

Joshua 5

The nation Israel was about to do the hardest thing it had ever done. They began as a family. Then they became an enslaved culture. Then they regained freedom in a strange and transitory place away from home. Now they were going to fight many nations in life and death battles and against trained soldiers. Instead of making more knives and spears, they all undergo a debilitating surgery as they approach the enemy strongholds. When we only do what makes sense to us, we are living off of our own wits. We need to do what God wants. The rub comes when God's plans seem a little crazy to us.

There are always two movies playing in our minds. One movie was that God had dried up the Red Sea and killed Pharaoh's army. It included living in the desert for 40 years without any crops or other water supplies. It included the miraculous crossing of the Jordan River. The other movie was all about the giants and the forts and the armies awaiting them in Canaan. As Christians, we live in the tension between our senses and our faith. We do not control the outcome. We only control if we pray and obey. That is a pretty secure space, because God will make a paradigm shift locally and around the world to fit our faith journey. Many times the things I am prompted to pray about the most go the smoothest.

Read Joshua 5:1-12: When Joshua and the children returned to their homeland in Canaan there were numerous Canaanite nations to displace. God had originally given the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants in 2000 BC. God required the children of Israel to destroy these sin-crazed idolaters upon returning from Egypt. Genesis tells us that God separated the Hebrews from the surrounding Canaanite culture and took them to a cloistered living in an area of Egypt.

But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. (Gen 15:16)

The entire modern dialogue about *Palestinian rights* are inaccurate. Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon all attacked Israel in what is called the 6-day war, and they lost. All of the displaced Arabs were not allowed to return to their Arab homelands, so they became Palestinian refugees. The Jews graciously allowed them to live within their borders. What other nation in the world would be so compassionate on those intent on killing them? Since that time, Israel has

continued to pacify the surrounding nations by allowing foreign settlement in Israel. The term west bank occupation is an intellectually dishonest description of areas west of the Jordan River as somehow having ties to Jordan. In fact, Jordan occupies some of what is truly Israel. It is obvious to us today what the effect of letting your enemies live amongst you. Besides, God said that this is really his property, and the Jews are not to re-gift it to other nations. God has the reversionary interest that he can call at any time he desires.



There are a few characters in the Bible who are recorded as doing things the right way. Joshua is one of them. Instead of charging in with guns blazing, Joshua stopped and circumcised the men. They put God first. They made themselves seemingly vulnerable in the process. They were now hemmed in by the Jordan River, on the doorstep of their enemies. There will be numerous times in our lives

that require that we stand still by while God puts things in order. If we interrupt his plans with our great logic and creative ideas, we could end up causing serious damage.

and that this entire assembly may know that the Lord does not save by sword or by spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and He will hand you over to us!" (1 Samuel 17:47)

Both Joshua and David were sober and focused on how to use the angels to fight their wars more than any other generals. They had an unparalleled series of unlikely military successes, against all odds. The book of Judges also makes mention of other God-powered deliverers. God does not need to use the agency of angels any more than he needs us to be his evangelists and disciplers...but he does. We are not to really communicate directly with our co-worker angels. We both work for the same guy.

The act of circumcision is a separation from worldly forces and impulses, so it is fitting to see a massive circumcision ceremony leading to an unprecedented military campaign success.

There is really nothing that left Egypt that translated to life in the land of abundance. Moses could not cross over into the holy land, because his life was connected to the Law of God and its requirements on sinful men. Moses himself is in heaven with God, but as the most humble man ever born, he is more of an Eagle Scout than an example of redemption. He represents man's best efforts to live right. He is proof that it is impossible. God has to reach down and do it for us. Alternatively, Joshua is God's yes man. He just takes action at God's word and trusts God for the results. Jesus and Joshua are the same name in different languages. They both mean 'Jehovah is salvation'.

The entirety of the prior generation who exited from Egypt died in the desert because they had no faith.

¹⁵ *As has just been said: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion."* ¹⁶ *Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt?* ¹⁷ *And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies perished in the wilderness?* ¹⁸ *And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed?* ¹⁹ *So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief. (Hebrews 3)*

The name Gilgal is associated with a circular rolling away of something. It obviously is a picture of the cutting action in circumcision. It also reminds us of the circular stone sealing the tomb of Jesus. It speaks of a new life and a door to better living. It involves separation from what we consider precious. Our sex lives, or life span, or intimate things. If we do not have 'skin in the game' we are probably not walking by faith. We might be playing it too safe.

Life looks different when you walk by faith. Their miraculous daily manna was replaced by crops that were grown and harvested off of the land. Faith includes a lot of work. We are given responsibilities to attend to. It may not seem spiritual to be a farmer or a tradesman, but it should entail our best efforts. People mistake faith with abdicating responsibilities. Nope.

¹⁰ Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might (Ecclesiastes 9)

Read Joshua 5:13-15:

This is a pre-incarnate meeting with Jesus. Like Abraham and others, Jesus meets with various Old Testament believers. His role here is the Captain of Heavens Armies.

¹¹ And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. ¹² His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many crowns; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. ¹³ He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. ¹⁵ From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will ^[e]rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the ^[w]wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. ¹⁶ And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written: "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." (revelation 19)

I really like the brief dialogue between this man of faith and Jesus. Joshua essentially asks if God is on his side. God essentially says no, but you can have victory if you are on my side. Our goal should always be to have our antenna out for what God is doing, and join him...not trying to win God over to my agenda.