

Norwood's Notes: Brief Summaries of Bible Stories

These "notes" are intended to provide a general overview of the basic stories of the Bible in the hope of building greater biblical knowledge and encouraging Bible reading and study. For more information, visit www.UjimaChurch.org

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9 - Highlights from Numbers 25 – Joshua 8, "From Moses to Joshua"

The Lord continued to protect the Israelites as they journeyed for 40 years in the wilderness, having been judged by God after they disobeyed Him and refused to enter the Promised Land, because they feared the people of the land. Still, they continued in their disobedience... some of the men married pagan women and even worshiped their wives' pagan gods, and even made offerings to the false god, "Baal" (Num 25). God sent a plague among the people for their sin. But, even in the face of the Israelites faithlessness and idolatry, God was still working His plan.

The Lord told Moses that he would be allowed to see the Promised Land, but not enter it. Moses was to prepare Joshua to be his successor to lead the new generation of the people into the Promised Land (Num 27). As they came to the lands just east of the Promised Land, the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the descendants of Joseph's son Manasseh, called the "half-tribe" of Manasseh, asked to be able to settle there instead of across the river Jordan in the Canaan. This was allowed, so long as their fighting men went with the other tribes to conquer the land west of the Jordan (Num 32).

When Moses was 120 years old, he summoned Joshua in front of all the people and told him, for all to hear, *"Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land that the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall put them in possession of it. It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed"* (Deuteronomy 31:7-8 ESV). As Moses grew close to death, the Lord called him to bring Joshua to the Tent of Meeting. The Lord gave Moses a song to teach the people so that they would be warned to not forsake Him as the last generation had (Deu 32). Moses then went to the top of a mountain and looked over to see the Promised Land. Moses died there on the mountain and the Lord buried him (Deu 34). For thirty days, the people mourned for him.

The Lord then spoke to Joshua, *"Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them"* (Joshua 1:5-6 ESV). Joshua sent two men as spies to Jericho, the first city the people would engage after crossing into Canaan. The spies stayed in the home of a woman named,

"Rahab," who hid them from the king of Jericho who searched for the spies (Josh 2). Rahab told the spies that she believed that the Lord had given the Land to the Israelites and that the people of Jericho had heard what the Lord had done to deliver the Israelites from the Egyptians decades earlier. Rahab asks the spies to swear by the Lord that, when the Israelites conquer Jericho, they would deal kindly with her and her family, which they promise to do, telling her to tie a crimson cord in her window as a sign that those in her home were to be saved. She then helped the spies escape through her window, which was cut into the wall of the city. When they returned, the spies reported that the people of Jericho were filled with fear over the coming of the Israelites.

Joshua led the people to the edge of the river Jordan and as soon as the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant stepped into the water, the flow of the river stopped and rose up in a heap upstream (Josh 3). The Israelites crossed the Jordan on the dry riverbed, just as the past generation had crossed the Red Sea. Joshua had them select twelve stones from the riverbed, one for each of the tribes of Israel, to set up a memorial monument on the riverside as a perpetual reminder of the miracle the Lord had wrought (Josh 4). After crossing into the Promised Land, the people celebrated the Passover in the land. They ate from the abundance of the land, and manna ceased to appear (Josh 5).

The Lord told Joshua to have his fighting men march around the city with some priests bearing the Ark and others carrying rams horn trumpets. Following the Lord's instruction, for each of six days they marched once around the city with only the sound of the trumpets blowing. On the seventh day, they marched around the city seven times, and when the trumpets sounded, the people shouted, and the great wall of Jericho fell (Josh 6). As Israel captured the city, Rahab and her family were spared, because God was working His plan... for Rahab would later marry an Israelite man and become an ancestor of Jesus Christ (see Matt 1:5)!

Jericho was conquered by the Israelites and burned to the ground. The silver and gold and vessels of bronze and iron were placed in the treasury of the Lord's tabernacle. Even though the people had been told not to take any such items for themselves as spoils of war, one man, Achan, kept some items for himself... and God was angry with him.

As Joshua considered the next target for conquest, the men presumed an easy victory and attacked the city of Ai with a small force. But, the Lord was not with them and they were defeated (Josh 7). Grieving the loss, the leaders of Israel inquired of the Lord, who revealed Achan's sin to them. Achan had hidden the spoils he took from the victory over Jericho, against the command of the Lord, and he was put to death by the people.

Now, with the Lord's guidance, Joshua led the Israelites in battle against Ai. Leading the overconfident warriors of Ai into an ambush, Israel prevailed and Ai was destroyed (Josh 8).