

A Sure Ticket For Trouble...

After so much miraculous intervention on God's part, you have to just shake your head in wonder. Why would he do it?? OK, let's look at the record – ten disastrous plagues destroyed Egypt, a terribly powerful nation at the time; the Red Sea split in two leaving a dry channel through which the fleeing Hebrews escaped the wrath of the pursuing Egyptian army; then the army was destroyed under these same waters as the Hebrews reached the distant coast; for the following 40 years, this wandering hoard of 2 – 6 million people were given water from a rock, bread from heaven, a cloud and pillar of fire for daily directions; their sandals never wore out; the Jordan river miraculously stopped running to allow their crossing into Canaan; the walls of Jericho simply fell down before them...the list goes on and on.

So WHY would he do it?? It wasn't as if he didn't know God had miraculously brought them back to the land of their fathers. And it wasn't as if God hadn't given them clear and specific instructions – Joshua told them, *“Now the city shall be doomed by the LORD to destruction...and you, by all means abstain from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. But all the silver and gold vessels of bronze and iron are consecrated to the LORD; they shall*

come into the treasury of the LORD.”

But he did it anyway! You know the story – after wiping out Jericho, the armies of Israel were defeated at the little nothing fortress of Ai. The people were instantly demoralized. What in the world had happened? Was God with them or not??

Joshua, their commander sought the LORD and found out the problem – God said, *“There is an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you.”* So he called for the whole host to assemble, then he called out the tribe of Judah; then he called out the family of the Zarahites; then he took the clan of Zabdi and then he took the man Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah. Achan, his knees must have really been knocking!

And he confessed, *“Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel and this is what I have done; When I saw among the spoils (of Jericho) a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it.”*

So he was taken, along with all that pertained to him – his family and his goods, and all Israel stoned him; then they burned him and finally heaped a great mound of stones over the ashes. The experience was so powerful that they memorialized the place of his execution calling it the Valley of Achor, the valley of trouble. Achan was his name and that spelled trouble.

For this study, we'll look at the root cause of this trouble, the real consequences in personal application and the repeat coming in prophetic terms.

Root cause – covetousness. God had protected, prospered, prepared the people for this campaign. They were all in line, so to speak, save one man, and his folly threatened the whole nation. He didn't need the spoils of the war; he had a lifetime of experience of God's goodness and faithfulness. He was fully informed as well. But he let his sinful lust drive him to the deed. It's interesting that when confessing, he asserts that the thing that first caught his eye was *“a beautiful Babylonian garment”* or a robe from Shinar. The prohibited items specified by the Lord initially did not mention garments. Could it be that his attraction for this Babylonian delight led him to greater guilt -- taking the silver and gold? Whatever the case, he coveted them.

The word translated as coveting here in Joshua chapter seven is basically lusting after something. It is the same word used when Eve looked upon the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden and in the Ten C's of Exodus when the Lord forbade coveting your neighbor's blessings. Whew! Talk about root cause! This is the stumbling block for all of humanity.

And the tragedy is that just as Eve was surrounded by God's incredible blessings and goodness in the garden, so was Achan upon entering the promised land, and so are you and I BY FAITH. Oh, we may yet wonder how we're going to make the next mortgage payment or 'just how

lonely can a person get?' But we have God's Word on it – all things are ours in Christ. (1 Cor 3:21-23). Paul made it abundantly clear that we are more blessed in heaven than can be described. Whether we enjoy earthly blessings or travail in earthly sufferings, we need not covet for we have such glorious promises of eternal rewards that they're just not worth comparing (Rom 8:18).

Real Consequences – coveting is intrinsically destructive to the individual soul and the community as a whole. Achan was bombarded, burned and buried. These consequences are the fruit of covetousness. Play with it and you'll be hit by temptations and lies, hurt by the heat of the flesh's insatiable appetite for sin and heaped upon in condemnation and guilt. **Just stop!** Consider the outcome – set your mind on things above.

Ever see a person afflicted with leprosy? Hands and feet decayed and gone; the face not recognizable as human, the senses dead – a sad, sad condition. And it all starts with one diseased nerve. One hidden problem. Such is the spiritual effect of covetousness in the body and the community. Sad to say, it is the foundational principle of today's entertainment and advertising with which we're pummeled day by day – it's mantra -- promote covetousness rather than contentment. Like the host of Israel, you have to deal with it radically.

Return coming – the prophetic illustration is wonderful here. This Valley of Trouble is very symbolic for the Jewish nation. You see, just as in the book of Joshua, the host of

Israel had only recently entered the Promised Land so too the modern nation of Israel has only recently re-entered it. Just as Jericho miraculously fell to the ancient host of Jews, so have the modern Israelis have had miraculous success in warfare and it may culminate with their victory over the Ezekiel 38 and 39 predicted invasion of Russia and its allies. But trouble's coming. One man is coming who cannot control his desire (the Antichrist). He will bring a time of false peace and then great trouble to Israel – the time of “Jacob’s trouble” (Jer 30:7). It will be during the last seven years of this age, the 70th week of Daniel’s famous prophecy (Dan 9:24-27).

As with Achan, it may begin with a temptation associated with Shinar (i.e. Babylon or modern day Iraq) and lead to some problematic buried treasure (oil??). Like Achan, he will be hung up on silver, gold and pleasant things (Dan 11:38). Regardless,...

Israel will be greatly troubled during this time of judgment. “*The great day of the LORD is near; it is near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of the LORD is bitter; there the mighty men shall cry out. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities and against the high towers.*” (Zeph 1:14-16) and like Achan, “*Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD’s wrath but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy...*” (Zeph 1:18)

“At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people (the Jews); and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that time...” (Dan 12:1)

But with the peril also comes a promise – “*And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book.*” (Dan 12:1) “*I will punish her for the days of the Baals to which she burned incense and she decked herself with her earrings and jewelry and went after her lovers but Me she forgot,’ says the LORD. ‘Therefore, behold, I will allure (or open) her, will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfort to her (speak to her heart). I will give her her vineyards from there, and the **Valley of Achor as a door of hope...**” (Hos 2:13-15)*

“I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the LORD.” (Hos 2:19,20)

The Jewish people in rejecting their Messiah have placed their hopes in other things. For two thousand years they have been ‘ripped on’ as a consequence. Now that God has graciously gathered them, they have re-entered the Promised Land and enjoyed military success. But they look to America and their own wits, their own power to preserve them. They’re not yet ready for their true Messiah, they’re ready for a false one. And Christ will remain in heaven until it’s time – “*For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, and like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, even I, will tear them and go away;*

I will take them away, and no one shall rescue. I (Jesus) will return again to My place (heaven) till they (the Jews) acknowledge their offense. Then they will seek My face; In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me.”

Jesus prophesied of the Jews in the tribulation period, “*Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations (by the 144,000 sealed Jewish evangelists? See Rev 7) and then the end will come. Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand) then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains (the wilderness?)...for then there will be great tribulation such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.”* (Mat 24)

However, because of God’s love for them, it is in this ‘valley of trouble’ that they will find a ‘door of hope’. They will say, “*Come, and let us return to the LORD; for He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. After two days (prophetically, 2,000 years – see 2 Pet 3:8) He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight. Let us know, let us pursue the knowledge of*

the LORD. His going forth is established as the morning (of the third day); He will come to us as the rain (from heaven not the US, UN or the EU) like the latter and former rain to the earth (two times – one fulfilling the Spring or latter rain festivals and one fulfilling the Fall or former rain festivals. More on that in another study, Lord willing). (Hosea 6:1-3) It could even be that they will literally pass through this valley which is near Jericho on the way to the wilderness.

Are you in such a valley? Do you know someone who is? Has covetousness led to trouble? Whatever trouble you may be in, know this – that in Jesus Christ and Him alone there is a door of hope, the door of salvation. Jesus said, “*Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep...If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.*” (John 10:7-9) (See Rev 3:8 and 4:1 also). Yes, He can turn that place of trouble into a peaceful pasture. In fact, He promises it – “*Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the Valley of Achor a place for herds to lie down, for My people who have sought Me.* (Isa 65:10) This is true.

As with Achan, that ‘Babylonian’ treasure may be quite attractive, but it’s a sure ticket for trouble. As Israel did, remove the ‘accursed thing’ from your midst – give your sin to God. Only then can you stand before your enemies. And one day soon, we who believe will leave this trouble behind!