

Plan and Purpose Bible Lesson #III-24—Joshua 2-Joshua 8

(Read Joshua 2) Joshua had already proven his military abilities as he was the chief general, in modern terms, of Moses' army. But as we follow his example of military leadership in the next few chapters, we will have to admit that he was very accomplished in the art of warfare even though his experience was somewhat limited. As any good military commander would do, he sent spies into the land, specifically to the city of Jericho to check out what they were going to encounter when they moved against the city to take it.

The question arises, quite naturally, why did the two spies end up in the harlot's house? It is my understanding that quite often, women, who were harlots, ran inns as the two professions would go rather well together. So it is quite likely that they stopped at the inn that happened to be run by a harlot.

In this case, however, not only had Rahab heard of the Israelites and what they had done as they left Egypt, but in the recent past when they totally destroyed Sihon and Og, kings on the east side of the Jordan River. Notice, however, she recognized that it was God that had led the people, performed the miracles, and fought for them against Sihon and Og and she was willing to put her faith in the Israelite God. She knew what was going to happen to the city of Jericho, at least the end result, and willingly helped the spies by protecting them from the king of Jericho and then telling them which way to go to avoid those of the king's men that she had sent on a wild goose chase as they looked for these two men. They in turn promised protection for her and her family if she would gather them all into her house and keep them there until they were rescued by the Israelites and if she would hang a scarlet cord out of the window of her house so it could be identified. Her house was on the wall of the city, so the scarlet cord was necessary for the Israelites to identify where she would be.

There is considerable speculation that she and her family became naturalized citizens of Israel then and that she ultimately married Salmon, the father of Boaz (from the book of Ruth) the great grandfather of King David.

(Read Joshua 3) Note that the people were first to stay behind the ark of the covenant 2000 cubits, or about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile, until the priests had stepped into the Jordan River. Then they were to pass by the ark to cross the Jordan after the river had been stopped and piled up in a heap. We will read in the 4th chapter the reason for choosing 1 man from each tribe.

The sign of the river being stopped and piling up in heaps so that the people could cross the river was to magnify Joshua in their eyes and to show them that God was going to drive out the Canaanites from before them plus to make it possible for the Israelites to cross the river. This is taking place in the spring of the year at about the same time as when they left Egypt. It is nearly time to observe the Passover Feast. So the Jordan was overflowing its banks which would be the least opportune time to be crossing it, yet to magnify God in their eyes, what better time to magnify God and Joshua in the eyes of the people.

(Read Joshua 4) Now we see the reason for the 12 men that were to be chosen.

(Read Joshua 5:1) Not only did the drying up of the river magnify God and His servant Joshua to the Israelites, but it killed the spirit of the people that were in the land of Canaan. Put yourself in the position of the Canaanites for a moment and imagine what you would think if you heard of such a thing happening to your enemies. It would be a pretty scary thing to experience.

(Read Joshua 5:2-9) Circumcision, for some reason was not as important to the Israelites as it became to their ancestors at the time of Christ. All of the men who came out of Egypt had been circumcised, but this observance had been forgotten during the 40 years they were in the wilderness. As it was with Moses, who had not circumcised one of his sons and was not allowed by God to start the job that God had prepared for him to do until he did circumcise his son, the Israelites were not allowed by God to proceed further into the land of Canaan until all of the males had been circumcised. They had to allow for a time of healing and then they had one more thing they had to take care of before they could proceed.

(Read Joshua 5:10-12) They had to observe the Passover Feast. Since they had not been able to grow a crop yet, they ate of the old grain of the land. As soon as they had eaten of the old grain of the land, the mana ceased and they never had it again.

(Read Joshua 5:13-6:5) Joshua met the Captain of host of the LORD and was instructed as to how the city of Jericho was to be taken. The city had been shut up as cities were when besieged and at this point, the Israelites really had no machines of warfare to break down the walls. The LORD instructed Joshua to have his army march around the city once a day for six days with the priests carrying the ark of the covenant and seven priests blowing trumpets of ram's horns with armed men going before it and behind it. On the seventh day, they were to do this seven times and the people were to shout when the signal came from those blowing the horns. The Captain told Joshua that the walls would then fall flat.

(Read Joshua 6:6-25) The people carried out the plan as the Captain of the host of the LORD had instructed Joshua. When it came time for the people to shout, Joshua instructed them to do so, but he also instructed them that only Rahab and her family were to be allowed to live and that the city was accursed and they were not to pick up and keep anything whether it be a garment or gold or silver for themselves. All of the gold and silver and vessels of brass and iron were to be put into the treasury of the house of the LORD. All else was to be destroyed. Sure enough, when the people shouted, the walls fell as they had been told they would. When Rahab and her family were safely out of the city, the city was burnt with all that was there in. (Read Joshua 6:26-27) Joshua laid a curse on the city and anyone who would try to rebuild it. Word spread throughout the land in short order as to what had happened which only added to the fear the people of the land had of the Israelites.

(Read Joshua 7:1-5) Unbeknown to Joshua and the people, one man had disobeyed Joshua and had picked up a Babylonish garment and some silver and some gold and hid them in his tent. The man, Achan, was a great, great grandson of Zerah, son of Judah. That anything had happened was not known yet when Joshua first tried to take the city of Ai. Again Joshua had sent spies to spy out the city and they returned and told Joshua that he didn't need to send the whole army, as the men of the city were few in number. So Joshua only sent 3000 men against the city and they were driven back by the men of Ai, killing 36 of them. Obviously something was wrong. (Read Joshua 7:6-36) Joshua went before God to ask what. God's answer was that Israel had transgressed His covenant which He had commanded Israel not to take of any accursed thing. God told Joshua He would not stand before them against their enemies until they had destroyed the accursed.

I'm not sure just how Joshua determined who was guilty. We're told that at first the tribes were brought before God, that God would take the tribe from which whoever had taken the accursed thing came from. We're not told just how Joshua knew which one God took. Then it was by families within that tribe that was taken and God took the family of the guilty man. First God chose Judah, then the

family of the Zarhites (or of Zerah) and then the family of Zabdi of the family of the Zarhites, or of Zerah, son of Pharez. Then man by man of the family of Zabdi was brought until the man Achan came and was taken. Achan then confessed as to what he had done. The punishment was quite severe as he and his family and his animals were all stoned to death, then the people burned them and all that they had and covered them with a great heap of stones.

There are a few occasions in Scripture in which we read that someone was burned because of their sin. I do not believe that it means that they were burned to death, but rather as happened to Achan here, he and his family were killed by stoning and then burned, or cremated. Because the burning seemed to be a means of bringing disrepute on that person, there is a question today of the propriety in God's eyes concerning the practice of cremation. Economics today is dictating that cremation be practiced in many instances, but there is some question as to whether it is proper in God's eyes because of this story of what happened to Achan.

Chapter 8 gives us an idea of Joshua's military capability. (Read Joshua 8:1-29) This is pretty self explanatory. When we read in the law about hanging someone, the context seemed to indicate that the criminal might be killed by some other method such as stoning and then their body hung on a tree, again to cast disrepute on that person. However, here it appears that the king of Ai was hung as a means of execution, and certainly this is the situation with Christ as he was hung, not by the neck, but stretched on the cross to die a slow agonizing death.

(Read Joshua 8:30-35) The importance of the people knowing the law is demonstrated here again as the law was written before the people and then read to them once again.

We'll stop at this point with this lesson and pick up with chapter 9 next lesson in which the Israelites made a very major mistake, though at first not realizing what they had done. I believe it is important to read all of this historical account as we will find later in Scripture some of the events that we read about here are used as examples to explain things later on, so it is important that we be sure to read and remember all of these stories. Plus, I find them quite exciting and interesting. JRL