

Joshua and Conquest

Moses would not enter the promised land because of sin (Num. 20). Yet before he died, he delivered the speeches in Deuteronomy, and he saw the land from Mount Nebo (Deut. 34). His chosen successor was Joshua, who was “filled with the spirit of wisdom,” and the Israelites “listened to him and did as the LORD had commanded Moses” (34:9).

Moses died. Now it was time for the Israelites to cross the Jordan, and God told Joshua to encourage the people not to be afraid, for He would be with them as long as they kept His covenant (Josh. 1-2). Joshua commanded the people to prepare, and they promised again that they would obey.

Joshua sent two men into Jericho, where a woman named Rahab helped them. Though she was of questionable character, she knew God had given Israel the land. The people of Jericho feared because they heard about the mighty acts of God. The men escaped back to their own camp, and Joshua was convinced that God had indeed given them the land.

Though Rahab did not know much about Yahweh, she demonstrated faith in His power. She and her family were spared when the Israelites marched around the city and the walls fell. She would even be later found in the genealogy of Christ (Matt. 1:5). God’s power and protection is seen through the account.



As the people prepared to cross the Jordan, they were told to follow the Ark of the Covenant. When the priests carrying the Ark stepped into the water, the river would be cut off and the people would be able to cross

on dry ground.

Joshua selected twelve men, one from each tribe, to pick up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan. These stones were set up as a memorial to this occasion, “so that when your children ask later, saying, ‘What do these stones mean to you?’ then you shall say to them, ‘Because the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off.’ So these stones shall become a memorial to the sons of Israel forever.” (Josh. 4:7)

After crossing, the people set up camp at Gilgal, east of Jericho, and the stones were set up there (another group of stones was set up in the Jordan where the priests had stood). God’s power would be remembered through these memorials.

Upon hearing that Israel crossed the Jordan, the people of the land were disheartened because they couldn’t stand up to Yahweh. Soon the city of Jericho would fall to the Israelites.

Before taking Jericho, Joshua was

confronted by a “man” standing with a drawn sword. Joshua asked, “Are you for us or for our adversaries?” This was the “commander of the army of the LORD,” and he told Joshua to remove his sandals. Then God told Joshua that He had given Jericho into their hands on the condition that they march around the city once a day for six days, while seven priests carried trumpets of rams’ horns before the Ark. On the seventh day the people were to march around the city seven times. Then the priests would blow the trumpets, and the people would shout. When they did this, the walls of the city would fall, and God’s people could take it.

Israel followed God’s instructions. The walls fell flat “so that the people went up into the city, every man straight ahead, and they took the city” (6:20). This took faith. One can only imagine what the people of Jericho were thinking, but God’s way worked as He planned. These are great lessons for those trying to please God.

The Israelites had been warned to take nothing from Jericho for personal gain. The city was under a “ban,” and all was devoted to the Lord. If one violated this, he would be “accursed and bring trouble” on the nation.

Achan thought he could get away with it (Joshua 7-8). He took some spoil, and “therefore the anger of the LORD burned against the sons of Israel” (7:1). About three thousand men went to the city of Ai to attack it, but were defeated. Israelites were being killed, and “the hearts of the people melted and became as water” (7:5). God was not fighting for them now. Why? That’s what Joshua wondered.

God told Joshua that Israel had sinned. In order to find the guilty person, they would have to go through a process specified by

God (lots). They eventually found that it was Achan, so he confessed that he had sinned, whereupon he and his family were put to death.

Sin is serious business. We cannot disregard what God teaches and expect to go unpunished. Sin is an attack on the character of God Himself, and we must not take that lightly.

With the sin out of the camp, Israel could go back into battle with God on their side. After defeating Ai, Joshua built an altar. The people stood, half in front of Mt. Gerizim, the other half in front of Mt. Ebal, and the blessings and curses of the Law were read. The entire assembly once again heard the Law.

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