

INTRODUCTION

God gives Israel a command that leaves them vulnerable to attack. But instead of the command foreshadowing Israel's defeat, the command prepares Israel to possess its Promise Land and observe Passover, an event that will mark a turning point in Israel's history. No longer are they slaves from Egypt or a nation fed by God's manna in the desert. Instead they are a nation about to possess its Promise Land and live off of it.

Israel's History Prior to Joshua Chapter 1

- God frees Israel from Egypt (Ex. 12:29-41).
- God leads Israel to the Promise Land, but they refuse to enter (Num. 13:1-14:12).
- Israel is cursed to wander in the wilderness for 40yrs (Num. 14:20-35).
- Moses is not allowed to enter the Promise Land (Num. 20:5-12, 24; 27:14).
- Joshua is appointed by God to replace Moses (Num. 27:15-23; Deut. 31:14).
- God brings Israel back to the Promise Land (Num. 33:40-56).

Joshua Chapter 1: *Victory before Entering the Land*

Israel is about to enter the Promise Land and God guarantees them victory before entering. The key to their success is God's Word; they must know it thoroughly in order to obey it. God also personally encourages Joshua and guarantees him victory, 1:5.

Joshua Chapter 2: *The Two Spies Confirm God's Word about the Promise Land*

Israel begins to see God's faithfulness regarding the Promise Land. The two spies reveal that the people of Canaan are terrified of Israel because of what God did to the Red Sea and the two Amorite kings, Sihon and Og.

Joshua Chapter 3: *The Parting of the Jordan River and Israel's Crossing*

God continues to strengthen Israel as He performs a great miracle that confirms Joshua's appointment as Israel's next leader (3:7; 4:14) and shows Israel that He will drive out the Canaanites (3:10).

Joshua Chapter 4: *The Crossing of the Jordan and Stones of Remembrance*

The Jordan Crossing is completed and two memorials are used because this great miracle is to be remembered throughout all of Israel's generations. It's a miracle that shows the nations of the world that Israel's God is powerful; He's not just another god. It also teaches Israel to fear their God.

Joshua Chapter 5: A Tuning Point in Israel's History

5:1, the Jordan miracle adds to the terror sensed by the people of the Land.

5:2-7, Israel has not circumcised its males for the past 40yrs. Circumcision is vital to the nation of Israel; it's the sign of God's Covenant with Israel, a Covenant that promises them the Land they're about to conquer, Gen. 17:8. Those who were not circumcised were "cut off" from Israel, Gen. 17:14 (and thereby the Covenant). Since Israel is about to enjoy one of the benefits of the Covenant (the Promise Land), they must ratify the Covenant by its sign, circumcision, Gen. 17:11.

Why did Israel not circumcise during the 40yrs? Since their parents, the Exodus generation, disobeyed God and refused to enter the Land, this effectively "cut them off" from the Land for 40yrs. Thus, God did not require circumcision during the 40yrs in the wilderness nor did He hold it against this generation. In fact, He guaranteed that they would see the Land, Num. 14:31.

5:8, circumcising all your soldiers right before battle is not a winning strategy. In fact, this guarantees your defeat, Gen. 34. But Israel had to circumcise its males in order to take possession of one of the covenantal blessings: the Promise Land. So how does Israel survive this vulnerable state God placed them in (Jos. 5:2)? God put the fear and dread of Israel in the Canaanites, Jos. 5:1, so that they wouldn't dare attack. The command to circumcise didn't leave Israel weak; it enabled them to possess the Promise Land.

5:9, no longer will Israel be known as a bunch of slaves from Egypt, but as a powerful nation with a mighty God.

5:10-12, the other reason Israel had to circumcise its males is because they could not celebrate Passover with out it, Ex. 12:48. The celebrating of this Passover marks a turning point in Israel's history: they will no longer be fed by God's heavenly bread, but the grain of God's Promise Land.

5:13-15, the Man who appears to Joshua is Messiah, Jesus Christ. We know this by Joshua's reactions. He bows down to worship Him and obeys His command to remove his sandals. If this was an angel, he would never accept Joshua's worship, Rev. 19:10. And the fact that He tells him the same exact thing He told Moses from the burning bush (Ex. 3:2-4) reveals that this is the Angel of the Lord, the God-Man Jesus Christ. He appears to Joshua with drawn sword because God the Father sent Him to annihilate the Canaanites for Israel, Ex. 23:23.

Conclusion: Do you trust God? Do you trust His commands or do they seem odd to you? Do you think that instead of helping, they actually make things worse? For example Romans 12:14, does it makes sense to "bless those who persecute you"? No! Question: who gave the command? If the Creator of heaven and earth gave the command, shouldn't we trust His Word? Yes! Rather than putting us in a vulnerable position, as they prepared Israel to conquer the Land, His commands prepare us to overcome the challenges ahead. Without them we truly are vulnerable and are guaranteed to fail.