

- ***Read Joshua 6:3-5*** One of the first, and probably the most famous of Israel's conquest, is that of the great fortified city, Jericho. You can be certain that the greatest military minds in all of the land of Canaan tried time and time again to breach its strong walls, but time and time again these people and their armies failed. So what was the strategy handed down from the Lord to His mighty commander Joshua? Well, of course the Lord told them to do the most sensible thing to do...they were to march around the city for 6 days and on the 7th day they would march and blow trumpets and shout. Totally a great battle strategy for taking one of the most fortified cities of the day, right? Yet, this was the Lord's plan.
- ***Read Joshua 6:17-19*** A little further down the chapter, the Lord gives some more instructions concerning the city. Normally, the people were able to take the spoils of the conquered city for themselves. However, in the case of Jericho, the Lord decided that all things of the city would be brought under a ban. Those things that would be most precious in the site of a warrior, the silver, gold, bronze, and iron were not to be taken from the ruins, but they were to be taken into the treasury of the Lord.
- ***Read Joshua 6:21-25*** After the warriors successfully carry out the Lord's plan for the overtaking of the city walls, they continued to follow the Lord's instructions by utterly destroying everything that was within the city. The only things left living were those in the family of Rahab the harlot who had faithfully protected the spies of the Lord. Everything of great value was taken and put into the treasury of the Lord just as He had commanded.....or at least that is what we are led to believe by the end of chapter 6.
- ***Read Joshua 7:1*** Sadly, we come to find out that not all of the people respected the commands of God concerning the ban on the valuables of Jericho. Achan of the tribe of Judah was unfaithful in his duties and plundered some of the valuables for himself. Because of his actions, the Israelites suffered a terrible defeat at the hands of Ai. Joshua and the people are distraught at the happenings following this great victory, and they go to the Lord asking what has happened for such an embarrassing defeat to take place. The Lord responds that Israel has sinned and that some have taken things from the ban for themselves. The Lord lays down just how they were to find the culprit and what the repercussions were to be for the crime committed. The offender was to be burned along with all that he owned because of his transgressions that disgraced Israel. Achan was discovered with his sin and he along with all of his house were stoned and burned with fire.
- How did all of this happen? How did Achan go from being a part of a monumental victory to being stoned and burned with fire all within the span of a few days. Let me suggest that Achan made some very deadly mistakes. His mistakes led to his physical death, and these same mistakes could lead to our death, as well. While Achan's death was physical in nature, these same mistakes can lead to our spiritual death if we do not guard against them. Let's consider the 4 deadly mistakes that Achan made that we must avoid.

I. Achan ignored the warnings.

- A. It was not as if Achan and the rest of the people were unsure of whether or not God was going to allow them to take plunder for themselves. God made it extremely clear back in the text that we read just a few minutes ago that He was not going to allow the people to take the valuable things for themselves. **(6:17-19)** Yet, Achan ignored those warnings and did that which God has specifically forbidden.
- B. Achan ignoring God's straight forward warnings led to his and his house's completely avoidable demise. Again, there were not questions to be asked. God had said to not take, but Achan decided to take and he suffered the punishment for such.
- C. Let it also be noted that God had not only said that they were not to take of the spoils, but He plainly said that those who did so would make the camp of Israel accursed and would bring trouble upon it. **(6:18)**
- D. God has given us many warnings in His Word concerning a variety things that He says that we ought to avoid. He warns us against the danger of false teaching. **(II Peter 2:1-3)** He warns us against the dangers of sexual immorality. **(I Cor. 6:18)** He warns us against the dangers of alcohol and its harmful affects. **(Prov. 20:1)** He warns us about loving the world and where that will leave us in this life. **(II Peter 2:15-17)** We are without excuse as to whether or not God has given us proper warnings that will keep us safe and leave us prosperous. However, if we act as Achan and ignore those warnings, then we cannot blame anyone but ourselves and we will suffer horrible spiritual consequences, the worst being ultimate spiritual death.

II. Achan didn't consider others.

- A. Let's go back to what God said concerning the consequences of disobeying His commands. Notice that God said that not only would the person have trouble, but in fact the whole camp of Israel would be accursed and trouble would be brought upon all of it. **(6:18)**
- B. This is exactly what happened when Achan decided to sin against God and disobey His commands. Following his sin, 36 of his fellow countrymen lost their lives because He decided that he would take that which God had banned from his possession. And even beyond that...Achan's house was destroyed because of his actions. How sad that Achan only considered his own desires, and that he completely failed to consider how his actions would affect others.
- C. Let us never be so self centered that we fail to consider how our actions will affect others. We can look to numerous Biblical examples of people who failed to consider others when they were presented with important decisions. David failed to consider others when he took Bathsheba for himself, and we know how greatly others were affected. Saul took matters into his own hands concerning the sacrifices to the Lord, and the rest of his line was affected because they would no longer possess the throne of Israel. We could spend time looking at numerous other examples, but we'll leave this point with what is said in **Exodus 34:7** where the Lord said that He would visit the iniquities of the fathers to the children and grandchildren, even to the 3rd and 4th generations. What is the Lord saying? He is noting that the sins of the father can have a lasting impact and lasting consequences on others even for a very long time after he is gone.
- D. When we are faced with a decision between doing what is right and giving into temptation, we must recognize that our decisions rarely affect only ourselves. More often than not, our decisions will have an impact on those who are around us, often those who are closest to us. That moment of weakness that leads to infidelity, crushes the innocent spouse and children that might be involved. That decision to drink and drive can easily lead to harm or death falling upon another person. Our lack of moral courage can land us in jail where we cannot fulfill our duties to our families. These and many other decisions can cripple those we love most, and our lack of wisdom can cause others to be hurt. That is not the type of love that God says we are to possess as Christians. That lack of love on our part will separate us from God, and He will hold us accountable for our failures in the last day.

III. Achan coveted the spoils.

- A. It is natural to think that there would have been many who saw the great treasure of Jericho and wished that they would have been allowed to have some of it. That desire in and of itself is not wrong when it is coupled with self control to do what is right and not give into temptation. Unfortunately, Achan did not practice self control and he allowed himself to desire those things to the point of covetousness. **(7:21)**
- B. Again, the desire wasn't the issue...the issue was the obsessive desire that led him to go against God's will which was that they were not to take of the valuable spoils of Jericho. Self control was sorely lacking in the heart of Achan. His inability to control his desires for the spoils led to his demise, the death of his family, and Israel's defeat at the hands of the people of Ai.
- C. Our lack of self control can lead us to do things that would be contrary to God's Word. We might come to really desire the possessions of our neighbor. That desire isn't necessarily wrong, but it is how we react to those desires that will either make us or break us. We can work hard, earn our money rightly, and buy our own cool possessions. Nothing wrong with any of that as long as we work hard, serve others when we can, and give God all the glory. **(Eph. 4:28)**
- D. But where do we run into problems? We run into problems when we aren't willing to go about things the right way. When we steal from others for our own gain. When we cheat others for our own gain. When we focus only on those things we want. When we fail to give God glory for His blessings. When we do these things then God is not pleased and we will find ourselves outside of the good graces of our Lord who desires for us to go about all things in the godly and right way.

IV. Achan tried to hide his sins.

- A. The last of Achan's deadly mistakes is in the fact that he thought he could hide his sins and get away with it all. He thought that he could sin against God and not suffer for the sins that he had committed. Sadly, we know just how wrong this type of thinking ended up being for Achan and his family.

- B. We might look at Achan and shake our heads at him while thinking how foolish he was for thinking that he could get away with his sins....as if God was not aware or something like that. However, how are we any different at times when we do those things that we know what ought not do?
- C. How often do we sin and ignore it as if it never happened. How often do we do those things we know that at we ought not do and just continue on with our lives as if God will just ignore what we have done and overlook it? How often do we sin and give every effort to hide them from those who are around us instead of confronting our sins and seeking help to overcome?
- D. Just as it was for the Achan and his sin, our sin is ever present before the eyes of God. There is nothing in this creation that is hidden from His sight. **(Heb. 4:13)** All things are laid open before Him, and He certainly takes sin seriously because it is an affront to His righteousness. He will not condone sin among His people. Even if we never see our sin accounted for in this life, we must never forget that that we will eventually be held accountable for it as we stand before the Great Judge of Heaven. Achan failed to consider the all seeing mind of God and it cost him his life. May the same not be said about us with his example to keep in mind.

The mistakes of Achan led to lasting and devastating ramifications within this chapter of Israel's story. He failed to heed God's commands. He failed to consider how his actions might impact others. He failed to control his desires. He failed to remember that nothing escapes the eyes of our God. Our God will always seek what is best for us. He will warn us of the dangers that might confront us. He will provide that way of escape. It is just up to us as to whether or not we will take the escape route and continue to live in His grace. May God help us to avoid the deadly mistakes of Achan. Mistakes that not only affected him, but mistakes that caused others to perish as well. May we love our God and our neighbor so much that we avoid these pitfalls and glorify God in all that we do in this life.