

Journey Through The Cities Of Refuge

Lesson #22

Hebron: Significance of Gilgal

June 17, 2026

Man's journey from Egypt to the Promised Land: Every major stop along the route represents a specific stage of the Christian life - in exact order.

1. Journey begins in Egypt: Bondage; slavery; life before salvation
 - Israelites were born into it.
 - Pharaoh, a type of Satan, would not let them go.
 - They could not escape through effort, intelligence or willpower. Cannot free yourself.
 - Man's condition before God intervenes.
2. Passover: A sacrifice for man
 - Before Israel could leave Egypt, a lamb had to die.
 - Blood was applied to the doorposts. Death passed over every home that was covered.
 - Salvation begins with a sacrifice you did not earn. The Lamb of God was sacrificed.
You accepted His blood sacrifice. Death has passed over you.
3. Red Sea: Baptism
 - Israelites walked through on dry ground.
 - The old life was permanently destroyed. There was no going back.
 - The waters that God parted for them crashed down on the Egyptian army behind them.
 - Once they were through, the path back was gone; could not return to Egypt.
4. Marah: Suffering Transformed
 - Three days after the Red Sea, the greatest miracle they had witnessed, they found bitter, undrinkable, water.
 - God told Moses to throw a tree into the bitter water. The tree made it sweet.
 - Hebrew word for tree is the same word used for the wood of the cross.
 - They tasted the bitter water and watched the tree make it sweet.
 - Life after salvation is still hard.
But the cross changes what the bitterness produces.
 - Have you experienced God taking "bitter water" and using it for your good?
5. Mt. Sinai: The Law given After Grace
 - God descended on the mountain in fire and thunder. He gave Moses the Law, His commandments. These are God's instructions for how to live as a free people.
 - The Law came AFTER the rescue. The sequence: God did not say they had to obey first before He would free them. He freed them first.
 - You obey because you are saved.
6. The Wilderness: Daily Dependence
 - An entire generation walked through barren desert between the mountain where God spoke and the land He promised. Long, dry years
 - Every morning God provided daily manna. Learn to depend on God daily.

- Most Christians live in the wilderness for a long time. They have been rescued. But the Promised Land, the abundant life, seems far away.

7. Jordan River: Renewed Commitment

- Forty years after the Red Sea, a new generation of Israelites stood at the edge of another body of water.
- The Red Sea was about leaving the old life behind.
- The Jordan was about entering the new life. It is a picture of dying to self.

Consider: Unfortunately, because of the stubborn nature of the human heart, because of the deep roots of the flesh within our personality, it often takes months, years and sometimes a lifetime before a Christian is brought to the place where he can relearn at the Jordan River what he should have learned at the Red Sea.

When you come to know Jesus Christ in the power of His Resurrection, you receive absolutely nothing new from God. You simply discover and begin to enjoy experientially what you received from God the day you were redeemed. The tragedy is that you can live for ten, twenty or fifty years, having all that God can give you in Jesus Christ and yet live in self-imposed poverty. You are out of bondage but not in the abundant life.

- That is why there must be a crossing of the Jordan River.

Joshua 3:5 And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify [Consecrate] yourselves: Tomorrow The Lord Will Do Wonders Among You.

Spiritual Consecration: It was a designated time for the people to ritually purify themselves:

- let go of their old wilderness mindset.
- set aside everyday agendas to dedicate one's life fully to God's sacred purposes.

Joshua 4:19-20 Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, [Nisan] and they camped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho.

And those twelve stones which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal.

Exactly 40 years previously,

- each Israelite household, in bondage in Egypt, chose a lamb on Nisan 10.

On Nisan 14, each passover lamb was killed, the blood was sprinkled,

the people observed Passover and the Israelites were delivered from the bondage of Egypt.

But, for 40 years they had wandered in a wilderness of carnality, unbelief and disobedience.

Now, God required a crossing of the Jordan River at flood stage to enter The Promised Land.

- Are you willing to die to self, submit to God & enter God's rest?

Matt. 16:24 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.

Turning Point: Make a conscious decision to wholeheartedly follow Jesus Christ.

- God displayed His power in parting the Jordan so they could cross on dry ground.
- Now they have crossed the Jordan and are camped at Gilgal.

The Memorial Stones were set up at Gilgal. It was A Place Of:

A. A Place of Remembrance All of God's people together went down unto death.

Truth: *If you forget what God has done, you will doubt what He can do.*"

Redpath: "The deepest, most real, and wonderful meaning of Calvary is that not only did Jesus die there for my sins, but I died with Him and in Him. Without a real spiritual revelation to your heart of this, you will never be a victorious Christian. God's best for you is to die to yourself."

Gal. 2:20a I am crucified with Christ...

John 12:24 Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone:
but if it die, it brings forth much fruit.

B. A place of Resurrection Together they came up with their leader into life in the land.
Rom. 6:3-4 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death:

that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father,
even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Eph. 2:5-6 even when we were [spiritually] dead *and* separated from Him because of our sins,
He made us [spiritually] alive together with Christ (for by His grace—
His undeserved favor and mercy—you have been saved from God's judgment).

⁶and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus,

➤ In the flesh I am on the earth, but in the Spirit, I am in heaven.

Powerful Truth: Every child of God is in a position, potentially,
of complete and absolute victory in the Lord Jesus.

Redpath: Our faith makes it real. The only thing Satan can do is to put doubts in your mind.

Any Christian who, by faith, takes his position on victory ground is invincible.

If any Israelite had gone back over Jordan into the wilderness, the stones in the bed of the river would have cried out against him. The stones at Gilgal would have cried out in protest that a people united in redemption and placed on victory ground should go back to the wilderness.

➤ Get back on the victory side! You have been placed there.

Gilgal is a place of resurrection only in the measure in which it is remembrance.

It is life only in the measure in which it is death.

It is victory only in the measure in which I have been humbled.

It is triumph only in the measure in which I have gone down with the Lord Jesus into the grave.

Joshua 4:19a Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month,

Heavily symbolic: sets the stage for the Israelites to observe the Passover

which begins on the 14th of Nisan while in enemy territory.

Joshua 5 bridges the gap between the wilderness and the Promised Land

Joshua 5 details the Israelites' spiritual preparation to enter the Promised Land. Key events:

the Canaanite kings' terror

the mass circumcision at Gilgal

the first Passover celebration in the land

the ceasing of manna

Joshua's vision of the Commander of the Lord's Army

The main point of Joshua 5:

Spiritual preparation

Radical trust

The assurance of God's leadership before the Israelites begin their conquest of Canaan.

Joshua 5:1-9 sets the stage for the renewal of a special event, Passover, on Nisan 14.

The Canaanite Kings' Terror

Joshua 5:1 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 2:9 I know that the Lord has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you.

Key: God had promised to put the fear and dread of His people into their enemies, ensuring that no one would be able to stand against them. [Ex. 23:27; Deut. 11:25]

- Melted Heart: a complete loss of strength and resistance; overwhelming fear, despair, or utter discouragement

Judgment of God against the Canaanites: The parting of the Jordan River was a testimony to the Canaanites. It was an additional warning to them: God's judgment was on the way.

It would come through the armies of Israel.

The Divine Miracle: The enemies of Israel expected the flooded Jordan River to act as a natural barrier to stop the invasion. When they heard how God dried it up, they realized they were facing an unstoppable, supernatural force.

Consider: They were in the land. The enemy is terrified. The logical strategy:
Attack immediately! Not God's Plan!

Powerful Truth: God's delays are always infinitely more profitable than our haste.
The first thing God wants is that we should BE something for Him.

C. Gilgal: A Place of Renunciation Must Cast off the Carnal Existence of the Wilderness.
Israel Must Restore Their Covenant Relationship.

Joshua 5:2-3 At that time the LORD said to Joshua, "Make flint knives for yourself, and circumcise the sons of Israel again the second time." ³ So Joshua made flint knives for himself, and circumcised the sons of Israel at the hill of the foreskins.

Neglect in the Wilderness: During the 40 years of wandering, the practice of circumcision was suspended because the disobedient generation was under God's judgment.

A New Generation: The men of war who came out of Egypt died in the wilderness.

The males born during the journey had never received the physical mark of the covenant.

Key: They must submit to the painful and humbling rite of circumcision to renew the covenant relationship with God.

Spiritual preparation involves the renewing of the Lord's covenant.

They are going to be surrounded by pagan people with immoral religious practices and they may be tempted to compromise with their enemies.

Covenantal Preparation: Circumcision was the physical sign of God's covenant and a prerequisite for observing the Passover and the mark of promise that Abram and his seed would possess the land.

This "initiatory rite into the Covenant Privileges of God's family" was initiated by Yahweh.

- It was required to eat the Passover. Ex. 12:43-51
- It was a sign of national identity.

Gen. 17:10-11 This *is* My covenant which you shall keep,
between Me and you and your descendants after you.
Every male child among you shall be circumcised;
and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins,
it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.

Key: If they are to receive what God promised under the Covenant, they must come into obedience under the Covenant which required circumcision.

This seems surprising when you consider they are in enemy territory and very vulnerable.

- Temporarily disable every male in the nation.
- What a golden opportunity for the enemy to attack and wipe them out.

Powerful Truth: There would be no victories in the Promised Land if they did not commit to obedience from the moment they crossed the Jordan.

Faith and Vulnerability: Submitting to circumcision after crossing the Jordan River—directly in enemy territory [near Jericho]—required immense trust in God. They were entirely reliant on God to protect them from the Canaanites during their recovery.

Circumcision: Testimony that the land was to be possessed in the weakness of the flesh, through suffering. It symbolized the weakness and almost death of everything that man can be, in order that the possession of the land should be given to them unmistakably in the sovereign grace of God. [Redpath]

Circumcision of the Heart: The prophets frequently warned the Israelites that the physical mark meant nothing if their hearts were rebellious.

The OT calls for the "circumcision of the heart," a symbol of the state of the heart. the cutting away of stubbornness, pride, and sin so that people can truly love and obey God.

Deut. 10:12-13, 16 And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good?

¹⁶Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer.

Acts 7:51 You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears!

You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers *did*, so *do* you.

Stiff-necked 4644 sklérotrachélos = only use in NT = donkey that refuses the yoke by stiffening its neck. The word pictures a settled resistance toward God's leading and correction.

Deut. 30:6: The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love Him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.

"The Lord Your God Will..." Transformation is not something you can achieve through pure willpower. It is a gift of God's grace, where He changes your internal desires so that doing right comes naturally rather than feeling like a chore.

Inner Spiritual Transformation. God will remove humanity's natural spiritual stubbornness, the flesh, granting them the grace and desire to love Him wholeheartedly and obey His commands.

- True obedience flows from a heart that loves and delights in God, which is the foundation of the Greatest Commandment.

Key: It is "heart surgery" that humans cannot perform on themselves.

Key: We are a willing partner with God as we cultivate a deep, reverent respect for the Lord.

We partner with Him when we say yes to the hard work of maturing in Christ.

Generational Grace: The promise extends to "descendants," highlighting a covenantal continuity. It assures parents that God's grace can actively transform future generations, ensuring a legacy of faith rather than just inherited tradition.

Chuck Swindoll: Circumcision of the heart is an inward transformation of the soul, contrasting empty religious rituals with authentic faith. Circumcised heart leads to humility, grace, and compassion rather than a judgmental, super-religious attitude.

Circumcision is Painful, Bloody, and Personal.

Believer: Spiritual circumcision is absolutely necessary!

God requires each of us to be Circumcised In Our Heart Before we are allowed to enter and receive the blessings that await each believer in the Abundant Life!

Circumcision, though painful, is always Purposeful! It requires losing our old way of life!

Consider Physical Circumcision: The flesh that is cut away is not kept, reused or put back.

It's completely and totally discarded...never to be reattached again!

Gilgal: Place of Circumcision: The sharp knife has to be applied to the flesh, to the things of sin:

- mortify your members Colossians 3:5
- put to death Ephesians 4:22
- put off these Colossians 3:8, 9

Rom. 7:18a For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells;

I Cor. 1:29 that no flesh should glory in His presence.

Ian Thomas: There is nothing quite so nauseating or pathetic as the flesh trying to be holy.

Before conquering Canaan, the nation had to be spiritually consecrated.

There is no entering into the inheritance without a circumcised heart.

My heart has to be wholly and utterly for the Lord.

Purpose: Cut away all that is necessary so that it's never allowed to reattach again!

Have you made the decision to get rid of some unnecessary stuff which includes people, places, things, conduct, behavior, thoughts, deeds, speech?

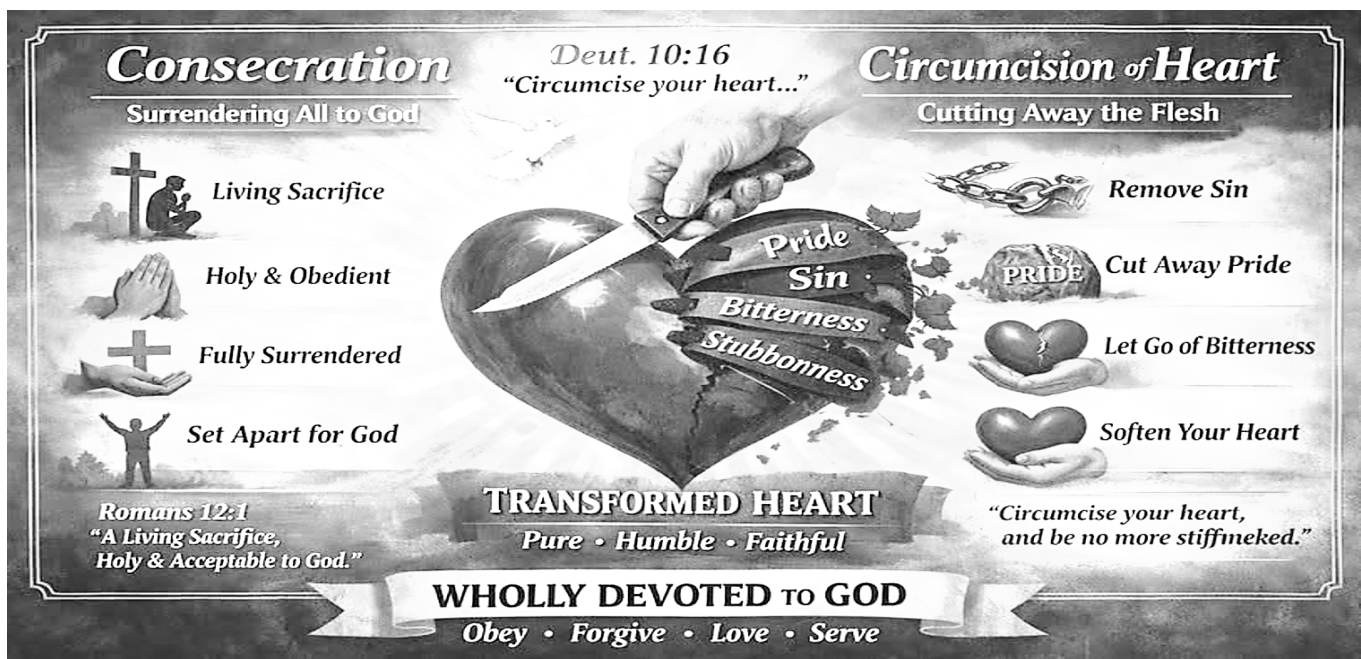
Key: Our spiritual battles are often won or lost in the private, personal parts of life as we struggle with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life [I John 2:16].

- It is the circumcision of our hearts that produces the most spiritual fruit.

II Cor. 12:9 When we surrender our self-sufficiency and acknowledge our exhaustion, we create space for God to work. True peace and victory don't come from our own striving, but from relying on His grace during our brokenness.

Note: Consecration was BEFORE crossing the Jordan River.

Circumcision was AFTER crossing the Jordan River.



Joshua 5:8 So it was, when they had finished circumcising all the people, that they stayed in their places in the camp till they were healed.

Because the surgical procedure was painful and left the men temporarily incapacitated and vulnerable, they had to remain in their tents until their wounds healed

- The people of Israel fought ONLY 2 BATTLES when they were coming out of Egypt.
- However, in the Promised Land they fought more than 31 BATTLES!

Joshua 5:9 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.

Removal of Shame: God states He has "*rolled away the reproach of Egypt*". He rolled away:

- The shame of slavery Bondage Thinking
- Disgrace of Disobedience The Wilderness Wandering

Key: Circumcision's period of pain and healing was the final step in ending the shame of their painful past. It established them as a free, covenant people.

It symbolized a fresh start before they conquered the Promised Land.

Truth: If you skip Gilgal...You won't sustain the promise.

As painful as your circumcision will be, it prepares you for what is to come! Don't under-estimate your process of circumcision! It is a good thing that shall work in your favor!

Before God takes you into everything He promised, He will bring you back to Gilgal—every time.

D. Gilgal: A Place of Restoration Come again into fellowship with the LORD.

Joshua 5:20 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.

The Passover had only been observed twice before now: when they came out of Egypt and at Mt. Sinai. They had forfeited their right to it and surrendered their privileges by living in disobedience and unbelief. God commanded in Ex. 12:48:

- No uncircumcised person should ever partake of the feast of the Passover.

Redpath: There can never be any feasting on the Lord in your heart,
any real heart worship of God, if there is disobedience to God in your life.

Note: They kept Passover four days after they crossed the Jordan River
right in the plains of Jericho, right under the nose of Satan.

We can defeat Satan right in the teeth of his most subtle attacks.

Ps. 23:5a You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

Feast on Christ in the thick of the fight, under the very nose of the devil and
prove to him that Jesus is Conqueror.

In Christ, I am more than a conqueror!

By partaking of the Passover, Israel was to relive their deliverance out of Egypt by the blood of the Lamb. Observing the Passover in Egypt protected them from the destroying angel.

It assured them of:

- Just as the Red Sea crossing would be followed by the destruction of the Egyptians
- Likewise, the crossing of the Jordan would be followed by the defeat of the Canaanites.

Remembering the past became an excellent preparation of faith for the tests of the future.

E. Gilgal: A Place of Realization They began to taste of the strong food of the land. Joshua 5:11-12 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.

¹² 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.

Three successive days are mentioned:

- 14th Day They kept the Passover (remember redemption from Egypt)
- 15th Day They ate of the old corn of the land and unleavened bread
- 16th Day The manna ceased- after 40 yrs. of God's feeding.

The Israelites ate the actual, physical crops of Canaan.

- This verse signifies the transition from wandering survival to settlement and provision.
- They were stepping into the abundance and agricultural blessing of the Promised Land

The Place of Decision I Samuel 13:8-14

Gilgal shows up again—but this time with Saul.

- He's waiting on Samuel But Samuel is late.
- Pressure builds. People scatter.

Saul makes a move: He steps outside of God's instruction.

- He offers the sacrifice himself.
- In that moment...He lost the kingdom.

Saul lost a kingdom—not because he didn't show up...

but because he didn't trust God while he was waiting."

Key: Gilgal will do one of two things:

- Strengthen your obedience or expose your impatience.

Gilgal became a place of realization. The wilderness journey ended, the carnality of that experience over, the food that suited it finished with, the people take of new life in the land of blessing as we take of new resources in our risen Christ.

Stop #8 Promised Land - The Abundant Life, the life God intended from the beginning.

- Living in the fullness of Jesus Christ. Col. 2:9-10
- It is not the absence of enemies. God promises victory in the battles.
- The presence of God's provision in a place He had prepared specifically for them.

Note: There are 8 stops in the journey. 8 is the number of new beginnings.

F. Gilgal: A Place of Revelation

They met their Captain with a drawn sword.

Joshua 5:13-15 And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?

¹⁴ And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant?

¹⁵ And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.

The "host of the Lord" refers to an unseen army, invisible to the human eye that surrounds the throne of God from all eternity and is ready to obey His commands and conduct operations in heavenly places against a satanic foe.

- It was an encounter that lifted a great burden from Joshua's shoulders.

The sequence is significant: first humble worship, then holy walk, then heavenly warfare.

This parallels the "spiritual postures" found in Ephesians. Joshua first

Joshua first bowed the knee. Eph. 3:14 Submitted to a holy walk [4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15

Then he went out to battle the enemy in the power of the Lord [6:10ff].

Like Joshua, we have already been given our spiritual inheritance [Eph. 1-2].

- We must overcome the enemy in order to claim it for ourselves.

If we are going to do the Lord's work successfully and glorify His name, we must be a spiritually prepared people. Instead of rushing into the battle, we must "take time to be holy."

The warfare of the Christian is a holy calling, but also a divine undertaking accomplished in those who humble themselves under the mighty hand of God.

I Pet. 5:6-7 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you.

Watchman Nee: "Not until we take the place of a servant can He take His place as Lord."