

Rolling Away The Reproach Of Egypt.

Joshua 5:1-9.

Sunday evening, November 8, 2009.

- I. The terror of the LORD on the Amorite and Canaanite nations. Vs. 1
- A. Two families of nations lived in Canaan. Amorites in the mountainous region just west of the Jordan River, and Canaanite nations in the coastal plain between the Mediterranean sea and the mountains.
 - B. The Jordan river being at flood stage these nations must have felt somewhat safe for the time being as Israel was camped East of the Jordan River in that place where the river was the deepest and the widest and was at flood stage.
 - C. When news spread far and wide about what the Lord had done for His people in holding back the waters of the river and allowing them to cross over on dry ground, they were totally dispirited and disheartened so that they did not mount an offensive of any kind against Israel.
 - D. Why is this mentioned at this particular place in the narrative?
This is a parallel account to Genesis 35:1-5 where Jacob leads his family in a return to the Lord at Bethel after Simeon and Levi kill all the men in the city of Shechem for violating their sister Dinah.
There we read: "And the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob." Genesis 35:5.
Here in Joshua 5:1-9 the Lord renews His covenant with the new generation of Israelites after the old generation had died in the wilderness, not having been able to enter the promised land because of unbelief. They do so by way of observing circumcision and the feast of Passover.

By way of application we learn the following truths from these accounts:

- 1. That when a soul wants to be right with God, or when a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.
The Lord will not allow any obstacles to stand between Himself and the soul that is turning or returning to Him.
- 2. From Joshua 5:1 we also learn that even though the terror of God may be on a soul, that by itself is not enough for such souls to humbly surrender to the Lord and to cast themselves on His mercy. More and greater grace is needed to overcome the obstinacy and enmity in the human heart to bring him to this place.
So it was with the Canaanite and Amorite nations; so it will be at the end of the world when the Lord's people will inherit the earth, and so it is with you and with me. Let us always pray for the Lord in His grace to overcome the hardness of our hearts.

II. The reproach of Egypt rolled away. Vss. 2-9.

- A. Joshua is asked to "circumcise the sons of Israel again the second time."
The context makes clear that this was not a second procedure on the same person, but rather that it involved the new generation of Israelites who were born in the wilderness over the 40 years, and who had not been circumcised.
- B. This is referred to as a circumcising of the sons of Israel the second time. There must therefore have been a first time, which has not been recorded for us.

It is unlikely that circumcision was kept up with among the Israelites during their years of slavery in Egypt.

For that reason they must have been circumcised sometime between the crossing of the Red Sea and the ratifying of God's covenant with them at Mount Sinai. This being the implied event mentioned here as the first circumcision of Israel.

- C. The question remains why the nation of Israel stopped circumcising their newborn boys during the 40 years of wilderness wanderings.
1. We can only speculate; Moses gives us no information pertaining to this..
 2. What is striking about Moses' writings is that there is no mention of a celebration of the three great festivals of Israel (Passover, Pentecost and Trumpets) either during the 40 years of wilderness wanderings, after they turned back from the borders of the promised land.
 3. It would seem then that a partial suspension of the covenant took place during these years to humble the people before the Lord. It would have been hard to celebrate your deliverance out of Egypt when you are not allowed into the promised land and are made to die in the wilderness. Similar with a harvest festival when your only daily ration is manna from heaven.
 4. At the same time it should be noted that the Lord's people were not altogether left destitute of the tokens of God's grace and goodness toward them, for the daily ministry of the tabernacle continued among them.
 5. It reminds us of the teaching in the WCF ch.18:4 "True believers may suffer God's withdrawing the light of His countenance, and even such as fear Him may for a season walk in darkness and have no light..."
- D. Here then we have a full restoration of light and of covenant privileges as the Lord renews the covenant with Israel in the renewal of circumcision and the simultaneous celebration of the Passover. They crossed the Jordan on the 10th day of the first month and celebrated the Passover on the 14th day. The circumcision took place in between. Joshua 4:19 and 5:10.
- E. Egypt's reproach is finally taken away, for Israel was not fully delivered out of slavery until the Lord had brought her into her own land and in the full light, privileges, and freedom of His covenant.

Application:

Like Israel we can not enjoy the full blessings of God's covenant until, for better or for worse, we humbly submit ourselves in obedience to Him.

Note the humble obedience of Israel here:

1. There's no mumbling against Joshua, only a pledge of faith and obedience Jos.1:16-18
2. They invade the promised land sending unarmed priests with the ark ahead of all.
3. They invade, not with an army, but with their wives and little ones and flocks.
4. They humbly submit to circumcision while surrounded by hostile nations.

Have you been deprived of the light of God's presence? Have you lost your way? The way back is always to the place where Israel was led to, and where we may be led also. The place of humble trust; humble submission and obedience.

The Lord's table is meant to be such a place.