

A Theology of Traps and Snares

Joshua 8:14-23

Preached by Phillip Kayser at DCC on Sunday, April 30th 2023

Just a bit of review: In verses 1-8 we looked at principles for making sure our plans conform to God's plan, and then in verses 9-13 we looked at the godly implementation of the plan, and now in verses 14-23 we will see the success of the plan. In fact, I was going to title it the way the A-Team movie ended their adventure by saying, "I love it when a plan comes together." And that certainly captures the essence of this paragraph. God loves to bless godly plans that are implemented in godly ways.

But instead of dealing with the obvious, I decided to focus on the providential way in which this whole event was designed by God to be a trap into which the king of Ai would be lured. The Bible gives us a pretty comprehensive theology of traps, snares, and nets. It uses these animal capturing devices to illustrate human life. They are warnings that all of life is full of traps. And God even warns unbelievers that they will fall into *His* traps if they do not repent. In Joshua 23 God warned Israel that if they started compromising with the nations that weren't yet driven out of the land, God would ensure that those nations would become snares and traps for *Israel* to fall into. Let me read that. Joshua 23:12-13.

12 Or else, if indeed you do go back, and cling to the remnant of these nations—these that remain among you—and make marriages with them, and go in to them and they to you, 13 know for certain that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations from before you. But they shall be snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land which the LORD your God has given you.

In other words, just as Israel trapped the soldiers of Ai because God delivered them into Israel's hands, the nations of Canaan would trap Israel and ensnare them to their destruction. And there are other references to God's theology of traps and snares. In chapter 9, the Gibeonites lured Israel into a trap that made them vow to be in covenant with them rather than destroying them. They were naive and fell for that trap. But here Israel becomes a snare and a trap for Ai. I bring all of this up to show that it is legitimate to make both negative *and* positive applications for each of the points that we can learn from this section about the nature of traps. Once you understand what the Bible says about traps, it helps you to navigate this dangerous world.

I. Traps work when the thing being trapped lacks insight (v. 14)

So let's begin with verse 14, which presents the first lesson - that traps work when the thing being trapped lacks insight. It says,

Now it happened, when the king of Ai saw it, that the men of the city hurried and rose early and went out against Israel to battle, he and all his people, at an

appointed place before the plain. *But he did not know that there was an ambush against him behind the city.*

Notice that phrase, “he did not know.” The king of Ai walked into the trap because he did not know that there was an ambush. Matthew Henry said, “Those are most in danger who are least aware that they are so.”¹ And it is important that we not be naive like the city of Ai was. You are most in danger when you are naive to the presence of danger.

Let’s apply this. We homeschoolers are sometimes so sheltered that it is possible for us to be naive about the dangers that lurk in neighborhoods, on phones, computers, stores, and in other venues. I talked to one person about how it probably wasn’t very prudent to be letting his daughter play unsupervised in a private area with a boy from another family. I wasn’t making any accusations or trying to dictate what they do in their home - I was just pointing to the potential of temptations. Now, he had grown up so sheltered that it didn’t even dawn on him that kids can be curious about things they aren’t ready for. So I narrated case after case of homeschooled children that got themselves involved in sexual traps because they were naive. So this first point is an important point.

It was a similar lack of insight that would get Israel into trouble in chapter 9. Now it is a lack of insight on the part of the king of Ai that got him into trouble with God’s war.

The obvious lesson? It is critically important that we all seek to gain Biblical insight into the way life really works. I’m not talking about over-exposure; I’m talking about *Biblical* insight. This is why we should study Biblical worldview, and diligently read and apply the Scriptures, and especially become familiar with the book of Proverbs. That was one of the main purposes of Proverbs - to turn the naive into wise Christians. Some people read a chapter of Proverbs every day - they just read the numbered chapter for the numbered day of the month. That way they get through the whole book once a month. Psalm 19:7 says, “The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.” The word simple is another word for naive. Proverbs 1:4 says that the whole book of Proverbs was given in order to “give prudence to the simple, [and] to the young man knowledge and discretion.” Proverbs 13:14 says, “The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to turn one away from the snares of death.” It is saying that Christians will be confronted with snares just like Ai was confronted with a snare, and we should not be naive.

Proverbs gives insight into how Satan’s kingdom works, how sin appeals to the flesh (that’s the bait part of the trap), how to resist such allurements, the upward steps of righteousness and the downward steps into bondage. So that is the negative application of this principle.

But the positive application is that the further away from God’s law that pagans stray, the more *they* will lack insight into how life works. They are going to start falling into their own traps and into the traps that the Lord sets up. They are not going to prosper. It’s a principle of life that if you want to avoid snares and traps, get wisdom.

¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 305.

II. Traps work by design (“Now it happened...at an appointed place” v. 14 with verses 1-8, 18)

But the same verse gives a second principle of traps - they all work by the design of a designer. The design can simply be human, or it can be demonic, or it can be God Himself who designs the trap. Some commentators point out that *this* verse itself hints at the fact that *God* designed this trap. We are told so earlier, but it’s hinted at even here. It uses the Hebrew word *mo’ade* (מוֹעֵד), which can be translated as appointed place or appointed time, though time seems to be the main meaning of the word. So I prefer the KJV and other translations that translated it as “appointed time.” Let me give you just a few illustrations of how this word is used. A year before the birth of Isaac, God told Abraham, “whom Sarah shall bear to you at the appointed time next year” (same word). Two more times Genesis speaks of her conceiving and giving birth at the time ordained by God - same word. Exodus 9:5 speaks of the ten plagues being brought at a time appointed (in other words, at the time appointed by God). And there are over a hundred similar verses that deal with time. It shows planning for the future and designing the future.

But whether you take it as appointed time or appointed place, it needs to be asked, who did the appointment for this war? Did the king of Ai appoint this time or did he instantly react to the appearance of Israel’s army? Well, verse 13 indicates that *Israel* initiated the engagement, not the king of Ai, and verse 14 indicates that the king of Ai and his men scrambled to react. It’s obvious that the king of Ai did not make the appointed time or place. He reacted.

And that leaves either God or Joshua who appointed the time, which in this chapter amounts to the same thing since Joshua was implementing God’s plans. Commentators point out that the trap that Ai fell into was beautifully designed by God. We can trust that at God’s appointed time, His enemies will overreach themselves.

But we can apply this concept of design more broadly, whether the design was crafted by man, by Satan, or by God. And we need to be on the lookout for those designs. When the leaders of Gibeon entered into a covenant with the leaders of Israel in chapter 9, it was an incredibly well designed trap. Unlike God’s traps, those Gibeonites lied through their teeth. God does not lie. And God rebuked Israel for being taken in by the ruse. Why did they get ensnared? Chapter 9:14 explains that “they did not ask counsel of the LORD.” They didn’t ask God for guidance and direction, and therefore they lacked insight. They were missing point one.

And I think the same rebuke could be given to us when we covenant with the modern Gibeonites of today. Christians are constantly getting lured into traps set by the statists of today. If the statists can get non-profits to take government money or privileges, then the state can control them. If the government can lure Christians into its indoctrination camps (falsely called public schools) by offering free education, they can seize the minds of much of the next generation. If the government can create a crisis and then present itself as the solution to the crisis, they can lure people into giving the state even more power than it currently has. And the deep state has been brilliant at designing crisis situations - whether

they are medical crises, banking crises, currency crises, stock market crises, oil crises, immigration crises, or other crises to grab power.

Human Rights Watch had an article titled, “How Authoritarians Are Exploiting the COVID-19 Crisis to Grab Power.”² That article demonstrated how country after country instantly jumped at the opportunity the COVID-19 crisis afforded to seize more power and never relinquish it. Every school shooting becomes an opportune crisis for statists to lure people into supporting gun control - on the pretext that disarming honest citizens will somehow stop dishonest people from doing the killings. In fact, there are so many crises that have been manufactured by the civil government that Townhall journal coined a phrase, “the crisis tyrant” - a leader who uses any crisis to grab more power. But whether the enticement is positive or negative, look for the designers of the trap and pray for wisdom in how to navigate it.

But the main point here is that when people fall for a trap, it is always because they didn't take into account the design of the enemy. 2 Corinthians 2:11 points out that even a simple thing like refusing to forgive your brother can lure you into Satan's trap, and he ends that verse by saying, “lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.” Many translations translate it more literally - “we are not ignorant of his designs.” Traps have design and we must be knowledgeable about those designs.

III. Traps work through misdirection (vv. 5,15)

But this leads to the next point - that traps work through misdirection. And this gives some people heartburn. Some people think that God wouldn't lay traps since traps work by allowing creatures or people to be misled, and they think that this would involve God in some form of lying. They point out that Hebrews 6:18 says, “it is impossible for God to lie.” And I agree. But does a trap always have to involve a lie? I don't think so. Let's read verse 15:

And Joshua and all Israel made as if they were beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness.

They pretended to be beaten. And don't say that God had nothing to do with this. God prophetically authorized this misdirection in His plan in the first verses of this chapter. All traps work by misdirection. So how could the God of truth have designed this trap? Well, Scripture repeatedly says that God allows people to be trapped by their *own* desires, stupidity, sinfulness, bad assumptions, and pride. They have only themselves to blame. They have their own naivete to blame. Yet the Scripture *also* explicitly says that God *sets* those traps to catch people in their own pride. Isaiah 8:14 says that Jesus (who is the very definition of Truth - “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life”) would Himself become “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, as a trap and a snare to the

² <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/03/how-authoritarians-are-exploiting-covid-19-crisis-grab-power>

inhabitants of Jerusalem.” If Jesus (the very definition of truth) can *be* a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, then it is obvious that traps do not have to involve a person in lying. He is the definition of truth.

This is really no different than a fake in basketball. A fake is when a player pretends to either shoot, move, or pass the ball, but immediately does a different action to separate himself from the defender. And when you read the instructions of how to become an expert at such fakes in basketball (and there are some really cool videos on it), you can see that it involves your bent knees, your hands, your eyes, and your entire body. A juke in football is a similar kind of misdirection.

Let me give you another example of misdirection in spiritual warfare. The Puritan writer, Matthew Henry, points out that Jesus yielded to what Satan thought was a death-blow (the cross), yet it was a trap in which Satan would *himself* be caught because by His death Jesus conquered death and Satan. In the recent movie, *Nefarious*, the demon says, “The Cross was our greatest mistake.” He recognized that he had been fooled by a trap. The cross was one of the most masterful misdirections that God ever did. And demons no doubt were shocked on resurrection day to realize that they were defeated. Was God lying? No. He had even prophesied Christ’s death. But He allowed Satan in his irrationality to assume something different.

There is a difference between lying and misdirection. When a person has automatic lights coming on and off at set hours in their house while they are on vacation, they aren’t lying by telling the burglars that they really are home. They are letting the burglars *assume* that. But it is still deliberate misdirection that is taking advantage of the enemy’s thinking.

And we need to be aware that all traps use misdirection - they pretend to offer something wonderful, or they pretend to be non-dangerous, or pretend to not be a trap or no one would step in the trap. And this means that we need to not be naive in the world or we will succumb to the world’s misdirection.

I’ve already mentioned that one of the reasons God gave the book of Proverbs was to help us recognize the misdirection of the world and not get sucked in because of naivete. Outright lies are actually *easier* to recognize than misdirection that appears to be on your side, but really is not. Politicians are very adroit at speaking evangelical language to get the Evangelical vote, when in reality it is all misdirection. And then the Evangelical gets disappointed that yet another politician has not kept his promise. In many cases the politician wasn’t actually making a promise. He was just throwing out words that acted as bait and letting naive Evangelicals assume what they wanted to hear.

But good people can set traps by design as well. When you fake a move to the right in basketball, you are trying to lure the opponent into a weak position that will enable you to get past him. That’s not lying. That’s designing your game to take advantage of your opponent’s inadequate thinking. Apologetics does that. And it is important that we know the enemy’s strategies better than the enemy knows them himself and to design traps that use their own worldview-inconsistencies to trap them - or better yet, to make them fall into their own traps (in other words, be forced to recognize that their system doesn’t work). Christians must become wiser than the pagans in designing biblical ways to frame language

in political bills, how to frame the debate over government schools, how to engage in the battle for the minds of our generation. We must always be people of truth, so lies are not becoming for the Christian, but that does not mean you reveal your whole strategy to the enemy. Hopefully my discussion has cleared up any confusion on this point.

IV. Traps work by offering tempting bait (vv. 16-17)

But all of this logically relates to the next point - traps work by offering tempting bait. If you see several mice run right past your trap without even looking at it, you likely have the wrong bait in the trap. So what was the bait that lured every single man out of Bethel and Ai? Verses 16-17 say,

Josh. 8:16 So all the people who were in Ai were called together to pursue them. And they pursued Joshua and were drawn away from the city. 17 There was not a man left in Ai or Bethel who did not go out after Israel. So they left the city open and pursued Israel.

That's really astonishing. The bait was so tempting that they *all* left the city. And the Hebrew word used is interesting. We are told that all of the men "were drawn away from the city." The word for "drawn away" is sometimes translated as "lured away." But drawn away is a bit closer. There was a magnetic power that pulled every man out of the city to eagerly pursue Israel. So what was the drawing power?

From a human perspective there was plenty *within them* for the magnet to lure. Pride, fame, plunder, and the misplaced certainty of success could do that. But what was the magnet?

The way this is worded makes it seem like there is an *external* force that was drawing them out - taking advantage of their bad thinking. Who made sure that the bait would work? I believe that A. W. Pink is absolutely right when he says that *God* was drawing them out of the city. Who in his right mind would leave the city completely unprotected and even leave the gates to the city wide open? But they did it, and the reason given is that they were drawn away. How do we explain that? Joshua 11:20 gives us a hint on God's sovereign working in even His enemies' lives. It says this:

For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that He might utterly destroy them, and that they might receive no mercy, but that He might destroy them, as the LORD had commanded Moses. (Josh 11:20)

Notice the wording - God hardened their hearts *so that* they would come against Israel in battle, *so that* He might destroy them, *and so that* they might receive no mercy. And that last phrase is particularly interesting. It implies that they *would* have received mercy if they had repented and not fought against Israel. It was God's hardening of the hearts in that case that drew them into battle. God has the right to withhold mercy and to draw them into judgment. Jesus said, "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, lest they should see with their eyes, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should

heal them.” Turning to the Lord always receives mercy and healing, so we can honestly say, “If you repent, God will receive you.” But there comes a point where they can’t repent. God hardens hearts so that they will *not* turn. He is sovereign; He has the right to do that.

In contrast, in the next chapter God allowed the Gibeonites’ ruse to work because it was His will to spare that particular nation. So He drew their hearts to Him and gave them faith. But it was still God’s drawing power. And the Gibeonites later proved to be more faithful to God than the Israelites.

But when people’s hearts are hardened, they will irrationally pursue a downward course just like Pharaoh irrationally kept opposing God through every plague all the way up until he drowned in the sea. Why would Pharaoh even *enter* the sea, knowing that God had parted it? Spiritual blindness; irrational blindness. Romans words it that God gives them up to a reprobate mind. *They* are to blame because it is their *own* sin that makes them fall when God removes His restraint (or gives them up), but it is still God’s sovereignty that is involved in when He gives them up. This is why we should not be discouraged at the hardness of heart that America is displaying. The same God who gives people up to experience the horrible consequences of their depravity can also draw them out of their depravity - like He will the Gibeonites.

In any case, in chapter 11 He speaks of hardening their hearts. Elsewhere God speaks of restraining unbelievers from sin. Those are two opposite actions on pagan hearts - and God can draw anyone’s heart in any direction without violating that individual’s will. This is the amazing God we serve. He can draw the elect to Himself (as He says in Jeremiah 31:3), or He can draw the non-elect to destruction and into perilous traps. Demons may think that they are in control of the media, the government, big corporations, and other God-hating entities. But no, it is God who is hardening their hearts so that they will fall into their own trap. God’s enemies are overstepping themselves because the bait of throwing off all the bonds of Christ looks so good. I’ll just give one illustration. The Trans community and LGBTQ community have been pushing for a full win in the corporations, media, courts, and legislatures of the land by making Christianity illegal and our views hate-speech. That’s what they want. But they may very well have pushed too fast and too hard because the population is beginning to get fed up. The 6.5 billion dollars that Anheuser-Busch (just one corporation) lost in stock value when they advertised for the pro-trans community regarding Bud Light Beer may be an indicator of other ways in which the enemy is being drawn out by God - *even though their own worldview is to blame.*

But before I leave this point, I want to point to the antithesis. Satan tries to make his traps look so appealing to *us*, and if we are not walking in the counsel of the Almighty, it would be easy to eat the bait.

When you see a flash of legs under a miniskirt, it is easy for Satan to use that as a lure to look, and to take a second, and a third look. It’s not the look itself that is sin, but the motive for the look. You might think, “Surely a glance won’t hurt.” You tell yourself that you are just curious. But as you feed that cute little lion cub of concupiscence within the heart, it eventually grow up into a lion that consumes you. So recognize it early and kill it early.

How many Christian schools and homeschoolers have been lured by government vouchers, only to later realize that the government claims the right to control the education. It's bait.

How many churches have been lured by the wonderful programs of other churches to start being program-driven in order to be successful. They have left the Bible's boring mandate, which has historically been known to be the regulative principle of government (which means that the church can only do what God has explicitly authorized it to do - unlike the individual and the family who can do anything not prohibited, the church and state can only do what God has explicitly authorized). Well, that doesn't give you much leeway for church programs. But they think, "But, but, but... Those other churches are growing. Those other churches are serving God so effectively with these programs, and are influencing so many people through these programs." But what happens when you leave God's guard rails for the church on the innocent looking things? Well, with the guardrails missing, many of those churches have eventually become unfaithful to God's Word on feminism, Revoice, government initiatives, and a host of other areas. But power is like any commodity - there is only so much to go around and if church or state take more power than God has given, that power has been taken from some other jurisdiction- often individuals or families. So even looking at other church programs can be tempting bait. Recognize the bait.

V. Traps work when you follow the Maker's instructions (v. 18)

I'm actually thankful that persecution is heating up. It may yet wake up the true church. And when will it be that the humanists push their dark agenda so far that it chases people right into the arms of the church? I believe it is when the church is willing to 100% follow our Maker's instructions - which is the next point.

Joshua was a prophet who followed the Lord's directions in this battle. He also stands as a type of Jesus who is warring against all His and our enemies. But as long as we tolerate sin in our midst (as happened in chapter 7), He isn't interested in giving us the victory. Why would he? As long as we ignore God's instructions (as will happen in chapter 9) we will find less than full victory. Verse 18 says,

Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Stretch out the spear that is in your hand toward Ai, for I will give it into your hand." And Joshua stretched out the spear that was in his hand toward the city.

"Then the LORD said..." Without God's authorization they did not move in their *herem* warfare. And since Joshua is a type of Christ, it is instructive that Joshua was the first one to stretch out His hand against Ai. His metal javelin (the Hebrew word is כִּיּוֹן -key-doan) may be a symbol of Christ's rod of iron - a rod of judgment that Revelation 2 says that the saints can share in wielding. It was unusual to have a metal javelin, so I think it is a type of Christ's rod of iron. But the main point is that until we are sold out to our Maker and follow His instructions, we will not see the success that Israel had in this chapter.

VI. Traps work when they are sprung quickly (v. 19)

The next principle is that just as mouse traps only work by a very quick action, this trap only worked because of Israel's quick action. Verse 19 says,

So those in ambush arose quickly out of their place; they ran as soon as he had stretched out his hand, and they entered the city and took it, and hurried to set the city on fire.

The words “quickly,” “ran,” “as soon as,” and “hurried” show the speed with which the trap was sprung. The longer they waited, the longer the main army had to endanger themselves by pretending to flee. So any slowness on their part would have become a danger to the main army. But slowness would also have enabled some of the men of Ai to escape.

But this speed of action presumes unity among a base, doesn't it? This is what made the Transgender advertising for Bud Light such a disaster - all it took was for the majority of the base to stop buying and their plan completely backfired. It wasn't even that organized. It was just spontaneous disgust that made people easily move on.

But it isn't so easy with things controlled by the Federal Government. The deep state has achieved unity and speed of action by means of the power of Federal agencies, propaganda, controlling much of the media, and through cooperation with big corporations. The traps of the Federal Government have become far more dangerous now than in the past because they have finally managed to achieve speed.

But thankfully many Christians are waking up to the fact that the Federal agencies are not friends here to protect you - they are enemies that need to be dismantled. I firmly believe that. Article 1, section 1 makes it clear that not a one of those myriad boards and agencies is constitutional; they are certainly not Biblical. The church hasn't gained a Biblical view of *why* they need to be dismantled yet, but maybe they will be more open to learning as the public gets less and less enchanted with these tyrannical departments.

But we have a lot of work to do in the Reformation of the church. The church as a whole has not been very organized on much of anything that we believe in. The church is not united on Biblically cohesive plans to overturn the murder of abortion. It's really sad how unbiblical and compromising the church has been on those issues. The church is not united on what politics should even *look* like Biblically. There is no unity on worldview and therefore no ability to quickly act in a united fashion. And because of lack of Biblical worldview, some of the conservative and Christians have had a knee jerk reaction to wokeness in Florida is defaulting to unbiblical statist strategies that will not please God and therefore will backfire on us. For example, Christians there are trying to get the state of Florida to do things (like building a prison right next to Disneyland), and adding tax incentives or removing them, that are traps playing right into the hands of a different kind of statism. Fascism is not the solution to Marxism, and conservatism is not the answer to leftism. It's time that Christians went back to the Bible for its strategies and its philosophy of politics.

VII. Traps work when there is no way of escape (vv. 20-22)

Next, traps work best when there is no way of escape. That's obvious with an animal trap, but it is true in chess and many other areas as well. This was the perfectly set trap. Verses 20-22.

20 And when the men of Ai looked behind them, they saw, and behold, the smoke of the city ascended to heaven. So they had no power to flee this way or that way, and the people who had fled to the wilderness turned back on the pursuers. 21 Now when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city and that the smoke of the city ascended, they turned back and struck down the men of Ai. 22 Then the others came out of the city against them; so they were caught in the midst of Israel, some on this side and some on that side. And they struck them down, so that they let none of them remain or escape.

Satan longs to spring this kind of trap for you. You may think that the bait is appealing and innocent enough, but if it is not in tune with God's Word, watch out. The devil and his hosts are brilliant strategists, and they are playing for keeps. They hope to destroy your marriage, destroy the church, and destroy our nation.

But praise God! *God* is working for keeps as well. And sometimes He uses the enemy's traps to trap the enemy. The book of Esther gives my favorite example. It looked hopeless for God's people. It looked like they would be annihilated. Yet with a beautiful turn of providence God destroyed the destroyers. I've already mentioned that the cross of Jesus was another example. The demonic hatred that the Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, and scribes had for Jesus was palpable. Their hatred for Christ was the only thing that united them. And as the demons moved the authorities to close in and crucify Jesus, they may have smugly felt that they had destroyed Him and His cause. But Jesus rose from the grave and triumphed over death and Satan's kingdom with the very trap that Satan had sprung for Him. Satan thought there was no way of escape, but escape Jesus did.

This is why I am not as concerned as some people are about the darkness that is closing in on us in America. Darkness can instantly be dispelled by light. What I am far more concerned about is the fact that the *church* is unholy, that the *church* is in theological shambles, has rejected God's law, does not depend upon the power of the Holy Spirit, has no hope in their eschatology, and no faith in God's promises. *That's* what is concerning; not the power of the enemy. The only way of escape for the church is if it repents and returns to the Old Paths. But even if the church in America is sent into exile or in some other way is annihilated, God is not done. He has promised that every nation *will* be given to Jesus and that there is no hope for Satan.

VIII. Traps work with different actions (vv. 22-23)

And that's why I want to end with one more point - that traps work with two different intentions. Some traps are designed to kill and others are designed to catch alive. And so verses 22-23 form the perfect transition point to the rest of the chapter, which forms a two

part typology of 1) Christ's judgment of His enemies and 2) second of His judgment to life of His elect. I won't get into this too much since I will draw these themes out in much more detail in the next two sermons. But let's look first at verse 22.

A. Some traps work by killing (v. 22b)

The last sentence of verse 22 says, "And they struck them down, so that they let none of them remain or escape." Many commentators believe that this stands as a symbol of Christ's judgments to hell of all the non-elect in world history. He is a Savior, yes, but He is also a just judge who pours out His wrath upon His enemies. And if a person has never put their faith in Jesus Christ, who bore God's judgment on the cross in our place, then there is nothing left for them but to face the fierce wrath of God's judgment themselves. And Jesus joins in bringing that judgment. If you reject Jesus, He will reject you. And we will look at that judgment in verses 24-29 next week, Lord willing.

B. Some traps work by catching alive (v. 23)

But there are also traps meant to take alive so that the animals can be dealt with later. And that is what happened to the king of Ai. Verse 23 says,

But the king of Ai they took alive, and brought him to Joshua.

And when we get to his execution and why he was singled out we will see that there was a symbolic purpose for that. This king will be hanged as a public spectacle in verse 29 - a show to all the world that even kings cannot buy their way out of trouble. But far more importantly, it was also a symbol of a curse. Deuteronomy 21:23 says that all who hang on a tree are cursed. And the king of Ai symbolically receives this curse to represent that he and all his kingdom stood under God's curse.

But that will perfectly introduce the last section of this chapter - the sacrifice that points to Jesus, another King who represented *equally* wicked people (the elect), and who *also* was hung on a tree as a curse. And the sacrifices that end this chapter reveal that all humanity is either covenantally cursed in Satan or covenantally cursed in Christ. No sinner can avoid the curse. There is no escaping God's judgment. Either you receive that judgment in Jesus or you bear it yourself - but judgment has to fall.

In chapter 12 Joshua will make a point of listing all the kings that were killed. But that will be a typology of the New Covenant times when eventually all enemies will be put under Christ's feet - either through conversion or judgement. I can't develop those two themes today.

Instead, I want to end with an encouragement and a challenge. My encouragement to you is to not get discouraged - God knows how to spring traps for Satan and his stooges at just the right time. And we can trust that His traps are perfect.

But my *challenge* to you is to avoid Satan's traps. Satan will use every unethical trick in the book, including lies, to set his traps for you. And it is important that you learn from Proverbs on how not to be lured by his traps.

So - having learned a theology of traps, may we value the freedom Jesus purchased for us, not take it for granted, and continue to pursue freedom. Amen.