

Joshua in a New Testament Context

A lot of people have a hard time accepting the Book of Joshua. They find it hard to reconcile a loving God with the God who commanded the Israelites to slay "all that breathe as the Lord God commanded." (Jos 10:40b). This commandment, as perceived by the Israelites, is actually documented in several places both in Joshua and Exodus. The perceived commandment was also documentedly carried out brutally throughout the book.

After reading several commentaries on this troubling, for some people, piece of scripture, I decided to look at it from a new perspective. I've read everything from, anything goes for the chosen people, all the way to 'God didn't really order that, it was merely the Israelites belief that he did'. Which even if He didn't order it, and it was a mistaken interpretation on the Israelites part, why is it in the Bible? Surely it has a purpose, for isn't "all scripture inspired by God, useful for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness"?

Applying the sacramental principle, maybe a dual meaning for this debacle was how we confront sin in our own lives. I've heard several people connect the crossing of the river Jordan with our own Christian Baptism. Sometimes after we commit to a new Godly Life, and we look ahead to all the change we must effect, or 'send out our spies', so to speak, the task may seem daunting and discouraging. We, ourselves, our own thoughts, or spies, if you will, may betray us by reporting to us of the tasks impossibilities.

We could definitely apply God's real or perceived directive to wipe out every last trace of sin, down to the last man, woman, and child.

Later on (Jos 24: 12-13) we're told what will happen if we leave any of our sinful ways alive. Isn't this so true! We may decide to just change the sins we choose are harmful, rationalizing, oh, stealing a little from work isn't so bad, or consensual sex with my friend's wife isn't really hurting anyone else, if he doesn't know...only to later find out that these sins and acts of disobedience result in the same destruction that all sin eventually brings about, albeit in different ways and at different speeds.

Maybe if we're really disgusted with all the lies, betrayals, misery, pain, and hardship wrought by sin, maybe we should zealously remove every last vestige of it from among the territory of our souls. Maybe we should mercilessly eradicate its very existence from not only our deeds, but also words, thoughts, and desires...