

Introduction

There is not a single book of the Scriptures which does not contain lessons for our instruction. When Paul wrote to Timothy he penned the words, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). Very possibly, the only scriptures at that time were the Old Testament and a few parts of the New. This meant that the book of Joshua was an inspired book. There are many lessons to be learnt from this book, such as:

- a) The reality of transition of leaders
- b) The determination of new leaders

Lessons to be observed and learned

1) The determination of new leaders

- a) Joshua the new leader
 - i) Prior to his death Moses appointed Joshua to be the leader (Deut. 31:14-28). God set His approval on Joshua by the manifestation of the cloud of His presence (Num. 11:25; 12:5). No doubt there was very possibly a caution and perhaps anxiety about this new leader, yet the people soon came to honour Joshua as their leader as he led the people to deeper idealism to the God who lived among them (Josh. 11:15; 24:24).
 - ii) What a responsibility to be placed on any human being, to lead the people of God to a deeper conformity to the God who was not only with them (Matt. 28:20), but in the age of grace in them (Jn. 14:20; 15:4).
- b) A new communicator between God and His people.
 - i) God had revealed His will for His people, their life behaviors, center of worship, and manner of approach. Now they were going to add to godly living and reverence in approach to God, that of war! God could have just given them the land but they learnt that their inheritance demanded unreserved obedience. When God said that they were to drive out all the inhabitants of the land (Num. 33:52); to slay all the males (Num. 31:7); or to slay the Canaanites and the Perizzites (Jud. 1:4); it did not mean compromise or make a league with them, or severely wound them, it meant what He said and as the Commander of the Lord’s Host, He had the right to command them to obey unquestioningly.
 - ii) They were to slay man, woman and child and immediately some would say, “But what about the little innocent children or where is the God of pity in all these people going to Hell?” The truth is, the children (from what we understand from the Scriptures and the response of David to the death of his little child) the children would be with the Lord. Adults who knew the purpose of God to give His people the land for their inheritance could have repented of their idolatry and turned to the Living God. Those who rebelled against the purposes of God paid the price for their rebellion by death and separation from God.
 1. We in our day must not let emotionalism affect our questioning of God’s ways, and hold onto “delightful sins which give pleasure”. The Holy Spirit caused the apostle Paul to write, “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body” (Rom. 6:12). God will not permit compromise.
 2. The leaders may die but the work of God progresses because He never dies.

2) The accursed thing (ch. 7:1, 11, 13, 15)

- a) One might ask what was so wrong about taking something and keeping it instead of burning and destroying it? Simply, on one level it was an act of disobedience, for God had declared the city accursed (Josh. 6:17). They were to keep themselves from the accursed thing lest they make the camp of Israel a curse (Josh. 6:18). All silver, gold, and vessels of brass and iron were to be the Lord’s (Josh. 7:19). Achan disobeyed with possibly the ultimate purpose of personal enrichment. It was a sin for it was stolen (ch. 7:11). When looking carefully, that which Achan did was:

- i) Broke a command (ch. 7:11)
- ii) Transgressed, taken, stole, folly (ch. 7:15); sinned (ch. 7:20)
 - 1. That which appeared beautiful and valuable in earth's evaluation. One wonders how did he feel about it now, how did his sons and daughters feel? There is no mention of his wife (Josh. 7:24).
- iii) It affected the whole congregation, "Israel hath sinned" (not Achan alone) (Josh. 7:1, 11).
- iv) It brought sin shame and death (Josh. 7:16-26).

3) The ark went first (Josh. 3:3, 4, 6)

- a) No matter the hardship of the way, the ark had gone there first being two thousand cubits ahead of them. In Gethsemane the Lord went a little further (Matt. 26:39), and in Hebrews He had known what we know (Heb. 2:10; 14:5:2).
- b) It is stupendous comfort to have, in difficult times, someone who has known what the perplexity or sorrow is. Christ was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief (Isa. 53:3); He had walked the pathway of faith and dependance on God (Jn. 11:41; 17:1); known what it was to be ridiculed, hated, despised and killed; having the truth thrown in his face in mockery (Matt. 26:55-27:1; 2:21-31, 34-37; 39-44), making light of His claims (Lk. 4:23-24; Jn. 7:52); and knowing what it was when the heavens were silent in His darkest hours at Calvary, yet He was willing to suffer all for the glory of God and blessing to others.

4) The danger of jumping to conclusions and ill thinking of others (ch. 23)

- a) The Lord told us to exercise extreme caution when judging because of the consequences.
 - i) "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matt. 7:1)
 - ii) "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven" (Lk. 6:37)
 - iii) "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (Jn. 7:24)
- b) However, often times we do judge others by what we see or know, despite what we know of the incident being exceedingly little. In Romans the question is asked, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?" (Rom. 14:4), and again, "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts" (1 Cor. 4:5). For any individual to judge the motives of another is usurping the place of God the Judge, and since every individual suffers from distorted spiritual vision and does not know all the facts, it is very presumptuous to sit in judgment on another, whither it is their person or work.

5) The necessity of realism (ch. 23:15-16)

- a) Paul was a realist for he knew the waywardness of the human heart and knowing such, he spoke very bluntly to the Ephesian elders. He said, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:28-30). Two particular warnings are given with either results or method and purpose:
 - i) Grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.
 - ii) Of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw disciples after them.
 - 1. Note that is primarily spoken to the Ephesian elders about outsiders allowed to come in and from men among themselves. We need to face the tragic reality that not all who are set up as "elders, shepherds, and overseers" are saved men and much less, appointed by God! There are counterfeit evangelists (Gal. 1:6-9); counterfeit apostles (Rev. 2:2); counterfeit saints (Matt. 13:25) (while not called saints, the wheat does refer to saints and the tares to that which is false); and counterfeit elders (Acts 20:28-30).

- b) One of the great problems is the failure to recognize weaknesses in the local churches and the lack of the movement of the Holy Spirit in salvation and maturing of the saints. What has been done is a feeble attempt to have a gospel or revival series, or using the condition of the unsaved as an excuse for the declines spiritually and numerically among the saints. When I spoke on such and the biblical ways to restoration, I was basically silenced. One of the elders told me, “We do not want that sort of ministry, do not mention our weaknesses”. How will churches ever develop without looking realistically at what is happening and how we can have a greater impact?

. . . Rowan Jennings