

Lesson 12 – Joshua 4-5

Text: Joshua 4-5

Key Passages:

- Joshua 4:20-24 – Joshua set up the memorial stones in Gilgal.
- Joshua 5:10-12 – The celebration of the 41st Passover marked the end of the wandering.
- Joshua 4:14, 5:13-15 – These events solidified Joshua’s position as Moses’ replacement.

Main Storyline:

Joshua had instructed the people, before they crossed the Jordan River, to appoint one man from each tribe. After they all crossed the river, Joshua called on these men to perform a special task. They were to go back into the river (still dry, as the priests had not yet crossed), and each one was to take a rock from the place where the priests were standing. Joshua told them that they would carry them until they arrived at their lodging place, and there they would lay them as a memorial of the crossing of the Jordan River for their children. The Israelites did as they were instructed by Joshua. When they were done, Joshua went to where the priests were standing and set up twelve other stones.

Once Joshua and the men were finished, God told Joshua to tell the priests to come to the western side of the Jordan River with the rest of the Israelites. As soon as the priests’ feet touched the dry land, the waters that had been held back by God began to flow again. As God had promised, Joshua was exalted in the sight of the Israelites by this miracle (similar to the miracle that Moses had done in parting the Red Sea). The people crossed over the Jordan River on the 10th day of the 1st month.

The Israelites camped on the eastern border of Jericho, at a place named Gilgal. There, Joshua took the rocks from the twelve appointed men and set up the memorial he had talked about before. Joshua gave specific instructions regarding what the people ought to tell their children when they ask about the stones. He told them that they needed to explain how God had done this great miracle in parting the Jordan River as He had parted the Red Sea. By keeping this commandment, others would know about the mighty power of God, and the Israelites would maintain strong faith.

The Lord then told Joshua to have the people be circumcised again (it seems that, at some point after they had left Egypt, God had told them to stop circumcising, perhaps because they had lost the promises to Abraham). Joshua obeyed, and all those who had not been circumcised were then circumcised. After it had been done, God told Joshua that He had rolled the reproach (taunting/chiding) of Egypt away from them on that day. This probably refers to the fact that the Israelites had left Egypt to go to the Promised Land, but instead had wandered in the wilderness for 40 years because of their disobedience. This may have drawn some taunting from the Egyptians, but now they were preparing to enter the land and inherit what the last generation gave up.

On the 14th day of the 1st month (4 days after they had crossed the Jordan River), the Israelites celebrated the Passover. This was the 41st Passover, marking 40 full years since they had celebrated the first Passover on the night they would ultimately leave Egypt. That day, they ate unleavened bread and grain (food from Canaan), and the manna stopped coming the next day. Later, Joshua was looking at Jericho and suddenly a man appeared with his sword drawn. The man identified himself as the Commander of the Lord’s army, whom Joshua recognized as deity (Jesus?). The man instructed Joshua to remove his sandals, for he was standing on holy ground (similar to Moses in Exodus 3).

Lessons/Applications:

- 1.) God is powerful, and He uses that power to take care of His children (Psalm 78).
- 2.) We need to remember God and take seriously memorials He gives to us (Deuteronomy 8-10).
- 3.) God keeps His promises to us; we need only to trust and obey Him.