

Utterly Destroyed

By: Justin Witt

Consider **Joshua 6:21** regarding Jericho

And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and donkey, with the edge of the sword."

This is certainly a common theme within the book of Joshua as Israel was entering the land that they had been promised. The land was already inhabited, and they were not only given the land, but they were told to utterly destroy the people of the land in taking it. When I had first read this book I had previously only read Genesis, some of Exodus, and some of Deuteronomy. And I read this and truly thought it seemed brutal. It seemed, to the casual reader that I was, that they were going in and doing battle with the people that were there first to take their land. It appeared that these inhabitants were victims throughout this book. There is, however, far more to this story.

I don't ever remember reading the story of Noah and the ark in Genesis 6-9 thinking that this was a brutal story. After all, regarding the people that died it was said

"God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (**Genesis 6:5**)

Not only were the men on earth wicked, but God also saved the righteous on the earth in that Noah and his family survived the flood. This I could easily recognize as justice from God.

I also don't ever remember thinking that the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was particularly brutal. We are told that they too were wicked (**Genesis 18:20**). And what's more, we are shown an example of their wickedness (**Genesis 19:1-9**). I can't imagine anyone thinking that this city received any injustice in its destruction. And again we see that Lot and his family were spared. The righteous were not destroyed with the wicked. This too clearly seems to be justice.

So, why was it that the inhabitants of the land of Canaan were destroyed as they were, given that God had previously spared the righteous when they were present?

- The inhabitants of Canaan are also described as wicked – **Deuteronomy 9:1-5**
- The inhabitants of Canaan served other gods – **Deuteronomy 7:1-5, 16**
- The inhabitants of Canaan practiced all sorts of sexual immorality – **Leviticus 18:24-28** (see also **Leviticus 18:1-23**)

It was for these reasons, and possibly others that I have missed or that are not recorded, that the inhabitants of this land were destroyed and the land given to Israel. In fact, we see more detail regarding these people than we do with the people before the flood. We should also consider that, just as God had done in our previous examples, he did indeed save the righteous in Jericho. Rahab indeed showed her righteousness in hiding the spies of Israel and guiding them safely as they left (**Joshua 2:1-21**). And she was indeed saved when they destroyed the rest of Jericho (**Joshua 6:22-23** see also **Hebrews 11:31**).

Certainly it is not for us to question God and His judgments, yet we are still given so much to show indeed that God is just. Truly, this all knowing God gave men what they deserved, for better or for worse. Though that is not altogether true. You and I have also been considered wicked in our lives as many have before us. Yet He sent His son to die for us so that we might have hope in spite of our wickedness. Truly justice for us would mean the destruction that many others faced, yet He has shown us grace and mercy by sending His Son. Truly God loves us all.