

The Old Paths

Volume 9, Issue 37

November 10, 2002

“Lessons From A Destroyed City”

Jarrold Jacobs

Joshua 2-6 records the spying, the planning, and the destruction of Jericho at the hands of Israel. This is a fascinating account, and one which ought to be read again if you have not read it in some time. At the destruction of Jericho, the people spared Rahab and her family, and God allowed the Israelites to gather the gold, silver, brass, and iron from Jericho and give it to the Lord's treasury (6:19, 21-22, 24). Everything else was utterly destroyed. Furthermore, Joshua cursed this city saying that anyone attempting to rebuild the city would “lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it” (6:26).

Not long after this event, the Israelites learned that Achan had troubled Israel by stealing things from Jericho, and hiding them under his tent (7:21). Because of his sin: Israel lost the battle to Ai, (thirty-six men died in that battle) the nation as a whole was dismayed at their loss, and finally, Achan and his family were put to death because of his sin (7:4-5, 24-26).

What has this to do with men and women today? I would suggest that many times, our individual lives parallel what happened at Jericho and Ai. How could this be? It happens because of sin, and because we selfishly prefer to satisfy our physical whims rather than selflessly preferring to serve the God of Heaven. Let us study

Joshua 6-7 further and see what other points parallel our lives today.

God Has Promised Us Victory

Just as God had given the people Jericho (Josh 6:2), so also has God promised us spiritual victory in Christ. Paul said this when he told the Corinthians, “thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Cor. 15:57). John wrote to the Christians, reminding them, “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (I Jn. 5:4).

God has not promised us earthly or physical victory over earthly nations, rather He has promised spiritual victory in Christ! I am afraid that we often forget that “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal.” Instead, they are, “mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (II Cor. 10:4-5).

Paul calls upon Christians to wear “the whole armor of God” (Eph. 6:11, 13). He calls it “the armor of light” (Rom. 13:11) or spiritual armor which protects us against our spiritual foe, Satan. Pleasing Him who has called us to be soldiers is how we can gain the victory over this world (II Tim. 2:4). We must recognize who rules us and live according to His will. When the Israelites did this, they gained victory over their enemies in Canaan (Deut. 28:1-7). When we do this, we'll gain the ultimate victory

over Satan and death itself (I Cor. 15:54-57)!

Trouble In Our Lives

So long as we live in this world, we will encounter problems. Satan will try every trick to get us to become disgusted, discouraged, and downtrodden. Sometimes, problems will come from without, and sometimes from within. A prime example of this is seen when Paul lists some of the things he suffered as a Christian and preacher of the gospel. He said he suffered some things which came upon him from wicked people, or hard circumstances (II Cor. 11:24-25, 27); but he also said that there were things he suffered from the brethren (II Cor. 11:26, 28). James wrote the scattered brethren, encouraging them to stand and to be strong in spite of the troubles they would face on every side (Jas. 1:2-3, 14-15).

Just as in the days of Jericho, we will face problems as others let us down, disappoint us, and are drawn away of their own lusts and enticed. Just like Achan's sin, the sins of others effect us, too. No man can say that what he does effects no one but himself. This was impossible when Adam and Eve sinned (Gen. 3:16-19; Rom. 5:12), it was impossible when Achan sinned (Josh. 7:4-5, 24-26), and it is impossible today! Though it promises great things, and many are enticed by its temporary pleasures (Heb. 11:25), in truth, sin brings about nothing but trouble.

Consequences We Must Face

There are many consequences men must face when sin comes into our lives. Of course, sin's consequences can be both physical and spiritual in nature. In our text, we are shown the physical consequences of sin as: Israel lost the battle at Ai, thirty-six men are killed, and Achan and his family and livestock are

“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.” (Jer. 6:16)

executed when his sin was discovered (Josh. 7:24-26; Num. 32:23).

When men sin today, there are oftentimes physical consequences which result. Perhaps one is killed, or his actions result in the death of another. Sometimes, consequences are not fatal, but nonetheless harmful where one might have to go to jail, or he simply loses the trust of loved ones, etc., when he sins.

Seeing that this is true, it ought to give us greater incentive for loving each other, and trying to help one another go to Heaven. The alternative is that our influence encourages others to sin and to live in that sin. Achan's selfishness led to many other problems, and when we sin today, the results are the same.

There are physical consequences we face as a result of our sin, but greater than these are the spiritual consequences we face because of our sin. God through Isaiah told us long ago, "*your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear*" (Isa. 59:1-2). Paul stated in no uncertain terms that "*the wages of sin is death ...*" (Rom. 6:23). James taught this when he told the Christians that "*sin, when it is finished bringeth forth death*" (Jas. 1:15). Yes friends, there are dread and dire consequences for sin. Is it any wonder why there is such urgency to save lost souls outside of Christ, as well as the urgency to restore erring Christians before it is too late (Mk. 16:15-16; Rom. 1:16; Gal. 6:1; Jas. 5:19-20)?

God's Longsuffering Allows Repentance.

Perhaps people look at such accounts as Achan, Ananias and Sapphira, Herod, and others and decide that since God didn't strike someone dead after sinning, then their sin was not "that bad" after all. Not so! Just because some

were like Uzzah, and were struck down for their sin that very second, please keep in mind that there were others like: Abraham (Gen. 12:13, 20:2), Isaac (Gen. 26:7), Peter (Matt. 26:69-75), and Barnabas (Gal. 2:13), who were not struck down the very second they sinned. That is a lesson to us. Peter said, "*account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation ...*" (II Pet. 3:15).

What Will You Do?

If you consider your life and some of the sins which you have committed, the fact you're living today means God is giving you yet another opportunity to repent and turn to Him before it is too late. Be thankful to God that he hasn't treated you like Achan or Uzzah, but is giving you another opportunity to repent. May this article be the "final straw" which will prod and provoke you to do what is right and live for God the rest of your life.

Don't wait until you're so steeped in sin that you, like the citizens of Jericho, are beyond help. Similarly, don't be like Achan and trouble the church because of your selfishness and sin. Let us have a renewed zeal and fervor for the Lord and His work, and let us act selflessly as God's "*peculiar people,*" being "*zealous of good works*" (Titus 2:14). Let us labor for Him, knowing "*your labour is not in vain in the Lord*" (I Cor. 15:58). Then, we can look forward to the true victory in Christ!

What Can I Do For The Lord?

Jarrod Jacobs

Our society places great emphasis on self. Selfishness has reigned supreme on this earth since Genesis 3! We see evidence of such an attitude when we hear of people doing this or that "for me." Someone says, "I took this job for me." Another says, "I lost weight for me, and for no one else." In the United States, people are encouraged to "join the church of your choice." Whatever happened to the attitude which asks, "What can I do for the Lord"?

If nothing else is taught in the Bible, God makes it clear that man has the responsibility to serve God. The "*whole of man*" is to "*fear God and keep his commandments*" (Ecc. 12:13). It is this person who is accepted with God (Acts 10:35). Self must be put to death if we wish to please the Lord. Yet, the question is, do we wish to please the Lord? Are we asking what can we do for the Lord, or are we asking what we can do to please and satisfy selfish motives? Christ never displayed selfishness, but left us the proper example when He said, "*I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me*" (Jn. 6:38, 4:34; I Pet. 2:21). Does selfishness or selflessness characterize me?

Add Our Website To Your "Favorites" List:

www.southside-churchofchrist.com



I want the truth, give me book, chapter, and verse!

Come and meet with the church at Southside.

Our address is: 2920 New Hartford Rd. Owensboro, KY 42303.

MEETING TIMES:

Sunday Morning Bible Study _____ **9:30 am**

Sunday Morning Worship _____ **10:20 am**

Sunday Evening Worship _____ **6:00 pm**

Wednesday Evening Bible Study _____ **7:00 pm**

Don't forget the call-in radio program on **WBIO, FM 94.7**, Sunday afternoon from 12:30-1:00 pm. **Call: 683-5200** with your Bible question.

Preacher/Editor: Jarrod Jacobs

Phone: (270) 683-5386

Website address: www.southside-churchofchrist.com (Updated weekly!)