

THE AGONY OF DEFEAT Sunday School- July 3, 2011

Unifying Topic: GOD REACTS TO DISOBEDIENCE

Lesson Text

- I. Israel Has Sinned (Joshua 7:1)**
- II. Israel Is Defiled (Joshua 7:10-12)**
- III. Israel Is Restored (Joshua 7:22-26)**

The Main Thought: But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmel, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel. (Joshua 7:1, KJV).

Unifying Principle: The fear of God means different things to different people. Are we punished for disobeying God? The Bible teaches that the consequence for disobeying God is severe punishment.

Lesson Aim: To explore the consequences of disobeying God.

Life Aim: To invite participants to reflect on and determine what actions in their lives can be regarded as disobedience to God and merit a need for repentance and transformation.

7:1 But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmel, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel.

7:10 And the Lord said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?

7:11 Israel hath sinned, and they have also trespassed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff.

7:12 Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you.

7:22 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent: and behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it.

7:23 And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the Lord.

7:24 And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor.

7:25 And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? The Lord shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones.

7:26 And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day.

HISTORY:

The armed men and priests had walked around the wall of Jericho seven times on the seventh day. Then at the signal of the long blast of the trumpet of the ram's horns they shouted and the walls came down. Every living thing in the city was destroyed except Rahab, the prostitute and her family. Joshua told them to go to her house and bring her out so that she and her loved ones would live. From then on, she lived with the Israelites. The Israelites burned the city and everything in it except the silver, gold, bronze, and iron vessels which were to be kept for the Lord's treasury. Joshua pronounced a curse upon anyone who would attempt to build a city or rebuild upon the foundation the city Jericho. Their person's first-born would die when he begins to build (*/lay the foundation*) and his youngest son would die upon completion (*set up the gate*). To sacrifice a first-born child at the founding of a city was not uncommon for ancient pagans. Joshua's prediction came true in the time of Ahab, one of Israel's most evil kings (1Kgs.16:34). Undoubtedly, the purpose of God's mysterious method for seizing Jericho was designed to test Israel's obedience to the will of God. Also it proved to strike even greater fear in the hearts of the enemy when the walls came tumbling down. And the greater purpose showed and reaffirmed Israel's faith in Joshua's leadership. God was with Joshua as He was with Moses. And upon this, Joshua's fame was spread throughout the country.

LESSON:

Joshua 7:1 Israel Has Sinned

7:1 But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: This verse is a continuation from the above verse: Chapter 6:27, "So the Lord was with Joshua; and his fame was noised throughout all the country." We see God

was with Joshua, "But..." Why is there a "but?" Although they had victory against Jericho, something happened that should not have happened. The Lord was with Joshua because he was obedient in all God told him to do. However, sin came into the camp of the children of the Israelites. It fell on all the children of Israel because when one sins, it is on all. "*Trespass*" (*Heb ma'a*) originally signified to cover as a garment. Hence, the noun came to mean a deceitful act or a misappropriation of property considered to be sacred. This sin committed was against God. When taking Jericho, the Israelites were commanded to spare Rahab and her family and to abstain from the "*accursed things*." This meant that the things taken were absolutely and irrevocably consecrated to God. There was to be destruction of everything else. This has caused a set-back in this battle of God's hand moving with them.

7:1b for Achan, the son of Carmel, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel: The culprit has been named. The children of Israel's sin were because of one man by the name of Achan. The one guilty of taking the accursed thing was Achan but God's anger fell on all the children of Israel; it polluted all of them. This experience of Achan illustrates how the sin of an individual has consequences for the family and community. However, unfair it may seem, the wrongdoing of one does indeed affect others adversely. Individual responsibility and corporate guilt often go hand in hand.

NOT A PART OF THE LESSON

Joshua 7:2-6

Joshua sends men from Jericho to Ai to spy out or explore the country. The name "Ai" means "ruins," The spies come back to Joshua and tell Joshua to send out two or three thousand men to go against Ai. Joshua now takes instruction from the men instead of God. And the people of Ai defeated them. Now this battle was not like the battle of Jericho. In this battle about 36 Israelites were killed by the people of Ai. They trusted God to go against Jericho; however, they trusted themselves to go against Ai. There was no mention of seeking God in this battle; there was no mention of God speaking to Joshua until after the battle. The Israelite forces must have been in shock because their hearts melted because the hand of the Lord had apparently been removed from them. Upon hearing of the defeat of his forces, Joshua demonstrated his deep sorrow and humiliation. He tore his clothes and fell face down to the ground before the ark until evening, while he and the elders placed dust on their foreheads.

NOT A PART OF THE LESSON

Joshua 7:7-9

Joshua begins to pray by asking God, why have they come over Jordan to be handed over to the Amorites and be destroyed? Troubles can always humble us to see our need for God after the fact! Joshua reminds God that they were content on the other side of Jordan and now they are running from their enemies; the Canaanites and everyone else will hear of this.¹ Joshua sees all of this as a shame they have brought upon God and this would give their enemies confidence to come against Israel. When Christians, who are God's representatives on the earth, go against God and look bad, it defames God, as well as the person.

Joshua 7:10-12 Israel Is Defiled

7:10 And the Lord said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Now, God begins to speak to Joshua by saying get up; rise up off the ground; get up off your face. This is after the fact of not consulting God sooner. Joshua really didn't know what had taken place; what was going on, but God did! That's why it's always good to consult God; seek His counsel first and see if you have peace about it! When you don't know what to do, Ask God!

7:11 Israel hath sinned, and they have also trespassed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff: God begins to tell the real reason of not winning the battle—sin in the camp! God doesn't call out any one name but He calls out Israel as a whole being the trespassers of His covenant! They have taken of the accursed thing, and also stolen, and dissembled (put on a false appearance; hide something by pretense), and mixed it with their own belongings. As I said Joshua didn't know, but God did! The point is: truth will always find its way.

7:12 Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you: In

¹ <http://www.lovethelord.com/books/joshua/07.html>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

these three verses (10, 11, 12), God shows why prayer was not necessary at this time; God shows His presence; God gives a pause until Israel gets the problem straight.

- **Prayer:** Joshua had to get up off his face and not cry out for these people because God refused to hear Joshua ranting about why they were brought out there to be left alone.
- **Presence:** God's presence is always around; always ready for people that will obey Him. He knew the people had trespassed against Him; had left Him and not He leaving them.
- **Problem:** God will not stand among disobedient people. He's waiting for them to get it right—to remove the accursed thing from among them. There is a problem Israel!

Thus, when one person failed everyone failed. If Achan's sin went unpunished, unlimited looting would break out. The nation as a whole had to take responsibility for preventing this. Did not Cain cry out and say "*Am I my brother's keeper?*" Surely he was and seems as if God thought so all the way back in Genesis. Have you ever been in a classroom and one person did something wrong and the perpetrator was not caught so all had to endure the punishment? Or have your mother punished all the children for one person's disobedience? Or you were on a sport's team and one messed up and all had to do laps as a punishment. Has anyone seen the movie Coach Carter, then you know what I'm talking about. We're all responsible for our brethren; we're all one body. This is what God wants us to see and know. It was so bad for Israel that they turned their backs; they ran from their enemies. And because their backs were to the soldiers of Ai, 36 men were killed. They went to battle without their banner being over them. Therefore Israel being a holy nation unto God is defiled (dishonored). Sin will have you running all kinds of ways. God cannot be in the mix of their sin. He has to clean it up first.

NOT A PART OF THE LESSON

Joshua 7:13-21

It's no need of you calling out one person's name, all; everyone had to be purified; cleansed; sanctified as a whole because at this point they could not stand against their enemies. Before the Israelites crossed the Jordan, they had to go through this same purification. Such rites prepared the people to approach God and constantly reminded them of their sinfulness and His holiness. Tribe by tribe had to come forth, then by families, and then man by man was brought by lot before the Lord. Therefore, the one who had taken this accursed thing and all that he had were to be burned with fire because he had violated the Covenant of the Lord and had brought calamity upon all of Israel.

TEMPTATION: THE ANALYSIS OF A SUCCESSFUL TRAP			
Satan	Eve	Achan	David
A perfect, anointed cherub (Ezek. 28:12, 13) ↓ Saw God's glory (Ezek. 28:13) ↓ Desired to be like Him (Is. 14:13, 14) ↓ Took what he wanted (Is. 14:14; Ezek. 28:6) ↓ Became the enemy of God (Is. 14:15; Ezek. 28:9)	The perfect creation of God (Gen. 2:18, 22, 23) ↓ Saw the fruit (Gen. 3:6) ↓ Desired to be like God (Gen. 3:6) ↓ Took the fruit (Gen. 3:6) ↓ Gave it to Adam (Gen 3:6) ↓ Ushered sin into the world (Gen. 3:7, 11–13, 16) ↓ Was expelled from the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:23, 24)	A member of the tribe of Judah (Josh. 7:1) ↓ Saw the treasures (Josh. 7:21) ↓ Coveted what God had specified as His (Josh. 7:21) ↓ Took the spoils of battle (Josh. 7:1, 21) ↓ Hid the valuable objects (Josh. 7:21) ↓ Caused the defeat of a nation (Josh. 7:12) ↓ Destroyed himself and his family (Josh. 7:11, 15, 24, 25)	The king of Israel (2 Sam. 12:7) ↓ Saw a woman (2 Sam. 11:2) ↓ Desired the wife of another man (2 Sam. 11:2) ↓ Took her for himself (2 Sam. 11:2–5, 26, 27) ↓ Lied and created a web of deception (2 Sam. 11:6–15) ↓ Caused the death of Uriah (2 Sam. 11:16, 17, 21) ↓ Broke fellowship with God (Gen. 12: 7–12)

As Joshua brought the tribes out before the Lord, Judah was the tribe singled out by lot; then the family of Judah which singled out the Zerahites individually (man by man), which singled out the Zabdi family individually (man by man), which singled out Achan. He was commanded to confess his sin unto God; that God may receive glory. Tell it all and don't keep back anything! The sin is revealed! ²Achan knows he is caught, and begins to confess his sin in detail. He knows his only chance lies in forgiveness. *Joshua 7:21* tells it all: "*When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred*

² <http://www.lovethelord.com/books/joshua/07.html>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it." One of the ten commandments of God is, "Thou shalt not covet". To "covet" means to desire what you don't have. Achan has broken God's Law. He did not confess, until after he was found out. It is too late for forgiveness. The silver and gold belonged to God, so he has stolen from the Lord. The garment was unclean and should have been burned. He knew how bad this was for he had buried the things in the floor of his tent. Points to remember:

1. Achan was directly responsible for the deaths of at least thirty-six men.
 2. Achan had robbed God. He had not just robbed Jericho - he had robbed God! The precious metals of Jericho were designated for God's treasury.
 3. Achan never repented! Yes, he confessed, but the text never says that he showed remorse and repented of his sin.
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Joshua 7:22-26 Israel Is Restored

7:22 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent: and behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it: The messengers found the accursed thing just as Achan had said. Lk.12:2 says, "*For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed: neither hid that shall not be known.*" As we put it into our words, 'what's done in the dark will come to light.' It carries great meaning! Well this is the case for Achan. His deeds done in the dark could not be hidden any longer. It came to cost he and his family great punishment.

7:23 And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the Lord: The accursed things were taken from Achan's tent and everyone had a chance to see what had caused so much trouble for them. All of these spoils were brought and laid before God. The offering to the Lord was the easy part; the punishment of Achan and his family was more difficult.

7:24 And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor: Achan underestimated God and didn't take his commands seriously. It may have seemed a small thing to Achan, but the effects of his sin were felt by the entire nation, especially his family (no wife mentioned, just sons and daughters). Like Achan, our actions affect more people than just ourselves. Remember Korha (Num.16) and his family and all those that sided with him? There were those who came against Moses and Aaron, God executed swift and final judgment against Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and their entire families when the ground opened up and swallowed all of them for their rejection of Moses and Aaron. We can also look into the news of today of how one's sin effects an entire family. Here, in this lesson, everything and everyone was brought to the valley of Achor meaning trouble because of Achan's sin. The Israelites felt the consequences it brought. We can see that the family is treated as a whole. Achan was head of the family; if he prospered, the family prospered; if he suffered, so did they.

7:25 And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? The Lord shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones: Many Israelites had already died in battle because of Achan's sin. Here, Joshua is asking Achan why he has brought this calamity upon them. He then says God will bring calamity on Achan today. Achan and his entire family were to be stoned and after stoning, then burned with fire so that no trace of Achan or his family would remain in Israel.

7:26 And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day: Stones were piled on them. This pile of stones would be a constant reminder of what sin will bring. It's still called "The valley of Achor" today (meaning trouble). As the sin was put out of the camp, Israel is restored back to God!

SUMMARY:

Immediately after the triumph at Jericho, the Israelites fought against the city of Ai, but were unsuccessful in defeating them because they had not checked with God. Instead, Israel is defeated by the inhabitants of the city of Ai. The Israelites

were running from them. In disobedience, secretly Achan had taken and hidden the accursed thing he had gotten from the battle of Jericho. Therefore, God's anger was against the children of Israel for Achan's sin. God reveals Achan, of the tribe of Judah by lot, as the culprit. God went through the process of selecting by lot. Maybe this process gave Achan time to come forward, confess, and repent of his sin voluntarily, and maybe God might have shown mercy – as when King David committed adultery with Bathsheba. Furthermore, this slow selection of lot process would give all the people of Israel a chance to examine themselves before the Lord. Well, the accursed things, along with Achan and his family, his livestock, and his possessions are taken to the Valley of Achor—trouble. They are stoned to death and then their bodies are burned. It was one thing to pinpoint Achan as the troubler, but the problem had to be judged and eliminated before Israel could move on. And God ceased from being angry. Do you think god sees your sin and winks at it or do you think it's coming to haunt you? It's still lurking for coming consequences? We've got to realize that sin affects more than just us. It affects the individual, it affects the family, and it affects the whole congregation. We often say oh the agony of defeat means there is pain and suffering when the enemy has crushed and overpowered you, and the Almighty God is not with you to help you. God knows how to deal with disobedience in His timing. And he can restore us back to right standing with Him when we repent of sin.

APPLICATION:

When going into a battle, make sure God is in the battle with you; our heart has repented of sin because sin should not be taken lightly because it causes you to be defeated before you even start. Repent when you know to do so! James 1:14-15 says, "*But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.*"