

Gilgal (Joshua 5)

Valleys Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 2nd March 2014

Intro

- We've been going through the book of Joshua:
- The background in the book of Numbers with the failed attempt to take the land followed by 40 years in the wilderness
- Joshua's initial call to lead the people and take them into the land after the death of Moses, with God's call for him to be 'strong and courageous'.
- The person of Rahab and how she was a woman who was an example of faith.
- Last time we looked at the crossing of the Jordan.

Read Joshua 5

Perception- He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world (5:1)

- The Amorites had 40 years whilst the Israelites wandered aimlessly in the desert after bottling out in their attempt to take the land. The Amorites could be forgiven for wondering if the stories of the Red Sea opening up were actually true; now however, with the opening up of the Jordan their fears became realised.
- Perception is everything- previously the 10 spies were terrified of the enemy, but here it's revealed that the enemy is terrified of the Israelites! What about you? Many Christians live in constant fear of the enemy. Are you afraid of the enemy, the devil and his demons? Do you feel they are going to get you? They would love to get you, but you are on the victory side- you share in Jesus' victory, let's not negate or downplay the victory of the cross. Demons shudder at the mere name of Jesus, and we are 'in' Christ and He has given us authority over them, let's not be afraid but bold in Jesus.
- What are your fears/phobias in life? What things have you not pressed forward in this last year in God because you were afraid? Do we see God as greater than these? Are we willing to make steps forward in these areas to learn to trust God over our fears?
- Do you expect to live a defeated battle against sin in your life? Then you will live out the reality of what you believe. In our minds we are to consider the battle won, the old us being crucified with Christ on the cross. We are to see ourselves as being raised from the dead and freed from sin's power, ascended with Christ and sat in Christ at the right hand of the Father with sin and death under our feet (see Ephesians 1).
- Do you believe the Church in Wales can triumph over the enemy? With many Churches closing in our day do you believe God can once again raise up a mighty army of believers in this land? Let's believe it and pray for it, and be that army.

Dedication- Circumcision (5:2-3)

- The fact that the enemy were in great fear it would have been an ideal time to strike, but instead God commands that all the men get circumcised. Why? It does not seem to make sense from a military point of view- imagine in Afghanistan the troops are just about to engage with the enemy and then choose instead to take themselves out of the frame for a few days to do a surgical operation on themselves which will immobilise them and make them vulnerable to the enemy.

- 'Hill of foreskins'- there were it is thought about 2 million Jews here- a heap of 1 million foreskins would be quite a heap!
- The fact is, this was a spiritual act of utmost importance to God as it was the sign of their faith in Him and relationship with Him. It was a sign given to Abraham and his descendants of their covenant relationship to God. This covenant involved God blessing them as His people and giving them the land of Israel. It was to be a sign given for all those who were Jews and should have been performed on each of these men when they were 8 days old. However, their parents had disobeyed God and allowed unbelief to get the better of them. The parents had so neglected their relationship with God and their duties as parents that there was a whole generation of men now who had never been circumcised. Becoming circumcised was communicating that they wanted to obey God and be in covenant relationship with Him. It was also accepting for themselves the promises given to Abraham of God's blessings.
- Here was a whole generation of people becoming spiritual where their parents had been unspiritual. Although our parents have a bearing on how we turn out we cannot use them as our excuse because we are all responsible for our own actions. A.W. Tozer said 'A man is as spiritual as he wants to be'. As I grew up as a Christian many people were saying about the Lord raising up a 'Joshua generation'. What is a Joshua generation? It is a generation which chooses to follow the Lord wholeheartedly even if their own parents have not done so before them. It is a generation which presses on to inherit the land by preaching the good news of Jesus and making disciples.
- Just as circumcision reminded the people of the promises given to Abraham their forefather so we too are to remember the promises given to us through Jesus. Through Jesus we too are sons of Abraham by faith. We are fellow heirs to the promises of God. We are to inherit the land we live in by making disciples wherever we go (Matt 28).
- Rather than physical circumcision which has only been given to physical descendants of Abraham we have had our hearts circumcised by surrendering to Jesus and accepting His sacrifice on our behalf. Just as a bit of flesh was physically cut away from the person Jesus has taken the old, bad us, the 'fleshly' part of us, and nailed it to the cross and made us new people- we are to regard the old sinful us as having passed away and instead we are to live as new creatures living lives glorifying to Christ(see Col 2:11-13; Rom 6:1-2). What has happened to us spiritually we are to make practically true by developing godly habits and giving up ungodly ones.
- Rather than rushing into the battles of each day lets start each day the right way just as these Israelites did with the foundation of our relationship with God- let's make a conscious decision to put Him first in our lives, especially with important decisions of life.

Restoration- Gilgal- God 'rolls away' our shame (5:9)

- The word 'Gilgal' comes from a Hebrew verb (*galal*), meaning to roll some object on, upon, away (even whirl or dazzle). In a figurative sense it is used in ideas like to *roll* oneself onto the Lord, meaning to put one's trust in Him (Psalm 22:8) or to commit oneself to Him (Psalm 37:5, Proverbs 16:3). When this verb is used for physically rolling something away or somewhere else, the object is usually stones (Genesis 29:3, Joshua 10:18)(source:http://www.abarim-publications.com/Meaning/Gilgal.html#_UxJRG-N_vTo)
- God was saying that this place where they had rolled 12 huge boulders to was the place God rolled away the reproach of Egypt, as if it were a huge weighty boulder pressing down on them.

- Why was this the place where God rolled away the reproach of Egypt? It was because they had now crossed over into the land God promised them and there was no going back- the river had gone back to flooding behind them- there was no turning back (they were 'committed Houston').
- It was also because they had been still been suffering from the effects of being in Egypt- although they were 'out of Egypt' Egypt had not been out of them. They had been a people of unbelief and sin. They had left slavery in Egypt to enter the prison of the desert, and so had made themselves an object of ridicule. Now, however, they were rededicated to God through circumcision and were spending their first night in the land God brought them out of Egypt to be in.
- As Christians we can sometimes feel stuck in a desert. We know God has rescued us from the slavery of sin, but at times we can be caught in habitual sin which keeps us it would appear in captivity. Sometimes the words of others can weigh us down like a giant boulder, going round and around in our minds. Whatever the weight is that is pressing down on us right now, the cross is our Gilgal- the place where God rolls away the boulders from our lives. It says in scripture that we should cast our cares on the Lord because He cares for us. What are you worrying about now? Bring it to the cross and leave it with Him. If there's action you need to take, then take it, but make a decision today to stop worrying about it and instead to pray and trust God.
- At the cross there truly is forgiveness- we don't need to live under that boulder of shame any more. He was rejected on our behalf, He bore our shame and was ridiculed. 'As we forgive those who sin against us'- sometimes it is ourselves which we need to forgive for blowing it. Jesus gave the woman caught in adultery back her dignity without condoning her sin, in Him there is forgiveness, like this woman let's receive His forgiveness and go and sin no more.
- **Passover celebration (5:10)**- now that they were circumcised they could partake of the Passover meal (not for the uncircumcised- see Ex 12:43-44,48). Passover was meant to be a celebration of coming out of Egypt, however it's not much to celebrate when you're stuck instead in a huge desert for 40 years! Now this Passover meal would have it's true meaning- a celebration of breaking out of a prison, out of slavery. For 40 years they did not have proper bread to celebrate passover, only manna. Now they were able to make their own bread with produce of the land, and it was harvest time! What a celebration! Jesus took this same meal and gave a new meaning to it. When we take communion we are celebrating our freedom from captivity to sin through Jesus' sacrifice for us. Let's remember when we take it that we aren't just kidding ourselves that Jesus took the punishment for our sins upon Himself- He really did do it, and that sets us free from sin. Jesus said 'It IS finished!'

Visitation- Seeing God as Mighty (5:13-15)

- The man with a drawn sword must have struck panic into Joshua as he was near Jericho. Joshua didn't know who he was, or who he was with. In a similar way the disciples on the road to Emmaus didn't realise that they were in the presence of Jesus until he gave thanks for the bread and disappeared from their sight! Sometimes God will speak to us through events and it takes us a while to realise it's the Lord speaking to us through the situation, but we need to be open to His promptings by His Holy Spirit, and train ourselves to hear His voice, just as Joshua had done by spending time with the Lord in the tabernacle.
- It is most likely that this person who appeared to Joshua was Jesus Himself in a pre-incarnate form, as Joshua has to take off his shoes just as Moses had done before God at the burning bush. Joshua calls Him Lord and asks what He wants

him to do.

- An encounter with God changes everything. Moses was changed by one encounter at the burning bush. Paul was changed by one encounter on the road to Damascus. Let's ask God for encounters! As we read the Bible let's expect to encounter Jesus, as we come to worship Him, listen to His Word. Let's ask God to fill us with His Spirit and expect Him to do so.
- Joshua encountered a side to Jesus here that he had not experienced before to quite this measure- Jesus met him with sword drawn! That must have been a frightening sight! This is not Jesus meek and mild, but Jesus as a mighty warrior.
- One of the titles of Jesus given in Isaiah is 'Mighty God'. The Hebrew for this is 'El-Gibbor' and can also be translated as God the mighty man or God the Warrior. Often God is called in Scripture 'The Lord of Hosts', which means the Lord of Heaven's armies. Jesus appears as a warrior riding on a white horse in the book of Revelation.
- There are numerous examples of God fighting for His people in scripture- God destroying the Assyrian army when they surrounded Jerusalem at the time of Hezekiah. David vs. Goliath. Deborah against Sisera and his chariot army. Samson etc.
- How mighty is your God? Isaiah prophesied that the Spirit of Might would rest upon Jesus. God wants us to get a revelation, just as Joshua did, that our god is indeed mighty.
- Paul said that we should be 'strong in the Lord and in His mighty power' (Eph 6:1)- we may have many strengths in our lives, but we are not commanded to be strong in these, rather we are commanded to be strong in the Lord. As we place our trust in Him rather than ourselves, so we become strong in Him.

Conclusion

- Perception- He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world
- Dedication- Circumcision
- Restoration- Gilgal- God 'rolls away' our shame
- Visitation- Seeing God as Mighty

Song:

*We are the army of God
Water You turned into wine*