

Joshua 5:10–15 — The Passover in Canaan

The Old Corn, the Manna Ceased, and the Captain of the Lord's Host

Scripture Reading: Joshua 5:10–15

“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. 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.”

The Third Passover: Canaan Ground

This is the third Passover recorded in Scripture. The first was in Egypt, connected with the thought of God's judgment and being sheltered from it by the

blood. The second was in the second year in the wilderness, where the people were pilgrims and strangers — the Passover is suited to such a people. The third is here, in the land of Canaan, after they have crossed the Jordan and been circumcised. A great deal more is present in this keeping of the Passover than in those earlier ones.

The crossing of the Jordan gives a special character to this celebration. Passing over the Jordan speaks typologically of death with Christ and resurrection with Christ — the reproach of Egypt rolled away, the flesh cut off in circumcision, the people brought into a new position entirely. The Passover here is not merely about sheltering from judgment; it is kept by a people who have been brought through death into life, and who stand on the other side of it. In Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast — and the feast that follows immediately is the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread, which speaks of the believer's walk answering to the Passover character. There is no gap between them.

Christ in Three Positions: Manna, Passover, Old Corn

Three things stand out in this passage, each presenting Christ in a distinct way. The Passover presents Christ the crucified one — our Passover sacrificed for us. The manna was for the wilderness, and it ceased here: it presents Christ as the bread of heaven come down, the humble one as he speaks of himself in John 6 — the food suited to the wilderness journey, the pilgrim character. And the old corn of the land presents Christ as the resurrected one. John 12:24 gives the key: “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” The old corn — JND notes it as corn from the harvest of the previous year, the store corn — is the fruit of what fell and died and rose again. They had not planted it, not tended it, not harvested it; it was ready for them when they arrived. God had it prepared.

The manna ceased without delay or transition. After forty years of manna, one day it was manna and the next day it was the old corn of the land. No overlap, no gradual phasing-out. They left one and went into the other, and that was it. The Apostle Paul's conversion illustrates this principle: he saw Christ in glory on the road to Damascus, and that was the starting point of his Christianity. Christ in resurrection and in glory — that is what is distinctively Christian, what distinguishes the Christian position from Judaism. Paul did not go to the other apostles to trace his Christianity; he traced it directly to Christ in glory.

The Fruit of the Land of Canaan

They ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year — and as they conquered more of the land, more food became available. Deuteronomy 8:8 describes the land: wheat, barley, vines, fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil, and honey — seven items, a number of completeness. All seven, without exception, are cultivated above the surface of the ground, lifted up. This stands in deliberate contrast with the foods of Egypt, which were cultivated below the surface or lay on the ground: onions, leeks, garlic, cucumbers, melons. Down, down, down. Up, up, up. The food of Egypt was the food of the world; the food of Canaan was the food of a people elevated by God's purpose. And the sweetness — the honey — came last, not first. The flesh would put the sweetness first; God puts it last.

We can have as much of Christ in our lives as we desire. The fruit of Canaan is available to the extent that we take possession of the land. The children who saw those great grapes from Eshcol and then said there were giants and they could not go in — they despised the pleasant land and went around it for thirty-eight more years. They had tasted the fruit but refused to take possession. It is possible for a Christian to have just a little taste and no more.

Holiness: The Fundamental Basis of Victory

When Joshua came near to Jericho he encountered a man with a drawn sword. This is a theophany — a manifestation of the Son of God in human form, just as Abraham recognized the three visitors. Joshua worshipped and asked for his orders. The man's identity is confirmed by his response to worship — he does not refuse it, as an angel would — and by the instruction he gives.

The instruction is a single word, essentially: holiness. “Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy.” This is not a battle plan. It is a principle. The fundamental basis of victory in the land is holiness to the Lord. People might have expected a military briefing, strategies, troop dispositions. What they received was this one great word. The same truth was given to Moses at the burning bush — the turning point of his life, and the word that gave character to everything that followed.

The shoe lifts a man up a little. Even that small elevation is not appropriate in the presence of the captain. There is to be no lifting up of Joshua before this personage. The drawn sword in hand marks the character of what lies before them: they are no longer pilgrims who needed a pillar of fire to show the way — they are warriors who need a captain. In the wilderness they had followed; in Canaan they must fight. And the captain's first word to his general is: take off your shoes. Holiness.

Art Thou for Us or for Our Adversaries?

Joshua's question — “Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?” — receives an answer that is not in the terms of the question. “Nay.” Neither, as Joshua asked. The captain of the Lord's host is not a partisan to be recruited to one side's agenda. The question itself exposes a way of thinking that puts “us” at the center of things, with allies and enemies arranged around us. The captain's answer reorients everything: the question is not whose side he is on, but whether Israel is on his side. Whether they are obedient to his commands. After that is settled, the

other question need not be asked — and need not be answered.

Joshua's response to the unanswered question is beautiful: he fell on his face to the earth and did worship, and said, "What saith my lord unto his servant?" Three things together — prostration, worship, and asking for his orders. A threefold cord of submission: fall, worship, obey. This is what is wanted before a victory. Not strategy, not self-confidence, not counting of troops. Fall, worship, and ask for marching orders.

Fall on thy face, worship, and ask: What saith my Lord unto his servant? That is the ground of victory.