

10/26/03

The Sin Of Achan
Josh. 7:1-26

Sin to man is a matter of secrecy and when it is public, the attempt is to justify it or altogether deny it, but with God it is clear and unmistakable.

Like the police who had no trouble at all tracking down the burglar who ransacked a house in Pelham, N.H. The burglar came by automobile and, in backing up the car to leave, rammed a snowbank. The license plate left a perfect imprint in the snow. **#5721**

Such was the sin of Achan, though it was hidden from all, God saw it clearly and it is marked by three things. Josh. 7:1-26

- I.** The defeat of Israel at Ai. Vs. 1-5
- II.** The despair and divine rebuke of Joshua. Vs. 6-15
- III.** The drastic measures of the executing Achan. Vs. 16-26

I. The defeat of Israel at Ai. Vs. 1-5

- A.** The folly of Israel through Achan. Vs. 1
 - 1.** The sin of Achan involved the entire nation of Israel by a trespass. Vs. 1a

- a.** The word “But” marks the sharp contrast between the last verse of the pervious chapter and the first of this chapter.
 - b.** Though God was with Joshua as He had been with Moses, sin had interrupted the favor of God for Israel.
- 2.** The charge against Achan was that he took of the accursed thing. Vs. 1b-g
- a.** They were told it would be their own destruction. 6:18
 - b.** All was the Lord’s as the first-fruits of that would be taken in the land.
- 3.** The anger of the LORD burned against the children of Israel. Vs. 1h

B. The commissioning of spies to Ai by Joshua. Vs. 2-5

- 1.** Joshua sent men from Jericho to spy out Ai, which is beside Beth Aven, on the east side of Bethel, Vs. 2
 - a.** Ai means a “ruins”, and was about fifteen miles from Jericho, which was at an elevation of 800 feet below sea level and they would be going up to an elevation of 2500 feet above sea level, a difficult adjustment.
 - b.** Beth Aven means house of wickedness.
 - c.** It encompassed the area of the central mountains.

2. The spies returned with their reconnaissance report. Vs. 3
 - a. They told Joshua to not bother all the people for the people in Ai were few.
 - b. Two or three thousand men would be sufficient to attack Ai.
 - * It is estimated that the city had about 12,000 inhabitants, roughly about 3,000 fighting men.
 - c. The men of Israel had become presumptuous and over-confident in themselves by not seeking God on the matter.
3. The outcome was that about three thousand men went up there from the people, but they fled before the men of Ai. Vs. 4
4. The details were distressing. Vs. 5
 - a. The men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men, as they chased them from the gate of the city to Shebarim, killing them on the descent.
 - b. The result was that the hearts of the people melted and became like water.
 - 1) The word melted “macca” is the same as Rahab used to describe the people of the land. Josh. 2:11
 - 2) It means to dissolve or waste away.

On April 1, 1946, an earthquake shook the abyssal plain deep beneath the Pacific Ocean. The wave it generated traveled the 2250 miles to Hawaii in four hours and thirty-four minutes, an average speed of 490 mph. When it struck the town of Hilo the wave was more than 45 feet high. It killed 173 injured hundreds more and caused well over 10 million dollars worth of damage. #1950
 * So it the effects of one person’s sin, it devastates so many lives!

Application

1. Sin is rebellion against God, against what one is to obey and it never effects just one person, even though it may be committed by one person like Achan.
 - a. A husband or wife decides to have an adulterous affair, thinking no one will find out or ever know.
 - b. But when ever there is two people, one eventually talks.
 - c. And if not, God knows and if you are a Christian, you have to get right or be miserable, having no fellowship with God.
 - d. When you are found out or you reveal the unfaithfulness the repercussions will affect, the wife or husband on both sides, the children, the immediate family and those who looked up to you as a Christian.
 - * Moses said, “Be sure your sin will find you out.” Num. 32:23

Illustration

2. Sin in the church is no different than the sin of Achan and the affects of it.

- a. When Christians know they are to not gossip and do, it hinders the church life.
- b. When people know they are not to be fornicating and do and keep on attending church, they are leaven to the church.

* Paul dealt with the young man who was sleeping with his step-mother in Corinth and told them to remove him from the church and turn him over to Satan in hopes of repentance. 1Cor. 5:1:5

- c. Anninias and Saphira lied to God and He made an example of them, the results being that, “None of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,.” Acts 5:13-14

3. Often when God allows us to have great victories, we become very self-confident and think we do not have to seek God about it.

- a. We may think that we no longer have to watch out for certain areas because God has done such an incredible transformation, so we put our guard down and we fall. 1Cor. 10:13
- b. Or we think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, through the grace given to us in gifts or anointing. Rom. 12:3

* The Psalmist prayed, “Keep back Your servant also from **presumptuous** sins; Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, And I shall be innocent of great transgression.” Ps. 19:13

These were the reasons for the defeat of Israel at Ai!

II. The despair and divine rebuke of Joshua. Vs. 6-15

A. The desperation of Joshua over the defeat at Ai. Vs. 6-9

1. The despair of Joshua. Vs. 6

- a. Joshua tore his clothes, a sign of morning, grief and bereavement.
 - 1) Joshua had been around for forty years with Moses, he should of known something was wrong in the camp.
 - 2) Joshua knew that sin is the only thing that caused God to remove His favor.
- b. Joshua fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until evening, to hear from God. Vs. 6b-c
 - 1) The time to seek God was a bit late.

- 2) The time should have been before they attacked Ai.
- c. Joshua and the elders put dust on their heads. Vs. 6d
 - 1) Their mourning and grief is for their defeat, death of the men, being humiliated and discouraged.
 - 2) Their mourning and grief should have been over the fact that God had removed Himself from them.
- 2. The direct accusation of God by Joshua. Vs. 7
 - a. Joshua blames God for the failure of Ai. “Alas, Lord GOD, why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all--to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us?” . Vs. 7a-f
 - 1) Questioning God, “Why have You brought the people over the Jordan at all. Vs. 7a-d
 - 2) Decisively holding God responsible for the death of the men. Vs. 7e
 - b. Joshua had failed to remember the promise of God declaring that he wished they would have compromised and been satisfied on the Jordan, “Oh, that we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan!” Vs. 7g

- 1) Israel said the same after they crossed the Red Sea. Ex. 16:3
- 2) The people in the wilderness did also at the report of the spies. Num. 14:1-4
- 3) Defeats cause us to double guess our right decisions and what we have heard from God, even leaders, if they are not cautious.
- 3. The discouragement of Joshua. Vs. 8
 - a. Joshua was more concerned about how to explain the disheartened condition of Israel before their enemies.
 - b. Rather than to find out from God why it happened.
- 4. The distorted view of God’s honor by Joshua. Vs. 9
 - a. Joshua informs God that now the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land would hear what happened, surround them and kill them, “cut off our name from the earth” Vs. 9a-c
 - b. Joshua then kind of reprimands God by saying, “What will You do for Your great name?” Vs. 9d
 - 1) As if to say, “I am attempting to be the best field general I can be, but Your aren’t making it easy for me Yahweh”.

- 2) I am trying to uphold Your name in honor but what are You going to do now that You got us into this mess?"

B. The divine rebuke of Joshua for his complaint about the defeat at Ai. Vs. 10-15

1. The indignation of God. Vs. 10-13

a. The Lord reproves Joshua. Vs. 10

- 1) The LORD said to Joshua: "Get up!"
 - a) His presence before the Lord was an affront to God.
 - b) He had accused God rather than to seek the reason for the defeat.
- 2) There is a time to pray and a time to move, similar to Moses before the Red Sea, "And the LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward." Ex. 14:15
- 2) The LORD said, "Why do you lie thus on your face?"
 - a) Rejecting his complaint.
 - b) Rejecting his accusation.

b. The identification of their sin by God. Vs. 11-12

- 1) The nation had sinned. Vs. 11a-b
 - * Joshua should have been looking for sin in the people instead of trying to find fault with God.

a) Israel had sinned, missed the mark of what God required of them. Vs. 11a

b) Israel had also transgressed, a willful disobedience of Yahweh's covenant He had commanded them. Vs. 11b

2) The indication of their sin described. Vs. 11c-d

a) They had taken some of the accursed things, thing devoted to God. Vs. 11c

b) They had stolen them from Yahweh, they were His. Vs. 11d

c) They had deceived themselves and the people. Vs. 11d

d) They had placed these things among their own stuff. Vs. 11e

c. The implication of their sin. Vs. 12

1) This was the very reason the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies. Vs. 12a

2) This was the reason why Israel turned their backs before their enemies. Vs. 12b

3) The reason being, they had become doomed to destruction. Vs. 12c

* Since they took of the accursed thing, they now were cursed by Yahweh!

- 4) This would be the reason why Yahweh would not be with them anymore. Vs. 12d
* God does not leave His people, they forsake Him!
- 5) This removal of His presence had a remedy, unless they destroyed the accursed from among you. Vs. 12e
- d. The instruction about their sin. Vs. 13
 - 1) Joshua as the leader was told to get up, and sanctify the people. Vs. 13a-b
 - 2) Joshua was to give the reason for the command of God. Vs. 13c-h
 - a) He was to tell them to sanctify themselves for tomorrow because Yahweh said there is an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel". Vs. 13a-g
 - b) He was also to tell them that they could not stand before their enemies until they took away the accursed thing from among them. Vs. 13h
- 2. The indicated plan for the inquiry of the one who sinned. Vs. 14-15
 - a. The indicated procedure. Vs. 14
 - 1) In the morning Joshua was to bring the people according to their tribes and God would choose the tribe that sinned. Vs. 14a

- 2) That tribe would come according to families and God would chose the family that sinned. Vs. 14b
- 3) That family would come by household and God would chose the household that sinned. Vs. 14c
- 4) That household would come according to man and God would choose the man that sinned. Vs. 14d
- 5) The reasoning behind the long drawn our procedure is to magnify God's love and mercy to forgive.
 - a) How the mind of God was known is not indicated but it was either by the Urim and Thummin of the priest, which means lights and perfections. Ex. 28:30
 - b) Or by lots. Num. 33:54
* "The Lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." Prov. 16:33
- b. The indicated judgment. Vs. 15
 - 1) The one who sinned by taking the accursed thing shall be burned with fire. Vs. 15a
 - 2) The person and all he possess will be burned with fire. Vs. 15b-d
 - a) The reasons are two, he has transgressed the covenant of the LORD. Vs. 15c

* The word transgressed “abar” means to cross over willfully knowing the prohibition of the covenant.

b) He has done a disgraceful thing in Israel. Vs. 15d

Illustration

A Sunday school teacher was examining her pupils after series of lessons on God’s Omnipotence. She asked, “Is there anything God can’t do?”

There was silence. Finally, one lad held up his hand. The teacher, disappointed the lesson’s point had been missed, asked resignedly, “Well, just what is it that God can’t do?”

“Well,” replied the boy, “He can’t please everybody.” #1996

* God will always do His good pleasure, which is absolutely perfect, not what pleases us!

Application

1. There are many people who blame God for many things, when in fact they have brought things on themselves.

- a. Some blame God for their bad marriages, when they disobeyed and married a unbeliever.
- b. Others blame God for not giving them a job they want, but it could be that the job would of taken them from God.

c. Or they loose their jobs because they are bad workers, calling in sick, being late and abusing their breaks and lunch time.

a. At other times, people blame God for their financial conditions, yet often it is due to not knowing how to manage their money, live in contentment, rather than beyond their means or have not prepared themselves for life to earn a high earning job.

* The principle of sowing and reaping is the truest of all things in life. Gal. 6:7-8

2. Sin is always an impediment to God!

a. He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy. Prov. 28:13

b. If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear me. Ps. 66:18

c. “Behold, the LORD’S **hand** is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.” Is. 59:1-2

3. God has His own ways of exposing people and dealing with them.

a. Sometimes God just turns people over to their sin and life-style and they are destroyed, like Samson by Delilah. Judges 16

- b. At other times God exposes a person like David, be it directly or through people like Nathan. 2Sam. 12
- c. Still another way is to simply give a person over to his own pride, “And he, Uzziah, made devices in Jerusalem, invented by skillful men, to be on the towers and the corners, to shoot arrows and large stones. So his fame spread far and wide, for he was marvelously helped till he became **strong**.” 2Chron 26:15

This was the despair and divine rebuke of Joshua!

III. The drastic measures of the executing Achan. Vs. 16-26

- A. The implementation of God’s instructions. Vs. 16-18
 - 1. Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel by their tribes, and the tribe of Judah was taken. Vs. 16
 - 2. Joshua brought the clan of Judah, and he took the family of the Zarhites. Vs. 17a-b
 - 3. Joshua brought the family of the Zarhites man by man, and Zabdi was taken. Vs. 17c-d
 - 4. Joshua then 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. Vs. 18

- B. The inquiry and confession of Achan. Vs. 19-21
 - 1. The inquiry from Achan regarding his sin. Vs. 19
 - a. He inquired from Achan with tenderness, humility and gentleness. Vs. 19a-c
* “Now Joshua said to Achan, “My son, I beg you.”
 - b. He instructed Achan to honor God. Vs. 19d-f
 - 1) Achan was to give glory to the LORD God of Israel by making confession to confirm that God is the revealer of all that is secret. Vs. 19d-e
* The root word is to give Him praise.
 - 2) Achan was to be honest in his confession by telling Joshua what you have done and not hide it from him. Vs. 19f-g
- 2. The incriminating confession of Achan regarding his sin. Vs. 20-21
 - a. Achan answered Joshua and said, “Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel.” Vs. 20a-b

- b.** Achan gave witness to what he did.
Vs. 20c-21
- 1) He described the lust of the eye,
“When I **saw** among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I **coveted** them and **took** them.” Vs. 20c-21a-d
 - a)) These are the three steps all take, when they sin! 1Jn. 2:16
 - b)) James says God does not tempt any man but every man is tempted....
 - 2) He declared where he had hidden them, “And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it.” Vs. 21e-f
* Many of the commandment, were broken. Ex. 20

C. The incriminating evidence of Achan’s sin.
Vs. 22-23

1. The process of justice was speedily as Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver under it. Vs. 22
 - a. There were no motions drawn of illegal search and seizure raised.
 - b. There were no objections to have legal council.

2. The procurement of the items were taken from the tent and brought to Joshua and to all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD. Vs. 23
 - a. The witness of God was sufficient.
 - b. The witness of Achan was incrimination.
 - c. The witness of the evidence verified his guilt.
- D.** The impressionable execution of Achan. Vs. 24-26
1. The procession to the execution. Vs. 24
 - a. Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the garment, the wedge of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, and all that he had. Vs. 24a-m
 - 1) There is no forgiveness, due to the fact that Achan was found out.
 - 2) He did not confess voluntarily but only because he was discovered, the implication being he would not of ever confessed it God had not revealed his sin.
 - 3) The possessions show he didn’t need the money.
 - b. They brought them to the Valley of Achor. Vs. 24n

- 1) Some object to the execution of his sons, daughters but they had to of being party to the sin, for no one pays for another man's sin before God.
* Ezekiel tells us each person pays for their sins before God. Ezk. 18:20
 - 2) The things coveted and all that he owned is to be burned also, the silver, gold, oxen, donkeys, sheep and his tent.
 - 3) Achan himself.
* "For what **profit** is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matt. 16:26
2. The proclamation before the execution. Vs. 25
- a. Joshua charge Achan with his crime, "Why have you troubled us?" Vs. 25a-b
 - b. Joshua declares the verdict of the Lord, "The LORD will trouble you this day." Vs. 25c
 - c. Joshua witnessed the execution of Achan by the people, "So all Israel stoned him with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones." Vs. 25d-e

- 1) Death was administered first.
 - 2) Then the bodies were cremated.
- d. Some will say this is too severe and harsh, so let examine the crime.
- 1) The one who sinned already knew they had sinned but they thought they could get away with their sin.
 - 2) The defeat and death of the men at Ai, should of caused the sinner to come forwards and confess but they did not, they instead hardened their heart.
 - 3) The instruction to all to present themselves before the Yahweh was another opportunity for the person to repent but instead hardened their heart more.
 - 4) The indication of Achan by God as the sinner indicated the line of being too late for repentance for the sin, he was hardened and said nothing.
 - 5) The individual confession was due to being found out and caught, being sorry for the consequences.
3. The perception after the execution. Vs. 26
- a. They raised a memorial. Vs. 26a-b
 - 1) They raised over him a great heap of stones to remind all what sin

- does to a family, will ultimately affect a nation. Vs. 26a
- a) When one forgets to take heed to the memorial at the crossing of the Jordan, to reckon the old man dead and walking by faith.
 - b) When one forgets to take heed to the memorial of cutting off the flesh life, at Gilgal.
- b. They still could see it to the day of the writing of the book of Joshua, reminding their children and future generations. Vs. 26b
- b. The Lord was once again for Israel. Vs. 26c
- 1) The LORD turned from the fierceness of His anger impressing their minds and hearts, that sin brings God wrath and judgment without exception.
 - 2) Instructing them to confess their sin before it is too late.
 - 3) Imploring them to understand that sin removed, places a person back in fellowship with God.
- c. They named the location according to the tragic event. Vs. 26d
- 1) They named the place the Valley of Achor to this day, which means trouble.

- 2) The play on word is inescapable, the name of Achan means “troubler”.
- 3) They did not whitewash the matter and said, “Oh he made a mistake, he did not know what he was doing”, no he brought trouble because he was a troubler!

Illustration

The removal of a limb to save a person’s life is drastic measures but necessary!

Application

1. The most important thing when there is discipline in the church and between Christians, is that it be Biblically accurate.
 - a. Matthew eighteen is for everybody when someone has offended us, going by one, two, three and finally the church elders, and if he refuses to hear, treat him like a publican, an unbeliever. Matt. 18:15-17
 - b. It is to be done in the spirit of gentleness as we would want to be approached. Gal. 6:1
 - c. But we are not to simply sweep it under the carpet, ignore it or simply say, ‘forget it’, and practice sloppy Agape!
2. The church and the Christian is to require certain things from a sinning brother or sister.
 - a. Acknowledgment of their sin, as Achan.
 - b. Confession of their sin, like Achan.

- c. Repentance from their sin, like Achan.
 - d. Responsible restitution, whenever possible, like Achan.
- * The evidence and facts must be presented with credible witnesses, at all times!

3. The severity of the discipline will depend on many things.

- a. The position of the person in the church.
- b. Did the person confess or found out?
- c. The person or persons involved, the sin and the ramifications to the various parties.
- d. The individual should be disciplined with the view of restoration, not simply castigation. Gal. 6:1
- e. There are times when a person can not be restored, as a pastor or elder, due to being disqualified. 1Tim. 3

This was the drastic measures of the executing Achan!

Conclusion

The sin of Achan is marked by:

- I. The defeat of Israel at Ai!
- II. The despair and divine rebuke of Joshua!
- III. The drastic measures of the execution of Achan!