A Sermon Outline By BILL PRATER

SETTING UP CAMP

Joshua 4:1-9, 15-20

This chapter opens with the people of God standing in the Promised Land. Instead of being intimidated by the monstrous Jordan, they chose to face it head on, put their trust in God and His Word, and step out by faith. What they experienced as the result was one of the greatest miracles ever recorded in the Scriptures.

For those who have chosen to confront their "Jordan" and to meet it head on through the power of God, and to continue on in their attempt to conquer Canaan, there are some important lessons to be learned before moving any farther into enemy territory. They need to realize that before them lies Jericho and hundreds of other places just like it that need to be conquered. The battle is going to be tremendous as we seek to establish ourselves in the land of spiritual blessing.

Verse 19 of our text says, "And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho." Gilgal became holy ground to the people of Israel. Throughout the book of Joshua you will find that Gilgal became the base of operations against the enemy. It was a place to which Joshua returned often. After his victories, and occasionally after his defeats, he would make his way back to Gilgal.

Although we may have confronted our "Jordan" and made the decision to begin possessing our possessions, we need to take the time to learn some new things and review some things that we've already learned. Some significant things happened at Gilgal which served to improve Israel's combat readiness.

I. CIRCUMCISION RENEWED Joshua 5:2-3, 8-9

Verses 4-7 explain why this circumcision had to take place. Basically it was because there was a new generation of Israelites who had not been circumcised. Their fathers had been circumcised, but they all died in the wilderness because of their disobedience and unbelief. And before Joshua could lead this new generation into the land of promise, the rite of circumcision had to be renewed.

The first question that arises is "Why?" What is the significance of circumcision? This circumcision is significant in three ways.

A. Physically it was a sign of Identification
1. Circumcision, as a sign of identification, began back in Genesis 17. Listen to verses 9-11, "And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you."

2. Beginning with Abraham, circumcision became a special sign between God and the Jewish people. It was a special sign regarding the covenant that God had with them which gave
them the land of Canaan.

**B. Symbolically it was a sign of Purification**

1. Paul spoke of a circumcision that was made "without hands" in Colossians 2:10-11. Paul said, "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:"

2. The circumcision that Christ is concerned about is that which takes place in our hearts, and which purifies us spiritually. It involves the putting off of sin.

3. As a sign of purification, circumcision is Needful.
   a. In the last message we talked about sanctification and being clean and getting rid of all unconfused sin, which is something that we MUST do if we're going to be victorious in our fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil.
   b. Everyone of us must be willing to step into the surgery room of the Great Physician and submit ourselves to the scalpel of His Word.
   c. Hebrews 4:12, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."
   d. Nothing has the ability to cut through the formality and hypocrisy of our lives like the Word of God.

**ILLUSTRATION:** One day a piece of machinery broke down in a factory and they had to close the doors for an entire day because their own mechanics couldn't get it going again. Finally they called in an expert from outside the factory to try and get the machine up and running. After looking at the situation for a few minutes, the expert took out a hammer and tapped the machine in just the right place and it started working again.

Later that month, the shop foreman got a bill for $200.00. He couldn't believe it, $200.00 to tap a machine with a hammer and go home. Needless to say he was furious. He immediately got on the phone and demanded an itemized bill. Later that week the itemized bill came and it said, $1.00 for hitting machine; $199.00 for knowing where to hit.

God uses His word to "hit" us where we need fixing.

3. As a sign of purification, circumcision is Painful.
   a. Without being too crude, imagine if you will the pain that was associated with what took place at Gigal.
   b. When the Holy Spirit goes to work in our life, usually its not a very pleasant experience because the sting of conviction is very painful.
   c. In Matthew 5 the Lord speaks figuratively of plucking out an eye and cutting off a hand. That's what its like sometimes as the Holy Spirit goes to work and reveals to us our sin and we begin the painful process of eliminating those things from our lives that keep us from being pure.
   d. I'm reminded of a certain ruler that came to the Lord in Luke 18, wanting to know what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. At the end of the conversation the Bible says, "Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me."
   e. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich."

   e. Some of those things that we are called upon to get rid of in our lives may be things that are very valuable to us, or things that have been a part of our lives for a long time. But regardless of position they may hold in our life, if they come between us and God's best,
C. Personally it was a sign of Repudiation
2. What was "the reproach of Egypt?"
3. Exodus 32:12

4. The "reproach of Egypt" had to do with the Israelites' failure to inherit the Promised Land. Because of their rebellion against God, the Lord made them wander around in the wilderness for forty years, and all the while, the Egyptians mocked them and ridiculed them.
5. Now then, by renewing the rite of circumcision, Israel was giving testimony that the Lord was back in their midst, and that once again, He would work on their behalf in helping them to possess that which rightfully belonged to them. Therefore, it was said that the reproach had been "rolled away."
6. Now then, let's apply this to our lives. All of us from time to time have set out to do great things for God. Perhaps after a great revival, or youth camp, or a particular message that seemed to really challenge us, we've purposed in our heart that we're going to live for God and we've set out for the spiritual Promised Land, only to be disappointed and defeated. And just like the Egyptians, the devil has come along and he's mocked us and ridiculed us and made us feel like total failures in terms of spiritual things. FAILURE IS NOT FALLING DOWN; IT'S NOT GETTING UP!

7. To "repudiate" something means to "refuse to have anything to do with"; "to refuse to accept"; "to reject as unauthorized or as having no binding force"; "to reject as untrue or unjust."
8. Just because we've failed in the past, does not mean that we have to stop trying. It doesn't mean that there's no hope for the future or that there's no need to try again.
9. If we're going to enter spiritual Canaan and inherit God's best for our life, we, like the Israelites, have got to get rid of the past. We've got to cut those things away from our life. We must repudiate or "refuse to have anything to do with" past failures and "refuse to accept" failure as a normal way of life. We must "reject" Satan as an "unauthorized" influence and see him as having "no binding force." We must "reject" his words of scorn as "untrue or unjust."
10. We don't need to be lugging around a bunch of excess baggage as we make our way down the road to victory. All it will do is get in the way and slow down our progress.
11. Psalm 103:12 says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." If you've confessed and forsaken your sin, then it's gone, FOREVER!
12. Notice verse 3 again.
   a. The "hill of the foreskins" was where the circumcision took place, and where they buried the foreskins.
   b. Do you think the Israelites ever went back and dug up those foreskins? NO! Do you think that at some point they got this overwhelming feeling to uncover that which had been cut away and disposed of? ABSOLUTELY NOT!
   c. Why then do we want to go back and dig up sins from the past and things that have been long forgotten by God?

II. COMMUNION REVIVED Joshua 5:10
The Passover had been observed only twice before: once, when the Israelites went out of Egypt and the other time at Mount Sinai. Since then there had been no Passover. It had not been abandoned by choice but by God's command. He had commanded that no uncircumcised person should ever partake of the feast of the Passover (Exodus 12:48).

When I speak of "communion" being revived, I'm talking about "communion" in the sense of fellowship with God. In this sense, let's notice three things.

**A. It Followed a Willing Purification**

1. There will be no feasting on the Lord in our hearts or any real worship of God if there is disobedience to God in our life.
2. Sometimes we wander why the church services have so little to offer, or why we are never able to get anything out of our Bible reading, or why we just can't seem to get excited about things as other people. Could it be that we have forfeited our right to blessing? God is not going to give the enjoyment of His fellowship and His blessing to people who are content to live in disobedience.
3. Notice that after the rite of circumcision or purification was renewed, the Passover was observed. The moment they obeyed, heaven opened and they feasted in fellowship with God.
4. I'm reminded of Isaiah 59:1-2, "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."
5. Fellowship with the Lord follows the act of willing purification. The moment a child of God comes to Him in true repentance, at that moment, heaven opens, the joy of the Lord floods his soul, and the peace that passes all understanding fills his heart.

**B. It Ended an Amazing Manifestation**

1. Joshua 5:12
2. The manna was an amazing manifestation of God's ability to provide for His own. However the manna was wilderness food, it suited a wilderness journey. The Israelites were no longer in the wilderness, now they were in the Promised Land, and they were going to have to learn to live off of what seemed to be just ordinary food.
3. Here's the point I want to make. We cannot live our Christian life from one amazing manifestation of God's presence to the next. We cannot live from revival to revival, or youth camp to youth camp, or Bible Conference to Bible Conference. We can't wait for someone to come along and "pump us up" for God.
4. Part of living the victorious Christian life is maturing in the Lord. Living from one emotional high to the next is a sign of immaturity and shows a lack of spirituality.
5. Something I read recently really made me stop and think. It said, "The less spirituality a church has, the more entertainment it takes to keep it running." The same principle can be applied to our lives individually.
6. Victorious Christians are maturing Christians who learn to draw from the resources of the Lord on a daily basis. They don't have to be spoon fed, they are able to feed themselves.
   a. Psalm 63:5-6, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches."
   b. There it is again, meditation. Growing, victorious Christians are those who partake of a steady diet of God's Word.
7. Do you want to be strong for God? Do you long to see Satan defeated in your life? Then learn to feast upon the "corn of the land." Jesus fills the hungry with good things; He satisfies the longing soul, and He's ours today for guidance, for discernment, for spiritual strategy in our battles with the forces of Satan.
8. Arthur Pink said, "We are not to expect extraordinary supplies when they can be had in an ordinary way: God works no unnecessary miracles."

C. It was Observed in an Interesting Location
1. The Passover was observed in the "plains of Jericho", right under the noses of the enemy.
2. Learning to "feast on Christ" in the heat of the battle is of utmost importance. We don't always have time to stop what we're doing and read our Bible or pray. But by hiding the Word of God in our hearts and staying in an attitude of prayer, we can receive the strength we need in those most difficult times.

III. THE CAPTAIN REVEALED Joshua 5:13-15
The first few words of verse 13 imply that Joshua had gone out by himself to take a look at Jericho. I can imagine the thoughts that were going through his mind as he viewed the walled city. "How many ladders will I need to scale the walls? How many battering rams are we going to need to break through the gates?" And then all of a sudden, out of nowhere, there appears this man with a sword in his hand who refers to Himself as the "captain of the host of the Lord."

A. The Captain and His Identity
1. Who was this Captain?
2. I believe it was Christ in pre-incarnate form.
B. The Captain and His Army
1. The "host" that the Lord was referring to here was not the host of Israelites that had just crossed the Jordan. The host referred to here is the unseen army of the Lord that stands ready, at His command, to go to war against the enemies that oppose us.
2. This host is the same one that appeared to Elisha's servant in 2 Kings 6:15-17. 3. It is the same host that the Lord spoke of in Matthew 26:53. Jesus said, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" A legion in the Roman army was made up of approximately 6,000 men. Twelve legions would have been 72,000 men. Without a doubt, 72,000 men would have been more than sufficient to take care of what needed to be done had Jesus thought it was necessary to call them.
4. Here's something else to think about. We are told in 2 Kings 19:35 "...that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and...in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses." If one angel could slay 185,000 men, can you imagine the efficiency of twelve legions. By the same computation they could have destroyed 11 billion, 920 million men.
5. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 10:3-4, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;" If we are going to pull down the strongholds of Satan in our life, we'll not do it through carnal means, but then again, we don't have to use carnal means.
6. Ephesians 1:17-22
a. All during His earthly ministry the Lord encountered the same spiritual enemies that you and I face every day of our lives. They came against Him in the wilderness, they attacked Him in the garden of Gethsemane, they launched an all-out attack against Him on the cross trying to get Him to come down and deny His deity. But He resisted them and triumphed over them. He ascended through all their ranks, and defied their authority, as He ascended to the place of absolute supremacy far above them all. And
God "...HATH put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church."
b. All of the demons of hell are under the foot of Jesus Christ, and one day He will crush them all along with their leader.

C. The Captain and His Authority
1. Verse 15
2. "And Joshua did so." Joshua willingly bowed to the authority of the Lord in his life.
3. Have you bowed to the Lord's authority in your life? Have you come to the place where it is no longer your will, but His will that is important?
4. The first victory that needs to be won in our lives is the victory over self. Once self is out of the way, the Lord can begin to take control of those areas of our life, that for so long, have been held captive by our own selfish desires.