

Chapter 7 - The Battle Begins

In the last chapter Caleb and Joshua urged the people not to be afraid of the inhabitants of Canaan, because “the LORD is with us” (page 61). This chapter begins the same way, as God says to Joshua, who has succeeded Moses as leader: “As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you . . . Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.” Are we beginning to get the picture that everything depends on God’s presence and that God promises to be present wherever we go?

Let’s face it – God’s orders to wipe out completely whole cities of men, women, and children are completely out of keeping with our standards of right and wrong. If genocide is wrong now, why wasn’t it always wrong? There is no answer to this question that will satisfy everyone.

How do the Biblical writers justify the attempted extermination of the Canaanites?

Rahab is described as a prostitute. According to the text, the two spies interpreted their orders to “spy out the whole land, especially Jericho” as meaning that they should go straight to a house of prostitution. And since they had never been to Jericho before, they would have had to ask, “Where’s the house of prostitution?” That may explain why the king of Jericho is so quick to find out where they are. Who has to ask the way to Rahab’s house except strangers?¹

Rahab’s speech on page 74 constitutes a confession of faith in the God of Israel, which explains why she helps the spies escape. In return, on pages 76-77, we learn that she and her family are spared and become part of Israel. This story is an indication, if a subtle one in light of all the bloodshed that follows, that the trouble with the Canaanites is not their ethnicity but their failure to put their trust in the true God, even after they have heard (at least according to Rahab) that the LORD is “God in heaven above and on the earth below” (74).

¹ Danna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn, *Gender, Power, and Promise: The Subject of the Bible’s First Story* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 117 – 121.

Why do you think God chose to give the Israelites victory by all that marching around and horn-blowing instead of just enabling them to fight better than their enemies at Jericho?

Joshua's farewell speech on pages 82-83 summarizes everything we have read in chapters 2-7.

After being reminded of all that God had done for them, it must have seemed obvious to the gathered Israelites that the smart thing to do was to swear loyalty: "We will serve the LORD our God." We'll see how long that lasts.

Thoughts on Christian maturity

It occurs to me that maybe there is something edifying in all this blood, gore, and fire. What if I were ruthless and determined to fling open every door, tear down every hiding place and turn over every rock where the idols that compromise my wholehearted devotion to God were hiding. I can't root them out of my life and destroy them in my own strength, but it would be a start if I were just willing to expose them and give God permission to burn them up and replace them with the Holy Spirit.

The people I know who are aware of the power of unseen idols and the necessity of constant vigilance against them are those who are recovering from substance addiction. They know better than the rest of us that there can be no compromise—no compassion for this one tiny desire that wants to live---no hiding this little trinket that God won't miss. Everything that feeds the addiction has to die if there is to be no going back. That's the way I want to live.