



Joshua 5:1-12
Heart Circumcision

Joshua 5:1 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, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan from before the children of Israel until we had crossed over, that their heart melted; and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the children of Israel.

2 At that time the LORD said to Joshua, "Make flint knives for yourself, and circumcise the sons of Israel again the second time."

3 So Joshua made flint knives for himself, and circumcised the sons of Israel at the hill of the foreskins.

4 And 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.

5 For all the people who came out had been circumcised, but all the people born in the wilderness, on the way as they came out of Egypt, had not been circumcised.

6 For 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, because they did not obey the voice of the LORD -- to whom the LORD swore that He would not show them the land which the LORD had sworn to their fathers that He would give us, "a land flowing with milk and honey."

7 Then Joshua circumcised their sons whom He raised up in their place; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not been circumcised on the way.

8 So it was, when they had finished circumcising all the people, that they stayed in their places in the camp till they were healed.

9 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.

10 Now the children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight on the plains of Jericho.

11 And they ate of the produce of the land on the day after the Passover, unleavened bread and parched grain, on the very same day.

12 Then 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.

Some people are famous for the fact that they are always running behind schedule. My friend and mentor Mark Herzer used to refer to the fact that ministers are particularly prone to this problem, by saying that he wasn't late it was just that while everyone else was operating on EST that is Eastern Standard Time, he was running on PST, that is Pastor Standard Time. I too am prone to functioning on that schedule.

The problem with being proverbially late however, is not only that you irritate people, but that you begin to become the butt of jokes and reproaches, especially from people who aren't that well disposed

towards you. The children of Israel at this point must have been the butt of many such reproaches from the nations at this point because although they have finally entered into the promised land, they did not do so on time. They are not five to ten minutes late, or even a day or two overdue, ***they have entered into the land forty years behind the original schedule.***

It doesn't take 40 years even when you have an entire nation walking on foot to go from Egypt to the border of Canaan. The wilderness of Sinai is a big place but it is not that big and the children of Israel had reached the border of the promised land well within the first year of their deliverance from Egypt. But their courage had failed them on the border, they believed the cowardly report of ten of the spies about an unconquerable land filled with giants, and they had rebelled almost stoning Moses and Aaron and Joshua to death, electing a new leader and returning to Egypt. As a result of this lack of faith and terrible rebellion the Lord had almost destroyed the rebellious people entirely, and it was only because of the intercession of Moses on their behalf that he let them live – but cursed them generation to wander for 40 years in the desert until not one of those who had rebelled was left alive. Now, you can just imagine the number of Hebrew jokes those years of wandering must have spawned in the nations.

But now, the laughing of the nations has come to an abrupt end. Their reproach is being "rolled away" although they are 40 years overdue, the rebellious generation has died in the desert, and the children of Israel have crossed into the promised land. And their entrance has been as amazing as it possibly could be: The Lord has literally stopped the Jordan river so that the people could cross over on dry land.

So they have gone from being a reproach to a cause of terror to the nations, they have been a long time getting there but now they are there and nations are fearful not because the size of the Israelite nation is so intimidating, or because of their military victories on the other side of the Jordan.

No, their hearts have melted because the God who goes before these people, Yahweh, is the mighty God who brought the nation of Egypt to its knees with seven terrible plagues, He is the God who parted the Red Sea that his people might walk through it and closed it again so that the Egyptian army was utterly destroyed, and he is the God who dried up the rushing waters of the Jordan at flood time so that his people could just walk in to the land. And they know that this almighty God keeps his promises and he has promised, covenanted, sworn with an oath, to deliver this land into the hands of his people. That is why they fear the Children of Israel.

This day, the Lord has rolled away the reproaches of the Egyptians that fell on the people because of their unfaithfulness, and that is why the place is called in Hebrew "Gilgal" or "rolling away". The Lord has kept his covenant and now it is time for the Children of Israel to renew their own covenant with the Lord, he has been their God, and now they must renew the sign that they are His people.

As they had wandered in the wilderness, there had been no circumcision of the new generation that had been born after the Exodus, possibly because of the unfaithfulness of the fathers. They had also not observed the celebration of the Passover in the wilderness, but now they will keep the Passover in the promised land, and in order to do that in accordance with the Lord's command in Exodus 12:48 that no uncircumcised male might partake of that meal, they must first be circumcised.

So, here in the promised Land, the new generation is marked with the sign of the covenant and then they observe the meal of the covenant. And they do not observe the Passover using Manna. Now they eat from the produce of the land. The Lord's extraordinary provision is no longer necessary.

Now I want to make 3 particular applications of this text:

- 1) First we should understand that just like the New Testament sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the corresponding Old testament sacraments of Circumcision and the Lord's Supper are intended to be outward and visible signs of inward and invisible spiritual truths and that if the spiritual grace that the sign is intended to point to is not present the sign itself is useless.

This means that circumcision is intended to be a visible manifestation of an inward change of heart, we see this explicitly spelled out in several texts, I am just going to point to a few of them:

Deut. 10:16 "Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer."

Deut. 30:5 "Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.

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 live.

Romans 2:28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh;

29 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.

A real Child of Israel is one who is not merely marked outwardly in the flesh but has had a change of heart and who has been saved by faith alone.

In the same way baptism is intended to be not only an external washing with water, it is intended to be an outward sign of an inward change worked not by the water but by the Holy Spirit: ***Titus 3:5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,***

The Passover similarly was a memorial meal that pointed to the covenant faithfulness of God in saving his people by the blood of the Lamb. So to the Lord's Supper, is also a covenant meal that points to the Lord's faithfulness in saving his people by the blood of the Lamb of God. Now to come to the table of the Lord as merely an external ceremony was never his intent. Rather we were to come know that the spiritual truth signified had really taken place.

It is worth noting that just as only the circumcised were supposed to eat the Passover, only the Baptized are allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper. But here there is an explicit requirement that to come to the table, the inward and spiritual change symbolized by Baptism must have taken place.

- 2) The next application is even more obvious, the signs themselves do not save, if they are not signs of a real and vibrant faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the promised redeemer that even the old testament sacrament of the Lord's Supper pointed to.

Interestingly you can be saved without the signs, but not without what they point to. I find it interesting that the circumcised generation was kept out but the uncircumcised were let in.

Difference between the two generations, one died in the wilderness. Jacob and Esau.

Both Circumcised.

“Believing on Christ must be personal; a man himself and in his own proper person must close with Christ Jesus—‘The just shall live by his faith.’ (Hab. 2:4.) This says, that it will not suffice for a man’s safety and relief, that he is in covenant with God as a born member of the visible church, by virtue of the parent’s subjection to God’s ordinances: neither will it suffice that the person had the initiating seal of baptism added, and that he then virtually engaged to seek salvation by Christ’s blood, as all infants do: neither does it suffice that men are come of believing parents; their faith will not instate their children into a right to the spiritual blessings of the covenant; neither will it suffice that parents did, in some respects, engage for their children, and give them away unto God: all these things do not avail. The children of the kingdom and of godly predecessors are cast out. Unless a man in his own person have faith in Christ Jesus, and with his own heart approve and acquiesce in that device of saving sinners, he cannot be saved. I grant, this faith is given unto him by Christ; but certain it is, that it must be personal.” – William Guthrie

3) God's covenant promises are always certain, nothing can rob us of them. With faith.

NAU Hebrews 11:1 Now **faith is** the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.
2 For by it the men of old gained approval.

Eph. 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;