

Spiritual Defeat Because of Sin



Joshua 7:1-26 TEXT, EXPOSITION AND PRACTICAL HELPS

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THE CONQUEST OF THE PROMISED LAND, [Joshua 6:1-12:24](#)

The Failed Assault at Ai (Achan's Sin): Spiritual Defeat Because of Sin, [Joshua 7:1-26](#)

[\(Joshua 7:1-26\)](#) **Introduction:** all kinds of human emotions are felt by people who experienced failure. There are the emotions of discouragement and depression, of being distressed and downhearted, of feeling down and being treated like an outcast, of being sad and crestfallen, of being disheartened and demoralized.

Sadly, these emotions become serious problems for some people. For example, people by the millions wrestle with the problem of depression and discouragement, living defeated, unsuccessful lives. For many people, life is like a roller coaster with peaks and valleys, being up one day and down the next. Life becomes like a wave of the sea rolling in and out, swaying to and fro. Sometimes there is progress, but there is also regression. Gains are sometimes made, but losses are also suffered. From time to time there is victory, but there is far too often defeat. There are occasional conquests and triumphs, but there is more often the experience of being overthrown, a sense of being routed and trounced by the events and experiences of life.

But listen: there is a glorious message of hope, the message of Holy Scripture. The Word of God declares that all these emotions that discourage and defeat us can be conquered. We can live a victorious life, a life that conquers and triumphs over all enemies that seek to defeat us as we walk throughout life.

Remember that Joshua and the army of Israel had just experienced the glorious conquest of the fortress at Jericho. Joy and rejoicing were flooding their hearts, for they had witnessed the power of God acting in their behalf. They had seen the walls of Jericho crumbling under the miraculous power of God. The future looked bright, for it seemed as though God would be with them as they marched forth to conquer the promised land. But then it happened: when the army launched an attack against the second city of the enemy, the soldiers were routed and soundly beaten. Defeat was now staring the Israelite army in the face. And through this experience, a strong warning is issued to succeeding generations: sin will always lead to defeat in spiritual warfare. This is the subject of this important passage of Scripture: *The Failed Assault at Ai (Achan's Sin): Spiritual Defeat Because of Sin, [Joshua 7:1-26](#).*

1. **The cause of the failed assault: sin (v.1).**
2. **The consequences of sin upon God's people (v.2-5).**
3. **The remedy for sin and defeat: a confrontation with the LORD (v.6-26).**

1. ([Joshua 7:1](#)) The cause of the failed assault: sin.

Sin, Results— Theft, Results— Stealing, Results— Responsibility, Corporate— Corporate Responsibility— Community, Duty— Society, Duty— Society, Corporate Responsibility, Flesh, Aim of: the cause of the failed assault against Ai was sin, terrible sin. A soldier had stolen some things that had been given to the Tabernacle, that had been set apart and devoted to God and His service. The soldier's name was Achan. His very name means "**trouble**," and he is known as the man who brought trouble upon Israel ([Joshua 7:25](#)). The trouble he caused had far-reaching consequences: his sin affected the whole community of Israel. It caused the first military defeat of God's people.

Note this fact: all Israel was charged with the crime, not just the individual man. There was a *corporate responsibility*. Therefore there was *corporate, community guilt*. God looked upon the community as one body of people who should love, care for, and look after one another. Israel was one body of people, one nation, one community of people who were to build up one another and build a strong, righteous, moral, and just society.

The point is striking: within communities, neighbors are to look after one another and take care of one another. In God's plan and purpose for Israel (and for all other peoples), neighbors are to love one another and be responsible and accountable for one another. Therefore, when Achan committed the sin of stealing from God, the whole community of Israel became guilty before God. Consequently, God charged the Israelites with *corporate, community guilt*. As a community, they were corporately responsible for one another; therefore, there was corporate guilt. God charged the Israelites with committing a "**trespass**" (**Maal**), with being unfaithful to him. The word means to cover up, to act in secret, to act treacherously; to be unfaithful; to break faith; to break or violate a trust.

One man had trespassed against God; one man had been unfaithful to God, broken the trust with God. But the man did not live in isolation; he was not an island unto himself. He lived within a community; therefore, what he did affected the community as a whole. His sin had a devastating affect upon the Israelites: it caused the assault against Ai to fail. His sins separated the whole community from God, from His holy Presence and guidance. Therefore when Israel went into battle, God was not with them. Their sin had separated them from God. Sin had cut them off from God; consequently, when they went into battle, they fought in the *arm of the flesh*, not in the power of God. And they were defeated. All because of sin. Sin always causes failure and defeat when fighting the enemies of this world.

Thought 1. There are two strong lessons in this point for us.

- 1) Sin always leads to failure and defeat when fighting against the enemies of this world.

Enemy after enemy confronts us, enemies such as.....

1. disease
2. accident
3. broken relationships

4. financial difficulty
5. loss of job
6. natural catastrophe
7. misunderstandings
8. discouragement
9. depression
10. family problems
11. work difficulties
12. disappointments
13. tension and stress
14. loss of loved ones
15. lack of purpose and fulfillment

Such enemies will defeat us if there is sin in our lives. God cannot dwell in the midst of sin. God is holy; therefore He can dwell only where there is righteousness and purity. His presence and guidance are not available where there is sin. We stand alone to struggle against such enemies if there is sin in our lives, and the only help available to us is what help man can give us. Supernatural help—God's presence and power—is available only as we live holy and righteous lives before God. Sin separates, cuts us off from God and His help. Sin causes failure and defeat. Sin causes us to live lives that are weak and wavering before God, lives that ebb and flow like the waves of the sea. Listen to what God declares about sin:

"This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me" ([Matthew 15:8](#)).

"Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men" ([Psalm 66:18](#)).

"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" ([Isaiah 59:2](#)).

"And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities" ([Isaiah 64:7](#)).

"They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the LORD; but they shall not find *him*; he hath withdrawn himself from them" ([Hosea 5:6](#)).

- 2) There is a *corporate, community responsibility* for one another. This corporate responsibility is true among all of society, but it is especially true among God's people. The first and greatest commandment is for people to love God with all of their hearts, minds, bodies, and souls. But the second and greatest commandment is that we love one another. Every human being is to love his or her neighbor, love every other human being upon this earth. God expects us to love and care for one another, looking after and taking care of our

neighbors. We are responsible for our neighbors; therefore we are held accountable by God for one another. When one of us joys, we are all to rejoice together. When one of us hurts, we are all to hurt together. When one of us needs help, we are to help that one. When one of us sins, it affects the whole community. When a person is murdered, a community is responsible for that blood and held accountable to see that justice is done.

The point is this: there is *corporate responsibility* and *corporate accountability* within our communities, and especially within the church. Righteousness affects our communities, and sin and evil affects our communities. Righteousness builds us up; but sin tears us down and eventually destroys us—both individually and corporately (within our communities). This is exactly what Scripture declares:

"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" ([Matthew 22:39](#)).

"So we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" ([Romans 12:5](#)).

"Let love be without dissimulation [hypocrisy]. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good" ([Romans 12:9](#)).

"For we *being* many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread" ([1 Cor. 10:17](#)).

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" ([Galatians 3:28](#)).

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" ([Ephes. 4:11-13](#)).

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many" ([1 Cor. 12:12-14](#)).

"Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king" ([1 Peter 2:17](#)).

"And the LORD make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you" ([1 Thes. 3:12](#)).

"One sinner destroyeth much good" ([Eccles. 9:18](#)).

"Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD: and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance" ([Psalm 33:12](#)).

"By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted: but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked" ([Proverbs 11:11](#)).

"Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" ([Proverbs 14:34](#)).

"Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness" ([Proverbs 25:5](#)).

2. ([Joshua 7:2-5](#)) The consequences of sin upon God's people.

Self-confidence— Flesh, Arm of— Consequences, of Sin— Anger, of God— Defeat, of the Believer— Defeat, of Israel— Israel, Defeat in Warfare—

Discouragement, Caused by— Defeat, Caused by: the consequences of Achan's sin were far-reaching and most tragic, for the consequences fell not only on Achan but also upon all the Israelites.

There were three serious consequences of sin upon God's people.

1. The sin of Achan aroused the LORD's anger ([Joshua 7:2](#)). Sin had been committed; therefore the justice of God had to be executed. Keep in mind that God's judgment was falling upon the Canaanites because of their terrible sin and evil, because their "cup of iniquity" had been filled to the brim. ([Genesis 15:16](#). See [DEEPER STUDY # 1—Joshua 11:20](#) see page # 16 for more discussion.) The Canaanites had sinned beyond repentance, beyond ever returning to God. The Canaanites were facing the judgment of God because of their evil. Now, God's people had sinned; consequently, they too must be judged. God shows no favoritism or partiality to any person or people; justice must be executed against sin. Sin arouses the anger, the justice and judgment of God; consequently, the anger of the LORD burned against the Israelites. The arousal of God's justice and judgment is the first consequence of sin.

2. The second consequence of sin was that of being defeated by the enemy ([Joshua 7:2-5](#)). **Note this fact:** Joshua and his officers were totally unaware that Achan had stolen some items from the Tabernacle. He and the army, in fact, all the Israelites were rejoicing over the great victory over Jericho. The LORD had given a great victory over one of the strongest fortified cities of the Middle East. The walls of Jericho had crumbled before the very eyes of the Israelite army, crumbled by the miraculous power of God. A spirit of joy and rejoicing and revelry was bound to fill the camp of the Israelites. They knew beyond question that God was with them and was going to give them victory over the enemies of the promised land.

- a. Note that in preparing to attack Ai, Joshua acted without seeking the LORD's presence ([Joshua 7:2](#)). He sent several men to spy out Ai which was near Beth Aven just east of Bethel. There is no reference to Joshua seeking the counsel and guidance of the LORD. Apparently, he acted entirely on his own, beaming with self-confidence because of the great victory over Jericho.
- b. The spies reported back in the arm of the flesh, also being full of self-confidence ([Joshua 7:3](#)). They reported that Ai had only a small army, suggesting that only two to three thousand soldiers were necessary to conquer the city. Again, note that the report of the spies was full of self-confidence. The

men were resting upon the arm of the flesh, the strength of the army itself to gain the victory. There is no mention whatsoever about the LORD and the need for His presence, guidance, and power. Joshua and the officers plainly did not seek the LORD. This is clear, for we shall soon see that God's strategy was to send the entire army against Ai, not just a few thousand soldiers (**cp. [Joshua 8:1](#)**).

- c. Joshua sent three thousand troops that were immediately routed, soundly defeated (**[Joshua 7:4-5](#)**). The Israelite soldiers retreated and were chased from the gate of Ai as far as Shebarim, which means the *stone quarries*. Thirty-six soldiers lost their lives in the retreat.

3. The sin resulted in terrible, devastating discouragement. A demoralized, paralyzed spirit struck the people. Their hearts melted with fear and their courage became as liquid as water.

Thought 1. There are two strong lessons in this point for us:

- 1) Self-confidence, acting in the *arm of the flesh*, will lead to failure and defeat. A person cannot stand by himself in this life and conquer the serious trials of life, not trials such as paralyzing accidents and deadly diseases. And no person can conquer all the temptations of life and the inevitable confrontation with death—not in the *arm of the flesh*. Self-confidence collapses before the temptations of life, and self-confidence never conquers death. Joshua and the Israelite army were defeated because of self-confidence, failing to place their trust in God. Scripture warns us against the danger of self-confidence:

"Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended" ([Matthew 26:33](#)).

"And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" ([Luke 18:9-14](#)).

"Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits" ([Romans 12:16](#)).

"And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know" ([1 Cor. 8:2](#)).

"For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself" ([Galatians 6:3](#)).

"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" ([1 Cor. 10:12](#)).

"Beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage" ([Deut. 6:12](#)).

"Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil" ([Proverbs 3:7](#)).

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" ([Proverbs 16:18](#)).

"Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him" ([Proverbs 26:12](#)).

"Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" ([Proverbs 27:1](#)).

"They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him" ([Psalm 49:6-7](#)).

"He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered" ([Proverbs 28:26](#)).

"Woe unto them *that are* wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight" ([Isaiah 5:21](#)).

- 2) When God's people sin, He chastises them. He disciplines and corrects them just as a father disciplines and corrects his child. Chastisement or discipline is necessary in order to save the child from harming himself. So it is with God. God chastises or disciplines us to keep us from harming ourselves by sinking deeper and deeper into sin. Without the chastisement of God, sin would run rampant and destroy us. Just imagine what kind of world this would be if the sins of lawlessness, brutality, violence, immorality, lying, stealing, and the host of other sins were given free reign and allowed to run unrestrained upon this earth.

Sin must be chastised, corrected, and disciplined by God or else the whole human race would become engulfed with a spirit of lawlessness upon this earth. Evil would run rampant, even among some of God's people who walk in carnality, living lives of immorality. This is the clear purpose for chastisement (discipline, correction): to save us from harming ourselves. Chastisement is one of the consequences of sin.

"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit" ([John 15:2](#)).

"For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the LORD, that we should not be condemned with the world" ([1 Cor. 11:30-32](#)).

"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the LORD, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the LORD loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" ([Hebrews 12:5-6](#)).

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" ([1 Peter 1:6-7](#)).

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" ([1 Peter 4:12-13](#)).

"Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee" ([Deut. 8:5](#)).

"My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth" ([Proverbs 3:11-12](#)).

"Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction" ([Isaiah 48:10](#)).

3. ([Joshua 7:6-26](#)) The remedy for sin and defeat: a confrontation with the Lord.

Sin, Remedy to— Defeat, Remedy for— Intercession, Results of— Word of God, Duty— Exposure, of Sin— Judgment, Caused by: the remedy for sin and defeat is a confrontation with the LORD. As soon as the retreating, defeated soldiers returned to camp, Joshua took immediate action. He did exactly what he needed to do: he confronted the LORD seeking the reasons for the defeat. Four remedies to sin and defeat are gleaned from what happened.

1. The first remedy for sin and defeat is intercession ([Joshua 7:6-9](#)). Joshua was stunned, bewildered, confused, shaken, utterly dumbfounded over the shocking defeat of the soldiers he had sent out against the enemy. He and the leaders immediately went to the Tabernacle and sought the LORD in prayer. Note that they fell face down before the Ark of the LORD and remained there until evening. Joshua acknowledged his utter dependence upon God, addressing God as "**Sovereign LORD**" (**Adonay, Yahweh**). Joshua was perplexed, dumbfounded. He asked God, "Why?"

- a. Was Israel now to be destroyed by the Amorites?
- b. Should they have stayed in East Jordan? Some commentators interpret Joshua's words here as saying that he actually wished he had kept Israel on the east side of the Jordan River. However, this is most unlikely, for Joshua had held the hope of the

promised land throughout his life. He was simply seeking the face of the LORD for the answer for the defeat. He was asking God if he had misread the will of God, if he had perhaps moved the people across the Jordan too soon.

- c. What could Joshua now say to the people? Was he to continue as leader?

Note that Joshua's major concern was the honor of God's name ([Joshua 7:9](#)). He feared that the enemy would soon wipe out Israel and ridicule God's name. They would call the LORD weak, powerless, unable to save and deliver His people and to fulfill His promises to them. God's great name and His reputation were at stake. Therefore, above all else, Joshua begged God to protect His own name, to protect the strong witness of the LORD before the peoples of the earth.

Thought 1. Intercession is the answer to sin and defeat. When we sin and suffer defeat, we must seek the LORD in prayer. If we seek the LORD in prayer, He will hear us and meet our needs.

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" ([Matthew 7:7](#)).

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" ([John 15:7](#)).

"Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms" ([James 5:13](#)).

"But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul" ([Deut. 4:29](#)).

"Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near" ([Isaiah 55:6](#)).

"And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" ([Jeremiah 29:13](#)).

"Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for *it is* time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you" ([Hosea 10:12](#)).

2. The second remedy for sin and defeat is that of hearing the Word of God ([Joshua 7:10-15](#)). By seeking the LORD until evening, Joshua proved his sincerity and earnestness, that he was totally dependent upon God to conquer the enemies of the promised land. Thus the LORD confronted Joshua and met his every need.

- a. The LORD encouraged Joshua by telling him to stand up, questioning why he was lying down on his face ([Joshua 7:10](#)). The confrontation was straightforward and direct: it was now time to act, to arise and begin to handle the situation.

- b. God then launched a charge against Israel, a charge of sin ([Joshua 7:11](#)). Throughout this charge, note the corporate, community responsibility and guilt. Note how God builds up charge after charge against the people. They had committed sin after sin: God's covenant had been violated by the people. They had stolen some of the things given to the Tabernacle, things that had been set apart, devoted to God. Moreover, the people had lied about the theft by secretly hiding it among their own belongings.
- c. God then explained the defeat of Israel by the enemy: they were defeated because the sin had doomed them to destruction, had alienated them from God ([Joshua 7:12](#)). And note the warning of God: He would not be with them anymore until they destroyed the things among them that had been set apart, devoted for destruction.
- d. God then commanded Joshua to go and tell the people to sanctify or purify themselves ([Joshua 7:13-15](#)).

Three actions had to be taken for sanctification or purification:

- 1. The people were to seek out the sin and sinner and remove the accursed thing from their presence ([Joshua 7:13](#)).
- 2. The people were to present themselves before the LORD in the morning: tribe by tribe, clan by clan, family by family, man by man ([Joshua 7:14](#)). As the people appeared before the LORD, He would identify the guilty person.
- 3. The people were to execute the guilty person and destroy all his possessions ([Joshua 7:15](#)).

Thought 1. One remedy for sin and defeat is that of hearing the Word of God. When we sin, we must listen to the Word of God and do exactly what He says.

It is the Word of God that tells us how to deal with sin and defeat, that tells us.....

- a. how to approach God
- b. how to receive the mercy of God
- c. how to receive forgiveness of sins
- d. how to repent and be restored to God
- e. how to dedicate and recommit our lives to God
- f. how to renew our covenant with God

We must hear the Word of God and do exactly what God tells us. Obeying God, heeding His Word is the remedy for sin and defeat.

"Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" ([John 15:3](#)).

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" ([John 17:17](#)).

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" ([Romans 15:4](#)).

"That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" ([Ephes. 5:26](#)).

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" ([Ephes. 6:16-17](#)).

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" ([2 Tim. 3:16](#)).

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" ([Hebrews 4:12](#)).

"The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes" ([Psalm 19:8](#)).

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word" ([Psalm 119:9](#)).

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" ([Psalm 119:105](#)).

"The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" ([Psalm 119:130](#)).

"For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life" ([Proverbs 6:23](#)).

"Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces" ([Jeremiah 23:29](#)).

3. The third remedy for sin and defeat is that of uncovering and identifying the sin ([Joshua 7:16-23](#)). As this point is studied, note how the sinner remained silent throughout the entire investigation. He was unwilling to confess his sin unless it was discovered.

- a. Joshua began the investigative process early in the morning ([Joshua 7:16-18](#)). The clans of Judah were investigated first, the clan of Zerahite and the family of Zemri were singled out. Then the guilty man was singled out. The scene of soldier after soldier walking by Joshua and the leaders of the nation must have been a dramatic picture. Finally when Achan's turn came to appear before the court officials, God indicated that he was the guilty offender. Note the spirit of Joshua as he examined the defendant.

- b. Joshua urged Achan to confess the truth before God, that he no longer try to hide the terrible sin ([Joshua 7:19](#)). The sin had been committed against God; therefore, confession needed to be made to God. Achan needed to give glory to the LORD and humble himself before the LORD, for he had refused to step forth prior to being discovered. Throughout the entire investigation, Achan had attempted to hide his sin. It was against God and against God alone that the sin had been committed. The sin had been a violation of God's covenant; therefore the only conceivable way for the sin to be forgiven was for confession to be made to God.
- c. Achan confessed his sin. However, keep in mind that the confession had been forced upon him. He had refused to step forth prior to the discovery of his sin ([Joshua 7:20-21](#)).

Note that Achan took the very steps that lead to death and destruction:

- a. He "**saw**" the plunder: a beautiful Babylonian robe, two hundred pieces of silver, and a bar of gold weighing one pound.
- b. He "**coveted**" them.
- c. He then "**took**" them.
- d. He "**hid**" them.

Simply stated, Achan "**saw...coveted...took...and...hid**" the items in the ground inside his tent. These were the very steps that caused Eve to fall into sin and later David when He committed adultery with Bathsheba ([Genesis 3:6](#); [2 Samuel 11:1-27](#)).

- d. Joshua sent messengers to gather the evidence from Achan's tent ([Joshua 7:22-23](#)). They quickly found the evidence and returned, spreading it out before the court.

Thought 1. Sin cannot be hid, not from God. We may be able to deceive people, commit sin under the cover of darkness, and keep it secret. But not before God. God sees every sinful act, even every single thought that crosses our minds. No sin can be hid from God. When we commit sin, the only remedy is to identify the sin and open it up to God. Confession needs to be made to God while there is still time, so that we can be forgiven our sins.

If we wish forgiveness, we must uncover and unveil our sins before the face of God. Only as we expose and confess our sin will God forgive us.

"For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known" ([Luke 12:2](#)).

"Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the LORD come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God" ([1 Cor. 4:5](#)).

"For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret" ([Ephes. 5:12](#)).

"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" ([James 1:13-15](#)).

"Be sure your sin will find you out" ([Numbers 32:23](#)).

"If I sin, then thou markest me, and thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity" ([Job 10:14](#)).

"Who can understand *his* errors? cleanse thou me from secret *faults*" ([Psalm 19:12](#)).

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh *them* shall have mercy" ([Proverbs 28:13](#)).

"For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil" ([Eccles. 12:14](#)).

"For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, *yet* thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the LORD GOD" ([Jeremiah 2:22](#)).

"For mine eyes *are* upon all their ways: they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes" ([Jeremiah 16:17](#)).

"Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? For they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth" ([Ezekiel 8:12](#)).

"And the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and said unto me, Speak; Thus saith the LORD; Thus have ye said, O house of Israel: for I know the things that come into your mind, *every one of them*" ([Ezekiel 11:5](#)).

"And they consider not in their hearts *that* I remember all their wickedness: now their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face" ([Hosea 7:2](#)).

"For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate *from their right*" ([Amos 5:12](#)).

4. The fourth remedy for sin and defeat is that of routing out and judging the sin and sinner ([Joshua 7:24-26](#)). What now happened was dramatic, a drama that stands as a great warning to Israel and to all succeeding generations of people.

- a. The judgment had already been pronounced: the accursed thing was to be destroyed ([Joshua 7:24-25](#); cp. [Joshua 7:12](#)). In this case, the accursed thing

was Achan himself. It had been his sin that had caused the judgment of God to fall upon the Israelites, a sin that had cost the lives of thirty-six soldiers. Just imagine how the family members of these thirty-six soldiers had felt during the investigative process. Standing there, the family members were bound to be wondering about the death of their loved ones. In some cases the soldiers had been husbands and fathers, and in all cases they had been sons. Hearts were broken and grief-stricken, and tears had flowed from the broken, grieving hearts of the families. A tragic, terrible evil had resulted from the sin of the soldier who had stolen items that had been set apart, devoted to God and His service.

The justice and judgment of God had to be executed. Achan and his entire family and all their possessions were taken out of the camp ([Joshua 7:24](#)). They were then executed ([Joshua 7:25](#)). Why were the family members executed along with Achan? Because they were accomplices in the crime: they knew about the stolen goods that were hidden in the tent. They were just as guilty as Achan in bringing the judgment of God upon the nation. Note that everything was burned. This was a symbol of purifying, cleansing the evil of the sin from among God's people.

- b. The result was dramatic: the LORD's anger was turned away from His people. The relationship between God and His dear people was restored ([Joshua 7:26](#)).
- c. The valley was renamed Achor which means "**trouble.**" Thereafter, the valley was to stand as a warning against sin and its consequences.

Thought 1. Sin must be routed out, gotten rid of, removed, forsaken, turned away from. Only as we rout out sin and forsake it will God forgive us. To have our relationship with God restored, to have access into God's presence, to have our sins forgiven and cleansed, to be accepted by God, to renew our covenant and promises with God, to rededicate and recommit our lives to God—sin has to be routed out of our lives. For a relationship to exist between God and us, sin has to be removed, taken away from us. God is holy, and He cannot dwell in the midst of sin. Therefore, sin has to be removed from us in order for God to dwell with us. Favor with God, access into God's presence, comes by routing out the sin from our lives.

"That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" ([Ephes. 4:22](#)).

"Abstain from all appearance of evil" ([1 Thes. 5:22](#)).

"Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" ([1 Peter 2:11](#)).

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" ([Hebrews 12:1](#)).

"If iniquity *be* in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy Tabernacles" ([Job 11:14](#)).

"Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it" ([Psalm 34:14](#)).

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" ([Isaiah 55:7](#)).

"Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked" ([Psalm 97:10](#)).

"Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil" ([Proverbs 4:27](#)).

[DEEPER STUDY # 1—Joshua 11:20](#)

[\(Joshua 11:20\) Iniquity, Cup of— Nations, Destruction of— Nations, Evil of— Nations, Judgment of— Canaanites, Destruction of:](#) the words "utterly destroy" or "totally, completely destroy" (**harami** or **charam**) *means* to "annihilate, exterminate, eliminate, or abolish". The word is related to the Hebrew *herem* which means "to devote to the ban." Once something had been promised or devoted to God, it was placed under the ban: it could not be removed. If it was a gift, it had to be given to God. If it was the promise to do something, then it had to be done. If it was a vow to devote something to destruction, then it had to be destroyed or exterminated. In ancient days, this was known as the *harem principal or law*. Once a person or thing had been *devoted* to the LORD, it could not be removed. It went to the LORD.

The very idea that God and moral people would be set on the total destruction of a people is offensive to some persons. How could God and moral people possibly endorse such an act? In looking at this, a person needs to keep certain factors in mind:

1. People can become so savage, evil, and corrupt that they are beyond repair or repentance, beyond hope or correction.

This is what is known as the "**cup of iniquity being full**"—filled to the point that it overflows and continues to overflow with...

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. savagery | 9. cruelty |
| 2. violence | 10. atrocities |
| 3. brutality | 11. barbarianism |
| 4. slavery | 12. corruption |
| 5. rape | 13. evil |
| 6. ruthlessness | 14. immorality |
| 7. lawlessness | 15. injustice |
| 8. abuse | |

History has shown that such behavior can be true of both individuals and nations. A person's or a nation's "**cup of iniquity**" can become full—well beyond repair or repentance, well beyond hope or correction. God declares this fact time and again as the Scriptures below show ([Genesis 15:16](#)).

God wants justice executed against these people. Scripture is clear about this fact: this is the very purpose for the judgment of God.

"But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" ([Genesis 15:16](#)).

"Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you: And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants" ([Leviticus 18:24-25](#)).

"And ye shall not walk in the manners of the nation, which I cast out before you: for they committed all these things, and therefore I abhorred them" ([Leviticus 20:23](#)).

"Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the LORD thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the LORD hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee. Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" ([Deut. 9:4-5](#)).

"And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel" ([2 Kings 21:2](#)).

"Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel" ([2 Chron. 28:3](#)).

"But did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel" ([2 Chron. 33:2](#)).

"And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood" ([Psalm 106:38](#)).

"The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant" ([Isaiah 24:5](#)).

"...thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness" ([Jeremiah 3:2](#)).

"And first I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double; because they have defiled my land, they have filled mine inheritance

with the carcasses of their detestable and abominable things"
([Jeremiah 16:18](#)).

2. God is a just God as well as a God of love. God loves all people—every individual and every nation upon earth. His love continually flows out to everyone. But God is also a just God, the Sovereign LORD who executes justice upon the earth. God is not an *indulgent grandfather* who pampers the evil and savage of this world. To allow injustice to go unpunished, He would be a God of evil, a God who showed partiality and favoritism. He would be favoring the evil of the earth by allowing them to go unpunished, showing injustice to the moral of the earth by allowing them to continue to suffer under the injustices of evil people.

When the "**cup of iniquity becomes full**"—well beyond repair or repentance, well beyond hope or correction—that person or people are to be judged. Justice is to be executed upon them. God wants justice executed against such persons. This is the reason He has appointed a day in which He will judge the world.

"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works"
([Matthew 16:27](#)).

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left"
([Matthew 25:31-33](#)).

"Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" ([Acts 17:31](#)).

"In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel" ([Romans 2:16](#)).

"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom" ([2 Tim. 4:1](#)).

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" ([Hebrews 9:27](#)).

"The LORD knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished"
([2 Peter 2:9](#)).

"The LORD is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" ([2 Peter 3:9](#)).

"And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the LORD cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him" ([Jude 14-15](#)).

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" ([Rev. 20:12](#)).

3. Israel was used by God as His instrument of justice and judgment against the nations of Canaan. The Israelites did not receive the promised land of Canaan because of some merit or value within themselves nor because of their own strength or power. In justice and judgment, God Himself destroyed the Canaanites, and it was because of their wickedness that He destroyed them.

Again, it is critical to note this fact: Israel as a people did not receive the promised land because of their merit or value nor because of some righteousness they possessed. The Canaanites were destroyed because they were evil and their "cup of iniquity" had been filled to the brim. They reached the point of no repentance; they were beyond correction.

Moses himself declared to the Israelites:

- a. "It is not because of any personal righteousness within you, not because you have pure hearts, that you inherit the promised land" ([Deut. 9:5](#)). The enemies of the land are to be conquered and destroyed **for two reasons**:
 1. "Because of their wickedness and because they are an evil people; their 'cup of iniquity' is full.
 2. "Because God is faithful; He fulfills His promise to the forefathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God has promised to give the promised land to their descendants, to all those down through the centuries who believe His Word, His promises.
- b. "Understand this warning: it is not because of your righteousness that God gives you the promised land. On the contrary, you are a stiff-necked, stubborn people" ([Deut. 9:6](#)). You are a sinful people. You have no righteousness within yourselves that merits God's favor. Your hearts are not upright nor pure enough to make God accept you and give you victory over the enemies of the promised land. You are a stiff-necked, stubborn people."

"Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Understand therefore, that the

LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou *art* a stiffnecked people" ([Deut. 9:5-6](#)).

4. God shows no partiality, no favoritism—not to any person nor to any nation. God warned the Israelites that they too would face the justice and judgment of God if they disobeyed Him, if they failed to keep His commandments.

The Canaanites were destroyed because they lived immoral and unrighteous lives. If the Israelites adopted the immoral and unrighteous lifestyle of the Canaanites, they too would be destroyed.

"Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you: And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, and shall not commit *any* of these abominations; *neither* any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourneth among you: (For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which *were* before you, and the land is defiled;) That the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that *were* before you. For whosoever shall commit any of these abominations, even the souls that commit *them* shall be cut off from among their people. Therefore shall ye keep mine ordinance, that ye commit not *any one* of these abominable customs, which were committed before you, and that ye defile not yourselves therein: I *am* the LORD your God" ([Leviticus 18:24-30](#)).

"Ye shall therefore keep all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them: that the land, whither I bring you to dwell therein, spue you not out. And ye shall not walk in the manners of the nation, which I cast out before you: for they committed all these things, and therefore I abhorred them. But I have said unto you, Ye shall inherit their land, and I will give it unto you to possess it, a land that floweth with milk and honey: I *am* the LORD your God, which have separated you from *other* people" ([Leviticus 20:22-24](#)).

"When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, *and* utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them: Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the

LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly" ([Deut. 7:1-4](#)).

"Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the LORD thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the LORD hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee. Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Understand therefore, that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people" ([Deut. 9:4-6](#)).

Thought 1. James Philip makes an excellent statement on the justice and judgment of God that is well worth quoting in full.

God was using His people as the rod of His anger against peoples whose cup of iniquity was full to overflowing. They were being judged for their sins and their depravities. This is, of course, stated explicitly more than once in the Old Testament itself (cf. [Genesis 15:16](#) and [Leviticus 18:24-30](#)). The time of their destruction was ripe. This is why they were thus dealt with, and it was no arbitrary act of injustice that drove them out of their land. They had forfeited the right to live as nations in Canaan by the extremes of their debauchery and depravity, just as Sodom and Gomorrah had done ([Genesis 19](#)), and just as the Canaanite civilization as a whole had done, bringing upon itself the judgment of the Flood ([Genesis 6](#)). Furthermore, it should be remembered that God dealt with His own people in similar fashion when they proved themselves unworthy to life in the land of promise, and He brought them into the captivity of Babylon in 586 B.C. To understand God's burning passion for righteousness in His creatures is to understand the basic reason for these judgments upon men and nations that refused to be righteous, and who rendered themselves incapable of being so by their continued sin.

Thought 2. The Nelson Study Bible says this:

Of Israel's attacks on the northern part of Canaanite cities, the Bible states, "but they struck every man with the edge of the sword until they had destroyed them, and they left none breathing. As the LORD had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did" ([Joshua 11:14-15](#)). God clearly commanded Israel to annihilate the Canaanites, and that is exactly what Joshua did.

Headlines such as this have caused many people to question God's basic justice. How can a holy, just, and loving God command such extreme violence? Indeed, many have thought of this issue as the Old Testament's

biggest challenge to modern readers. Some have gone so far as to allege that there is no connection between the "God of the Old Testament" and "God of the New Testament revealed in Jesus."

However, this stereotype breaks down under examination. The Bible gives reasons for the Canaanites' destruction—and these reasons are in concert with the whole tenor of the Bible in both Testaments.

The primary reason for the Canaanites' destruction was that they were guilty of gross sin. Abraham got a preview of this when God promised him the land. God said fulfillment of the promise would be delayed in part because "**the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete**" ([Genesis 15:16](#); the Amorites were the Canaanites). For many years, the Canaanites' sins would not justify annihilation. But that time would arrive, and it did arrive by the time of Joshua.

What were the sins of the Canaanites? The gruesome list in [Leviticus 18](#) gives some of the details, including incest, adultery, child sacrifice, homosexuality, and bestiality. Of course, every person has sinned in some fashion ([Psalm 14:3](#)). On this level, the Canaanites only received what all peoples deserved; others were spared only by God's grace. But Canaan was not a community of upstanding citizens. It was a thoroughly debased society, hostile to all God's ways ([Deut. 9:4-5](#)).

To a lesser degree, God was merely protecting His people. God promised Abraham that He would curse anyone who cursed Israel ([Genesis 12:3](#)). The Canaanites sought to destroy Israel on at least two occasions ([Joshua 9:1-2](#); [Joshua 11:1-5](#)), and God would not allow that.

The stereotype also breaks down because it overlooks the highly localized nature of the judgment on Canaan. The Israelites did not have a license to kill. They had no right to do the same to whatever peoples they encountered, at any time or in any place. This destruction targeted the sinful Canaanites of that time only. As harsh as it may seem to us, the Canaanites brought God's judgment on themselves by their own sin.

The New Testament states that one day Jesus Christ will judge the wicked nations of the earth ([Matthew 25:31-46](#)). God once judged all the wicked with an overwhelming flood ([Genesis 6-9](#)), and the same God will one day again judge everyone who has ever lived ([2 Peter. 3:10-13](#)). The judgment against the Canaanites is merely one instance of His judgment on the wicked even as He extends forgiveness to others.

Thought 3. Warren Wiersbe gives an excellent statement on God's command to exterminate the Canaanite nations.

But wasn't it cruel and unjust for God to command Israel to exterminate the nations in Canaan? Not in the least! To begin with, He had been patient with these nations for centuries and had mercifully withheld His judgment ([Genesis 15:16](#); [2 Peter 3:9](#)). Their society, and especially their religion, was unspeakably wicked ([Romans 1:18](#)) and should have been wiped out years before Israel appeared on the scene.

Something else is true: These nations had been warned by the judgments God had inflicted on others, especially on Egypt and the nations east of the Jordan ([Joshua 2:8-13](#)). Rahab and her family had sufficient information to be able to repent and believe, and God saved them ([Joshua 2](#); [Joshua 6:22-25](#)). Therefore, we have every right to conclude that God would have saved anybody who had turned to Him. These nations were sinning against a flood of light in rejecting God's truth and going their own way.

God didn't want the filth of the Canaanite society and religion to contaminate His people Israel. Israel was God's special people, chosen to fulfill divine purposes in this world. Israel would give the world the knowledge of the true God, the Holy Scriptures, and the Savior. In order to accomplish God's purposes, the nation had to be separated from all other nations; for if Israel was polluted, how could the Holy Son of God come into the world? "God is perpetually at war with sin," wrote G. Campbell Morgan. "That is the whole explanation of the extermination of the Canaanites.

The main deity in Canaan was Baal, god of rainfall and fertility, and Ashtoreth was his spouse. If you wanted to have fruitful orchards and vineyards, flourishing crops, and increasing flocks and herds, you worshiped Baal by visiting a temple prostitute. This combination of idolatry, immorality, and agricultural success was difficult for men to resist, which explains why God told Israel to wipe out the Canaanite religion completely ([Numbers 33:51-56](#); [Deut. 7:1-5](#)).