

A Practical Study of JOSHUA

“The Path of Obedience Leads to Victory”

Study Number Seven – Joshua 7:1-26

Let's take Romans 8:5-9 and put it over Joshua chapter 7.

Romans 8:5-9

For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace; because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the Law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. However you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

In Joshua chapter 1 we saw the COMMISSIONING of Joshua for the invasion of the land.

In chapter 2 the episode of SPYING THE CITY OF JERICHO—the first fortress that they were going to face in the land—we were introduced to Rahab.

In chapter 3 the CROSSING OF THE JORDAN.

In chapter 4 **THE MEMORIALS**—one in the river and one at Gilgal.

In chapter 5 it was preparing the people for **CONQUEST**. It was a time of **CONSECRATION** and **CLEANSING**.

In chapter 6 we saw the first victory in the land as God granted **VICTORY OVER THE CITY OF JERICHO**.

Now as the scene of this study opens we could call this study **THE SIN OF ACHAN**.

Whereas in chapter 6 we have **VICTORY**, in chapter 7 we have **DEFEAT**. And then in chapter 8 we'll have **VICTORY AGAIN** because the problem has been dealt with.

Every believer has **WAR ON THREE FRONTS** in his Christian life:

1. he faces the **WORLD**,
2. he faces the **FLESH**—his old nature within him, and
3. he faces the **EVIL ONE** himself.

We'll find that these conflicts usually come into our life at critical times when we're wanting to experience growth. The world wants us to conform to it, the flesh has desires that are not pleasing to the Lord and the evil one wants to keep us out

of the Word and away from our spiritual disciplines.

In chapter 6 JERICHO represents the WORLD.

In chapters 7 and 8 AI represents the FLESH.

In chapter 9 we'll find that GIBEON represents SATAN himself.

These are indeed the enemies that we face coming into the land.

Chapters 1-5 were INVASION OF THE LAND,

Chapters 6-12 the CONQUEST, so we're in the midst of possession of the land.

Now before we get further into the study let's make one observation that is very important. And that is, just because the world is big and there are a lot of people who don't think we're not important to God. The very hairs of our head are all numbered and He loves us and He knows us well.

The sad story is that one man thought that he could get away with something because he was part of a nation of two and a half million people. And God knows all about this man. We're going to be introduced to him in the first verse and we're going to see his whole family history.

God knows us each well and we will be held fully accountable

for the life we live as a believer. Or if we choose not to receive Christ, that too will become much of the attention that God places as far as our eternal destiny is concerned.

Let's look at some divisions in the text.

These Ds will take us through the passage and we can focus on them and they each summarize the content of the section we're looking at.

1. DISOBEDIENCE—verse 1
2. DEFEAT—verses 2-5
3. DISMAY—verses 6-9
4. DIRECTIONS—verses 10-15
5. DISCOVERY—verses 16-21

And then:

6. DEATH—verses 22-26

None of those words are very attractive so it is indeed a sobering study we've arrived at.

1. DISOBEDIENCE—verse 1

v. 1 But the Israelites acted unfaithfully in regard to

the devoted things; Achan son of Carmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of them. So the Lord's anger burned against Israel.

“But the Israelites acted unfaithfully in regard to the devoted things; Achan son of Carmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah of the tribe of Judah, took some of them. So the Lord's anger burned against Israel.”

See the word “But”—that forms the CONTRAST from chapter 6. We left them in great victory. They won the battle over the city of Jericho.

Joshua's military strategy is to drive a wedge into the middle of the land. So we go from Jericho straight west toward the Mediterranean Sea and drive this wedge. Then we go south and mop up the south and north and mop up the north. And that's basically the story of the rest of the book of Joshua.

We'll have these battles in the southern campaign and then battles in the northern campaign.

Now note that the record says “the Israelites.” That helps us understand that we are not an entity unto ourselves either. That we are in relationship with others and what we do affects others.

The whole nation pays the price for the disobedience of one man is an incredible lesson from the study. Notice what the

text says. He “acted unfaithfully” in that he took something that didn’t belong to him. We do that every time we take something that doesn’t belong to us. We act unfaithfully—whether it’s sex, silver or whatever.

The text says he “acted unfaithfully in regard to the devoted things.”

Let’s refresh our memory. Just before they made the big shout and before the walls fell down, Joshua gave some very specific instructions. Achan should have been listening.

Joshua 6:17-19

The city and all that is in it are to be devoted to the Lord. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall be spared, because she hid the spies we sent. [Now get this] But keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them. Otherwise you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring disaster on it. All the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the Lord and must go into the treasury.

Now the rest of verse 1 introduces us to the villain. Achan is his name.

Why does the Lord go to so much specific family history?

It comes all the way through the passage. Why? Well let’s just

take a quick look at the family history. He's the son of Carmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah.

Why all that? Well it's very, very interesting that Judah—in Genesis 38—because of his whoredoms (his relationship out of wedlock) Zerah was born. And the birth of Zerah from that visits on the next generation and what's taking place here in Achan. Achan's name means "trouble" and he really does live up to his name.

Remember that great old principle, the sins of the fathers are visited on the children? We have a real indication of that. This man comes out of the tribe of Judah and he is ultimately an offspring of Zerah, the son of Judah.

Notice that last phrase. We don't like that phrase do we?

"the Lord's anger burned against Israel."

Not many people preach that. We like to talk about LOVE. God just loves us and He loves us so much He's just going to put His arm around us and pat us on the back and say, "Awww, that's alright. After all, you're just a little old human being. Just come on in. We'll forget it this time. Just sweep it under the rug!"

And that's a lot of people's concept of God and they don't have any place for the anger or the wrath of God in their concept. Why? Because that's just a little bit disturbing. We hate to be confronted when somebody's angry at us.

And God does get angry and He doesn't wink at sin. If we go back to the garden of Eden and we take a quick whip through scripture and watch critical points, we're going to see and be convinced of the wrath and the anger of God.

What happened to our first parents in the Garden of Eden? As soon as there was disobedience, boy it was cherub there at the gate and "you all are going to work by the sweat of your brow. Get out of the garden." And they were kicked out. And on top of that physical death is going to be instituted. "You're going to die and you're going to suffer the pain of childbirth."

Well then we go a little bit further on and God has given very specific orders about how we worship Him in the book of Leviticus. Aaron's two boys just decided they were going to go in and offer strange fire to the Lord. After all that was the cool thing to do.

Nadab and Abihu go tripping in there. What happens? Man the strange fire eats them up. They're gone. They're casualties instantaneously.

We come down to Achan here and we see another tragic illustration of it. In the early church Ananias and Sapphira said they were bringing their whole offering. And remember they only brought part of it and they become instant casualties again of God's anger and God's wrath. The passage is a sober reminder of the fact that God does get angry.

Now what's the sin? What's the disobedience? What's the problem? How would we label it?

Achan sinned. Well we'd say he coveted.

That's exactly what Paul said. He would have been blameless with regard to the Law if it didn't say "Thou shalt not covet."

Robert Foster in the *Secrets for Successful Living* says it well:

(Secrets for Successful Living by Robert Foster)

The world of daily business finds us in the warfare between contentment and covetousness. Happy or hungry? God-satisfied or gold-seeking? Relaxed with what you have...or restless for more and more and more?

"Notice that, and be on your guard against covetousness in any shape or form. For a man's real life in no way depends upon the number of his possessions." Luke 12:15

Achan, the actor, is a good example. The loot of battle was before him and with bulging eyeballs he coveted in his heart! He was hungry for spoils. His appetite grew by indulgence. He fanned the flame. "Starving men may think about food but so do the gluttons: the gorged as well as the starved like to be fed to the full."

So Achan acted in direct disobedience to this 10th Commandment. Greedy, envious and lustful he ends up being

a thief.
(source unknown)

Now listen to what A. W. Tozer says about this. This is so great:

A. W. Tozer has laid it straight on the line: “At the root of all growth is a set of right desires.”
(source unknown)

If we’re growing in Christ we have the right desires. If we have the wrong desires we aren’t growing. Those wrong desires have stifled any possibility of growth until we deal with the problem.

Tozer goes on to say:

“Wrong desires stop that growth. Wrong desires pervert the moral judgment so that we are unable to appraise the desired object at its real value. However we try, still a thing looks morally better because we want it. As Christians our only safety lies in complete honesty with ourselves.

“To want a thing, or feel that we want it, and then to turn from it because we see that it is contrary to the will of God is to win a great battle on a field larger than Gettysburg or Bunker Hill. To fight and to win in the Name of Christ is always better than to have known no conflict [in your life].”
(source unknown)

Covetousness—desirous for more and for more and for more. We see this constantly in a society built on materialistic principles. It’s “I want it, I want it, I’ve got to have it to be happy and fulfilled.”

We build it in our kids. We build it in our society. We build it in religion. Turn the TV and what do we see? We have a picture of guys taking thirty minutes of TV time to beg us for funds for some project that they have to have our money for. And basically they’re not content.

Philippians 4:11, 12

Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.

DISOBEDIENCE—verse 1

2. The DEFEAT—verses 2-5

v. 2 Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth Aven to the east of Bethel, and told them, “Go up and spy out the region.” So the men went up and spied out Ai.

“Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth

Aven to the east of Bethel, and told them, ‘Go up and spy out the region.’ So the men went up and they spied out Ai.”

Now let’s get Ai in our minds. Gilgal is 900 feet below sea level, okay. Ai is 3,000 feet above sea level. So literally they’re going up.

And where are they going? They’re going about 15-20 miles straight west from Gilgal toward the Mediterranean Sea. It’s driving the wedge in the middle of the land. This is the next fortress on the map that Joshua sends them into to spy out.

So the text tells us—just like they did with Jericho—they left, they went and spied out the land. Now when we come to verse 3, what do we have?

v. 3 When they returned to Joshua, they said, “Not all the people will have to go up against Ai. Send two or three thousand men to take it and do not weary all the people, for only a few men are there.”

“When they returned to Joshua, they said, ‘Not all the people will have to go up against Ai. Send two or three thousand men to take it and do not weary all the people, for only a few men are there.’”

Now why do they come back with this strange set of instructions for Joshua?

“Joshua, it’s no big deal. I mean it’s a piece of cake. Just send

a few up there and we'll take it easy.”

Now what is that? That's somebody reading their press clippings. That is conceited confidence.

“Hey, do you know we're cool? Man we mopped up Jericho and we're going to get Ai! We're on a roll! No big deal!”

The silent shambles of Jericho is a tribute to God's might and not man's, but they've already gotten it figured out that they're really it.

That's exactly what we hear every week on TV. In the NFL the weakest team can beat the best team. They always have to be ready.

And they're not. In this situation they make the deadly error of underrating the enemy's power. And Christians are doing that all the time.

There's nothing small in our Christian life that we can handle. The minute we do that we set ourselves up for a big defeat. We're adequate for nothing—absolutely nothing—and we cannot combat it in our own strength.

If we're experiencing victory in our life, it's a tribute to God's love and grace and His power in our life, not our amazing ability to cope and to handle.

He is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. We have to

keep the shield of faith because the fiery darts of the wicked one fly thick and fast to be ready to do battle.

Ready for the big one? Look at verse 4.

v. 4 So about three thousand men went up; but they were routed by the men of Ai,

“So about three thousand men went up;”—Joshua just listens to the men—“but they were routed by the men of Ai,”

Now what’s wrong with that? We see the strange set of circumstances here is that Joshua doesn’t even bother to consult with the heavenly Father. There’s no prayer before they go to battle.

Another thing we need to recognize is they’re not even aware of the fact that they’re out of fellowship with God. Boy that is a subtle thing. We can be out of fellowship with the Lord for weeks and maybe we don’t even notice it. We’re not even aware of it until all of a sudden we pop off and say something so ugly and we realize that only shows up prior neglect in given areas and so we really blew it and failed.

That’s exactly what happened to Samson. He sacked out in the lap of Delilah and lost his hair. In Judges 16:20 we read this:

Judges 16:20

She said, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” And he

awoke from his sleep and said, “I will go out as at other times and shake myself free.” But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him.

They got whipped. They got “routed.” When we don’t pray before we go we’re going to be forced to pray after we get back because we’re going to get whipped. And that’s exactly what happens in this passage.

This is one of the greatest temptations of the Christian life. We experience a victory and then we feel like we have it all together and so we don’t need to pray and read the Word anymore. So we’re just going to go in there and just show them how it’s done. We need to watch yourselves, take heed lest we fall.

v. 5 who killed about thirty-six of them. They chased the Israelites from the city gate as far as the stone quarries and struck them down on the slopes. At this the hearts of the people melted and became like water.

“who killed about thirty-six of them.”

Thirty-six bodies strewn all the way back toward Gilgal.
Brother Israelites paying the supreme price.

“They chased the Israelites from the city gate as far as the stone quarries and struck them down on the slopes. At this the hearts of the people melted and became like water.”

What does it mean that their “hearts...melted and became like water”?

It’s the opposite of being strong and courageous isn’t it? They’re weak and they’re whipped. They’ve turned tail on the enemy. And 36 of them die because of the disobedience of one man—Achan.

Now what caused all that? There are three things that caused it:

1. their SELF-CONFIDENCE,
2. their PRAYERLESSNESS, and
3. their DISOBEDIENCE.

They’re wrong. They’re out of fellowship with God.

There’s nothing more sad and tragic than to see a person from whom the blessing of the Lord has departed. Ichabod—the glory of the Lord has departed.

1 Samuel 16:14

The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul.

What a tragic, tragic picture.

Well Joshua's shook!

We have:

3. DISMAY—verses 6-9

v. 6 Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell face-down to the ground before the ark of the Lord, remaining there till evening. The elders of Israel did the same, and sprinkled dust on their heads.

“Then Joshua tore his clothes, he fell face-down to the ground before the ark of the Lord, remaining there till evening. The elders of Israel did the same, and sprinkled dust on their heads.”

v. 7 And Joshua said, “Ah, Sovereign Lord, why did you ever bring this people across the Jordan to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us? If only we had been content to stay on the other side of the Jordan!”

“And Joshua said, ‘Ah, Sovereign Lord, why did you ever bring this people across the Jordan to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us? If only we had been content to stay on the other side of the Jordan!’”

v. 8 O Lord, what can I say, now that Israel has been routed by its enemies?

“O Lord, what can I say, now that Israel has been routed by its enemies?”

v. 9 The Canaanites and the other people of the country will hear about this and they will surround us and wipe out our name from the earth. What then will you do for your own great name?”

“The Canaanites and the other people of the country will hear about this and they will surround us and wipe out our name from the earth. What then will you do for your own great name?””

He has **THREE QUESTIONS** doesn't he? Ever noticed when we have a lot of bitterness in our heart we have a tendency to answer the Lord's question by the question?

“Ah, Sovereign Lord, why did you ever bring the people across the Jordan?”

Then he goes ahead and answers it: “to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us?”

“That's why You brought us over here, huh Lord? You just brought us across here to wipe us out. You know, thanks a lot. It would have been a whole lot better if we'd have stayed on the other side of the river.”

There comes the **BITTERNESS**. But now comes the **DEPRESSION**.

“O Lord, what can I say, now that Israel has been routed by its enemies?”

He’s believing the worst.

“It’s all over. What can I tell everybody now that we’re done?” And then he goes on to verse 9 to say that the Canaanites are going to “hear about this” and they’re going to come and tear us apart.

And so he’s seeing the very worst happen. And in essence if we’re summarizing his dismay, we have to say, “Father the next move is Yours. What are You going to do for Your own great name?”

In this confrontation with the Lord he’s totally exasperated. He’s frustrated, he’s gone between questions and exclamations all the way through his prayer. And the tragedy of these circumstances is that Joshua went into battle first then he prayed afterwards instead of doing it the other way around.

Now watch what the Lord answers. Here comes the:

4. DIRECTIONS—verses 10-15

The DISMAY has been expressed in his prayer. Now watch the DIRECTIONS that come from the Lord.

v. 10 The Lord said to Joshua, “Stand up! What are you

doing down on your face?

“The Lord said to Joshua, ‘Stand up! What are you doing down on your face?’”

Sometimes the Lord says, “Get off your face and get rid of your sackcloth and ashes and quit your whining! If you deal with the root problem you wouldn’t be whaling before Me in prayer like that! You know there’s a problem here so quit it! I don’t want to listen to that stuff! Let Me tell you what’s wrong!”

Many times if we would come to God and honestly and openly confess the root problem, our own pride and our own independence, God would begin to work in mighty ways in our lives. And He is just so tired of listening to us whine over how bad life is and how rough all the circumstances are, and yet He never hears from us except when we’re in trouble. There’s really no fellowship and no close relationship with Him.

So the Lord has His own commands: “Get up and stand on your feet!”

And look at verse 11. There are 6 reasons why they all are in trouble. We can number them right there.

v. 11 Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, they have lied, they have put them with their own possessions.

#1—“Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenant,”

2—“which I commanded them to keep.”

3—“They have taken some of the devoted things;”

4—“they have stolen,”

5—“they have lied,”

6—“they have put them with their own possessions.”

The Lord looks on Achan’s sin from a national point of view and the whole nation suffers as a result of it.

They’ve been whipped at Ai and 36 casualties, all because of one man and his disobedience.

v. 12 That is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies; they turn their backs and run because they have been made liable to destruction. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction.

“That is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies; they turn their backs and run because they have been made liable to destruction. I will not be with you anymore”—period huh?

A lot of people think that's true. When they sin, that's it.

“I will not be with you anymore period!”

No hope. No help. These are the same people that when things get rough in their lives they think that God's getting even with them for something in their lives in their past. It's just like God comes to a time that He gives up on the believer. “I won't be with you anymore.”

Thank God for the “unless,” for every one of us.

“unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction.”

“I'm coming back and we'll win but you're going to have to do something! You're going to have to deal with the problem that is there! And until you do that, there'll be no victory. You'll stay in the same state.”

Precious time is lost and we'll be weak and whipped—long time “unless you destroy” it.

Principle: We open ourselves up for judgment in our life when we're disobedient.

And that's what happens here. We open ourselves up for judgment in our life when we're disobedient.

v. 13 “Go, consecrate the people. Tell them, ‘Consecrate

yourselves in preparation for tomorrow; for this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: That which is devoted is among you, O Israel. You cannot stand against your enemies until you remove it.

“Go, consecrate the people. Tell them, ‘Consecrate yourselves in preparation for tomorrow; for this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: That which is devoted is among you, O Israel. You cannot stand against your enemies until you remove it.’”

Now have we seen that phrase before? Remember back in Joshua 3:5 he says:

Joshua 3:5

... “Go consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.”

And that was just before they went across the river. In chapter 5 he had them consecrate themselves in anticipation of taking the city of Jericho. Now it’s time again. We have to deal with this problem before we can go any further.

Principle: There will be no victory until we deal with it.

Fellowship breaks and growth stops until sin is confessed and fellowship restored.

It’s like going over to the wall and flipping the switch—the lights go out. It’s exactly the same way in the Christian life.

Sin does that—breaks fellowship.

John describes it so beautifully. He says:

1 John 1:7

We walk in the light as He is in the light...

But with fellowship broken we walk in darkness and we don't know where we're going. But if we're walking in the light as He is in the light, the blood of Jesus Christ is cleansing us from all sin. We're in the right relationship with Him so we're walking in the light, transparent before Him.

v. 14 “In the morning, present yourselves tribe by tribe; the tribe that the Lord takes shall come forward clan by clan; the clan that the Lord takes shall come forward family by family; and the family that the Lord takes shall come forward man by man.”

““In the morning, present yourselves tribe by tribe. The tribe that the Lord takes shall come forward clan by clan; the clan that the Lord takes shall come forward family by family; and the family that the Lord takes shall come forward man by man.”

Now understand why all those things were there in verse 1. Everything's already been said about him and those very words are going to fit into the jigsaw puzzle, out of two and a half million people to give us the one man responsible.

And that's how it's all going to happen.

This is what we're going to do—"present yourselves."

Notice how quickly the Lord of hosts makes commands.

In verse 10 He says, "Stand up."

In verse 13 He says, "consecrate yourself."

In verse 14 He says, "present yourselves"—we're going to handle this.

v. 15 He who is caught with the devoted things shall be destroyed by fire, along with all that belongs to him. He has violated the covenant of the Lord and has done a disgraceful thing in Israel!"

"He who is caught with the devoted things shall be destroyed by fire, along with all that belongs to him. He has violated the covenant of the Lord and has done a disgraceful thing in Israel!"

We have a tendency to forget the victims don't we? When we come to justice and judgment?

Thirty-six families are fatherless. Corpses strewn along the road because of the sin of one man. And now God says it has to be dealt with and it's going to be very, very severe.

Ready for the discovery?

5. The DISCOVERY—verses 16-21

What's the text say?

v. 16 Early the next morning Joshua had Israel come forward by tribes, and Judah was taken.

“Early next morning”—there we go again. All the great action takes place early in the morning.

Joshua says:

“Early the next morning Joshua had Israel come forward by tribes, and”—WHAT?—“Judah was taken.”

What was Achan thinking?

“Two and a half million! They’ll never find me. I’m not part of this deal.”

But there’s a twinge of guilt. It’s kind of a little twitter. And all of a sudden they’re saying, “We want the tribe of Judah out of the twelve!”

He’s thinking, “Well man, it’s the biggest tribe in the whole bunch. You know 100,000 people or more. I’m lost in a crowd like that! I’m safe.”

Watch God's FBI get to work and learn the lesson that crime does not pay. We're getting ready to learn a great lesson in this verse.

v. 17 The clans of Judah came forward, and he took the Zerahites. He had the clan of the Zerahites come forward by families, and Zimri was taken.

“The clans of Judah came forward, and he took the Zerahites.”—Son of Judah—“He had the clan of the Zerahites come forward by families, and Zimri was taken.”

Hitting kind of close, huh?

v. 18 Joshua had his family come forward man by man, and Achan son of Carmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken.

“Joshua had his family come forward man by man, and Achan son of Carmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken.”

Achan was taken.

There comes a time when we can put our own name in there if we're living in disobedience. That's why God says:

1 Corinthians 11:29

Let a man examine himself and so let him eat. Lest you eat

and drink judgment unto yourself.

God means business.

Don't think He knows? How about:

Proverbs 15:3

The eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good.

Ecclesiastes 12:14

God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.

Hebrews 4:13

All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Yes, God knows all about us. Just talk to Ananias and Sapphira. They'll tell us that the Spirit of God watched them sell their property and agree to lie about how much was involved and in what they gave. Tragically they lost their lives.

v. 19 Then Joshua said to Achan, “My son, give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, and give him the praise. Tell me what you have done; do not hide it from

me.”

“Then Joshua said to Achan, ‘My son, give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, and give him the praise. Tell me what you have done; do not hide it from me.’”

Know how sometimes we read a verse for a long time and we don’t understand it?

It’s difficult to figure out Joshua’s response to Achan when he’s standing before him. Why say, “My son, give glory to the Lord...and give him praise.” Why would he say that?

Rather than say, “Tell me what you’ve done and we’re going to wail on your tail.” That’s basically the way we handle it. Why give God the glory and let him have praise?

What had Joshua just gotten done doing to the Lord?

God has been the victim of circumstances that He did not design. God has been misjudged. Joshua said, “You brought us over here to let us be wiped out by the Amorites! Thanks a lot God.”

And now it’s time to set the record straight and praise God and give Him glory that He cared enough to reveal the sin of man. And God is right and man is wrong.

One of the vital things that ought to be involved in our confession of sin and disobedience is to praise God that He

spared our life. And give Him glory that He still loves us and hasn't given up on us.

And here it's time to give God glory and to praise Him because He's only acting faithfully in accordance with His specific instructions as far as Jericho was concerned. "Don't take the devoted things. Tell me what you have done. Do not hide it from Me."

Here is the only statement of Achan in the scripture.

v. 20 Achan replied, "It is true! I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel. This is what I have done:

"Achan replied, 'It is true!'"

"I have sinned against me, I have sinned against my wife, I've sinned against my kids, I've sinned against the nation."

Is that what it says?

"I have sinned against the Lord,"

It's an amazing thing how many times people in the Bible dealing with sin will cause it primarily an offense to God.

David could say after his year of an affair with Bathsheba, "Against thee and thee only have I sinned!"—speaking to God.

Joseph, when he's caught in a similar set of circumstances where he could have very well perpetrated an affair with Potiphar's wife, said "I cannot sin and do this great wickedness against God!"

Now Achan comes to the time of confession. He says:

"I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel." and "This is what I have done:"

v. 21 When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath."

"When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath."

Notice the progression in the passage:

"I saw...I coveted...and [I] took..."

"I saw with my eye, I desired my heart and I took with my hand by an act of my will."

What's tragic about this? The confession comes too late.

If Achan had come to Joshua and would have said, “Joshua, I’ve taken some things. I’m wrong. I’m bringing it back. I want to make restitution. Provide for me a burnt offering and a sacrifice. I want to get right with God!” God would have forgiven him and he would have gotten right and spared his life. But Achan doesn’t do that.

He wants to get away with it. It’s going to haunt him to his grave.

“I saw it, I coveted it, I took it.”

Oftentimes we hear people pray, “Father, we confess our many sins to You if we’ve sinned. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

It’s kind of like dumping the whole load on His backdoor without ever getting specific. God really doesn’t listen to that. He’s really not impressed. It might be that we’re not experiencing much victory in our life and much joy because we are not being specific.

Joshua expects Achan to name it and to say exactly what he did, and by the saying of it, have repentance as part of it.

If we’re kneeling by our bedside and confessing our many sins, we might be having some real problems with the Lord.

J. Vernon McGee was describing one time as Mel Trotter, the director of Pacific Garden Mission, had a fellow on his board of directors who did this all the time.

(Joshua – Judges by J. Vernon McGee)

Mel Trotter told about a man on the board of his Pacific Garden Mission, a doctor, who, when he prayed would say, “Lord, if I have sinned, forgive my sins.” Mel Trotter got tired of listening to that. Finally he went to the doctor and said to him, “Listen, Doc, you say, ‘If I have sinned.’ Don’t you know whether or not you have sinned?” The doctor said, “Well, I guess I do.” “Don’t you know what your sin is?” “No,” the doctor said, “I don’t know what it is.” Mel Trotter said, “If you don’t know, then *guess* at it!” The next time the doctor prayed, Mel said, he guessed it the first time!
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Label it! Mention it! Get it right.

When we are dealing in specifics with an offense with a holy God, then we’re going to make it right. But if we can just come bouncing into His presence with lukewarm, blasé, calloused heart and say, “Oh God, I know I’ve sinned today and I confess the whole nine yards. Forgive me”—and go to sleep.

That is not dealing with God in examining our heart. And if this has been our practice, try something else. If we want a real revival to happen and we want some things to really start happening around, start making a list before God.

Psalm 139:23

Search me, O God, and know my heart...

Start writing them down and then confess those things one at a time. Name them before God.

Oh it's humiliating. But oh how beautiful it is as with a broken and contrite heart God begins to pour out His blessing upon our life.

Now as nearly as we can tell this is a \$25,000 theft. \$500 probably is about the price of the robe. And \$3,500 for the silver coins. And for the wedge of gold probably around \$21,000. So it's a pretty large theft and you don't bury stuff in the floor of your tent without your sons and daughters and everybody in the family knowing it. So they're all involved in what has taken place.

Lewis Smedes has written the following:

(Choices: Making Decisions in a Complex World by Lewis B. Smedes)

We would all stay out of a lot of trouble if we always acted where people could see us. Or if we were at least willing for them to see us. Cover-ups are always the strategy of the irresponsible.

So one way of testing the responsibility of what we are doing is to ask, "Would I be willing to let people I care about know what I am doing?"

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Therefore protecting ourselves to make the right decision in a given situation.

Well we've come to number 6 and the end of the study. It's a very serious and sober conclusion. It isn't pretty at all.

6. DEATH—verses 22-26

v. 22 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent, and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver underneath.

“So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent, and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver underneath.”

v. 23 They took the things from the tent, brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites and spread them out before the Lord.

“Then they took the things from the tent, brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites and spread them out before the Lord.”

There it all is.

v. 24 Then Joshua, together with all Israel, took Achan son of Zerah, the silver, the robe, the gold wedge, his sons and daughters, his cattle, donkeys and sheep, his tent and all that he had, to the Valley of

Achor.

“Then Joshua, together with all Israel, took Achan son of Zerah, the silver, the robe, the gold wedge, his sons and daughters, his cattle, donkeys and sheep, his tent and all that he had, to the Valley of Achor.”

The Valley of Achor is the “valley of sorrow.” And the inventory of what they take has 11 entries:

1. Achan,
2. silver,
3. robe,
4. gold,
5. sons,
6. daughters,
7. cattle,
8. donkeys,
9. sheep,
10. the tent, and

11. the last one is a miscellaneous entry—“all that he had,” down to the valley of sorrow.

v. 25 Joshua said, “Why have you brought this trouble on us? The Lord will bring trouble on you today.” Then all Israel stoned him, and after they had stoned the rest, they burned them.

“Joshua said, ‘Why have you brought this disaster on us?’”

Notice He doesn’t answer that question.

“The Lord will bring trouble on you today.”

It’s almost like saying, “Do you have anything you want to say before it’s all over?”

“Then all Israel stoned him, and after they had stoned the rest, they burned them.”

v. 26 Over Achan they heaped up a large pile of rocks, which remains to this day. Then the Lord turned from his fierce anger. Therefore that place has been called the Valley of Achor ever since.

“Over Achan they heaped up a large pile of rocks, which remains to this day. Then the Lord turned from his fierce anger. Therefore that place has been called the Valley of Achor ever since.”

If we are growing in our Christian life and we're maturing in the Lord, there's a place of death for our flesh. There's a place where we're executing things in our life that are not right. The Spirit of God has His finger on that and we have to cut it out of our life or we'll know no joy and no blessing until we do it.

That's:

John 12:24, 25

Except a corn of wheat fall unto the ground and die it abides alone. But if it die it brings forth much fruit.

There needs to be a valley of sorrow, a place of death in our lives. When we die of our dear desire, self will resign. Execution takes place and is faithfully performed in this valley of sorrow as we let go.

Here are the lessons that come out of the text.

Lesson #1: What one person does affects the whole nation.

It's a vital lesson out of the study. We affect the rest of the body of Christ.

Lesson #2: When you take something that doesn't belong to you, you have acted unfaithfully.

Lesson #3: How important it is to pray before we proceed.

Joshua didn't before so he ended up praying afterwards.

Lesson #4: The people are not even aware that they are out of fellowship with God.

The people are not even aware that they are out of fellowship with God. They just go on up to Ai thinking it's just like old times. They don't even know it.

Lesson #5: The high cost of disobedience—the high cost of disobedience—for Achan and the nation as a whole.

It's a supreme price to pay.

Lesson #6: How weak and whipped we are without his strength in our lives.

Lesson #7: We open ourselves up to judgment when we are disobedient.

And then of course the process of the flesh working is in lesson #8:

Lesson #8: The eye saw; the heart desired; and the hand took, or the will said to take it.

The eye, the heart and the will are involved. The eye saw it; the heart desired; and the will took it with the hand.

This is an important lesson to challenge us :

Lesson #9: There is no victory until you deal with the problem.

Lesson #10: Fellowship breaks—growth stops, until sin is confessed.

Lesson #11: The confession of sin must be specific.

And then our last lesson:

Lesson #12: The children of Israel are now ready for victory because the offense has been dealt with.

Lee Ezell, writing about being raped says, when she comes to that moment of great resignation and surrender:

(The Missing Piece: Finding God's Peace for Your Past by Lee Ezell)

“God, You’re all I have right now. But I thought that when I committed this rape to You, that would be the end of its effect on me.” As I spoke to God, I realized how incapable I was of handling this crushing news. Though I had thought my commitment of the situation to Him would solve the problem, I had to admit that perhaps I didn’t understand what commitment really was. Maybe the reason I was in this mess was because I was still trying to run my life. I had given Christ a place to live in me, but deep inside I knew that I was still calling the shots. I felt Him pressing in on me, asking for control of my decisions, friendships, time, career, attitudes—

everything. And I realized that without Christ in charge there was no hope of my overcoming this problem and succeeding in life.

“Lord, I’m so unhappy with my life,” I prayed. “I seem to have no control over the things that happen to me. If You don’t help me, Lord, if You don’t take control of my life, then there’s no hope for me.”

I cried again, quietly this time before I continued my prayer. “God, how much more can I take? Please help me. Take my life. I have nothing left. I surrender it totally to You. I’m looking to You for guidance. I’m not asking You to make my life rosy. Just help me get through this mess. I’ll accept the results, whatever they are, but I can’t go on without You in control.”

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This reading from *Our Daily Bread* is a great illustration because it fit the study:

Pastor Dan Baker told a story about a man traveling on an ocean liner. He was leaning over the ship’s rail tossing something in the air and catching it. “What is it you are tossing in the air?” asked an onlooker. “A diamond of great value. It is all I have in the world,” said the man. “What an awful risk to keep tossing it up so carelessly!” “No risk at all. I’ve been doing it for the last half hour, and I can catch it every time.” “But there might come a last time,” remarked the onlooker. The man laughed and tossed it up again—but this time he missed. For a moment, the man [just] stood aghast. Then he cried out, “Lost! Lost! Lost!” Baker commented, “You

say that story's not true—it is true! The ocean is eternity. You are on the vessel of life. That diamond is your soul.”
(source unknown)

Luke 12:19, 20

I will say to my soul, “Soul, thou hast much good laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry.” But God said unto him, “Thou fool! This night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be?”

Father, we come to You and realize that it's different talking about Your anger, talking about Your justice. We're literally overwhelmed. Father teach us to learn from the life of Achan what to do with disobedience. How to make it right. How to be specific about our sin. How to be people who are aware of the fact and be sensitive that when we're out of fellowship with You we know it and we have to get right. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

A Practical Study of JOSHUA

“The Path of Obedience Leads to Victory”

Study Number Seven – Joshua 7:1-26

NOTES

v. 1 But the Israelites acted unfaithfully in regard to the devoted things; Achan son of Carmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of them. So the Lord’s anger burned against Israel.

v. 2 Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth Aven to the east of Bethel, and told them, “Go up and spy out the region.” So the men went up and spied out Ai.

v. 3 When they returned to Joshua, they said, “Not all the people will have to go up against Ai. Send two or three thousand men to take it and do not weary all the people, for only a few men are there.”

v. 4 So about three thousand men went up; but they were routed by the men of Ai,

v. 5 who killed about thirty-six of them. They chased the Israelites from the city gate as far as the stone quarries and struck them down on the slopes. At this the hearts of the people melted and became like water.

v. 6 Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell face-down to the ground before the ark of the Lord, remaining there till evening. The elders of Israel did the same, and sprinkled dust on their heads.

v. 7 And Joshua said, “Ah, Sovereign Lord, why did you ever bring this people across the Jordan to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us? If only we had been content to stay on the other side of the Jordan!

v. 8 O Lord, what can I say, now that Israel has been routed by its enemies?

v. 9 The Canaanites and the other people of the country will hear about this and they will surround us and wipe out our name from the earth. What then will you do for your own great name?”

v. 10 The Lord said to Joshua, “Stand up! What are you doing down on your face?”

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v. 11 Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, they have lied, they have put them with their own possessions.

v. 12 That is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies; they turn their backs and run because they have been made liable to destruction. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction.

v. 13 “Go, consecrate the people. Tell them, ‘Consecrate yourselves in preparation for tomorrow; for this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: That which is devoted is among you, O Israel. You cannot stand against your enemies until you remove it.

v. 14 “In the morning, present yourselves tribe by tribe. The tribe that the Lord takes shall come forward clan by clan; the clan that the Lord takes shall come forward family by family; and the family that the Lord takes shall come forward man by man.

v. 15 He who is caught with the devoted things shall be destroyed by fire, along with all that belongs to him. He has violated the covenant of the Lord and has done a disgraceful thing in Israel!”

v. 16 Early the next morning Joshua had Israel come forward by tribes, and Judah was taken.

v. 17 The clans of Judah came forward, and he took the Zerahites. He had the clan of the Zerahites come forward by families, and Zimri was taken.

v. 18 Joshua had his family come forward man by man, and Achan son of Carmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken.

v. 19 Then Joshua said to Achan, “My son, give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, and give him the praise. Tell me what you have done; do not hide it from me.”

v. 20 Achan replied, “It is true! I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel. This is what I have done:

v. 21 When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath.”

v. 22 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent, and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver underneath.

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v. 24 Then Joshua, together with all Israel, took Achan son of Zerah, the silver, the robe, the gold wedge, his sons and daughters, his cattle, donkeys and sheep, his tent and all that he had, to the Valley of Achor.

v. 25 Joshua said, “Why have you brought this trouble on us? The Lord will bring trouble on you today.” Then all Israel stoned him, and after they had stoned the rest, they burned them.

v. 26 Over Achan they heaped up a large pile of rocks, which remains to this day. Then the Lord turned from his fierce anger. Therefore that place has been called the Valley of Achor ever since.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Joshua 7:1-26 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What happened when they got into the city of Jericho, according to verse 1?

3. What is the recommendation of the spies who have scouted Ai, according to verse 3?

4. What happened at Ai, according to verses 4 & 5?

5. What is the reason for the defeat at Ai, according to the Lord's message in verse 11?

6. What does the Lord tell Joshua to do, according to verse 13?

7. What did Achan do to create the defeat at Ai, according to verses 20 & 21?

8. What did Joshua and the children of Israel do to Achan and his family and all of his belongings, according to verses 24-26?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: What one person does affects the whole nation.

LESSON #2: When you take something that doesn't belong to you, you have acted unfaithfully.

LESSON #3: How important it is to pray before we proceed with the project of possession of the land.

LESSON #4: The people are not even aware that they are out of fellowship with God.

LESSON #5: The high cost of disobedience for Achan and for the nation as a whole.

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LESSON #6: How weak and whipped we are without his strength in our lives.

LESSON #7: We open ourselves up to judgment when we are disobedient.

LESSON #8: The eye saw, the heart desired, and the will took.

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