

Lesson 2 – Joshua 7

Text: Joshua 7

Key Passages:

- Joshua 7:10-15 – All Israel was in sin because of Achan; the sin needed to be removed.

Main Storyline:

Before Jericho was destroyed and conquered by the Israelites, Joshua instructed them very specifically regarding the spoils of the city. Nothing was to be taken except for the gold, silver, bronze, and iron, and those articles were to be given to the treasury of the Lord. Joshua had promised that if someone did take of these things (the “accursed” things), they would bring a curse on all Israel. Unfortunately, one of the Israelites, Achan, took some of the forbidden things, and God became angry.

Joshua was unaware of this, however, so he began to prepare to attack the next city in the area, a small outpost called Ai. He sent spies to the city, who said that the city was so small that Joshua need only send two or three thousand men to take it. Joshua, listening to the spies, sent three thousand men up to Ai to conquer the city. Because God was angry with Israel and no longer fighting for them, the small army of Ai was able to chase the Israelites away, and in the process, kill 36 of Israel’s men.

When the rest of Israel heard about what had happened, they became extremely afraid, perhaps as afraid as the Canaanites had been previously (see Joshua 5:1). Joshua tore his clothes and prayed to God all day long, as he did not understand why God had abandoned them in this battle. God responded to Joshua’s prayers, informing him that the reason that the Israelites had not been victorious was that one of the Israelites had sinned and taken some of the “accursed” things from Jericho. By doing this, that Israelite had doomed all of Israel to destruction. God promised that He would not be with Israel anymore until the sinful Israelite and the “accursed” items were destroyed.

God told Joshua that He would help him to find the one who had taken the things from Jericho. He was to assemble all of Israel by their tribes, and God would show him the tribe with the sinful Israelite in it. Then he would show him the family which had the sinful Israelite, followed by the household which had the sinful Israelite. Finally, God would show Joshua the man of the household who had violated the command regarding the things of Jericho. That man, and all he had, was to be burned.

Joshua obeyed God’s instructions, and God showed him that the sinful Israelite was from the tribe of Judah, from the family of the Zarahites, and from the household of Zabdi. Finally, it was revealed that the sinful Israelite was Achan. Joshua begged Achan to glorify God and confess his sin. Achan confessed that when he saw a beautiful garment, 200 shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing 50 shekels in Jericho, he coveted them and took them. He told Joshua that he had buried them in the corner of his tent. Joshua sent messengers to dig up the items, who brought them back to Joshua.

Joshua then took Achan, his family, and all his possessions (including the garment, gold, and silver he had stolen from Jericho) to the valley of Achor (meaning “troubled”). There, he rebuked Achan in front of all Israel before they all stoned him, his family, and his animals to death and burned them and all his possessions with fire. Finally, they built a heap of stones over them as a grave and a memorial. With the sin in the camp removed, God’s fierce anger turned away from Israel.

Lessons/Applications:

- 1.) We cannot allow spiritual success to deceive us into thinking we can worry less about sin.
- 2.) We must always seek guidance from the Lord and His Word regarding what we ought to do.
- 3.) Sin always affects more than the sinner; it affects those around him and God, as well.
- 4.) Sin cannot be hidden. It will eventually be revealed, and the sinner will be judged (Num. 32:23).
- 5.) We cannot tolerate sin in our lives or in the church; it must be completely eradicated (1 Cor. 5).