

God says to us - When you get a check at the end of the week. Imbedded in that check is a bomb. It is devoted to destruction. It is going to blow up, and when it blows up it will destroy everything around it. I want you to bring that bomb (that tithe) to me, to my house. With it I will "rebuke the devourer" so that he cannot carry out his plans against you. I will use the bomb from your income to destroy the one who wants to destroy you.

Or, you can keep it. But if you keep it remember this. It's a bomb and it will do what bombs do - and when it blows up it will destroy everything around it. If its in your checkbook, if its in your 401K, if its parked in your garage, or if you are carrying it around in your pocket - sooner or later it will blow up.

When we keep for ourselves the thing that God wants to use to bless us - it becomes a curse.

Let's look a bit further forward in Joshua - Joshua 8:2 "*and thou shalt do to Ai and her king as thou didst unto Jericho and her king; only the spoil thereof, and the cattle thereof, shall take for a prey unto yourselves.*"

Oh, if Achan had only been willing to wait. If he had only been willing to trust the Lord - instead of a little pile of treasure that became instead a curse - he would have had blessings he could not have imagined.

As move on, I want to point out that Achan's failure was not the only failure in the camp....

Joshua sent spies to spy out the city and they returned and reported, (verse 3) They said, this town will be no problem, the people are not many, the city is weak - not strong like Jericho - don't even bother to send up all of the people. Just send up two or three thousand men - they can mop it up in no time. This is easy.

So (verse 4) Joshua sent up about three thousand men, and they fled before the men of Ai. And the men of Ai smote them and killed 36 men; for they chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down; wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water.

Let's look at this analytically:

40 years before when Israel spied out the land - they were cursed by a lack of confidence. Now - they are cursed by OVER CONFIDENCE. They looked back at Jericho and said, "We won a battle easily at Jericho, this Ai will be no problem." EXCEPT Isarel did not win a battle at Jericho - they went for a walk and WATCHED GOD win a battle at Jericho.

At Jericho they were ASSURED OF GOD'S BLESSING - AT Ai - they ASSUMED GOD'S BLESSING

At Jericho they HEARD GOD'S INSTRUCTION while at

At Ai - they did not SEEK GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS and at Jericho they Marched behind the Ark of the Covenant, while at Ai - they did not even bother to bring bring the ARK OF THE COVENANT. (God's presence)

At Jericho - Joshua inquired of the Captain of the Hosts - "What do you want me to do?"

At Ai - Joshua listened to the counsel of men and did not seek God's instructions. If he had sought the Lord, he would have known before the battle about the sin of Achan.

When Joshua DOES seek God (after the fact) God tells him, I will not be with you, nor will you be able to stand before you enemies UNTIL you remove the accursed thing from your midst. (7:12)

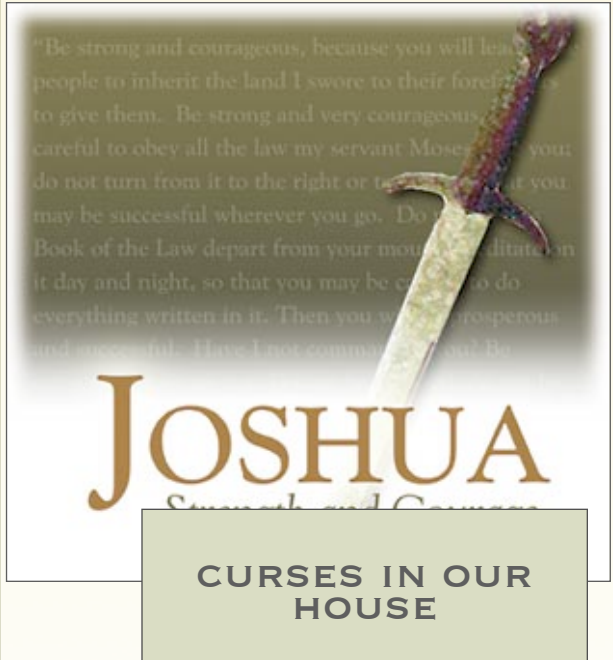
From this account we need to consider several things:

- (1) What have we brought into our house that is an accursed thing - devoted to destruction, making our home an accursed home? Am I bringing a curse upon the very people that I love the most? *Perhaps I need to do an inventory of my house and remove those things which God hates that I'm hiding in my tent.*
- (2) What am I withholding that belongs to God, that I need to turn over to him so that he can bless me? **Am I storing a bomb in my checkbook?** And by keeping the thing that belongs to God, am I *preventing* my family from receiving the blessing that God has in store for us?
- (3) Am I assuming God's blessing? Am I failing to ask God for instructions about even the simple matters? Am I walking in the presence of God so that I can know his power, his provision, and his blessing?

AGAPE

PULPIT SERIES

February 8, 2009



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The Israelites have now entered the promised land - they have celebrated a great victory at Jericho and are now ready to move on to the next city, Ai and pursue their conquest of Caanan. However, there is a problem of which Joshua is totally unaware of that will result in some important lessons - for us and for them. What we are going to do today is take a stroll through chapter 7 and make some observations which are very important for us to note.

We read in verse 1: *“But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing; and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel.”*

For a moment, let's look backwards and then forward from this verse to set the context:

Backward, Joshua 6:18 - 19, *“And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse and trouble all. But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the Lord: they shall come into the treasury of the Lord.”*

So here is our backward look from Joshua 7:1 - the people were commanded by the Lord that they were not to touch, or take certain things from the city of Jericho. They were told that certain things were “accursed” and certain things were “consecrated” and they were not to take any of these things.

Now the English Standard Version (which I highly recommend as an accurate translation of the original language) uses the word “devoted” where the King James uses the word “accursed”. The word accursed is not wrong - is just that the word “devoted” is more accurate. It means - something that is devoted (or set apart) for destruction or consecrated to God. There were some things in the city that were to be destroyed. They were anything that was used as part of the idolatrous worship of the people of Jericho. Those things were to be destroyed. There were some things in the city that were consecrated to the tabernacle. All of the gold, silver, brass, and iron was to be brought to the tabernacle for the “lord's treasury.”

The people were clearly warned - if you in any way partake of these “devoted,” these “accursed” things - you will make yourself accursed. Furthermore, you will cause that same curse to come upon the entire camp of Israel and it will bring great trouble upon everyone.

Forward. Now, we're going to look forward a bit to

Joshua 7:21 - when confronted by Joshua, a man by the name of Achan confessed that he had disobeyed clear commandment and had taken some of the “devoted” things and had hidden them in his tent. They were specifically a “Babylonish Garment” and two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold worth fifty shekels.” He says, “I saw them, I coveted them, and took them, and behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.”

The Babylonish garment would have been a garment from the temple which would have been used in the worship of false Gods. It was specifically identified as a “babylonish garment,” probably used in the worship of Baal, and quite possibly worn by a temple prostitute. These things according to Joshua 6:18 were “accursed” and devoted to destruction. The gold and silver, were of course to be brought to the tabernacle and devoted to the Lord's treasury.

As a result of this sin, God's blessing was removed from the camp of Israel and when they went up against Ai in their next campaign they were soundly defeated by a very small and insignificant enemy.

The greater, perhaps even sadder part of this story is Achan who brought “accursed” things, things devoted for destruction or clearly consecrated as property of the Lord's treasury into his house. As a result, Achan not only lost his life, but his family was cut off, his heritage erased. There are no descendants of Achan in Israel today.

Achan's house and his household was cursed by the things he brought into his house. He saw those forbidden things and coveted them - and even though God had said that Israel needed to avoid those things he brought it and buried it in his house.

Now, let me explain some things to you this morning. If God says something is going to be destroyed - if something is accursed - if something is devoted to the treasury of the Lord - the last place you want that thing is in your house. When Achan brought that thing into his tent - he condemned his house and all that dwelt there.

The question begs to be answered here today, by you and me - What have we brought into our homes that have been “devoted for destruction?” What do we allow into our houses that are “accursed things,” and is so doing - have we brought our homes and our households into harm's way?”

Young person, when you sneak certain types of music into the house on your IPOD, are you sneaking a curse in upon your family and they don't even know it? When you bring musicians who blaspheme everything that is holy and desecrate the name of Jesus, glorify violence, and

promote carnality - you are bringing an accursed thing into your home.

If it seems that we are losing battles that we ought to be winning, falling behind when we ought to be getting ahead, living under pressure when we ought to be standing in victory - what have we hidden in our tent that is making our homes accursed?

When we authorize that channel on our cable, are we streaming curses into our homes? We wonder why there is fighting and squabbling and unrest? We can't figure out what's happening to our relationships, to our marriages - have we guests in our home that should not be there, but which we invite when we partake of the accursed thing.

But there is not only the accursed thing. There is the devoted thing. Achan not only partook of an accursed thing, he also kept for himself things that were devoted to God. The gold and the silver were devoted to the Lord's treasury - and Achan kept it for himself. Let me show you something in Malachi 3:8-11: *“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherin have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse; for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me herewith, saith the Lord of hosts. If I will not open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruit of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts.”*

Some of you have heard this teaching before, but it bears repeating here.....I want us to look for a moment at what the Lord is saying here. God says that a portion (the tithe) of your income is devoted to the Lord's treasury. And more importantly - its is devoted for destruction. Verse 11 says, “I will rebuke the devourer for your sake” - the word here is kwaram - and it means devoted for destruction.

Here is what I have come to believe this verse is teaching us.....The enemy has designs to destroy you, to destroy your family, to destroy your stuff, to rob you of God's blessings. God says, I have planed within your goods a portion that is slated for destruction. Let's call it a bomb. Now, we all know what bombs do, don't we? They blow up. That's what they do, because that's what they were designed to do. They don't have any other purpose - they don't do anything else. They blow up and when they blow up - they destroy everything and everyone around them.