

Trinity Home Teams

Sermon Notes / Jan. 4, 2026

The Book of Joshua / When Doubts Arise

Joshua 6:27 and 7:2-9

1. The defeat at Ai was humiliating, degrading. Did Yahweh forsake his people? Have you felt forsaken?
2. Evaluate Joshua's complaint. Legitimate? Reasonable? What's right about it? Wrong? What's the problem?
3. Why did Scott skip over v1 in reading? The point?

An intrepid (fearless, bold) decision

The Lord had promised Joshua:

- "No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life" (1:5).
- "for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them" (1:6).
- "Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord ... is with you wherever you go" (1:9).

The Lord piled the waters of the Jordan up in a heap so that all Israel could cross on dry land. "This was a sign to all Israel: "you shall know that the living God is among you and that he will ... drive out Canaanites ..." (3:10).

The Lord himself promised them Jericho: "I have given Jericho into your hand..." (6:2). The Lord himself fought against Jericho; the people obeyed, and at the shout of the people, the walls fell flat, and "they devoted all in the city to destruction, both men and women, young and old, oxen ... the edge of the sword" (6:21).

All this demonstrated that "the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame was in all the land" (6:27).

On the advice of the spies sent by Joshua, Israel decided to send only three thousand soldiers against Ai. Compare the report of these spies with the spies sent to view the land and Jericho in Ch2: "Truly the Lord has given all the land into our hands. And also, all the inhabitants of the land melt away because of us" (2:24)

In the report about Ai, there was no indication that the people had been given into their hands. Compared to Jericho, where Joshua was instructed by the commander of the army of the Lord, the Lord is strangely silent.

Numbers 27:21 – *And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the Lord. At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the people...*"

An ignominious (deserving public disgrace) defeat

Imagine the shock when Israel encountered Ai. It was the antithesis of Jericho; not only were they unable to take the city, but nothing positive for Israel: "three thousand men went up... they fled before the men of Ai, and the men of Ai killed about thirty-six of their men and chased

them before the gate as far as Shebarim and struck them at the descent."

Something was terribly amiss. What should have been an easy victory turned into a rout that shook Israel to its core. V5: "And the hearts of the people melted..."

Joshua 2:9-11 "I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. ¹⁰ For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. ¹¹ And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the Lord your God, he is God in the heavens ...and on the earth..."

Joshua 5:1 "As soon as all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan for the people of Israel until they had crossed over, their hearts melted and there was no longer any spirit in them"

Exodus 23:27 "I will send my terror before you and will throw into confusion all the people against whom you come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you."

An intense dismay

Boldness and resolve were replaced by fear and despair: "tore [their] clothes and fell to the earth on [their faces] before the ark of the Lord until the evening."

Joshua is bewildered. Why has Yahweh allowed this?

When doubts arise due to our circumstances, it is never because God is not faithful, righteous or good.

Like other OT prophet, he makes a fearful cry that the people will perish. Joshua's concern for Yahweh's glory echoes Moses. Joshua struggles to make sense of Yahweh's miraculous works in crossing the Jordan and destroying Jericho only to fall to the Amorites.

Eventually he confirms: "not one word has failed of all the good things that the Lord your God promised concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one of them has failed" (23:14).

DAVIS: "These are words of despair, not unbelief. Joshua complains to God in prayer; complaining to God is not the same as complaining about God (Israel's practice)."

An illuminating disclosure

Dramatic irony is a literary device in which the author gives the reader info that is not available to the characters. Notice we skipped v1 in our reading today. Although we know Achan's treachery, Joshua does not. Maybe he thought God intended to destroy Israel, and he did not consider the possibility that there might be sin in the camp. His assessment is based on insufficient information. "The problem was not willful disobedience but ignorance of a hidden transgression. Why do we so often find fault with God instead of with ourselves?"