

# THE TRESPASS AND ISRAEL'S DEFEAT AT AI

**BIBLE TEXT:** Joshua 7:1-26

LESSON 172 Senior Course

**MEMORY VERSE:** "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD" (Jeremiah 23:24).

## BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

### Joshua 7:1-26

<sup>1</sup> But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, 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.

<sup>2</sup> And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which *is* beside Bethaven, on the east side of Bethel, and spake unto them, saying, Go up and view the country. And the men went up and viewed Ai.

<sup>3</sup> And they returned to Joshua, and said unto him, Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; *and* make not all the people to labour thither; for they *are but* few.

<sup>4</sup> So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men: and they fled before the men of Ai.

<sup>5</sup> And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men: for they chased them *from* before the gate *even* unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down: wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water.

<sup>6</sup> And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads.

<sup>7</sup> And Joshua said, Alas, O Lord GOD, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the

## BIBLE REFERENCES:

### I Achan's Trespass

1. Achan sinned by partaking of the accursed thing, Joshua 7:1;

#### Joshua 6:17-18

<sup>17</sup> And the city shall be accursed, *even* it, and all that *are* therein, to the Lord: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that *are* with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.

<sup>18</sup> And ye, in any wise keep *yourselves* from the accursed thing, lest ye make *yourselves* accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.

#### Deuteronomy 13:17

<sup>17</sup> And there shall cleave nought of the cursed thing to thine hand: that the Lord may turn from the fierceness of his anger, and shew thee mercy, and have compassion upon thee, and multiply thee, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers;

2. Israel was unable to defeat the inhabitants of Ai because sin was in their midst, Joshua 7:1-12

### II Revelation of Sin

1. Achan hid the evidence of his sin, and thereby thought to escape the penalty of his transgression, Joshua 7:11;

#### Psalms 10:6

<sup>6</sup> He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for *I shall never be* in adversity.

#### Psalms 10:11

<sup>11</sup> He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see *it*.

#### Psalms 10:13

<sup>13</sup> Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require *it*.

#### Psalms 73:11

<sup>11</sup> And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High?

#### Job 22:13

<sup>13</sup> And thou sayest, How doth God know? can he judge through the dark cloud?

2. God exposes all sin and sinners, as He did Achan's sin, regardless of who is guilty, Joshua 7:10-18;

#### Job 34:22

<sup>22</sup> *There is* no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.

#### Numbers 32:23

<sup>23</sup> But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out.

#### Ecclesiastes 12:14

<sup>14</sup> For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil.

#### Luke 12:2

<sup>2</sup> For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.

#### 2 Samuel 12:13

Amorites, to destroy us? would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan!

<sup>8</sup> O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies!

<sup>9</sup> For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear *of it*, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?

<sup>10</sup> And the Lord said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?

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

<sup>12</sup> 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.

<sup>13</sup> Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow: for thus saith the Lord God of Israel, *There is* an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you.

<sup>14</sup> In the morning therefore ye shall be brought according to your tribes: and it shall be, *that* the tribe which the Lord taketh shall come according to the families *thereof*; and the family which the Lord shall take shall come by households; and the household which the Lord shall take shall come man by man.

<sup>15</sup> And it shall be, *that* he that is

<sup>13</sup> And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

#### **Amos 9:2-3**

<sup>2</sup> Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down:

<sup>3</sup> And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them:

#### **Jeremiah 17:10**

<sup>10</sup> I the Lord search the heart, *I* try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, *and* according to the fruit of his doings.

#### **Jeremiah 23:24**

<sup>24</sup> Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.

3. Achan stood before God and man as an unrepentant and condemned sinner, and suffered the penalty of sin — death, Joshua 7:20-26;

#### **Romans 1:32**

<sup>32</sup> Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

#### **1 Chronicles 10:13**

<sup>13</sup> So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, *even* against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking *counsel* of *one that had* a familiar spirit, to enquire *of it*;

#### **Ezekiel 18:4**

<sup>4</sup> Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

#### **Romans 6:23**

<sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### **III Separate from All Sin**

1. The Lord used the occasion of Achan's sin to emphasize to Israel that God's work was hindered by the toleration of sin in their midst, Joshua 7:11,12;

#### **Judges 2:14**

<sup>14</sup> And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.

#### **1 Corinthians 5:1-13**

<sup>1</sup> It is reported commonly *that there is* fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.

<sup>2</sup> And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.

<sup>3</sup> For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, *concerning* him that hath so done this deed,

taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath: because he hath transgressed the covenant of the Lord, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel.

<sup>16</sup> So Joshua rose up early in the morning, and brought Israel by their tribes; and the tribe of Judah was taken:

<sup>17</sup> And he brought the family of Judah; and he took the family of the Zarhites: and he brought the family of the Zarhites man by man; and Zabdi was taken:

<sup>18</sup> And he brought his household man by man; and Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken.

<sup>19</sup> And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide *it* not from me.

<sup>20</sup> And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done:

<sup>21</sup> When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred 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.

<sup>22</sup> So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, *it was* hid in his tent, and the silver under it.

<sup>23</sup> 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.

<sup>24</sup> 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

<sup>4</sup> In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,

<sup>5</sup> To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

<sup>6</sup> Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?

<sup>7</sup> Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:

<sup>8</sup> Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth.

<sup>9</sup> I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators:

<sup>10</sup> Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.

<sup>11</sup> But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.

<sup>12</sup> For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?

<sup>13</sup> But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

2. Achan's public condemnation was for the purpose of warning Israel against all such future transgressions, Joshua 7:25, 26;

#### **Proverbs 26:26**

<sup>26</sup> *Whose* hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be shewed before the *whole* congregation.

#### **1 Timothy 5:20**

<sup>20</sup> Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.

### **NOTES:**

#### **Trespass in Israel**

"The city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the **LORD**: . . . And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it" (Joshua 6:17, **18**).

Preceding the conquest and siege of Jericho all Israel had been informed of this curse, that he who partook of the accursed thing would bring upon himself a curse and would also greatly trouble Israel. All Jericho was to be destroyed except the silver and gold and the vessels of brass, which were to be consecrated to the Lord (Joshua 6:19). It was some of this same silver and gold that Achan coveted and stole.

When Israel went up to attack Ai with a small number of men, they were shamefully put to rout by the inhabitants of Ai, and Israel suffered the loss of thirty-six men. God had not gone with them to battle, and they discovered they were powerless before these obstinate people. Joshua inquired of the Lord the reason for Israel's defeat; whereupon God told Joshua that one in their

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.

<sup>25</sup> 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.

<sup>26</sup> 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.

midst had partaken of the accursed thing, and had defiled Israel. God would not go with Israel until that defilement was removed. God's Watchful Eye

"Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow: for thus saith the LORD God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you" (Joshua 7:13).

With this command ringing in their ears, the Children of Israel were commanded to search and find the accursed thing in their midst. And so the search began the next day, early in the morning. Tribe by tribe, family by family, throughout all Israel, the lot was taken by Joshua until it began to narrow down to the house of Achan, of the tribe of Judah. Finally Achan stood before Joshua as the guilty man. Achan had thought to hide his sin from all eyes, and thereby escape detection and the penalty. Achan was not the 'first who had thought in his heart, "How doth God know?"' (Job 22:13). Neither was he the last.

Since Adam tried to hide himself in the Garden of Eden, from the all-seeing eye of God, people have tried to hide their sins, thinking that they will never be exposed. And they think that even if they are exposed, somehow they will be able to come out all right. (**Zephaniah 1:12** <sup>12</sup> And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.) Adam sought to put the blame of his sin on his wife, but Adam's excuses were not accepted by God; and no one else since has ever given a satisfactory excuse to God for sin.

### Achan's Sin Exposed

Achan's secret soon became no secret at all, for he found himself publicly exposed. Achan seemed to be an unrepentant rebel against God all the way through this affair. It was only after Achan was exposed by the Lord, and searched out by the casting of lots, that he made any admission of guilt. His words were: "When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred 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" (Joshua 7:21).

This is the only statement of Achan's confession we have recorded in the Bible; and nowhere are we given any reason to think that Achan was anything but a determined and reprobate sinner. He died a sinner's death, without any plea for mercy or any attempt to make amends for troubling Israel, and his own house.

### Divine Justice

"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 all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day" (Joshua 7:24-26).

Such was the infamous ending of Achan and his household for his covetousness, his defiance of God, and his consequent defiling of the camp of Israel. Was Achan dealt with unjustly? Not at all. He is one of such about whom we read in the Book of Proverbs: "He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be



destroyed, and that without remedy" (Proverbs 29:1).

It is with such incidents as this that God brings forcibly to everyone's attention the fact that He will not at all acquit the wicked. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked and is patient and longsuffering; but that does not hinder Him from bringing judgment, swift and sure, on those who dare to presume upon His mercy and goodness. (**Nahum 1:3** <sup>3</sup> The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. **Ezekiel 18:23** <sup>23</sup> Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?)

Achan was publicly denounced, and his sin revealed to all the Israelites, that they, and we, might see and learn thereby that every other unrepentant sinner will someday stand before God and men with his life exposed. He will suffer the same fate as did Achan --- death, and eternal damnation! God's great tribunal of justice will convene at the end of the Millennium, and every secret thing will be made manifest; every sin will be exposed; and every sinner will be judged for his sin.

### Separation of the People of God

The Bible proclaims the truth; and all who have worshiped God in spirit and in truth have likewise lent their voices and testimony to its proclamation, that he who would be a follower of God must be like God in righteousness and holiness. He must be completely separated from all sin. (**1 John 1:6-7** <sup>6</sup> If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: <sup>7</sup> But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. **1 John 3:5** <sup>5</sup> And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. **1 John 3:10** <sup>10</sup> In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.)

The Word of the Lord to Israel was: "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exodus 19:5, 6). The Lord also informed Israel: "And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine" (Leviticus 20:26). (**Numbers 23:9** <sup>9</sup> For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. **Isaiah 52:11** <sup>11</sup> Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord. **Psalms 119:115** <sup>115</sup> Depart from me, ye evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.) This, then, is the responsibility and duty of every man who follows the God of Israel: to be holy, even as He is holy. (**Leviticus 19:2** <sup>2</sup> Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy) We can see, then, that he who follows God will not only be cleansed of all sin, but will keep himself unspotted from the world. When a saint loses communion with God and commits sin, he becomes a sinner. His sonship with God is forfeited, for he is an enemy of Christ.

Here, then, is much of the reason for the severity and suddenness of Achan's punishment for his transgression. He not only violated the law of his conscience by stealing, but he violated the law of God, and troubled Israel by bringing sin into a camp of people where the command of God was abstinence from all sin.

God gives a sinner a chance to get rid of his sin through the merits of the Atonement, purchased by the shed Blood of Jesus Christ. God has no toleration at all for sin, and in the judgment day of God all sin will be destroyed with those who tolerate or harbor it.

Satan, his angels, and all sinners will be cast into the lake of everlasting fire (**Revelation 20:10-15** <sup>10</sup> And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. <sup>11</sup> And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. <sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. <sup>13</sup> And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. <sup>14</sup> And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. <sup>15</sup> And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.).

Achan desired sin. He Sought after it in preference to righteousness; and even when confronted with his sin, he would not repent of it, and so perished. This was the cause of Israel's defeat at Ai. Sin was amongst their number, and sin had to be removed before God would dwell in their midst again.

### Holiness Enjoined Today

Is a child of God who professes to name the name of Christ, to be holy? Is it possible to abstain from all sin? Most certainly we are to be holy! God is the same yesterday, and today, and forever. What is commanded one is commanded all. In this day of greater revelation of the truths of the Bible, greater responsibility is imposed.

We are to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (**Ephesians 5:11** <sup>11</sup> And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*. ). Paul tells us: "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear" (I Timothy 5:20). From those "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" turn away (II Timothy 3:5). Paul also wrote to the church at Corinth about such matters: "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (I Corinthians 5:11-13).

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (II Corinthians 6:17).

### QUESTIONS

- 1 What was the result of Israels first attempt to conquer Ai?
- 2 What was the cause of Israel's defeat at Ai?
- 3 Describe the circumstances of Achan's sin.
- 4 Why would God refuse to help Israel because of one man's sin?
- 5 What was the result of Achan's sin so far as he personally was concerned?
- 6 Did Achan receive any harsher treatment than other sinners will receive?
- 7 Why are all who follow God to be holy?
- 8 What kind of fellowship are we to have with sinners?