

## APRIL 12

It finally hit me today reading about Israel crossing into the land, that the waters of the Jordan didn't recede until the priests' feet were in the water. Talk about making your faith work to the last possible second. God could have started lowering the level as the priests approached, but no, they had to trust Him to the point of doubt, getting their feet wet. It makes me think of Jesus telling Peter to put out into the deep and let down the nets for a catch. Peter says they couldn't catch a fish all night long, but at His word Peter obeyed. And then it says, *And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking.* (Luke 5:6) In both situations, the priests and Peter, it wasn't until they had **done it**, that the miracle kicked in. As disciples following Jesus in the harvest, this ought to tell us something.

### Joshua 5:1-7:15

Joshua 5

V. 1 So, if the kings of the land had melting heart syndrome, they must also have had "stiff-necked and not very smart" syndrome. If Israel's God could do all that they knew He did in Egypt or at the Jordan, what chance did they think they had? There should have been "for sale" signs going up all over Canaan.

It was also a good thing they were in no mood for a fight, because Israel's soldiers were not in any shape to fight back.

Vs. 2-9 Keep this place, Gilgal, in mind for later. This is where the stone monument would have been set up. It will be important in Judges 3.

This entire section shows us what we might have guessed at, but didn't fully realize. When Israel rebelled at Kadesh-barnea, God broke off the Mosaic Covenant with them. His promise to Abraham was still guiding things toward this moment, but some things were stopped. Since Kadesh-barnea none of their male children had been circumcised. This wasn't neglect on the part of the people or Moses. Moses of all people should have known how important circumcision was since he almost died by not circumcising his son. This must have been a directive by God. God was looking ahead to this moment when He would lead a new generation into Canaan. Circumcision will mean something to these people. It was the symbol of the promise to Abraham. By going through this, every man would know he was participating in that covenant. This generation of Israel is probably the most godly group of people who ever followed the Lord.

Vs. 8-9 This is God's explanation to them. In Egypt, the people were forbidden to circumcise their children. Apparently only people high in society could be circumcised as a sign of their position. The Hebrews were slaves, and reproached as such, and therefore forbidden to be circumcised. ([Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT](#), p. 337)

V. 10 Here is another surprise. An uncircumcised man could not participate in the Passover. They had not celebrated a Passover since Kadesh-barnea. This means that this is only the third Passover that Israel has held. They had the original Passover, they had a Passover at Mt. Sinai, and the next would have been held in Canaan if they had obeyed. Many people in this generation have only heard of the Passover.

Vs. 11-12 It is interesting that on the day after the Passover, the manna stopped. The Feast of Unleavened Bread followed the Passover and for this feast they gleaned grain from the fields. Some of these people didn't know anything but the manna. I wonder if they felt bad that this had ended and years later reminisced about the wonder of it. It sort of makes you wonder which miracles and provisions of this time on earth are being overlooked and taken for granted. When this darkness is all over, we might appreciate what a wonder it was that we were indwelt with the

Spirit and had the Word as a daily resource. Maybe we'll wonder, too, why we didn't take more advantage of these very special and amazing privileges.

Vs. 13-15 Joshua must have had guts. He apparently recognized the "man" as an angel, but didn't know what kind (good or bad) he was. So, he challenged him anyway. What a guy.

Since Joshua was by Jericho, he probably went to look at the challenge of how Israel, without materials or experience taking a fortified city, could wage war here. With those thoughts in his mind this angel appeared. Joshua realized that this person was in command of the battle for Jericho, not him. Joshua was the servant.

By the way, who was that angel? Hint: You're not allowed to worship angels. *And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God." Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God." For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.* (Revelation 19:9-10)

I wonder what Jesus thought, years later, walking through the city He Himself had led Israel to conquer.

Joshua 6

So, what things do you notice here and what speaks to you as a disciple?

The biggest lesson for me is that God demands faith, and thereby strengthens our faith. I've heard people go overboard trying to explain why they went around the city seven times, trying to find significance in "7." There might be something there. I don't know. But I do know that the entire process was "out there." It wasn't normal. It didn't make sense. There was nothing externally smart or wise or crafty or military about what they did. But it was wise to listen to God, and they did. We get so used to only doing the "smart" thing that we forget to walk by faith. If faith is included in the equation, then the smart thing might look stupid in the eyes of the world. As disciples, we know God and understand life and reality in a way that is different than everyone around us. It will make us look like fools. As Jim Elliot said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose." In 1956, in Ecuador, Jim Elliot and four other guys gave their lives to follow Christ into the harvest.

Vs. 1-14 One thing about the way God did it was that the people couldn't take any of the credit for this. A city like Jericho could have withstood a siege for months. God's way only took a week.

Vs. 15-21 It seems that Joshua gave these instructions just before the men yelled. Notice that special care is given to protect Rahab. Notice too that all the people of Jericho were called to stand before God for judgment. That meant they would all have to be separated from the body to stand in His presence. The killing of the animals might have had some religious significance, but probably it was for Israel and the other nations to understand that God's judgment was total. Also, all of the precious metals were to go into the treasury, almost as a memorial to this first victory. This kind of total ban on taking anything would only happen here, so if the men were patient, they would get stuff at other cities.

Vs. 22-25 Again, these are special instructions about Rahab and her family. They would have to be taken outside of the camp until they were cleansed and the men circumcised, and then they would become part of the community of faith. Her faith was already evident. This was an exception to God's rule of not including any of the Canaanites. But God's mercy always extends to faith in action and we'll see another exception in chapter 9.

Vs. 26-27 We can assume it was the Spirit speaking through Joshua to pronounce this curse. Believe it or not the most evil of the kings of Israel, the northern kingdom, will rebuild Jericho and this curse will be fulfilled.

Joshua 7

Vs. 1-15 It's too bad they didn't include the entire chapter for today.

There are a few things that stand out to me.

First, Achan becomes the symbol of how one man's sin has an impact on others. Perhaps it was good that something like this happened right away. It became a permanent lesson to that generation of people. Phinehas will mention this again at the end of Joshua. Notice in v. 5 that 36 men died as a result of what Achan did. That was tragic. Families suffered and children lost their fathers. On the other hand, good does come out of this. The guys were safe with God in heaven and chillin', and this becomes a tremendous example to the nation. After this, you can bet they were holding one another responsible to obey the Lord.

You very seldom hear anyone say that our individual walk with the Lord is important to the work we are doing together in the harvest. It is.

Second, in the next conquest, God is going to allow them to collect plunder. Achan should have just waited.

Third, God will use this entire situation for good. Not only do the people get a great lesson, but the nations surrounding Israel will now get arrogant. This arrogance will actually help Israel make quick work of the main strength of the opposition. In everything, God works for good with those who love Him. God will turn this small defeat into a military strategy to defeat Ai.

## **Luke 15**

This section is rich with lessons for us as disciples. So, why do you think Jesus makes the same point with three different stories? What is the same in each? How does the image get enlarged in each?

I do want to mention one thing before I begin here. These three parables do not stand alone. This section of teaching will continue to Luke 17:10. Because we are reading smaller sections, it is hard to see the continuity, so as you go from one section to the next, look for the flow of the teaching and how it all holds together.

Vs. 1-2 This is the occasion and reason for Jesus teaching on the lost sheep, lost coin and lost son. Now, if you look at Luke 17:1-4, you will see the conclusion of all of this teaching and all of these parables. To deny anyone forgiveness was a sin.

Vs. 3-7 Notice that He doesn't love the lost sheep more than the others, but there is an outpouring of mercy, compelled because of the need. Notice too that the neighbors and friends are invited to rejoice. And of course, there is rejoicing in heaven. That happens now too.

Vs. 8-10 Here, even the angels of God rejoice. The other ones, not so much.

Vs. 11-16 There are good lessons here on how the Father allows us to have our way. Love cannot be compelled. It should be a warning to us when God allows us to prosper in our sin.

Vs. 17-24 Notice that it was hardship that caused the son to come to himself. Neither the father nor anyone else bailed him out. And he knew the door was open to return to his father. There is true repentance here.

V. 21 Although the father cut him off and didn't let him finish, he heard enough and knew there was genuine repentance. His words are so interesting, *he was dead and is alive again.* (v. 24)

Vs. 25-32 Enter the older brother, with whom I can identify unfortunately. Notice what his concern was. It was the *fattened calf*. He never got one. The father pointed him to the spiritual reality. It wasn't about stuff; it was about life and salvation.

And to think, as we work in the harvest we meet these prodigal sons and can tell them the Father is waiting if they are ready to turn to Him. And when we help them come to the Father, there is joy. It is pretty cool to think that there was rejoicing and joy in heaven the day you gave your life to Christ. This is a way that we create joy and celebration in heaven, by working in the harvest, making disciples.

### **Psalm 81**

Because you have read the books of Moses, you will understand this psalm so much better. Most commentators think this psalm is recording the celebration of the Feast of Booths. If so, that pinpoints it to Nehemiah 8:14-18. This son of Asaph was writing after the exile, celebrating the first Feast of Booths since the death of Joshua.

Vs. 1-3 This is to be a joyous celebration because God is their strength.

Vs. 4-10 God made this feast a statute, so Israel would always remember how God sustained them in the wilderness living in tents. He freed them from slavery and did the impossible by keeping them alive. Just think, they were supposed to have celebrated this every year for the past 800 years and never did it.

There is a lot of wilderness history here.

Vs. 11-16 Once in the land, the people didn't listen to God. Ironically, not holding the Feast of Booths was a case in point. God was the one who freed them, but once free they didn't need Him.

Notice how there is an exhortation here that if people will listen to Him, He will forgive and bless them. This portion reads a lot like Isaiah 55.

**Proverbs 13:1**

Does the *father's instruction* also contain *rebuke*? It looks that way from the parallelism. Rebuke sounds negative to us, but God commands it.

*I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. (2 Timothy 4:1-2)*