

INTRODUCTION

Our heavenly Father is a loving Father, who despite being utterly offended by our sins, continues to show us grace. We must be mindful of sin's dire consequences not because we should live in fear of God, but because it shows us His everlasting loving-kindness. Though we deserve to die, He allows us to live...time and again.

Israel's History Prior to Joshua Chapter 1

- God frees Israel from Egypt (Ex. 12:29-41).
- God leads Israel to the Promise Land, but they refuse to enter (Num. 13:1-14:12).
- Israel is cursed to wander in the wilderness for 40yrs (Num. 14:20-35).
- Moses is not allowed to enter the Promise Land (Num. 20:5-12, 24; 27:14).
- Joshua is appointed by God to replace Moses (Num. 27:15-23; Deut. 31:14).
- God delivers two Amorite kings into Israel's hands. (Num. 21:21-35; Deut 2:24-3:10).
- God brings Israel back to the Promise Land (Num. 33:40-56).

Joshua Chapter 1: *Victory before Entering the Land*

God encourages Joshua and the nation of Israel by guaranteeing them victory over the Canaanites, but they must obey His Word.

Joshua Chapter 2: *The Two Spies Confirm God's Word about the Promise Land*

The two spies reveal that the Canaanites are terrified of Israel because of what God did to the Red Sea and the two Amorite kings, Sihon and Og.

Joshua Chapter 3 & 4: *The Parting of the Jordan River, Israel's Crossing, and Stones of Remembrance*

God parts the Jordan River. It cements Joshua as Israel's next leader and shows Israel that God will drive out the Canaanites. Two memorials are set up for this great miracle, which shows the world that Israel's God is powerful and teaches Israel to fear her God.

Joshua Chapter 5: *A Tuning Point in Israel's History*

God gives Israel their first battle command: circumcise every male. Instead of leaving Israel weak, it prepares them to conquer their Land and observe Passover.

Joshua Chapter 6: *The Lord Delivers Jericho into Israel's Hands*

Israel obeys God's strange command to march around Jericho for 7 days and they conquer the city. But God also warns them not to take anything from Jericho.

Joshua Chapter 7: *Israel's Sin and their Subsequent Defeat at Ai*

Although Israel had a great victory over Jericho, Achan took something from Jericho, which brought defeat at Ai.

Joshua Chapter 8: Israel's Victory Over Ai

8:1-2, what a stark contrast with the events of chapter 7. The Lord encourages Joshua once again, cf. 1:5, 6, 7, and 9. As with Jericho, the Lord delivers Ai into Israel's hands. But the spoil will go to Israel and not God (Achan should've waited). Though Ai's not taken with a miracle, it's still the Lord's doing and plan, 8:1-2.

8:3-8, Joshua follows the Lord's plan: 30k go on a 12mi hike to lie-in-wait just outside Ai. Joshua & Co. will act as bait. Once Ai takes the bait, the 30k will take the city and burn it.

8:9-13, the Lord's plan is spelled out. The 30k will be on Ai's west side, between Bethel and Ai. Joshua will take his crew to the North side, where there's a valley between them and Ai. Joshua puts another 5k behind the 30k to guard against Bethel's men joining in. Once everyone's in position, he goes to the valley to lure Ai's men.

8:14-17, Ai thinks that they'll get a repeat performance against Israel. And the men of Bethel jump in, but the Lord uses Israel's previous defeat by Ai to conquer Ai.

8:18-23, God uses no miracle as with Jericho, but He still delivers the city to Israel. Ai (and Bethel) takes the bait and they are soon surrounded and slaughtered by Israel. Everyone is killed except Ai's king who is brought alive to Joshua.

8:24-29, once the slaughter in the battlefield is over, Israel goes back to Ai and kills everyone else, however, this time all the booty goes to Israel. Joshua hangs Ai's king, but his body cannot be left overnight, Deut 21:22-23.

8:30-35, these events are mandated by the Law, Deut. 27. In effect, this re-ratifies God's Covenant with Israel. It's especially apropos because of the focus on the cursings and blessings at the end of the Law. Israel had just experienced this: Achan (and the nation) was cursed for disobeying and Israel was blessed for obeying.

Conclusion: the gruesome curses contained at the end of the Law reveal that God takes sin very seriously. However, God is and always has been a God of grace. From the beginning He showed man grace: He let Adam and Eve live after they sinned and He provided the solution to the death Adam introduced to mankind, His Son, Gen. 3:15. Evidence of His grace is scattered throughout Scripture (He showed Israel grace over and over, Num. 14:22 and 14:12; He showed His servant David grace when he committed adultery and murder, 2 Sam. 11-12, when he deserved death, Lev. 20:10; Ex. 21:12-1). His grace is even evident in the Law, which itself was grace, Jn. 1:16-17.

However, God's grace is not a "hall-pass." It's Him holding back His immense wrath every time we sin. Yes, where sin abounds His grace abounds even more, Rom. 5:20, but this is supposed to cause us to repent not sin more, 6:1!

The punishment for sin, any sin, is death, Rom. 6:16, 21, 23 (even for a lie, Acts 5—remember all sin is against God, Ps. 51:4). Thus, God has the right to kill us every time we sin. The fact that he doesn't, reveals his incredible grace towards us. Though God punishes all sin, Rom. 1:18; 2:3-6, and is still a God who reveals His wrath, Heb. 3:7-4:13; 10:26-31, He is not primarily a God of wrath whom we are to constantly fear. He is a loving God who longs to fellowship with us. He loves us so dearly that He gave His only Son for us, Jn. 3:16. We need to be mindful of the seriousness of sin because it offends our heavenly Father and breaks our fellowship with Him, Jn. 1:6-7.