

Joshua 5-8 • Gilgal, Victory, Defeat and Renewal

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Chapter 5 is incredibly important. I want to just fill you in and let you know that the nation of Israel has now crossed the Jordan. They're in the land of Canaan. They're in the land that God had promised through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It's been many, many years since any Israelites have lived in this land, but now they're here. This is the beginning and this is where it all starts.

Chapter 5 says, *“As soon as all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan for the people of Israel until they had crossed over, their hearts melted and there was no longer any spirit in them because of the people of Israel.” (ESV)*

Well, this is the way you want your enemy. This is, if you're going to fight a battle, you want your enemy having his knees knocking together, right? You want him literally melting with fear. You'd think to yourself, well, hey, this is perfect. This is the time. This is the time to attack right here, right now. Let's get into it. Let's do it. I have no doubt that some of the soldiers, maybe even all of them, believed that now was the time. An all-out offensive should be happening right now. They are afraid of us.

Verse 2, *“At that time the LORD said to Joshua, “Make flint knives and circumcise the sons of Israel a second time.”* I want you to pause there for just a moment because this is the opposite of probably anything that you or I would do as it relates to the timing of any sort of an attack.

And guys, can I just talk to you here? As we go through this, we're going to be talking about the historical, physical battles of Israel. But I want you to know that these things tie directly into the spiritual battles that you and I fight on a regular basis. All right.

And so the very first thing that we learn here is that many times what we see and the timing that we perceive about a particular battle, may not be what the Lord sees and the timing that He has for that battle. Because again, you want

your enemy to be shaken in his boots or sandals as the case may be. You want your enemy fearing you.

And to hear that is in fact going on and then for the Lord then to say, all right, now I want you to get some flint knives out and we're going to circumcise the boys. Right? That's just like, is this really the time? Is this, Lord? You start questioning, Lord, is this the best time to do this sort of a thing?

This had to be a very challenging command for Joshua to hear because, essentially, what it means, effectively, is that they are going to incapacitate their entire army for a number of days. And they're over the Jordan. In other words, they're in enemy territory, right? And then you incapacitate your army. You literally get them in a place where if they were attacked during those days when they were healing, all would be lost. And yet, this is what the Lord tells them to do.

Are you learning things about the God you serve? Sometimes the commands He gives aren't going to make sense to you. On a military strategic level this doesn't make a lick of sense. God, why are you saying this right now? But, thankfully Joshua obeyed.

It says in verse 3, *“So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the sons of Israel at Gibeath-haaraloth. ⁴ And this is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: all the males of the people who came out of Egypt, all the men of war, had died in the wilderness on the way after they had come out of Egypt. (and) ⁵ Though all the people who came out had been circumcised, yet (look at this) all the people who were born on the way in the wilderness after they had come out of Egypt had not been circumcised.”*

We're not told why. That was an act of disobedience on the part of the people, but they just didn't do it. *“⁶ For the people of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, the men of war who came out of Egypt, perished, because they did not obey the voice of the LORD; the LORD swore to them that he would not let them see the land that the LORD had sworn to their fathers to give to us, a land flowing with milk and honey. ⁷ So it was their children, whom he raised up in their place, that Joshua circumcised. For they were uncircumcised, because they had not been circumcised on the way.”*

Now let's stop there for a moment because we need to talk about circumcision even though you may not want to. I want to remind you about something related to circumcision. It was first of all, the covenant sign between God and Israel. It

was the sign that God gave to Israel, you'll remember, originally through their patriarch Abraham.

But more than that, it symbolized their covenant relationship with Him, and it symbolizes for you and me, a greater reality. Because you see what the Israelites did was the circumcision accomplished in the flesh. It involved a cutting away, a cutting away of the flesh. But circumcision stood as a picture of a greater spiritual reality and one that is talked about much in the New Testament. Let me show you a passage from Colossians up on the screen. Colossians chapter 2 it says,

Colossians 2:11-14 (ESV)

In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, (in other words, the sinful nature) by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

And it goes on to say,

Colossians 2:11-14 (ESV)

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

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That's one of those wonderful passages in the Book of Colossians. But you'll notice how many times it speaks of circumcision, but not in the literal physical sense, but rather in the spiritual sense of putting off the sinful nature, which the Bible refers to as, "*the flesh.*" Understanding that, let's keep reading and let's see if we can figure out more about what's going on here.

Verse 8 says, *“When the circumcising of the whole nation was finished, they remained in their places in the camp until they were healed. 9 And the LORD said to Joshua, “Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.” And so the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day.”*

And Gilgal is a word that simply sounds very much like the Hebrew phrase, to roll, but again, on a physical level. On a physical level. This was God's way of getting past the past, renewing the covenant for the future that He made originally with their forefathers and so forth before they engaged the Canaanites.

But on a spiritual level, what does this mean to you and me? I mean, what can we, how can we connect this to battles? Because remember, remember, this whole picture of entering into the promised land is metaphoric for you and me. And the analogy is this picture of walking out the promises of God because this is the promised land. So for you and me, this means walking out God's promises day by day, but dealing with the battles that come with walking out those promises.

Well, the battles are not physical, they're spiritual, right? We know that. The Bible tells us that. We don't fight against a physical enemy, we fight against spiritual enemies, right? If we're going to fight against spiritual enemies, we better know how to do it, or we're going to get beat up. We're constantly fighting.

See, we think we're fighting against physical enemies, but we're not, it's spiritual. The battles are spiritual. So what is God speaking to us? How, what's He saying to us about the preparation that is necessary for going into spiritual battles.

Well, He's preparing the people of Israel in all the ways that really matter, but He's speaking to you and me also about the things of the flesh that need to be put aside before we enter into spiritual battle. Those things that He's been convicting us about. You're going to go into battle with the enemy and he's going to pull out all the stops and he's going to, and we're going to, we'll talk about this in a minute.

He's going to accuse you of everything you've ever done. You got to make sure when you're going into a spiritual battle, that there aren't just these open areas of disobedience in your life where the flesh has been ruling and reigning in your life. And this is what the Lord is calling us to think about, to pray about, and to come before the Lord about, as it relates to those spiritual battles. And our need

to say, Father, this is, I'm about to go into some heavy duty warfare here, and I can't afford to have something weighing me down that the enemy is going to accuse me of and point the finger at. Okay, we'll talk more about that here in a minute.

Check out the next verse which is verse 10. It says, *“While the people of Israel were encamped at Gilgal, they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening on the plains of Jericho.”*

Alright, this is so good. Not only did God begin to prepare His people for the upcoming battles through the picture of putting off the flesh. The cutting away, the circumcision that He required of them, but He also had them keep the Sabbath. Now, again, you guys remember what the Sabbath is all about.

The very first Sabbath; Passover, excuse me. The very first Passover took place in Egypt when God brought the final plague that released them from their slavery in Egypt to set them free.

All of these things are a picture. Egypt is a picture of the world. Pharaoh is a picture of Satan who wants to keep you in slavery. Their slavery in Egypt is a picture of the slavery that we experience apart from Christ when we're living in the world. And Passover is the picture of our salvation that sets us free from slavery to sin and death, and allows us to walk free into the will of God.

But what was the picture that He gave? He told the people of Israel to sacrifice a lamb and to take that blood, and you'll remember, and to literally take a hyssop branch and paint it on the door post of their home. And then to stay indoors where they would shelter under the blood of the lamb. And when the angel of death crossed Egypt that night, they would be safe from being put to death. In other words Passover is a picture of being saved from death by sheltering under the blood of the Lamb.

Now we have these two pictures for you and me, as it relates to spiritual warfare, and how the Lord is speaking to us about preparing our lives for those times when we're praying. And praying hard and battling for situations, whatever they may be.

Maybe you're battling spiritually for a loved one. Maybe you're battling spiritually for health issues. Maybe you're battling spiritually for any other number of sorts of things, and you just recognize this is a spiritual attack. And so you, it's time to go to work. It's time to pray. It's time to press in. It's time to start fasting and to really hit this thing hard.

So what do you do? You begin by coming to the Lord. These are beautiful pictures, unmistakable for us. You begin by coming to the Lord and you come to Him first of all, and you understand, here's who I'm going into battle against. We battle not against flesh and blood, but through spiritual powers. (Ephesians 6:12)

Now, what is the biggest..., what is the enemy going to use against you? That's what I'm trying to say. What's the what's the device he's going to bring against you to try to get you to back off? Well, it all centers around what the Bible calls the enemy in Scripture. This is his weapon and it's in the Book of Revelation, and I want to show it to you on the screen. Revelation chapter 12, and it says,

Revelation 12:10 (ESV)

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God."

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, (and look, I want to you see how they refer to the enemy) for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who (does what?) accuses them day and night before our God."

Well, let me tell you something about the enemy, we're talking about Satan. He not only accuses you before God, he accuses you to yourself. He brings accusation against your own, your sins to you. And this is the deal, and this is why it's so important to understand the prep that God is giving us a picture of here in the Book of Joshua.

When you engage in spiritual warfare, you're fighting against those spiritual powers, as we've already mentioned. And by the way, if you want to see that passage on the screen, it's Ephesians chapter 6, that's the one we've been talking about. That says,

Ephesians 6:12 (ESV)

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, (then what are we wrestling against? Well) but against (it's) the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

And as you wrestle, the enemy, the accuser, as he's referred to in the Bible, is going to come against you with everything he's got. And can I just tell you something? He doesn't play fair. He doesn't set out to just give you a bad day or to bum you out. He sets out to take you out of the game. And I have watched as people have been taken out of the game by the accusations of the enemy. He is very clever.

And so we begin by understanding this idea, this spiritual idea of circumcision. This removing of the flesh, that sin that the Bible says, so easily entangles. And it's also important for us to understand that circumcision is not something that is done with human hands, as we read earlier. It's a work that's done by the Lord.

If there's an area in your life that you're struggling to get victory over, then bring it to the Lord in prayer, and tell Him that you can't do it on your own. And tell Him you need His help to overcome. Because listen, the flesh cannot reform the flesh. It has to be through the Spirit, the Spirit of God. And so it's very important that we understand this.

You come to the Lord first and foremost and you say, Lord, I am engaging or about to engage in some real heavy duty spiritual battles. But I know that there's some areas in my life that the enemy is going to very aggressively go after. Because there are some areas in my life where I've not gained victory and my flesh is, just seems to just have its own way. And so I give this to You, and I pray that You would give me the victory. That's the first thing.

But the other thing that's important is remember, it's Passover. Passover for the Jews was the reminder of how they are kept from death. And that is again, sheltering under the blood of the Lamb. How are you saved? How are you saved? Same way. Sheltering under the blood of the Lamb by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

And before you go into spiritual battle, you've got to come to terms with the simple fact that I am saved, not by my own good works, not by my own effort, but by what Jesus did for me on the cross.

And the reason that's so important is when the enemy, the accuser, comes against you, you've got to be able to respond and say no, no, no, it's not about

me. It's not about what I've done. It's not about all the ways I've screwed up in my life. It's about what Jesus did on the cross. That's why I'm saved. That's why I'm secure in my salvation. It is through Him and not me.

Listen, people, if you're not truly convinced that your salvation is all about Jesus, the enemy is going to play you like a bad fiddle. And I've watched people go down in the midst of spiritual battles because they did not have a secure foundational understanding of their simple salvation.

They believed it just fine when things were going great, but as soon as the enemy began to attack, and began to remind them of all the things they've ever done in their life, and he begins to whisper and say, you? A person like you? Saved? Are you joking?

And believe me, he's relentless in his pursuit to get you to question your salvation. He is relentless. You got to know that you know that you know that you know. And you've heard me say that over and over again. You got to know that you know that you know, I am saved. I'm a born again Christian because I'm a good person? Heaven's no. Because I've lived a good life? Absolutely not. Because I've always done things correctly? No way.

I am a born again Christian because of what Jesus did for me on the cross and it is through Him and Him alone that I am saved. That's what has to be known for a certainty. As I said before, the enemy doesn't play fair.

Verse 11 and 12. These are interesting verses. *“And the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. ¹² And the manna ceased the day after they ate of the produce of the land. And there was no longer manna for the people of Israel, but they ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.”*

I got to tell you something. I'm sure manna tasted fine. But anything that you eat for 40 years has got to get old. I mean, unless it's pizza, I could keep going on pizza forever. But this manna bread that they had to make with this stuff, I don't know that, but they were really, really glad to begin to eat the produce of the land.

Anyway, this next part is really fascinating because up to this point, you got to know Joshua is looking at. They're literally camped in the shadow of Jericho, this enormous walled city which, it's standing right in their way, so they got to get past Jericho. He hasn't received any marching orders up to this point. He doesn't know what they're going to do.

It says here, ¹³ *When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. (how weird) And Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?"* ¹⁴ *And he said, "No; but I am the commander of the army of the LORD. Now I have come."* *And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, "What does my lord say to his servant?"* ¹⁵ *And the commander of the LORD's army said to Joshua, "Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy."* *And Joshua did so."*

You can hear some remnants there of Moses connection when he met the Lord in the burning bush. Alright, let's talk about these verses here just a little bit.

Joshua is out there, he's probably scouting the situation, looking at Jericho, thinking, well, that's a big city, and those are some big walls. And suddenly there's this impressive looking man standing in the distance with a drawn sword. And by the way, there are other biblical references to angelic figures holding a drawn sword. And I'll just tell you this, it is typically a picture in the Bible of impending judgment. Okay, so you just need to know that.

But Joshua walks up to this man and puts to him a simple question. He basically says, *"Are you for us, or..."* are you for them? Right? And the response that he's given here is not only a little bit surprising, it's also a little confusing. Because this figure who stands before him simply says, *"No;..."* Well, it wasn't really a yes or no question. He said, *"Are you for us or,..."* are you against us? *"No;..."* Maybe you didn't hear me. *"Are you for us or,..."* are you against us?

Well, it's interesting. The NIV, if you have an NIV Bible, tries to render this in a little more understandable way. It has this figure saying to Joshua, *"Neither."* In other words, the response is, I'm not for you or for your enemy. And frankly, even though that's not what the Hebrew literally says, it's probably a fairly good rendering of what is being said here. Because essentially, Joshua was asking the wrong question, and that is what I believe the Lord is communicating.

You see, to Joshua, and many times to you and me when we're engaged in spiritual warfare, the issue is kind of a we against them, sort of a scenario. It's our side, and then the other side, and we certainly want the Lord to be on our side, whatever we're dealing with. Lord, I really need you on my side.

But I believe that the Lord was gently reminding Joshua that He doesn't take our side. And I think that's an important thing to remember. We take His side. And that's why I believe the Lord said, no when Joshua asked, *"Are you for us, or*

for our...” enemies? No. No. No. No. That's not even the right question. This issue isn't about, this isn't a you versus them sort of a situation.

And I believe that Joshua should have recognized the fact that this drawn sword that the Lord is showing here at this time is a symbol of the Lord's judgment. Because as I said, an angel, or messenger of the Lord, or even the Lord Himself, as I believe this is the case, with a drawn sword is a common picture of judgment. And in this case, it is the Lord's way of saying that the sin of the Amorites is now complete. Because remember, the reason Israel went to go live in Egypt for 400 years, well, do you know why? He actually, the Lord explained it to Abraham. Let me put it up on the screen. Genesis 15:15, and 16. It says,

Genesis 15:15-16 (ESV)

“As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”

“As for you, (Lord talking to Abraham) you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, (look at this, look at this) for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”

Okay. In other words, God was giving the Amorites time to repent. He was giving them time to turn from their sinful ways. But they, and how long did He give them? You think 400 years is long enough? We don't even know how long He'd been giving them before that. I mean, talk about patience. Talk about patience.

Joshua and all Israel needed to know that they were here to carry out the Lord's battle. This was the Lord's judgment. This was, they were going to be the agent of God's judgment but this was God's battle. That's the point. And that's the point for you and me when we engage in spiritual warfare. It's not a we versus them. This is God's battle. And the Bible tells us that the battle belongs to the Lord. And that's the important thing that we have to remember but so often forget.

Okay, as for the identity of this commander of the army of the Lord. You've heard me say that I believe it's the Lord Himself, and the reason I believe that is because of the way Joshua responded in verse 14. It says it right there. *“Joshua fell on his face to the earth and (did what? He) worshiped...”* He worshipped. And you'll notice there was no rebuke from this being saying, don't worship me as we see in other books of the Bible.

Like the Book of Revelation when John the apostle fell at the feet of an angel and began to worship. He was immediately rebuked. Do not worship. I'm a servant of God, just like you, the angel would say. But in this case, as in the case of Jesus, when they worshiped Him in the boat, after He rescued Peter from sinking, it was received, right? There you go.

And judging by what we read in the next chapter, this exchange goes on into chapter 6 as it relates to how Jericho was to come against the city, or excuse me, how Joshua was to come against the city of Jericho. There we go.

Chapter 6. *“Now Jericho was shut up inside and outside because of the people of Israel. None went out, and none came in.”* And the reason for this is because the people of Jericho considered the walls of their city to be their greatest strength. Right? The army wasn't the greatest strength, it was the walls. And if you want to win a battle, the best advantage is to make sure you keep your enemy on the other side of the walls, right? Very simple.

Now we hear the instructions given to Joshua. *“² And the LORD said to Joshua, “See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and mighty men of valor. ³ You shall march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once. Thus shall you do for six days. ⁴ Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. ⁵ And when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, when you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people shall go up, everyone straight before him.”*

⁶ So Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, “Take up the ark of the covenant and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD.” ⁷ And he said to the people, “Go forward. March around the city and let the armed men pass on before the ark of the LORD.”

⁸ And just as Joshua had commanded the people, the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the LORD went forward, blowing the trumpets, with the ark of the covenant of the LORD following them. ⁹ The armed men were walking before the priests who were blowing the trumpets, and the rear guard was walking after the ark, while the trumpets blew continually. ¹⁰ But Joshua commanded the people, “You shall not shout or make your voice heard, neither shall any word go out of your mouth, until the day I tell you to shout. Then you shall shout.” ¹¹ So he caused the ark of the LORD to circle the

city, going about it once. And they came into the camp and spent the night in the camp.

¹² Then Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD. ¹³ And the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD walked on, and they blew the trumpets continually. And the armed men were walking before them, and the rear guard was walking after the ark of the LORD, while the trumpets blew continually. ¹⁴ And the second day they marched around the city once, and returned into the camp. So they did for six days.

¹⁵ On the seventh day they rose early, at the dawn of day, and marched around the city in the same manner seven times. It was only on that day that they marched around the city seven times.” Can you imagine what it would have been like being in Jericho, knowing that all this is going on outside your city walls?

“¹⁶ And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, “Shout, for the LORD has given you the city.” And the next statement is important, pay attention to this.

“¹⁷ And the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the LORD for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent. ¹⁸ But you, keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction, lest when you have devoted them you take any of the devoted things (and listen to this, this is the warning) and make the camp of Israel a thing for destruction (in other words, make us liable for destruction) and bring trouble upon it.” ¹⁹ But all silver and gold, and every vessel of bronze and iron, are holy to the LORD; (look what's to happen to those) they shall go into the treasury of the LORD.”

What's God showing them here by this? The first fruits go to the Lord. This is first fruits, that's all it is. So He says, with Jericho, it's all Mine. With the rest of the cities, take what you want. And He's going to say that later. But for the first city, it's all Mine.

Verse 20, “So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they captured the city. ²¹ Then they devoted all in the city to destruction, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys, with the edge of the sword.

22 But to the two men who had spied out the land, Joshua said, "Go into the prostitute's house and bring out from there the woman and all who belong to her, as you swore to her."

Now remember, she lived in the wall, so this section of the city was the only thing standing. The rest of the city falls down flat, and this one section, which housed Rahab and her family, stayed, stayed upright. Alright?

"So the young men (verse 23) who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab and her father and mother and brothers and all who belonged to her.

And they brought all her relatives and put them outside the camp of Israel.

24 And they burned the city with fire, and everything in it. Only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD. 25 But Rahab the prostitute and her father's household and all who belonged to her, Joshua saved alive. And she has lived in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho."

And let me just tell you that not only did Rahab continue to live in Israel as we're told here, but she married a man in Israel, and she bore children to that man. And what's amazing about that and those children is that they actually appear in the genealogy of king David. Let me put this on the screen from Matthew.

Matthew 1:2-6 (ESV)

Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king.

Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king.

And you know that the Messiah was born in the lineage of David the king. So you literally, you have this prostitute who is in the lineage of Messiah. Talk about the grace of God. Isn't that incredible?

Verse 26 says, *“Joshua laid an oath on them at that time, saying, “Cursed before the LORD be the man who rises up and rebuilds this city, Jericho.*

“At the cost of his firstborn shall he lay its foundation, and at the cost of his youngest son shall he set up its gates.” (and that does come to pass later on)

(and) ²⁷ *So the LORD was with Joshua, and his fame was in all the land.”*

That's an interesting statement. Joshua's fame was in all the land. What was his fame for? Obedience to God. He didn't do anything special. He just, I mean, what he did was he marched around the city once for six days and then on the seventh day, seven times and then they shouted. They shouted. They yelled and the city walls fell down. Shouting doesn't cause city walls to fall down. The Lord caused the city walls to fall down. The point of this whole thing is the fame of Joshua was a result of obedience, and that's, I think, an important thing to keep in mind.

Chapter 7. *“But the people of Israel broke faith in regard to the devoted things, for Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of the devoted things. And the anger of the Lord burned against the people of Israel.*

² *Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-aven, east of Bethel, and said to them, “Go up and spy out the land.” And the men went up and spied out Ai. ³ And they returned to Joshua and said to him, (oh, hey) “Do not have all the people go up, but (just) let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not make the whole people toil up there, for (it's a small town) they are few.” ⁴ So about three thousand men went up there from the people. (but look at this) And they fled before the men of Ai, ⁵ and the men of Ai (in fact) killed about thirty-six of their men and chased them before the gate as far as Shebarim and struck them at the descent. And the hearts of the people melted and became as water.”*

And that included Joshua because it says, *“⁶ Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until the evening, he and the elders of Israel. And they put dust on their heads.”* Listen to what Joshua

says, *“⁷ And Joshua said, “Alas, O Lord GOD, why have you brought this people over the Jordan at all, to give us into the hands of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would that we had been content to dwell beyond the Jordan!” ⁸ O Lord, what can I say, when Israel has turned their backs before their enemies! ⁹ For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land (they’re going to) will hear (about this) of it and (they’re going to) will surround us and cut off our name from the earth. And what will you do for your great name?” Then?*

Isn't that just pathetic? We laugh. This is what we do. This is exactly what we do when there's some sort of a failure. We blame God and that's what Joshua was doing. He said, why did You let this happen? Why didn't You just leave us over where we were across the Jordan? We didn't have to come here and now that we've lost to the people of Ai, they're all going to be emboldened by it and they're going to come attack us. We're done for.

Notice he doesn't even stop to ask the question. I wonder if we did something wrong, I wonder if this is on us. We just assume it's God. God doesn't answer a prayer quite the way we want, or something happens to a family member, or to us, and we don't like it. And so immediately we blame God. I want you to see what the Lord says.

Verse 10, *“The LORD said to Joshua, “Get up! (I love that, that's just so good. He says) Why have you fallen on your face?”* In other words, you see what God is saying here? He's saying, did you think this was Me? Did you think I just went on vacation and decided I wasn't going to help you anymore? And like, well, we'll do Jericho, but you guys are on your own from here on out. I think there are some people who think that's the way God treats them. It's like I got saved and now I've got, it's up to me. It's up to me. I got to do this thing and so forth.

He says, verse 11, *“Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I commanded them; they have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen and lied and put them among their own belongings. ¹² Therefore the people of Israel cannot stand before their enemies. They turn their backs before their enemies, because they have become devoted for destruction. I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you. ¹³ Get up! Consecrate the people and say, ‘Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow; for thus says the LORD, God of Israel, “There are devoted things in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the devoted things from among you.” ¹⁴ In the morning therefore you shall be brought near by your tribes. And the tribe that the LORD takes by lot shall come near by clans. And the clan that the LORD takes shall come near by households. And*

the household that the LORD takes shall come near man by man. ¹⁵ And he who is taken with the devoted things shall be burned with fire, he and all that he has, because he has transgressed (remember transgressed means he knew he was doing wrong and he did it anyway) the covenant of the LORD, and because he has done an outrageous thing in Israel. ’”

¹⁶ So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel near tribe by tribe, and the tribe of Judah was taken. ¹⁷ And he brought near the clans of Judah, and the clan of the Zerahites was taken. And he brought near the clan of the Zerahites man by man, and Zabdi was taken. ¹⁸ And he brought near his household man by man, and Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. ¹⁹ Then Joshua said to Achan, “My son, give glory to the LORD God of Israel and give praise to him. And tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me.” ²⁰ And Achan answered Joshua, “Truly I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I did: ²¹ when I saw among the spoil a beautiful cloak from Shinar, (that’s Babylon) and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels, then I coveted them and took them. And see, they are hidden in the earth inside my tent, with the silver underneath.”

²² So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and behold, it was hidden in his tent with the silver underneath. ²³ And they took them out of the tent and brought them to Joshua and to all the people of Israel. And they laid them down before the LORD. ²⁴ And Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver and the cloak and the bar of gold, and his sons and daughters and his oxen and donkeys and sheep and his tent and all that he had. And they brought them up to the Valley of Achor. ²⁵ And Joshua said, “Why did you bring trouble on us? The LORD brings trouble on you today.” And all Israel stoned him with stones. They burned them with fire and stoned them with stones. ²⁶ And they raised over him a great heap of stones that remains to this day. Then the LORD turned from his burning anger. Therefore, to this day the name of that place is called the Valley of Achor.” And that means, trouble, the Valley of Trouble.

Chapter 8. “And the LORD said to Joshua, “Do not fear and do not be dismayed. Take all the fighting men with you, and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, and his people, his city, and his land. ² And you shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king. (listen to this) Only its spoil and its livestock you shall take as plunder for yourselves.”

Isn't that one of the saddest statements you've ever read in the Bible? I mean, Achan lost his life. It sounds like his family went down with him and just

because he couldn't wait. He couldn't wait. The next city comes along and God says, whatever you find there, it's all yours. Hey, it's all yours. Just don't take God's stuff. It was just as simple as that. God said, I've devoted this stuff to the Lord. It's given unto the Lord as first fruits, don't touch it. Oh, just what a sad thing.

Anyway, we're in the middle of verse 2. He says, "*Lay an ambush against the city, behind it.*" And that means Joshua is being told to hide some soldiers behind the city where they can't be seen.

And it goes on to say, "³ *So Joshua and all the fighting men arose to go up to Ai. And Joshua chose 30,000 mighty men of valor and sent them out by night.* ⁴ *And he commanded them, "Behold, you shall lie in ambush against the city, behind it. Do not go very far from the city, but all of you remain ready."* And of course, they were to remain hidden.

"⁵ *And I and all the people who are with me will approach the city.* (meaning from the front) *And when they come out against us just as before, we shall flee before them.*" In other words, they're going to take advantage of the attitude of the people of Ai, figuring that they're going to be at this time puffed up with confidence. Hey, we chased off these Israelites once, we can do it again. If they're going to come back here and try to threaten us, we'll just give them a licking the same way we did the first time.

And he says, "⁶ *And they will come out after us, until we have drawn them away from the city. For they will say, (oh yeah) 'They are fleeing from us, just as before.'* *So we will flee* (and act like we're running away) *before them.* ⁷ *Then you shall rise up from the ambush and seize the city, for the LORD your God will give it into your hand.* ⁸ *And as soon as you have taken the city, you shall set the city on fire. You shall do according to the word of the LORD. See, I have commanded you.*" ⁹ *So Joshua sent them out. And they went to the place of ambush and lay between Bethel and Ai, to the west of Ai, but Joshua spent that night among the people.*

¹⁰ *Joshua arose early in the morning and mustered the people and went up, he and the elders of Israel, before the people to Ai.* ¹¹ *And all the fighting men who were with him went up and drew near before the city and encamped on the north side of Ai, with a ravine between them and Ai.* ¹² *He took about 5,000 men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, to the west of the city.* ¹³ *So they stationed the forces, the main encampment that was north of the city and its rear guard west of the city. But Joshua spent that night in the valley.* ¹⁴ *And as soon as the king of Ai saw this, he and all his people, the men of the city,*

hurried and went out early to the appointed place toward the Arabah to meet Israel in battle. But he did not know that there was an ambush against him behind the city. ¹⁵ And Joshua and all Israel pretended to be beaten before them and fled in the direction of the wilderness. ¹⁶ So all the people who were in the city were called together to pursue them, and as they pursued Joshua they were drawn away from the city.”

Look at this verse 17. *“Not a man was left in Ai or Bethel who did not go out after Israel. They left the city open and pursued Israel.*

¹⁸ Then the LORD said to Joshua, “Stretch out the javelin that is in your hand toward Ai, for I will give it into your hand.” And Joshua stretched out the javelin that was in his hand toward the city. ¹⁹ And the men in the ambush rose quickly out of their place, and as soon as he had stretched out his hand, they ran and entered the city and captured it. And they hurried to set the city on fire. ²⁰ So when the men of Ai looked back, behold, the smoke of the city went up to heaven, and they had no power to flee this way or that, for the people who fled to the wilderness (and that’s Joshua and the people with him) turned back against the pursuers. ²¹ And when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had captured the city, and that the smoke of the city went up, then they turned back and struck down the men of Ai. ²² And the others came out from the city against them, so they were in the midst of Israel, some on this side, and some on that side. And Israel struck them down, until there was left none that survived or escaped. ²³ But the king of Ai they took alive, and brought him near to Joshua.

²⁴ When Israel had finished killing all the inhabitants of Ai in the open wilderness where they pursued them, and all of them to the very last had fallen by the edge of the sword, all Israel returned to Ai and struck it down with the edge of the sword. ²⁵ And all who fell that day, both men and women, were 12,000, all the people of Ai. ²⁶ But Joshua did not draw back his hand with which he stretched out the javelin until he had devoted all the inhabitants of Ai to destruction. ²⁷ Only the livestock and the spoil of that city Israel took as their plunder, according to the word of the LORD that he commanded Joshua. ²⁸ So Joshua burned Ai and made it forever a heap of ruins, as it is to this day. ²⁹ And he hanged the king of Ai on a tree until evening. And at sunset Joshua commanded, and they took his body down from the tree and threw it at the entrance of the gate of the city and raised over it a great heap of stones, which stands there to this day.”

I don't know if you noticed, I wanted to read through those last couple of chapters fairly rapidly because, well, first of all, it's just a narrative of what took place. But second of all, you'll notice a cycle here that begins with this whole

process of the nation of Israel coming in taking the city of Jericho. And what you see here is this first great victory that came about through obedience, right? To the Word of the Lord and all of the blessings that go along with it.

And when we're obedient to God, there's always blessing. But what's interesting is that when we walk in victory and we begin to see those blessings coming in, if we're not careful, just like Israel will become self-confident. And we start to think that we can make our own plans and that's what we see Israel doing.

They come up to Ai and they scout out the city and say, well, what do you think about Ai? Well, it's not much. It's a small place, there's not that many people. Don't send the whole army, we don't..., piece of cake. And notice that this wasn't the direction of the Lord. This was their own doing, their own planning, their own wisdom. We know how to do this. We've been victorious before you know. We know how this is done so we stopped relying on the Lord.

And just like Israel, that very attitude can lead us to defeat because the Bible says to you and me that we are to trust in the Lord with all of our hearts and lean not on our own understanding, but in all of our ways, acknowledge Him. (Proverbs 3:5-6) And so we're led into defeat of one kind or another.

And then we see this cycle that's just like we see happening with Israel. There's repentance and reconciliation with the Lord, right? And then once again, they begin to walk in victory. Once again, we begin to walk in victory. But it's very important that we understand this cycle so that we don't repeat it like the people of Israel did.

Let's finish out the chapter. It says, ³⁰ *At that time Joshua built an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, on Mount Ebal,* ³¹ *just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the people of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, "an altar of uncut stones, upon which no man has wielded an iron tool."* *And they offered on it burnt offerings to the LORD and sacrificed peace offerings.* ³² *And there, in the presence of the people of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written.* ³³ *And all Israel, sojourner as well as native born, with their elders and officers and their judges, stood on opposite sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, half of them in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded at the first, to bless the people of Israel.*

³⁴ *And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law.* ³⁵ *There was not a word*

of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the sojourners who lived among them.”

That must have been a long reading because that's essentially the Book of Deuteronomy essentially. Anyway, there you go. Hey, we covered 4 chapters tonight. That's good. Excellent.

And that's where we're going to stop. We'll pick it up in chapter 9 next time. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father help us to remember what we've read tonight here in the Book of Joshua when we face spiritual battles. That picture of circumcision, putting off the sinful nature. That picture of Passover, reminding ourselves how we are saved, and knowing beyond a doubt that our salvation is secure through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Father, I thank You for these reminders and I pray that we would keep from becoming self-confident and thinking that we have this whole spiritual battle thing figured out. And that we would continue to trust in You every time we face challenges in life and that we would go with Your timing and Your battle plan.

And so we thank You, Father, for the beautiful pictures that are given to us here tonight in the Scriptures that give us tremendous insight into how we are to face the enemy.

Be with us, we pray, as we go from this place, keep us, guide us, direct us, and continue, we pray, to speak to our hearts.

For we ask it in Jesus precious Name, amen. Amen.

God bless you.