



Lesson 69

The Sin of Achan

Story Elements

- **Text:** Joshua 7:1-26
- **Setting:** circa 1404 B.C., at Ai.
- **Characters:** God, Joshua, and Achan
- **Plot:** Achan's disobedience at Jericho leads to an Israel's embarrassing defeat at Ai.
- **Key word(s)** " _____ " (v 25)
- **Climax** *Joshua 7:19 And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me.*

Commandment Disobeyed

1. (v 1) God had warned the army of Israel not to plunder Jericho because it was set aside for destruction, and all the valuables were to be dedicated to the LORD. Failure to obey in this matter would result in judgment from God. (cf 6:18-19).
 - a. In this way, Jericho was to be a sort of _____ offering from all the victories that Israel would experience in their conquest of Canaan.
 - b. But Achan disobeyed and _____ what God had claimed for Himself, "and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel."

APPLICATION → We may wonder why all Israel was said to have sinned when only one man was guilty. Matthew Henry explains, "This should be a warning to us to take heed of sin ourselves, lest by it many be defiled or disquieted (Heb. 12:15), and to take heed of having fellowship with sinners, and of being in league with them, lest we share in their guilt."¹ There is a great difference between being a friend to sinners and a friend to sin. When sin is found in one, unless it is swiftly addressed, it will spread to the another, until nearly the whole body is infected (cf. Luke 12:1). Let us heed the warnings of scripture.

Israel Defeated

2. (vv 2-3) After their stunning victory at Jericho, Joshua sends Hebrew scouts to reconnoiter the city of Ai.
 - a. The scouts return with confidence and void of any caution, saying of Ai, "they are but _____."
 - b. The city's population numbered about 12,000 (8:25) - a presumably easy victory for Israel's much larger army. Joshua's scouts recommended a small force of only _____ to engage the men of Ai. (7:3).
3. (vv 4-5) But the Hebrews were embarrassingly defeated at Ai - thirty-six Israelites were killed, and "the hearts of the people were melted, and became as _____."

APPLICATION → Christians are to walk by faith, not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). When we walk by faith, we believe the promises of God and obey the commands of God. When we walk by sight (or by our own judgment) we fall into two traps: (1) We fear, and then fail (like the older generation of Hebrews who believed the evil report of the 10 spies); or (2) We presume, and then fail (like the new generation did concerning Ai). Each sin fails to _____ God.

4. (vv 6-9) Joshua's reaction shows his humility and faith:
 - a. Instead of anger, he showed extreme _____ by rending his clothes and putting dust on his head.
 - b. Instead of blaming others, he contritely fell on his face before the ark of the covenant, the symbol of God's

¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 301.

presence in Israel.

- c. Instead of accusing God, he confessed his confusion and showed his concern for the ____ of God (cf. v 19)

Guilt Discerned

5. (vv 10-12) God answered Joshua's prayer and told him that the reason Israel was defeated was because someone had stolen the accursed thing.
6. (vv 13-15) The LORD told Joshua that on the following day, lots² would be cast to discern which tribe held the guilty family, and then the process would be repeated to discern which family, and then again to discern the individual.

APPLICATION → Perhaps God prescribed this way of finding the guilty person instead of simply telling Joshua who it was so that it would impress upon Achan his need to confess before he was caught and to repent before the judgment was laid down. Notice verse 11 mentions _____ (misleading) – Achan had been lying about his actions, and his family was surely involved in the deception and cover-up.

7. (vv 16-19) Joshua did as he was commanded, and Achan's guilt was discovered. Then (and only then) did Achan confess his guilt.
- a. (vv 20-21) During the battle of Jericho, Achan saw a Babylonish garment, two hundred shekels of silver (about 5 pounds), and a wedge of _____ weighing fifty shekels (about 1 pound).

APPLICATION → Notice the downward spiral of sin in Achan's confession (v 21): "I **saw**", "I **coveted**", "I **took**", "I **hid**" – such even was the cadence of the first sin: "And when the woman **saw** that the tree was good for food... tree to be **desired** to make one wise, she **took** of the fruit thereof, and did eat...and Adam and his wife **hid** themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden." Let us so live that we do not need to _____ anything about our lives.

- b. (vv 22-26) Achan, his family, and all that was his was put to death, burned with fire, and a great stone heap erected as a memorial of the _____ of sin.

APPLICATION → Joshua's final word to Achan was a poetic rebuke: he called Achan a troubler and said that God would trouble him for troubling Israel. The place where Achan was killed (Achor) means "trouble." **Sin is indeed troublesome!** Joshua used these very words as a warning in the previous chapter: "And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and **trouble** it." (Josh 6:18)

Notes: _____

Answer Key: Key word(s): "trouble" • 1. a. first fruits; b. took • 2. a. few; b. 3,000 • 3. water; → believe • 4. a. grief; c. glory • 6. → dissembling • 7. a. gold; → hide; b. danger

How to use this worksheet for personal Bible study: (1) Read the Bible passage given in the **Story Elements** section. (2) Read through the worksheet and try to fill in the blanks without looking at the **Answer Key**. (3) Check your answers with the key and make the necessary corrections. (Note: some answers are a matter of opinion, and often more than one answer is correct. (4) Write down your own thoughts, applications, and questions for further study in the **Notes** section.

² "the LORD taketh] i.e. by lot. The Hebrew word for lot suggests that small stones, probably white and black ones, were used. These were probably drawn from a chest (cp. the expressions in 18:11, and 19:1)." Albert Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament: Exodus to Ruth*, ed. F. C. Cook and J. M. Fuller (London: John Murray, 1879), 367.