



LESSON 8

God judges Achan's sin

JOSHUA 7:1-26



God takes sin seriously.



“But the people of Israel broke faith in regard to the devoted things, for Achan...took some of the devoted things. And the anger of the LORD burned against the people of Israel” (Josh 7:1).

Supporting Truths

1. God’s wrath burns against sinners.
2. Loss of God’s gracious presence is deadly.
3. Sin must be dealt with in order for God’s grace to be present.
4. The consequences of sin are severe.
5. God’s wrath cannot be avoided by trying to hide sin.

Objectives

1. Describe Achan’s sin.
2. List those who died during Israel’s first attempt to conquer the city of Ai.
3. Describe how Joshua responded when God was not present to fight with Israel.
4. Describe what happened at Ai because of Achan’s sin.
5. Describe how Achan tried to hide his sin, but how God made his sin known.

STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

God judges Achan's sin • Joshua 7:1–26



Lesson Summary

By God's presence, Joshua had led Israel to victory over Jericho. Soon after, however, Israel was defeated at Ai, showing that God was no longer with Israel to fight for them. God would no longer fight for Israel because Israel had sinned. So Joshua followed God's instructions, found out that Achan was the one who sinned, and put Achan to death along with all his family and animals. Once the sin was dealt with, God turned from His wrath and fought for Israel once again.

Spotlight on the Gospel

God takes sin seriously. So much so that God sent His only Son to rescue sinners. On the cross God poured out His wrath over sin on Jesus so that all those who trust in Him will no longer experience God's righteous anger over sin. As Christians our sin still provokes God's anger, but His anger does not condemn us. Instead, His anger brings pain into our lives in order to draw us back to Him. When we repent, we enjoy His presence once again.

LAST WEEK



God gives Jericho
to Israel
Joshua 5:13–6:27

THIS WEEK



God judges Achan's sin
Joshua 7:1–26

NEXT WEEK



God is chosen by Israel
Joshua 23:1–24:29

POSSESSION

Lesson Commentary

God takes sin seriously.

True to His word, God brought His people into the land of Canaan. At Jericho it was clear that Israel's success was a work of God (Josh 6:1–2). God's presence, represented by the ark of the covenant, was the key to victory (1:5, 9; 6:4–13). But immediately after this victory, something terrible happened: God's presence was no longer with Israel to fight for them. Instead, His anger burned against Israel—all because of one man's sin.

The LORD was not present to give victory (7:1–5)

One man sinned, but his sin affected all of Israel. Just as Rahab's faith brought safety to her entire family (Josh 6:25), so Achan's unfaithfulness brought *wrath*, God's burning anger, upon all Israel.

Achan sinned by taking things from Jericho that were set apart for destruction. This violated God's command (Deut 20:16–18) and Joshua's specific instructions (Josh 6:18–19). Joshua had warned that those who broke this command would make the camp of the Israelites accursed and bring trouble on it (Josh 6:18).

This warning was realized when Israel was defeated at Ai (7:3–4). Thirty-six Israelites were killed (7:5), and Israel suffered a potentially devastating defeat in their ongoing conquest of the promised land (7:8–9). While God fought for Israel, the hearts of the Canaanites melted in fear (2:9). But now Israel saw that God was not fighting for them, and their own hearts melted in fear (7:5).

Their failure was due to God's wrath, not poor strategy. The people who had just witnessed the extraordinary destruction of Jericho's walls now fled before a less than ordinary military force from the city of Ai (7:3–5). All this happened because of *sin, any thought, word, or action that is displeasing to God*. God's anger burned against Israel on account of their sin, and His anger would continue as long as this sin remained (7:11–12).

God takes sin seriously. He does not punish every sin immediately, but the mercy He graciously extends to guilty sinners will not continue indefinitely (Rom 2:4–5). God will judge every sinful thought (Luke 8:17; Rom 2:16), word (Matt 12:36–37), and action (Matt 16:27). And His judgment is severe: spiritual death (Rom 6:23). The unrepentant sinner will endure God's wrath for all eternity, separated from the presence of God's grace (Rev 20:14–15).

The LORD explained why He was not present (7:6–15)

Joshua was so grieved that he tore his clothes (Josh 7:6). He knew this was no small defeat. God had promised that no one could stand against him (1:5), but now that promise seemed empty. What was God doing? Why had He brought them into Canaan only to abandon them (7:7–8)? Despite his confusion, Joshua still had the right perspective: he addressed God as “Lord GOD,” which emphasizes the LORD's sovereign control over all things (7:7). He also had the right priority: he was concerned about God's glory (7:9).

Joshua shows us how to pray in times of trouble. Prayer is rooted in faith in God's sovereign control even when things don't make sense (Rom 8:28). Prayer may express sorrow and make requests, but God's glory is its greatest concern (Dan 9:16–19; Matt 6:9–13, 33).

The LORD answered Joshua's righteous prayer. He explained that Israel had “sinned,” “transgressed,” “taken,” “stolen,” “lied,” and “put” the stolen things with their own possessions (Josh 7:11). These words are piled up to show how serious the sin was. Achan had broken numerous commandments (Exod 20:3, 15, 17; Lev 19:11; Deut 20:16–18) and, through Achan, Israel was guilty of taking things set apart for destruction (Josh 7:10–11), so the LORD declared that He had set apart Israel for destruction (7:12). The LORD would no longer be with Israel to fight for them, which would surely lead to their destruction, because it is the LORD's presence that provides courage and wins the victory (1:5, 9; 3:7, 10; 4:14; 6:27; Exod 33:15–16).

THINK ABOUT IT

Joshua's main concern was not Israel's defeat, but what Israel's defeat would say about Israel's God.



STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

God judges Achan's sin • Joshua 7:1–26



Mercifully, the LORD's response did not end there. He also provided the solution: get rid of the sin (Josh 7:13–15). This is always the solution to sin. In our own lives, we must quickly **repent** and **turn away from sin** (Acts 3:19), get rid of anything leading us back to sin (Matt 5:29–30), and make things right with those wronged (Matt 5:22–23).

The LORD even promised to show Joshua exactly who had sinned, and we can ask for His help to reveal our own sins too (Ps 139:23–24). No sin can be hidden from His sight (Heb 4:13). If we try to hide our sin, we will be miserable (Ps 32:3). But when we confess it, we will find great joy in God's forgiveness (Ps 32:1, 5).

The LORD restored His presence (7:16–26)

Joshua got up early in the morning, showing that he obeyed immediately (Josh 7:16). As Joshua carefully followed God's instructions, God revealed the sinner just as He had promised: it was Achan (7:16–18).



THINK ABOUT IT

Joshua was as eager to gain victory over sin as he had been to gain victory over Jericho (Josh 6:12).

Achan knew he was caught and admitted his sin (7:19–22). He had seen things that looked good, coveted them, and had taken them, exactly as Eve had done with the forbidden fruit (Gen 3:6). So we also sin when we choose to follow our desires rather than God's word (Jas

1:14–15). But sin never gives us what it promises. If Achan had only obeyed and waited, he would have been allowed to keep the plunder from Ai (Josh 8:2). How often in our impatience do we miss out on God's good gifts?

Achan's punishment was severe: Achan, along with all his family and animals, was stoned to death, then burned (7:24–25). His remains were buried under a pile of stones (7:26), just like the body of the king of Ai would be (8:29). That pile of stones over Achan was a monument reminding Israel for years to come of God's deadly wrath against sin. But it also reminded them that the LORD's wrath did not last (7:26). With the purging of Achan's sin came the

return of God's presence in battle. God spoke to Joshua, encouraging him to return to Ai, for He had given the king, his people, his city, and his land into Joshua's hand (8:1). Joshua obeyed, and he and the people gained a great victory (8:18–29). God had once again provided for His people.

God takes sin seriously. So seriously, in fact, that He sent His own Son to pay sin's penalty. God the Father treated Jesus as if He were a sinner (even though He was not) in order that all those who trust in Him would be delivered from God's wrath on sin (2 Cor 5:21). No other sacrifice will do. The only acceptable sacrifice for sin is God's Son (Heb 10:4–14), which God freely gave while we were yet sinners (Rom 5:8).

Apart from Christ, we all are like Achan. We have all sinned, choosing what looks good to us instead of choosing to obey God's commands (Rom 3:10, 23). So we all, like Achan, deserve to die away from the presence of God's glory (Rom 6:23). But if we turn to Christ, then God's wrath is removed forever (Rom 8:1). Even though as Christians we still continue to sin, provoking God to anger (Eph 4:30), His anger does not condemn us, but rather draws us back to Him (Jas 4:5; Heb 12:7–10). So although God's anger against us may last for a moment, His favor towards us is forever (Ps 30:5). This is a warning against sin, but it is also a great comfort and motivation to run back to God when we do sin, confident that His favor towards those who believe will never end.

THINK ABOUT IT
God sent His own Son to pay the penalty for sin that we could not.



Lesson Outline

God takes sin seriously.

AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE



1. The LORD caused Israel to lose the battle at Ai (7:2–5).
2. The LORD was angry with Israel because Achan sinned (7:1, 6–15).
3. The LORD stopped being angry after Achan's sin was handled (7:16–26).

AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE



1. The LORD was not present to give victory (7:1–5).
 - The LORD was angry because Achan took banned things (7:1).
 - The LORD caused Israel to be defeated at Ai (7:2–5).
2. The LORD explained why He was not present (7:6–15).
 - Joshua expressed grief and confusion to the LORD (7:6–9).
 - The LORD explained that Israel had taken things set apart for destruction (7:10–11).
 - The LORD declared that Israel was set apart for destruction (7:12).
 - The LORD commanded Israel to get rid of the sin (7:13–15).
3. The LORD restored His presence (7:16–26).
 - Achan's sin was exposed (7:16–21).
 - The things Achan stole were brought before the LORD (7:22–23).
 - Achan and his family were stoned to death (7:24–25).
 - The LORD stopped being angry against Israel (7:26).



TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

God judges Achan's sin • Joshua 7:1–26



Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

- 1. What happened when Israel attacked Ai?**
Israel was defeated, and 36 Israelites were killed.
- 2. Why was Israel defeated?**
Because Israel had sinned.
- 3. Who had sinned?**
Achan sinned by stealing things from Jericho.
- 4. What did God tell Israel to do to Achan and his family?**
He told them to put them to death.



Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

- 1. How did God respond to Achan's sin?**
His wrath burned against all Israel.
- 2. When did Joshua realize that something was wrong?**
He realized that something was wrong when Israel was defeated at Ai.
- 3. Why was Israel so afraid even though only 36 soldiers were killed?**
They realized that God was no longer with them to fight for them.
- 4. What did Joshua do when he realized God was no longer with Israel?**
He prayed. He prayed to God as the one who sovereignly rules over all. He prayed for the sake of God's glory.
- 5. According to this story, can sin be hidden from God?**
No. God knew about the sin and showed Joshua who had committed the sin.
- 6. According to this story, is it okay to let sin keep going?**
No. Sin is so deadly to our relationship with God that we must get rid of it at all costs. As Israel killed Achan and all his family, so we cannot allow sin to stay in our hearts.
- 7. Did God continue to have wrath against Israel?**
No. After the sin was dealt with, God turned from His wrath against Israel.
- 8. Does God's wrath towards us last forever?**
It does if we are not a Christian. But if we have trusted Jesus for salvation, then God's wrath towards us does not last. His wrath is like the discipline of a father who still loves his children no matter what.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



GOD KNOWS

Bring in a nice coat and some money and a blanket. Put the coat and money under the blanket. Have the children guess what is under the blanket. Ask if God knows what is under there. God does. Explain that nothing can be hidden from God. Tell the children that in the story today, we'll learn that we cannot hide our sin from God.

ONE AND ALL

Play tag or "Simon Says" with the children, and make a rule that if even one child is tagged or loses, then everyone is out. Mention how quickly the game ends with this rule. Explain that God gave Israel instructions that they were to all obey, but because of one man's sin, all the people were in trouble with God. Discuss with the children what happened to Israel at Jericho when one man sinned.



THE SOUNDS OF FEET

As the children are seated, lead them in making a marching sound. Then have the children make the sound of feet quickly running away in fear. Talk about what the different sounds of feet were like. Use this activity to talk about what happened to Israel when Achan disobeyed God.

HEARTS LIKE WATER (JOSH 7:5)

When Achan sinned, God no longer gave Israel the victory in battle. When the people were defeated, they doubted God, and their hearts were no longer bold as they had been. The text describes Israel's spirit by saying that their hearts became like water. You could illustrate this change by showing two kinds of hearts to children: One hard (made of plastic or some other hard material) and another made out of gelatin in the shape of a heart. Extra gelatin hearts could be brought to eat during snack time. Use the activity to discuss what happens when we are scared and how it can feel as though our hearts are like water.



ACHAN'S SIN IS REVEALED

See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheet, construction paper, scissors, crayons, and glue.

Directions: Pre-cut pictures from the craft sheet. Have the students color the pictures. Glue the tent to a sheet of construction paper. Help the students to tape the tent door to the correct position, as shown below.



*Achan's Sin is Revealed
See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1*

TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

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AGES 6–8



HATRED OF SIN

Ask the children whether they have ever hated anything. Explain that you don't mean just disliking something intensely, but rather being so repulsed by it that you can't even be in its presence. God is perfectly holy and hates sin. He hates it perfectly and can't even be in its presence. In today's lesson, we will see that God hates sin and requires that it be punished. How much does God hate sin? He hates it so much that He commanded that a sinner and his family be killed for his disobedience in the book of Joshua.

TREASURE MAP

Make a treasure map (could use map to lead the children to some type of "treasure" in the room). First, ask the children why people hide treasure. Tell them that in today's lesson they will learn about somebody who hid treasure. Second, tell the children that there is buried treasure in today's lesson, but it was not found with a treasure map. Have them listen for how the treasure was found. Third, ask the children what types of things are found with a treasure map. Tell them which of those is the buried treasure in today's story.



ISRAEL'S MELTING HEARTS

Freeze water in the shape of a heart. Take out the frozen heart before the lesson, show it to the class, and review last week's lesson on Jericho. After such a great conquest, the Israelite's hearts must have been strong and full of courage. Tap on the hard ice to symbolize its strength. Read Joshua 2:11 to remind the class that the Canaanites' hearts had once melted in fear. Explain that now the hearts of Israel are going to melt and become like water. Display the heart in a dish in the front of the classroom so the children can observe it slowly melting over the course of the lesson. At the end of the lesson, there should be a puddle of water in the container. Read Joshua 7:4–5 to the class at the end of the lesson, and remind the children that there are serious consequences for sin.

SIN CONTAMINATES

Bring in a clear cup of water and dark food coloring. Put in a drop of food coloring and show how it changes the color of the whole cup of water. That is how sin is. When we sin, our sin infects the people around us.



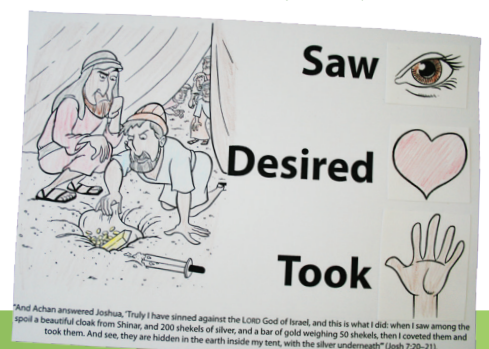
BEWARE OF COVETING

See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheet, crayons, and glue.

Directions: Color and cut out pictures of the eye, heart, and hand. Glue them next to the words "saw," "desired," and "took." Explain that this is the process that takes place when someone covets something.

Beware of Coveting
See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1



AGES 9–11



INTRODUCE

MOSTLY OBEDIENT

What does it mean to be mostly obedient? What if you asked someone to do something and they did it most of the way but didn't finish? Would they have done what you asked? What if a bridge builder built the bridge most of the way but forgot to finish it? Explain that God expects perfect obedience, not partial obedience. Although most of Israel obeyed God's commands during the siege of Jericho, one man didn't. Once the sin was found out the guilty were punished as an example to the rest of Israel. When you obey God, do you fully obey Him, or are you only "mostly obedient?"

A LITTLE LEAVEN

Before the lesson, explain how it takes only a little yeast to leaven an entire lump of dough. Illustrate the concept of what happens with yeast in bread by setting up a lump of dough and adding some yeast to it. Give enough time for the yeast to take effect. Throughout the lesson, refer back to the rising dough and the illustration of its similarities of sin. Explain that in a similar way, sin can infiltrate the life of the believer and spread to others in the church (1 Cor 5:6).



ILLUSTRATE

LOST

Have you ever been lost? Has there ever been a time when you thought you were with your parents, but then you looked up and they weren't there? It can be scary to realize your parents aren't with you. It is much scarier to realize that God is not with you because of sin.

SPLINTER

Ask the children if they've ever had a splinter in their finger. Then ask them what they did about it. Did they leave it under the skin to fester and become infected, or did they remove it, not matter how much it might hurt? Most should say they removed it. This is because we know that not dealing with the splinter will lead to more pain and trouble in the future. The same is true with our sin; no matter how much it hurts, we must deal with our sin as soon as we become aware of it. Only then will healing come.



APPLY

COVETING

Discuss with the children the process of coveting. Read the story of Eve's temptation (Gen 3:1–6) and observe the process that she went through that led to sin. What is the difference between seeing something that you would like to have and coveting something? What are the steps that lead to coveting and sin? What are some things that you have seen that you have wanted and were tempted to sin to get? What would some logical, precautionary steps be that you could take to prevent finding yourself in the temptation in the first place?