

The People Prepare for the Conquest – Part 1

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Israel prepares for the Conquest through circumcision and the Passover
2. aim – to cause us to give glory to God for the power he has exerted through us to glorify himself
3. passage – Joshua 5:1-15

b. outline

1. The New Generation Circumcised (Joshua 5:1-9)
2. The People Celebrate the Passover (Joshua 5:10-12)
3. The Commander of the Lord’s Army Appears (Joshua 5:13-15)

c. opening

1. the **structure** of this chapter
 - a. this is a chapter that contains not one (1), but three (3) separate pericopes:
 1. **vv. 1-9** (circumcision); **vv. 10-12** (Passover); **vv. 13-15** (the commander of the Lord’s army)
 2. **i.e.** each of these are able to stand “on their own” having a single subject and intention
 - b. however, we will *combine* them because there is a **common thread** between them **in context**
2. the **content** of this chapter
 - a. **IMO**: the Jordan river crossing narrative (begun in **chap. 1**, continuing through **chaps. 3-4**), actually ends *here*, in **chap. 5**
 - b. although *it seems as though 5:1 transitions* into a new phase of Israelite history (**i.e.** the Conquest), this chapter (in reality) is the *conclusion* of the river crossing (a “bookend” to **chap. 1**)
 - c. so, this chapter is a **preparation narrative** – another *anticipation* of what is to come – **i.e.** prepare for what God is about to do, *just as you prepared to see what God would do in the river crossing*
 - d. thus **IMO**, the “observation” made by the author in **5:1** is actually a part of the first pericope of this preparation narrative – **i.e.** the circumcision ritual outlined in **vv. 2-9**

I. The New Generation Circumcised (Joshua 5:1-9)

Content

a. the reaction of the Canaanite kings (v. 1)

1. “*kings of the Amorites*” = the various city-states in Canaan occupied by Amorites
 - a. the Amorites were various people groups descended from Ham and Canaan (**Genesis 10:15-18**)
 1. in the E: Sihon and Og in Moab (**Deut. 31:4 cf. Josh. 2:10**); in the W: various cities scattered from Jerusalem to the E (**i.e.** over the E half of the land of Canaan; **Josh. 10**)
2. “*kings of the Canaanites*” = the various city-states in Canaan occupied by others
 - a. the Canaanites represented a number of people groups (**i.e.** listed individually in **Josh. 3:10**)
 1. “*by the sea*” = those occupying territory to the W of the hill country towards the Mediterranean
 2. eventually: the Philistines, who occupied the SW corner of Palestine
3. “*their hearts melted*”, “*any spirit in them*” = **seriously demoralized**; faced with the **hopeless** reality that a *huge contingent* of people (enemies!) were coming their way
 - a. **i.e.** the same phrase used by Rahab in **2:10-11** = we heard what the Lord had done through you *on the other side* of the Jordan (to Sihon and Og); the news of your arrival has given us great fear
4. **question #1**: how did all of these kings hear *so quickly* about the Israelites crossing the Jordan?
 - a. **IOW**: the implication of the date listed in **5:10** seems to imply that these events took place *fairly quickly* after the river crossing (**i.e.** a week or two?) – how did that information get around so fast?
 - b. **probably**: the kings in the cities near the crossing location (**i.e.** Jericho) dispatched messengers through the territory *warning* of the Israelite’s arrival (with the message then *spreading out*)
 - c. **possibly**: God *himself* “whispered” the news into the ears of the kings, informing them that his people were coming, *that what was about to happen was ordered from his throne, and they deserved what they were about to get (i.e. a demoralizing spirit sent over them ... ?)*
5. **question #2**: why does the author mention this here; what is his *point*?
 - a. **certainly (see above)**: it is a *transitional statement* into a new phase of Conquest – the Israelites are now “home” and it is time for them to “expel” the natives (thus, the *reaction* of the natives)
 - b. **more likely**: it is part of what comes next ...

b. the new generation circumcised (vv. 2-9)

1. God *himself* instructs Joshua to circumcise the people
2. “a second time” = since it is impossible to be *physically* circumcised twice, this must be **nationally**
 1. which Joshua explains in **vv. 4-7**: the men who came out of Egypt were circumcised, but because of their *refusal* to enter the land, none of their *descendants* were after that
 - a. **i.e.** children were *not* being circumcised on the eighth day during the wilderness wandering
 2. **note**: the *original* event of circumcision *implied* in **v. 5** is not recorded in the Pentateuch
 - a. Abraham circumcises his family (**see below**), it’s prescribed in the Law in **Leviticus 12:3**, and there are references to *specific* ones, but this is not included anywhere in Torah
 - b. the assumption must be that this occurred **at Sinai**, after the Law is given (**after the Calf?**)
3. **question #1**: why does the custom of circumcision *stop* for 40 years, leading to this event *now*?
 - a. circumcision *is a sign* of the covenant made with Abraham (**read Genesis 17:7-11**)
 1. it is an outward sign *identifying* the specific people who belong to God and are given the land
 - a. **aside**: Baptists *deny* that baptism is the “replacement ritual” in the New Covenant for circumcision – in the New, circumcision *is of the heart, not the flesh, by the Spirit (Romans 2:29)*, and baptism is a *testimony* to an inward circumcision/regeneration (**of both genders**)
 2. **i.e.** those who came out of Egypt were *identified as the people of Yahweh*, his people (**v. 5**)
 - b. but, because that generation *refused to go into the land*, God “withdrew” the promise from them
 1. **a time of “judgment” fell** – they were *rejected*, and they died *in the wilderness* (**v. 6**)
 2. **i.e. they were not qualified** to circumcise their children – they could not give them the “sign”
 - c. so, now that the next generation is **in the land**, the sign can be *reestablished* in them
 1. Joshua (one of the faithful of that generation) “passes” this sign onto them *now* (**vv. 3, 7**)
 - a. each man brings **his own** “flint knife” (**v. 2**) to Joshua as an act of *submission*
 2. **i.e.** God has “rolled away” (Gilgal) the reproach of Egypt (**v. 9**) = the sin of those who came out of Egypt has been erased; they are gone, and a new generation now has the “sign” in them
4. **question #2**: what is the *point* of **v. 1** (the demoralized nations) beginning this event?
 - a. **answer**: God sends a demoralizing spirit over the natives in order to *prevent them* from rising up *while the Israelites would be vulnerable to attack* (**i.e.** healing from their “surgery”; **v. 8**)
5. **the first act of preparation for the Conquest ahead is to identify themselves, in God’s prescribed way, with the promise to Abraham – to state unequivocally that they are ready to take and occupy the land promised to their patriarch**

II. The People Celebrate the Passover (Joshua 5:10-12)

Content

a. the people celebrate the Passover (v. 10)

1. **note**: unlike the circumcision ritual implied above, the people celebrating the Passover at Sinai is recorded in **Numbers 9:5** – however, it is *unknown* if they *continued to do so* during the 40 years
 - a. **IMO**: they probably *did*, since the Passover is a celebration of deliverance *from Egypt*, something that had happened *in the past* and could not be “taken away” from them in judgment
2. so, the people celebrate the Passover here, *in the Promised Land for the first time*, as both:
 - a. a celebration of their freedom from Egypt, and
 - b. a celebration of the fact that they (too!) had seen the wrath of God “pass over” them – **i.e.** they had survived **the judgment of God in the wilderness** just as the previous generation had survived the wrath of God coming for the firstborn of Egypt
 - c. **IOW**: the ritual takes on a *whole new meaning*: we, too, experienced the mercy of God, and he has led us out of that “day” of judgment, across the “water barrier”, and to his promised place

b. the people eat of the fruit of the land (vv. 11-12)

1. **note**: since the people have only been in Canaan for a few days (or weeks!), it is *impossible* for them to have grown this food – so, it is *obvious* that they have *taken this food from the natives*
 - a. **question**: wouldn’t this be a violation of the Eighth Commandment (thou shalt not steal)?
 - b. **answer**: it is not considered stealing **if what you take belongs to you in the first place**
 1. **i.e.** since God (the *rightful owner of all things*) has given this land to *this people*, then whatever grows *from that land* rightfully belongs to them
2. so, the people get to eat *for the first time in 40 years*, actual grains (and fruits and vegetables)
 - a. and (**v. 12**), the manna stops – now that they are *in the land*, they no longer need the manna
 - b. **IOW**: the *judgment* of the wilderness wandering is *now officially over* – eating manna exclusively for 40 years **is not a blessing, it is a curse** (e.g. **prison food**: effective only to keep you alive!)

3. **the second act of preparation for the Conquest ahead is for them to celebrate, in God's prescribed way, their experience of the mercy of God – to take unequivocally their ownership of the very place promised to their patriarch**
- c. **the application of these two events by the people to us**
 1. a **“preparation motif”** is common in Scripture – before God sends his people into what he has purposed for them, he prescribes a period of *preparation* beforehand
 - a. **e.g.** the people prepare to cross the Jordan (chap. 1); Moses (40 years in the wilderness); Paul (14 years in Tarsus); Jesus (30 years as a carpenter's son, 40 days in the wilderness)
 - b. **e.g.** preachers must be prepared before they can preach (**i.e.** their sermon, their training, their spiritual and emotional life)
 2. **this time of preparation is consistently revealed as a turning away from ourselves (from our “natural” abilities) to the power of God – to enter into what is ahead of us having looked upward to Christ and his power, rather than plunging into the fray relying on our own strength**
 - a. **here:** the people *identify* themselves with Yahweh's promise, and then they *celebrate* that promise by reflecting on what God has given them (**i.e.** they prepared by remembering who got them here)
 1. they “go forward” knowing they are here *only because of the mercy of God*, and they will succeed in occupying the land *only because of the power of God*
 - b. **we do the same:** we gather as the people of God **each Sabbath** as both an *identification* with Christ, and a *celebration* of what he has done for us (**i.e.** we prepare in our remembrance)
 1. we “go forward” (into this next week) knowing that we will “make it through” whatever is ordained for us *only because of the mercy of God* and we will persevere *only because of the power of God*
 - c. which is *precisely* what the *last event of preparation* in the chapter is all about (**see next week**) ...
 4. **Benediction – Psalm 46:8-11:**

“[The psalmist says:] Come, behold the works of the LORD, how he has brought desolations on the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots with fire. [God says:] ‘Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!’ [We say:] The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.”