

Joshua 07-05-04a

This is Friday, the 4th of May 2007. We continue our study in the book of Joshua, resuming at chapter 7, the end of chapter 7, beginning of chapter 8. We will take a moment as we begin, as is our custom, to go before the Lord in prayer. It gives us a chance to focus our thoughts and our attention on the study of God's Word.

Shall we pray? Father, we are grateful for the standing we have before you because of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of Him, we have righteousness and peace and sanctification. We have a future.

We have a purpose. We have a destiny. We have blessings.

We have provision. We have hope. All because of your love for us, expressed through the Lord Jesus.

We thank you for your Word and for the Holy Spirit who makes it understandable to us. We ask your blessing on us as we make an investigation of it this evening, that each one of us may find in the things that we study, those truths and spiritual resources that will enable us to live as you would have us to live and do what you would have us to do. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. The second generation of Israelites who have been freed from slavery and bondage in Egypt after 40 years of wandering and after the death of the entire first generation with two exceptions, has crossed the Jordan into the land. The first memorial erected by the nation of Israel in the land was what? A heap of stones.

What does a heap of stones represent? Twelve stones taken from the center of the water course of the raging Jordan River which God stopped and halted 17 miles upstream so that they could cross on dry ground just as their fathers had crossed 40 years earlier the Yam Suf, the Reed Sea. And it was a reminder that they were making the same kind of start that their fathers made, but with greater faith, with greater confidence, with the presence of God and with obedience to God's Word and God's plan. And they not only leave lives that were circular in their wanderings and destinationless in terms of their goal, now they are crossing in to accomplish the plan and purpose of God which is twofold.

What is the purpose of Israel going into the land? There are really two purposes, aren't there? One is to establish the nation of Israel, God's people, to fulfill the promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to fulfill the hope of Joseph when he had his bones encrypted, if you will, above ground as a reminder with instructions, don't bury me, take me with you when you go, because God is going to fulfill his promise. So entrance into the land is the fulfillment, at least the early initial fulfillment of what will be an ultimate fulfillment in the Millennial Kingdom. What is the second purpose? What did God tell Abraham way

back in Genesis? Your descendants are going to be oppressed 400 years until something happens, until the iniquity of the Amorites is full.

The iniquity of the Amorites is now full. What is God's specific instruction to this generation of Israelites? Go in and wipe them out. If you want the short version and you don't want to name all seven kinds of ites, all the different flavors of Amorites, all the different flavors of Canaanites, in a word, it is, go in and wipe them out.

Men, women and children. Now this has been cited by atheists and naysayers and ne'er-do-wells for centuries as a horrible thing. What kind of a God do you serve? This baby-killing, pregnant woman-slaughtering, judgmental God of the Old Testament.

What kind of a religion is Christianity that would adopt and study and live by a Bible that has such instructions and such stories in it? Your God is a violent God. He's a vindictive God. He's an implacable God.

He's not a God worthy of worship. If you hear such things, if you are invited to participate in a discussion where such a notion is raised, remember this. Unlike other nations, such as those who have structured their government on the ideas of Engels and Marx, I had the wonderful privilege of printing out the Communist Manifesto this past week and reading it again to refresh my memory.

The common idea that's floating around in our public schools now is that communism is really a pretty wonderful form of government. It's been abused and there's been a few bad guys who got a hold of it, but it's basically a good form of government because you don't have power concentrated in the hands of a few. You don't have property or industry or anything concentrated in the hands of a few.

You distribute it equally. It's a commune. We have all things in common.

That's like the early church did. Isn't it wonderful? You have Christians talking about what a great thing communism is. It absolutely makes me want to have a stroke listening to this sort of a thing.

Go back and read the Communist Manifesto written in 1847, published in the early 1900s, adopted by Marx, Lenin, Stalin, and the rest of these murdering sons of Belial, and read what it says. It is not sufficient for a small country to do what Ho Chi Minh and Stalin and a lot of these other guys did, which is in the implementation of communism. How do you start? Well, you take over the country and you say, We're communists.

Hi there. We're here to stay. We've ousted the old government.

You look around and you say, Well, we've got all of the proletariat out here, all the worker bees. They don't have anything. They don't own anything.

We're the new sheriff in town. We're the new government. So let's find all of the bourgeoisie.

Let's find all the property owners, all of the factory owners, all of the landowners, and line them all up against the wall and mow them down, execute them, kill them by the hundreds of thousands, because we've got to get their stuff. It's really kind of regrettable that we have to do this, but how else are you going to get a hold of all of the property and all of the industry and everything that has material value so that you can distribute it to the proletariat if you don't murder the bourgeoisie? And this is why communism is always a murdering government. They talk about sweet Uncle Ho and what a great patriot he was over in Vietnam.

Go back to 1945 when he took over the country and count all of the, quote, unquote, Can you imagine bourgeoisie in Vietnam? I mean, come on. They were these little guys in pajamas and straw hats who had a little plot of ground. Ho lined them up and shot them all and took their stuff so that he could be the big communist grandfather of the nation.

Look at his reforms in the mid-50s after he'd been in 10 or 12 years, and he made another center. Listen, you have to look hard. You go to websites.

Go to Wikipedia and this communist encyclopedia they've got on the web. You've got to watch that thing because it's a communist encyclopedia. Everybody contributes.

Everybody has a say. There's some of the biggest misinformation in the world up on Wikipedia. Go look at the article on Uncle Ho, and you have to look hard to even find one line about the massacre he perpetrated in the mid-50s or the massacre he perpetrated in the mid-40s or what a murdering devil he was as the communist leader of that country.

Well, I digress. There are genuine murderers. There are genuine mass slaughterings that take place.

And what is it in the name of? We are the wonderful benevolent government who's going to provide for all of your needs and take care of you. What happens when a communist government takes over? They become the bourgeoisie who lives in the dachas and the villas and the Swiss Alpine mansions and so on. Look at what happened in communist Russia.

Where did all of the big-wig government officials live? Were they living down there amongst the proletariat, going to work every day and standing in line for bread and so on? No. They basically murdered the bourgeoisie, became the bourgeoisie, and distributed a small fraction of the proceeds of their murdering and thieving to the proletariat just enough to keep them working so that they could amass more. It's a heinous, evil, godless form of government.

Well, that's evil. When you take honest, hard-working people and penalize them, you make it illegal to have private ownership of anything. It is illegal.

Read Engels. Read the Manifesto. If you haven't read it lately, get a copy.

It's not long. And read the thing. If you want to know why we fought the Cold War, if you want to know why we were ready to face down the Red Chinese and the communist Russians and everybody else back in the 50s and 60s, go back and read what we were up against.

The new idea is, well, all of the people from the generation of the 50s and 60s, they were just infected with McCarthyism, and they were paranoid and fearful, and they weren't really objective. If they had been able to be objective, they would have seen that, really, communism was no threat, and it's actually a very wonderful form of government when it's done right, and we should really give it another shot. Because the mean old Americans, with their imperialist domination of the world and their meddling in the affairs of others, started the Spanish-American War, started World War I, started World War II, started the Korean War, started the Vietnam War.

It's all the mean old United States' fault. And we've been a bad nation. We've been a bad country.

There's nothing to be proud of. And if we ever get taken over, well, we deserve it, because we're just an evil nation. This is what's in your Texas public schools, in the English classes, in the history classes, social studies classes, geography classes, any class down there, get a textbook and read it and look at the way the history of our country is presented.

It has been rewritten. It couldn't be any worse if the things had been published in Moscow 30 years ago. Now, people say, well, look at your Bible.

You've got a god who's sending the Israelites in, and they're murdering people by the thousands. This is the pot calling the kettle black. A. God is not in the communist government.

God does not say to the bourgeoisie, you are evil, conniving, sinful, god-hating murderers of my people, and therefore you are under judgment. Communists murder people because they have something the communists want, like a country, or land, or a business, or some other form of real property. And they murder you just because you have what they want.

This is what criminals do. This is what a mugger does. When God sent Israel, think about this.

Mount Sinai, God's up there talking to Moses, face glowing, lightning, thunder, clouds,

and so on. What is the commission that God gives to his people? Does he say, now, you Israelites, I'm going to prepare you, I'm going to teach you in the wilderness, I'm going to arm you, I'm going to be with you, and so on, and you're going to take over the world. Murder everybody, take the whole thing over.

I'm going to go send you against the Assyrians, who aren't really too much around yet, but they will be. I'm going to send you up against the Hittites way up in the north. I'm going to send you against all of the proto-populations of Greece and Rome and Africa and around into Asia Minor and over into the Orient.

I'm going to cover the earth with my people, and they are going to slaughter and maim and kill and take over everything in sight. I will make an empire bigger than the Roman Empire, bigger than the Greek Empire, which is still future. Bigger than everything.

You people are going to go forth and just hack your way all over the globe. Is that the commission? What is the specific instruction? You are going to go into this small patch of land that belongs to me, that I have given to my servant Abraham and his descendants. Abraham and his descendants had to leave.

Other people have taken it over, and they have become exceedingly sinful. They are child sacrificers. They are temple prostitutes.

They are perverts of every shape, size, and description. And their iniquity has reached the point that the pre-flood population of the earth reached. It is a danger to the rest of the civilized world to allow this cesspool of evil to continue.

I am going to use my people as a scourge and as a judgment, and this specific set of peoples are going to be eliminated. All of them. They are not going to have any descendants.

You want to make an argument for genetic predisposition to evil? I wouldn't. Somebody might. But for whatever reason, God said, I don't even want you raising their kids.

In some cases, I don't even want you keeping their animals. Kill everything. Everything that breeds.

Slaughter it. It is all contaminated. This is a picture of God's righteous judgment on those who reject Him.

You as an adult reject God. Your family is going to suffer. You as an adult are disobedient to God, apathetic toward God, indifferent toward God, hostile toward God.

Not only are you judged, but you have a periphery. You have a sphere of influence. The judgment on you is going to radiate out to them.

There is cursing by association. If you want to feel sorry for the little children who got

killed in Canaan when the Israelites went in, blame their parents. Their parents brought down the wrath of God on those nations.

It is the parents' fault. Households are sanctified by the God-fearing individual who dwells therein. The entire city of Sodom could have been rescued from destruction if there had been ten righteous people in it.

God would have spared all the rest. This tells you something about the land of Canaan. There were no righteous people.

They were full of iniquity. They were like the fool who says in his heart there is no God. So, draw a distinction in your mind, and in any discussion you have with people who try to badmouth the God of the Old Testament, this is a narrow, specific, limited, one-time judgment on a people who had 400 years to get the message.

Abraham and his descendants circulated in this area talking about the truth of Abraham's God, and these people didn't get it. Rahab heard about it. She was delivered.

We'll talk about her in a moment. The people of the Old Testament and the God of the Old Testament are not slaughter-happy, sword-swinging, murdering types. It's limited.

It's specific. It's not written in the laws of Israel, Behold, when thou shalt come upon another people on thy borders, thou shalt slay them all, and leave not one alive. That's not a part of the Constitution of Israel.

They were to clear out a specific place. It is as though God drew the most evil elements of early ancient Near Eastern culture and civilization into the vacuum left by the departure of Jacob and his sons. Drew them all in there.

They have contact. They have opportunity. They hear about the God of Israel.

They reject Him, and God brings His people back and clears them out. One time, limited judgment from God, delineated by a righteous and just and merciful God. It isn't ubiquitous.

It isn't something as a universal principle for Israel, much less the Church. So, we want to make that distinction. Secondly, when God does send His people in, what is He doing? He is sending a message.

These people are going to be judged. Now, God could have done it another way. He could have kept His people over on the other side and sent a great plague through the land and wiped everybody out with a virus or a bacterial disease of some sort.

They could have all gotten VD and died and rotted away. Ten years later, the Israelites could have moved in and then nobody would be saying what a vindictive, implacable, horrible God of the Old Testament there is because these people would have just died of

natural causes and the land would have been vacant and empty. God brings His people in to despoil these squatters, these who have come into a land that has been deeded and ceded by God to His people and have come in there and have cultivated all manner of evil.

But there is a message that God sends to the entire rest of the world. God doesn't just judge because He is angry and vindictive. He uses this judgment to send a message.

This judgment on the Canaanites and on the Amorites in the land, the people in the plains and the people in the hills, resonates down through history. God never has to do this again, although He is going to do some more judgment through King David and his armies to broaden and expand the kingdom some and clean up the stuff that the first bunch under Joshua didn't finish. But it's essentially a one-time thing and the record of it down through history speaks a message.

The record of it at the time spoke a message. What is the nature of that message? Well, you better believe in God or He's going to murder you? Not exactly. I'm going to read you a little bit from one of the most erudite and knowledgeable and fascinating guys you will ever find on the subject of culture and history, the ancient Near East, is Alfred Eidersheim.

Many of you are familiar with the life and times of Jesus the Messiah and so on. He's got another work that's equally good and is sort of a companion to that. It's called Bible History.

It's seven volumes of similar material, what we used to call the isagogics, the cultural background, the historical framework and context in which biblical events take place. Let me read you a little bit of what Eidersheim says about this particular period. It was one of the main principles of heathenism.

It's what we've just been talking about. One of the main principles of heathenism that each of their god's many was limited in his activity to one special object. They didn't have omnipotent gods, like our God.

It would be a specialty god. You think about the Romans and the Greeks with Mars, he's the god of war, Bacchus is the god of wine, etc. What the Canaanites had heard of Jehovah showed him to be the god of nature.

Does this make sense? What had Rahab and the rest of them heard about what went on in Egypt? He craved, you don't get that kind of language anymore, he craved the Red Sea and arrested the waters of Jordan. They had heard of the plagues in Egypt, natural phenomena, darkness, water, bugs, animals, nature. He's a nature god.

And you remember at the time that we studied the nine plagues plus one in Egypt, three sets of three, how God pitted himself against, if you will, the Egyptian conception of their

gods and what their gods controlled and were able to do. Their great god of the Nile, blown out of the water, so to speak. Their gods of light, remember the long-faced pharaoh there with his sun god thing, the whole deal with light and all that.

He took one Egyptian god, just excluded all others, and he was the sun god, the guy associated with light. So God put him in darkness for several days, and so on. And so there was this obvious contrast specifically in Egypt.

But the people far off probably heard of this, but they're thinking, well, this is all nature. He split the sea, he split the river, he's a god of nature. And so far, also, he is the god of battles as to give victory over the Amorite kings.

Remember Og, king of Bashan, and the stuff that they did in the Transjordan, on the eastern side of the Jordan. So, well, he seems to be a god of battles and he's a god of nature. What they don't know yet, as Joshua and the Israelites sit at Gilgal and prepare to attack Jericho, is what about a fortified city? Jericho is one of the premier fortified cities in the land.

Is he a god of fortresses? Maybe he's got limits. He's good with nature, he's good with pitched battles in a plain, but you put him up against a fortress and he's got no juice, he's got no power. Was his strength also the same as against their gods in reducing strong fortresses? Of that, at any rate, they had no experience.

Trivial as such a question may sound in our ears, Eidersheim says, we have evidence that it was seriously entertained by heathendom. To mention only one instance, we know that a similar suggestion was made at a much later period, not by obscure men, but by the servants and trusted advisors of Ben-Hadad, and that it was acted upon by that monarch in the belief that Jehovah is a god of the hills, but he is not god of the valleys. You find that in 1 Kings 20, 28.

Remember that whole thing with Ben-Hadad? Well, he's good in one kind of terrain, but not the other. At any rate, it was worth the trial, and Jericho, as already stated, was the strongest fortress in Canaan, and the key to the whole country. So this is what's at stake.

God is blessing his people. He is fulfilling covenant promise to his people as he brings them into the land. He is also judging evil and those who are god-rejecting in the population.

Now, keeping that in mind, we have two conclusions we can draw. One is in the area of personal observation, interpretation, and application. Our presence on this earth, now and in the future, has a similar two-fold purpose.

God wants to bless us. He wants to fulfill, and is going to fulfill, to those who by faith and patience qualify to inherit the promises. God is going to fulfill those promises through Christ, in Christ, because of Christ, all around Christ.

Christ is the firstborn among many brethren. He's not the firstborn among all brethren, by the way. He is the firstborn among many brethren, because many brethren are gathered around him to share in the spoils of victory.

But many other brethren are going to be in the darkness which is outside. Those who by faith and patience qualify to inherit are going to be standing with him. To him that overcomes, I will grant, Jesus says, seven times.

Seven-fold fulfillment to overcomers. Sit with him on his throne. Walk with him in white.

Have a white stone and a new name. Partake of the hidden manna, and so on. Now, that's one purpose, and we love to think about that.

But we have another purpose. Our presence on this earth is a lamp and a light. It is a light shining in a dark place.

And our presence is a contrast and a judgment upon sin and evil. We are representing, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, through the indwelling Word of God, which brings about the indwelling of the Son and the Father, we are God's presence on this earth. Now you know what it is that stands in the way of the man of sin.

And when it is taken out of the way, the man of sin is going to be revealed. This is Paul's argument. You remember it well.

We are light. We are salt. We are that which flavors and seasons.

And we are also that which stands as a rebuke and as a judgment. Because whenever someone says, well, I can't help it. It's just the way I am.

I was born this way. My environment made me this way. There's one of us who came from the same sort of genetic pool, who's gone through the same kind of environment, who has had the same or worse start in life and has trusted Christ and has been transformed by the renewing of the mind.

And we stand as a rebuke and as a judgment on those who would blame God for their negativity, for their unrighteousness. We are a judgment. We are the people of God sent and commissioned to judge sin and evil on this earth.

Now, where do these two things converge? What if we ourselves fail? What if we indulge and cultivate sin, unrighteousness, and evil? What if we tolerate it in our midst? What if we tolerate it in our life? Even in one area of our life. Maybe we are sterling in nine parts out of ten, but there's one area. Maybe it's late at night on the Internet.

Maybe it's when we get around other people and start to talk and gossip. Maybe it's when we do our taxes. Maybe it's when we're engaged in some form of conversation where verbal sins creep in.

Maybe it's a sin of the tongue. Maybe it's a mental attitude sin or a cluster of mental attitude sins. Maybe we just can't get over this grudge or this hatred or this worry or this issue with other people.

Typically, our mental attitude sins tend to do with people. Our overt sins have to do with material things. Our sins of the tongue are always committed.

Talking to somebody else. You can't commit a sin of the tongue sitting around by yourself. Anymore, it can be the sin of the email or the sin of the instant messenger or whatever.

But if we tolerate, if we allow sin in the camp, what does this do to God's overall program? If God has to come in and judge what He is trying to use to judge the outside, it halts the whole program. And this is exactly what happens. Joshua and the armies of Israel are coming in to fulfill this historic program of God.

The 400 years are up. The iniquity of the Amorites is full. Here comes the rod of God to smite those who have rejected Him, who have steeped themselves in unrighteousness.

And now the rod is about to crack and break in God's hand because it doesn't have integrity. It is itself infected with the very evil that God is trying to stamp out. So everything grinds to a halt.

Joshua falls on his face. The people are weeping. Thirty-six men are dead.

And nothing... In the meantime, the evil people are not... What are they thinking? Here's God making this great grand point. Yes, I am the God of fortresses. But they're saying, they totally failed to take this little two-bit village of Ai.

So what is He not the God of? What have those people of Ai got? And they're trying to calculate and figure out, hey, there appears to be an Achilles heel. There's some kind of a weak spot. This is the same idea that Balak had when he hired Balaam.

There's got to be a weak area. I think they like women a little too much. Let's send in the Midianite women and we'll undermine them and catch their chink in their armor.

So this is a major setback. And this is why the judgment on Achan is so profound and so public and so severe. Because there are bigger things at issue.

Do you think Achan thought about any of this when he grabbed the wedge of gold? When he grabbed 500 shekels of silver and a Babylonian garment? Was he thinking about the great grand program of God in human history? Of the fullness of time for this judgment and for this fulfillment of covenant promise? He forgot who he was. He forgot why he was there. And he just got greedy.

I want something for myself. Look at this stuff. What a waste.

What a shame for this to be Charim and to go to God. And he got self-centered. And he lost sight of the strategic goals.

He even lost sight of the tactical goals. All he thought was, wouldn't it be great if I had this stuff? Self-gratification. And this is our Achilles heel.

This is our weak spot. It gratifies human nature to do various things. To fill in the blank of your mental attitude sin, your sin of the tongue, your overt sin.

We always commit these sins because we like it. It appeals. Even feeling sorry for ourselves.

Even self-pity is appealing. Self-pity is self-centeredness. Feeling sorry for yourself and saying, woe is me, is arrogant.

Who are you to think that your problems are too great for God's provision, God's plan, and God's purpose? You want to be like the first batch of Israelites, the ten spies who disagreed with Caleb and Joshua. The problems are too big. I feel sorry for myself there.

We're like grasshoppers in their sight. I know these grapes are big, but think of all the people. We're like ants.

There's no way we can do this. Oh, my problems are too big and God is too small. You haven't seen what I've seen.

I've been in there. I saw these great big guys. Nonsense.

If you wallow in self-pity, you have blasphemed the Lord God. You have no reason. There's nothing that enters the life of a believer that God has not programmed, that God has not intended.

Do you want to say something has entered your life that God did not intend? Your problem is bigger than God? Your problem outfoxed, outsmarted, outmaneuvered God? Well, God didn't see this coming. God couldn't handle this. It slipped under the defenses.

God posted the angelic guards, but the demons were stronger and they got in there and got me. Blasphemy, self-pity, arrogance, pride. It afflicts us all.

And it will stop the plan of God. It will stop the forward progress. It will stop our inheritance.

It will stop our conquest of the land. It will stop the fulfillment of God's covenant blessings if we let sin enter the camp. Self-centeredness, covetousness, any form of sin.

Individually, we can penalize all the people around us, just the way Achan does all the people of Israel. Now, think about this. Dispensationally speaking, we have a contrast.

In this conquest of Jericho, there are two individuals, besides Joshua, that are spoken of. Who are the two individuals that we have by name in this story? Two individual names. Who are they? Who's the lady with the rope in the window? Rahab.

Who's the guy with the gold under the stuff in his tent? Achan. Achan is what nationality? He's an Israelite. Rahab is what? Canaanite.

If we were using more modern terms, Achan is a Jew. Rahab is a Gentile. The Old Testament people of God are Jews and Israelites.

The New Testament people of God are largely Gentiles. Who gets delivered in this scenario? Who is under the threat of destruction, but is delivered because of faith? Rahab. Who is a part of the people of God, but because of lack of faith is destroyed? Achan.

Is there perhaps a suggestion of larger dispensational truth here? Even at the point that Israel receives fulfillment of these earthly temporal land promises under Joshua, lack of faith causes that branch to be broken out of the tree of God's plan and purpose, and another branch is grafted in. They lose exactly one entire family when Achan is stoned. Achan, his wife, and all of his children are destroyed.

They also gain exactly one family. Rahab, her father and mother, and her brothers, and all that are with them, come out. There is a one-for-one swap.

Achan is broken out of the tree. Rahab is grafted in. Which branch in that tree, if you had to guess, is the most fruitful and productive branch of all.

Rahab is the great-grandmother of King David. That's where you find fulfillment. Her faith overcomes all obstacles.

She was apparently born in Jericho. She's a Gentile. She's a Canaanite woman.

And yet, look at the contribution she makes to the plan and purpose of God by faith. Achan is of what tribe? Tribe of Judah. Rulership tribe.

You've got everything going for him. And what happens? He and all that he has and his posterity is cut off for lack of faith, for disobedience, self-centeredness. It's a powerful, powerful picture and reminder that we cannot take for granted that because we are in Christ, because we are saved, because we go to Bible class and we've got a lot of notes, that we are headed for glorious inheritance.

We have got to ensure that there is no sin in the camp. Purge out the old leaven. Touch not the unclean thing.

This, by the way, Achan's sin is a metaphor for the problem that is going to plague Israel ever after. Turn with me to Zechariah 5. Zechariah turns. This is the famous flying scroll

thing.

Fifteen feet wide, thirty feet long, whatever it is. I turned and raised my eyes. I saw there a flying scroll.

He said to me, What do you see? I answered, I see a flying scroll. Its length is twenty cubits and its width ten cubits. Cubits is about a foot and a half.

So this is thirty feet by fifteen feet. As scrolls go, this is a whopping big scroll. You can't miss it.

And it's in the air. You can't miss it. It's like a billboard.

He said to me, This is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole earth. What is the curse? Every thief shall be expelled, according to this side of the scroll, and every perjurer shall be expelled, according to that side of it. I will send out the curse, says the Lord of hosts.

It shall enter the house of the thief and the house of the one who swears falsely by my name. It shall remain in the midst of his house and consume it with its timber and with its stones. What is the nature of this curse? Taking what does not belong to you, making a commitment that you do not keep, swearing falsely, taking a false oath.

That's the curse. If you want to see this even more clearly, turn to Malachi chapter 3. Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight.

Behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts, but who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like launderer's soap. Now, you've heard this. You've heard Handel's Messiah however many times.

But think about it. He's like a refiner's fire and like what? Launderer's soap. What does the refiner's fire get applied to? Look at the next verse.

He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver, purifying the priests, the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver. What do they take? Gold and silver. What do you use launderer's soap on? Laundry.

Garments. Launderer's soap, you don't bathe with it. You don't do your face with it.

It's laundry soap. There is gold, there is silver, and there are fine, clean garments. White, spotless.

Launderer's soap makes your garments white. He will purify the sons of Levi. What is the uniform of the sons of Levi? What is the uniform of the priests? White robe, right? That's

the garment of the priests.

I always thought that was the most impractical color. What do the priests do all day long? How easy is it to get blood out of a white shirt? You ever cut yourself shaving or something and gotten blood on a white shirt? God prescribed white linen garments for the priests. Aaron, in his regalia for the day of atonement and so on, is white from head to toe.

Launderer's soap. Gold and silver. Purification, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness.

Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasant to the Lord as in the days of old, as in former years. And I will come near you for what? For blessing? For judgment? I will be a swift witness against sorcerers, adulterers, perjurers, those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans, and against those who turn away the stranger, who turn away the alien. Because why? They do not fear me.

What they do, they do out of covetousness. What they do, they do out of self-centeredness. What they do, they do to please themselves and not to please the Lord.

Verse 6, I am the Lord, I do not change. Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob. Yet from the days of your fathers, you have gone away from my ordinances and have not kept them.

Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. But you say, in what way shall we return? We don't think we ever left. How are we going to return when we've never left? We don't have a need to return.

Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed me. You say, in what way have we robbed you? In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed me, even this whole nation.

You have taken what belongs to God and kept it for yourself. This is the context of the bring the tithes into the storehouse thing. Everybody that wants to come to Malachi 3.10 wants to get people to give 10% to the church.

What is the context? Don't take unto yourself that which belongs to God. Don't live your life. Don't operate your body as a sacrifice to yourself.

It should be a living sacrifice to God. Bring the tithes in and see if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing. There won't be room to receive it.

Well, this is the lesson of Achan. This is the message of Rahab. This is the balance of these two named individuals in the rubble of the walls of Jericho.

Let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we'll pick up our study in Joshua 7-8.