

The Celebration of the Passover, and the Manna Stops

Joshua 5:10-15

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¹³ And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, "Are You for us or for our adversaries?"

¹⁴ So He said, "No, but as Commander of the army of the LORD I have now come."

And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, "What does my Lord say to His servant?"

¹⁵ Then the Commander of the LORD's army said to Joshua, "Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy." And Joshua did so."

Background Notes

Gilgal was located on the west side of the Jordan River, about two miles northeast of Jericho. Gilgal became Israel's base camp for their military conquest of the land. Several times throughout this book we read that they were camped in Gilgal, or they returned to Gilgal. Gilgal was the place where they set up one of the stone monuments to commemorate their crossing of the Jordan, and Gilgal was the place where the men of the new nation were circumcised.

In the second half of Joshua 5, we see that Gilgal was the place where they celebrated the Passover, and Gilgal was where they first ate of the food of the land after the manna stopped. Gilgal was the place where the Lord, as commander of the Lord's army, appeared to Joshua.

All these events have spiritual lessons for us. We've already seen that the land of Canaan is a picture of the spiritual land that God wants us to possess -- the land of spiritual blessing and spiritual battles. It is in the land that we enjoy our spiritual blessings in Christ, and it's in the land that we win spiritual battles in the power of Christ. The land is called the heavenlies or heavenly places (in the book of Ephesians) in the New Testament. It's not heaven, but "the heavenlies" -- the realm or sphere of spiritual realities.

In this wonderful spiritual picture in Joshua, the Ark, a picture of Christ, opened up the way into the Promised Land. We enter the land by first of all recognizing our spiritual position in Christ -- that we've died with Christ and we've been raised with Christ. (Remember the stone monuments?) And then we must practice spiritual circumcision -- putting the knife of

God's Word to our fleshly desires. Spiritual circumcision is the "death to self" principle, or the judgment of "self," so that the life of Christ can live through us.

Here in the second half of Joshua 5, we see three more prerequisites for living in the land. These events will be our teaching points for this section of Joshua 5.

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. Committed believers observe the remembrance feast in the land.

Verse 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."* Notice that they arrived in the land just in time to keep the Passover. Exodus 12:6 says, *"Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight."*

We don't read of the Israelites keeping the Passover during their wilderness wanderings, during the 38 years after their great sin of unbelief. But now they had entered the Promised Land, and they were once again following and trusting the Lord. Now they were ready to remember how the Lord delivered them out of Egypt by celebrating the Passover.

Do you see the spiritual picture for Christians here? We don't keep the Passover, but we keep the remembrance feast of the Lord's Supper, or Communion. 1 Corinthians 5:7 says *"Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us."* In the Lord's Supper we remember what the Lord has done for us in delivering us from sin. We remember the basis of our salvation.

Notice that circumcision comes before the Passover -- in fact, that's the way the Passover was instituted. Exodus 12:48 says, *"And when a stranger dwells with you and wants to keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it."*

In the same way, we should undergo spiritual circumcision or self-judgment before we as believers celebrate the Lord's Supper. 1 Corinthians 11:28 says that we should examine ourselves before we eat of the bread and drink of the cup at the Lord's Supper, so that we don't eat and drink unworthily.

How much do you appreciate the opportunities we have to celebrate the Lord's Supper, our "remembrance feast"? If you're "living in the land," you'll enjoy this remembrance feast. If you're not in the land, attending the Lord's Supper will be just going through the motions for you. How is it in your life? Committed believers observe the remembrance feast in the land.

2. Committed believers eat the food of the Land.

Verses 11-12: *“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.”*

The unleavened bread that they ate was a part of the Passover feast, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread follows the Passover.

The giving of the manna for food in the wilderness was a miracle, and the stopping of the manna was a miracle. Now that the people were in the land, they could eat the food of the land. What is the spiritual lesson for us here? In the spiritual picture, we know that the manna is a picture of Christ because the Lord says so in John 6: “He is the bread of life come down from heaven.” The food of the land is also a picture of Christ. Christ is our Savior, and He’s also our sustenance. He is food that sustains our souls.

The manna particularly pictures Christ in His earthly ministry, and the food of the land pictures Christ in His present heavenly ministry. Is the earthly ministry of Christ the only food for your soul, or have you gone further in your Christian life, and the risen, ascended, and glorified Christ is now living His life through you? The risen and glorified Christ becomes food for your soul! In the spiritual picture, to be nourished by the risen, ascended and glorified Christ who is living His life through us -- this is the food of the Land. Committed believers eat the food of the Land.

3. Committed believers serve the Lord of the Land.

Verses 13-15: *“And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, “Are You for us or for our adversaries?” ¹⁴ So He said, “No, but as Commander of the army of the LORD I have now come.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, “What does my Lord say to His servant?”*

¹⁵ *Then the Commander of the LORD’s army said to Joshua, “Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy.” And Joshua did so.”*

We believe that the “Man” who appeared to Joshua was a “Christophany” -- the pre-incarnate Son of God took on the form and appearance of a Man and appeared to Joshua. Only God receives worship, and the Man here allowed Joshua to worship Him, showing it was the Lord Himself. This Man was the Lord Himself.

Joshua asked Him, “Are you for us or for our adversaries?” The Lord essentially answered, “Joshua, you’re asking the wrong question! I’m the commander of the Lord’s army. I call the shots!” At this point Joshua recognized that this was the Lord Himself, and he fell on his face to the earth and worshiped Him. Then Joshua asked, “What does my Lord say to His

servant?” By obeying the command to remove his shoes, Joshua demonstrated that he was prepared to do whatever the Lord said.

Has each of us come to that place in our lives as believers? Do we recognize that the Lord is on our side and will fight for us? We have the sword of the Lord and all His Holy angels on our side -- what an army! Do we realize that?

Do we recognize that He is the Lord? Have we “taken off our shoes”? We’re on holy ground! We’re not just “playing church”! Spiritual warfare is serious, holy business. Do we realize that as well?

In Joshua 3:4, the Lord said to the people, “*you have not passed this way before.*” In the Land, we must stay close to the Lord. There will be some new experiences. There are not only the spiritual blessings to enjoy; there are the spiritual battles to be won. We need to stay close to the Lord. Committed believers serve the Lord of the Land.

Practical Application

You can always be sure of your next meal!

Where do we see that? Notice from verse 12 that after forty years, the manna didn’t stop a month or a week before the food of the land was available. The manna didn’t even stop a day before – it stopped a day after! In other words, there was enough overlap so that the people never missed a meal. Isn’t that amazing? God doesn’t miscalculate!

Did you know that the manna even fell from heaven on the day that the people of Israel worshiped the Golden Calf? Talk about the grace of God!

If you’re one of God’s children, you can depend on your heavenly Father to meet your needs. In Matthew 6:33 “*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*” God may change His source of supply, but He will supply. God changed His source of supply for Elijah. Remember that Elijah had bread and meat dropped off by ravens, and then he had food from the poor widow. Not a feast, but Elijah never missed a meal. God’s supply never failed!

First God supplied manna, bread from heaven for the people of Israel – a miraculous source! Then He supplied the food of the Land -- the produce of the Land! God has many sources of supply. So whether it is supply for the financial needs for a ministry, or literally bread for your table, you can be sure that God’s well will never run dry if you look in faith to your heavenly Father. God may change His source of supply, and He may not always supply a feast, but you can always be sure of your next meal!