

JOSHUA, the Leader to the Promised Land

Aim

To understand the link between Joshua and Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and to feel the joy of our inheritance to the Promised Land (Heaven)

Memory Verse

Joshua 1:9

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

How many times in a day do we panic and forget this verse. Remind the youth of the powerful words these messages hold for them. Our God is a faithful, merciful God who fulfils all His promises to us. The other side of this promise to Joshua stands with us and it is in verse 1:7,

“ only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded you, do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This book of law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it.’

Sounds easy and fair, but how many of us really do our part of the promise yet expect God to lead our life like He did with Joshua.

References

Book of Joshua by Fr Tadros Yacoub Malaty

Exodus 17:9, 24:13

Genesis 1:11

What the Bible is all about by Dr Henrietta C Mears

Spiritual Preparation for the servant:

Read Joshua 1-7

Contemplate on Joshua the leader, symbolising the Lord Jesus Christ, and draw the parallels.

Joshua’s heart was ready. God did the rest.

The Early days of Joshua:

Joshua was born in Egypt and got out with the people of Israel under the leadership of Moses to the desert of Sinai, growing up in the desert and witnessing all the amazing miracles of God there.

We 1st hear of Joshua at the battle of Rephidim in Exodus 17:9, fighting with the Amalek. He was about 44 years of age then. The Amalekites or the word Amalek were Giants and it is thought that Goliath was from their descendants. Thru Joshua going to battle they were saved. Thru Jesus Christ’s crucifixion, we were saved.

In the Book of Numbers (14:6-9), we see Joshua with Caleb as spies sent by Moses to check the Promised Land.

In Exodus 24: 13, we see “Moses arose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up to the mountain of God”.

Help the youth understand when Joshua was leader of the people of Israel so they can paint a picture of the time and situation in their head. The events of the Book of Joshua took place around 1400 BC until about 1375 BC.

Also let them know where the Book of Joshua is in the Bible. The 1st 5 Books of the Old Testament are Books of the law. The following 12, the 1st of which is Joshua are Books of History.

Joshua and Jesus in Hebrew are identical names, meaning God is saviour. None of the fathers in the Old Testament were given such a name.

Joshua served Moses. As you know Moses represents the law having given the commandments to God’s people. Jesus our Lord and saviour came fulfilling the law.

Moses dies in the desert as the law is not enough for us to enter the Promised Land. Our Lord Jesus thru the crucifixion and resurrection took us to the promise of salvation.

Joshua as leader following Moses took the people of Israel to the Promised Land Canaan. Look at John 1:17: “...For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

Joshua chosen by God

In chapter 1, God Himself chooses Joshua as leader for His people. He equipped him with the gifts to carry out the responsibilities.

Read with the students, Chapter 1, verse 2-9

Draw the map on the board to show the kids the boundaries of the Promised Land, outline to them, the difficulty of the task ahead, balanced by God’s promise.



Crossing the Jordan:

Crossing the Jordan. Chapters 3-5. The crossing of the Jordan, giving their backs to the wilderness, a symbol of baptism that makes us sons and daughters of God. The 12 stones carried by the 12 tribes from the bed of the river Jordan represent leaving the old bad habits behind and picking new good habits. Similar to the death and burial of our Lord Jesus Christ and his resurrection. They were also taken as memory for God's work amongst His people Israel. Note interesting points:

1. From Rahab the gentile adulterous woman came our Lord Jesus Christ in the descendants. She did that thru her faith and shows God's acceptance to everybody and His utmost humility.
2. After crossing the Jordan, God told Joshua to circumcise all males. This is a renewal of His covenant identifying these as His people. As all the males except Joshua and Caleb had died in the wilderness, God wanted to renew His covenant with the new generation.

Taking the Promised Land, starting with Jericho:

The miracle of conquering Jericho is well known. You may not have enough time in this lesson to actually present it, but sufficient to say that Achan, from the tribe of Judah fell into greed and took from Jericho, goods forbidden by Joshua (Chapter 7). This led to the people of Israel being defeated in the next battle after Jericho: the battle of Ai. It is interesting how the 1 sin of 1 man is really the sin of the whole community. This is like someone with Influenza sitting in a room and infecting everyone else in that room. Achan was found out and punished and the people were victorious in the 2nd trial at getting the city of Ai. The message here is that if we accompany those who do not carry Christ in their heart, it will affect us in a major way.

It also shows us that when we repent and confess we must do so completely. We cannot leave any accursed sin unrepented. One point to suggest to the teens is that although teens may be honest in their studies, but if they carry any "accursed" sin in their hearts they will not receive the blessings from the Lord.

Compare the cities of Jericho and Ai.

- Jericho was large and fortified whilst Ai was small and un protected.
- The Jordan river provided protection whilst Ai had no river.
- Experienced soldiers were found in Jericho however Ai had none.
- Israel had no boats to cross the Jordan river, yet the Lord parted the river for them
- Israel had no experienced soldiers as all the people coming out of Egypt died in the wilderness, all they had was Faith in the promises of the Lord

Division of the land amongst the tribes of Israel

After securing all of the land of Canaan, Joshua was about 90 years of age. Show the kids the map enclosed and outline these points:

1. There was still a large part of the Promised Land unconquered (Chapter 13:1).
2. You can see the names of all the 12 tribes (sons of Jacob) on the map, except for Levi (Levites), as they were serving as priests. You do not find the name of Joseph as he is represented by: Ephraim and Manasseh, his sons. Thus, there are 12 names in capital letters: 10+ the 2 sons of Joseph. No Levi.

Conclusion

If we keep the commandments of God and are not ashamed of proclaiming them, He is sure to fulfil His promise. He will bless you in your exams, family life, jobs and other issues you may not even think about.

Make sure you transfer this message of Joy to the students, concentrate on God's victory and hence ours as His followers. Joshua and his book is a joyful victorious book where God's people inherit the Promised Land. What we are promised thru our Lord Jesus is eternal and far greater and better than anything earthly. Reassure the students that on Earth also the Lord will provide you with great joy not just in heaven, these victories Joshua had are real stories occurring whilst he was still on Earth. They are not fictitious.

Summary: of the person of Joshua and his book.

Joshua, the son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim, was born in Egypt during the Israelite enslavement. The word Joshua is a Hebrew word meaning "God Saves". This has important relevance, as He led the people of Israel into the Promised Land Canaan, after the death of Moses (symbolizing Jesus when He brought us salvation).

It comes as the 6th Book in the Old Testament, after Deuteronomy. It is 24 Chapters.

The 1st 5 Books of the Old Testament are the Books of the "Law". The next 12 books are the books of history. Joshua is the 1st Book of history.

One of the main other characters in the Book is Rahab. She is mentioned in the Genealogy of Christ in the Gospel of St. Matthew.

One of the main battles in the book is that of the fall of the walls of Jericho.

In Chapter 10, an amazing miracle happens when the sun stood still in the middle of heaven, to help win the battle of the Gibeonites.

Joshua divided the occupied land among the tribes of Israel as dictated to him by God.

When he was old and stricken in age he called together the elders and chiefs of the Israelites and encouraged them to have no fellowship with the native population. He died, at the age of 110, and was buried in Timnath Serah.

Interesting Facts:

In Chapter 10: in the battle at Gibeon, the sun remained up for 24 hours. Verse 14: "the Lord heeded the voice of a man; for the Lord fought for Israel"

This is interesting as Chinese writings talk about an extra long day during the era of Emperor "Yu". There are similar writings in Mexico. (Reference: Fr. Tadros Yacoub Malaty's Book on Joshua)

DETAILED NOTES – Summarised from the “book of Joshua” by Father Tadros Y Malaty.

THE FALL OF JERICHO

Having offered to His people, led by Joshua, all the possibilities to enjoy the inheritance; and having brought them across the Jordan; they stood before Jericho, that city of fame along the generations, fortified by mighty walls, that had to fall down before the people, to realize the promises of God. ... Here again, God offers new possibilities for conquest and triumph !

- 1- The city of Jericho
- 2- Marching around the city
- 3- Blowing the trumpets
- 4- The shouting of the people
- 5- The statute of accursing
- 6- Sparing Rahab
- 7- Cursing Jericho

1- THE CITY OF JERICHO:

‘Jericho’ meaning (the city of the moon), or (the place of good aroma), is located 5 miles west of the River Jordan; and 17 miles north-east of Jerusalem. But ‘Jericho’, that is mentioned in this Book, was located where ‘Tal-Alsultan’ is nowadays, one mile west of the modern Jericho; known now as ‘Al-Riha’ and the hills of ‘Abul-Olek’. Since old times, Jericho was known for its palm trees (Deuteronomy 34: 1; 3; Judges 3: 13); bananas, oranges, and roses (Sirach 24: 14); Sycamore trees (Luke 19: 4); Balsam, and several other fruit trees.

2- Marching around the city:

Jericho, the first fortified city that confronted the people, who came to enjoy their inheritance; represents the love of the world, as an obstacle that hinders the soul from setting forth to eternity, to enjoy the true inheritance; that loads it down, so as not to be lifted up by the wings of the Holy Spirit, from glory to glory. At the same time, it represents the ‘self’ -- the (ego), being the most serious obstacle that would face the spiritual beginners, to deprive them of the fellowship with God, the Grantor of conquest and of eternal inheritance. Two dangers that would face man in his spiritual strife are: love of the world, representing the left strike, and the ‘self’ or (ego) , representing the right strike, when man counts himself as better than others, and more righteous.

The scholar Origen talks about Jericho, as representing evil itself, saying: [It came in the Bible: “*A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves ...*” (Luke 10: 30). Here we recognize a portrait of Adam, falling down from Jerusalem, to the exile of this world. And the two blind men from Jericho (Matthew 20: 30), met by the Lord Christ who opened their eyes; did not they represent the men of this world, blinded by ignorance, for whose sake the Son of God came ? ! Therefore the city of Jericho is this world in which we live, that should be destroyed]. And he talks of the battle of Jericho, as a battle against the evil

of this world, fought in the heart, saying: [Let us go to war, and attack the most dangerous city in the world, namely evil; Let us devastate the walls of the arrogant sin ! Are you looking around to know the way you have to take, and the battle location you have to choose ? ! Look inside yourself, as the battle you are to fight is in you, where there is the walls of wickedness that should be destroyed ! Drive your enemy out of your heart ! These are not my own interpretation; but let me quote the Lord Christ who says: *“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, thefts, false witness, blasphemies”* (Matthew 15: 19).

The Holy Book describes Jericho as such:

“ Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel; none went out, and none came in ” (Joshua 6: 1) It represents one who is shut on himself; his heart not open to taking and giving; devoid of love ! As for him, whose heart is wide open with Christ, the lover of mankind, he lives with an open mind, opens his depths for everyone by a divine wisdom; and emits from his heart every fulfilling love to others.

This is Jericho, representative of the world, or of evil itself, especially the ‘self’ or (ego). God used, in the conquest over Jericho, a unique way, that was never, and will not ever be followed in wars. As the battle of Jericho, was to be the first battle in the land of promise, after crossing over the Jordan, God intended to proclaim in a distinct way, that the war is His, and the victory is from Him, and their real and essential weapon is faith. The apostle Paul says: *“By faith, the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were encircled for seven days”* (Hebrew 11: 30).

In that battle, God did not use military tactics, men, human wisdom, or weapons; although He committed His people to use them in the battles to follow; in order to confirm to them from the beginning, that, although He appreciates human wisdom, and uses human work if sanctified, yet He remains alone the secret of our conquest over sin ! He commanded them to march around the city once every day for six days, until they are exhausted. On the seventh day, He commanded them to march around the city seven times, until they are unable to march any more. Then, all the people are to shout a great shout, as a proclamation of their faith in God, the Grantor of triumph, who would then defend them and grant them what He promised.

Marching around, probably refers to “entering into eternity”, representing life with no end like a circle. By the eternal life that becomes ours in Jesus Christ our Lord, we can destroy the mighty walls and buildings of Jericho. The world, with all its seductions, will not be able to draw our hearts; the evil, with all its deceits, will not be able to draw our thoughts to it; and the ‘self’ or (ego), will not be able to captivate our soul and shut it in. “Eternity”, or “life with the eternal Christ”, is the way of conquest and inner triumph; through which the (time), brought to death, is swallowed; and before it, all fantasies and vain glory of the wicked world, will escape ... Indeed, our entry into heaven, while we are still on earth, will lift us up over every weakness, and uproot from our inside, the deep roots of evil.

Marching around the city once a day through the first six days, refers to continuous work all our time (the week days); while marching seven times on the seventh day, means that, on the day of our rest -- the seventh day -- we should work double time for our Lord, and strive a perfect strife (the figure 7 refers to perfection). By that strife, keeping the Sabbath is spiritually realized; namely, the rest in the Lord. Actually, the day of the Lord, or the day of rest in Him,

is not a day of laziness and relaxation, but it is a day of continuous strife, by the free grace working in us; until the devilish castles are totally destroyed; until the 'self' or (ego) in us is crucified; until our true Joshua reigns inside us, and finds rest in our hearts, as though on His throne; and until sin no longer have authority over us.

3- Blowing the trumpets:

On the seventh day, marching seven times around the city, the priests blew the trumpets by the seventh time (Joshua 6: 4, 16). In our interpretation of the Book of Numbers (10: 1- 10), we talked about the language of trumpets, as being the word of God, incessantly uttered by the priests, capable of granting the believers the life of spiritual conquest, and of putting in them the inner joy and rejoice of the heart. St. Ambrose says: [Not everyone has the right to blow the trumpet, nor to call others to a holy meeting; but that privilege was given only to priests].

The scholar Origen talks about the trumpets of the priests that were blown to destroy the walls of Jericho, saying: [Jericho represents the present world; the strength of whose walls would be destroyed when the priests blow their horns. The strong walls that serve this world, are idolatry and giving divinity to things made by satanic deceit, and works of magicians and diviners, ... besides the different atheistic thoughts of philosophers, and preaching of heretics. All these are like high walls supporting the world. But once the Lord Christ came -- represented by Joshua the son of Nun -- He sent the priests and apostles to blow silver horns (Numbers 10: 2; Psalm 98: 6); namely to present exalted and heavenly preaching. The first priestly horns were blown in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; Peter, James, Judah, and John also blew horns in their epistles; and Luke in the Book of Acts; and finally Paul, who blew his fourteen horns, to blast the walls of Jericho with lightening, to bring them down to the ground; destroying all its buildings, together with all its war instruments, of idolatry and philosophical thoughts].

Bishop Caesarius speaks of the trumpets of priests, saying: [The walls of Jericho, referring to this world, fell when the priests blew the horns; So also those of the 'pride', the (city) of this world, together with its towers: namely, greed, envy, looseness, etc.; That is to say, every evil lust will be destroyed and abolished, through the continuous preaching of the priests. That is why, priests should never keep silent in the Church, but rather comply to what the Lord says: "*Cry loud, spare not; Lift up your voice like a trumpet; Tell My people their transgression*" (Isaiah 58: 1). We are committed to persist on shouting loudly, and to "*spare not*", so as not to perish by our silence, because of the wickedness of sinners. When you shyly care for his feelings, you fail to care for his (spiritual) health. Do not let his wounds get worst because of your silence, but let them heal by your shouts. We should shout, and shout loudly, that nobody should claim that he did not hear, or that the voice of the priest is not known to him}. He also says: [The trumpet is important for the sinners, not only to pierce their ears, but also to shake their hearts; not only to rejoice them, but also to rebuke them. The sound of the trumpet should encourage the watchful to do good, and to terrify the negligent on their sins. And as, in battle, the trumpet terrifies the trembling soldier, and enflames the spirit of the brave; so also the trumpet of the priest does to the sinner and the righteous ... That is the work of the trumpet, to scatter the work of the sinners, and to steadfast that of the righteous].

4- The shouting of the people:

God commanded Joshua, that when they hear the sound of the trumpets, “ *all the people shall shout with a great shout; then the wall of the city will fall flat. And the people shall go up every man straight before him*” (Joshua 6: 5)

Some interpreted the word “shouts”, to mean (cries of joy); while, according to others, like the scholar Origen, they are (shouts of unity) by all the soldiers with one spirit, when they get carried away by the atmosphere of the battle. It is as though the falling down of the walls of Jericho, or the destruction of the kingdom of the devil, does not require the life of joy of an individual, isolated from the congregation, but the shouts of triumph by all the congregation with one spirit. It is indeed the shout of spiritual strife against sin and the kingdom of Satan, full of hope and joy, through unity together. That is why the Psalmer says: “*Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands ! Serve the Lord with gladness*” (Psalm 100: 1); and: “*Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound*” (Psalm 89: 15).

Marching seven times around Jericho, caused them to get physically worn out, as though dead, incapable, not only to fight, but even to walk on their feet. And here, as marching around refers to eternal life, we say that their death was swallowed up in the victory and conquest of eternity; according to the saying of the apostle: “*Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory’*” (1 Corinthians 15: 54). As though all, having enjoyed eternity in Jesus Christ, would give the shout of joy and rejoice, as a sign of victory over death, and the enjoyment of the victory of eternity; saying with the apostle: “*O Death, where is your sting ?; O Hades, where is your victory ...; We receive victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Corinthians 15: 54, 57). As such, their exhausting strife mixes with the rejoicing of their hearts; and the spiritual war melds with the experience of the heavenly joy !

That is why the fathers of the Church -- even the Hermits among them -- talked about the life of inner joy in Jesus Christ, amid the tears of repentance, and the labors of spiritual strife; warning against falling before the spirit of sadness, that brings us into despair that could destroy our faith. They confirm our commitment to the great inner shouting, amid our bitter strife. St. Agnatus Berianshaintof says: [If you get a thought or a feeling of sadness, it is of benefit to remember the power of faith, and the words of the Lord, who warns us against fear and sadness; proclaiming and confirming to us God’s promises, that even the hairs of our heads are counted; and that nothing could ever happen to us, without His knowledge and consent

5- The statute of the accursed:

“Now the city shall be doomed by the Lord to destruction ...And you by all means, keep yourselves from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are consecrated to the Lord; they shall come into the treasury of the Lord”(Joshua 6: 17. 19)

At the start of their inheritance, God, intending for their heart, mind, and time, not to be directed toward profiting and material gaining, He forbade them to take anything from Jericho. In the following battles, He allowed them to take spoils, to confirm to them that, keeping themselves from the worldly things in Jericho, would grant them both the material as well as the spiritual things in the wars to come; as said by the Lord Himself: “*Seek first the Kingdom of*

God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6: 33).

The scholar Origen comments on the statute of accursed, saying: [Joshua indeed said: *“And you, keep yourselves from the accursed things, lest you become accursed, when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it”* . The meaning of these words is to beware of keeping things of the world inside us, lest wicked habits would get into the congregation of believers ... Do not mix things of this world with those of Christ; and keep the abominations of the world from entering into the sanctuaries of the Church.

St. John, the Evangelist, blowing the horn in his epistle, warns us against that same thing, saying: *“ Do not love the world or the things in the world”* (1 John 2: 15). And the apostle Paul also says: *“Do not be conformed to this world”* (Romans 12: 2). If we walk according to the ways of those of the world, we would be welcoming the accursed things. As examples, Sharing the feasts of pagans, after we became Christians, together with practicing astrology, magic, etc. Would mean giving the chance to accursed things to enter into the Church, the camp of the Lord; that would lead to the defeat of the people of God.

6- Sparing Rahab:

“Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the country, ‘Go into the harlot’s house, and from there bring out the woman and all that she has, as you swore to her.... And Joshua spared Rahab the harlot, her father’s household, and all that she had. So she dwells in Israel to this day” (Joshua 6:22, 25)

By faith, Rahab alone, together with all her father’s household, were spared the doom; and that Gentile woman entered into the midst of Israel, to get attached to the true tree of Israel. The scholar Origen says: [How can we understand that Rahab *“dwelt in Israel to this day?”* . Normally the Book uses this expression “, to imply that something remains till the end of time. But how can we say that Rahab *“dwelt in Israel to this day “?* We should understand from this that she joined the true Israel (the Church of the New Testament) to this day. ! If you want to be enlightened as to the way by which Rahab joined Israel; you will have to consider, how *“a wild tree were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree”* (Romans 11: 17)... We, who were branches of a wild olive tree, came from various nations, and were grafted in the original stem. We, who used to live in adultery and to worship stones and wood instead of the true God (Deuteronomy 4: 28), entered into faith in the Lord Christ, and became to this day, (the people from above), while the Jews, because of their lack of faith, became (the people from below). *“Many who were first will be last, and the last first”* (Matthew 19: 30)].

7- Cursing Jericho:

As Jericho became a representative of evil, that had to be completely destroyed and abolished, Joshua swore saying: *“Cursed be the man before the Lord who rise up and builds this city Jericho; he shall lay its foundation with his firstborn, and with his youngest he shall set up its gates”* (Joshua 6: 26)

This was literally realized, when ‘Hiel of Bethel’ tried to rebuild it; the Book says: *“He laid its foundation with Abiram his firstborn, and with his youngest son Segub he set up its gates,*

according to the word of the Lord, which He had spoken through Joshua the son of Nun”
(1 Kings 16: 34).

Jericho with its mighty walls has been destroyed forever, a sign of the destruction of evil and lack of faith. St. Augustine says: [Until when these walls will stay high / Not forever! The Ark of the Covenant is marching around Jericho; and in the seventh time, all the walls of the city, of contradictions and lack of faith would fall down; But, to have this realized, it is fitting for man to labor hard in his practices, bearing with the adversaries, in order to acquire wings to set forth with ...].

Indeed, let Jericho be destroyed forever, and let Rahab the harlot be spared; namely, let the evil that prevailed on the world, be abolished, according to the words of the Book: *“The whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one”* (1 John 5: 19).. Now, *“ All that is in the world -- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life”* (1 John 2: 16). Evil would be utterly destroyed, so that Rahab, who used to be a harlot, would become *“a holy and chaste virgin to Christ”* (2 Corinthians 11: 2). By that, the harlot would no more walk in her harlotry, but in the holiness of the Lord; according to the words of the apostle: *“And such were some of you; But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God”* (1 Corinthians 6: 11).

DEFEAT AT AI

The people conquered Jericho, the huge and fortified city; but were defeated before ‘Ai’, the little village; *“There is an accursed thing in their midst”* (Joshua 7: 13). God would no more be in their midst, until they take away the corrupt yeast, and be sanctified to Him.

- 1- The treason of ‘Achan’
- 2- The defeat before Ai
- 3- Joshua, the intercessor
- 4- The reason for the defeat
- 5- Taking away the corrupt yeast

1- The treason of Achan:

“But the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things, for Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zareh, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed things; so the anger of the Lord burned against the children of Israel” (Joshua 7: 1)

It is not strange, that the great conquest over Jericho, would end up by the treason and the accursed deed of Achan the son of Carmi, in the midst of the people of God; as that demonstrates the horrible human nature, that pays back for God’s exalted free gifts, by denial instead of thanksgiving. Before the mighty walls of Jericho, it stands in humility, waiting for God’s amazing salvation; Yet, once the walls fall down, and the enemy submits, it commits a treason against the covenant of God !! Indeed, many mighty people, who could, by grace defeat Jericho, and destroy its greatness; in the corruption of their inner heart, were defeated before the tiny village of Ai, because of the accursed thing that infiltrated into their heart.

Anyway, God allowed, for the inheritance to start with such a great victory, then to be directly

followed by bitter defeat, to make of that a lesson for all future generations: that the conquest is from God, and the defeat is because of our wickedness. Whenever we conquer through the divine grace, we are committed, while thanking God for His gifts, to beware, lest evil would infiltrate into us, through our negligence, to come to face defeat before sins, that may seem to us small and of no importance. Concerning this, the apostle Paul says: *“But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified”* (1 Corinthians 9: 27).

2- The defeat before Ai:

It was not possible to start any action toward the strongly fortified Jericho, before God proclaimed to Joshua: *“I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor”* (Joshua 6: 2)

But here, as the accursed thing infiltrated into the midst of the people; and before such a little village like Ai, we do not hear God’s voice proclaiming anything to Joshua; nor Joshua consulting God before sending men to spy, or deciding the number of men to fight; If it happened that Joshua did consult the Lord, the Lord would have forbidden him of doing anything before taking away the corruption that infiltrated unseen into his people; and that painful defeat before Ai, would not have taken place.

The spies despised the village of Ai, and said to Joshua: *“Do not let all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not weary all the people there, for the people of Ai are few”*(Joshua 7: 3)

Indeed the people of Ai were few; but the people of God, after He forsook them, became, not only few, but as though nothing at all. And as the wise Solomon says: *“The wicked flee when no one pursues; But the righteous are bold as a lion”* (Proverb 28: 1). That is what God warned His people through the prophet Moses, saying: *“But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God ..., The Lord will cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them; and you shall become troublesome to all the kingdoms of the earth. Your carcasses shall be food for all the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and no one shall frighten them away”* (Deuteronomy 28: 15, 25, 26). So such was the error of the spies; having looked through a human eye, and disregarded the hidden secret of their conquest; that is the sanctified life in the Lord !

They assumed that two or three thousand men are capable of striking Ai; although the situation first needed the striking of the inner corruption in the people. Actually, it ended up that all the people of war were needed to go up with Joshua, and to set two ambushes of thirty thousand mighty men of valor, and about five thousand men (Joshua 8: 5, 3, 12). The men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men of the Israelites (Joshua 7: 5); which is the same figure as the number of anointments of the Sacrament of ‘Meron’ (36), by which the priest anoints all the members of a newly baptized person, from the top of his head, down to the toes of his feet. It is as though that weak ‘Ai’ has been capable of killing all members of the

body, because of the accursed things inside the heart. A wicked thought, that we think as simple and of little importance; if we surrender to it, it would cause us to lose the purity of the whole body, and may cause us to lose all our life ! The fruit of all this was:

“The hearts of the people melted and became like water”(Joshua 7: 5)

That was the work of sin, that destroyed the whole people, caused them to lose their courage and strength, and made their heart become like water; flowing with no one to help or support. So do not be astonished to hear the prophet Jeremiah, feeling the activity of sin, say: *“O my soul, my soul ! I am pained in my very heart ! My heart makes a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because you have heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war”* (Jeremiah 4: 19). And, having carried our sins, the Lord through the prophet says: *“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It has melted within me”* (Psalm 22: 14). How horrible sin is!!

3- Joshua the intercessor:

“Then Joshua tore his clothes, and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the Lord until evening, both he and the elders of Israel, and they put dust on their heads”(Joshua 7: 6)

Joshua, who stood as an intercessor for the people before God; tore his clothes and fell on his face before the ark of God till the evening, carried a symbolic portrait of the atoning intercession of our Lord Jesus. He, before whom the heavenly hosts tremble, ‘took off the clothes of His glory’ for our sake; descended to earth; and proclaimed the perfection of His love, realizing the reconciliation on the cross, in the evening. Of Him Isaiah said: *“Because He poured out His soul unto death. And He was numbered with the transgressors”* (Isaiah 53: 12); and John, the beloved, says: *“And if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world”* (1 John 2: 1, 2); and the apostle Paul says: *“Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He ever lives to make intercession for them”* (Hebrew 7: 25).

His intercession was not through tearing His clothes, or falling on His face to the earth, as Joshua did; But, though the eternal living God, He put on a human body, to pour out His soul to death; He carried on our transgressions and weaknesses, to have them condemned in His body. To be numbered with the transgressors, He who knows no sin, offered His life for the sake of humanity, that chose to harbor animosity toward Him. He, who is alone, capable of delivering Himself to death, and, at the same time, of rising again; became for us a living intercessor, to offer us to His Father, as members of His living body; to find for us a place of comfort in His divine bosom. His intercession is not just words or screams, but He brought us into Him, to be justified by His blood, and to be counted as an object of pleasure to the Father.

St. Augustine says: [There is only one Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God, who prays for our sake, prays in us, and to whom we pray; As our Priest, He prays for us; Being our Head, He prays in us; And as our God, we pray to Him].

4- The secret of defeat:

God proclaimed to Joshua the secret of defeat, and offered him the cure:

“Get up ! Why do you lie thus on your face? Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them, for they have taken some of the accursed things... They become doomed to destruction; Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you. Get up, sanctify the people ...There is an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; You cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you” (Joshua 7: 10 - 13)

In these phrases, it is to be noticed:

(1) God says to Joshua twice, “Get up”: In the first time He says: “ Get up; Why do you lie on your face?”, and in the second, “Get up; Sanctify the people”. It is as though God the Father, seeing the Son, voluntarily bearing death, is asking Him to rise ... And through His resurrection to sanctify the people; The incarnate Son rises, to let us also rise with Him without a sin ! ... The Book of Joshua is the Book of Resurrection; as without it, no inheritance will be realized for us, neither shall we have a portion in the divine promises.

(2) The secret of defeat, is that the believers will remain accursed; and forsaken by God, until they take away the accursed thing from their midst. One of them, by taking for himself what is accursed, carried its nature, and became himself accursed, he and his people with him. Acquiring evil would give us its nature, and acquiring the sanctified, would make us saints. Whoever acquires the vain sin would become himself vain, and whoever acquires god would bear in him the divine life, and would have new attributes according to the image of his Creator.

(3) If the secret of our defeat is having the accursed in our midst, the cure will have to bear two integrated concepts: Taking away the accursed thing from our midst, and acquiring sanctification. The negative aspect, namely taking away evil, would not be enough, but there should be the positive aspects, namely acquiring the Holy Himself. That is why God commands Joshua to take away the accursed, and get up and sanctify the people.

5- Taking away the corrupt leaven:

It was impossible for the people to enjoy the sanctified risen life, unless they take away the old leaven that corrupts the whole dough (1 Corinthians 5: 6); They had to completely take away the accursed thing, to get back to enjoy the permanent company of God. Here we notice the following:

(1) Unfortunately, from the same tribe that provided the Holy Virgin St. Mary, who bows her head in obedience to God, to receive the dwelling of the word in her womb, to deliver the Savior of the world, the Lion who comes from the tribe of Judah -- comes out Achan the son of Carmy, who brought the offense to the people and almost destroyed it ! Probably God allowed this, to teach us to be aware of falling, and of the offense even what seems as simple and of little importance. The tribe, which is given the promises, produced him who deserved destruction.

The divine honest and free gifts, offers us hope and certainty, yet we should be careful; lest we become like Achan who saw, coveted, took, and hid (Joshua 7: 21); saying: *“When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge*

of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it”(Joshua 7: 21)

The offense usually begins with unsanctified seeing, then coveting, then taking, to be followed by hiding the evil in the earth, in the middle of the tent.

(2) God did not forgive Achan for several reasons: The first was that his behavior was the first of its kind after their entrance into Canaan; so God wanted from the beginning to give them a lesson, demonstrating the seriousness of sin, and confirming the necessity of cutting it off. That was what happened to the man who was found gathering sticks on the Sabbath day -- the first one to break the Sabbath; God's verdict on him was:

“The man must surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp” (Numbers 15: 35). Also that was what happened with Ananias and his wife Sapphira, the first family to lie to the Holy Spirit, in the days of the apostles (Acts 5: 3).

The second reason why God did not forgive Achan, was that he had enjoyed the divine blessings, and saw by his own eyes, how a way through the Jordan was opened for them to cross; and how the walls of Jericho fell down to let them inherit; That is why his wages were bitter and firm. If he chose to wait a little, he would have got his portion of the spoils from Ai and other battles to follow, as well as the inheritance in the land of promise; But he despised God's blessings, and cared for earthly things, to end up losing these and those.

The third reason for not forgiving him, was that he did not repent, and did not confess from the beginning, but waited until God revealed the tribe, the clan, and the family that sinned (Joshua 7: 16, 17), and finally his very name; then he had to confess ... He hid his crime and did not repent, even after the people's defeat..

Anyway, Achan became a lesson to the whole Church along the generations, that the secret of defeat in the life of a believer or a congregation, is the accursed things in their midst. St. Athanasius the apostolic says: [When Achan was accused of theft, he could not claim that he was zealous in war; and when he was condemned, the whole congregation stoned him to death]. Finally, he turned into an example to all generations concerning the commitment of the believer to abolish every bit of sin in his life. Joshua the son of Nun abolished every trace of Achan and his belongings; in order to demonstrate to us that we should deliver in the hands of God -- our living Jesus, our inner life and behavior, to Him; who, alone, can uproot the roots of our sins, to leave no trace of evil. Let us hold fast to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom every offense in us will be cut off; remembering the advice of the Lord to us, saying: *“If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; ... and if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell”* (Matthew 5: 29, 30).

(3) The body of the crime was:

a- A beautiful Babylonian garment (Joshua 7: 21); a garment imported from 'Shinar', the region where the tower of Babel was built (Genesis 11: 2); and where some of Jews were captivated (Isaiah 11: 11; Zechariah 5: 11).

If the garment refers to the body, coveting the Babylonian garment refers to body lust to enjoy the luxuries of nations. In the Book of Hezekiel, God rebukes Judah, because her sister Israel “*lusted for the Assyrians, captains and rulers, clothed most gorgeously*” (Hezekiel 23: 12). Achan bore the first seed of body lust with the Gentiles; So it was imperative to cut it off from its beginning ... He defiled the body, that God created sanctified !

b- Two hundred shekels of silver (Joshua 7: 16). If the garment refers to body lusts, the two hundred shekels of silver refer to love of wealth ... to acquire silver on the expense of deprived brothers. Silver also refers to the word of God; So, as the wicked man does wrong to his sanctified body, defiling it; he likewise misunderstands the word of God, and hides it underneath the ground of his tent; namely, he uses it according to an earthly concept, to the account of the tent of his body, instead of receiving it to lift him up to the heavenly places, to the account of his spirit, as well as for the salvation of his body.

c- A wedge of gold (Joshua 7: 16); which refers to the tongues of heathen philosophers, that look golden and glittery. The scholar Origen says: [I do not think that stealing a little gold was a sin big enough to defile his great Church ... The wedge of gold is the corrupt thoughts of philosophers that glitter like gold. Beware, lest you would be deceived by the splendor of their workmanship, and the sweetness of their golden tongue. Remember Joshua’s command that everything gold in Jericho is accursed. If you are reading the essays of poets, that tell about gods, do not be charmed by their eloquence; because if you take them to your tent, namely, let their teachings enter your heart, all the Church would be defiled. That was what Valentine and Basilides did; they stole the golden wedge of Jericho, and ventured to transfer the corrupt principles of philosophy to the Church, to defile the whole Church of God].

d- Fifty shekels: The figure 50 refers to the spirit of freedom and unity. In the tabernacle of the Meeting, the two curtains were coupled to one another by 50 loops on each side (Exodus 26: 4, 5); all the loops were coupled together by 50 clasps of gold, a reference to the secret of unity between the two peoples (the Jews and the Gentiles), through the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of the Pentecost; when they gained the Spirit of freedom in Jesus Christ, who also grants the unity. In the Jubilee -- the fiftieth year -- all slaves were liberated, and everyone enjoyed freedom ... Here, Achan received freedom to hide it underneath the ground of his tent; namely, used the sacred freedom to the account of his body, and his worldly interests, to turn into looseness.

In short what Achan did was that he defiled the sanctities and possibilities given to him by God for his comfort and peace, and used them for his self destruction and perishment. He used the body (the garment) for lust, instead of making it a helper to the soul in the holy life; used the word of God, with a sinful mind, instead of getting lifted by it up to the heavenly places; used the mind in the glittering unconstructive philosophies, instead of using it for the glory of God; and used freedom, as a tool for the body, instead of using it, unhindered, as a secret of its setting forth to the bosom of God the Father.

THE FALL OF AI

Because of sin, the people were defeated before that weak village of Ai; But now, as all were sanctified, after taking away the accursed things from their midst, they did not only get conquest and victory, but presented through that a symbolic prophecy, for the work of salvation of God.

- 1- Setting an ambush for Ai
- 2- Striking down Ai

1 - Setting an ambush for Ai:

“Then the Lord said to Joshua, ‘Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; take all the people of war with you, and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land’” (Joshua 8: 1)

God commanded him to divide the people into two groups: The first group to lay an ambush against the city, behind Ai, between it and Bethel, on its west side. It seems that that group was in its turn divided into two groups: an ambush formed of 30, 000 men of valor (Joshua 8: 3), to be able to go against any movement of the people of Bethel to come to the aid of Ai; and another group of 5, 000 men (Joshua 8: 12), to be set in ambush close to Ai, to attack it when Joshua gives them the sign to attack. The second group, the obvious one under the leadership of Joshua, was to advance toward the front entrance of Ai. The plan was that, when the enemy comes out at them, that they would flee before them; the whole city of Ai will follow, leaving the city empty of its inhabitants; Then, the other group would rise from the ambush and seize the city from behind.

That plan carried a living portrait of the work of salvation of God, on the level of the Church of the New Testament as a whole, and on the level of each of its members; It represents the conquest of the (catholic) Church over the devil (king of Ai), depriving him of all his authority and capabilities; as well as the conquest of every soul over him.

Concerning the Church as a whole, the two groups represent two divisions in the Church of the New Testament: one of Jewish origin, and another of Gentile origin. The division, that was under the leadership of Joshua, that approached the entrance of Ai from the front, and pretended to escape, to draw the king of Ai, his army, and all his people, out of the city, represents the group of Jewish origin, that having received faith in Christ; approached the city in full sight; having come through the law and the prophets, to attack by its Jesus the kingdom of darkness, and to destroy the devil, its ruler. That is the group about which the Lord said: *“I have only been sent to the lost sheep of Israel”* (Matthew 25: 24); and the apostle said: *“Glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek”* (Romans 2: 10). As to their pretending to flee before the city of Ai, according to the scholar Origen: [All who followed Joshua pretended to flee; having fled from the burden of the law, from keeping the Sabbath according to the statutes, from the circumcision of the body, and from offering the bloody sacrifices. But beholding their following movement, we find that those who followed Joshua, the perfect and the fulfiller of the law, did not flee but got back to enter the city].

They pretended to flee, to draw the king of Ai and his people out of his city, then got back and conquered them. So did the Jews who received faith in the Lord Christ; they appeared to retreat before the law and its statutes, but came back to comprehend the two of them by the Spirit and not by the letter. They were freed from under the law, to live, not as breakers of the law, or despisers of its statutes, but to enter into its spiritual secrets, to appreciate its depths, and to realize its goal, under the leadership of “the true Joshua”, the bearer of the curse of the law, for our sake.

As to second group, it represents two divisions: one of 30, 000 men of valor, to approach from Bethel behind Ai; and the other, of 5000 men directly behind Ai. These two ambushes represent the congregation of believers of Gentile origin, whom Joshua had chosen and directed, yet was not physically present in their midst; the same way like the Gentiles, among whom the Lord Christ was not present in body, as He was with the Jews, but they heard of Him, and came to know Him through the preaching of the disciples and the apostles. Those also did not approach the city from the front, but were hiding behind it ... ; as they did not have the law nor the prophets, and were not given the covenants nor the promises; and as the apostle says: *“The Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith:”* (Romans 9: 30). They came from behind, with no prior knowledge of the law, the statutes, and the prophets, yet, by the faith in their hearts, they attacked the city, destroyed the forces of darkness, and robbed the devil of his authority and might.... Their work melded with that of the first group, under the leadership of Joshua himself.

The two figures: 30, 000 and 5,000, concerning the two ambushes against the devil and his hosts, bear two spiritual concepts. The figure 30, 000 is the product of multiplying 3 X 10 X 1000. So if the figure 3 refers to faith in the Holy Trinity, or to the secret of resurrection with Christ, as we know from the previous chapters; the figure 10 refers to the law including the 10 commandments; and the figure 1000 refers to heavenly life; so this figure in its wholeness would mean that that group of nations, which did not receive or know the Mosaic law, by their faith in the Holy Trinity, as well as their enjoyment of life risen in Jesus Christ, became consummators of the law (10), yet in a spiritual or heavenly way (1000). The Gentiles (believers) did not break the law, nor despised it, but by faith they became justified in Jesus Christ, risen from the dead; as though they have consummated the commandments and realized them in a spiritual heavenly thought, and not in a killing literality. As to the figure 5000, it refers to the sanctification of the senses of those believers, who were before living in darkness and sinking in defilement; then by the living faith, had their five senses sanctified, and acquired the spiritual heavenly feature (1000).

As the plan was integral, and no one group could have won alone; both groups should be working together; so the Church appears integral, through acceptance of members of Jewish origin, and others of Gentile origin; despite the difference in culture, thoughts, and circumstances.

If we consider that plan presented by God to Joshua to overcome and to seize Ai, as representing the spiritual war in the life of each one of us, we would likewise, need a similar plan; to fight spiritually through the apparent strife, under the leadership of the true Joshua, as in the liturgical worship, fasting, private and family prayers, partaking of giving, prostrating,

etc. ...; to meld all that with the hidden secret life, that acts as an ambush by the soul against sin and its kingdom, under the guidance of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; as for example the moaning of heart, (arrow) prayers -- the permanent prayer of Jesus --, the sanctification of the will and feelings, etc. ...; things unseen by anyone, and not recognized except by the Lord Himself. Thus, our apparent life would meld with our hidden life, as one integrated life, harmonizing all our behavior, both in the Church, at home, at work, with friends, as well as with oppressors; to work in one harmonious spirit, worthy of our spiritual leader, the Lover of mankind; to turn our life in its wholeness, and from all its sides, into one harmonious life, like a guitar on which the Lord Jesus Christ plays, by His Holy Spirit; each of its strings produces a special tune, but in harmony and integration with those produced by the rest of strings, all composing an unutterable symphony of love, to be presented by the Leader to His heavenly Father, by His Holy Spirit.

2- Striking down Ai:

Striking Ai was not through human tactics, but by a divine plan, in which God used His ministers and people; although He was the One who ordained and who granted the conquest. At the beginning, He commanded His servant Joshua to “*arise, go up to Ai*” (Joshua 8: 1), proclaiming that He is going to give him victory, and even providing him with the fighting plan (Joshua 8: 2).

The Lord Himself followed up all his steps, saying: “*Stretch out the spear that is in your hand toward Ai, for I will give it into your hand ... So those in ambush arose quickly out of their place, they ran as soon as he had stretched out his hand, and they entered the city and took it, and hastened to set the city on fire*” (Joshua 8: 18; 20)

God was the One working in the midst of His people, yet not without them ! He rejoices and has pleasure to work to their account and with them ! He acknowledges man and raises his value; granting him salvation as a free divine gift, yet does not disregard the human factor, the human will, and the human work !

The divine command was for Joshua to stretch his hand with the spear toward Ai, in order to give it into his hand ... That command symbolizes the work of divine incarnation, in which the “hand” refers to the Person of the Son; while stretching it means its proclamation ... It is as though the Son proclaimed Himself through incarnation, and crucifixion; His cross acting as a spear, by which to destroy the forts of the devil, and to burn down his kingdom, by the fire of His Holy Spirit ! “*They struck them down, so that they let none of them remain or escape*” (Joshua 8: 22)