

## Joshua ch 9-

Now, you recall that so far in the book of Joshua, we've seen the crossing of the Jordan, and having crossed the Jordan, the Lord re-initiated with the nation the rite of circumcision reminding them of the fact and them consenting to the fact that they would take no confidence in the flesh. And that although the circumcision took place outwardly, it was in reality only an outward showing of the fact that they were circumcising the foreskins of their hearts. No longer would they have hearts set on and driven by the flesh, but rather set on and turned towards God. And then one morning just prior to the Jericho invasion Joshua was out meandering through the camp and he met the Commander of the army of the Lord. And he was reminded of the fact that he wasn't truly the commander in charge but that he served the Chief commander, the Lord Himself and was reassured of the fact that God would go before him and fight his battles for him. And so having received their marching orders, that's exactly what they did, they marched around the city of Jericho 1 time a day for 6 days and then on the 7<sup>th</sup> day they marched around it 7 times in a row, never making a sound and then on the completion of the 7<sup>th</sup> lap, they blew the trumpets, let out a war cry and the city walls fell flat and they ran up and took the city. And having just obtained such a tremendous victory, they thought they'd just go ahead and take Ai in similar manner, never having sought the Lord, and so Joshua sent a few thousand men up to take out Ai and they were driven back and some 36 men were killed. And so Joshua tears his clothes, cries out to God and God answered and said, why are you lying there crying out to Me? You've got sin in the camp. And you're not going to move forward from this point on because I won't be going with you until the sin issue is taken care of. Joshua didn't seek the Lord prior to going into Ai and cost the nation of Israel tremendously, well, Joshua took care of the sin issue and Achan was taken from the camp along with his whole family and all that he owned and they were stoned and burned and then buried. And so God reassured Joshua that now He would go with him again and that Ai had been given into Israel's hand and so not to be afraid or dismayed and God gave Joshua the plan, not at all similar to the plan involving Jericho. This time he had an ambush ready and waiting to take the city and Joshua and some of his men lured out the men of Ai and when they came out against them they acted as though they were going to retreat and then at that point when the men pursued them to a certain point Joshua turned around, raised his spear and the men waiting in ambush ran in and set the city on fire, and having the men of the city surrounded, they wiped them all out. Except for the king whom they brought to Joshua alive and Joshua had him hanged on a tree until evening and then his corpse was taken down and thrown into the entrance of the city and a pile of stones was heaped up over it, and all the spoil of the city they got to keep for themselves.

Jericho's spoil went to the Lord, it was the 1<sup>st</sup> fruits of the land, but what they got out of Ai they got to keep for themselves, and then we left off with Joshua taking them up to Mt Ebal and Mt Gerizim and reading to the children of Israel all that was written in the book of the Law, both the blessings and the cursings in obedience to the command of Moses, and the people were to respond with an amen, saying that they consented to and agreed with the righteousness of the Law and the blessings that come to those who obeyed and the cursings that would be upon those who rebelled and they were reaffirming their commitment to the Lord.

Now that brings us up to ch 9 where we find something rather interesting taking place. Notice with me vs 1-2 of chapter 9.

Vs1-2

So in essence while Israel was at Mt Ebal and Mt Gerizim reaffirming their commitment to the Lord, the kings of Canaan were conspiring together to come against and attack Israel.

They had heard of the defeat of Jericho and Ai and apparently came to the conclusion that there was no way that any of them one on one would stand a chance against Israel, now what's so interesting about this is the fact that the kings of Canaan weren't really allies in the 1<sup>st</sup> place. They were in opposition one to another, but they were willing to lay aside their differences in order to come together to take up arms against a common foe. And it's not all that uncommon to see different people with different ideals, different priorities, and different philosophies, align themselves with one another because they're mutual enemies of God. Because their hatred for God and God's people out weigh their hatred for one another, and people will form these alliances based upon a mutual hate. You remember in Marks gospel ch 3 right after Jesus had healed the man with the withered hand in the synagogue on the Sabbath that we read that, "*the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him.*" Now the Pharisees and the Herodians were not of one accord, as a matter of fact they hated each other, there was all kinds of animosity between those 2 groups. The Herodians were the Jews that welcomed the Roman occupation of the Jews' land. And they used that friendship to rule over the people politically. The Pharisees, on the other hand, desired to rule over the people religiously. And despised Roman rule, they were diametrically opposed on practically every issue. That is, until Jesus came along, and they found a common enemy that they were willing to lay aside their own differences for, in order to join forces to try and wipe Jesus out. The Pharisees and the Sadducees had the same type deal going on even though both parties held places in the Sanhedrin, the Pharisees were the fundamentalists – they believed the Word of God and the supernatural aspects of the kingdom, while the Sadducees were more or less the liberals, not believing in angels or the resurrection of the dead, and these guys were bitter enemies. But in Matt ch 16 we find them both coming together to try and trip Jesus up in His words and find fault in Him so as to discredit Him.

Even Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, the very day that Jesus was crucified even though previously they had been at enmity with each other, (the bible says). And one day, (And I would venture to say in the not too distant future) this mentality will culminate on a global level. We read in Rev ch 19 where at the end of the tribulation when Jesus is coming back to the earth with the armies of heaven that the kings of the earth and their armies will gather together, (even though they'd been previously fighting each other), and they'll join together to make war against Him who sat on the horse (that being Jesus Christ) and His army. But the common thread that's woven in all of these examples that I've given you is that of defeat of those who came against the Lord &/or His righteous people, and victory to God and His people, because it doesn't matter how many people team up against you, you and God always make a majority, and if God be for you, then who can stand against you?

But that's what's happening here in Joshua, several kings plotting together to come up against Israel.

Vs3-6

Really here they're being quite clever, because they were just in reality not too many miles down the road. And they knew all about what had happened so far to the people that had tried to stand in the way of Israel and so they get a few guys together, dress them up like they've been on a journey for weeks and weeks and send them out to try and get Israel to make a peace treaty with them. And it's not stated that they knew any thing about the Law of Israel, but either they just took for granted that anyone in the near vicinity was going to be annihilated or they had some understanding or had heard of some of the standards of Israel. Because they say to Joshua, we've come from a far country, so we want you to make peace with us. We don't want to wind up on the receiving end of your sword and we're from a long ways off, but we want you to know that we don't want to be your rivals. Now, why do I make note of the fact that they said we're from a country that's far away from here? Because if Israel were going up against a people who were outside the land, they could offer them peace, and if they surrendered, they were to be made their servants, but anyone inside the boundaries of the Promised Land, they were to utterly destroy and make no covenants with them. Deut 7:1-2 says, "*When the LORD your God brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and (notice) the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you, and when the LORD your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them.*" Now, the inhabitants of Gibeon were Hivites, and so the Gibeonites are in essence saying hey, we're outside the boundaries of the land that you're seizing but we want to make peace with you just for the sake of knowing that we're on your good side.

Vs7-13

What are they doing? They're appealing to the pride of Israel, you guys are fierce, we're your servants and we've come along ways just to ensure to you the fact that we want no trouble with you. And notice how one lie leads to the next at 1<sup>st</sup> they said that they were from a far country, in vs 9 the re-emphasized that by saying we're from a "very" far country. And then they make sure to point out how all of their provisions are all raggedy and torn so as to add credence to their statements, and notice how in vs 3 they were in reality coming to them because of what they'd heard had happened to Jericho and Ai, but here they don't make mention of that, why? Because if in reality they were from a very far country, they probably wouldn't have had time to hear of the destruction of Jericho and Ai because that just happened. And so they speak to Joshua concerning what God did in Egypt and those people that were on the other side of the Jordan before they ever entered into Canaan. Now there's a couple of things to consider here, #1 if you were going to go on a long journey, odds are you would prepare adequately, you wouldn't take provisions just barely enough for a one way trip. If all their stuff was already ate up and moldy, how were they to get back? and #2 if you were going to meet with the president of a certain country or the leader of a nation, you'd more then likely bring a change of cloths so that you wouldn't look all ratty and disgusting when you met, especially if you were coming to ask of him a favor. And it's interesting to me that it appears as though Joshua did have his suspicions. Because they said in vs 7 maybe you're setting us up, maybe you just live right down the road, maybe we shouldn't make a covenant with you at all. And of course that's when they reiterated the fact that if they were from a place near by, they wouldn't be as tattered as they were.

When you find yourself suspicious in a certain event, there's usually a reason, not always, sometimes people are just hyper-paranoid. But often times there's reasons, and I would encourage you that anytime you find yourself in check in your heart or you're suspicious about something, at the very least pray about it, seek the Lord concerning it. Well, these guys told Israel their sad story.

Vs14

Strike 2, they took a good look at their stuff, but they didn't seek the Lord, what were they doing? The same thing that they did in the case of Ai, walking by sight, they just took for granted what they were seeing, and as the old saying goes, seeing is believing. They were once again exercising common sense and not kingdom sense; they were acting naturally and not spiritually. But the thing that blows my mind is that the mistake that was made was identical to the one that brought about their last defeat, neglecting to seek the Lord concerning the situation. You'd think that they'd have learned their lesson, maybe Joshua thought that this wasn't that big of a deal and wasn't worth bugging the Lord over. But for whatever reason he relapsed into the same mistake, and though it won't cost anybody's life this time, it still stands to be a failure in that they at this point are being disobedient to the word of God.

And they hadn't yet learned to wait on the Lord and seek His direction, not that it's wrong to use the minds that God has given us, God has given us the capacity to think and reason and we need to use it. But even in that, we need to have etched in there the fact that we're not to lean on our own understanding, but rather we're to acknowledge the Lord in all our ways. There's nothing too small a matter to take to God, if you've ever struggled over what you should or shouldn't pray about, let me ease that for you, pray about everything, the bible says that we're to pray with out ceasing. No matter how minor the issue may seem, make sure you're bringing it before the Lord, because what may seem to be a no brainer, just might be one of the most detrimental decisions you ever make.

#### Vs15-20

How exactly they found out I have no idea, (maybe they over heard them talking about it) but within a few days they caught wind of the fact that they only lived about 20 miles or so down the road. And so they went to check it out and sure enough there they were, and they couldn't touch them because they had already given them their word, let me tell you something God expects us to be men and women of our word. The bible says let your yes be yes and your no be no and anything more than that is from the evil one, because if you're not an individual of your word, or I'm not an individual of my word, what does that make me? A liar, and the bible has much to say concerning lying, in Prov 6:16-17 where it talks about the six things that the LORD hates, and seven that are an abomination to Him: the 1<sup>st</sup> thing is A proud look, #2 is A lying tongue. Prov 12:22 "*Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, But those who deal truthfully are His delight.*" Eph 4:25 says to put away lying, and "*Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,*" for we are members of one another." and So the leaders of Israel say hey, we've given them our word before God, so we can't touch them, and so all the people began to complain against the leaders, why? Well, #1 it cost them plenty of spoil, #2 they might influence the children of Israel toward pagan practices, but understand one thing, not to justify Joshua and the leaders decisions.

We often times are able to criticize in hindsight, as I said earlier you'd think that they'd have learned their lesson the 1<sup>st</sup> time, but how often do we make repeat mistakes, and you find them all over the scriptures, people repeating the same mistake to their own detriment.

Even Ab due to the fear of man, made the same mistake concerning Sarah twice, once in ch 12 of Genesis and then we see it again in ch 20 and he feared man rather than trust in God and so he lied concerning his wife. Peter had the same problem, he denied the Lord 3 times due to the fear of man. And then sometime later, even after he'd been baptized in the Holy Spirit he feared what the Jews would think of him if he was caught eating with the gentiles and so while there were no Jews around he ate with the gentiles, but then when the Jews came to town he withdrew from the gentiles and played the part of the hypocrite. And Paul busted him concerning it and you can read of that in the epistle to the Galatians.

And here Joshua, not because of the fear of man, but just due to leaning on his own understanding and not seeking the Lord he falls again into the same snare of not inquiring the Lord concerning the situation that faces him and because of that it cost him and the entire nation. Because they gave them their word that they'd keep peace with them and so they kept their word even though it was to their own disadvantage. And quite frankly that's what God expects us to do, to be men and women of our word, from time to time you'll hear, well I was backslidden when I got married and I entered into this relationship, and now my marriage is horrible, this isn't who God desired me to marry. And that may all be true, but the bottom line is that you entered into an oath before God and man to stay in that relationship till death do you part, and if you're the one who breaks off the relationship in that case, then you're the one who's guilty before God. In Ps 15:1-4 we read, "*LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? He who walks uprightly, And works righteousness, And speaks the truth in his heart; He who does not backbite with his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbor, Nor does he take up a reproach against his friend; In whose eyes a vile person is despised, But he honors those who fear the LORD; He who swears to his own hurt and does not change.*" Yeah, the fear of the Lord is to hate evil and we're to walk uprightly and in truth and despise that which vile. But we still have to honor our word out of the fear of the Lord, the Lord honors it when we keep our word, even to our own hurt & we don't change, if you say you're going to do something, if you give your word, then do it. Whether it's convenient or not, or whether it costs you something or not, you never had to say it, but once you have, you need to honor it. And so that's what they do, and of course the people begin to complain, but you know what, be careful about criticizing until you've stood in the shoes of leadership, and even at that you'd do well to refrain, we're not to be backbiting and sowing discord or being murmurers and complainers. And it may shock you to learn of the fact that people in leadership are just as human as anyone else and we need the grace of God just as much if not more so than anyone else. So just be careful concerning being to quick to jump on the bandwagon of the critical spirit. Because it's easy to criticize after the fact and talk about all the things that you'd have done had you been the one to make the decision, but often times the one's who are so quick to point fingers are the very one's who refuse to engage in any real form of accountability in the 1<sup>st</sup> place. So do yourself a favor and exercise caution when it comes to criticizing and just don't do it.

Vs21-27

And in reality what Joshua meant to curse them actually in many ways turned out to be a blessing for them, and we'll begin to get into some of that (Lord willing) next week.

