

## The Gospel of the Kingdom

### Week 4 - Day 1: The Promised Land Awaits

My wife and I started dating at a relatively young age. The more serious we got about our relationship, the more we dreamed of our marriage in the future! When our wedding day finally came, we were thrilled beyond compare after enduring years of highs and lows. As I stood before the crowd at our wedding ceremony waiting for my bride to enter the back doors, flashbacks and memories of those youthful years filled my mind. We were going to start a new chapter of life together. As the music started, I couldn't help but utter the words in my mind, "It's show time"...

Have you ever anticipated something like this before? Maybe you are anticipating something right now! As the moment gets closer and closer to you, what does that heightened anticipation feel like?

Consider the Israelites at this particular moment of God's Kingdom story. Generations of their families had been slaves in Egypt for 400 years with only a promise to hang onto. For the last 40 years, this new generation had to watch their parents wander in the desert because of their unfaithfulness to God. Now, they stand a stone's throw away from God's promised land having just heard the wise words of Moses. All the memories and anticipation have led up to this moment! For Joshua and this generation, it was "show time".

**Joshua 1:2-3 Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses.**

Perhaps these moments are so thrilling because we never quite know what to expect. In order to cross into the land, God splits the Jordan river just like He did for Moses at the Red Sea. Furthermore, right before they approach the first city of the Canaanites, Joshua runs into this mysterious figure:

**Joshua 5:13-14 When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" And he said, "No; but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come."**

An encounter with the Commander of the Lord's Army! What an amazing encouragement this must have been for Joshua! Next, Joshua approaches Jericho. Here is the war strategy from God:

**Joshua 6:3-5 You shall march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once. Thus shall you do for six days. Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams'**

**horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. And when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, when you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people shall go up, everyone straight before him.**

Can you imagine thinking that you are going to war and then hearing this command from God? And then it actually works! If I am Joshua, I am praising God for His true faithfulness towards His promise to bring Israel back into the kingdom land!

Not everything went according to plan, however. At the battle of Ai, the Israelites suffered losses because the sins of Achan had plagued the camp. The Israelites took this sin so serious that they put Achan to death. They did not wait all these years to have someone mess things up by disobeying the commands of the Lord! After the Achan episode is resolved, Israel returns to conquer Ai. Next, we are told that the neighboring Gibeonites are spared because they fooled Joshua into making a covenant of peace with them. Finally, the Lord causes the Sun to stand still as Israel conquers the king of Jerusalem.

Israel could not be thwarted so long as the commander of the Lord's army was for them. However, the slightest hint of unfaithfulness caused the Lord to withdraw His mighty hand. Furthermore, other nations could find refuge under the wings of the God of Israel if they submitted to His kingdom rule, much like Rahab who hid the spies before the Jericho attack!

**Joshua 6:25 But Rahab the prostitute and her father's household and all who belonged to her, Joshua saved alive. And she has lived in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.**

At last we see God fulfilling His kingdom promises! God had brought His kingdom family into His kingdom land under His kingdom rule. Sure enough, Israel extended God's blessings to the nations (Rahab) who would acknowledge God's authority! God's people would continue to spread His glory throughout the land!

The rest of the book goes on to tally Israel's great victories and how Joshua geographically divides up this promised land. The important thing about this commonly skipped over section is that God had successfully brought Israel from a state of hopelessness to fulfilling one of His great promises made to Abraham long ago.

However, their task was not quite complete...

**Joshua 13:1 Now Joshua was old and advanced in years, and the Lord said to him, "You are old and advanced in years, and there remains yet very much land to possess."**

**Deuteronomy 20:16-18** But in the cities of these peoples that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes,<sup>17</sup> but you shall devote them to complete destruction, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the Lord your God has commanded,<sup>18</sup> that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the Lord your God.

If you have ever been to a wedding, you know that they are storybook ceremonies that are extremely exciting for the newlywed couple. However, any couple will tell you that this is just the beginning of a much longer journey. My wife and I continue to learn about each other's best and worst qualities! As Joshua summons the leaders of Israel to urge them to follow the ways of the Lord and complete the mission, the people caught up in the thrill of the moment, exclaim that they surely will complete the task three separate times!

**Josh 24:14-25** “Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

Then the people answered, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods, for it is the Lord our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight and preserved us in all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed. And the Lord drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the Lord, for he is our God.”

But Joshua said to the people, “You are not able to serve the Lord, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm and consume you, after having done you good.” And the people said to Joshua, “No, but we will serve the Lord.” Then Joshua said to the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord, to serve him.” And they said, “We are witnesses.” He said, “Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your heart to the Lord, the God of Israel.” And the people said to Joshua, “The Lord our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey.” So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and put in place statutes and rules for them at Shechem.

All of God's kingdom pieces are falling into place: God's family of people under His rule in His space. Will this be the generation that will finally experience *salvation* from their allegiance to the kingdom of sin that has plagued all of humanity? Would this be the generation that remained obedient? Would we see the promised king from Israel defeat the serpent and take the throne over this generation of people?

-AJ Vanegas

**Share the Gospel:** Our King will shake Heaven and Earth to bring His people into His promises. We long for God's kingdom land that will one day be cleansed of every wicked ruler and their false gods and where we will be able to obey the commands of our King!

Personal Observations, Reflections, and Prayers: