

Israel Has a Sin Problem

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[0 : 00] Today we're going to see what happens after the fall of Jericho. We're going to read about the failure of Ai, but I'm not going to talk a lot about Ai. I'm going to talk about someone else.

I guess it's Glenn's sermon next week, right? No. No? Steve's there. Somebody gets to talk about Ai, not me. But we are going to talk about the sin of Israel, and particularly the sin of Achan.

So what we're going to do is read. There's 26 verses in this chapter. And the whole story is in those 26 verses that we need to cover. We're not going to read every one of them, but most of them.

So if somebody would do this, 1 through 9. So if someone would read 1 through 9, chapter 7. It would be wonderful.

I'll do it. Alright. 1 through 9. Yeah. John, did you have to do this to me?

[1 : 13] Yeah. Yeah. You know what I'm doing? From the tribe of Judah took some of the things under the banner. Therefore the anger of the Lord burned against the sons of Israel.

Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Bethlehem, east of Bethel, and said to them, Go up and spy out the land.

So the men went up and spy out Ai. And they returned to Joshua and said to him, Do not let all the people go up. Only about 2 or 3,000 men need to go up to Ai.

Do not make all the people toil up there, for they are few. So about 3,000 men from the people went up there. But they fled from the men of Ai.

And the men of Ai struck down about 36 of their men and pursued them from the gate as far as Shevarim and struck them down on the descent, so the hearts of the people melted and became as water.

[2 : 23] Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the Lord until the evening, both he and the elders of Israel.

And they put dust on their heads. And Joshua said, Alas, O Lord God, why did you bring, why did you ever bring this people over the Jordan?

Only to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us. If only we had been willing to dwell beyond the Jordan.

O Lord, what can I say since Israel has turned their back before their enemies? For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it, and they will surround us and cut off our name from the earth.

And what wilt thou do for thy great name? Alright. Hey, Mark, if you'll go to the fourth slide. It's the one verse on there. It says verse 1. Go ahead.

[3 : 27] Verse 1. It's like the third or fourth slide. There you go. I didn't tell him to change them while you were reading.

But it says this. But the Israelites disobeyed the command about the city's riches. Now, Matt read this, and who really did this?

Akin. But who got blamed for it? Everybody. Israel. Israel. It says it twice in there. Israel. Israel. It's recorded.

It's recorded. It's recorded. It's recorded. It's recorded. It's recorded. That your son or grandson was the one who did this thing. Israel. So, He's from the tribe of Judah. The tribe of Judah has a particular role in God's purpose to play.

[4 : 49] Eve was promised that her seed would crush the serpent's head. When you get to Israel, he blesses Judah.

Why? You will rule your brothers. Out of you will come kings. Judah was set aside to be that continuation of the seed of Eve.

Who's the ultimate person from the tribe of Judah? Jesus. Satan's going to do everything in his power to break that line.

He knows the prophecy, the promise. He's going to try to find a way to subvert, and particularly Judah. Here's Achan. Out of all, there must have been, there's either between 600,000 and a million Israelites camped there before Jericho.

And one person from Judah has got the whole nation brought under the ban, which means they now are exactly in the same boat as the city of Jericho.

[6 : 01] They are set aside for destruction, and God's anger is burning against them. You got a picture? The first lesson I guess you get out of this whole thing is that sin has consequences.

Because I want you to know, but it's not just consequences for the person who sinned. I always wondered how many men died in the battles Israel fought to conquer the land.

And you know what the apparent answer is? Zero. Zero until they got to Ai. And then after that, it was zero again. Nobody died in battle.

Why? Because the Lord fought the battle for them. They went to Ai, and what happens? 36 men died. Now, I don't know how those 36 got chosen out of the whole, you know, 3,000 men go up and 36 died.

It would be my luck I'd be the 36th one, by the way. Think about that. Because Achan sinned. 36 innocent men died.

[7 : 23] And the whole nation is now under the ban for destruction. Sin has communal consequences.

Well, that's the problem. Sin is the problem. Sin is the problem. And God is a holy God, and He cannot dwell amongst a sinful people.

And in order for Him to do what He was going to do, that is, bring Israel out of Egypt and into the Promised Land, by the way, which is actually a picture of the return from exile.

You know what exile I'm talking about? The exile of Adam and Eve from the garden. God is bringing His people back into His land. And He's going to establish His kingdom there.

And He's going to dwell amongst these people. And they're going to pick up doing what Adam and Eve were supposed to do, which is to bring glory to Him from the nations and to extend His authority and His glory over the earth.

[8 : 29] So He dealt with this problem with sin. He can't live with these people if they're sinful. So He dealt with that at Sinai. And you think about it.

What happened at Sinai? He gave them the law. He said, this is how a holy people live. Peter calls that peculiar. Well, if you and I have ever read the law, you go, some of this is pretty peculiar.

Tassels on your garments and stuff. And then He also gave them the sacrifices. And He established the tabernacle.

And why did He do that? He did that because a holy God has to be separate from an unholy people, a sinful people.

So then the holy of holy, God put the ark. Had them put the ark. And the ark was His footstool. It was the connection between heaven and earth. God's presence was there.

[9 : 31] The priest could only go in there once a year. Then there was the outer court. The next outside. And the priest could go in there on a daily basis. But he was separated by a veil from the holy God.

But before he could go in there, he still had to consecrate himself. And then there was the outer court. And the average Jew could go, or Israel could go in there, and do what he needed to do, offer sacrifices and pray.

And then the outer side of the camp is where the people lived. And that's where the sin would happen. It's in the outer camp out there. They deal with it on the inside.

God said, yeah, for me to be in your presence, you to be in my presence, there has to be a sacrifice. There has to be a cleansing. There has to be a way that your sins are covered.

Because a sinful man cannot be in God's presence. It's just not possible. Not possible. And so they had this system.

[10 : 31] Now, they get to Jericho. What did God tell him to do? Well, he gave him directions about the city. Nothing in the city can be kept. Everything has to be destroyed.

All the gold, silver, and iron. Brought to the treasury of the tabernacle. He said, everything is under a ban. And he told the people before they did that, though, that they had to consecrate themselves.

They had to ritually cleanse themselves. Which is quite a process. I think we heard something about it. Maybe this morning. Anyway, about they had to take...

Oh, I know. I heard it from Tim Keller. They had to bathe themselves. They had to clean their clothes. You had to clean clothes. You had to be clean yourself. You had to do certain things. And there were certain things you couldn't do.

And you were ritually clean. It was symbolic to say that I cleaned myself up before the Lord so I can go in His presence. And they go and they take the city.

[11 : 27] And now, Achan is sin. There's something else going on here.

When Joshua decides it's time, to go take Ai, we're way off my slides, so don't worry about them. We're going to find out.

You read it. He didn't even ask the Lord for advice. Who gave him the strategy they used to take Jericho? The Lord did.

In fact, Joshua meets a guy with a sword, standing there, and Joshua challenges him. Who are you for? Us or them? And what did he say? I'm not for you or them.

I am the commander of the army of the Lord. And then he gets instructions. Do this. It's how you're going to fight this battle. They didn't fight anything.

[12 : 35] God did it for them. The walls fall down. They go in. Joshua now goes, All right, guys. The next target is Ai. Let's go. How are we going to do this? He says, The spies out.

Good military tactic. Go find out. We have reconnaissance. Got to know the enemy. Got to know what's going on. What do I need? How do I go about this? Send them up. They come back. Say, eh.

Small force. It turns out that Ai probably was a small military outpost. A little town with a wall. But it was some soldiers in it that was there to protect the route up to Bethel and all that area and that area.

So, he goes, we don't need the whole army. And he goes, okay, take 3,000 and go attack it. You don't hear anything about him seeking the Lord's wisdom or asking him, Lord, how do you want us to do this?

You don't even hear him say, oh, yeah. Lord, is this the next target? Go do it. And he's, if you talk to the Lord, you think the Lord might have said, Joshua, before you send those 3,000, you might want to deal with the sin in your presence.

[13 : 36] Because I can't go with that army because you have sin in your camp. My presence cannot be here with you because you have sin.

You don't hear that. And it's a disaster, by the way. The word that they use means trouble.

Guess what Achan means? The letters of Achan's name is exactly the same as the letters in the word trouble in Hebrew, which is exactly, later on you're going to find out, the valley where Achan dies is Akor.

And it's the exact same letters as Achan. Trouble, trouble, trouble. Now we get to the part where they come back, they fail, and the hearts of the people melt.

Now what's happened? Remember what Rahab said about the Canaanites? The hearts of the people have melted. Israel and Canaan have switched places.

[14 : 41] And it's now Israel whose hearts have melted. Why? Because they despair. They don't see God with them. They don't understand what happened. Why did we get defeated?

Why did 36 of our men die? Why did we run from a small force and flee the battlefield? Let's read the next part.

Someone read 10 through 15. If you want to find that on there, you can. There you go. There you go. So the Lord said to Joshua, rise up.

Why is it that you have fallen on your face? Israel has sinned. They have also transgressed my covenant, which I have commanded you. And they have even taken some of the things under the band, and have both stolen and deceived.

Moreover, they have also put them among their own things. Therefore, the sons of Israel cannot stand before their enemies. They turn their backs before their enemies, for they have become accursed.

[15 : 46] I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy the things under the band from your midst. Rise up, consecrate the people, and say, consecrate yourselves for tomorrow.

For thus the Lord, the God of Israel, has said, there are things under the band in your midst, O Israel. So you cannot stand before your enemies until you have removed the things under the band from your midst.

In the morning, then you shall come near by your tribes. And it shall be that tribe which the Lord takes by lot shall come near by families.

And the family which the Lord takes shall come near by household. And the household which the Lord takes shall come near man by man. And it shall be that the one who is taken with the things under the band shall be burned with fire, he and all his belongings to him, because he has transgressed the covenant of the Lord, and because he has committed a disgraceful thing in Israel.

Thank you. What Joshua has done before this, before the Lord tells him to get up, is he's going, whine, whine, whine, whine, whine, whine, whine, whine, whine, whine, whine, whine, whine, whine.

[17 : 00] And the Lord says, all right, Joshua, enough of this crap. Get up off your knees and stand up like a man. I'm going to tell you what the problem is.

And what's the problem? He's sin. And if you listen very carefully, you'll find out it says, verse 11, Israel has sinned.

They have violated. They have taken. They have stolen. Who is the Lord holding responsible? All of them.

They were all given the instructions. They were all told what to do. They were all to be obedient. And they failed. And the Lord says, now, get up.

Consecrate yourself and your people. Get them ready because tomorrow we're going to go through the tribes. We're going to go through the clans. We're going to go through the households.

[17 : 58] And we're going to go through man by man until we locate the person who has brought this on Israel. Now, I'm going, wouldn't it have been a whole lot easier, Lord, if you just said it was aching?

Or ask for volunteers. Anyone volunteer to be stoned today? You know, I took it. But he didn't do that. Why would he do that system?

I think his accountability. Israel, you're under the ban. Israel, you have sinned. Now, we're going to have an accounting. First tribe.

Now, how do you think they chose the tribe was or was not? By lots. In all likelihood. I can just see the relief.

Here's a card. The tribe was... Nope, not you. Let's go. You know, until they get to Judah. It's you, Judah. Okay.

[19 : 06] Now, we start the clans. Let's get the clans. First clan. Second clan. Down, down, down, down, down. Until they get the clan that belongs to. It's you.

You can imagine the elder from that clan going, Who would have done that? Household by household. It's this household.

Man by man in the household. It's this man. This one. Do you think this might have put the fear of the Lord in the people of Israel?

Impressed upon them the seriousness of sin in their midst? Yes. Yes. He tells them that sin must be revealed and dealt with.

He won't go with them. There is no victory. What all the things that Joshua will wind about, about the Amorites throwing them out and exterminating, all that will be true because of sin in their midst.

[20 : 11] We've got to deal with this. God's purpose is going to be fulfilled. God is going to. He's given them the land already. He said, I gave you, pastor, the land. It's already yours.

You've just got to go and take it. It's going to happen. That's God's purpose. So we've got to deal with this problem of sin. And they do.

And they get to Achan. Someone read 19 through 21. Then Joshua said to Achan, My son, give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, by telling the truth.

Make a confession and tell me what you've done. Don't hide it from me. Achan replied, It is true. I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel. Among the plunder, I saw a beautiful road from Babylon, 200 silver coins, and a bar of gold weighing more than a pound.

I learned them so much that I took them. They're hidden in the ground beneath my tent, with the silver buried deeper than the rest. So Joshua sent some men to make a search. They ran to the tent and found the stolen goods hidden there, just as Achan had said.

[21 : 26] The silver still buried beneath the rest. They took the things from the tent and brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites. They laid them on the ground in the presence of the Lord. And Joshua and all the Israelites took Achan, silver, the robe, the bar of gold, his sons, daughters, cattle, donkeys, sheep, goat, tent, everything they had, and brought them to the valley of Achan.

Then Joshua said to Achan, why have you brought trouble on us? The Lord will never bring trouble on you. And all the Israelites stoned Achan and his family and burned their bodies.

They piled a great heap of stones over him, which remains to this day. That's why this place has been called Valley of Trouble ever since. So the Lord was no longer angry. What is not apparent in this, in English, when we translate this, is that Achan's perception of the things that he took, and that is he said, I saw among them the goods, I saw among the goods we seize, and that is really what he's saying is, and Roger's translation implied it, you know, spoils.

The things that I saw were spoils. The Hebrew word is herem, which means under the ban. But Achan didn't see it as under the ban.

He saw it as what? Legitimate spoils. Soldiers are allowed, they were allowed to take spoils, but they were not allowed to take things that are herem, under the ban.

[23 : 00] So in his mind, he looked at them. Now I don't know what a robe of Babylon looks like, but I got this idea that it's pretty fancy with all kinds of fringe and trim, and you know.

He looked at that and he goes, ooh, ooh, ooh. I look good in that. Now I don't know where he thought he was going to wear it, but anyway. And he saw the gold, and he saw the silver, and he says, you know, but you know, I was thinking about this.

He did this for a handful of, a pound of gold, and a bunch of silver. So he was promised a house, and land, and vineyards, and fields, and animals, and he did not do anything to earn.

God was going to give him everything he needed when they got, they divided up the land. That's what they did. They didn't destroy most of the cities. They didn't kill the cattle. What they did is they took it all, and then a family would move in.

Everything he could want was going to be given to him. And yet he says, I saw it, and it looked good to me. So I took it, and I justified by saying it spoils.

[24 : 10] See, it didn't really belong to the Lord. He didn't mean that this had to be destroyed. This was spoils. I, as a soldier, took this, found this, kept it for myself. But he understood that he had sinned.

If you read, and you can change the slide if you want. 1 John 2, 15 through 17 says, Do not love the world, or the things of the world.

For if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Because all that is in the world, the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the arrogance produced by material possessions, is not from the Father.

But it's from the world. And the world is passing away with all its desires. But the person who does the will of God will remain forever. That literally became true for Akin.

He saw, he desired, he took. By the way, that's the same sin of Eve. She saw, she desired, she took.

[25 : 19] That's what sin is. We see, whether we actually see mentally or physically, or with our eyes. We desire. We take. James says the same basic thing.

We add another step, and Akin did too, and we justify. Oh, this isn't really sin. I'm not really sinning. I'm just doing what I can do.

It's okay. Think about that. Your favorite sin. Don't you say that to yourself often when you get done? You go, oh, that was bad. No, no, no. There's nothing wrong with that. It's okay. I don't remember exactly saying that.

That was wrong in the Bible. Do you remember saying that? No, it isn't exactly like that. It's similar. But you know what? There's a distinction. I have this need for this thing. So it's okay.

It's okay. We do that all the time. All these things that come from the desire of the flesh, the desire of the earth, and the arrogance that comes from material possessing, those things are under the ban.

[26 : 25] What's going to happen to them? All those things that we take pride in and seek with diligence, material things in particular, titles, whatever, what happens to those? They're going to pass away.

They're gone. They're useless. They're tools in the process, but they're not going to... When you get to heaven and you're standing before the great throne of God and the judgment, he's not going to say, okay, we're going to have this little test by fire, and if your titles and your house and your fancy car and all that, those things are going to survive the test, and you can keep them forever.

No. What's going to happen to them? They're going to burn up. What's going to be left? Our good deeds for one day. Our obedience to God's will for another day.

Those things last for eternity. Those are our reward. Achan missed what was eternal, taking in its place that which was bound for destruction.

And in the process, Achan lost everything. Everything. His grave is under a pile of stones in the valley of Angkor or trouble.

[27 : 56] I also want you to notice that this costs other things and people their lives. Who died with Achan?

His children. And every animal he owned. Now, I have to believe that those children, because of where the stuff was found in the middle of the tent, probably knew about it.

So they become guilty of the sin too. They know this has been banned and they know their father has taken it and they know he's hidden it, but yet they have not done anything to bring it to the attention of the rulers.

There's no mention of a wife, so almost all the commentary I read said they assumed the wife was not there anymore. She's died. But the children were probably grown children.

Achan's sin cost them their lives too. That tells me that no matter how we think or what we say to ourselves, there is no private sins.

[29 : 19] Sin is costly and affects damages the whole community. it's also interesting that Achan could have repented.

Did you hear repentance in his confession? No, he just stated what he did. He never said I shouldn't have done it or I read it or I repent of it or he just said I took it.

God revealed the truth of his sin and it had consequences.

We sin and we often try to conceal it almost always I don't think many of us are in the habit of bleeding out and out public sin and just letting it hang out there and well that's the way it is.

But God's spirit in us will reveal it. He knows it and we can confess our sin and he is righteous and just to forgive us as 1 John would tell us.

[30 : 31] Why? Because of the finished work of Christ. Now I don't have a slide I heard this verse this morning I go there's the answer to my sermon. Turn to Colossians 1 starting in verse 19 and it says this for God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell on his son and through him to reconcile all things to himself by making peace through the blood of his cross through him whether things on earth or things in heaven and you were at one time strangers and enemies in your minds as expressed to your evil deeds but now he has reconciled you by his physical body through death to present you holy without blemish and blameless before him if indeed you remain in the faith established and firm without shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard.

We too have a problem with sin. We can't have God's spirit living in us and be sinful. Why? God cannot live in the presence of sin.

So what did he do? He said I'll fix sin forever. Now this is his intent from the get-go. The whole Levitical system was actually a picture of what God was going to accomplish through Christ.

Christ is the new temple. It is the presence of God in our midst. We now have the spirit living in us. The holy of holies is in us. So fortunately for us when God sees us he sees Christ.

And he says you are justified and righteous but John we need to deal with that flaw that's in your old man. The one that keeps doing that stupid thing you know what I'm talking about right John?

[32 : 30] I go oh yes I don't really want to give it up though I really enjoy that. He says stop stop you must reflect the character of my son only in him am I well pleased.

We've had our problem fixed but we have to live like it's fixed rather than like it's an excuse and how many of us and I have to admit I'll raise my hand first how many of us use the blood of Christ and our ability to ask for forgiveness as a way around giving up sin yeah boy I did that oh Lord I know it was wrong forgive me forgive me and off we only do it again why because we don't take the seriousness of sin serious we say yeah I sin God forgive me change me and then we go and do it again because we didn't really mean it we'd like it to happen that's a wish I wish you would fix this in me forever but in the meantime boy life's good

Jonathan by the way got accepted to the divinity program which was really interesting I'm going to be interested to see how that all works out but anyway he told me while he was here this week he said you know he said I realized something most Christians don't believe this or they know it but they don't actually live it he says that Christ is king if he's king we are his servants and if we're servants then we need to be obedient doing the will of our king rather than the will of our political masters or our economic masters or our you name it we don't live like we're servants of a king we live like we are bystanders waiting for the end to come but in the meantime let's play the game and God says no there's only one kingdom there's only one king and you my children must be faithful and good servants because what do we hope to hear what did

Jesus say he said well done my servant he's not well done my good and faithful friend my good and faithful buddy my good and faithful child my good and faithful servant so let's learn from this remember that our sin does affect the community we may not see it day to day but it does it impedes us why God cannot abide deliberate persistent sin in the midst of his people because he wants to dwell with us that's why we have this candle here Christ walks amongst us but if we're sinning not obedient then he can't he won't he could but he won't bless us and use us he can't use us because we're a broken tool a corrupted thing that has no use but destruction why are churches failing why are churches failing because they have abandoned being obedient and servants of the king he says I don't need you anymore

I never needed your building and since none of you are following me I don't need you either I will move on and find those that are faithful so let's serve the risen king our Lord Jesus the Christ Lord we thank you for your grace it's only by grace that we even come to you Lord it's only by your grace that you have extended to us the forgiveness that we need to be in your presence the cleansing that we need so we may live with you and before you the grace that has allowed us to draw near to you be your people call you king call you lord and know you help us lord to understand the problem with sin and to accept your solution and not play games with it we thank you in Jesus name amen