

The Four D's: "Spiritual Defeat"

FOR FURTHER STUDY

The story is told about the first reports of the invasion of France on D-Day in World War II. As the battle raged, a storm was approaching and darkness was quickly falling. Anxious eyes on the English shore were trained on the distant beach across the English Channel. Weather conditions made communications and radio silence restrictions made communication impossible. Suddenly, a beacon from over there began to flash a coded message, one that brought despair to the hearts of the allies: A-L-L-I-E-S D-E-F-E-A-T-E-D... The fog rolled in at that point and communication was lost for the night. And what a night it was for those dejected military planners! Then came the morning. As the fog lifted, overjoyed people on the English shore saw what they had missed. The message? A-L-L-I-E-S-D-E-F-E-A-T-E-D T-H-E E-N-E-M-Y... The message of victory had been lost in the storm and the darkness. As Christians, we must always remember that victory is promised even when circumstances say otherwise.

Israel's victory at Jericho was decisive and complete. Joshua's first major test of leadership had gone as planned. The response of Joshua and the people after this victory is interesting to say the least. In their celebration, they become somewhat haughty, self-confident, and arrogant. At this point, they seemed invincible in their own eyes.

THE PROBLEM?

Verse 1 - In the midst of victory, Israel had committed a trespass. Literally, the phrase means that they "acted unfaithfully" and "underhandedly". The term is used throughout Scripture for "marital infidelity". The first word of the verse, "But" was used to show a contrast between chapter 6 and chapter 7; and what a contrast it was. Interestingly, Joshua and all Israel were held responsible for the trespass; although we later learn it was committed by Achan.

WHY WAS EVERYONE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR ONE PERSON'S SIN?

To demonstrate the effect of one person's sin upon others. This principle applies to families, churches, and nations.

- Victory is always followed by a threat of defeat.
- One victory never ensures the next victory.

Verse 2 - "And" This little word indicates that as far as Joshua and Israel were concerned, it was business as usual. Spies were sent to the city of Ai and the report indicated it would be an easy victory. They were so confident, that they determined to send only two to three thousand soldiers. The problem was that there is no record of Joshua talking or listening to God about this battle. In fact, God must have been astonished as Israel prepared for a battle He new nothing about.

FACTORS THAT LED TO DEFEAT

1. Joshua and Israel remain ignorant of Achan's sin. Joshua would have known if he had communed with God.
2. Joshua and Israel underestimated their enemy.
3. Joshua and Israel overestimated their own strength.
4. Joshua and Israel took God for granted.

Verse 5 - Defeat always demoralizes people

Verse 6, 7 - Joshua does what all of us do many times; he blames God.

Verse 8, 9 - Joshua is concerned about his own testimony and the name and fame of God.

Verse 10 - God tells Joshua to get up out of the dirt and throw off defeat and despair

Verse 11.12 - God explains the defeat to Joshua

WHAT LED TO ACHAN'S PERSONAL DEFEAT?

- 1. A dissatisfaction with life in general.**
- 2. A dissatisfaction with what he had. He wanted more.**
- 3. A total disrespect and lack of regard for God's Word. He ignored what God had said**
 - **He took gold and silver. Indicates he was gripped with covetousness.**
 - **He took a Babylonian garment. He wanted fame, prestige, and influence like everyone else.**

WHAT LED TO ISRAEL'S DEFEAT?

- 1. Their reliance upon self.**
- 2. Not hearing from God.**
- 3. Reliance upon past victories.**

CONCLUSION AND APPLICATION THOUGHTS

- 1. The defeat at Ai in Joshua 7 is sad because it simply did not have to happen. God had promised Israel complete victory over all their enemies if they would obey His voice. How true this is in our own lives.**
- 2. Many people today do not understand the consequences of personal, private sin. It infects and affects everyone. Sin is never a private matter.**
- 3. Joshua 7 records Israel's only defeat in the Book of Joshua. Joshua 7 is also the only time that the phrase the "Israelites were slain" is found in the book.**
- 4. The sin of dissatisfaction is very serious because it indicates that we need more than just God to satisfy us.**
- 5. Interestingly, God was in the process of giving everyone in Israel, including Achan, land, housing, and blessings beyond measure in Canaan, yet dissatisfaction cost him everything he had, including his life. (Joshua 7:24-26)**
- 6. Defeat should never be permanent.**
- 7. According to Joshua 8:1, God gave Israel a second chance. This time, with God as their leader, Ai is totally and completely defeated.**