



## ***Joshua At Ai: One Too Many Israelite's***

A Christian's journey to the promised land is beset with many difficulties. A great many. There are some we have control over, others we don't. But difficulties are just par for the course. I think Joshua's battle to gain entry to the land that God promised him and the Israelite's is one of the most telling OT episodes on how we Christians have to battle to enter into God's rest. Joshua was a true man of God and a mighty warrior. He had all the traits of both and used both to the Glory of God.

God had worked a major miracle at Jericho and clearly, if there were any lingering doubts about Joshua's leadership skills and favor with God, they evaporated after the siege of Jericho. Joshua was God's man and one whom the miracle at Jericho further established. But the next battle was a completely different matter.

One would think that after the Jericho battle things would go easy for the Israelite's and that they would have victory after victory. The battle of Ai changed all of that. Suddenly and at least at first inexplicably, they suffered a defeat. It was not a crushing one, 36 men were killed. But it had a devastating effect on the morale of the Israelite's and their army.

*And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men: for they chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down: wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water. (Josh 7:5, KJV)*

*Often in our own lives when things don't go as we planned or things get fouled up, we lose heart. This is what happened to Israel after Ai.*

*Joshua had a different response to the crisis. Rather than moan and complain, he rent his clothes and fell on his face before his God. The elders of Israel did the same thing. They wanted to know why the Lord had forsaken them on the battlefield. They had enormous doubts now about the worthiness of continuing even saying that they wished they had been content remaining on the other side of the Jordan! Not only that but they were afraid that the surrounding tribes would hear of it and take heart against Israel in future battles.*

*Then God finally tells them the answer with a swift rebuke. 'Get up, Why are you lying on your face praying, there is sin in the camp!' is the Lord's paraphrased response. Then he identifies the problem. There an abomination, an accursed thing - something that God*

hates in the camp.

Yes, God really hates abomination. **Thoroughly.** When the wise man told of the seven abominations that God hates in Proverbs (Proverbs 6:16), that is what he meant. These are things that can and will get in your way of your Christian walk. But for Joshua there was a more tangible accursed thing, an abomination in the camp.

*Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you.  
(Josh 7:11-12, KJV)*

This was a physical or tangible abomination. What Solomon describes in proverbs are spiritual abomination and they are no less offensive to the Lord. But here at Ai, one (count 'em - ONE) person had something that was abominable to the Lord and it caused the failure of Joshua army at Ai. Not only the abominable thing was there but two other sins are mentioned. One was theft and the other was dissembling - lying about it. The word for dissembling is this one.

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כָּחַשׁ

kâchash

kaw-khash'

*A primitive root; to be untrue, in word (to lie, feign, disown) or deed (to disappoint, fail, cringe): - deceive, deny, dissemble, fail, deal falsely, be found liars, (be-) lie, lying, submit selves.*

God warned Joshua of this thing and told him that there would be no more victories until he get rid of the abominable thing from their midst. Yes, the Lord was giving them an ultimatum. Clearly someone in the camp did not take the Lord's word seriously and consequently refused to heed God's clear concise and express commandments. What was the cost of this persons rebellion? Thirty-six lives and a major embarrassment for Israel.

Joshua and the elders finally found their culprit. A man named Achan was the guilty party. He made is confession and was contrite in making known that he had sinned against the Lord. Covetousness entered into his heart, he lusted for something forbidden to him.

*And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent,*

*and the silver under it.  
(Josh 7:20-21, KJV)*

*When they found the goods Achan it was clear, had to pay. I think this is something that we Christians tend to forget at times. That being that God's forgiveness, while freely given does not mean we don't have to face some of the consequences of our bad behavior. Look at David - he lost the son he wanted so much and the sword of violence never left his household. Did God forgive David? Yes and still loved and blessed him but the consequences of his evil (and what David did was truly evil) would not be turned back. David had to pay for his sin. The same thing with Achan. He sinned and he even confessed, but in the end the consequences for his sin had to be paid. Like David, his sinfulness cost others their lives and the Lord would not spare them at least some of the consequences of their wickedness.*

*Once the wicked man was removed and his accursed thing gotten rid of, Israel had success. But that is what it took nothing more and nothing less.*

*What is the lesson here? There are many but lets concentrate on what it means to us personally and to the wider body of Christians.*

*I am often accused of being a little too conservative and 'hard nosed' on basic, fundamental Bible teachings. I accept the criticism, at least in comparison to what is often taught today. There are some fundamentals that with God, there is no middle ground. Either you will obey or rebel. It does not matter how many pastors or priests or Pope's soft peddle God's commandments, the truth is they are immutable and he is not going to change them. Taking life because of covetousness? Both David and Achan were guilty of this and each paid dearly.*

*The truth is that more and more each day we are seeing a falling away from the basic fundamental teachings of the Bible. This has been the pattern we have seen for many years now and in many places it is accelerating. Why? Well mostly because of false doctrines and false teachers who are among the people to do and to teach others to do evil rather than good. But that is not the only reason for it and that is where I think this teaching in Joshua is instructive.*

*Achan was just one man in the camp, but his sin caused the three big 'D's - defeat, death and doubt among the children of Israel. This is what sin will do. It causes all manner of trouble and that trouble oftentimes is not just for the sinner but all who are in the camp (association/Church etc) will often be deeply effected by one troublemaker in the assembly. There is only one issue that can deeply effect the Church's spiritual standing with God. What is that? Well lets start with what it is not.*

*It's not race*

*It's not economic standing*

*It's not living on the wrong side of the tracks*

*It's not hair color*

*It's not age*

*It's not language or nationality*

*It's not the kind of car you drive.*

*The only real thing that can effect a Church's, a prayer group, an informal Christian assembly standing with God is sin. All manner of sin - greed, covetousness, adultery, fornication, hate of any kind, cruelty, unforgiveness. These things in the lives and hearts of men and women in the congregation this will choke out many, most if not all of God's blessings as well as keep it from having those spiritual victories that so many crave.*

*Sin is the biggest impediment to a victorious Christian walk and a victorious Christian life. When I read the troubles that Joshua faced I often look at the enemies his host had to fight as being the same kinds of things we Christians have to fight. Only they had the Amorites and the Amelekites and we have the 'fornication-ites' and the 'coveteous-ites' and the false doctrine-ites to deal with. They are no less dangerous to us than that the men who bore swords in those bygone days. We as Christians are in a battle and we are in hostile territory, just like Joshua and the Israelite's were. For we in the west, we have to deal with these different kinds of enemies. But if you live in Iraq, Syria or Nigeria, you have to deal with sin as well as literal sword wielding enemies of Christ. Think Boko Haram and ISIS.*

*Our battles though are spiritual and as such must be fought with Spiritual weapons. Paul exhorted us as to this in the book of Ephesians.*

*Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God,  
that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all,  
to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having  
on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the  
gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to  
quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation,  
and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always  
with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching  
thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; (Eph 6:13-18, KJV)*

*I note all of the similitude's are of warfare. These were the garb of the typical Roman Soldier in the Apostle Paul's day. Paul is using this as a way to relate to his hearers as to how to successfully fight the enemy. It's not with literal swords and shields, but with spiritual ones. Now interpose this with the narrative above and Joshua's battles. We too are on a journey to the promised land but if we want those victories, we must yield to God, get rid of sin, get rid of false doctrines, and abominations and keep our souls right with God. When we allow sin to enter in, we commit, by way of analogy, the sin of Achan and as a result we give the devil ammunition against us. Moreover we become or are on our way to becoming a hindrance to the body of Christ and keep others from victory. Go back to the Book of Revelation and the letters to the seven Churches. Each was written to and most had some issues that the Lord pointed out. But note the punishment for the entire congregation if some of the sin was not dealt with.*

*Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent,  
and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly,  
and **will remove thy candlestick** out of his place,  
except thou repent. (Rev 2:5, KJV)*

Such can be the fate of an unrepentant Church. A false doctrine like the teachings of Baalam (Rev 2:14) the false prophetess (Rev 2:20), fornication (as inferred in both passages) are major problems. They are things that God really hates and can cause us to really miss his blessings and protection. Look at Paul's admonition in the Book of Corinthians. Paul knew the perils of spiritual corruption.

*But now I have written unto you not to keep company,  
if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous,  
or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner;  
with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them  
also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?  
But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away  
from among yourselves that wicked person.  
(1Cor 5:11-13, KJV)*

The lesson I think that is most potent was that for Israel to enter into the land of promise and have the necessary victories, there was simply one too many Israelite's. One of them had to go and God made it plain that there would be no victory without Joshua dealing with this individual and his sin. In Revelation Chapter two we see the same theme, for God's continued blessing, there needed to be repentance and that there were 'one too many Christians' in the congregation.

I say these things to all of you so that we may all recognize the sin's and impediments in our own lives that may be hindering our victory. But also to let you know another important point in the above biblical narrative.

Joshua and those 36 men who died were **not** to blame for the failure at Ai. They did their job and yet those men died. We often look at many of the troubles we suffer and have to endure as somehow being our fault or that we may have 'missed God' in some way. Such soul searching is healthy but sometimes the trials and delays we have to face are not our fault. Look at Job. All that trouble he had to go through and none of it was his fault. This is why we cannot look at life as being a 'formula' that if we do this and do that, this will happen. Of that if we walk in a totally upright fashion our lives will follow a pattern of constant success and victory. Those 36 men and their deaths? That was the fault of others.

One thing I do is to try and take into consideration others in my decision making processes. Yes, I really do. Many don't understand why I do things the way I do sometimes but I do try to take into consideration others in all I do. I would hope others would do the same for me and that is why I do it for others. We need to take that into consideration when we sin. That adulterer... he may really enjoy that 30 minutes of sex. But when wifey finds out, that sexual escapade will cost him his marriage, his family, his kids and the consequences for it may mean massive legal bills and child support payments that will keep him in a rented room until his youngest child is 18 years old. That 30 minute 'horizontal refreshment' has now deeply effected the lives of many others, even more if the woman he was sleeping with was also married with kids.

This is why we cannot always blame ourselves for some of the bad things that happen to us.

*Sometimes the decisions of others can have an effect on us. But let me tell you one thing you and I must never do. We must never blame the Lord for our misfortune. If there was one lesson we learn from Job is that we must always give thanks to God for what he has already done for us, acknowledge his sovereignty, have faith and WAIT UPON THE LORD. But don't ever, EVER blame the Lord for our misfortune. God was plenteous in mercy towards Job in the end and I am convinced that his constancy in giving thanks to God even in the midst of trial was one of the key factors in God blessing Job twice as much at the end of the trial than at before. It's not that he did not complain, he did he thought he was being treated unjustly. But Job was and remained faithful to his God.*

*This is the key for us brothers. To remain faithful to Jesus Christ and to keep his commandments even and especially in the midst of trials and tribulations. Is this too not one of the commandments given to us Christians.*

*Yes, that among a few others.*

*Rejoice evermore.  
Pray without ceasing.  
**In every thing give thanks:**  
for this is the will of God in Christ  
Jesus concerning you.  
Quench not the Spirit.  
**Despise not prophesyings.**  
Prove all things;  
hold fast that which is good.  
Abstain from all appearance of evil.  
(1Thess 5:16-22, KJV)*

*Everything also means trials and tribulations.*

*Brothers, I write this piece today on unction for the Lord... specifically. There may be some of you who are impeding the works of God with something you are doing, or not doing and getting in the way of something that God wants to do. Sin is usually the reason, but so are other less clear ones; Jealousy, envy, strife, anger, stubbornness and hostility - these too will choke out any blessings from God. God will wait on us to get right but he won't wait forever. And let us remember how our behavior effects others and reflects upon us and the God we serve.*

*Let none of us be a modern day Achan. Let us be that Joshua and his loyal captains who fought the good fight, served the Lord and inherited the promise!*

*Grace and peace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ*

*Brother Mark*

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