



Study Guide: Joshua – Chapter 5

Study Guide: Joshua – Chapter 5

This study guide provides an educational overview of Joshua Chapter 5 using a verse-by-verse structure, theological context, and application-oriented insights grounded in Scripture.

Introduction

Joshua Chapter 5 marks a pivotal moment in the narrative of Israel's conquest of Canaan. It serves as a transition between the crossing of the Jordan River and the fall of Jericho, highlighting themes of covenant renewal, obedience, and divine preparation for battle. Readers should watch for the significance of circumcision being reinstated, the celebration of Passover, and the encounter with the commander of the Lord's army, all of which underscore Israel's identity and God's presence with them as they begin to take possession of the Promised Land.

Context

Joshua 5 follows the miraculous crossing of the Jordan River in Chapter 4, where God demonstrated His power by stopping the river's flow. The Israelites are now camped in Gilgal, on the eastern border of Canaan. This chapter occurs within the larger narrative of Israel's entry into the land promised to their ancestors, a fulfillment of the covenant God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Key figures include Joshua as the leader of Israel and the mysterious commander of the Lord's army, who appears as a divine warrior. The setting is one of preparation—both physical and spiritual—for the conquest ahead, emphasizing covenant faithfulness and divine guidance.

Outline

The chapter begins with a description of the cessation of manna and the renewal of circumcision, signaling a new phase for Israel as they prepare to settle in the land. Next, the Israelites celebrate Passover, recalling their deliverance from Egypt and reaffirming their covenant relationship with God. The narrative then shifts to a theophany where Joshua encounters the commander of the Lord's army, who instructs him on the coming battle. This encounter confirms God's presence and authority over the conquest. The chapter closes with Joshua's reverent response, setting the tone for the military campaigns



to follow.

Verse-by-Verse Study

Verses 1-3: The chapter opens by noting that the kings of the Amorites and Canaanites heard that the Lord had dried up the Jordan River. Their hearts melted in fear, indicating the psychological impact of God's intervention on the inhabitants of the land. This sets the stage for Israel's advance by revealing the enemy's apprehension.

Verses 4-9: God commands Joshua to circumcise the Israelite males who had been born during the wilderness journey, as they had not been circumcised. This act renews the covenant sign between God and His people, symbolizing spiritual readiness and obedience. The place of circumcision is called Gilgal, marking it as a significant site. The narrative emphasizes that after this, the manna ceased, and the Israelites began to eat the produce of the land, signifying a transition from dependence on miraculous provision to enjoying God's promised blessings.

Verses 10-12: The Israelites celebrate Passover at Gilgal, commemorating their deliverance from Egypt. The day after Passover, they eat the produce of the land, which had previously been forbidden. This sequence highlights the continuity between God's past acts of salvation and the present fulfillment of His promises, as well as the importance of obedience to God's commands.

Verses 13-15: Joshua encounters a man standing with a drawn sword, who identifies himself as the commander of the Lord's army. Joshua's immediate response is one of reverence and worship, recognizing the divine nature of this figure. The commander instructs Joshua to remove his sandals because the ground is holy, echoing the encounter of Moses at the burning bush. This encounter reassures Joshua of God's presence and authority as Israel prepares for battle.

Key Themes

One key theme is covenant renewal, demonstrated by the reinstatement of circumcision and the celebration of Passover, which reaffirm Israel's identity as God's chosen people. Another theme is divine provision and transition, as the cessation of manna and the eating of the land's produce symbolize a new stage of dependence on God's promises rather than miracles. The chapter also emphasizes God's presence and guidance through the theophany of the commander of the Lord's army, highlighting the theme of holy warfare



under divine authority. Lastly, the holiness of the land and obedience to God's commands are underscored, preparing Israel spiritually and physically for conquest.

Cross-References

The command to circumcise in Joshua 5:2-9 recalls Genesis 17, where God establishes circumcision as the sign of His covenant with Abraham. This connection reinforces covenant continuity. The celebration of Passover in verses 10-12 links back to Exodus 12, where the original Passover was instituted as a remembrance of deliverance from Egypt. The encounter with the commander of the Lord's army parallels Moses' encounter with God at the burning bush in Exodus 3:5, emphasizing the holiness of the ground and God's commissioning of His servant. Additionally, the cessation of manna in verse 12 echoes the wilderness provision described in Exodus 16, marking a transition to life in the Promised Land.

Application

Modern disciples can learn from Joshua 5 the importance of spiritual preparation before undertaking God's work. Just as Israel renewed the covenant through circumcision and celebrated Passover, believers today are called to reaffirm their commitment to God regularly and remember His faithfulness. The transition from manna to eating the land's produce challenges believers to recognize God's provision in new seasons of life and to trust His promises rather than past experiences alone. The encounter with the commander of the Lord's army reminds Christians that God is sovereign over their battles and calls for reverence and obedience. Embracing God's presence and holiness equips believers to face challenges with confidence and humility.

Summary

Joshua Chapter 5 serves as a critical moment of covenant renewal, spiritual preparation, and divine commissioning for Israel as they enter the Promised Land. Through the reinstatement of circumcision, the celebration of Passover, and the theophany of the Lord's commander, the chapter emphasizes God's faithfulness, holiness, and presence with His people. It marks the transition from wilderness wandering to settlement and conquest, setting the foundation for the victories to come by highlighting obedience, trust in God's provision, and reverence for His authority.