

Joshua 7-8:30

Joshua 7

1. When you were a kid, where was your favorite hiding place?
2. Can you recall a time when someone else did something wrong, and you were punished for it?
3. Why was God angry with *all* the Israelites (Joshua 6:18-19)?
4. In 7:1, notice that “the Israelites” are said to have broken faith, even though the offense was committed by one man. How does the description of who Achan is help us understand how the people will be held guilty for the actions of an individual?

The people “broke faith.” Their actions and their faith are connected. Conscious acts of treachery are works of unfaithfulness. “Broke faith” is a very strong word, see 1 Chronicles 10:13-14 to see another example of this phrase.

5. When Israel attacked Ai, what did they expect would happen? What was the actual outcome?
6. How would you describe the reaction of the people?
 - a. Cowardly
 - b. Angry
 - c. Whining
 - d. Surprised
7. How does the Lord get the people back on track?
8. How did Joshua find the person who had disobeyed?

9. What was Achan's sin? Why do you think he did it even though he knew the instructions of the Lord? Imagine his state of mind as he saw the tribes, clans, and families file past Joshua?
10. Who suffered because of Achan's sin?
11. The deep concern of Joshua and the Lord is that the covenant community might become like Canaan. The danger of apostasy lurking unseen in the community will take the people away from the promises of God. 7:26 involves the raising of a great heap of stones as a memorial. What will the people remember when they go through the Valley of Achor?
12. What happens in our lives when we sin and try to hide it? What are some ways that God lets you know you have sinned?
13. Is it fair that God punished *all* Israel because of the sin of Achan?

Joshua 8:1-30

14. When have you had more success the second time around? What made the difference? Do you have a come-from-behind victory story in your life you remember fondly?
15. The first attempt at Ai ended in failure. What does the Lord say to Joshua to encourage him in a second attempt? How is this second attempt different from the first attempt?
16. How does the plan of attack drawn up in v. 3-8 make use of the defeat suffered in the first attack?
17. If you were a soldier listening to Joshua's plan, would you have excitement or trepidation? How would Joshua convince you to have confidence?
18. What do you think was the attitude of the people of Ai?

19. The people were not allowed to take anything from Jericho which was devoted to destruction. The Lord gives them permission to take items from Ai. No reason is given in the text, and the permission is ironic after Achan's punishment. What is the crucial factor in not taking things from Jericho and being able to take things from Ai?

20. The defeat of Ai is memorialized by a heap of stones that is all that is left of the city itself. The centers of power for Canaan are left to be a heap of stones (8:28-29). The phrase "to this day" appears in several places. What is emphasized in the text through the heap of stones and the phrase "to this day"?

Joshua 8:24-27 has been identified as a text of terror. It can be difficult to reconcile the God who commands extermination of men, women, and children, and even animals with the God we know in the face of Jesus. One response of some Christians is to say that the God revealed in Joshua is different from the God we meet in Jesus Christ. This extreme interpretation of discontinuity is easier for some to embrace than to reconcile these terror moments with our savior Jesus. Consider though it was John the Baptist that spoke of judgment, "the ax is already laid to the root of the tree." John describes the wrath of judgment for those that do not bear fruit, namely trust in Christ as the Messiah (Luke 3:7-9; Matt. 3:12-13). The main point with these texts of terror is to remember that "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). The pagan occupiers of God's land deserved death. To judge God's command as unrighteous is to reveal an inability to accept the seriousness of sin. Before we translate the judgment against Ai with any actions we take today, we must remember that God alone is the one that can bring this destruction. No nation today is in covenant with God. No nation today can engage in "holy war." We cannot replay Israel's holy wars in Canaan. The old covenant has been fulfilled (Hebrews 8:6, 13). The things devoted to destruction have now been carried by Christ to the tomb.

The final conquest of Jesus Christ at his return will come with the arrival of the new Jerusalem. There will be nothing that defiles in the new heaven and new earth (Revelation 21:27). But for now, "God sends the rain on the just and the unjust alike" (Matthew 5:44-45). There is no holy war, because no land is now a holy land that must be cleaned. The new covenant of God with his people is not secured by our possession of land but now by possession of faith in Christ. The everlasting promise, secured by Christ's obedience and mediation, remains secure for all sinners who trust in Christ. Sin is destructive, faith is restorative.