

# Sin Revealed

ACHAN'S ACTIONS WERE DISCOVERED AND JUDGED  
BECAUSE HE DISHONORED GOD.

## Joshua 7:10-23

**10** The LORD then said to Joshua, “**Stand up!** **A** Why have you fallen facedown? **11** Israel has sinned. **They have violated** **B** my covenant that I appointed for them. They have taken some of what was set apart. They have stolen, **deceived,** **C** and put those things with their own belongings. **12** This is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies. They will turn their backs and run from their enemies, because they have been set apart for destruction. **I will no longer be with you** **D** unless you remove from among you what is set apart. **13** Go and **consecrate** **E** the people. Tell them to consecrate themselves for tomorrow, for this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: There are things that are set apart among you, Israel. You will **not be able to stand** **F** against your enemies until you remove what is set apart. **14** In the morning, present yourselves tribe by tribe. The tribe the LORD selects is to come forward clan by clan. The clan the LORD selects is to come forward family by family. The family the LORD selects is to come forward man by man. **15** The one who is caught with the things set apart must be burned, along with everything he has, because he has violated the LORD’s covenant and committed an outrage in Israel.” **16** Joshua **got up early** **G** the next morning. He had Israel come forward tribe by tribe, and **the tribe of Judah** **H** was selected. **17** He had the clans of Judah come forward, and the Zerahite clan was selected. He had the Zerahite clan come forward by heads of families, and Zabdi was selected. **18** He then had Zabdi’s family come forward man by man, and Achan son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was selected. **19** So Joshua said to Achan, “**My son,** **I** give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, and **make a confession** **J** to him. I urge you, tell me what you have done. Don’t hide anything from me.” **20** Achan replied to Joshua, “It is true. I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel. This is what I did: **21** When I saw among the spoils a beautiful cloak from **Babylon,** **K** five pounds of silver, and a bar of gold weighing a pound and a quarter, I coveted them and took them. You can see for yourself. They are concealed in the ground inside my tent, with the silver under the cloak.” **22** So Joshua sent messengers who ran to the tent, and there was the cloak, concealed in his tent, with the silver underneath. **23** They took the things from inside the tent, brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites, and **spread them out** **L** in the Lord’s presence.

### Exploring Key Words

- A** Joshua had fallen on his face after the awful defeat at Ai (Josh. 7:1-9). Now, the Lord ordered him to get up and deal with Israel’s sin (v. 11).
- B** “Transgressed” (KJV; ESV); “broken” (NLT). The Hebrew wording suggests stepping over a boundary. The repeated use of “they” indicates that God held the entire nation guilty.
- C** “Lied” (ESV; NIV). Hiding what he stole proved that Achan willfully disobeyed the Lord.
- D** Israel would not experience God’s blessing until the sin was removed from the camp.
- E** The Hebrew word (*qadas*) underscores a call to spiritual purity. It suggests holiness in the Lord’s presence (see Ex. 29:37; 2 Chron. 29:5).
- F** As the defeat at Ai proved, Israel was helpless before any Canaanite without God fighting for them.
- G** Joshua had risen early to lead Israel against Jericho (Josh. 6:12,15). Now, he rose early to deal with Israel’s sin.
- H** Judah was Jacob’s fourth son (Gen. 29:35). This tribe’s inheritance included Jerusalem, and it would produce King David and his heirs.
- I** Joshua used this term of endearment as he talked with Achan.
- J** The Hebrew word (*toda*) relates to praise and thanksgiving (Ps. 26:7; 42:4). God was not glorified by Achan’s sin, but He would receive glory from Achan’s confession.
- K** “Shinar” (NAS; ESV). This area was associated with the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-4). Babylonians were known for beautiful fabrics.
- L** God had laid claim to these items already (Josh. 6:15-19; 7:11). Now, the Israelites returned them to Him.



NOTES

### **Covenant Violated** (Josh. 7:10-15)

- After a disheartening defeat at Ai, Joshua fell facedown before the Lord and questioned His guidance bringing the Israelites across the Jordan (Josh. 7:5-7).
- The Lord responded by telling Joshua that Israel had sinned by stealing items that should have been set apart for the Lord. He would not be with the Israelites until they removed the items.
- The Israelites were to consecrate themselves and present themselves before the Lord who would identify the person responsible.

### **Achan Revealed** (Josh. 7:16-19)

- Following God's instruction, Joshua called forward each tribe, clan, and family before the Lord. Achan from the tribe of Judah was selected as the person responsible for taking the devoted items.
- Joshua instructed Achan to confess his sin and give glory to God.

### **Confession Made** (Josh. 7:20-23)

- Achan admitted to sinning against the Lord by taking some of the spoils from the conquest at Jericho. He told Joshua where he had hidden the items.
- The items were found and placed before all the Israelites and the Lord.
- Ultimately, Achan, his family, and all his livestock were stoned to death in the Valley of Achor (Josh. 7:24-26). His material possessions were also destroyed.

### **Summary Statements**

*Achan's actions were discovered and judged because he dishonored God.*

- We should recognize that sin always dishonors God and negatively impacts our relationship with Him.
- We should acknowledge that God is always aware of our sins.
- We honor God by repenting and confessing our sins to Him.

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### **Memory Verse**

*Galatians 6:7*

### **Key Doctrine**

*God*

God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. (See Isaiah 6:1-5; 1 Peter 1:14-16.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at [goExploreTheBible.com](https://www.goExploreTheBible.com).

## ENGAGE

**Bonus:** *When have you thought you got away with something, only to be caught later?*

- One of the central truths of the Bible is that every human being is a sinner. We sin against others, and every sin is a sin against God. The Bible also reveals that though we may try, we cannot hide anything from God—including our sins.
- What's more, the Bible clearly declares that there will always be negative consequences for one who tries to conceal one's sin from God.
- Nevertheless, there is good news. God's Word teaches that whoever confesses and renounces their sins to God will find mercy and forgiveness.

**What should be a person's motivation to confess sin and seek forgiveness?** (PSG, p. 46)

## EXPLORE

### COVENANT VIOLATED (JOSH. 7:10-15)

**Bonus:** *When have you suffered because of someone else's actions? When have others suffered because of something you did?*

- After having conquered Jericho, the conquest of Ai appeared to be a small thing in comparison. But when Israel attacked Ai, they were soundly defeated. In an act of mourning, Joshua and the elders fell facedown on the ground before the ark of the Lord.
- God's response in verse 10 was a rebuke. Instead of lying facedown on the ground, Joshua needed to stand up and deal with the real problem: sin in the camp.
- Someone had stolen items placed under God's ban at Jericho. Until this sin was identified and removed, God would not move forward with His people, and they would not be able to stand against their enemies.
- God told Joshua to get the people ready to meet with Him the next morning. He would systematically reveal the guilty person and remind His people why they needed to take His holiness seriously.

**Why is it important for us to recognize sin's impact on us and our relationship with God?** (PSG, p. 51)

### ACHAN REVEALED (JOSH. 7:16-19)

**Bonus:** *When have you been excited to be chosen for something? When have you dreaded being chosen for something?*

- Joshua had Israel's tribes come forward as the Lord instructed. God selected the tribe of Judah. Next, He chose the Zerahite clan, followed by the family of Zabdi. Finally, Achan was selected. It was essential for the people to see God identifying who was guilty.

- God's lengthy process gave Achan plenty of time to come forward on his own. He could have demonstrated sincere confession and repentance. But he refused.
- Once Achan had been revealed, Joshua addressed him as a father speaking to a son. Joshua urged Achan to give glory to the Lord and to confess what he had done.

**What might prevent one from confessing and seeking the Lord's forgiveness?** (PSG, p. 52)

### CONFESSION MADE (JOSH. 7:20-23)

**Bonus:** *When have you "come clean" about something you did? How did that make you feel?*

- Achan's explanation is similar to what happened in the garden of Eden—he saw, he coveted, and he took. Also reminiscent of the garden is the effect on other people. Both should remind us that our sin always has an impact on others.
- When Achan shared where the banned items were hidden, Joshua sent messengers to Achan's tent. They found the stolen items exactly where he said they would be. The items were spread out before the Lord, the One to whom they rightfully belonged.
- Verses 24-26 indicate that Achan and his entire family were stoned to death. Plus, everything he owned along with the stolen items were buried in stones with them.

**Why is it important for us to view sin as seriously as God does?** (PSG, p. 53)

## CHALLENGE

Encourage the group to consider how one person's sin can have a negative impact on others.

**How can you encourage one another and even others outside your Bible study group who might be struggling with sin?** (PSG, p. 54)

Challenge individuals to examine their lives and evaluate how their sin is damaging their relationship with God.

**How does knowing that God is always aware of your sin affect how you deal with your sin? How does repenting and confessing your sin honor God?** (PSG, p. 54)

### FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week's study.

### BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 53)

Use a Bible dictionary to learn more about a biblical principle.

Read the article on “Holy War” in a Bible dictionary. **Why did the Lord sometimes require the Israelites to dedicate everything in a “ban,” which meant that the inhabitants and possessions of an entire city would be set apart to the Lord and destroyed? How would you respond to someone who questioned why a loving God would order the wholesale extermination of the nations that were occupying the promised land?** (Hints: The Lord had given these people time to repent. See Gen. 15:13-16. The Lord is a God of both love and judgment. See Ex. 34:6-7.)

Provide several Bible dictionaries and direct adults to work in small groups to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 53 of the PSG. After a few minutes, lead a brief discussion of the questions in the activity.

### OBJECT LESSON: PLAYING CARDS

Prior to the session, remove all the face cards (*jack, queen, king*), joker cards, and the ace of spades from a standard deck of cards.

During the session, allow volunteers to take one of these face cards, keeping it facedown and not showing it to anyone. As you discuss Joshua 7:16-19, lead the volunteers to turn over their cards one at a time. Share that a face card or a joker represents the Israelites who obeyed the Lord, while the ace of spades represents Achan.

Allow adults to compare and contrast this method to what God did through Joshua in these verses. Point out that shuffling playing cards introduces the element of randomness to the activity. Say: *In contrast, God was in complete control of what was happening with Israel. Chance had nothing to do with it. As a result, God identified the right man, and the Israelites could move forward with confidence.*

### REAPING WHAT WE SOW

Galatians 6:7, the memory verse for this session, underscores the central truth portrayed in the Old Testament account of Achan and his sin. It drives home the reality that dishonoring the Lord brings painful consequences. Likewise, honoring Him results in spiritual blessings.

In Galatians, the apostle Paul reminded readers that wise people stay alert to the instruction of the Lord and live according to His words. Otherwise, we can fall into the trap of deception easily because our hearts are not set on Him. When we lose sight of the priority of honoring the Lord with our lives, our self-serving interests can mislead us.

The Greek word for “mocked” (*mykterizein*) paints a picture of individuals who turn their noses up at the Lord with contempt. The word appears only in this verse, but it conveys a rock-solid reality that mature followers of Christ take seriously. We simply “cannot fool God” (CEV) or try to make “a fool out of God” (GNT). Instead, we live with the awareness that He’s present in everything we do and say.

However, when we keep our distance from Him, we can deceive ourselves into thinking that He’s blind to our thoughts, words, and actions. That’s when we set ourselves up for disaster. Eventually, we’ll find ourselves ignoring the certainty of His justice. In turn, we discount our accountability to Him for our behavior.

This verse also provides us with a reliable and pertinent fact of life in Him. We harvest what we plant. Farmers put this life principle to work every year during planting season. If they want a harvest of corn, they plant corn seeds.

Growing believers are bound by this principle in our walk with the Lord. We can count on reaping a harvest of His judgment when we plant seeds of sinful behavior that dishonor Him. However, when we listen to Him and obey Him, we can expect His blessings and true meaning in life.