

## THE SIN OF COVETOUSNESS

– *DECEMBER 14.* – *JOSHUA 7.* –

"Be sure your sin will find you out." – Numbers 32:23.

THE Israelites, full of faith and flushed with the victory over Jericho, proceeded with the conquest of Canaan. Spies were sent to Ai. These, returning, advised that the place was small, and that a force of two or three thousand men would be quite sufficient for its capture. Indeed, from the experiences of Jericho they anticipated that none of the Israelites would be killed – that their enemies would be so terror-stricken as to render little or no defense. But the experiences at Ai were the reverse. Thirty-six Israelites were slain; and Israel's army, perceiving that they had not the Lord's favor, fled before their enemies.

Joshua and his associates, the Elders of Israel, were bewildered at this. They prostrated themselves before the Ark of the Covenant, bewailing the trouble and especially fearful of the influence which the defeat would have upon their enemies – encouraging them and discouraging Israel, who were God's typical people.

## THE ACCURSED OR DEVOTED THING

In our Common Version, *accursed* has been used where *devoted* would have been preferable. The Lord informed Joshua that Divine favor was not with Israel because of their unfaithfulness. When Jericho was captured, a portion of the spoils had been appropriated by one of the soldiers. But according to the Lord's arrangement all the spoils were devoted in advance; hence this was a breach of their agreement, and Israel's armies could have no blessing until the matter was rectified.

In order that the lesson might be learned by the entire people, the Lord directed that the representatives of all the tribes should appear before Him and lots be cast, and that thus would be indicated the tribe to which the guilty one belonged. In like manner the different families of that tribe were tested, and the family found. Thus step by step the matter came down to Achan, who was the [R5351 : page 345] one indicated as guilty – the cause of the trouble.

"And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto Him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me. And Achan answered Joshua and said, Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent."

### **THE PENALTY UPON ACHAN**

The penalty upon Achan was death by stoning, and after the stoning the corpse was burned – the burning indicating symbolically that there was no hope of a future life for him. It is our thought, however, that this was a part of the general allegory, and that really Achan, as a member of Adam's family, must ultimately have a share with all the remainder of the race in the redemption provided through Jesus' death. Thus also the Sodomites were destroyed by fire from heaven – in a figure representing the class which will die the Second Death. But none can die the Second Death without being first released in some manner from the condemnation of the first death – Adamic death. These were merely types, or foreshadows, of the wilfully wicked class and of the everlasting destruction, as brute beasts, which will come upon them.

As the Sodomites experienced no knowledge nor blessing through Jesus, so Achan had none. As the Sodomites, redeemed by the merit of Jesus' sacrifice, will be awakened from the sleep of death during the Messianic Age, and their experiences will be more tolerable than those of the people of Chorazin and Bethsaida, so it will surely be with Achan. As the Apostles declare, these typical experiences of the past were set forth as an ensample of the destruction which will be the ultimate punishment of all who wilfully, knowingly and intelligently reject the Lord's ways. – I Corinthians 10:11; Jude 7.

### **COVETOUSNESS IN OUR DAY**

Perhaps at no time in the world's history was there ever so much covetousness as in our day. How few comparatively in any city, in any nation, would do very differently from what Achan did! If all such were to be stoned to death and to be burned, the world would be one vast funeral pyre. True, they are not deterred by fear of any such punishment. Nevertheless, a large proportion of them profess to believe that for all such sins the penalty is eternal torture. Yea, many who are ready to condemn the curse of Joshua and the Israelites in the stoning of Achan, are ready to believe that the God of Love, the God of all Grace, the Father of all Mercies, would do ten times worse by Achan and by practically the entire human family – all except saintly ones who have come into vital relationship with the Redeemer.

Alas, how twisted our minds have become! How glad we are that the true light is now shining, and chasing away to some extent our hobgoblins of error and false doctrine handed down to us from the Dark Ages, and wrongly supposed to be teachings of the Bible!

### **COVETOUSNESS IN THE CONSECRATED**

When we remember that Jordan represents consecration, and that those who crossed Jordan typically represented those Christians

who have entered into a Covenant with God and who have been begotten of the Spirit; and when we remember that the conquests of Canaan represented the spiritual battles of the consecrated and the subjugation and possession of the citadel of the heart, the sin of Achan has a new force and meaning. It corresponded closely to the sin of Ananias and Sapphira. They had devoted, or consecrated, their property to the Lord's service, and then attempted to take back a portion of the devoted wealth. They would rob God. They would steal back that which they had given to Him. This class seems to be especially represented in Achan. He stole, not from his brethren, but from the Lord, things which had been devoted to the Lord.

The name Christian today has a very wide application, and in general signifies a civilized person. But the term Christian really belongs only to a comparatively small class of humanity – to those who, believing the Message of Jesus, have made consecration of their lives to be His disciples, His footstep followers. These have accepted His terms – "If any man will be My disciple, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." This is the class, typified by Israel, who have entered the antitypical Canaan, who are fighting the good fight and who would recognize all the spoils of their warfare as consecrated to the Lord.

It is for these to inquire respecting their own faithfulness, loyalty. Each of them should inquire, Am I keeping and holding as my own any portion of what was consecrated to God? If they are keeping back as their own any portion of that which was devoted to the Lord, they are in danger of being part of the antitypical Achan. They are in danger of exercising an injurious influence on others of the Church; and not only so, but they are in danger of that fate which was typically illustrated in Achan's case – in danger of the utter destruction of the Second Death – everlasting destruction. **[R5351 : page 346]**

## **"COVETOUSNESS, WHICH IS IDOLATRY"**

The Apostle declares that "Covetousness is idolatry." It puts first and most prominently the thing which is coveted; and when this coveted thing is contrary to the Divine will, it signifies that the coveted thing is esteemed more than God – is desired more than the Divine favor. From this viewpoint the whole world is full of idolatry today. The idols most worshiped are wealth and pleasure. These occupy the time and the attention of nearly everybody. Time and strength, honor and manhood and womanhood, are poured out lavishly for these "idols." On the contrary, the true God, from whom comes every perfect gift, receives but slight attention from the masses of His creatures. His laws and His will, His pleasure and His favor are scarcely thought of.

What is the result? Has the worship of mammon been real joy or peace and satisfaction to the hearts of humanity? Has the pursuit of pleasure and the devoting to it of time, talents and money brought real pleasure of soul to the masses? This question must be answered in the negative. Wealth is being pursued and bowed down to on every hand, yet grants its favor to only a comparatively small number, and even the favored ones find bitterness mingled with their sweets. The possession of wealth brings not the joy and peace which they had hoped and believed. It has brought care, perplexity and still greater hunger, which they know not how to satisfy.

So it is with the worship and pursuit of pleasure. It is an ever-continuing chase and seeking for pleasure. The grasping of it seems to bring, not joy, but discontent and heart-hunger. As a result the worshipers of mammon and pleasure are unhappy. The world is discontented, and apparently growing more so as the days pass by.

Man is so constituted by nature that his finest and noblest sentiments, which bring him the most satisfaction, joy and peace, rest and happiness, are the exercise of his mind and talents Godward. According to St. Paul, all men by nature should be feeling

after God, desiring to find Him. But, alas, many of the noblest of God's people, who have found rest and peace through a knowledge of the length and breadth and height and depth of

"Love Divine, all love excelling," are not only not helping the world to find the true God, but, on the contrary, actually misdirecting them!

The monstrous misrepresentations received by us from the Dark Ages we have heartily repudiated. And yet we are holding up these misrepresentations of the Divine Character and Plan before the world, and in so doing are turning them away from God and from the Bible – to seek rest of soul and peace and joy in the worship of mammon and the pursuit of pleasure, which can bring only disappointments. Alas, how long will it be before we openly acknowledge to the world that we have repudiated the monstrous teachings of our creeds and have accepted the teachings of the Bible that God is Love, and that He has a gracious Plan whereby through Jesus all who will may be recovered and enter into rest!

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