

## Joshua Chapter 7 – “The Anger of God against sin in His people”

First – Read Joshua Chapter 7.

But the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things, for Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed things; so the anger of the LORD burned against the children of Israel. <sup>2</sup> Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which *is* beside Beth Aven, on the east side of Bethel, and spoke to them, saying, “Go up and spy out the country.” So the men went up and spied out Ai. <sup>3</sup> And they returned to Joshua and said to him, “Do not let all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not weary all the people there, for *the people of Ai are few.*” <sup>4</sup> So about three thousand men went up there from the people, but they fled before the men of Ai. <sup>5</sup> And the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men, for they chased them *from* before the gate as far as Shebarim, and struck them down on the descent; therefore the hearts of the people melted and became like water. <sup>6</sup> Then Joshua tore his clothes, and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until evening, he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads. <sup>7</sup> And Joshua said, “Alas, Lord GOD, why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all—to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Oh, that we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan! <sup>8</sup> O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turns its back before its enemies? <sup>9</sup> For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear *it*, and surround us, and cut off our name from the earth. Then what will You do for Your great name?” <sup>10</sup> So the LORD said to Joshua: “Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face? <sup>11</sup> Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived; and they have also put *it* among their own stuff. <sup>12</sup> Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, *but* turned *their* backs before their enemies, because they have become doomed to destruction. Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you. <sup>13</sup> Get up, sanctify the people, and say, ‘Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, because thus says the LORD God of Israel: “*There is an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you.*” <sup>14</sup> In the morning therefore you shall be brought according to your tribes. And it shall be *that* the tribe which the LORD takes shall come according to families; and the family which the LORD takes shall come by households; and the household which the LORD takes shall come man by man. <sup>15</sup> Then it shall be *that* he who is taken with the accursed thing shall be burned with fire, he and all that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he has done a disgraceful thing in Israel.” <sup>16</sup> So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel by their tribes, and the tribe of Judah was taken. <sup>17</sup> He brought the clan of Judah, and he took the family of the Zarahites; and he brought the family of the Zarahites man by man, and Zabdi was taken. <sup>18</sup> Then he brought his household man by man, and Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. <sup>19</sup> Now Joshua said to Achan, “My son, I beg you, give glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession to Him, and tell me now what you have done; do not hide *it* from me.” <sup>20</sup> And Achan answered Joshua and said, “Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I have done: <sup>21</sup> When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it.” <sup>22</sup> So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver under it. <sup>23</sup> And they took them from the midst of the tent, brought them to Joshua and to all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD. <sup>24</sup> Then Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the garment, the wedge of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, and all that he had, and they brought them to the Valley of Achor. <sup>25</sup> And Joshua said, “Why have you troubled us? The LORD will trouble you this day.” So all Israel stoned him with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones. <sup>26</sup> Then they raised over him a great heap of stones, still there to this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of His anger. Therefore the name of that place has been called the Valley of Achor to this day.

## Introduction

Last week in my introduction I made it very clear that the destruction of Jericho and the subsequent conquering of the land of Canaan was God's idea. He was judging the sin of the nation, after giving them plenty of time to repent.

I won't repeat the verses that support this but in case you were not here last week I will give you them to look up later. The verses are Genesis 15: v. 13-16, Lev.18: v. 24-27 and Deut. 9: v. 4-5.

I also mentioned in my introduction that "All sin is against God", this is not just sin in the life of an unbeliever but also sin in the life of a believer.

We will notice in chapter 7 that God is just as strict about sin in the life of a believer as He is in the life of an unbeliever.

There is a lot for us to learn in this chapter which we can directly apply to our lives.

Because of "Communion" today I will save a little time by mainly focusing on the practical application of this chapter, rather than go over the narrative which is quite simple.

However firstly we need to examine the literary structure of the chapter.

The two important verses in this chapter are v. 1 and verse 26.

But the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things, for Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed things; so the anger of the LORD burned against the children of Israel.

<sup>26</sup> Then they raised over him a great heap of stones, still there to this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of His anger. Therefore the name of that place has been called the Valley of Achor to this day.

In v. 1 it tells us that God's anger burned against the children of Israel and in the last chapter, v. 26, we are told that the Lord turned from the fierceness of His anger.

We must understand the chapter in relation to these two verses.

It is clear that everything happened in this chapter because God was angry with something.

His anger ceased when the problem was dealt with.

We must keep this in mind as we move through the chapter.

### 1. V. 1-5 – Israel's defeat.

In v. 1 we are told that God was angry and why He was angry. We need to go back to v. 18 and 19 of the previous chapter to find out why.

Joshua 6:18-19

<sup>18</sup> And you, by all means abstain from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. <sup>19</sup> But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, *are* consecrated to the LORD; they shall come into the treasury of the LORD."

I think at this point we need to identify the "accursed things".

The Strong's Bible dictionary says that an "Accursed thing" is a doomed object or anything that is devoted to destruction.

We need to also go to v. 21 to identify the particular accursed thing. It was a “Babylonian Garment”, probably a very attractive garment worn by royalty in Babylonia. God had told Joshua that everything in the city was to be destroyed and the silver and gold etc. was to be taken into the Lord’s treasury.

God was angry with the whole of Israel because one person had disobeyed His instructions.

This is clear from v. 1 and v. 11.

Why was God angry with the whole of Israel? Why not just the one person?

The simple answer is that Israel was “one people” in the Lord.

Exodus 19: v. 5-6a

<sup>5</sup> Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth *is* Mine. <sup>6</sup> And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’

God walked about in the Israelite camp and therefore the camp was to be kept “Holy”

Deut. 23:14

<sup>14</sup> For the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and give your enemies over to you; therefore your camp shall be holy, that He may see no unclean thing among you, and turn away from you.

Anybody who disobeyed God defiled the camp and this affected their relationship with God and with each other.

Now we come to a New Testament application and to something that is personal to us here at O.I.C.

God’s people today are “One Body in Christ”. We belong to each other, we need each other, and we affect each other.

(1 Corinthians 12: 12)

<sup>12</sup> For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also *is* Christ.

We know that any weakness in our human body affects other parts of our body. It is the same with the spiritual body.

(1 Cor. 12:26)

<sup>26</sup> And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with *it*; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with *it*.

(Ecclesiastes 9: v. 18)

Wisdom *is* better than weapons of war; But one sinner destroys much good.”

If there is sin in the fellowship of O.I.C. then God is not happy with the whole body. Therefore if we want to move forward as a body we need to deal with that sin.

Can we think of anything in our lives that may be blocking the blessing of God upon us as a fellowship? If after serious prayer and waiting upon God we find nothing that is O.K.

If God points out something that needs forgiveness we need to confess that. (1 John 1: v. 9)

In v. 2-5 we are told that Joshua sent spies to check out Ai. They suggested that they would need 2 or 3 thousands soldiers only to defeat Ai. The report would have been right except for the fact that God was angry due to sin being in the camp.

Under normal circumstances God would have given them victory with this number.

We don't read about Joshua praying about what to do, and it may have been that a little self-confidence had crept into his leadership after Jericho.

Joshua didn't ask God what He wanted to do. Perhaps if Joshua had sought God in prayer for a day, God might have told him about sin in the camp and he could have saved the lives of 36 men?

Whatever we are going to do in God's service, prayer is an essential pre-requisite.

Prayer is the most important thing a Christian should be involved in but it is the least practiced Christian activity in the western world.

Billy Graham who was mightily used by God through evangelistic crusades for many years said in his biography that if he had his time over again that he would spend more time in prayer.

The great Revival prayer in 2 Chronicles 7: v. 14.

<sup>14</sup> if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

Humility, personal Holiness and seeking God's face in prayer is the key to "Revival" in any country, especially Japan.

May God help us to seek Him in prayer?

We are living in desperate days as we move towards the second coming of Jesus Christ.

#### V. 6-9 – Joshua seeks God.

In verse 6 we are told that after the defeat at Ai Joshua and the Elders had a day of mourning.

They tore their clothes and fell in front of the "Ark" which represented the presence of God.

This is the normal way that Jewish people behaved whenever they experienced great distress.

Joshua was discouraged and he spoke to God about the problem.

He sounded like the unbelieving Jews when they found themselves in a tough situation after leaving Egypt. Remember the Israelites moaned when they got to the Red Sea before God opened it up for them to cross over. ( Ex.14:11)

They said the same thing when they were hungry and thirsty in the wilderness. ( Ex. 16:3,17:3)

Joshua was starting to doubt the promises of God because he didn't know the full picture.

He didn't know that sin was in the camp and God was angry.

One commentator said this about this situation;

"When you walk by faith you will claim all that God has for you; but unbelief is always content to settle for something less than God's best."

Q. Are we as individuals, and therefore corporately as a Church content to settle for something less than God's best?" OR will we walk by "Faith" and claim all that God has for us?

God sometimes allows us to experience defeat in order to reveal what is really going on in our hearts.

Jeremiah 17: v. 9 says “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?”

We don’t always know the condition of our hearts, but God wants us to know it, in case it may need cleansing. ( 1 John 1:9 )

## 2. V. 10-15 God speaks to Joshua.

God speaks to Joshua and reveals to him about sin in the camp. (v. 11)

God also reveals why the defeat happened at Ai. It wasn’t because they didn’t have enough men, or particularly because Joshua didn’t have days of prayer beforehand. It was because of the sin of one person.

In v. 12 God warned Joshua that he must deal with the sin in the camp otherwise God’s presence would be removed. God instructed Joshua to line up all the tribes and families and find the person who sinned. He was told to totally destroy that person and all that he had.

One of the most difficult things that a Pastor has to do is to challenge one of his congregation about sin in their lives.

I find it very difficult but it has to be done. It is always a joy to restore people back to fellowship with each other and with God. However sadly it doesn’t always happen.

Whenever anything is reported to me I take it seriously. However we must always follow the Biblical steps in Matthew 18: v. 15-17.

<sup>15</sup> “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. <sup>16</sup> But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ <sup>17</sup> And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

Joshua must have found it difficult to deal with sin in the camp but he had to do it and he had to find the evidence. He found the person and he found the evidence.

## 3. V. 16-26 God’s wrath is revealed.

In v. 16-26 we discover who it was who had sinned and what he had done.

<sup>19</sup> Now Joshua said to Achan, “My son, I beg you, give glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession to Him, and tell me now what you have done; do not hide *it* from me.” <sup>20</sup> And Achan answered Joshua and said, “Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I have done: <sup>21</sup> When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it.” <sup>22</sup> So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver under it. <sup>23</sup> And they took them from the midst of the tent, brought them to Joshua and to all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD.

Achan and all his family were stoned to death and then burned with fire.

Because a Law in Israel prevented innocent family members from being punished for the sins of their relatives. (Deut. 24: v. 16) then Achan's family must have been guilty of assisting him in his sin.

The death of Achan was a dramatic warning to the nation of Israel not to take the word of God lightly.

God was setting an example to His people, just in the same way that God set an example to the early Church about Lying in Acts 5: v. 1-11 with the story of Ananias and Sapphira.

The whole story is a reminder to us of the "Gospel Message"

Sin came into the hearts of men and women, through one man.

(Romans 5: v. 12)

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—

The fact that one day we are going to die goes right back to this one man.

Sin entered into the camp of human nature and God had to punish sin.

God must punish the sin in all of our lives because He is a just and Holy God.

BUT – He has provided a way of escape because of His mercy and Love.

John 3: v. 16

<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Perhaps today you have never seen your personal sin in the way that God sees it.

If you do you will want to know His forgiveness, and you can know his love and forgiveness today.

The question is do you want to hide your sin like Achan, or do you want to deny your sin, like most people do. Whatever you do the Bible says that one day your SIN will found out by God and punished for all eternity.

Now is the day of Salvation, now is the time to trust Jesus.

If you are a Christian today, then God may want to deal with something in your life that needs attention. Has He brought to a place in your personal circumstances that has got your attention? Maybe it is for a reason?

Perhaps today you need to talk to someone and pray with someone about this.

After the service you will have an opportunity to do this.

Let us pray.