



OHBC MEMORY VERSE – WEEK #11

THIS WEEK'S MEMORY VERSE: I KINGS 18:21

“And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.”

Why I Kings 18:21?

Because it is the exact message we “Laodiceans” (Rev. 3:14 – i.e. believers in the last days) need to hear!

To set the context of I Kings 18, it is important to understand that this was a low point in Israel's history. A very wicked king, with an even more wicked wife had arisen to the throne. God gives his epithet in I Kings 21:25 – “But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.” Wow! In light of some of the incredibly wicked kings in Israel, that's quite a statement!

During Ahab's reign, the people of Israel believed that Jehovah was God. That sounds great; the only problem was that they believed Baal was god, too. Their worship, their love, and the affection of their hearts was divided between the two. Because of Israel's apostasy, God prophesied through His prophet Elijah that it would not rain for three years (I Kings 17:1; 18:1).

In I Kings 18:17-20, Elijah and King Ahab were in the midst of a dispute about who was the real source of the problems Israel faced. Elijah called for a showdown on Mount Carmel. He called for the 450 prophets of Baal to assemble on the mount, along with the 400 prophets of the groves, and for the entire nation of Israel to likewise gather at the foot of the mountain. As soon as everyone had assembled, Elijah walked up to the platform, grabbed the microphone, and “came unto all the people and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him”!

God's message to this people of divided allegiance was, “Go one way or the other! But I'm either Lord OF all, or I'm not Lord AT all!”

It's the same message Jesus speaks to those of us of divided allegiance in these last days of the Laodicean church period in Rev. 3:15-16 – “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.”

As we hide I Kings 18:21 in our hearts, may we heed God's call to surrender all of our being to follow Christ's lordship. Be HOT!

DAY 51

TODAY'S READING: JOSHUA 6-10

OVERVIEW:

The conquest and destruction of Jericho; the sin of Achan; the destruction of Ai; the deception of the Gibeonites and their subsequent covenant with Israel; Joshua leads Israel in victory after victory.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As Christians, we face many “Jerichos” in our lives. All too often, we want to give up at the sight of insurmountable odds, just as the spies at Kadesh (Num. 13:28-33). But no wall is too high and no sin is so great that our Lord Jesus Christ cannot give us the victory. Just note that the soldier who fights the best and experiences the victories is the one who bows the lowest before battle (see Joshua 5:13-15)! We win our battles on our knees and on our faces before the Lord (Phil. 4:6-7).

No man can take a city by himself. Joshua had the loyal cooperation of the priests and the people, and together they overcame the enemy. The Book of Hebrews commands us to not forsake assembling ourselves together, as many people do (“i.e. you don't have to go to church to be spiritual”), but to exhort one another, especially as we get closer to Christ's return (Heb. 10:25). We all need the accountability and help that a local church provides, in order to keep our enemies defeated. It is the only way we can live in victory. Why? Because God said so! (See Matthew 16:18).

In chapter 7, God reveals to us the consequences of secret sin. Achan had taken some of the spoils from Jericho in direct disobedience to God's command (Josh. 6:18-19). Israel suffered their first defeat at the hands of Ai because of this sin in the camp. Ever since Adam, man has thought it was possible to hide his sin from God (Gen. 3:8 - Adam and Eve "hid themselves from...God"). Even Achan hid (Josh. 7:21-22) that which he coveted and took for himself, thinking God would never know! We may look at Achan and think, "how absurd he was to think that God wouldn't know or find out about his sin". But, what sin are you presently harboring that you think you will get by with? II Corinthians 7:1 says, "Deal with it now!" ("Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.") Take heed to God's warning in His Word... "be sure your sin will find you out" (Num. 32:23)!

Note that in Joshua 8:2, God said that the people of Israel were to take the loot from Ai unto themselves (unlike Jericho where all the loot was supposed to go to God alone). Had Achan just waited a few days, he would have had all the wealth he could have carried (Matt. 6:33).

Once again, Ai represents the flesh and the daily battle we have against it. In chapter 8, "Joshua arose" (verse 3) to lead Israel to victory against Ai. This is another awesome picture God is painting for us. It is through the power of Jesus' resurrection that we can conquer and defeat the flesh and sin in our lives. In verse 6, we are told that "they will come out after us," picturing the fact that our flesh will never quit...it always wakes up ready to come out and fight the Spirit each morning. Notice that the end of verse 9 says, "Joshua lodged that night among the people". We have this same promise from our Joshua (Jesus) in scripture; Jesus is always with us to help us conquer the flesh (Rom. 7:24-25, 8:35-39; Matt. 28:20).

Gibeon was the next city to be taken after the victories by Israel at Jericho and Ai. The Gibeonites used deceit as their tool to avoid destruction. In chapter 9, they posed themselves as ambassadors from a far country who wanted to be the servants of Israel. They succeeded in getting this agreement (or covenant) from the leaders of Israel and then the truth was revealed (they were actually the Gibeonites themselves). Beware! The flesh will make deals with you before it will allow you to kill it. Note that it is often after great victories that Satan will launch his subtle attacks from the "back door". We must never let our guard down, allowing ourselves to become complacent in our relationship with God. We must do as the apostle Paul did when he said, "I die daily" (I Cor. 15:31).

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

In the ARK OF THE COVENANT – Joshua 6; God dwelling within Israel (God lives in us – I Cor. 6:19).

Through JOSHUA – Joshua 8 and 10; He is the only one who can lead us to daily victory over our flesh.

DAY 52

TODAY'S READING: JOSHUA 11-14

OVERVIEW:

Joshua conquers kings and cities for Israel; the land is divided by lot among the tribes; Caleb requests and obtains the mountain of Hebron from Joshua.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

From the chapters we read today, we are reminded that there are many battles to fight, many cities to destroy, and many kings to conquer in our lives. When we have no battles to fight, we are in trouble! (See Rev. 3:17.) It is the battles we fight that keep us dependent upon the Lord. What "king" does Jesus need to conquer in your life? What "walled cities" need to be destroyed so that God can possess all of you, instead of just part of you (I Cor. 6:19-20)?

In chapter 12:1-6, we are reminded of the kings conquered by Israel before crossing the Jordan River. Two and a half tribes thought it "couldn't get any better than this", so they asked that their inheritance be given to them on this side of the Jordan River. They got satisfied with less than what God had for them. Don't ever allow yourself to settle for being a good spouse and a good parent who attends church and reads his/her Bible! We must possess all that God has for us so that we can bear fruit and fulfill the mission God left us to accomplish!

In chapter 14, Caleb asks Joshua for the mountain of Hebron. This is the same mountain that the ten other spies saw and feared because of the giants that lived there in the "great and fenced" cities (Josh.

14:12). Caleb received permission to go and conquer this mountain and the giants that lived there. Caleb, even in his old age (85 years old – see Josh. 14:10), was anxious to claim his inheritance that God had promised him (Josh. 14:6-9). It is interesting to note that Hebron means “fellowship”. This is the very thing that God desires from each of us. God has promised fellowship to us, but we must be like Caleb, and claim the promise of God that we are “more than conquerors” (Rom. 8:37), even in our old age!

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

Through JOSHUA – Joshua 11-14; as the one who deals with the “kings” in our lives, and as the one who gives us our inheritance.

DAY 53

TODAY’S READING: JOSHUA 15-18

OVERVIEW:

The land of Canaan is divided among the tribes of Israel.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

In Joshua 15, Caleb, the eternally strong warrior (Josh. 14:11; a picture of God the Father), decides to reward the man who conquers and takes the city of Kirjathsepher ("city of the Book") with his daughter, Achsah, to wife. Othniel (meaning "lion"), who happens to be from the tribe of Judah, conquers and takes "the city of the Book" in order to obtain his bride. Achsah, which means "anklet", was given to Othniel as a reward for his accomplishments in battle. Her “anklet” distinguished her from other women when she walked. During this time period, women were covered from head to toe with clothing, making it hard to tell one from the other. The picture is that we, the church, were given to Christ, the Lion from the tribe of Judah, to be His bride because of His accomplishments in battle (He rose from the dead and fulfilled every prophecy in "the Book" of God). We, too, should now be known for our walk in this world, just like Achsah (Rom. 6:4; Eph. 4:1).

Also in chapter 15:18-20, Achsah (the Bride of Christ, who is known by her walk), makes a request from her father Caleb (God the Father). She begs her father for a field (Matt. 13:38 - "the field is the world") with springs of water (Eph. 5:26 – water pictures the Word of God). Caleb gives her what she wants so that she can produce much "fruit". We, as God's children, are commissioned to take His Word to the world in order to produce much fruit (John 15:16)! But beware of Satan, who is more "subtle" than any beast of "the field" (Gen. 3:1; II Cor. 11:3-4).

There are several observations we must make from this portion of Scripture to understand some of the key issues we face as we, like Israel, seek to possess our inheritance (Acts 20:32; Eph. 1:15-23):

1. Some chose to dwell on this side of Jordan (Num. 32). They were the first to fall to the enemy because they settled for less than God intended for them (II Kings 10).
2. Some were partial possessors (Josh. 16:10). They could have driven the enemies out, but chose to put them under tribute instead. In the same way learn to “spiritualize” our flesh, and use it for "ministry", instead of utterly destroying our flesh on a daily basis.
3. Some were conquerors and possessed all of their inheritance (Josh. 8:26; 19:47).
4. One wanted more (Caleb in Josh. 15).

In terms of dealing with your flesh and allowing God to totally possess you, which of the four observations listed above best describes you?

This portion of Scripture also provides us with several action steps for beginning the process of possessing our inheritance (I Thess. 4:4):

1. "Arise" (Josh. 18:8) – Get up out of your "safe" place. Sometimes we have to get uncomfortable in order to deal with our flesh.
2. Go for a walk (Josh. 18:8) – "Walk" through your life and see what you still haven't allowed God to possess.

3. Tell Joshua (Jesus) what you see (Josh. 18:8-9) – Take it to the Lord in prayer and allow Him to change you and to possess all of you today.

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

Through OTHNIEL – Joshua 15:17; His name means "lion" and he is from the Tribe of Judah (Rev. 5:5).

As SHILOH – Joshua 18:1; Shiloh means "rest"...from war (see Gen. 49:10; Matt. 11:28 and Col. 3:15-16).

DAY 54

TODAY'S READING: JOSHUA 19-21

OVERVIEW:

The remaining lots are divided among the tribes of Israel; the cities of refuge are designated; the 48 cities given to the Levites from among the other tribe's inheritance.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

In chapter 19, Simeon is given his inheritance from within the inheritance of the tribe of Judah (Josh. 19:1, 9). This was the consequence of Simeon and Levi's own sin when they killed many men in anger because of what they had done to their sister (Gen. 34; 49:5-7). It is a graphic illustration of the law of reaping and sowing (Gal. 6:6-8). There are consequences to sin regardless of forgiveness. Now, Simeon and Levi were without their own inheritance within Israel. The lesson we must learn is to beware of the power of uncontrolled passions such as anger, wrath, and sexual sin! There is a high price to pay for sin!

In chapter 20, God appoints six cities to be a place of refuge for those who innocently killed somebody (i.e. it was by accident or unintentional; not premeditated) as long as they fled there immediately. They were protected by the elders of that city from the "avenger of blood" until the death of the high priest. This is truly an amazing picture in God's art gallery of the Old Testament! If you still need proof as to whether or not God wrote this Book, let's compare the cities of refuge with our Lord Jesus Christ:

The Cities of Refuge

1. They were appointed for those who shed blood innocently.
2. They were appointed to protect from the avenger of blood.
3. You were safe as long as you stayed in the city (vs. 4, 6).
4. Only the death of the high priest set you free (vs. 4, 6).
5. They were always readily accessible to anyone (vs. 9).
6. Knowing they existed wasn't enough to protect you. You had to flee to them.
7. You had to leave everything to come to the city of refuge (family, friends, possessions, etc., see vs. 6).
8. These cities were the responsibility of the Levites (Num. 35:6).

The Lord Jesus Christ

1. We all are responsible for shedding His innocent blood (I Pet. 2:24; Isa. 53:4-12)
2. If we have trusted Christ, then we are protected from the true avenger of blood (God the Father, see Deut. 32:35, 43).
3. If we are "in Christ", then we are safe and secure (Rom.8:31-39).
4. It is only through Jesus' death (our High Priest, Heb. 6:20), that we are able to be free indeed from the penalty of our sin (John 8:36).
5. Jesus is accessible to anyone, at anytime (Rom. 10:13; I Tim.2:5).
6. Just knowing what Jesus did and who He is, doesn't save you. You have to run to Him and trust Him with your life (Eph. 1:12- 13)!
7. You may have to forsake your family, friends, and possessions in order to come to Jesus (Matt. 10:34-39, Luke 18:22).
8. It is now our responsibility as N.T. priests (Rev. 1:6), to lead others to the City of Refuge (i.e. Jesus Christ, Matt. 28:19-20).

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As the CITES OF REFUGE – Joshua 20 (see Ps. 46:1).

DAY 55

TODAY'S READING: JOSHUA 22-24

OVERVIEW:

The two and a half tribes who chose their inheritance on the other side of Jordan build an altar and call it Ed; Joshua exhorts Israel's leaders; Joshua exhorts all the people of Israel and brings them to a point of decision.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Joshua 22 is a great lesson that teaches all of us to never choose less than God's best! The two and a half tribes chose to live on this side of the Jordan River before they ever saw what God had in store for them on the other side. They settled for less than the best. In this chapter, Joshua allows them to leave Shiloh the place of "rest", and go back to their chosen inheritance in Gilead, which means "stony place". They chose to live in a place where it was difficult to farm and "bear fruit" (Matt. 13:1-5). God, in His patience and grace, allowed them to go because He never forces anyone to "live close to Him". On their way back to their inheritance, they built an altar called Ed to remind their children that they worshipped the God of Israel, too. These two and a half tribes were trying to give the appearance of spirituality by building this altar, while living far from the presence of God (the Ark of the Covenant stayed with the other ten tribes in the Promised Land). The lesson we all need to learn here is that you can't fool anybody, especially your children, into believing that you live closer to God than you actually do. Are you doing what is "allowed" by God, building altars like "Ed" in your life to give the appearance of a Spirit-filled life, or are you seeking to do only those things that please the Lord? Either way, do realize that God and your family (i.e. your spouse and children) know the truthful answer!

In Joshua 23 and 24, Joshua pulls the leaders and people of Israel together to exhort, challenge, warn and call them into remembrance. Joshua's main concern was that Israel remain a separated people, and not mingle with the heathen nations and worship their gods (23:7). How foolish it is to worship the gods of a defeated enemy! Yet, that is somehow what eventually happened! If they meditated on and obeyed God's Word, then God would continue to bless them. If not, those blessings would be removed and in their place would be traps, snares and thorns. Be sure that you realize the sins we allow to remain in our lives will become just that...traps, snares and thorns (Num. 32:23 – "be sure your sin will find you out").

Joshua brings the people to point of decision (Josh. 24:14-15). The decision was essentially this: Whom will you choose to fear, and whom will you choose to serve? The basic lesson is, whomever we fear (i.e. hold in awe), is whom we will serve. The principle includes both positive and negative aspects. When we fear God (i.e. when we hold Him in absolute awe and reverence), we will be what He wants us to be, and do what He wants us to do. In other words, we will serve Him. On the other hand, when we fear people (i.e. when we revere them and think they're awesome), we will be what they want us to be, and do what they want us to do. We will serve them. But don't miss the message, everybody serves somebody! Not to choose God, is to choose Satan by default. When we hold ourselves in awe, choosing our own way, we fall into the snare of the devil, and actually become like Satan himself (See Isa. 14:12-14).

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

Through JOSHUA (the prophet), ELEAZAR (the priest), and JOSEPH (the King) – Joshua 24:29-33; The book of Joshua ends with three funerals (for Joshua, Eleazar and Joseph). A prophet, priest and king were buried right there in the middle of the inheritance. It is only through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Prophet, Priest and King, that we have access to our inheritance in Him.