

Reading Schedule for November 28-December 4, 2016

One of the more upsetting events is referred to as Achan's Sin. From our vantage point this may seem rather harmless. He took a few things from the city of Jericho and hid them. What we might regard as a small issue, turns out to be a big deal. There is so much at stake as the Israelites were moving into the Promised Land. To disobey God's direct command was unacceptable and had to be removed. May this summary whet your appetite for learning about the importance of obedience. This will not be the only story that we are reading pertaining to disobedience. Have a good week in God's Word.

November 28 – Joshua 6:15-27: "Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, 'Go into the prostitute's house and bring her out and all who belong to her, in accordance with your oath to her.'" (v.22) I told you we'd come back to Rahab and God would be faithful to her. Rahab and her household were saved because they trusted in God, and because she helped the Israelite spies. All the rest of the city was destroyed. The evil practices of the Canaanites could surely bring down God's people and lead them astray. As I mentioned in the introduction, this was a crucial time in the life of God's people. God would move mightily on their behalf, but he needed undivided devotion to his commands. This would keep the people's faith strong, and their commitment to God and his ways uncontaminated. How do you understand this strong judgment against the Canaanites? Why is it encouraging that God would rescue Rahab?

November 29 – Joshua 7:1-15: "Go, consecrate the people. Tell them, 'Consecrate yourselves in preparation for tomorrow; for this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: There are devoted things among you, Israel. You cannot stand against your enemies until you remove them.'" (v.13) The word "consecrate" is not one that we use very often. I mentioned it previously in chapter 3. I have thought about this spiritual principle quite often. It means to prepare my heart and put my priorities in order. If I need to repent of anything or confess my sins in any way, that is part of consecration. But it is not just confession. It is also aligning myself to follow the ways of the Lord. Achan becomes an example of impurity and self-centeredness. This could undo God's people. Achan's sin of indifference to idolatry and evil could spread like cancer. And just like cancer, it has to be removed, which we will read about tomorrow. What do you learn from Joshua in these verses? Why do you think this is such a big deal to God?

November 30 – Joshua 7:16-26: "Over Achan they heaped up a large pile of rocks, which remains to this day. Then the Lord turned from his fierce anger. Therefore that place has been called the Valley of Achor ever since." (v.26) It is natural to ask why Achan's entire family had to pay for his sin. The biblical record did not tell us if they were aware of his crime, but in the ancient world, the family was treated as a whole. Achan, at the head of his family, was like the tribal leader. If he prospered, the family prospered with him. If he suffered, so did they. Achan's entire family was to be stoned along with him so that no trace of their sin would remain in Israel. In our permissive and individualistic culture, we have a hard time understanding such a decree. Sin has such drastic consequences that we too should take drastic measures to avoid it in our own lives. Do you agree? Why are we so casual about sin?

December 1 – Joshua 8:1-35: "Then the Lord said to Joshua, 'Hold out toward Ai the javelin that is in your hand, for into your hand I will deliver the city.' So Joshua held out toward the city the javelin that was in his hand. As soon as he did this, the men in the

ambush rose quickly from their position and rushed forward. They entered the city and captured it and quickly set it on fire." (vv. 18 & 19) Once sin was dealt with, forgiveness and victory was just ahead. When we are convicted of sin, we do not need to stay discouraged or burdened with guilt. No matter how difficult the consequences might have been, we can renew our connection with the Lord, and he will give us a second chance. Isn't it amazing how quickly the Lord moved on their behalf when they dealt with sin? I think these are very important principles for us to realize. If I recognize selfishness in my life, I need to repent. If I am declining in apathy towards the Lord, I need to repent. If there are any idols in my life, I need to admit it and repent. The promise is that God will forgive and bring hope and promise into the future. Do you agree? How do you respond to this chapter?

December 2 – 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1: This reading is very practical. It has to do with binding relationships that we form with unbelievers. It is easy to see that a believer should not marry an unbeliever. But how about a business partner? Can you think of other relationships that would be compromised with an unbeliever? Why does Paul make such a big deal about this reality? We will anticipate tackling this subject this coming Sunday. How do you respond to it after reading it?

December 3 – Joshua 9:1-27: "Three days after they made the treaty with the Gibeonites, the Israelites heard that they were neighbors, living near them." (v.16) God had specifically instructed Israel to make no treaties with the inhabitants of Canaan. This reminds me of our topic yesterday as we anticipate studying 2 Corinthians 6:14f. It doesn't seem like the people were sensitive to God's leading. They didn't ask him if it was okay. They just went right ahead and believed the deception. We can do that in our own lives. We know the devil is the deceiver in so many ways. When these situations arise, we can forget to seek God's wisdom and guidance. They would need to honor the oath, even though they had been deceived. That might not make sense to you, but it was an overriding principle in the relationships between nations. How do you respond to this chapter? What applies to your life?

December 4 – Joshua 10:1-15: "So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the nation avenged itself on its enemies, as it is written in the Book of Jashar. The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day." (v.13) Many people have a hard time believing miracles like this one. There must be an explanation. Of course, the scientific explanation that the earth's normal rotation slowed for a time, makes sense and would be a miracle and consistent with the Hebrew language used in this text. Some however, suggested that the sun's rays were refracted for additional hours that kept the sun shining longer. The Lord brought victory to the Israelites, and he used the prayers of Joshua to perform his marvelous miracle. The Lord loves it when we turn to him in faith and believe that he can do anything. Jesus said, "If you say to this mountain 'be cast into the sea' and you believe it to be so, it will be done for you." That would be an example of our God wanting to stir up our faith. Our relationship with God is based on faith, and our faith leads to a deep desire to obey. When we are in a difficult circumstance, our faith tells us to turn to him. That is what Joshua did. Is there something in your life that seems insurmountable? Why not follow Joshua's example and turn to the Lord?!

Prayers: Pray for Advent and our response to the living God during these marvelous days of celebrating the coming of Christ.