



Achan's Sin & Battles with Ai



Even after God caused a great victory for the Israelites over the city of Jericho, not all of God's people chose to LISTEN and OBEY God. The sin of greed caused the Israelites to lose a battle that they should have easily won. We will see that God will not bless those who choose to disobey Him.

Day #1: Blessings from God

Back when the Israelites were still in the wilderness, at the foot of Mt. Sinai, God promised many wonderful things to these people. He promised that He would drive out all the nations that were in the Promised Land, and give the land to the Israelites. These nations were all bigger and stronger than the Israelites.



The Lord chose you because he loved you very much. He didn't choose you because you had more people than other nations. In fact, you had the smallest number of all. The Lord chose you because He loved you. - Deuteronomy 7:7-8a

Just moments after Moses read God's Law to the people, God made an "if, then" promise. God told them that **if** they obeyed the laws, **then** when they entered the Promised Land God would bless them more than any nation had ever been blessed.

The Lord will love you and bless you. He'll increase your numbers. He'll give you many children. He'll bless the crops of your land. He'll give you plenty of grain, olive oil and fresh wine. He'll bless your herds with many calves. He'll give your flocks many lambs. He'll do all of those things for you in the land of Canaan... He will bless you more than any other nation... The Lord will keep you from getting sick. - Deuteronomy 7:13-15a

God told the Israelites that it was not because they were so good, or righteous, that He was going to drive out all of the people from Canaan. Instead, it was because the people of Canaan were so wicked (Deuteronomy 9:4). These people worshipped false gods (Deuteronomy 7:25). God commanded the Israelites to destroy all of the people in the land. He told the Israelites not to have pity on the people of Canaan. God warned that the Israelites should NEVER worship the gods that the Canaanites worshipped (Deuteronomy 7:16). God also told His people not to fear these people even though they were bigger and stronger than the Israelites. God said to **remember** what He had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians. God promised to do the same thing to the people in Canaan (Deuteronomy 7:18-19).



Look at the passage above (Deuteronomy 7:13-15a). Underline each promise God made. How many can you count? With blessing like that in store for them if they obeyed, should the people have obeyed God? Likewise, God promises amazing things to us when we obey His word (1 John 3:22; 1 John 5:2-4).

Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love him. We will come to him and make Our home with him." - John 14:23

Day #2: Warning

Sometimes we are given warnings. Street signs warn a driver to slow down or stop. We might hear a warning on the radio that a tornado is coming. Your parents warn you to be careful when you go out to play. Why would someone warn someone else? (To keep the person safe.) Today, we will see a very firm warning that God gave to His people. God warned them because He loved them and wanted them to be safe.

Last week we learned about God causing the walls of Jericho to tumble down. Jericho had lots of people, and people have lots of "stuff." God commanded that all of the people in Jericho, except Rahab and her family, were to be destroyed (Joshua 6:17). Remember, these people were wicked and worshipped idols (Deuteronomy 7:25; 9:4). God said the city and everything in it **MUST** be destroyed (Joshua 6:17a), except the things made of silver, gold, bronze, and iron. Those things were to be brought into God's treasury (Joshua 6:19). Joshua gave a **VERY** strong warning about this.



"Do not take any of the things set apart for destruction, or you yourselves will be completely destroyed, and you will bring trouble on the camp of Israel." - Joshua 6:18

Joshua warned that if anyone took any of the people's "stuff," he or she would be destroyed! Burning up valuable items may seem wasteful, but nearly forty years before, God warned the Israelites about these very things.

Burn the statues of their gods in the fire. Don't long for the silver and gold that is on those statues. Don't take it for yourselves. If you do, it will be a trap for you. The Lord your God hates it. - Deuteronomy 7:25

God knew that His people would be trapped by these things. If they held onto these things, soon they would worship these idols just like the Canaanites did. Remember the first and second commandments:

Do not put any other gods in place of Me.

Do not make statues of gods that look like anything in the sky or on the earth or in the waters. Do not bow down to them or worship them. - Exodus 20:3-5a

We can only have life when we are following the one, true God. God, alone, **DESERVES** our worship. Worshipping these false gods can never bring us peace and joy (Jeremiah 16:19).



God was very clear. He **HATES** false gods and idols. He wants us to hate them too (Deuteronomy 7:26). Is there anything in your life that you are constantly thinking about and that you would refuse to give up if God told you to? This thing may have become an idol to you. Ask God to change your heart toward that thing and to draw your heart to Him above all other things.

Day #3: Sin & Defeat

Immediately after the great victory in Jericho, we read these tragic words:



But the people of Israel weren't faithful to the Lord. They didn't do what they were told to do with the things that had been set apart to Him in a special way to be destroyed. Achan had taken some of those things. So the Lord's anger burned against Israel. - Joshua 7:1a

Day #3 continued:

One of the Israelites, a man named Achan, had taken some of the forbidden treasures and hid them. Joshua did not know about this. Joshua was concerned with the Israelite's next battle. Again, Joshua sent spies to check out the land and the people. The spies went to a city named Ai. When the spies returned, they told Joshua that he would not need to send all of the Israelite men to fight, because there were not very many people in Ai.

So only about 3,000 men went up. But the men of Ai drove them away. They chased the men of Israel from the city gate all the way to Shebarim. They killed about 36 of them on the way down. So the hearts of the people of Israel melted away in fear. - Joshua 7:4-5

The few men of Ai easily won the battle against the 3,000 Israelite men. The men of Ai chased the Israelites and even killed thirty-six of them. The Israelites became very afraid. Joshua and the leaders fell face down and cried out to the Lord. Joshua was unaware that one of the people had not LISTENED to God's very serious warning. Remember God's "If, then" promise? If they obeyed God, God would bless them. Achan did NOT obey, and God did not bless their battle with Ai. Tomorrow we will see how God commanded Joshua to clean Achan's sin from the Israelite camp.



Achan's sin had tragic consequences for Israel's fighting men. Thirty-six of them died, many were probably injured, and all the people of Israel became terrified. Sin always hurts people! LISTEN to God and obey, so that you will stay far from sin.

Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit. - Galatians 6:8

Day #4: Achan Destroyed

Joshua and the Israelite leaders remained face down in prayer for hours. Joshua asked God why Ai was able to defeat the Israelites. Joshua wished they had never even crossed the Jordan River. He feared that the people of Canaan, who had been afraid of the Israelites, would hear about this battle and come to attack them.

God told Joshua, "Get up! Why are you lying there face down?" God told Joshua that Israel had sinned. Someone had taken some of the forbidden items. God said they had stolen and lied. So, God had removed His hand of protection from them. Then God said these chilling words:



"That is why the men of Israel can't stand up against their enemies. They turn their backs and run. It is because I have decided to let them be destroyed. You must destroy the things you took that had been set apart to me. If you do not, I will not be with you anymore." - Joshua 7:12

This was exactly what God had warned about. If they took any of the forbidden items, they would be destroyed (Joshua 6:18). The Bible tells us that the payment for sin is death (Romans 6:23). God told Joshua to tell the Israelites to get ready, because the next day, God wanted Joshua to call all of the tribes together. God would choose a tribe. From that tribe, God would choose a clan. From that clan, God would choose a family. And from that family, each family member would come before God. God would reveal who had disobeyed Him. God commanded that this person must be killed because he disobeyed God's command.

Early the next morning, Joshua did as God had instructed. God chose the tribe of Judah, the clan of Zerahite, and the family of Zimri. Out of that family, God chose Achan. Joshua told Achan to confess what he had done.

Achan replied, "It is true! I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel. Among the plunder I saw a beautiful robe from Babylon, 200

Day #4 continued:

silver coins, and a bar of gold weighing more than a pound. I wanted them so much that I took them. They are hidden in the ground beneath my tent, with the silver buried deeper than the rest." - Joshua 7:20-21

Joshua sent men to check Achan's tent. They found the stolen items hidden, just as Achan had said. The men brought the items out and laid them in front of everyone. Joshua took Achan, his family, the things he had stolen, and everything he owned to a valley. There, the Israelites obeyed God and stoned Achan and his family. Everything he owned was set on fire. Then God was no longer angry.



God's Word is clear about disobedience. When we disobey, we are headed for destruction (Galatians 6:8). We take ourselves out from under God's protection when we chose to disobey Him (Joshua 7:12; Nehemiah 9:30). And, God will not bless those who are living in disobedience.

He told them, "God says, 'Why do you refuse to obey my commands? You will not have success. You have deserted me. So I have deserted you.'" - 2 Chronicles 24:20b

Day #5: Victory

God told Joshua not to be afraid or discouraged. God instructed Joshua to take the whole army and attack Ai again. God promised, "I have delivered into your hands the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land." Notice, God was doing the delivering. God said this time the Israelites could keep the livestock and everything else they took from the people. Just as He did with Jericho, God gave the plan of attack. God said to have some of the fighting men hide behind the city and take them by surprise.

This time, Joshua took the whole army with him. Joshua chose 30,000 of his best fighting men and told them to go around behind the city at night. Joshua and the rest of the army approached the city from the front. When the king of Ai saw Joshua and his men coming, the king and all the men of Ai came out to fight them. Joshua and his men pretended to be afraid and turned to run away. Every single man in Ai and the neighboring town Bethel went after them. They left the city completely unguarded. God told Joshua to hold out his sword, or javelin, toward Ai.



As soon as he did, the men who were hiding behind the city got up quickly. They came out of their hiding places and rushed forward. They entered the city and captured it. They quickly set it on fire. The men of Ai looked back. They saw smoke rising up from the city into the sky. But they couldn't escape in any direction. - Joshua 8:19-20a

The king and his men couldn't escape. The Israelites were around them on all sides. Joshua held out his sword until all of the people of Ai were killed. Only the king was taken alive, and he was hanged a short time later. The Israelites carried off the livestock and the goods of the city, and Joshua burned the city to the ground. God had promised to deliver the king, people, city and land of Ai into Joshua's hand (Joshua 8:1). Again, we see that God ALWAYS keeps His promises!

Then Joshua built an altar to God on Mount Ebal. Then, with every man, woman, and child gathered around him, Joshua read every word of the law that God had given to Moses, so they would remember and obey.



God's Word tells us there is nothing we can do to EARN salvation - eternal life in heaven. We cannot "obey our way" into heaven (Ephesians 2:8-9). Eternal life comes ONLY when we trust in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross (Romans 4:23-24).

However, obeying IS very important. God's Word says that when we obey, God is delighted (1 Samuel 15:22). When we obey, God will be near to us (John 14:23) and we will be blessed (Luke 11:28).