

The Greatest Story (Part 10):

Devoted to Destruction

Joshua 6-8

Memory Verses: **Romans 3:23**

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction

Lets begin by reading in the book of **Joshua 6:12-21**. Now I want you to think about what you just read. In case you missed it let me recap. Let's skip over walking around the walls of Jericho 7 days and the walls falling down at the trumpet's sound. We've heard this story since we were little children. We've all sung the song... we'll cover it in our daily devotions on Facebook... but that is not the most radical thing in these verses here. I want you to recognize one phrase in particular in verses 17 and then again in 21. The phrase is "devoted to destruction." It is the Hebrew word Charam and there is no word like it in English. It means to set apart for absolute destruction to the one whom it has been given.

It's like the idea of calling dibs. Do you remember dibs? If you wanted a chair in the living room and no one was currently occupying it but you thought maybe someone else would also want that seat at the same time you would call dibs and it would be reserved for you. It's like that time at the dinner table when you were a kid and you were afraid that your snotty little brother would eat your piece of cake if you got up and went to the bathroom so you would lick it to designate it as your piece of cake. Right? No one else?

Well, God is calling dibs. God has called dibs on the promised land and he has called dibs on everyone who lives in the promised land. That would include (look with me in **Deuteronomy 7:1**) the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites... and most likely the Termites with their Appetites and Bug bites. Am I right?

God is calling dibs and not in the same way he called dibs on the Israelites right? He called dibs and said these are my people and I am their God. They are my chosen people and I will covenant to uphold them for my glory. But for the Canaanites and the Amorites he is calling dibs for their destruction. I want to come back to this idea later...

But get this... God is telling the Israelites, that as they enter into the promised land that they are to devote all of the inhabitants of the land to destruction. They are to kill every man, every women, every child, every goat, cow, dog, and frog. They are to put them all to death by the sword.

Okay... hold that thought. Lets step back and take a look at where

we've been for a moment. We've seen a God who is glorious, gracious, good, great, holy, atoning, redeeming, just, and loving. He has chosen a people for himself through whom he will redeem the entire world from their sin. In the meantime he has made a way for atonement from sin through the sacrifices of animals. He has made a way for a relationship with the people of Israel through worship and has consistently delivered them from death and destruction they most assuredly deserved.

But now (**grab sword**) we get to a God who wants to kill women and children in cold blood? It's like... "come again?" You want us to do what? You want what?

And it is right here that we get the greatest disillusionment with the God of the Old Testament. Right here is where most people who were on the fence with God just kind of check out right? This right here is where the Atheists find their greatest ammunition against the God we worship... and right here is where the notion comes from that the Old Testament God and the New Testament God are two different kinds of gods. This passage right here could in fact be the great divide where we choose to continue trusting this God or check out ourselves.

I think most of us, when we come up against passages like this that we don't necessarily like, we tend to just pass over it and pay it very little attention. It's like after watching a show that is scary or disturbing you turn on an episode of the Office or Duck Dynasty. Why? Cause the comedy helps you get over the uncomfortable thing you watched earlier. I think that's why we tend to focus on the walls of Jericho coming down rather than the fact that women and children were slaughtered at the command of God. We want to give our attention to something easy to digest rather than something difficult. And make no mistake... this might just be the hardest thing in the entire Bible to digest. So... we can't just look on past this. Rather we need to learn to meditate on these types of passages and resist the temptation to blow right by them. **When something in the Bible makes you uncomfortable it is an indicator of an area in your life that needs transformation.**

So... lets slow down and look diligently at what God is trying to show us through this and perhaps we can answer the question this morning; why did God devote the inhabitants of the promised land to destruction and what does it mean for us today? I think what we will see is this... **Instead of Asking "Why Did God Kill People In The Old Testament?" Ask, "Why Does He Not Kill Us All Now?"**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

But I think we need to answer both questions to see why we really only need to answer the second question. So... first... I want you to see that... **God Devoted the Canaanites to Destruction Because They**

Deserved It. Now, that sounds a little harsh right? What group of people deserves to be wiped out? In fact, it may even make us think of other times where evil men have tried to wipe out entire people groups and we aren't okay with that are we? So I want to tell you why this isn't like that... but I also want you to understand that these people did in deed deserve what they got.

The first thing we need to understand about the Canaanites is that they were idolators. They worshipped other gods; Baal, Ashera, Molech, etc... And they hadn't always worshipped these false gods. Canaan was the grandson of Noah. Noah and his family were the only ones on the planet and they survived by depending on the one true God who saved them in the Ark. But throughout generations they fell into this idolatry. In **Ex 22:20** we see that idolatry is punished by Charam. Idolators are to be devoted to destruction. Meaning it was a capital crime to worship anyone but the one true God. These idolators had a death sentence.

So God had every right to kill them... but get this. For 400 years God was trying to draw them to himself. For 400 years God was trying to get the Canaanites to repent from their idolatry and worship him alone. In **Ge 15:16** we see God Abraham that his offspring, the Israelites, will be in bondage for 400 years because "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete." Meaning... God was mercifully allowing the Amorites or Canaanites to have 400 years to repent... perhaps to even become a part of Israel.

But... they didn't. After 400 years God's patience with them ran out. They didn't repent or convert and so the mercy of God was rescinded. The Bible speaks in many passages about the sin of blasphemy. Simply put... there is a time that God will stop calling you and give you up to your own desires. In Romans 1:24 God says that he will give those who harden their hearts to him up to their own lusts. In vs. 26 he gives them up to their passions and then in vs. 28 it says he gives them up to a debased or reprobate mind. There will come a time when God will no longer pursue you because you have rejected him too much and you have hardened your heart to him. That time may be death, but it may be sooner. That is why you shouldn't wait to repent and surrender to God.. **Today is the day of salvation so answer the call of God before he hangs up the phone.**

So God devotes them to destruction. In **Nu 21:3** it says that God devoted the Canaanites to destruction during the wilderness wandering. In **De 2:34** we see that anyone they fought in the wilderness was also devoted to destruction. Anyone they met would have been a Canaanite. So all the way from Exodus on these people were devoted to destruction.

But why? Why devote idolators to destruction? **De 20:16-18** explains. Simple. These people won't repent and will instead lead you into idolatry. You will intermarry with them and they will lead you to

idolatry and away from the Lord. Which as it happens is exactly what ends up happening. God cared so much about the purity of his chosen people that he wasn't going to let anyone get in the way.

So that leaves one issue... but it's a big one. What about the innocent women and children? Our biggest hangup is how can a just and loving God order the execution of innocent children. And I'll be honest here... I struggle with this one as well. It doesn't seem right. So, what do I do? I go to the Bible. And this is what we learn.

God is sovereign over life and death. Why would I be frustrated by the fact that God ordered the death of children in the Old Testament, when God will kill a lot of children today. He gives life and he takes life and just this very day he will take over 50,000 lives. Life is in his hands and we have to trust him with it. I mean... who else would we rather be governing life and death? God is good. He is good in his sovereign will over whether I live or die right now. If I die right now God has done me no wrong to me because he isn't beholden to me and he doesn't owe me anything.

But that's not all. You see when we ask questions like, "how can a loving God allow evil things to happen to innocent people?" We are forgetting a very elementary truth found in God's Word and that is... none are innocent. Look at **Ro 3:10-12**. We all deserve judgement, we all deserve death, we all should be devoted to destruction. God is just in killing anyone who lives because anyone who lives is guilty of sin and deserves it. The Canaanites deserved it... and so do you and I.

Those who sin are devoted to destruction. I said I would return to this. You must see this. When you hear the phrase devoted to destruction, you get the connotation that something is being offered. The one offering it is God, the thing be offered is death, the person to whom its being offered is God. So when God says... that is devoted to destruction... who are we to say... you can't have it. When God devotes someone to destruction you can't save them. He's called dibs and he will have them. All we can do is say... yes God. When we look at those who were devoted to destruction in the Old Testament we must try to understand. And... If this makes you uncomfortable then it simply means something needs to be transformed in your heart. So what is it? Perhaps you need to trust God more concerning life and death. Perhaps you need to surrender to trusting that God is good, just, and loving when it comes to those he is taking from this world. And you need to come to grips with this... **Would you rather you, or a Good and All Knowing God be in control of the life and death of all people? Instead of Asking "Why Did God Kill People In The Old Testament?" Ask, "Why Does He Not Kill Us All Now?"**

And that leads us right into the more important question... if we are all sinners then why are we all not devoted to destruction. Why does he not kill us all now? Well... **God Spares The Lives of Some Because of His**

Grace . We all deserve it but some are spared because of his grace. We all have sinned and deserve death, we all should be devoted to destruction but God has chosen to spare those of us who place our faith in his Son. Our memory verse for today says it all. **Ro 3:23** – the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. God chooses... and he bases his choice on those who choose to place their faith in him.

For instance look at **Jo 6:17** . God spared Rahab because she feared God and had faith in his sovereignty. Look what she declares about God in **Jo 2:10-11** . So get this... even though God had written the Canaanites off... even now he says that they can still be saved if they choose him. So maybe God never really writes anyone off.

For us the grace shown to Rahab is a precursor to the grace shown us all in Jesus Christ. He is the ultimate Grace. And so God has made it really easy to be saved... all you have to do is trust in Christ as Lord and no one else and you will have everlasting life.

So what should be our response to the grace of God in Jesus Christ. It's simple... **Determine today to trust in the salvation of Christ and you will be spared the destruction of God. Instead of Asking "Why Did God Kill People In The Old Testament?" Ask, "Why Does He Not Kill Us All Now?"** because of Jesus Christ!

But there is still one more thing to consider... **God Still Hates Sin and So Should We**. If anything, the fact that God devoted the Canaanites to destruction and did not spare the sword even from children, should open our eyes to how much God hates sin. Listen, if you think the death of children and women and the elderly by the blade of a sword is uncomfortable – how uncomfortable is sin to God? Knowing that God is love and loves life and loves babies... how much more must he hate sin? In an article I was reading while preparing for this message **Thomas White** says this... **"What strikes me most is God's hatred of sin. He wants total destruction of evil and one day he will accomplish it. We like Jericho sit while God patiently endures the rebellion of many in our nation and while God extends grace to the Rahabs of this world who repent and believe. God's ultimate hatred of sin is so serious that he will accept no treaty with evil in the war for the affections of our heart."**

So if we have been spared we should hate sin too, right? We should despise it... but we don't. We are often like Achan. Look at **Jo 7:10-12**. After the victory at Jericho the Israelites suffer a crushing defeat at the hands of the small town of Ai. When Joshua asks God what's up he replies with this. There is sin in the camp because someone has taken something that was devoted to destruction. You see... we know that sin is horrible, we know it brings destruction, but we want it anyway. And when we allow sin into our lives what we are really

doing is like... we are spitting in God's face. It's like we are mocking him. It's like we forget what sin has really cost God. And that sin creates a barrier between us and the blessings of God. But as we see in Chapter 8 once the sin is removed and the price of sin paid (Achan's life) then the favor of God is also restored **Jo 8** (victory of Ai). The last thing we see in **Jo 8:30-35** is the covenant restored by Joshua. You see... God had to make an example of Achan. Because sin cannot be tolerated. So why do we keep letting it creep in? Again **Thomas White** says, **"As I look at those devoted to destruction, I realize that I do not hate my sin enough. Rather at times, I love my sin more than I love God. At times, I make peace with my sin and tolerate its existence through a treat of deception. Sin deceives me to think that I can "handle it or control it." Biblically, I should hate my sin and desire its utter destruction so that I may live my life totally devoted to God."** I do not hate sin enough. The bottom line is this... **if you hated sin the way God hates sin you would never sin again.**

Application (Resolution, You)

So... a few questions. First, do you trust God to be sovereign over life and death? Do you trust that he is good in giving and taking life according to his plan? Remember **Instead of Asking "Why Did God Kill People In The Old Testament?" Ask, "Why Does He Not Kill Us All Now?"**

Secondly, have you trusted in the life and death of Jesus Christ for your salvation? Have you repented of your sins and believed on Jesus for his grace?

And lastly, do you hate sin or are you still trying to hide it in your life like Achan?

Conclusion

This **sword** was meant for you... but instead God gave it to Christ. **Ro 3:23**... So Give your life to the one who has given you life. Give up sin for the one who has taken your sin. And **Instead of Asking "Why Did God Kill People In The Old Testament?" Ask, "Why Does He Not Kill Us All Now?"**