

October 28, 2011

Dear Friends,

As you may recall, I have been working toward a Master's Degree in Old Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. This month instead of a ministry update, I thought I would share with you something from one of my classes.

To approach understanding why the LORD commanded the Israelites to destroy the inhabitants of the Promised Land, one must begin with God's holiness as a foundation. Sinful people cannot be in the presence of a Holy God. Since the Fall, God has been working His plan that would enable people to be with Him and He with them. His plan of salvation includes judgment upon sin. And in God's judgment, He has provided a way of salvation.

In God's covenant with Abraham, He promised him land. The land was to be a sacred place where the LORD would dwell with His people. As the saving of Rahab in Joshua 6 and the death of Achan in Joshua 7 show—God's people are His people by faith, not nationality. Rahab was saved from being killed because she had changed her affiliation from Jericho to the LORD. Rahab believed the LORD to be the only true God. Achan, on the other hand, did not observe the rules of the LORD's war and kept some of the devoted things. God is holy, this could not be allowed. The LORD's war was not a regular battle fought in human terms with the normal spoils taken by soldiers. This was God's war, fought on His terms, in His way, with His hand acting.

Others could have been saved with Rahab and her household. They, too, had heard about the LORD and all He had done for Israel. In fact their hearts melted with fear. But instead of turning to Him as Rahab did, they tightly shut up their city in fear. God does bring judgement. His holiness demands it. But He provides a way of salvation. That happened not only with Rahab in Jericho, but even before that in Egypt. Others left Egypt with Israel.

Back to the land: God was creating a place in the Promised Land where He would dwell with His people. People who worshipped other gods could not be in that place, too. It would tarnish God's holiness; additionally, those inhabitants would lead the Israelites astray to follow after their gods.

All of this also continues into the New Testament where we are told of a judgment still to come. The way of salvation is in Jesus. All who believe in Him—what His death and resurrection have accomplished—are saved. It is no longer a sacred land, but a people ransomed for God in whom He dwells.

Together, we are taking this message of God's salvation to students and faculty throughout the northeast and around the world.

Because God saves,

