

Joshua

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The unconventional punctuation styles you will see are related to the way these studies were originally intended for the e-mail audience, using plain text to keep file sizes smaller for bulk mailing; creatively 'formatting' with punctuation, for various kinds of emphases, in the absence of formatting the actual type. You may find occasional misspellings, and the more rare cases of a Scripture reference going to a wrong passage; those will be 'typos', not intentional. With this type of POD (Print On Demand) publishing, it seems simplest, and the most prudent use of time, to not completely go through and revamp everything, but to just leave things as they are. Please accept this book, warts and all; but rather, please pay attention to, and receive God's Truth presented herein.

Joshua

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Joshua's Call: God's Call (Joshua 1:1-2)

"And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. And the days of weeping and mourning for Moses ended."(De34:8)

"And after the death of Moses the servant of Jehovah, it came to pass that Jehovah spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying: Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land which I am giving to them; to the children of Israel." (vs1-2)

How does a "junior" minister follow the heels of a "great man of God"? When somebody like Theodore Epp steps down from leading Back to the Bible, who follows him as leader? When John G. Mitchell is taken Home, who follows him to lead Multnomah School of the Bible? A man of God starts a church, and as has happened here and there throughout history, due to his faithfulness to the Word of God, hungry souls come, and the congregation grows; and he feeds them for 30-40 years; then he retires and dies; who follows him? When the 'father' (originator) of that church leaves, so often it happens that the one who follows never -quite-"measures up" in the eyes of the congregation; even if he had been an 'assistant' and had the 'blessing' of the elder pastor. I have seen where the junior coming in was actually better than the one who left, and God's Word prospered. But in most cases, people start complaining: He just isn't like So-n-so. Oh for the good-ol' days of dear old So-n-so! In how many cases do 'splits' also result! In the case of once-great-ministries, the new replacements do not have hearts equally tuned to God's Word as the elder 'father', and the ministry that had been a worldwide bastion of faithfulness to God's Word joins the ranks of the ever-growing apostasy.

How could anyone -ever- follow in the footsteps of Moses? If you look up the closing verses of Deuteronomy, one sees that Moses' summary was of the greatest prophet, ever. God knew him "face to face". (De34:10b) His works were so great in Egypt and the wilderness, that the period of Israel's redemption out of Egypt and wilderness wanderings is a historical milepost. Many things are proclaimed in relationship to Israel's exodus out of Egypt. The first five books of the Bible were written by Moses. The Law was given through Moses. Moses performed signs and wonders, and it recaps: "all the great terror which Moses had done in the eyes of all Israel." (vs12) Water was turned to blood, Egypt's first-born were all killed, the Red Sea was split apart to allow Israel to cross on dry land, and then it closed up again to destroy Egypt's entire army, the earth opened up to swallow up Korah and his family, at the striking of his rod water came out of the rock, etc. How does anyone follow all -THAT-??

And yet for all that, Moses died. He was not like Enoch or Elijah whom God took up without dying. Moses died. But also, apparently there was

some dispute about his body at the highest echelons of the Heavens.
(Ju1:9)

So... when Moses died, did they have never-ending mourning? After all, he was such a great man, the post-news prime-time tabloids need to talk about him incessantly for the next half year. Everything must shut down while we properly mourn his great loss, and elevate him to god-like status. That's what the world does, even if the person is not deserving. Anna Nichole Smith, Michael Jackson or Ted Kennedy come immediately to mind, who -just- WON'T GO AWAY, already!!!

No. Moses didn't even get a right proper burial with a tombstone which people can go to on Memorial Day and put flowers, candles, and 'pray to' him (as the pagans do). "...no one knows his grave to this day" (De34:6) One of the greatest men in history, and nobody knows where he is buried!

Well... Moses had "laid his hands on" Joshua. And unlike most of today's commissioning services, when Moses laid his hands, Joshua received and was "full of the Spirit of wisdom" (vs9)

For as great as Elijah was (remember the 400 prophets of Baal and the fire that consumed the altar); when Elisha received a "double portion" of his spirit (2Ki2:9-14), Elisha is the one who raised the dead (2Ki4), cured Naaman's leprosy (2Ki5), made the axe head float (2Ki6), showed his servant the chariots of fire (2Ki6), etc. And yet, for all of Elisha's miracles, it is Elijah who is named as proclaimer before Jesus and the end-time events. (Mal4:5, Lk1:17)

So, who is the great one? A truly great one responds,

"We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do."
(Lk17:10)

Moses dies, and they mourn him for 30 days. The mourning ends. Now God comes to Joshua: Moses is dead. OK now, get up and get going. It's time to go over the Jordan and start taking possession of the land. 40 years earlier Israel had rebelled, so that generation died off in the wilderness. Moses, in spite of all his greatness, also had a momentary lapse of faithfulness and was not allowed to go into the land. Thus, Israel could not enter until their leader, Moses, was dead. Now, Moses has died... So let's get going. It's time. As great as Moses was, he has died. Moses is now behind us. Ahead of us is God's promise. Are we going to cling to the dead past, or forge ahead where God leads?

And with this understanding, let's stop a minute and receive some practical exhortation. What Joshua experiences, here, is not at all unlike what children experience when a -strong- parent dies, and the child is at adulthood. Or perhaps the strong parent is still alive, but aging, and the child is now an adult and ready to forge ahead with their life at God's

command; not their strong parent's directives. And when I say "strong", this is the parent who rules every aspect of the child to where the child has essentially no -individuality-, but what it -must- reflect and conform to the parent, at the peril of the parent's wrath; or the collective "family values" of that family.

When God says that a man "-leaving- his father and mother, and having cleaved to his wife, they are one flesh" (Gen2:24), that son is no longer under the parents unto "obedience" (Eph6:1); he is no longer a "child". *Children* "obey" their parents, but the grown *man* "leaves" father and mother. This is a foundational principle that, when not followed, often results in many wasted years of life.

But how many strong parents don't know when to "let go"? And how many grown children, even though attempting to forge ahead, due to the oppressive nature of their upbringing, never seem to be able to "mourn 30 days" and then "arise" to follow God's promise, leaving what should be behind, behind. That strong parent, in the grown child's mind, is still 'looking over their shoulder'...so the child keeps turning the head, looking back for parental approval..."am I doing right?" Looking for parental approval, where it had always been scarce throughout childhood and youth, but what there wasn't always a continual theme of criticism no matter what the child attempted or did.

When we stand before God, we each give account concerning "ourselves" before God. (Rom14:12) The child does not give account for the father, nor does the father for the son. (De24:16) And even though Proverbs says to "train up a child in the way he should go" and when he is old "he will not depart from it" (Pr22:6), God also explains the difference between the child who sees the father's righteousness and deviates into evil vs the child who sees the father's wickedness and does not follow, but becomes righteous. (Please read Ezk 18 & 33) A wicked father does not guarantee a wicked son, nor does a righteous father seal his children into Heaven. Each soul is answerable to God, individually, for how they choose to live, whether unto Life or Death. (De30:19)

The same is true of life careers and ministry. Notice that Joshua was not Moses' son. Moses was -given- a wife. Would he have chosen her on his own? Whatever the case, as Moses was standing before Pharaoh and doing all the 'great' things he did, his wife had problems with the circumcision, and who knows what else (Ex4:25), and was not with him; as it wasn't until Israel was in the wilderness that Moses' father-in-law brings her and the sons back to him in the wilderness. (Ex18) Often, a person who is doing "great things" in service for God finds it better to be single (like Paul 1Co7:7); and if not, the family often gets neglected. (e.g. Samuel's sons, for as great as he was, did not turn out like himself 1Sa8:5) Just because someone 'great' has sons, it should not be expected that the son will (or even 'should') follow in his father's footsteps. Nor should such a son try to emulate his father. Nor should the father 'groom' the son to "take

over" when he retires. Nor should others judge a son against the 'great' father's legacy. It is not up to the father to appoint his son to follow in his own footsteps. Men do not appoint unto service for God. God appoints those whose hearts He knows, to fill the post God intends. Yes, as many of the "fundamental" baptist persuasion like to promulgate for every situation, in the NT many leaders were "appointed" by elders. (Tit1:5) But God's minister is not 'apprenticed' (as it were) to his father. In the OT the Levitical priest system was father-to-son. But that was also Israel and the Law.

But prophets, even in the OT, were not appointed by man. In Galatians, the book that delineates the NT Church from the OT Law, Paul introduces himself as an apostle "not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead" (Ga1:1); and further explains how his preparation by God was "not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but by a revelation of Jesus Christ." (Ga1:11-12)

When Jesus called a certain person to "follow" Him, the man says, "Let me first go and bury my father" Jesus says, "Let the dead bury their dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God." Another wanted to have -time- to say his Good-byes, and Jesus responds,

"No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Lk9:59-62)

They are not like Abraham's faithful servant who, when Rebekah was to be taken as wife for Isaac, her family wanted to 'party' a few days to give her a proper send-off, and the servant says, "Do not delay me..." (Gen24:56)

The most important thing in life is NOT "FAAAAM'LY". If one is following God, Jesus also said,

"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." (Mt10:37)

When following God in faithfulness, it is often the "family" that becomes the greatest hindrance and an "enemy" to the Gospel of Christ. (Mt10:36)

They might be "in the church", but they do not know the Lord. When they don't know the Lord, all they have of perceived worth in this world to latch onto is "family". If a person decides to be obedient to God's call, they will whine and whimper, "You don't love us anymore! Why do you hate us so?? Why are you being so hatefully mean to us?" If they truly loved the Lord their God "with all [their] heart...and soul" (De6:5), they would gladly say good-bye, and send the family member into the Lord's work. As Hannah did, who brought the child Samuel to serve the Lord at his young age (1Sa1:26-28); who then grew up to be a great prophet, who also

anointed David as king. In a way, is not one who anoints greater than the one who is anointed by him?

And so, Joshua is not Moses' son. But he is following in Moses' footsteps. There are great expectations of him. He has been groomed for 40 years. We don't usually remember this little nugget, but when Moses went up into the mountain to receive the Law, Joshua accompanied him. (Ex24:13) And when they are coming down off the mountain, it is Joshua who notices the commotion of the partying around the golden calf that Aaron made. (Ex32:17) What better place to "learn the ropes" than at Moses' side. He knows Israel. He knows what he's getting into. He knows, so-to-speak, the "lay of the land".

But even though Moses had laid his hands on Joshua, does Joshua, now that Moses is dead, stand up (like Peter did before the Holy Spirit was given Ac1:15) and just strike out on his own? After all, Moses had laid his hands, and Joshua had the "Spirit of wisdom". As many baptists like to say, he had been "appointed" (by a human elder). Let's "grab the reins" and "Giddy-yup!" ??

No! -God- had, yet, to (specifically) 'call' him...personally.

Not to talk personally, but this fits here on several levels: Shortly after I had been married, I hadn't yet fallen into the 'niche' of service to God. I was doing this and that, but was not yet 'settled'. Father-in-law, a successful businessman, also an elder in his church, exhorts me to push on some doors, figure out which one seems to be opening, and then just "go for it". I wasn't going to get anywhere if I just sat and didn't -do-something. (I had been saying to him that I was "waiting on the Lord" Ps27:14) Of course, there was already this cloud of disapproval for having married his daughter; I didn't measure up to their "faaaam'ly values" (see where I get that expression?), so I'm sure he was looking out for her by trying to make me "successful"; because otherwise I was a nobody and would never amount to anything. But in attempts to gain approval, I 'tried'. Uh... that's: -I- ... tried. As exhorted. But it was NOT -God's- call. As eventually became discerned, the advice and exhortation had been coming from an unbeliever. Exhortation to do things the way the world does it: Devise a 'business plan' and -implement- it. The same way many church boards operate when comprised of mostly successful businessmen. Same way many mission boards function. No! The unequal yoke needed to be unyoked, some years later, and as I was getting the world out of my life (see next lesson), -then- God called.

Also notice who Moses had been. God says, "My servant". God did not lavish upon Moses, to Joshua: Your benefactor, your teacher, the great one you've been serving as his right-hand-man (so therefore, since you have been obeying Moses, you are now going to do great things). Nor is Moses telling Joshua: OK, get up now, and "go for it". Again: We must remember who our "Boss" is. It is not the mission board, the

denominational headquarters, the board of elders who commission a little ceremony at the platform. -GOD- is the "Boss". The "great man" is dead. He was/is My servant. He was My servant, not your boss. Now, just as he was My servant, after I called him from the burning bush; now I am calling to you, Joshua. He was My servant; now -you- are My servant. In a different sort of way, but like the old expression, "The king is dead, long live the king!" From God's standpoint: My servant is dead. Now arise, My servant, and let's go; there is work to do; a land to conquer.

Just as God had described to Moses how he would deal with Pharaoh, showing him God's power how the staff would become a snake, and his hand became leprous; according to what Joshua is about to do, God also gives him understanding and encouragement as to his new duties. His call is different from what Moses' was. Different servant, different mission.

That's next lesson.

Joshua's Call: the Mission (Joshua 1:3-9)

"Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon I have given to you, as I have said to Moses." (vs3)

And then vs4 outlines the boundaries of the territory. Later in the book will also be more details as the land is allotted to each tribe. Many scholars worry themselves over whether or not Israel has ever yet had total possession of 'everything' God promised, or will that happen during the Millennium? In this series we will not be worrying about those things. The thrust of these studies is to observe God's leadership, how Joshua followed God in leading Israel, how faithfully Israel obeyed God, and such things. Not that an analysis of Israel's territory would not be a noble topic to study; as we also see the world squabbling over what they think Israel doesn't have a right to, or are they "occupiers"... it's just not what God is burdening my heart for us right now. This is a "walk-thru" series, which by definition, does not cover each verse in depth. We are observing 'highlights' as we go through the book.

God makes a couple of promises to Joshua; but also requires a certain expected standard from Joshua (and Israel).

First of all: Wherever they would walk, God was giving it to them. This is now the fulfillment of God's original promise to Abraham.

"Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you." (Gen13:17)

This, after God first says...

"And after Lot had separated from him, Jehovah said to Abram: Lift up your eyes now and look from the place where you are, northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your seed in perpetuity." (Gen13:14-15)

Notice, this promise is not to Lot, and Lot's sons, Ammon and Moab. It is a different territory than Lot was given. And as Israel is coming out of Egypt, they are told to leave the Ammonites and Moabites alone, and not bother them. (De2:9,19) Lot had -left-, and -then- God promises the land to Israel, through Abraham.

So Lot leaves, and God tells Abraham to 'walk' the land. Walk it and make claim to it. But Abraham was not yet a nation, ready to take possession. Nor were Isaac and Jacob. That would happen in Egypt. (Ge46:3) Now Israel is coming out of Egypt, a great nation, and what Abraham made claim to, Israel is now ready to take possession.

But Israel is not -taking- the land due to their own greatness. God says, "I have given to you". Notice the past perfect tense, "have given". The *giving* had already been done, years ago, through Abraham. Joshua and Israel are only now becoming the recipients of the promise to Abraham. What we will see is not so much "military conquering" (as this 'wild/crazy' nation is on a rampage), as it is "fulfillment of promise", and the judging of the "iniquity of the Amorites" (Ge15:16) It is God who "preappointed times and boundaries" of the nations. (Ac17:26) Notice again the past-perfect-tense concept. God "preappointed" the national boundaries. So, as Israel is ready to take possession, it is not Israel and Joshua -deciding- their own boundaries; but rather, in obedience, they are receiving God's promise.

Even today, it is not the nations of the world, Obama and the UN strong-arming Israel into acquiescing something they -took- (stole) in the 1967 war, and thus must now "give-it-back". Today's nations do not acknowledge God's "preappointment" of Israel's boundaries, bequeathed initially through Abraham. God made the promise through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Ex6:8, 33:1), not Abraham and Ishmael.

"for in Isaac your Seed shall be called." (Ge21:10,12, Ga4)

God has given Israel victories in recent times because of His promise to Abraham. And here promises Joshua...

"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 abandon you nor forsake you." (vs5)

Guaranteed military victories! Never any defeats! What a deal! A perfect formula for world domination... right? Wherever you walk, it's yours. And as you go about to conquer it, you will not be defeated.

Oh, but wait... a bit later there is this -defeat- at Ai. (7:8) Is God setting up Joshua for a fall? Make some promises, and then yank the rug out from under him?

Remember? God made some promises. But there are also expectations from Joshua. God does not "accept you JUST AS YOU ARE" (no preconditions), and lavish 'grace' upon you, -just- 'because'.

"Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I have sworn to their fathers to give to them. Only be strong and very courageous..." (vs6-7a)

Well see? There you go! With God's -grace-, I understand just how much I am "worth" to God. See how God is pumping up Joshua's self-esteem. Like in today's 'worship' they pump up themselves, "let the weak say, I am strong" (Joe3:10b) Go! Joshua go! (clap! clap!) Go! Joshua Go! Just give him encouragement. Just like before athletic games, get the cheer leaders

out there, jumping around, and the grandstands shouting and stomping, making lots of "noise".

And is this not just about how today's church quotes these two verses? If you want to have victory over your enemies as you are building God's 'kingdom' on this earth... WORSHIP. And if there is any fault to the church, what they view 'apostasy' to be, the fault is that people are -just- not WORSHIPING ENOUGH! Not creating enough noise. After all, is that not how Jehoshaphat had military victory? They took the worship team along with the army and worshipped; and as they started to worship, God gave the victory. (2Ch20:21-)

But what does the rest of the verse say? The part they typically leave out...

"...that you may take heed to do according to all the Law which Moses My servant has commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go" (vs7b)

Look at the wording carefully: Be strong and courageous THAT YOU MAY...

What is God exhorting Joshua to be "strong and courageous" -about? Military conquest? The phrase "that you may" is a -connecting- phrase. Do -this- THAT YOU MAY do -that-. Be courageous THAT YOU MAY "take heed" to keep God's Law.

Take heed. Be careful. Be diligent. As Christians we are to be "diligent" to what?

"Be diligent to present yourself APPROVED TO GOD, a worker who does NOT NEED TO BE ASHAMED, RIGHTLY DIVIDING the Word of Truth." (2Ti2:15)

Somebody e-mailed me recently about their experiences about a certain situation, which in human terms did not turn out as hoped. In addition, a person that used to be a friend, is a friend no longer. I replied to this person that God does not ask us to be "winners" or "successful", but to be "faithful". (1Co4:2)

This is what God is exhorting Joshua. God has -already- promised victory militarily. All the things we will be reading in coming lessons were NO BIG DEAL as far as God's power and ability were concerned. What takes courage and gumption is to FOLLOW GOD WHOLLY.

The military victories are a -given-. Notice that there is no 'rod turning into snake' episode, like God demonstrated to Moses. There are no military strategies, nor instructions how to build up their cache of weapons arsenals. But there is a lot about how to be holy.

"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may take heed to do according to all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success." (vs8)

What does God expect? Keep His commandments. His commandments begin with:

"And you shall love Jehovah your God with all your heart, with all your soul, exceedingly in every way. And these Words which I am commanding you today shall be in your heart." (De6:5-6)

"Do not turn to the right hand or to the left; remove your foot from evil." (Pr4:27)

"How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your Word. With my whole heart have I sought You; O let me not wander from Your Commandments! Your Word have I hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You." (Ps119:9-11)

"Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him." (Pr30:5)

Why is it necessary to be "strong of of good courage" to keep God's Word? Who is the enemy? The Canaanites, Philistines, Jericho, Ai, Syria, Persia?

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary THE DEVIL walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (1Pt5:8)

Defeating all the world's military forces? NO BIG DEAL! God created the universe in six days! What's a few thousand tanks and guns?

But have you ever noticed when confronted by the world in a situation where you are called on to "give a defense" (1Pt3:15) for what you believe, suddenly there is a pang of fear? What about when being challenged to join the world for worldly activity, and they want to know 'why' you will not join them, "So you think you're better than us?" And they...

"...think it strange that you do not run with them in the same overflow of dissipation, -BLASPHEMING-." (1Pt4:4)

A twinge of 'fear' at their disapproval? Be honest now. You know it is true. There are often economic, employment, social consequences. In some cases, physical assault. In some cases and cultures, brutal death. And when the time comes to make the choice to bow to the image of the beast, or go to the guillotine...will that not take strong courage!

However, the trip to the guillotine does not start at the steps -to- the guillotine, when you are already in shackles. It begins way back where the choices are made regarding holy living. God says, "Be holy, because I am holy" (1Pt1:16) It -begins- with the 'little' things. Turning to the right or left. And the basis and foundation is in God's Word; the "Book of the Law". And these days it becomes a stand for a faithful translation of the Bible. Does one compromise for the sake of unity and peace? Or does one make themselves odious because the "majority" are following the path of corruption, and the Believer is standing for Truth. (Ex23:2)

We have spoken of a mere couple of things here. You know that life is *full* of a wide variety of ways in which the enemy comes after us. And it takes Strong Courage to stand for the Lord.

In Joshua's case, he doesn't know it yet, but he will be dealing with Achan, Gibeon, whining and lethargy amongst some of the tribes, and Israel's persistence in idolatry. These will be the tough things. The battlefield? ...schmattlefield! Piece-o-cake!

-THIS- is what God is exhorting Joshua. Don't worry about taking the land or winning over the enemies on the battle field. That's already been dealt with, since the promises were made to Abraham. But what you need to take diligent care to is to be holy. Have you understood? To repeat...

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for Jehovah your God is with you wherever you go." (vs9)

the Leaders (Joshua 1:10-18)

"Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, Pass through the camp and command the people, saying...." (vs10-11a)

One thing Joshua learned, being next to Moses, was the art of delegation. When Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, came out to the wilderness, Moses had been acting as -sole- judge of people's disputes.

"And Moses' father-in-law said to him, The thing that you do is not good. Both you and these people who are with you will droop to exhaustion. For this thing is too much of a burden for you; you are not able to do it by yourself." (Ex18:17-18)

And counsels Moses to appoint heads and rulers to take care of the regular matters, leaving Moses free for the more difficult matters. Which they did.

God has commanded Joshua, "arise, go over this Jordan". (vs2) So Joshua gets right on it. The whole group of people are mustered through the leaders; so he starts the command process through the chain-of-command. They are sitting at Shittim, which is a bit east of the Jordan River, so before they can cross, they first have to pull up stakes and 'go' to the Jordan. And if they've been camped out awhile, mourning the death of Moses, they don't have everything packed, ready for travel. So the command is issued: Get your stuff together and get ready. In three days we break camp. (vs11)

So now comes the first difficult command. Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh have already been given their portion to the east of Jordan. Joshua needs to re-establish the promise they have made, under Moses, to go with the rest of the tribes to help them conquer the heart of the land, leaving their wives, children and possessions (cattle) on the east side. (vs13-15) For all the rebellion that Israel has already done throughout the 40 years of wilderness wanderings, will these tribes stick to their promise? Or will they rebel? Will they insist on staying with their families? Are we about to have another confrontation? After all, way back when, Israel had promised Moses...

"All that Jehovah has spoken we will do/and obey" (Ex19:8,24:7)

But the book of Numbers is full of their rebellions, whinings, disobediences, and God's judgments. So, will these three tribes keep their word to Moses, now that Moses is dead and Joshua is in command?

"So they answered Joshua, saying, All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we have heeded Moses in all things, so we will heed you." (vs16-17a)

Oh, wonderful! They're on board with me. Joshua might be tempted to think? Going to the parallel example of church leadership by which we began this series, the young pastor, following in the founder's footsteps, might think: Oh wonderful! My pastorate is going to be successful. We will have a smooth transition.

Is this not how so many view this topic? But we left out part of their response. The -reason- 'why' the transition is going to be smooth.

"Only Jehovah your God be with you, as He was with Moses" (vs17b)

Oh my! What a "perfect church"! Every pastor's dream.

And don't worry about everybody following your leadership:

"Whoever rebels against your mouth and does not heed your words, in all that you command him, shall be put to death." (vs18a)

Heh! Heh! Ultimate power. They are promising to obey -me-, and deep-six anybody who doesn't. But wait...!

"Only be strong and of good courage" (vs18b)

Same thing God has just repeated three times. And what is the thrust and goal of this "courage"? FAITHFULNESS to God, His Word, and holiness.

You see, as this, that is often called on maps and outlined in studies as "Joshua's Campaigns" is beginning, everybody is on the proper footing. They are all starting on the same page. They are of one mind and one heart. Loyalty to Joshua and his leadership? Yes...but... -because- the leadership and allegiance is toward God. God is the one leading, and everybody is tuned to sing in the same key.

God reminds Joshua "Have I not commanded you?" (vs9) And as Joshua immediately obeys (vs10), and passes God's commands to the people (vs11), the leaders also pledge to obey (vs16), turning around, completing the circle and encouraging Joshua to "be strong and of good courage" (vs18)

Looks like we have the makings of a successful campaign.

the Spies & Rahab (Joshua 2)

"And Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from Shittim to spy secretly, saying, Go, view the land, especially Jericho. So they went, and came to the house of a harlot woman named Rahab, and lodged there." (vs1)

39 years earlier Moses had done a similar thing, at God's command. Twelve spies were chosen, among whom Joshua was one, with the charge to travel through the land, see the lay of the land, the nature of the occupants; and they brought back some of the produce. Truly, a land "flowing with milk and honey" as the expression was in those days. But the land also had giants, and 10 of the spies whined: "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we." (Nu13:31) And so, the concensus of the people became...

"Oh that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or that only we had died in this wilderness! Why is Jehovah bringing us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become prey? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt? So they said to one another, Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt." (Nu14:2-4)

And when Joshua and Caleb tried to persuade the people that it was a "good land" and that they shouldn't "rebel against Jehovah", the mob became of a mind to stone Moses, Aaron, Joshua and Caleb. (Nu14:6-10)

Giants? Schmiants! David killed Goliath. And the other giants ultimately were also all killed by David's men and brothers. As this is being written, this summer there has been this series during prime time, "Shaq vs ????" Shaquille O'Neal's attempt to excel at sports besides basketball, taking on the 'best' of other sports. I have only seen his efforts at football and beach volleyball. (and those were too stupid, I won't likely watch any others) Attempting to be a football quarterback, he lost to Ben Roethlisberger. Beach volleyball? Misty and Kerri just obliterated him. And yet at over 7ft tall, he -towers- over everybody else... of imposing stature. I have never followed basketball, so don't know how he plays that sport. But in volleyball, he was 'slow'. Not 'agile' at all! And the two girls clobbered him. So, what of all his size?! ...and trash-talk about them 'breaking their nails', boo-hoo, etc?!

Joshua and Caleb knew something that David would proclaim years later:

"Then all this assembly shall know that Jehovah does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is Jehovah's, and He has given you into our hands." (1Sa17:47)

Was Joshua remembering Kadesh Barnea when he hand-picked only *two* spies? It was the 'multitude' of the ten spies that started that rebellion. During the spying, knowing human nature, I'm wondering, had they also

been whiners and complainers? Did Joshua observe such behavior? Perhaps arguing as to "who's in charge" of the spy mission? But right 'now' God is saying it's -time- to go in and take possession. -Opinions- are no longer needed. Concensus is not the goal. Democratic majority rule is not the method. Over the past 39 years God has been judging and deep-sixing those who had rebelled. We don't need a repeat of that. But for military strategy, we need to spy out and see -where- everything is these days, so we can surprise the enemy, but not be surprised, ourselves. The lay of the land and where people are living can change in 39 years.

So these two spies... Real spy-er-ly. They walk right into Jericho, and pull-up-a-stool (perhaps?): You have a room for the night? Rahab might have been a harlot, but in those cultures the harlot's house was often also the local hotel/motel/pub/restaurant. For all the details, please read ch2; we won't address everything here.

But what about -appearances- (that today's pharisees worry about)? To "abstain from every -appearance- of evil" (1Th5:22 kjv) For being God's *holy* people, these spies went to a -harlot's- house? What will they think back home when we tell them where we went? But when we read the account, we see that God obviously directed them there. Rahab's heart had been prepared.

This harlot (a woman of the night) had become a Believer in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel; and she showed it by her actions. (Remember how Jesus "-needed- to go through Samaria" (Jn4:4) to talk to another harlot who became a Believer? But when the disciples get back from grocery shopping, it says, "they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, What do You seek? or, Why are You talking with her?" Jn4:27) Like Jesus said to the self-righteous leaders, "Truly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you." (Mt21:31) Perhaps (speculating, here) Jesus sent away the disciples IN ORDER THAT He could talk with the woman one-on-one? She likely would not have been open had all the disciples been standing around, since her 'trade' was in dealing with (pleasing) men...as she was going to the well, alone, during the heat of the day when other respectable people (who otherwise would have taunted and harassed her due to her 'profession') were inside, out of the hot sun. She was at the low end of society; the scum of the earth. It was not good for "appearances" (1Th5:22 kjv mistranslated; as misapplied by today's pharisees) for Jesus, a 'holy' man, to be seen talking to such a woman as that.

"For you see your calling, brethren, that there are not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many of nobility. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are mighty; and the low-born of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should boast in His presence." (1Co1:26-29)

When the officials come looking for the two, Rahab has hidden them, redirects the officials to go on a wild goose-chase, and then comes to the two.

In addition to recounting how the city is terrified of Israel and Israel's God, what is Rahab's testimony?

"...for JEHOVAH YOUR GOD, HE IS GOD in the heavens above and on earth beneath. Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by Jehovah, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father's house, and give me a true token, and save alive my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our souls from death." (vs11-13)

A plea for salvation. But first she proclaims her faith, as the "faith chapter" says, one must...

"...believe that He is (that God exists), and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." (Heb11:6)

Salvation is "not of works". (Eph2:9) But how does one show to other humans, who cannot see the heart as God does, the sincerity of their heart? Jacob says, "I will show you my faith -from- my works" (Ja2:18b) At the end of his life Joshua will be exhorting Israel to serve God "in sincerity and in truth" (24:14)

Rahab has just committed "treason" against her own people to show the sincerity of her faith in Israel's God. If those officials had found the spies, she and her family likely would have been taken out and hacked to pieces. She has taken her life into her own hands, and trusted in God, whom she hoped would save her, even though she doesn't yet know Him. She had her "home" but was "reaching forth to a better, that is, a heavenly place" (Heb11:14-16) She was putting everything on the line to give aid to the spies, and through them, God.

"By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace." (Heb11:31)

So now, in order to prove her faith, she is given instructions, with the condition that, if she doesn't do exactly as told, they cannot guarantee her safety when Jericho is overthrown.

"And the men said to her: We will be exempt from this oath of yours which you have made us swear, unless, when we come into the land, you bind this cord of scarlet thread in the window through which you have let us down; and you shall bring your father, your mother, your brothers, and all your father's household into your house. And it shall be that whoever goes outside the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be upon his own head, and we will be guiltless. And whoever is with you in the house,

his blood shall be on our head if a hand is laid on him. And if you tell this business of ours, then we will be free from your oath which you have made us swear." (vs17-20)

And what does she do?

"According to your words, so be it" (vs21)

In other words, "Amen."

But she does not stop with mere words.

"And she bound the scarlet cord in the window" (vs21)

Rahab doesn't know about the seven days Israel will march around Jericho. She doesn't know that they will be in pain awhile when they are circumcised. She doesn't know when or how they will be crossing the Jordan River. It's likely a bit of time, yet, before Jericho is overthrown. But she does not figure: Oh, I've got time. No. That cord goes 'right' in the window, waiting. Based on this, I would guess she also didn't waste any time to get all her relatives into her home, too; waiting.

This time a different conclusion by the spies when they report back to Joshua.

"Truly Jehovah has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the land have melted before us." (vs24)

Isn't that what God had said?

And when Jericho is captured, just as promised, Rahab's house, in the wall (vs15), when the rest of the wall fell flat, apparently did not fall, because they were preserved safe. But can you imagine the shuddering and shaking for them, as everything else around them is crumbling away from where they are holed up! The two spies go and bring her family out, and place them outside the camp. (6:23) And it says...

"And she dwells in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua had sent to spy out Jericho" (6:25)

Now... while being a gentile and momentarily "unclean", they obviously did some cleansing rituals because they did not -remain- outside the camp. How do we know?

"And Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David the king." (Mt1:5-6a)

This is part of the genealogy of Jesus, through David. Jesus came through the "seed" of the woman. (Gen3:15) Through Abraham. (Ge22:18) And not

only the gentile Rahab, but also Ruth the Moabitess. Jesus reconciles both Jew and Gentile to God "in one body" through His death, through His blood. (Eph2:13-16) Thus, not only does He -bring- Jew and Gentile equally -to- God, He also -represents- (partakes of Heb2:14) both in His physical lineage. In His physical manifestation Jesus had both Jew and Gentile in His blood... that which He shed for the sin of the world.

And if we want to carry this one step further, to understand God's total all-inclusiveness in Salvation, just as during Jesus' day the Samaritans were a sort of half-breed (between Jew and Gentile) due to intermarriage, and despised by the Jews; Ruth also came from a place somewhat between' Jew and Gentile. Israel, the Jews, were the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Gentiles were anybody not related to the Jews. But Ruth, from Moab, from Lot, was 'sort-of' related to Abraham, but was not of the seed of promise. Technically Ruth was a gentile, and yet there was this 'branch' that, go back far enough, she was of the same seed from where Abraham sprang. So, where does she fit? So, in having Rahab and Ruth in the Messianic line, just ahead of David, we see God's provision for "Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom1:16), and also: Anybody in-between. That "everyone" ("whosoever" kjv) believing might have Eternal Life. (Jn3:16)

"...for the same Lord over all is rich toward all who call upon Him. For EVERYONE, WHOEVER calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Rom10:12-13)

So Rahab came to be in that place in Faith. But her faith was real; she did not just appear in church for 'worship' and happy 'feelings'. Her faith was a faith in action.

"Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified from works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?" (Ja2:25)

Crossing the Jordan (Joshua 3:1-5:1)

"And Joshua arose early in the morning; and they set out from Shittim and came to the Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before crossing over." (vs1)

This study is in two parts: the Preparation to cross, and the Crossing in Faith.

Most of us probably already know that the waters of the Jordan are going to be parting, to let Israel cross over. Even a person who has never read the Bible will likely have heard rumors from Sunday School stories of the Jordan River crossing. Just like the Red Sea, this is going to be, as people like to say, a -miracle-. A working of God's power. Where many translations say "miracle", the words are actually "works of power" (Ac2:22,8:13,19:11,1Co12:10,28, Ga3:5, Heb2:4) According to the dictionary a "miracle" is an event that cannot be explained by the "laws of nature"; otherwise known as "supernatural". Thus, the charismatics start singing songs, clapping, dancing, prophesying, pronouncing shamanistic mantras...and so, somebody's legs become of the 'same length'. Or "BE HEALED!!!" is yelled at somebody, while they are popped on the forehead. or this or that. These things are called "miracles". And often, when the people go home and stop taking their medications, they keel over and die.

Certainly, Jesus and the disciples healed people... TRULY HEALED them. It says that Jesus "healed EVERYONE" (Mt8:16) He was not like today's snake oil salesmen. He was the real deal. How much 'power' does it take to make a blind man see? Compared to stopping up the waters of the Jordan at flood season? (3:15) And yet, something that allows -millions- of people to cross the river, compared to a -single- blind person... from our human reasonings it seems like a much -bigger- event, doesn't it; requiring 'more' power. Although, Jesus said it was a matter of faith:

"Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, Be removed and be cast into the sea, it will happen." (Mt21:21)

If God created this entire universe in six days, what is a simple matter like manipulating some drops of flood water! The outcome of the next events will be...

"that all the people of the earth might know the hand of Jehovah, that it is mighty, that you may fear Jehovah your God all your days" (4:24)

But what is the preparation for these events? Worshiping? Getting all chummy and friendly with Jesus? Becoming spirit-filled? Loving our fellow-worshiper and hugging them? When Jesus healed people and cast out demons, people were often amazed (Mt12:23) and fearful (Lk8:37).

What was Joshua exhorted? To "take heed to do according to all the Law" (1:7) What are the people exhorted?

"SANCTIFY YOURSELVES, for tomorrow Jehovah will do wonders among you" (3:5)

Worship? No! Sing songs? No! Name and claim God's power? How would they do that? They didn't even yet know -what- God was going to do. But SANCTIFY! That word means, to 'make holy'. And no...this is not *emotional* preparations, while swooning and sighing, make sure the halo is propped atop the head straight. No! It is -cleansing-. If there is anything unclean? Get rid of it! It's like doing a house-cleaning... both physically and spiritually. If there is sin, confess it. Notice that when Daniel was given insight, his preparation before the insight had been confession of sin. (Dan ch9)

Holiness was further illustrated by -distance-. -GOD- was going before Israel, as represented by the Ark of the Covenant. (3:3) As we learn from the book of Hebrews Jesus had not yet come and died as the "once for all" sacrifice. (Heb7:27); man could not yet "come boldly" before God. (Heb4:16) They couldn't even -touch- the Ark, as Uzzah found out when he was struck down dead. (2Sa6:6-7)

In Japan, where I was born and grew up my early years, every year they would have O-matsuri...Festival. ("O" indicating that it was to the gods) Some of the celebrations included parades, where this huge cart with shrines and figures of dragons and such were all over, decorated with paper dangling all over, and people dressed up festively, and this thing was pulled through the streets with long ropes, by all the children. (It's now been so many years ago, I no longer remember all the details) But they also always had this smaller shrine, carried along by some strong young men on their shoulders. They might walk, run, dance....sometimes the dance would jostle the shrine around, and they would do this in choreographed fashion by the chants they would utter amongst themselves boisterously. As a child, when I would see that, it was just "O-matsuri". I didn't know any different. It was just... "Japan". But there are those who speculate that Japan's Shinto religion may have origins in Israel, from when Israel was dispersed throughout the world, that some of them landed in Japan, and this little shrine they would jostle around in the parades was actually harking back to the Ark, as the priests would carry it. In Japan, the people lined both sides of the streets, close, where this shrine was carried along.

But notice God's command. There was to be a -distance- between the people and the Ark. 2000 cubits (3:4) is equivalent to a bit over a half mile. (or, for you from other countries, about the equivalent of a Km) Symbolic of 'holiness'. But a whole Km!! Isn't that somewhat extreme? How about if we just promise "not to touch" it? Isn't that good enough? No. It's like the exhortation...

"Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not go in the way of evil. Avoid it, do not pass by it; turn from it and pass on." (Pr4:14-15)

Isn't that terribly judgmental and pharisaical? 'Don't need to be so 'radical' in your religion. What? Have you no 'tolerance' for other 'viewpoints'? Yours is the only right way, and totally dismiss others?

Indeed! -NO-! God is not to be trifled with! The "Lord of all the earth" (3:13) is about to do a great work. Israel is at the border to the land of promise. Israel is about to enter their earthly equivalent of "heaven". When many contrive songs, and mix up their doctrines, many are the songs of the Church going to Heaven being likened to Israel entering Canaan. They would sing "Oh Beulah Land, sweet Beulah Land" (Is62:4 kjv) or... "On Jordan's stormy banks I stand and cast a wistful eye, to Canaan's fair and happy land where my possessions lie...I am bound for the promised land...O who will come and go with me?" The Church is not headed to Canaan, but to Heaven. But symbolically there are similarities between the Church entering Heaven, and Israel entering Canaan.

Just as "corruption" cannot get to Heaven (1Co15:50), neither could Israel enter the Land without first "sanctifying" themselves. They could not run along, jovially patting the Ark. There was a -distance-. Perhaps this is where many 'christians', who have not laid hold of Jesus' finished work of Salvation and Sanctification, view God as being OUT THERE someplace, because the Holy Spirit does not reside within them? Indeed, until Jesus came in human flesh, and fulfilled the Law, sin still needed to be atoned. Israel continually offered sacrifices, but they could "never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect...For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins", so Jesus came and "He said, Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God." (Heb10:1,4,9) But until Jesus came, God -was- WAY OUT THERE, even though, for those (even in Israel), if they had kept God's Commandments "in their heart" (De30:14) they would have known God's nearness. As David, the man after God's heart, understood, the Holy Spirit was with them. (Ps51:11)

But even with Israel, God reminds them that they are not an entity unto themselves. God is not just -Israel's- God. He is the "Lord of all the earth" (3:13), and is setting up to proclaim His might to "all the peoples of the earth" (4:24) As we will see in a couple of chapters, God is setting up the precedent for His later prophecy about how He fought "in the day of battle". (Zec14:3)

And so... since this symbology exists, perhaps Israel crossing the Jordan is similar to the Resurrection and Rapture of the Church? Immersion (what many call 'baptism') is a symbol of the Believer "dying to sin" and then being raised "to newness of life" (Rom6:2-4) After Jesus much immersing was done in the -waters- of the Jordan river. Going down into the water, and then being raised back out. Here, Israel is about to go down into the

riverbed of the Jordan, and emerge out the other side -in- the Land of Promise. If you will, as though going "through the valley of the shadow of death" (Ps23:4), as God asked Job if he knew where the "gates of death" were, or the "gates of the shadow of death" (Job38:17) A mass 'immersion', as they had been 40 years earlier in the Red Sea (1Co10:2) From Egypt they were leaving sin. Now they are about to enter into 'Life'.

But how -can- they enter (into this symbology)? How can they be qualified?

"Who shall go up into the hill of Jehovah? Or who shall stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart; who has not lifted up his soul to vanity, nor sworn deceitfully." (Ps24:3-4)

HOLINESS

Again, just as God did not exhort Joshua to sharpen his swords and spears to prepare for battle, but rather to Keep God's Word; the same is for Israel. Prepare to cross the Jordan...

SANCTIFY YOURSELVES

If the crossing of the Jordan is symbolic of the Resurrection and Rapture, and Israel was to Sanctify themselves; what is the exhortation for the Church in preparation for Jesus' -APPEARING-?

"Everyone who has this hope -PURIFIES- himself, just as He is pure" (1Jn3:3)

Purify? Another term expressing sanctification. For the Church that would be...

"And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk decently, as in the day, not in carousings and drunkenness, not in cohabitation and licentiousness, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts." (Rom13:11-14)

So... the preparations are made. The crossing is now a simple matter. Well... maybe not. For God, yes. But for man? A couple of things to note...

Think of the priests carrying the Ark. (Please read the passage to review the details)

"...as those who bore the ark came to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests who bore the ark dipped into the edge of the water...that the waters...rose in a heap...and the priests who bore the ark of the covenant

of Jehovah 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" (3:14-17)

Imagine the -faith- of those priests. Did the -tips- of their toes actually get wet...as they -began- to step into the water? When Noah and family went into the ark, it says, "because of the waters of the flood" (Gen7:7) The flood was beginning -as- Noah went into safety. The destruction of Sodom could not happen until Lot and family had escaped. (Gen19:22) And when Lot's wife lingered a bit, she was destroyed. (Gen19:26) -That's- how close Lot's escape and Sodom's destruction were to each other. Or did God wait till their toes were within a micro-millimeter of the water (they stayed dry?) to push back all the waters?

I cannot imagine the scene that transpired that day. The waters backed up, and piled up 20-30 miles away, upstream. Did they have to -wait- while the ground dried? It says they stood on dry ground in the middle of the river bed. The way it is written it would seem the priests started walking, as their toes began to enter the water they (Zap!) were piled up, and just as quickly the ground was dried and firm, for walking, as they KEPT ON (?) walking. If the people were to stay at least 1km away from the Ark, and there were several million of them travelling, along with their livestock and belongings, and they crossed within a day, there was reason for the waters to back up 20-30 miles away. That was likely a -wide- procession of people making the crossing.

And it says...

"On that day Jehovah magnified Joshua in the eyes of all Israel; and they feared him, as they had feared Moses, all the days of his life" (4:14)

Perhaps even -more- spectacular than the Red Sea crossing? There, the *wind* blew all night. (Ex14:21) Here it was a massive instantaneous drying up of water. If Joshua was to follow Moses, for the fickle human minds *something* spectacular was needed, eh.

And then, the stones.

They took some stones from the land and piled them up in the middle of the river bed where the priests had stood with the Ark. And they also took some stones from the middle of the river and made a pile, a monument. For what reason?

"And the twelve stones which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal. And he spoke to the children of Israel, saying: When your sons ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What are these stones? then you shall let your children know, saying, Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land; for Jehovah your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, as Jehovah your God did to the Red Sea,

which He dried up before us until we had crossed over, that all the peoples of the earth might know the hand of Jehovah, that it is mighty, that you may fear Jehovah your God all your days." (4:20-24)

As the 40-year wanderings are coming to an end Moses repeated to Israel,

"You shall remember...." (De8:2,18, 15:15, 16:12, etc)

Remember what? All the things that God had done for them, bringing them out of Egypt, through the wilderness, giving them the Law. Why? People are so forgetful. It says...

"And Israel served Jehovah all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders whose days were prolonged after Joshua, who had known all the works of Jehovah which He had done for Israel." (24:31)

But then, after these had died, then it says...

"And the children of Israel did evil in the eyes of Jehovah. They -FORGOT- Jehovah their God, and served the Baals and groves." (Jdg3:7)

As generations pass, later generations come along and: What proof is there that all those things happened? God isn't doing spectacular works of power now. How do we know that these -stories- aren't just made-up legends? Fairy tales? Old wives' tales?

The monument is a historic -record- left by those who did it, experienced and saw it; not only for Israel, but also for the whole world.

In N.Dakota, just east of New Salem, along the 'old' hiway (before the I-94 freeway was built) there used to be (is it still there?) a sign that the locals called the "upside down sign". In the history books it was written how that, when the white man started moving across the prairies and settling down, establishing farms, that this one day, as the farmer was out there plowing the land to plant his crop, there was interaction with the natives. They observed the plow digging the sod over. So it is said that the indian came along, took the piece of sod and re-turned it over so the grass was on top, also saying something about (I don't remember the exact quote now) the fact that the dirt was now right-side-up again. The farmer had been making it wrong-side-up. It was one thing to have that event as legend. Another to have it written in history. But the sign, the marker, the monument, showed -where- it happened. And it was remembered for generations, because the sign was there, and people would talk about it. It is a landmark.

People, especially the pagans, don't often believe the Bible; which among other things is a 'history' of past events. If they would -believe- God, the Bible would be enough. It is a record of Israel's crossing the Jordan that day. But they made a pile of stones.

I don't know if that pile still exists today? But where Islam keeps trying to destroy evidence of Israel's past in the Land of Promise, archaeology keeps digging up 'proof' that they -did-, in fact, enter the land, and became a great nation.

"So it was, when all the kings of the Amorites who were on the west side of the Jordan, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard that Jehovah had dried up the waters of the Jordan before the children of Israel until we had crossed over, that their heart melted; and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the children of Israel."
(5:1)

It's the same today. The world blusters against Israel. Islam wishes to destroy them and push them "into the sea". They refuse to label "Israel" on their maps. In reality, they are in 'fear' because of Israel. They know the historical heritage of the past. They have seen Israel's prowess in battle in recent decades. And so... what Israel receives from her neighbors today is nothing new. It is the same thing Israel faced as they crossed the Jordan. The surrounding nations were scared spitless.

But who they actually fear is God. It is God who performs works of power for Israel. It is God who fights for Israel; as we shall see as we continue. He is God "of all the earth". (3:13)

This fear of God did not come about because Israel formed a 'concensus' with the surrounding nations. They did not 'dialog' with them. They did not invite them to rock concerts. No! It began with HOLINESS. First of all, Joshua; he was exhorted to faithfully obey God's Law. And then, what the leader was, the people also needed to be. HOLY. They needed to SANCTIFY themselves. -THEN- the Lord worked wonders, and God was honored and feared among the nations.

For those who will hear: The same is true today.

Complete Holiness (Joshua 5:2-15)

"At that time Jehovah said to Joshua, Make flint knives for yourself, and circumcise the sons of Israel again the second time...So it was, when they had finished circumcising all the people, that they stayed in their places in the camp to be healed. And Jehovah said to Joshua, This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you. Therefore the name of the place is called Gilgal to this day." (vs2,8-9)

First of all, let's look at something. Is it not obvious to all? Israel has just crossed the Jordan River, the waters are now flowing again, and Israel is camped at Gilgal. As close as I can tell from maps, Gilgal was scarcely a mile away from Jericho. The people of Jericho could probably climb up to the top of the wall and look at Israel, and observe what they were doing. Did the people of Jericho -know- that a mass circumcision was going on?

When Shechem defiled Dinah, and then wanted to join together with Jacob's family, they were conned into being circumcised, and when in pain, Simeon and Levi went and slaughtered them all. (Gen34)

Military 'strategy' does not teach in 'Military Ops 101' (if there is such a class) to go up to the enemy, and while camped a stone's throw from them, close enough so they can watch, to mutilate yourselves and deliberately make yourselves vulnerable to the enemy! Make yourself indefensible! Joshua! You've got this ALL WRONG!!! You're going in to 'conquer' the land, and -this- is how you start? Are you OUT OF YOUR MIND??

You can read the passage to understand why. Those coming out of Egypt had been circumcised, but those born in the wilderness had not, due to the continual travelling. The primary covenant with Abraham was circumcision. (Gen17) And if a foreigner wanted to keep the Passover, they could do so only after first being circumcised. (Ex12:48) The primary delineation between Jew and Gentile was this ritual; which Paul discusses in Romans and the epistles. This was an act, a ritual of holiness unto God. It set apart the person thus ritualized as holy unto God. They were thus symbolically partakers in God's promise of blessing and salvation. (We won't go into all those details right now)

It was not merely a -physical- ritual; it was a ritual to indicate the heart. (De10:16, 30:6) As Paul also said, it was not so much the cutting of the flesh, but the "heart" before God. (Rom2:29) Just as immersion in water does not save, but is a physical symbol of Salvation to the Church, so was circumcision to OT Israel.

Also for Israel, everything about their physical existence was about "clean" vs "unclean". What God desired from their hearts, the laws and ordinances were given to also keep them clean in body. For many years modern

medicine said there was no difference between being circumcised or not; no real medical reason -to- have the procedure. Now, within the past few months, they are noting that the incidents of certain diseases and the transfer of STDs and Aids is less among those who have had the procedure. In other words, a person who has been circumcised is (in OT Jewish terminology) "cleaner"; not as susceptible to disease. And there are some, now, who are also calling for a national 'mandatory' policy (a new law) that all male babies -must- have the procedure done at birth.

So... there's a couple of parameters that I see here. First of all, is Israel going to be obedient? The reason there had been those 40 years in the first place was "because they did not obey the voice of Jehovah" (vs6) And what a place to ask for this kind of obedience: a mile away from the first enemy to be conquered, and blocked on the enemy's side of the river. In a vulnerable place. Where is their trust? Their own military prowess? ...or God?

The other parameter is that which we have seen over and over thus far in this book. Holiness. A ritual of promise through Abraham. That which distinguished Israel from all the other nations. Travelling through the wilderness was continually like stop-n-go traffic. They didn't know from one day to the next if that day they would be travelling, or staying put; but did so at God's command. (Nu9:23) Now, they have crossed over into the land. They are now eating the produce of the land. (vs12) They are 'home'. They just need to tie up some loose ends, so-to-speak. Israel was a "holy seed" (Ezr9:2) This ritual involved the instrument of procreation; that which delivers the seed. If the seed is "holy", should not also be the instrument?

Also, if Israel, nationally, was to be God's instrument of holy judgment upon the "iniquity of the Amorites" (Ge15:16), did not that national instrument, Joshua's armies, need to be pure in -all- aspects! We will see in a couple of chapters how the sin of one individual, which resulted in the tarnishing of that holiness, cause defeat and death. But now: they sanctified themselves to cross the Jordan. Now they have finished their sanctification and gotten rid of every last vestige of Egypt.

And they kept the Passover. (vs10) I just looked, and it doesn't appear that Israel kept the Passover throughout those 40 years. They did so when they came out of Egypt (Ex12), and then at the one-year anniversary as they were camped out next to Sinai. (Nu9) But shortly after that they should have entered the land, but rebelled, and no other observances are recorded until we cross the Jordan, ready to take Jericho. Besides the rebellion, if they were not circumcised all those years, they COULD NOT partake the Passover.

"For no uncircumcised person shall eat it." (Ex12:48)

So they have all partaken the ritual related to their "holy seed". Now they were also qualified to partake the most significant annual Feast, Passover;

that which typified the future crucifixion of Messiah for the "sin of the world". (Jn1:29)

And then we see a very interesting incident...

"And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood 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? And He said, No, but as Commander of the army of Jehovah I have now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and prostrated himself, and said to Him, What does my Lord speak to His servant? And the Commander of the army of Jehovah said to Joshua, Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you are standing is holy. And Joshua did so." (vs13-15)

Who is the Commander of God's armies?

"And I saw Heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. And He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in Heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and pure, followed Him on white horses. And out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He might strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS." (Re19:11-16)

Jesus Christ, Himself. Paul mentions the "Rock", that "was Christ" (1Co10:1-4) Moses talked with God "face to face". Here, Jesus Christ, Himself, comes to Joshua. Joshua goes out to meet Him. Likely, to see who this -challenger- is? After all, Joshua is in charge of Israel's military and security. He is merely doing as any responsible commander would do. Like those on guard duty, and they see some activity and call out: Who goes there?

When he realizes it is God, he is no longer challenging. But like Saul on the road to Damascus, "Lord, what do you have in mind for me to do?" (Ac9:6)

Take your sandals off. This place is HOLY.

Before Joshua, who else had this experience? Moses at the burning bush. (Ex3:5) That was the occasion where God calls Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt. Here, now, is Joshua's similar commissioning service. And notice it is not at the platform of the baptist church, with the hands of the elders and deacons laid on Joshua, with a ritualizing prayer. This is the Lord, Himself. Joshua is in God's very presence. Israel is in a strategically precarious

place: a mile away from Jericho, all the males incapacitated with circumcision. Who's really in charge? If anybody was bemoaning the straights in which they were situated, when Elisha's servant cried out, "Alas master, what shall we do?" Elisha prays for God to open the servant's eyes, and he sees God's armies surrounding the Syrians with chariots of fire. (2Ki6)

No, Joshua is not the big 'hero'. He is not even "in charge". God is. And Joshua has now met Him face-to-face.

But would this meeting have happened if they had not obeyed? If the "place" where Joshua was standing was "holy", it was certainly so because of Jesus' presence. But also, the entire camp was now fully ritually 'holy'. They were in full compliance with God.

Thus far have we seen a single word about sharpening swords, stockpiling spears, and otherwise getting ready for battle? No. It has all been about the -heart-, IN COMPLIANCE with God. Being HOLY. Being pure.

The "battle is Jehovah's" (1Sa17:47)

Now, they are ready to start taking possession.

Taking Jericho (Joshua 6)

"And Jehovah said to Joshua: Behold, I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor." (vs2)

Notice one thing God does -not- say to Joshua; perhaps as we see this over and over enough times, we will come to fully understand that God's ways are not like man's ways.

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, says Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." (Is55:8-9)

God does -not- say to Joshua: Ok now Joshua, it's time for -you- to go capture and conquer Jericho; so get to -your- strategy room and make plans. No, it is God's gift. Notice again, also, the past perfect tense: I -have-given-. It is -already- a done deal. Jericho is -already- as good as captured/destroyed.

And notice the war 'strategy'. It is the stuff of Sunday school stories, as the kiddies color in their coloring books. We are not going to re-tell the story here; if you are not familiar, please read the chapter. But I suspect, being soooo far afield of how the 'great' conquerors of history took over empires, could it be one reason why scoffers suggest that the Bible is full of "fairy tales" and not really real? What war strategist conducts "parades", playing musical instruments, day after day, before engaging the enemy?

The battle is the Lord's. And so God is fighting -His- battle. Jericho will be the first in a series of conquests where God will be fighting, "like the day He fought in the day of battle" (Zec14:3) And so, if it is God's battle, it must be fought in God's -way-; according to His directions; following His rules.

God's presence is often accompanied by trumpets. We won't look them all up now, but at: Sinai when the Law was given (Ex19:16), at the Resurrection and Rapture (1Th4:16, 1Co15:52, Re4:1), during the various final judgments of Revelation. And here, as God is about to overthrow Jericho, the first battle in the process of giving Israel possession of the land He had bequeathed to Abraham, God is not only conducting the battle, but He is also letting the world know that -He- is the one conducting the battle: The Ark of the Covenant, which represented His presence in the middle of Israel; accompanied by seven shofars made of rams horns. (vs4)

When royalty ascend the steps to the palace, or on other occasions of pomp, the long banner-draped processional trumpets are blown; to the ears of this musician I don't believe there is a more spine-tingling, hair-raising, awe-inspiring sound than brass trumpets blown with their full richness and harmonics. So now, add to that concept that these are rams horn shofars. They are known for their "-SOUND- of the shofar".

(Ex19:16,19, Ps150:3) It is something that cannot be described with mere words; if you've heard it, you know what I'm talking about.

And this is something David learned the hard way. When he sought to bring the Ark to himself, he did not follow the rules. The priests did not carry it, but they put it on an ox cart, and when God made the oxen fall, to make the cart almost topple the Ark over, and Uzzah reached out to steady it, he was struck down dead. In addition, instead of the Shofar, they were making a racket with "harps, with lutes, with tambourines, with rattles and buzzing." (2Sa6:5) A veritable party "rock band". But then, when David got his head back where his heart should have been, and they did it the right way, they had the priests carry the Ark (2Sa6:13), got rid of the rock band, and had the "SOUND of the shofar" (vs15) Bringing the representation of God's holy presence, according to God's rules, in God's way.

So this is how they circled the city: The Ark of God's presence, Seven shofars... oh, and incidentally... the troops before and behind. (vs9)

"And Joshua had commanded the people, saying, You shall not shout or cause your voice to be heard, nor shall a word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I say to you, Shout! Then you shall shout." (vs10)

Why no talking? Why keep silent? Over the years when I was younger I used to hear teachers make speculations. The only one I can remember right now was the theory that, if they kept still for seven days, then when it came time to shout, their voices would be "rested" so they could shout *real* "loud". That it was the audio 'decibels' of their shouting that knocked the wall down flat (you know, like the opera soprano shattering the goblet) ...because their vocal chords had all 'rested' for those days. Against huge stone walls, that would be like everybody standing, facing the same direction into the wind, and -BLOW-, to keep back the wind. Or everybody -JUMP- together, and make the earth move. No, I don't think so!

How silly! -WHO- is fighting this battle? Israel, or God?

What is the scene that Jericho is seeing? God's -presence- (symbolized by the Ark) encircling them. And when in God's presence what are people supposed to do? Dance, scream, shout, make "joyful noise", and "worship"? That's what charismania teaches, as they are "spirit-filled" (with demons). It's what non-charismatics used to do as in, back in my day, the *job* of the song leader was to pump up the congregation, get everybody to -smile-, and sing -rowdily-. The more "rowdy" the singing, the more "spiritual"...and such was the nature of what used to be called "singspirations" on Saturday or Sunday nights...which then also led to the rise of rock and jazz groups like Stamps Baxter, Blackwood Brothers and others, and eventually the Gaithers, etc.etc. As there used to also be an entire series of music books with the "singspiration" label.

But with the Ark, it was the representation of God.

"But Jehovah is in His holy temple; let all the earth be silent before Him." (Hab2:20) Who "dwells between the cherubim" (1Sa4:4)

Just as also, when the doom of impending judgment is upon the world:

"And when He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in Heaven for about half an hour." (Re8:1)

After which the

"...seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound." (vs6)

As judgment then commenced, of which, the three final trumpets were labeled...

"Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!" (vs13)

Another observation: Notice they march around the city for seven days, one after the other. Thus, somewhere in the mix, on the 7th day, the sabbath, they did not rest, but marched; or was Sabbath on the 7th day, with the seven trips, and then the battle? Remember how when somebody went out to gather sticks to fire up their breakfast meal, they were stoned for breaking the sabbath. (Nu15:32-36) The pharisees, when debating about Jesus, concluded, "This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." And yet, others argued, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" (Jn9:16)

Who is Lord of the sabbath? Jesus. (Mt12:8) Jesus healed on the sabbath to "loose" the woman from the "bond" of infirmity, so she could experience rest (Shabbat). (Lk13:11-16) But they complained against Jesus: He can't really be of God... He doesn't keep the Sabbath!

Jesus healed the sick on the Sabbath. The overthrow of Jericho was the beginning of the process of judging the "iniquity of the Amorites" (Ge15:16) Cleansing the land to make it holy. God's holy work. God established the Sabbath; He can also do His work on the Sabbath; and what better work than cleansing the land of wickedness.

And finally the "devoted things" (vs18) As they are preparing to destroy Jericho, the exhortation is not, "Watch out for their arrows!" ...or, "Watch each other's backs as you fight!" No. See something of value? DON'T TAKE IT FOR YOURSELF. -Everything- of value from Jericho is "devoted" to Jehovah. God is announcing His presence in the land, and all the spoils of this battle belong to Him.

Some translations say "accursed" thing. When studying the various definitions and meanings, the -verb- form of the word indicates a setting apart for destruction. Something set for destruction is, by definition, accursed. But these things were being set aside, not for destruction, but for God's temple treasuries. They were not being destroyed. Things that are set aside unto God are devoted to/for God. If we wanted to further the linguistic gymnastics, in a very real sense they were being 'consecrated', set aside unto God as holy. The treasures of Jericho were not for the people's own personal use, but dedicated to God. But if a person took something for themselves, they would be accursed; they would be in deep trouble. The thief's 'trouble' is not the same as the the thing being stolen, which is 'devoted' to God. They are in 'trouble' (accursed) because they took that which was 'devoted' (dedicated) to God.

On the other hand, the whole of Jericho could be said to be both "accursed" -and- "devoted".

"And the city shall be devoted unto Jehovah, it and all who are in it" (vs17a)

When an animal was separated out for sacrifice, it was "devoted" to God for sacrifice. But in terms of its own welfare, was it not "accursed", because it was about to die. Just as Jesus was when He died on the cross...

"Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" (Ga3:13b)

And God devotes the accursed nations to the birds...

"Assemble yourselves and come; gather together from all sides to My sacrifice which I am sacrificing for you, a great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel, that you may eat flesh and drink blood." (Ezk39:17b)

Those coming against Israel in the latter times are accursed; but also devoted to the birds of prey for feasting. God's sacrifice.

And so we see, at every turn: HOLINESS. Joshua was to consecrate himself to keeping the Law. The people were to consecrate themselves, and were circumcised. When they crossed the Jordan, they kept a holy *distance* between them and the Ark of God. So now they circle Jericho in silence, while the shofars announce the presence of the Creator of the universe.

Now, after the 7th time on the 7th day, they SHOUT, as commanded. And the walls "fell down flat" (vs20) I can't put my finger (of my memory) on the source of this information, but the area has been excavated in more recent decades, and the discovery was made that the walls fell 'outward' from the city. Thus, obviously not the 'thrust' of the people's shout! What made the walls fall? Did God plant a nuclear bomb in the middle of the city? I've

heard some speculations in that direction. Or was it all the 'tramping' of the people outside the walls, tamping the dirt down on the outside so the walls were already beginning to 'lean' outwards as the dirt was trampled, and so the big shout was merely the last straw to topple them? (Again...let's all *jump* together and move the earth!) Well... how did God make the waters of the Jordan River pile up 20 miles away so Israel could cross? However, the fact that the walls fell 'outward' proves that Israel did not get battering rams and break it down (inward). It was not Israel's doing. It was -God's- doing.

Notice another thing, except for the treasures, they destroyed -everything- : men, women, children, cattle. So, where was the UN to convene an emergency session of the Security Council, and issue a condemnation against Israel for "human rights" violations?

God is beginning the judgment of the "Amorites" for their wickedness. This was a -complete- judgment and destruction. Wipe the slate clean.

Except for Rahab and her family. (vs22) Rahab in -FAITH- received the spies. One would assume that the relatives in her home also were there, waiting in faith...otherwise, if they didn't think judgment was coming, they would not have taken refuge with her. And we have already observed how, for her faith, she was blessed to become part of the lineage for Jesus' birth in flesh and blood.

And as we continually note the "few" that are destined for "life" (Mt7:14), notice out of all Jericho, whatever it's population was, it was ONLY Rehab, and family, who were preserved.

So... God gave the victory. But what did people see, or take note of?

"Thus Jehovah was with Joshua, and his (Joshua's) fame spread throughout all the land." (vs27)

This will be one of the premises for the events in the next chapter.

Defeat: One Honest Mistake? (Joshua 7)

"But the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the devoted things, for Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the devoted things; so the anger of Jehovah burned against the children of Israel." (vs1)

For quite a few months now, the local grocery workers union has been airing these ads on TV against Fred Meyer for firing some of its employees, asking the public not to shop at Fred Meyer, but instead shop at Safeway and Albertsons. They ask, "Have you ever made an honest mistake?" And they go on to tell how some employees made "one honest mistake" and they were fired. Of Fred Meyer policies: "That's just wrong!" On the TV ads, however, they don't specify -what- the "one honest mistake" was.

Since these ads have been running so incessantly, unto nausea, I decided to ask a neighbor who works at Safeway part-time, to see if he knew what that "one honest mistake" was. He wasn't sure; thought it was because the clerks had returned checks to the customers, after "running them through" the system. But I found out that in some places where the till is networked into the bank, that this is becoming common practice. So then, I went to Fred Meyer to purchase something that my regular store had stopped carrying, and while checking out, I asked the clerk what the "one honest mistake" was.

At quitting time, tills that were "short".

Ahhhh... now that makes more sense! Pilfering the till. "one -HONEST-mistake", huh??? I don't think so!

However, let's return and observe the events in order. vs1 sets the stage, which we will come back to. The people and Joshua aren't yet aware that trouble is brewing. So... what's next?

"Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai" to spy out the land. (vs2) And they come back with the suggestion: Ai is sooo small; capturing it will be a piece-o-cake! (vs3) Why do we need to send everybody up there, toil hard, and work at things. After all, is not our leader, Joshua, now a famous man?! (6:27) Considering the victory -we- just had against Jericho, Ai will be like swatting a mosquito.

So they did as the spies recommended, and when they did so, they came hurrying back, their backsides whooped real good; killed 36 of Israel. (vs5)

And so what does Joshua do? (Please read the text for yourselves)

"Alas, O Lord Jehovah, why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all; to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us? Oh, that we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan! O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turns its back before its enemies?" (vs7-8)

Why, the other nations will hear of this defeat of ours, that You brought us into, and "cut off our name from the earth. Then what will You do for Your great name?" (vs9) God, You promised that no one would be able to stand before us. (1:5) So now, what are you going to do about it? God, it's all Your fault. Like Adam whined to God about the woman "whom You gave to be with me" (Ge3:12) It was somehow "God's fault" that Adam followed Eve into disobedience.

Is this the same Joshua we've been seeing? On the other hand, it is beginning to sound like the 'old' Israel from Kadesh Barnea: Oh, that we had stayed in Egypt! (Nu14:2) Now Joshua is whining: Oh, that we had stayed on the other side of the Jordan!

Before we go on, let's stop here a moment, and take reflection. We have come 9 verses: they have sent spies, they have sent a military expedition, and come running back with tails between their legs. At -whose-command? In these first nine verses, have we heard from God? Joshua, the 'hero', has assumed his position as hero-leader. Joshua gave the command. The spies made the suggestion as to 'how' to take Ai. And that's how they proceeded. Things failed, and -then- they turned to God: Why did You let this happen? Or worse yet: Why did You -make- this happen?

They were stepping -ahead- of God. Remember the first verse? There is *sin* in the camp. If they had -waited- for God's direction, would they not have learned of the sin? So now, at Joshua's whining, we hear from God...

"Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face? Israel has sinned... Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you. Get up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow... O Israel; you are not able to stand before your enemies until you take away the devoted thing from among you" (vs10-13)

God gives Joshua a good talking-to. A tongue lashing.

What was the fault? -One- person, Achan, had disobeyed the ban on the devoted things. He saw a couple of items, which he took, and hid in the dirt in his tent. Out of how-many-million, just -one- person. Just "one honest mistake"; so he took a couple of items. What were those few things in light of all the wealth they collected from Jericho? Nobody will miss it. Right? Out of Israel's millions, this was only -one- person... just -one- person. And so God punishes -all- Israel, for "one honest mistake"?

Notice how often, in these first seven chapters we have seen the word "sanctify"? Make "holy". It's one thing to have God continually repeat throughout the giving of the Law, "...you shall be holy; for I am holy" (Le11:44) It's one thing to sit IN CHURCH and hear about holiness, sing the songs, gaze at the stained glass and have -feelings- and -emotions- of "holiness", imagining the halo floating down from Heaven over our heads. But what God commands is holiness in actions and behavior. As Peter says, "become holy in all -CONDUCT-" (1Pt1:15) Holy conduct is not the act of fluttering our eyelids, with twinkles in our eyes, whilst putting hands together with fingers pointed upwards; and perhaps uttering quiet little smiling pious 'sighs'.

In the case of this account, holiness was supposed to be -OBEDIENCE-. God said "don't"... so don't. If God says "do"... then do.

Achan's disobedience was not only 'theft' of that which was devoted to God; since 36 were killed in the excursion to Ai, and those deaths were because of Achan's disobedience, he had also committed murder. The Law was clear. In this case, Achan and everything he had was stoned, burned, and covered over with stones; a monument to the incident. What were monuments for? To -remember-. In this case, 'this' happened: Don't do it again! Included in all this were the items Achan had stolen. (vs24) What? Not -restored- to God? No. It had been defiled by disobedience. Everything dealing with Achan was eradicated from among the people.

But wasn't that rather 'harsh'? For such a 'minor' infraction (one honest mistake), to receive such gross punishment? God is not trifled with! As we keep noticing... the entire process of crossing the Jordan, being circumcised, Jericho's destruction; EVERYTHING thus far has been at the command of Jehovah. In the wilderness they had been learning this for 39 years: each day they woke up they did not know if they would be travelling or staying put. It was everyday...

"At the mouth of Jehovah they remained encamped, and at the mouth of Jehovah they set out; they kept the charge of Jehovah, at the mouth of Jehovah by the hand of Moses." (Nu9:17-23)

Now, suddenly, they struck out on their own. They were not sanctified. They were not holy.

The faults in this account were on several fronts:

First of all, was Joshua letting the praise and fame get to his head? When Joshua is on his face, God does not treat him with kid gloves. He says, "Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face?" Why are you feeling sorry for yourself? There's sin that needs to be dealt with.

And why did Joshua forge on ahead to Ai without God's command? Well, he was functioning like world CEOs do. Formulate a plan, based on

surveys, scope out the territory, and then JUST GO FOR IT! (like my ex father-in-law exhorted me to do years ago) Joshua did not wait. He conducted his warfare according to the flesh. (2Co10:4) And all Israel suffered the consequences.

The spies had their focus in the wrong direction. Yes, Jericho had been defeated... but it was -NOT- 'Israel' that defeated them. It was not their hero-leader, Joshua. It was God's battle, conducted in God's way, which resulted in victory.

But for the spies it was -we-. Like when two cats are facing off, squalling, hissing, taking the occasional swipe, but they are both too chicken to really get it 'on' to decide who wins or loses. But if the master of one comes along, stomping and hissing, the 'stranger' cat goes scampering away, and the 'home' cat goes chasing after. Did the home cat 'win'? Does he now puff up himself in his own exploits at having chased the stranger cat? No! It was the 'master', before whom the strange cat would have fled anyway.

The spies, and those around them, forgot just -who- the Master was. They forgot -who- was in charge. They forgot -who- their leader was. Yes, they were obeying Joshua... but their leader/commander (5:14) was Jehovah God.

And finally, Achan. When the leaders went ahead and got clobbered by Ai, they didn't have all the facts. And this will be a lesson they will have to learn again with Gibeon. But they did not know about Achan. They did not consult with God, but charged ahead in their own wisdom. If they had waited for God, He would have commanded them to take care of the matter of Achan; to sanctify (cleanse) the camp of Achan's sin; and -then- they would have gone up to Ai.

"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of Jehovah our God." (Ps20:7)

Doing it Right (Joshua 8)

"And Jehovah said to Joshua: Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; take all the people of war with you, and arise, go up to Ai. Behold, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land." (vs1)

Aahhh! Things are on track again! "-Jehovah- said to Joshua" God is speaking, and Joshua is listening. God instructs the battle plan, to "lay an ambush" (vs2b), and this time they take 'all' the troops. We will not rehearse all the details; you can read for yourselves.

But as Joshua is giving the instructions to the people, notice he says...

"According to the word of Jehovah you shall do. See, I have commanded you." (vs8b)

They are not convening a council, fielding various ideas. That was the path to failure. No. Listen to me now: This is what God has commanded. So they set out, following God's commands, and achieved victory.

This is what God's prophet and leader is supposed to do. To Ezekiel He says,

"I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, Thus says the Lord Jehovah." (Ezk2:4)

When somebody in a place of leadership says, "I think we should..." such a foundation of "I think" is shaky ground. When a committee sets up to "take a vote"... well... when the disciples made a -proposition- and took a vote, they elected Matthias to replace Judas. (Ac1:23,26) But from the rest of the NT it is pretty obvious that Jesus' choice was S/Paul. (Ac26:16, Ga1:15) And once past the vote, we never hear of Matthias again.

Just as Scripture does not come from "personal exposition" or by "man's choice" (2Pt1:20-21), so too, the doing of God's work is not of personal contrivings, manipulations or wisdom. Again, as shared earlier in the series, it is not a matter of making a business plan and -decision- and then "GO FOR IT". I suspect one reason Paul was chosen as an apostle was because he had the heart attitude...

"Lord, what do You have in mind for me to do?" (Ac9:6)

These are things that come through the Holy Spirit (2Pt1:21b), as we then have the "mind of Christ". (1Co2:16)

So... Israel goes and Ai is defeated. Now what?

Hip hip... Hooray! Hip hip... Hooray! Hey! Everybody! Let's go meet at Joe's Pizza Pub. Hey bartender! A round for everybody! Free drinks for all! For he's a jolly good fellow...??? No!

"And Joshua built an altar unto Jehovah the God of Israel, in Mount Ebal" (vs30)

Having Church???? What a downer! Joshua, you have this all wrong! They achieved victory... you should be praising them for their good work. What? What's this...??

"And afterward he read all the Words of the Law, the blessings and the curses, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. There was not a Word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, with the women, the little ones, and the sojourners who were living among them." (vs34-35)

The -whole- Pentateuch? Don't you realize how long that's going to take? The men are -tired-, and want to get home, kick back, put their feet up and relax. What's this? And all the children, too? Don't you realize that children can't sit that long without fidgeting, whining and crying. It's obvious you don't have any children of your own; if you did you would do things differently. Maybe send them off to "children's church" where they can color with their crayons.

Whose battle was it? God's. Why did they have to go up to Ai twice? Because they had not followed God's Law. That was the very first thing God had exhorted Joshua, to "take heed to do according to all the Law" (1:7); which they had not done. Obviously, everybody needs a reminder.

In those days most people did not read, nor were the printing presses printing out thousands of copies of the Bible so every family could have one sitting on their coffee table, collecting dust, to be dusted off to impress the preacher when he might come to visit. People learned the Law by it being read to them by the scribes. (Neh8:8, 2Ch17:7-9) As we read Paul's exhortation regarding church services, to...

"...give attention to -READING-, to exhortation, to doctrine." (1Ti4:13)

Many of the Psalms were written by David, one of Israel's greatest military leaders. He was the one who finished what Joshua started, and gave Israel peace from all their enemies, so that Solomon's reign could be one of peace. (1Ch22:9) Many of the Psalms are also on the topic of warfare and seeking God's wisdom and assistance.

It was David who proclaims to Goliath...

"the battle is Jehovah's" (1Sa17:47)

"O how I love Your Law! It is my meditation all the day." (Ps119:97)

"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of Jehovah our God." (Ps20:7)

But if a person does not read God's Word, they will not be aware of these things. And when God has given victory, does it not behoove man to remember that it was God who gave the victory

God is the one who gives the victory, and also encouragement. Remember how many times when God first calls Joshua that he encourages Joshua: Be strong and of good courage. Do not be afraid or dismayed. (1:6,7,9,18) So, Israel has failed; but Joshua has obeyed in cleansing the nation. It's been quite a traumatic time. Now it's time to get up and go again; and God renews the encouragement...

"Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed" (vs1)

Gibeon: Oops! again (Joshua 9:3-27)

"But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, they did shrewdly, and went and pretended to be ambassadors. And they took old sacks on their donkeys, old wineskins torn and bound up, old and patched sandals on their feet, and old garments on themselves; and all the bread of their provision was dry and in crumbs. And they went to Joshua, to the camp at Gilgal, and said to him and to the men of Israel, We have come from a distant land; now therefore, make a treaty with us." (vs3-6)

Well... Jericho and Ai have been obliterated, and the rest of the nations that are next on the list are getting worried, so they decide to take preemptive action. Just as in recent decades, when Israel became a nation again, and all the surrounding Arab nations ganged up on them, and God gave Israel the ability to defeat them; well... these nations don't yet have this history to draw on, to think better of their plan. So they decide to get together to gang up on Israel (vs1-2)

But Gibeon decides to take a different approach. Instead of brute strength with (imagined) overwhelming numbers, they decide on intrigue. The peoples of the land are learning the name "Jehovah". They know the report of the Red Sea opening to allow Israel to cross, and Egypt's army being destroyed. They have seen the Jordan opening. They have seen and heard the reports of Israel's military exploits. A God who can control the seas and rivers, even if a whole bunch of nations get together, this God is more powerful. They know that God's plan is to wipe out all the nations and give the land to Israel. But they want to choose life.(vs24)

Again... you can read the account. But how blind are Israel's leaders? Don't they recognize a con job and scam when they see one? Perhaps, since the Law says to not lie, and they are living God's Law day-in day-out, they have become naive? (Just trying to give them some benefit of the doubt, here) Isn't it a bit too 'convenient' that this delegation is wearing worn out clothes, and carrying dried food. And when asked 'where' they are from, they don't actually give a -name-, but say, "...from a very distant land" (vs9) Does that land have a -name-? Where is that "distant land"? Even on the surface (being familiar with the account) doesn't their presentation sound an awful lot like the pan-handler who wants "just a couple dollars" for bus fare so they can get home. Or perhaps \$20.00 for cab fare so they can get to Coeur d'Alene (from Spokane) because their car broke down. (Even though a 'broken down' car is nowhere in sight; and when you ask them where their car is, their pointing is nebulous all over the place; or when you re-ask, they point to a different direction than they did the prior time) Or draw from your own memories the ways you've been approached.

Even Joshua, the 'leader', the one who due to his position as leader of people should know how to 'read' people, doesn't go much beyond surface questions. They begin to have an inkling, "Perhaps you are dwelling among us; so how can we make a treaty with you?" (vs7)

But "THEY DID NOT ASK AT THE MOUTH OF JEHOVAH" (vs14b)

They make a treaty, and then a few days later discover that they had been had; they had been conned. (vs16)

So, what would conventional wisdom say to do in this case? Israel swore (promised) to them, but it turned out that they were not honest; does their dishonesty make the promise/swear by Israel nul-and-void? Israel swore to them, but it was based on a false premise. And it doesn't sound like they wrote up a contract or treaty with that provision; like the spies did with Rahab: If you don't keep your end of the bargain, then we are free from our promise. (2:20) They just made the promise. What to do?

What does Israel do? Gather the troops and go wipe them out? You lied to us, so now you pay the consequences. ??

"O Jehovah, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill? He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart... HE HAS SWORN TO HIS HURT, AND DOES NOT CHANGE IT" (Ps15:1-2,4b)

Israel had foolishly sworn "to their hurt". But they did not compound the error by going back on their word. The enemy may have lied... but Israel did not need to break their word in order to even the score.

If only they had asked after God! However, next lesson we'll see how even this foolishness works to the glory of God in one of the greatest military victories, how "all things work together for good to those who love God" (Rom8:28)

So, Gibeon and allies are spared, and put to servitude: cutting wood and drawing water for the altar service. How many came to Saving Faith as a result? It doesn't say. But they were spared death, and given the opportunity to be within hearing of the Word of God. (Rom10:17)

Joshua's Long Day (*Joshua 9:1-2, 10:1-11:23*)

"And Jehovah said to Joshua, Do not fear them, for I have delivered them into your hand; not a man of them shall stand before you." (vs8)

Jericho and Ai are destroyed, and Gibeon has made peace with Israel. This is becoming a precarious situation for the remaining city-states. So the five kings of the Amorites (vs5) get together and decide to punish Gibeon for making peace with Israel. Gibeon calls out to Israel: Help! And so Israel, in keeping with the treaty they forged, goes to help Gibeon. And even though they had been foolish, they are keeping their word, and God honors that by promising victory. But this will be a victory like no other.

The treaty with Gibeon has actually turned out for an 'opportunity' for Israel, to engage in preemptive defense. (Like they did in 1967 when they obliterated Egypt's airforce and other similar things in short order. Quick and sudden strikes. To Egypt they flew below the radar. When they took out Sadam Hussein's nuclear reactors, their jets flew in a -very- tight formation, making themselves appear to the enemy radar as a commercial airplane) The enemy coming to Gibeon, coming -to- Israel was part of God's plan; just as in the next chapter when some more nations decide to come after Israel it says...

"For it was of Jehovah to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that He might utterly destroy them, and that they might receive no mercy, but that He might destroy them, as Jehovah had commanded Moses" (11:20)

What is it that they call it? "First blood"? If an enemy comes and attacks, and a nation 'defends' itself, there is more justification in the eyes of the world for self-defense, than for out-n-out naked aggression.

And so, before all is said and done for the next few days, a whole bunch of nations will be obliterated. And it says,

"All these kings and their land Joshua took at one time, because Jehovah the God of Israel, fought for Israel" (10:42)

How did God fight for Israel? He moved the heavens and earth. God threw hailstones down on the enemies, such that more died of the hailstones, than at Israel's hand. (10:11)

There was a lot of fighting to do, but only so much daylight. Joshua speaks to God, and the sun and moon stood still to make for an extra day's worth of daylight. (10:13)

How did this happen? There are others who know a lot more about astronomy than I do. It is said that astronomers, when calculating the

passage of time, going backwards through history, and calculating the orbits of the planets and the solar system, that there is a missing day in their calculations. Did God just -stop- the earth's rotation? The fact that a bunch of ice came crashing down suggests something else. Perhaps another planetoid came orbiting near the earth, and the gravity between the two pulled on the earth. If this planet had an ice moon that came within Roche's Limit of earth, the interaction of gravity would have made the ice moon 'explode' into bazillion pieces, and that's where the hailstones came from? Perhaps it was an icy comet? The fact that there was lots of ice falling from space, and that there was a complete extra day, means that *something* spectacular happened in the heavens. After all, God did set up the universe for "signs and seasons, and for days and years" (Ge1:14)

When we read in Revelation about the stars falling from heaven and the huge earthquakes, as Jesus promised (Mt24:29, Mk13:25), or as Joel speaks of the sun, moon and stars (Joel2) or about the earth moving out of its place (Is13:13), and hail falling (Re8:7,11:19,16:21, Ezk38:22) as Zechariah speaks of the final conflict as God restores Israel and judges the nations, it says...

"And Jehovah shall go forth and fight against those nations, like the day He fought in the day of battle." (Zec14:3)

I believe this episode with Joshua is what that refers to. (10:14) As Joshua speaks to Israel...

"..for Jehovah your God is He who is fighting for you.." (23:3,10)

It was not Israel's bravery, nor Joshua's commanding skills, but...

"..Jehovah your God has delivered them into your hand" (10:19)

They were able to defeat all these nations in one fell-swoop...

"because Jehovah the God of Israel fought for Israel" (10:42)

Israel has another time of deliverance coming. As we have seen, both Israel and Joshua have had lapses in obedience and wisdom. As it comes to the end of Joshua's life he is going to chide them to get rid of their idols (24:23); but the time is coming when Israel will be given a new heart (Jer31:31-34); as the third part that remains (Zec13:9) after Armageddon, they will "all be saved" (Rom11:26) God moved heaven and earth to get Israel into the land of promise in the first place. And when He eradicates, once and for all, Israel's enemies who want to wipe her off the map, He is going to do so again, just as He did in the days of Joshua.

"For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem. And the city shall be captured, and the houses plundered, and the women ravished. And half the city shall go into captivity and the rest of the people shall not

be cut off from the city. And Jehovah shall go forth and fight against those nations, like the day He fought in the day of battle. And His feet shall stand in that day on the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives shall split in two, from the east even to the west, a very great valley. And half of the mountain shall move toward the north, and half of it toward the south... And it will come to pass in that day, that there shall not be light; the great lights will shrink. And it will be one day which shall be known to Jehovah; not day and not night, but it will happen, that there will be light at evening time." (Zec14:2-4,6-7)

Been Done - Yet to Do (Joshua 12:1-14:5)

"These are the kings of the land whom the sons of Israel struck, and whose land they dispossessed on the other side of the Jordan toward the rising of the sun (the east)... and ...these are the kings of the land which Joshua and the sons of Israel conquered on this side of the Jordan, on the west..." (12:1,7)

"Now Joshua was old, advanced in years. And Jehovah said to him: You are old, advanced in years, and there remains very much land yet to be possessed. This is the land that yet remains:" (13:1-2)

Judging from Caleb's age in 14:10, it seems that approximately five years have gone by since the crossing of the Jordan. I didn't see any time markers to indicate how much time went by between Jericho's conquest and the activities around Ai. Nor the time from that to Gibeon and the "long day" battles. We are told that certain victories were accomplished "at one time because Jehovah the God of Israel, fought for Israel" (10:42) While God gave them many victories and the conquering of many states in a relatively short period of time, God had also promised earlier...

"And Jehovah your God will clear away those nations before you little by little; you shall not prevail to destroy them all at once, lest the beasts of the field become too numerous for you." (De7:22)

And so, while we will see Joshua giving certain ones a tongue lashing a bit later for dragging their feet to take possession (18:3), it was also *expected* that it would take a period of years to fully occupy the land. If they had always been in obedience, it would likely have been a quicker project. But as it would turn out, by the time the period of the judges ends, and Samuel deals with Saul's rebellions, it became around 400 years before David had finished the task, leaving a peaceful territory for Solomon to reign over and build the temple.

And having looked at this verse from Moses, let's stop a minute for modern-day reflection. Notice God's concern if -all- the nations were defeated all at one time, while Israel is yet only a few million, for all that territory. Notice that God did not make the earth for the animals.

God "made the earth, and created -MAN- on it" (Is45:12)

God gave -MAN- "dominion" over the earth, and all its animals. (Gen1:26) Man was told to "subdue" it. (Ge1:28) A bit later as some are whining about the mountain they were given, that it was forested land, Joshua tells them to "cut [the forest] down" (17:18) and take possession.

Notice there is nothing about, after the nations are subdued, to -give- the land "back to the animals". There is no talk about "save the rain forests".

Man was given the earth to -use- it. Earth was made -for- man, not the other way around. Man is to have 'dominion' over the earth and manage it. This was not a situation like just after the flood. The animals and people who left the ark were of a similar number. They were 'balanced' to each other, as they both spread out over the earth, fruitfully multiplying. So the balance between man and animals remained at a self-regulating constant. But if all the people were now suddenly killed, it would create a -void- of the human population, thus giving animals the upper hand. So we see how God saw to an -orderly- conquest of the land to settle Israel on it.

Today's eco-nuts probably would have praised a situation where the animals could have taken over. Some of them would even now like to 'kill off' 90% of humanity, putting those 10% who remained into pre-planned (sustainable) communities, leaving the rest of nature for the animals. They, of course, come from a Godless background where they believe in evolution, which teaches that animals were dominant, and man only 'evolved' in the more recent millions of years; and just look at how he is 'ruining' the earth, and doesn't deserve it; so let's kill off man and let the earth 'revert' -back- to the animals. In not acknowledging the Creator, they reject man's God-given role as 'rulers' of the earth...-over- the animals and nature.

So, if they want to kill off humanity, perhaps we can borrow from something alleged to have come from Rush Limbaugh; for those who wish that upon humanity: let them "lead the way". Let them take the pill, bullet or whatever means by which they would kill humanity...first. If they truly believe so militantly that way, should they not lead by example? And then, who would take possession of their multi-bathroomed mansions, gas-guzzling SUVs and private jets?

Thus, we notice God's purposes (to not have animals over-run the land) and Joshua's commands (to cut down the forests) in keeping with God's original covenant in the beginning at creation.

So, at this point there is nothing 'wrong' with Israel not yet being in full possession. But here we are, as we review: This has been done (ch12), but there is more to do (ch13), and here is a review of what yet needs to be done...

"...them I will dispossess before the sons of Israel; only, divide it by lot to Israel as an inheritance, as I have commanded you. Now therefore, divide this land as an inheritance to the nine-tribes and the half-tribe of Manasseh" (13:6-7)

God's promise that this territory -will- be given. Divide it up, by lot, so that everybody knows what belongs to whom. This is the 'inheritance' that -will- come with time.

Of course, it says nine and a half tribes because two and a half already have their possession on the east side of the Jordan. While the fighting men are with Joshua, their families are already in possession of their territory. (13:8,14:3)

"Only the tribe of Levi he had given no inheritance; the sacrifices by fire unto Jehovah the God of Israel, are their inheritance, as He had spoken to them" (13:14,33,14:4)

Where had God said this? Levi was given "all the tithes" (Nu18:21) They were to be given cities -within- all the various tribes. (Nu35:2) The Levites were given no -earthly- inheritance because "Jehovah is his inheritance" (De10:9) And so Israel was also exhorted...

"You shall not forsake the Levite who is within your gates, for he has no part nor inheritance with you." (De14:27)

We won't look up all the references now... but the Levites, the priests, and their families ate from the altar sacrifices. The tithes were not for the temple service; but for the support of the Levites; as well as widows, orphans and strangers. (De26:12) And so for the Church Paul also says, "

"Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel." (1Co9:14)

Does this suggest that pastors and preachers should not 'own' their own homes, and should only live in church-owned parsonages? I don't know that Scripture suggests this, although there are some who believe, teach and practice it (or at least, years ago they did) The Levites were given cities to live in, as such would they not have -owned- what they had within those cities?

But they were not given (earthly) 'tribal' territory. Their 'territory' was God's Kingdom. That was their God-ordained life and career. Not striving for earthly goals, but Heavenly. So even though Israel was an earthly nation, there was always this reminder of their connection with God. After all, until Jesus would come and fulfill the Law (1Ti2:5), the priests were the 'mediators' between God and man.

Now, even though Paul sometimes worked as a tent maker (Ac18:3), there are some pastors who believe it is 'wrong' to also hold down a job, and will not do so, even when the group is obviously too small to support him. But on the other hand, Paul also exhorts to support (double honor) those who minister the Word. (1Ti5:17)

But whatever the case, preachers are not to be hoarding up wealth. The "love of money is a root of all evils" and leads many to stray from the Faith. (1Ti6:10) Paul said that he knew both how to be poor, and to abound. (Php4:12) The prophets often came out of the tribe of Levi, and as such

could receive of the tithe. But there were also cases like Elijah, where God fed him via the ravens, because in his faithfulness to God, he was running for his life from Jezebel.

It was important for Israel to be diligent to divide up the land between the tribes. But it was also important that they remembered that Levi did not get an earthly inheritance, as it is repeated several times through these passages.

And so this is what they did. The inheritance was by "lot". (14:1-2)

But in amongst all of this; a side note; notice a specific item of cleansing that took place...

"The sons of Israel also killed with the sword Balaam the son of Beor, the diviner, among their slain." (13:22)

In the wilderness, when Israel was committing idolary and sexual perversion with the Moabites, somebody from Israel returned to his tent with a Moabite woman...

"And when Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand; and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman, through her belly. Thus the plague was stopped from the children of Israel. And those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand." (Nu25:7-9)

But at the time Balaam, who had been the catalyst for the whole incident, was 'out-of-reach' from justice. But when Israel was finally in the process of taking possession, and met up with him, he received his reward. As Moses warned in another context...

"...you have sinned against Jehovah; and recognize that your sin will find you out." (Nu32:23)

Caleb: Give me this mountain! (Joshua 14:6-15:63)

"Now therefore, give me this mountain of which Jehovah spoke in that day; for you heard in that day how the Anakim were there, and that the cities were great and fortified. It may be that Jehovah will be with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as Jehovah has spoken." (14:12)

There's been a lot of joint fighting thus far. All of Israel fighting and taking over large tracts of territory. Now it's beginning to break down into individual tribes forging out and taking what has been allotted to them, specifically. Sometimes individually; sometimes by teaming up with a neighbor tribe. And who is taking the (proverbial) bull by the horns first? Caleb.

Who is Caleb? Moses had sent out 12 spies to spy out the land, and they came back to report. Most of them whimpered away...

"The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. There we saw the giants, the sons of Anak of the giants; and we were like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and so we were in their eyes. And all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night." (Nu13:32-14:1)

And that became the incident of Kadesh-Barnea, 45 years earlier, where God consigned Israel to wander the wilderness 40 years; one year for each of the days they had spied the land and then rejected, until all those of the age of vigor should die away in the wilderness. 'Today', most of Israel is comprised of their children. But two of the spies had encouraged Israel...

"But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, among those who spied out the land, tore their clothes; and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. If Jehovah has delighted in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us; a land flowing with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against Jehovah, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their shade has departed from them, and Jehovah is with us. Do not fear them." (Nu14:6-9)

Well, 'today' Joshua is leading all of Israel. And Caleb? He is the one making the request, "Give me this mountain!" This mountain in which dwell those previously-feared "anakim". The giants.

OK, now again... who is Caleb? Well, he is of the tribe of Judah. Who else came from Judah? David. What did David do? He killed Goliath the giant. And David's brothers and men killed the remaining brothers of Goliath. (1Ch20:4-8) Here Caleb kills several of the giants. (15:14) In other words,

Judah is a tribe of 'giant killers'. But were they strong, in and of themselves?

Caleb reviews, "...but I wholly followed Jehovah my God" (14:8) and so, "It may be that Jehovah will be with me" (14:12)

When David was facing Goliath,

"Then all this assembly shall know that Jehovah does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is Jehovah's, and He has given you into our hands." (1Sa17:47)

Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years because they said, essentially: -We- cannot defeat all these giants. We are like grasshoppers in their eyes.

"Thus says Jehovah, Cursed is the man who trusts in man, and makes flesh his strength, and whose heart departs from Jehovah... Blessed is the man who trusts in Jehovah, and Jehovah is his refuge. (Jer17:5,7)

At the ancient blessing Judah was entitled,

"Judah is a lion's whelp" (Ge49:9)

If Judah is the 'whelp', who is the -lion-?

"Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to bosen its seven seals." (Re5:5)

Jesus asked a question of His detractors...

"What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He? They said to Him, The Son of David. He said to them, How then does David in the Spirit call Him Lord, saying: The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool? If David then calls Him Lord, how is He his son?" (Mt22:42-45)

If Judah was the 'whelp', obviously then the 'lion' had to be there first. Yes?

"Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, Before Abraham came to be, I AM." (Jn8:58)

God had promised Moses,

"For My Angel will go before you and bring you in to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off." (Ex23:23)

As Paul says of that one who went before Israel,

"..that Rock was Christ" (1Co10:4b)

Like we observed back in ch7: when two cats are facing off, and the master of the one comes along stomping and hissing, the 'enemy' scampers off, defeated. It was not the 'home' cat that actually -won-. It was the master's presence.

It's the same thing Israel is facing. Any of the tribes facing off with the enemy is like those two cats. But Israel has the 'Master' stomping and hissing. And Caleb understands this.

But we also see that Judah had troubles driving everybody out; the ones who had chariots, including Jerusalem. (Jdg1:19) God let this be purposely...

"And they were left, that He might test Israel by them, to know whether they would obey the commandments of Jehovah, which He had commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses." (Jdg3:4)

The book of Judges is a testament to how Israel did -NOT- wholly follow God during successive generations. It's not enough that Moses, Joshua and Caleb followed the Lord; what will their descendents do? And after around 400 years, David will finish the job in taking Jerusalem. (2Sam5)

But for right now Caleb leads the way; one man in a big tribe that will otherwise also have weakness. Will anybody follow his example?

We can't take this mountain! (Joshua 16:1-18:10)

"Thus...Manasseh and Ephraim took possession" (16:4)

"And [Ephraim] did not drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwell in the midst of Ephraim to this day and are serving under tribute" (vs10)

"There was also a lot for the tribe of Manasseh, for he was the firstborn of Joseph..." (17:1) The daughters of Zelophehad came forward to claim their inheritance. (17:3-4)

"Yet the sons of Manasseh could not dispossess those cities, but the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land. And it happened, when the sons of Israel grew strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, but did not drive them out to dispossess them." (17:12-13)

And so here we go...

"And the sons of Joseph spoke to Joshua, saying, Why have you given us only one lot and one portion to inherit, since we are a numerous people, inasmuch as Jehovah has blessed us until now? And Joshua answered them, If you are a numerous people, then go up to the forests and clear out a place for yourself there in the land of the Perizzites and the giants, since the mountains of Ephraim are too confined for you. And the sons of Joseph said, The mountains are not enough for us; and all the Canaanites who dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, both those who are of Beth Shean and its daughter-villages and those who are of the Valley of Jezreel. And Joshua spoke to the house of Joseph, to Ephraim and Manasseh, saying, You are a numerous people and have great power, you shall not have only one lot, but the mountains shall be yours. Although it is a forest, you shall cut it down, and it shall be yours to its extremities; for you shall dispossess the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots and are strong." (17:14-18)

Something that has always seemed like a dichotomy to me, when reading through these chapters over the years. Perhaps I'm missing something about military 'strategy'? But somehow I doubt it.

When God calls Joshua to lead Israel, He promises, "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.." (1:5) Now here we are, Israel is -in- the land; Joshua is still alive; and yet as these tribes go to take possession they are certainly taking -some- territory. As it says of Dan

"..the sons of Dan went up to fight against Leshem and took it; and they struck it with the edge of the sword, dispossessed it, and dwelt in it" (19:47)

But there are all these little verses here and there "they did not drive them out" but AS THEY GOT STRONGER they would put them to tribute; but the inhabitants 'insisted' on staying in the land. Why was there any *choice* on the part of the inhabitants as to whether they were staying or being dispossessed, if the tribes were going at God's leadership and mastership? If Israel had those massive victories against insurmountable odds, such that the inhabitants were in fear of Israel, why now suddenly is Israel 'weak' and NOT 'able' to subdue individual clans, tribes and cities here and there?

Caleb had victory (15:14-19) because he was resting on God's promises. (14:12) Does this mean the rest are -already- going back to their old ways; going in their -own- strength and wisdom; not asking after God's leadership?

Generally the "land was subdued before" Israel. (18:1b) They are -in- the land of promise, even though individual tribes haven't yet taken full possession of their own territories. So now Shiloh becomes the center for worship. Shiloh is situated north of Jerusalem, a bit north of Bethel and Ai. Just as Jerusalem will become the center of worship under David and Solomon; during the years of the judges and through Samuel and Saul, Shiloh will be Israel's center of worship, where the tabernacle will reside.

The tent is setup, and Israel all gathers together. (18:1)

So now Joshua lays into them...

"How long will you be slack to go and possess the land which Jehovah the God of your fathers has given to you?" (18:3)

Is this 'complacency'? Laziness? Are these not the meanings of the word slack? Are they re-adopting the pre-Ai mentality? Since -we- have been victorious over these other -great- enemies, what are these little backwater places? Piece-o-cake! Let's waltz in there, and they will fall into our laps. But the enemies were persistent.

Perhaps a little is going on as happened with me as a kid? I was homeschooled, and then when I entered the boarding school for missionary kids, in taking the standardized test to see 'where' I fit with the rest, my homeschooling tested me waaaay ahead of the rest. And I -knew- the test results. Well...you see! I'm sooo smart... I'm way smarter than these other kids... I DON'T -NEED- TO WORK AT IT. And you know, in short order I was struggling to keep my grades up. I was again homeschooled, and then we came back to the US where I entered the public school system, was tested... waaaay ahead. Same attitude: I'm so smart I don't need to work. And again, things got so bad I barely passed 7th and 8th grades with Ds and Ds...and by that point I was actually *working*, but was NOT ABLE to get my grades back up. (My intelligence

level, if I had not messed up, was capable of pretty much straight As) Couldn't figure out how to get my brain back in gear.

And by the time Samuel comes along, Israel is going to be soooo messed up that they are going to ask for a king to "fight our battles" (1Sa8:20)

It seems that they liked the victories. They like the new land. But they don't want to put forth the effort. This mountain? There's -trees- growing on it. They had gotten so used to taking possession of...

"...land for which you have not labored, and cities which you have not built, and you dwell in them; you are eating of the vineyards and olive groves which you have not planted." (24:13)

Were they expecting -everything- to just fall (plop) onto their laps? After all: to wield an axe to fell some trees and clear some land? That's soooo much work!!!

Remember how earlier we discussed how remaining holy and staying true to God and His Word takes a lot of diligence and work?

"..be strong and very courageous, that you may TAKE HEED TO DO according to all the Law..." (1:7)

The Christian life is not for slackers! We are exhorted to...

"..run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus..." (Heb12:1-2)

The other day there was something on the sports news about a couple of referee calls at a local (college?) football game. In one of the cases they showed the runner, carrying the football, running towards the goal. He had soooo outrun anybody trying to tackle him that, as he got to the goal, NOBODY was around him, or a threat. So he slowed up his running pace those last 3-4 steps as he crossed the goal line. Now I don't understand this; I don't know the intricacies of football that much; but the runner was cited by the ref for "unsportsmanlike conduct". Because he had deliberately 'slowed down' to cross the line. I suppose: 'showing off'? (I forget: did he also throw in a couple of 'high' steps, to boost the boast-factor)

One thing I -do- understand is music, and particularly singing. If singers, or any instrument based on the breath support of the musician, close the musical phrase by slacking their breath support, the note will go flat at the end, will lose its tonal luster and richness. The breath support must be in *full* force to the VERY END of the note, even (especially) when the note is getting quieter. As Paul says about the runner of the race, "stretching forward" (Php3:13)

Joshua isn't even yet dead, and Israel is already getting lazy. In the next book of Judges this will translate into many backslidings into idolatry.

But here, for now, Joshua gets on their case: get a group of you together and go scope out the territory and make a map of the land. Joshua will then "cast lots" (18:8) over the map, and make assignments as to what belongs to whom. So now there's no excuses. You know who belongs where, and who needs to subdue what. All that is needed, then, is to -do- it. Let's get going! C'mon! (clap clap) Let's goooo!!!

Earlier in the series we addressed the world's "business man" idea of forging a plan, and then -just- "go for it". But if God hasn't yet given the instructions, such methods step ahead of God, and end up in disaster. But now Israel -has- their instructions. So, why are you dilly dallying?

Cities of Refuge (Joshua 20-21)

"Jehovah also spoke to Joshua, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, saying: Appoint for yourselves cities of refuge, of which I have spoken to you by the hand of Moses, that the slayer who kills a soul accidentally or unintentionally may flee there; and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood." (20:1-3)

"Then the heads of the fathers of the Levites came near to Eleazar the priest, to Joshua the son of Nun, and to the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the sons of Israel. And they spoke to them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, saying, Jehovah has commanded by the hand of Moses to give us cities to dwell in, with their common lands for our cattle. And the sons of Israel gave to the Levites from their inheritance, at the mouth of Jehovah, these cities and their common lands." (21:1-3)

These cities of 'refuge' and the ones given for the Levites are -related- to each other. I made a comparison years ago, so did not repeat it now; you can if you are so-inclined. You will notice six cities of refuge. (Nu35:15) If you check them out on a map, you will note that three are on the west side of the Jordan, and three on the east. (Nu35:14)

In ch21 there are MANY MORE cities given to the Levites as dwelling places. But one thing you will notice is that every City-of-Refuge is also a Levite city. Not all Levite cities are cities of refuge; but each of the six cities of Refuge is also a Levite city.

Why is this of significance?

--The Mighty God is my refuge and strength, and He makes my way whole.

--I wait upon You, O my Strength; for God is my refuge.

--I will say of Jehovah, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him will I trust." (2Sa22:33, Ps59:9, 91:2)

"that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters in within the veil" (Heb6:18)

The Levites were not given physical territory because -God- was their 'inheritance'. In their service regarding the sacrifices they were -priests-... 'mediators' between God and man. When people would come to the priests about whatever matter they did so, it was somewhat as if they were -symbolically- coming 'to God'. And so, if a person was fleeing the avenger, they came to the City of Refuge as though they were fleeing "-to-God".

After the flood one of the laws God dictated to mankind was the matter of capital punishment for the committing of murder. And recompense was the right of the relatives of the victim. (Gen9:5-6) God repeated this law in the Ten Commandments. (Ex20:13)

But God is not merely a God of -Law-; but has also always been a God of reason (Is1:18), mercy (La3:22) and grace (Ex34:6). God knows that, in the affairs of daily life, there are 'accidents'. God knows the "thoughts" of the heart. (1Ch29:18, Heb4:12) He knows whether the killer -intended- to commit "murder" aforethought. And there is a passage that explains aforethought, planning, habit, steps taken toward prevention and resultant level of guilt. (Ex21:12-36)

But when a person's relative is lying on the ground, dead, the emotions, assuming the worst, run wild: Why! I'll kill you!!! So the chase ensues. The avenger doesn't want to hear reason... he just wants revenge.

And so the 'guilty' one reaches the City of Refuge; being inhabited by Levites, a symbol of God's haven. The Levites were also the adjudicators of civil and legal matters. And so, God set up something which, to my uneducated mind, seems an awful lot like modern jurisprudence; the concept of "trial by jury" (of one's peers). The list of conditions is given by which they are to look at the evidence of the case, and then God says...

"then the CONGREGATION SHALL JUDGE between the manslayer and the kinsman avenger of blood according to these judgments. Thus the congregation shall deliver the manslayer out of the hand of the kinsman avenger of blood, and the congregation shall return him to the city of refuge where he had fled, and he shall remain there until the death of the high priest who was anointed with the holy oil." (Nu35:24-25)

With God, and the Law, when somebody was guilty (whatever the sin), there was no procrastination and extended time for 'appeals'. If the offending party was guilty, they were taken out and stoned... RIGHT NOW.

As the preacher says...

"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." (Ec8:11)

But if the 'intent' of the heart was not guilty, notice God's provision for what in this country is called, "Innocence until proven guilty" But under Israel's plan, the life of the innocent was not as 'easy', in that: they had to -run- for their life, and hope they were faster at running than the avenger; because if the avenger caught up to him first, before he could reach the City of Refuge, and killed him, that was it. God's Law was 'stacked' on the side of the avenger. Such is the -serious- nature of the matter when human life is extinguished. And even when the person was acquitted of premeditation,

they still had to -remain- in the City of Refuge. It was not a FREE PASS back to the former 'normal' life.

So we notice that God sets up very quickly, within the first few years of Israel being in the land, the Levite cities, and the Cities of Refuge. There were not prolonged years of lawlessness.

And so...

"And Jehovah gave them rest all around, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers. And not a man of all their enemies stood against them; Jehovah delivered all their enemies into their hand. Not a word failed of any good thing which Jehovah had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass." (21:44-45)

Now, while it says here that all of God's promises were fulfilled, we understand that there is still work to do. Still more territory to take possession of. (13:1, 23:5) But with the establishment of the Levite cities, Israel is -in- the land, and their leadership is situated where they will live, so they can proceed with God's work as assigned to them. Yes, still some loose ends to tie up. But Israel is -in- the land, as God promised them.

Go Home: Idolatry Already? (Joshua 22)

"Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, and said to them: You have kept all that Moses the servant of Jehovah had commanded you, and have obeyed my voice in all that I have commanded you. You have not left your brethren these many days, to this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of Jehovah your God. And now Jehovah your God has given rest to your brethren, as He has promised them; now therefore, return and go to your tents and to the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of Jehovah has given you on the other side of the Jordan." (vs1-4)

The initial military campaigns are finished. The tabernacle is setup at Shiloh. The cities of refuge have been appointed. The 2.5 tribes have hung in there, helping the rest of the tribes subdue the land. Their promised obligation is complete. It's time to go home to their families. How does Joshua send them off? Thanks guys! Go home... Live long and prosper! ?? No. The thing which characterizes every instance of exhortation in the book...

"But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the Law which Moses the servant of Jehovah has charged you, to love Jehovah your God, to walk in all His ways, to keep His commandments, to cleave unto Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul." (vs5)

Diligent heed... to -do- the commandments and law. Love God. Follow all His ways...with heart and soul. Just like the NT exhortation to the Church...

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth." (2Ti2:15)

Serving God requires -diligence-! "earnest persistent application, steady effort, attentive care, heedfulness" In the dictionary it indicates that "diligence" is also French for a 'large stage coach', something given to 'speed'. The coach would be 'dispatched'. This suggests an order is issued, and it is obeyed RIGHT NOW, with 'due alacrity'. Not like the youth the other day who was rolling down the sidewalk in front of the store, and when I went out to alert him to the fact that the area was a "no roll" zone, he then proceeded to get back on his push scooter to finish rolling out the end of the walkway; to which I -yelled- (boomed) after him, "I said NO!!!" ('made him 'jump' a little. But by then he was already at the end, and away.)

Salvation might be by grace, through faith and NOT of works. But Salvation is -unto- "good works". (Eph2:8-10) We won't repeat everything we've observed in prior lessons. But the Christian Life is 'hard work'! And it is not based on our own -ideas- and the passing -whims- of the day. Or the attitudes of today's youth summed up with a shrug and the word,

"Whatever!" It is based on God's Word. In the OT they called it the Law. In the Church we call it the Bible or Scripture. Same thing. It is God's Word.

This is how the 2.5 tribes were sent home. Oh, so critical! So judgmental! So hateful! So -negative-! Not very 'loving', nor inviting to come back to visit!

So... the 2.5 tribes get to the Jordan, and before crossing over to go home they erect a huge monument. (vs10) A big altar.

The rest get wind of it and assemble all the troops to go to war with them. (vs12) But first they exercise some wisdom. They assemble a delegation to go meet with them: What's the deal here? Did you learn nothing from Peor? We're still suffering some of the consequences of that incident. (vs17) Have you already forgotten Achan's disobedience and God's judgment? (vs20) If your territory is somehow unsuitable, come over and we'll make room for you. (vs19) But don't go into idolatry!

No, no, no! You've got it all wrong. If that's what we're doing, then let us suffer the consequences. (vs21-23)

But their -concern-. What happens when peoples and families are separated for a long time, and a few generations pass. Succeeding generations 'forget' who their ancestors were. And then politics happen, and those who -should- be allies forget that they are allies; competition gets involved; and all the things that cause rifts. And where they were originally 'family', they are now enemies; or at least, arguing strenuously.

This monument is for -remembrance- and -identity-. Surely, we are all familiar with the movies or story lines where some charm is broken in half; one half goes one way, the other half goes another. Many years later events bring certain people together, and they think it odd that they seem to have so many similarities of thought, or this or that. And then it becomes discovered that they each have this 'half' of the charm (usually in the shape of a heart). They each pull out their own half, and they put the two halves together, and they match perfectly; and so they tearfully embrace, realizing that they both come from the same relatives, and they are 'family'. This monument is like that 'heart'.

God's altar had a certain way in which it was built, that all Jews recognized. It was not like pagan altars. Other than the fact that the rocks were not to have any tool cut/chip them (Ex20:25), I don't personally know what their -appearance- was. But it was significant enough a difference that, after the prophets of Baal had finished dancing and cutting themselves, Elijah took the stones and built an altar according to God's direction given to Israel with 12 stones; one for each of the 12 tribes of Israel. (1Ki18:30-32)

It's just like today with the Diaspora. When villages, groups or enclaves of Jews are found in whatever part of the world they are found in, it is observed that they all have certain habits and rituals harking back to Israeli customs. Those habits and rituals are part of the reason further investigation is done, to know if they are truly related to Israel. And today, they have the added medical tool of DNA testing. Those truly from Israel have a certain DNA characteristic that is unique to Israel. In fact, there are also certain flags to identify which tribe they come from, as well.

And so, the 2.5 tribes are concerned that, with time, the rest of the nation might reject them as not 'belonging' to Israel. Well... what is it that ties them together? ...or rather, Who? Jehovah God. And what identifies a person's allegiance to God? The sacrifice and its altar. There is only one way to sacrifice to God. Anything else is idolatry.

And so, just as Laban and Jacob erected a pile of stones, a monument, as a 'witness' between them, that they would not come after each other for harm (Gen31:44-52); so too the 2.5 tribes erected a 'pattern' of the altar.

No, not idolatry.

"For it is a witness between us that Jehovah is God" (vs34)

Serve God Only! (Joshua 23-24)

"And Jehovah your God will thrust them out before you and dispossess them before your faces. Thus you shall possess their land, as Jehovah your God has spoken to you. Therefore be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, that you not turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left, and that you not go among these nations, these remaining among you. You shall not make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause anyone to swear by them; you shall not serve them nor bow down to them, but you shall cleave unto Jehovah your God, as you have done to this day." (23:5-8)

These two chapters represent Joshua's closing communications with Israel before he dies. (24:29)

The theme, as it began the book, also ends the book. The opening salvo was:

--The land will be divided to Israel as an inheritance

--Be strong and courageous... THAT YOU MAY

--Keep God's Law (1:6-9)

Now it is:

--Israel's success is because God has been fighting for you
God will see to the completion of the task of conquest

--Be courageous... to

--Keep all that is in the Book of the Law (23:3-6)

Now that they are in the land, there is another parameter in following God; not only following God, but also...

"You shall not make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause anyone to swear by them; you shall not serve them nor bow down to them, but you shall cleave unto Jehovah your God..." (23:7-8)

This is what Moses had warned when they were yet in the wilderness...

"take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise. You shall not do so unto Jehovah your God; for everything that is an abomination to Jehovah which He has hated, they have done unto their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire unto their

gods. Whatever I am commanding you, take heed to do it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it." (De12:30-32)

God is the one fighting for you; take diligent heed to love Jehovah your God. (vs10-11)

But if you turn back... (vs12)

-HOW- is it that people become snared into idolatry? What is the #1 concern? -INTERMARRIAGE- That Israel...

"make[s] marriages with them, and go in to them and they to you" (vs12)

You see, there is nothing quite like the enticement of the "seductiveness of the foreign tongue" (Pr6:24) Solomon knew this well, since he married many foreign wives, and his wives...

"thrust his heart aside after other gods; and his heart was not perfect with Jehovah his God, as was the heart of his father David." (1Ki11:4)

It starts out with the seductiveness, the desire, the lust... and once married then it's GOTCHA!!! Like Jezebel with Ahab. Ahab was already an evil king, but when he married Jezebel, the evil grew and multiplied. And Jezebel was this "hot little number", the "hottie" who knew how to get herself up with the cosmetics and makeup. Even though married to Ahab, when she knew Jehu was coming, she dolled herself up for him. (2Ki9:30) But he didn't take the bait, and had her thrown out the window (vs32-33) where then the dogs ate her. (1Ki21:23, 2Ki9:34-37)

And so, in diligence to following God is also included the matter of the unequal yoke. If a person becomes a Believer after already being married, the Believer is not to leave the unequal yoke. (1Co7:12-13) God will take care of the differences. A principle as Jesus taught...

"Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn." (Mt13:30)

But if a person is going into marriage -as- a Believer, it should be "only in the Lord" (1Co7:39b) Because otherwise, if it is an unequal yoke, spouses are seeking to please each other. (1Co7:33) How does a Believer truly "please" an unbeliever, unless one's Faith is also likely compromised for the sake of the beliefs of the unequal yoke. The desires are different, the activities are different, the morality and standards are different. And if the unbeliever worships other gods, the Believer is stuck in respectful deference to those gods. Whereas God is a "jealous Mighty God" (Ex20:5) The Believer is to have "no other gods before [Him]" (Ex20:3)

When a Believer embraces an unequal yoke -physically-, they are also embracing the unequal yoke's other gods -spiritually-.

And what does God promise Israel if they do that?

"know and understand that Jehovah your God will no longer dispossess these nations before you. But they shall be snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land which Jehovah your God has given to you." (23:13)

And Joshua furthers the example that: Just as during their obedience God blessed and gave them victories; if they turn and marry the unequal yokes of the land and its gods, in just the same way they have been experiencing blessing for their obedience, they will experience wrath and defeat for their disobedience. It is not a question of military prowess, but which gods are they going to serve? Jehovah, Most High, or the "other gods". (vs16)

Joshua reviews Israel's history...

"And Joshua said to all the people, Thus says Jehovah the God of Israel: Your fathers (Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor) dwelt on the other side of the River in ancient times; and they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the River, led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed and gave him Isaac." (24:2-3)

There are some who claim that -Abraham- served other gods. But please notice carefully the parentheses: "Terah, the father of..." Terah served other gods, but Abraham did not. In fact, knowing how Joshua speaks of Jasher (10:13); there is an incident recorded in Jasher ch11 where at the age of 50, when Abram returns from hiding with Noah, because Nimrod is after him to try to kill him, he discovers his father Terah's idols, and has a bit of an Elijah-esque 'contest' with them. Elijah challenged Baal's prophets to bring down fire on the altar; which didn't happen. Abram challenged Terah's idols to eat the offerings he brings to them...which of course, they do not. www.a-voice.org/jasher/11.htm

"Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; eyes they have, but they do not see; they have ears, but they do not hear; noses they have, but they do not smell; they have hands, but they do not handle; feet they have, but they do not walk; nor do they utter through their throat. Those who make them are like them; so is everyone who trusts in them." (Ps115:4-8)

And so, part of Abraham's coming into the land of Canaan is also the act of leaving his father and his father's idolatry. (Remember also Laban's idols that Rachel had stolen De31:19,34 It ran in the family) But -God- took Abraham out of Terah's idolatry to make of Abraham a Godly nation.

Abraham, in skepticism and ridicule, has the contest with Terah's idols. But when God starts talking to Abraham, it says,

"Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." (Rom4:3, Ge15:6)

And so Joshua ratchets up the exhortation: God has kept His end of the deal. He has given them land, houses and vineyards over which they didn't have to labor.

"Now therefore, fear Jehovah, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and PUT AWAY THE GODS WHICH YOUR FATHERS HAVE SERVED on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve Jehovah! And if it seems evil to you to serve Jehovah, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers have served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah." (24:14-15)

And so Israel responds...

"Far be it from us to forsake Jehovah to serve other gods...we also will serve Jehovah, for He is our God" (vs16,18)

So they go back and forth. Joshua is not being very nice: You CANNOT SERVE GOD. He's jealous. Oh, but yes we can and will. No you can't. Yes we will. OK... "you are witnesses against yourselves"... Yes "we are witnesses" (vs22)

So now, after this back and forth, the challenge, the promises...

"Now therefore, he said, PUT AWAY THE FOREIGN GODS WHICH ARE AMONG YOU, and INCLINE YOUR HEART unto Jehovah the God of Israel" (vs23)

What is this??? Israel is promising: Yes, we will serve Jehovah. Jehovah is our God. But they -already- have idols, which they are exhorted to put away? Apparently! Joshua would not have made such an exhortation if it was not true.

Notice he not only says to "put away" the idols, but also "INCLINE YOUR HEART". The word "incline" is like a ramp, or something that leans. People often speak of "leaning" in certain directions with regard to their thoughts, emotions, politics, theology or tendencies. When we "trust" in Jesus Christ, that word "trust" might equally be "lean". We "lean" on Jesus Christ; like the song says, "Safe and secure from all alarms". Israel is exhorted to "lean" on Jehovah.

When a wife is in full submission to her husband, she might also 'lean' on him as they walk together. But if there is a rift, rebellion, waywardness,

they will often walk stiffly upright, and -apart- from each other. God says of Israel

"For your Maker is your husband; Jehovah of Hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel." (Is54:5)

And the Church is Christ's "bride" (Eph5:32)

The Believer leans "on the everlasting arms" where we "have fled for refuge" (Heb6:18)

Israel has been (physically) obedient in terms of sacrifices and keeping the Law and conducting battles. But to "incline" is an expression of the *HEART*; that which other people cannot see, but which God sees. If they have been obeying God, but they also have idols, it means that their hearts are NOT WHOLLY INCLINED towards God. They've got a 'part' of themselves that's holding out from full commitment to God. They are keeping a 'part' for themselves. They do not fully

"love Jehovah [their] God with all [their] heart, with all [their] soul, exceedingly in every way." (De6:5) That's the #1 Law. What Jews call The SHEMA. "Hear" O Israel...

It's like the church gathers and sings: Lord we lift Your name on High. Lord we love you. Jesus, we love You. Praise you Jesus. Praise the Lord. Lord, I have come to worship I have come to bow down. And then the preacher gets up and says: You hypocrites! You don't really love the Lord. These words you've been saying are all a sham and a lie! As Jesus said...

"But why do you call Me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say?" (Lk6:46)

Israel keeps promising. And it says...

"And Israel served Jehovah all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders whose days were prolonged after Joshua, who had known all the works of Jehovah which He had done for Israel." (24:31)

And then comes the book of Judges, where Israel keeps falling away, they cry out to God for deliverance, and they follow God during the days of the judge God raises up, and then fall away again...over and over...to where the book of Judges ends...

"In those days there was no king in Israel. Every man did what was right in his own eyes" (Jdg21:25)

For all that God did for them, what was Israel's true heart?

"Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but Jehovah ponders the hearts." (Pr21:2)