

## The Book of Jesus | Crossing Into the Land of Promise

### Jericho

Joshua 5-6

9.30.18

*On the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain.<sup>12</sup> The manna ceased on the day after they had eaten some of the produce of the land, so that the sons of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate some of the yield of the land of Canaan during that year.*

<sup>13</sup> *Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us or for our adversaries?"<sup>14</sup> He said, "No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the LORD." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, "What has my lord to say to his servant?"<sup>15</sup> The captain of the LORD'S host said to Joshua, "Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.*

*Now Jericho was tightly shut because of the sons of Israel; no one went out and no one came in.<sup>2</sup> The LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and the valiant warriors.<sup>3</sup> "You shall march around the city, all the men of war circling the city once. You shall do so for six days.<sup>4</sup> "Also seven priests shall carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark; then on the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets.<sup>5</sup> "It shall be that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people will go up every man straight ahead."*

<sup>17</sup> *"The city shall be under the ban, it and all that is in it belongs to the LORD; only Rahab the harlot and all who are with her in the house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent.<sup>18</sup> "But as for you, only keep yourselves from the things under the ban, so that you do not covet them and take some of the things under the ban, and make the camp of Israel accursed and bring trouble on it.<sup>19</sup> "But all the silver and gold and articles of bronze and iron are holy to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD."*

<sup>20</sup> *So the people shouted, and priests blew the trumpets; and when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted with a great shout and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight ahead, and they took the city.<sup>21</sup> They utterly destroyed everything in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword.<sup>22</sup> Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the harlot's house and bring the woman and all she has out of there, as you have sworn to her."<sup>23</sup> So the young men who were spies went in and brought out Rahab and her father and her mother and her brothers and all she had; they also brought out all her relatives and placed them outside the camp of Israel.<sup>24</sup> They burned the city with fire, and all that was in it. Only the silver and gold, and articles of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD.<sup>25</sup> However, Rahab the harlot and her father's household and all she had, Joshua spared; and she has lived in the midst of Israel to this day, for she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.*

**Today we're looking at a very famous scene in the Bible...** As we've said, it's a children's story and if you grew up in the Church you likely learned it in your Sunday School class...and maybe you imagined it like a scene from a super-hero movie...

But as you got older... you tried to look at this as an event that actually happened in history and that raised some problems for you...BECAUSE it involves a miracle (and you see yourself as a scientific person, a thinking person) AND it involves religious violence and that is repugnant to you... because IF there is a God, He surely would NOT sanction religious violence...

So I'll kind of warn you: I actually DO believe this happened... (I've concluded the miracle issue – if there IS an almighty Creator, then, He can do miracles) AND I also see that this whole scene is INDEED a description of religious violence and as such it IS terrible...and while I don't fully understand it, I DO BELIEVE IT WAS WARRANTED... and yet still terrible...

And embedded in this story of Jericho's destruction are a number of mysteries that open up a bigger perspective, a much bigger story and an explanation of the WHOLE HUMAN STORY... and seeing things from this mysterious but wider perspective is actually very helpful in my quest to understand God and my life...and the purpose of everything.

Sometimes a patient actually benefits from electroconvulsive therapy... I'm sure it's terrible to go through it and terrible to see a loved one go through it...but sometimes it IS the counterintuitive treatment that works, sort of "reboots" the whole psyche... It's like when a patient complains of chronic fatigue ("Doctor, I'm always tired!") and the doctor prescribes a rigorous exercise program: "WHAT! That's only going to make me MORE tired!" AND yet that upside-down approach is just what the patient needs – it's a paradox.

You may THINK what you need from the Bible is the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm or those three or four "go-to" passages you read again and again...BUT maybe forcing yourself to digest this passage about the total destruction of a city and all its people...this MAY be the counterintuitive electro-shock therapy that reboots your soul.

Let's look at 1) Moment and Mystery 2) Man of Mystery and 3) Moving In Mystery

The MOMENT: the Israelites have crossed the Jordan River and are now in the Promised Land. They're told to circumcise all the males who haven't BEEN circumcised...this will bind them together as a people and sever their ties with Egypt (pun intended).

Then they eat the Passover... apparently it's been many years and THIS TOO will confirm to them that they are God's ransomed people – saved from Egypt through this sacred meal. And then the MANNA stops (remember that? Over 40 years!) but now they eat from the Land – nomads no more! They're home!

And then they launch out... the priests are to carry the Ark of the Covenant (symbol of God's presence) and it's really not a military campaign, it's a ritual. ...It's a kind of a spiritual worship experience. They march around this fortified city once per day for seven days and on the seventh day they march seven times and then the 7 priests blow the 7 trumpets and all the

people shout and the walls fall flat. It looks sort of silly but one thing is clear – God gave them the city.

Then every living thing is killed... eradicated completely and the city is burned!

Except the House of Rahab... (her again!) and all who have taken refuge there ARE SPARED and incorporated into Israel... a little flash of mercy in the judgment.

Now... this act of religious war is troublesome to us and for some people it's the reason they reject the Bible and Christianity altogether – "I can't believe in a God who does violence...calls for violence" and WHAT do I say to that person?

Well, first, I don't understand it all. There's mystery in all of the Bible and in all of life.

Second, this was a specific moment in history. God was establishing His headquarters on planet earth; the people of Abraham are chosen to be His HOLY people and the Land He would give them was to be a model for the whole world – the City on a Hill!

Third, Canaanite religion practiced child sacrifice. In fact so many ancient religions practiced human sacrifice. A recent article in the magazine *Science* told about recent excavations in Mexico City that confirmed accounts written by Spanish Conquistadors in the early 1500s. One account said that there was one rack of skulls from sacrifice victims, a tower of an estimated 130,000 skulls!

And it was considered a gross exaggeration until recently when excavations in 2015 verified it.

And an interesting point is that the writer of the original article, Lizzie Wade, pushed back against the critics on Twitter to say, "Hey, this was just their way to make sense of life and who are we to judge?"

The practice of human sacrifice in Canaanite religion is well documented ... When it says in the Hebrew Bible that "they made their sons pass through the fire", THAT'S a kind of euphemism for child sacrifice. They bargain with the gods – "we will sacrifice our children to Molech if Molech will give us rain for our crops and safety from our enemies". It's KARMA.

And later history will show that the Israelites were very susceptible to the contagion of child-sacrifice... That's why every vestige of it had to be eradicated.

War is a kind of corporate capital punishment (the death penalty for a whole people) and that's what we're witnessing in this period of history and it's hard to read. It's like gangrene that leads to an amputation... It's NOT compassionate to leave the limb when the infection will take the whole body.

And so as Joshua readies the people for war – THEY are reminded about a relationship with God that is NOT based on KARMA but on grace. The circumcision is about their being CHOSEN by God. They don't get chosen BECAUSE they did the ritual – it's the other way around – circumcised because we HAVE BEEN CHOSEN (not KARMA but GRACE).

The Passover Meal reminds them that God gave a lamb to substitute for His guilty people – not KARMA but GRACE.

Rahab received the gift of mercy by simply believing – another show of GRACE NOT KARMA (Heb 11.31).

AND then there's this wonderful and strange meeting with this mysterious Man. Where did He come from? What is His name?

Joshua looks up and there He is – standing opposite to him, sword drawn. Joshua approaches him and asks the obvious question – “Are you for US or for our adversaries?”

And the Man just says, “No.” (Huh!?)

“I am on the LORD'S side... I've come to fight for the cause of YHWH – YOU didn't think YOU were doing something for God DID YOU? Apart from Me, you can do nothing! The battle belongs to the LORD, Some boast in chariots, and some in horses; but we will boast in the name of the LORD, our God. NOT KARMA or human deserving but divine grace!” (Psa 20.7)

“I am the Sar Saba-oth – the Leader of the LORD'S armies...”

And Joshua fell on His face and then asks, “Uh...what should I do (as if to say – how will I win this battle?) and the Mysterious Man says, “Receive it as a gift – I am the Presence of Holiness...take off your shoes.”

And Joshua does...see Joshua son of Nun is meeting Joshua Son of God...the same Man whom John met on the Island of Patmos, the Man who conquered our last enemy, death, and whose words are able to kill and make alive – a sword comes from His mouth.

This is Joshua meeting Yeshua... this is the One who will 1400 years later actually become a Human Being and will then be the One and only acceptable Human sacrifice who will die in Joshua's place and be raised to conquer death itself...

The whole Book of Revelation has so much in common with the Book of Joshua. Both books feature a harlot (Rahab and Babylon – the City that Falls like Jericho). Both feature Seven Trumpets. Both have two witnesses who enter the city and escape. Both books have 12 Stones

(the stones of remembrance and the 12 foundation stones of the New Jerusalem). Both are a call to a holy life not based on the Karma of the world but on the GRACE of God – come out from the world! Jericho is a type of the world... and the world will fall.

But mainly both books are really about the True Joshua, Yeshua Messiah, who is the Commander of the Hosts of Heaven and who overcomes the world.

And this means that EVEN in this difficult passage that talks about corporate Capital Punishment and the eradication of that blood-thirsty child sacrifice religion inspired by the evil one himself...even in this shocking passage – we see the Mysterious God on the move and calling us to move with Him.

You know, there's a lot going on in this world that just leaves me puzzled. I don't have it figured out. I don't what's going on in politics (sorry to even raise that!). I don't know what's going on with other people...and I really don't know what's going on in ME, half the time (like Paul in Romans 7).

Are you like I am? OR do you have it together? Do you have it figured out? Are you finding yourself a mystery, others a mystery, GOD, THE GREATEST MYSTERY OF ALL? Do you have lots of unanswered questions?... And now this passage that looks like genocide or at least Divine Violence...what to do?

The world is a mysterious place and the Bible is a mysterious book and God is Himself an infinite mystery – I mean how much do you understand God? What percentage of God's Person and work do you understand?

But do you see how even in the most mysterious and counter-cultural, counterintuitive parts of the Bible you still can't escape these glimpses of Grace from the God who eventually took the sword of justice IN OUR PLACE and was pierced with the nails and the thorns and the spear that I might be like Rahab and be spared along with my family.

Do you see the beauty and the enthralling mystery that is unfolding in the pages of Scripture and will eventually come to full bloom in the Revelation of the True Joshua Jesus Christ?

The whole thing works together in my own thinking to move me to trust this mysterious King who will shock us... in order to send us running into His strong arms, the Everlasting Arms.

I hope after this little jaunt into a difficult passage that is still dripping with grace, MYSTERIOUS GRACE, I hope you find yourself even more inclined to trust Him and the Captain who never leaves us and fights to conquer us and free us by His grace.