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Joshua 7

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Joshua 7.

Topics.

- Israel broke faith, for Achan of Judah, took some of the devoted things.
- Israel's armies flee from the men of Ai and their hearts melted before them.
- The LORD tells Joshua Israel has stolen, lied and taken devoted things.
- Consecrate yourselves and take away devoted things from among you.
- Achan confesses he sinned against God and hid the devoted things.
- Achan and all that he had are burned and stoned in the Valley of Achor.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

INTRODUCTION: the first five books of Moses anticipated the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham concerning the Promised Land. Moses is now dead. Joshua crosses the River Jordan (about 1400 B.C.) and after a string of military victories apportioned the land according to the twelve tribes. These battles shine a brilliant spotlight upon the truth that God fights for His people when they are faithful and courageous and put their full trust in Him. (Josh. 1:6-9). At the close of the book Joshua says that he and all his house will serve the LORD and invites the people to choose whether they will serve the gods of their fathers or the gods in whose land they dwell or the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob. The people choose to serve their God. (Josh. 24:15). Although anonymous the book appears to contain eyewitness testimony, some of which may have been written by Joshua himself.

JOSHUA 7:1

Israel Broke Faith for Achan took some of the Devoted Things.

- **Joshua 7:1:** But the people of Israel broke faith in regard to the devoted things, for Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of the devoted things. And the anger of the LORD burned against the people of Israel.

This is continued from the previous chapter. All Israel was not only told to keep themselves from the things devoted to destruction lest they make the camp of Israel a thing for destruction, but also told that all the silver and gold, and every vessel of bronze and iron, were to be holy to the LORD and placed into the treasury of the LORD (Josh. 6:18-19). The LORD through Joshua made it very clear that if any man or woman laid hold of what was devoted to destruction to use for their own purposes and gain they by their own rebellion against God's command would make the camp of Israel a curse, by provoking God to punish them for their sin.

JOSHUA 7:2-5

Israel's Armies Flee from the Men of Ai and their Hearts Melted.

- **Joshua 7:2-5:** Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-aven, east of Bethel, and said to them, "Go up and spy out the land." And the men went up and spied out Ai. ³And they returned to Joshua and said to him, "Do not have all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not make the whole

people toil up there, for they are few." ⁴So about 3,000 men went up there from the people. And they fled before the men of Ai, ⁵and the men of Ai killed about thirty-six of their men and chased them before the gate as far as Shebarim and struck them at the descent. And the hearts of the people melted and became as water.

Imagine Joshua's confusion God had told him to be of good courage and that He would give Him the victory and be with him and the spies had told him that the men of Ai are only a few, yet Joshua sees the three thousand warriors of Israel fearfully fleeing from them. Added to this when the people of Israel at Jericho see the men fleeing their hearts also melt in fear, Joshua seeing all this would have been stunned especially after such a triumphant victory over Jericho.

JOSHUA 7:6-9

Joshua Falls Before the Ark of the LORD and Pleads with the LORD.

- **Joshua 7:6-9:** Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until the evening, he and the elders of Israel. And they put dust on their heads. ⁷And Joshua said, "Alas, O Lord GOD, why have you brought this people over the Jordan at all, to give us into the hands of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would that we had been content to dwell beyond the Jordan! ⁸O Lord, what can I say, when Israel has turned their backs before their enemies! ⁹For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it and will surround us and cut off our name from the earth. And what will you do for your great name?"

Joshua has absolutely no idea why Israel's armies never got the victory over Ai and turned their backs before their enemies, but he does know enough of God's goodness and promise that there must be some valid reason for it so he earnestly prays. Joshua is fully aware when all the remaining nations in the land hear that Israel's armies fled in terror all fear of their God and their armies will vanish like a vapour in the wind. Every king and ruler know that one of the greatest weapons to prevent an army attacking them is to have them believe that they are far more powerful than every other nation and every commander going into battle knows that instilling great fear into his enemies will give them an advantage over them.

Joshua was fully aware of this and feared the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of Israel defeat and fear and rise up to utterly cut off the name of Israel from the earth. From all his confusion and fear Joshua asks God what will He do to protect His people and His great name?

JOSHUA 7:10-12

Israel has Stolen, Lied and Taken Devoted Things.

- **Joshua 7:10-12:** The LORD said to Joshua, "Get up! Why have you fallen on your face? ¹¹Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I commanded them; they have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen and lied and put them among their own belongings. ¹²Therefore the people of Israel cannot stand before their enemies. They turn their backs before their enemies, because they have become devoted for destruction. I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you.

Ponder for a moment, Joshua's shock and horror when the LORD told him that Israel has sinned, stolen, lied, broken His covenant and taken some of the devoted things, especially when it is considered Joshua was a man full of honesty and integrity before God. The LORD explains to Joshua why the people of Israel cannot stand before their enemies and that He will no longer be with Israel until Joshua destroys the devoted things from among the people.

Consecrate Yourself and Take away the Devoted things.

- Joshua 7:13: Get up! Consecrate (sanctify in KJV) the people and say, 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow; for thus says the LORD, God of Israel, "There are devoted things in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the devoted things from among you."

Sanctify and consecrate comes from the Hebrew word (*qadash*) it means to be or make or pronounce or observe one to be clean (ceremonial or moral) and to purify oneself. The LORD calls all Israel to cleanse and purify themselves by removing the stolen devoted things from amongst the people.

JOSHUA 7:14

He who Took the Devoted things did an Outrageous thing in Israel.

- **Joshua 7:14:** In the morning therefore you shall be brought nearby your tribes. And the tribe that the LORD takes by lot shall come near by clans (families in KJV). And the clan (family) that the LORD takes shall come near by households. And the household that the LORD takes shall come near man by man.

Following are the four steps taken to discover who had lied and stolen the devoted thing:

1. All of the twelve tribes were to be brought before God and He would choose a tribe by lot.
2. Then that tribe was to bring all their families before God and He would choose a family by lot.
3. Then each family was to be brought before God and He would choose a household by lot.
4. Then each man of that household was to be brought before God and He would choose a man by lot.

In this context the decision of the lot was totally in control of God, since only He knew who the guilty man was and it is very clear that God told Joshua to cast the lot in this manner.

When casting the lot is in God's will: the word lot comes from the Hebrew word (*gowral*) and literally means to be rough (as stone). It refers to a stone or pebble that is thrown to determine a decision by the way it is going to land. Following are the two ways in which casting the lot is in God's will:

1. When God is in total control of the lot as He was in Joshua chapter seven. In this chapter God told Joshua to cast lots to discover who had lied and stolen the devoted things amongst the people of Israel (Josh. 7:14). The decision of the lot was totally in control of God, since only He knew who the guilty man (Achan) was and it is very clear that God told Joshua to cast the lot in this manner.
2. When either way the lot falls it is a good choice. In the book of Proverbs it is written:
 - The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD. (Prov. 16:33).

In some circumstances the easy way to decide a thing or stop a quarrel is to flip a coin. Proverbs states; "The lot puts an end to quarrels and decides between powerful contenders. (Proverbs 18:18). When my building partner and I decided to go our own way we had to divide the tools, we were good mates and did not want to upset each another so we

prayed that God's will would be done and then grouped the tools together in pairs of equal value. We wrote our names on opposite sides of a block of wood and tossed it in the air and agreed that whoever's name came up would have the first choice then we would alternate choosing from then on, it worked really well and stopped any tension that could have developed. In casting lots God's will was done because we both agreed to accept the outcome whatever way the block fell and both accepted the outcome of it as God's will.

In the book of Acts those in the upper room agreed that there were two men who could equally replace Judas so either way the lot fell would have been OK. If Paul and Peter were deciding to share the Good News of the Gospel on a particular Sunday at the same house meeting they could pray and flip a coin to see which one of them was to lead the meeting in that home and by faith whatever way the lot fell it could be accepted as God's will since no matter whether the coin fell in favour of Peter or Paul the outcome is a good result for those attending the meeting and for God's Kingdom. In all of these examples whatever way the lot fell was not only a good outcome, but also agreed by all involved that whatever it determined would be accepted.

No-one with any wisdom would cast a lot if one man was be perfectly suited for the position or the work and another was not nor would they cast a lot if one of the outcomes had the potential to do harm, bring ruin or cause division. In these types of scenarios no one needs to cast a lot to make the right decision since the choice would be obvious to all. Casting lots is only in God's will when it is absolutely clear God is in total control of it or when whatever way the lot falls is a good outcome. When the lot is cast according to these principles its every decision can be accepted as being from the LORD. (Proverbs 16:33)

JOSHUA 7:15

He who took the Devoted things shall be Burned by Fire.

- **Joshua 7:15:** And he who is taken with the devoted things shall be burned with fire, he and all that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he has done an outrageous thing in Israel."

God's promise to give Israel the Promised Land was conditional upon Israel obeying His commands, they could not sin and do as they pleased and think they would not suffer for it. Stealing the things devoted to the LORD was not only an outrageous sin, but also shows a total disrespect and lack of integrity in his heart toward God and for the people of Israel. To purify the people of Israel all involved with this outrageous sin against God and the people of Israel had to be burned.

JOSHUA 7:16-18

Achan of the Tribe of Judah is Brought Before the LORD.

- **Joshua 7:16-18:** So, Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel near tribe by tribe, and the tribe of Judah was taken. ¹⁷And he brought near the clans of Judah, and the clan of the Zerahites was taken. And he brought near the clan of the Zerahites man by man, and Zabdi was taken. ¹⁸And he brought near his household man by man, and Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken.

Joshua did as the LORD had instructed him and Achan of the tribe of Judah is brought before the LORD and shown to be the thief who had lied and stolen the devoted things.

JOSHUA 7:19-21

Achan Confesses He Sinned and Hid the Devoted Things.

- **Joshua 7:19-21:** Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the LORD God of Israel and give praise to him. And tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me." ²⁰And Achan answered Joshua, "Truly I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I did: ²¹when I saw among the spoil a beautiful cloak from Shinar, and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels, then I coveted them and took them. And see, they are hidden in the earth inside my tent, with the silver underneath."

Joshua tells Achan to give glory and praise to the LORD. Giving God glory and praise in this context means telling the truth and confessing his sin. Achan confesses his sin against God saying he coveted the things devoted to the LORD and took them for his own personal use and gain.

JOSHUA 7:22-26

Achan and all He had are Burned and Stoned in the Valley of Achor.

- **Joshua 7:22-26:** So, Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and behold, it was hidden in his tent with the silver underneath. ²³And they took them out of the tent and brought them to Joshua and to all the people of Israel. And they laid them down before the LORD. ²⁴And Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver and the cloak and the bar of gold, and his sons and daughters and his oxen and donkeys and sheep and his tent and all that he had. And they brought them up to the Valley of Achor. ²⁵And Joshua said, "Why did you bring trouble on us? The LORD brings trouble on you today." And all Israel stoned him with stones. They burned them with fire and stoned them with stones. ²⁶And they raised over him a great heap of stones that remains to this day. Then the LORD turned from his burning anger. Therefore, to this day the name of that place is called the Valley of Achor.

Achor comes from the Hebrew word (*`Akowr,*) and refers to a valley in Palestine, figuratively it means troubled, disturb or to afflict. All that Achan had stolen was found hidden in his tent. In the previous chapter God instructed the people of Israel that that all the silver, gold and every vessel of bronze and iron were to be holy to the LORD and placed into the treasury of the LORD (Josh. 6:19) which means that these stolen goods were stolen from the LORD. Achan, the silver, the cloak, the bar of gold, his sons and daughters, all his livestock and his tent and all that he had were taken to a valley and stoned and burned with fire. This valley became named the Valley of Achor.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.
