

The Scandal of Judgment

Joshua 6:15-21

Preached by Phillip Kayser at DCC on Sunday, January 15th 2023

Please turn to Joshua 6. This is a passage that some Evangelicals whom I love and pray for are embarrassed over. There is no reason to be embarrassed, but some sadly are. For my part, I glory in the fact that our God is not only a tender God of love and compassion, but He is also a Warrior God of vengeance and wrath against His enemies. That brings comfort. Let's read Joshua 6:15-21.

I. Introduction - Are we ashamed of God's Words? (v. 21 with Mark 8:38)

Hugh Latimer was a Reformer in England who eventually got beheaded by Queen Mary. King Henry VIII had previously appointed him to be the Bishop of Worcester because he was such an acclaimed scholar. But the king later regretted having done so because there was a butting of heads between the two. The king considered himself to be the head of the church and expected all bishops to be subservient. Most bishops played along, but not Hugh Latimer. For example, it was customary for each of the bishops to bring a gift of gold to the king on New Year's Day and show their loyalty. Well, Latimer did go to *visit* the king along with the rest of the bishops, but instead of giving a bag of gold like the other bishops did, he gave the king a New Testament which had a page very prominently folded down so that it pointed to Hebrews 13:4, which says, "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." Since the king was flagrantly involved in both of those sins, Hugh Latimer's gift was a very politically incorrect gift. And you can see the discomfort of the other bishops in that painting of him in your outline. It was just not socially acceptable to rebuke the king, and you for sure did not talk about the king being in danger of hellfire. After all, he was the head of the church of England. It took courage for Hugh Latimer to preach the whole counsel of God - including the uncomfortable portions of Scripture. And I pray that God would raise up many more such leaders in the modern church to replace the deafening silence on important topics. Most modern preachers avoid anything controversial.

I'll just give you one example. According to more than one survey of Evangelical pastors, hell is almost never preached on. Nor are God's judgments in history. Indeed, numerous so-called evangelicals are apologetic for Joshua 6 - at least in front of unbelievers. Even some commentaries do. Let me read from one very famous commentary that I own. Andrew Knowles says,

How can we understand the killing fields of the days of Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Saul and David? Did God really command such bloodshed, or were even these great men affected by the times in which they lived? Did they slay their enemies believing it was God's will—or assume that God approved because he gave them victory? One thing is certain. Our picture of God gets clearer as the Bible story

unfolds. It becomes perfectly clear only when we see the life and example of Jesus. It isn't that God has changed, but our understanding of him has developed. ...God's way is not to destroy but to save; not to take life but to give it; not to wreak vengeance, but to forgive and make peace.¹

He is clearly embarrassed by passages like this one. And he obviously hasn't read the book of Revelation where Jesus Himself wrecks vengeance on Israel and Rome. Anyway, my point is that verse 21 has become a scandal to many believers. Let me read that verse again. "And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword." It is tempting for some people to skip over passages such as these. But when we skip over them or try to justify them to modern man, we make the passage lose its intended punch and impact. God wants us to wrestle with these questions rather than ignoring them. Why are they in the Bible? There is a purpose. Far from being a scandalous passage, I hope to show you how the glory of God beautifully shines through in this passage. It's passages like these that make our salvation seem all the more amazing and glorious.

II. Jericho was not without warning (v. 15 with vv. 1-14)

But it's helpful if we don't take verse 21 out of context. We'll start with verse 15:

But it came to pass on the seventh day that they rose early, about the dawning of the day, and marched around the city seven times in the same manner. On that day only they marched around the city seven times.

The word "But" and the phrase, "on that day only" remind us of the previous context. That context shows that they had been marching around Jericho for seven days with God's throne of mercy prominent in the parades. In a previous sermon I showed how God's mercy seat offered mercy to any who would repent. But of course, God only granted the gift of repentance and faith to Rahab and her household. But the point is that *Jericho did not want mercy. They didn't even believe they needed mercy. They were enemies of God.* And therefore that same mercy seat became a throne of judgment to those who persisted in their rebellion. For seven days this throne had been visible to all, and for seven days the priests summoned one and all to submit to the one true God of all the earth. Jericho was without excuse.

And they were without excuse for their own capital crimes. There isn't much Canaanite literature extant, but from what we have you will realize that Jericho was the dregs of society, harboring people who engaged in every vile deed, including torture, body mutilation, child sacrifice, human trafficking (including sexual slavery), sodomy, bestiality (and bestiality may be one of the reasons the animals were killed), and every vice that is beginning to be practiced in America. According to Genesis, God was not going to judge

¹ Andrew Knowles, *The Bible Guide*, 1st Augsburg books ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 110.

them until their cup of iniquity was full. And it was. But at a minimum, Jericho was not without warning.

III. God Himself authorized this destruction (vv. 16-17a)

Next, if you believe that the Scriptures are the infallible revelation of God (as I do), there is no escaping the fact that *God Himself authorized this destruction*. Andrew Knowles' suggestion that Joshua was only doing this because pagans did this and he was a product of his times is *totally* off the mark. This was not just *Joshua* taking this into his *own* hands. No. *This was commanded by God Himself*. Look at verses 16-17.

16 And the seventh time it happened, when the priests blew the trumpets, that Joshua said to the people: "Shout, for the LORD has given you the city! 17 Now the city shall be doomed by the LORD to destruction, it and all who are in it..."

Did he just make that up out of thin air? No. God had previously commanded this. He had even made that command in the Pentateuch. Deuteronomy 20:16-18 says this,

Deut. 20:16 "But of the cities of these peoples which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance, you shall let nothing that breathes remain alive, 17 but you shall utterly destroy them: the Hittite and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, just as the LORD your God has commanded you, 18 lest they teach you to do according to all their abominations which they have done for their gods, and you sin against the LORD your God.

Notice that anything that could teach them pagan ways was to be destroyed. This included the books, as we have seen in a previous sermon. All the library cities had their libraries destroyed. God did not want the wisdom of the pagans infecting the Israelites. But the point of this authorized destruction is that the God of love and the God of justice are one and the same God, and the New Testament affirms that He "is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8). So let's not buy into this idea that God somehow acts differently in the New Testament.

IV. God's judgments are consistent with His grace (v. 17b)

Third, the text affirms that God's judgments are *totally* consistent with His grace. The cross shows that you can't have grace without judgment. Verse 17 goes on to talk about His grace to Rahab:

...Only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all who are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.

If Jericho was the dregs of humanity, Rahab was the dregs of the dregs. Yet God saved her because she had faith and she hid the messengers by faith. And the fact that her family did not report her to the authorities, and they themselves came into the house to be rescued, is

a hint that they had saving faith as well. In saving her family we see that God displayed remarkable *grace* along with remarkable *judgments*. And we'll return to this in a bit.

V. God calls for antithesis for their own good (v. 18)

But fourth, God hates sin *wherever* it is found, whether *outside* the church or *inside* the church. He tells Israel in verse 18:

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.

It is of God's very nature to curse sin and rebellion wherever it is found. Our salvation wasn't shoving our sins under a carpet. No. The only way we could be saved was for God's curse to rest upon Jesus and for God's wrath (that we deserved) to be poured out upon Jesus as our substitute. Galatians 3:13 says He became a curse for us. God has not changed. The only reason Rahab escaped the curse was because she cast her sins on the future Messiah by faith and received His righteousness.

But let's think about this four-fold repetition of God's curse on those who side with accursed things of Jericho. Even though believers cannot lose their salvation, they too can be cursed when they fail to maintain antithesis. This is so important to understand. We will actually look at that in more detail next week - God's blessings and curses. Salvation doesn't remove God's desire for antithesis between right and wrong, truth and falsehood, good and bad. When we get to chapter 7, we will see Israel was defeated precisely because Achan took some of the precious items out of Jericho. It was so beautiful that he couldn't bear to see it destroyed.

And this is the very problem that I see happening in the modern church. Admiration for the wisdom and beauty of the pagan Greeks has made Christians adopt their natural law theories and philosophy - especially those of Aristotle and Plato. Admiration for the beauty of pagan science, art, architecture, and other things has made Christians take the accursed things into their homes through Classical Education. But God tells us His opinion of those Greek and Roman foundations in Daniel chapter 2. That chapter contains God's vision for the kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome - the empires where all the classics found in classical education come from. And in that chapter God doesn't deny that the four kingdoms had a lot to be admired. He speaks of the statue representing the four empires as a "*great image, whose splendor was excellent...and its form was awesome*" (v. 31). God *Himself* said that there was a certain beauty in it, *yet despite that splendor and beauty (maybe because of that splendor and beauty that was so awesome and tempting) he wanted it destroyed*. He didn't want Christians captivated by it. It's not as if they didn't have truth, but as Romans says, they held the truth in unrighteousness, which made their presentation of partial truth ultra dangerous. Brothers and sisters, I am pleading with those of you who love Classical Education to read Daniel 2. Daniel 2 goes on to say that God's kingdom of heaven (represented by a stone cut without hands), struck the image at the feet (which would be the Roman empire at Christ's first coming), and Christ's kingdom

gradually broke the entire statue to pieces and replaced it. Replaced what? Replaced even what was glorious and beautiful about all four kingdoms. Verse 35 ends by declaring God's end result:

[the kingdoms] became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that *no trace of them was found*. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

This is God's goal for the most beautiful features of those classical empires - *that no trace of them will eventually be found*. No trace. The antithesis between pagan achievements and the biblical achievements of God's kingdom will become more and more consistent over history until not a trace of pagan wisdom, beauty, or splendor will compete with the beauty, wisdom, and splendor of God's Word and of God's kingdom. *That* should be our goal. But that's the exact opposite of the goal of Classical Education. It rescues the accursed things from Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome and immerses children in the splendor and beauty of pagan classics.

The point is, God's desire for antithesis, and His hatred for paganism continues even *after* salvation. God doesn't add things to paganism to beautify paganism. He replaces it. The whole conquest of Canaan was a similar type or picture of Christ's kingdom replacing the kingdoms of this world, leaving nothing of the wisdom of the previous kingdoms remaining. As Deuteronomy 20 commanded, they were not to learn from the Canaanites, but were to utterly destroy that civilization. God has not changed. And we should glory in this passage and not be scandalized by it. It has so much to teach us.

VI. Only that which could endure the fire could make it into God's temple as a sort of firstfruits of the plunder of Canaan (v. 19 with numb. 31:22-23)

But you might wonder, what about verse 19? Doesn't that contradict your thesis against Classical Education, pastor Kayser? No, it does not. Let's read it and then I will read the commands given by Moses on *how* this was to be done. Verse 19 says,

But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are consecrated to the LORD; they shall come into the treasury of the LORD."

Numbers 31 specified that any carvings or idols that were made from metal had to be melted. Any other metal articles could be purified by fire. It said,

22 "Only the gold, the silver, the bronze, the iron, the tin, and the lead, 23 everything that can endure fire, you shall put through the fire, and it shall be clean...

So it wasn't carvings that were saved. Just the metal itself was saved. It was similar to the land that was sanctified to the Lord and then was able to be used for His glory. But none of the *wisdom* of the Canaanites was to make it into Israel. There was to be *total* antithesis.

Friends of mine call this legalism, but it can't be legalism if it is simply following Scripture. Legalism is *adding* rules to the Scripture or thinking we can be saved by rule keeping. Strictly following the Scripture is not legalism. I don't know how you can get around the conclusion of the image of Daniel 2 or the symbolism of *this* conquest. Paul uses exactly this image of purifying by fire to show what *from* our lives will be pleasing to God and make it into heaven. He guarantees that it won't be the wisdom of this world. I will be reading from 1 Corinthians 3, beginning at verse 9:

1Cor. 3:9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. 10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. 11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. 16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17 If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

He says only that which can endure fire can be brought into the temple. You are the temple. And then he goes on to say, "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" (v. 19) and "Therefore let no one boast in men" (v. 21). The conquest of Canaan teaches us that we must be biblicists in our worldview and education. In stark contrast, W. G. T. Shedd's *History of Christian Doctrine* is so enamored with Plato and Aristotle because of *his* Classical Education, that he begins his history of *Christian doctrine* with Aristotle and Plato's philosophies, and he thinks they were likely saved, and he says that those two men form the foundation for Christian doctrine. It's scandalous. Contrary to Stephen Wolfe (who wrote the *The Case for Christian Nationalism*, grace does not perfect the beauty of the pagans; it replaces it. So that's the first scandal. God's judgment did away with a lot of the wisdom and the beauty from that culture just like the stone in Daniel's image did. I say it's a scandal, but it's not a scandal for us.

VII. Israel conformed their actions with God's wisdom (v. 20).

And in verse 20 we see Israel submitting to God. OK, Lord, we will do what you say. They conformed their actions with God's wisdom. It says,

So the people shouted when the priests blew the trumpets. And it happened when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat. Then the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.

We already looked at the miraculous nature of this falling of the wall in a previous sermon. And we already saw how human responsibility goes hand in hand with God's miraculous provision. *They* had to shout and *they* had to fight. And because they completely surrounded the city, they just ran forward into the city and took it as God had commanded.

And today, God calls us to conform our lives to the standard of His Word - not to the standard of your favorite teacher (not even Phil Kayser), but to the Word. Paul praised the Bereans for checking out everything he said by the Scriptures. Our minds must be held captive to God's will, and our actions must be held captive to God's will. And this is true even on the so-called scandal of verse 21, which is what I'm going to concentrate on now.

VIII. The scandal of verse 21

Verse 21 says,

And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword.

A. Many people have raised their objections

Many people have raised objections to this passage over history. Thomas Jefferson was one of the few founding fathers of our nation that objected to it and to other things in the first five books of Moses. Most of our founding fathers were fairly orthodox. But Jefferson said that it showed God to be "cruel, vindictive, capricious and unjust."² More recently, pastor Charles Templeton was a famous evangelist who lost his faith over passages just like this one. They didn't comport with his *independently* derived view of God. He said,

The God of the Old Testament is utterly unlike the God believed in by most practicing Christians. He is an all-too-human deity with the human failings, weaknesses, and passions of men—but on a grand scale. His justice is, by modern standards, outrageous, and his prejudices are deep-seated and inflexible. He is biased, querulous, vindictive, and jealous of his prerogatives.³

And I would ask him, "How would *he* know what justice is? *God* is the standard of justice, not man."

² Jefferson to William Short, August 4, 1820. The full quote is, [T]hat Seer [Moses] had presented, for the object of their worship, a being of terrific character, cruel, vindictive, capricious and unjust. ... Moses had either not believed in a future state of existence, or had not thought it essential to be explicitly taught to his people." Thomas Jefferson Papers, *Swem Library Special Collections*, College of William and Mary. Transcription available at Founders Online. <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/98-01-02-1438>

³ Charles Templeton, *Farewell to God: My Reasons for Rejecting the Christian Faith* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1996), p. 71.

1. The theological problem - how can God do this

In any case, I bring up these examples because this verse is a scandal to many people, including many Christians. Craigie's book, *The Problem of War in the Old Testament* sees three problems with this passage. He labels the first scandal a *theological* contradiction with the God of love. He says, "It is not easy to reconcile this conception of God with the New Testament description of God as loving and self-giving."⁴ Actually a pastor friend of mine that I grew up with became so disillusioned with passages like this one that he became a liberal minister in the United Church of Canada. He told me that he didn't believe in the God of the Old Testament anymore because that God was a god of wrath. That viewpoint goes all the way back to the second century heretic, Marcion. But Marcion's trick of making the god of the Old Testament different from the God of the New Testament simply won't work. I pointed out to this man that the book of Revelation is far more gruesome than the book of Joshua ever was. And he said, "Well, I guess I don't believe in the God of the book of Revelation either." After an hour of arguing he told me that God had revealed himself to him and his god wouldn't hurt a fly. Well, I'm sorry, but his god is a false god; a demonic god.

2. The revelational problem

And that's the second problem. From *where* do we get our idea of God anyway? People object that God could not have revealed these things. Craigie lists the second problem as a revelational problem. Is this just history, or is it truly the inspired Word of God? And who determines what is and isn't the Word of God? And on what basis? That was the problem with my friend. He went from being a charismatic pastor to being a liberal because he trusted his supposed *experiences* and *revelations* more than Scripture. Initially he was just following the New Testament, but I read the following passage from Revelation to him:

Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!... For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her. Again they said, "Alleluia! And her smoke rises up forever and ever.

Here's the point - there is grace in both testaments, love in both testaments and judgment in both testaments. So let's be honest. We can't pick and choose what we want to believe in the Bible. We have to take the whole Bible or reject the whole Bible. And sadly, my liberal friend chose to reject the whole Bible.

⁴ Peter C. Craigie, *The Problem of War in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), p. 11.

3. The ethical problem

The third scandal that Craigie brings up is the ethical problem. And this is perhaps the most frequent issue that is brought up. Let me quote Theodore Drange on this so-called “ethical problem.” He said,

It seems quite unethical for God to order the execution of so many people, whatever their offense might have been, especially in the case of the children, who were presumably innocent.⁵

What’s the assumption in *all* of these objections? The assumption is that *God* is not the determiner of truth or ethics; *man* is. So they judge *God* based on *their* opinion of what is truth or what is ethical. And until that orientation is changed by the regeneration of their hearts, they won’t like the Biblical answers to these ethical questions either. I’m going to give you the Biblical answers now, but those Biblical answers are just as offensive to unregenerate people as this passage is. But here goes:

B. Many People Don’t Like the Obvious Answers

1. There is no problem

The first answer given in the Bible is there is no problem with there being pain, suffering, and death in this world. There is *no* problem. Pain, suffering, and death is to be *expected* in a sinful world. The *true* problem is highlighted in 2 Peter 3 - why is God so *patient*? That’s what’s so astounding. Peter’s answer is that God’s longsuffering puts off the judgment until men are given an opportunity to repent. We saw already that God had given Jericho time to repent. John H. Gerstner, in his book, *Repent or Perish*, said,

“If you recognize that basic Christian teaching [that all deserve hell because all are sinners], you’ll understand why I wrote a little primer entitled “The Problem of Pleasure.” We talk so much about the Problem of Pain. There’s no such thing as the problem of pain! You tell me how excruciating it is and I’ll still look you in the face and say there’s no problem. Why? Because we’re sinners. We deserve the eternal wrath of God. I don’t care who you are or where you are. *That you are breathing at all is incredibly gracious*. What needs explaining is not that there’s pain in the world. If there wasn’t any pain, we *would* have a problem.

How can God be holy and this world be wholly sinful and there be anything but pain? It’s incredible that there is non-pain.... Why is anybody not suffering? That’s a problem!

Christ solves that problem. Temporary freedom from pain is given you so that you may repent and not perish. The only answer to the problem of pleasure is that God is pleased to give hell-deserving sinners an opportunity to repent.

⁵ <https://infidels.org/library/modern/theodore-drange-bible/>

And you might say, "But the children! Surely they were innocent?!" And Gerstner's reply is there is absolutely no human being who is innocent, and that is true from conception on. Let me read some Scripture proofs. Romans says, "there is none righteous, *no not one.*" Psalm 51:5 says, "Behold I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." Psalm 58:3 says, "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies." Isaiah 48:8 says, "For I knew that you would deal very treacherously, *and were called a transgressor from the womb.*" Ultimately we have to rest in the fact that *God* defines justice, and since *He* is the standard, He by definition cannot do wrong. We must say with Jesus to the Father, "Your Word is truth." It is *the* truth standard by which all truth-claims are judged. We don't judge God's Word to be true as if our mind is the determiner. We start by saying it is the truth that judges our thoughts. We must submit to Him, and to Him alone. Romans chapter 9 shows the arrogance of human clay speaking against the Potter and telling the Potter what He can and cannot do. That's not the way it works.

2. God is No Different Today

The second Biblical answer is not much more acceptable to the unregenerate. People are just as scandalized by this answer. But the answer that the Bible gives is that God is no different today. We've already talked about this a bit. Hebrews 11 praises the destruction of Jericho *as an evidence of faith*. The New Testament book of Hebrews has absolutely no problems with this event in Joshua.

And as I mentioned earlier, the last book of the Bible, Revelation, teaches God's right to judge all. He is the same yesterday today and forever. So if we are offended with the God of the Old Testament, we will be just as offended with the God of the New Testament. It's the same God. Christ not only spoke of God's justice in destroying every living thing in Sodom and Gomorrah, but said that it would be far worse for the towns of Chorazin and Bethsaida. Christ spoke more of hell than he did of heaven. So if we are going to see a problem, let's make sure that we see how pervasive the problem really is. It covers God's judgment in the flood every when man, woman and child were killed in the flood except for the family of Noah. We serve an unchanging God; a God of judgment, wrath and fury against sin. And when His patience has completely worn out, there will be such fury unleashed in hell as will make anything in this world pale into insignificance. You have to reject the doctrine of hell in order to have *any* problems with this passage whatsoever. And of course, many people are doing exactly that because they are just as scandalized by the doctrine hell. They have made their puny mind the judge of what can be true or not. But I love God just the way He has revealed Himself to be. And I'll tell you why this is such an encouragement later.

3. The Bible is One Document

But first, let me tell you of the third scandalous answer that the Bible gives. The Bible is one unified cohesive document. You can't reject one part of it and accept another part of it. The whole book is interwoven. Some like the the fact that Rahab got saved. But that is the same chapter that condemns her compatriots. The New Testament supports the Old Testament lock, stock and barrel. Acts says that Paul didn't teach anything that he didn't back up from

the Old Testament, and Paul praised the Bereans for checking out his doctrine from the Old Testament.

4. God judges Consistently with His Justice

The fourth answer which is just as scandalous as the question is that God judges consistently with His justice. But people object, no one was given a fair trial. Where does the Bible give Israel the right to exterminate a population? And the answer is “*God* judged the Canaanites, not Israel.*” *This was not standing warfare policy.* Israel was actually not allowed to fight this way in their ordinary warfare.* This was a unique kind of warfare called *herem* warfare where God commanded them to be *His instruments of judgment*. They were simply executioners of the people God whom God had already judged in His courtroom. In later history Israel was absolutely not allowed to engage in this kind of warfare simply because Israel could not read people’s hearts like God can. It would take special revelation from God for this kind of warfare to ever be resurrected, and because all inspired prophecy has ended in AD 70, it is guaranteed that no human can ever again justly engage in this kind of indiscriminate killing. Human courts can only deal with objective behavior that God clearly defines as a crime in His written Law-Word. The Bible says that there can never again be *herem* warfare. God alone can judge the thoughts and intents of the heart. And because God could see the sins of every human heart, there is no principle of justice that is overturned by this passage. And my book on Canon exegetically demonstrates that the Bible predicted that all prophecy would cease in AD 70.⁶ Because of that, no one can claim new revelation to justify killing such as Israel was commanded by God to do.

5. God is a God of Grace Even In This Passage (back to v. 17)

But the last answer that the Bible gives is that God is a God of patience, love, and grace *even in this passage*. Let’s look at patience. God had put up with the iniquities of the Amorites and Jebusites and other Canaanites until their cup of iniquity was full and He could bear it no more. In Deuteronomy 2 we see that God would not allow Israel to fight with several other nations mentioned. His patience had not worn thin with them. But here’s the thing - *rebels don’t want patience. They want their rebellion overlooked, or positively praised.* Nowadays, if you don’t praise homosexuality, and gender fluidity, or physicians chopping of children’s body parts on a whim, you are condemned by our woke society. And so even the concept of *patience* is a scandal to the sinner because it implies that the sinner sins and is deserving of judgment. People don’t want a patient God. They want a god who *approves* of their sin.

And certainly the concept of *grace* is a scandal because it too rules out the idea that we can deserve God’s good favor. It reminds us that none deserve God’s grace. Think of Rahab. Most self-righteous people would think, “Why would God save *her*?” If Jericho was the

⁶ My book, *The Canon of Scripture*, demonstrates that the Bible itself predicted that all prophecy would cease in AD 70. For various formats of this book, go to <https://kaysercommentary.com/booklets.md>

dregs of Canaanite society, wasn't she the dregs of Jericho? And I think if we are honest, we would have to admit that there was absolutely nothing in her to warrant her salvation.

But that's the beauty of it. *That makes her a prime example of what grace is like, what faith is like, and in the book of James she is an example of what good works is like.* The faith and the good works flowed *from* God's mercy, not vice versa. Why is that offensive? Because humans want to take credit for *something* and to at least look a *little* bit better than they really are. It is a sign of God's grace when we admit that we are sinners deserving of hell. It is a sign of grace when we are humbled into admitting that in my flesh dwelleth no good thing. It is a sign of grace to powerfully experience the truth of Christ's statement: "Without Me you can do nothing." If your heart thinks that God had no right to order the slaughter of everyone in that city, then you have even remotely understood the sinfulness of sin.

The only reason this judgment by God is offensive in our eyes is because we still have illusions that we are not deserving of such judgment. We can't picture ourselves as being Canaanites deserving of being destroyed. We can't imagine our children as deserving any judgment from God's hands. The average Christian sees his children as being innocent, not sinful. The average Christian sees the problem with unbelievers as being an intellectual one, not one of heart rebellion. How do I know? By the methodology of evangelism that they use. They spend less than a minute on sin and most of their time on grace. But apart from an understanding of how sinful we are, we simply cannot appreciate God's grace. Until people get over the scandal of passages like these, they will never be able to fully glory in the graciousness of grace and the richness of God's gift of salvation.

6. Thus, this passage brings a warning to us

Thus, this passage also serves as a two-fold warning for Christians. It is first of all a warning of where *our* hearts are at. If your heart rebels against what God did in this passage, it is a warning that you may be more aligned with Jericho than you are with God's people. You may be identifying with them more than you are identifying with God's cause and kingdom. God deliberately tests our hearts with passages like this to see where our heart is at, and if our heart rebels against God's right to destroy the Canaanites, the Sodomites, the Gomorrahites, the pre-diluvians and others, it is a sign that our blind eyes have not been opened by God's Spirit and that our hearts have not yet been softened to His grace. It may be a sign that we are one of the Canaanites doomed to God's eternal destruction. And if so, I would call *you* to repentance because you are an Esau in the church. Repentance is your only hope of avoiding God's judgment because our God *is* a God of judgment. The judgment either fell on Jesus on your behalf, or *it will fall on you.*

If you see a problem in this chapter, it's not *God* who needs to change. It's not the *Bible* that needs to change. It is *we* who need to change. If we find a problem with God's perspective on Jericho, it simply means that we are still viewing life like the Canaanites did. Look at verse 18 again. Verse 18 says,

And you, by all means keep yourselves 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.

In the next chapter Achan had a hard time seeing what was so repulsive about these things to God. He didn't find them repulsive. But that was simply because Achan did not have a holy revulsion for sin. God is the measure of what is shameful and what is glorious; what is sin and what is righteousness; what is accursed and what is blessed. And there are plenty of Scriptures which test whether we have grace in our hearts or whether we are still rebels. So it is a *subjective* warning.

But it is also an *objective* warning that God does judge rebellion just as surely as He blesses repentance. It is a warning that cultures can have their D-Day. Yet, Rahab is an example of how any sin can be forgiven if it is repented of. But Canaan, whose cup of iniquity was finally full, is also an example that there comes a time (as Hebrews words it) that you cannot be renewed to repentance. It will be impossible to repent. And without repentance, judgment is a foregone conclusion.

Let's just see how Jesus draws this out. Turn to Luke 13 and see how Jesus applies the historical judgments people face to our lives. Luke 13:1-5:

Luke 13:1 There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. Luke 13:2 And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? Luke 13:3 "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.

Notice first of all that Jesus doesn't say, "What a tragedy. Those people didn't deserve that. Why do terrible things happen to good people." He said the opposite. He said that they were *sinners* who *deserved* judgment.

But secondly, Christ corrects the notion of any Jerusalemites who might have smugly felt that *Galileans* deserved such a fate because they were *worse* sinners. Christ not only told them that they themselves were deserving of judgment unless they repented, He also reminded them that historical judgments happen on *their* side of the railroad tracks as well. They happen in *Jerusalem*. Verses 4-5:

Luke 13:4 "Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? Luke 13:5 "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

Historical judgments teach us that God sees all men as sinners, and there aren't *any* who can claim that God has been unfair. God said that Job had no right to complain. Hey, if *Job* (one of the most righteous men ever) can't complain about his pain and losses, then I need to shut my mouth when I think I deserve better treatment from God's hands. Are Americans worse than Canaanites? Probably not. Probably not by a long shot. But Christ's words *still* apply. He says, "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish." It does not matter how severe the historical judgment may be, it is a *just* desert for our sins.

IX. The Glory of this Passage

But I want to end by showing that the very thing that is a scandal for the unregenerate is a glory and comfort and joy for God's people. This passage should cause the elect to rejoice for at least three reasons:

A. God hates sin

First, it proves that God hates sin. The reason that is such a comfort and glory to the believer is that indifference to sin could be discouraging and even terrifying. But when we know that God hates the abortion in our land far more than we do, we know that that sin cannot last. When we realize that God hates the sins we commit, we know that God *will* sanctify us and purify us. That's encouraging. If God was apathetic about sin, it would be terribly discouraging with those whose whole life has been devoted to battling sin. Since God is *against* sin, *our* fight against sin *must* prevail. It is a tremendous glory to realize that God hates sin.

B. We were the people of Jericho, apart from God's grace (v. 22)

Second, it is a glory to realize that we *were* the people of Jericho in a spiritual sense, yet God saved us. The greater our sense of sin is, the greater the glory of our salvation will appear. Remember Christ's statement about the woman who was a harlot. He said, "Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little." She knew that she was forgiven of a lot and she loved the Lord a lot. The people in that room who were judging the prostitute for kissing Jesus' feet had plenty of hateful sin, but they didn't *recognize* their sin. That's why they didn't love the Lord as much. To whom much is forgiven, the same loves much.

C. God extends His grace to families, and we have the privilege of bringing them out (v. 22,23)

But the third glorious thing about this passage is that God's grace extends not just to individuals, but also to families. Notice that verse 17 says, "Only Rahab the harlot shall live, she *and all who are with her in the house...*" That is repeated again in verse 22 where Joshua's command is, "bring out the woman and all that she has..." And it's repeated again in verse 23, which says,

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.

We will deal with the last phrase next week. But aren't those three statements about the salvation of her household glorious? They brought out *all* her relatives. Praise God! Perhaps some of you have unsaved relatives that you have been praying hard about. Continue to pray and do not waver. There are many, many Scriptures you can lay claim to for their salvation. 1 Corinthians 7:14 says that the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the believing husband. Camp on that verse. Claim

it. Do not waver in your faith concerning it. The same passage sets aside the children as sanctified to the Lord. Camp out in Psalm 72:4 "He will save the children of the needy." Hallelujah! I love verses like this. Or Isaiah 49:25: "I will save your children" or Luke 19:9, where Jesus said to the tax collector, "Today salvation *has come to this house*, because he also is a son of Abraham." Or Acts 11:14, "who will tell you words by which you *and all your household will be saved*" or Acts 16:31, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you *and your household*." Or Galatians 4:1 which calls your children "heirs." Or the numerous promises that *families* will be saved - like Acts 3:25 - "saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'" This passage is a glory to families because we realize that it is sovereign grace alone which could have saved a Rahab, and if it is sovereign grace alone which can save, then there isn't any case too hard in our families for God to save. He said it, we need to believe it, and that should settle it.

Bothers and sisters. May this passage *not* be an embarrassment or scandal to you. Glory in the true God, not a precious moments God of your own imagination. Glory in the fact that the God who can be tender and compassionate to you is also a God of fury and wrath against your enemies. He is an awesome powerful warrior God who is worthy of our respect and admiration. Learn to adore Him for who He is. Amen.