

# Endings and Beginnings

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 08 August 2021

Preacher: Rev Kenneth M Ferguson

[ 0 : 0 0 ] Let us now turn to the Word of God and the Old Testament Scriptures and the book of Joshua. The book of Joshua and chapter 5.

Reading at the beginning of Joshua chapter 5. And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites, which were on the side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites, which were by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over, that their heart melted, neither was their spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel.

At that time the Lord said unto Joshua, Make these sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time. And Joshua made him sharp knives, and circumcised the children of Israel at the hill of the foreskins.

And this is the cause why Joshua did circumcise all the people that came out of Egypt, that were males. Even all the men of war died in the wilderness by the way, after they came out of Egypt.

Now all the people that came out were circumcised, but all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way, as they came forth out of Egypt, them they had not circumcised.

[ 1 : 5 0 ] For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people that were men of war, which came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord.

Unto whom the Lord swore that he would not show them the land, which the Lord swore unto their fathers, that he would give us, a land that floweth with milk and honey.

And their children whom he raised up in their stead, them Joshua circumcised. For they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them by the way.

And it came to pass, when they had done circumcising all the people, that they abode in their places in the camp, till they were whole. And the Lord said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you.

Wherefore, the name of the place is called Gilgal, unto this day. And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month, at even in the plains of Jericho.

[ 3 : 0 5 ] And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow, after the Passover, unleavened cakes and parched corn, in the selfsame day. And the manna ceased on the morrow, after they had eaten of the old corn of the land.

Neither had the children of Israel manna any more, but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan, that year. And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, there stood a man over against him, with his sword drawn in his hand.

And Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay, but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come.

And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord's host, said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy.

And Joshua did so. Amen. And may God bless to us that reading from his word. To his name be all the praise. It is again saying to his praise, this time in Psalm 45, the common meter version of Psalm 45, in the Scottish Psalter.

[ 4 : 43 ] Verses 3 to 6. Psalm 45 at verse 3. O thou that art the mighty one, thy sword gird on thy thigh, even with thy glory excellent, and with thy majesty, for meekness, truth, and righteousness, in state, ride prosperously, and thy right hand shall thee instruct in things that fearful be.

Thy narrows sharply pierce the heart of the enemies of the king, and under thy subjection the people down do bring. Forever and forever is, O God, thy throne of might, the scepter of thy kingdom, is a scepter that is right.

These stanzas of Psalm 45, the common meter version, verses 3 to 6, O thou that art the mighty one, thy sword gird on thy thigh.

O thou that art the mighty one, thy sword gird on thy thigh, Ele amplifier intending song for the wicked one, so that art and curtailed one and have fertilizer any bypassed one.

He will bring the glory that surpline, now live our lethe see.

[ 6 : 14 ] For he hid through the righteousness, this day I cross the sea.

Unlike my bloods of the earth's blood, and things that fear will be, by my rules of the peace of heart, O man is over here.

Come down the lights of church, the peace of earth and nearer.

Forever and forever is, O Lord, I know no mind.

But step there, O my King, O will I step there, O my King?

[ 7 : 47 ] Now as the Lord enables us, let us turn and consider words we have in this chapter, which we have read together, in the book of Joshua, chapter 5.

And we may read again verses 13. And following. And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, there stood a man over against him, with his sword drawn in his hand.

And Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay, but as captain of the host of the Lord, am I now come.

And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from of thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy.

And Joshua did so. We have a record of the children of Israel having come to the end of their wilderness journeyings.

[ 9 : 32 ] And we see in the chapters before this, how the Lord had encouraged Joshua as he took charge of these people of Israel, speaking to him in these very encouraging terms, As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee.

And if Joshua were to think back to the way that the Lord had shown himself to be with Moses during the 40 years of wilderness journeyings, he could take great comfort and encouragement from that.

As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee. And also the Lord said that he would give the people to inherit this land of Canaan.

And in the previous chapters, we see the people crossing the Jordan River. It's quite possible that the Canaanites wouldn't have expected them to attempt the crossing of the river at that particular time of the year because during the months of harvest, that would have been April or May, the river was overflowing its banks, probably due to the snow melt from Mount Hermon, as well as the rains called the latter rains.

And the river was in spate. But that's the time the Lord chose to show another miracle in that he dried up a path through the river of Jordan for the children of Israel.

[ 11 : 28 ] Do you remember that he commanded the priests to stand in the water carrying the Ark of the Covenant? And when they stood in the waters, the river opened up and the waters coming down, they piled up for many miles backwards.

But the waters flowing away, they ran dry because the Lord's hand, as it were, was upon that whole situation. And now we see in this particular chapter, chapter 5, that they are in the land of Canaan, the land that the Lord had promised to these people long, long before.

It's exactly 40 years since the Lord had taken them out of the land of Egypt in an amazing demonstration of God's power and God's gracious dealing with these people.

And he had led them for 40 years through the wilderness, led them by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

He was obviously caring for these people in a very special way. Now they are in the new land. And there are endings and new beginnings in the lives of each one of ourselves also.

[ 13 : 03 ] Like there was an ending of the wilderness journeyings for Israel here and the beginning of a new experience in the land of Canaan, the land of promise.

So there are endings and beginnings with us also. Maybe it's the end of your working life and the beginning of your retirement. Maybe it's something else.

And for this congregation, it's the end of one ministry and this is the beginning of a vacancy and you're looking forward to a new ministry in God's good time.

So there is a kind of a situation similar to what the Israelites here had. They had finished the wilderness journey. Now they were going into the land of Canaan to possess it.

And I think there are four things that we need to take note of as we read through this chapter. This new phase of the life of the children of Israel first of all was marked by a renewed consecration to God.

[ 14 : 24 ] You see, when it talks about Joshua being commanded to circumcise the children of Israel at Gilgal, this was a renewed consecration, a re-committing of themselves to God.

That's the first thing. The second thing is that there was a reason for great thankfulness for all that had been done for them hitherto.

And the way that was expressed was that they partook of the Passover as we have it in these verses before us. Verse 10.

And then thirdly, at verse 11 and following, they ate of the old corn of the land.

You remember that they had been supplied miraculously with manna for their wilderness journeys. But now that they have come into the land of promise, the manna has stopped and it says that they ate the old corn of the land.

[ 15 : 52 ] Just say a word or two on that. And fourthly and finally, as Joshua here looks on the great challenges before him, firstly and foremostly he had dealt with this great city of Jericho.

how am I going to deal with this city? And as he lifted up his eyes maybe from prayer, he saw a man and the man made himself known to him as the commander or the captain of the Lord's army.

That was the ultimate encouragement for Joshua in this particular time. The Lord made himself known to him. This was none other than the Lord himself.

And that's the fourth point I want to say just a few words on. Firstly then, as they go into this promised land, and remember they had had many wonderful experiences over the past 40 years, nevertheless it says here that they hadn't really been following in obedience the covenant requirements of God.

It says in verse 2, and I just read the two verses here, the Lord said unto Joshua, make these sharp knives, circumcise again the children of Israel a second time.

[ 17 : 24 ] Joshua made him sharp knives and circumcised the children of Israel at the hill of the four skins. This is the cause why Joshua did circumcise. All the people that came out of Egypt that were males, even all the men of war died in the wilderness by the way after they came out of Egypt because they hadn't believed the report of Caleb and Joshua, the spies who had gone in to spy the land and when they came with a good report these men who had already been circumcised nevertheless refused to believe the report of the spies.

And because they didn't believe in the report the Lord said you will die in the wilderness. Your children will inherit the promised land but you will not because you refuse to believe the word of God and the report of the spies.

he forwards And the children whom he raised up in their stead, them Joshua circumcised.

For they were circumcised because they had not circumcised them by the way. And this is an act of recommitment to the Lord by these people.

They have seen the last of the wilderness, that experience. Now they are going forward into a new experience.

[ 19 : 30 ] And what better than to commit themselves to the Lord in truth, according to the way the Lord commands his people to be committed to him.

To give themselves to him by faith, trusting in him, trusting in his promises, trusting in his glorious gospel promises.

And for yourselves and for myself, every day is a new beginning. And what better than to recommit ourselves and consecrate ourselves to the Lord.

This was the meaning, you remember, of the burnt offering that was offered morning and evening in Israel. A lamb, as a burnt offering, every morning and every evening.

A burnt offering meant full consecration. The lamb was burnt completely. And that's the way the Lord asks us to give ourselves to him. To commit ourselves to him completely.

[ 20 : 36 ] Holding nothing back. And that's the way these people started off as they went into the land of Canaan. Committing themselves in obedience to what the Lord asked of them.

That's the first thing. The second thing was this, that they observed the Passover. Now you remember from the book of Exodus and chapter 12 in particular.

The way the Lord commanded them there in Egypt. To take a lamb of the first year, a male, without blemish.

And examine that lamb from the 10th of the month until the 14th at evening tide. So that there was no flaw or blemish in that lamb at all.

And that that lamb was put to death. And you remember that they took the blood of the lamb. And with hyssop they dipped the hyssop in the blood of the lamb.

[ 21 : 49 ] And put the blood upon the doorposts. And the lintel of the places where the Israelites were living. And the Lord said, when I see the blood, I will pass over you.

And of course they also roasted the lamb with fire. And they ate the lamb. Now that's a picture of Christ, isn't it? The Lord Jesus Christ going to the cross.

Giving himself up as a sacrifice. To satisfy divine justice. And reconcile his people to God. And we see that when these people were commanded to observe this Passover feast once again.

It was in thankfulness for all that the Lord had already done. Thankfulness for his promises fulfilled. And thankfulness for all that he was promising to do for them still.

You know, we have many reasons to thank the Lord for. Yourselves as a congregation. During the past ministry.

[ 23 : 05 ] So many reasons for which you, I'm sure, are thankful to the Lord. Well, there are many reasons in our individual lives.

If we were to look for them, they're there. To thank the Lord for them. And of course, this is the way these people were. They observed the Passover feast.

In thankful remembrance of God's past mercies. But then thirdly, we see that in verse 11.

They did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow. After the Passover. Unleavened cakes and parched corn in the selfsame way.

A day. I found this a tremendously interesting verse. What does it mean?

[ 24 : 12 ] That they ate this kind of diet once they went into the land of Canaan.

Do you remember that they had lived for 40 years on the manna that came down from heaven? They had to go out every morning except the Sabbath day.

They had double portion given to them on the day before the Sabbath. And they were not to go out on the Sabbath because nothing was provided on that particular day.

But the Lord for 40 years faithfully provided for their needs in that miraculous way with the manna. Now, the manna has stopped.

Because they've come into the land of Canaan. And they ate the old corn of the land. I looked this up in the Hebrew.

[ 25 : 19 ] And old corn of the land means something like this. Stored grain. Grain that had been stored.

Now, that is one thing about the manna. If they kept it over days, it went bad immediately.

It went bad immediately. But when they went into the land of Canaan, they had stored grain. The old corn that had been stored up.

So, what do we understand by this? Well, they had been eating wilderness food. The manna.

Faithfully supplied by the Lord for 40 years. Now, it's a different stage they're at.

[ 26 : 20 ] And they're given a different kind of food. I think that many used to say of this old corn of the land that it was what was waiting for the children of God at the end of life's journey.

You know, when they went into heaven. And when the people of God in glory are no longer dependent on the means of grace as they are here.

The means of grace like God's word and prayer and sacraments and so on. But in glory there is no means of grace as we have it here.

It is the Lord himself. And when the people of God get into heaven, they will feast, as it were, on the eternal love of God with no doubts as to whether he loves me or not.

The love of God will be poured upon them. And that has been prepared from all eternity for them.

[ 27 : 53 ] And they look unto Jesus and they see the glory of his Messiahship in heaven. And they realize something and increasingly the glory attached to that provision in covenant before the world wars.

that the Father and the Son and the Spirit met in the covenant agreement before the world wars.

And the Father asked the Son to take unto himself the elect people whom he had elect from all eternity and in the fullness of times to come and take their nature and work out a way of salvation for them.

And that the Son in that covenant discussion if we can call it a discussion in the Godhead the Son said yes I am going and I am happily coming to fulfill all that's required on behalf of these people.

And the people of God in heaven will have a deeper understanding of these things. They'll see the glory of the mediatorship of Christ set up before the world wars.

[ 29 : 21 ] And they'll see the glory of the grace that he bestowed upon them. The grace of faith and the grace of hope and the grace of love.

And they'll see all these things and it's as if they will be feeding on these glorious truths in God himself throughout the endless ages of eternity.

The old corn of the land. But coming back to the children of Israel they were now in the promised land.

They were no longer dependent on wilderness supplies. but they had come into this land of plenty that was flowing with milk and with honey.

And the Lord according to their needs provided for them in that land. And I think that's the point. You see it's according to our need that the Lord supplies food for our soul.

[ 30 : 33 ] whatever stage we're at whatever situation we have whether it is difficult wilderness or enjoying the blessings of God's fellowship the Lord feeds us out of his bounty out of his fullness as the man of God says out of his fullness have we all received and grace for grace.

they ate of the old corn of the land. Isn't it wonderful that God has a provision exactly according to the need that you have.

He had provision for them in their wilderness journeys. He has provision for them now that they are going into the land of Canaan provision.

And the provision is exactly according to the need that you have. The Lord knows my needs and he's able to supply all my needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Ask that the Lord continue to bestow upon you out of his fullness goodness that might feed and sanctify your life and your soul.

[ 32 : 08 ] And then fourthly Joshua here in verse 13 he was by Jericho and he lifted up his eyes and looked and there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand.

Jericho was a big city a daunting city high walls wide strongly constructed walls there were houses actually in the walls isn't this what we read in relation to Rahab when the spies went in and they stayed in Rahab's house house and the scripture says that her house was in the wall or on the wall of the city.

So it must have been wide enough to accommodate a dwelling place. and Joshua there in verse 13 he lifts up his eyes maybe as I said from having been at prayer Lord how do I tackle this great problem how am I going to deal with this city how am I going to destroy it so that's what it says in the book of Deuteronomy and chapter 33 it's an amazing chapter where Moses relates a blessing for every one of the tribes in succession and verse 27 it says the eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee and shall say destroy them he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee that's the

Lord's side of things but he's not leaving his people with folded arms doing nothing as they deal with the Jerichos of life he says destroy them what are the Jerichos of your life well maybe it's an awareness of the corruption of your nature the idle sinful thoughts of your mind and the sinful leanings of your soul maybe that's a Jericho for you maybe it's the trials and afflictions that come in God's providence that's a real trial a real

Jericho for many people things that they didn't expect things that they would never have sent for had they had choice but they have come and we have to deal with them maybe it's a personal Jericho maybe it's a family problem maybe it's the Jericho of wayward children maybe it's something completely different it could be a personal Jericho of guilt over sins long committed long ago Joshua is here by

[ 36 : 27 ] Jericho how am I going to deal with it he lifted up his eyes and looked behold there stood a man over against him sword drawn in his hand somebody was saying Joshua might have felt that he himself was in charge of this whole people and he sees this man with a sword drawn and he said who gave him permission to draw his sword who is he and he went over and he said are you with us or with our enemies no I am the captain of the Lord's host what an amazing meeting that was Joshua and the pre-incarnate

Christ do you know what I mean by that that before Christ took human nature to him he appeared in human form repeatedly repeatedly I believe to Moses and to others down through the Old Testament years and this is him now the captain of the host of the Lord what's the host of the Lord well one could say first of all that it's all the angels of heaven they are at his back and call one angel destroyed the whole army of Senachrib in one night I think it was 85,000 men one angel and when the Lord at

Gethsemane was confronted by his enemies and he asked who are you looking for Jesus of Nazareth I am he and Peter took a sword out and he cut off the right ear of Malchus and Jesus said put your sword back in its sheath I could call on twelve legions of angels but now it's the hour of darkness this is their hour and I am giving myself to them if it is me you seek let these disciples go their way he is the captain of the host of the angels and you remember the scripture says that the angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation ministry of angels is a reality you say you've never seen one you probably haven't that doesn't mean that they're not there there are plenty of stories from the scriptures not stories but accounts in the scriptures and plenty stories told by people but we have to go by what the scripture says and the scripture makes absolutely clear that the ministry of angels is a reality for the people of God but then of course the Lord says

I am the captain of the host of the Lord the people of God the people of God in every age I am their captain I am their king I am their commander I am the one who's going to deal with their Jerichos only I am able to do that the Jericho of death is a Jericho that awaits us all how are we going to deal with it when I was thinking of these words the other day this peace flooded into my mind and my soul I'm so thankful that Jesus is the captain of my salvation he is the captain of my salvation he goes ahead of us he's gone ahead of us through death and the resurrection he goes ahead of us into our circumstances he comes to our aid when we're confronted with the difficulties and trials of life whatever these might be he is the one who is able to turn night into day and to turn seeming defeat into victory captain of the host of the

Lord am I now come and Joshua fell on his face to the earth and did worship and said to him what saith my Lord unto his servant the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua loose thy shoe from off thy foot for the place whereon thou standest is holy and Joshua did so of course he did the same as Moses before him at the burning bush put thy shoes from off thy feet for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground and there is a sense in which we have to do the same to put our shoes from off our feet because we're in the presence of the captain of our salvation the captain of the host of the Lord the holy one of Israel and how are we going to put our shoes from off our feet well this is at least one comment on it that when we come into the house of

[ 42 : 54 ]    God remember it is the house of God don't make it a marketplace like the Jews were making of the temple people you have made it a place of merchandise he said as he overthrew their tables and he overthrew the money changers tables and so on we mustn't make the house of God a place of merchandise how can that be well when we bring the world in with us when we come and do not devote our thinking from the world when we think about anything and everything while the preacher is preaching no ask the Lord to focus your mind and put these dusty dirty weekday shoes off your feet and come and ask to be sanctified and ask to look to the

Lord for all that lies ahead when you go into chapter six you hear the commands the Lord gives to Joshua in relation to the taking of Jericho don't read of that strategy anywhere else go around the city once a day for six days and then on the seventh day go around seven times and only in that particular way was the city going to fall and you know it's a holy war we're in led by the holy one of Israel and for for the word for the word for the word and season to our souls and may we be motivated and enabled by your

Holy Spirit to respond to the word like Joshua did taking off his sandals from off his feet and seeking to be obedient to the Lord's will and command may it be so with us all forgive our sin in Jesus name Amen