

Joshua 07-04-20b

Let's pick up our study now in the book of Joshua. We've addressed, at least to make you aware of the difficulty with numbers such as the two or three thousand men who were to go up and attack Ai and they go and suffer the 36 casualties and this has been a problem that's been wrestled with for decades and I'm certainly not able to solve it but I can at least make you aware of it and suggest a few alternatives and the last thing I want to say on that is I recommended to you this article by Klein and what I recommended I don't agree with it I think his conclusions are faulty but it's a good source of information like so many things that I use for references I think it has great information but I disagree with the conclusions it draws because Klein's conclusion is that while the chronicler was exaggerating for effect and that there's no good answer to why these numbers are so big he concludes by saying our understanding of these numbers should not lead us to disparage the chronicler's value or denigrate his theological importance neither should we try to force his data into a historical genre rather the chronicler like other writers in Israel used what we would call inflated numbers to give texture and impact to his presentation of Israel's theological story in other words he was taking literary license by blowing these numbers up on purpose and I think that's utter boulder dash so just so you know I read the article and and there's a lot of good passages and details but he spends a lot of his time failing to adequately debunk what I think are good possible explanations so back to Joshua chapter three when the men of Ai struck down about 36 men chasing them from before the gate as far as Shebareem and struck them down on the descent the hearts of the people melted and became like water Joshua tore his clothes fell on the earth fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the Lord until evening there are a couple of quick points I want to make about this because again we want to keep in mind personal application how many times have we observed as goes the nation of Israel in the Old Testament so goes the individual believer in the church age all of these things have been written for our instruction we often head down a path we are confident that we are in God's will God has said cross the Jordan God has brought us across the Jordan in a miraculous fashion we have been circumcised we have observed Passover we have just experienced a mighty victory God has brought the walls of Jericho crashing to the earth we have gone in and done as we were told we have slain those who needed slaying we have burned that which needed burning we have dedicated to God the things that belong to God we move on to what seems to be a secondary and rather minor side detail and suffer a shocking setback and it can easily turn our hearts to water we are rocked back on our heels by a circumstantial development that is obviously suggestive of God withdrawing his blessing and withdrawing his support of withdrawing his provision and we think wait a minute didn't we hear from God didn't we see a miracle at the Jordan didn't we haven't we done everything we were supposed to do haven't we just had a huge victory that was obviously the hand and the work and the power of God manifest in our lives and over here I suddenly get this cold slap in the face I don't understand what is the proper

response well Joshua is Joshua is in shock and as I said last time one of the few times that you can even insinuate or infer or suggest the Joshua doesn't do everything that he should is this episode right here because God essentially rebukes him he falls he tears his clothes and falls 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 and you would think well this is appropriate go to God in sackcloth and ashes basically and prostrate yourself go to God and say what's up and this is often the response that we have isn't think about it I don't know I can't necessarily call them on a recent crisis of this nature but we can easily imagine that if we thought we were in the will of God we started to proceed and we got this kind of a tragedy setting us back we would go to God in prayer in tears with dust on our heads and just prostrate ourselves before God and say what is up would be natural you think well God says Joshua what are you doing you shouldn't be laying here you shouldn't be wasting your time with the tears and the dust it's obvious what the problem is and you should know better and we've got to kind of prod ourselves to keep our minds functioning keep cultivating and seeking the ministry of the Holy Spirit to cycle the Word of God through our souls and continue to make application answers from God do not come in prayer do you ever think about that God does not guide us while we are praying prayer is not a means of divine guidance per se you can certainly ask for guidance you can ask for insight you can claim the promises of God and so on but prayer in and of itself going before God and prostrating ourselves before him or even walking boldly into the throne room there as it says in Hebrews 10 that's not the mechanism for guidance most Christians do not understand what I just said people face a decision people come to a fork in the road don't know which way to go what do we do well let's pray we'll just keep on praying keep on praying and wait for a bolt from the blue wait for three doves to fly over wait for you know the multitude of counselors to come and tell us what we should do that you know people love to go to multitude of counselors there is safety and that kind of thing I'll wait for some believers I'll go seek the advice of as many believers as I can get a consensus think about it you know the answer to this what is the mechanism for divine guidance what is the provision from God for light on your path is there any scripture that says pray to the Lord with all your heart and he will illuminate your path is there anything that says cry out in the night and God will speak and answer in a vision wait for a dream you know they love to quote the other one where there is no vision the people perish gotta wait for a vision or you're gonna perish what is the mechanism for divine guides you know the answer to this by word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path what has God told the Israelites what did he tell them way back in Deuteronomy if you are obedient one of you will put the flight a thousand an elephant remember that what did God say would happen if they were disobedient number 32 and garrison cycles of discipline some of us know it by what happens if you're disobedient a thousand of you will be put to flight by one of your enemy and look at what has happened they've suffered a serious and highly unexpected military defeat what is the obvious conclusion from the Word of God there is sin in the camp and that's why when Joshua says alas Lord God why have you brought us over the Jordan at all to

deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us Oh Lord that we had been content to dwell on the other side of the Jordan and if there is a failure in Joshua's life this is about the only place you're gonna find it he's crying the blues Oh Lord what's up we shouldn't even come over here that we have to turn our backs on our enemies the Canaanites are gonna hear about this and surround us and cut off our name from the earth this one setback is the finish for the whole plan of conquest we lost 36 men it's all over we might as well build rafts and get back across the Jordan and rejoin you know Reuben and Gad and a half tribe of Manasseh over there because the jig is up what will you do for your great name so the Lord said to Joshua get up get up why are you lying to us on your face this is not the way to get the answer this is not the way to resolve the problem lying on your face pouring dust on your head and crying the blues about the other side of the Jordan is not the way to fix this Israel has sinned and the implication is here Israel has sinned and you should notice apply the Word of God keep your mental wheels turning Israel has sinned and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them for they have taken some of the Karim they have both stolen and deceived and this again is a principle that we observe many times that sin is sort of like a cancer it's it is like mold or mildew you never just get one little isolated case sin breeds sin sin tends to produce clusters of sins there is the taking and now there is the deceiving to cover up the taking they have both stolen and deceived and they have put it among their own stuff notice that God puts this in the plural when it is in fact a single man but the entire nation is tainted by Achan this is a known principle God will deal with groups based on individuals Bob Dean used to call this the principle of the of the pivot where there's even a minority of believers in a nation and God will continue to bless that nation for the sake of that minority just as he explained to Abraham if there were ten righteous people in Sodom he would spare the city it is in the New Testament the Apostle Paul talks about the fact that God will bless a household for the sake of one believer in it if one spouse is faithful and the other is not regardless of their salvation status if you have one growing believer the children are sanctified for the sake of that one parent the household is sanctified God blesses the household on the basis of the presence of just one individual groups can be preserved groups can be blessed groups can be sanctified companies businesses families organizations can be blessed just because of the presence of individuals who are faithful believers in them by the same token there is cursing by association just as there is what I used to put in my notes as BBA blessing by association there is CBA cursing by association this is the case of Israel the entire nation is cursed blessing is now not revoked but withheld until this sin is eliminated now what's our principle as goes the nation in the Old Testament so goes the individual believer in the new what is the application if there is one area of our life where we have not given to God the things that are God's we are not faithful we are not obedient other areas perhaps all areas of our life are going to begin to suffer it may be that we are remiss or disobedient or sinful in a personal relationship as a result of that our professional efforts are no longer blessed our social efforts are no longer blessed our hobby and spare time and personal interest efforts are no longer blessed sin in the camp

will taint everything we lose capacity for life we lose capacity for love we lose capacity for blessing and we lose the revoked but it is withheld sometimes even the promise of provision God will get our attention suddenly provision that we have taken for granted won't be there blessing that we have come to count on and even take for granted will suddenly vanish and instead of going to God and falling on our face and pouring dust on her head and saying oh God why is this happening to me it's a good time to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith the various areas of our life we might have to take the areas of our life as Joshua is going to do here tribe by tribe take it one section at a time and in this case God says there is an accursed thing in your midst oh Israel you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you many times we wonder why we're not making progress we wonder why there isn't more advance or why God doesn't seem to bless like we expected and we say I'm doing a good thing I'm following the will of God this is in many cases and I'm talking at large now in the Christian world people who have ministries people who have churches people who have homes and families evangelistic efforts overseas ministries and so on and and it doesn't seem to produce the fruit that was expected and you think well this is surely the will of God that these ministries take place that these benefits be accruing to people and the fruit be born and so on and it's not happening what's the matter well what does Israel have to do to identify this problem it is currently to Joshua and to ninety nine point nine percent of the people in Israel unknown where the problem is they have become painfully aware that there is a problem but they don't really know we often have sin of which we are consciously unaware we may not be fully cognizant of the omission or the commission of which we are guilty we haven't thought about it we haven't identified it we haven't applied the Word of God to it it is going to come to our attention only by seeking it out so God says get up cleanse the people sanctify the people the word here that is translated sanctify is from our root Kaddash which is where we get the word Kodesh holy they have found a few archaeological remnants where the inscription is there that indicates that something belongs to the temple and it says holy to the Lord and it's Kadosh La Adonai Kadosh La and the symbol for the Lord's name holy to the Lord all of the implements the vessels and so on were stamped and engraved with this legend and here you have that word Kodesh make holy the people cleanse the people sanctify the people say to them Kodesh yourselves and this is Hithkadshu I love the way that Hebrew words change and tell you what they are there is the Kal stem which is the active standard voice there is the Nipal which is the passive there is the Piel which is the intensive and then there is the Hithpail which is the reflexive stem we don't really have a stem in English for a reflexive word we have to say we have to put yourself after it you know wash yourself feed yourself get yourself over there or whatever but in Hebrew they can put it right into the verb and so this is a Hithpail there is also the Hithpallel and some other odd forms but this is a Hithpail essentially and it is reflexive Kadosh yourselves make yourselves holy you think well now wait a minute God is holy what can man do look God said make yourself holy he has made provision there is a way to be sanctified and that's what they are to do sanctify yourselves for tomorrow for thus says the Lord

there is an accursed thing in your midst there is Karam in your midst and Karam belongs to the Lord what are you doing with it you have something that you have kept to yourselves that belongs to God you cannot stand before your enemies and this is literally you cannot stand before the face of your enemies you cannot face your enemies all of our great memory verses put on the whole armor of God why that you may be able to stand in the evil day and having done all to stand God says if you've got something that belongs to me in your midst if you have stolen and then deceived you cannot stand before your enemies you're going to fall you're going to fail you're going to be defeated you're going to be slaughtered you cannot fulfill the mission you cannot fulfill the purpose you cannot take possession of the inheritance in the morning therefore verse 14 you shall be brought according to your tribes I find this fascinating there's all kinds of different ways God could have had you know a pillar of cloud settle over the tent of Achan could have been a star like guided the wise men that would have been a nice positive symbol but instead what does God do God's basically puts it in the hands of the Israelites you have to examine yourselves you have got to sanctify yourselves and assemble and you've got to go tribe by tribe and this connotes self-examination God is not going to run a bolt of lightning down there and say here's the problem he's not going to explode the ground under Achan's tent and expose the silks and the bars of metal and so on he says essentially to Israel you all need to cleanse yourselves you figure it out you go tribe by tribe you cast the lots and you it's just like artillery you establish a bracket first you find the tribe then you find the clan then you find the family then you find the individual and it's a process of elimination it's a process of narrowing down many times when we've got a spiritual problem when we know there's something to matter but we don't know what it is this is what we need to do process of elimination what am I responsible for to God what are my areas of responsibility I look at myself and I say well let's see I am a son to my parents and I know that I have a biblical responsibility to honor my parents to look out for them I am the eldest son I have a little bit extra responsibility in that regard because I've been around longer than my siblings and I as the sort of senior brother present afloat or whatever SPBA you know in the Navy they have the SOPA when you look around you got a bunch of ships all milling around in the water there they say well who's the SOPA that's the senior officer present afloat he's the guy in charge he commands the the flotilla or the whatever you got going there well we have to look around say am I the responsible individual here listen no matter what your group or what situation you may be the senior believer present afloat if you have learned the Word of God and you have a measure of maturity you have a responsibility as the stronger believer to look out for the weaker to provide some leadership to provide some direction to speak the truth in love and not let the inmates run the asylum not let the children take over the nursery and this has become an issue for some of us in a church if there is a leadership vacuum suddenly and there are many weak believers milling about pulling in this direction in that direction more mature believers have a responsibility to speak up and be heard now it may not engender a response you may not save the day but that's really not the measure the measure is not what the outcome

is the measure is did you do what you were supposed to do so in a marriage husband's have certain responsibilities to their wives wives have certain responsibilities to their husbands parents have certain responsibilities to their children children have certain responsibilities to their parents when we begin to go tribe by tribe and clan by clan through our life, we say, what is my responsibility? And many times as we begin to define and clarify those obligations, those duties before the Lord, we begin to see light enter murky situations. I have become aware that an employee is doing something unethical or illegal in the company, but this person is in a position where it's going to be very awkward if I say anything.

Should I say something or not? Should I rat out a fellow employee? Should I endanger my job? I'm just barely making ends meet. Should I, or should I not? Should I speak? Should I remain silent? Something has come to my attention? Well, that's not a cut and dried answer. There is a time to speak and a time to remain silent.

There is a time to make an issue and there is a time to let sleeping dogs lie. How do we know what we should do? Go through methodically, issue by issue, tribe by tribe, clan by clan, and clarify, review, meditate upon our specific, individual, biblical responsibility in that area. What does God say that pertains to that responsibility? It is incumbent upon a steward, the Bible says, that a man be found faithful.

Is this situation putting me in a position where I cannot faithfully execute my duties? Something needs to be done. Something needs to be said. Something needs to change.

Because the Bible says it is required of a steward that he be faithful. Over and over again, Jesus says, he that is faithful in that which is least will be faithful also in that which is much. Should you blow this off because it is a small thing? God says there is no such thing as a small thing.

Small things lead to big things. We go tribe by tribe, clan by clan, family by family to ascertain this is not a problem, this is not a problem, here is an area that has a problem. Now let me get more specific.

Let me focus on that. This is exactly what takes place in Israel. It shall be that the tribe which the Lord takes shall come according to families.

This tells us that the standard of evaluation that we use is not the opinion of people, it is not popularity, it is not our level of love and delight in any particular thing. It is the Lord's standard. When we look at the areas of our life, the categories of our responsibility, we look at them in the light of God's word.

We let God speak, we let God identify the tribe that has the problem. God says the Lord shall take the tribe that has the problem. God will speak, God will make it known.

It would have been so easy for God to just say to Joshua, there is sin in the camp, it is

Achan, son of Carmi, son of Zadvi, etc. God could have saved them all trouble. Why does He go through this elaborate procedure? Think about it.

Why does God put them through this elaborate procedure? There could be this lightning sort of secret police visit by Joshua and a couple of trusty aides to the tent of Achan to hustle him out of there by the shirt and drag him out in the midst of the people and say, this man has taken of the carom and he is to be stoned. And people are going to look at it like a news event. Oh, look at that.

Oh, Achan. Well, no wonder we couldn't take the next step in our campaign. But this way, everybody in Israel is involved.

Everybody has to sanctify themselves. Everybody has to troop and stomp. Everybody has to assemble by tribes.

Everybody is looking around to say, essentially, Lord is it I? Remember in the Old Testament, He is going to betray me. Everybody says, is it me? And this is a healthy thing. It is healthy to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith.

Don't assume as we are genetically inclined to do, that it's the other guy. Oh, of course, it's the other guy. Everybody in Israel is going to be able to say that except Achan and his family.

Yep, it's the other guy, not me. But there is a period of evaluation. Everybody is saying, you didn't accidentally pick up a coin or something out of the city.

Everybody is examining themselves and reviewing and making sure that he did exactly what the instructions required. This is a healthy thing. Self-examination.

Self-judgment is required of believers by the Word of God. When was the last time we sat down, cleared a space of 10 or 15 minutes and said, where am I with regard to the will of God for my life? Where am I in my marriage, or my family, or my efforts as a student, or as an employee, or as a person in business, or as wherever we are, whatever we are doing? When was the last time we sat down, cleared the decks and said, let me just assemble myself by tribes and let the Lord look over the areas of my life and make sure everything is as it should be? I am ashamed to say that often, in my case, it isn't until God gets my attention by some very remarkable event that I have not been consistent in that evaluation. And I'm sure it's the same for all of us.

It shall be the tribe which the Lord takes shall come according to families. Once you identify an area, now you've got to get specific. You've got to break it down.

Increase the magnification on the microscope here. The family which the Lord takes shall come by households, and the household which the Lord takes shall come man by man. Then it shall be that he who is taken with the kerim shall be burned with fire.

Fire is universally a symbol of judgment. In the Bible it is usually divine judgment. It is permanent.

It is entire. He and all that he has will be burned with fire because he has transgressed the covenant of the Lord and because he has done a disgraceful thing in Israel. Now this word for disgraceful is nalah n-apostrophe-b-a-l-a-h and the lexicon says that this means disgraceful folly, foolishness.

It has as its primary meaning senselessness. Senselessness. It is used of being inhospitable.

Do you remember Nabal? In 1 Samuel chapter 25 and Abigail comes out to stop David from slaughtering Nabal because he has insulted and denigrated David's men and refused to provide for them after they have provided security for him. And she goes out and prostrates herself in the road and stops David and she says, Please let not my Lord regard this scoundrel Nabal for as his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name and nalah is with him.

It's a word play. They're from the same root. Nabal, nalah, it's all the same.

Foolishness. He has, Joshua 7, 15, transgressed the covenant of the Lord and has done a foolish thing. Disgraceful because it's foolish in Israel.

So, verse 16, Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel by their tribes and the tribe of Judah was taken. This is an embarrassment. Judah is the leadership tribe.

It's equally embarrassing when you begin to look and try to figure out well, what's going wrong in my household and you find out that as the husband, it's your fault. As the father, it's your fault. As the ostensible leader of the household, it's you that's screwed up.

It's very humiliating. This is what happens in Israel. It's the tribe of Judah, the leadership tribe.

So, amongst the clans of Judah, the Lord takes the family of the Zerahites. When the families are brought, family by family, Zabdi is taken and the households within that clan or family of Zabdi are brought man by man. Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah of the tribe of Judah was taken.

And this is why we had at the very beginning and again here, the lineage of Achan because Achan has disgraced himself. He has brought destruction on himself and his immediate family and he has brought disgrace not only to himself and to his family, but to all of the sons of Carmi, all of the sons of Zabdi, all of the sons of Zerah, all of the tribe of Judah. I was reminded today of some of the weird stuff that goes on under the ostensible banner of Christianity.

I mentioned once before I think several months back about this group of quote unquote Baptists who go around to the funerals of guys that have been killed in Iraq and make all kinds of picketing and protests and you cannot believe, I'm not even going to dignify this group. They're up in Topeka, Kansas and they claim to be Christians, they claim to be a Baptist church, but you cannot believe the nonsense that goes on due to rampant and overflowing self-righteousness. They believe that in their anti-homosexuality, for example, that this justifies all manner of slander, all manner of abuse.

They put out bumper stickers that say God hates you. They put out pictures of the American flag that say the fag flag because they believe that America is going to be destroyed by God for its tolerance of homosexuality, etc. The point being, someone like that is going to get held up to all Christians.

As an example, oh yeah, you're a Christian, here's a Christian. All of us suffer when any believer runs amok. This lady that sawed the arms off her little daughter was a Christian listening to a Christian station on the radio while she mutilated and killed her daughter.

This woman that drove her kids all into the river and drowned them all was a Christian hearing God's voice in her head and so on. It disgraces all of us. People who engage in foolishness allegedly in the name of God and in the name of Christ disgrace all of us.

And we are all held to account for the extreme stupidity of a few. There can be millions of Christians, but people are going to point to the five that are complete whack job nutcase fruit loops. And that's what people are going to remember as Christians.

So this is the type of thing that's going on here when it's not just the household of Achan, but everyone associated with him all the way up to and including the entire tribe and the nation as a whole has been penalized by God for this sin. Why do I belabor that point? It is not a casual responsibility to identify and eliminate sin in our spiritual camp. Failing to do so has far reaching repercussions.

We are unavailable to be used by God to achieve victories in the spiritual conflict. We are going to be stopped at the first sight of the enemy. We will not be able to stand.

We will disgrace ourselves and others. Achan is personally responsible for the death of 36 fine, upstanding, un sinful warriors in Israel because of his mistake. There was a movie that we watched the other night that is an account of a rescue.

It's a dramatization and these things are based on a true story. But it truly did happen. The movie is called The Great Raid.

It is the story of men who were captured by the Japanese in World War II, were on the Bataan Death March, and were taken to a prison camp and held. As U.S. forces began to retake that area and advance toward Japan, the Japanese in desperation slaughtered POWs in the camps rather than releasing them. This was the imminent fate of over 500

men at this particular camp.

It's a long name that starts with a C. I can't reproduce it. There was a rescue mission undertaken by a group of Army Rangers. One of the scenes that is dramatized in this movie, the Major who is the senior officer there, is trying to hold everyone together and inspire them and keep them playing by the rules within the camp so that nobody suffers more than they have to.

But he's got malaria and he can't he gets so weak that he can't be there. So there is another individual who has threatened several times to escape. The Japanese secret police who come and take over the camp shortly before this destruction of all the prisoners says, if any of you attempt to escape, 10 of you will pay the price.

So the Major with the malaria says look, Fred, don't escape. Don't try and escape. It's not worth it and you're going to cost people.

And this guy says, well, as long as I don't feel like it, I won't. The Major details two guys to watch him, but they fall asleep. The guy makes an escape.

He is recaptured and it is a very graphic scene, probably the most memorable in the movie where the Japanese take 10 individuals picking them more or less at random out of the lineup of all of these 500 plus prisoners and force them to kneel in a line in the sand and this individual who made the escape is number 11 and as they kneel, the Japanese go behind them with a pistol and one by one shoot them and execute them. 10 men pay the price because this one individual didn't care enough to be obedient, to follow the rules and the orders of those appointed over him and it's a very powerful image. This is the same image that the people of Israel had in their minds as they assemble and as the guilt of the offending party is slowly determined and identified.

Who is responsible for the death of these 36 men who need not have died, who should not have died, who themselves did nothing wrong? Our sins have consequences. Our sins prevent us from winning spiritual victories. Our sins, as far as our part in God's plan is concerned, slow everything down and stop progress and it is exceedingly important that we not lose sight of the fact that we do not sin unto ourselves.

The Bible says no man lives unto himself and no man dies unto himself. And if we die spiritually, if we fail to bear fruit and fail to function as we should, others in our periphery will pay the price. Count on it.

And most all of us know this from personal experience. Our failures cause pain and cause heartache for others and you can't take it back. Joshua doesn't go and resurrect the 36 men, does he? What's done is done.

You can't unring the bell. You can't unsend the sin. And God doesn't say, now Achan, I hope you've learned a lesson from this.

Let's bring these men back and let's all go on. It's done and it's over. And it stands as an example in Israel, just like that man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath.

To his credit, when Joshua says to Achan, my son, I beg you, give glory to the Lord God of Israel and make confession to Him. He doesn't say make confession to us. He doesn't say apologize to us, Achan.

Apologize to the families of these 36 men who died. He says, make confession to God. Tell me now what you have done.

Do not hide it from me. Achan answered Joshua and said, indeed, I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel. This is what I have done.

And he gives the details, which we'll look at next time. These details are not without their own significance. But hopefully we see the point.

Why is this story preserved out of all of the many things that no doubt happened in the days of the nation of Israel and the career of Joshua? Why is this told in such great detail? All of these things have been written for our instruction. It is important for us to make sure that there is no sin in our camp because the consequences are severe. Let's close here in a word of prayer.

We'll pick up in verse 20 and 21 next time. Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for the graphic illustrations that teach us the timeless truths of your plan and purpose for us in this age.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress them in our hearts. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.