

JOSHUA 1–8; 23–24

Introduction

The following “Witnessing Christ from the Old Testament” study covers [Joshua 1–8; 23–24](#).

[You can find the LDS outline of study and resources here.](#)

LDS Study Focus

The LDS focus for these chapters is: “Be Strong and of a Good Courage.”

Although the resources emphasize God’s power and help, the end goal of his help is to enable humans to become obedient for their salvation.

It had taken several generations, but the Lord’s promise was about to be fulfilled: the children of Israel were on the verge of inheriting the promised land. But in their way stood the Jordan River, the walls of Jericho, and a wicked but mighty people who had rejected the Lord (see [1 Nephi 17:35](#)). On top of that, their beloved leader Moses was gone. The situation may have made some Israelites feel weak and fearful, but the Lord said, “Be strong and of a good courage.” Why should they feel this way? Not because of their own strength—or even Moses’s or Joshua’s—but because “the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest” ([Joshua 1:9](#)). When we have our own rivers to cross and walls to bring down, wonderful things can happen in our lives, because it is “the Lord [who] will do wonders among [us]” ([Joshua 3:5](#)).

Biblical Focus

As God prepares his people Israel to possess the promised land, he prepares them for their future in this land by destroying their enemies and leading them to trust him, his commands, and his promises. Through conquest, condemnation, rescue, redemption, and restoration, God draws his people closer to his heart of grace and demonstrates himself to be the only thing in the universe that can truly save them and grant them the blessings of an ultimate promised land. Through the account of Joshua, God also shows what happens when people have faith and trust in him to do what he promises.

JOSHUA 1–5

Get Ready to Receive the Promised Land

The time had finally come for Israel to take the promised land! The previous generation forfeited their inheritance out of faithlessness and fear. But now, before the conquest began, the next generation received the promise that God would be with them. God gave them the enabling command to be strong and courageous.

The crossings of the Red Sea and the Jordan River bookend Israel's journey. Although they are both water crossings, the two accounts are quite different. At the Red Sea, Israel, pursued by her enemy, did not yet trust in God. So, the people crossed over in fear and doubt. Now a new generation is at the banks of the Jordan. They confidently cross into the land of their enemies with hearts full of confidence and trust in God.

Faith Expressing Itself in Deeds

Joshua 2 introduces us to Rahab. As a resident of Jericho, Rahab was doomed, and she knew it. With the strength of their mighty God, Israel had destroyed the neighboring cities, and her city was next. As a Canaanite, she was without hope. In [Deuteronomy 20:16–17](#), God commanded the complete destruction of her people. Not only was she a Canaanite, but she was a prostitute detestable to the Lord and deserving of the death penalty. Take note that the Bible never shies away from admitting the sins of the heroes of faith. In Hebrews and James, Rahab is identified as “the prostitute.”

One evening, two Israelite spies showed up at her door. Probably unlike any men she had ever met before, they came, not seeking sex but salvation. The enemy was no longer at the gates but on her very doorstep. She, who needed saving from the Israelites and their God, now held two Israelite lives in her hands. What would she do?

Rahab told the two men what she knew about their God, who went before his people into battle. She knew that this God was much more powerful than any Canaanite gods. She knew that Israel's God was the God of heaven and earth. She believed that this God could save these men and her.

Then, more men came knocking at Rahab's door. Jericho had discovered spies in their midst, and the king sent soldiers to capture them. But now, as one ready to abandon her culture and its gods, Rahab then did something unbelievable; she concocted a plan to save the Israelite spies. Not because she was a “good person” or thought she could barter with God to deserve a reward from him; instead, she acted by faith, trusting him.

The book of James and the book of Hebrews (while making sure we know that she was a prostitute) tell us that it is **by faith that Rahab hid these men**. In [Hebrews 11:31](#), Rahab is highlighted alongside other major heroes of the faith like Noah, Abraham, and Moses.

Mormons like to use James 2:25 to show that works are necessary for salvation.

“Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?”

Out of context, this passage seems to contradict everything Christians know about obtaining salvation by grace alone. However, James is describing *what living faith does*. In the eyes of God, Rahab was

justified because she believed in him. In the eyes of the Israelites, Rahab was justified by the evidence of her faith. Just as we can identify a tree by its fruit, we can identify a believer by its fruit. James wrote his letter to people who *called* themselves Christian but were still living as if they were slaves to sin, seeking to satisfy the cravings of their sinful nature. James' point is that those who did not produce evidence of faith don't have faith.

Rahab's deeds didn't save her; instead, they demonstrated that she believed she was *already* saved. The word about Israel and their God had come to Rahab *before* the spies ever came. So, what she did with the spies resulted from the faith that *already* existed in her heart.

It was indeed an incredible and heroic thing Rahab did **by faith**. She deceived the soldiers and sent them on a three-day wild goose chase in the opposite direction. Then, when it was safe for the spies to come down from the roof, she said to them, "When you come back to destroy this city, and I know your God will do this, remember me, remember my family and me, remember what I have done for you." And the two men responded to her by saying, "Yes, we will remember you. As long as you keep your promise, we will keep our promise." The spies then instructed Rahab to tie a scarlet cord in her window to show that this place and its inhabitants were under God's protection.

The scarlet cord that hung from Rahab's window reminds us of the blood on the doorframe during the first Passover. Just as God's wrath passed over the Israelites that night, so his judgment would pass over Rahab when the walls of Jericho would fall.

The Genealogy of Jesus ([Matthew 1:5](#))

Not only is Rahab rescued from destruction on the day that Jericho fell, but she is adopted and given new citizenship. No longer is she a Canaanite, but an Israelite. All the judgment attached to her old nationality is replaced with the blessings that came with being an Israelite. Not only this, but God also includes her in the lineage of the Messiah! **From a body once dedicated to sin, God saw fit to bring about a piece of his redemption**

Conversation Starters:

- **As Joshua and the Israelites prepare for receiving the promised land, consider which came first, obedience to God's commands or belief in his promises?**
- **What enables us to believe God's promises?**
- **Examine Rahab's words to the spies. Where do you see her confession of faith?**
- **In what acts do you see Rahab's fruits of faith?**
- **Why does the Bible keep highlighting the fact that she was a prostitute? Why would God include someone like Rahab in the line of the Savior?**
- **How does Rahab's story comfort us as we seek forgiveness for sexual sin?**

Sharing Personally

When I think of Rahab in Joshua chapters 2 and 6, her sin repulses me. She was a prostitute and part of a culture that regularly sacrificed children. Such a person doesn't deserve God's mercy.

But God's mercy never acts according to what we deserve. He made himself known to Rahab. He created faith in her heart. God not only rescued Rahab from the destruction of Jericho, but he adopted her into his family, giving her a new identity as an ancestor to the Messiah, the Holy One who would redeem us all.

No matter what you've done in the past or who you are in the present, Jesus can save you. If a prostitute in the pagan nation of Canaan can be saved, you can be saved. No matter what your past looks like or your present feels like, no matter where you've been or what you've done, those who place their faith in Jesus and his blood are protected and accepted into his family.

Additional Resources

For a deeper dive into Rahab's story and the proper connection between faith and works, see [Rahab: From the Wall of Shame to the Hall of Fame](#) on BeYePerfect.org.

JOSHUA 6

Jericho is the first city that the Israelites would *receive* on the other side of the Jordan River and inside of the promised land. This unique takeover set the tone for the reception of God's gift to his people and the judgment he would carry out on the unbelieving Canaanites.

God's takeover plan was strange. One could argue that marching around silently in circles and finally yelling loudly while the walls come tumbling down isn't a battle plan. It is insane. The only reason this would work would be because of the power and will of the LORD. The only reason the Israelites would follow this plan would be because of their faith in the LORD.

The victory belonged to the LORD. Jericho was his gift to his people. The Israelites could not possibly claim victory by their power and might.

The complete demolition of Jericho, including women, children, and animals, can give us pause. Canaanites worshiped false gods through prostitution and child sacrifice. Their time of grace on earth was over, and everything they corrupted God also destroyed as a judgment upon sin.

Jericho points back to the flood and forwards to the final judgment. All unbelievers and all creation were and will be destroyed. Only the believers hidden in the ark, hidden in Rahab's house, and hidden in Christ would/will be saved to live in the new world.

Conversation Starter:

- **Does God still ask believers to obey him in strange ways?** (Think about how the world views Christians as they obey God with their time, their money, their careers, their relationships, etc.)
- **What is obedient faith?**
- **Is God's judgment fair?**

JOSHUA 7-8

Achan and Ai

As God gave Joshua and Israel instructions about the takeover of Jericho, he clearly stated that everything should be destroyed or devoted to the LORD ([Joshua 6:17-19](#)). God even warned the Israelites to *keep away* from the devoted things to avoid temptation.

Then one man, Achan, sinned, and the whole nation suffered. Just as Adam took the forbidden fruit and hid, so Achan stole the forbidden treasures from Jericho and hid them in his tent. The consequence of one sin did not fall upon just the original sinner. Sin infected and spread.

Achan's confession is deep and heart-revealing. He disobeyed by stealing with his hands, but the bigger crime was what took place in his heart. After years of God's miraculous provisions in the wilderness, Achan should have known God could and would provide everything he needed and more. Yet, in a moment of temptation, he forgot and desired to secure blessings for himself with his own strength apart from God.

Achan's punishment was death. Does this seem too harsh? Anytime the Lord issues a punishment that we're uncomfortable with, it is usually because we don't want this punishment too. Achan's sin is relatable. It only takes a second for our hearts to forget all God has done and rely on our might to take what we think we need. We covet. We take what wasn't meant for us. We may not hide our sins under our houses, but we are good at burying them under excuses.

Jesus has made it safe for us to confess all of our sins. He has already suffered the punishment of death that our sins deserved, and he has already secured forgiveness for us. Share this great news with your Mormon friends and family and pray that God would lead them to confess their sin and need for him as well.

Conversation Starter:

- **List all who were affected by Achan's sin.**
- **What was at the root of Achan's evil? Why did he steal?**
- **What tempts us to covet and steal? What does this reveal about our trust in God?**
- **When did Jesus face the temptation to covet or take?**
- **Where did Jesus bury my sins of doubt, coveting, and stealing?**

Sharing Personally

Do you think Achan's sin of stealing plunder from Jericho in Joshua 7 is relatable? At first, it might not appear to be, but look closer.

Here was someone who had experienced God's miraculous provisions in the wilderness for years. He should have known that God would provide all he needed and more. Yet, in a moment of weakness, he failed to trust God and stole some of the plunder that was to be destroyed.

Similarly, I have experienced God's mercy and grace for years, yet I forget how trustworthy God is. I covet and seek to take what isn't meant for me. I fear that God won't come through, so I must take matters into my own hands. Because of my sin, I, too, deserve a death like Achan's.

But I have a substitute for my punishment. Jesus has already suffered the penalty of death that my sins deserve, and he has already secured forgiveness for me.

The Death of the King of Ai

The death of King Ai is gross ([Joshua 8:29](#)). But, if you stop and think about it, you will learn a bit about the death of Christ. The king was the chief representative of the wicked people of Ai. When he was hung on the tree, it was for public humiliation, shame, and judgment.

In humiliation and shame, King Jesus was hung on a tree, judged as the representative of the wicked.

JOSHUA 23–24

Joshua's Farewell Address

Joshua's address can be confusing for many. It seems like it will be a great motivational "choose the LORD" speech, but right in the middle of it, Joshua douses the flames of faithful enthusiasm by saying, "You are **NOT** able to serve the LORD."

Why would Joshua say that to Israel? Because it was true. In only one generation, Israel would forget. They would adopt the Canaanite religions and practices in just a few years.

It is in our nature and throughout Mormon theology to think we can pull ourselves up by our bootstraps, do more and try harder. Yet the Christian life is one of submission. We submit to Jesus our powerlessness to deal with our sin. We submit to him our inability to save ourselves. We trust that he has done away with our sin and has made us new creations. We trust that he is the one holding on to us.

Conversation Starters:

- **Identifying Israel's idols always seems so obvious to us. Naming our own can be more difficult. What is worshiped by the culture around you? How do Christians adopt those practices?**
- **Discuss: Is a mature Christian always obedient or one who is deeply aware of their need for forgiveness?**
- **Israel's cycle of faithfulness and faithlessness can leave a Christian feeling afraid of what could happen to their faith in the future. How do John 10:27–28 and Romans 8:35 comfort us? Upon whose power do we rely?**

Sharing Personally:

*I wish I could hang a plaque on my door that echoes Joshua's statement, "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15). But thinking about **me** and what I will do tempts me to rely on **my** power and strength to hold onto Christ.*

The reality is, like Israel, I often turn away and look to the idols around me to give me purpose and hope. Like Israel of old, I do not fully and faithfully serve the Lord at all times. I cannot hold Christ with my willpower.

Christ, hold onto me!