

Joshua 5

What was going on with all the heathen Kings in the area (v. 1)? They were seized with panic and their courage melted when they heard of the miraculous crossing of the Jordan by the Israelite army.

What did the Lord direct Joshua to do (v. 2)? He commanded Joshua to circumcise the men of Israel again.

Why did God require circumcision again (vv. 4-5)? God had guaranteed Joshua's success only to the extent that he kept the Mosaic Law (1:7). It was necessary therefore that all the males who had been born in the wilderness, and who had not undergone circumcision, should do so now. Circumcision brought each individual male into the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant.....a contract guaranteeing the everlasting continuation of Abraham's seed and their everlasting possession of the land (Genesis 17:7-8). This rite was also a prerequisite for partaking in the Passover, which God required of all the Israelites yearly (Exodus 12).¹

What was the historical basis for the circumcision requirement (vv. 6-7)? All the men who came out of Egypt had been circumcised; however, the men of war died during the wilderness period (Deuteronomy 2:16). For forty years no circumcision was practiced. During this time, a new generation arose, born throughout the years of wandering, and they had not undergone this covenantal rite. As a result, they now needed to be circumcised as a sign of their restoration to the full enjoyment of the covenant blessings.

The text explains that although the men of Israel were circumcised prior to the exodus, they perished in the wilderness because of their disobedience at Kadesh Barnea (Numbers 20:1-13; cf. Numbers 27:14; Deuteronomy 32:51). Their sons, born during the wilderness wanderings, remained uncircumcised—an indication of their parents' spiritual neglect. Therefore, this sacred rite had to be performed on the new generation to renew their covenant relationship with the Lord.

What did the Lord mean by "the reproach of Egypt" (v. 9)? He is referring to the shame that the Israelites had incurred by not circumcising their sons during the latter years of the Egyptian captivity and during the wilderness wanderings.

It could also mean that now that the 40 year desert wandering is over and Israel is safely in the Promised Land as His special people, consecrated to Him by circumcision, the reproach of Egypt is rolled away.

What was the next significant event in the life of the Israelites (v. 10)? They now kept the Passover. Without circumcision they would have been unqualified to participate in this important event (Exodus 12:43-44, 48). Interestingly the nation arrived across the Jordan just in time to celebrate the Passover on the 14th day of the month (Exodus 12:2, 6). God's timing is always precise!²

Through circumcision and the Passover the Lord was calling His people back to the basics of their relationship with Him. Both of these rites had been neglected in the wilderness.³

This was only the third Passover the nation had observed. The first was observed in Egypt the night before their deliverance from bondage and oppression (Exodus 12:1-28). The second was observed at Mount Sinai just before the people broke camp and moved toward Canaan (Numbers 9:1-5).

Now they were reliving the Passover again. As the lambs were slain, they were assured that as the Red Sea crossing was followed by the destruction of the Egyptians, so the crossing of the Jordan would be followed by the defeat of the Canaanites. So remembering the past was an excellent preparation for the tests of the future.⁴

What was the significance of the day after the Passover (v. 11)? The morning after Israel had eaten the Passover and were prepared for battle, they ate some of the produce of the land. The people ate freely of the

harvest, including unleavened cakes and parched corn. Roasted ears of grain are still considered a delicacy in the Middle East and are eaten as a substitute for bread.

What happened on the next day (v. 12)? The manna stopped. For 40 long years it had continued (cf. [Exodus 16:4–5](#)), but now it ceased as suddenly as it had begun, demonstrating that its provision was not a matter of chance but of special providence. God stopped performing this miracle once natural food was available.

When Joshua was near Jericho, who did he encounter (v. 13)? He lifted up his eyes to see a Soldier brandishing His sword.

What did Joshua ask the man? “*Are you for us or for our enemies?*” Are you on our side or theirs? If the Stranger was an enemy, Joshua was ready to fight.

How did the man answer Joshua (v. 14)? He didn’t answer Joshua’s question but He did identify Himself as the Commander of the Lord’s Army.

Who was this man? It seems clear that Joshua was indeed talking to the Angel of the Lord, another preincarnate appearance in Old Testament times of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (cf. 6:2).⁵

Why was He there? What was the message? This was a deeply significant experience for Joshua. He had anticipated a battle between two opposing armies, Israelite and Canaanite. He had thought this was to be his war and that he was to be the general-in-charge. But then he confronted the divine Commander and learned that the battle was the Lord’s. The top general of the LORD’s army had not come to be an idle Spectator of the conflict, or even an ally. He was in complete charge and would shortly reveal His plans for capturing the citadel of Jericho.⁶

How did Joshua respond to the man’s answer (v. 14)? Joshua knew he was in the presence of God. Recognizing the divine nature of his heavenly visitor with the drawn sword, he fell on his face and worshiped, saying, in effect, “*Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening.*”⁷

The Commander of the Lord’s Army stood with a drawn sword, indicating that He would fight with and for Israel. But the sword also shows that God’s long-suffering delay of judgment was over and the iniquity of the Amorites was now full (cf. [Genesis 15:16](#)). The Israelites were to be the instruments by whom judicial punishment would fall.

What kind of a military force did this divine Commander lead? The “Army of the LORD” was surely not limited to the army of Israel though it may have been included. More specifically, it referred to the angelic host, the same “army” of heaven that later surrounded Dothan when Elisha and his servant appeared to be greatly outnumbered by the Aramean army ([2 Kings 6:8–17](#)).⁸

What did the Commander of the Lord’s Army tell Joshua to do (v. 15)? “*Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy.*” By removing his sandals he gladly acknowledged that this battle and the entire conquest of Canaan was God’s conflict and that he was merely God’s servant. This was Joshua’s “burning bush” experience (cf. [Exodus 3:5](#)).

God is sovereign. It is never a question of whether God is on our side but whether we are on God’s side.

¹ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Joshua, 2025 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 46.

² Donald K. Campbell, “Joshua” in the Bible Knowledge Commentary: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 338.

³ William MacDonald, Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 243.

⁴ Donald K. Campbell, “Joshua” in the Bible Knowledge Commentary: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 338.

⁵ Ibid., 339.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.