

Free - Take One



Shaqah



*“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”
Colossians 2:8*

Issue #107

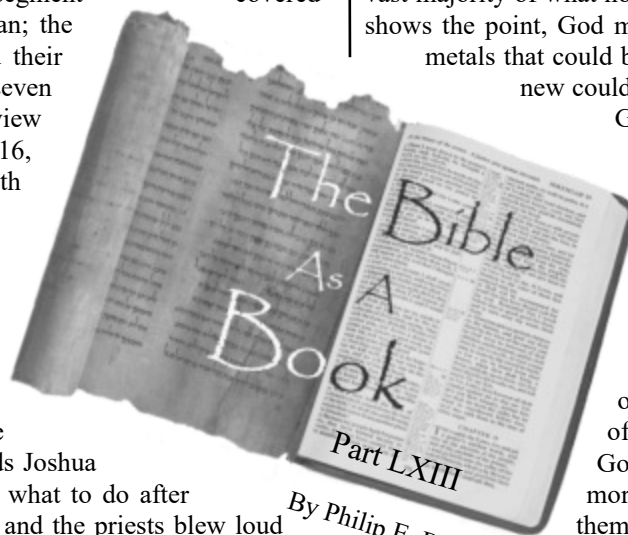
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In our last segment, we began our overview of the Book of Joshua. We talked about how it was finally time for Joshua to step forward and take the lead in a way he never had until Moses was not just gone into the mountain but the search for and mourning over Moses had finally come to an end. With that, the Book of Joshua begins by telling us God came directly to Joshua as He had Moses before him and encourages Joshua with the fact He was with Joshua just like He had been with Moses. God does not drag this out for any time though as God gets right to instructing Joshua with what steps he is to take in moving Israel across the Jordan and claiming the promised land. Thus, our last segment covered the spies going across the Jordan; the nation crossing the Jordan; and their marching around the city for seven days. This brought our overview through Joshua chapter 6 verse 16, and we will pick up this time with verse 17.

Of course, verse 16 brings us to that point where Israel had marched around the city once for six days and on this seventh day they had marched seven times around the city. Verse 16 conveys the words Joshua had instructed the people about what to do after they had made that seventh trip and the priests blew loud and long with their shofars. The people were to shout, not as a way to take the city but because God had already given it to them. In verse 17 we are given more of the details of what Joshua had told the people concerning Jericho. Those words told Israel, Jericho was accursed; everything it was made of, everyone in it, everything it contained, and the idea of the city itself! The only exception to this was Rahab and her family because she had helped the spies and they had sworn to her they would spare them. Everyone who had followed the instructions of being in her house at the time this all happened was spared, but everyone else was accursed right along with the city itself. Joshua makes it clear the nation was not to take anything of Jericho. This kind of instruction was always hard for Israel as it would be for any people. Taking the spoils of war for one's self was just part of the payment for fighting the fight, or it was the

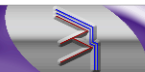
purpose for which you were sent to attack a certain place. However, God wished to make the point here that He so often did with Israel that this was not about worldly gain, this was about destroying the corruption and making room for the things of God. That is why Israel is instructed everything was accursed and nothing was to be taken out of the city. All of it was to be destroyed and left as rubble for time to deal with. The only exception to artifacts was that the silver, gold, and vessels of iron and brass could be sanctified to God and put in the treasury of the tabernacle. In this, we see God showing us how He can redeem the things He wants unto Himself in spite of the fact the vast majority of what normally might be spared is destroyed. It shows the point, God makes the choices, and in this case the metals that could be melted down for creating something new could be spared but only for the purposes of God's work!



By Philip E. Busby

With these instructions already in their minds the people would end their seventh circle around the city and hear the blast of the shofars they had been instructed the priests would give, and they would shout! With this shout, both the people of Jericho and all of Israel would see one of the most amazing things they had seen God do for them. Without doing anything more, like battering them or pressing upon them, the walls of the city would simply fall down flat all on their own. Israel would rush in to begin the work of attacking what was left of the city and its people. In the utter confusion the people must have experienced at this moment and the devastation the city walls falling could cause all by itself, destroying the rest of the city, the people, and even animals had to be easy work. At this point the two spies that had made the promise to Rahab had been instructed to head to her house and make sure her and her family were brought out unharmed. This may be the most amazing part of all as Rahab was able to originally help the spies because her house was on the wall of the city. Everyone in such structures should have been the first to die, but God had protected that part of the wall and everyone in her house along with it. The men would go in and bring out that family and the things they owned. The family would not be made a part of the chosen nation, but

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they would be put outside the camp of Israel where they'd be safe. In a poetic way, this family represents the first of those who would learn from Israel's example of serving God by just living close to the nation. This is the true work the nation was set up to accomplish, and we see in this family being the only ones spared, the truth many are called but few are chosen! (Matt. 22:14)

Rahab would live close to the nation's people for the rest of her life, but the rest of Jericho was destroyed. Israel would burn the heap of rubble that once had been Jericho, and Joshua would stand up at that time to curse anyone who ever rebuilt this city. If anyone did they would end their life childless as they would lose their first-born at the start of building, and by the end they would lose even their youngest. The Canaanites had become a very corrupt and wicked people. Jericho was to remain a desolate place; a monument of what it was God had sent Israel into the land to do. Anyone who even considered rebuilding the city would get a chance to end their ill advised work by seeing the death of their first-born. (1 Kin. 16:34) This should not have just been a general bad thing as in one loses a child, but the first-born had particular importance in any family. This is why God killed all the first-born of Egypt at Passover to make a final attempt at getting Pharaoh to do what he should. The fact Passover was/is so important to Israel and remembered every year should have made the death of a first-born that much more of an impact on anyone in Israel who might think of rebuilding this city.

The destruction of Jericho did exactly what God had promised Joshua it would do. The fame of Joshua would spread not just among Israel, as they would gain great confidence in him on that day, but also among those of the land. As fearful as many may already have been of Israel's invasion, now they had seen how capable Israel was to simply run them all down. Sadly, everyone in Israel did not stay pure in what Joshua had commanded them concerning Jericho. Thus, the very next place Israel attacked did not go as well. Joshua would send spies to Ai which was the next major city to the west and slightly north of Jericho. These spies would go up and come back with the opinion that it would not even take all of Israel's fighting men to take the place. They believed only two to three thousand men could do the job. Joshua would send three thousand men to attack the city but they would be defeated, and thirty six men of Israel were killed as the men of Ai chased them in retreat. After the great encouragement of how easy it was to take Jericho this was a surprise to say the least, and Israel's belief they were going to easily take this land was greatly harmed. Joshua and the elders of Israel would go to the tabernacle and fall down before the Ark of the Covenant to speak to God about this. As they mourned this loss in the tradition of ripping clothing and putting dust upon their heads, Joshua's words show us how different he was from Moses. Moses would likely have told the people they had obviously done something wrong before God for this to happen, and then he would have went before God and asked why God had him lead these people out if this is how they were going to be? After starting out at the burning bush telling God he was just a shy guy who could not do the work, we see Moses go forward with the training and forcefulness of a king. This is what he had been taught while being raised in Pharaoh's house, but his good heart was shown in that he rose up and smote an Egyptian for

brutalizing one of Israel. This combination made Moses the perfect man for the job, but Israel had been so disobedient Joshua was left to finish that job and lead Israel in this conquest of the promised land.

Being a very young man as Israel left Egypt, Joshua seemed to cling to Moses' side from the start. It is obvious he greatly admired Moses and the work he did. In being one of only two out of twelve spies that believed Israel could take the land some 40 years earlier, Joshua showed his heart for trusting in God. However, now the burden was totally on Joshua as the leader. He could not lean on Moses or look to him to find the answer. It had to be difficult now for Joshua to believe God was with him as He had been Moses, and Joshua shows that in his words as he comes before God. What is interesting about Joshua's words is that they so greatly mirror the words of the generation that was left to die wandering in the wilderness. They often asked why did God or Moses bring them out of Egypt to die in this land or be killed by an enemy? They would often cap this with their idea it would have been better to remain slaves in Egypt than have to suffer that fate. In this new generation of Israel the people did not know Egypt, or it was a long ago faded memory from childhood. They had gone forward most of their days as adults to cut the path they needed to get to the east side of Jordan where they wiped many people off the map and claimed the land for themselves. As easy as it was for their fathers to say it would have been better to be slaves in Egypt, it was far easier for this generation to claim what Joshua reflects in his words. Joshua asks God why He brought Israel, not out of Egypt, but across Jordan if they were just going to die here? He then caps that off with the thought, it would have been better to stay on the east side of Jordan where they already had good land, than to have come over here.

These words show a weakness on Joshua's part that I don't believe any of us have even the beginnings of a right to judge for so many reasons. That aside, it is there nonetheless, but what we see in Joshua was that he goes before God to make this complaint. Therein lies a big key to the difference in what Joshua does. Those coming out of Egypt often attacked Moses. Moses had to be the firewall between the people and God, and he often took heat from both sides. The people needed Moses to be there many times or they would not have survived God's wrath. A mistake man made on the first day he fell into sin was in these people. Adam and Eve hid from God instead of running to Him to ask for help. I would say Joshua was pushing it a bit by using these words before God, but at the same time he was the leader upon whom the burden fell. He was there on his knees with dust on his head, humbly before God. As wrong as they may seem, he did not speak his words in a defiant stance of turning back to the east and giving up. He didn't say them out of anger that God dare let this happen. No, Joshua is truly pleading with God as to why. He is seeking answers and hoping to hear God's voice. All this shows us the great difference not just our actions and words make, but the attitude with which we convey them. Attacking the minister of God instead of going to God Himself for the answers you need is always the wrong thing. There are people, like other ministers and certainly those who have the gift of prophecy, who might seem to attack a minister when delivering words of instruction God is giving, but that is why each of us must know in our heart what we are doing is done

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

In our last segment, we talked about the conversation Abraham and Isaac had as they walked together up the mount where Abraham was to sacrifice Isaac to God. We talked again about how hard it had to be for Abraham to do this, knowing that human sacrifice was not something The One True God wanted. However, God had asked it of Abraham so he had taken the fire, the wood, the knife, and his son to do just that. We discussed how all the things Abraham brought had meaning, and a lot of what was done foreshadowed what Jesus came to do when giving His life for us all. We also started talking about the question Isaac asked his father about where the sacrifice was since they had all the elements necessary to offer one but not the sacrifice itself. In doing this, Isaac no doubt understood what was going on, but wanted his father to confirm to him or explain further what it was this all meant. That brought us to discuss Abraham's answer in Genesis chapter 22 verse 8, and that is where we will continue this time.

As we started looking at the words Abraham spoke we talked last time about some of the overall meaning Abraham was trying to convey to his son. To start this time we want to look at the words themselves a bit more before we move on. One of the first things we don't want to miss is the fact Abraham does not say, "God will provide a lamb..." He says to Isaac, "God will provide himself a lamb..." This may not come through with the power it does in the original language once it's translated into English, but this is a great example of how well the King James Bible did/does and why we don't want to be bringing every verse, if any verse, of the Bible into "modern English." This is not because modern English can not totally do the job, but the point most want to make when saying they are bringing the Scriptures into today's English or modern English is not to just get rid of the thees and thous. No, what they mean most of the time is they want to make it more like the English we commonly speak today which is a very weak pedestrian language. It's meant to get us through the day, which means it's specifically not meant to convey any deeper thoughts. This is a problem when translating Scripture in particular as there is no deeper writing than the Word of God.

A point many do not think about is that even at the time the King James Version was written, it was not done in what might be called the "street English" of the day. This is why we often call it, "The King's English." There was a pure form of English spoken by the nobility that was not so much spoken by the common person who knew "English." While people of that time were far more use to the thees and thous and a few other things in the King James we feel are out of date and/or not clear on what they mean, those of the day still needed a certain level of education to grasp it all. Mind you, it was not as big a gap as it is today, and that is actually saying something about how low a language we daily speak now. It was not common for those without wealth and/or of nobility to get much of an education that went beyond learning a trade; often just something their

family already did. This means almost no common person sat in a language class of any kind. They only knew what they had heard from others. Today many have the ability to go to school and learn a language if not more than one. In most "developed" countries it's even a requirement to be educated to a certain level of literacy or at least attend school for a certain number of years. My point is simply that if any people have an excuse for complaining the language of a writing as important as the Word of God is too complex or high an English for them, it's not modern people. It's just gotten that bad, and we've just gotten that lazy that even if the King James was redone into a college level English of today most would still complain about how hard they think it is to understand.

All that said, there is still the point that even the King James English is not able to give us all the original language contained and neither would a high college level of today's English. At the same time, there are subtle things like the way these words are put together which bring a lot of the meaning through. Without stretching the point out and saying something like, "God will be the sacrifice he will provide..." It states, "...God will provide himself a lamb..." In ways I have a hard time imagining those who know Hebrew well could ignore, Abraham is telling Isaac The Messiah would be God Himself in some form. Abraham did not know what that form would be exactly because the triune nature of God had not been revealed to men in the detail Jesus was able to show it to us. However, not only do those of the Jewish religion today believe The Messiah cannot be God Himself, they are leaning on a religious thought developed by those putting together the doctrine who lived even before Jesus came. This is exactly why it was unacceptable for the Jewish religious establishment of the day to see Jesus as The Messiah. The power of religious thinking was/is so strong it did not matter how many things Jesus did to show Himself to be The Messiah or how powerful He was showing He was of God in an undeniable way, the fact He also showed Himself to be equal to God was blasphemy and demanded the punishment of death as they saw it. (John 3:1-2, Phil. 2:4-8)

This is amazing because it is clear in what Abraham said that he understood The Messiah would be God Himself. Of course, it's easy to sidestep this with a lot of technical excuses and claim that's not what the wording means for one reason or another, but this is a denial of the simple truth Abraham was conveying to Isaac. Isaac wanted some kind of further information as to why they were about to do what they were headed up that hill to do, and Abraham could have simply said, "Son, only God really knows." Abraham could also have said something along the lines of trying to make a longer consideration of his understanding about what would one day be the case, but he also did not do that. That point is why it's good the King James Version does not belabor or drag this statement out into a longer sounding explanation in an attempt to capture

even more of what the original language conveyed. For even in the original language Abraham was being simple about this and straight to the point. It was not about being ignorant of anything that was going on and why, but it also was not about pondering the point. Abraham simply tells Isaac, as well as those of us who still read this today, that there was something about what they were about to do that had deep meaning, and they would do it because it was what God had asked. However, as we talked about last time, the real point was that what they did or did not do was about being or not being a part of God's plan unfolding. It was not about stopping it or doing the tangible work of moving it forward in a literal sense. This is not to say what Abraham and Isaac did didn't have a profound impact on our understanding of God's plan and our faith, but to say only Jesus could come and give Himself to actually cleanse us of sin. Only Jesus can be The One to stand on Judgment Day and tell The Father this one is Mine, redeeming us by His choosing.

Those will be the moments when it really matters and why it really mattered Jesus came and actually physically gave His life. It's not to say there is anyone who can legitimately say, "What right does Jesus have to save that person and not me?" However, this is the perfection of God and it shows us something about how we should live our lives. We are told in the New Testament to abstain from all appearance of evil and things like, a better name is rather to be chosen than great riches. (I Thes. 5:22, Prov. 22:1) These can seem like hard things to navigate, especially in a world where so much evil is called good and so much good is called evil. (Isa. 5:20) How do we choose what is right and what is wrong in certain circumstances. If we give this world's thoughts credit, more and more, it will seem correct when we are judged as totally wrong for believing certain things that used to be considered the good and right way of thinking. There is almost always this struggle in the political realm and now more so than ever! So many things that for decades were considered the "Christian" way of thinking governments should run the affairs of a country and laws should be made, can now be looked at as hateful and discrimination. This means doing things that will give us a good name in the eyes of people who have accepted the wrong and rejected the right will be impossible if we continue to hold to that which is right. It will seem in the eyes of the world that we are not only failing to abstain from all appearance of evil, we are the evil! Believe me, I have fought this within the church itself over several decades and watched this kind of wrong judgment be the reason true believers have no place in a lot of churches. The wrong way of looking at what is right and wrong has so totally saturated our modern world and gotten into our churches, the right looks wrong and the wrong looks right to more and more people.

So what are we to do as true believers in God's ways? Can we really abstain from all appearance of evil and choose a good name over riches in a world so turned on its head? The answer is yes, because in the end it is not about what pleases man but God. This again brings us to the critical fact we see the golden rule as being that we love The Lord our God with everything we have, and the second one is to love our neighbor as ourselves. (Matt. 22:34-40) If we put God first in all things then He is our guide, our anchor. It is God who dictates the right and the wrong through His Word and the conviction power of

The Holy Ghost. We shouldn't care what man thinks over what God thinks. We shouldn't care what man says over what God says. To us, abstaining from all appearance of evil means we abstain from all things that would make it seem we are violating God's Word. What is important is not that man agrees with us, but that others are clear we do what we do because we feel it is what God has asked of us. This very point is in what Paul says in Romans 14:22-23 "Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." We stand before God and do what we do unto Him. This is what people should see when they look at us. If they judge us as bad for what we do they should at least see that what we do is because we believe in God and His ways.

Now, this point was widely understood in the past, and that is why it became a common thing for people to say to others, "I can't believe you think you're a Christian!" or "And you're suppose to be a Christian?" People love to try to shake our faith, and at times maybe it seems to work, but these are not the times to be stuck in religious mud and say well I do what I do because it's what I was taught or because it's what I have always done. No, these are the times that mean so much that we have been in God's Word on a regular basis. If we have slipped away from being in His Word, these are the times that show us we need to get back. If we do what we do in faith it means we do it because we believe it is what pleases God, and we believe that because we've looked into the subject for ourselves. We know it's in the Word of God, and if we don't know it we should seek it. We should seek the truth in any matter from God Himself not just listen to men. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." Psalms 1:1-2

As for loving one's neighbor as one's self, that part becomes simple once we've followed the true Golden Rule. We can easily do unto others as we would have them do unto us because we are only interested in doing our best to please God. When others hate us for what we believe or try to judge us, we know our sincerity for serving God is what they are seeing. We may be mostly right or we may have many flaws in our thinking, but when people see we are trying our best to obey God that is doing unto them as a true believer would want done to themselves. True believers should all desire to see everyone striving to serve The Lord. This is not just in the fact we will feel more comfortable knowing others are not lost but also in that it takes the burden off our hands. If we see others doing the things they do in a true attempt to do as they feel God would want of them we can discuss the ways we disagree, but we should feel no burden to do more if others do not accept what we believe. This is why we are told in Romans 14:13 "Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way." When we degrade into demeaning the faith of others by saying to them things like, "And you believe you're a Christian?" We are not only directly judging them as not someone who's going to make it to heaven, we may very well cause that person to become disheartened and truly stop even

What About God's Chosen People?

Part XXXVII

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

"Is it true that the Jews are God's chosen people? I have a Christian friend who says the Jews were not God's chosen people."

In our last segment, we talked about the sequence of events that made up the Kitos War. As we discussed, so many of these events were really self contained in that one did not take place due to the other. This is particularly true of the events in Mesopotamia where many Jewish communities were totally wiped out by this war in spite of the fact these communities had rose up for far different reasons than those who rose up in Libya, Egypt, and Cyprus. In the end, one of the biggest takeaways from the Kitos War is that it was not just used as a propaganda tool in order to blame the Jews for the Romans' mismanagement of the empire, but it was also used as an excuse to oppress the Jews that much more. This included not just the outlawing of the Torah but also direct bans on Jews living in certain parts of the empire. When the Romans made Judah a direct province of the empire they also made its official name Judea. In many ways this was used as a way to start narrowing down what the Romans saw as Jewish land to just that southern province. However, all this was just the beginnings of an attempt to wipe clean from the memory of the world that any of this land was the Jewish homeland.

Following the Kitos war things really began to get dark for the chosen nation in a way it had never been before. It is in this time period we really see the reason anyone can doubt the Jews we know today are those we knew as the chosen nation of the past. However, as we continue to follow the history we find the Jews as a people did continue. Due to world events shifting around them they end up in very different looking circumstances for a long time, but what is amazing is we can continue to follow the Jewish people even through these darkest of times, which unlike things such as the Babylonian captivity, ended up lasting for centuries not decades! Following the history is what we will continue to do in this study, and in so doing see how God has preserved His people.

By the end of the Kitos War, we find there was a new emperor of Rome named Hadrian. His placement on the throne as Trajan's rightful successor was suspicious. However, he was accepted by the military, and not long thereafter accepted by the senate. This might have been the end of the matter, but shortly after this, four Roman senators were executed on the basis they were conspiring against the empire. This brought some suspicions that Hadrian had them killed simply because they had opposed his placement. Over the long term Hadrian would have a back and forth relationship with the senate, but as was the case for most emperors, he would mostly do as he pleased and his policies would certainly effect how things played out with the Jews. In talking about the actions of the Mesopotamian Jews during the Kitos War, we found their real reason for rising up was due to Rome's overreach as Trajan attempted to expand the

empire. What is ironic is the Jews in Judea did not do much during this war. In spite of this, following the Kitos War, Judea would be put under heavy scrutiny and looked at as a trouble spot for the empire. Thus, in what is certainly an overbearing move by the empire, Rome would actually permanently station an entire legion of the Roman army in Ceasarea just to keep an eye on the Jews. This was the Legio VI Ferrata, which means "Sixth Ironclad Legion," and Judea would remain their post for the next two centuries!

To show what an overreach this was on the part of Rome, we only need look at how Hadrian began to change Roman policy. One of the most controversial shifts in policy Hadrian brought about was to end the expansionist ambitions. This would not be just in the idea he would no longer pursue greater and greater territory as Trajan had desired to do, but Hadrian would pull back from much of the eastern territory Trajan was said to have made part of the empire. This was another move that upset many in the empire. Military families had fought long and hard and sacrificed much to go with Trajan on these eastern campaigns, yet Hadrian simply abandoned much of that gain. This made the fact many Jewish communities in Mesopotamia were wiped out completely even sadder, as it was all done by Rome for reasons Rome would now abandon. Hadrian simply did not like the idea of an empire with such great boarders that they needed constant vigilance to protect. Instead, he favored boarders which were secure and fairly easy for the empire to hold. In this, there is a wisdom that Trajan seemed to lack, but before we give Hadrian too much credit we must understand some of his deeper thinking that made him desire this.

The trouble with Hadrian is that he was greatly in love with the Greek culture, and once again, this would bring great trouble for the Jews. It was Hadrian's desire to see the empire return Greece to its former glory, and in turn to see the Roman Empire as a whole fully turn to the Hellenistic ways. This has a great deal to do with why he did not favor expanding boarders. He returns us to the thinking that culture could be the conqueror more so than armies and weapons. Thus, it was his desire to see those in the Roman Empire become a grand example to the world of what a great society following the Greek way of life could be. This caused Hadrian to turn from a military focus to a cultural focus. Obviously one of the things the Jews did during the Kitos War was destroy many temples. These were both Greek and Roman temples as well as some more ancient ones in Egypt, but it matters not how new or old these structures were, they represented false religion just the same. That is why the Jews took the opportunity to destroy them. The Jews may in many ways not have been on the exact right path of serving God as they should have been, but they did understand, in maybe a greater way than they ever had before, just how much false religion was their true enemy. This was a little too late in that the best way for Jews to remain clean was to live on a land of their own and keep that land pure, but the message was getting

through in some form and that could be a good thing.

In a practical sense the Jew's destruction of pagan temples ended up being little more than a symbol of Jewish displeasure with those of the world desiring to oppress the Jew's way of life, because it would be short-lived. The Kitos War takes us from a Roman emperor whose focus was on land expansion of the empire which did not really have to effect the Jews so much in the end, to an emperor focused on the culture, and that was never good. It was as if Hadrian was returning the Jews to the time when the Greeks ruled the empire, and there was little to no good thing for the Jews during the Greek reign. Much of what the Jews had "accomplished" during the Kitos War would be reversed as Hadrian made it a large part of his reign to see many temples rebuilt and restored to their former glory. He would not just rebuild temples but also be very ambitious in building new ones. The big problem with an emperor who wants to make culture the conquering tool of his empire is that this building of new temples and grand places of culture was not something Hadrian was going to simply do at random, or just for people and places who greatly desired to be a part of his grand vision. No, building such places was a calculated move on Hadrian's part as he looked for places important to other cultures as religious centers, and in those places he sought to build temples in order to help integrate the cultures into Hellenistic thinking!

As one should be able to guess, this meant one of the most significant places looked at as a place needing such a thing would be Judea! What place in the empire would such an emperor see as most needing a conversion to a "better" culture than Judea? Obviously, if Hadrian wanted to, he could have looked back and found the records which would have told him how this did not play well in the past when the Greeks themselves attempted such a thing. However, one has to wonder if Hadrian did look. Did he make his moves against the Jewish culture knowing the past and feeling he was just powerful enough to do what the Greeks could not, or did he not know the past and this was simply history repeating itself? This is a question we can not fully know the answer to, but it does not really matter because again, as one should be able to guess, Hadrian's quest to Hellenize his empire would bring him straight to Jerusalem!

Hadrian would visit Jerusalem in 130 A.D. Of course, there was not much to visit at the time because the first Jewish-Roman war had seen not just the destruction of the temple but of the city itself. The city had often been seen as a troublesome place for the empire, and the first war was used as an opportunity to raze Jerusalem to the ground. The historian Josephus records that Jerusalem was so thoroughly razed to the ground by those who demolished it that nothing was left which could persuade visitors it had once been a place of habitation. In what is likely more Roman propaganda, it is recorded that Hadrian came proposing the rebuilding of Jerusalem as a gift to the Jewish people. No matter the record there is no reason to believe Hadrian had any intent of rebuilding Jerusalem for Jews. This might have been said as a way to lure the Jews into not resisting this rebuilding effort as it took place, but Hadrian was all about building cultural centers that promoted Greek culture, of which there could not be a place symbolizing more opposition to such an idea than Jerusalem. As some Jews held out hope Hadrian

might actually be intending to rebuild Jerusalem for the Jews, it became clear very early on that he instead intended to build on the ruins of Jerusalem a city in his honor which would be a Roman colony dedicated to pagan gods. He would name the city Aelia Capitolina. The first part, Aelia is in honor of Hadrian's family, and Capitolina is a way of dedicating the city to the god Jupiter.

Of course, there is nothing about this which would please the Jews, and obviously it would do just the opposite and enrage them. To make matters worse there would also be a new Roman governor of Judea by this time who was very much so not on the side of the Jews. This governor's name was Quintus Tineius Rufus, also known as Turnus Rufus the Evil. This man would be put in charge of the building of Aelia Capitolina, and he would show no respect for the Jewish history of Jerusalem in doing so. The building would begin in 131 A.D., and Rufus would see to the foundation ceremony. This laying of the foundations of the city was begun by plowing up what was to be the city's borders. This included plowing up the Temple Mount itself. It would have been bad enough if Hadrian's plan had been about building a city off to the side of the Temple Mount, but it would seem his intent was to build a specific temple to Jupiter directly on the Temple Mount. While the Jews had been greatly discouraged by the losses suffered during the first Jewish-Roman war, they had realized there was little they could do to resist Rome and not acted again. As we have covered, the Kitos War was not really about the freeing of Judea, and might never have included events in Judea if it had not been for leaders of that war fleeing to Judea and making it their last stand.

However, now Jerusalem itself was being violated and this included the Temple Mount. There had also been other pressures put on the Jews as they watched the Roman policy favor non-Jews on the land. Various privileges of how to claim and use the land was given to non-Jews coming into Judea as a way for the Roman government to diminish the Jews as a people and encourage a non-Jewish population. At the very least, it could be said Rome's policy was about attempting to water down the Jewish population to the point they as a people would simply disappear into the greater population of the Roman Empire. If nothing else, it was likely the Romans hoped the Jewish religion would fade, and that alone would mark the end of any troubles the empire would have with them. This might have seemed like a good policy to pursue against a people who had already lost two wars with the empire. It was very political in its thinking, as instead of taking a direct approach of outlawing Jewish culture altogether there would simply be a fading of it as new generations of Jews found it to be the unfavorable lifestyle. This was a great underestimating of the Jewish dedication to the Law, and all these events would contribute to the start of a third Jewish-Roman war.

The third Jewish-Roman war is known as the Bar Kokhba Revolt. This is due to the fact a lead man in this uprising was a man named Simon bar Kokhba, and his rise to preeminence has to do with something we have touched on over and over in this study. Again, we come to that fact Jesus came to the Jewish nation at a time when relations with Rome were about as good as they were ever going to be. We often think about the relationship between Jews and Rome at the time of Jesus as being not so great. However, that is a lack of historic perspective

on the fact things got a whole lot worse. Not only is that true, but at the time of Jesus' coming Rome actually desired to work with the Jews and saw them as very much a contributing people to the empire. This is not to suggest Rome did not do many things that angered the Jews, but the Jews saw themselves as entitled to be a totally free people having to answer to no empire or higher authority other than God Himself. This would have been ideal, but even before Moses died he made it clear that to have such blessed circumstances the nation would need to follow God with their whole hearts and perform the law with purity. This the Jews had not done, and while God had given the Jews a great victory over the Greeks at the time of Hanukkah's events, the Jews had a long way to go in getting things right as God wanted them.

The Jews were far from a stable enough people to be ruling without anyone over them, if for no other reason than the world was a dangerous place where powers such as the Romans and Parthians sought territory and glory for their respective imperialistic ideas. Of course, God could protect the Jews from such powers no matter how insurmountable that task might seem. However, if we know what the Bible is showing us, we see God raising His hand of protection more and more from the nation based on their unwillingness to follow Him in purity is how the dynamic worked. This is why in totally following God the nation would see great blessings, but in not following God they would experience the great trouble caused by a world who hates the things of God and certainly the people who represent it, in spite of how much those people may or may not purely live it. Thus, being under the Roman rule as the Jews were at the time of Jesus was a great opportunity to live under the secular protection of an empire that saw them as simply one of the many ethnicity in the empire. This was as good a thing as the nation could ask for considering how far from the perfection in following God they were at the time. This made it the best time for The Messiah to come and use this opportunity to teach and restore the nation into the perfect ways of the Law.

Sadly, we know the Jews did not take that opportunity. They believed, should The Messiah come, He would be the one to free them from any and all rulers other than Himself. Jesus was crucified primarily because He showed He had no intentions of doing that, and a great opportunity was lost. All that said, the problems with believing The Messiah would be such a figure did not end with Jesus coming and being rejected. No, that is why man having false beliefs within his religious system is so dangerous! Failing to accept what Jesus offered at His coming only meant as the years wore on the Jews would experience the downhill slide that was inevitable for them to experience without the help of The Messiah. The nation would follow the same path they would have followed had Jesus not come. Sure the growth of the church effected events some, but this is so early on and before what calls itself Christianity became a religious force of its own, the effects are practically irrelevant. The simple truth of the matter is that the Jews as a nation and more importantly as a religion awaited The Messiah's coming to set them free from their troubles. What religious thought patterns had done was take something the Law made clear was only going to be granted to a nation which followed God with sincerity and turned it into a right. The Jews believed they had the right to their temple as the people of God. They believed God had an obligation to fulfill His promise to them which they saw as being freedom from secular rule outside the nation. Since none of this was true there

was only one thing for religious minds to do, and that was to grab on to any and all threads of things that made it seem it was true!

The Jews had experienced at the time of the Babylonian captivity the fact that only 70 years after the temple had been destroyed they were allowed to return and rebuild it. The fact this would happen was even prophesied by the prophet Jeremiah. (Jer. 29:10-14) Instead of seeing this as something that happened and therefore was a prophecy given and fulfilled, it was as if the Jews had put this idea into doctrine. It was believed that just as it had been at the time of the captivity, the temple destroyed by the Romans would also be rebuilt in 70 years. These are the kinds of things Satan loves to play with. People have already given him what he needs in the part he could not force upon them. All he has to do is work with leaders and individuals who are willing to listen to his suggestions to bring things that at first glance might seem to be nothing but unfortunate timing. The temple had been destroyed during the first Jewish-Roman war in the year 70 A.D. It would take some time before the Jews in any place would attempt to rise up again. However, the Kitos War would eventually take place and make things even more desperate feeling for the Jews. At a loss as to what to do the Jews would simply try to endure for a time, but now just as they passed the 60th anniversary of the destruction of the temple a Roman emperor chooses to rebuild Jerusalem. At first it was believed he would do this as a favor to the Jews, and hope no doubt sprang up that they were, once again, on the verge of seeing the temple rebuilt! Then it was found just the opposite was going to take place, and while they stood able to do nothing it seemed, the Jews watched as the Temple Mount and the city of Jerusalem was prepared to have built upon it a temple and city dedicated to a false god.

If you've been paying attention you can see how dangerous this made the Jewish religious thought at the time. Only a handful of years now stood between that 70 year mark for the rebuild and this laying of a foundation for Aelia Capitolina. To the Jewish mind this had to mean only one thing; The Messiah was going to appear as the conquering hero the teaching said He'd be, and He would not only put a stop to the building of this abomination over Jerusalem but see that the temple was restored! This caused there to be a flurry of Messianic fervor. While history does not give us the details, there can be no doubt, knowing human thought, that there were any number of people thought to be The Messiah at the time. Anyone who seemed to fit the bill of being a leader who might accomplish the goal was probably singled out by at least a few as being who they thought The Messiah was. This was truly the time Jesus warned of when He said there would be many claiming to be The Messiah, but they should not go out after them. (Matt. 17:22-24) When we think about those words of Jesus, we can see the big picture of how we should not be fooled into believing some religious leader or anyone claiming to be The Messiah really is. However, we see in the specific events of the time we are studying how, more so than an overall fear, this could be a problem throughout the time we await the return of Christ, we are shown a great cautionary tale of where religious thought in general can take us.

For that we turn to the man named Simon bar Kokhba. Scrolls found among what are collectively known as the Dead Sea Scrolls tell us his original name appears to simply have been Simon bar Kosevah. The Kosevah would have indicated where

he came from or simple been a family name. However, this man, for various reasons, gained momentum in being a man believed to be a great leader. It might simply have been his passion for an attempt to free Judea or other factors, but what is interesting is that it seems this man did not rise up claiming to be The Messiah. Instead, he simply did his part in organizing the revolt that would eventually bear his name, and it was a Jewish sage of the day who considered Simon The Messiah. This sage would give him the title Bar Kokhba, which means "Son of the Star" in Aramaic. This was inspired by Numbers 24:17 which is a verse the Jews of the day had to be greatly excited might be fulfilled in their time! It is said, and the Talmud tells us, that not all the religious leaders were convinced this man was The Messiah. In the Talmud he is often referred to not as Bar Kokhba but as Simon bar Koziba, which means "Son of the Lie." However, how much this was really something done in the day and how much this was later ascribed to him after it became clear he was not The Messiah they believed him to be is hard to say for sure. History is not just written by the victors, some parts of it are written by the survivors, and as dark as Jewish history from those days was, this is certainly the case when it comes to that time period.

In any case, the truth of the matter is that there was a great fervor over the idea The Messiah would appear, and that added to the number of people at least willing to join this revolt. The political and social circumstances of the day also show us the Jews were a bit like a cornered animal. It seemed at the time there was little to nothing to lose in attempting to revolt, once again, against the Romans. Judea was already being given primarily to strangers and the city of Jerusalem was being desecrated. Surely God would not let this stand, and no matter if The Messiah was leading the nation or not, surely God would give the chosen nation victory! Thus, the Jews would determine the time was right to try again, but this time unlike the other times their intent would be to rise up a very organized revolt. They were all too clear on the way the first war had gone, and even more clear on what a failure the Kitos War had been for the Jewish people as a whole. This revolt needed to be well organized if it was to not just have success but long-term success in taking and holding the promised land for the Jewish people. These facts added to the importance that the revolt be led by men the nation believed in. It mattered not if you believed Simon was The Messiah or not, what was universally known is that this time the nation could not go off disorganized and following various leaders. Thus, Simon and a Jewish scholar named Eleazar of Modi'im would be the lead men in this revolt, and the Jews willing to participate would follow them.

The Bar Kokhba Revolt would begin in 132 A.D. In what might have been a planned poetic start to this third war with the Romans, it would begin in the city of Modi'im. Modi'im is situated about 19 miles west of Jerusalem, and it was the original home of the priest Mattathias and his five sons who had led the spontaneous events which ended with the rededication of the temple, and which Hanukkah celebrates. From this town the new revolt would spread quickly across the countryside as the Jews would rise up to take back their homeland. This action would quickly cut off the Roman garrison stationed in Jerusalem and halt the progress of building that city into the pagan monument

Hadrian wanted. Of course, it would be the job of the Roman governor Rufus to respond to this sudden crisis, but it would appear his efforts were unsuccessful. Rufus would be so unsuccessful in halting or even slowing the revolt he simply disappeared from the records not long after it all started. Some have speculated that his inability to handle the revolt, if not Rome's anger he had let it begin at all, caused him to be removed from his position in disgrace. However, there are later records of him and his family enjoying the privileges of being in Rome's favor, and this would indicate Rome was not as displeased as it might have seemed. In any case, Rufus did not succeed in stopping this revolt as it moved quickly across Judea and even did heavy damage to the Roman legion, Legio X Fretensis, which had been brought to Jerusalem possibly in anticipation of just such actions by the Jews.

Once it was seen the Fretensis alone was no match for the Jewish forces, the Legio VI Ferrata was called up to reinforce them. This brought some 20,000 Roman imperial troops against the Jews, and even this was not enough to bring the revolt under control. In reality these Roman troops failed so greatly that the Jews almost took Jerusalem itself! This truth was brought to Rome's attention, and it became apparent that while the Romans were far better prepared to handle a Jewish revolt in Judea than they had been at the beginning of the first Jewish-Roman war, it was not going to be enough. Neighboring legions of Roman soldiers would have to be called upon to attempt bringing this to an end. The closest of these reinforcements was the Legate of Syria who would come and bring with him Legio III Gallica. The governor of Roman Arabia would also be called upon, and he would bring Legio III Cyrenaic. It is also possible by some accounts that Legio XXII Deiotariana was called up from Arabia Petraea but was ambushed on its way to Jerusalem and destroyed so thoroughly it was disband as an imperial legion.

As if that was not enough Roman troops to be called up to Judea, the legion stationed in Egypt, Legio II Traiana Fortis, eventually came as well. By the time all these legions made it to the area, the Romans had some 80,000 troops thrown into this effort to stop Bar Kokhba. Like the first war, once Rome got the picture of how serious the situation was, Rome was giving this revolt no small attention. However, in spite of all these troops the Romans were still outnumbered by the Jewish forces. This alone should show how invested the population of the Jews were to this war and its success. The other factor the Jews had on their side was, unlike the Roman troops they knew the terrain very well. Rome was once again caught off guard by the Jews as many Jews from outside Judea made their way there to fight for the homeland. At this point, the best Rome could accomplish was a stalemate with the Jewish forces. This had to be very encouraging to the Jews and greatly disheartening to the grand Roman armies who could do little but hunker down and attempt to protect themselves.

Until next time, may we each continually choose to be the people God wants us to be!

***Questions submitted to the Institute, answered by
Philip E. Busby.***

FBS continued from pg. 4

trying to follow God.

Sure there will always be those nasty people whom it seems obvious are nothing more than evil, who only want what gains them something. They're selfish, and all the things Paul describes in the first of Romans, but that is all still for God to deal with. We can do little but focus on living the life God wants us to live and being the example of the believer God wants us to be. (I Tim. 4:12) Striving to be the very best example of a believer we can be is certainly not trying to please men. It is pleasing God so others see that is our focus. If we can perfect that then we have what we need and our growth in God's ways will be ever forward! We have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory, so it's not about if we are perfect, nor about how great a perfection we have made it to overall. (Rom. 3:23) It's about if we are attempting to go in that direction. God has taken the burden of worry and judgment off our hands, and if others want to judge us, that's an issue between them and God. We do what we must do and what we know to be right. Righteousness is righteousness, not just because God says it is but because that is what it is. That brings us back to where we started this in talking about Jesus being judged for saving this one and not that one. No doubt there will be many who will attempt to judge God for not choosing them in the end. We look at the verse in Matthew 7:22 where Jesus tells what some will say who are rejected of God on Judgment Day, and we think of this as people pleading to get into heaven. No doubt there will be plenty of that as people stand before an eternal God and realize they wasted the opportunity this life gave them to be on God's side. However, the verse is also about judgment.

There will be plenty of people who feel God is unfairly judging them. They will feel they did great and mighty works in the name of The Lord and yet here God is rejecting them. In these words Jesus is letting us all know that will do us no good. Why is that so? Because Jesus came and gave His life, a life that was sinless and therefore death could not hold. Jesus is the only One to overcome death through His perfection. Thus, when we see people as thinking they are perfect when they try to instruct us of something, we confirm our understanding of how much Jesus has not just the right to instruct us but to ultimately judge us. We are condemned by our imperfection. This means what Jesus is judging is not perfection. It means He is making a judgment call only He is worthy to make. This is what we see portrayed in the Book of Revelation when the scroll with the seven seals is being wept over. It was sad there was no one who was worthy to break the seals and open the scroll. Then, The Lamb that had been slain came forward because He and He alone was worthy. (Rev. 5:1-14)

This is the understanding Abraham had. Not a full and detailed understanding, like knowing the exact way Jesus would come and die on a cross because a religious authority, which Abraham could not even dream would exist, put Jesus there. Not that a powerful government structure would be the ones to actually nail Jesus to the cross, but an understanding like Revelation gives. Abraham understood he could give his son but that was just some representative part of God's plan to help others understand. Abraham understood only God Himself would be worthy in the end to take the scroll and break the seals;

to make all of this life and existence continue to have meaning. God's creation would not end with the one fault Adam and Eve made in taking the fruit God told them not to take of. It would not end with a great flood that would kill everyone and everything. It would not end even because man destroyed the very planet God gave us to live on. No, God's plan would prevail and mean something into eternity, the something God wanted it to mean, which is that those who would choose Him by a free will would live forever and commune with Him. This understanding is what Abraham wanted Isaac to have. They walked that hill not by their own choosing or because it's what they had known from their religious training was the thing to do. They walked it in faith!

Of course, the words "...himself a lamb..." is not the end of the sentence. Abraham said the reason God would provide Himself a Lamb was "...for a burnt offering:..." If one does not really know the Law, your first thought is to take this statement as basically meaning God would offer Himself. So Abraham simply relates this to an offering or sacrifice that would commonly be given to God and which Isaac would be familiar with. It seems he's just relating this to the fact a burnt offering is what they were going up the hill to do. However, if one knows a little bit about the Law, you understand the sacrifices required at the temple were symbolic of the sacrifice Jesus would one day make on the cross. This belief is why it's so easy for Christians to be taught the sacrifices at the temple were meant to end after Jesus came because Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice. On the other hand, if we really understand the Law we know something deeper. You see the representative side of the Law, of which there is no greater and yet basic than the sacrifices and offerings brought by the people. You understand these Laws were made based on the interaction God has had with men. It all started with Adam and Eve. It was they who took of the fruit God told them not to take of. If they had not done that there would have been no need for any sacrifices. In truth that's probably not the way to look at it because there is the complexity that if Adam and Eve had not done it, it seems unlikely that man would have populated the earth and no one had done it! This is why Jesus was The Lamb slain from the foundation of the earth. (Rev. 13:8) God knew in giving man a choice there would be this need to judge at least some. Thus, embedded into the plan of God was not just the creation of man and the giving of a choice to take of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil but the way to save those who did fall into sin.

Getting back to our main point, Adam and Eve did take of the fruit and this caused every human ever born to automatically have the knowledge the fruit had granted. In the more immediate situation was Adam and Eve's understanding they were naked. This was the most basic of needs and the one they focused on trying to solve. By the time God comes to the garden they had not solved that issue with satisfaction, and hid. To be clear, they did not hide because they knew God would know what they had done. They hid because they were naked! Adam admits that directly, and it is God Who points out their concern should have been why they now thought of that as a problem not just the problem itself. (Gen. 3:7-11) We should all know the story about how God had to punish them and the instructions He gave them, but a small fact that is not so small is that God killed animals to make them clothes. In order to

solve what was in their minds the big immediate problem they now felt, animals had to give their lives. This, of course, was not necessary in that clothing could have been made of any number of things. One can say it was the easiest way, but was it? I know you can argue God wasn't going to take the time to show them how to weave cloth or how to make the strands needed to weave. To save time He'd have to have made such a thing and just gave it to them to wear with no clue how it had been obtained. That said, and not to be gruesome here, but God did not just rip the hide off animals and put it on them either. Skin, or what we often call leather, has to be processed before wearing for more than one reason. So either way, there is a process God showed them in making clothes or He simply gave them something they were not totally clear on how it had been produced. The real point is that God could have done who knows what to satisfy this "need" of theirs, but He chose to kill animals to make their clothes.

Most people think nothing of it today, but how strange it must have been for them to put the skin from a dead animal over their own to cover themselves. They were used to eating plants, so using plant material to wear as clothes would seem natural but killing animals would not! What we see in this is that God specifically illustrated the point made in Hebrews 9:22 "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." From there we move to the time of Cain and Abel when we see them bring their offerings. All the points I normally like to make about this story aside, God shows the two of them that blood offerings are treated differently than non-blood offerings. The attitude of Cain, who got upset about this, is shown in the fact it became common practice to offer blood sacrifices to God and false gods alike. We could run this down more, but to make the point, by the time we get to the Law, God certainly was not offering illustrations He came up with and which men would have to work hard to figure out. In truth, the illustrations in the Law are quite clear, and maybe would have been to them in their day far more than they are to us today. What God did in the Law was show both the chosen nation as well as all of us the way to do sacrifices and offerings in a way that had all the correct illustrations. This is what put the sacrifices into the administration of just the priests at the tabernacle and later temple. It constrained them to that spot alone. Sacrifices, and getting the illustration right, is so serious even those of the chosen nation were not just taught a way to do it and left to individuals. All this makes one of the biggest representations in the Law, the complexity of it all!

When many people say they don't understand the Bible, they are often talking about all these ins and outs which at times can seem arduous to even read through much less see meaning in. However, getting frustrated at the fact "God made the Law so complex!" is missing the point. This is serious stuff we are dealing with. For centuries before the Law was laid down man did his thing with this killing animals and offering them as sacrifices thing. Many rituals and ways of thinking about it had been taught by religious minded people, and so while the basics of killing an animal is in there, it was always shrouded by a cloak of complexity depending on what god you

served and offered to. God took all that and narrowed it down to one specific way to do it. He told the nation and those outside the nation this is how it's done and who should do it; any other way is wrong. This had the point to it that getting it right is more important than just doing it, and there are many stories in the Word of God which show us how people didn't get this point in their heads. (1 Sam. 15:19-23)

All that said, at the time of Abraham and Isaac walking that hill and having this conversation we are long before the Law and even some of the corruption among men that made the Law necessary to give. This is why there was a 400 year development period from the time of Abraham to the giving of the Law and establishment of the nation. Abraham and Isaac would have been far more clear on the issue of what it meant to offer a "burnt offering" as they were going to do and Abraham tells Isaac God would one day provide Himself as a burnt offering. However, if we are not familiar with the Law this point of Abraham's might not be as clear and as deep as it should be. The Law shows us there are many sacrifices and offerings to God. We tend to think of all of the ones involving blood as representing what Jesus would one day do, and without putting too fine a point, as a beginning knowledge that's correct. However, only the Passover sacrifice is so clearly the one performed in accordance to the Law that directly represents Jesus' sacrifice. This is why Jesus was killed on Passover the year He physically died!

The deeper truth is that a person bringing a burnt offering is about the recognition that each of us will have to give our lives for the sin we have done. That is the wages of sin pure and simple, and I don't think enough people who call themselves Christians really understand that. (Rom. 6:23) What Jesus saves us from is not the fact we will die, but the fact we must die. It is the most basic truth of why our reward can't be earthly, nor earthly things of the here and now! Abraham and Isaac were going to represent the willingness to give their here and now to God. To represent the shedding of their own blood, and as far as they knew, for Isaac this would be literal. Understanding this brings great impact to what Abraham said to Isaac as Isaac asks where the sacrifice was. Abraham in essence was saying, it did not matter if they offered animals in representation. It did not matter if they were required to offer themselves in a literal way. Everyone is going to die at some point or be changed at the Second Coming of Christ. (1 Cor. 15:50-52) The questions are, do we trust that God has a plan to do something about that fact? Do we believe through Jesus' sacrifice God has obtained the righteous justification to judge us and every human who has ever lived? Are we willing to give up the sin for a season the here and now allows, to live the life God created us to live? (Heb. 11:24-26) That is why Abraham simply tells Isaac no matter what we do, we all ultimately depend on the fact God one day willingly offered Himself as a burnt offering for us all!

Until next time, Shalom!

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because God told us to and not because we simply feel a certain way. If we have problems we need to go to God, and no matter how angry we may be we must do it with the humility and understanding of Who we are speaking to. This is the place Joshua was in.

The second part of Joshua's words are concerning the fact he was worried about two things at this point. Maybe no one was more knowledgeable than Joshua about how much the people turned to grumble against Moses. The people said enough directly to Moses' face for him to be clear on their displeasure. However, Joshua was that outside man who assisted Moses but wasn't looked at as anything too special. I don't mean to say they didn't respect him, but only that on a regular basis Joshua got to hear just how unsatisfied the people were with Moses. Moses got the blunt end of their anger, but Joshua was aware of the undercurrent that always flowed and which caused God to allow that generation to die in the wilderness. Thus, one of Joshua's two main concerns was how he was going to handle Israel when they choose to run from their enemy. He didn't know how he would get them to move forward after such a thing. He didn't know what to say about why God had allowed them to be defeated. The second thing Joshua was worried about is another item we see in human thinking, and it was one Moses brought up on more than one occasion. Joshua was worried about what the people of the land and surrounding countries would think of God after His people were routed in battle. This is human nature. We don't often worry about our actions or pay enough attention to what God wants of us in the beginning. This causes God to punish us, which in many situations ends up reflecting badly on God's ability to protect and provide for His people. As believers we understand God is able to do what He says. Lacking the "faith," as people often put it, to believe God is/was able, is not so much the problem. In truth, this is why it's hard for us to approach God in humility. We know He's able and understand it was His choice not to grant us what we wanted, expected, or thought should happen in any given situation. Now there's the problem with lacking humility!

We can murmur and mumble around about how God didn't do something we thought He should, but this is just like a child who knows their parent could give them something they wanted but didn't. Obviously human parents make many mistakes, but even with that, often the fact children are told they will not get what they want has a point to it the child needs to understand. It can be as simple as, no you can't have ice cream because then you won't eat dinner, or it can be more complex like the fact the money to buy the item is there but it's needed for more pressing things like food, clothing, the electric bill, etc. It is these larger points that children so often do not get or simply do not care about. When it comes to God, He makes no mistakes! If He does not do something, even something we feel He said He would do, we can be assured there is a righteous reason for it. There is a bigger point or effect to what we wanted which we do not see. If we can keep this in our hearts it becomes easier to never make the mistake of approaching God in anger. The point might simply be that something we must do or get is far more important than the sweet treat we would rather have, or it might be something far greater than that.

In the case with Joshua, God responds with a question

that indicates Joshua should have known what the problem was! God asks him why he laid there graveling in the dirt on his face? God was in no way scolding Joshua for doing the wrong thing in being humble, but pointing out that he needed to be more like Moses to whom it likely would have been obvious as to why this happened. Why should it have been so obvious? The answer lies again in the fact true believers know God is able. In the case of Joshua and the nation of Israel it was actually even more than that. God was not just able, He had made it clear to the nation why He brought them over Jordan. He did so to use them to utterly destroy the wicked people of the land and claim it for their own. There was no reason to ask that question, and from more than one angle God had already answered the question about what others would think concerning how this reflected on Him. One of the great redundancies that can make some people tire of reading the words of the Torah is the fact over and over and over Moses tells the people the same basic facts. One of those facts is that if they did right they would be blessed and if they did wrong they would be cursed. It did not matter what others thought of what that looked like, for even when God is blessing His people it can seem to the world He is cursing them. If we go back to our child parent analogy we can see how much other children and parents who view confrontation between a child and parent look at it differently. The outside parent can often see how much the child is getting upset over something minor when the parent is trying to protect something so much greater. However, to the outside child it often looks just like it does to the child who wants what they want!

As we view humans' and God's interaction with us there is no parent perspective from the outside! We are all children. Some of us grow to know a few things others do not, but this is just the same thing as an older sibling having a better understanding as to why the younger one is being told no in certain circumstances. The older sibling will still have their own moments that boil down to the same exact basic point as they interact with their parents. All humans, being children under God, means we all may judge God for what He chooses to do whether inside or outside the situation. However, this shows us the strength, righteousness, and holiness of God! He has no one in any way equal to Him to judge Him if He gives in to us. He also has no one equal enough to Him to understand why He doesn't give in to us or generally does what He does. Nor are we as humans often able to see the cause and effect even in the end of any situation. All we see is the effect and we judge on the basis of it. This is the argument we are really making when we think God should have done this or that because of how it reflects "badly" on Him when He does not. Like the outside child we agree with the inside child, but often when a situation is memorable enough, even the outside child will one day grow up to understand why the adult did what they did. This is where we are as humans; we have a lot of maturing to do. We can't judge God on why He does what He does or does not do, for two reasons. One, we may simply not understand how it is the best thing for us and the right thing to do in any case. Two, the fact it went the way it did might be our fault. That brings us back to the importance of humility, and in this situation that was certainly called for!

After God gets Joshua's attention He tells him why they had been defeated. It was because they had sinned in taking of the accursed things of Jericho. This is described in the way that

is truly important, which is that they had trespassed the covenant the nation had with God. In doing this they had disobeyed the instruction of God to the nation, and obeying the covenant had specifically to do with not just living by the Law but obeying every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God. (Deut. 8:3, Matt. 4:4) The wording here is interesting because God does not just say they had disobeyed, He describes what they had done by saying they had, "...also stolen and dissembled..." By saying they had dissembled God is pointing out this person is not obvious. One might ask, why would someone who had disobeyed the instructions of God be obvious? For that we need to remember how often the people came to Moses and flat out told him how much they disagreed with his decision and/or thought what Moses claimed God said was wrong. They would say things like, "We are all part of the chosen nation of God. What right do you have to make all the decisions? We can hear the voice of God as much as you!" People often paid for those words, and we see an entire generation ultimately did. However, what God was pointing out in this case was that the person did not do what they did because they were someone who grumbled about how they were not allowed to do the thing, or they disagreed it was something God had said. The person in this case had done what they did and walked on as if they were doing and agreeing with what God had instructed as much as anyone else.

The "stolen" part of the statement would become obvious later, as it would be found that at least part of what was taken was an item that should have been put in the treasury of God. As bad as it was to so directly take something God had told the nation not to take, the idea of taking something that was to belong to God was very egregious! That said, even if the person had not taken something so obviously an item to be taken to the tabernacle, it would still be stealing. God wanted Jericho to be a heap of burnt rubble for all to see what God had done for the nation of Israel. It was to stand, not just to strike fear in the hearts of others on the land at the time, but for all time as a reminder of what God was/is able to do. Taking anything from the site was theft in that on that sight is where all the remains of Jericho were to stay. The fact someone had violated this even in the smallest way is why Israel could not stand before their enemies in taking Ai. God tells Joshua he didn't have to worry about moving the people forward. Their failure at Ai would continue everywhere they attempted to go because the entire nation was accursed. The only way to turn things around was for this person who had done wrong to become accursed in the eyes of the nation itself. In other words, this person's actions were to be looked at by the nation with as much contempt as God had over their actions. This answers the question people have about it being fair that an entire nation be punished because one person did wrong. In the end of this world we will all stand before God for our actions alone, and that's when it would be unfair. In the here and now it rains on the just and the unjust. (Matt. 5:45) This is part of the reason why, for the individual believer, we must believe to live is Christ and to die is gain. (Phili. 1:21) Here we live our lives as the best witnesses and servants of God we can be, no matter what.

Israel needed to learn this lesson in a big way. God had instructed in His Law that Israel cut out those who did not want

to follow God's Law. Depending on the circumstances they were to be anything from cast out of the nation to put to death. Here the nation was being required to take on that task for obvious reasons, but the real hope was the nation would learn this truth for much less obvious situations. They were not suppose to overlook something God required in the Law someone be cut off from the nation for doing, with the excuse it didn't seem they were hurting anyone. Until the men of Israel went out to Ai and more than thirty of them lost their lives, Israel had no idea anything was wrong. This is how sin works. We often do not know how disobeying God in one thing caused us not to have the connection to God and strength we needed to accomplish something later. The fact this is a dynamic of how life works and not so much a specific punishment from God is why it is necessary for a parent to teach their children lessons as they grow up, which can at times seem to be blowing the whole thing out of proportion. God's Word instructs that if we spare the rod we spoil the child. (Prov. 13:24) There are those who like to use this instruction as an excuse to abuse children, but if we look at it, there is no excuse. Corporal punishment is meant to be done out of love and a desire to make a point very obvious to a child. To many in our day any use of such a teaching tool is considered punishment never fitting to any crime. It is even illegal in some places due to that lack of wisdom. We should punish those who abuse their children, but attempt to instruct those who do not use it with wisdom. It should not be done away with.

When it comes to a nation of people, a spanking turns into something much larger, and that is what Israel was experiencing in this situation. Thus, God tells Joshua to get up and go tell the nation to sanctify themselves against the next day. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, so it is necessary to instruct the nation to search their individual lives so as not to be caught up in the punishment for wrong that was coming. (Rom. 3:23) God also wanted them to remove the wrong from the nation because they would be required to carry out judgment against an individual. This would be done by the hand of the nation as a whole. To be the best ministers of God we can be we need to be as clean as we can be ourselves. This was a point made to the nation many times as well, and we see it here again. This also is why Jesus responded with the words He did the day the Scribes and Pharisees brought the adulterous woman to stone her. (John 8:1-11) They asked Jesus what they should do, and knowing He was a man of great compassion, Who also very often emphasized the Law of God to them, they reminded Him the Law was what instructed them to stone her to death. Jesus begins writing something on the ground of which we are not told what it was. There can be any guess as to what it was, but the point here again is that the answer to their question was not difficult, it was obvious. After they insisted, Jesus then tells them the person who was without sin should throw the first stone. One by one they all left. Jesus asks the woman where her accusers were and she answers, they had all gone. They could not condemn her, but that fact only meant her immediate life was spared. What meant far more was that Jesus told her He did not condemn her either. However, she needed to use the opportunity to hate sin and do it no more!

Let's stay in God's Word!

