

Victory and Defeat

There is one crucial requirement for victory in the Christian life – **obedience** to God’s commands. Similarly, there is one thing the Christian can do to ensure defeat and discouragement – **disobey** God’s instructions. Simply put, obedience brings victory, while disobedience and compromise results in defeat and trouble.

These truths are vividly demonstrated in this lesson. The Israelites obeyed God and enjoyed complete victory at Jericho. Later one of the Israelites disobeyed God, which resulted in a humiliating and costly defeat at Ai. Read the following scripture verses and answer the questions to learn about Israel’s experience.

- Josh. 6:1-5** What instructions did the Lord give Joshua about Jericho?
What did He promise would happen if they obeyed?
- Josh. 6:6-11** Joshua told the Israelites what God had told him.
- Josh. 6:12-14** The Israelites marched around Jericho once a day for six days. Did they obey God in doing this?
- Josh. 6:15-19** Who were the only residents of Jericho that were to be spared (v. 17)?
What was to happen to the silver, gold, brass, and iron (v. 19)?
Were the Israelites to take any of the spoils of victory for themselves?
- Josh. 6:20-27** What happened to the wall of Jericho when the trumpets were blown and the people shouted?
The Israelites utterly destroyed Jericho and killed everyone except Rahab and her family. What does verse 27 say about Joshua?
- Josh. 7:1** Why was God angry with the Israelites?
- Josh. 7:2-5** What happened when the Israelites attacked Ai?
- Josh. 7:6-9** What did Joshua and the elders of Israel do after the terrible defeat at Ai?

Notice in verse 9 that Joshua wanted to protect God’s name.

- Josh. 7:10-11** God answered Joshua. What sin did He say Israel had committed?
- Josh. 7:12** What did God say would happen if Israel failed to destroy the “accursed” from among them?

Josh. 7:13-15 The Israelites were to sanctify themselves (Josh. 3:5) and come before Him the next day.

Josh. 7:16-18 Joshua did exactly as God said. Achan was identified as the one who had disobeyed God.

In verses 19-20 Joshua gave Achan the opportunity to glorify God by confessing his sin. Achan could have confessed his sin before the battle at Ai, after the defeat, when Joshua told the people to sanctify themselves, or before they began going through all the tribes and families. Instead, Achan waited to get caught.

Josh. 7:21 What did Achan do when he saw the forbidden items?

Where did he hide them?

Josh. 7:22-23 The forbidden items were found exactly where Achan said they were.

Josh. 7:24-26 What was done to Achan, his entire family, and all his possessions?

Why did the Israelites do this (Josh 7:15)?

In Joshua 8 the Israelites followed God's instructions and defeated Ai. The irony of Achan's sin was that if he had controlled his greed at Jericho, he would have had all the spoils he could carry at Ai (Josh. 8:2). In Joshua 9 the Israelites were deceived into making a peace treaty with the Gibeonites. God had specifically told them not to make peace or compromise with any of the inhabitants of the land (Ex. 23:32; Deut. 7:2). They made this mistake because they didn't ask God what to do (Josh. 9:14).

Concluding Thoughts: There is much we can learn from this lesson. When the Israelites explicitly obeyed God they were blessed with victory, but when they disobeyed they suffered humiliating and disheartening defeat. The same is true today. If you obey God you will be blessed with victory, but disobedience and compromise always bring defeat. The choice is yours.

Notice something else: when Achan sinned, **everybody** suffered. The world says your sin affects nobody but yourself, but that is simply not true. When you sin your family, your friends, and your church will suffer. **Sin is serious business.**

The theme of this quarter's study is **Costly Compromise**. In this lesson we have found Israel's first compromises and the troubles they caused. Compromise always brings trouble.

Has the Lord brought to your mind some area of sin, disobedience, or compromise in your life? If so, confess it right now. Don't be like Achan and wait to be caught. Confess your sin right now and ask the Lord to enable you to obey Him explicitly.

Project: If there is disobedience in your life take definite steps to correct it. Don't delay!