

Joshua**Be Sure Your Sin Will Find You Out****Joshua 7**

After Israel's miraculous victory over the mighty stronghold of Jericho, it's shocking they are routed by the much smaller outpost at Ai. 3,000 Israeli warriors would have been more than enough with the Commander of Yahweh's hosts fighting by their side. In sending only 3,000, Joshua showed his full confidence in Yahweh, but Yahweh didn't show! He did not give Ai into their hands. If Israel had sent 30,000 warriors, it wouldn't have mattered, and the reason is stated clearly in **vv. 1&10**: Israel violated their covenant commitment to God, so now, they are devoted for destruction!

As God's people, personal holiness is not an option. ("*Be holy for I am holy.*" **Leviticus 19:2**, *et al.*; **1 Peter 1:16**).

The language in **7:13** echoes back to **3:5** with striking irony. Once again, Joshua commands Israel, "*Consecrate yourselves,*" but this time, not because God is going to do "*amazing things among you,*" so you can cross the Jordan, but because God is going to remove the "*devoted things among you,*" because you crossed the line! **v. 11** reads: Israel "*transgressed*" the covenant, lit., they "*crossed over*" the covenant ('*abar*, the root of *Hebrew*). The Jews had betrayed their very identity as *Hebrews*!

The buildup of sin terms in **v. 11**—*they have taken, they have stolen, they have lied*—indicates the seriousness of their crime and God's outrage at it. The violation is so serious, in **vv. 12-13** God threatens to leave Israel, unless they *remove the devoted things in their midst*—lit., in their gut.

QUESTION: Since Achan took the devoted things, why is all of Israel suffering the consequences of one man's sin?

INDIVIDUAL INIQUITY, CORPORATE CONSEQUENCES

The Bible teaches the *corporate solidarity of God's people*. The individual and the community are closely identified: **v. 11** affirms "*Israel has sinned,*" and yet, later, in **v. 20**, Achan confesses, "*I have sinned.*"

This runs counter to the individualism we so highly prize in the West, but it's a profound biblical truth (e.g., **Romans 5**, esp. **v. 19**; **Hebrews 7:9-10**; **Genesis 14**).

There is a vital, communal connection to our individual lives.

An important point of clarification: **Deuteronomy 24:16** (cp. **5:9**) & **Ezekiel 18**.

God states, unequivocally, that he never punishes one person for another person's sin. Guilt is a personal thing, not a corporate thing.

In Ezekiel's day, Israel complained that they were being *punished* by God for sins committed by their forefathers.

What Yahweh argues in **Ezekiel 18** is this: If a future generation is being punished for the sins committed by their forefathers, it's because they're guilty of committing the same sins, whether they realize it or not!

Achan's sin may have actually reflected a general heart condition in the nation.

God isn't simply interested in outward appearance, but the inward heart.

On the other hand, Israel's trouble in **Joshua 7** may be a case of corporate solidarity.

What Israel suffered in the deadly defeat at Ai may not have been punishment because of their personal guilt, but they were still caught in the wake of consequences caused by Achan's guilt, because they're family.

The same principle was at play in the lives of Daniel in **Daniel 9** and Nehemiah in **Nehemiah 1:4-11**, as well as the 7 churches of Asia Minor in **Revelation 2 & 3**.

Neither Daniel, Nehemiah, nor every individual in those NT churches were personally guilty of the specific sins for which God judged Israel or threatened to judge the 7 churches, but because of their communal connection, they were certainly subject to the same shame and consequences.

Properly understood, the Bible does not teach individualism.

We must be careful not to view the corporate reality of Israel's demise in Achan's sin as some primitive mode of thinking inconsistent with modern thought.

God's word judges Western individualism as idolatry. In fact, most of the Bible is written from the standpoint of a communal, honor-shame culture, and if we miss that, we will have a huge blind spot in our understanding of God's word and the reality of how connected we are in God's eyes.

We are individuals before God, but we are more than that.

BE SURE YOUR SIN WILL FIND YOU OUT

vv. 14-18, Yahweh exposes Achan indirectly through a divinely controlled casting of lots.

Achan was "caught" by the process.

Numbers 32:23, "*But if you fail to do this, you will be sinning against Yahweh; and you may be sure your sin will find you out*".

In several places in the Bible, sin is described in terms that make it seem to be a living being with a mind and will of its own. (e.g., **Genesis 4:7**; **James 1:14-15**; **Romans 7:14-25**)

Whether or not others discover your sin, your sin will "discover you."

Galatians 6:7-8: "*Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction.*"

SAME SONG NEW VERSE

Achan violated the 8th Commandment—do not steal, the 10th—do not covet, and the 1st—have no any other gods before Yahweh.

This passage parallels **Genesis 3:6**. The very same verbs are used of Eve's sin: both she and he “saw,” “desired” (coveted) and “took” what was forbidden.

The “*beautiful robe from Shinar*” hyperlinks back to **Genesis 11**. Shinar is where post-flood humanity went in defiance of God and built the Tower of Babel.

Achan's sin is a reenactment of sin's history. His sin, like all sin, is what sin has always been—defiance of God.

Sins' history keeps repeating itself (**James 1:14; 1 John 2:16**).

v. 19 - Achan is finally exposed. His confession will glorify God (cp. **Philippians 2:10**).

Achan thought he could hide his sin from God which, David learned, is utterly impossible (**Psalms 69:5; 90:8; 139:1-12**).

Jeremiah 16:17 *My eyes are on all their ways. They are not hidden from me, nor is their iniquity concealed from my eyes.*

Wordplay - **v. 19** Joshua instructs Achan not to hide anything from him; **v. 21** Achan admits he hid the devoted things under his tent.

God allowed the Israelites to take plunder in the next victory, at the second battle of Ai (**8:2**). Achan could have had anything he wanted, if he had only waited on God.

Achan's sin was not out of need, but out of greed.

v. 23 - The devoted things found in Achan's family tent were “*laid down before Yahweh*.” The phrase “*laid down*” is most commonly translated “*poured out*,” as in the anointing of oil or a drink offering.

v. 24 - The “*Valley of Achor*,” where the judgment on Achan and his family takes place means “*Valley of Trouble*.”

Wordplay - **v. 25** Joshua's question, “*Why have you brought this trouble (achor) on us?*” is turned on its head by his next statement: Yahweh will now bring *achor on Achan*.

SIN'S MAXIMUM WAGE

Sin always has consequences.

Galatians 6:7 *The sin we sow, we will reap.* **Romans 6:23** *The wages of sin is death.* **Ezekiel 18** *The soul that sins will die.*

v. 25 “*All Israel ‘stoned’ him with stones* (lit. *with a stone*, singular), *and they burned them with fire, and they ‘stoned’ them with stones* (plural).” Two different verbs are used in the Hebrew text for “stoned” (*rāgam v. 25a; sāqal v. 25b*). The former refers to stoning as a form of capital punishment with a blow to the head with a single

stone. The latter refers to casting stones on the bodies after they were burned, for the purpose of erecting a memorial pile (**v. 26**).

Achan was treated like a Canaanite. It may be that Achan's sin revealed his complete unbelief.

The conquest of Canaan is God's war against human evil.

God is no respecter of persons (**2 Chronicles 19:7; Romans 2:10-11; 1 Peter 1:17**).

APPLICATION

First, we must deal with personal sin. The wages of sin is death, but the gift God offers in Christ is forgiveness and eternal life (**Romans 6:23; 10:9**). First and foremost, we must be made right with God by grace, through faith in Christ.

Once we are made right with God and stand accepted before him in Christ, our fellowship with God requires that we pursue being holy as he is holy. Certainly, we will stumble and fall, but God promises, *if we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness* (**1 John 1:9**). So, our walk with God can remain warm and blessed, even though we are yet broken and vulnerable to sin.

What do we do when we are caught in the wake of someone else's sin and we bear the shame and consequences of their evil, for which we are not personally guilty? The biblical model is clear: We lament over that sin and we confess (agree with; acknowledge) the reality of that sin, just as Daniel and Nehemiah did, and even as Jesus, who was sinless, did (**Matthew 28:37-39; Luke 19:41-44**), whether it's sin in our nation's past and present, our church's past and present, or our family's past and present.

We have a communal responsibility for one another. **Hebrews 3:12-13** *Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*

My life is your business. Your life is my business. **Galatians 6:1-2** *Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness, keeping watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.*

NOTE: Earlier, in this same letter, Paul recounts how he had to confront Peter to his face in the presence of all. Sometimes the kindness shown in restoring another needs to be direct and assertive. Being kind is not the same as being nice.

NOTE: The “spiritual person” is to restore the errant brother or sister, not the nosey, judgmental, nitpicker, who loves to mask his/her own faults by pointing out the faults in others.

Matthew 7:5 *You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.*

Cain was dead wrong; *we are our brother's keeper* (**Genesis 4:9**), to help one another from being hardened by sin's deceitfulness, so our story with God does not end up echoing the *achor of Achan*.