

Achan's Sin

Joshua 7

1-5:

1. (We review the story up to seven) How has the tone changed from the outset of this chapter?

The tone is anger with the Israelites. We are told he is angry with the Israelites because of this one man's sin, specifically this man and here's his genealogy

The author is explaining to us what is wrong ahead of the narrative, so we understand what they do not.

2. What happens at Ai? Why is this?

A few thousand are sent up against "not many"

They are routed. Why? Not because they became cocky. They could have sent all of Israel up, but it would not have mattered because God's hand was against them.

NOTES: Ai means 'ruin'. We have not found good archeological evidence for Ai. But absence of evidence does not mean evidence of absence. Just because you can't find your car keys does not mean that you don't own a car.

The body count is "about thirty-six". This is not an exact number, but many of the nations of the ancient middle east had a number system that counted by sixes rather than tens, so this is like saying "about fifty".

Why do the people "melt like water" with only 36 dead? They were relying on what God had said in 1:3 about total success.

6-9:

3. What do you think of Joshua's prayer?

The Good: It is the proper reaction, rather than attacking again.

The last part sounds a little like Moses when the people were worshipping the golden calf. God says to Moses that he will just wipe them out and start over with Moses, but Moses prays to God about what it might do for God's glory on the earth if he lets his people be wiped away.

The Bad: He makes the comment that it looks like it would have been better if they had just thanked God for getting them to the edge of the Jordan and just stayed put rather than entering the Promised Land. This is the echo of the grumbling of the Israelites in the wilderness when anything went wrong. It's kind of a slap in the face.

The good we take from this prayer is that we should take all things to God in prayer just as Joshua did, but we are to still be respectful of our God. Fortunately, we can also take heart in the words of Paul in Romans when he says, "We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit intercedes for us...the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will."

It also shows Joshua as not being a perfect man of faith. And that is true of all the leaders of the Church, even of Joshua and Moses, so then also me and Pastor Walther and Pastor Hoft. But we try our best to do God's work.

10-15:

4. What is the God's reaction?

What are you doing on your face? Sounds like God expects that Joshua should know exactly why they have lost. They have sinned and need to fix it before he will continue the covenantal blessings.

Describes the problem as "they" have...though we know it is Achan. Why to them all? They all agreed to this covenant which belongs to the nation, and the consequences of the violation of the covenant were explained before they set out. They are in this together.

Also, we see grace here, in that God tells Joshua how to take care of the situation, to mend what is going wrong. Though this method is time consuming, not only does it pinpoint the sin in the nation, but it also definitively clears all who are innocent. And in declaring this process to the nation, it gives Achan the chance to step forward voluntarily to account for his actions.

16-21:

5. How does Joshua treat Achan when he is discovered?

Pastorally. He does not come down on Achan with a rant about the trouble he has caused. Achan is clearly shaken at this point, having the lots actually point to him. Rather he calls upon him to tell the truth.

6. What is Achan's reaction to his discovery?

Confession of the sins themselves, not just the taking, but the sins that led up to the action he saw the plunder, then he covets, and then he takes and then he hides, even when it becomes evident that he is the cause of the problems he and his family still hide the things in their tent.

This is not a generic confession of sin, which we do use, but is used with the understanding that we have reflected upon our sins beforehand, and have considered our lives as we ask for forgiveness.

We shake our heads at Achan, but we try to rationalize our sins all of the time also. "look at this great stuff. I could really use the extra money from this. The other Israelites are probably doing the same thing."

7. What is Achan's fate? Why?

He and all he has is destroyed. The family is complicit in the taking of the things devoted to destruction so they are put in with this. This is known to be the fate of the one with the things in verse 15 and this was declared to the people.

Do we consider this 'just' though? Happens in Jonah, and of course, the one man Adam also transgressed and the many know the consequences.

But God also used one man, Moses, to bring a whole people out of Egypt, and of course in a greater way, became one man to make all who believe in Christ holy and pleasing in his sight.

Both sides are examples of God's judgments and while one type may seem harsh in our eyes, the other is glorious in the depth of its abundance.

Achan was killed, but was he damned? He may not have been, for he freely confessed his sin before God and revealed the work of that sin. While he had to pay the just consequence for his sin, that does not mean that he was not made right with God.

Valley of Achor. Valley of Trouble. That name stuck. We hear it again many centuries later when God refers to it through Hosea the prophet: "I...will make the valley of Achor a door of hope." Here he is saying that the Messiah's saving acts will put hope even in the dark places of the earth.

8. How does this affect the nation's relationship with God?

The LORD turns from the heat of his anger. The harmonious relationship between God and his people is restored. And of course this is the next step for us also. Having been washed in the waters of Holy Baptism, having been brought into faith by the Holy Spirit, the Lord has turned the heat of his anger at our sins and placed them at Calvary. And in that event, we also have come to a harmonious relationship with God. Not by what we did, but by what he did for us.