

Join with me to turn tonight in your Bibles to Joshua 4 as we pick up where we left off in early February or something.

The book of Joshua is primarily a book of occupation. After years of being slaves and in bondage, when God demonstrated His power on behalf of His people, and He brought them out, it was their failure as a nation - the nation of Israel - to go into the land that God had chosen and that God had promised them. And so rather than going in, they went back. They went back into the wilderness. Almost thirty-eight years of those forty years were wandering - very little in the Bible about what they did; it was just a time that was wasted - terribly so. Well, over this last year - as the Lord has brought them closer, and God has shown them who He is - this next generation comes with Joshua back to the Land of Promise; and they're finally going to occupy the land, the one that God had told Abraham about and Isaac and Jacob - the descendency - that they would have a place to go. And God had kept His word.

But the big picture of Joshua - and I should tell you by the time we get to chapter 12 or so, the rest of the book is filled with the names of towns - and so we have to look at the bigger picture unless we want to just study a map. But we'll get the bigger lessons, and certainly one of the big lessons about the book of Joshua is that when God makes you promises, you can fail to experience them. When God says, "Look, every place that you put your foot, it belongs to you," (He said to the nation), they didn't bother to put their feet many places at all. God had more for them than they were willing to accept. God had more for them than they were willing to live in, to realize, to participate in. And so we told you when we started the book, by the time you see Israel entering the land and taking what God promised, only 10% of what He promised was taken by them; 90% just kind of laid there in everyone else's hands. And they really won't occupy the land like this until the Lord comes back, and then God will place them there.

But there is this big picture about we're either going to be overcomers, or we're going to be overcome; we're either going to be victors, or we're going to be victims. And watching the children of Israel to either obey and follow and turn towards Him, or they're going to kind of not listen, and the result is they're not going to

move forward very far. Most Christians do well the first twenty-four months or so, and you can almost mark off most believers' lives; after twenty-four months, they quit moving forward, and they're no different twenty years later. They grow initially, they're excited initially, and then nothing else takes place. Paul wrote, "Walk in the Spirit." He didn't say, "Veg in the Spirit." Right? Don't just sit around. It's kind of like riding a bicycle up hills. If you stop peddling, you're going to lose ground pretty quickly. So it's a great book of occupation. The people are finally going in to where God had promised to take them. It's the Land of Promise. It represents - from a spiritual standpoint - living your life in the Spirit. It's not heaven. The Promised Land is not heaven. There're no enemies in heaven to fight. But it is that life where you live in relationship with God, trusting in His power to keep you and to deliver you. And that's what ultimately the big picture of Joshua becomes.

So, so far we have looked at the calling of Joshua - how God prepared him for forty-plus years to be this man that would lead. We looked at his commission. If you look in chapter 1 at the commission to the people, "Wherever you put your feet, I'm going to go with you. I'll give you victory over every enemy. Just listen to what I say. Obey My Word. Hide it in your heart." We looked, in chapter 2, at Rahab's faith, and we said she has a perfect example of saving faith. She hears, she believes what she hears, she goes out to seek after the God of whom she has heard, and it leads her to behavior, to action, to seeking a life from Him, His grace. And then, the last time we were together, we looked in chapter 3 at the crossing of the Jordan. And so tonight we are going to look at two chapters (they go together) before we get to the battle, if you will, for Jericho. They are chapters of preparations, some things that God initiated with the people as they were ready to go in. So they're in the land, they've crossed the Jordan, if you will, but now God is preparing them in the land to begin to have victory in the land as well.

So verse 1 of chapter 4, "And it came to pass, when all the people had completely crossed over the Jordan, that the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying: 'Take for yourselves twelve men from the people, one man from every tribe, and command them, saying, "Take for yourselves twelve stones from here, out of the midst of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet stood firm. You shall carry them over with you and leave them in the lodging place where you lodge tonight."' Then Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the children of Israel, one man from every tribe; and Joshua said to them: 'Cross over before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of the Jordan, and each one of you take

up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, that this may be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come, saying, "What do these stones mean to you?" Then you shall answer them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. And these stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever.' And the children of Israel did so, just as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones from the midst of the Jordan, as the LORD had spoken to Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them to the place where they lodged, and laid them down there." I like verse 4. It starts with the words, "And it came to pass." I heard a lady a couple of months ago said - somebody asked her what her favorite verse was, and she quoted this verse. And someone said, "That's a weird verse as your favorite verse. And why do you like that?" She said, "Well, it says 'it came to pass,' and so whenever I get a trial, I say to the Lord, "Lord, You said it didn't come to stay, it came to pass." ' ' " (Laughing) And she said, "I can apply it to anything."

Well, last time we talked about the Jordan River being at flood stage when the children of Israel were commanded by the LORD to cross over into the Land of Promise and that the Jordan, by God's power, was rolled back upstream sixteen miles, overflowing its banks. For sixteen miles, it's dry. And everyone along the River knows that the LORD has arrived. Boy, word got out big-time and very quickly. You might remember (a few months ago when we were in verse 10) that the LORD talked to the priests about stepping out into the water. And we mentioned to you that the LORD said to the priests, "Get your feet wet. And if you'll get your feet wet, then God can use you and begin to move amongst you."

Well tonight we pick up the story on the other side of the Jordan. God is preparing the nation to begin to take over the land. There are, by the way, very few specific descriptions of the overthrow of the land. There is Jericho, there is Ai, there're a couple of other battles. But then, for the most part, for the next seven and a half years, the LORD says, "And they took this area," and you get a hundred names of a city, "And then they took that area." So the lessons that the LORD wants us to learn from them are found in the individual, I think, battles that He sets before us.

As they crossed over, notice that the LORD directs Joshua to tell these twelve men - one from each tribe - to pick up this rock and carry it to the place where

they were going to camp that night. We'll read at the end of the chapter (here in a little bit) that they were going to stop in a place called Gilgal, which is where they would camp for the night. In fact, verse 19 and verse 20 he mentions that. The word "Gilgal" is a Hebrew word that means to roll away, and the LORD will use this place to say to the people of Israel, "I've brought You here and rolled away the reproach and your captivity and people looking down their noses at you. You're My people. I've brought you in. I've delivered you." And every time that they would go to fight in the land - in the middle of the country, as they cut the land into two - they came back to Gilgal. When they went to the southern portion, fought for many years, they would come back to Gilgal. And then to the north, they would come back to this place as well. But the whole imagery, if you will, of these twelve stones was to memorialize for the nation God's great work. And especially in terms of making sure that the kids, in the years to come, would understand what it was that the LORD had done. Now, think about it; 2½ million people cross over a sixteen-mile stretch of dry land which the LORD has rolled back so that they might be encouraged. In fact, Joshua says (in the previous chapter), "The LORD said through Joshua to the people, 'You'll know I'm the LORD when you cross over on dry land.'" I'm thinking of course you will! How amazing is this!

But God was good at wanting to help us to memorialize His work. It is a big problem of yours and mine that we forget pretty quickly what God has done for us. And we have monuments around our country. We live behind a park that has a memorial park for servicemen that we'll find dads in tears and moms sitting and where there's a plaque of their son's name who's died in battle. And you can watch these folks. They come back to remember. And we build lots of monuments across the nation. Some of them are very large and well known, some of them not so much so. But we like to celebrate the donations and the sacrifices and the service of others. God's memorials are pretty simple (in the Bible) by comparison. They end up being these twelve rocks - river rocks - next to a river shore, and yet they are put out there to be reminders. And I think it's because our tendency is to forget quickly what the Lord has done. I know folks - the one that sticks out in my mind was a man, maybe twenty-five years ago. He called, and his dad had never come to church; he was always antagonistic. But he was dying of cancer, and we went to the ER late, late at night, and we prayed with him and asked that the Lord would raise him up out of his bed. He wasn't saved, and he was kind of a cantankerous guy. And he got healed! I mean, he went home eight or nine days later. God did this marvelous thing in his life, and he'd come to church, and he was telling everybody, "Oh, man, the Lord healed me!" And he was here for three weeks, and then he

went back to his old life. And I think he lived maybe ten or twelve more years before he died. I don't ever remember him coming back around to talk about the Lord. But we have this weird ability, I think, to forget what God has done.

So Gilgal becomes, as a place, (besides the first night they stayed there) the base of operations, and they always returned here no matter what. But notice, in verse 6 and in verse 7, that the LORD specifically talks about His desire that His power and that His glory and His miraculous work and His delivering presence might get to the next generation; that the kids might learn from their parents what the LORD has done. And sadly, from a historical standpoint, church revivals - as large as they were, the ones in Wales, for example - never last more than a generation. It just seems to start and end with the peoples through whom God begins to work, and that transmission of what God does is very difficult, and we don't find it very often. Even large churches stop growing at some point. And whether it is the settling in of the people, whether it is the institutionalization of its leadership (who lose that fresh vision when God was depended upon, and now we're just kind of going through the motions), whether it's the newness that wears off, or whether it's people are always hungry for something new, and if there's something new to be had somewhere, that's what they're going to go try to find. And worship and ministry fall into ruts or something, and there's a loss of zeal and a loss of an awareness of God's good work, and pretty soon the institution becomes like a rock. What was once a really work of God no longer is, and you end up with that Revelation 2 Ephesians kind of church - busy but having left the first love for what drove that first generation. But at some point - and you find it in the Bible, you certainly find it in history - there's no transmission of the glory of God to the next group. There's no handing over to the next group, "Here's what God can do in your life." And the LORD says very specifically, not only here but throughout the Old Testament especially, "Make sure that there's a way that your kids will learn exactly what you've seen so that they'll know Me as you know Me." This first generation had gone through a lot, and they had seen the LORD's hand at work; they were the pioneers, and so they had a lot to go on. But the kids needed to learn the God that they knew.

Thirty-two years ago Morningstar began in a house in Whittier with four people sitting around a table saying, "Wouldn't it be cool if we could have a church? And wouldn't it be cool if we could reach the city?" And we had a Bible study every Tuesday night, and it started with four, and then there were forty, and then (in a home) we had 140 people. It was crowded. The guy who was hosting it looked

around and went, "Man, this is a bad idea. Look at all these people." (Laughing) As the church began to grow, the sacrifices, literally from everyone, were significant. We rented the school up here on Santa Gertrudes, and we met in their gym. It was a place that, during the week, they cared for disabled adults, which meant that they spilled their food, and in the bathroom things weren't the cleanest. It wasn't their fault. They were disabled; they were doing the best that they could. But we literally had to bring a whole team of people in every week - on a Wednesday, on a Sunday morning, on a Sunday night - just to be able to meet there. It was a lot of work. We had to set up the sound, we had to set up the tables, we had to set up the chairs, we had to take them all down again. There was no air conditioning in the gym. It was hot, really hot during the summer. There were very little creature comforts. There was a sandwich board sign at the curb. We had a much larger cloth sign that we hung from the roof. Everything had to be put up and taken down. They wouldn't let us go into the classroom and remove all the stuff you'd find in a public school - the Halloween decorations, the bunnies, the Santa Claus - the stuff that we wouldn't feel was the best thing for Sunday school classes. But we were sharing it with the school. That was all that we had. And we had an offsite office that was run by - at least for a while - people that were just volunteering. And there was nothing outwardly that would have attracted you to the church. It was hot, it was uncomfortable, the chairs were those metal ones that creaked when you sat on them. Outside in the play yard were the guys playing baseball, and it was during the service, and it was loud; so you couldn't close the doors - it was too hot. And that's the way that we had church. But when we had our prayer meetings, sixty or eighty people would show up on Saturdays. We don't have that now here, but we had it then. And everyone was involved. We had everyone show up at retreats. Very few people missed mid-week service. There was an awe of what God has done, what He was doing. We were amazed that people would come to church at all. We'd see people and go, "What are you doing here? It's ridiculous to be meetin' here." And they kept coming. And it was an amazing time. We had plenty of help. Everyone had a vision. There was a lot of excitement, a lot of energy. And then we got to be ten or fifteen years old as a church, and we bought a building, and it's paid for. We don't owe any money on the building. And we have a book store that you can go use. There's air conditioning that usually works. We have a national radio ministry that knows about Morningstar - from this state across the country. They know about you. We have missionaries all over the place. We have pastors on call 24 hours a day. And yet we have a generation in the church that doesn't know the cost of getting here. But they got here. But rather than the folks who started who began to see what God

could do by faith and waiting on Him, you now have people that see the church very differently. And their view of the church is things like, "The seats aren't that soft," or, "It's really cold right here where I sit. They should turn the air down." Or, "I don't really have the right lighting. I couldn't find a parking space. Could you start a little later on Wednesday nights?" And, "How about not meeting on Wednesday at all? I've got stuff to do. Could third service start at 12:30 instead of 11:30 so I could sleep in?" And it no longer becomes the people who experienced what it took to get there and the favor of God to get you there. It became, rather, those who have come in later. And yet they needed to know, and they need to know; we need to know that God is still in the miracle-working business. We have yet to see what God's going to do.

So, I think in terms of telling the generation, if you continue reading through the Bible, you will get to the book of Judges which, in the opening couple of paragraphs, talks about a time twenty-five years after this - this warning from the LORD, "Tell the kids." And you read, "There was a generation" (that came up, the third generation) "that neither knew God nor His power" (Judges 2:10). It was only twenty-five years down the road. So there's something vitally important about us sustaining that relationship with the Lord and passing along the good things of God to our kids. It's important that they know that. Will our kids make it that way? Can we grow? Can we, as a church, expand? We pray that we can do that, but we can't do it living on yesterday's blessings. We should definitely memorialize what God has done - never forget to talk about what He has done. But those stones were set out by Joshua just to honor the LORD. It wasn't to honor Joshua or the priests. It was to honor the LORD's work, to give Him credit, and to build up the faith of the kids. So, kids should know from you even what God has done, and not only what God has done but what God is still willing to do. Here's the problem with passing along information. We don't want your kids to get just second-hand information. That comes from you. We want them to get first-hand information from the Lord because they're watching you. They go to the same place you do and receive what God has made available. So if you read chapter 2 of Judges, beginning in verse 8, it's only twenty-five years later. So how quickly we forget. Right? And the parents in Israel - whatever they did, they failed to take this encouragement to heart, failed to convince their children that God could provide deliverance, failed to teach them of His love, failed to recount to them - even like the stones - what had happened, what God had done. And their kids went quickly astray and off into their own dismay.

So we need reminders. I think Peter was one who kept saying in his epistle, "I want to keep reminding you. Even when I'm dead, I want you to have this to remember me by." And so Moses, I think, challenged the parents in Deuteronomy 6 about teaching the kids and hanging on their doors and in their hearts and sitting down with the children and telling them. The first nine chapters of the book of Proverbs are really nothing more than a father writing to his son about how he could translate his relationship with God into practical terms - how to handle lust and laziness and finances and being diligent, or how to find wisdom and keeping God's Word in focus. There's that verse in Proverbs 22:6. It says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." But the word "train" is a Hebrew word "*chanak*," and "*chanak*" means to stimulate somebody's taste buds. It's almost like we sit here in our offices, and Kentucky Fried's Chicken (I don't know if you like it or not, but it) smells really good about 3:00 in the afternoon, (Laughing) especially when you haven't had lunch. Ohhhh. It'll get you salivatin'. Well, that's what that word means. Get your kids hungry for the things of God. Get their spiritual taste buds stimulated, and get them hungry for the things of the Lord; not just outside the church or away from the body or away from the Word but get them hungry and thirsty for those things.

So the LORD gave them this outward, if you will, symbol. In fact, in verse 9, interestingly enough, "Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests who bore the ark of the covenant stood; and they are there to this day. So the priests who bore the ark stood in the midst of the Jordan until everything was finished that the LORD had commanded Joshua to speak to the people, according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua; and the people hurried and crossed over." We have a couple of memorials here, you know. We're having communion tonight. It's a memorial. Reminder. Baptism is a memorial, right? It's a practice, it's a sacrament, if you will, of the church. It's to remind us in the present tense of the love of God in the eternal sense. So, these rocks would in fact do the same thing. By the way, Joshua got big at doing rocks. At the end of the book, he does it again. He puts more rocks out. I guess he thinks if one's good, a hundred would be better. He seems to put a lot of rock piles around to remind the people of God's work.

Verse 11, "Then it came to pass, when all the people had completely crossed over, that the ark of the LORD and the priests crossed over in the presence of the people. And the men of Reuben, the men of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh crossed over armed before the children of Israel, as Moses had spoken to them.

About forty thousand prepared for war crossed over before the LORD for battle, to the plains of Jericho." So they came with them. Verse 14, "On that day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they had feared Moses, all the days of his life. Then the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying, 'Command the priests who bear the ark of the Testimony to come up from the Jordan.' Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, 'Come up from the Jordan.' And it came to pass, when the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD had come from the midst of the Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet touched the dry land, that the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and overflowed all its banks as before. Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month," (four days before Passover) "and they camped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho. And those twelve stones which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal. Then he spoke to the children of Israel, saying: 'When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, "What are these stones?" then you shall let your children know, saying, "Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land"; for the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed over, that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever.' " So tell the story. Keep the stones alive. Right? Pass it along. It certainly had the heart of Rahab and her family. Tell the story. Now here's the bad news (because I read ahead). Now I don't want it to be a defeatist kind of a statement, but Gilgal, which took such a huge and important position in the life and in the history, if you will, of the children of Israel here, by the time you get to the book of Amos has lost all spiritual significance of them at all. I mean, it is just a town, and no one cared nor do they speak about it. They don't seek it out. In fact, I think it is Amos who will say, "Gilgal has now multiplied her transgressions, and no one asks for her or enters her anymore." Whatever that position was where there was a place and a memorial that would remind you, it grew cold in the lives of the people. And we, I think, have only ourselves to blame if we just run in and run out and quit telling the story of what God has done. Our relationship with God has to be present-tense. That's the issue. And the kids should have it as well. There should be a new experience and the old truth constantly from the Lord. So, they're in. Their first night is spent at the place called "rolling away."

In chapter 5, the LORD then immediately goes back to reinstitute two things that He had established with the nation, who had let them slide completely once they

came out of Egypt and got back into that wandering in the wilderness: circumcision, which was an outward rite of spiritual dependency upon God and not on the flesh, and the Passover, which they had been given to keep to celebrate the LORD's deliverance. (Back in Genesis 17 circumcision was actually established and then Exodus 12 the Passover). So, God brings them back to doing the things that, from an outward standpoint, identify them with His love, His power; that they aren't just another nation coming in. They're a nation hanging on to the hand of God. They are coming in by His power. As I said, every male was supposed to be circumcised on the eighth day. The strangers that lived amongst them were to do that as well. It was symbolic of cutting away of the flesh. So here they are in the Land of Promise. They're going to face enemies far stronger than they. They're going to succeed here; they're going to cut away the flesh. They're going to stand on the promises of God, if you will. And so, as the LORD established circumcision with Abraham when He called him out of paganism, and made him a covenant for the land and his seed and those who would come after him, this was supposed to be a continual practice for the nation of Israel. But they stopped the minute they were wandering. That relationship with God, if you will, was set aside. Years from now, Paul, in Romans 2, talking about circumcision, said God is mostly interested in the circumcision of your heart; that outwardly, this act of cutting away of the flesh is of little use unless there's a spiritual component to it. It's a reminder of how deterioration can set in when it's a religious practice without a heart to the Lord - like having communion and having no relationship with God. It just doesn't work. So Paul wrote in chapter 2 of Romans this is very little benefit, here, if you're just going through the medical procedure, if you will, even with the rabbi at the Temple. There isn't anything that speaks of your relationship or your dependence upon the Lord. But here, as they've come into the Land of Promise - they haven't fought anybody yet - the LORD wants to be sure that they understand in their practices that their dependence has to be upon Him, or they're going to lose. So He reestablishes this practice, and He calls them to conquer nations that they would need more than their flesh to have victory over; they'd have to have strength. In fact, it's interesting that we read these verses, and we read, "There're forty thousand men of war coming with them," and the LORD goes, "Yeah, that's not enough." "We've got forty thousand, just from two and a half tribes." "Yeah, that's not really going to do you a lot of good." So God had faithfully brought them into the land that He had promised, and now He wants to restore them to that relationship with Him that forty years of disobedience had absolutely kind of interrupted, if you will. And so at Gilgal, where the reproach has been rolled away, the LORD says, "We're going back to circumcision. It's an emblem between you and

Me as a nation." From a physical standpoint, this is a bad idea when you're about to go to war - to incapacitate your entire army for several days. But the spiritual component is you're going to go stand and live in the Land of Promise, you're going to need the LORD's help, not your own. Right? Same thing with us. We live in the Spirit not in the flesh. Right? And He helps us to do that, and we need to live that kind of a life with Him.

So we read in verse 1 (chapter 5), "So it was, when all the kings of the Amorites who were on the west side of the Jordan, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan from before the children of Israel until we had crossed over, that their heart melted; and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the children of Israel. At that time the LORD said to Joshua, 'Make flint knives for yourself, and circumcise the sons of Israel again the second time.' So Joshua made flint knives for himself, and circumcised the sons of Israel at the hill of the foreskins. And this is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: All the people who came out of Egypt who were males, all the men of war, had died in the wilderness on the way, after they had come out of Egypt. For all the people who came out had been circumcised, but all the people born in the wilderness, on the way as they came out of Egypt, had not been circumcised. For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people who were men of war, who came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they did not obey the voice of the LORD - to whom the LORD swore that He would not show them the land which the LORD had sworn to their fathers that He would give us, 'a land flowing with milk and honey.' Then Joshua circumcised their sons whom He raised up in their place; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not been circumcised on the way. So it was, when they had finished circumcising all the people, that they stayed in their places in the camp till they were healed. Then the LORD said to Joshua, 'This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.' Therefore the name of the place is called Gilgal to this day. 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."

So circumcision is back in place because they're God's people. It became the outward, if you will, relationship with Him that would act upon by faith. And then while leaving Egypt, God gave them another thing to do, and the one other thing was to remind them. It was just like those piles of rocks - that God wanted them to be reminded how they got out of Egypt. The cool thing about communion is it takes you back to where you got saved. It reminds you that, "This is how I got

out." Right? Or, "This is how I got in." It doesn't matter what you're doing now - how beneficial you think you are to the body or how God has used you - this takes you back to the beginning. "Here's where I got saved. This is my ticket in. This is the cost for my life." And so, in many ways, Passover became that same kind of understanding. They were supposed to celebrate how God delivered the people from slavery, brought them out of Egypt (it's a type of the flesh), brought them out by the blood of the lamb that was shed; it wasn't them or their doing, it was the blood, it was innocent blood, it was substitutionary blood. Beautiful picture of all that Jesus would come to do. So that's handed to them as well. And the blood that was sprinkled upon their door, God passed over it. Right? That's where the word came from. The Angel of death passed over. God passed over, and the sin that you are covered in, God then passes judgment over from you. And so this was supposed to be done every year. As far as the Bible record goes, they kept it twice. They kept it the day they left Egypt. They kept it on the one-year anniversary when they were camped in the desert in front of Mount Sinai, getting the law, and the thunder and the lightning and Moses going and coming. They kept it that year. They haven't kept it for thirty-nine years since then. So, the whole nation had just let it go. They had totally set it aside. They hadn't talked about it, hadn't shared with one another. They hadn't come to the realization, "Hey, we're about to fight a bunch of battles, and the battles belong to the LORD." So, much like communion tells that same story, they were facing a city with walls as thick and big as Jericho's, God would have to do a work. He'd have to be the Deliverer. They'd had to have another Passover. So, four days before they go to fight, and four days after they get into town and cross the River, God says, "All right. Let's go back to celebrating the Passover. God is about to deliver you once again." And He does. But it was important that the children of Israel had emblems - circumcision, Passover, rocks in Gilgal - to remind them of what God has done. It's important that you don't just come and go without being reminded that God has done great things, and He's going to do great things yet. I truly believe that God always has more in store than we're willing to look for, more in store than we're willing to look for. And certainly it was true here. So, those two things were started within those four days. "Let's get back to doing things identifying ourselves with the LORD."

We read in verse 11, "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. 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." So, literally, this wilderness experience is now over. For forty years, they have eaten these Krispy Kreme donuts falling out of the sky. Now they were going to eat the fruit of the land, and it does tell you that there was a lot of fruit around the land in the Jericho area, if you will.

So, chapter 5 ends with an interesting story. And, because we've interrupted ourselves a couple of times going through, let me just say that Joshua was not a guy (from what we can gather) that was very confident. I mean, if you have to fill Moses' shoes, those are big feet. And Joshua was pretty sure (a) that they wouldn't accept him as they had him, and (b) even big, bad Moses seemed to have his share of the people rejecting him. And so you find in chapter 1, I think there're three places in chapter 2, chapter 3, chapter 4 where the LORD comes and says, "I'll do this, and then they'll know." We just read it, right? "And from that day forward, the children of Israel honored him like they did Moses." And so Joshua was not so self-confident, which I guess is a good thing. But more than that, he was completely unsure of the place that he stood, and yet God used him greatly. And I tell you that because you may feel that way about yourself, but God has a way of getting over the way you feel about you. He has things to do in your life, and He's good at encouraging us along the way. And so, if you read the first four chapters of Joshua, especially, you can mark a half a dozen times where the LORD said, "This is going to be good. I'm going to show them who you are and who I am and that I'm with you. And don't you be discouraged."

So it does appear these last few verses that Joshua that night went out after the Passover when the food wasn't falling from the sky anymore, and he got to look at their first city - Jericho - with its walls so high, so imposing. And I don't know what he was doing out there by himself, but he went out there to check it out. Right? "How in the world are we going to do this?" And I suspect that he was wondering again, "What am I supposed to do here, with 2½ million folks in that place right there?" And they're having to pick their own food now and, "What are we going to do?" So we read in verse 13 these last few verses, and it says, "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?' 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 worshipped, and said to him, 'What does my Lord say to His servant?' 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." It sounds very much, doesn't it, like Moses at the burning bush? He's off to do something he's not really prepared for, he tries to get out of it in every way that he can, he's Mr. Excuses. That's what Moses - "I can't talk so good, I'm not a very prominent guy from a very prominent tribe," and finally he meets the LORD, and he is told to take off his shoes and that the ground was holy (Exodus 3:5).

This is one of a very long line, as you're reading through the Bible, of what are called theophanies. A theophany is the appearance of Jesus in the Old Testament as the Angel of the LORD. And most of the time, the Bible translations get that right. They capitalize the Angel, and it's not too hard to miss. Had this been just an angel, he would have never accepted the worship that Joshua gave. In fact, throughout the Bible, when you find folks trying to worship an angel, they usually get told off. "Hey, I'm just an angel." John tried that twice in the book of Revelation. But there are times when like (Abraham in Genesis 18 and 19 or when Jacob wrestles the LORD all night in Genesis 32) here Joshua meets with Jesus who accepts his worship, accepts his praise, accepts his submission. "Lord, what would you say to me?" and He tells him to take off his shoes, "You're standing on holy ground." And so back in chapter 23:20 of Exodus, the LORD had said, "I send an Angel" (capital "A") "before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for My name is in Him. But if you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. For My Angel will go before you" and cut off, and then He lists those seven major tribes - the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, and all those other "ites." "He'll go before you. You listen to Him, you follow Him, and your success in the land will be great." That was way back in Exodus 23.

So Joshua, before this battle of Jericho begins, is confronted again with the realization that he's not on his own. For the seventh time in five chapters, the LORD says to him, "I'm with you, man. You can count on Me. Just follow. Just listen. Just let Me be the LORD, and you're going to find great things." And by the time you get to chapter 6, Joshua's all right now. He's all right with marching and shouting. He's all right with big walls that seem impenetrable. He's all right with all of that stuff because, if nothing else, over those many weeks that you find him searching to understand what happens now with him after Moses died, God has prepared him and He's convinced him. And Joshua doesn't disappoint you as a leader. Good leaders in the Bible are those who can first be led by the Lord, and

the best ruler is one who can be ruled. If you can't be ruled, if you can't submit to others, you're not going to be much of a leader. But Joshua is, and it's kind of like that attitude of the centurion (there in Matthew 8) that said to the Lord, "I'm not worthy to receive You under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. I know about authority. I can order people around, and they listen. But I figure You're the authority when it comes to life and death. Just speak. It's done." And the Lord was so impressed with his heart and with his faith.

So, this encounter leads us directly to the battle of Jericho, which happens to be in the next chapter. But before anything else, God wanted to be sure His guy was ready. And I would say to you, there's a big challenge in our culture today for you to live as a Christian outwardly because everything you do is wrong, it seems. I mean, the world's gone nuts. Yet with the Lord in front of us, and the Lord guiding, and the Lord opening the way, we can have great victory, can't we? We can't be overcome, we'll be overcomers. We won't be victims, we'll be victors. And that's the way it has to work. But the same picture is here. This picture doesn't change. And by the time the children of Israel go into Babylon for captivity for seventy years to learn not to worship other gods, you shake your head and say, "Man, we've been reading this back since Exodus. What are they doing?!" Well, don't let that be written of you. Instead, trust the Lord with whatever you're facing because He's awful big. He's the Captain of the army, and you're on His side. He's the Commander, isn't He? And He says, and it happens. It's nice to hide behind Him, don't you think? And then you'll be ready for Jericho.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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