

Sin in the Camp (Part 2)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 February 2014

Preacher: Don Coleman

[0:00] Joshua chapter 7 is where we are and we started this last Sunday.

! Well, I am ultimately, but we're going to just read it as we go along instead of reading the entire chapter to begin with.

And I mentioned, you might remember last time, that chapter 6 is the thrill of victory. And so chapter 7 is what?

The agony of defeat. And by the way, I can still see those old commercials years ago for the Olympics. I can't remember who the announcer was.

He's dead. Who? John Cameron Swayze. Okay. And you see that skier. Okay. Yeah, that skier who's just wiped out and just sliding off, you know, terrible.

[1:17] I can still hear the thrill of victory, the agony of defeat. Well, chapter 7 certainly is that. And so last week we started out by looking at this sad chapter, or started to look at this sad chapter in Israel's history.

And just a little bit of review. It begins with disobedience. That's how it always begins.

Disobedience. And that's the first thing we see here.

Disobedience. Verse 1 starts with that kind of ominous word. But. But. Quite a contrast from chapter 6 and all that took place there.

But. Alas. We can almost say that. The children of Israel committed a trespass. That's how chapter 7 begins. Israel acted unfaithfully.

Anyway. It acted faithfully in chapter 6. And God brought a great victory. But even in the midst of their. Their great victory.

[2:25] Someone committed a sin. And that's what we have described for us. In chapter 7. What did they do? Well, they committed a trespass regarding the accursed thing.

The things that were under the ban. Literally. Under the ban. Things that were banned. Some of them banned to be destroyed.

Some of them banned. To be God's personal possession. They were. They were his. To be given to him. All right. The Bible says. For Achan.

The son of Carmi. The son of Zebediah. The son of Zerah. The. Of the tribe of Judah. Took of the accursed things. The things under the ban.

So. What happened? The anger of the Lord. Burned against the children of Israel. And again. You would expect. Really would expect it to say. Burned against Achan.

[3:23] I mean. It was Achan who did it. And yet. It doesn't say that. His anger burned. Against the children of Israel. So the whole. God held the entire camp.

Of Israel. Accountable for one man's sin. And we talked a little bit about that. And the result was. God. In effect. Withheld. His presence.

Withdrew his presence. With Israel. And withdrew his blessing. Until. The sin. Was dealt with. Would be dealt with. So there was sin in the camp.

Art. So first. Disobedience. Second. And. We looked at this last week as well. The result. Of God. Removing his hand. From Israel. The result.

From. Him. Withdrawing his presence. Because of their disobedience. Was. Defeat. That's the second thing. After disobedience. Comes defeat.

[4:21] And. It always works that way. Look at verse 2. And following. Now Joshua. Sent men from Jericho. To Ai. Which is beside Beth-Avon.

On the east side of Beth-El. And spoke to them. Saying. Go up and spy out the country. So. The men went up. And spied out Ai. And they returned to Joshua.

And said. Do not let all the people go up. But let about 2 or 3,000 men. Go up. And attack Ai. Do not weary. All the people there. For the people of Ai.

Are few. Literally. They're. They're. They're weak. They're insignificant. So about 3,000 men. Went up there. From the people. But they fled. Before the men of Ai.

They were routed by them. Literally. And the men of Ai. Struck down. About. 36 men. For they chased them. From before the gate. As far as.

[5:16] Shabarim. And struck them down. On the descent. Therefore the hearts of the people. Melted. And became like water. This is clearly defeat. Not just simply. A military defeat.

Defeat. But. An overwhelming. Defeat. Even in the hearts. Of the people. They were defeated. And they were demoralized.

And defeated. I mean. Israel. In first place. Joshua. Their leader. But Israel. All together. Had careless. They were carelessly ignorant. Of Achan's sin. Something they.

They should have known about. Even though it was done in private. I don't think it was. So much in private. That they did not know. Or some did not know. But they. Were ignorant of it.

And so they. They then were presuming upon God. They took him for granted. That what he did at Jericho. He would do at Ai. They just kind of took that for granted. And. And thereby.

[6:10] Overestimating their own strength. Underestimating the strength of the enemy. So. Disobedience. Defeat. Now we're ready to go forward. Third. And what usually follows.

Defeat. Especially unexpected defeat. Defeat. Defeat you don't think you deserve. What follows is despair. Despair.

Certainly overtook Joshua. But he's representative of the people. And the people were in despair. Verse 6. Then Joshua. Tore his clothes.

And fell to the earth on his face. Before the ark of the Lord. Until evening. He and the elders of Israel. And they put dust on their heads. They. They covered their heads with dirt.

All right. Now. That little description. What comes next. What follows this. Is going to be instructive for us. Here. About. Disobedience.

[7:10] And defeat. And the result. Of that being despair. There's some instruction here for us. And. And really. What's described here. I think. Is another one of those. Kind of. Proofs.

Of the inspiration of scripture. That it was not written by man. Because. You see. God does not use. Photoshop. To touch up the blemishes. Of his people. He doesn't.

Touch that up. He doesn't hide that. God always gives the unvarnished truth. About all of his. Great leaders. I mean. Think about it. Adam. Of course. Disobeyed God. Look.

What that got us. Noah. Got drunk. Abraham. Lied. Jacob. Deceived his father. Moses. Got angry. David. Committed adultery. And murder. And that's just a few.

Few of. The honest. Open disclosure. Given in the Bible. Of God's. Great. Leaders. And. If man was writing this book.

[8:07] He would have left that part out. You know. We want to always project something favorable. So I think it's proof. Of the inspiration of scripture. Just one of. Among many. All right. Now. What did Joshua say then?

Verse seven. Joshua said. Alas. Lord God. Why have you brought this people over the Jordan at all? To deliver us into the hand of the Amorites?

To destroy us? Oh. That we had been content. And dwelt on the other side of the Jordan. Oh Lord. What shall I say? When Israel turns its back.

Before its enemies. For the Canaanites. And all the inhabitants of the land. Will hear it. And surround us. And cut off your name from the earth. Then what will you do for your great name?

I mean you get the tenor of this. As he's speaking. I mean you can just kind of feel the. You know the. I guess what. What is so weak here.

[9:05] What Joshua is expressing here. It certainly is a voice. Of utter despair. And he is voicing his despair. With three questions and two statements.

And they're kind of alternating with one another. Here. The first question. Alas. Lord God. Why have you brought this people over the Jordan.

At all? What a. What a strange question. And then to. Finish that off with. To deliver us into the hand of the Amorites. To destroy us.

Now is that why God brought them over the Jordan? I mean come on. How could Joshua even suggest such a thing? As a matter of fact. The word alas. Here. And.

You have an NIV. I think it starts with ah. I'm not sure what some of the other translations do. But the word that is translated there. Is a word that is often used.

[9:59] Always used really. To. To express. Feelings of despair. And. Quite often. It is. Used to. Used to.

Express feelings of hopelessness. And. Defeat. And humiliation. Alas. You know we still. Well I don't know that we use that word very much today.

But. Still. We kind of understand the. The sentiment. The feeling. The mindset. That is behind the word. Alas. Now.

The only place where this expression. Is used quite often in. In Hebrew. Literature. And. In the Bible. The only place. That. Where this expression is used positively.

Positively. The times it's used positively. A number of times. Is when it is followed by. These two words. Adonai Yahweh. Which.

[10:54] Alas. Is followed by that here. Alas. Lord. God. Alas. Adonai. Yahweh. And so the word. Alas. There has some. Then.

Is used in the sense of some. At least. An expression of. Who God is. And. Who he is. In truth. He is. The. Sovereign.

Lord. God. So at least. Joshua. Interjects that. When he. Kind of expresses. This feeling of despair. But then. It's just clear. That he seems to question. God's wisdom.

He seems. He kind of seems to. Question God's integrity. And certainly. He is questioning. God's promises. That he has made. To his people.

And his covenant. And we could. Include all of that. He says. Why have you brought. This people over the Jordan. At all. To deliver us. Into the hand of the Amorites. To destroy us.

[11:50] He's questioning. God here. His wisdom. His integrity. His promises. You see. And. And this is true. True to nature. For when we are in despair.

Because. When our thoughts. Are totally occupied. With the defeat. In life. Or the problem. That has overcome us.

Whatever that. Whatever shape that. Defeat. Takes in our lives. When our thoughts are totally. Occupied with that. when we fail to focus rather our thoughts upon the Lord, especially at those times in our lives.

When that happens, we tend to forget. It's not in our minds anymore about, first of all, the reliability of God, His person.

And also we tend to forget the undefeatable plans and purposes of God. Anything can defeat God's plans and purposes.

[12:57] He'd sent them into the land. He was going to bring conquest of the land. That's His plan, His purpose. You think anything could defeat that? A few soldiers from Ai think they could be defeated?

Yet Joshua's thinking along these lines. And it also tends to, we tend to lose focus upon this reality, the irrevocable promises of God.

God had promised that land to them. And nothing was going to remove that. But Joshua had forgotten about that. What did you bring us over here for?

To defeat us? Well, certainly not. Now, the proof of this really is fairly easy to see. You see, it never entered, apparently entered Joshua's mind that God may have had another reason for allowing their defeated Ai.

Apparently it didn't occur to him. But there was something to be learned at this time. And that's something that doesn't always occur to us as well when we're struggling, when we are defeated.

[14:09] And then we have Joshua's first statement. First there's a question, then there's a statement. He says, Oh, that we had been content to dwell on the other side of the Jordan.

Ridiculous. Think about that. We'd just be content to be over there in the, you know, in our wilderness wanderings. You know, if we could just have been content there, this kind of thing never would have happened.

You see, when we lose our focus, or rather, we focus entirely upon negative circumstances, when we lose sight of God, we also, our vision, the vision that God originally gave us becomes clouded. In fact, we often just become blind to reality itself, to truth. And this is what had happened to Joshua and the people of Israel. I mean, think about it.

One little minor defeat. I mean, just a handful of Israelites were killed. I know every life is important. But relatively speaking, this was just a pretty minor defeat.

[15:16] And just one defeat, especially off on the heels, I mean, right off of a great victory at Jericho. So one defeat, and they're ready to turn tail and run back to the wilderness.

You know, the other side of the Jordan. It doesn't make a bit of sense, but you see, this is what happens. When we are in despair, and our focus is totally upon our problem, we just lose, our vision becomes clouded.

We're even totally blind to the truth. And then comes Joshua's second question. Verse 8, O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turns its back before its enemies?

I mean, what kind of answer am I going to have for that? This is just, what a contrast. You know, in Joshua's strength and his character, what a contrast between this and what was said in chapter 6 and verse 27, so the Lord was with Joshua and his fame spread throughout all the country.

We've got a different kind of Joshua here at this point. And he's just representative of the people of Israel. I mean, now Joshua's worried about his own place of leadership.

[16:36] I mean, how will he keep the people, keep their confidence in him? What he's going to say to them when they begin to complain to him? He's all worried about that. He was doubting his own ability to lead.

All right, you see how paralyzing despair can make you when there's sin in the camp?

And then comes Joshua's second statement, verse 9, for the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear it. You're going to hear about this. And they're going to surround us and they're going to cut off your name, your name from the earth.

All right, so here's the issue. What effect will this have upon the other people of this land? Not just Ai, but all the people of the land of Canaan. What effect will it have on them?

Will this damage our testimony? Will this damage the credibility of your name, Lord, and our message about you, the one true God?

[17:42] And the answer to that is, yes, it will. Yes, it will damage that. And you see, when God's people disobey and God sends correction, until repentance is made, our testimony is weak, damaged, I mean, maybe even meaningless, until the sin is dealt with.

Then finally, Joshua's third question, verse 9, then what will you do for your great name? God, what are you going to do? Your name has been, you know, has been damaged by it.

What are you going to do about that? Look what we've done to your name, Lord. Look how we have diminished your name in the eyes of these pagans all around. What are you going to do?

Joshua is just in despair. He's in despair over the defeat of Ai. And by the way, you know, I think I may have said this last week, there apparently was a lack of prayer from the very beginning, lack of prayer on Joshua's part to get God's instructions before the battle of Ai.

We don't have any mention of that. I mean, they just go right on into it. I think we have the implication of that before Jericho. And if Joshua had followed the same practice to get out there and meet with God, then perhaps he would have discovered about Achan then.

[19:13] And perhaps Achan's sin could have been dealt with before this bitter, bitter defeat. Who knows? All right, so disobedience followed by defeat, followed by despair.

But then, fourth, God reveals His grace. And so the next we see direction. God gives direction.

God's gracious to not allow this to just persist and for defeat to be now the norm for Israel.

He could have just left them alone. He said, okay, you've blown it. That's it for you. I'll go find me another people. Which God did threaten to do at one point. But God is gracious and so He gives directions to remedy this problem.

First, God gives Joshua direction. He gives some direction directly to Joshua. Some stern directions, I would say. Look at verse 10. So the Lord said to Joshua, get up.

Get up. Why do you lie thus on your face? I just love that. I mean, you can kind of picture that, can't you?

[20:34] Remember, where's Joshua? He's got dirt all over his head. You know, he's got his head in the ground. I know it's a show of humility and it was part of the custom but God says, now get up.

I mean, this is quite a stern, really a rebuke against Joshua. He's certainly wanting to get Joshua's attention. All right, now this is an example, even though it's very stern, I think it's an example of the grace of God.

See, God's not just going to let Joshua go on with this. You know, this complaining and oh, woe is me and this despair. He's not just going to let him go on with that and just totally ruin his leadership of God's people.

God does not want his people in despair just to be persistent and ongoing in despair. God's not content to do that. Joshua's lying on the ground.

I know this is a custom, show of humiliation. He was overcome with hopelessness, overcome with, really, I think, unbelief at this point. God had had enough of it.

[21:44] Get up. Get up. I mean, there's a time for humility, a show of humility. There's a time to prostrate yourself upon the ground and put your face on the ground before God in humility.

1 Peter 5, 6, therefore humble yourselves before or under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in due time casting all your care on him for he cares for you.

All right, but there is also time for action to do something, especially when there is sin, when sin is the cause of the defeat and therefore the cause of the despair.

There's time for action and so God says get up and that's really what he means. Some translations have arise or raise yourself up and really the word technically means to prepare for battle, prepare for action.

It means rise up from your state of inaction, your state of failure and humility and hear my word.

Why do you lie thus on your face?

[22:54] And the meaning there is examine the situation. You can't examine the situation with your face down in the dirt. Get up, examine the situation and get to the bottom of the problem.

And here's the problem. God says, here's what it is. Israel has sinned, verse 11. That's the problem.

And so you see, when failure comes, when defeat comes, we should never think that God, you know, somehow has abandoned us.

We certainly should never think that God's plan has failed. You know, never that. Rather, what we need to ask is what is the cause?

What's the cause of this? Or maybe even more specifically, God, am I the cause? Could I be the cause? All right, so what is the cause of Israel's defeat?

He's already, we already know that from Scripture. I mean, the narrator, the writer has already clued us into this, but Joshua had no clue. He should have. I think he could have.

[24:00] But at this point, he did not have, and so God is revealing this. This is his direction. He's giving direction to Joshua because we're going to remedy this problem, Joshua. So verse 11, he says, Israel has sinned and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them for they have even taken some of the accursed things, the things under the ban and have both, have both stolen and deceived and they have also put it among their own stuff.

That's kind of a favorite word of ours, isn't it? Stuff. Isn't it refreshing to find that in the Bible too? Hidden in among their stuff. All right, now, there's this repetition of these clauses all divided by the word and and it's a repetition, but God's not listing a number of different sins they've committed.

They've committed one sin. Each clause here is connected by and and so each one is an explanation of the sin and it begins with the general and moves to the specific and then he's going to get real specific ultimately to reveal the very things that have been stolen.

So he begins with the general and he uses two words. These are parallel thoughts but they're two different words that are translated, usually it's often translated sin, two words in the Hebrew.

Hebrew. And so when he says Israel has sinned, that's *Ishtai* in the Hebrew and it means to miss the mark. That may sound familiar to some of you because that Hebrew word is the, or that's the Hebrew equivalent to the Greek word *Hamartia*, to miss the mark.

[25:46] For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. That's *Hamartia*, miss the mark, miss God's standard. And then he says they have transgressed my covenant.

It's just the same thing, it's saying the same thing yet using different words. And transgressed is the word here or some versions I think the NASB uses the word violated.

And it is the word *abar* in the Hebrew and you'll find it many places in the Old Testament and it means a violation of the law. Literally an overstepping of the law.

So sinned, missed the mark, overstepped, violated God's law. That's generally speaking what Israel had done. They have sinned. But then he moves to the specific. He says they have taken what was banned.

Now we're getting more specific here what the sin was. And Joshua needed to know this. Those things that were devoted to God, those things under the ban, they stole it. How could they have stolen it?

[26 : 48] Because it belonged to God. They stole it from him. And they stole it by deception. So we're getting even, I mean it's almost like a snowball effect. They just didn't steal it but they deceived.

They hid. Hid it. They hid it among their own stuff. Therefore, verse 12, we'll just kind of move through here.

The children of Israel could not stand before their enemies but turned their backs before their enemies because they have become doomed to destruction. neither will I be with you anymore unless you destroy the accursed thing under the band from among you.

Actually, here is a reference to the one who committed the sin until you destroy the accursed. And we'll get to that here in a minute. All right, now the biblical truth here is this.

Sin always grieves and quenches the Holy Spirit of God. Ephesians 4.30, and do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

[27 : 56] 1 Thessalonians 5.19, do not quench the Spirit. Proverbs 28.13, he who covers his sin will not prosper. This is an epitaph for Israel at this point.

They will not prosper but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy. So first we have God's instructions or directions given to Joshua and now we have Joshua giving the people of Israel God's directions and that begins in verse 13.

And again he says, get up. All right, so he said this twice to Joshua. I don't think it's because Joshua hadn't obeyed but this time it is more reference.

Now let's get to it. Get up. It's time for action. You cannot lead the people. There with your head covered in dirt. You know, you got to get up and go.

Sanctify the people or consecrate them. Actually, literally, it means to prepare the people for what is to be done the very next day.

[28 : 56] Prepare the people and say to them, prepare yourself or sanctify yourselves for tomorrow because thus says the Lord God of Israel there is an accursed thing.

So now God has revealed that to Joshua. Now Joshua is going to reveal it to the people. There is the accursed thing in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you.

This is why you were defeated at Ai and this is why you will always be defeated unless you deal with the sin that is in the camp. So there must be a purging then of the sin.

In the morning, therefore, you shall be brought according to your tribes and it shall be that the tribe which the Lord takes shall come according to families and the family which the Lord takes shall come by households and the household which the Lord takes shall come man by man.

Then it shall be that he who is taken with the accursed thing 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 a disgraceful thing in Israel.

[30 : 05] So there it is. It's all laid out before them. Now first there is then going to be this examination of the people tribe by tribe family by family man by man getting down to the one man and that man going to be held responsible for for what has been done but his whole family is going to be included in this.

And so the examination would reveal the guilty party. And then the second thing that's going on here is the punishment. There's the punishment that will be carried out on the guilty party the accursed one.

Verse 15 and he he who is taken with the accursed thing shall be burned with fire burned with fire he and all that he has. And also we have the reason for the severity of the punishment it is a severe punishment and the reason is because he has transgressed the covenant of the Lord and because he has done a disgraceful thing in Israel.

And that leads us to the fifth movement in the story. After God's directions then comes the discovery. The discovery.

The discovery of not what was done but who did it. And that starts with verse 16. Now look at it. So Joshua rose early in the morning brought Israel by their tribes.

[31:35] The twelve tribes. And the tribe of Judah was taken it says. Alright so we're down to Judah the tribe.

We know the perpetrator of the sin is of the tribe of Judah. He brought the clan of Judah and he took the family of the Zahites.

Alright so now we're down to the families. Alright the family of the Zahites and he brought the family of the Zahites man by man and each family would have many men in that family an extended family bought them man by man and Zabdi was taken.

Family of Zabdi. And the son of Zerah and the tribe of Judah was taken. Now Joshua said to Achan excuse me then he brought his household man by man of Zabdi brought his household man by man and I keep losing my place and Achan the son of Carmi the son of Zabdi the son of Zerah the tribe of Judah was taken.

So now we're down to Achan. Alright he's the one. Now Joshua said to Achan my son I beg you give glory to the Lord God of Israel and make confession to him and tell me now what you have done do not hide it from me.

[33:14] And Achan answered Joshua and said indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel and this is what I have done. When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment 200 shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing 50 shekels that's a lot of gold I coveted them took them and there they are they're hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent with the silver under it.

So Achan admitted to the sin didn't even seem to have any kind of argument there or denial or anything now how did this work it just seems awfully easy doesn't it how did they discover Achan first how did they discover which tribe then which family then which man how did all that work have you ever wondered that well the first answer is we're not really sure how did that happen other than God certainly revealed it I think we can go a little deeper than that you really have to go back to verse 14 and note the repeated phrase which the Lord takes you'll see that three times in verse 14 three times the tribe which the Lord takes shall be according to families and the family which the Lord takes shall come by households and the household which the

Lord takes shall come man by man three times so each time they're getting down to the very man it's which the Lord takes now if you have a new American standard you might notice that the words by lot are added to the first time that phrase appears which the Lord takes and it doesn't appear the other two times but it's assumed there so the NASB has it which the Lord takes by lot and it doesn't help us a whole lot but we're getting closer and yet I would tell you that the words by lot if you have an NASB you'll notice those words are in italics which means that those words are not in the original text have been added and so the Bible translator translator or rather the copier of scripture and the translator into English has added the words thinking it would help in the understanding and in a sense it does because the words by lot interpret the meaning of that phrase which would have been a common phrase understandable phrase which the

Lord takes by lot would explain the meaning of that alright now follow me here when we get to verse 16 and following when this is actually done you know the tribe family man the phrase which the Lord takes is not there doesn't appear there anymore but it's shortened to the word took they took and say which the Lord took but it's implied because we have verse 14 took and taken so alright so now what's going on here well have you ever heard of the Urim and Thummim ever heard of that Urim and Thummim what are they we don't have any idea not really and we have a sense from scripture what the Urim and Thummim were used for but we we really only have a description of just a bare description of them in Exodus 28 30 the Bible mentions that they are in the breastplate and upon

Aaron's heart it's part of the high priest's garments and apparently it was something that was placed there either in the breastplate of the high priest that had the twelve stones representing the twelve tribes and it was there around the heart area Aaron's heart is mentioned there in the passage that's where the Urim and Thummim were placed as part of the high priest's garments alright that really helps us doesn't it one Jewish scholar has speculated and there are a number of speculations I'll just mention this one the Urim and Thummim were stones stones in placed in a bag and one stone actually this particular Jewish scholar believed there were three stones and one stone would have the symbol for no or the negative and the other stone would have the symbol for the positive yes and the other stone would be blank or kind of neutral and so these were used as lots called lots and the high priest would decide decisions specific decisions not every decision but those decisions that

I guess were ordained by God decide accordingly as one or the other was drawn out of the pouch that he wore on his garments he would draw that out and that would be the lot and so the idea was that the thought is the possibility is that this was what was done on this day and lots that we draw lots to discover which tribe and draw or draw the lot according to which family and draw the lot according to which man and God was giving all the direction this way now you know it's kind of like throwing the dice

[39 : 29] I guess in a sense I mean some have likened it to that though we don't have the Urim and Thummim anymore okay so you can't just throw a dice to try to make a decision say God you just guide the dice and tell me what to do you know have a die with yes on one side and no on the other maybe flip a coin would be another maybe comparison we might make but not at all this was something that was used by God so they you know God used this process apparently to discover so that they could discover his will his judgment and so Joshua rather was able then to discover a truth that he could not have discovered any other way now there's no New Testament version of this alright so don't be looking for some way to make your decisions based upon some Urim and Thummim or some equivalent there's no New Testament equivalent of that in fact even what I've said is quite sketchy but they had some method apparently that God could identify the right tribe the right family the right man and I think it was the use of the

Urim and Thummim in the days of the high priest alright so disobedience defeat despair direction discover we've got to wrap this up the last one defeat that's the final movement in the story defeat verse 22 this sad portion of the chapter so Joshua sent messengers and they ran to the tent and there it was hidden in his tent with the silver under it and they took them from the midst of the tent brought them to Joshua and all the children of Israel and laid them out before the Lord then Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan the son of Zerah the silver the garment the wedge of gold his sons his daughters his oxen his donkeys his sheep his tent and all that he had and they brought him to the valley of Achor and Joshua said why have you troubled us the Lord will trouble you this day so all

Israel stoned him with stones and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones then they raised over them or him a great heap of stones still there to this day so the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger therefore the name of that place has been called the valley of Achor trouble to this day now when you read that one question usually comes to your mind why was God so harsh so harsh with Achan but also with his family and you know you might think of you know the New Testament and you might think of the mercy Jesus seemed to give to the woman the Samaritan woman at the well who had five husbands and the man she was living with at the time was not even her husband or your mind might think about

John 8 3 what you know about the woman who was taken in adultery and a Jewish woman who could have been stoned according to the law in fact was about apparently about to be stoned and yet Jesus had mercy on her you might think of those instances and so then you kind of put those two together and so why did Achan and especially his family not receive a similar mercy from God that's the kind of way our thinking goes and you know what's the answer for that now of course you know you may have forgotten all about God's swift judgment of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts chapter 5 I mean at the very least there is God's purity God's holiness God's name to be considered here I mean at the very least that's not enough of an answer for us and really there is another issue here I think that we should consider who were these people we call

Israel God called Israel who were they what was their purpose what was their purpose at this particular moment in their history crucial moment really a beginning moment of really being the people of God they were the people called of God to be witnesses of his name that's who they were and they were it would be through them that God would one day bring the Savior the Messiah and so we ought to consider this God must protect his people his chosen people through whom the Messiah will one day come he must protect his people from the destruction of sin and so he must deal radically at this point with sin and so they must all realize and even beyond them other peoples must realize just how serious it was to sin against

[44 : 57] God's law all right now that that's an answer that doesn't fully satisfy us and so think about this as we kind of take it a step further thinking about God's people at this time in their history and in the larger sense at this particular juncture in God's revelation of his redemption that flows all throughout Old Testament and on into the new think about that in terms of that compare these two things as the situation of Ananias and Sapphira occurred in the very early period of the church New

Testament church so also this judgment against Achan and his family this severe judgment radical judgment occurred at the initial period in the initial period of Israel's entrance into the promised land two very crucial beginnings in God's working out of his redemptive plan and so

God then in both instances God acted from our perspective harshly and God certainly acted severely if not harshly in both instances God determined to strike fear the fear of God in the hearts of the people that's what happened when Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead as they stood there and it struck fear in the hearts of the people so God determined to do that and here with Achan he provided then this provides an example of the seriousness of sin the seriousness of what Achan had done in violating the covenant of God both instances are very similar and God did it that way to speak a strong message to God's people at crucial times in the history of his people the history of Israel as a people in the promised land the history the beginning of the history of the church

God's people just right after the Pentecost and the establishment of the church in Achan's case a great heap of stones was set up over Achan's grave and that was done as a memorial a memorial of a warning for the generations to come and on the New Testament side what what do we have that reminds us of the seriousness of sin can you think of anything how about the cross now certainly we glory in the cross and the cross is a symbol of God's grace and salvation but we would miss its full significance if we did not also see the seriousness of sin so serious that the Lord Jesus Christ went to the cross to pay the price for it so that we would not have to you