

# ISRAEL DEFILED BY SIN

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As Israel prepared for the conquering of the city of Jericho, the firstfruits of the land of Canaan in fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Israelites were warned not to take any of the spoil of Jericho for themselves. Joshua 6:16-18 says, "And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the Lord hath given you the city. And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the Lord: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent. And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it." But an Israelite named Achan did not heed this warning. Joshua 7:1 says, "But 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." Later in the chapter, we learn that Achan had taken "a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight" (Josh 7:21). Sin within the camp of Israel caused God to be angry with the nation (Josh 7:1).

## **Cleansing the camp of Israel**

As God had forewarned Israel, one person taking of the accursed things of Jericho would "make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it" (Josh 6:18). Sin within the camp would defile the whole camp. That is why Israel fled before their enemies in the first battle against Ai in Joshua 7:2-5. After suffering their only defeat of the entire conquest of Canaan, God told Joshua the reason: "Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: *neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you.* Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow: for thus saith the Lord God of Israel, *There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you*" (Josh 7:11-13). The following day,

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(continued)

when Israel removed the sin from their camp (Josh 7:25), at that time “the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger” (Josh 7:26).

## **Israel today**

Today, the church of Christ is spiritual Israel (Rom 2:28-29; Gal 6:16; Heb 12:22-23; 1 Pet 2:5-9).

But as sin in the camp of Israel defiled the physical nation, so also sin within the church will defile the spiritual nation today. Just as Achan’s sin made the whole camp of Israel a curse (Josh 6:18) and “troubled” it (Josh 6:18; 7:25), so also false teachers within the churches of Galatia “troubled” them (Gal 1:6-7). God says all false teachers are cursed (Gal 1:8-9), and warns us that “*a little leaven leavens the whole lump*” (Gal 5:9). The whole church will be defiled by any form of wickedness within it. The church at Corinth had a practicing fornicator among them (1 Cor 5:1). As Achan was removed from the camp of Israel to purify it, so Paul told the Corinthians that “he that has done this deed” should “be taken away from among you” (1 Cor 5:2). He commanded them to deliver the fornicator to Satan (1 Cor 5:3-5). He asked them in verse 6, “*Know ye not that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?*” The church was commanded, “*Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened*” (1 Cor 5:7). Of course, we do not put sinners to death as Achan was put to death, but the church must not keep company with or eat with “any man that is called a brother” who is practicing sin (1 Cor 5:9-11). As Israel was made to judge and put away wicked Achan from among them, so also the church is commanded to “*judge them that are within*” and “*put away from among yourselves that wicked person*” (1 Cor 5:12-13). God tells us, “*Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners*” (1 Cor 15:33). Therefore, God has commanded the church to make as a heathen man and a publican those who trespass against their brother and do not repent (Matt 18:15-17; Luke 17:3). God has commanded the church to rebuke and then deliver to Satan (withdraw from) those who are guilty of moral transgressions and do not repent (1 Cor 5; 2 Cor 2:6-9; 7:7-12; 12:20-13:2; Gal 6:1; 2 Thes 3:6-15; 1 Tim 1:20; 5:19-20). And God has also commanded the church to mark and avoid unrepentant false teachers (Rom 16:17-18; 1 Tim 6:3-5; Titus 3:10-11). Five of the seven churches of Asia had sin within them and were told to “*repent or else*” (Rev 2:5,16,22; 3:3,19). As God turned away from Israel for having sin in their camp, He will also remove the candlestick from any of his churches that has sin within them and does not put it away.