

# The Story of Salvation

## Chapter 11 - From Joshua to Samuel

**Joshua 3-6, 8-12, 24; Judges 1, 21;  
Ruth; 1 Samuel 1, 3-4, 7, 19**



### Opening Prayer:

O Lord, our faithful God, as You guided the Children of Israel through all the dangers of the wilderness and brought them into the Promised Land, even so, we pray that You would lead us safely through the dangers and temptations of this evil world; and finally, at the time it pleases You, bring us into the promised heavenly kingdom, where we shall be forever free from all trials and afflictions. Grant this for Jesus' sake. **Amen.**

Hymn: LSB 862 "Oh, Blest the House"

### JOSHUA

All the Israelites who were adults when Moses led them out of Egypt were dead now, and their bodies left in the wilderness (Numbers 14:32). Even Moses would not be allowed to enter the Promised Land. Joshua and Caleb were the only exceptions. After the death of Moses, Joshua was appointed his successor as the new leader of the people. He was now about eighty-four years old.

### CROSSING THE JORDAN

The Israelites were now at the goal of their journey, the Promised Land, and were eagerly waiting for the order to break camp, enter into Canaan and take possession of it. One day Yahweh spoke to Joshua. "It is time for you to cross the Jordan, leading all the people into the land I am giving them. I will be with you. I will not fail you nor forsake you. Be strong and courageous, doing everything according to the Law that my servant Moses taught you. Meditate on the Book of the Law day and night so that you do all that is written in it. Then you shall have success. And know that I will be with you wherever you go."

Joshua gave the order, and the Israelites marched to the bank of the Jordan River. The Levites, carrying the Ark of the Covenant, came first. When they stepped into the river, the water flowed away downstream and held back up-stream. The Levites with the ark stopped in the middle of the river-bed while all the Israelites crossed the Jordan on dry ground.

When all the people had crossed the Jordan, Yahweh said to Joshua, "Have twelve men, one from every tribe, take twelve stones from where the priests are standing and carry them with you." So Joshua had twelve men do as he had been commanded. Then Joshua set up twelve stones marking the place where the priests had stood and spoke to the people, "These stones shall be for a memorial for the Children of Israel forever. When your children ask what these stones mean, you can answer, 'The waters of the Jordan were cut off when the Ark of the Covenant of Yahweh passed over Jordan.' For Yahweh your God dried up the waters of the Jordan until you passed over, as Yahweh your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up until we had gone over so that all the people of the earth might know the hand of Yahweh, that it is mighty, and so that you might fear Yahweh forever."

When all the people had crossed over, the ark of Yahweh and the priests passed over in view of all the people. Joshua commanded the priests to come up out of the Jordan. When the priests stepped out of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and flowed over all the banks as they did before.

As soon as the people had made camp on the soil of the Promised Land, the Passover was celebrated with great rejoicing. It had been forty years since it had been first instituted in Egypt. The manna now ceased coming, but the people lived from the better fruits of the land of Canaan.

## JERICHO IS TAKEN

Yahweh had promised the Children of Israel through Moses that He would drive out their enemies—all the heathen nations that inhabited Canaan—from before them when they would enter the Promised Land. After crossing the Jordan and encamping in Gilgal, they began their campaign by laying siege to nearby Jericho. It was a strongly fortified city. At God's command the Levites, carrying the ark, followed by the priests and the armed men, walked around the city once a day for six days. The priests were blowing their trumpets during the march, but otherwise not a sound was heard. On the seventh day they walked seven times around the city. The seventh time, while the trumpets sounded, the armed men and the people shouted, the walls fell and the city was taken. They burned the city, and only the silver, gold, and vessels of brass and iron were plundered and put into the treasury of the house of Yahweh (the Tabernacle).

By these two events (crossing the Jordan and conquering Jericho) God made it clear to the Israelites that He would pave the way and give them the land if they would trust and obey Him. It was a review of the old lesson. Without trust in God and obedience to Him, Israel could not do God's work.

## ACHAN'S THEFT

Achan, of the tribe of Judah, did not obey God and had secretly kept for his private use some of the plunder which he had found in Jericho instead of giving it to the priests to be devoted to religious purposes, as Yahweh had strictly commanded. So Yahweh became angry with the Children of Israel.

When Joshua sent three thousand men from Jericho to Ai to conquer the city, they fled before the men of Ai and 36 were killed. The Israelites became scared, and Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of Yahweh. Then Joshua said, "O God, why have You brought this people over the Jordan to have the Amorites destroy us? What are You doing to Your great name?"

Yahweh said to Joshua, "Get up. Why are you lying on your face? Israel has sinned. They have taken cursed things and put it in their own stuff. That is why they could not defeat their enemies."

Early in the morning, Israel was brought before Yahweh by their tribes, and Achan, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. Joshua said to him, "My son, give glory to Yahweh, God of Israel, and make confession to Him. Tell me what you have done; do not hide it from me." Achan answered Joshua, "Indeed I have sinned against Yahweh, the God of Israel. When I saw a good Babylonian garment, 200 shekels of silver, and 50 shekels of gold, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the earth in my tent."

When Joshua sent messengers to the tent and found what was hidden there, they brought the spoils to Joshua and laid them before Yahweh. Then Joshua and all Israel took Achan and all his household to the valley of Achor. All Israel stoned him and raised over him a great heap of stones. Then Yahweh turned away from the fierceness of His anger.<sup>1</sup>

## THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR

After the stoning of Achan, Israel attacked the town of Ai once more, and this time successfully. From now on the book of Joshua records nothing but victories over the wicked Canaanites, whom Yahweh had determined to exterminate. After a seven years' war, Israel had taken most of the valleys. However, the foothills and the flats along the Mediterranean Sea were still held by the Philistines. Additionally, in the valleys and the highlands many places (among them Jerusalem) were still in possession of the Canaanites.

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<sup>1</sup> "stoned him" — He was punished in the same way as a blasphemer in the wilderness because he had violated the honor of God, notwithstanding the fact that he had openly confessed his sin. If he was truly penitent, his soul was saved, though he died as a criminal.

"great heap of stones" — A monument of shame and a warning to others.

## THE MOST DEADLY ENEMY

In the places held by the Canaanites lurked an enemy more deadly than the swords and spears of the natives. This enemy was idol-worship. Let us take a look at three of the idols of the Canaanites.

Baal was the god of life and fertility. He represented the productive activity of nature, and in that capacity his title was Prince, Lord of the Earth. He was also considered king of the gods of Canaan. Baal's altars were generally built in groves on hills. In the evenings sacrifices<sup>2</sup> were brought and the worshippers celebrated by committing acts of immorality. Despite God's efforts to dissuade them, the Israelites engaged with the Canaanite culture a little too much and adopted their practices, including Baal worship.

Ashtoreth (or Asherah/Astarte) was the mother goddess and the counterpart of Baal. She was the goddess of sensuality and erotic love. Her priestesses were nothing but prostitutes. Sexual immorality was a part of her worship. It was held that Ashtoreth gave life to 70 other gods in the Canaanite pantheon. She was also represented by stylized tree trunks, called an Asherah Pole. Because of the association with trees and fertility, the places of Asherah worship were commonly associated with "the tree of life." Because of Israel's incomplete conquest of the land of Canaan, Ashtoreth worship survived and plagued Israel, starting as soon as Joshua was dead (Judges 2:13).

Moloch (or Molech/Molek) was the fire god. The idol's image is usually depicted as a bull-headed humanlike god. Each image was made of metal and had a hole in the stomach with a large open mouth and hands stretched forward and upward. A fire was lit in or around the statue. As the pinnacle of worship, an infant would be placed in his hands so he or she would roll or slide through the open mouth into the fire that was burning inside while Moloch's worshippers listened to the infant cry as it burned to death before their eyes. When a couple sacrificed their firstborn, they believed that Moloch would ensure financial prosperity for the family and future children.

It is plain that idol-worship developed what was evil in man. It encouraged immorality and other desires of the flesh to go on unrestrained. It fostered superstition, fear, and cruelty. When the Israelites joined the Canaanites in their idol worship they lost all interest in the faith and life to which God had called them. Idol worship destroyed the fear and love of the holy God.

## WHOM WILL YOU SERVE?

Joshua was fully aware that the idol-worshipping Canaanites posed a serious threat to God's people as long as they were allowed to live among them. The separation that God had established between His people and the ungodly must be maintained or Israel would cease to be God's people. He warned the people against the spirit of compromise, and shortly before his death he called a meeting of the people to address the issue. He reminded them of Yahweh's faithfulness to them. He urged the people to drive out all idol-worship. Then he pleaded with them, "Choose this day whom you will serve. As for me and my house, we will serve Yahweh." The people responded that they would serve Yahweh, and the covenant made at Sinai (Exodus 24:7) was renewed. Although the people were always eager to make promises, they never had the resolve to live up to them.

## EVIL DAYS

After these things, Joshua, the servant of Yahweh, died. He was 110 years old. God did not appoint a leader to take Joshua's place because Israel now had everything that was necessary to build a prosperous nation. It had a form of government given by God Himself (theocracy). The people had been given good laws and officers provided by the laws. It had the true religion, the revelation not only of God's holy will, the Law—which sinful man, alas, cannot fulfill—but also of God's good and gracious will, the Gospel of the promised Messiah, which promised salvation through faith in Him and also kindled and preserved this faith.

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<sup>2</sup> Baal sacrifices — Pig slaughter and sacrifices were a hallmark of Baal worship, which is likely why when God established the ceremonial law for Israel it included laws against eating pork, lest they be mistaken for partaking of the worship practices of idols

They were established in a good land in which the rich soil was being tilled and planted everywhere. Vineyards and olive groves were cultivated. Wells and cisterns had been dug. Herds of cattle and sheep grew prosperous. Trade and commerce as well as the fine arts flourished.

Israel might have been a happy people enjoying peace and prosperity as well as all the temporal and spiritual blessings promised them by God. However, mere outward civilization is never enough to sustain the morals of a nation. Success and prosperity only tended to increase the desires of Israel to enjoy life and the good things the world offers.

They did not drive out the Canaanites but associated with them, intermarried and were thus drawn into their idol-worship. They lost the sense of being God's chosen people and their national unity. When attacked by enemies, the tribes did not stand together, and as a result were defeated and robbed. Frequently Yahweh gave them into the hands of these enemies with the intention of bringing them to repentance. At times the bitter experiences brought the tribes to their senses and they cried to God for help. Whenever they repented, God sent them a deliverer. These were called judges. Among the judges, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson were the most notable.

However, the judges were only a temporary help. Again and again, no sooner would the judges depart than the people would again fall back into their old ways and do evil in the sight of Yahweh. This pattern of apostasy and rebellion, repentance, deliverance, and falling away again continued for approximately 325 years (see image on last page). The book of the Judges closes with these words: "In those days there was no king in Israel. Every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

And yet Yahweh still had small faithful remnants here and there in Israel. In this period we even hear of a member of a foreign pagan nation, a young Moabite woman named Ruth, who forsook her people and their idols and professed faith in the true God and the promised Messiah; *and what is more, this former heathen became a direct ancestor of our Savior, Jesus Christ.*

#### A NEW DAY DAWNS

Finally a new day dawned. It began when a mother asked God to give her a son and she vowed she would give him to serve God for whatever work God wanted him to do. The mother's name was Hannah, and she called her son Samuel. When Samuel was about five years old, Hannah brought him to the high priest Eli at the Tabernacle at Shiloh to be his helper. Eli was old and needed help. His sons were ungodly, and the conditions at the Tabernacle were very bad.

One night God spoke to Samuel. God said, "Tell Eli that I will punish him for not disciplining his sons, and I will punish the sons for their ungodly lives." In a battle with the Philistines Eli's sons were killed, Israel was defeated, and the Ark of the Covenant was taken. When Eli heard that the ark was taken, he fell backwards and broke his neck. The Philistines brought the ark into the house of Dagon, one of their idols, but God sent them so much sickness and death that they were forced to return it. However, the Philistines continued to rule over the Israelites.

Samuel was the last of the Judges of Israel, but God also called Samuel to be a prophet, the first prophet since the days of Moses. With him begins a long list of prophets called by God from time to time to be His special messengers to deliver His Word to His people. Samuel's work was to lead the people away from idol worship and bring about a national confession of sin. In doing this, God's chosen people would gain a renewed sense of being God's chosen people and restore national unity. Samuel also founded a school of prophets. So he was helped by a group of young men trained in the Scriptures who went around the country, using music and song to appeal to the people to repent of their sins. The work brought results. Many hearts bowed before God in sorrow and confession. A longing for a spiritual renewal grew up in all the tribes. A national gathering, called by Samuel, met at Mizpah. The people fasted and confessed their sins, and God heard their prayers. In an attempt to punish the Israelites for their unfaithfulness, the Philistines attacked them, but they were utterly destroyed. The sense that Israel was God's people called to do a special work and separate from the ways of the heathen nations around them was revived. Samuel continued his work for many years.

CATECHETICAL CONNECTION:

**As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household**

**THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT**

***Honor your father and your mother.***

*What does this mean?* We should fear and love God so that we do not despise or anger our parents and other authorities, but honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them.

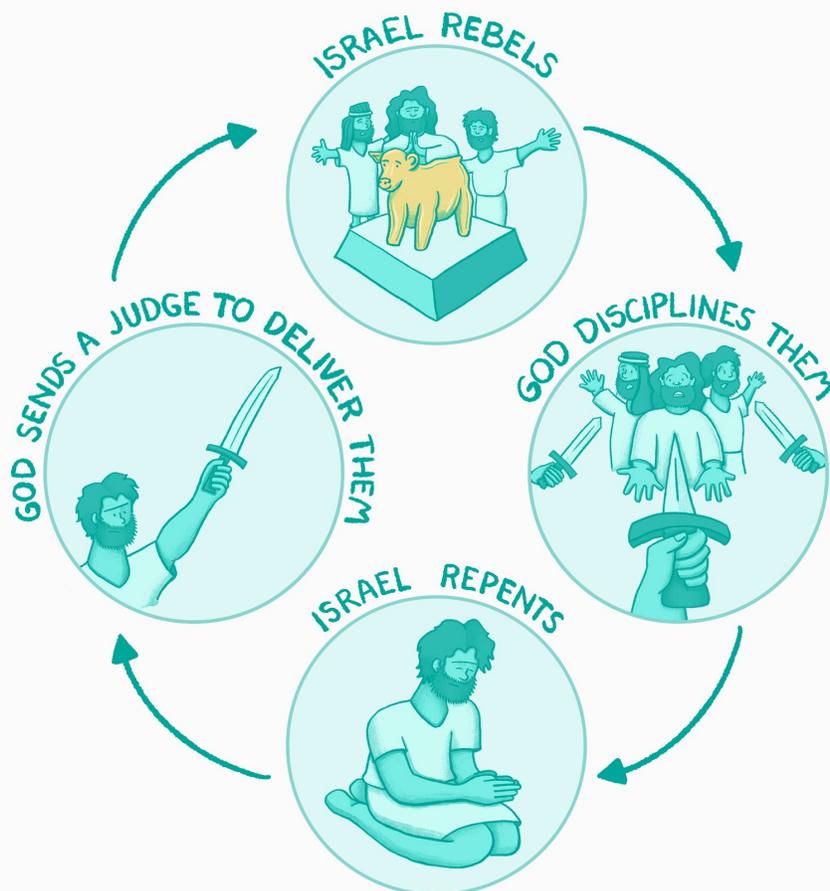
Luther. (2017). [Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation](#) (p.14). St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

**PRAYER FOR THE CLOSE OF DAY:** *Lutheran Service Book p. 298*

Reading for the Next Chapter - Ch. 12 "Israel Wants a King":

- ➔ I Samuel 8-9, 11, 14, 17, 31; II Samuel 1, 5, 11
- ➔ Table of Duties: "Of Civil Government" and "Of Citizens"

# The cycle of rebellion



# “Oh, Blest the House”

LSB 862/TLH 625



1 Oh, blest the house, what - e'er be - fall, Where Je - sus  
2 Oh, blest that house where faith is found And all in  
3 Oh, blest the par - ents who give heed Un - to their  
4 Oh, blest that house; it pros - pers well. In peace and  
5 Then here will I and mine to - day A sol - emn



Christ is all in all! A home that is not whol - ly  
hope and love a - bound; They trust their God and serve Him  
chil - dren's fore - most need And wea - ry not of care or  
joy the par - ents dwell, And in their chil - dren's lives is  
prom - ise make and say: Though all the world for - sake His



His— How sad and poor and dark it is!  
still And do in all His ho - ly will!  
cost. May none to them and heav'n be lost!  
shown How rich - ly God can bless His own.  
Word, I and my house will serve the Lord!

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## ✠ **Prayer for the Close of Day** ✠

*The sign of the cross may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.*

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
**Amen.**

The Lord Almighty grant us a quiet night and peace at the last.  
**Amen.**

It is good to give thanks to the Lord,  
**to sing praise to Your name, O Most High;**

To herald Your love in the morning,  
**Your truth at the close of the day.**

### **Apostles' Creed**

**☩ I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried.  
He descended into hell.  
The third day He rose again from the dead.  
He ascended into heaven  
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.  
From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy Christian Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life ✠ everlasting. Amen.**

**Lord, now You let Your servant go in peace;  
Your word has been fulfilled.  
My own eyes have seen the salvation  
which You have prepared in the sight of every people:  
a light to reveal You to the nations  
and the glory of Your people Israel.  
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

*Continued on the back →*

Visit our dwellings, O Lord, and in Your great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night; for the love of Your only Son, our Savior Jesus Christ.

**Amen.**

**I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **Lord's Prayer**

**☩ Our Father who art in heaven,  
hallowed be Thy name,  
Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done on earth  
as it is in heaven;  
give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.**

**For Thine is the kingdom  
and the power and the glory  
forever and ever. Amen.**

*Then go to sleep at once and in good cheer.*

## **Acknowledgments**

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