

"Listen"
Joshua 5-6

8/15/10

9 & 10:45 am

Series: "A New Beginning"

INTRODUCTION

As we walk through the book of Joshua, we see how God leads His people in a new beginning ... a new leader, a new generation, a new land to take as a homeland. Most everything in their lives is new.

As we move through this book, we're going to see a series of truths that Joshua and the nation of Israel learn together, under God's direction and revelation.

First lesson: *When God leads in a New Beginning, He promises to be with you. (Joshua 1)*

Second lesson: *When God leads in a New Beginning, trust Him to establish you. (Joshua 3-4)*

(church web site: view past messages, listen, my message notes, are all available)

Third lesson: *When God leads in a New Beginning, continually listen to His voice. (Joshua 5-6)*

OPEN to Joshua 5 (**PAGE** 336)

READ Joshua 5:1 **"Now when all the Amorite kings west of the Jordan and all the Canaanite kings along the coast heard how the LORD had dried up the Jordan before the Israelites until we had crossed over, their hearts melted and they no longer had the courage to face the Israelites."**

Background: God directed a tremendous military-style "show-of-force" as Israel entered Canaan: He stopped the Jordan River from flowing so His people could cross over. Then, the first ones to cross were 40,000 armed warriors.

Talk about intimidating the enemy!

As for Israel's army, I can imagine their adrenaline pumping, their minds alert and set for war. You would expect that the battle plan was in place, and they were going to strike quickly since they have no fortifications to protect their women and children, flocks and herds.

But what we see after they cross the river is very surprising. In fact, it is the exact opposite of what one would expect of an army who has just crossed into enemy territory.

At the same time, we see that their actions are very consistent with what we have read so far in Joshua; that Joshua is listening to God's voice.

READ Joshua 5:2-12

I. Listen to God's Written Word (Joshua 5:2-12)

v. 1: The people of the land are paralyzed by fear: **"... their hearts melted and they no longer had the courage to face the Israelites."**

The God-instructed, God-empowered show-of-force worked. The people of the land are paralyzed with fear.

This is key, because what God calls Israel to do next, in this time of war, is akin to national suicide.

A. Walk in God's covenant symbol (Joshua 5:2-9)

God directs Joshua to circumcise the men. This seems crazy! It will leave the men disabled, vulnerable, unable to defend themselves or their families.

And they knew this: there's even a story from their history that would warn against it:

In Genesis 34 Jacob's only daughter, Dinah, is raped by the son of the ruler of that region. Then, that man comes to Jacob, along with his father, asking for permission to take Dinah as his wife.

When Dinah's 12 brothers find out what happened, they are enraged and they concoct a plan, without their father's knowledge: they tell the ruler and his son that they cannot give their sister to men who are uncircumcised; it is detestable to them. But, if all the men they rule over are circumcised, then they will give their sister in marriage.

They never really planned to give their sister to them, but wanted to use circumcision to disable the men and then kill them all.

Genesis 34:25 **“Three days later, while all of them were still in pain, two of Jacob’s sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brothers, took their swords and attacked the unsuspecting city, killing every male.”**

Circumcision had left the men vulnerable.

So, why did God command Israel to do this at a time of war?

Male circumcision was the covenant symbol God gave to Abraham to be practiced in every succeeding generation. Every male child was circumcised at eight days of age. It was a sign and a daily reminder to and Israeli man that he was in a covenant with Yahweh, the God of Israel. (Genesis 17:8-13)

In spite of this, circumcision had not been practiced in the desert by the parents of these men ... perhaps because the parents had refused to follow and trust God.

That circumcision had to be done at this specific time shows how important their relationship with God truly is. In any and every situation, listening to God and obeying Him always comes first.

For us, under the new covenant God made with us through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we read in Galatians 6:15 that **“Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.”**

Colossians 2:11-12 **“In [Jesus] you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, 12 having been buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him through your faith in the power of God, Who raised Him from the dead.”**

Baptism is the outward declaration of your inner new life in Christ, that you have died to yourself, have been buried with Jesus, and raised with Jesus to a new life.

If you have received Christ, surrendered your life to Him, I urge you to be baptized. (*Mark it on your Keeping in Touch card and we'll contact you*).

Next, we see that they ...

B. Walk in God’s covenant meal (Joshua 5:10)

They observe the Passover. The Passover was an annual observance reminding Israel of how God delivered them from slavery in Egypt.

Exodus 12:25-27 **“When you enter the land that the LORD will give you as He promised, observe this ceremony.**

26 And when your children ask you, ‘What does this ceremony mean to you?’

27 then tell them, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, Who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when He struck down the Egyptians.’”

The tenth day of the first month, Joshua and the people crossed the Jordan (Joshua 4:19). This is the same date every year that the Lord said they were to select a lamb to be sacrificed on the Passover.

Then, on the evening of the 14th day, they celebrated the Passover meal. (Exodus 12:2, 6, 18).

Just as they had not practiced circumcision in the desert, they had only observed Passover one time, at Sinai (Numbers 9:1-5). (EBC)

Israel is re-entering, re-establishing the covenants God made with them. They are declaring their faith in God, re-entering the covenant reminders God gave them.

You see, entering and conquering the Promised Land is being done by faith, with confidence in God’s promise to fight for them and give it to them.

Taking the land is all about their relationship with God; it is God Who is giving the land, God Who is fighting in the battles. So, their relationship to God as a nation is their first priority. (Deuteronomy 3:21-22; 20:4)

About 1,400 years later the Lord Jesus was celebrating the Passover meal with the disciples when He instituted **the Lord’s Supper**, the reminder of the new covenant we have with God through faith in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Jesus commanded us to participate in the Lord’s Supper in remembrance of Him; the shedding of His blood, the death of His body on the cross. It is significant for us!

** Your relationship with God is the primary priority in every new beginning, every new day when you get out of bed.

Every day, as we encounter different situations, we should continually ask question, *“Has God written on this matter?”*

We should continually ask God, *“What have you written about this? Lead me as I look in Your Word. When I don’t know, show me who I can ask. Speak, Lord, because I am listening.”*

ILLUSTRATION

“On his way to work one day, Chicago insurance broker Bob Muzikowski saw a baseball field full of trash in a gang-infested neighborhood. ‘The kids here could use an organized Little League,’ he thought. He teamed up with a friend to create the Near North Little League. In ‘pretty wild’ early practice sessions, coaches dealt with 250 boys long on enthusiasm but short on fundamentals. Each game began with a prayer. Cursing was strictly forbidden. ‘While I had no illusions that I’d change the world, I had no doubt that God wanted me to play baseball with these kids,’ said Muzikowski. ‘My faith had taught me that being a Christian means truly believing what Jesus said about loving my neighbor.’

The next year, 400 kids joined the league. Today 900 fatherless kids in 100 Little League teams are learning self-respect and community values.

Reporters wondered why a wealthy businessman chose to live among the poor, coaching other people’s kids. Muzikowski answered, ‘Jesus didn’t say, “When you’ve paid someone to help the least of these you have done it to Me.”’ What He said was, “when you have helped the least of these, you have done it to Me.””

“A League of Their Own,” Men of Integrity (July/August 2010),
August 13 entry; based on a passage from Chuck Colson’s How Now Shall We Live? (Tyndale, 2004)

I. Listen to God’s Written Word

II. Listen to God’s Spoken Word (Joshua 5:13-6:25)

READ Joshua 5:13-15

A. God speaks to direct timing (Joshua 5:13-15)

Now that the covenant has been re-established, and that the Passover has been observed, battle time has come:

Joshua sees **a man** he doesn’t recognize with his sword drawn. But as they talk, it is clear that this is no ordinary man.

The man's 'drawn sword' seems to indicate that the time for battle has now come.

Joshua asked whether he was friend or foe.

He replies that he is **"the commander of the army of the LORD."**

His presence was a sign that the Lord is ready to lead Israel into battle. God has made His timing clear.

B. God speaks to direct actions (Joshua 6:1-5)

READ Joshua 6:1-5: God gives Joshua a very unusual (crazy-sounding!) battle plan for Jericho.

Joshua 6:6-24: Joshua directs all Israel in God's plan, they obey God's Word, and Jericho falls!

There are times, like we see here in the battle strategy God gave, where there is no specific instruction written in the Word of God. At times like this, God will make His will clear to us and He gives us other methods for discerning His voice:

- Clear impressions and ideas through prayer
- Counsel / advice of mature believers
- The leading of the Holy Spirit
- A clear, reinforced direction that comes through prayer, counsel, circumstances
- God uniting praying Christians (same mind)

And always remember: The spoken Word will not contradict the written Word.

ILLUSTRATION

"My son, Aaron, was five or six when he began asking me, 'What does God's voice sound like?' I didn't know how to answer.

A few years later, Aaron went off to his first junior high camp. In the middle of the week, I went up with another dad to see our kids. Aaron, I learned, had started to

assault another kid but had been held back by his friends. He was unrepentant, wanted to leave camp, pulled together his stuff, and shoved it into the car. I asked him for a last talk with me before we drove away. We sat on two large rocks in the middle of the woods.

'Aaron,' I asked, 'is there any voice inside you telling you what you should do?'

'Yes,' he nodded.

'What's the voice telling you?'

'That I should stay and work it out.'

'Can you identify that voice?'

'Yes,' he said immediately, 'It's God.' It was the moment I'd waited for.

'Aaron,' I said, 'do you realize what just happened? You heard God's voice. He spoke to you from within your soul. Forget everything else that's happened. God spoke to you, and you were able to recognize him.'

I will never forget Aaron's dug-in response: 'Well, I'm still not doing what God said.'

I explained to him that that was his choice, but this is what would happen. If he rejected the voice of God coming from deep within and chose to disobey His guidance, his heart would become hardened, and his ears would become dull.

If he continued on this path, there would be a day when he would never again hear the voice of God. There would come a day when he would deny that God even speaks or has ever spoken to him.

But if he treasures God's voice however it comes to him —through the Scriptures, through his conscience — and responds to Him with obedience, then his heart would be softened, and his ears would always be able to hear the whisper of God into his soul.

Aaron chose to stay, I'm grateful to say. If he had chosen differently, he would have begun the path toward nominal discipleship. Perhaps he never would have rejected the faith overtly. He might have even chosen to be a faithful attender at a church and been by everyone else's estimation a good man, but he would no longer be a close Jesus-follower."

Adapted from Erwin McManus, *The Barbarian Way* (Thomas Nelson, 2005), pp. 87-89

II. Listen to God's Spoken Word

CONCLUSION

Who do I listen to on a day-to-day basis? What forms my thinking, my actions? How do I make decisions? What do I allow to take root in my mind? Whatever takes root will become my beliefs and then my behaviors. Who am I supposed to be listening to?

God ... through His written Word, the Bible,

God ... through prayer,

God ... through His people,

God ... through those He has put in authority over me, (and I sort what they say by the written Word)

What voices do I need to stop listening to?

Those that disagree with God's Word:

1 Corinthians 1:18-20 **"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.**

19 **For it is written: 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.'**

20 **Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?"**

1 Corinthians 3:18-20 **"Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a 'fool' so that he may become wise.**

19 **For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: 'He catches the wise in their craftiness';**

20 **and again, 'The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile.'"**

Proverbs 14:12 **"There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death."** (repeated verbatim at Proverbs 16:25)

In your new beginning, in your daily life, what is the basis of what you believe and do? Who do you take counsel from? From what sources do you determine truth? Your world view, how you see the issues and practices and thinking of society and sort out what you believe? Turn to God's written Word, and sort His spoken Word through it.

ANNOUNCEMENT

We're going to have a season of listening as a church family.

Beginning the week of September 12 for six weeks, we're encouraging everyone in the church to become part of a six-week small group.

From the children's area through adults, we will be uniting to look at what God says about love ... loving God and loving people.

Each week there will be three powerful components that will help us grow together:

- Sunday messages
- Small groups
- Daily devotional using the book, The Relationship Principles of Jesus

1. Starting next Sunday, we're going to ask you to sign up for a small group.
2. Also, we'd like you to consider hosting one of the groups. You can sign up for that as well.

"Father in Heaven, I want to grow in listening to Your voice! With Your help, I will meet with You in Your Word. Please renew my mind with Your truth and help me to hear Your spoken voice as well. In Jesus' Name, Amen."