

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Joshua: God's Faithful Giving Of The Promised Land To Israel

Part I: God's Leading Israel Into The Promised Land, Joshua 1:1-5:12

E. God's Preparation For Israel's Facing An Aggressively Immoral Foe (Joshua 5:1-12)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

After our morning worship service last Sunday, a teen asked me how he was to answer secular associates who ask him what he as a Christian thinks of gays. His associates presume from hearing mainstream media reports that Christians hate homosexuals, so he wanted to know what to tell his associates!

This incident reflects the great need for believers in general to know how to respond to the aggressive immorality that invades our realm from today's society, a fact we can easily illustrate (as follows):

(1) The April 4-5, 2015 lead editorial, "Liberal Intolerance, Round II" in The Wall Street Journal, p. A12 told how "a local TV reporter went door-to-door asking restaurants how they would respond if they were asked to cater a gay wedding. The innocents at Memories Pizza, who had never faced the question in daily business, said that they would prefer not to participate in a hypothetical same-sex pizza party ceremony," so "(t)hey were suddenly converted into the public face of antigay bigotry across cable news and the Internet, and became the target of a social-media mob . . . The small business closed amid the torrent . . ."

Kirsten Powers' opinion piece, "Gay marriage debate's sore winners" (usatoday.com, April 7, 2015) noted: "The wrath of gay rights supporters rained down on Memories Pizza because O'Conner committed a thought crime. She discriminated against nobody, but thinks the 'wrong' thing about same-sex marriage and she said it out loud."

(2) Yet, aggressive immorality rises from even religious realms: Francis X. Rocca's article, "The New Rome" (Ibid., p. C1) told how "Pope Francis has called a two-part meeting" of "the Synod of Bishops" where "(a) document" was "issued" that "set off a furor because of its conciliatory language toward cohabitating couples, divorced and remarried Catholics, and those in same-sex unions."

Need: *So we ask, "In today's aggressively immoral era, how are we who believe in Christ to think and to act?!"*

- I. **Right after God had miraculously led Israel across the Jordan River, demoralizing the Canaanites, He amazingly led her to pause for consecration before she battled her terrorized Canaanite foes, Jos. 5:1-2:**
 - A. God had miraculously caused Israel to cross the Jordan, leaving her Canaanite foes demoralized, Joshua 5:1a.
 - B. However, instead of letting Israel take advantage of this state by quickly attacking the vulnerable Canaanites, the Lord remarkably had Israel pause for consecration, Joshua 5:1b-2; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 336-337.
- II. **This consecration involved several steps to prepare Israel successfully to face the aggressively immoral Canaanites so she could avoid their sin and so take lasting possession of the Promised Land, Jos. 5:2-12:**
 - A. God's having Israel circumcise all her males influenced her to reject all Canaanite immorality, Joshua 5:2-9:
 1. The Lord's call that Israel circumcise all of her males was given since Israel's now deceased faithless generation had not circumcised their infant males in their 38 years of wilderness wandering, Joshua 5:2-9.
 2. However, the necessity of having this rite practiced **BEFORE** Israel's men **encountered** the **Canaanites** in **battle** becomes apparent when we view the historical and theological contexts involved (as follows):
 - a. God had instituted circumcision for Abraham as the sign of His covenant (1) to be the God of Abraham and his seed and (2) to promise Abraham and his seed possession of the land of Canaan, Genesis 17:7-14.
 - b. Yet, even in Abraham's era, the Canaanites were turning very wicked (Gen. 15:16), and in the realm of immorality, they would indulge in fornication, adultery, incest, homosexuality and bestiality, Lev. 18:1-27.
 - c. By the time of Israel's Exodus, the Canaanites practiced gross immorality in their fertility cult to obtain rain from their gods for crop production, Zonderan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, vol. Two, p. 531.
 - d. Therefore, as "(t)he act of circumcision itself symbolized a complete separation from the widely prevalent sins of the flesh: adultery, fornication, and sodomy" (Ibid., B. K. C., O. T., p. 337) so typical of Canaanite society and its fertility cult (Merrill F. Unger, Archaeology and the O. T., 1973, p. 177 in citing William F. Albright, From the Stone Age to Christianity, 1940, p. 214), God gave circumcision as the rite for the Genesis 17 covenant in part to impress Israel in her later conquest of Canaan to reject all Canaanite immorality and their pornographic cult objects that she was to destroy, cf. Deuteronomy 12:1-3!
 - e. [Applied to the Church era, Paul referred to *spiritual* "circumcision" in Colossians 2:12-13, a picture of the positional judgment of the Sin Nature at one's salvation, and this positional truth is to be applied to

one's experientially reckoning his sin nature to be dead that he might live in righteous newness of life through depending on the indwelling Holy Spirit of God, Romans 6:1-2 with 8:3-4; Ibid., p. 338.]

- B. Following this rite of circumcision, God had Israel observe the Passover, leading her to rely on Him to defeat her Canaanite foes so she could dwell in Canaan with His blessing, Joshua 5:10:
1. Passover had been instituted by the Lord when Israel was back in Egypt to lead her to commemorate God's delivering the nation from its long and helpless bondage to the Egyptians, Exodus 12:26-27 with 2:23-25.
 2. Celebrating Passover here in Canaan on the eve of Israel's war with the Canaanites would therefore remind her of God's past deliverance as a promise of Israel's future victory over her Canaanite foes, Ibid., p. 338.
 3. However, this promised deliverance necessarily followed circumcision, signaling that consecration to the Lord in holiness via circumcision was the necessary basis for God's blessing Israel with victory in battle!
- C. God then replaced His manna supply with Canaan's crops for Israel, leading her to trust Him for her livelihood needs versus turning from Him to start practicing the Canaanites' immoral fertility cult, Joshua 5:11-12:
1. Now that she was entering Canaan, God's provision of manna in the wilderness that had been necessary for Israel's survival was to be replaced by His supply of the crops of the Promised Land, Joshua 5:11-12.
 2. Yet, with this change in method of livelihood supply came the future risk of temptation for immorality:
 - a. We learned in "II, A, 2" above that Israel was to avoid adopting the Canaanites' lewd fertility cult.
 - b. However, Canaan was not irrigated by a constant river water supply as was Egypt from which Israel had come, but by rain that came directly from God (Deut. 11:10-12), so Israel would be tempted to turn to lewd Canaanite fertility cultism instead of trusting God for the rain needed for her crop production!
 - c. Thus, the exchange of the divinely-provided manna for the crops of the land was to signal Israel's need to keep trusting in God for the rain for her crops as she had once trusted in Him for her daily manna needs!

Lesson: *To prepare to face an aggressively immoral foe, God had Israel be consecrated (1) to oppose immorality, (2) to trust God for victory over the Canaanites and (3) to continue to trust Him for her future livelihood needs.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ to be saved and positionally sanctified in Christ, John 3:16; Romans 6:1-2. (2) Then, may we (a) rely on the Holy Spirit to live free of the sin nature's lusts, (b) continuing to rely on the Holy Spirit for victory. (3) Just as Israel had to trust the Lord for victory over aggressively immoral foes, may we trust God to provide room for us to live free of sin in an aggressively evil world (4) as we reach the lost with the Gospel.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

So, (1) to live uprightly in an aggressively immoral world, Scripture teaches us: (a) First, opposite Israel in Joshua's day, God calls us today not to harm immoral people, but to love them in Christ and evangelize them, 2 Cor. 5:14-20. (b) However, we must avoid all forms of immorality as described in Leviticus 18 (1 Cor. 6:18). (c) We express this stance ((1)) by relying on the indwelling Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16-23) to ((2)) perform acts of kindness to lead even immoral people to trust in Christ while ((3)) not participating in or promoting immoral actions or states. ((4)) If anyone acts outrageously or fierce toward us, we must avoid them (middle voice of *apotrepo*), 2 Tim. 3:1-5. ((5)) Where Scripture is not specific, our *conscience* must guide us, 1 Cor. 6:12; 8:13. (d) We must trust God to supply the geographical space for us to live uprightly in a godless world like God gave Israel victory over the Canaanites so she could have geographical space to live in the land of Canaan.

(2) Proof that this format works comes to us from Church History: when Martin Luther was ordered to the Diet of Worms by the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, much as in our own dark era, "(h)e saw his stand as a part of the pattern of history where error seems in power and truth on the scaffold," James Atkinson, The Great Light: Luther and Reformation, 1968, p. 64. Luther was not being called to defend his views in a democratic forum, but was "summarily called to make public recantation," meaning he faced individual coercion by the government, Ibid., p. 63.

At that time, as in our era, the spiritual darkness of the world was aggressively wicked: a humanist described Worms during the 1521 Diet as a city marked by murder, stealing, immorality, frivolity and gluttony, Ibid., p. 65.

Luther eventually stood before the emperor and was asked in a threatening manner, "Will you recant? Yes or No?" and he "gave a plain answer . . . Unless he were proved wrong on the basis of scripture and sound reason (for popes and councils had been known to err and could err again), he was bound fast by his conscience to the Word of God, He could not and would not recant. 'May God help me,' he added, 'Amen.'" (Ibid., p. 66-67)

Atkinson added that in retrospect, "(i)t was one of the world's greatest moments," Ibid., p. 67.

May we also look to God in our era to live holy lives in dependence on the Lord that He might give us the victory in overcoming the darkness as He did for Martin Luther in the sixteenth century!