

APRIL 13

Yesterday, after Israel took (was given) Jericho, Joshua (6:26) cursed anyone who attempted to rebuild Jericho. You don't have to go looking for it now, but as you read through the OT this year, you will unexpectedly find the guy who ordered the rebuilding of Jericho and what happened to the builder who did the work. This is why reading through the Bible is fun. You find stuff, and the Spirit makes all sorts of connections for you. It is always better when you find something on your own and get that "kick" of excitement. That's the kind of joy and motivation that stays with you and it energizes your teaching and your sharing. The truth actually becomes a part of you.

Yesterday we witnessed a national disaster for Israel. In Joshua 7:5 it says that all of the people were disheartened by the defeat and loss of men at Ai. In contrast to how Israel was before, you don't see everyone at their tent doors weeping and ready to stone Joshua.

Joshua prayed and cried out to God, but God sort of says to him, "What are you doing? Get up off your face. Obviously the people sinned." The people and Joshua were to learn an important lesson. If they were defeated, it was because of sin. It meant there was something wrong with them, not God.

Joshua 7:16-9:2

Joshua 7:16-26

V. 16 When it says that Judah was taken, I'm guessing a tribal leader stood before the priest, and the priest rolled the Urim and the Thummim. The result showed if a man was to be selected or not.

You can imagine Achan standing there watching his nightmare come true as the people were whittled down to his tribe, his clan, his family, his household, and finally he's standing nose to nose with Joshua, who I think was a rather imposing dude.

Vs. 24 and 25 are pretty fearful verses. The innocent were immediately with God and enjoying it. The hard reality is, even today, that the sins of the fathers (and mothers) harm the children, even in Christian homes.

V. 26 God's anger was satisfied. Now imagine that this is what happened to Jesus. God just kept heaping it on until He was totally punished in our place. When Jesus had paid every last penalty for us, you could quote part of v. 26 in that, *the Lord (God) turned away from His burning anger* toward all who are covered by the blood of the Lamb.

One more thought from yesterday. God told Joshua that as long as the *devoted* thing was among the people of Israel, He couldn't be among the people of Israel. It just makes me wonder how many things I've let into my life that have distracted me from loving Jesus and following Him in the harvest. He never leaves us, but as long as we have something besides Him, it weakens His ability to speak to us and it keeps us from fully abiding and loving Him. More about that in Luke.

Joshua 8

Vs. 1-2 God totally affirmed that He would give Joshua victory at Ai. Joshua is one of the few guys in the Bible who has no mark against him. Moses and David were both murderers. Not that I'm looking for something bad, but this is the first time I've seen that although Joshua didn't do anything bad, he didn't always ask God first before he did stuff. There was no mention of him asking God before he sent the spies to Jericho.

That worked out fine. He never consulted God before the defeat at Ai. That would have been a good idea. Apparently, like us, Joshua had things to learn, even in his 80s.

Notice that God allowed them to take the plunder. Achan should have waited.

Vs. 3-23 I find it interesting that God turned the entire situation around so that it made Israel's defeat look like a clever ploy to get the city to empty out, leaving it defenseless from the rear.

Vs. 24-29 This is Joshua and his leadership. Notice that like Moses holding the staff back when Joshua fought, Joshua wouldn't put down his javelin. He was devoted to the Lord and to his men.

Notice in v. 29 that Joshua made an example of the king of Ai. He will do this to other kings, but what he does here is interesting. In Deuteronomy 21:23 it says, *for a hanged man is cursed by God.*

This curse of hanging a man before God is what the Father did to His Son for us.

Vs. 30-35 Now that Israel had taken the two fortress cities that guarded the road from the valley of the Jordan into the hill country, it was time to fulfill what God had commanded them to do. They themselves had already experienced the emotions of blessing and curse and knew the terrible effects of the curse. I'll bet their experience with Achan, when God left them for that battle, made this event much more intense and real.

This is the ceremony that the Lord commanded Israel to carry out: the blessings and the curses. The way this was organized with the ark in the middle was really cool.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT, p. 347, adds that Joshua had to move the nation 30 miles to get to the place God said this ceremony was to take place.

I've never seen before that Joshua wrote on the stones and that he copied it from his own copy that he himself had written. Joshua was not a king, but fulfilled one of the requirements of a king by making his own copy of the law and reading it every day. The BKC mentions that they have found other monuments where documents three times longer than Deuteronomy were inscribed.

This was a long event that could have gone days and weeks. Notice v. 35. Everyone was present to hear the law. Joshua's strength was in fulfilling the law and all that was commanded him.

Joshua 9:1-2

While Israel was on its pilgrimage, devoting its heart to the spiritual rather than the military, apparently all the kings of the land thought it was a good time to mount an offensive against the worshiping nation. But not everyone was spiritually irrational and wanted to fight, as we'll see tomorrow. Those who seek, find.

Luke 16:1-18

Vs. 1- 9 So, imagine there is a connection between this chapter and the past chapter. What would it be?

I'll make a suggestion. Jesus was in conflict with the Pharisees over the question of reaching out to sinners. When Jesus told the parables of the lost sheep, coin and son, He was really teaching His disciples, because the Pharisees weren't open anyway. All three of the parables involve things of value, but spiritual value rather than earthly value. You see this particularly in the

father talking with the elder brother. The Pharisees were rich. It was one of the ways you joined the club. And actually, the disciples were rich by biblical standards, since they had food for several days and had several changes of clothes. But they were also rich in something else, and that needed to be shared.

Now if we put what Jesus is saying here, together with what He said elsewhere about seeking the kingdom first and selling everything and having treasure in heaven, you understand Jesus is telling them to use all of their resources for the kingdom. What I find interesting here is that the steward got everyone squared up with the master and decreased their debt so it was paid up. So you have two elements to how the steward used his last days of influence: People paid up their debts and they were in good standing with the master. I guess, applying it to us, we should be using our resources so people can trust Christ (who paid their debt) so they can be forgiven and in good standing with God.

Jesus is not telling the disciples to be generous if they have a lot to be generous with. He is telling them to use all of the resources God gives them shrewdly to help people come to Him. As we'll see later, the disciples were poor and getting poorer, but they were beginning to understand what real spiritual values and riches looked like. In this case, it meant paying a price to be with tax collectors and sinners.

Vs. 10-13 Here is a clear application. It didn't matter how much they had or gave, it was their faithfulness with a very little that counted. Notice the promises in vs. 11 and 12.

We've seen v. 13 before in the Sermon on the Mount. I think it was a standard part of Jesus' teaching to His disciples. I still don't think I take this as seriously as Jesus meant it.

Vs. 14-15 The Pharisees who objected to Jesus' association with tax collectors and sinners were still present. As Jesus was telling His disciples that God does measure our faith by our faithfulness to Him in using the resources we've been given, the Pharisees must have been scoffing audibly. When He told the disciples they couldn't possibly serve God and money, the Pharisees were convinced that it was not only possible, but that they were doing it. The Pharisees were justifying themselves; because, generally speaking, they were generous in tithing, although they did it publicly for their own appearance and recognition. Remember, the idea of riches is about what a person values.

Vs. 16-18 Jesus changed the direction of the discussion and got the Pharisees on a point where they couldn't deny they were at fault. They felt they were teachers of the people and the compliance officers of the law. They "forced their way" into the kingdom, trying to make the law conform to them, stretching truths to make themselves acceptable. But Jesus said that not even the punctuation of the law could be perverted. It would always stay the same regardless of how they reinterpreted it for themselves.

Then Jesus got the Pharisees on adultery. They had engineered the law to allow divorce for burned toast, pretty much like today. Divorce was so commonplace in those days that later when Jesus told another group of Pharisees that God was against divorce, even Jesus' disciples were "amazed and greatly astonished," and said, *If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.* (Matt. 19:10) The implication here is that since the Pharisees had money, they were manipulating the system to get the women they wanted. If they wanted a new wife better suited for their needs, they could divorce their own wife and entice a poorer woman to divorce her husband. Who wouldn't want an address on "easy street" for a while? In fact, they could afford to make a poorer, dissatisfied man an offer he couldn't refuse to get his wife, and the system was "legal."

In Jewish society it was a man's world. If a wife was out of place, it was easy to divorce her. This is how the Pharisees were using their wealth and position to give them treasure on earth. Their riches and values had to do with manipulating the law for their own gain. You'll see this in the

parable tomorrow of the rich man and Lazarus. Again, this ties back to the issue of tax collectors and sinners, Lazarus being that needy, but rejected, person. Anyway, the Pharisees probably weren't making audible noises now.

Psalm 82

So, what's going on here? It looks like God could be referring to the angelic hosts, but looking at the rest of the psalm shows you that God is talking primarily to the leaders of Israel. Yet, even in the two references we have to Satan and his fall (Isa. 14:12, Ezek. 28:12), his description is taken from the description of the king of Babylon and king of Tyre, and given such language that makes it obvious to us that God has now begun to talk about the fallen angel, whose arrogance was similar to the human judges being described. It could be that the references to *sons of the most high* and *prince* could be shadows, in a secondary sense, of angelic authorities, since *sons of God* (in Job 2:1) and *prince of Persia* (in Daniel 10:20) are both titles that refer to angels. If, in fact, the angels had a guardianship to serve and guide mankind, they perverted it and did not guide anyone to honor God by giving justice and protection.

Vs. 1-5 The main meaning is to the leaders of Israel. The people needed godly leadership, but the leaders then, like the Pharisees in Jesus' day, misled the people and served themselves.

Vs. 6-8 They had a privilege to serve and guide the people. Think of men like Moses and the elders he appointed under him who were given a portion of his spirit (spiritual enabling) to serve before the people and give them justice. The fact that these judges and leaders had the Word of God made them like gods. They were given the truth and "power" to direct people in God's way. That is why God can refer to them figuratively as *gods*, mighty ones. Jesus refers to v. 6 in John 10:34. Even Jesus' usage there has a twist to it, because in referring to this psalm, He is standing before leaders of the people who have led the people astray. Jesus' point was that if they who had been given the Word were called *gods*, how could they say He was blaspheming when the Father had consecrated Him and sent Him into the world?

As reflected in this psalm, as Israel settled into the land, they strayed from God and were led by many who did not honor God. The prophets brought God's judgments upon the leaders who misled the people. As we go on through the year, we'll find many portions of Scripture like this in the OT. One that I'll use here is a good one that eventually promises the Messiah.

"Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!" declares the LORD. Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who care for my people: "You have scattered my flock and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for your evil deeds, declares the LORD. Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the LORD.

"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'" (Jeremiah 23:1-6)

Proverbs 13:2-3

V. 2 A man's mouth is seen in contrast to the person who is treacherous. A treacherous person uses his mouth to trick or mislead people, but in relating to people in that way his inner life is full of turmoil and violence. The good man eats what is good because he uses his mouth to encourage and enrich others honestly.

V. 3 This is the obvious corollary and a good reason to honor the Lord with our mouths.