Elder's Corner

Then Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the garment, the wedge of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, and all that he had, and they brought them to the Valley of Achor. And Joshua said, "Why have you troubled us? The Lord will trouble you this day." So all Israel stoned him with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones.
(Josh. 7:24, 25)

After forty years of wandering the **children of Israel** finally entered the promised land. They had witnessed **the mighty hand of the Lord** stopping the flow of the **Jordan** River which was in flood stage so they could cross over on **dry ground (Josh. 3:16, 17; 4:23, 24).** Sons of **the children of Israel** who had not **been circumcised** during the forty years of wandering were **circumcised** after crossing the **Jordan (Josh. 5:7),** and then **Passover** was observed, the **manna ceased** and they began to eat **the produce of the land (Josh. 5:10-12).** The instructions that **the Lord** gave for the conquest of **the city** of Jericho seem to have been followed well, and **the city** was easily taken **(Josh. 6:20, 21),** once again evidence of **the mighty hand of the Lord.**

But chapter 7 begins with "but." Often what that portends is not good. The easy victory that **the children of Israel** had experienced over Jericho brought complacency. The spies who went to search out Ai advised **Joshua, ". . . Do not let all the people do up but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not weary all the people there, for the people of Ai are few (Josh. 7:3).** That mistaken advice led to defeat. Today we in the church must be careful about easy victories—perhaps over sin or other important issues—can cause complacency, then carelessness, and then defeat. **Joshua** was shocked, he was distraught and brought his **"why"** question before the ark of **the Lord**— **"Why have you brought us this far to destroy us" (Josh. 7:7).** Our Lord's answer must have shocked **Joshua, "Israel has sinned" (Josh. 7:11).** It seems that one of the instructions that **the Lord** gave as they prepared to **take the city** of Jericho was not heeded:

> **And you, by all means abstain from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. (Josh. 6:18)**

The Lord God let **Joshua** know that someone had taken of the **accursed things,** that is why they **couldn't stand before their enemies in Ai (Josh. 7:11, 12).** What **God** had declared as devoted for Himself, sadly, a man had **coveted and** determined to use for his benefit and pleasure **(Josh. 6:19; 7:21).**

Joshua was instructed to bring all the tribes before the Lord the following **morning,** and He would take them by **tribe** and clan and **by family**, and finally **man by man (Josh 7:14)** until He identified the guilty **household**. A **man** named **Achan** was identified by **the Lord God** as the guilty one. When **Achan** could no longer hide his guilt, he confessed. **"I saw"** and "**I coveted"** and **"I took"** and **"I hid them in the midst of my tent" (Josh. 7:20, 21). Joshua 7:24, 25** above reveals that **Joshua** promptly administered the punishment prescribed by **the Lord God (Josh. 7:12, 15).** Because all his **family** was put to death with him, it's evident that they were complicit with their father in their disobedience of **the Lord.** No doubt **Achan** had witnessed **God** disciplining His people in the wilderness with His **mighty hand,** yet he convinced himself that He could sin against **the Lord God,** doubting that he would **make the camp of Israel a curse and trouble it.**

In the taking of **the city** of Jericho, we see **two people** who were involved in that taking, whose actions resulted in dramatically different outcomes. Achan's doubt and disobedience brought the results contained in this article and the verses at the beginning. In contrast, there was a **woman** who lived in Jericho, a harlot no less, whose faith and obedience produced a much different outcome for her and her family:

> **But Joshua had said to the two men who had spied out the country, "Go into the harlot's house, and from there bring out the woman and all that she has, as you swore to her. "And the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father, her mother, her brothers, and all that she had. So, they brought out all her relatives and left them outside the camp of Israel. (Josh. 6:22, 23).**

As the **children of Israel** were getting a fresh start in the promised land, **the Lord** found it necessary to demonstrate that He would not tolerate doubt and disobedience among **the children of Israel** but would show favor even among the most unlikely who trusted and obeyed Him.

Is there a lesson here for us today. We sing a hymn called "Trust and obey." Let's consider the words, "Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, than to trust and obey. Maranatha.