

## Jesus Silences Satan

*Foundations are important.* Who would build the ground layer of a house out of styrofoam and then build the next layer out of concrete? Who would put a child in a Calculus class when she hasn't figure out counting yet? This morning, as we look at these words in Joshua, we run into the same risk. At first, it might appear as if these words are totally unrelated to what Jesus says to Satan in the desert. But these words are the foundation. If you don't understand and appreciate these words, then what Jesus says and does with Satan in the desert don't mean much at all.

In order to understand what happened in Jesus' desert, we have to understand what happened as Joshua was leaving his desert. The LORD had give the Israelites the invitation and the command to go into Canaan and conquer it. They conquered Jericho, not with sword or spear, but with God's word. But, long before they the walls fell, the LORD made it clear that everything in the city belonged to *him*. But there was a man, named Achan. He took some of the stuff in the city. After the Israelites attacked Jericho, they attacked a little, tiny village named Ai. And even though they outnumbered the men of Ai by a lot. The men of Ai routed the Israelites. All the Israelites were defeated, demoralized and despairing because they didn't know why they had lost. They had the LORD's command. They had the LORD's promise. What was wrong.

And so, we arrive at Joshua seven and read these words: *"Early the next morning Joshua had Israel come forward by tribes, and Judah was taken. The clans of Judah came forward, and he took the Zerahites. He had the clan of the Zerahites come forward by families, and Zimri was taken. Joshua had his family come forward man by man, and Achan son of Carmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken." (Joshua 7:16–18 NIV)*

Who was to blame? That was the question. So, the LORD had them cast lots. 'Casting Lots' is much like rolling dice or pulling straws. It was a way to arrive at a decision by chance. They casted lots knowing that the LORD was going to find the one who was to blame. And so, the tribe of Judah was chosen, then the clan of Zerah, then the family of Zimri. And finally then the house of Achan was chosen.

Then Achan says: *"It is true! I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath." (Joshua 7:20–21 NIV)*

Now, here in these words we find the connection between Joshua's time the time of Jesus. Note very carefully *how* it happened that Achan fell into sin. For there's a course of events, a course of temptations which Satan put in front of Achan.

First, Achan *saw* the robe, the silver, the gold. He saw it. And then he *wanted* it. Now, here we have to pause for a moment. The hebrew word here carries with it a whole lot of weight<sup>1</sup>. It means not just to *want* something. It means that you want and then *plan* to get something. So Achan sees, he wants, he plans and then finally, he *takes*.

Note very well this course in Achan's life. For it is the same path that goes through *our* lives. Jesus said: *"anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."* (Matthew 5:28 NIV) How much evil has poured into our lives through our eyes? We look and we find a cookie, a toy a person that does not belong to us. And what happens next? We *want*. And the wanting drives us to *plan*. We plan how we might get what is not ours. And then finally we take it.

And as this course of events goes on and on in our lives we become more sophisticated. We realize that if you take, you get caught. So, our sinful natures teach us to look when we think no one else is looking and yearn on the inside. That was the course of events in the lives of Adam and Eve. It was the courses of events in Achan's life. And it's the same in our lives.

When we see this course of temptation clearly, then what Jesus says to Satan make sense. Satan whispers such sultry and seductive words, doesn't he? Why not make some bread for yourself. And Jesus answers with words we would never—could never say: *"man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD."*

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<sup>1</sup>חמדי

(Deuteronomy 8:3 NIV)

We look at these words in awe because they are perfect. They stop the flow of lies at the source. They gave glory to the LORD alone. They proved that Jesus was the one who would take away our sins by his obedience to God's word.

Jesus silenced Satan. He stopped the course of temptation. But, we have one more foundation to build here in these words in Joshua: *"Then Joshua, together with all Israel, took Achan son of Zerah, the silver, the robe, the gold wedge, his sons and daughters, his cattle, donkeys and sheep, his tent and all that he had, to the Valley of Achor. Joshua said, "Why have you brought this trouble on us? The LORD will bring trouble on you today." Then all Israel stoned him, and after they had stoned the rest, they burned them."* (Joshua 7:24–25 NIV)

Through the lies that Satan speaks he brings a course of temptation. But he does even worse. We find that there are consequences to our sins. These consequences both remain in our lives and affect the people around us in our lives.

Look at Achan. His confession seemed contrite, didn't it? He spoke of this course of temptations in his mind: He looked, he wanted, he planned and he took. He even confessed where the stolen loot was hidden. But what happened? Was he let go? Did the story end *happily ever after*?

No! Achan died. His family died. And even his flocks and herds died too—all because of his stupid, selfish sin. Now, notice what this teaches us. His sin angered God. It caused some of his fellow Israelites to die. And it ended up tempting his family to sin so that they died along with him. Yes, that's right, his family members sinned too! How? Take note of two details in these words. Step by step, the LORD gave Achan many chances to repent. Every time the lot chose his tribe, then his clan, then his family—every time he had the opportunity to repent. And not just him. Every time his family had the choice to worship the head of their family or the LORD.

That's the first detail. But notice the second detail. Achan came into his tent with a load of loot. His family members at the very least looked the other way when he came into the tent with the gold and silver. Who knows, maybe they even helped him bury it in the ground.

Notice, my brothers and sisters, there are consequences to our sins. These consequences might remain even after we have repented of our sins. And these consequences affect everyone around us. I know a man who used to smoke. And when I say 'smoke', I mean that he *really* smoked a lot. His children started to have problems with their lungs. And he still smoked. His children developed asthma, and he still smoked. Now, years later, he repents of what he did. But, his lungs are broken and his children still have asthma.

You see, this is the foundation, right here. For Jesus doesn't just deal with the temptation to sin. He also lovingly, caringly, graciously deals with the consequences. He does this in two ways. First, he uses the consequences of our sins for our good. I met a man who was in a maximum security prison. Years ago he repented of the sin that put him there. But, I doubt he will ever be let out of prison. For his sin had an earthly consequence. But, the LORD brought about good through him. I saw a man who was just as much a sinner as I was. I saw a man who was humbled instead of prideful. I saw a man who was wise in God's word instead of wealthy in this world. I saw my brother in the faith. And I will see him again at the resurrection.

God can even use the consequences of our sins for good in this life. But, for those which remain, he has another plan. Jesus silences the consequences our sins in heaven. Jesus and only Jesus has the right to do that. He won that right by fighting Satan moment by moment, day after day, century after century. Because of Jesus victory for us there will be a time when the consequences of our sins will not follow us. The damage we have done to ourselves; the damage we have done to others—they will all fade away. Jesus will silence them all. And what will replace them is shouts of joy. And so we sing with the hymn-writer:

*Bold shall I stand on that great day—who can a word against me say?  
Fully through you absolved I am From sin and fear, from guilt and shame.*

Rejoice that Jesus has silenced Satan. He has silenced the course of temptation. He even silences the consequence of our sins. Amen.