.

He's going to miraculously do some things at Jericho, but in the further conquest of the land, the miracles are going to cease. Does that mean God's not with them anymore? Not at all. It means Joshua has been vetted and demonstrated to be Moses' successor, God's appointed leader, and once that's been established, you don't have to just keep establishing it over and over and over again.

Well, the same is true, by the way, in the church age. The authority of the scriptures that were written down by God's apostles in the New Testament were established in the original generation by miraculous signs. John did miracles.

Peter did miracles. Paul did miracles. And the scriptures produced by those men constitute the vast majority of our New Testament, and we know that this is the word of God, because it came from authenticated messengers.

Once those messengers are authenticated, the purpose of the gifts ceases. And Paul talks about this. He says, when that which is complete has come, complete communication from God, that which is in part the miracles, will be done away.

What's going to abide all the way through? Faith, hope, and love. Jesus didn't say, by this shall all men know that you are my disciples, that you work miracles. Did he? How is it that people know we are Christ's disciples? By our love.

Remember that old song, we are one in the Spirit? They will know we are Christians by our love, and that ought to be the case. So, let your children know at the end of chapter 4, 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. Notice, these are subsequent generations who have to take the word of the first generation that God dried up the water.

God's not going to say, okay, every 40 years I'm going to dry up the water, so that each succeeding generation will know that yes, I'm really God, and yes, I can really dry up the

Jordan. It happens one time. We talked about Jesus talking to Thomas.

You stuck your finger in the holes, you believe blessed are those who, not having seen, believe based on you all's testimony, the testimony of the disciples. Well, this is very important for understanding Gilgal, all of this, which is why I'm spending a little time in review. So that, verse 24, all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the Lord.

All the peoples of the earth didn't see the water stack up. All the peoples of the earth aren't going to see the walls of Jericho fall down. But all the peoples of the earth are going to hear the testimony of these Israelites.

The Old Testament scriptures have passed into virtually every language over centuries and centuries and centuries, ever since this happened. The testimony, either verbal or written, has filled the earth. And it has never gone away.

You can't point to a time in history where nobody knew what happened to the Israelites in the wilderness. It has always been known. So, and I'm not going to talk about the Chinese, we'll talk about that some other time.

All the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty that you may fear the Lord your God forever, so that you may fear you who are seekers of God. Now, chapter 5. So it was, when all the kings of the Amorites, who were on the west side of the Jordan, and all the kings of the Canaanites, who were by the sea. Notice, sometimes these terms seem to be used interchangeably, but they mean different things.

The Canaanites are the people from about halfway, you remember the air map, you've got the Sea of Galilee, Jordan River, Dead Sea, you've got the land between that and the Mediterranean. Well, the half of the land that's closest to the Mediterranean, that's the Philistines. That's the Canaanites.

The people between the valley in the middle of the land, over to the Jordan Valley, and up in the hill country, those are the Amorites. So your Amorites are inland. Your Canaanites are over toward the coast.

Canaanites, these are your proto-Philistines, your early Philistines. So, you know, you've got your west coast people and east coast people in the United States, or you've got your Yankees in the north and your crackers in the south. I can say that because we are them.

Well, in Israel, before they came in, you had the Amorites in the east, and you had the Canaanites in the west. And this is important later on, when you get into the whole conquest. So that's what this says.

Heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan from before the children of

Israel until we had crossed over. It's very significant, because there are a couple of places where the author here slips into the first person. And it tells you that this was written by somebody who was there.

That their hearts melted, and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the children of Israel. At that time, the Lord said to Joshua, Make flint knives for yourselves, circumcise the sons of Israel again the second time. So Joshua made flint knives for himself, and circumcised the sons of Israel at the hill of the foreskins, which in Hebrew is Gibeot HaAralot.

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, i.e. You have to think about this.

Don't bog down now, because this is a really important thing. It strikes me greatly. It struck me.

I was looking at this, and all of a sudden it just dawned on me. Why is there so much discussion about the circumcision? It's kind of a thing you don't want to think about too much anyway. Get that over with, and let's go in and knock down Jericho.

And it just keeps going on and on about this. And I thought, why is that? But listen, this is really interesting. Think about it.

All through the 215 years of the captivity, remember that, don't you? 215 years wandering in Canaan, 215 years in Egypt between Joseph and Moses. All during that time, generation after generation after generation after generation after generation of Israelites kept the covenant sign of circumcision. And when Moses came, and it was time to lead everybody out, God didn't have to say, stop the presses, we can't do anything until we get them all circumcised.

They were good to go. Moses was circumcised. What happened when Moses tried to bring his son with Zipporah into the land? Moses nearly lost his life because he had not done what he knew good and well he was supposed to do and what everybody else knew.

He was circumcised. So, by the way, that didn't mark him out as a Hebrew because the Egyptians practiced circumcision also, especially in the nobility. So all the princes and things of Egypt, they were circumcised for different reasons.

And that's why that wouldn't have been any cause for concern when the daughter of Pharaoh adopted him because all of those highfalutin mummies and so on demonstrate this. But the point being that this had been practiced all the way up until they came out of Egypt. And so when God gave them the Passover as an ordinance, and He said, you

will keep this Passover, they kept the first Passover while they were all still in Egypt.

No problem keeping the Passover as a sign of covenant between them and God because they were all circumcised. First year out of Egypt, they observed the Passover. Remember? They observed the Passover their first year out.

But then, you remember, you have the whole issue of sin and rejection and they send in the spies and no go. And God says you're going to wander until you all drop. And the people, that generation said, you know, we see no reason to keep up this covenant with God and they didn't circumcise any of the sons that were born in the wilderness.

For those wandering years, none of the baby boys got circumcised. Why? Their parents were mad at God. Their parents said, well, phooey on your covenant thing.

We don't think you're keeping your end, so we're not going to keep ours, basically. It was a sign of their faithlessness. So, think about it.

This is the most ironic thing that I have thought of lately. The circumcised generation that kept the sign of the covenant dropped in the wilderness and didn't go into the land. Look at the timing of this.

It is the uncircumcised generation that crosses the Jordan and goes into the land. They're in the land and they're not circumcised yet. Now think about this.

In the sweep of history, age of Israel, age of the church, who are the circumcised individuals, people of God, who don't enter into the blessings? It's the nation of Israel. They miss it. The Lord Jesus comes and they miss it.

And who is it that enters into the preview of coming attractions, the spiritual fulfillment of those covenant promises? It's the Goyim. It's the Gentiles. It's the uncircumcised, unwashed heathens that end up taking hold of these promises.

And it's foreshadowed here. Why do you think God waited until they were on the other side of the Jordan to do this? Why not on the east side? Why not on the east bank? Well, you can't go into my land until you observe the ritual. Crossing the Jordan was a sign of faith.

The things that they did on the other side of the Jordan. Once the Viper attack happened and they looked at the bronze snake, this generation is good to go. Everything they do after that is faith, faith, faith, faith.

Cross the Jordan by faith. Enter into the land by faith. Standing there, backed up against the Jordan River, facing all of the armies of the Canaanites and the Amorites with no avenue of retreat because the swollen, spring-tied Jordan River is flowing behind them.

They disable all of their military men for three days. Because God says get circumcised

and they do it. Do you think their parents' generation would have done this? They can't even walk three days in the desert without losing faith and saying, let's go back.

These people, they know the story of Simeon and Levi and what happens when you get circumcised and you can't fight for three days. And the first thing they do on the far side, when the waters close back over, is they circumcise all the military men. And they sit there for three days, defenseless.

Why? Trusting in God. God's going to have to defend us if these people launch some sort of preemptive strike against us now that they've heard that we're in their country. We're doomed because nobody can fight.

We'll have to send granny out there with a pitchfork or something because all the guys are held up. So, circumcise the sons of Israel at the hill of the four skins, all the people who were not circumcised because their parents didn't do it. The children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness till all the people who were men of war who came out of Egypt were consumed.

They are circumcised but they did not obey the voice of the Lord. Here are uncircumcised individuals who do obey the voice of the Lord. And they are in the land and circumcision is almost an afterthought.

And what this speaks of is the great truth that the genuine circumcision is circumcision of the heart. And this is the point that the New Testament makes. In fact, the Old Testament even made it.

In Deuteronomy chapter 10 verse 16 you remember how Israel is a stiff-necked and disobedient people? And they are told in Deuteronomy chapter 10 verse 16 Therefore circumcise the four skin of your heart. Have an inner covenant with God not just the external sign. And be stiff-necked no longer.

In Deuteronomy chapter 30 verse 6 the same thing is told to that generation in Israel. The Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul so that you may live. Make a note, at least mentally, of that statement.

In Deuteronomy chapter 30 verse 6 Circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul so that what? So that you may live. Do you know what the Hebrew word is for live? Have you ever seen Jewish people in the modern day when they give a toast they clink their glasses together what do they say? L'chaim! What does it mean? L' means to and what's Chaim? Life. C-H-A-Y Chai and its various derivatives and forms means life and living.

Just keep that in mind here. In Jeremiah, later on much later in the history of Israel Jeremiah is going to say Circumcise yourselves to the Lord take away the four skins of

your hearts you men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem lest my fury come forth like fire and burn so that no one can quench it because of the evil of your doings. It's attitude.

And so when you get to the when you get to the New Testament you have numerous passages but Romans 2.28.29 He is not a Jew who is one outwardly nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh but he is a Jew who is one inwardly and circumcision is that of the heart in the spirit, not in the letter whose praise is not from men but from God. There is an inner witness that's invisible there's an outer witness that is visible there's an invisible witness down in the depths of the Jordan and there's a visible witness out on the shore. This circumcision for Israel is an invisible witness Men don't run around disrobed and they're certainly not going to go into battle like Greeks or something with no clothes on.

This is a witness to themselves, right? This is not a particular flag that they wave or a banner that they carry in terms of a sign of covenant with God. It's personal, isn't it? Very few people are typically going to see this particular covenant sign, right? And that's as it should be. It's personal.

It is an individual personal reminder. But God is going to provide other signs that are outward. And so we see sort of a recurring theme here that there are some things that are meaningful to the individual believer or the individual nation and there's other things that are outward.

So, think about this in terms of its prophetic implications. The nation of Israel is like that first generation. They've got the legalistic outward show of obedience, but their heart's not right.

And they fail to enter into the land of promise. The second generation doesn't have that outward sign until after they go into the land. They go into the land by faith and they are circumcised in need.

It's as though this is a real meaningful circumcision because they do it in faith. They have to do it trusting that they're not going to get slaughtered during the period of time. So, and notice the issue is made here.

It's not like a deep theological insight because the scripture says it. They did not obey the voice of the Lord in verse 6 there. And the Lord swore that he would not show them the land which the Lord had sworn to their fathers that he would give us, notice that's first person again, a land flowing with milk and honey.

So Joshua circumcised their sons whom he raised up in their place. What's Joshua's name in Hebrew? Yeshua. Yeshua circumcised the ones he raised up in their place.

Remember Paul in Romans talking about how the branches in the tree of God's plan

were broken out due to unbelief and fruitlessness. And the wild olive branches were grafted in. Abide in me, abide in the vine, you will bear much fruit.

And Paul said don't be boasting, don't be throwing rocks and making snide remarks about the branches that were broken out because the only reason you're in the tree is by faith. And if you're faithless like they are, you can be broken out also. Which tells you the tree is not salvation.

The tree is fruitfulness and obedience and life after salvation. The fact that people can be broken out and grafted in and broken out and grafted in, this is not talking about eternal salvation. It's talking about functionality and fruitfulness in God's plan.

So now, verse 8. This is the punchline for our first lesson. If you've hung with me this long, here's the final point. So it was, when they had finished circumcising all the people, that they stayed in their places in the camp until they were healed.

Have you got your Hebrew text there, Matt? What word do you think has been translated healed? Chai. Chai. It's the word for life.

Normally, this word is translated life. There's only a few places in Scripture where it is not translated to live. And this is one of them.

Another one is Deuteronomy 30, verse 6. Deuteronomy 30, verse 6. And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may chai, that you may live. They stayed in place, all of the people, till they were alive, would be another way to... This circumcision makes them alive. They are productive.

It is the sign and the seal and the mark of their faith. And now they are alive indeed. They have passed from death on the far side of the Jordan into life.

This is the place of fruitfulness. This is the place of conquest. This is the place of victory.

This is the place of Nike, Niketo. This is the place of overcoming. To him that overcomes, I will grant.

Then the Lord said to Joshua, This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you. Therefore the name of the place is called Gilgal to this day. God rolls the reproach of Egypt away from Israel on this day.

What is the reproach of Egypt? What is the reproach of Egypt? Was it a reproach to them that they were enslaved? Was it a reproach to them that they were in bondage? It is a good question. What is the reproach of Egypt? What is it that God has rolled away? I think Egypt here stands for the mindset of their parents. The fact that they were uncircumcised was a reproach, right? You are sons of Abraham.

You ought to be circumcised and you are not and it is a reproach. Why do they stand there uncircumcised? Because their parents could never shake the Egypt mindset. We want to go back to Egypt.

We want to make a golden cat that looks like the gods of Egypt and say this is what brought us out of Egypt. They could not shake that mentality and the faithlessness that resulted in no circumcision for the children is the mark of Egypt. They just couldn't.

God did many more mighty acts in the sight of their parents than He did for this generation. And yet it is this generation that goes in. And of course there is a wordplay here because the verb rolled is the same word from which you get Gilgal.

So the name of the place is called Gilgal to this day. Now, they were there on the 10th, circumcised, waited three days, now it's the 14th. And so they can keep the Passover on the 14th day of the month at twilight on the plains of Jericho.

And they ate of the produce of the land on the day after, which is the 15th. And what day is that in the feast calendar? What's the day after Passover? Feast of Unleavened Bread. Do you think they kept either Passover or Unleavened Bread for the 38 years of wandering after the spies failed? They did not.

This is the first time. And notice, they ate Unleavened Bread and parched grain on the very same day and 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.

It's a wonderful thing because now they are going to live off the fruit of the land. It's a land flowing with milk and honey. And they are going to take their food and take their land and graze their flocks and herds by right of conquest.

They are going to eat the fruit of land that they are seizing and claiming by faith. And God doesn't have to provide manna. Isn't it interesting that the previous generation rejected God, disobeyed God, did all kinds of things and the manna never ceased to fall on them.

They didn't lose the manna through faithlessness, but they no longer needed the manna when they became faithful. Manna is the low-level subsistence for the believer who hasn't arrived. God's grace, the rain falls on the just and the unjust.

And people say, Oh, boy, that came like manna from heaven. And if you really think about it, manna is your basic level subsistence. Now they are partaking of the produce of the land.

But they begin with that feast of unleavened bread where it needs to be cleansed. The leaven has been taken out. And this is what they are going to need to do to the land.

They need to unleaven the land, remove the leaven. The iniquity of the Amorites is now full and God's judgment is about to fall. That is the significance of what's coming up in this next section.

So we'll pause here and take our break. When we come back, we'll pick up in verse 13 and see if we can figure out what's going on here with this very strange episode. After Gilgal, after circumcision, after Passover, and after unleavened bread, suddenly you have the commander of the armies of the Lord showing up.

Why? Well, that's what we'll try to answer when we come back from our break.