

Sermon Outline

“AND THE LORD GAVE THEM REST”: A CHRISTIAN READING OF THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

GOD IS GREAT—AND GOOD (JOSHUA 6:22-27)

I. God is Great—and Good

- A. The Lord will judge the earth through Christ on the Day of Judgment.
- B. But God is not just great, he is also *good* to his enemies.
—This is seen in Romans 5:8 which shows that while we were still sinners, God sent his own Son to die in our place.
- C. But even before Jesus comes to save sinners, God shows us glimpses of this Gospel in his historical dealings with his people.
—And one such place is, *surprisingly*, in Joshua 6.

***Question for reflection:** Based on Romans 5:8, how do we know that God is not just great, but good to sinners?

II. Joshua Speaks to the Two Spies (Joshua 6:22)

- A. When Joshua 6:22 begins, Israel is in the midst of plundering the city of Jericho.
 - 1. Israel’s war against Jericho is *herem* warfare.
 - 2. The word *herem* means “to ban” or “to condemn to destruction.”
 - 3. But *herem* refers to destruction under God’s specific orders.
- B. Joshua speaks to the spies who had interacted with Rahab earlier in chapter 2.
 - 1. “Go into the prostitute’s house and bring out from there the woman and all who belong to her, as you swore to her.”
 - 2. From those instructions, we can assume that Rahab’s section of the wall of Jericho may have been left standing (Josh 2:15).

3. Rahab had tied a scarlet rope to her window to mark out her home (Josh 2:18, 21).
- C. So, the spies “went in and brought out Rahab and her father and mother and brothers and all who belonged to her.”
- D. And “they brought all her relatives and put them outside the camp of Israel.”
—Why outside the camp and not inside it? Probably because Rahab and her family were not yet full-fledged Israelites.

***Question for reflection:** (1) What instructions did Joshua have for the spies? (2) Why were Rahab and her family left outside the Israelite camp at first?

III. The Destruction of Jericho (Joshua 6:24)

- A. The rest of Jericho was destroyed according to the Lord’s instructions.
—“And they burned the city with fire, and everything in it. Only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD.”
- B. Condemnation and consecration are the two sides of this entire event.
 1. Condemnation is the destructive aspect of God’s judgment, the *herem* warfare.
 2. But next to condemnation is consecration, the devotion of things to God.
- C. Although we may not be able to see it clearly now, this principle of condemnation and consecration is at the heart of God’s dealings with his people.
 1. What is the Gospel?
—It is the condemnation of the Lord Jesus Christ in order that sinners who believe in him can be consecrated to God.
 2. What will happen on the final Day of Judgment?
—God will condemn the world, but save his people.
- D. The Jericho campaign is really a taste of things to come.
 1. It contains the pattern by which God works out his purposes in the world.
 2. This is the pattern of destruction and salvation; condemnation and consecration.

***Question for reflection:** (1) What did Israel do to Jericho? (2) What are two sides to the event in Joshua 6?

IV. Jesus Christ, the Condemned and Consecrated One

- A. The place where condemnation and consecration come together in perfect harmony is Jesus Christ.
1. Scripture presents Jesus to us as the Condemned One as well as the Consecrated One.
 2. Jesus was condemned for our sins.
 3. But he was also consecrated for our salvation.
 - a. Jesus was consecrated from birth (Lk 1:35).
 - b. Jesus was also, in a sense, consecrated at his ascension (Heb 7:26).
 - c. Through Jesus, we are consecrated as well (Heb 10:10).
 4. Jesus contains within himself both destruction and salvation.
—Thus, he is able to serve as the perfect Savior of God’s people.
- B. As the history of Scripture unfolds, we discover that it is God (in Christ) who would take on himself the final punishment of sin on behalf of his own people.
- C. But for us to fully appreciate this great Work of God, we must cover great portions of history in the story of the Bible.
1. At this point in the book of Joshua, we are seeing Israel at its best.
 2. But by the end of Joshua, we have doubts about Israel’s commitment.
—Joshua 24:19: “You are not able to serve the LORD, for he is a holy God.”
 3. In Judges, Israel will begin to become more and more like the Canaanites.
 - a. Israel’s leaders are less than holy.
 - i. Jephthah sacrifices his own daughter to the Lord—a horrendous merging of God’s religion with the Canaanite cult of child sacrifice (Jdg 11:34-39).
 - ii. Samson will serve his own sinful desires (Jdg 13).
 4. By the time 2 Kings 25 comes, Israel (reduced to Judah) is expelled from the land for their own sins.

5. Just as God used Israel to expel the Canaanites, God now uses other nations to punish his own people for their sins.
- D. Once we understand how history will develop, we are able to put Joshua 6 in perspective.
1. Joshua 6 is simply one moment in time when Israel is at their best behavior.
 2. But this will not last.
 3. By the end of the Old Testament, we wonder: *How will salvation come?*
- E. According to the apostle Paul, God allows Israel and the whole world to be placed under his curse so that his Son might be the only Savior of the world.
1. Galatians 3:23: “Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed.”
 2. Galatians 3:24: “So then, the law was our guardian *until Christ came*, in order that we might be justified by faith.”
 - a. The fact that the Law is a guardian means that God gave his Law to the world in order to instruct and to protect us from ourselves.
 - b. But since we are sinful, we are not able to obey the Law in all its fullness.
 - c. Thus, we cannot earn our salvation by obeying the Law.
 - d. We are saved when we put our faith in Christ.
 3. Are we now able to see why God has placed the whole world under the ban of destruction?
—It’s to lead us to Christ for mercy and salvation.
- F. Our hope is not in the Law of God, but in the finished work of the Son of God.
1. The Lord Jesus saves the world by undergoing the condemnation of God on behalf of those who trust in him — “But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities...”
 2. On the first Good Friday, God descended in judgment on his own Son.
—In Jesus, God “condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom 8:3).
 3. After God’s justice had been satisfied, Jesus rose from the grave and ascended into heaven to be enthroned at God’s right hand.
 - a. This is, in a sense, the consecration of Jesus.

- b. Having finished all that God had given him to do, Jesus is separated from the earth and he is taken up into the realm of holiness to be seated at the right hand of God (Heb 7:26).
- G. God gives the promise to us: *If we turn from our sins and put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation, God will save us.*
- H. And so, judgment and salvation, condemnation and consecration come together in perfect harmony at the cross of our Lord Jesus.
 - 1. In Jesus, we who believe in him have already been punished for our sins.
 - 2. Through Jesus, we are also saved and consecrated to God.

***Question for reflection:** (1) How is Christ the place where condemnation and consecration come together? (2) What hint does Joshua 24:19 give us about the future state of Israel's loyalty to the Lord? (3) Based on Galatians 3:23-24, why does God place the world under his Law and its condemnation? (4) How are we saved from our sins?

V. God Is Good

- A. So, God is not only great in power and perfect in righteousness. —But he is also good to sinners who don't deserve his goodness.
- B. Where is God's merciful goodness to sinners found?
 - 1. Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (Jn 14:6).
 - 2. God's goodness to sinful people like us is found in only one place—the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - 3. All who take refuge in Jesus Christ will not be ashamed.
 - 4. Just as Rahab and her family found peace with God through the treaty with Israel, we and our families will find peace with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

***Question for reflection:** (1) Where is the one place God's merciful goodness to be found? (2) Have you put your faith in Jesus Christ?

VI. The Salvation (and Adoption) of Rahab and Us (Joshua 6:25)

- A. But God does more than simply forgive our sins.
—He actually embraces us as his sons and daughters.
- B. This is where we come to the final verse of our text.
—Joshua 6:25: “But Rahab the prostitute and her father’s household and all who belonged to her, Joshua saved alive. And she has lived *in Israel* to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.”
- C. The text says, “And she has lived in Israel to this day...”
 - 1. This shows us that Rahab and her family eventually enter the community of Israel, and become members of God’s house.
 - 2. We assume that the male members of the household receive the covenant sign of circumcision.
- D. In the same way, all who believe in Christ will also become members of God’s household.
 - 1. To use the words of John 1:12, “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”
 - 2. Galatians 4:6 as well: “And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”
- E. Admittedly, the mercy of God for sinners does not seem to shine very brightly in Joshua 6.
- F. But again, we have to keep the whole Scripture in mind.
—The outpouring of God’s mercy to sinners at the death and resurrection of Jesus is where everything is headed.
- G. God is great and very good!

Just as Rahab and her household are saved from destruction by turning back to God and putting their trust in him, we are saved from destruction when we turn back to God and put our faith in his Son, Jesus Christ. All who believe in Christ will become children of God. Praise be to God who is merciful to sinners!

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What happens to Rahab and her household in the end? Do they become full Israelites? (2) Based on John 1:12 and Galatians 4:6, what happens to those who believe in Jesus Christ?