

JOSHUA 7 STUDY NOTES (3/20/22)

Joshua's Big Theme: The Israelites are finally ready to enter into the land that God promised - that God is *gifting* to them - that is currently inhabited by enemy forces which need to be pushed out. Over the course of Joshua, they will learn what it means to be strong and courageous in the Lord as they follow God and trust Joshua in the scariest and most overwhelming of situations.

Today's Context: After God explicitly tells the Israelites not to take any of the "devoted items" - items belonging to God which have been set aside for destruction - Achan disobeys. His disobedience produces deadly consequences not just for himself, but for his family and all of Israel.

Additional Study Notes:

- Consider the allusions and references this passage makes to other stories:
 - Numbers 14: There, like here, Israel enters into battle without the favor of God, and they end up facing the sting of defeat.
 - Joshua 6: There, everyone who *belongs* to Rahab will be spared from destruction due to her obedience. Here, everyone who *belongs* to Achan will face destruction due to his disobedience. *Additionally*, Achan's destruction is identical to the destruction of Jericho at the end of the chapter: death and burning.
 - Acts 5: Ananias and Sapphira are often compared with this story, as they too face a shocking death sentence after deceiving and lying to God/God's people. Both there and here, the punishment was likely so severe because something new was being formed (the nation of Israel in Joshua or the church in Acts) and any disobedience would be devastating to the larger body of believers.
 - Genesis 3: (see below)
- The story of Achan most directly parallels the story of Eve (and Adam's) disobedience in Genesis 3. Eve/Achan both see something good/beautiful ("tov" in Hebrew), they both covet/desire what they cannot have ("chamad"), and they both take what doesn't belong to

them (“laqach”). Their sins are identical: taking what God has not given them.

- While the death of Achan may be easier to grapple with, the death of his family is much harder. Some people believe his family actually was *not* included in the death sentence since the Hebrew is fairly vague on this, and *The Message* translation even translates the passage to exclude them from punishment. However, the Hebrew speaks in the *plural* when describing the stoning and burning, and this only makes sense if the plural refers to multiple people (possessions typically were not stoned, just people). Some people believe that the children also must have been guilty, and must have cooperated in their father’s deceit in some way. However, the passage never says this, and Achan himself takes full responsibility (7:20). Most likely, in some way, the consequence of Achan’s sin affected his children in some way, causing them to be brought into his shame and destruction. (For a fuller unpacking of this listen to Pastor Matt’s sermon). This further contrasts Achan with Rahab, whose act of obedience led to the protection of her family.
- The passage never mentions Achan’s wife, and we don’t know why. It’s possible she was already dead, not present during the stoning, or for whatever reason, didn’t warrant punishment.
- Achan and his family are not just stoned and burned, but their ashes are covered with stones as well (7:26). These are stones of remembrance, much like we saw in Joshua 4. God constantly has his people set up stones of remembrance so they can be reminded of events both good and bad. Here, the stones remind the people of what disobedience produces, and how Achan’s sin affected the whole body of Israel. Like it not, Achan’s sin serves as an important lesson for future Israelites, and is even mentioned again in Joshua 22:20.

For Additional Study (most are available to borrow from CFC):

- NIV Study Bible
- ESV Study Bible
- Other commentaries available upon request

Discussion Questions

CATCHING UP ON LAST WEEK

- (1) What was most significant for you from Joshua 6:15-27? What's stuck with you as meaningful or impactful?

TODAY'S TEXT

KNOWING God

- (2) What questions do you (or members of your group) have about this passage? Discuss.
- (3) What does this passage tell us about God?
- (4) What does this passage tell us about humanity?
- (5) Alpha and Omega Question: Did today's passage in Joshua 7 remind you of previous passages of Scripture you've read?
- (6) Look at the allusions and references to other passages in the study notes above. What's the most surprising and interesting comparison? What might be the significance of the comparison to Genesis 3?

GROWING Together

- (7)* If people in your group are following the Alpha and Omega reading plan, take time to discuss/encourage their reading for 5-10 minutes.*
- (8) How have you experienced the consequences of someone else's actions negatively affecting your life? How have you experienced the consequences of *your* actions negatively affecting someone else's life?
- (9) How might Achan's sin be a mercy to future generations of Israel (Joshua 22:20)? How does remembering our own consequences serve as a mercy for our future?
- (10) How does Christ help the process of redeeming the negative consequences of our life?
- (11) What questions, ideas, or themes would you want to study further?

SHOWING God to Others

- (12) What in this passage serves as good news for the world around us?

PREPARING FOR NEXT WEEK

- (13) For next week, spend some time reading Joshua 8:1-29. What's interesting? What questions do you have?

QUESTIONS FOR CHILDREN (from Children's Director Emily Reiser)

- (14) What stood out to you in this story? What did you find interesting and what was confusing?
- (15) This is a difficult passage. Why do you think God was so angry at Achan? What do you remember from the previous chapter regarding the "devoted things?" Who was supposed to receive them?
- (16) When Achan stole from God, who was God mad at originally? Because of Achan, all of Israel was going to suffer, 36 people lost their lives, and so did Achan's family. Does our sin affect only ourselves? In what ways have you sinned and how does it affect other people? Has anyone you know sinned and it hurt you in some way?
- (17) We all sin and fall short of the glory of God, but who covers those sins? How does that make you feel? How can you share this gift with others?