

## **Essentials For Victorious Christian Living**

### **Joshua 5:1-15**

#### **Introduction**

The Book of Joshua is all about Victorious Living In Christ. In Joshua we see the children of Israel crossing over the river (chapters 1-5); conquering the enemy (chapters 6-12); and claiming their inheritance (chapters 13-24). Before the children of Israel conquer their enemy and claim their inheritance there are still preparations that remain.

An athlete prepares for competition, a soldier prepares for battle and the Christian prepares for living the life of faith.

Both athletes and armies must have appropriate resources; proper nutrition, proper supplies and equipment. Mental—physical—emotional preparation.

There is one preparation that is often overlooked: spiritual preparation in the form of personal consecration. Consecration precedes conquest.

What does it mean to be consecrated? It means the complete dedication of a person or an object to a specific purpose or use.

We have an illustration in our own Declaration of Independence (July 4th 1776); “And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of the Divine Providence (God), we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.” “The founding fathers consecrated everything they were and everything they had to the purpose of establishing the United States as a free and independent nation” (see Donald K. Campbell; *No Time for Neutrality*; p.67).

#### **The First Essential: Cross Over (v.1)**

*Joshua 5:1–15 (NKJV)* *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.*

The Children of Israel have crossed over the Jordan. This is a picture of crossing over from the place of defeat to the place of victory. Old life and new life. What happens when the Children of Israel cross over? Their enemies are demoralized and paralyzed.

The people who occupied the land are terrified. They thought the Jordan river would provide the barrier needed to keep the Children of Israel at Bay. The people of Canaan’s morale is at an all time low. The Children of Israel’s morale is at an all time high.

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Your old life was filled with enslavement to sin, complaining, fear, turning from God, unbelief. We could go on and on covering the wilderness wanderings of distrust, defeat, rebellion, sexual immorality, worldliness, lawlessness, worshipping self, or some other form of idolatry.

Now they are in the Land. God's land. The promised land. This land marked a new beginning. This was supposed to be the place of conquest and victory, peace and rest, security and protection, provision by God, abundance and fruitfulness, inner fulfillment and satisfaction, a deep seated sense of purpose, meaning and significance. This is the land of rejoicing and blessing; of God's guidance and presence. This is the place where the Children of Israel can be rooted and grounded in God's Holy Word and prayer!

You would think Joshua would rush into battle! But God knew the people remained unprepared. The Children of Israel needed to be spiritually prepared to face the hardships ahead. The Lord would have them wait and rest.

Clearly victory must begin with crossing over into the land. In order to live the life of victory you must leave the life of defeat. You must forsake the old life and embrace the new life in Christ. In Ephesians 2:2 Paul wrote; "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience" (KJV).

All of that has changed. You have a new life and new Lord.

### **The Second Essential: Cut Away Sin (vv.2-9)**

*2At that time the Lord said to Joshua, "Make flint knives for yourself, and circumcise the sons of Israel again the second time."*

*3So Joshua made flint knives for himself, and circumcised the sons of Israel at the hill of the foreskins.*

*4And 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.*

*5For 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.*

Why had they not been circumcised?

*6For 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."*

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The wilderness wanderings and their unbelief—had *temporarily suspended their covenant relationship with God (see Numbers 14:32-34)*.

Unbelief and disobedience—and their refusal to enter the land that “the Lord had sworn to their fathers that He would give us, “a land flowing with milk and honey”.

*7Then Joshua circumcised their sons whom He raised up in their place; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not been circumcised on the way.*

*8So it was, when they had finished circumcising all the people, that they stayed in their places in the camp till they were healed.*

It was time to renew the covenant of circumcision.

Some might argue—now is not the time! What if the Canaanites find out? Won't this make Israel vulnerable? How can inflicting that much pain prepare them for war? Preparation, consecration—and this time of vulnerability would also require faith!

But when Joshua receives the command of the Lord there is instant obedience! Joshua creates flint knives with which to make the precise cuts. He circumcises the young men (under the age of 39) to restore the ‘sign’ or mark or symbol of their commitment, their covenant relationship with the Lord. The first generation died because of their terrible sin and had broken their covenant with God.

*9Then 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.*

After the Jews safe and supernatural crossing the Lord God commanded them to receive the mark of the covenant given to Abraham in Genesis 17. Collectively they had gone through the experience of death (leaving the old life and entering a new life) and now they were to experience death to self.

For the Jewish people physical circumcision was a picture—a type of a spiritual truth. The sad thing was the physical ritual itself became more important than the spiritual truth it taught (see Romans 2:25-29).

The Children of Israel in Joshua's time—knew this was not simply marking the flesh—it represented a cutting away of sin and holiness to the Lord.

In a sense the Lord was saying; “I will fight for you. I will fight your battles in Canaan. I will give you repeat victories over your enemies. But before I fight for you—I want you to bear in your body the mark—of the Covenant on your flesh!”

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Circumcision is a picture of putting off the old man of the flesh—a cutting away of sin. In the New Testament Paul writes “In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made **without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ**” . . .

The putting off of the body of sins of the flesh is a reference to the old nature—the fallen nature—everything you were apart from Christ—unregenerate—unrepentant—in a state of rebellion against God—but this cutting away—can only be accomplished by God’s Holy Spirit through Christ. This happens when we are saved—born again—we are now committed to serving God rather than serving sin.

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God” (Col.3:1).

Paul told the Colossians (3:5) “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” Put to death means kill—deprive of power—render the thing impotent or unable to function.

Paul told the Galatians (2:20) “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

### **Become what you are and were meant to be in Christ.**

W. Graham Scroggie: “We should die because we are dead; we should live because we are alive; we should conquer because we have won” (*The Land and Life of Rest*; p. 24).

The fact of our death in Christ causes us to act on our life in Christ.

Circumcision would have been painful (see v.8).

And so is putting to death our flesh.

Some people want a painless Christianity.

In the Old Testament put away a small portion of the flesh—but in the New Testament the Christian puts off the body of sins of the flesh (see Col. 2:9-13).

What happened at Gilgal? The Lord rolled away the reproach of Egypt from the children of Israel (see v.9). What was the reproach of Egypt and the other nations? This is the ridicule and criticism—heaped on the Children of Israel—who wandered in the wilderness 40 years—that God could not really bring them to the place of promise! **The heathen nations were basically saying “Your God isn’t really strong enough to take you where He said He would take you.” Now God had brought them to the place where they belong and the reproach was gone!**

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The operation at Gilgal illustrates the truth that we as believers are to live “crucified with Christ” (Gal.2:20).

#### **The Third Essential: Consider God’s Power To Deliver (v.10)**

*10Now 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.*

The feast of the Passover had not been kept in the wilderness! Spiritual revival will always reveal the Cross to a new generation!

How do we remember the Passover? Seder dinners? Strict observance of the Passover? Clearly it means to remember God’s power to deliver His people through the shed blood of the Lamb (the Lord Jesus Christ). Jesus takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

**No Jewish man and therefore no Jewish family could celebrate the Passover who was not circumcised (see Exodus 12:48).** This is another reason they had to undergo the mass circumcision. Remember—in the Promised Land the Children of Israel were required to observe the Passover yearly. Remember the point—Passover marked the Jewish people’s deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. The Lord God delivers us from our slavery to sin. Once again the celebration of Passover marked a new beginning in a new land! **Their old life was suddenly and forever over! Now it was time for a new life.** But even for the second generation—it was a new beginning—time to leave the wilderness—time to live in the land.

This is a picture of true conversion—of coming to Christ. We make a clean and forever break with the Old Life. We believe in Jesus. He is our Passover Lamb. He frees us and saves us by His sacrificial death. We are saved from sin to righteousness; we are saved from death to life; we are saved from the judgment of God to the approval of God; we are saved from hell to acceptance of God. The day we got saved—was our Passover—we are passed over—we no longer face—the wrath of God—the condemnation of God—the judgement of God. We are free to live our new life in Christ.

#### **The Fourth Essential: Celebrate Your New Life In Power (vv.11-12)**

*11And they ate of the produce of the land on the day after the Passover, unleavened bread and parched grain, on the very same day.*

*12Then 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.*

In the new land there would be new food. In the Wilderness the Children of Israel ate the Manna that came from Heaven. Now the Lord would give them ‘new’ food—the grain or produce of the Land.

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In the wilderness—the manna came from heaven—in the land—the bread comes from the earth. Jesus is the Bread of Life. Jesus is the Bread that came down from Heaven in His incarnation. Jesus is the Bread of Life who comes up from the earth in a glorious resurrection!

This grain or produce or fruit speaks of the Lord's resurrection power. The seed must be buried in order to bear fruit. The order of events reminds us of Christ's death, burial and resurrection—they kept the Passover (death) they ate of the land (resurrection)!

The Children of Israel exchanged the wilderness for the land!

### **Life in the land represents living in the power of Christ's resurrection from the dead!**

The Feast of Unleavened Bread was celebrated immediately after Passover. For seven full days the Jews were to put all leaven out of their tents and houses and out of their presence. They were to eat no bread with yeast or leaven. Remember leaven or yeast was a type and picture of sin's horrible influence. The unleavened bread represents nourishment free from sin. When the Children of Israel fled Egypt they had to go quickly—they had no time for leavened bread.

We flee the old life. We have no time for sin. We eat the food of the land. The Children ate unleavened bread and parched grain—left behind by the fleeing Canaanites! Blessing after blessing belonged to them. This first fruit and first taste, first produce—was to be a picture of what was in store for them in the future. Note—the manna stopped—the moment they ate the bread in the land. For 40 years God had made a miraculous provision in the Wilderness.

We must act quickly to put away all evil from our lives. We are to be free, clean and cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. In 1 John 1:7 we read, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin". In Isaiah we read, "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil" (Isaiah 1:16).

### **The Fifth Essential: A Confrontation With The Commander (vv.13-15)**

*13And 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?"*

*14So 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 worshiped, and said to Him, "What does my Lord say to His servant?"*

*15Then 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.*

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Joshua has an encounter with the true Commander—of the Lord’s army. Joshua is alone near Jericho planning and praying. He looks up and sees a man with a drawn sword and asks if he is a friend or a foe. The man identifies Himself as the “captain of the Lord’s host”. Joshua falls down in submission and reverence. He asks for a message from the Lord. The Lord’s message; take off your sandals—the promised land is holy (HIS LAND)—therefore Victory is assured.

Who is the guy? Some believe this is a Christophany—a pre-incarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Angel of the Lord—who appeared in times past—to Moses before the burning bush (Exodus 3:2)—this angel said, “I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob”. The angel of the Lord is sometimes called “the angel of His presence”. Some suggest this angel is sent by God with the authority of God that is the personal representative of the Lord.

Every once in a while—we need a fresh experience—a special experience with God. We all face times of discouragement, loneliness, emptiness, depression. We may have suffered some accident or illness, disease or death—some overwhelming problem, obstacle or loss. We need to get alone with God. We need to meet with the Lord and seek His face. He will give us His presence, guidance and power. God will be our helper in time of need.

### **Conclusion**

Consecration precedes victory. The children of Israel—would cross over; renew circumcision, the celebration of passover, appropriation of Canaan’s produce and the acknowledgement that God is their Supreme Leader, Commander in Chief.

**Before we can experience victory over the enemy we must experience victory over sin and self. Jesus is our Passover and our portion in the land. Jesus is our Commander.**