



Sin Revealed

ACHAN'S ACTIONS WERE DISCOVERED AND
JUDGED BECAUSE HE DISHONORED GOD.

JOSHUA 7:10-23

One of the central truths of the Bible is that every human being is a sinner. We sin against others, and every sin is a sin against God. The Bible also reveals that though we may try, we cannot hide anything from God—including our sins. What's more, the Bible clearly declares that there will always be negative consequences for one who tries to conceal one's sin from God. Nevertheless, there is good news. God's Word teaches that whoever confesses and renounces their sins to God will find mercy and forgiveness.

 **What should be a person's motivation to confess sin and seek forgiveness?**

UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

JOSHUA 7:1-12:24

After the account of the fall of Jericho in Joshua 6, chapters 7-12 summarize the rest of the conquest of Canaan. Joshua 7 reveals that an Israelite sinned against God when the Lord brought down the walls of Jericho. When Achan saw some of the items that were to be set apart for the Lord, he coveted them and took them for himself. Achan's sin resulted in Israel's initial defeat at Ai. Only when Achan was confronted and his sin dealt with could Israel move on. Joshua 8 describes how God turned away from His anger and handed over the city of Ai to the Israelites.

Israel's victories over Jericho and Ai resulted in some of the people in Canaan forming an alliance to oppose Joshua and Israel. When the inhabitants of the city of Gibeon heard about Israel's victories, they disguised themselves as foreigners from outside of Canaan and said they had traveled to meet the Israelites because of the reputation of their God and a desire to make a treaty with them. Without consulting the Lord, Israel made a treaty with Gibeon. When the Israelites discovered they had been tricked, Joshua conscripted the Gibeonites to serve Israel at the tabernacle (chap. 9).

When the king of Jerusalem heard that Gibeon made a treaty with Israel, he formed an alliance with four other kings and together they laid siege on Gibeon. When Joshua received news of the attack, he led his troops to Gibeon and attacked the coalition. The Lord threw the enemy into confusion. As they tried to escape, God sent down large hailstones that killed more of the enemy than Israel did. The Lord stopped the sun in the middle of the sky for almost a full day while Israel completed the rout of their enemies. Then Joshua led his troops south, defeating their enemies as the Lord had commanded them (chap. 10).

Chapters 11-12 describe how Joshua turned his attention northward, destroying the great city of Hazor and enjoying one victory after another over Israel's enemies. In all, Joshua and his troops vanquished thirty-one kings.



Read Joshua 7:10-23 in your Bible. Identify the corporate effect of sin and the corporate responsibility of Israel for the sin.

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

COVENANT VIOLATED (JOSH. 7:10-15)

¹⁰ **The LORD then said to Joshua, “Stand up! Why have you fallen facedown? ¹¹ Israel has sinned. They have violated my covenant that I appointed for them. They have taken some of what was set apart. They have stolen, deceived, and put those things with their own belongings. ¹² This is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies. They will turn their backs and run from their enemies, because they have been set apart for destruction. I will no longer be with you unless you remove from among you what is set apart. ¹³ Go and consecrate the people. Tell them to consecrate themselves for tomorrow, for this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: There are things that are set apart among you, Israel. You will not be able to stand against your enemies until you remove what is set apart. ¹⁴ In the morning, present yourselves tribe by tribe. The tribe the LORD selects is to come forward clan by clan. The clan the LORD selects is to come forward family by family. The family the LORD selects is to come forward man by man. ¹⁵ The one who is caught with the things set apart must be burned, along with everything he has, because he has violated the LORD’s covenant and committed an outrage in Israel.”**

VERSE 10

After having conquered Jericho, the conquest of Ai appeared to be a small thing in comparison. Like he did at Jericho, Joshua sent spies to scout Ai. When they returned their report was significantly different from that of the spies in Jericho. The spies in Jericho reported that the Lord had handed over the land to them, but these spies did not mention the Lord. They were self-confident, concentrating on their own ability to defeat and conquer Ai with a smaller contingent of just two to three thousand soldiers. This was a fraction of Israel’s army according to its number of 601,730 men recorded in Numbers 26:51 as they were preparing to enter the promised land. But when about three thousand of their soldiers attacked Ai, they were soundly defeated.

Israel’s self-confidence melted away. In an act of mourning and submission, Joshua and the elders fell facedown on the ground before the ark of the Lord. Fear gripped them. Given that the

Jordan River was to their back, they had no way of escape and feared that when the Canaanites learned what happened, they would attack and kill every Israelite. Joshua asked the Lord what this would do to His reputation among the nations (Josh 7:9).

It seems Joshua had forgotten everything he had seen the Lord do for them. Nevertheless, he and the elders knew that the right thing to do was to take their worries to God. This is a sign of godly leadership.

God's response in verse 10 was a rebuke. He would not listen to any more of Joshua's allegations that God was untrue to His promises to Israel (see v. 7). Furthermore, God was not going to listen to Joshua question His wisdom as He led the people to this place. It is amazing how people are quick to question God's character and wisdom when they reap what they have sown because of their own sin. Instead of lying facedown on the ground feeling sorry for himself and his people, Joshua needed to **stand up** and deal with the problem.

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VERSES 11-12

The Lord got right to the point—**Israel has sinned**. They had **stolen** from the Lord and then deceitfully hid what they had stolen **with their own belongings**. How had they stolen from the Lord? When Israel was about to defeat Jericho, Joshua instructed that “all the silver and gold, and the articles of bronze and iron were to be set apart for the LORD and must go into the LORD's treasury.” (6:19). Joshua also warned them that if they took for themselves anything from the things set apart to the Lord that they and the camp of Israel would be set apart “for destruction” (6:18). This is what happened.

The Lord revealed that it was because of this sin that the people of God could not defeat their enemies. He had warned them that there would be dire consequences if they disobeyed Him concerning the things that were to be devoted to Him. If they were going to act like enemies to God by disregarding Him, then they would experience a taste of what that meant. Therefore, the Lord declared His holiness, the egregiousness of their sin, and its profound

consequences by stating He was going to withdraw His presence from Israel until they removed the sin from among them.

This declaration was both disheartening and hopeful at the same time. While God had abandoned them on the battlefield, there was the hope for restoration once they were purified and their sin was removed. As the people of God, believers are to be holy as the Lord our God is holy (Lev. 11:44). Peter spoke of this truth saying, “Therefore, repent and turn back, so that your sins may be wiped out, that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19-20a).

KEY DOCTRINE: *God*

God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections.
(See Isaiah 6:1-5; 1 Peter 1:14-16.)

VERSES 13-15

God gave Joshua instructions detailing what the people needed to do. First, God told Joshua to go and ***consecrate the people*** and to ***tell them to consecrate themselves for tomorrow***. This meant they needed to prepare themselves for an encounter with God. This may have involved seeking to discover the items that needed to be removed from among them. Second, the next day the people were to present themselves to the Lord in the order He chose, tribe by tribe, clan by clan, and family by family.

God knew who the guilty party was, but this way would emphasize the corporate effect of the sin and the corporate responsibility of Israel for this sin. There is also a play on words in verse 14. The word ***selects*** appears three times. This Hebrew word can also mean “captures” or “catches.” As the Lord ***selects*** the tribes, clans, and families, it will lead to the identification of the guilty party.

The lawbreaker thought he could get away with stealing from God. But as he watched what would methodically transpire, it would dawn on him that he was going to be found out. It should remind us that we can be sure our sin will catch up with us (Num. 32:23).

The guilty party had the opportunity to confess his sin when he, along with everyone else, received Joshua’s instructions to prepare for what was to happen the next day. He could have turned dishonoring God to honoring God if only he had demonstrated sincere confession and repentance of his sin. When David sinned against God, he realized this truth. He wrote that God does not

“despise a broken and humbled heart” (Ps. 51:17). Nonetheless, this guilty party remained silent.

There is also another likely reason God brought to light the guilty party the way He did. Israel needed to see the importance of not taking lightly God’s Word, His holiness, and His glory. The images of what would transpire the next day were to make a lasting impression on them. The discipline of one can serve as an essential lesson to others (Prov. 19:25).



Why is it important for us to recognize sin’s impact on us and our relationship with God?

ACHAN REVEALED (JOSH. 7:16-19)

¹⁶ **Joshua got up early the next morning. He had Israel come forward tribe by tribe, and the tribe of Judah was selected.**

¹⁷ **He had the clans of Judah come forward, and the Zerahite clan was selected. He had the Zerahite clan come forward by heads of families, and Zabdi was selected.** ¹⁸ **He then had Zabdi’s family come forward man by man, and Achan son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was selected.** ¹⁹ **So Joshua said to Achan, “My son, give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, and make a confession to him. I urge you, tell me what you have done. Don’t hide anything from me.”**

VERSES 16-19

Joshua *got up early* so there would be no delay in obeying God’s instructions. He was eager to remove the sin against God from among them. Joshua had the tribes of Israel *come forward* as the Lord instructed. As he did, the Lord selected the tribe of **Judah**. Next, the Lord selected the **•Zerahite** clan. Then, the Lord selected the family of **•Zabdi**. Finally, **•Achan** was selected. It was essential the people witnessed that it was the Lord who was making the selections, just as He said He would in verses 13-15. He was the one superintending what needed to be done to bring about Israel’s reconciliation to Him.

When Joshua addressed Achan, Joshua spoke to him as a father would to a son who has sinned. Joshua told Achan to do four things. First, he told Achan to *give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel*.

Achan would do this by making a **confession** to the Lord. This is the second command Joshua gave Achan. Third, Joshua implored Achan to tell him what he did. Fourth, Joshua told Achan not to hide anything of what he had done from Joshua.



What might prevent one from confessing and seeking the Lord's forgiveness?

CONFESSION MADE (JOSH. 7:20-23)

²⁰ **Achan replied to Joshua, “It is true. I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel. This is what I did: ²¹ When I saw among the spoils a beautiful cloak from Babylon, five pounds of silver, and a bar of gold weighing a pound and a quarter, I coveted them and took them. You can see for yourself. They are concealed in the ground inside my tent, with the silver under the cloak.” ²² So Joshua sent messengers who ran to the tent, and there was the cloak, concealed in his tent, with the silver underneath. ²³ They took the things from inside the tent, brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites, and spread them out in the LORD’s presence.**

VERSES 20-23

Achan finally decided to confess his sin. His explanation is similar to what happened in the garden of Eden—he **saw**, he **coveted**, and he **took**. Also reminiscent of the garden is the effect. Adam and Eve’s sin affected the entire human race after them. Achan’s sin affected the entire nation of Israel. Both should remind us that our sins always have an effect on others. Achan’s stolen goods consisted of **a beautiful cloak from Babylon**, two hundred **silver** shekels, which weighed about eighty ounces, and a bar of **gold** weighing fifty shekels, the equivalent of about twenty ounces. Once Achan confessed, he told Joshua where he had hidden the stolen treasures.

Joshua sent messengers to Achan’s tent, and they found the stolen items exactly where he said he hid them. The messengers retrieved them and spread them out before the Lord, the One to whom they rightfully belonged.

Verses 24-26 indicate Achan and his entire family were stoned to death, and everything he owned along with the stolen items were buried in stones with them. Achan's household died with him because they implicitly knew about Achan's sin. Achan had plenty of opportunities to confess but did so only when forced to. His sin had caused the deaths of his brothers (v. 5), and he had disregarded God's holiness. God allowed Israel to plunder Ai when Ai was finally defeated (8:27). Achan could have enjoyed that plunder if he had only trusted God and waited on God's timing.



Why is it important for us to view sin as seriously as God does?



BIBLE SKILL: Use a Bible dictionary to learn more about a biblical principle.

Read the article on “Holy War” in a Bible dictionary. Why did the Lord sometimes require the Israelites to dedicate everything in a “ban,” which meant that the inhabitants and possessions of an entire city would be set apart to the Lord and destroyed? How would you respond to someone who questioned why a loving God would order the wholesale extermination of the nations that were occupying the promised land? (Hints: The Lord had given these people time to repent. See Gen. 15:13-16. The Lord is a God of both love and judgment. See Ex. 34:6-7.)
