

A Study of Joshua 5: The Captain of the Lord of Hosts

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Verse 1: When the Canaanites heard about the drying up of the Jordan waters, *their hearts melted*. No spirit was left in them. This is unique to Israel. It never happened to the church, that the people of the world feared the people of God. **It was the mistake of the crusaders.** The church thought it was Israel, and therefore, they thought the nations would fear them as God worked through them. But the result was that the Muslims renewed their hatred of the Christians and their resolve to destroy the Christians.



When conservative Christians in politics try to promote conservative Christian ideas, the result is not the fear of God but the hatred of Christians. It didn't happen with other people of God either—such as Noah or Job—but Abimelech feared Abraham (the first “Israelite”) when he found out Sarah was his wife and the men of Shechem feared Jacob's sons.

Application: Expect God to prepare the hearts of the people to respond to His messengers. That does not mean it will go smoothly or easily or without conflict. (Note Paul's teaching and rejections in the synagogue in Acts 18 and 28:23-24.)

Verse 2: God told Joshua to circumcise the men of Israel. Here are some observations about circumcision:

- In Genesis 17:12 it was a command to Abraham.
- Newborn males were to be circumcised on the eighth day. Others were to be circumcised when they became part of the people of Israel. Abraham was ninety-nine and Ishmael was thirteen when they were circumcised on the same day.
- Anyone not circumcised were to be separated from Israel.
- Circumcision was not in the Abrahamic Covenant, but it had at least five purposes:
 - (1) It was a visible sign of commitment to God.
 - (2) It was a sign of belonging to God and not to the culture around them.
 - (3) It reminded the nation of God's promise to Abraham.
 - (4) Deuteronomy 10:17 Moses said to circumcise your heart and no longer be a stiff-necked people. This is a humble heart (Leviticus 26:41). Paul repeated this idea in Romans 2:29.
 - (5) It seems to be a commitment to God, being set apart from the world, and humility because it is done for God. There is no personal advantage to it.

Application: We must be careful to obey God by keeping His commandments the way He says they are to be kept when that way is given. God directed the circumcision to be done with flint knives, not iron.

Verses 3-5: Those who came out of Egypt had been circumcised (Joshua and Caleb were only ones left), but those born during the wandering were not circumcised. **What God told Joshua to do incapacitated the whole army for several days, right outside the enemy's fortress.**

Verses 6-10: God said *today I have rolled away the reproach, [or shame], of Egypt from you.* "Gilgal" means "rolled away." We're not told exactly what that means.

Application: God does not forget His Word just because we forget it. Circumcision was ignored for 430 years, but God remembered. The Gospel and the literal following of Scripture was ignored by the mainline Eastern and Western Church for over 1000 years before the Reformers began to look at it again. But God did not forget (v 3-8).

Application: Worship places change from time to time, but worship should be carried out according to the guidelines specified for the age in which we live. For the church, it's defined as presenting our bodies as a living and holy sacrifice (Romans 12:1), confessing our sins (1 John 1:9), and especially remembering at the Lord's Supper Christ's death on the cross until He comes, as in 1 Corinthians 11:28-32 (v 9-10).

Verse 11-12: That day they ate from the produce of the land and the manna ceased. It was time to depend on the land, not on God's miraculous intervention. Both were God providing for their needs. But now it would come from their harvest of the land and they will have to fight Canaanites.

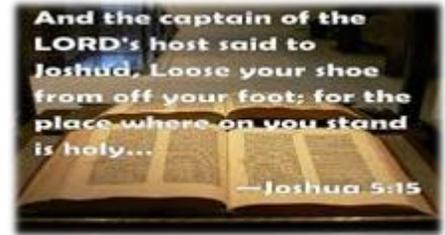
In the spiritual life, often will God remove a temptation for a baby Christian. But that isn't the way it will always be. **If you expect God to remove all your temptations, you will never become spiritually mature.** There comes a time when the manna ends and you need to deal with the land. Most of your temptations will never go away.

Application: God may provide an unusual deliverance from your sinful habits, practices or the consequences of them, but the normal spiritual life is not manna in the wilderness but eating the fruit of the life situation we are in. We must live through and in our situation, not look to escape from it.

Verses 13-15: Joshua saw the man with a sword and asked him if he is for Israel or against it. The man said, *Neither. I'm Captain of the hosts of the Lord.* So Joshua bowed down and worshipped Him. The Captain told Joshua to remove his sandals because this was holy ground.

Throughout biblical history, a person appears **who is not God the Father** (because one cannot see Him without dying, Exodus 33:20; Genesis 32:30; Deuteronomy 5:6; Judges 6:22; 13:22). **Neither is this person an angel**

because He is called "Lord," "God," or "Yahweh." He's also worshipped or encourages worship, as He does here with Joshua and as He did with Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:5), by telling them to remove their sandals because the ground is holy. Good angels do not receive worship (Revelation 19:10; 22:8).



Sometimes this one who appeared is called a "man," as He is here and as He is with Abraham in Genesis 18–20. Sometimes He is called the "angel of the Lord." John 1:18 says that the Son declares God. It's my conclusion that the One standing before Joshua is the pre-incarnate Jesus.

The reason people saw God and lived was because they were seeing God the Son, not God the Father.

Application: Understand it is God who is in charge of His forces. We just work here.

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