

God Reacts to Disobedience

Key Verse: *“The children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel.”*
—Joshua 7:1

Selected Scripture:
Joshua 7:1-8:29

GOD’S REACTION TO DIS-
obedience sometimes seems harsh when examined through the experiences of his people as recorded in the Scriptures. When we recall, however, that he is the Creator of all things, he has every right to expect his creation to abide by his laws. On the contrary, when his people obey his commands, the scriptures indicate that great blessings follow. Such is the account of today’s lesson.

After successfully conquering Jericho, our Key Verse states God detected that one of the Israelites had taken some spoils of the victory—“the accursed thing”—and kept them as his own. The first hint that there was a problem came as the Israelites went out to battle their next enemy, the city of Ai. When Joshua sent men to view the city, they came back and reported that only two or three thousand would be needed to conquer Ai, “for they are but few.” (Josh. 7:3) Joshua believed their report and sent only three thousand men, who were summarily routed by the

men of Ai and fled.—vss. 4,5

When Joshua heard the news of Israel's defeat, the account says he "rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the even-tide." (vs. 6) Joshua then prayed to God as to why such a thing would be allowed to happen to his chosen people Israel. God's response was that the defeat at Ai was due to the "accursed thing" that had been taken from Jericho and hidden in the house of one of the Israelites. It would be necessary to determine who had the accursed spoils of Jericho. The pronouncement given concerning this person was, "he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all he hath." (vs. 15) Only then, God said, would Israel be able to stand before their enemies again.

In verses 18-23, the record states that Achan, of the tribe of Judah, was the guilty person, for hidden in his tent were a Babylonish garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold, all of which he had taken as spoils from Jericho, contrary to the word of the LORD (see Joshua 6:17-19). Achan, together with the silver, the wedge of gold, and the garment, his sons and daughters, his oxen, his asses, and his sheep, were taken to the valley of Achor and destroyed.

True to his word, God then provided a great victory to Israel, they having now obeyed his word and destroyed "the accursed thing." Now they went back to Ai once again, not with three thousand men, but thirty thousand. Joshua positioned all but five thousand on the north side of the city, and when the men of Ai went out to them as before they made as though they would flee. However, Joshua had positioned the other five thousand Israelites on the west side of the city. When the men of Ai pursued those on the north, the five thousand went in and routed the city, burning it. The men of Ai fled back to the city, but it was too late. They and their city were destroyed by the hand of the LORD.—Josh. 8 ■