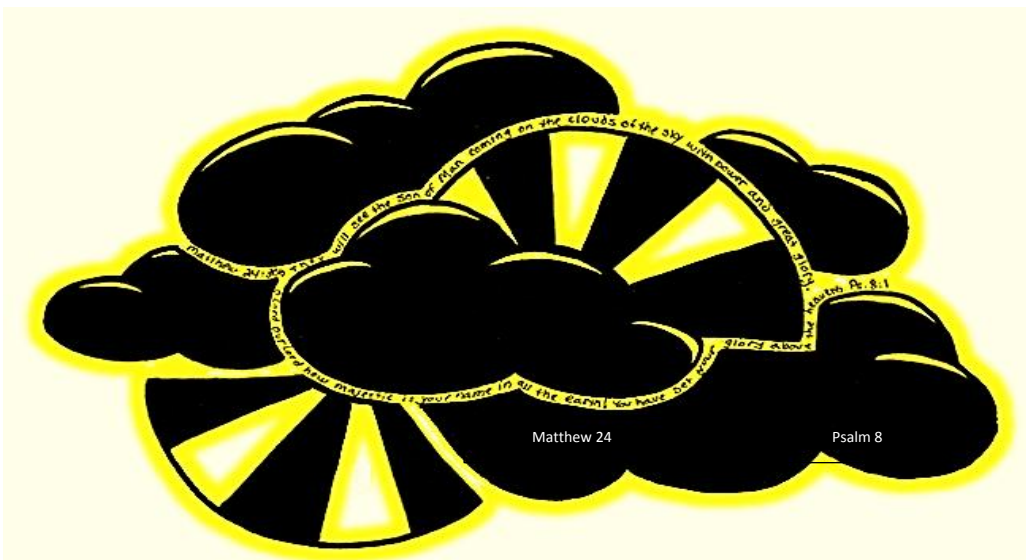


## Study #7



### The Battle Begins Joshua 1-24

### Timeless Truth: Faith is the victory.

Israel spent 40 years on a discipline road, wandering in the wilderness, remembering and rehearsing the Lord's words and His plan. A lot can change in 40 years. All of the people who were slaves in Egypt had died; Aaron and Miriam had died; Moses had died. A lot of sadness and lostness-feelings.



But even the sad consequences of sin are cushioned by kindnesses from God. The Israelites had experienced Lord keeping His word of providence for 4 decades; the LORD had brought the children to the promised land, as He had promised. The Israelites now had the same occasion as their parents had 40 years earlier, an opportunity to show their faith in the LORD God Almighty.

From their parent's generation, only two people, Joshua and Caleb, were alive and allowed to enter Canaan. This was a gift from God because of their steadfast and joyful confidence in His words of promise. Any child could talk with Joshua about the Egypt rescue. Joshua had been Moses' right-hand man.

Joshua was now Israel's new leader. Joshua had been set apart by the Lord Himself. Joshua was publicly placed into office by Moses. And now the alarm clock was ringing, it was time for the wilderness class to be over. That 40 year wilderness walk of rebellion and reversal was behind the nation now. The new generation, serving the timeless and faithful God, was now camped at Canaan's corner.

Much had changed during the wilderness years, but the LORD God Almighty does not change. The promise He'd made to Abraham over 600 years before was about to become reality. The LORD spoke to Joshua saying, *"Be strong and courageous, for I AM with you. Be careful to obey My law."* Joshua listened and trusted, now, finally, it was time to do. Joshua was going to follow through on God's words.

Joshua sent two spies into Jericho to appraise the land. They were hidden in Rahab's house by Rahab, a prostitute. She had indeed fallen so far that most would say it was not worth the time or effort to seek her out. Yet she was restored completely by the LORD. She boldly confessed her faith in the LORD God as the one who mightily keeps His promises. The spies promised to save her whole family when they attacked Jericho.



*[On a side note: Spies, mystery, politics, escape...but the most awesome truth is this: God loved that prostitute. God had chosen her. In the LORD's plan, she was to be grafted into His Messiah tree from which Jesus, her Savior, would be born a few centuries down the road. Now, back to where we were...]*

This new generation of Israelites had heard the exciting God-histories faithfully recorded, repeated, and recited. They had heard of super-natural plagues that showed how “nothing” the powers of the so-called gods of Egypt. The first, the Nile river, a god the Egyptians worshiped was mocked. The Nile's waters were turned into blood in the first of 10 small demonstrations of God's almighty power and judgment. The Plagues increased in scope and power until the tragic last plague, the Passover Plague. God's judgment killed every firstborn that refused to be under the LORD's protection of lamb-bloodied doorposts.



This new generation had heard of impossible-physics. They had heard how their moms and dads, their aunts and uncles had walked through the Red Sea on a safe, dry, highway. Then they heard how God collapsed the wall of water on the right and on the left and crushed a threatening Egyptian army in its drowning waters.

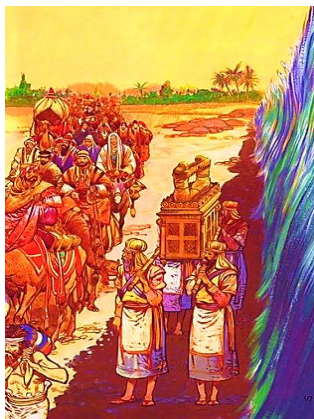
They had been heard of physical-impossibilities like crossing the Red Sea on dry land, hearing God's own thunder and trembling as His holy glory shook the planet when He came down to Mount Sinai. They also heard how their families had watched geologically-impossible rivers of water gushing out of rocks to allay thirsty families and flocks.

And then there's this: every morning for 4 decades, blessings rained down on them. God provided manna, a biological-impossibility food. And this miracle of God had been going on, regularly, 5 days- manna, 1 day- double manna, 1 day- no manna. Over. And. Over. For. Forty. Years. And in addition to the daily manna, they had seen for themselves the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud, pillars of God's promised Presence.

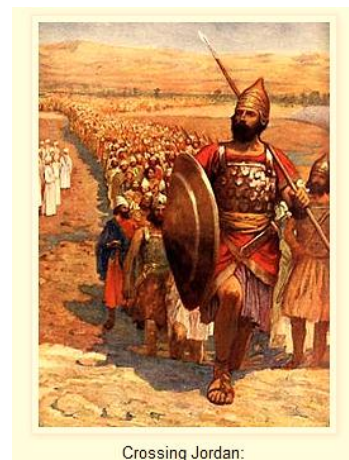


Now, they had been brought by the LORD to take their place. This was their time, time to boldly

follow the living God. In good form, God had the first steps of His people into the Promised Land taken across another patch of dry land, a dry riverbed, at another physically-impossible time, flood stage in the spring. The dry river-bed on which they walked was almost exactly like what the dry sea-bottom their dads and moms saw.



It was also the second miracle after God's first eye-popper of parting the Jordan River when the priests' sandals touched the river's edge. God's second highway leading directly into God's promised land.



When they reached Jericho, the military strategy was unorthodox. The priests were told to march silently, no talking, with the Ark of the Covenant, a public gold box demonstrating God's presence. They did this march around Jericho's walls each day for six days. On the seventh day, they marched around the city seven times. Their parade concluded with the sound of trumpets and shouts of thanksgiving at God's great victory over their enemies.

As they offered up their thanks and praise and music on this seventh circle around the city. Amazingly for the inhabitants, the walls of solid and secure Jericho suddenly completely collapsed! Jericho was utterly destroyed and all of its wealth was devoted to the LORD. Only Rahab and her family were saved as promised.



The land of Canaan was a place of conquest and victory for Israel. When Israel obeyed, God faithfully delivered her enemies into her hands. Every time. When they failed to trust Him, they missed out on the fulfillment of those promises. A temporary defeat at Ai was caused by disobedience and resulted in the first war casualties that Israel ever encountered. But that was later turned to victory when the people exposed and removed the wickedness by following God's command.



In America, the homeland of the writer, the history of the annihilation of entire cities and regions and peoples is a graphic glimpse into God's holy intolerance of sin. If I am ever tempted to keep feeding my pet sin, I need this written reminder. God hates sin and must destroy all ungodliness that comes from Satan's thought. The shock is not that the LORD commanded the deaths of such rebels, but that He had tolerated their presumptuous sins for so many centuries.

In the account of Gibeon we see God's mercy extended to a people who were following the true God. Finally after taking the entire region, Joshua divided up the land tribe by tribe as God promised. Faith in God's words won.

The book closes with Joshua's final words as he recounts the histories of God's faithfulness and deliverance. God keeps His promises. Yet God never forces or coerces His people to participate in the blessings of His promises. Believers hear of God's love, His words move us to trust Him, the Living God. Like Joshua we heed God's empowering and challenging words: *"Choose this day Whom you will serve."* Joshua stated he and his household *"serve the LORD."*

## THE BATTLE BEGINS Joshua 1-24

1. What was the hardest journey/ trip you've ever taken? Or, when were you faced with an overwhelming challenge?
2. What concerns might Joshua have as he is assigned leadership of God's people from God through Moses?



3. *Hebrews 11:30-31 says: "By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the army had marched around them for seven days. By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient."* Rahab- the prostitute- is in the FAITH HALL OF FAME! God redeemed her, which means she must not have remained a prostitute, but rather repented and turned to Him. But it gets even better.

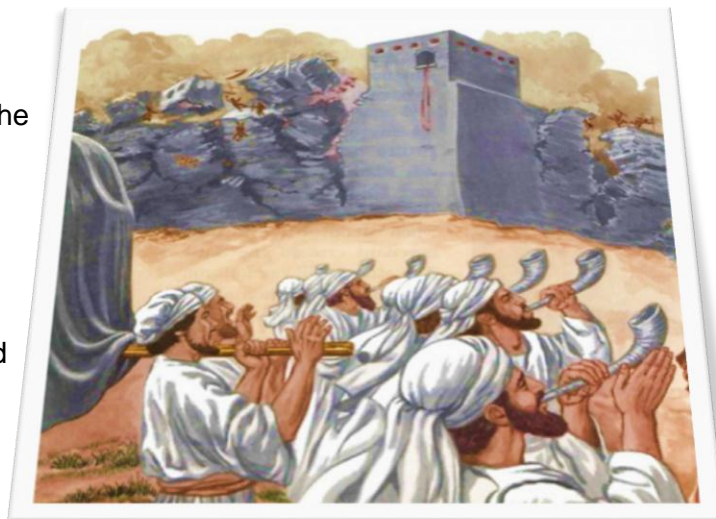
Rahab's faith-based obedience is used by God to explain how faith without deeds is dead. *James 2:25-26: " In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did? when she gave lodging to the spies? and sent them off in a different direction? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead."*

Not only is she in the FAITH HALL OF FAME, and in James' letter, but here's the kicker - in Matthew's intro, verse 5, guess who is in the ancestry of our Savior and king? Yep! This spy-hiding, prostitute liar! Yet the Bible praises her faith. So is it ok by God sometimes ok to lie? and sometimes not ok? Sometimes ok to sell yourself for sex? and sometimes not? Explain.

4. Israel is commanded to destroy entire cities. Why did God call for such drastic action? See Exodus 20:1-3. In other words, we would ask today: were these wars justified?

5. How were these Old Testament wars unlike the wars nations wage today?

7. Joshua challenged people to make a commitment to God [Joshua 24:15]. What would motivate them to publicly take their stand and follow God? What would tempt them to follow other gods/idols?



8. How does God's command to destroy cities fit in with Joshua's challenge for the people to choose whom they will follow?

9. What do you think could be a main point about the book of Joshua? How did God move His promise closer to Easter's empty tomb?

10. Out of a terrible battle and death, the LORD saved Rahab. Out of a destructive deluge, God saved Noah and His family. What do you see God teaching us here?

**Caring Time** – Take some time to encourage one another. Can you share how we can pray for you?

**NEXT TIME:** The Call vs the Culture - Judges 1-8, 13-16