

Route 66

Joshua: Seizing the Promise

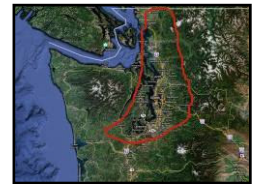
Part 6 – May 3, 2009

700 years have passed since God's covenant with Abraham/Abram to give his descendents the Land of Canaan:

The Lord said to Abram ... "Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever." - *Genesis 13:14-15 NIV*



He's referring to the land of Canaan (later called "Israel"). And because of *this* promise it was known as the "Promised Land". It was approximately 40 miles wide and 180 miles long. That's Anacortes to Birdsvie and Blaine to Olympia.



And now, the time has come for this promise to be fulfilled through an almost 90-year-old Joshua; the Lord says to him:

Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. - *Joshua 1:6 NIV*

Problem is, the cities are well-fortified, and the enemy seems to be super-sized (King Og had a 13' bed! *Deut. 3:11*) and super-bad (God is judging them because of their *wickedness!* *Deut. 9:4-5*). And this makes a lot of sense if you think about it.

Remember how God had notified the serpent (in the garden) that He was going to send a Savior to crush his head? (*Gen. 3:15*) And remember how God chose Abram and said his descendants would be enslaved for 400 years before returning to Canaan? (*Gen. 15:13-16*)

Well, that gave Satan a location *and* a time-frame in which to focus his attention, and build up his forces, by drawing into Canaan the biggest, baddest, vilest dudes He could deprave! If I was Joshua, I'd be a little nervous. And maybe that's why God felt it necessary, right off the bat, to say:



Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. - *Joshua 1:9 NIV*

Then God gives Joshua just *three days* before he must lead the people across a flooded Jordan River to possess the Promised Land, beginning with Jericho. Jericho is a strategic city. It's only about the size of the church parking lot and the wrecking yard.

However, it sits right in the middle of Canaan. So, if and when it was captured it would divide the enemy in half and prevent a massive alliance against Israel. So, just as he and Caleb had been sent to spy out the Promised Land 38 years earlier, Joshua now sends two spies into Jericho.

So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there. - *Joshua 2:1 NIV*

This is the *least* suspicious place for two spies from a nation known for its holiness, purity, and separation. But, they say too much, or they're overheard, and it gets back to the king. He sends officers to arrest them, but Rahab hides them under a pile of flax stalks she's drying on her roof.

She tells the spies that she's heard about Egypt and the Red Sea and King Og, and she has more faith in their God than her king! So, she helps them escape down a rope through a window (her house is part of the wall), and in exchange they promise to save her and her household if she ties a scarlet cord in her window.

Now, Joshua has been Moses' apprentice for 40 years:

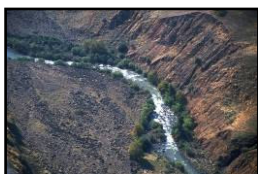
- He was in Egypt (age 50) when Moses confronted Pharaoh.
- He was at the Red Sea when Moses parted the water.
- He was on Mount Sinai when Moses received the law. (*Ex. 24:13*)
- He was outside the tabernacle when Moses spoke to God.

He knew Moses, he served with Moses, and he knew he was no Moses. So God decides to "validate" Joshua at the Jordan River.



And the Lord said to Joshua, "Today I will begin to exalt you in the eyes of all Israel, so they may know that I am with you as I was with Moses. Tell the priests who carry the ark of the covenant: 'When you reach the edge of the Jordan's waters, go and stand in the river.'" - *Joshua 3:7-8 NIV*

And as they did, the water dried up before them! Joshua must've been curious and sent someone to check it out, because they discovered that the water "piled up in a heap" (3:16) eighteen miles upriver at a town called "Adam".



The Jordan runs through the Great Rift Valley; and on several occasions, earthquakes or heavy rains have caused the steep clay cliffs to collapse and block it up. In 1927 a landslide at the ruins of Adam dammed up the Jordan for 21 hours!

Think of how that must've looked. The water tapered off as they advanced; so it would appear they were dragging the shoreline along with them until they stopped in the

center of the dry bed! But: The Lord didn't act *until* they waded in. We give God the opportunity to show us that He's *with us* every time we step out in obedience in spite of our fears and feelings.

Now they're *in* the Promised Land! And after they've gathered and eaten food from this side of the Jordan, the manna stops.

And then a very strange thing happens:

Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" "Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?" The commander of the Lord's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." - *Joshua 5:13-15a NIV*

Who is this Commander of the Army of the Lord? It *isn't* an angel; throughout scripture they rebuke men who fall in reverence to them and command them to worship God. (*Rev. 19:10*) This sounds a lot like when God appeared to Moses at the burning bush and told *him* to take off *his* sandals. But God made it clear to Moses that a man can't see His face and live to tell about it! Did you know that Moses changed Joshua's name?

Moses gave Hoshea son of Nun the name Joshua. [*Hebrew meaning: "The Lord saves"*] - *Numbers 13:16 NIV*

Q: Do you know how to pronounce the name "Jesus" in Hebrew?

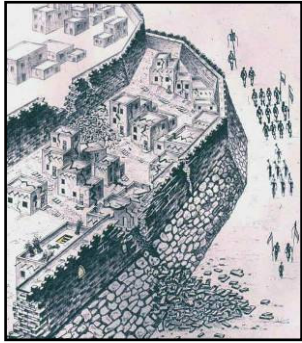
A: Joshua! The same name given to Mary's firstborn son!

Joshua *and* Moses both got to meet the one they were to represent. Moses was *never* going to be allowed into Canaan. And it *wasn't* just because he got mad and struck a rock. Didn't that strike you as a little harsh?! It was because he *represented* the law of God. And ... the law *can't* take you into the Promised Land!

On the day Joshua finished burying Moses - the embodiment of the law - God tells Joshua to rise up in three days, so he can lead his people through the water and into the Promised Land! And Jesus is the One who gives His namesake the battle plan:

Then the Lord said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have all the people give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the people will go up, every man straight in." - *Joshua 6:2-5 NIV*

Jesus is beginning a battle that will end with the crushing of Satan's head/power: the grip of sin and the death. The Commander has come to fight against flesh with Spirit!



Notice it says they will: “go up” and then “in”? Excavations have revealed that Jericho was built on a 70' mound with a retaining wall at the base and then two security walls in tiers above that.

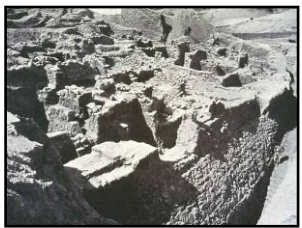
Excavations also show that the entire structure cataclysmically failed around 1400 BC, forming a ramp up and into the city.

The mound was saturated (it's the rainy season), and perhaps the same tremor that plugged the river also weakened those walls.



For six days 40,000 men pounded the ground in unison *once* around the city. But then, on the seventh day, they just kept going. How very odd. The curious men of Jericho probably crowded onto those walls to see what was going to happen next!

And the walls come tumbling down ... well, not *all* the walls.



There's this one prostitute whose house is built *into* the wall; a woman whose faith will not only deliver *her* and *her household*, but eventually include her in the genealogy of Jesus. Excavations also reveal that a portion of the north wall of Jericho didn't collapse. This section is on the lower level, above the retaining wall, and had the city's low-income housing built right into it.



But, the most unusual find was the great quantity of **grain jars**. They were part of a siege (they'd been burned); the siege happened quickly (or they would've been eaten); and just after the harvest (when one would be drying flax stalks on her roof). And grain was more valuable than gold! The looters had left the best plunder, just as the Israelites were instructed to do:

The city and all that is in it are to be devoted to the Lord. - *Joshua 6:17 NIV*

But one man named Achan took some of the plunder from Jericho and hid it under his tent. And because of his sin, the Israelites lost their next battle with a little town called Ai. The lesson here: Our sin affects those we care about most.

But this would be the last battle they would lose. They routed out the sin from their camp, renewed their covenant with God, and defeated Ai in a rematch. And then, with God's miraculous assistance, and their faithful obedience, they conquered stronghold after stronghold! And seven years later, Joshua divided up the land between the tribes.

But, there are still pockets of resistance throughout Canaan, so each tribe is made responsible for finishing the job and driving out the remaining opposition in their quarter. And remember Caleb, the only other faithful spy besides Joshua? He has a special request from his old friend:

So here I am today, eighty-five years old! I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I'm just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. Now give me this hill country that the Lord promised me that day. You yourself heard then that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but, the Lord helping me, I will drive them out just as he said. - *Joshua 14:10-12 NIV*

He's 85! And the last thing he wants is to retire from God's army. He doesn't want ease ... he wants victor-ease!

And Joshua, at 97, leads for another 13 years! But, as we come to the end of the book, Joshua comes to the end of his life. He gathers his people together and warns them to drive out their enemy and throw out their idols. And then He dies at the ripe old age of 110; and he's buried in the Promised Land.

There's not a single negative word about Joshua in all the Bible.

And what a simple, incredible, profound epitaph he's given:

Israel served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua ... - *Joshua 24:31 NIV*