

**JOSHUA 1-5 THE SPIES AT JERICHO; RAHAB; CROSSING OF THE JORDAN**

We begin to study today a new section of the Bible. The book of Joshua begins the *second section* of the Old Testament. Christ mentioned the three major divisions of the Old Testament when He said, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in *the Law of Moses* and *the Prophets* and *the Psalms* concerning Me" (Luke 24:44). The book of Joshua begins the section of *the Prophets*. In the Hebrew, here is the original order of the O.T. books

THE LAW OF MOSES

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

THE PROPHETS

Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the 12 Minor Prophets

THE PSALMS (Also know as The Writings)

Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles

Our Bibles does not have the Hebrew order of books, but the Greek order from the Septuagint version, that classified the books *thematically and chronologically*, not in its original version. Yet they are the same books, just in a different order, and at least it doesn't change the doctrinal teaching at all.

So, we begin this section of the prophets with Joshua, who, like Moses, was a type of a prophet, since he received the revealed word of God. No more laws are introduced in this book, for all the law giving was done in the first five books.

Now the rest of the Bible will mostly consist of the *history* of God's people, Israel, and whether they kept God's laws or not. In the Old Testament, the emphasis is on keeping the letter of the law while the New Testament, with Christ's magnification and transformation of the law by adding its spiritual dimension, the emphasis is on keeping the spirit and not only the letter of the law.

The children of Israel are about to enter the Promised Land, and fulfill the promises given to Abraham. God keeps His promises exactly on time! According to the approximate dates for the death of Abraham, around **1800 B.C.**, Israel enters the Promised land around **1400 B.C.**, carrying out the promise God made to Abraham of his descendants

staying in Egypt **400 years** (Gen. 15:13-16). Israel left Egypt right after the Passover **40 years** before, and now will start to take possession of the Promised Land **right after the Passover**. What timing!

God begins the book by continuously encouraging and strengthening Joshua to carry out his daunting mission, as Moses had previously done. He says, "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving them...From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates...and to the Great Sea...No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. *I will not leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and of good courage*, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land...*Only be strong and very courageous*, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it...that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law [the first five books] shall not depart from you mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and you will have good success" (Jos. 1:1-9).

Some people think to be religious, if you are a man, you have lose your masculinity and become timid and effeminate. No way! As we see here, it takes *great courage* to follow God. The apostle Paul also said the same thing to the brethren, "Watch, stand fast in the Lord, *be brave, be strong*" (1 Cor. 16:13).

Now it's Joshua's turn to strengthen the faith of the Israelites. He prepares them for the coming conquest, and reminds them, "Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days *you will cross over this Jordan*, to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess" (1:11).

This second generation of Israelites responds with faith, and says, "All that you command us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we heeded Moses in all things, so we will heed you. Only the Lord your God be with you, as He was with Moses. Whoever rebels against your command and does not heed your words...shall be put to death. Only be strong and of good courage" (1:16-18).

The transition from one of God's leaders to another can be difficult. The people would never have another Moses, who spoke to God, "face to face" meaning conversing directly with Him (Deut. 34:10). But they knew Joshua had been ordained to the post by Moses and that, "Joshua...was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses *had laid his hands on him*" (Deut. 34:9). We see here the importance of the doctrine of the laying on of hands (Heb. 6:2). Just as the Israelites obeyed, it is important for us to follow those ordained by God and had hands laid upon them, separating them for the work of the ministry. Remember, we have a God of order who is not the author of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33, 40).

Now, the first Canaanite city to be conquered is Jericho, a strategic fortress that protected the only entrance in that region into the interior of the country. Joshua, as a good commander, wanted first of all to know everything he could about the fortifications and the state of mind of the people.

As a spiritual parallel, we also need to know how our adversary the Devil operates to be aware of his strategies, "lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Cor. 2:11).

So Joshua sends to Jericho "two men to spy secretly...and they came to the house of a harlot named Rahab, and lodged there" (2:1). Why there? The *Keil & Delitzsch Commentary* explains, "Their entering the house of such a person would not excite so much suspicion. Moreover, the situation of her house against or upon the town wall was one which facilitated escape. But the Lord so guided the course of the spies, that they found in this sinner the very person who was the most suitable for their purpose, and upon whose heart the tidings of the miracles wrought by the living God on behalf of Israel had made such an impression, that she not only informed the spies of the despondency of the Canaanites, but, with believing trust in the power of the God of Israel, concealed the spies from all the inquiries of her countrymen, though at the greatest risk to herself."

Jericho is known as one of the oldest cities on earth. Its prime location on a fertile oasis, with a large spring of fresh water, and at 75 ft. below sea level, it has a wonderful semitropical climate. It was the key center for supplying precious salt, sulfur and tar (to make things impermeable) in the Middle East.

The ruins of Jericho have been extensively excavated and the latest conclusions confirm the

biblical account of Joshua! When the king of Jericho heard two spies had entered the city and were seen at Rahab's house, he sent soldiers to find them, but Rahab successfully hid them. Before the spies left, she explained why she had risked her life to hide them. "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. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, [so much for the idea of this being the Reed Sea] and what you did to the two kings of the Ammonites...whom you utterly destroyed. And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath. Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the Lord, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father's house, and give me a true token and spare my [family] and deliver our lives from death" (2:9-14).

The spies accepted her conditions and "she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall; she dwelt on the wall" (2:15). Archaeological excavations have revealed the remains of two massive walls at Jericho, with a space between them and houses built against the walls.

Rahab is an example of how a person can repent of the world's evil ways, accept God's laws, and be incorporated into God's people, no matter what was the previous background. She is listed as one of the women of faith in the Bible (Hebrews 11:31) and even became an ancestor of Jesus Christ! (Mat. 1:5). We therefore see what faith is able to produce, and that God is not a respecter of persons (Gal. 2:6).

The spies made it back safely and told Joshua, "Truly the Lord has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us" (2:24).

Next, Joshua tells the people, "Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you...And the Lord said to Joshua, "This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. You shall command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, saying, 'When you have come to the edge of the water of the Jordan, you shall stand in the Jordan. So Joshua said, 'By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will

without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites...Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over the Jordan...And... as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the Lord...that the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off...and they shall stand as a heap...and the waters which came down from upstream stood still, and rose in a heap very far away...Then the priests...stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan; and all Israel crossed over on dry ground, until all the people had crossed completely over the Jordan...And the children of Israel...took up twelve stones from the midst of the Jordan...and carried them over with them to the place where they lodged, and laid them down there. Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan...and they are there to this day" (3:5-9).

What a great miracle! This was similar to the drying up of a section of the Red Sea, but now it was done for the second generation of Israelites. Those stones were to be a memorial to let "your children know...the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, as the Lord...God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed over, that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever" (3:22-24).

Regrettably, those stones are no longer there to bear a witness to God's mighty acts then, but God has left us with 7 *spiritual memorial stones* to remember His great acts throughout history, some in the past and some to be fulfilled in the future. Which are they? They are God's 7 Feasts. Each year we are able to rehearse God's mighty acts and plan of salvation. The Passover is a symbol of that first "stone" or great miraculous act, in the O.T., with the liberation of Israel from the Egyptians and the smiting of Egypt's firstborn children. In the New Testament, this "memorial stone" reminds us that "Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7). Sadly, the world is ignorant of these great acts of salvation because it doesn't acknowledge these seven "memorial stones" are signposts of His Plan of Salvation in the midst of God's Word!

After crossing the Jordan, they face the imposing fortress of Jericho. After witnessing the miracle of the opening of the River Jordan, the Canaanites' "heart melted; and there was no spirit in them any

longer because of the children of Israel" (5:1). Yet, though scared and astounded, they were not about to give up their perverted Canaanite ways! They could have repented, but it was obvious their continuous sinning had hardened their hearts.

On the other hand, the Israelites' hearts must be sanctified to be used as instruments in God's hands. Incredibly, they had not been circumcised by their faithless parents! "For all the people who came out [of Egypt] had been circumcised, but all the people born in the wilderness...had not been circumcised...because they did not obey the voice of the Lord...Then Joshua circumcised their sons whom He raised up in their place...and the people stayed/in the camp till they were healed. 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 [the rolling] to this day" (5:5-9).

Now--Passover. "Now the children of Israel...kept the Passover on the fourteenth day at twilight...and they ate of the produce of the land after the Passover, unleavened bread and parched grain, on the very same day. 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" (5:10-12).

It is very fitting after the Passover, and as the Days of Unleavened Bread were beginning, that the manna *ceased*. God's plan for Israel started on a Passover and now it ends at Passover time, 40 years later. Yet, this is only a foretaste of God's promises to Abraham, for the ultimate fulfillment is when Abraham and his spiritual descendants will *inherit the entire earth in the Kingdom of God*! That is what we look forward to inheriting one day. As the Bible says in Heb. 4:8-11, "If *Joshua* had given them *rest*, then He would not afterward have spoken of *another day* [the rest in the coming kingdom of God]...Let us therefore be diligent to enter *that rest*, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience."