

defeated

Grit clung to sweat-soaked skin. The blast of trumpets still rang in their ears, and the shout that followed it pulsed through their blood. Seven silent circuits. One command. Then the ground buckled. Stone split. Towers folded inward. The city that had braced for siege lay broken at their feet.

Two soldiers pushed through falling debris towards the scarlet cord in the wall window. Inside, hands grabbed arms in the dark—Rahab, her father, her mother, brothers and sisters pulled close, breath coming hard. No time to look back. They were driven toward the breach. Stones shifted underfoot as heat pressed against their backs. A child stumbled, and someone lifted him without slowing their pace.

They ran past the soldiers setting flame to beam and door, out beyond the reach of sparks and collapsing roofs. The plains opened ahead, wind cutting through smoke-filled lungs. Only when Jericho's roar dulled behind them did they slow.

A promise fulfilled.

Jericho had collapsed, burned to its foundations. The Lord fought for them. Young men cheered as they gripped their swords. Veterans tightened armor straps. The conquest of the land was indeed theirs, and plans for the next target formed quickly.

“Ai. Let's go.”

Momentum compelled them forward. Yahweh's banner would rise from the rubble of another fallen city.

But in their zeal they were unaware of the hidden enemy in their midst—entirely ignorant that the greatest threat to a victorious people can grow inside the camp, silent and unseen.

defeated

What happens when the danger is not marching over the hill but folded into your belongings? When the Lord who shattered stone goes silent, where do you look—out at the battlefield, or down at the ground beneath your feet?

What if...
the thing that can defeat you lies buried beneath your own tent?

definitions

Using a Bible app or the word glossary at the back of this book,
look up each Strong's number to find the definitions.

Achan | Trouble | Achor

STRONGS DEFINITION | H5912 & H5916 & H5911

Ai

STRONGS DEFINITION | H5857

Joshua 7:2 ... "Go up
and spy out the land."
And the men went up
and spied out **Ai**.

Joshua 7:1 And Joshua
and all Israel with
him took **Achan**...
And they brought
them up to the Valley
of **Achor**.²⁵ And
Joshua said, "Why did
you bring **trouble**
on us? The Lord
brings **trouble** on
you today."

decode the text

Read | Joshua 7:1

Jericho had fallen. The walls collapsed. The city burned.
"The LORD was with Joshua, and his fame was in all the
land" (6:27). It was phenomenal and unmistakable
BUT...

Chapter 7 opens with the word “But.” What contrast is being introduced between 6:27 and 7:1?

Read | Joshua 7:2-5

How does the repeated phrase “devoted things” connect this chapter directly to the previous one? After Jericho’s supernatural victory, Israel is defeated at Ai. What details in verses 4–5 emphasize the reversal?

The people’s hearts “melted and became as water” (7:5). Trace this language in Joshua (2:11; 5:1). Who previously experienced melting hearts — and why is the reversal theologically significant?

Read | Joshua 7:6-9

Joshua tears his clothes and falls before the ark until evening. What do his words in verses 7–9 reveal about his understanding of what has happened? What seems to concern him most in his prayer?

Read | Joshua 7:10-12

In the LORD's response to Joshua, what covenant violations are listed?

What reasons does the LORD give for why Israel "cannot stand before their enemies"?

Compare verse 12 with Joshua 1:5. What condition has changed?

Read | Joshua 7:13-15

What does this command reveal about the relationship between the Lord's holiness, the presence of sin among His people, and their ability to stand in battle?

TRIBE BY TRIBE, CLAN BY CLAN, HOUSEHOLD BY HOUSEHOLD

UNTIL
one man
REMAINED



BENEATH THE TENT

beneath the tent

Ai should have been small. Insignificant. Almost effortless. A minor skirmish after the thunderous victory at Jericho. A handful of warriors went forward, expecting an easy surrender. Instead, thirty-six men lay dead on the slope. Hearts melted in terror. Confidence shattered like dry clay. The nation that had just watched walls fall now stood stunned, reeling from a defeat that made no sense.

Joshua fell on his face before the Lord, desperate for answers. "There is sin in the camp, Joshua." Achan had taken what belonged to the Lord. He buried the spoils beneath his tent, covered it with packed dirt, then slept above it at night.

Though no one knew about it,
everyone was affected by it.

When small battles bring disproportionate ruin, something deeper is almost always at work. Achan took private treasure and the nation paid the price in blood.

"WHERE YOUR *treasure*
IS THERE YOUR *heart*
WILL BE ALSO."

— MATTHEW 6:21

The heart follows what it hides.

Is your heart consecrated, or is something buried
beneath your tent?

When defeat strikes in places that should not undo you... When minor obstacles knock the wind out of you... When momentum collapses without warning... It may not be time to question God's faithfulness.

It may be time to search the tent.

We are the temple of the Lord. Temples... have rooms and closets and storage places tucked in the back. What sits in your cupboard? What have you hidden among your possessions that was never yours to keep?

The defeat at Ai was never ultimately about Ai. It was about consecration. Only what is devoted survives.

So, no more sleeping on buried treasure. No more pretending that the defeat is random. Search the tent. Clean house. Consecrate the heart. No more defeats. Deal with the flesh. Do it now. Drag what is hidden into the light, lay it on the altar, and you'll have victory again.

Read | Joshua 7:20-21

Achan described his actions with three verbs: "I saw... I coveted... I took." What progression do these words reveal about sin in this passage?

Achan hid the devoted things "in the earth inside my tent." How does this concealment contrast with the earlier command that Jericho's devoted things belonged only to the LORD (6:19)? What claim was Achan making by burying what was holy?

"THERE ARE DEVOTED
THINGS IN YOUR MIDST,
O ISRAEL.

you cannot stand

BEFORE YOUR ENEMIES
UNTIL YOU TAKE AWAY
THE DEVOTED THINGS
FROM AMONG YOU."

wield the sword

FLESH CANNOT WIN SPIRITUAL WARS

Contrast Jericho and Ai. What was difference in these battles?

Jericho

Ai

Consider Zechariah 4:6. In the spirit filled life of faith, what should we rely upon? What is the difference between that and what Israel did in Joshua 7:3?

stepping forward



The Lord uncovered what was concealed, resolved what was buried, and returned His presence to His people. The valley that began in humiliation became a doorway back into fellowship.

That is grace.

This chapter should leave us sober but not discouraged. The same God who said, “Israel has sinned,” also made a way forward. He did not abandon His covenant. He did not revoke His promises. He purified His people so they could walk in them. There is a kindness in that.

Defeat is never pleasant. Exposure is never comfortable. But an unanswered defeat would be far worse. A silent heaven would be terrifying. Instead, God speaks. He reveals. He corrects. He restores.

So walk into this week with courage. If something feels unsettled, seek Him. If conviction comes, respond. If the Spirit presses on an area long ignored, that is mercy.

Because the Lord intends to grant victory, He is committed to His consecrated people. He searches the camp not to shame, but to sanctify. He uncovers what destroys so that He can rebuild what endures.

And remember this: Ai was not the end of the story. The same place of defeat would later become a place of triumph (Joshua 8). The Lord wastes nothing — not even failure.

Walk in the light. Consecrate what belongs to Him. The land is still before you. And the God who calls you to holiness is the same God who fights for His people.