

Sabbath School Lesson #6 – The Enemy Within – 1-7 November 2025

Chris by His own Spirit convinces men of sin. If the Lord did not do this, we should not know that we had sinned. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings” (Jeremiah 17:9-10). God and His Son alone can know what is in man. How foolish, then, when God tells us that we are doing wrong, for us to say, ‘I cannot see it; it does not seem to me to be wrong.’ Of course, not; and that is why the Lord shows it to us. For us to say that we have not sinned, when God says that we have, is to charge God either with ignorance or falsehood; and who can expect to be saved while making such a charge against God? There would be war in heaven at once, for we would be setting our will and our judgment against God’s.

Sunday: Breach of the Covenant – Read Joshua 7; what were the two major causes of Israel’s defeat by the inhabitants of Ai? The Lord said, “Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant.” What caused the failure in the Camp? The incident shows our dependence on God. When they trusted in themselves, they failed. And what was the reason that God was not among them? Because there was sin among them. The sin of Achan was imputed to the entire camp, until the offender was searched out and punished. The record says, “But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing; for Achan... took of the accursed thing.” Yet there is no evidence that anybody besides Achan was concerned in the theft or knew of it. The Lord showed by this that He would have His people have a care for one another. We are each our brother’s keeper. The Lord has said, “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and shall not suffer sin upon him” (Leviticus 19:17). When the body of believers, then, searches out the erring one, and rebukes him, it is doing that which is necessary to its own existence. Just as a man cannot be said to be sound if one of his limbs is diseased, so the body of believers is not pure unless each individual member is walking orderly. Each person should consider how much responsibility attaches to his course. By a wrong course he may involve many in his own ruin; so true it is that “none of us liveth to himself” (Romans 14:7).

Monday: The Sin of Achan – Read Joshua 7:16-19; what lessons do we learn from the sin of Achan? There was sin in the camp when Israel went up against Ai, and this was the cause of their defeat. The whole people suffered, not simply because of Achan’s sin, but because all had sinned. “Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4). Whether they were blinded by “the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb 13:3), and then became exalted in their minds, or whether their self-exaltation led to their sin, is not material; certain it is that the people had given place to sin, and had become self-confident, which is in itself sin. Because of sin they suffered defeat; so long as sin was given a place in their hearts, they could not go on with the conquest of the land; and this again proves that the promised inheritance, into which God was leading them, was such as could be possessed only by righteous people – those who had the righteousness of faith.

The men who went up to view the country made the people believe that but few men were needed to capture Ai, because it was a small city. But they had no ground for such an assumption. True, Ai was not nearly as large as Jericho, but numbers had nothing to do with the taking of that city. Like Jerico, Ai must fall by faith: “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down” (Hebrews 11:30); and if the Israelites had been only half or even one-tenth as numerous as they were, the result would have been the same. It required the same power to take Ai that it did to take Jericho, namely, the power of God, laid hold of by faith. When the men said that but few of the people were needed for the capture of Ai, they assumed that it was their military skill that was to secure the land for them. But that was a grievous error. God had promised to give them the land, and it could not be obtained except as a gift. The mightiest army that the world has ever seen, armed with the most approved weapons of war, could not take it; while a few unarmed men, strong in faith and giving glory to God, could have possessed it with ease. The force that takes the kingdom of heaven is not the force of arms.

Another lesson from the story of Ai is that God did not intend that His people should ever suffer defeat, or that in the occupation of the land a single man should lose his life. We read:

“And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six 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” (Joshua 7:5). In ordinary warfare the loss of thirty-six men in an assault upon a strongly fortified city would not be counted great, even if the assault were successful; but in taking possession of the land of Canaan it was a terrible reverse. The promise was, “Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you,” and “there shall not any man be able to stand before thee,” (Joshua 1:3, 5), and now they themselves had been obliged to flee, with the loss of men. The influence that the passage of the Jordan and the capture of Jericho would have had to impress and overawe the heathen, was now broken. Trusting to their own strength, the Israelites had lost the power of God’s presence, and had demonstrated their own weakness.

Tuesday: Fateful Choices – Read Joshua 7:19-21; what is Joshua asking Achan to do? What is the significance of such a request? How do we understand his confession? We are told: “The confession of Achan, although too late to be available in bringing to him any saving virtue, yet vindicated the character of God in His manner of dealing with him, and closed the door to the temptation that so continually beset the children of Israel, to charge upon the servants of God the work that God. Himself had ordered to be done. It was the Lord Jesus Himself that specified what should be the punishment of Achan, or there might have been murmuring in the camp of Israel, even though the stolen goods were found in his tent” {8LtMs, Lt 13, 1893, par. 22}. “The Lord knew just where the stolen goods were to be found, and had told Joshua where they were, although He had not specified who was the guilty one. But the honor of God must be vindicated by confession from the sinner’s own lips, and Achan testified to the truth against himself. In the manner in which the Lord dealt with Achan, we can see how great is His displeasure against those who commit similar sins. The standard of the gospel today is no lower than it was in the days of Joshua, but as much more elevated as increased light shines upon our pathway” – EGW {8LtMs, Lt 13, 1893, par. 23}.

Wednesday: The Door of Hope – Read Joshua 8:1-29; what does this story tell us about how God can transform our most abysmal failures into opportunities? In dealing with the sin of Achan, came searching of heart and camp, and the revelation of that search was such that repentance, deep and strong, took hold of the camp as of one man. Then the “accursed thing” was removed. Not only were the gold and silver and the Babylonish garment taken away, but their self-sufficiency, so satisfying before, but now so detestable, was for the time banished from the camp. Then the Lord said to Joshua: “Take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land” (Joshua 8:1). When this divine direction was carried out, Ai was easily taken. God was as well able to have conquered Ai without human co-operation as He was to cause the walls of Jericho to fall at the blast of the priests’ trumpets. But the lessons for that people to learn, as well as those of us today, was, that no matter how great the number of the people, or how small the work to be accomplished, God wanted them to understand that He could not sanction one’s excusing himself from doing his part.

Thursday: A Witness to God’s Power – Read Joshua 7:6-9, what lessons do we learn from Joshua’s initial reaction and subsequently? Israel attacked Ai without the assurance that God would be with them and the inhabitants of Ai “chased them from before the gate, ... and smote them in the going down.” Joshua initially spoke sinfully, “Alas, O Lord God,” he cried, “wherefore hast Thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us?” Then, “what wilt Thou do unto Thy great name?” “Joshua manifested a true zeal for the honor of God, yet his petitions were mingled with doubt and unbelief. The thought that God had brought his people over the Jordan to deliver them up to the power of the heathen was a sinful one, unworthy of a leader of Israel. Joshua’s feelings of despondency and distrust were inexcusable in view of the mighty miracles which God had wrought for the deliverance of his people, and the repeated promise that he would be with them in driving out the wicked inhabitants of the land” {ST April 21, 1881, par. 6}. “But our merciful God did not visit his servant with wrath because of this error. He graciously accepted the humiliation and prayers of Joshua, and at the same time gently rebuked his unbelief, and then revealed to him the cause of their defeat” {ST April 21, 1881, par. 7}.