

## VINE CHURCH

# JOSHUA LEADER'S BOOK

*So the Lord gave Israel all the land He had sworn to give their fathers, and they took possession of it and settled there. The Lord gave them rest on every side according to all He had sworn to their fathers. None of their enemies were able to stand against them, for the Lord handed over all their enemies to them. None of the good promises the Lord had made to the house of Israel failed. Everything was fulfilled.*

- **Joshua 21:43-45**

The book of Joshua outlines Israel's conquest of the Promised Land after being saved from Egypt and wandering the desert. Some of you might not like history. You might think that it is dull and that it has little relevance to our lives today. I would like to propose, though, that you put that scepticism aside and indulge in all the wonderfully practical theology that we will learn in Joshua. I am sure that once you start to delve into this magnificent book you will start to see that Joshua is all about our Lord who keeps his promises. It is this certainty that will radically shape, change, and direct our lives now to live in confidence loving our majestic and faithful Lord more and more. More than this I think that we will see that it is the Lord who saves his people and that he does that through Christ! Strap in and get excited because the picture presented throughout Joshua will change your life if you don't harden your heart or close your ears!

### Using These Notes and Studies

As leaders of a Community Group you have the great privilege of guiding and facilitating people as they deal carefully with the scriptures. People will be challenged, nurtured, and changed (even from death to life) before your very eyes as you lead them throughout the year. This can be a somewhat daunting task even for the most experienced leaders. Praise God that he doesn't leave us to do this on our own but works by His Spirit through His word to bring about these miraculous changes in his people. However this doesn't mean that we don't prepare diligently or love sacrificially in our roles as leaders. These notes that we have compiled are there to help you to prepare well so that we are teaching, exhorting, and encouraging carefully and persuasively from God's word.

The notes that we have provided will hopefully be helpful for you as you prepare to lead your group through some quite dense sections of scripture. With the notes as a bit of a backup don't be afraid to spend some time thinking hard about what the Lord is really revealing to us in these sections. The questions that we have provided will help you to mine some of these sections a little deeper but don't feel the pressure of answering every single question. Different groups will hit on different ideas and so allow them to investigate some of the areas that Jesus teaching brings up. (As a guide though the notes will help you to know what is good to spend time on or what is the main thrust of the passage. It might be helpful at times to move people on from a point that is not the main focus of what the author of Joshua is teaching or what the Lord is pointing us to see.)

### RESOURCES

These notes have been compiled from a number of different sources. If you want to grab these or have a look at these for yourself we would encourage you to do that. Some things we will be able to copy and put up for you online but there is plenty that you could read on Joshua to help you lead these studies. Here are the ones that these notes mostly come from.

Joshua: No Falling Words.

By Dale Ralph Davis

Joshua

By Richard Hess

The Book of Joshua

By Marten Woudstra

According to Plan

By Graeme Goldsworthy

If you would like access to any of these then please speak to Andy ([andrew@vinechurch.com](mailto:andrew@vinechurch.com)) and he will be able to give you these and other resources that will be helpful for your preparation. [The final title on the list there gives an overview of Biblical theology that will help us to read the OT in line with the big story of the Bible and see the significance of Christ throughout the Bible.]

# Study 1 – Joshua 1

## Main Idea

The certainty of the promise of God, the truth of his word, and the fellowship of believers help us to remain faithful to our Lord even as we face uncertainty.

## First Steps

The beginning of Joshua is set against the backdrop of the end of Deuteronomy. Moses, the greatest leader Israel had ever seen, has died and now the people must go into the land that God has promised. They have been in this position before, under Moses' leadership. When they came that first time Moses sent 12 spies into the land to scout it out (Num 13). Ten of the twelve came back and said that they couldn't possibly take the land because the people were too big, their cities were too well fortified, and their warriors were too badass (Num 14). The people had been brought to the doorstep of the Promised Land and at that moment they didn't trust God's promises. Because of their lack of faith they were to wander in the wilderness for 40 years until all of that rebellious generation had died out (Num 14:20-23). The beginning of Joshua is the people of Israel once again on the doorstep of the Promised Land. Will they trust the promises of God? Will they take the land? Will God be faithful to his promises? There are so many questions swirling about for the people as they gather on the plains of Moab.

I don't know about you but if I were Joshua I would have been freaking out at this point. The statement at the beginning of v. 1 firmly links the events of the end of Deuteronomy with the beginning of the book of Joshua. It is a time of transition for the people in which Moses will no longer be featuring. The one who is brought to the centre of our focus is Joshua, God's appointed leader (Num 27:18-21). He has big shoes to fill if he is going to lead the people well.

The passage can be broken up roughly into two parts. From this sketch at least two emphases emerge: the land is God's gift and yet there is the command to lay hold of the gift, and encouragement is given to the leader of God's people. The encouragement in both cases comes to Joshua, who doubtless needed it greatly. Interestingly, chapter 1 is almost entirely direct speech rather than descriptive narrative. It is like we are standing amongst the people of God, as they are about to enter the land. It is like the conversation is going on around us and we are in the heart of the action!

## Themes

*Joshua* – the name means quite literally 'the Lord saves'. Jesus was the Greek form of Joshua and that is appropriate in the light of Matt 1:21 as Jesus is the Lord who comes to save the people from their sins. Names are normally loaded with meaning in the scriptures and it would be good to set this firmly in our minds as we launch into the book of Joshua.

*Eastern Tribes* – see the map below for more information. The 3 (two and a half) tribes that are mentioned in this first chapter were ones who had asked for an inheritance of land on the eastern side of the Jordan River (Num 32). This had caused a problem of division under the leadership of Moses and he gets really angry at them for what they have asked. He gets angry because he thinks that they will abort the mission to fulfill the promises of God in the taking of the land. Their actions in this first chapter are crucial for establishing the key theme of nation unity that is evident right throughout Joshua.

## Structure

vv. 1-9	Yahweh's Charge to Joshua
1-4	Yahweh's command to action
5-9	Yahweh's encouragement to Joshua
vv. 10-18	Joshua's Charge to Israel
10-15	Joshua's command to prepare for action
10-11	To the people
12-15	To the Eastern tribes
16-18	People's encouragement to Joshua

## Working through the text

### *1-4: Yahweh's command to action*

The first theme that our writer wants us to see is the vitality of God's promises. The content of the promise has to do with Yahweh's gift of the land (vv. 2-4). And what a land it is!! What is important for us to see here is that God is remaining faithful to the promise that he made way back to Abraham (Gen 12:6-7, 13:14-15, 15:7, 18-21, 17:8, 24, 26:3-4 [you get the idea]). So we must see that the roots of Joshua 1 are sunk deep into the soil of Genesis 12 and following, and the ancient promise is about to receive its contemporary fulfillment.

However, the context of the promise – after the death of Moses – is particularly significant. The greatest leader that Israel had seen, the one who took the people across the Red Sea, the one who led the people out of Egypt, who gave them the Ten Commandments, who spoke so powerfully God's word, was dead. What do you do when *the* servant of God dies and a raging river lies between you and the land that you are to inherit? It is against this background that the writer sets the continuity of Yahweh's promise. "Your greatest leader is dead, so now rise and cross over into the land." What?!?

The first charge is for the people to cross the Jordan River to the land that the Lord is giving the people. There is a twofold aspect to this. God promises the land but the people must take it for themselves. Here we see the central theme of the gift of the land to the people of God. As mentioned above this has deep roots in the Patriarchal narratives of Genesis and so should be read with God's promises from the birth of their nation are the central focus. This helps us to see that Joshua is all about our God who fulfills his promises. The purpose of Joshua is then to inform the reader of the fulfillment of the ancient promises in all its glorious detail. (It may be helpful to note here that Joshua shows us that the people took most of the land but not all [see 13:1 and 11:23]. We will deal with this a little more later on.)

An era has ended but the promise has endured. The fidelity of God's promises does not hinge on circumstance or the achievements of men. The promises of God don't evaporate with time or in the face of seemingly impossible odds. No, the promises of God

### *5-9: Yahweh's encouragement to Joshua*

Yahweh's encouragement of Joshua is seen in his promise to be with him, the encouragement of his presence. That is the reason that none will be able to stand before the people of Israel. No one can stand before the army of the Lord when the Lord walks with his people and with their leader! It is interesting to note that these simple words, "I will be with you" were once spoken to a very reticent, backward, excuse-making, ask-Aaron-not-me sort of chap, that is, Moses, in Ex 3:12. This promise was made when he was called to face pharaoh and Israel. The same God now gives the same assurance in similar threatening circumstances to Joshua. Plenty may have changed but Yahweh has not changed. He is still the God who is present with his servant and his people to help and deliver.

It is on account of this presence with Joshua that Yahweh can call him to be "strong and courageous". Joshua is not told to grit his teeth and screw up his courage on his own; he is to be strong only because Yahweh is with him (v. 9) and not because Yahweh prefers leaders who are positive thinkers. This assurance actually keeps appearing throughout the book (2:24, 3:7, 4:14, 6:27, 10:14, 42, 13:6 etc.). Joshua is to be bold because of the presence of God so that he can distribute the land that the Lord had given to the people of Israel. The drama of this conquest is what we can look forward to as we read through Joshua.

Another crucial element of Joshua's leadership is that he is to meditate on the law of the Lord. This raises the idea of the centrality of God's word. Joshua is commanded to be especially strong and bold 'to be careful to do according to all the torah (instruction) which Moses my servant commanded you' (v. 7). The formula for such obedience is explained in verse 8. Constant, careful absorbing of the word of God leads to obedience. A lack of careful, constant study of the word of God leads to a lack of obedience. This command is directly to Joshua and so could we hold back and say that it is specifically for him and maybe not as applicable for us? No! Psalm 1 and 119 show the norm that each and every believer should be delighting in the word of the Lord! Our life in the kingdom should be lived out of the Word of God. What we see here then is that a life that is pleasing to God does not arise from mystical experiences or warm feelings or from a new gimmick advocated as the shortcut to holiness. We see that a life pleasing to God comes from the Word of God that he has already spoken and from obedience to that word! Joshua's leadership would only be as solid as his faithfulness to the word of God.

### *10-15: Joshua's command to prepare for action*

The author in these verses is showing two things; the spiritual preparation and the unity of the people of God.

Joshua commands both the officers (vv. 10-11) and the eastern tribes vv. (12-15). The narrator's concern is with spiritual preparation (the real cause of victory) rather than with specifics about martial preparations (the apparent cause of victory). This is reflected in the lack of specificity that exists in these verses. There is practically not time given to how this was all to happen.

One might think that there isn't much meat to be devoured in these verses. But if we read them in light of Numbers 32 they may take on a little more significance. When the two (or two and a half) tribes request Moses to assign them an inheritance to the east of the Jordan, Moses suspects that their query hides a fresh conspiracy to abort the fulfillment of God's promise. In a flash of white heat he tears shreds off them as a 'brood of sinful men' (Num 32:14), apparently content to possess their land now, sit out the conquest, allow the other tribes to fend for themselves, and thus to discourage and dishearten the majority of God's people. It is in the light of the peril of rebellion against Yahweh that the unity of God's people becomes so crucial.

### *16-18: People's encouragement to Joshua*

With the situation loaded what will the response be from those whose land is to the east of the Jordan? Will they refuse to go over the Jordan? Will they send the people of God reeling into division once more? The tension should be palpable!!!!

Their response is encouraging and wonderful. They agree in the most certain terms that they will be going to conquer with the whole nation. They will leave their land that they already have and go to see the promise of God fulfilled. Now perhaps we can see why the unity of all Israel in Joshua 1 is so critical. Here, Reuben, Gad, and half Manasseh are models of willing obedience and instruments of encouragement. Indifference on their part or snubbing their noses at the western tribes would have discouraged and disheartened the rest of the people and led to rebellion and unbelief. We should here be able to detect some implications here for the theology and practice of church – unity among God's people is no idle luxury.

So Moses has died. But God has not left Israel – or us – orphans; we still have God's promise, God's presence, God's word, and God's people. And that should be enough as we face the uncertainty of life and wait for the coming kingdom of God!

### **For us now?**

*This is a slightly different section. It is a perilous move to just simply apply the commands of the OT directly to our lives. In this short section we are hoping to show how we move from the truth of our passage, through Christ, to our lives. We must always be careful when making these moves to ensure that we are reading the Bible on its own terms and not over extending or unhelpfully flattening our application.*

There have already been some hints as to how we get to seeing this intersect with our life and how Christ is seen in this chapter.

First we can see that the leadership of Joshua is like that of Christ. He is strong and courageous because the Lord is with him. He stands up to the powers that oppose God and his people and he smashes them on the cross. We must be careful here not to just apply the commands made to Joshua straight to us. It is Jesus who is our leader. It is him who is strong and courageous. He is the one who answers Satan's challenges with the Word of God (Matt 4). These commands to Joshua show us more about who Jesus is and what he has done. He is the one who is perfectly obedient to God's word and he is the one who is faithful till the end, fully accomplishing all that God has promised (2 Cor 1:18-20). Thankfully that burden is not on us.

Second, we might think that the promise of God's presence with us is just for Joshua. He is like a major character, but I'm just a regular person. That's good for him but what about me. Is the promise of God's presence for ordinary Christians? Look at Hebrews 13:5-6. Here the promise of Joshua 1:5 is applied to a Christian congregation. The promise of God's abiding presence in Joshua 1 is also for you and is the solution to the sin of covetousness and discontent, which in turn leads to the great freedom of life without fear. There is nothing more essential for the people of God than to hear their God repeating to

them amid all their changing circumstances, 'I will be with you' or 'I will not forsake you.' (in the argument of Hebrews this is all possible on account of what Jesus has done for us.)

Third, the side effect of this is that we can be strong and courageous because we have a leader who has gone before us and secured victory for us. It is on account of his death and resurrection that we can face the uncertainty of the world! We can face the uncertainty of the world because we know that the promise of God, eternal life, is safe and secure!

Fourth, one of the things we need to deal with is the nature of the promise. We don't expect to inherit the land of Canaan. So what are we expecting to inherit? Well this is where a NT passage might help us. Hebrews 11 is a fantastic list of the heroes of the Faith. Right at the end (vv. 39-40) we get a glimpse into the nature of the promise for us. All those in the list were commended for their faith in the sense that God testified to their faith and made them witnesses of true faith for others. Yet none of those listed received what had been promised (v. 13 but saw them at a distance). Although they saw the fulfillment of specific promises in this life, none of them experienced the blessings of the Messianic era and of the new covenant. In his gracious providence, God had planned something better for us in the sense that their enjoyment of perfection through Christ would only be together with us. Ultimately all of their faith was directed towards the ultimate fulfillment that would come in Christ. Yes they went forth to take the land knowing that was what God had promised them. But that was a shadow of what he was going to bring to us through his son Jesus. That is what we seek to inherit now, the kingdom of God, not the land of Canaan. The ultimate promise for us is to share in the benefits of Christ, mainly eternal life in the city of God (Rev 21-22)

Finally, Joshua 1 gives us some indication of how we can face uncertain futures with the unity of the church spurring us on. As mentioned above the unity of God's church is no idle luxury. It is something that we should cherish and relish as God's gathered people. This does not mean that we have to feel all sticky and gooey about each other, but it does mean that we must care enough that we don't want any of the Lord's children to get discouraged. Ultimately, unity is a prerequisite for faithfulness (fidelity). If we are to remain faithful to God and not turn to the right or to the left of his commands we need our brothers and sisters at church encouraging us and spurring us on to take hold of our promised eternal life in Christ.

## **Implications**

One of the great temptations for those who want to see people saved is compromise. Joshua would no doubt have been tempted to do this in the conquest of the land. It would have been easy for him to come in and try to carve out a small section of the land through some battles but mainly diplomacy. He as the leader was to set the tone for the people. However, the Lord had given the entire land into the hands of Israel and so they were to take it all by removing the wicked people who already lived there. We may feel the same temptation when it comes to calling people to repentance and faith. I have had a number of times in my life where I have been faced with an opportunity to speak the truth of the gospel with someone that I have been working with. In my mind the question always runs through, what should I tell them? How much should I tell them? Should I just leave out the part about hell? I want them to hear me out and I want to be their friend and so I think in my mind what will be PC enough for me to say. But if I do hold back then it is to their disadvantage. Who am I to withhold the truth of coming judgment? Who am I to hold back the glorious love of our saviour on the cross? If I hold back then I am turning to the right or to the left of God's truth and not speaking all that he has spoken for our good because he loves us. Jesus, ultimately, is the one who does this perfectly. He doesn't turn to the right or to the left of God's will and it gets him killed. His obedience and love takes him to the point of sweating drops of blood as he faces his impending death on the cross. What a wonderful, courageous and devoted leader and saviour we have. It is daunting but I want to imitate him in not turning to the right or to the left of God's promises.

# The Land



# Study 2 – Joshua 2

## **Main Idea**

The promised salvation of God is on offer to all, sometimes to even the most unlikely of people, who fear the Lord and repent.

## **First Steps**

The story about Rahab functions in several different ways in its place in Joshua. From the perspective of literary context, it provides a view of the Canaanites as chapter 1 did of the Israelites. As in chapter 1 it highlights one particular figure. In this sense, Rahab corresponds to Joshua as the faithful one of her people who is chosen to lead them to salvation, or at least to offer it to those who are interested. Joshua 2 also anticipates the conquest of Jericho in chapter 6. In the broader context of the Pentateuch (first 5 books of the Bible), ties are obvious with Numbers 13-14 and Deuteronomy 1 and the sending of the scouts into the Promised Land with disastrous results. In the contrasting account of Joshua 2, the role of Joshua is magnified as one who follows God and who leads the people. Joshua 2 thus justifies the character of Joshua as a leader who is concerned for his people, for he gathers intelligence before leading them into hostile territory. It also describes how Rahab and her family are given an opportunity to deliver themselves from the final destruction. Finally, this passage also shines a light on the mission of Israel and may be a slight peek into the coming salvation that is offered through the descendant of Israel (Christ).

The structure gives us a huge clue as to what is the most central element of the story. It helps us to see that; the story underscores the confession of Yahweh's sovereignty. One might think of the structure as a sandwich, with the first and fifth sections representing the bread, the second and fourth sections lettuce and cheese, and the third section or middle section the meat. Obviously, the meat is the most important – and expensive – part of the sandwich (I'm thinking some lovely ham off the bone); the lettuce and cheese is extra and the bread is simply to keep the sauce and cheese from getting my hands messy. In this way the writer is telling us to appreciate the meat that is the heart and most valuable (and tasty) part of the sandwich/story.

Interestingly we can also see as we read through that the central focus deliberately puts some things in the background. The writer is not concerned about getting into tricky ethical questions based on vv. 4-6: endless wranglings and discussions about whether it was right for Rahab to lie to the Jericho police, and so on. It would be a shame to trip on this and not hear Rahab's truth, which the writer has deliberately drawn attention to! (Note that the NT stresses the faith of Rahab and so we must consider that as of first importance!) With the focus clearly in sight we can look and see the glorious truth Rahab is teaching us by her faith!

## **Themes**

Repentance and Mission– As you can see by the structure below, the central theme of the chapter is the confession of faith that Rahab speaks. The core of the confession is repentance. The Israelites had ways of repenting (atoning for their sin) before the Lord. This passage here is one of the first glimpses that we get of someone from outside the community of God's people coming to the Lord and recognizing that he is mighty and merciful. The pattern of repentance seen here is that knowledge of God's great actions in saving his people brings about a call for mercy. This call comes from one of the most unlikely people outside the nation of Israel. There is a subtle hint here of the people of the world being blessed through the nation of Israel.

## **Structure**

- v.1a                      Commission by Joshua (1a)
- vv. 2-7                Arrival/concern: Protection of the spies (2-7)
- vv. 8-14 Confession of Faith (8-14)
- vv. 15-21            Escape/concern: protection of Rahab and co. (15-21)
- vv. 22-24              Return to Joshua (22-24)

## Working through the text

### *2-7: Protection of the spies*

As soon as the spies have come into the land the King of Jericho knows. There is a repetition of spy out/investigate the land in each of the three people speaking (v. 1, 2, 3). The plan of Joshua is relayed to the king, and his servants are told to repeat it to Rahab. The writer leads us to understand that the mission of the spies was known to the enemy at the highest levels. It was treason against Jericho and its king to aid these men. Rahab's helpful deeds indicate her renunciation of allegiance to the Canaanites of Jericho and her acceptance of the rulership of Joshua and his agents. More than this though it is a hint at whom she fears (respects and follows), mainly the Lord.

We see Rahab's faith as she hides the spies and lies to the guards. Rahab has taken the two spies into her house (v. 1) and has then proceeded to hide them in the roof (v.6). She admits that strangers have come to her, that she does not know their identity, and that they have already left the city before nightfall and the shutting of the city gate. With the advice to the messengers of the king that a hot pursuit be organized, she concludes her remarks with a recommendation for immediate pursuit. In this we see that Rahab is risking much by hiding these men that she doesn't know. She is clearly showing her allegiance to the Lord and is offering protection at great risk to the ones who were scouting the land for Joshua. We as readers are told of the pursuit but the tale of it is not picked up again until v. 22. We as the reader are first directed to concentrate on what goes on inside Rahab's house.

Note the suspense that has been generated by the writer. At the end of verse 7 we are left wondering how the spies will get out if the gates are closed? The writer is almost saying, 'don't bother about the escape. Have a listen to this!' All other matters are put to the side as Rahab speaks!

### *8-14: Confession of Faith*

The content of Rahab's confession justifies its central place in the story. She rehearses the might of Yahweh (v.10). this was the basis of her faith; she had heard about the **mighty** acts of God. This is the normal way of coming to faith. Biblical faith is based on at least some knowledge, data, and evidence. Even romance has some basis in knowledge. One doesn't decide to marry someone without knowing anything about them. A couple will speak and spend time together. The decision is made with the proper knowledge. So it is with faith. Faith is not just a warm, cosy feeling about God. Faith grows, if at all, out of hearing what God has done for his people.

Then Rahab confesses the **majesty** of Yahweh in v. 11. That is the conviction of faith. That was to be the conclusion Israel was to reach about her God (Deut 4:39). But here is a pagan, Canaanite harlot with an 'Israelite' confession on her lips. She holds to the utter supremacy of Yahweh. She seems to know that he is the only God functioning in heaven and upon the earth.

This leads Rahab to seek the **mercy** of Yahweh in vv. 12-13. Here is the evidence of faith. Genuine faith never rests content with being convinced of the reality of God but presses on to take refuge in God. Rahab not only must know the clear truth about God but also must escape the coming wrath of God. It isn't just a matter of correct belief but of desperate need. Saving faith is always like this. It never stops with brooding over the nature or activity of God but always runs to take refuge under his wings. Amazingly, Rahab not only trembles before the terror of the Lord but also senses that there might be mercy in this fearful God. What but the touch of Yahweh's hand could have created such faith in the heart of this pagan harlot?

And that is what the writer sees as the central idea of the chapter. It is the confession of the harlot Rahab of the might, majesty, and mercy of the God of the universe! Profound in its simplicity isn't it?

### *15-21: Protection of Rahab and family*

The narrator at this point is concerned with bringing a particular tension to a resolution. That is why the report of the spies leaving the window is put at this point. The fact that this information appears here doesn't mean that we must see the following conversation being shouted from the bottom of the wall. That would hardly be the most stealth move on the part of the spies and would surely see the death of them and Rahab.

Before taking leave the two spies state more precisely than they had previously the conditions under which the oath of v. 14 will be binding on them. She is to tie the scarlet cord in the window, and to make sure that those whom she hopes to include in this agreement will be with her in the house. She is also sworn to secrecy and she upholds her end of all of these as the writer shows that she ties the scarlet

cord to her window. (It is also amazing that the assurance given to Rahab is a life for life guarantee. The spies have guaranteed Rahab and her families safety with their own lives v. 14)

#### *22-24: A positive report*

The spies come back to Joshua and their report couldn't be more different to that given in Numbers 13-14. The spies are positive and are trusting in God's promise. This story shows that Israel is given encouragement in Yahweh's faithfulness. The net gain from the whole episode is seen in the spies report in v. 24. The land has continued to be of concern in this chapter (v. 1, 9, 14, 18, 24). And now as the fruit of the spies' reconnaissance the Israelites are assured that Yahweh will give them the land as promised. That is all. The only thing they received from the episode was to be sure of Yahweh's promise. Someone might say that they should have been certain of the promise without this extra encouragement. True, Yahweh's word is adequate in itself. The problem is not that Yahweh's promises are not sure but that we need to feel sure of them. His words should be sufficient to bolster us. But because of the weakness of our faith, he graciously stoops down and by a plethora of signs, evidences and providences, makes us feel assured of his already sure word. It is something like a husband who send a card or note through the mail to his wife telling her how much she means to him. She shouldn't need to know that he loves her, but it is an extra effort that makes her feel loved and appreciated.

I don't know if you've noticed but there was no real need to tell Rahab's story. It would have made just as much sense to go from chapter 1 to 3. Have a read and see. Instead the writer has decided to give us this story of the conversion of a pagan harlot as a picture of one welcomed in to the people of God. Matthew seems to see the value of this as he mentions her in the genealogy of Jesus in Matt 1:5. Why would we ever leave out a trophy of divine grace such as Rahab?

#### **For us now?**

*This is a slightly different section. It is a perilous move to just simply apply the commands of the OT directly to our lives. In this short section we are hoping to show how we move from the truth of our passage, through Christ, to our lives. We must always be careful when making these moves to ensure that we are reading the Bible on its own terms and not over extending or unhelpfully flattening our application.*

Repentance is presented in this story as crucial. It is the central section and the main theme of the whole story. The character of Rahab is also presented as being one of the most unlikely converts. And yet the story shows that even the most unlikely can come in repentance to the Lord and be saved.

At the risk of allegorizing the passage we might be able to see some parallels with this passage and a particular section of Luke's gospel. Luke 18:18-19:10 is an amazing sequence where we see an amazing truth being uncovered for us. A man comes to Jesus, one that we would expect to follow him. But he doesn't on account of his wealth. Jesus explains to his disciples what that whole episode meant in v. 27, "What is impossible with men is possible with God." It is a profound statement at this point but it becomes even more amazing as the Luke continues to write. The next scene we are confronted with the religious leaders and they cannot grasp or see what Jesus is saying about himself. Beautifully, right next to this episode comes a blind man crying out to Jesus to save him. The one who couldn't see had the best spiritual sight of everyone. He sees Jesus for who he truly is and is healed and he follows Jesus. The cherry on top of the section is Zacchaeus. He is described as very rich! In other words he is one of the most difficult people to save. But remarkably as he meets Jesus he repents and is saved. We can have no other thought at this point but to wonder that what is impossible with man is possible with God. Even the most unlikely and far off can be saved as they come in faith and repentance to the powerful God of the universe.

The difference between Rahab and us is that we look upon the Lord's glorious sacrifice on the cross and come to him knowing that he has done away with our sin. Our faith grows out of our growth in knowing what Jesus has done for us. Our faith grows the more that we meditate and consider what Jesus did on the cross. Our faith grows as we remind each other that we were brought at a price. Our faith grows as we see that God's grace is enough to save us and that we can approach him in repentance knowing that in him we find mercy and love. As we do this we cease to be outsiders, we cease to be under the judgment of God, and we are made a part of the people of God heir of the promise of eternal life.

#### **Implications**

Making a decision to apply for jobs to work in full-time ministry after finishing college is one area where my faith in Christ was the driving force. I love woodwork and as I was going through my final year at

college I began to realise just how much I loved it. I had a period of a couple of weeks last year where all I seemed to be able to do was watch woodworking videos on YouTube. I couldn't concentrate on any of the work that I was supposed to be doing and I could feel myself being drawn more and more to it. It was in this time that I needed to begin to think about jobs for this year. I had a decision to make. Did I want to finish college and become a carpenter or did I want to serve the Lord in full-time ministry. I spent plenty of time thinking about it. As I thought though I began to see that my heart was completely set on seeing people saved. There was nothing that I wanted to do more. Woodworking was just a distraction. My trust in Jesus had led me to making the daunting decision of going into full-time ministry. The decision to apply for jobs and go to interviews was down to my faith in Christ. Even though, throughout the interview process, I felt completely inadequate and under-prepared I trusted Christ as the one who would work through me. Having now started there doesn't seem to be a day that goes by when I don't make a decision or take an action that is a direct result of my faith in Christ. Asking for forgiveness when I let people down is a direct result of my faith in Christ. Preparing to preach and finally speaking to people on a Sunday is a result of my faith in Christ. Giving sacrificially of my time and money is only down to Jess and my faith in Christ. I do so many things throughout the week that I would otherwise not do because of my faith in Christ. How much does your faith in Christ shape your daily life?

# Study 3 – Joshua 3-5

## Main Idea

Our great God has promised and deliver salvation to his people.

## First Steps

As mentioned in the previous story there was no real need for the author to include the Rahab story. It didn't add to the progression of the big story but really provided an aside to give a little more detail and to tell an amazing story!

One important element for us to consider in Joshua is the grand context that is present in the background. We must always remember that God has called Abraham and has promised that he would be the father of a great nation, that his nation would have a land that the Lord had given them, and that they would be a blessed people through whom the world would be blessed. Then Abraham's descendents have moved to Egypt, grown tremendously in numbers, and been enslaved. Then the Lord has heard their cries and has raised up Moses to lead them out of Egypt. Moses does this through a number of great miracles including the crossing of the Red Sea. Since that time the people have come to the doorstep of the Promised Land and have wavered in their trust of God and his promises. This has meant that they have been punished and driven out to wander in the dessert for 40 years until all the unfaithful generation have died out. Now the people once again stand at the doorstep to the land that the Lord has promised them. This is the context that we must remember as we approach this story!

These two chapters describe Israel's preparations for crossing the Jordan and the completion of the task. Can you feel the enormity of this from the context!!!!!!! They describe the words and events that accompanied the crossing as well as the means by which the memory was preserved. Even a quick read through reveals some repetition as the writer develops tension and centres us on the main points and ideas that he would like us to see. The structure is not as simple as what we have seen so far and so a little creativity is needed in order to see the distinct stylistic elements that the author has left us with. Stylistic features include the development of instructions in ever greater detail as they are repeated, and the presentation of simultaneous actions in a sequential form. The repetition and then description convey the sense that everything the Lord has promised or instructed is being carried out precisely according to plan.

The repetitions and the miracle at the centre of the story emphasize the significance of the event of crossing the Jordan and entering into the new land. The events that follow the crossing also serve to focus us on its importance. Israel enters into the land the God has promised and begins to lay claim to it. This is an amazing event that represents a super crucial time in the history of Israel. More importantly it is a small element that helps us to see that the promises of God are being fulfilled! Exciting stuff!

## Themes

*Entering the Land* – as mentioned in the 'First Steps', the significance of this chapter is seen from the context of salvation history. The whole book of Joshua has deep roots in the promises of God that we see way back in Gen 12 + 15. This shapes our expectation as we approach the entry to the land. The significance of the entry to the land is that Yahweh has upheld and is fulfilling his promises. There is no promise that goes unfulfilled as the whole book of Joshua shows us, through the entry into the land. This is a monumental (get it...because of the stones) moment in Israel's history. It would be enough to bring even the most cynical of Israelites to tear.

## Structure

### *Chapter 3-4*

- vv. 1-4 The Lord speaks to Joshua - Instruction
  - vv. 5-6 Joshua speaks to the people
- vv. 7-8 The Lord speaks to Joshua - Encouragement
  - vv. 9-13 Joshua speaks to the people

vv. 14-17 The people cross

vv. 4:1-10a Twelve Stones

vv. 10b-14 The people cross

vv. 15-18 The miracle of the crossing

vv. 19-24 The great Salvation of the Lord

### **Working through the text**

It won't be possible to give all of the detail for these three chapters. I would recommend reading the New Bible Commentary and Joshua: No Falling Words (by Dale Ralph Davis) for more information. Let me know if you need access to those and I can send you a scan of the relevant pages. These notes will focus in on the core of the story (3:14-4:14) and will try to capture some of the drama and significance of the section.

#### *3:14-17: The people cross*

It is here that we see the narrative of the crossing actually begin! (Note the drawn out tension, as the priests are moving in v. 6) You can feel the tension as our focus is drawn on the priests. Their feet touch the water. What is going to happen? Will the people be able to cross? I know what could have been going through my mind if I was one of the priests holding the ark, "please stop flowing. Please stop flowing, I don't want to look like an idiot getting wet for nothing!"

So what does the author do? Instead of giving us the resolution he makes us wait. V. 15 seems an annoying detail that slows the story down. But it is actually driving the tension up. The river is swollen and it overflows its banks at this point in the year! Just the time to tell us about river conditions in springtime. Like this could get any more difficult. The writer has cunningly delayed the climax just enough to get us sitting on the edge of our seat. Finally, in v. 16a we see that the waters stop flowing. It is this delay and tension in the narrative that helps us to see and appreciate the enormity of the miracle. When was the time of year that God led his people through the Jordan? Precisely at the time of year when such a feat looked (and was) impossible.

#### *4:1-10: Twelve stones*

Turning to chapter four we notice its stress on the remembrance of Yahweh's goodness. This chapter focuses on the 12 stones and their function.

The narrator continues to tell of the miraculous crossing but turns our attention to the placing of the remembrance stones. Once again the source of instruction and guidance is from the Lord. He is the one who initiates action (vv. 1-4). We also see that the commander the Lord has chosen passes on the word from God (vv. 5-7). Note also that the number 12 appears regularly throughout vv. 1-8 and is reinforcing the theme of unity that we saw briefly in chapter 1. It is important that the promise is being fulfilled to the whole nation of God's people together! The twelve stones are set up as a memorial. To the readers of the time there would have been no need to explain that the stones were a memorial. Everyone would have known and understood. But Joshua's words make this absolutely certain. Memory plays an important role in any society. Without a memory a person loses identity, and without a history to sustain it a society and the world around it become virtually phantom.

One thing we might observe from this section is that one of the greatest enemies of faith may be forgetfulness. So Joshua says, you must remember what Yahweh has done; and these stones are to serve as visual aids to that end. More than this Israel are not only to remember themselves but they are to teach their children to remember (4:7) as well. The twelve stones were meant to provide occasions for teaching, for impressing upon the next generation Yahweh's mighty act at the Jordan. They served to point to his mighty act of salvation.

There is an implication here. If Yahweh so insists that Israel remember this day, it implies that this event was unique and that Yahweh does not usually work with such visibly raw power. If Yahweh did something of this magnitude every 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month, why should Israel need to remember this moment? Apparently, this sort of miracle will be infrequent. Yahweh's standard method of retaining his people's fidelity is not by frequent and dazzling displays of power but by faithful witness and teaching of those particular acts in which he has already demonstrated his care for his own.

#### *4:10-14: The people cross*

Those poor priests seem to have been standing in the middle of the river bed forever!! But amazingly all of the people have crossed and the ark has come through all on dry ground. The weight of this moment should not be missed. The people of God have just crossed the raging river into the land that their forefather Abraham had been promised. They are here.

The author is careful here to show the success of the crossing being in accord with what had been commanded. Furthermore we see that Joshua and Moses are linked once more as the great leaders of the people of God who command exactly what the Lord has spoken. (There may be echoes here of the construction of the Tabernacle in Exodus and how Moses did everything as the Lord had commanded). This solidifies the theme that it is God who has designed, initiated, and executed this crossing of the Jordan. This great miracle can only be attributed to the God who saves.

We also see the 'eastern' tribes crossing over with the people. They really have followed through with their promise from chapter 1. This all takes place before the sight of all the people and in the presence of the Lord. Once again we see the promise of chapter 1 (will not leave or forsake you) fulfilled before our very eyes. The occasion of the crossing further cements this point in our minds as we see Joshua recognized as a great man in the sight of all Israel (fulfilling 3:7 in a nice little story arc), and they feared him as they feared Moses. The parallel with Moses' position after the Red Sea crossing is striking (Ex 14:31). Joshua like Moses is accepted as God's accredited spokesman and ordained leader.

#### *4:19-24: The great salvation of the Lord*

These final verses make the picture of this whole event even more clear for us. First, we see that there is a date given for the crossing. This actually links this event with the Passover festival (our biblical theology alarm should be going wild now). Henceforth, the commemoration of the first Passover will therefore coincide with the commemoration of the entry into the Promised Land. Further to this is actually gives us an historical point when this event occurred, a date in history when God did a miraculous work for his people.

Second, it centres us on the main theme of the chapter. The twelve stones are set up and explained. That this ceremony is of great importance for us becomes clear from the fact that for the second time (vv. 6-7) we hear what parents are to pass on to their children in connection with these stones.

vv. 23-24 should be seen as an additional comment by Joshua in reflecting upon the crossing and its meaning. It may also be part of what the parents are to pass on to their children. An explicit link is made here between the crossing of the Red Sea and the crossing of the Jordan (v. 23). This almost feels like the completion of the saving act of the exodus. The people were brought out of slavery when they crossed the Red Sea. Now they are brought into the land that they have been promised as the Jordan is dried up before them. What Yahweh began he has brought to completion. The parallels with our salvation cannot be missed and we would miss the beauty of this whole passage if we don't spend a moment to dwell on the enormity of God's salvation that he has won for us!

The final verse shows us that this miracle had a twofold purpose. This miracle was to show the world that the Lord's hand is mighty and so that Israel would fear the Lord. The Lord has put the Jordan River on the map of faith along with the Red Sea – so that Gentile observers might have clear proof of his might and Israel might reverently and continually submit to his sway.

#### **For us now?**

So what does this story show us about Christ? Or how does this passage expand our view of what Christ has done for us?

There is one obvious point in which we see Christ in this passage. It is in the rescue and salvation of the people of Israel that is only brought about by God himself. The great miracle of the crossing is notably not accomplished by anyone in the Israelite community. The repetition in the passage centres our focus on the ark of the Lord. So it is by the Lord's presence with his people that they are able to cross over into the Promised Land. The text leaves us with no other explanation.

More specifically, Joshua in his climactic speech in 4:21-24 shows the whole sweep of God's work of salvation. He is the one who has brought the people out of Egypt. He is the one who by his mighty miracles the people were freed from slavery in Egypt. He is the one who has brought them to the doorstep of the Promised Land and it is he who is the one who holds back the waters of the Jordan River. He is the one who brings them into the land that has been promised to them. None of this can be

attributed to the people. It is all attributed to God's great work of salvation. And it is in that simple point that we see the glory of the Salvation offered to us in Christ. Our Lord is the one who does the saving, taking us out of slavery to sin and into the promised land of peace to dwell with our God.

This is why Paul can say so gloriously in Eph 2:1-10,

*As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (see also Titus 3:3-7)*

It is God alone who saves and he does that through the death and resurrection of His son Jesus. This is the great event that we are to turn to in order to remember what the Lord has done for us. And what could be more amazing?

(We might also consider the Lord's Supper as an action where we remember or a memorial by which an inner reality is expressed in an external action.)

## **Implications**

I grew up in a Christian home. My family consisted of my parents and my two older sisters. From a very young age we were all involved in what was going on at church. I remember my Dad saying to me when I was about 12 or 13 that you can't just turn up to a service you have to serve too. So I picked an area where I could help and got into it. As I moved through high school it became evident from my life during the week that I didn't trust Jesus. I indulged in all that high school had to offer. I carved out a little career stealing stuff and selling it at school. But on a Sunday I would be there, serving away at my service and going to youth group on a Friday night. But my heart was cold to whatever was being taught and I wouldn't pay any attention to what was being said. I went only to keep my parents happy.

When I got to the end of high school I decided that I needed to have a hard think about church. The double life was tiring and if I wasn't going to go then I needed to have a good reason. I wanted a good reason so that I could shut down the conversation as quickly as possible if anyone asked me. So I got to work trying to prove that Jesus never existed. They seemed to talk about him a lot so that would be a good place to start. I read historians like there was no tomorrow. As I read it became more and more clear that there weren't many credible historians that didn't think Jesus existed. Crap! What was I supposed to do? I guessed that I would have to decide that he was who he said he was or that he was just a liar. As I pondered this the thing that stuck in my mind was his love. Why would he die to save people who didn't even like him?

It was reflecting on this that changed my life forever. He died so that I could live. I have my ups and downs there is no doubt about that. But there wouldn't be a day that goes by that I don't look back in wonder on what God has done in saving my through the death of his Son. Not a day goes by when I don't look back and wonder at what Christ has saved me from. There is not a day that goes by that I am not thankful for the life that he has given me. There is not a day that goes by that I don't think of the costly but great sacrifice that he laid down so that I could be freed from slavery and ushered into his throne room for all eternity. Where else are we to go but back to the cross daily to see God's mercy, love and salvation fresh every day.

# Study 4 – Joshua 6

## Main Idea

We see in Joshua 6 that it is the Lord alone who has won a great victory. It is those who walk in line with God's commands that will see victory.

## First Steps

Having taken their first steps into the land Israel, under Joshua's leadership, have been quick to show their commitment to the God whose promises are certainly to be fulfilled. We might ask though, why circumcision? Circumcision in Israel made one qualified for the covenantal relationships with God (Gen 17:9-14) and so a fit heir to the Promised Land. The people are now in a fit state to take the land under God's power. They have been marked out as inheritors and are now going forth to take the land. It makes sense then that this chapter (6) contains the first battle to take a portion of the land from the wicked Canaanites.

See below for a diagram of the rough structure. It is important for us to keep a look out for transition words (now v. 1, so v. 6+20), time markers (after v. 8, next morning v. 12) and shifts of scene (v. 22, 26). Noticing these should give us a feel for the movements of the story. The movement towards taking Jericho is always progressing and moving forward, almost relentlessly.

We should also notice that the ark, once again, plays a central part in the story. It is mentioned 9 times in the chapter and this is serving to reinforce the presence of Yahweh with his people and that it is indeed him who wins the day.

The meeting with the Lord's commander follows a familiar pattern (see also Gen 32:22-32 and Exod 3:1-4:17). The pattern is that the human protagonist encounters a divine messenger before facing a life and death conflict, but there is a significant difference with Joshua. Unlike the pattern in the other stories Joshua doesn't wrestle or argue with the messenger. He questions him and responds as he is told. Joshua recognizes the superior rank of the Commander of the Lord's army and responds rightly to him (note the contrast with Moses and Jacob). There is little doubt that this would have been a great encouragement for the man and the people about to carry out a military conflict. This appearance causes us to read 6:1 in a different light I think.

## Themes

*Holy War* – It is important for us to understand the Old Testament's own perspective on the conquest. In Genesis 15:16 Yahweh explains to Abram that his descendants would not inherit Canaan immediately but would come back in the fourth generation, 'for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete'. The implication is that Yahweh was being patient with the present inhabitants of the land but that when their sins had reached the limit, he would use Abram's descendants to bring judgment upon them.

This view is confirmed in the rest of the Pentateuch. Yahweh cast out the residents of Canaan because of their gross sexual perversions (Lev 18:24-25) and their zeal for magic, divination, and all such pagan hanky-panky (Deut 18:12, possibly including child sacrifice Lev 18:21). Hence Israel must not assume a holier-than-you-all attitude, for Yahweh will not bring his people into the land because they are righteous and deserving; 'it is because of the wickedness of these nations that Yahweh is driving them out before you' (Deut 9:4-5). The conquest is not a bunch of land-hungry marauders wiping out, at the behest of their vicious God, hundreds of innocent, God-fearing folks. In the biblical view, the God of the Bible uses none-too-righteous Israel as the instrument of his justice on a people who had persistently reveled in their iniquity.

We see the righteous judgment of God not only falling on the people of Canaan at the hands of the Israelites but that he holds his own chosen people to the same standard. Thus, the people of Israel are judged in the same way, through conquest, by the Assyrians (northern kingdom 722BC) and the Babylonians (southern kingdom 586/87BC) on account of their wicked and sinful practices. God is serious about sin and he will judge all people by the same standard. Rather than recoiling from the conquest we must see through it to the glorious sacrifice of Jesus as the one who saves us from the just judgment of God against our wickedness. It may be hard for us now to stomach but it should be a stunning reminder of God's grace shown to us on the cross!

## **Structure**

vv. 5:13-6:5	Pre-capture Instructions
vv. 6:6-21	The capture of Jericho
vv. 6-15	Yahweh's strange methods
vv. 16-21	Demand on Yahweh's people
vv. 6:22-27	The result of the capture
vv. 22-25	The salvation in Yahweh's judgment
vv. 26-27	Finality of defeat

## **Working through the text**

### *6:1-5: Pre-capture instructions*

Having read the description of the commander of the Lord's army at the end of chapter 5 we should see Jericho's defenses in a different light. This first verse is important, as its purpose is to show the seemingly hopeless situation confronting Israel. They have closed the gates and no one can come in or go out. The Israelites would have had little or no experience in siege warfare and had no idea how to storm a fortified city. But the danger and difficulty of that fades into the background, as Joshua knows that the Lord's army is fighting on their side. The following verse is crucial as Yahweh says, 'See! I have given Jericho into your hand' (6:2). It becomes surprising and encouraging on account of the fact that the Lord's army is with the people and that the Lord states so clearly that it is given into the hand of the people.

God's methodology is frequently like this, especially in Joshua. Greater obstacles for his people call forth his mighty help, even though we must admit that sometimes nothing looks quite so unlikely as the decree of God (6:2 in light of 6:1). This only gets more fanciful as the instructions tell the people that it will be a ceremony that will overcome the walls of Jericho. How odd!

### *6:6-15: Yahweh's strange methods*

We cannot help but notice the strangeness of Yahweh's method: armed men, seven priests blowing ram's horns, the ark, the rear guard, such was the caravan that circled Jericho each day and seven times on the seventh day. But as at the crossing of the Jordan, it is the ark of Yahweh that holds centre stage. The chapter refers to the ark 10 times, nine of which are in these verses. It is Yahweh's presence in the midst of his people that will make the difference. The people are not allowed to shout (6:10) until given the signal. So this little section stresses how central Yahweh's presence is and how passive his people are.

As a literary aside note how the sequence of days is built up between v. 11 and 15. The people go out, march around and return. Nothing. The people go out again on the second day, march around and return. Nothing. The suspense is building as nearly a week flies by in just a few verses. The sense of expectation at the beginning of verse 15 is massive. It's like grand final morning! I am asking as I read these few repetitive verses, will the walls fall? Will they get in? They must! And the delay at the end of verse 15 brings us right to the edge of our seat...

What do we see through this repetition? Sometimes, it seems, God insists on bypassing his people's activity in order to enhance his own glory among his people. If Israel only marches and shouts, there will be no doubt about who batters Jericho to the ground. Every now and then God works this way now. Normally he works through the instrumentality of his people. But since we have a tendency to obscure God's splendor and to steal his praise, he sometimes sets our contributions aside and knocks down the walls around peoples hearts in order to show us that the power resides in him and not in us.

### *6:16-21: Demand on Yahweh's people*

Continuing on the path of somewhat odd things we should look at what demands are made of God's people. Here the story hits its most tense point. The people have marched around 7 times.... The priests are blowing their trumpets... Joshua says "Shout!".... And then he tells them a bunch of stuff that I just

don't want to hear at this point. Tell me whether the walls have fallen down!!! I want to know that God's people have won!!! Joshua stop talking!!!

After having read verse 10 and 16b, one expects to hear the people shout as in verse 20. Indeed, in light of verse 10, the most natural sequence would be for verse 20 immediately to follow verse 16. The writer is using this delayed climax perfectly. In doing this he shines a light on Joshua's instructions and warnings (vv. 17-19). He does this because what Joshua says in verse 17-19 is more important than Jericho's walls falling down (v. 20). By such literary style the writer highlights the priority of obedience to Yahweh's commands over victory in itself. (The importance of this is seen in chapter 7). Even in the victories God gives, there lurk temptations for his people.

It is interesting to note that the actual triumph is given only a brief mention, an almost matter-of-fact report (vv.20b-21). This should be a clue that his concerns lie elsewhere. On the point of reading the passage and trying to get to the heart of what the author is trying to communicate, we should be careful to spend the majority of our time discussing holy war when the focus of the passage is on obedience. This is not to say that we shouldn't have a ripping conversation on that. But it would be a shame to miss the heart of the passage in doing that.

#### *6:22-25: Salvation in Yahweh's judgment*

Our write would also like us to see the salvation in Yahweh's judgment. In between the notices of Jericho's destruction (vv. 21, 24) there is a beautiful little story of salvation and rescue (vv. 22-23, 25). Rahab and her loved ones are salvaged and begin a life in association with God's people. This is the completion of the Rahab story line that was commenced in chapter 2. Rahab so feared Yahweh's threat that she fled to his mercy. Now we see her inheriting the mercy that was promised. This pagan gentile and her family now stand within the circle of the chosen people. Why then should we be surprised if her God should one day take those who are far off and bring them near (by the blood of the Messiah Eph 2:13)?

Even in this small story arc we see the promises of God fulfilled. Rahab saw the power and might of the Lord and repented. She put her trust in him and now we see that she has been saved. Rahab lives!

#### *6:26-27: Finality of defeat*

The contrast to the Rahab story is seen in the finality of the defeat of Jericho. Rahab has lived but Jericho has died. The constant switching between the story lines has served to contrast the fates of both 'characters'.

By means of a solemn oath Joshua finally pronounces a curse upon Jericho so that it will never be rebuilt. This rule of permanent desolation of a wicked city applied also to any city in Israel that had departed from the covenant (Deut 13:16). No one can sure if the Lord does not curse (Num 23:8), In that conviction Joshua now pronounces a curse on Jericho. The city's fall was symbolical of what would happen to Canaan as a whole.

### **For us now?**

Victory is for the ones who walk in line with God's commands. The repetition of the story shows us that the success of the assault on Jericho relied on the total obedience of the people. God set the battle plan before them. Admittedly, it was a strange plan (are we really going to bring the walls down by 1 loud shout?). But the passage shows us that God has won the great victory through his people who had not turned to the left or to the right of his word. Obedience was the prerequisite for success in taking the land that the Lord had given them (this has already been shown in Deuteronomy and ch 1). The nation of Israel's obedience foreshadows the ultimately obedient one.

Jesus death pays for our sins we know that. But have you ever wondered why he lived so long? It is because he was to be the one who perfectly fulfills the necessary obedience of the people of God on their behalf. The standard that is required of the Israelites is perfect obedience in order to inherit the land. The standard required for one to be saved is perfect obedience to the God of the universe. So Jesus' life wasn't just biding time until his death. It was fulfilling something very important for us. It was fulfilling the requirement for perfect obedience that we needed in order to be able to approach God. Ultimately Jesus is victorious and is raised from the dead because he is innocent, having followed all that the law had commanded. He had perfectly fulfilled the obedience require for victory. It is because of his perfect obedience that we can now also enjoy victory and inherit the fullness of the promises of God. This is not just a land in Palestine but a heavenly kingdom that will stand forever.

## **Implications**

One spiritual battle that continues to come up in my life is the clash of kingdoms. I want to rule myself and I want to be self-sufficient. But God has called me to be his servant and so each time I want to grasp after self-sufficiency I am actively challenging his rule. The spiritual warfare I endure and fight is my battle to keep living under God's rule and not striking out on my own. I see this a lot even while I am writing this. I want to just get in and write and show everyone how smart I am or how clever I can be. But the warfare starts when I want to pray for these studies. It starts when I want to pray for our groups and that they would be growing in their knowledge and love of Christ. It carries on as I think about putting time aside to pray for our community group leaders. It rises when I consider what to read next in my personal devotions. My temptation is to put aside prayer and my personal devotional life in order to thrash through the work that people will see. My temptation is to leave aside prayer for our groups and try to write the most eloquent (obviously I have failed at that) exposition possible so that people might see how much work I have done. In the end though they are not actions that are helpful or glorifying to God. I need to fight to continue to read the bible, pray for our groups, and to pray for our leaders. Paul reminds me in 2 Cor 10:1-6 that the battle is against the ideas and teachings of the world. My holy war now is not fighting to take the land; it is fighting to push back the invasions of the evil one as he tries to tell me that I don't need help and that I can do it on my own. My fight is to take every thought captive to Christ and to continue to walk in a manner worthy of the calling that I have received. How do I do this? By the Spirit's power. Praise God that he is the one who has fought the spiritual war for us and that he renews our minds and hearts by the Spirit's work so that we might fight the holy war against sin in our lives. (Especially for me, the sin of self-sufficiency)