

Sunday, January 19, 2025 pm

JOURNEY THROUGH THE Bible (37)

The Conquest Begins – the fall of Jericho and Ai

Joshua 6-8

As we continue our “Journey through the Bible”, in our last lesson we began the 7th of 17 time periods of Bible history – conquering and inheriting Canaan. We found Israel crossing the Jordan river and they have finally arrived at their promised land. After crossing the Jordan, the manna ceased as they enjoyed the produce of the land, their men were circumcised (which they had not done in the wilderness), and they kept the Passover in Canaan for the first time. Then they prepared to conquer the land of Canaan. 2 spies were sent to Jericho and returned with a favorable report. We were also introduced to Rahab, who by faith hid the spies and as a result she was promised to be spared when the city was destroyed. Today, we begin the conquering of the land by noting the taking of Jericho and Ai.

I. Our text

- a. Preliminary thoughts. The conquest of Canaan by Israel is divided into 3 campaigns. The central, southern and northern campaigns. Today’s study is about the first of these – the central campaign. This will be strategic victories that will set the tone for Israel’s success with the help of YHWH. And that is where we begin.
- b. **The commander of the Army of YHWH** – Josh. 5:13-15. As Joshua is near Jericho he sees “a Man (who) stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand.” Joshua goes to Him (he does not run away) and asks if He was for or against them (whose side was He for). He answered that He came as “the Commander of the army of the LORD.” **NOTE: This is not just some angel.** 1) Like Moses, he is told that the place is holy and to take off his sandals. He complies; 2) He falls down and worships and is not hindered; 3) The conversation beginning in 6:2 describes YHWH as directly speaking to Joshua. While clearly not in the same form as Moses saw YHWH, He is directly represented by this being.
- c. **The conquest of Jericho** - Joshua 6
 - i. Jericho is secured as they are preparing to be attacked (defensive posture).
 - ii. 6:2 – YHWH tells Joshua, “I have given Jericho into your hand...”
 - iii. 6:3-5 – Israel is given unique instructions. For 6 days they were to march around the city. Priests were to carry 7 trumpets (rams’ horns) and the people were to be silent. **NOTE:** The walled portion of the city of Jericho was relatively small (about 7-10 acres). But as a fortified city, preparing for invasion people from all around would have flocked into the city. We do not know the population. The 7th day, the Israelite army was to march around the city 7 times and at the conclusion, the trumpets were to be blown and they were to take the city.
 - iv. 6:6-16 – They did this for 6 days, with the priests carrying the ark of the covenant and blowing the trumpets while the army of men were silent. The bulk of the army went before the ark and then there was a rear guard after the ark. On the 7th day, they arose early and marched around the city 7 times. At the conclusion the priests blew their trumpets and Joshua commanded the people to “Shout, for the LORD has given you the city”

- v. 6:17-21 – Joshua instructs the people to utterly destroy the city – EVERYTHING and everyone – man and beast. Also everything of value was consecrated and was to be brought into the treasury of the LORD. The people shouted and the walls fell flat. Israel entered and utterly destroyed the city.
- vi. 6:22-25 – the 2 spies were told to get Rahab and her family and brought them outside of the camp of Israel. They then burned the city and dedicated the vessels of value. We are told Rahab dwelt in Israel after this.
- vii. 6:26-27- Jericho was cursed by Joshua (and YHWH). The declaration was that whoever rebuilt that city – their firstborn would die as the foundation was laid, and as the gates were set up (usually one of the last things done), the youngest son would die. THIS curse is fulfilled during the reign of Ahab, a wicked king of Israel several hundred years later (1 Kings 16:34).

d. Defeat at Ai – 7:1-9

- i. 7:1 tells us, “But the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things”. Achan took some of the items for himself.
- ii. 7:2-5 – after spying the city of Ai, an army of 3000 attacked the city, but Israel was defeated and 36 men died and Israel retreated. Israel was disheartened.
- iii. 7:6-9 – Joshua mourns and complains to YHWH before the ark of the LORD. They are fearful that the defeat would embolden the Amorites and they would utterly defeat Israel.

e. Achan’s sin discovered – 7:10-26

- i. 7:10-18 – YHWH speaks to Joshua and tells him Israel had sinned. Lots were to be cast and the guilty household identified. The one guilty was to be executed and all he had was to be destroyed. The next day, the process of elimination begins. The tribe of Judah is chosen, the family of the Zarhites, and Achan was identified.
- ii. 7:19-26 – Joshua demands that Achan confess declaring, “Give YHWH the glory.” Achan confesses that he took several items and hid them in his tent. Men were sent and retrieve the items. He is convicted and stoned to death, he and his family (they likely knew what he had done). The LORD then turned from His anger.

f. Ai defeated – 8:1-29

- i. 8:1-2 – YHWH reassures Joshua that they would defeat Ai (and Bethel). However, the people could keep the spoils this time.
- ii. They divided up groups and set an ambush of about 30,000 men of valor. Then a smaller force would come against the city as before. As the men of Ai came out they would again flee from them. When the men were out of the city, Joshua raised his spear and those in ambush attacked and burned the city. When the men of the city turned and saw the fire they knew they were defeated. Then the fleeing Israelites turned around and attacked them army that pursued them. They were surrounded and soundly defeated by Israel. Vs. 25 notes there were about 12,000 men and women of the city. The city was burned and the king was taken alive. He was brought to Joshua who hanged him until evening and then his body was taken down and cast at the gate of the city and a heap of stones were cast over him as a grave.

g. Israel renews the covenant with YHWH – 8:30-35

- i. 8:30-35 - Joshua built an altar to the LORD God in Mt. Ebal as Moses had commanded (Deuteronomy 27:4-10). They used whole natural stones and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings to the LORD. Then Joshua wrote on the stones a copy of the LOM.
- ii. The people gathered in the valley between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim with the ark and the priests in their midst. The law was read before the people – the blessings and cursings (Deuteronomy 28). Everyone, men, women, children and “strangers” were there to hear the law being read.

II. Lesson to consider:

a. Jericho – an example of salvation

- i. We frequently reference how salvation involves grace, faith and works. Grace is God’s part, and a working faith is our part. We see that illustration not only in NT passages (Ephesians 2:8—9, James 2:14-26), but in the example of Noah & the Ark, and we see it in this illustration.
- ii. God’s grace – Joshua 6:2 – “I have given Jericho into your hand”. It was a gift from YHWH. Furthermore, the WAY they “received” Jericho clearly shows it was handed to them by God.
- iii. Works of obedience – Joshua 6:3-4 they were given instructions as to HOW they would receive the gift. They had to be willing to DO what was commanded to receive it.
- iv. Faith – considering the instructions YHWH gave, they had to BELIEVE and TRUST Him as they acted. Hebrews 11:30 tells us that it was by faith the wall of Jericho fell.

b. Obedience matters – Matthew 7:21-23. Not only did Israel have to do what God said to do to receive the city, they had to respect His prohibitions. Achan disobeyed God when he took the items he coveted. When we disobey there are consequence.

c. We need to follow God even if we do not understand

- i. The instructions YHWH gave to Israel are illogical. Why He chose that way we are not told. But one thing it did do was ensure they UNDERSTOOD this was the work of God.
- ii. God knows more than us – His ways are higher than ours, Isaiah 55:8-9.
- iii. There are other examples of this in scripture: Some of the dietary and clothing laws given to Israel (not boiling an animal in its mother’s milk, mixed garments, etc.); Naaman was commanded to dip in the Jordan 7 times. Deuteronomy 8:2, *And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.*
- iv. Why did He choose to send Jesus to die?
- v. God may ask us to do something a certain way just to see if we are willing to obey Him.
- vi. Having said that, even if we do not understand, there are usually good reasons for what He commands. Consider John 13:7 as Jesus washed the feet of disciples He declared, *“What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.”* Jesus would explain it to them.

d. God can accomplish anything He desires – what He did at Jericho (and Ai, in Egypt against Pharaoh, and as we will see in our next lesson) shows that He is all powerful.

- i. Jeremiah 32:27, *“Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?”* See also vs. 17.
- ii. Matthew 19:26 speaking of the rich entering heaven, Jesus said, *“With God all things are possible.”*

- iii. Examples like these show why we ought to trust Him always. Remember 1 John 4:4 – He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.
- e. Are there walls that you need to tear down with God’s help? Acts 20:32 notes that the word of His grace is able to build us up. His word gives us the direction we need. Many passages promise His strength and provision as we seek to overcome – 1 Corinthians 10:13, Matthew 11:28-30, 6:33, etc. Romans 8:37 reminds us, “*Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.*”
- f. Before acting ask if it is authorized
 - i. Joshua 7:1-5 describes how they decided to attack Ai after their success at Jericho (before discovering the sin of Achan). NOTICE what is absent from the text – inquiring of the LORD. Had they asked Him first, perhaps they would have learned without that devastating defeat that cost the lives of 36 men. AFTER Achan was dealt with they did follow the direct instructions of the LORD (8:1).
 - ii. Colossians 3:17 reminds us that in everything we do, it must be “in the name of the Lord.” That is why we ask, “Is it authorized?”
- g. God knows your sins –
 - i. You may be able hide your sins from man, but God knows and there are consequences. Hebrews 4:13 reminds us that all things are naked and open to His eyes. 1 Timothy 5:24-25 - *Some men’s sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later. Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden.*
 - ii. Achan thought no one would notice the few items he took, but the LORD did.
 - iii. Sometimes the consequences of our sins affect others. Either directly or indirectly.
- h. The sin of covetousness –
 - i. What Achan did helps us understand covetousness.
 - ii. Covetousness is defined as the desire for more than what you are entitled to, especially something that belongs to another.
 - iii. Joshua 7:21 (NKJV, ESV, NASB, KJV). When Joshua admonished Achan to give God glory and tell what he had done. Achan confessed and admitted he had coveted the various items.
 - iv. In the NT, covetousness is described as idolatry – Colossians 3:5, Ephesians 5:5. And we are clearly commanded to not be covetous – Hebrews 13:5, Ephesians 5:3, etc.
- i. Make plans before you act –
 - i. After their defeat and being told by YHWH that they would defeat Ai, they developed a strategy – Joshua 8:1-2 (the LORD actually told them how to take the city). Loran Bures on this text noted that this battle is studied at West Point for strategy.
 - ii. It is always good before we act to think about and make plans for what we are going to do. Luke 14:28-30 as Jesus encouraged men to count the cost of discipleship, He gave the illustration of building a tower and first counting the cost to complete it.
 - iii. And do not leave God out of your plans – cf. James 4:13-15.
- j. We need occasional reminders.
 - i. Our final lesson is an example of reminders. After their initial victories Israel was called to gather in the valley between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim. The law was to be read to them (Joshua 8:34-35).
 - ii. We have addressed our need for reminders recently.

These are some lessons we can learn from the central campaign against Canaan. In this portion of their conquests, God made it CLEAR that He was with them and in charge. No wonder they continued to trust Him as they battles continued. God has done enough for us to prove that He cares and can help us. Will we listen to Him and trust Him? Will we obey Him? Think about it!