



15 Joshua Chapter 5:1-12 Circumcision of the Heart

Israel Is Circumcised

5 Now it came about when all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard how the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan before the sons of Israel until they had crossed, that their hearts melted, and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the sons of Israel.

² At that time the LORD said to Joshua, "Make for yourself flint knives and circumcise again the sons of Israel the second time." ³ So Joshua made himself flint knives and circumcised the sons of Israel at Gibeath-haaraloth. ⁴ This is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: all the people who came out of Egypt who were males, all the men of war, died in the wilderness along the way after they came out of Egypt. ⁵ For all the people who came out were circumcised, but all the people who were born in the wilderness along the way as they came out of Egypt had not been circumcised. ⁶ For the sons of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, that is, the men of war who came out of Egypt, perished because they did not listen to the voice of the LORD, to whom the LORD had sworn that He would not let them see the land which the LORD had sworn to their fathers to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey. ⁷ So their children whom He raised up in their place, Joshua circumcised; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them along the way.

⁸ Now when they had finished circumcising all the nation, they remained in their places in the camp until they recovered. ⁹ Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the shame of Egypt from you." So, the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day.

¹⁰ While the sons of Israel camped at Gilgal they celebrated the Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month on the desert plains of Jericho. ¹¹ Then on the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and roasted grain. ¹² And the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten some of the produce of the land, so that the sons of Israel no longer had manna,

but they ate some of the yield of the land of Canaan during that year. (Joshua 5:1-12, NASB).

Let us pray.

So what have we learned thus far in the Book of Joshua?

1. God does not leave us where He finds us. He brings us out to take us in. He took Israel out of Egypt to take them INTO the Promised Land. He found us in sin and He moved us into Christ. He takes us from the slavery of sin into the victorious Christian life of Canaan.
2. God wants you to be a victor and not a victim. We easily can become victims. The people saw themselves as grasshoppers and so their enemies also saw them this way. Because of their unbelief they died in the wilderness. Many Christians look at the inheritance from afar instead of dwelling in Canaan. This morning we will see that as soon as they got across the Jordan they were staring into Jericho.

Last Wednesday we looked at Joshua Chapter 4 and learned about monuments. An important part of our journey in the Lord is remembering what He has done for us along the way, and remembering the relationship we have with Him. One way God gave Israel to memorialize the covenant between Israel and God was through circumcision (Genesis 17:10-14). It was a "token" of the covenant between God and His people.

The passage this morning begins by relating to us that all of the surrounding kings knew about the Jews crossing the Jordan. I am sure that as the Israelites had approached the Jordan, the surrounding peoples and kings reasoned that there would be NO WAY that they would ever pass over the Jordan when it was at flood state. But, with the mighty hand of God, they did. Apparently all had heard about another water wall miracle like that which had happened back in Egypt. And because of this, the Bible tells us that the surrounding peoples' hearts MELTED WITH FEAR.

Then comes the strange and unexpected. In verse two, God tells Joshua to make flint knives and circumcise the men again. This is just sort of weird. The whole thing of circumcision is weird, but it is really weird that the first thing they were to do after crossing the Jordan was to circumcise all of the men. It's like seeing the climax of a great movie in which the bad guys are just about to be wiped out, and the movie stops for intermission. Why is this circumcision thing so strange? It is because when this happened, all of the warriors of Israel would be incapacitated, trying to heal from the

operation of circumcision. At this vulnerable point, they would be unable to protect themselves or move forward in battle.

I am sure they wondered why God had not asked them to do this BEFORE they passed over. That way their enemies couldn't easily destroy them. I would have been saying, "God you brought me over the river now? If you wanted this, why didn't you have us do this BEFORE we got within bowshot of our enemies?" There is a very easy explanation. God wanted to teach them once again to trust and obey in Him even when it makes no sense in human terms.

God sometimes puts us into places that seem to be fraught with problems and danger, but God encourages us to move forward. We often end up in positions that make no human sense, but God promises that He is with us in those circumstances and that somehow, some way, they will work together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purposes (Romans 8:28). Also, this had to be done because the circumcision was a personal monument pointing to what God was wanting to do in their hearts. It was a reminder, and as we learned last Wednesday, God loves reminders. Look over at Deuteronomy chapter 10 for a moment.

God said to the people, *"¹⁶ So circumcise your heart, and do not stiffen your neck any longer. ¹⁷ For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who does not show partiality, nor take a bribe. (Deuteronomy 10:16-17, NASB).*

Circumcision seems to be a picture of cutting away the outer "shell" so to speak. The remainder is tender and receptive to the things of the Lord. It is an exact physical explanation of what goes on in the fifth chapter of Galatians. In Galatians the "deeds of the flesh" are to be cut away (the old man being put off) and the deeds of the spirit come into their place (putting on of the new man). Even in the Old Testament God was telling the Jewish people that circumcision was a picture of what was to happen in the heart.

Look over at Deuteronomy 30. *"⁶ Moreover, the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the hearts of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and all your soul, so that you may live. (Deuteronomy 30:6, NASB).*

God talks about circumcising their hearts so that they might LOVE the Lord with ALL OF THEIR HEARTS so that they might live! It is when we let our own hearts be circumcised that we live life, and we live it abundantly (John 10:10).

In Jeremiah 4:4 the prophet tells the people to circumcise themselves to the Lord. This idea is a symbol and a monument of what the Holy Spirit wants to do in our hearts and our lives. The Holy Spirit wants to cut away the flesh (the old man) and leave the tender tissue of our souls to be sensitive to the direction of the Lord. We've talked a lot about this as we've talked about "PUTTING OFF THE OLD MAN AND PUTTING ON THE NEW." Christlikeness always involves the laying aside of self through the direction and power of the Holy Spirit.

They dying of self and the cutting away of self ONLY comes through submission to the Holy Spirit. We can't control ourselves enough by living a "white knuckle" kind of Christian life (a life where you just try harder and try enough to be a "good Christian"). You and I are JUST NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO DO THIS ON OUR OWN. This is very important, because nothing will make you feel more horrible and make you feel more like a failure than trying to do this thing called "Christianity" on your own.

God then tells them to rest in Gilgal. Gilgal comes from the [Hebrew](#) verb גלל(galal), meaning "to roll." After Joshua had circumcised Israel, God said that he had rolled away the reproach of [Egypt](#) and the place where he had done this was called Gilgal ever since (Joshua 5:9). Note that the name Gilgal is spelled the same as the nouns galgal and gilgal that were derived of the verb galal.¹

God would "roll away" that which was in the way of their victory. The Book of Joshua is all about getting out of the wilderness and getting into the Promised Land. God is prepared to "roll away" everything that is blocking you from getting to the Promised Land. God is telling each of us that before we get into the battle, we need to submit the flesh and let Him do a work in us to make us tender to accept His direction and His calling. We must have a time in which God does "heart surgery" on us before we engage in spiritual warfare.

We each must get to Gilgal before we go into warfare. This is when you've allowed yourself to become so tender that, with the flesh cut away, you are back in fellowship with the Lord. This is what I talked about last Sunday. Remember I called it the Doctrine of Spilled Milk. It is when you are a child of God but you engage in sin. You are weakened by that sin. You are accused by that sin. But simply by restoring fellowship, we are empowered and refreshed and renewed.

Let's now read verse 10 of Joshua 5 again. ¹⁰ *While the sons of Israel camped at Gilgal they celebrated the Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month on the*

¹ <https://www.abarim-publications.com/Meaning/Gilgal.html>

desert plains of Jericho. (NASB). We see that the people are once again celebrating Passover. This celebration was a sign and a memorial done yearly in which the passage through and out of Egypt was celebrated. Remember what happened at the first Passover? All of Israel that put blood from the Passover Lamb on their doorposts were saved.

When we come into Gilgal and become conscious of sin in our life, we rededicate our lives to Him once more remembering ALL that He has done for us. At this point we are walking forward. The day after the Passover, the passage tells us they were eating produce from the land and then the Manna stopped.

I think that is important as well. God went from giving them a stipend to get them through from day to day, to giving them their inheritance. So Gilgal is a time of remembrance, restoration, reflection, and redirection. This happens to us through spiritual circumcision allowing God to convict, direct, and change us. Sometimes people come to church and become convicted, and they tell me that they want to “rededicate their lives.” But what they are *really* saying is that they’re away from where they need to be. Once we engage in confession and submission, we are restored.

Agreeing with God that something in our thoughts, words, or deeds is not lined up with His desire for our lives is a simple act for the believer. We can pray a prayer something like this: “Lord, I know that this thing that I’m thinking, doing or saying is sin. Lord, I know that you died for that sin on the cross, but I’m confessing to you that I have let it come between you and me. I agree that this needs to be removed. So Lord, thank you for forgiving me of this. Lord, thank you for removing it as far as the east is from the west. Lord, restore to me that sweet fellowship between us. Lord, I give you this flesh deed and ask you Lord to help me overcome it through the power of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus name I pray. Amen”

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.
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