

# ***PROMISED LAND 1: Lesson One, Preparation for Conquest***

## ***Joshua 1:1 – 5:12***

**Subject:** Israel prepared for conquest of Canaan under Joshua's leadership.

**Main Idea:** Spiritual victories are preceded by preparation.

**Principles:**

1. *Meditating on and applying God's word are foundational to spiritual victory.*
2. *Victorious Christian living requires faith.*
3. *A victorious life is the result of daily living out the Gospel.*

### **Introduction**

In 1907, an English soldier coined the two-word phrase that has served as the motto for National Scouting Organizations around the world ever since: “Be Prepared!” Historians tell of many occasions in which one military power was unprepared for another. In 1941, the United States was unprepared for the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor. US military commanders focused on the threat of sabotage within to such a degree that they actually increased their vulnerability to the threat of an attack from without.<sup>i</sup> As a parent, I am sympathetic to this mistake, since at times, I believe I've focused on preparing my children for some of life's challenges to the exclusion of others. Have you ever questioned your own preparedness for life's challenges? Specifically, how well prepared are you for the battles inherent in the Christian life?

As the book of Joshua opens, we find that God is preparing His children, the Israelites, to cross the Jordan and inherit the Promised Land of Canaan. In our introduction, we discovered that, while the Promised Land is a real geographical location (later known as Palestine and today, as Israel), it is also a symbol of the inheritance every believer has in Christ. While every Christian is guaranteed the glories of Heaven, it seems that the Promised Land is a symbol of the fullness of life Christ has offered us on earth (John 10:10). Crossing the Jordan is *not* a picture of a believer dying and going to heaven. In Dr. Donald Campbell's words, “For the Israelites Canaan was hardly heaven!” Rather, “It is a picture of entering into spiritual warfare to claim what God has promised.”<sup>ii</sup> This inheritance isn't one of worldly riches but of spiritual ones.

In Joshua 1 – 5, we find God preparing the Israelites to conquer Canaan in several ways. They would not gain their inheritance without doing battle, and they needed preparation. Similarly, if we want to take hold of our full inheritance, the abundant life Christ offers in this life, we are going to face a battle – a *spiritual* battle – and *spiritual victories are also preceded by preparation*. We have an invisible, spiritual Enemy who is content to leave us alone, as long as we remain shallow and immature in our faith. But the moment we determine to claim our spiritual inheritance, He will engage us. Each of us must face off against “giants,” sins that threaten to keep us from our inheritance. The Enemy will try to keep us under their control. Thankfully, God is not an imperfect parent, as am I. He has *fully* equipped us to be victorious in *every* engagement. 2 Peter 1:3 says, “[God's] divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life.” Our job is simply to take up our God-given

equipment and *be prepared* to use it at any moment. By considering Israel's preparations, we can learn something about our own.

## I. Introduction to Joshua – Joshua 1

### A. Who was Joshua?

- i. Moses' Aid: The opening verses remind us that God appointed Joshua to succeed Moses shortly before Moses' death (Deuteronomy 31). Previously, he had served as Moses' aide. Joshua had accompanied Moses up Mount Sinai when Moses received the Law (Exodus 24, 32). Before the Tabernacle was constructed, Joshua had remained at the tent in which Moses communed with God. Moses came and went, but Joshua remained there in God's presence (Exodus 33).
- ii. Battle Commander: Joshua's training in warfare began when the Amalekites attacked Israel, soon after they left Egypt (Exodus 17). Later, Joshua was appointed as one of the twelve spies who surveyed Canaan (Ephraim's tribal representative [Numbers 13]). Of the twelve, only he and one other, Caleb, believed God would give them the Land.
- iii. Name Change: Originally, Joshua's name had been "Hoshea," but Moses changed it. "Joshua" (Numbers 13:16), means "Yahweh saves (or delivers)," and the appropriateness of the name is evident in this book, which clearly portrays the Lord, not Joshua, as the source of Israel's military successes. Joshua's name appears in the Old Greek traditions (Septuagint) in the same form the New Testament uses for the name "Jesus."

**B. Authorship:** Joshua 8:32 tells us Joshua kept records in writing. The phrase "to this very day" appears several times and in a number of places, allows for the possibility (or even suggests) that someone who lived later than Joshua wrote it (the one exception is the reference in 6:25 to Rahab being alive "to this day"). Of course, Joshua could not have written certain things, such as the record of his death. Some have suggested Samuel. Although modern critical scholarship often assigns the book a later date than the scriptural evidence supports, evangelical Old Testament authority David Howard, Jr. concludes that portions of the book were written in Joshua's day and that it was substantially complete no later than the time of King David.<sup>iii</sup>

**C. Purpose and Construction:** Regardless of who wrote the book of Joshua, its purpose is apparent. God kept His promise to bring Israel into Canaan. Just as Israel did not come out of Egypt on her own strength, but by God's enabling, so she did not inherit Canaan by her own strength, but by God's provision. The book is outlined in what is sometimes called a "bifid" construction, in which its chapters are divided into equal halves. The first twelve chapters describe the conquest of Canaan and the second twelve record the division of the land. Based

on internal evidence (1 Kings 6:1, Judges 11:26), the events of the book took place around 1400 B.C.

**D. Leadership Established** – Joshua 1: The first chapter contains conversations between God and Joshua and between Joshua and the Israelites. The conversations establish Joshua as Moses’ successor. However, it is also abundantly clear that God was behind the appointment and that *He* was Israel’s true King and leader. Like Moses, Joshua was merely His human agent.

i. God Spoke – 1:1-9

1. *God’s Promises to Joshua*: At the time of Joshua’s appointment, God gave him precious promises that Joshua surely held dear throughout his life and repeatedly returned to for strengthening and encouragement. God promised that He would be with him, just as He had been with Moses, and that no one would stand against him all the days of his life. Furthermore, He promised to give Joshua every piece of land on which he set his foot.
2. *God’s Challenges to Joshua*: God also issued several commands as part of His charge to Joshua.
  - a. First, Joshua was told to get the people ready to cross the Jordan.
  - b. Second, God told him to be strong and courageous. Notice that this charge was given twice (1:6, 9). Moses had been Israel’s greatest prophet and leader. Following in his footsteps must have been an intimidating task for Joshua. Furthermore, Joshua knew he was being appointed to lead the Israelites into battle against what they had perceived to be a powerful people (Numbers 13:28).
  - c. Finally, the Lord spoke of the supreme importance of obedience to His word: “Be careful to obey all the Law my servant Moses gave you, that you may be successful wherever you go. Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips. Meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful” (1:7-8). Meditation on God’s word and obedience to His commands are essential to success.

ii. Joshua Spoke – 1:10-18: Joshua immediately responded to the Lord’s instructions by ordering the Israelites to get ready to cross the Jordan in three days.

1. *The Transjordanian Tribes’ Commitment*: Previously, when Israel defeated the Amorite kings Sihon and Og, the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh requested their land, just east of the Jordan, as an inheritance. Moses’ agreement had been

contingent on these tribes' willingness to assist their fellow Israelites in conquering Canaan. Before crossing the river, Joshua ensured that they planned to keep their commitment. The Transjordanian tribes responded dutifully, pledging their loyalty to Joshua's leadership and to fight alongside their brothers.

2. *Joshua's Authority*: When Joshua spoke to the Israelites, he spoke with God's full authority. His confidence was the result of having heard from God. He knew he had to personally hear from God before he spoke on God's behalf. Moses had modeled this. It is no less true today that any leader must hear from God before they are ready to speak to others on His behalf. The practical implication for every believer is the necessity of devoting time to reading and studying God's word. Some may be called into specific teaching roles, but all of us have been commissioned to disciple others (Matthew 28:19-20). We are foolish if we think we can begin our work and daily routines with spiritual power if we haven't first heard from God. We cannot lead others where we have not been ourselves. God told Joshua, "Meditate on [my word] day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. *Then* [my emphasis] you will be prosperous and successful" (1:8).

**Summary Statement:** God commanded Joshua to study and obey His written word. Doing so prepared Joshua to successfully lead Israel.

**Principle:** *Meditating on and applying God's word are foundational to spiritual victory.*

In Ephesians 6:10-18, the apostle Paul tells believers that we are in a spiritual battle against a real enemy.

- Sometimes people belittle the notion that a real "devil" exists, but the Bible speaks of him from beginning to end as a real being, a spiritual being who is God's enemy, who wants to prevent the world from knowing God, and who wants to derail God's people from living victoriously. The Bible certainly teaches that he is not the only reason we suffer. Believers sometimes suffer under God's hand of discipline in their lives. We also suffer the consequences of our own foolish and sinful choices and those of others. At times, we suffer simply because we live in a fallen world. However, we make a serious mistake if we ignore what the Bible says about Satan's attempts to discourage, dissuade, and derail us from enjoying our inheritance in Christ.
- This enemy cannot keep believers out of Heaven, so he works to make our lives on earth as miserable as possible. He has had the advantage of thousands of years to study human behavior and as a result, is very cunning in the way he goes about his work. Of course, it works in his favor if we don't believe he exists and, even if we do, it works in his favor to keep us unaware that he is behind many of our struggles.

- Paul tells us, “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark work and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12). In other words, a spiritual struggle may lie behind our daily battles. However, in Christ, we have already been given everything we need to defeat this enemy. We just have to be prepared by picking up the “spiritual armor” we have been given.

Paul lists six pieces of spiritual armor that we must put on in order to be prepared for battle. The first and the last of these have to do with the Bible.

- The first, he calls the “belt of truth” (Ephesians 6:14). The belt goes around our mid-section, keeping our upper garments and our lower garments in place. Author Tony Evans says, “The belt of truth is designed to stabilize things by keeping them in their proper order.”<sup>iv</sup> This is exactly what *truth* does: it stabilizes us by putting in proper order all the information we have been fed in our lifetime. If the Enemy cannot lead us to discard God’s truth altogether, he will just work to keep a little of the world’s philosophies and attitudes mixed in. But each of the many deceptions and distortions to which we’ve been exposed need to be exposed and rejected. With God’s truth at the forefront of our thinking, it becomes the filter through which we process all other information. It is our stabilizing “belt of truth.”
- The last piece of armor Paul says to put on is the “sword of the Spirit” which, he tells us, “is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17). Jesus used the sword of the Spirit when tempted by Satan (Luke 4:1-13). After He quoted the Scriptures aloud three times, Satan left Him.

God has provided us with this essential battle equipment, but it is our job to be prepared to use it at any time. The enemy sometimes attacks when we least expect! How can we be sure the belt of truth is always around our waist and the sword of the spirit is always in hand? The most certain way I know is through scripture memorization. Memorizing forces me to meditate on the passages, which ultimately helps me internalize them.

**Application:** If you are new to this habit, I encourage you to start with a short passage, perhaps a few verses, and to work on just one phrase at a time. Write that phrase on a card or paper that is small enough to keep with you. If the meaning isn’t clear to you, pray for insight and look within your Bible for any cross-references. If it’s still not clear, ask someone who is further along in the faith or consult a Bible commentary. Then, read and rehearse the phrase when you rise in the morning. Repeat it in the shower, during your work commute, over breaks, in your mealtime prayers, and especially as you are falling asleep at night.

Are you ready to start claiming more of the abundant life in Christ? Start memorizing the scriptures! The enemy does not need to convince us that memorizing scripture is a bad idea. He only needs to put enough distractions in our life to keep us preoccupied. Busy-ness is a great threat to experiencing spiritual victories. Then, when we have enough time, he will

appeal to our fleshly appetites. Which tactic has he effectively used to keep you from Bible memorization and meditation?

**Transition:** God told Joshua the key to success was meditating on and obeying His word. Chapters 2-4 tell of a reconnaissance mission and a river crossing, and we learn that another essential piece of armor for spiritual victory is faith.

## II. Reconnaissance and River Crossing – Joshua 2:1 – 5:1

### A. Rahab and the Spies – Joshua 2

#### i. Spies Surveillance

1. *The Spies Sent:* During the three days Israel was preparing to cross the Jordan, Joshua covertly sent two spies to investigate Canaan, particularly Jericho. Jericho was strategically located, controlling the way of ascent into the mountains that run north and south through central Palestine. The spies' arrival did not remain a secret. The king of Jericho knew of it almost immediately and sent for them (2:2-3).
2. *Spies Lodging:* The spies had taken lodging with a prostitute named Rahab (2:1). Most likely, her home was an inn and tavern (the kind of place where people gathered and information was exchanged). The text carefully avoids any suggestion that the spies had sexual relations with her. They were on a serious mission and were single-minded about gathering information.

#### ii. Rahab's Faith

1. *Rahab's Treason:* Perhaps to their surprise, the spies found Rahab unwilling to comply with the king's command to turn them over. Instead, she committed treason: hiding the spies and telling the king's men that they had left. Rahab is one of several Bible heroes who, in the course of exhibiting faith, did something unethical. The Bible nowhere allows for lying. God is the God of truth. While the Bible praises her faith (Hebrews 11:31, James 2:25), with regard to her lie, it simply states the fact without further comment. When challenged by an evil government, Peter and the apostles concluded, "We must obey God rather than human beings" (Acts 5:29). Perhaps Rahab felt similarly conflicted. However, because she did not merely fail to comply with the king's order but actually lied, it seems better to say that God's grace operated in spite of Rahab's "sinful maneuvering".<sup>v</sup> Perhaps she should have done as Walter Kaiser suggests: "hidden the spies well and then refused to

- answer the question whether she was hiding them” or volunteered to allow them to look while praying the spies would not be found.<sup>vi</sup>
2. *Rahab’s Information:* Once the king’s men left, Rahab offered the spies critical information. The Canaanites, she said, heard all that the Lord had done on Israel’s behalf and were terrified. “A great fear of you has fallen on us... Our hearts melted in fear and everyone’s courage failed because of you...” (2:11-12). The Israelites’ proximity had utterly demoralized the Canaanites. This was exactly the kind of information the spies had been seeking.
  
  3. *Rahab’s Profession:* Unlike the other residents of the land, Rahab did not respond with fear but with faith! According to verses 8 and 11, she uttered what amounts to a profession of faith when she said, “I know that the Lord has given you this land... for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on earth below.” The Canaanites believed in many gods, but Rahab had concluded that the Lord is supreme and deserved her allegiance. She was ready and willing to abandon her people and their gods and embrace the people and God of Israel. God has always intended to include the Gentiles in His plan of salvation (Galatians 3:8). He promised Abraham that through his descendants, *all nations* would be blessed. Rahab is an example of this. Each person in Jericho heard about the Lord and had the same opportunity to ally with Him and His people. Only Rahab chose to put her faith in the God of Israel. She then requested mercy (“kindness”), asking that the Israelites spare her life and that of her extended family, in exchange for her assistance. The spies consented.
  4. *Rahab’s Advice:* With the agreement made, Rahab advised the spies to hide themselves for three days before returning to their camp. Since her home was conveniently part of the city wall, she let down a rope out a window so the men could escape. After hiding themselves for three days, the spies returned and reported to Joshua, “The Lord has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people are melting in fear because of us” (2:24).
  5. *An Unlikely Candidate:* Rahab seems an unlikely Bible hero. She was a woman who lived in a patriarchal society, she was a Gentile (despised by Jews), and she was a prostitute. Yet the New Testament mentions her three times (Matthew 1:5, Hebrews 11:31, and James 2:25). In Matthew 1, we discover that she was privileged to be an ancestress of Jesus Christ! Amazingly, the Bible indicates

that God often chooses, for the sake of His glory, to use the people we would least likely expect (1 Corinthians 1:26-31).

## **B. Crossing the Jordan** – Joshua 3:1 – 5:1

- i. Following the Ark: Three days had passed and Joshua had received the spies report. It was time for Israel to finally cross the Jordan into Canaan. Joshua instructed the Israelites to follow the Ark of the Covenant and the priests carrying it, but to keep a distance between themselves and the Ark.
  1. *Why was Ark to Lead Them?* The books of Moses tell that at God’s instruction a portable worship center (the Tabernacle) was built. One of the Tabernacle’s furnishings was the Ark of the Covenant, a chest overlaid with gold and carried by poles inserted into rings on either end. The Ark was only to be transported by the Levites (the priestly tribe). Inside the Ark, the stone tablets with the covenant Law written on them were stored, among other treasures (Exodus 16:33-34; Numbers 17:1-11). The Ark had an “atonement cover,” a lid with cherubim mounted atop, facing one another. Most importantly, God symbolically dwelt between the wings of the cherubim, and it was there that He had met with Moses. The Ark was a symbol of God’s presence. During the many years of Israel’s desert wanderings, the Ark always led the way (Numbers 10:33-36). It’s not surprising to learn then that the Ark would lead them through the final stretch of their journey, across the river (3:3). To follow it was to follow God. He would lead them safely into unfamiliar places (3:4).
  2. *Keeping a Distance*: In reverence to the Lord their King, Joshua also warned the Israelites to keep their distance. Their sin was a barrier to approaching God’s holy presence. In every era, people have been able to experience intimacy with God *by faith*, however Old Testament believers were instructed to keep a physical distance between their bodies and the things of God as a way of reminding them of God’s holiness and their own sinfulness. Hebrews 10:19 tells us that Jesus’ shed blood paved the way for the believer’s open access to God’s presence. Before His death, individuals had no direct access to God, but now those whose sins have been forgiven and who are legally justified before God through faith in Jesus can directly approach (“draw near to”) Him. We need no Ark today because God leads us through His word and the indwelling Holy Spirit.
- ii. The Miraculous Provision
  1. *A Step of Faith*: The priests were told to carry the Ark into the Jordan’s waters. Not until *after* they set foot into the River,

*exercising faith in God's command*, was the provision made for their crossing. God stopped the flow of the river, and the priests, followed by the Israelites, were able to walk on the dry riverbed.

2. *A True Miracle*: As if to ensure we do not misunderstand the true nature of this miracle, 3:15 tells us that the river was at flood stage. Warren Wiersbe explains, "During most of the year, the Jordan River was about a hundred feet wide; but at the spring flood season, the river overflowed its banks and became a mile wide."<sup>vii</sup> (This was a generation of people that had grown up in the desert. It is probable that most of them did not know how to swim.) Some have claimed that an earthquake could have occurred and caused the damming. Even if it did, the timing of the cessation of the river's flow, and the facts that the riverbed was immediately dry enough to walk on (3:17) and the water returned immediately after they finished crossing (4:18) are too amazing to be coincidental.
3. *The Israelites' Confidence*: These Israelites were, no doubt, reminded of the miraculous provision 40 years earlier at the Red Sea that made it possible for some of them and their parents to escape the Egyptian army. Witnessing a nearly identical miracle firsthand must have given them great confidence. God wanted them to know that He, the living God, was among them and would drive out the inhabitants of Canaan (3:10), just as He had promised. Another reason for the miraculous provision was to give the Israelites confidence in Joshua, their new leader (3:7; 4:14).
4. *A Testament of God's Power*
  - a. *For the Israelites*: God not only wanted this event to have an impact on the individuals who crossed the Jordan that day. He intended for the event to be memorialized for the benefit of future generations. For this reason, one representative from each tribe was to take a stone from the dry riverbed. The twelve stones were then set up by Joshua at Gilgal, Israel's first camp inside the borders of Canaan. The memorial would stand as a testament, for future generations of Israelites, of God's miraculous provision and the keeping of His promise (4:6-7, 21-23).
  - b. *For the Nations*: Not only that, the miracle allowed the "people of the earth" to know the Lord's great power (4:23-24). Among those who heard of the event were the Amorite and Canaanite kings in the Land. The terms "Canaanite" and "Amorite" are often used interchangeably to denote all the people groups whom Israel was to displace.<sup>viii</sup> Sometimes, in the book of Joshua, specific ethnicities within that group are

distinguished (see 3:10). If the hearts of the local peoples had “melted” in fear because of God’s work on Israel’s behalf *prior* to the Crossing, as Rahab indicated (2:11), we can only assume they must thereafter have been utterly panic-stricken!

**Summary Statement:** Rahab exhibited faith by hiding the spies. The Israelite priests demonstrated faith by stepping foot into the Jordan at flood stage.

**Principle:** *Victorious Christian living requires faith.*

According to Paul, the “shield of faith” is another piece of our spiritual armor (Ephesians 6:16). In the cases of both Rahab and the Israelites, what we notice is that faith was shown by actions. We may say we believe in the security of keeping our money in a bank account, but if we never open an account and hide all our money in our home, we have disproven our faith in the bank. The Bible teaches that true faith is always proven by actions. James says it’s no good to merely say we believe in God, for even the demons believe in Him (James 2:14-26). If we have saving faith, it will show in our actions.

We may think we need more faith. Jesus’ disciples once thought the same. Jesus said they were wrong. He said, with faith as small as a mustard seed (the smallest of seeds), nothing will be impossible for us (Matthew 17:20, Luke 17:5-6). We do not need more faith. Rather, we need to start acting on the faith we have!

**Application:** If you are actively following the Lord, He will repeatedly ask you to step into “the Jordan” by faith, knowing that in so doing you will face spiritual opposition. He will never ask you to do anything you cannot do through Him! Fear kept the generation of Israelite adults who left Egypt from entering the Promised Land. The enemy is extremely skilled at firing his arrows of fear into vulnerable corners of our hearts. We can defend ourselves against his attacks by putting up the shield of faith, however small you believe your shield to be, and refusing to give in, or even listen, to his suggestions.

Fear of entering the “Jordan” can keep us gazing across the river at the Promised Land of God’s blessing but never entering it. Fear says, “John Doe or Susie Que may be enjoying a rich life in Christ, but you don’t have their courage, their upbringing, or their gifts. Just be content where you are. Your sins are smaller than those of others. You can live with them.” Faith says, “God is using this very battle to make me into a person of courage and character. He has promised me an abundant life and Jesus died that I might have it. I do not have the strength in myself, but God will provide. I will follow wherever He leads.”

Which fear is keeping you from claiming more of your inheritance? The thought that you’re not smart enough to memorize scripture? The worry that you’ll encounter defeat? Use the

shield of faith, refuse to even listen to such suggestions, and trust God for the victory in His time and way!

**Transition:** God gave Joshua and the Israelites all they needed to conquer Canaan: He gave His word (His instructions and promises) and He gave them a measure of faith. The Israelites only had to act on them. The first twelve verses of Joshua 5 tell of two other preparatory acts.

**III. Final Preparations** – Jordan 5:2-12: Gilgal was the first place of Israel’s encampment inside Canaan. The place name appears forty times in the Old Testament. Later, it became a center of worship. In Joshua 5:2, it is referred to as “Gibeath Haaraloth,” meaning “hill of foreskins,” because while they were there, the Israelite men were circumcised.

**A. Circumcision** – Joshua 5:2-9

- i. An Old Testament Symbol: Six hundred years earlier, God had ordered Abraham to circumcise himself and his descendants as a sign of His covenant with him (Genesis 17:14). Although the custom was not unique to Israel, for the Israelites, it was a physical way of demonstrating their allegiance to God and their association with His people.
  
- ii. New Testament Application: According to the New Testament, people of faith (Jews and Gentiles alike) are those whose *hearts* are circumcised (Romans 2:29). Colossians 2:11 and Philippians 3:3 identify the circumcision of a believer’s heart with the putting off of our sinful nature. We are made holy as God, through Christ, does the required surgery to cut out of our lives the things that make us unholy. Allowing Christ to cut them away can be a painful process. Our natural instinct is to hold dear and defend certain private areas of our hearts, even after we come to realize that they are obstacles to our enjoyment of an abundant life in Christ. New Testament believers are not required to be circumcised; New Testament believers are required to be baptized. It is our declaration of allegiance. The act of being baptized doesn’t save us, but like circumcision, it is an outward expression of an inward reality: the decision and commitment of our heart to enter a covenant with God through Christ. Immersion into the water symbolizes your unity with Christ in His death and rising from the water symbolizes your unity with Him in resurrection (Romans 6:3-4). Baptism is a symbolic expression that the power of the Gospel is at work in your life! Is it a step of obedience you have ignored? The presence (or absence) of certain witnesses, the person who will baptize you, or where it takes place shouldn’t keep you from obeying. Like circumcision, the act of baptism won’t save you. But since God commanded the Israelites to be circumcised, I can’t imagine that they

could have gone confidently into battle without obeying. Similarly, we have been instructed to “repent and be baptized” (Acts 2:38, 22:16).

- iii. Israel’s Obedience: Joshua 5:4-7 explains that the generation of Israelites that left Egypt had been circumcised but that their children, who grew up in the desert en route to Canaan, had not yet been circumcised. God now told them that this was something that had to be taken care of before they moved on to victory in Canaan. Joshua saw that God’s orders were carried out and the Israelites remained in the camp at Gilgal until they were healed (5:7-8).

**B. Passover** – Joshua 5:10-12: The Israelites crossed the Jordan and camped at Gilgal on the tenth day of the first month (4:19). According to the Law of Moses, Passover was to be celebrated each year on the fourteenth day of that same month (Exodus 12:6). Thus, in obedience to the Lord, the Israelites were circumcised and observed Passover (5:10), both of which helped prepare them for victory. The very next day, the Israelites began enjoying the produce of the land and the miraculous manna was no longer available. The Israelites’ wilderness wandering was official over!

- i. History of Passover: Passover was an annual celebration that began forty years earlier on the eve of their parents’ departure from Egypt. God had instructed the Israelites to kill a lamb for each family, roast it, put some of its blood on their doorposts, and eat its meat hurriedly (they would be fleeing Egypt in haste that night). An angel of the Lord came through Egypt and put to death every firstborn in the land but “passed over” the households (spared the sons) of those with the blood on the doorposts. Just as the first Passover marked Israel’s exodus from Egypt, it would now mark her entrance into Canaan.
- ii. New Testament Fulfillment: According to the New Testament, when Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins with His blood, He became our Passover Lamb (John 1:29, 1 Corinthians 5:7). By His death, our sins have been atoned and we are justified. We no longer owe the penalty for our sins. He paid the death penalty we owed. Think about this for a moment: Circumcision was ultimately a symbol of our deliverance from sin. It was an outward expression of the Gospel. So too, Passover was an enactment of the Gospel!

**Summary Statement:** The Israelites may not have understood the full significance of what they were doing, but they were preparing themselves for victory by symbolically living out the Gospel.

**Principle:** *A victorious life is the result of daily living out the Gospel.*

**Application:** How exactly do we live out the Gospel? Simply put, we depend on Christ every day for the surgical work of cutting sin out of our lives *and* we celebrate the hope that is ours because of the completed work of our Passover Lamb. Just as circumcision and Passover prepared the Israelites for battle, we prepare for battle by living each day in dependence and in hope.

Too often, Christians make the mistake of thinking that the Gospel was what they needed to receive Christ and “get saved.” The Gospel is far more! We cannot *live the Christian life victoriously* apart from the Gospel. Colossians 2:6 say, “So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in Him.” Just as we trusted God in Christ to save us from the penalty of sin at the time of our conversion, if we want a victorious Christian life, we must daily *continue* depending on Him to deliver us from the power of sin. We are dependent on Christ for the circumcision of our hearts.

One way we express dependence is through prayer. Paul concludes his words concerning our spiritual armor by admonishing us to “pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests” (Ephesians 6:18).

Another way we live out the gospel is by celebrating our hope. The celebration of Passover was an expression of hope. Just as God had delivered Israel from Egypt, so would He keep all of His promises. Christian hope isn’t just wishful thinking but confident expectation that enables us to celebrate what is yet to be in advance. One who enters battle without hope of victory is unlikely to have success. The final three pieces of spiritual armor that Paul names protect our hearts and minds from defeatism, so that we can enter battle with confident expectation.

Two of these are the *breastplate of righteousness* and the *helmet of salvation* (Ephesians 6:14-17). Without the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation, we are vulnerable to discouragement about our sins and the Enemy’s accusations and condemnation. The breastplate of righteousness guards your heart and the helmet of salvation protects your mind against such discouragement. We should never say about ourselves in discouragement, “I am just a thief (or a liar, or a drunk, or a gossip, or a loser). I’ll never really change, because that is who I am.” No, that is who you *were*! With the helmet of salvation and breastplate of righteousness in place, we have confidence in the Gospel message: that in Christ, we have been made new and have a new, righteous identity (2 Corinthians 5:17)! We are overcomers and God is delivering us from these bodies of death (Romans 7:24-25)! This

armor defends us from attacks that distract us from the Gospel, the hope of our salvation. Our minds need a daily soaking in this knowledge!

One of the best ways to bathe in it is by talking about the Gospel with others. The sixth piece of our armor are the shoes that ready us to carry the Gospel of Peace to others (Ephesians 6:15; Isaiah 52:7). When we share the Gospel, it's hard not to get excited about what God is doing in our own lives! Talking about it forces us to revisit the preciousness of it. Like the Passover, it gives our minds and spirits the much-needed and renewing bath in the knowledge of our hope, God's salvation.

## Conclusion

Wouldn't you like to claim what God has offered you and experience greater victory over sin, greater peace and joy, more spiritual fruit – a richer life in Christ? It is yours for the taking, but you must prepare yourself for enemy resistance.

When one first wears armor, it feels heavy and awkward. But the more its worn, the more natural wearing it becomes. Which piece of armor will you practice wearing this week? Meditation on the word of God through scripture memorization? Exercising faith through a step of obedience? Living out the Gospel by prayerful, daily dependence and confident hope in Christ? Spiritual victories are preceded by preparation. God has *fully* equipped us to be victorious in *every* engagement. Our job is to simply take up our God-given equipment and *be prepared* to use it.

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/worldwar2/theatre-assets/pacific/pearl-harbor/pdf/p-american-report.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> Campbell, D. K. (1985). *Joshua*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 335). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>iii</sup> Howard, D. M., Jr. (1998). *Joshua* (Vol. 5, p. 30). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>iv</sup> Evans, Tony (2011). *Victory In Spiritual Battle* (p. 55). Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers.

<sup>v</sup> Kaiser, W. C., Jr., Davids, P. H., Bruce, F. F., & Brauch, M. T. (1996). *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (p. 182). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity.

<sup>vi</sup> Kaiser, W. C., Jr., Davids, P. H., Bruce, F. F., & Brauch, M. T. (1996). *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (p. 182). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity.

<sup>vii</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *Be Strong* (p. 50). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>viii</sup> Cole, R. D. (2000). *Numbers* (Vol. 3B, p. 223). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.