

Joshua 3:1-5:8 – Commitment & Progress
James Farrer – 4 August 2013

God proving himself again and again throughout Joshua – The river crossing everyone forgets about – **Ark is central**
Ch 3:10 “This is how you will know that the **living God** is among you...”

This is the first major step that the Israelites took under Joshua – this is the beginning of all their battles of taking the land – if you look in Joshua 12, under Joshua the Israelites defeated 31 Kings / peoples.

This step of progress is book ended by two acts of commitment and obedience – **consecration and circumcision.**

Through the rest of Joshua – similar happens again – before the sin of Achan is revealed (Ch 7), God asks the Israelites to consecrate themselves. Once they’ve taken Ai, Joshua then builds an Altar to the Lord at Mount Ebal.

In between these two acts of commitment, there’s also an important lesson to be learnt in the midst of progress.

1. Consecration

What does it mean to consecrate yourself? What did the Israelites do?

This was a command to the Israelites to remind them who they were – God’s chosen people, to live for God.

What did they actually do?

- In Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy and Numbers – God has given them instructions of how he wants them to think, live and act. It was about being “**set apart**”, **living differently**. It was about clean v unclean.
- For the Israelites, there was probably a physical act of consecration – in Exodus, God told the people to consecrate themselves by washing their clothes.
- Joshua 3:5 meant it was probably a case of “you’ve got tonight to think about yourself and how you relate to God – go back to your tribes, your clans, your families and prepare”
- It was taking the time to hear God, remind themselves of who He is, who they are and committing themselves to being obedient to Him.
- Probably involved finding faith in the midst of uncertainty... are we really going to cross the Jordan? Did the story of the Red Sea really happen?

Important lesson here as well – holiness along the way of the mission

Could have a church of mission, mission, mission – or a church of “Well, we’re still not good enough, we’re still just little worms of people, and God will not move amongst us and act if we’re involved”.

Balance: Mission and holiness – This is exactly what the NT was like and what we should expect.

2. Creating a Legacy (4v5-7, 21)

Note here in v21 that it says “your descendants ask their fathers” ... i.e. not even your children, but your children’s children. This act of God was to be remembered – it was to be passed on – it was to be used to instruct their children of who God is and was – and that there is a living God.

People of testimony & remembrance – in the midst of progress we’ve got to remember the victories and successes and pass them on. For the Israelites, it was a physical legacy and I think we need to remember along the same lines – people whose lives have been changed are the physical legacy of this church.

2 Tim 2:2 – Spread the message, keep passing it on...

3. Circumcision (5v2-8)

Genesis 17:10-11 – Sign of the covenant. Definite act of commitment and obedience!

Joshua’s generation did not have a good legacy – **you may not have had a good legacy** – but what that means is that **you can start a legacy – you can begin again**, just like Joshua’s generation did.

This act of commitment and obedience was to show their wholehearted devotion to God. But why did God ask them to be circumcised? This is never fully explained – but I think we can see these things in it:

- It was to be passed from generation to generation – again a reminder of legacy, multi-generational people
- Every Israelite male would be reminded when he woke up in the morning and went to the toilet!
- Every Israelite female would be reminded when they saw their husband or when caring for their children
- It set them apart – it’s what got you “in”
- It was a future sign of what God was to do through Jesus

Romans 2:28-29 “...a man is a Jew if he is **one inwardly**; and circumcision is **circumcision of the heart**, by the Spirit...”

Colossians 2:10-13

- God circumcising us in Jesus brings our heart into new life, a new creation – like a new set of senses – we see with eyes of faith, hear the word of God, taste the goodness of God – gives us the motivation and desire to be committed to God. **Just as you received your circumcision, continue to live in the good of it.**

To live for the Kingdom of God rather than kingdom of self requires whole-hearted, total commitment – and how do we find the strength, the resolve, the encouragement for that commitment? We look at Jesus – and the fact that he was not only circumcised, but had enough commitment and whole hearted dedication to endure insults, beatings and a painful death to circumcise our hearts and set us free.