

ISRAEL AND AI

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: JOSHUA 7-8



Destruction comes upon those who do not follow the Word of God.

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

Israel was defeated due to Achan's sin – God's commanded Israel to destroy everything in Jericho except the silver, gold, iron, and bronze (which were to be declared holy and deposited in the treasury of the Lord). But not everyone obeyed. As a result of Achan's sin God did not give Israel victory over Ai. In fact, Joshua 7:5 tells us that as a result of the defeat, the hearts of the Israelites "melted and became as water." This description matches the description of the people of Jericho when they heard Israel had crossed the Jordan, see Joshua 5:1.

Achan was found out and judged – God directed Joshua call Israel before Him so that those guilty of taking the devoted things could be judged. He instructed Joshua to choose a tribe, clan and household by lot (see vs 14). Without hesitation, Joshua appealed to Achan to confess. Achan, affected by the way he was found out, immediately confessed to taking a cloak, some silver and a bar of gold. Achan and his entire family were taken to the Valley of Achor. There Achan, his family and possessions were stoned and burned with fire. Just as God's mercy came to the outsider, Rahab and her entire family, God's judgment came to an Israelite's entire family. Rahab shows us that the Lord's mercy is not only for those inside the camp and Achan show us that the Lord's judgments are not only for those outside the camp. The Lord is His holy judgments will not compromise.

Israel defeated Ai and enjoyed the spoils – In God's kindness He gave Ai into the hands of Israel and He rewarded them by allowing them to keep the spoils and livestock of this war for themselves. Prior to battle, Joshua warned them to "do according to the word of the Lord." Reminiscent of the day Moses held up his hands during the battle against the Amalekites (Exodus 17:9-13) Joshua held up his javelin until Israel's victory was secured.

Joshua built an altar and offered a blood sacrifice to the Lord – Just as Moses did at the conclusion of the battle with the Amalekites, Joshua built an altar. Joshua followed God's Word to make an altar of undressed stones, see Exodus 20:25. This would show that the altar was for the Lord. On the altar, Joshua offered sacrifices. Then he wrote the law of the Lord and read it before all the people. Joshua read every word of the law to all of Israel both natives and the sojourners who lived among them.

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WHERE IS JESUS?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

Take time to remind the children that God always punishes sin. Achan was killed for taking the gold and silver. He deserved to be punished for his sin. We all deserve to be punished for our sin as well. The penalty for even one sin is death.

Jesus took the penalty for our sin at the cross so we can be forgiven. All those who trust in the Lord have their sin paid for on the cross. The Bible says, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Joshua offered a sacrifice to God for a peace offering. One day, God would offer up His son Jesus as the ultimate peace offering. Jesus said in John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you." With the sacrifice of Jesus, there is no longer a need to offer peace offerings for we have peace with God, see Romans 5:1.

ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

Bible Passage: Jeremiah 33:14-15

Connecting the passage to Christ:

Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise. He is the righteous branch for David; He is a righteous judge. Jesus lived a perfect life of obedience in our place as our representative. Because of His death on the cross where He took the penalty for our sin we can be forgiven and His perfect righteousness as our representative can be given to us. That is why we say the Lord is our righteousness.

Questions for reflection:

- What in this passage points to Christ? (Jesus fulfills the promise to bless the nations through the tribe of Judah. He lived without sin and was from the line of David. Jesus brought righteousness to men by virtue of His perfect atoning sacrifice on the cross.)
- Why couldn't other men in the line of David be the ones described here? (Israel's king at the time, Zedekiah, was a sinner just like the other kings of Israel. The name Zedekiah means "the Lord is righteous" but Jesus would be the fulfillment of this prophecy and would be a better "Zedekiah".)

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SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

HOLD THE JAVELIN

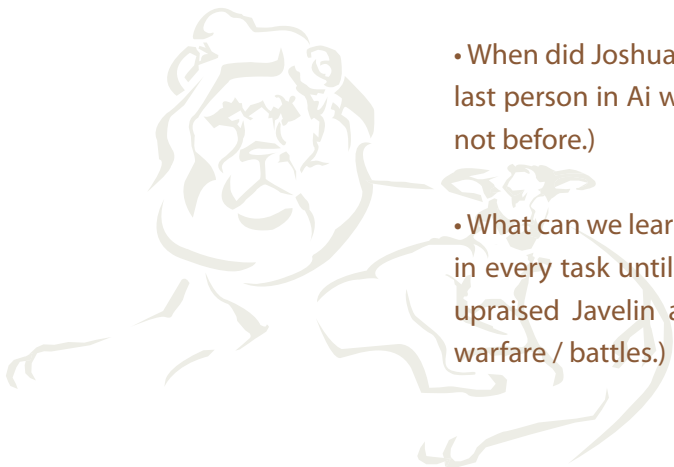
Supplies

Bring in a large broomstick pointed on one end

Ask for a volunteer. Explain to them what Joshua did in holding up the javelin during the battle, see Joshua 8:18. Ask them to hold up the javelin while you read the story, this is going to get tiring, that is the point. Have them hold it out toward Ai. Ask them, How would Joshua have held the javelin? Likely he held it high pointed out without much support. Go through and read the story slowly. Keep looking over at them to remind them to keep it high. When you have finished ask the volunteer if he or she is tired. Thank them for their help.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- Why did God want Joshua to hold up the javelin? (God was going to give Israel victory over Ai. The javelin was a weapon like a spear. By holding it in the air, Joshua did no fighting but all the while recognized it was God who was fighting for Israel.)
- When did Joshua pull back the javelin? (Joshua pulled down the javelin when the last person in Ai was destroyed. Once God's word was fulfilled Joshua rested, but not before.)
- What can we learn from this story? (God is able to deliver us. We should obey God in every task until it is complete. In addition, Moses' upraised hands and Joshua's upraised Javelin are traditionally seen as analogous to constant prayer in our warfare / battles.)



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YOU CAN'T HIDE YOUR SIN FROM GOD

Supplies

- red foam core
- red felt

Purchase a large piece of red colored foam core at a local art supply shop or purchase a white piece and spray paint it red. Also purchase several sheets of red felt. Cut out a large letter "S". Draw the letter S in various sizes on the felt. Cut out twelve or more. Draw a very large S on the foam core and cut it out carefully with a razor knife. These letters represent sin.

When you get to class, place the larger letter out of view of the class. Tell the class that Achan thought he could hide his sin but he was found out. Achan thought sin was easy to hide. Ask for four volunteers to help you.

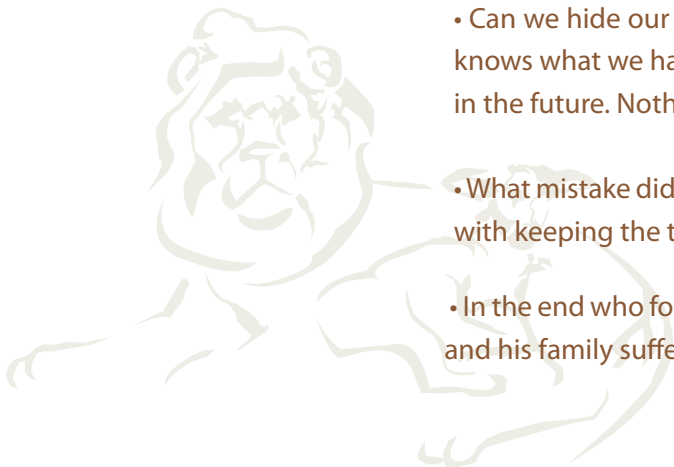
Bring the volunteers up to the front of the class. Ask them if they ever sinned. Of course they will say they have. Distribute the felt letters and tell them that these represent sins. Ask them to hide the letters from view when you turn your back and count to ten. The volunteers must hide the letters on their person. They can't give the letter to anyone else or get rid of it anywhere.

Turn around and say "Okay, hide your sins." Then count to ten and quickly turn around. Carefully inspect for evidence of the red letters. If you see any red sticking out of a pocket look surprised and act like a prison guard looking for contraband.

Explain to the class that it is easy for us to hide our sin from other people but it is impossible to hide our sin from God. Pick one of the volunteers and then pull out the large "S". Tell them you are going to turn your back and they need to hide this larger "S". When they object, thank them for their participation and move on to the questions.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- Can we hide our sin from God? (We cannot hide our sin from God. God not only knows what we have done in the past, but He also knows what we are going to do in the future. Nothing can be hidden from Him.)
- What mistake did Achan make? (Achan thought he could hide his sin and get away with keeping the treasures.)
- In the end who found out about Achan's sin? (Everyone knew in the end and Achan and his family suffered the penalty for his sin.)



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JUSTICE IS GOOD

Supplies

handcuffs with key (real or play handcuffs)

This lesson is designed to help the children understand that God's judgments are good. If sin was allowed to continue without check, it would have destroyed Israel. When we read the story of Achan we might be misled to believe that God's judgment was harsh. It is important to remember that sin destroys and that it is God's goodness that sin is restrained. This works real well if you have a police officer in your congregation who can come to do a safe demonstration for your class.

Have the police officer (or do this yourself) explain what handcuffs are for (restraining a criminal suspect). Have the officer ask the class if handcuffs are a bit scary. The officer can allow the class to come forward and touch the handcuffs. Then ask for a volunteer to demonstrate how they are used. The officer should gently demonstrate the use of handcuffs and explain how they keep a criminal suspect from hurting anyone while he or she is being taken to jail. Thank the police officer for the demonstration.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- Do you think criminals like handcuffs? Why not? (They restrain criminals from doing what they want including escaping. After a while handcuffs hurt your hands.)
- Are handcuffs good or bad? (It depends on how they are used. If you use them for justice to hold a criminal they are good. If they are not used properly, for instance as a mean trick against your friend, they are evil.)
- How did God's judgment of Achan restrain sin from invading Israel further? (God's judgments against Achan were just. God judged Achan for his disobedience, theft, and lying. By judging Achan, God removed sin from Israel and it also served as a warning for all of Israel to keep them from being tempted to sin.)



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PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

IN CLASS PROJECT

The first and second grade children can use the preschool coloring sheet and questions. Have the older children draw a picture of Joshua lifting up his javelin.



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FOR OLDER GRADES

Supplies

- pencils or pens
- copies of the provided question sheet

Read the following three accounts out loud as a class then have the children each compare the story of the battle of Ai (Joshua 8:18-28) with the battle Moses fought (Exodus 17:8-16) and the parting of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:16). Explain to them that you will be collecting their work and passing it to their parents at the end of class for accountability.

Have the children use the attached assignment sheet to answer this question for their comparison:

- What do we learn about God and how He leads His people in battle from these three accounts?

Ask for a few volunteers to read their papers and then look for the following points:

- God wants His people to know that the battle is the Lord's and He brings the victory.

God often used a staff held up for all the people to see. Just like a flag in battle the staff of Moses and javelin of Joshua represented victory. To drop the standard or flag in battle tells the troops the enemy has overrun their position. But to stand strong with the flag or standard held high signified that the enemy is not gaining a foothold.

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Death by hanging – The King of Ai was hung on a tree by Joshua. Death by being hung on a tree was considered a curse.

And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God. You shall not defile your land that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance. (Deuteronomy 21:22-23 ESV)

This person would not only be killed by man but also cursed by God. That is why crucifixion was such a defiling punishment. Jesus, hung on a tree and was cursed by God because of our sin.

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— “FOR OLDER GRADES” ASSIGNMENT —

Compare the story of the battle of Ai in Joshua 8:18-28 with the battle Moses fought in Exodus 17:8-16 and the parting of the Red Sea in Exodus 14:16 and answer the following question:

What do we learn about God and how He leads His people in battle from these three accounts?

Lined writing area for the assignment.

