

The Book of Joshua



Joshua Encounters the Commander

The Book of Joshua

Bible Study – Good Shepherd Lutheran Church – Collinsville, Illinois

Chapter Five

1. (5.1) Enemies Melt with Fear

Chapter five is an interlude between Crossing and Conquest.

The Jordan couldn't hold Israel back. God was leading them forward into battle. God still leads His people in the plan of His salvation:
Rom 8.31-39; Psalm 110; 1 Cor. 15.24-28; Phil 2.6-11; Heb 2.8



Notice the use of the word "we." The author is an eyewitness.

2. (5.2-9) Circumcision

Why were the Israelites not circumcised in the wilderness?

Best answer: Because they were under God's judgment. It's hard to believe that Israel would have just ignored this important commandment.

Why did they use flint knives instead of metal?

Exodus 4.25 says that a stone knife was used. Perhaps this recalled the ancient command. Flint may have provided a better surgical instrument.

Background of Circumcision

Gen 17.12 He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant.

Rom 4.11-12 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, ¹² and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised.

Col 2.11-13 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. ¹³ And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,

What about the large numbers? Were there really 601,730 men fit for battle?

Some suggest that the Hebrew word *eleph* ("thousand") could mean "leader." According to this idea there were a certain number of leaders for every group of soldiers. For example the number 50, 600 could have meant 50 leaders or subgroups that provided a total of 600 soldiers. However this doesn't hold up when we get to the final numbers 601 leaders and 730 soldiers doesn't make sense.



What about Gilgal?

The name comes from the Hebrew word "to roll." See Psalm 119.22. It is also related to the name "Golgatha." Jesus rolled away the reproach of our sins when He died on the cross. Gilgal is also the area where John the Baptist proclaimed "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." Consider Micah's (6.5) remarks about this incredibly important two week period when Joshua led the people across the Jordan:

"O my people, remember now... (your journey) from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD."

3. (5.10-12) The Passover

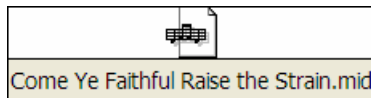
How many Passovers have been celebrated so far?

Surprisingly only two. The first was in Egypt. The second was one year later at Sinai (Numbers 9). After the rebellion at Kadesh there were no Passover celebrations until the celebration at Gilgal.

The Passover was a remembrance of God's salvation in Egypt. The beautiful hymn of St. John of Damascus "Come, You Faithful, Raise the Strain," illustrates the significance of the Passover for all believers:

1. Come, ye faithful, raise the strain
 Of triumphant gladness;
 God hath brought His Israel
 Into joy from sadness.
 'Tis the spring of souls today:
 Christ hath burst His prison
 And from three days' sleep in death
 As a sun hath risen.

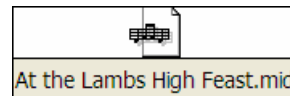
Please see <http://www.lutheran-hymnal.com/lutheranworship/lutheranworship0cd.html> for midi file and lyrics.



St. John of Damascus
 675-749 A.D.

At the Lamb's High Feast

Praise we Christ, whose blood was shed,
 Paschal victim, paschal bread;
 With sincerity and love
 Eat we manna from above.
 Alleluia!



Why did the manna cease?



Hebrew *man* was written *manna* in the Greek translation of the OT. The Hebrew word means "What is it?" Deuteronomy 8.3 especially emphasizes the significance of the manna.

"So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives

by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD."

The Feast of Unleavened Bread was eaten seven days after the Passover (Lev. 23.4-8). The significance of this is that they ate the fruit of the land fulfilling the promise of Deuteronomy 6.11.

Instead of military training and sword sharpening, the Israelites were worshipping in the day before the conquest. What does this teach us about priorities. See Matthew 6.33.

All military campaigns present problems. Fighting is not the only challenge. Israel would be tempted to join in the immorality of the Canaanites and to become enamored with the spoil. Do we face the same problems today?

4. (5.13-15) Joshua Encounters the Commander

Probably while Joshua was surveying the area around Jericho, he encountered an extremely unusual being. Notice the progression:

- 5.13 – A man with a sword
- 5.14 – Commander of the Host of the LORD
- 5.15 – Causes the ground to be holy

Exodus 3.5 Then He said, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground."

Jewish interpretations include: a prophetic vision, dream, the angel Michael.



Early Christians and Luther: This is the Son of God – the preincarnate Christ.