

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Let's pray...

For the past seven weeks, as we have been going through the book of Joshua, we have seen the Children of Israel experience spiritual victory after spiritual victory.

They took the necessary steps of faith and they placed their trust in the Lord and they crossed the Jordan River. Victory

#1

They placed their trust in the Lord and were obedient to His word as they consecrated themselves by returning to observing the covenant by circumcising themselves and also

by partaking of the Passover for the first time in 40 years.

Victory #2,3

Last week we read about the amazing victory that the Lord gave them in Jericho. They placed their trust in God's plan and marched around Jericho 13 times over seven days – without questioning God's plan and screamed – and the once impenetrable walls of Jericho came crumbling down.

Victory #4.

This march across the Promised Land is looking pretty easy right???

Then we get to chapter 7.

Church, in our walk in Christ, there will be times when we too will experience spiritual victories after spiritual victory.

And then, we too may experience our own chapter 7.

You see, in our chapter this morning, the Children of Israel are going to suffer their first defeat in the Promised Land.

Not only does our text provide insight on the root causes of their defeat – it also provides us on the steps they took to correct it.

So, let's look at our text.

[Jos 7:1-26 NKJV] 1 But the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things, for Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed things; so the anger of the LORD burned against the children of Israel.

I asked you to underline the word but.

Because up to now, there haven't been any buts – from the time Joshua became their leader, all we have seen is a smooth continuation of what had happened previously.

That is why up to this point, we see words like,

So it was...

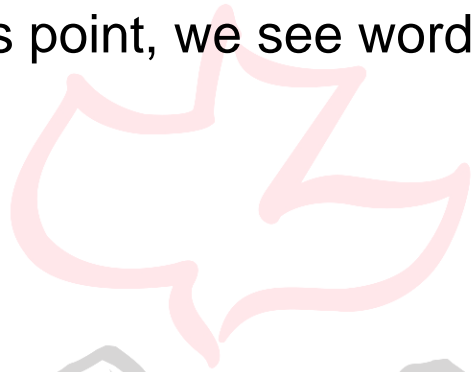
Then...

Now...

And it came to pass...

But chapter seven starts off with a but.

And the word but is used here to introduce a contrast to what has already mentioned.



CALVARY

Santa Cruz

I can look back at my early years as a Christian and see the same three letter word contrasting what I should have been doing to what I eventually did at that time.

I wanted to draw close to the Lord **but**, I didn't have the time.

I wanted to live my life for Jesus **but**, I loved the desires of my flesh more.

I wanted God to use me **but**, I chose to live a life of disobedience.

And it is these "but" moments that hinder our Christian walk.

And here in verse 1, we find the first reason that the Children of Israel suffered defeat for the first time.

- **The Children of Israel were defeated because of their disobedience.**

Achan, “troubler” took of the accursed things.

Last week when Joshua gave the instructions that the Lord had given him regarding Jericho, he gave them a strict warning that they had to adhere to.

[Jos 6:18 NKJV] 18 "And you, by all means abstain from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.

And I pointed out last week that the accursed things were the spoils of this first victory. All the metal and gold and silver were supposed to be melted and given to the Lord. It was their first victory in the Promised Land and God desired the first fruits.

But Achan took of it and God is going to judge them for it.

Let's continue with our text.

2 Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which [is] beside Beth Aven, on the east side of Bethel, and spoke to them, saying, "Go up and spy out the country." So the men went up and spied out Ai. 3 And they returned to Joshua and said to him, "Do not let all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not weary all the people there, for [the people of Ai are] few." 4 So about three thousand men went up there from the people, but they fled before the men of Ai. 5 And the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men, for they chased them [from] before the gate as

far as Shebarim, and struck them down on the descent;
**therefore the hearts of the people melted and became
like water.**

After Jericho was defeated, Joshua sets his eyes on the next city to conquer.

The city of Ai is about 12 miles from where the city of Jericho was.

In the next chapter, we will see that there were only 12,000 people who lived in Ai.

So Joshua sends a few of his guys to scope out Ai and they come back with a positive report.

“It’s piece of cake Joshua!”

It is so easy that we don't need to send everyone, just send two or three thousand men – that will be more than enough.

And what happens is that when they engage the men of Ai, they are soundly defeated.

In fact, our text states that they were chased down the hill and lost 36 men.

Now, there is something missing here in verses 2-5 that contributed to the defeat of the Israelites.

Anyone want to take a guess???

There is no mention of Joshua seeking the council of God before he decides to send his men to attack Ai.

- **The second reason that the Children of Israel were defeated was because they neglected prayer.**

Especially Joshua.

God is the one that gave Joshua the command that it was time to prepare his men to cross the Jordan.

God is the one who gave Joshua the instructions for crossing the Jordan River.

God is the one who gave Joshua the instructions for conquering Jericho.

And here it appears that Joshua takes it upon himself to come up with a time and the way of how the Israelites were going to attack Ai.

He relied on his own understanding instead of relying on the Lord to guide him.

Turn with me to Proverbs 3,

[Pro 3:5-6 NKJV] 5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

If Joshua had relied on the Lord, like he did previously, it would have been revealed to him that there was sin in the camp that had to be addressed before they could continue.

Because he failed to seek the Lord, 36 men are dead and an entire nation is discouraged from continuing.

- **The third reason that the Children of Israel were defeated was because they became self-confident.**

Jericho was an impressive victory.

Towering walls, we read that the walls were so thick that the people dwelt within the walls. It was supposed to be impenetrable.

Comparing Ai to Jericho was like comparing Rio Rico to Phoenix.

“We don’t need everyone going to battle, send two or three thousand men” – the spies said.

This argument made by the spies came from the supposition that they were the ones that had defeated Jericho.

In reality, all the army of the Israelites had done was to march around Jericho and wait upon the Lord.

The destruction of Jericho was not a testimony of the military strength of the army of the Israelites –

It was a testimony to power of Jehovah Himself.

The problem that each and every one of faces is that as soon as we begin to string up a few victories, we start to take pride in ourselves and we start boasting that the victory is by our own doing.

I overcame that drinking habit

I saved my marriage

I am a good person.

This is so opposite of what the truth is.

You see, the truth is church, that apart from the grace of God and the blood of Jesus, the smallest temptation will be too powerful for you and me.

6 Then Joshua tore his clothes, and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until evening, he and

the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads. 7 And Joshua said, "Alas, Lord GOD, **why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all--to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Oh, that we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan!** 8 "O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turns its back before its enemies? 9 "For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear [it], and surround us, and cut off our name from the earth. Then what will You do for Your great name?"

We find Joshua on his knees in verse six.

However, verse six is after the fact –

Joshua should have been on his knees before making the decision to attack Ai.

As Joshua is on his knees, he is questioning God's will.

Joshua makes the statement that they would have been content on the eastern side of the Jordan, the problem with that is that all of God's promises were in the West Side of the Jordan.

In fact, Joshua starts to sound like the Children of Israel when they encountered adversity in the wilderness. Maybe we should quit and go back to Egypt.

This is what happens when discouragement kicks in after a spiritual defeat – we start to question God.

Joshua should have known better and held on to the promises of God. God told him in chapter one that He was not going to leave him or forsake him. He told Joshua that He was going to give them all the land that they set foot on.

But in his discouragement, Joshua forgot all of those promises.

10 So the LORD said to Joshua: "Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face?"

The Lord is calling Joshua into action. Stop feeling sorry for yourself and take care of the problem – that is what God is commanding Joshua to do.

There is a time for mourning – now is not that time!!!

11 "Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived; and they have also put [it] among their own stuff.

In verse 11, God provides Joshua with the source of the sin that had entered the camp. However, notice that God doesn't say – Achan has sinned. He says Israel has sinned.

You see, the children of Israel were a nation. God treated them as one entity. I believe that it is important for us to realize that the same thing applies for us as the church.

We are one church, not 20 or 30 separate church members.

As believers, we are the bride of Christ. Not the brides of Christ.

When one of the members of this church family grows cold spiritually, it affects each and every one of the other

members of this congregation. When one of our fellow

brothers and sisters sins against God, the verdict from

heaven will be, "My people have sinned."

I believe that this lesson should be engraved into our hearts.

The importance of encouraging and strengthening each other and praying for each other as well.

Apostle Paul reminds us of this...

[Eph 4:1-6 NKJV] 1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 [There is] one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who [is] above all, and through all, and in you all.

12 "Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, [but] turned [their] backs before their enemies, because they have become doomed to destruction. Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you. 13 "Get up, sanctify the people, and say, 'Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, because thus says the LORD God of Israel: "[There is] an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you."

So God tells Joshua that their conquering days are done unless the sin is eliminated from the camp.

And then God gives Joshua instructions on how to find it.

14 'In the morning therefore you shall be brought according to your tribes. And it shall be [that] the tribe which the LORD takes shall come according to families; and the family which the LORD takes shall come by households; and the household which the LORD takes shall come man by man. 15 'Then it shall be [that] he who is taken with the accursed thing shall be burned with fire, he and all that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he has done a disgraceful thing in Israel.' "

God commands Joshua to start weeding out the people little by little.

Someone may say – wait a minute – why didn't God simply tell Joshua it was Achan who took of the accursed things.

The reason – grace!

As the people are being weeded out, Achan has an opportunity to repent. However, once the moment where he is the only one left standing – grace ends.

16 So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel by their tribes, and the tribe of Judah was taken.

17 He brought the clan of Judah, and he took the family of the Zarhites; and he brought the family of the Zarhites man by man, and Zabdi was taken. 18 Then he brought

his household man by man, and Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. 19 Now Joshua said to Achan, "My

son, I beg you, give glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession to Him, and tell me now what you have

done; do not hide [it] from me." 20 And Achan answered Joshua and said, "Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I have done: 21

"When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it."

I asked you to make a note of the Babylonian garment – you see, the Hebrew word for “garment” that is used here, can be translated, “a prophet’s garment”.

A garment that could have been used in idol worship by the people in Jericho.

Historically, Babylon had been the birthplace for many twisted pagan religions. So it could be that besides the silver and gold that was taken by Achan, he also took something that would have been used in idol worship.

Now, I personally don't know what Achan was thinking – it is not like he was going to be able to wear it.

But that is what sin does to us – it makes us do irrational things.

One of my brothers when he was a freshman in high school, he got caught shoplifting at the grocery store across from the high school and the cops were called and I had to drive my mom to go pick him up.

As we were driving to the store, we were trying to figure out the items he tried to steal.

The first thing that popped up in my head was that he tried to steal beer or cigarettes.

However, when we got to the store, we find out that he tried to steal a handful of mechanical pencils.

The thing that puzzled me was that he wasn't a smart kid in school anyways – why would he want to steal mechanical pencils.

It's like me walking into Fry's and stealing a can of hairspray. It doesn't make sense.

That is what Achan is doing here.

Toward the end of verse 21, we also have the progression of sin. I asked you to underline that Achan coveted and he took.

Coming across the articles was not the sin.

Temptation is not a sin – the sin is how we respond to the temptation.

Achan coveted – he desired the items that did not belong to him – they belonged to the Lord. he took them and then he hid them.

Why did he hide them, because he knew what he had done was wrong.

And one of the areas where we get into trouble as believers is that instead of coming out and confessing our sins, we choose to hide our sin.

[Num 32:23 NKJV] 23 "But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the LORD; and be sure your sin will find you out.

No sin is ever hidden from God. Eventually, it will be revealed.

22 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver under it. 23 And they took them from the midst of the tent, brought them to Joshua and to all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD. 24 Then Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the garment, the wedge of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, and all that he had, and they brought them to the Valley

of Achor. 25 And Joshua said, "Why have you troubled us? The LORD will trouble you this day." So all Israel stoned him with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones. 26 Then they raised over him a great heap of stones, still there to this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of His anger. Therefore the name of that place has been called the Valley of Achor to this day.

Achan's sin is revealed, all his possessions are collected – and the scriptures tell us that they were all stoned and set on fire.

In order for his entire family to be stoned and burned – they must have been complicit with the hiding of the accursed things. They were all in it.

The pile of stones that were piled upon Achan and his family – it became a memorial stone.

We talked about memorial stones a few weeks ago when God commanded them to erect one after they had crossed the Jordan.

Now, the Children of Israel have two memorial stones, one to remind them of God's faithfulness and this one to remind them that the consequence of sin is death.

Ultimately, Achan's sin was that he chose to not wait for chapter eight. Because in chapter eight. God tells the Israelites that they get to enjoy the spoils of victory once He hands them Ai.

Achan didn't want to wait. He wanted his blessing now – and in doing so – he loses his inheritance.

May we be obedient to His word and wait upon His blessing
in His perfect time.

Amen.

Let's pray....

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for

**Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray,
Amen.**

