

THE CHURCH IN NEW YORK CITY CHILDREN'S MEETING LESSON

LESSON #25

DATE: March 8, 2020

SUBJECT: THE TRAVELS OF THE CHOSEN PEOPLE OF ISRAEL: The Sin of Achan & the Battles of Ai

SCRIPTURE: Joshua 6:18-19; 7:1-26; 8:1-29

AIM: To show the children that God is holy and all knowing (omniscient). We cannot hide our sins from God, and we should confess our sins to Him.

MEMORY VERSES TO CHOOSE FROM: Job 34:21 (For His eyes are upon the ways of a man, And He sees all his steps.); Jeremiah 16:17 (For My eyes are upon all their ways; they are not concealed from My face, neither is their iniquity hidden from My eyes.); 1 John 1:8-9 (If we say that we do not have sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.)

SUGGESTED SONGS: 2827 (Good Morning Lord Jesus); 2806 (Giving Song - Story of Achan); 52 (God is Always Near Me); 54 (God Knows Everything); 11 (Oh Be Careful); 56 (God Sees Us); 1615 (Count Your Blessings); 4610 *BSS Matthew Vol. 1* (My Father Knows Before I Ask); 2204 *BSS Matthew Vol. 2* (Every Little Hair); 6407 (Seek Ye First the Kingdom); 197 (Why Not I?); 146 (I Want the Lord to Have the First Place); 4 (Be Careful What You Do)

CRAFT IDEA: Children may use construction paper as background to create an Achan's tent with fabric scrap cut a slit in the middle, revealing the three hidden items that Achan coveted.



APPROACH: (1) Ask the children if they have ever wanted something their siblings or friends have (bigger Lego set, fancy bike, phone/tablet/smartwatch, pretty doll, brand name clothes or sneakers, etc.). When their sibling or friend gets one of these items how do they feel/react? Do they desire one also? (2) Another approach is to ask the children if they ever did something bad that no one knew about? Did they feel sorry? Did they hide their sin? Did anyone find out? What were the consequences?

BACKGROUND: Jericho was a heavily fortified city. When Israel came near, no one went in or out of Jericho. However, in the prior lesson, we saw that Jehovah was with Israel and that Israel believed God. The city's wall fell down at the shouting of the people. There was complete victory. There was no loss of life of any Israelite. Also, even though Rahab was a sinful woman, Rahab and her family were spared because Rahab helped God's people by hiding the spies that Joshua had sent.

Note to serving ones: Some details may be too much for younger children. Consider in fellowship and prayer how much detail to give.

CONTENT: The next city that the children of Israel came to was called Ai. Ai was north of Jericho. (It may help to use a map to show the children where the cities were in relation to each other.) Its people might have heard of the defeat of Jericho but rather than surrender, they decided to fight. Just like the city of Jericho, Ai was also a city surrounded by walls which was built to protect them against their enemies.

Joshua sent men to go up and spy out the city. After having seen Ai, the spies returned with a good report. They told Joshua that not all the people needed to go fight. Rather, just a force of about 2,000 to 3,000 men would be all that was necessary to defeat Ai. They assumed that conquering Ai would be an easy victory and persuaded Joshua of this fact; unfortunately, the 3,000-men army was defeated and about 36 Israelite men were killed.

Joshua was very surprised and upset that they lost the battle at Ai and became very discouraged. The people were all so discouraged that it felt like "the heart of the people melted and became like water." Joshua was afraid that other enemies would hear about this defeat and surround them. Jehovah had promised to be with Joshua and with the children of Israel throughout their journey to possess the good land. What could have happened to cause such a defeat? With this unexpected defeat at Ai, Joshua and the elders of Israel mourned and fell to the ground to pray. The Lord demanded that Joshua get up. He then gave the reason why Israel was defeated at the hands of Ai. Before the battle of Jericho, in Joshua 6:18, Joshua had instructed the people to destroy Jericho and all that was in it. The only

persons not destroyed were Rahab and all who were with her in her house. The only things they could take were silver and gold and vessels of bronze and iron that would go into the treasury of Jehovah (Joshua 6:19). However one of the Israelites disobeyed and kept some precious items for himself. Jehovah was very angry, and declared: "Israel has sinned. Indeed they have trespassed My covenant, which I commanded them; indeed they have taken of that which was devoted to *destruction*; indeed they have stolen; indeed they have been deceptive; indeed they have put it among their goods. Thus the children of Israel are not able to stand before their enemies,...I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy that which was devoted to *destruction* from among you." (Joshua 7:11-12) Further, the Lord demanded that the people be brought to Him in the morning, tribe by tribe, family by family, household by household, and man by man. In this way, God would identify the offender.

So early in the morning, Joshua got up and brought the people of Israel as Jehovah instructed. Achan was identified as the culprit (Joshua 7:18). He admitted to everything, "When I saw among the spoil a beautiful mantle of Shinar and two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And now they are hidden in the earth in my tent, with the silver under it." (Joshua 7:21) Joshua sent men to bring these from Achan's tent. Then Achan and his family were punished with death.

Then Jehovah turned away from His fierce anger, and assured Joshua of complete victory over Ai since the serious sin in Israel had been dealt with. God told Joshua to choose an army of 30,000 mighty men and set up an ambush for Ai's army. This time, the people of Israel all obeyed God, and they won a great victory. In the battle, Israel destroyed every resident of Ai, both man and woman. The cattle and the spoil of that city were taken as plunder and the city was burned with fire. Joshua also destroyed the king of Ai as God had commanded.

SUGGESTED APPLICATIONS: *Note to serving ones: It is not intended that we cover all the suggested applications, but based on prayer and fellowship, and the children's response, allow the Lord to lead us regarding which applications to cover.*

- **We should be satisfied with what the Lord has provided for us.** Remember that one of the Ten Commandments is not to covet. Achan's sin was due to coveting. Sometimes, when we watch television or feast our eyes on advertisements which are full of things we wish we could have (but may not need), it can cause us to covet those things even more intensely. We should be careful not to feed that desire. Turn off the television, close the social media, or throw away the catalog. Pray that the Lord would help us be content with what He has given us. We can thank and praise the Lord every day for what He has given to us. The more we thank and praise Him, the more happy and content we will be. Help the children think of things they can be thankful for.
- **The Lord is omniscient and sees everything.** We cannot hide our sins from Him. Even if no one knows what we did and even if we do not get caught, God knows. We need to take care of our conscience by confessing (admitting and saying sorry) to the Lord for what we did. If we cheated on a test by peeking at someone else's paper, we need to tell the teacher and even be willing to suffer the consequences of what we did. If we lied to our parents, we need to tell the truth and apologize. Perhaps we took or borrowed something that did not belong to us; we need to return it. Serving ones can share age-appropriate examples or elicit examples from the children.
- **It is dangerous to ignore the feeling in our conscience.** When we do something sinful, perhaps we feel bad for what we did at first. But if we do not confess the sin to the Lord and take care of the matter, we may find it easier to repeat the same sin later and do even worse things. Furthermore, our sins have consequences. Achan's sin had consequences for him, his family, and the entire nation of Israel. What we think is not a big deal may have consequences to others that we could not have thought of.
- **We should be obedient to God and our authorities.** The children of Israel were defeated the first time at Ai because Achan did not obey God. The second time, they obeyed God and won the victory at Ai. We should obey God and the authorities that He has given us, like our parents, teachers, school monitors, police officers, etc.

Adapted from the Church in New York City Children's meeting lesson 2/12/89; 03/17/96; 03/14/2004; 03/21/2010; 03/15/15