

# THE COVENANT RENEWED

## JOSHUA 5



T. M. Moore

*A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe*

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

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## Joshua 5: Introduction

Safely across the Jordan and camped at Gilgal, it's time for Israel to begin thinking about the hard work of claiming God's promises.

But not before they are renewed in His covenant.

Two covenant rituals are in focus in this chapter: circumcision and Passover. We may not understand why God requires these, but *that* He did was beyond doubt. Israel duly complied, following Joshua's leading, and this would help them to remember that God was with them and would bless them in the struggles that lay ahead.

The chapter closes with a powerful confirming encounter for Joshua, and this would help to give him, as Israel's leader, the confidence that God would not fail them as they set about to subdue the land of promise.

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## 1 Melted Hearts, Evaporated Spirits

*So it was, when all the kings of the Amorites who were on the west side of the Jordan, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan from before the children of Israel until we had crossed over, that their heart melted; and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the children of Israel. Joshua 5.1*

*Reflect.*

1. To what does the Bible refer when it mentions the *heart*? How does this *heart* function within us?
2. How widespread was the dispiritedness of the people of Canaan? How do you suppose that happened?

*Think about it.*

Clearly, the people in the land of Canaan had been keeping an eye on Israel. Probably from the moment the news reached them of the defeat of the kings on the east side of the Jordan, some ongoing observation of the movements of Israel had been established, with runners carrying regular reports back to their respective leaders.

Can you imagine how the news of Jordan's drying up would have been received? Can you see the astonished faces of those kings and generals? Hear the fearful murmuring of the people in marketplaces and at worship centers everywhere throughout the land? Whatever "spirit" had existed in these peoples to resist the invasion of their lands, suddenly evaporated. Their hearts melted, from kings to commoners, priests to paupers, high-born to low-born.

The people of Canaan entered a waiting game, expecting the worst. They would not be disappointed.

*Meditate and discuss.*

1. It might be a good idea at this point to reflect on what we know about the people of Canaan. What was their religion? What did that religion require of them? Did the different nations and peoples live peacefully with one another? Would they likely be good neighbors to the people of Israel, as they returned to claim the land promised to them by God?
2. When the people of Canaan heard what God had done for the people of Israel, their hearts melted, and they had no spirit in them to resist. What does this suggest about the importance of sharing the works of God with the people in your Personal Mission Field? Which works?
3. God is as much with us today as He was with Israel in their day, but even more so (cf. Phil. 2.13; Eph. 3.20, Jn. 14.12). Why are we not as active in seeking His promises and Kingdom as they were?

*"The recognition of the fearful power of God had such an effect upon them that they were astonished and fainted with terror, but it did not incline their minds to seek a remedy for the evil. Their heart was melted inasmuch as destitute of counsel and strength they did not bestir themselves, but in regard to contumacy they remained as hard-hearted as before." John Calvin, Commentary on Joshua (1509-1564 AD)*

*Lord, You have done so many wonderful works for me, and do so every day! Today I want to share one of Your works with someone, so help me as I...*

*Pray Psalm 78.1-8.*

As you pray, let God's "strength and His wonderful works" come to mind, especially those He has done in

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your life, and give Him thanks and praise. To whom will you make His work known today?

**Psalm 78.1-7** (*Foundation: How Firm a Foundation*)

Give ear, O my people, attend to my word,  
Dark sayings and parables sent from the Lord,  
Things we have before by our fathers been told,  
Which we would not dare from our children withhold.

The glorious deeds of our God in His might,  
And all of the works He has done in our sight,  
Together with all of the words of His Law,  
Would we on ourselves and our children bestow.

Lord, let all our children arise and declare  
The truth of the Lord every day, everywhere,  
And set all their hopes in God's wonderful Word,  
And never forget all the works of the Lord.

## 2 Covenant Business

*At that time the LORD said to Joshua, "Make flint knives for yourself, and circumcise the sons of Israel again the second time." So Joshua made flint knives for himself, and circumcised the sons of Israel at the hill of the foreskins. Joshua 5.2, 3*

*Reflect.*

1. Review Genesis 17.1-14. What was the role of circumcision in God's covenant?
2. Circumcising the entire male population of Israel was a bit risky, as a recovery time was required (cf. v. 8; Gen. 34.20-25). How would doing so at this time have strengthened Israel's dependence on the Lord?

*Think about it.*

We recall that, when Moses set out to lead God's people into the next stage of their covenant relationship with Him, he neglected his first covenant obligation, that of circumcising his sons. His wife Zipporah would have to remind him of what God required and undertake the task for him, because God was angry at Moses (Ex. 4.21-26). God did not wait to see if Joshua would make the same mistake, as he hadn't thought to do so to this point.

As frequently in Israel's history, when the Lord is preparing to do something great for His people, He first brings them to a state of increased dependency upon Him (cf. Gen. 32.22-32; Ex. 5.1-21; Jdgs. 7.1-8; etc.). With the flooding Jordan behind them and all their males (except Joshua and Caleb, v. 6) in a state of recuperation, Israel was vulnerable at Gilgal. It is an indication of the people's trust in the Lord that they submitted to this covenant obligation without grumbling.

Sometimes God requires us to do things that don't seem to make sense. We can't always understand His reasons; but if we can understand His *Word*, then we must obey it, no matter the cost, and trust in Him to keep and bless us as a result.

*Meditate and discuss.*

1. What are some aspects of the life of faith that people today might find unreasonable, if only for them. Tithing? Bearing witness for Jesus? Praying without ceasing? Explain.
2. Baptism replaces circumcision as the ongoing sign of entrance into God's covenant. Why is this an effective means of reminding us of God's grace and our need to submit to Him?
3. How would circumcision have reminded Israel of God's faithfulness? How can every baptism fulfill that same purpose for us?

*"Now, this was a figure of baptism, for, just as circumcision cuts off from the body a part which is not useful but a useless superfluity, so by holy baptism are we circumcised of sin. It is obvious that sin is a superfluity of concupiscence and of no use."*  
*John of Damascus (650-750 AD)*

*Lord, I'm recalling my own baptism just now, and remembering that in it I...*

*Pray Psalm 86.11-13.*

In giving us His Spirit, the Lord circumcised our hearts (cf. Deut. 30.1-10; Ezek. 36.26, 27) and brought us into His covenant. Pray that He will sanctify you in your heart to fear, love, praise, and glorify Him today in all your walk with and work for Him.

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**Psalm 86.10-15** (*Andrews: Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven*)

Lord, You are great, You wondrous deeds do;  
You are the only and sovereign Lord.  
Teach me Your way, let me give heed to,  
With all my heart, Savior, all Your Word!  
Lord, be gracious to me, Lord, be gracious to me,  
Praise Your Name forever, Lord!

Great is Your mercy, Lord, toward me;  
You have delivered my soul from hell.  
Though dreadful foes and threats arrayed be,  
You will Your grace and Your mercy tell!  
Lord, be gracious to me, Lord, be gracious to me,  
Slow to anger, loving well!

### 3 Too Busy to Obey

*And this is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: All the people who came out of Egypt who were males, all the men of war, had died in the wilderness on the way, after they had come out of Egypt. For all the people who came out had been circumcised, but all the people born in the wilderness, on the way as they came out of Egypt, had not been circumcised. For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people who were men of war, who came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they did not obey the voice of the LORD —to whom the LORD swore that He would not show them the land which the LORD had sworn to their fathers that He would give us, “a land flowing with milk and honey.” Then Joshua circumcised their sons whom He raised up in their place; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not been circumcised on the way. Joshua 5.4-7*

*Reflect.*

1. What does it say about the hearts of those fathers, that they did not consider it important to fulfill their covenant obligations for their sons while they were in the wilderness?
2. Circumcision might have seemed like a little thing to those fathers. It was not a little thing to God. We may feel free to compromise on our end of His covenant, but He will not fail to uphold His – both the promises He has made and the sanctions He threatens for disobedience. What are sanctions? Are there sanctions attending to the New Covenant?

*Think about it.*

In Exodus 2.24 and 25, we learn that Israel’s deliverance from Egypt came about because God “remembered” (literally, “attended to”) His covenant with Abraham. He had promised 400 years of captivity in Egypt (Gen. 15.12-16), and now that time was up. God expects His people similarly to “attend to” His covenant, by fulfilling the obligations of obedience He has commanded. The covenant with Abraham included the duty to circumcise male children. The people who were delivered from Egypt rejoiced in God’s faithfulness, but they were not careful about their own. They must have considered that circumcising their sons was a minor concern, compared to surviving in the wilderness. But their failure to obey in this matter, as in their refusal to enter the land of promise (Num. 14), was a symptom of a deeper problem in their hearts (Deut. 5.29).

Twice in the passage for today the text repeats the reason for God’s commanding the men of Israel to be circumcised at this time (vv. 5, 7). That’s God’s way of saying to His people, “Listen up!” Whatever He commands us to do, we must do faithfully and well. We do not have the right to pick and choose from the Lord’s commandments, or to reinterpret them in ways that are more convenient for us, or more to our liking. God’s covenant comes with promises *and* sanctions, and this is as true of the New Covenant as of the Old (cf. Heb. 12.3-11).

The Christian movement in the West is losing ground. We’re not seeing new people come to Christ as in the past, and we’re not making the kind of impact on culture and society we should expect. Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit (Rom. 14.17, 18) are giving way to narcissism, self-indulgence, and irrelevance. Are we entering a wilderness period of our own? Will God refuse to do anything of significance for His Kingdom until our generation has died and a subsequent generation arises which is determined to take God at His Word – about the Lord’s Day? About how to worship God? About our calling to be His witnesses? About making disciples rather than merely going to church?

*Meditate and discuss.*

1. How would we know if we as a community of believers had fallen under the disfavor of God and the

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sanctions of His covenant? What should we do then?

2. Circumcising all the males at once was a drastic measure. Why was it so important? What would be a similarly drastic measure to take in our day, if we suddenly came to realize we were out of favor with God (cf. Ps. 85)?

3. What is the role of church leaders in helping to make sure God's people keep pressing on toward the promises and not slinking back into the wilderness?

*"The circumcision was given to Abraham before the law, after the blessings and after the promise, as a sign to set him and those born of him and those of his household apart from the Gentiles in whose midst he was living. And this is obvious, because, when Israel spent forty years alone by themselves in the desert without mixing with any other nation, all those who were born in the desert were not circumcised." John of Damascus (650-750 AD)*

*Search me, Lord, and show me if there are any areas where I am failing in keeping covenant with You, or where I...*

*Pray Psalm 105.1-8.*

As you pray, give thanks to God for all His covenant promises, and recommit yourself to all your covenant obligations.

**Psalm 105.1-11** (*Warrington: Give to Our God Immortal Praise*)

Give thanks unto the Lord Most High; call on His Name, before Him cry!  
Make known His deeds in every land; sing praise for all the works of His hand.

Glory in God, rejoice in heart, all you who seek His holy part.  
Him and His strength and presence seek; His works proclaim, His judgments speak.

You holy children of Abraham, you chosen ones of Jacob, stand!  
He is our Lord, of wondrous worth; His judgments are in all the earth.

He will His covenant faithfully guard – His oath, the promise of His Word.  
That which He to our fathers swore, He will perform forevermore!

## 4 End of the Reproach

*So it was, when they had finished circumcising all the people, that they stayed in their places in the camp till they were healed. Then the LORD said to Joshua, "This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." Therefore the name of the place is called Gilgal to this day. Joshua 5.8, 9*

*Reflect.*

1. Have you ever experienced a situation in which some "reproach" or obligation or debt was canceled or taken away? What was that like? How did you experience that? Did you commemorate that experience in any way?
2. Very often in Scripture, names have significance. We've seen that in the cases of Moses and Joshua. Can you think of some other examples? Why is this a good thing?

*Think about it.*

The people of Israel had been living under a reproach for forty years. It's likely that most of them were not even aware of the reproach. But God was. An obstacle or hindrance existed between God and His people, related to their failure to circumcise their male children. Now it had been removed, and we shall see how this opens up the previously clogged channels in the hearts of God's people so that now His grace could flow freely and abundantly.

In Revelation 2 and 3 Jesus reproached five of the seven churches to which He wrote. He had something against them, something they needed to deal with, or else the sanctions of His covenant would be invoked. See if you can identify each of these reproaches (Rev. 2.4; 2.14; 2.20; 3.2; 3.15). Do you suppose Jesus could have a reproach against churches still today?

God named the place where they were camping *Gilgal*. This word is a verbal form that means "rolled away" or just "rolling." Thus God established yet another memorial to remind His people of His grace and to encourage them to remain faithful to Him. Do you suppose we need more reminders in our daily lives of how good and loving God is to us?

*Meditate and discuss.*

1. What might be some conditions today that would cause a local church to come under reproach from the Lord? Israel's reproach cost them forty years and the death of an entire generation. Jesus threatened sanctions against the churches in Revelation unless they took steps to remove His reproach. What should a church do that discovers itself to be under reproach from the Lord?
2. What's true for churches can also be true for individuals. How would you be able to tell when something in your life had caused you to come under reproach from the Lord? What should you do then?
3. What can we and our churches do to help ensure we do not fall under reproach from the Lord?

*"No one, therefore, fears the reproaches of past transgressions, if he has been wholly converted and has repented from the heart, and, by faith, has parted the waters of the Jordan and been purified through the second circumcision of the gospel. You hear that, Today, I have taken the reproach of Egypt away from you." Origen of Alexandria (185-254 AD)*

*Lord, guide my steps and direct my path, so that I do not come under Your reproach. Otherwise...*

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*Pray Psalm 38.*

Here is a psalm from David when he was under some reproach from the Lord. Can you identify with how this was making him feel? Let the Spirit lead you as you pray, so that you become more sensitive to any reproach-worthy behaviors.

**Psalm 38** (*Leoni: The God of Abraham Praise*)

O Lord, rebuke me not, nor chasten me in wrath!  
Your arrows pierce my sinful heart and fill my path.  
Your heavy hand weighs down;  
My flesh and bones grow weak.  
My sins oppress, confuse, confound – I cannot speak!

My sinful wounds grow foul, and fester painfully;  
I bend and groan within my soul most mournfully!  
Sin fills my every part;  
Conviction stings my breast.  
Lord, ease my numbed and burning heart and grant me rest!

You know all my desire, my sighs You know full well.  
My strength fails and light's holy fire my eyes dispel.  
My friends and loved ones fail;  
The wicked do me wrong.  
My life they seek, my soul assail the whole day long.

Their threats I will not heed, nor speak to their reproof;  
To hear or speak I have no need – I claim Your truth!  
Lord, hear my fervent prayer!  
Let not my foes rejoice;  
Redeem me from their traps and snares – Lord, hear my voice!

My sins I now confess; my anxious soul relieve!  
Though foes are strong, Lord, heal and bless all who believe!  
Forsake me not, O Lord!  
Repay my foes with wrath.  
Stand by me with Your saving Word and guard my path!

## 5 Manna No More

*Joshua 5 (5)*

*Now the children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight on the plains of Jericho. And they ate of the produce of the land on the day after the Passover, unleavened bread and parched grain, on the very same day. Then the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land; and the children of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate the food of the land of Canaan that year. Joshua 5.10-12*

*Reflect.*

1. The Passover bookends the deliverance of Israel: they kept it *before* crossing the Red Sea, and they kept it *after* crossing the Jordan. Why is this important?
2. No announcement was made concerning the discontinuation of the manna. How do you suppose the people felt when they went out that first morning and it wasn't there?

*Think about it.*

Here is perhaps the earliest example of Paul's maxim in 2 Thessalonians 3.10: "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat." If the people of Israel wanted to eat, they would need to take up the work of subduing the promised land, because the manna they had eaten for forty years had ceased.

The Passover, we recall, reminded Israel of God's deliverance from Egypt, and was a token of His choosing and redeeming them as His people. They ate the Passover before being delivered *out of* Egypt, and now they ate it again, after being delivered *into* the land of promise. Our salvation in Jesus is both a deliverance *out of* and a *deliverance into*: out of sin, darkness, and the dominion of the devil and into forgiveness, eternal life, and the Kingdom of God's Son. Jesus accomplished our deliverance by His death and resurrection, and He gave us His Supper to commemorate what He has done, and to be renewed in His work.

God granted His people a sampling of His promises as they ate the food of the land (cf. Deut. 28.1-14). They had not worked for this; God prepared it for them as a token of His faithfulness and of greater promises yet to come. This is how He leads us in seeking the Kingdom. He prepares blessings for us, which we daily reach out in faith to receive and enjoy, understanding as we do that greater blessings are to be realized as we press toward the promises and seek the Kingdom as our first priority in all things.

*Meditate and discuss.*

1. How do you prepare for taking the Lord's Supper? Paul says the Supper is a *participation* (literally, *fellowship*) in the body and blood of our Lord (1 Cor. 10.16). What does this mean? In some ways, our feeding on Christ's body and blood are like the unleavened bread and parched grain the Israelites ate on the plains of Jericho. Explain.
2. The ceasing of the manna could have been an unsettling occasion for the people of God. Manna was the food of their wandering; the "produce of the land" was the fruit of their obedience. Is there an analogy here for us who believe (cf. 1 Cor. 3.1, 2; Heb. 5.12-14)? Is it significant that the manna stopped the day after the people ate the produce of the land?
3. Review all that had transpired during the two weeks prior to this Passover (cf. Josh. 4.19, which refers to all of chapter 4). How do you think the people would have been feeling at this time? Do you think they would be talking about what had happened? Should we be more eager to talk about the Lord's work on our behalf?

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*“After they observed the Passover in Egypt, they began the exodus. In the book of Joshua, however, after the crossing of the Jordan, on the tenth day of the first month they encamped in Gilgal...Then the sons of Israel observed the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month much more cheerfully than the one in Egypt, seeing that they also ‘ate unleavened bread and fresh from the grain of the holy land,’ a food better than the manna. For God does not feed them on lesser foods when they have received the land according to promise, nor do they obtain inferior bread through Jesus [Joshua] who is so great.” Origen of Alexandria (185-254AD)*

*Thank You, Lord, for Your precious and very great promises, which all come together in Jesus. To day, help me to press on toward those promises so that...*

*Pray Psalm 124.*

Thank the Lord for His deliverance *out of* and His deliverance *into* as you pray these verses.

**Psalm 124** (*Neumark: If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee*)

If You had not been with us, Jesus –  
Let all who love You say with pride –  
When foes rose up to fright and seize us,  
They would have swallowed us alive!

*Refrain v. 8*

Our help is in Your Name, O Lord,  
Who made creation by Your Word.

When all their anger flared against us,  
The flood would us have swept away;  
Torrents and waters sore had drenched us,  
Were not You all our hope and stay!

*Refrain*

Blessed be the Lord who has not given  
Us to our foes to be devoured.  
We shall escape and rise to heaven  
By His eternal grace and power.

*Refrain*

## 6 Holy Ground

*And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, "Are You for us or for our adversaries?" So He said, "No, but as Commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, "What does my Lord say to His servant?" Then the Commander of the LORD's army said to Joshua, "Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy." And Joshua did so. Joshua 5.13-15*

*Reflect.*

1. Does this incident remind you of any previous incident or incidents in Israel's history? What seems to have been the purpose of this encounter?
2. Look up the word *theophany*. What does this mean? Is this a theophany? Or is this an angel? How can you tell?

*Think about it.*

It seems Joshua was by himself when this encounter occurred. The text is clear that Joshua saw a *Man*. Immediately he wanted to know whether the Man was for Israel or for the Canaanites.

The answer was: neither.

The Man before Joshua was the Commander of the army of the LORD. The word *army* is, in the Hebrew, *host*. The host of God, all which is at the Lord's disposal for fighting His battles, is greater than Israel or the Church, and includes all the angelic hosts who do the Lord's bidding, as well as all the creation which serves the purposes of God (Ps. 119.89-91). The Commander of *that* host, the One Who has authority to direct the efforts of *all* the Lord's host, is He Who has *all* authority in heaven and in earth (Matt. 28.18).

This encounter is a *theophany*, a manifestation of God to man in a visible and recognizable form. This particular theophany is of the Word of God, the second Person of the Trinity, Who would ultimately become incarnate as our Lord Jesus Christ. Now He presents Himself to Joshua as the Commander of the Lord's host (cf. Heb. 12.1, 2). Joshua immediately understands this to be a manifestation of God, and he falls on his face to worship, as he should. He makes himself the servant of the Lord, Who is always and only about *His* purposes, and asks what his Lord requires of him.

In the Lord's answer, it's almost as if Joshua's question is reversed, and Joshua must demonstrate whose side *he's* on.

The answer Joshua receives recalls Moses' encounter with God forty years earlier (Exod. 3), and reveals what God most requires of those who would serve Him: they must get close to Him, and they must partake of His holiness and yield themselves entirely to Him.

The Lord has no specific instructions for Joshua as to battle tactics or military strategy. Joshua needs to stay close to the Lord, to know Him in His holiness and to wait for His Word. If he will do this, the Commander of the Lord's host will never fail to lead and direct and prosper his labors.

*Meditate and discuss.*

1. Why were Moses and Joshua required to take off their shoes? Was it because their shoes were dirty? Well, weren't the rest of their garments dirty as well? Was taking off the shoes a means of their more directly

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partaking of the holiness of the Lord? What would be the equivalent for us?

2. The Commander of the Lord's host made it clear that His loyalty was to God and His will. He seems to have been challenging Joshua in some way. Explain.

3. The message to Joshua is clear: Stay close to God! How is this message relevant for us today? How do we fulfill it?

*"For every heavenly army, whether angels or archangels, whether powers or 'dominions or principalities or authorities,' all these that were made through him, wage war under the chief himself, who is the chief of chiefs and who distributes sovereignty to the sovereigns. For he himself is the one who says in the gospel, 'Have power over ten cities,' and, to another, 'Have power over five cities.' This is the one who has returned after accepting the kingdom." Origen of Alexandria (185-254 AD)*

*Lord, You call me to walk holy ground every day (2 Cor. 7.1). Help me in this calling, Lord, so that today I will...*

*Pray Psalm 35.1-10.*

As you pray these verses, think about the day ahead, and seek the Lord's help in specific challenges and opportunities.

**Psalm 35.1-10** (*Creation: Exalt the Lord, His Praise Proclaim*)

Contend, O Lord, with those who strive with me;  
My shield, my strength and buckler be!  
Engage with spear and axe to fight  
And rescue me with all Your might!  
My soul with Your salvation soothe,  
And vanquish all who oppose Your truth.  
Let those ashamed and humbled be  
Who would destroy and humble me.

Let all my foes be blown like chaff,  
And let Your angel take my behalf;  
No cause have they to hide their snare  
Or for my fall a pit prepare.  
Upon them let destruction fall;  
Disperse, destroy them one and all!  
And let the net which they have made  
Be for their doom and judgment laid.

Thus shall our souls rejoice in You  
And hold Your salvation ever true.  
Our bones as one aloud shall cry,  
"Lord, who is like You, enthroned on high,  
Who cares for those too frail and meek  
To save themselves when they are weak?  
Who rescues His afflicted ones  
When foes their warfare have begun?"

## 7 God's Covenant Renewed

*Read Joshua 5.*

*Reflect.*

1. What is God's covenant? Israel was renewed in God's covenant with Abraham (Gen. 17) *and* with Moses (Ex. 12)? What does this suggest about the covenant?
2. In the Old Covenant, rituals and solemn ceremonies were very important to Israel. Do they have the same importance for us in the New Covenant? Should they?

*Think about it.*

God's covenant provides the overarching framework and integrating thread of all of Scripture. In His covenant, God commits Himself to fulfill a raft of exceedingly great and precious promises for His people, whom He calls to be faithful and obedient to Him. From beginning to end in Scripture, God is unfolding His covenant and promises for His people.

Joshua was made to understand this, and he did not hesitate to lead the people of Israel into two solemn acts of covenant renewal. The circumcision of all the males reached back to God's covenant with Abraham, while the Passover linked the people of Joshua's day with Moses and his generation. These are not two covenants, but one. In every stage of the unfolding of God's covenant, different elements are introduced to administer it, according to the circumstances of the people. Joshua showed his understanding of the continuity of God's covenant by leading Israel into these two acts of obedience.

The ceasing of the manna indicated that Israel had entered into a new phase of the unfolding of God's covenant. In this phase, the focus of God's blessing would not be on a promised son (Isaac) or deliverance from Egypt, but on gaining the land of promise (cf. Deut. 28.1-14). The concluding vignette involving the Commander of the Lord's host serves to confirm Joshua's actions and leadership, and to prepare the way for more covenant fulfillment.

Beginning in Joshua 6, we will see how God unfolds His promises and blessings in this new phase of His covenant.

*Meditate and discuss.*

1. The focus of the Abrahamic covenant is the promises of God (Gen. 12.-13). The focus of the Mosaic covenant is on the Law of God (Ex. 20). What is the status of each of these in the New Covenant?
2. What would be the role of the promises and the Law in the conquest of Canaan? How would each of these facets of the divine covenant serve the people of Israel?
3. Verses 13-15 are a fitting conclusion, not only to Joshua 5 but to all that has happened thus far in the book of Joshua. Why?

*“And in what manner is Jericho holy ground since it is retained by the enemies? This indicates, and not by accident, that the chief of the army of the power of the Lord sanctifies every place to which he comes, for Jericho itself was not a holy place. But because the chief of the army of God came there, the place is said to be holy.” Origen of Alexandria (185-254 AD)*

*Lord, as I prepare today for my day of claiming Your promises, I...*

*The Covenant Renewed*  
*Joshua 5*

*Pray Psalm 135.*

Thank God for the power and faithfulness He has shown in keeping His covenant with Israel and with us.  
Commit yourself to follow and serve Him today.

**Psalm 135** (*St. Gertrude: Onward, Christian Soldiers*)

Praise the Savior, praise Him, for His Name is good;  
Sing, for it is pleasant, to our glorious God!  
All whom He has chosen and redeemed by grace,  
Praise His Name together, praise Him in this holy place!

*Refrain v. 1*

Praise the Name of Jesus, you who serve His Word!  
Raise your voice and praise our good and glorious Lord!

Great and sovereign, Jesus rules o'er all above,  
Doing as He pleases, sovereign in His love.  
Clouds and seas obey Him, lightning, too, and rain;  
He the winds brings forth in pow'r and sends them back again.

*Refrain*

Egypt's firstborn fell to God's redeeming pow'r;  
Kings and nations crumbled in redemption's hour.  
He the land of promise to His people gave;  
Thus His Kingdom Jesus gives to all He's pleased to save.

*Refrain*

Evermore Your Name, O Savior, shall endure!  
Your renown throughout all ages is secure.  
For You have compassion, vindicating all  
Those who serve Your Name and on Your saving mercy call.

*Refrain*

Vain the nations serve the idols of their hands;  
Mouths and ears they have but cannot understand.  
Every idol vain is, lacking life or breath;  
All who serve them like them shall be lost to lasting death.

*Refrain*

Bless the Lord you people, all who love the Lord!  
Bless Him, you who trust His sovereign, holy Word!  
Bless the Lord from Zion, Him Who in it dwells;  
Praise Him! Lift your voices, all His grace and glory tell!

*Refrain*

*The Covenant Renewed*  
*Joshua 5*

*Questions for reflection or discussion*

1. The writer brings forward into Israel's experience key aspects of God's covenant. Why is this important?
2. How do we relate to those key aspects of God's covenant today?
3. What is holiness? Why is it so important that we seek it?
4. The Commander of the Lord's host was with Joshua and Israel. How is He with us today, and what can we expect from Him?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from Joshua 5? How are you putting that lesson to work in your walk with and work for the Lord?

*For prayer:*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at [www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org) to learn more.

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Thank you.