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JOSHUA 6:1-9:27

The sixth chapter of the book of Joshua is one of the most exciting passages in all the Word of God. And, it's exciting not only because of what it relates to us about the **past**, but it's exciting because of what it teaches us about the **present**.

Last week, we saw how the children of Israel crossed over the Jordan River on dry land. We saw how Jehovah caused the waters of that river to stand up in a heap, and we saw how the sons of Israel just walked across to the other side.

Today, our lesson finds them on the west side of the Jordan and obviously their hearts are thrilled to finally be there but now, they must really get to work! And the first thing they must do is conquer Jericho.

1) Jericho Destroyed

Jericho was a well fortified city. There were two walls around the city of Jericho. There was an outer wall and an inner wall. The outer wall was 11 feet high and 6 feet wide. The inner wall was 35 feet high and 12 feet wide. It was on top of the inner wall that Rahab and her family lived.

Now, can you imagine what the military leaders of the children of Israel must have been doing?

Don't you suppose they must have been planning how many **battering rams** they would surely need...
and how many **catapults** they would need to hurl massive balls of fire against the walls of Jericho...
and how many **soldiers** they would need to carry **swords**...
and how many **soldiers** they would need to carry **spears**...
and how many **archers** they would need to shoot **arrows** into the city...

And while this **strategy session** was going on, and **lists** were being made, and **figures** were being calculated, and **plans** were getting firmed up, Joshua was out meeting with the Lord!

Joshua 5:13-15...

Who was this Man? This Man was Jesus...This was a preincarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ. He appeared to men of Old Testament many times. This is called a "theophany" or "Christophany."

And how did this Man appear to Joshua? He appeared as a Man with a drawn sword in His hand.

Let me just say this before we get into **chapter 6**. Jesus is sufficient in every situation. Joshua was a soldier and so He appeared to Joshua as a warrior.

Abraham was a pilgrim and so He appeared to Abraham as a traveler.

Jacob was fighting God's will and so He appeared to Jacob as a wrestler.

Paul was in darkness, and He appeared to Paul as a bright light.

To the **hungry** He's the **Bread of Life**.

To the **thirsty** He's the **Water of Life**.

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To those who have **gone astray**, He's the **Good Shepherd**.
To those who are **spiritually dead**, He's the **Resurrection and the Life**.
To those who are **discouraged**, He's the **God of All Comfort**.
To those who are in **darkness**, He's the **Light of the World**...
He's sufficient in every situation.

So, while Israel's "joint chiefs of staff" were planning their military strategy, let's look at what the Lord Jesus told General Joshua.

Joshua 6:1-5...

So, when Joshua went to the folks, he must have said something like this...

"Guess what folks,
we don't need any **battering rams** and
we don't need any **swords** and
we don't need any **spears** or **bows** or **arrows** and
we don't need any **catapults**!!
I'm almost embarrassed to tell you what we need...
See, what we need is
the ark of the Covenant
and we need some **priests who are also trumpet players.**"

What do you think the men of Israel must have thought? They must have thought that this was a strange way to go to war...

But, see, in God's mind all this was perfectly sensible. What makes sense to God doesn't always make sense to us.

See, the Ark of the Covenant symbolized the presence and the power of God and the priests stood for prayer and the rams' horns...the trumpets...were instruments of praise.

The bottom line is this...they were to take Jericho with the presence and the power of Almighty God, with prayer and with praise...and that's it!!

Now, that was the strategy they used back then, and may I say to you that this is to be our strategy today...

See, we don't wrestle against flesh and blood. If we did, then you and I would need **swords** and **spears** and **battering rams** and **bullets** and **bombs** to defeat the enemies we face.

You and I are to come against our enemies **in the armor of God**...and we're to come against our enemies in the **presence and power of Almighty God**. We don't have the Ark of the Covenant today, but we have something far better...and that "something" is "Someone"...**we have the dear Holy Spirit empowering and enabling us**. And we are to be bathed in **prayer and praise** to the Lord as we go.

Now, when the Israelites began their march around the city of Jericho, don't you wonder what the citizens of Jericho thought? Don't you know these folks must have looked over their walls and wondered what in the world was going on?

I mean...here the Israelites come...marching all around the city one day...two days...three days...four days...five days...for six days, they did this...they simply marched around Jericho once and then they left and went back to their camp.

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Don't you wonder what the folks at CBS and ABC and NBC and CNN would have said about this?

Well, on the seventh day, what happened? They marched around the city six times and on the seventh time, the people shouted, the priests blew the trumpets, and the walls fell down flat!! The people of Israel utterly destroyed everything in the city with the exception of Rahab and her family. (By the way...Rahab had hung scarlet cord from her window, but I believe the men of Israel knew where she was because the part of the wall upon which her house rested apparently did not fall down!)

Let me ask you...how in the world did this happen? Did those rams' horns and ark have something explosive to make the walls just blow up? Was there something going on here...some missile...some device...some smart bomb that Scripture doesn't tell us about?

Hebrews 11:30 tells us the walls came down **by faith!** ***"By faith, the walls of Jericho fell down."***

Now, how do we conquer our enemies? How do we have victory over the obstacles before us?

The only way we're going to have victory is the same way these folks did it...by faith...**even when it doesn't make sense...**

See, God's ways are higher than our ways...and God's thoughts are higher than ours...in fact Isaiah says they're as high above us as the heavens are above the earth...and sometimes things don't make any sense.

Listen, can you make sense out of a man building a huge boat in the middle of the desert in preparation for a flood in a land where it had never rained before?

Can you make sense out of the virgin birth?

Can you make sense out of one God in three Persons?

Can you make sense out of five loaves and two fishes being brought out to serve 5,000 hungry people, and not having enough to feed but having leftovers?

Can you make sense out of the saving power of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ?

The answer is NO...because all these things that don't make sense come from our Heavenly Father who is omnipotent and omniscient and so much more and all He requires of us is to 1) believe Him and 2) act upon that belief and then 3) watch as His invisible hand goes to work.

This is a miracle from God's mighty hand...this really happened! And it's not farfetched for us to believe that God's invisible hand will perform miracles in our lives when we believe Him and step out in faith and obey Him!

2) Achan Discovered

Well, here are the children of Israel basking in their victory over Jericho and they come to a little place called Ai.

Joshua again sends two men into the city to spy it out. These two men came back and said,

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“Oh, Joshua, you don’t need to send many folks against these people. Just send in a couple or three thousand men and they’ll make short work of them and we’ll just go in and take over Ai and that’ll be it!”

But, what happened?

Joshua 7:4-13...

God had told the children of Israel to utterly destroy Jericho...(**Joshua 6:18-19**) They were NOT to take anything under the ban for themselves and God said to Joshua, “Israel has sinned, Joshua, they have stolen and deceived and unless you deal with this, I won’t be with you anymore!”

I believe it’s interesting to note that Joshua prayed AFTER their defeat. Don’t you believe if Joshua had prayed BEFORE they went into Ai, that God would have said, “**Joshua, don’t go against Ai right now...there’s sin in the camp and you must deal with that first!!**”

You know, back in the book of **Deuteronomy** Moses had described the Promised Land as “a land of hills and valleys.” And that’s so true of our lives as Christians, isn’t it? So often when we’ve been on a high mountain top spiritually, we will shortly find ourselves down in the valley. **Joshua was a gifted leader, and he did it all just right at Jericho, but Joshua blew it at Ai.** He didn’t consult with Jehovah...he was human and therefore just like all of us...he made a critical error.

Well, it didn’t take Joshua long to find out who had taken the things under the ban. It turned out to be a man named Achan.

Verses 19-21...

Achan spelled it out pretty clearly here, didn’t he?

He saw...He coveted...He took...He hid...

What a vivid description of sin...Can you identify with this? Have you been there? Has there ever been a time when **you saw, you coveted, you took and you hid?** Except you **didn’t** hide...you only **thought** you did!!

That’s the way sin is, and it doesn’t make any difference if we’re tempted by the world, the flesh or the devil...**we see, we covet, we take, and we hide...**

Eve did the same thing when she listened to the **devil**.

David did the same thing when he yielded to his **flesh**.
And Achan saw the things of the **world**, and he coveted them and he took them and he hid them.

Well, let’s see what happened to Achan...

Verses 22-26...

Achan’s sin teaches us several things...

It teaches us that we don’t hide anything from God...everything is laid bare before Him.

It teaches us that stealing from God is a very serious thing.

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It teaches us that our sin is never isolated...it always has a ripple effect.

It was because of Achan's sin that little Ai defeated Israel.

And it was because of Achan's sin that his family and his animals were put to death. Now the question that came to my mind this past week as I was preparing this lesson is, "Were the members of Achan's family guilty?" I believe we can safely say they were. It's hard to believe this man could steal and bury this much stuff alone and no one in his family not know it, isn't it? But, more importantly, God had promised Moses back in the book of **Deuteronomy** that relatives would not be held accountable for the sins of another relative. (**Deut. 24:16**)

We could all name many instances where sin has a ripple effect, though. Think with me...Adam and Eve is the most profound example I can think of. **Because of their sin...you and I are born sinners in need of a Savior.**

Can you think of others in Scripture? What about Abraham and Sarah? Had they not run ahead of the Lord, **Ishmael would never have been born** and the Arab race would not have been established and all that turmoil in the Middle East could have been avoided.

What about the men who threw Daniel into the lions' den? Remember what happened to their families? The king had them **all** thrown into the lions' den.

And we could go on and on. We could also tell of instances in our own lives where our sin or the sin of someone else had devastating effects on the lives of other people.

Getting back to Achan and having said all that...let me ask you this...Does this seem like extreme punishment?

Well, let me tell you something that I've come to know in my long life...☺

God doesn't operate on our schedule. What seems fair to us and what is fair to God isn't always the same.

But remember this, Beloved, God may not be fair...but God is always just and His justice is perfect! Just trust in the character of our Heavenly Father, whether you understand it or not...whether you agree or not...and remember He does all things well!!

(By the way, we're going to see over and over where God gave the command to His people to utterly destroy cities and people...men, women and children...and we're going to be tempted to say... "Oh, that's not fair.")

Let me tell you something...God had given Abraham this land, but did Abraham possess it? No, God said Abraham's descendants would possess it. And let me tell you why...because God told Abraham that "the iniquity of the people living in that land was not yet full." That means that God gave these people of Canaan 440+ years to repent and to turn to Him and they refused.

God didn't want His people to be polluted and perverted by the sins of these people. He had called His people to be separate from the world and if they had obeyed Him, they wouldn't have had all the troubles we will see next in the *book of Judges*...but that's another lesson, isn't it? ☺

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So, when you come upon Scriptures where you believe God is dealing with folks unfairly...just trust in the character of Almighty God and know that He deals in justice, not fairness!!

Well, let's quickly see the last point...

3) Ai Defeated

Chapter 8 tells us that Israel went against Ai again and this time they defeated Ai totally.

The latter part of this chapter tells us that after the battle, Joshua gathered all the people together and he built an altar...he also wrote on the stones a copy of the Law of Moses and...

Verses 34 and 35...

(I read in Saturday's Commercial Appeal about a lecture that will be given this coming weekend at Grace St. Luke's Episcopal Church... **"Finding Enlightenment through the Labyrinth"**... May I say to you, finding enlightenment through God's Word is better!!)

Well, let me just say a couple more things and then we'll be through...

Aren't you glad that God is the God of the second chance...and the third chance and the fourth...? If He weren't, where would you and I be?

Listen, Beloved, just because you've experienced defeat in your life does not mean that God is through with you.

Let's just think about this...

What if God had never given **Abraham** a second chance? I mean...it certainly wasn't God's perfect will for Abraham and Sarah to take matters into their own hands and have Abraham go into Hagar so that he could have a son, was it? And if God had not given them a second chance, **they would never have had Isaac, would they?**

What if God had never given **Moses** a second chance? Moses killed an Egyptian and if God had not given Moses a second chance **he would never have delivered the children of Israel and he would never have received the Law from God, would he?**

Think of **David**...if God had not given David a second chance, **we wouldn't have all the precious Psalms he wrote after he sinned with Bathsheba.**

Think of **Peter**...if Jesus had not come to Peter and given him a second chance...**we would never have heard from him after he denied the Lord Jesus Christ.**

And we could go on and on...because the Bible is replete with examples of God's servants getting second and third chances...

Rest assured, we're going to have our "Jerichos"...we're going to be victorious in our walk with the Lord...but, we're also going to have our "Ai's"...**times in our lives when we fail the Lord, when we walk our own way and we disobey His will.** We all sin! The Apostle John said that if we say we don't sin we're what? **He said we're LIARS!!**

But, John also told us that if we confess our sin, God is faithful and JUST to forgive our sin and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness. By the way, aren't you glad this verse doesn't say that God is "FAIR"? Aren't you glad that verse says God is faithful and "JUST"?

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See, if He were **FAIR**...He'd send us all to hell when we fail Him. But He doesn't because He is **JUST**. He's too **just** to allow the blood of His dear Son to be spilled at Calvary in vain. The blood of Jesus is greater than all our sin...

Praise God!

Let me ask you this morning...

Do you know Jesus Christ as your Savior? Was there ever a time in your life when you knew you were a sinner and you knew you needed a Savior, and you knew you could not save yourself and you called on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ? ***If not, or if you're not sure, there is no better day than today to trust Jesus!!***

If you do know Jesus as your Savior, is there something in your life that you're trying to hide from Him? ***If there is, may I say to you that you may as well confess it and repent of it and be forgiven because you're certainly not hiding anything from God!!***

If you don't have any known sin breaking fellowship with your Savior, are you seeing His invisible hand at work in your life? Do you know His promises for you and then are you acting upon those promises?

My prayer for all of us is that God would reveal to us anything that may keep us from being all that He wants us to be every day we live.

