

Intro. For some people, obedience comes easily. Others of us learn obedience through the school of hard-knocks or reluctance. In what may be described as the most revolutionary movie of the 20th century, “Star Wars—Episode IV: A New Hope” introduces Obi-Wan Kenobi’s request of Luke Skywalker to have Skywalker join him on the mission to the planet Alderaan & begin to learn the ways of the force. In this scene, Luke has just discovered the Empire has killed his aunt & uncle as he returns to Obi-Wan (show 45 second clip). Luke obeyed Obi-Wan & the need to join the rebellion only after he came face-to-face with his family’s defeat. In a similar way, Israel learned to obey the Lord after they faced defeat & you can, too. Today we look at Joshua 5 in our series on “Moving Forward: In Obedience.”

Theme: Obedience

Background: After freeing Israel from Egyptian bondage, Yahweh began to lead Israel to the Promised Land, but they sinned by not trusting in Yahweh to bring them victory. Thus, they wandered in the Wilderness for 38 years until the leaders died off, including Moses. Then God commanded Joshua to lead Israel into the Promised Land & called him to have strength & courage in leading. While preparing to enter the Promised Land, God reminded Israel about faith & obedience, a lesson driven home again in chapter 5.

Overview of the Narrative:

- As the news of Yahweh performing miracles on behalf of Israel spread, including the crossing of the Jordan, the hearts of the Amorites & Canaanites melted (5:1; cf. 2:9, 11)—they were psychologically defeated before they ever faced Israel in battle
 - In order for Israel to receive the inheritance of the Promised Land, they had to obey Yahweh & the covenant stipulations He had commanded for them to be His special people—each male had to be circumcised
 - Once Israel was circumcised, Israel could keep the Passover & they received the produce of the Promised Land rather than the manna they had depended on for nearly 40 years
 - Just before they go into battle, the Commander of the army of Yahweh appeared to Joshua to set him apart & strengthen him for service
 - This passage provides us with 3 results in “Moving Forward: In Obedience”
 - I. When you obey the Lord, He provides forgiveness of your shame (5:1-9)**—they renewed the Lord’s covenant
 - It had been nearly 40 years since the Israelites had circumcised their men—those coming out of Egypt had been circumcised but not the new generation—this shows the kind of disobedience they had toward the Lord—part of why they perished before entering the Promised Land was “because they did not obey the voice of Yahweh” (5:6), which included not being circumcised
 - It was one thing not to trust the Lord to lead the previous generation into the Promised Land, but it was another thing for them not to obey the Lord in the sign of the covenant He had made with them
- Illus: This act of obedience was a test of Israel’s faith, much like God tested Abraham’s faith in calling him to sacrifice his only son Isaac (cf. Genesis 22). Through the act of circumcision, Israel’s fighting men would be temporarily disabled & yet they were only a couple of miles from Jericho, the enemy could have easily overtaken them
- Without being circumcised Israel could not take the Passover (cf. Exodus 12:48)
 - Once Israel obeyed the Lord & was circumcised, God took away their reproach from Egypt (5:9)—probably in reference to their slavery there, but now they had been brought back to their homeland
 - Gilgal means “to roll away” & refers to God’s rolling away the reproach of Egypt for Israel

- One of the greatest needs of each person is to be forgiven for their past & have their shame removed—when you obey the Lord & confess your sins to Him (agreeing with Him about how wrong they are), He is faithful & just to forgive you & cleanse you
- The sign of the OT covenant was circumcision (Genesis 17:11; ultimately to be circumcision of the heart), the sign of the NT covenant is baptism (of those who have been cut to the heart, or convicted of sin & truth, i.e. believers)

II. When you obey the Lord, He provides new blessings in your life (5:10-12)—they remembered the Lord’s goodness

- As they obeyed the Lord with circumcision & taking the Passover in the Promised Land, God quit sending the daily manna which He had provided for 40 years in the Wilderness, for He now provided for them from the fruit & produce of Canaan, a land flowing with milk & honey
- When you obey the Lord, doing what He has called you to do, not only does the Lord forgive you of your past, but He continues to pour out His grace to strengthen you, comfort you, transform you & bless you

Illus: One of the favorite passages of many Christians is Psalm 23, because it reminds us of the protection & provision of our Lord, the good Shepherd. Verse 5 says “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies”—certainly Israel was being fed with the food of Canaan in the presence of her enemies & God was providing these new blessings for them

III. When you obey the Lord, He provides His presence & guidance (5:13-15)—they received the Lord’s presence

- The drawn sword signifies combat readiness
- He replies to Joshua’s question with “No,” because He doesn’t fit into Joshua’s categories exactly—the question Joshua asked was “Are you on our side or our enemy’s side?” but his question should have been “Who are you? Can we fight on Your side?”—too many times we assume the Lord is on our side but we need to make sure we are on the Lord’s side
- “Commander of the army of Yahweh” (5:14)—could be translated as “Prince of the army of Yahweh” (Daniel 8:11)

Illus: Literally “Prince of the LORD of hosts/armies” (Prince of Lord Sabaoth—we sing about “Lord Sabaoth His name, from age to age the same, on earth is not His equal [Luther’s “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”])

- This Commander is probably like the Angel of Yahweh (58x in the OT), also called the Angel of God (11x)—a pre-incarnate Christ (more than a theophany but a Christophany), who appeared throughout the OT as the Messenger of God/Yahweh to protect (Genesis 16), teach (Judges 13), guide (Genesis 32) & more
- Clearly He is divine, because Joshua worshiped Him (and angels commanded others not to worship them; cf. Revelation 19:10; 22:8-9) & the place where He stood was holy (cf. Exodus 3:5)
- “Now I have come”—the book of Psalms knows of a “coming” which is pregnant with redemptive meaning (Psalm 40:7; 50:3; 96:13; 98:9)—Christ came & appeared to Joshua to assure him of His deliverance in the upcoming battles

Conc. As most of you know, Luke Skywalker didn’t just join Obi-Wan & begin learning the ways of the force, but he became one of the greatest Jedi of all time, because of his later confrontations with Vader & the Emperor. Luke’s obedience to Obi-Wan resulted in the deliverance of numerous groups throughout the galaxy. Jesus Christ came & provided a new hope for the world, for He learned obedience through suffering in giving His life for the sins of the world. But Jesus’ sacrifice doesn’t automatically guarantee you a spot in heaven, because you must obey Him in order for His sacrifice to take effect in your life. Obedience begins with trusting Him & turning from your sin. Do you want to “Move Forward” in your life? Then start “Moving Forward: In Obedience.”