

Remnant Life Church
July 7, 2019
Avoiding an Ai Encounter
Joshua 7:7-13

A story involving the nation of Israel and the city of Ai

Background

- The premise of what we are going to be looking at this morning is found in two verses of Scripture (the city is Jericho)
- **Josh 6:17-18** - *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. 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 trouble on it.*
 - In **Joshua 5:13-15** we read that Joshua saw a man with a sword He approached him and asked if he was for or against them
 - The man said neither, he was the commander of the army of God
 - Joshua was speaking with the archangel Michael
 - While their conversation is not recorded, these were instructions that Joshua must have received from God that he then passed on to the people
 - The instructions were clear, explicit, and carried great consequence
- Fast forward 1 week
- The people of Israel have just won a tremendous victory over, what was at the time, one of the oldest and most impregnable cities of the then known world
 - There are 3 known sites that have utilized the name Jericho – this is the original or OT city
 - Jericho is found in both the Old and New Testaments
 - It sits at the base of the Judean mountains approximately 8 miles to the NE of where the Jordan river flows into the Dead Sea
 - The Jordan begins to the north at the Sea of Galilee, also known as Lake Tiberius, and flows south for 156 miles emptying into the Dead Sea
 - Jericho is 800 feet below sea level, so it has a tropical, hot climate that is ideal for growing dates, bananas, and other similar plants
- The first reference to Jericho by name is found in **Num 22:1** when the Israelites camped along the river across from the city (they would come back to that exact spot 40 years later)
- Israel had not yet sent the first set of spies into Canaan
- **Josh 2** – spies are sent again and come back from Jericho having been helped by Rahab the prostitute
 - Marched around the city and the walls came down
 - Rahab and her family were spared
- Jericho is also in the NT
 - The Romans plundered Jericho as they did the entire region under their control

- Herod then beautified the city as a part of his great love of building – he died in Jericho
- Jesus ministered around and passed through Jericho many times
 - It was near Jericho in the Jordan river that Jesus was baptized by John – (Matt 3:13-17)
 - He was tempted in the mountains near the city
 - Blind Bartimaeus was healed at Jericho – (Mark 10:46-52)
 - Zacchaeus climbed a tree to better see Jesus in Jericho – (Luke 19:1-10)
 - Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan takes place on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho – (Luke 10:30-37)

So, the story and scenario of Joshua, Israel, and Jericho is a familiar one

- It begins with the crossing of the Jordan (Josh 3:14-17)
 - God stops the flow of the water and everyone crosses on dry ground (Josh 3)
 - One of 4 recorded times this miracle takes place
 - Here, Moses at the Red Sea, Elijah and Elisha and the Jordan river (2 Kings 2:8, 14)
- The people follow God’s instructions for engagement (bizarre as they were) and everything happened just as God said it would
- The army is confident
 - Took the city in only 7 days
 - Did not fire a shot
 - Not a single Israeli casualty
 - Not only that but word is spreading to the surrounding cities what has happened
- Joshua must be feeling great!
 - But he is unaware that there is sin in the camp
 - Trouble is brewing because of disobedience to God’s command
 - Consequence ALWAYS comes when we disobey God
- Joshua then sends out a recon mission to check out the next city
 - They come back with good news
 - The town of Ai is very small, certainly no Jericho
 - A couple of battalions should be more than enough
 - 3000 men go up and they are routed by the men of Ai with 36 Israelites being killed (Josh 7:3-5)
- Joshua goes from the exaltation of victory to the depression of sudden defeat
 - He knows that just as the other nations heard of their great victory, they would also know of this stunning defeat
 - Every battle would be more difficult because the enemy now knew they were not invincible
 - So, what does Joshua do?
 - He blames God!
 - **READ** – Josh 7:6-9
 - How does God respond?
 - **READ** – Josh 7:10-13

Why did others need to suffer for Achan's sin?

- Why did 36 soldiers have to die for the private sin of one man?
- There is no such thing as a "private sin"
- Sin affects everyone
 - In football, if a player loses his cool and makes a late hit or commits a flagrant foul the entire team is penalized 15 yards not just the player who was guilty
 - Sin will always negatively impact your life and the lives of others

Look again at **Joshua 7:13**

Go, consecrate the people. Tell them, 'Consecrate yourselves in preparation for tomorrow; for this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: There are devoted things among you, Israel. You cannot stand against your enemies until you remove them.

1. Consecrate yourselves

- a. To consecrate means to cleanse or make clean
 - i. This was both a physical act (condition of the body)
 1. The most times in Leviticus
 2. It is the word most often used when Jesus healed the lepers (**Matt 8:3; 10:8; 11:5**)
 - ii. The word also refers to the spirit as well (condition of the heart)
 1. Cleansed of our sins (**I John 1:9; Heb 9:14; 10:2**)
- b. Another word used is sanctify
 - i. Original language kah-DASH or kah-DAYSH
 - ii. To be set apart; made holy
 - iii. Being cleansed also means a changed takes place that can be seen by others through your faith and how you live – Peter addresses this...
- c. **2 Peter 1:5-9** - *For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.*
- d. For the Christian, being cleansed brings with it the responsibility to do all that we can to live in a way that reflects what Jesus Christ has done

2. There are devoted things among you

- a. In the OT the devoted things were the spoils or plunder that was taken from the conquered nation and kept in the temple treasury
- b. But here, the devoted things became a symbol of sin when God's directions are disobeyed
- c. A question for this morning - what are the devoted things in your life?
 - i. What are you attempting to hide and keep from God

- ii. Just like with Israel, what you have hidden from others, cannot be hidden from God
 - iii. It takes many forms but is the same is that you are trying to guard and carefully hide it
- 3. You cannot stand against your enemies until you remove them
 - a. The sin in the camp of the Israelites had to be made right
 - b. God is a God of righteousness and judgement upon evil
 - c. Our culture today continues to move further and further away from God and this is another way it demonstrates that
 - i. Every effort is being made to remove consequence for actions being taken
 - ii. It begins in the home where parents barely discipline their children anymore
 - 1. Not sure this is true?
 - 2. Kids in restaurants – Katerina and me in a Cracker Barrel
 - 3. Teachers today versus 30 years ago when I was teaching in the public schools
 - iii. We have gone from encouraging our children to achieve and excel through hard work and learning to deal with both success and failure
 - iv. To making sure everyone gets the same reward regardless of their efforts
 - v. It is why we now have a generation of so-called leaders in our government who believe they should be telling us what is wrong with our nation who have virtually no concept of what it means to earn anything
 - vi. They also clearly demonstrate the troubling pattern of never taking responsibility for what has been done wrong,
 - d. For Israel to be made right, the sin in the camp had to be dealt with
 - i. And the penalty was steep
 - ii. Not only Achan, but his entire family
- 4. Once these things were done what was the result?
 - a. The blessing of God's presence
 - b. The army went back (this time with 30,000 men – 10x more than the first time) and easily took Ai

The main point of this story is not the war, battles, or even victory after defeat

- It is about obeying the directions of God
- It is about recognizing that sin always carries consequence
- And it is about realizing that your sin is not just yours, it will impact all those in your life in one way or another

So, I will ask again, what are the devoted things in your life that you are keeping hidden?

- There is no need to confess them here publicly like Achan had to do
- Because God already knows
 - I can assure you it is having a negative impact on your life
 - Others are being affected
- But like Israel, you can make it right