

# The Book Of JOSHUA

## JOSHUA AND ISRAEL DEFEATED AT AI *Joshua 7:1-26*

### Introduction

**Deuteronomy 11:10-12**

*...a land of hills and valleys...*

### Geography of Two Lands

Israel had spent 430 years in Egypt

- The Lord delivered Israel from Egypt
- The Lord was leading Israel into Canaan, the promised land

Egypt and Canaan Similar

They two countries with a river running through them

- Egypt – Nile
- Canaan – Jordan

Egypt and Canaan Different

Geography

- Egypt is desert (“watered it by foot” Vs 10)
- Canaan is fertile (“drinks water from the rain of heaven” Vs 12)

Topography

- Egypt – flat
- Canaan – hills and valleys

### Geography of Two Lives

If Egypt is a picture of the life of sin and the world

The geography of the land is also a picture of the geography of the life of sin and the world

- It is watered by foot - It is managed by human effort
- It is flat, desert - There is no life

If Canaan is a picture of the spiritual life, the life of faith

The geography of the land is also a picture of the geography of the life of faith

- It is watered by heaven - It is fed and sustained by God
- It has hills and valleys - Hills of victory and valleys of discouragement

### Hills & Valleys

The first word in Joshua 7 is, “*But...*”

- An ominous sign that the fortunes of Israel are about to change

Israel is walking in, and living by faith

- They have experienced the hill of victory at Jericho
- Now they will experience the valley of defeat and discouragement at Ai

As believers in Christ

- We will have hills of victory
- We will have valleys of defeat and discouragement

**Question:** What causes those defeats?

**Question:** How do we deal with discouragement?

# A Disobedient Soldier

## The Sinner

**Joshua 7:1**

### The Name

- His name was Achan or Achar
- He was from the tribe of Judah
- His name means troubler or trouble

### Joshua 7:25

Joshua wordplays on his name

- “Why have you troubled us?”
- “The Lord will trouble you this day”

### Joshua 7:26

He is judged and buried in

- The Valley of Achor
- The Valley of Trouble

### The Action

Achan’s disobedience is the cause of

- Israel’s one and only military defeat in the Canaan campaign
- The death of 36 soldiers

Never underestimate the amount of damage one man, outside the will of God can inflict

### Illustrations

Abraham	-	Almost cost him his wife
David	-	Death of 70,000 people
Jonah	-	Almost the lives of a ships company

The church of Jesus Christ

- Needs to be diligent in rooting out and dealing with sin
- One sin can bring defeat to the whole church
- That’s why Paul exhorted the Corinthians to discipline the disobedient man in their fellowship (**1 Corinthians 5**)

### Galatians 5:9

*A little leaven leavens the whole lump.*

### Hebrews 12:15

*looking diligently lest anyone should fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up should cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;*

### The Blame

**Joshua 7:1** “the children of Israel committed a trespass”

**Joshua 7:11** “Israel has sinned”

**Question:** Why did the blame rest at the feet of the whole nation?

**Answer:** Israel was the wife of Jehovah

- She was to be undefiled, without spot or blemish
- One sin defiled the entire camp

The church of Jesus Christ

- Is one body (**1 Corinthians 12:12-13**)
- Any weakness or infection in a single member of the body effects the whole body

### 1 Corinthians 12:26

*And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it.*

## The Sin

**Joshua 7:20-21**

### The Order

Achan (along with the whole of Israel) heard the order

- Given by his earthly commander
- Received from his heavenly commander
- **Joshua 6:17-21,24**

Jericho was Israel's first victory in the land of Canaan

- The firstfruits always belong to the Lord

### **Proverbs 3:9**

*Honour the LORD with your possessions, And with the firstfruits of all your increase;*

### The Disobedience

Achan disobeyed the order

- Direct disobedience to his earthly commander
- Direct disobedience to his heavenly commander

Disobedience led to sin and death

- Achan      *"I saw...I coveted...took"*
- Eve         Saw / Coveted / Took

### **Genesis 3:6**

*the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and desirable to make one wise, she took its fruit and ate*

- One sin effected the whole of mankind
- One sin effected the whole of Israel
- Your sin never only effects you

### The Four Mistakes

#### 1. To Look Twice

The second glance leads to sin

#### 2. To Reclassify

God said the treasures were *"consecrated to the Lord"*, Achan said, *"they are spoils"*

### **Isaiah 5:20**

*Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!*

#### 3. To Covet

Instead of lifting his heart to God, he imagined in his heart how the treasures would lift him

### **James 1:14**

*But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.*

#### 4. To Hide

- Thinking you can conceal sin
- Adam and Eve tried to cover their sin
- Sin cannot be covered or concealed – it can only be cleansed or bring condemnation

### **Numbers 32:23**

*be sure your sin will find you out.*

We all can be Achans

We all can make the same mistakes

## A Defeated Army

*Joshua 7:2-5*

### A Wrong Strategy

#### Joshua's Leadership

Joshua was an experienced commander

- He surveyed the situation
- He sent out spies
- He developed a strategy based on the intelligence received

Joshua's error was

- Not his lack of military experience
- He did not consult the Lord
- He put his faith in the word of the spies
- Instead of the seeking the word of the Lord

### Spiritual Leadership

Spiritual leaders must constantly seek the word of the Lord

- To determine God's will for each situation
- To walk by faith and not by sight (**2 Corinthians 5:7**)
- Church should pray for their spiritual leaders

If Joshua had called a prayer meeting

- The Lord would have shown him there was sin in the camp
- The matter could have been dealt with
- The lives of 36 men would have been saved
- Israel would have escaped a humiliating defeat

### A Wrong Heart

#### Presumption

**Question:** What entered the mind of Joshua and Israel?  
Did the victory at Jericho give rise to undue self-confidence?  
Did that self-confidence lead to presumption and pride?

#### Perspective

Ai was a smaller city

- Less fortified
- On a hill
- 1700 feet above sea level

Surely victory was inevitable

- From a human point of view
- Oh, what a mistake to think that our perspective is the right perspective

#### **Isaiah 55:8**

*"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD.*

We need the mind of God on every situation in life

- Otherwise we will march up the hill to the Ai's of life full of self-confidence
- Only to flee down leaving death and defeat in our wake (36 souls)

#### **Proverbs 16:18a**

*Pride goes before destruction*

### Song Of Moses

#### **Deuteronomy 32:30**

One Soldier relying on God the Rock

- Could defeat 1000 men
- Three soldiers could have taken Ai

## A Discouraged Leader

**Joshua 7:6-15**

We read in **Joshua 6:27**

- Joshua was magnified
- Now Israel's leader was mortified
  
- Have you ever had your best plans fall to pieces before your very eyes?
- Have you ever faced almost certain success, only to be greeted by unexpected defeat?
- Then you know something of what Joshua felt at this moment

## Remorse

**Joshua 7:6**

### Broken Heart

Israelis are not like the British

- There is not the same stiff upper lip
- There is not the stoic resistance to emotion
- There is not a "big boys don't cry" type of thought

Israelis are very expressive with their emotion

- Grief is very visible – torn clothes and dust on the head
- Emotion is very vocal, "*Alas, Lord God!*"
- Mourning is very public – laying on the earth, face before the ark

The tables had turned

- The heart of the Canaanites had melted when they heard of the conquests of Israel (**Joshua 2:11**)
- Now the heart of Israel melted like water (**Joshua 7:5**)

### Humbled Heart

This defeat not only hit Israel hard

- It hit Israel's commander hard too
- Joshua had not known defeat until now

Filled with distress and discouragement

- Joshua and the elders lay prostrate before the ark
- Until evening

Joshua humbled himself before the Lord in remorse

- If only Joshua had humbled himself before the battle had been launched
- The ark symbolised the presence of the Lord
- When defeated and discouraged the place to go is the presence of the Lord

## Reproach

**Joshua 7:7-9**

### A Step Backwards

The Wilderness Israelis

- Those who did not inherit the fulness of the promised land
- Were filled with unbelief and despair
- They said, "*Oh, that we had stayed where we were!*" **Exodus 14:11**

In his defeat and discouragement

- Joshua spoke with the same despair
- "*Oh, that we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan!*"
- He took on the character of a Wilderness Christian instead of a Warrior Christian
- He moved from operating in the Spirit to walking after the flesh

Walk by faith - You will claim all that God has for you

Walk in unbelief- You will always be content to settle for something less than God's best

## A Step Forwards

### **Hebrews 6:1**

*...let us go on to perfection...*

The Lord sometimes allows us to experience humiliating defeats

- To test our faith
- To reveal what is going on in our hearts
- To provoke us to cry out to Him

## Repentance

### **Joshua 7:8-9**

Joshua's prayer reveals an attitude of repentance

- Israel's defeat robbed God of glory
- For this Joshua was repentant

Joshua's reputation had been dented before Israel and the Canaanites  
Israel had lost the place of fear in the Canaanite hearts

Joshua was not concerned

- About his fame
- About Israel's conquest

Joshua was concerned with the glory of God

- "Then what will You do for Your great Name?"
- Where does our concern lie?

## Rebuke

### **Joshua 7:10-15**

## A Submission

Joshua lay prostrate before the Lord until evening

- The Lord allowed Joshua to come to the end of himself
- Only then was Joshua ready to hear the word of the Lord

Once the that word had been received and heard

- It was time to rise and respond, "Get up"
- There is a time to pray
- There is a time to act

## A Sin

The Lord showed Joshua that Israel had sinned

- That sin needed to be dealt with
- Israel was guilty of stealing from the Lord
- That evil had to be punished and purged from the nation

A Sanctifying

**Joshua 3:5** Israel had to be sanctified before crossing the Jordan

**Joshua 7:13** Israel had to be sanctified before dealing with an enemy in the camp

- Both were steps forward in the spiritual life of Israel
- Both required faith
- Both required sanctification
- Each step forward in our spiritual life requires faith and sanctification

## A Sifting

In the morning there would be a sifting of the people

- Gradually the sin would be brought to the surface

- Once exposed it could be dealt with

In the same way the Lord sifts the heart of the believer through hardship and trial

- Gradually sin is brought to the surface
- Once exposed it could be dealt with

## A Sentence

The guilty party would be executed, *"burned with fire"*

- This shows the Lord's hatred of sin
- This foreshadows the ultimate punishment of all sin

The word went around the camp

- Sanctify yourselves
- Tomorrow the Lord will expose the sin in the camp that has spelt defeat
- Did Achan get any sleep that night?

## A Discovered Sinner

**Joshua 7:16-26**

### The Investigation

**Joshua 7:16-18**

### Searching Scriptures

**Jeremiah 17:9-10**

*The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward each person according to their conduct, according to what their deeds deserve.*

The Lord knew the heart of Achan

- As He knows all our hearts
- Nothing could conceal or hide the truth from the Lord

**Jeremiah 23:24**

*"Can a man hide himself in hiding places so I do not see him?" declares the LORD. "Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?" declares the LORD.*

Whether a sinner

- Runs to the top of a mountain
- Dives to the bottom of the sea
- God will find them and judge them

**Amos 9:3**

*And though they hide themselves on top of Carmel, From there I will search and take them; Though they hide from My sight at the bottom of the sea, From there I will command the serpent, and it shall bite them;*

**Ecclesiastes 12:14**

*For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.*

### Searching Process

The Lord was systematic in seeking out the rotten apple in the barrel of Israel

Israel was

- |                              |                        |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. First sifted by Tribe     | Judah was selected     |
| 2. Second sifted by Clan     | Zarhites were selected |
| 3. Third sifted by household | Zabdi was selected     |
| 4. Finally sifted by man     | Achan was selected     |

We don't know how this process of identification took place

- Perhaps the high priest used the ephod
- Perhaps lots were used

- The Lord clearly identified the sinner

## Searching Emotions

The camp of Israel was full of tension and emotion

- How the fear must have grown greater
- As the search grew narrower
- How the horror must have befallen his loved ones
- As Achan's guilt became evident
- How the sense of justice may have filled the families of the 36 slain men
- As the one responsible for their deaths came to light

## The Confession

**Joshua 7:19-23**

### Achan's Testimony

Now the criminal has been identified

- He is brought to trial
- Joshua as the judge

Joshua bid Achan, "*Give glory to God*"

- This is the equivalent of our modern:
- "Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?"

Achan was honourable enough to make confession

- He said, "*I have sinned*"
- Thus echoing words spoken by King David and the prodigal son
- Thus echoing words spoken by Pharaoh and Judas

### Achan's Tent

Joshua acted on the confession and sent people to search out Achan's tent

- There the incriminating evidence was found
- The "*accursed thing*" was uncovered

### **Deuteronomy 17:6**

*On the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness.*

Joshua had the two witnesses of

- Achan's confession
- The evidence from his tent

So Achan could rightly be convicted and sentenced

## The Judgement

**Joshua 7:24-26**

### Swift Punishment

The judgement was swift

- Achan, along with
- His cattle
- His children

Were taken to the Valley of Achor

- There they were stoned to death
- Then they were burned

### Just Punishment

This is troubling to some

- As it appears the innocent children were punished for their father's guilt
- Mosaic law forbade transferal of punishment
- The guilty party had to bear the weight of their own sin

**Deuteronomy 24:16**

*Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin.*

We must conclude for the children to be executed too

- They were of a reasonable age of accountability
- Were both aware and guilty of assisting in the crime
- We see here an entire family who had turned from the living God

**Lasting Punishment**

This is a shocking and horrific event in the history of Israel

Yet such an incident served to teach both Israel and us well

- We should not treat sin lightly
- We should be swift to expose it
- We should be ruthless in dealing with it

The ashes of Achan, his family and his cattle

- Were buried under stones
- A memorial

Now Israel had two sets of memorial stones

- Gilgal        A testimony to the fruit of obedience to God's word
- Achor        A testimony to the fruit of disobedience to God's word

**The Conclusion**

Where do you stand before the Lord today?

- Do stand at Gilgal or Achor?
- Are you walking in faith and obedience?
- Are you walking in sin and disobedience?

**Matthew 6:19-21**

*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*