

3. What day of the month was it when they crossed Jordan?
4. In what month was the day of the crossing?
5. What was the name of the place where Israel first camped west of Jordan?
6. What was the purpose of the memorial for all people?
7. What was the purpose of the memorial for Israel?
8. Did Joshua put up a second memorial?
9. How many stones did Joshua put in the memorial which he erected where the priests stood?
10. Where did the men who carried stones out of the Jordan set up their memorial?

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 5

Vv. 1- 9 *The covenant of circumcision.* The generation of Israelites who crossed over into Canaan had not been circumcised on the eighth day after their births in the wilderness. As a result of this neglect, it was necessary for them to keep this perpetual covenant with God as they entered into a new phase of their lives under His leadership. This was done at the camp, and the place was named Gilgal signifying the rolling away of the reproach of Egypt from them.

Vv. 10-12 *The keeping of the Passover.* On the fourth day after they crossed the Jordan, the people kept the first Passover to be observed in the Promised Land. It must have been a glorious occasion as the people renewed their vows to God. After the people were situated in the land, the manna which had come to them each day during their wilderness wandering was discontinued.

Vv. 13-15 *The appearance of the captain of the Lord's host.* God manifested himself to Joshua in an unusual way as their experience in Canaan began. A man stood before him with a sword drawn. When Joshua asked him for his identity he identified himself as "the captain of the Lord's host" (v. 15).

### LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *No excuse can be given for disobedience.* The people may have excused themselves in various ways as they failed to keep the covenant of circumcision. They may have felt that they did not have time to perform this rite since they were perpetually wandering in the wilderness. Whatever their reason may have been it was not valid. God expected them to observe this rite, and it was necessary for them to do this before they expected God's continuing guidance upon them. Christians must realize that they too stand in an inexcusable position when they disobey God's plain commandments.
2. *Daily bread comes from God.* Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). God gave the people of Israel manna every day. He will give daily bread to the Christian. Those who want to eat must work; but when they have done their best, they should not be anxious. God feeds the birds of the air, and He knows His children's needs.
3. *God fights for His people.* God's presence with Joshua was symbolized in the form of a man with a drawn sword. God and Satan are at war. When man fights with God, victory is assured. The Christian soldier is given adequate armor (Ephesians 6), and God's Son is the captain of the Christian army (Hebrews 2:10).

## CHAPTER FIVE

*The Covenant of Circumcision 5:1-9*

And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites, which were on the side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites, which were by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over, that their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel.

2 At that time the Lord said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time.

3 And Joshua made him sharp knives, and circumcised the children of Israel at the hill of the foreskins.

4 And this is the cause why Joshua did circumcise: All the people that came out of Egypt, that were males, even all the men of war, died in the wilderness by the way, after they came out of Egypt.

5 Now all the people that came out were circumcised; but all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, them they had not circumcised.

6 For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people that were men of war, which came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord: unto whom the Lord sware that he would not show them the land, which the Lord sware unto their fathers that he would give us, a land that floweth with milk and honey.

7 And their children, whom he raised up in their stead, them Joshua circumcised: for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them by the way.

8 And it came to pass, when they had done circum-

cising all the people, that they abode in their places in the camp, till they were whole.

9 And the Lord said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day.

*1. Who were the kings of the Amorites? 5:1*

The kings of the Amorites were the lords of the various cities located west of the Jordan River. The word Amorite means specifically "the high one," and it is generally supposed that the Amorites were highlanders (Numbers 13:29; Deuteronomy 1:7, 20; Joshua 10:6). Many of the cities of the Canaanites were located in high places, and this is probably a reference to the kings who ruled in the hill country. They were undoubtedly those kings which joined together in the southern coalition as they went out to fight against Joshua.

*2. What light is thrown on the question of authorship by this reference? 5:1b*

Both the King James Version and the American Standard Version translate the phrase, "until we were passed over." Some variations of meanings are found which would cause the translation to be, "until they were passed over." The majority of texts point to the first person plural form of the verb, and this is an indication that the book was written by an Israelite who was among the multitude who crossed over into the land of Canaan. Joshua would certainly fit this description, and this is substantiated evidence of his being the author of the book.

*3. Why was it necessary to stop for the circumcision of the people? 5:2*

When the people came out of Egypt, all of them had been circumcised, as distinctly affirmed in verse five. During their journey through the wilderness, circumcision

had been neglected. Since a new generation had arisen, the nation was no longer circumcised, and therefore it was necessary that circumcision should be performed upon all the men who had been born in the wilderness. This was an inviolable commandment; and if Joshua were to keep the Law perfectly, it was an act which had to be performed. It was necessary for the people to be circumcised before they could eat of the Passover. This was especially specified, as Moses gave the directives about the first Passover (Exodus 12:48).

4. *Why had circumcision been neglected in the wilderness?* 5:4

As the covenant of the Lord with the fathers was broken, the sons of the rejected generation were not to receive the covenant sign of circumcision. Nevertheless, this abrogation of the covenant with the generation which had been condemned was not a complete dissolution of the covenant relation, so far as the nation as a whole was concerned. The whole nation had not been rejected, but only the generation of men who were capable of bearing arms when they came out of Egypt. The younger generation who had grown up in the desert were to be delivered from the ban. Some students of the Scriptures have suggested that the people did not have time to perform the rite of circumcision since the people were constantly on the march through the wilderness. A close study of their journey will reveal they were at some forty-one different places and they wandered for nearly forty years. They had an average of almost a year to spend in each place. They surely had time to take care of this important matter if they had been so inclined. They must have felt that since they had disobeyed God and were doomed to die in the wilderness it would be a mockery for them to keep this sign of the covenant.

5. *How many were circumcised?* 5:5

The number of persons to be circumcised is estimated, by some, at a million. According to the general laws of population, the whole of the male population of Israel, which contained only 601,730 of twenty years of age and upwards, besides 23,000 Levites of a month old and upwards, when the census was taken a short time before in the steppes of Moab, could not amount to more than three million in all. Of these between birth and sixty years of age perhaps one half were thirty-eight years old. They would have been born before the sentence was pronounced upon the nation at Kadesh, and for the most part before the exodus from Egypt. These had already been circumcised. Consequently, the proportion between the circumcised and the uncircumcised was one to two. The operation could, therefore, be completed without any difficulty in the course of a single day.

6. *How could Canaan be a land of milk and honey?* 5:6

Their food was produced where grass and flowers abound. These provided nectar for the bees. It was well-watered and good for grazing cattle, sheep, and goats (Exodus 3:8, 17; 13:5; Leviticus 20:24; Numbers 13:27; Deuteronomy 6:3; Deuteronomy 32:14; Judges 14:8; Matthew 3:4). These animals would produce milk, and thus it could be said that the land literally flowed with milk and honey. The expression is a quaint way of saying that it was a highly productive land.

7. *How long did the men remain in the camp?* 5:8

The Scripture says the men stayed in their camp "till they were whole." This was probably at least a period of three days since we learn from other records that the rite of circumcision left the men sore for at least this long a period of time (Genesis 34:25). Such was the case in the days of Jacob and his sons when the men of Shechem submitted to the ordinance. The time they stayed in their

camp would have hardly been much longer than this inasmuch as they did participate in the Passover which fell on the fourteenth day of the first month. The people crossed the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and there would thus be only a four-day period between these two events.

8. *What was the "reproach of Egypt"?* 5:9

Two unsatisfactory suggestions have been made, as follows:

- a. As slaves (Genesis 34:14; I Samuel 17:26)
- b. As taunted (Exodus 32:12; Numbers 14:13-16; Deuteronomy 9:28)

The reproach probably was the sentence which rested on Israel as the nation was condemned to wander restlessly about and to die in the wilderness. The reproach was involved in the thoughts and sayings of those who would believe that the Lord had brought the Israelites out of Egypt to destroy them in the desert (Exodus 32:12; Numbers 14:13, 16; Deuteronomy 28). This was constantly on the mind of Moses, and he made reference to it as apparent failure repeatedly faced the nation he was leading. After they had crossed over into the Promised Land, there was no more danger of this happening; and so the reproach was rolled away from them.

9. *Where was Gilgal?* 5:9b

The word *Gilgal* means "rolling." The name was given to the place as a means of recalling what had transpired at that point. The place was also known as "the hill of the foreskins" (Joshua 5:3) or Gibeath-haaraloth. The place must not have been far from Jericho, for it was here that the Israelites first encamped after they crossed the Jordan. It was here that they set up the twelve stones as a memorial, and it was here that they made preparations to attack Jericho. Two other places in the Promised Land bear the name; one is known as the Gilgal of Elijah and

Elisha (II Kings 2:1, 2; 4:38). This was a locality some four miles away from Bethel and Shiloh in the hill country of Ephraim. There is another spot known as regal Gilgal in the American Standard Version (12:23). This reference speaks of the king of Goyim in Gilgal, and it is believed that the Goyim probably means the nomadic nations who had been driven away by Joshua and settled in a particular unknown spot in Canaan.

*The Keeping of the Passover 5:10-12*

10 And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho.

11 And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the selfsame day.

12 And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

*10. Could the Passover be kept on the fourteenth day of that month? 5:10*

The circumcision of the people was performed on the day after the crossing of the Jordan. According to 4:19, the crossing was the tenth day of the first month. Now, as the Passover was kept on the fourteenth (v. 10), the two accounts are said to be irreconcilable. The account of the circumcision is said to have been set down as a later and unhistorical legend. Several objections are made to the historical credibility of this account. One is that the suffering consequent upon circumcision made a person ill for several days, and according to Genesis 34:25 was worst on the third day, so that the people could not have kept



the Passover on that day (see Leviticus 15:1 ff.). Genesis 34:25 by no means proves that the pain was worst on the third day. Even if this were the case, it would not prevent the keeping of the Passover. The lambs could have been killed and prepared by the thousands of men who had been circumcised as children in Egypt. Those who were still unwell could join in the meal, since it was only Levitical uncleanness and not disease or pain which formed a legal obstacle to this (Numbers 9:10 ff.).

11. *What day was the "morrow after the Passover"?* 5:11

In Numbers 33:3, this phrase refers to the fifteenth of Nisan. Here it must be understood as signifying the sixteenth. The produce of the land, of which they ate not only on that day but according to verse 12 throughout that year, was both the corn of the previous year, and the produce of that same year. This would be new corn, and they were not allowed to eat any of that until it had been sanctified to the Lord by the presentation of the wave sheaf on the second day of the Passover (Leviticus 23:11). The fact that both the old corn and the parched corn are mentioned in the same verse throws some light on the abundant crops which grew in the land. The Israelites were able not only to eat of the produce of the present year, but there was produce left over from the previous year. It was a good land which God had promised to them.

12. *When did the manna cease?* 5:12

Special prominence is given to the words, "in the self-same day," because not only did the eating of the new corn commence on that day, but from that day forward "the children of Israel had manna no more." This statement is evidently related to Exodus 16:35 and must be understood according to that passage as signifying that on this day the gift of the manna entirely ceased (Exodus 16:14-36; Psalms 78:25; John 6:31, 49, 58; Revelation 2:17). God had

abundantly provided for His people all during the days of the wilderness wanderings. Each day they had a supply of manna to form the mainstay of their diet. On the day before the Sabbath they gathered a double portion. It did not spoil as they kept it over the Sabbath day. Whenever they tried to become greedy and gathered a double supply during the week, the manna spoiled and would not keep for them. This was a miraculous provision God had made. When they got to the land of promise, there was no need for this special providence.

*The Appearance of the Captain of the Lord's Host 5:13-15*

13 And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?

14 And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant?

15 And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.

*13. Who was the captain of the host of the Lord? 5:14*

The person who appeared neither belonged to the Israelites nor to their enemies. He was the captain of the army of the Lord, i.e., of the angels. "The Lord's host" does not mean the people of Israel, who were just at the commencement of their warlike enterprise. Although the hosts of Israel who came out of Egypt are called "the hosts of the Lord" in Exodus 12:41, the Israelites are never called the host or army of the Lord (in the singular).

"The host of the Lord" is synonymous with "the host of heaven" (I Kings 22:19; and signified the angels, as in Psalms 148:2 and 103:21). Some students of the Bible believe this "captain" was the second person of the trinity, the Son of God, who is called the Captain of the salvation of the believers (Hebrews 2:10). It seems better, however, to view this "captain" as the Angel of the Lord, who appeared first to Hagar when she fled from Sarah. This angel was recognized as a manifestation of God in one aspect of His being.

14. *Did Joshua recognize this Angel as God? 5:14b*

Joshua fell down upon the ground and "did worship." He recognized him at once as the Angel of the Lord, who was a special manifestation of God. This is more than the giving of reverence upon the part of a dependent to a superior or king (e.g. II Samuel 9:6; 14:33). He recognized him as something more than man, a superior being. The angel accepted his adoration, something the angel would not receive from John on Patmos (Revelation 22:9). Such reception of worship would have caused Joshua to know immediately that before him was standing a divine being. Joshua was facing a severe test as the people of Israel were approaching the strongly fortified city of Jericho. He would need to know that they who were for Israel were greater than they who were against them (II Kings 6:16).

15. *What was the purpose of this appearance? 5:14c*

The object of the divine appearance was indicated by the drawn sword in the hand (cf. Numbers 22:31) by which He manifested himself as a heavenly warrior. The drawn sword contained in itself a practical explanation. God was saying that He had a heavenly army to make war upon the Canaanites and to assist Joshua and his people. Such a theophany would give great encouragement to Joshua.

16. *Was this a vision?* 5:15

It was not in a vision that this appearance took place. It was an actual occurrence belonging to the external world verified by Joshua's senses. He saw the man with the drawn sword at a certain distance from himself. He went up to him to address him, an act that would be perfectly incompatible with an inward vision. He entered into conversation with the man. He heard him reply to his questions.

17. *What are the interesting details of this appearance?*  
5:13-15

The following details of this occurrence are worthy of noting:

- a. A man—Genesis 12:7; 18:2; cf. Exodus 3:2, 6; John 1:18
- b. A sword—cf. Genesis 3:24; Numbers 22:31
- c. Prince of the host of the Lord—Jeremiah 5:14; 15:16; Isaiah 6:3; Psalms 24:10; 80:7, 19. (see also I Samuel 1:3; I Kings 22:19)
- d. Joshua's attitude was like others:
  1. Abraham—Genesis 17:3
  2. Moses—Exodus 3:6
  3. Manoah—Judges 13:22

We also read later that this Angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim with a message for Israel (Judges 2:1).

## TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 5

1. What two names were given to the inhabitants of the Promised Land?
2. What instruments were used in performing the rite of circumcision?
3. What name was given to the place where the people of Israel were circumcised?

4. On what day of the month was the Passover held?
5. When did God stop giving manna to the people?
6. What instrument of war did the man who appeared to Joshua have in his hand?
7. What title did the man give to himself?
8. How did Joshua act in the presence of the man?
9. What military title is given to the man?
10. What article of clothing was Joshua told to remove from himself?

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 6

- Vv. 1-11 *Instructions for attacking Jericho.* God gave explicit instructions to Joshua as he attacked Jericho. The men who bore the Ark of the Covenant were to go before the people along with priests who were to blow their trumpets. An advanced guard of soldiers was to lead the way, but the host was to proceed noiselessly until they were given the order to shout.
- Vv. 12-21 *The city destroyed.* The strategy for the campaign was not one which men would devise. The circling of the city for seven days was God's plan, and He blessed the obedience of the people with complete victory.
- Vv. 22-27 *The sparing of Rahab.* Joshua did not forget the promise which the two spies had made to Rahab. He ordered them to go into her house and to bring out all that were with her. Only the vessels of brass and iron, the silver and the gold were spared and put into the treasury of the house of the Lord. When the campaign was completed, Joshua pronounced a curse upon anyone who would rebuild Jericho.