

# The Battle Begins

## The Story—part 7

October 23, 2016

God's strategy involves some way-out-of-the-box stuff! It is important to ask, "Why?" What you'd typically hear is, "Well, we just need to trust God." OK, of course. But God knows our propensity to minimize or explain away what God did, all the way from the creation of the universe down to the minutest of details. If God is going to demonstrate His name, nature, heart, and plan to fallen human beings, it apparently has to be so outrageous that even the strongest skeptic is stopped in his tracks!

### **DAY 1: Why Invade the Promised Land?**

#### **The two reasons God commands Israel to take the Promised Land.**

##### **A. Because of the wickedness of the inhabitants to the land.**

1. God told this reason to Abraham 600 years earlier.

*Genesis 15:14 But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. <sup>15</sup> You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age. <sup>16</sup> In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."*

2. God prophesied that one day the His people would escape slavery, become a nation, and dwell in the Promised Land. Why couldn't they move in sooner? God was giving the Amorites (a generic name for what we would later consider all the Canaanite people) time to repent. They had hundreds years to do so, and never did. In fact, the Amorite culture had become so depraved (think ISIS today), that it was time for judgment to fall. The evil they perpetrated on others and themselves had to stop!

3. The inhabitants practiced detestable idolatry which included using prostitutes in worship and sacrificing (burning) children to the gods. (Deut. 12:31; 20:18; Exodus 34:15-16)

##### **B. Because God wants to make Himself known among the nations.**

4. At least 19 times in the Scriptures God declares this as His mission.

5. To Abraham God said that all the nations of the world would be blessed. God wants all people to be in relationship with Him.

*Genesis 12:3 (God) "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."*

6. The time of repentance came and went. The time of judgment arrived. God used the hardness of the hearts of the Amorite/Canaanite people to make it just for Israel to take the land.

## **DAY 2: Entering the Land (Joshua 3)**

1. God performs a miracle by damming up the Jordan River.

*Joshua 3:13 And as soon as the priests who carry the ark of the LORD--the Lord of all the earth--set foot in the Jordan, its waters flowing downstream will be cut off and stand up in a heap." <sup>14</sup> So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them. <sup>15</sup> Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, <sup>16</sup> the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away, ..., while the water flowing down was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho. <sup>17</sup> The priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground.*

2. Why reasons can you think of as to why God had the nation cross the Jordan River in the precise way He did. (feel free to read the rest of Joshua 3)

### **Last Events Before the First Big Battle**

3. Before the first great battle against Jericho, God tells the soldiers to be circumcised!

*Joshua 5:2 At that time the LORD said to Joshua, "Make flint knives and circumcise the Israelites again." ....<sup>4</sup> Now this is why he did so: All those who came out of Egypt--all the men of military age--died in the desert on the way after leaving Egypt. <sup>5</sup> All the people that came out had been circumcised, but all the people born in the desert during the journey from Egypt had not.*

*<sup>7</sup> So he raised up their sons in their place, and these were the ones Joshua circumcised. They were still uncircumcised because they had not been circumcised on the way.*

*<sup>8</sup> And after the whole nation had been circumcised, they remained where they were in camp until they were healed.*

*<sup>9</sup> Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." So the place has been called Gilgal to this day.*

4. No general today would have the men in his army observe this "battle preparation." Why did God think this so crucial?

5. They celebrated Passover.

*Joshua 5:10 On the evening of the fourteenth day of the month, while camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, the Israelites celebrated the Passover.*

6. After forty years, the manna stopped and the people ate from the Promised Land!

*Joshua 5:11 The day after the Passover, that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land: unleavened bread and roasted grain. <sup>12</sup> The manna stopped the day after they ate this food from the land; there was no longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate of the produce of Canaan.*

### **DAY 3: Battles begin; 7 Days Around Jericho; Joshua 5-7**

1. The first big battle of the invasion occurred at the heavily fortified city of Jericho. Here were God's "battle" instructions!

*Joshua 6:1 Now Jericho was tightly shut up because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in. <sup>2</sup> Then the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men.*

2. If you had been Joshua, what kinds of battle instructions would you "expect" to get?

3. Here are the "marching orders." Underline each part of the strategy to take Jericho:

*Joshua 6:3 "March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. <sup>4</sup> Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. <sup>5</sup> When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have all the people give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the people will go up, every man straight in."*

4. If you had been Joshua, how would you have felt giving these instructions to your officers and fighting soldiers?

*Joshua 6:15 On the seventh day, they got up at daybreak and marched around the city seven times in the same manner, except that on that day they circled the city seven times. <sup>16</sup> The seventh time around, when the priests sounded the trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the people, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the city! <sup>17</sup> The city and all that is in it are to be devoted to the LORD.*

5. Why do you think God instructed to give to Him all the plunder from the city?

*Joshua 6:20 When the trumpets sounded, the people shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the people gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so every man charged straight in, and they took the city.*

## **DAY 4: Battles Within and Without**

1. While people are fascinated with the battles in taking the land, there were parallel battles going on as well: inside the hearts of people. Here is one example.

*Joshua 7:1 But the Israelites acted unfaithfully in regard to the devoted things; Achan ... of the tribe of Judah, took some of them. So the LORD's anger burned against Israel.*

*Joshua 7:11 "Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, they have lied, they have put them with their own possessions. <sup>12</sup> That is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies; they turn their backs and run because they have been made liable to destruction. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction."*

*Joshua 7:20 Achan replied, "It is true! I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: <sup>21</sup> When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath."*

2. Achan details the steps in took in his sin. Underline each one, above. What strikes you about the progression of temptation and sin?

### **3. The southern battles: Israel defeats 5 kings and takes the cities in the south.**

*Joshua 10:40 So Joshua subdued the whole region, including the hill country, the Negev, the western foothills and the mountain slopes, together with all their kings. He left no survivors. He totally destroyed all who breathed, just as the LORD, the God of Israel, had commanded.*

### **4. The northern campaign: Israel defeats 14 kings in the north**

*Joshua 11:1 When Jabin king of Hazor heard of this, he sent word to Jobab king of Madon, to the kings of Shimron and Acshaph, <sup>2</sup> and to the northern kings who were in the mountains, in the Arabah south of Kinnereth, in the western foothills and in Naphoth Dor on the west; <sup>3</sup> to the Canaanites in the east and west; to the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites and Jebusites in the hill country; and to the Hivites below Hermon in the region of Mizpah. <sup>4</sup> They came out with all their troops and a large number of horses and chariots—a huge army, as numerous as the sand on the seashore.*

*Joshua 11:23 So Joshua took the entire land, just as the LORD had directed Moses, and he gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal divisions. Then the land had rest from war.*

5. By the end of Joshua 11, the Promised Land is in the hands of Israel. It was battling inside sin and outside enemies. To which do you relate to more? Why?

## DAY 5: Joshua's Farewell Address (Joshua 23-24)

1. At the end of his life Joshua gives a farewell address to the people, now at home in the Promised Land. Here are some excerpts.

*Joshua 23:3 "You yourselves have seen everything the LORD your God has done to all these nations for your sake; it was the LORD your God who fought for you.*

*<sup>4</sup> Remember how I have allotted as an inheritance for your tribes all the land of the nations that remain--the nations I conquered--between the Jordan and the Great Sea in the west.*

*Joshua 23:9 "The LORD has driven out before you great and powerful nations; to this day no one has been able to withstand you. <sup>10</sup> One of you routs a thousand, because the LORD your God fights for you, just as he promised. <sup>11</sup> So be very careful to love the LORD your God.*

*<sup>12</sup> "But if you turn away and ally yourselves with the survivors of these nations that remain among you and if you intermarry with them and associate with them, <sup>13</sup> then you may be sure that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations before you. Instead, they will become snares and traps for you, whips on your backs and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land, which the LORD your God has given you.*

2. Today's victories can set us up for tomorrow's defeats. Who we spend time with and allow to influence us makes a difference!

3. Joshua reminds the people of God's larger story, all the way back to before Abraham!

*Joshua 24:2 Joshua said to all the people, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Long ago your forefathers, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the River and worshiped other gods. <sup>3</sup> But I took your father Abraham from the land beyond the River and led him throughout Canaan and gave him many descendants. I gave him Isaac,*

*Joshua 24:13 So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant.'*

*<sup>14</sup> "Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.*

*<sup>15</sup> But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, **then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve**, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. **But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.**"*

4. What strikes you most from Joshua's farewell speech?