AM Joshua 4 & 5 A Special Place

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[0:00] Please turn with me in your Bibles to the book of Joshua, Joshua chapter 4.! The Israelites have just crossed the river Jordan when it was in flood.

! And God has graciously held back the waters from flowing. And they have crossed over a dry river bed.
Joshua chapter 4. When all the nation had finished passing over the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua, Take twelve men from the people, from each tribe a man, and command them, saying, Take twelve stones from here, out of the midst of the Jordan, from the very place where the priests' feet stood firmly, and bring them over with you, and lay them down in the place where you lodged tonight.
Then Joshua called the twelve men from the people of Israel, whom he had appointed, a man from each tribe. And Joshua said to them, Pass on before the ark of the Lord your God into the midst of the Jordan, and take up each of you a stone upon his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel, that this may be a sign among you.
When your children ask in time to come, What do these stones mean to you? Then you shall tell them, That the waters of the Jordan were cut off, Before the ark of the covenant of the Lord.
[1:47] When it passed over the Jordan, The waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel, A memorial forever. And the people of Israel did just as Joshua commanded, And took up twelve stones out of the midst of the Jordan, According to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel, Just as the Lord told Joshua.

And they carried them over with them to the place where they lodged, And laid them down there.
And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, In the place where the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the covenant had stood, And they are there to this day.
For the priests bearing the ark stood in the midst of the Jordan, Until everything was finished, That the Lord commanded Joshua to tell the people, According to all that Moses had commanded Joshua.
The people passed over in haste, And when all the people had finished passing over, The ark of the Lord and the priests passed over before the people. The sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh Passed over armed before the people of Israel, As Moses had told them.
About forty thousand ready for war, Passed over before the Lord for battle, To the plains of Jericho.
On that day the Lord exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel, And they stood in awe of him, Just as they had stood in awe of Moses, All the days of his life.
[3:32] And the Lord said to Joshua, Command the priests bearing the ark of the testimony To come up out of the Jordan. So Joshua commanded the priests, Come up out of the Jordan.

And when the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the Lord Came up from the midst of the Jordan, And the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up on dry ground, The waters of the Jordan returned to their place, And overflowed all its banks as before.
The people came up out of the Jordan On the tenth day of the first month, And they encamped at Gilgal on the east border of Jericho. And those twelve stones which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up at Gilgal.
And he said to the people of Israel, When your children ask their fathers in times to come, What do these stones mean? Then you shall let your children know.
Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground, For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you, Until you passed over, As the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, Which he dried up for us until we passed over.

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[4:55] So that all the peoples of the earth may know That the hand of the Lord is mighty, That you may fear the Lord your God forever.

As soon as all the kings of the Amorites, Who were beyond the Jordan to the west, And all the kings of the Canaanites, Who were by the sea, Heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan, For the people of Israel until they had crossed over, Their hearts melted, And there was no longer any spirit in them, Because of the people of Israel.
At that time the Lord said to Joshua, Make flint knives, And circumcise the sons of Israel a second time. So Joshua made flint knives, And circumcised the sons of Israel, At Gibeath Haraloth, And this is the reason why Joshua circumcised them.
All the males of the people who came up out of Egypt, All the men of war, Had died in the wilderness on the way, After they had come up out of Egypt.
Though all the people who came out had been circumcised, Yet all the people who were born on the way in the wilderness, After they had come out of Egypt, Had not been circumcised.
[6:20] For the people of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, Until all the nation, The men of war who came out of Egypt, Perished, Because they did not obey the voice of the Lord.

The Lord swore to them, That he would not let them see the land, That the Lord had sworn to their fathers to give to us, A land flowing with milk and honey.
So it was their children whom he raised up in their place, That Joshua circumcised. For they were uncircumcised, Because they had not been circumcised on the way.
When the circumcising of the whole nation was finished, They remained in their places in the camp, Until they were healed. And the Lord said to Joshua, Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you, And so the name of that place is called Gilgal, To this day.
While the people of Israel were encamped at Gilgal, They kept the Passover, On the fourteenth day of the month, In the evening, On the plains of Jericho.
[7:35] And the day after the Passover, On that very day, They ate of the produce of the land, Unleavened cakes and parched grain.

And the manna ceased, The day after they ate of the produce of the land, And there was no longer manna for the people of Israel, But they ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan, That year.
When Joshua was by Jericho, He lifted up his eyes and looked, And behold, A man was standing before him, With his drawn sword in his hand.
And Joshua went to him and said to him, Are you for us, Or for our adversaries? And he said, No, But I am the commander of the army of the Lord.
Now I have come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, And worshipped, And said to him, What does my Lord say to his servant?
[8:56] And the commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, Take off your sandals from your feet, For the place where you are standing is holy.

And Joshua did so. Amen. And may God bless through us that reading from his word, And to his name be the praise.
Please turn back your Bibles to the passage we read together, Joshua chapters 4 and 5.
I'd like to look at this passage with you, Under the title, A Special Place. A Special Place.
In the Reformed tradition, We don't have holy places. We don't have holy places any more than we venerate holy people.
[10:04] In the words of the old hymn, Jesus, Where'er your people meet, There they behold your mercy seat.

Where'er they seek you, You are found. And every place Is hallowed ground. And yet there may be places Which we hold dear, Because of their spiritual associations, Or because of The part they have played In church history.
Living in the southwest of Scotland, You have probably visited Anwath, Where the saintly Samuel Rutherford ministered In the 17th century.
Fair Anwath By the Solway. Or you may have visited Wigton, Where Margaret McLaughlin And Margaret Wilson Were bound To stakes In the Water And drowned Since they refused To compromise Their Christian beliefs.
Or you may have visited St. Peter's Church In Dundee, Where the Reverend Robert Murray McChain Had a short-lived But very fruitful ministry.

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[11:36] Or perhaps The Ferrentosh Burn in Rothshire, Where thousands Used to gather For communion During the ministry Of the so-called Apostle of the North, The Reverend John MacDonald.

For the Israelites, Gilgal Was a special place. It was the first place At which The people of Israel Set up camp After Their momentous Crossing Of the River Jordan.
Hundreds of years Before, God had entered Into covenant With their ancestor Abraham And promised To give His descendants A land Of their own.
In the intervening Period, The Israelites Had lived in Egypt, Latter-layer Slaves Until God Delivered them Under the leadership Of Moses And miraculously Parted the waters Of the Red Sea To allow them To escape From Pharaoh And his army Who were in Hot pursuit.
On account Of their disobedience They had ended up Wandering for Forty years In the wilderness Before reaching The border Of the promised Land.
[13:11] But reach it They did. You can just Imagine their Excitement When they arrived At the River Jordan And prepared To cross over Into the very Heart Of the territory That God Had promised To give them So many Hundreds Hundreds Of years Before.

Gilgal Was where They encamped After they Crossed the river. We read In chapter Four The people Came up Out of the Jordan On the Tenth day Of the first Month And they Encamped At Gilgal On the East border Of Jericho.
I would Like to Suggest Four Reasons Why Gilgal Was a Special Place It was First of All A place Of Remembrance A place Of Remembrance Secondly It was A place Of Consecration Thirdly It was A place Of Encouragement And Fourthly And Finally It was A place Of Worship We Are Not Israelites We May Never Visit The Site Of Ancient Gilgal But If We Belong To The Israel Of God If We Belong To God's New Covenant People These Four Things Should
Characterize Our Lives Too Remembrance Consecration Encouragement And Worship First Of All Then Gilgal Was A place Of Remembrance It Must Have Been Without Keen Sense Of Anticipation That The Israelites Arrived At The Jordan And Prepared To Cross It But It Was Also A Daunting Prospect For A start They Didn't Know What Lay Ahead Of Them On The Other Side Of The River They Didn't Know What Lay Ahead On The West Side Of The Jordan How Easy Would It Be To Take Possession Of The Land What Opposition Would They
Face How Would They Get On And The Israelites Also Had A New And Untested Leader For Years Moses Had Led Them And He Was Someone They Could Rely On But Now Their Leader Was Joshua And He Was Something Of An Unknown Quantity Would He Command Their Allegiance Could They Trust Him Would He Be Up To The Task And There Was An Immediate Problem Facing Them The River Jordan Is Not Normally Particularly Wide Or Challenging To Cross But It Happened To Be Harvest Time And The Bible Tells Us That The
[16:58] Jordan Overflows All Its Banks Throughout The Time Of Harvest It Was Just At The Time When The Jordan Was In Flood That The Israelites Found Themselves Getting Ready To Cross Just How Were They All The Young And The Not So Young To Get A Cross But God Performed An Amazing Miracle As Soon As The Priests Who Were Carrying The Ark Of The Lord Stepped Into The Water The River Stopped Flowing Some Distance Away And The Bed Of The River Became Like Dry Ground And The The Priests Stood In The River Bed Until All The Israelites Got Safely Across To

The Other Side When The Crossing Was Completed The Lord Instructed Joshua As We Read To Select Twelve Men One From Each Of The Tribes Of Israel And They Were To Take Twelve Stones From The Bed Of The River From Where The Priests Who Carried The Ark Stood They Were To Bring The Stones Over And Lay Them Down In The Place Where The People Lodged That Night The Stones Were Brought To Gilgal And Joshua Erected The Twelve Stones There They They Must Have Been Something Like Standing Stones They Were To Be A Memorial Of The Miraculous Crossing They Had Just Experienced When Your Children Ask Their Fathers In Times To Come What Do These Stones Mean Joshua Said To The People Then You Shall Let Your Children Know Israel Passed Over This Jordan On Dry Ground For The Lord Your God Dried Up The Waters Of The Jordan For You Until You Passed Over As The Lord Your God Did To The Red Sea Which He Dried Up For Us Until We Passed Over So That All The Peoples Of The Earth May Know That The Hand Of The Lord Is Mighty That You May Fear The Lord Your God Forever The Standing Stones At Gilgal Were To Be A Reminder To The Israelites And Not Least The Generations Yet To Come Of How God Demonstrated His Mighty Power In Bringing His People

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Safely Across
The River In A Time Of Flood He Had Performed A Truly Amazing Miracle To Secure His People's Passage And It Was Important That They Should Never Forget That Or Indeed The Similar Miracle He Had Performed Forty Years Earlier When He Dried Up The Waters Of The Red Sea The Stones At Gilgal Were To Be A Constant Reminder That The Israelites Were A Redeemed People A Favored People A People Who Had Been Rescued From Slavery In Egypt And Brought By God's Grace Into The Land He Had Promised To Give Them They Needed To Keep In Mind What God Had Done Only A Short Time After They Escaped From Egypt They Started Grumbling Against Moses And Aaron They Started Saying Why Didn't We Just Die In Egypt Wouldn't That Have Been Better Than Being Brought Out Here Into The Wilderness In Egypt At Least We Had Plenty To Eat They Forgot All Too Soon Of The Toil And Drudgery Of Life In Egypt They Forgot All Too Soon Just What Life In Egypt Was Like And They Began To See Life In Egypt Through Rose Tinted Spectacles No Longer Were They Grateful For The Lord's Deliverance Now That They Were In The Promised Land Would
[21:59] Things Be Any Different Probably Not They Needed To Remind Themselves Regularly And Be Reminded That The Lord Had Done Great Things For Them And The Stones Were Meant To Be A Visual Reminder If We Are Christians We Too Are A Redeemed People We Have Been Rescued By The Lord Jesus Christ Not Just From Slavery In Not From Slavery In Egypt But From Slavery To Sin And Its Consequences It Took Nothing Less Than The Death Of God's Son The Incarnate Son Of God To Achieve That Rescue In The Words Of The Apostle Paul The Son Of God Loved Me And Gave Himself

For Me The Wages Of Sin Is Death But Through His Death On The Cross Jesus Paid Sin's Penalty And Broke Its Power He Bore The Wrath Of God Against Sin And Having Defeated Sin And Death He Now Shares His Resurrection Life With All Who Come To Him In Repentance And Faith What An Amazing Rescue He Who Had No Sin Of His Own Gave Himself For Us And For Our Salvation So That We Might Become The Righteousness Of God In Him But Like The Israelites We Can So Easily Forget We Can Become Ungrateful We Can Take The Blessings We Enjoy For Granted We Need To Remind Ourselves Constantly What We Have Been Saved From And What We Have Been Saved To That's One Reason Why It's Important To Meet Together On The Lord's Day The Lord's Day Is Itself A Weekly Reminder Of Our Lord's Resurrection On The First Day Of The Week If Gilgal Was A Place Of Remembrance For The Israelites We Too Need To Remember The Great Events Which Lie At The Very Heart Of Our Faith The Life And Death Resurrection And Ascension Of Our Lord Jesus We Have Been Redeemed Not With Perishable Things Such As Silver Or Gold But With The Precious Blood Of Christ Gilgal Was A Place Of Remembrance Secondly It Was A Place Of Consecration Crossing The River Jordan Was In Many Ways A New Beginning For The Israelites It Marked Their Entry At Long Last Into The Land They Had Been Promised But They Couldn't Afford To Take Things Easy God Had Promised Them The Land But They Had Work To Do They Were Now In The Land But They Had To Make It Their Own They Weren't Given Things On A Plate They Had To Pray And Fight
And Obey And So It Was Appropriate For Them To Consecrate Themselves Afresh To The Lord Not Only Because Of What He Had Done For Them But Also In View Of What They Had Yet To Do In Reliance On His Help And There Was One Particular Glaring Sin Of Commission Sin Of Omission They Needed To Do Something About Circumcision Was The Sign Of The Covenant Which God Made With Abraham And His Descendants In The Covenant Abraham promised A Family A Family Which Would Become A Great Nation And A Land But Most
[27:00] Importantly Of All God Promised Him That He Would Be Abraham's God And That The Israelites Would Be His People That Meant That The People Of Israel Were To Be Committed To Him There Was A Requirement For All The Male Members Of The Covenant Community To Be Marked With The Covenant Sign Normally That Was Done When They Were Eight Days Old But It Seems That The Practice Of Circumcision Had Fallen Into Abayance While The Israelites Were In The Wilderness Perhaps It Was Inconvenient For Them To Practice Circumcision While They Led A Nomadic Existence But The Failure

Constituted Disobedience In The Eyes Of The Lord It Was A Breach Of The Covenant Now That They Were West Of The Jordan The Lord Instructed Joshua To Regularize The Position All Who Had Not Received The Covenant!

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Sign Should Now Do So If They Were To Appropriate The Privileges Of The Covenant They Needed To Signal Their Willingness To Assume All Its Obligations And So In An Act Of Renewed Obedience There Was A Mass Performance Of The Initiatory Rite And When That Was Done The Lord Graciously Declared In Verse Nine Of Chapter Five Today I Have Rolled Away The Reproach Of Egypt From You That Indeed Is How Gilgal Got Its Name It Sounds Similar To The Hebrew Word Galal Which Means To Roll The Disobedience Which Had Characterized The Previous Generation
Of Israelites And Prevented Their Entering The Promised Land Had Been Addressed A Fresh Start Had Been Made And Appropriately That Fresh Start Was Followed By The First Celebration Of Passover In The Land Of Canaan You See The Israelites Needed To Be Living In Obedience To The Lord Before They Began The Conquest Of The Land There Were Things That Needed To Be Put Right This Wasn't An Attempt To Win God's Favor It Was Rather A Response To The Favor Of God Which They Already Enjoyed In The Words
Of Alec Motier Circumcision Marks The Gracious Movement Of God To Man And Only Derivatively The Consecration Of Man To God Gilgal Became A Place Of Renewed Obedience As The Israelites Committed Themselves Afresh To The God Of The Covenant As Christians We Are Made Right With God Solely Through The Righteousness Of Christ Solely Through The Work Of Christ It Is His Righteousness That Is Put To Our Account But
[31:26] If We Are To Live In The Good Of That Relationship We Need To Be Living In Accordance With His Law For As Long As We Live We Shall Need Daily Forgiveness For Daily Sins And There May Be Times When We Are Aware Of Particular Sins In Our Lives It May Be Back Sliding Of Some Kind It May Be That Our Love Has Grown Cold In These Circumstances We Need To Take Stock Of Things Like The Israelites We Need To Address The Problem We Need To Make Our Calling And Election Sure As We Consecrate Ourselves Afresh To The Lord And To His Service Gilgal Was

A Place Of Consecration Thirdly Gilgal Was A Place Of Encouragement We Read In Verse 11 Of Chapter 5 The Day After The Passover On That Very Day The Eight Of The Produce Of The Land Unleavened Cakes And Parched Grain They Ate Of The Produce Of The Land That Point Is Made Three Times In The Space Of Two Verses Obviously This Was A Momentous Event A Event And No Wonder The Israelites Had Been Promised A Land Flowing With Milk And Honey And Now For The First Time
They Were Enjoying The Fruits Of This Fertile Land For Forty Years They Had Been Dependent On The Lord's Provision Of Manna Remember How Each Morning Six Days A Week The Israelites Had Had To Gather Manna Which Fell Around Their Camp But Now They Were In A Position To Sample The Produce Of Canaan It Must Have Been Quite Something For Them To Eat These Unleavened Cakes And The Parched Grain Here In Their Hands And In Their Mouths Was Further Evidence Of God's Faithfulness Further Evidence That He Kept His Promises Further Evidence That He Could Be Relied On And
The Following Day There Was No Manna The Manna Didn't Come Now They Were In A Habitable Land They Could Find Food In The Normal Way But The Provision Of The Land As Much As The Provision Of The Manna Reflected God's Gracious Care For His People The Israelites During Their Time At Gil Gal Had Ample Reason To Be Encouraged Encouraged As They Experienced More Of The Lord's Providential Care And We Too Have Reason To Be Grateful For The Lord's Care We Have Reason To Thank The Lord For The Way In Which He
Provides For Our Needs Physical As Well As Spiritual We Have Reason To Thank Him For The Blessings Which He Showers Upon Us We Ought To Rejoice Ought We That We Have A God Who Keeps His Promises A God Who Can Be Relied On Geogal Was A Place Of Remembrance A Place Of Consecration A Place Of Encouragement Fourthly And Finally It Was A Place Of Worship A Place Of Worship In The Final Verses Of Chapter Five We Are Presented With Rather A Strange Scene We Are Told That Joshua Is In The Vicinity Of Jericho When
[36:30] He Sees A Man In Front Of Him With A Drawn Sword He's Obviously Startled And He Asks The Man Are You For Us Or For Our Adversaries Whose Side Are You On Are You On The Side Of The Israelites Or Are You On The Side Of The Canaanites The Man Doesn't Indicate Whose Side He's On In That He Says No!

It's As If He's Saying I'm Not On Either Side No! But I Am The Commander Of The Army Of The Lord That Was A Strange Reply But Joshua's Response Is Telling He Falls Prostrate On The

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Ground In Worship And All He Can Do Is Ask This Man For His Instruction What Does My Lord Say To His Servant And He Is Told Take Off Your Sandals From Your Feet For The Place Where You Are Standing Is Holy And Joshua Did So Who Is This
Man Joshua Joshua's Reaction And The Order That He's Given Suggests That This Man Is At The Very Least An Angel And Quite Possibly A Manifestation Of The Lord Himself Joshua Joshua Is In The Presence Of Holiness And He Knows It All He Can Do Is Fall Down In Reverend Worship And Take The Man's Instructions The Whole Episode Reminds Us Of Moses Encounter With The Lord At The Burning Bush When He Was Told To Remove His Shoes Because The Ground On Which He Stood Was Holy Ground On That Occasion Moses Was Commissioned To Lead The Israelites Out Of Egypt And He Was Assured
The Lord Would Be With Him Now As He Is About To Begin The Conquest Of Canaan Joshua Is Given Similar!
Assurance The Commander Of The Lord's Army Is Present He Is Not An Either Side In The Sense That He Is Not A Mere Human Being But He Is On The Side Of God's People He Is The Commander Of The Lord's Army Joshua Now Knows That He Can Count On The Help Of That Army On The Help Of The Hosts Which The Lord Commands He Knows That He Has The Resources Of God Himself At His Disposal If He Finds A Prospect Of What Lies Ahead Daunting He Can Now Say In The Words Of Psalm 46 The Lord Of Hosts
[40:22] Is With Us The God Of Jacob Is Our Refuge The Israelites Have Work To Do They Need To Fight They Need To Cultivate The Land They Need To Live In Obedience To The Lord's Revealed Will But None Of These Things Need Be Done In Their Own Strength This Evening We Shall See What Happens When The Israelites Try To Live By Their Wits But Know All That Joshua And The Israelites Need To Know Is It As Long As They Give The Lord The Place Which He Deserves And Demands They Can Draw On His Resources And

That Is Just As Relevant For Us We Cannot Live The Christian Life In Our Own Strength If We Try To Do So We Shall Fail But We Don't Have To I Can Do All Things Says The Apostle Paul Through Christ Who Gives Me Strength Paul Knew Where His Strength Lay He He He He He He He He He He He He He He He He He He He He He recordings of Great Difficulty of The Lord's Grace was sufficient for Him His Power Was Made recordings In Weakness If We Offer The Lord The Whole Hearted recordings Of Our Lives recordings If We Live In Dependence On Him We
Can Draw On His Mighty Resources That Is Surely What Has Energized The Lives Of So Many Eminent Christians Down Through The Centuries Yet Not I But Through Christ In Me Gilgal Was A Special Place It Was A Place Of Remembrance Do We Keep In Mind All That The Lord Has Done For Us A Place Of Consecration Do We Confess Our Sins And Commit Ourselves Afresh To The Lord And To His Service A Place Of Encouragement Do We Recognize
The Lord's Goodness And Draw Comfort And Encouragement From His Faithfulness A Place Of Worship Do We Offer The Lord The Worship Of Our Lives As We Draw On His Strength To Live In His Way When We Walk With The Lord In The Light Of His Word What A Glory He Sheds On Our Way While We Do His Good Will He Abides With Us Still And With All Who Will Trust And Obey Shall we conclude Our Service By Singing
Singing The Holy Blessing To To

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