

- Plans to Destroy Ai (Josh 7:1-5, 6:17-18, Rom 9:6, Gal 6:16)

#1. Israel Has Sinned (Josh 7:6-12, Eph 1:7, Ezek 18:20, Rom 6:23, Eph 2:1)

#2. Get Up; Sanctify the People (Josh 7:13-21, 6:19, Gen 11:2)

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- The Magnitude of Sin and of Salvation (1Cor 10:31, Eph 2:8-9, 1John 1:9)

- The Valley of Achor a Door of Hope (Hos 2:14-15, Dan 9:24, Hos 2:16-17, Rev 21:9, Prov 17:13)

Please open your Bibles to the Prophecy of Joshua, Josh 7:1 (2X). The children of Israel have destroyed Jericho, and now they make preparations to destroy the next city, which is Ai. We must bring up again that God has said in Josh 6:17-18, **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.** Look at this from a practical point of view: there were more than half a million soldiers in the camp of Israel. What is the chance that one of them violated this commandment from the Lord? That chance is very great. And that is indeed what came to pass. One person sinned, and he was punished in the Valley of Achor. Therefore the title of this sermon is **The Valley of Achor** (2X). **This is a dreadful story here in Joshua 7. But then, many years later God said in Hos 2:15, and I will make the Valley of Achor for a door of hope.** This is an intriguing statement, and now we want to know what God meant by that. Let us begin with the historical development in Joshua 7.

- **Plans to Destroy Ai (Josh 7:1-5, 6:17-18, Rom 9:6, Gal 6:16)**

Jos 7:1-5 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. And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which *is* beside Bethaven, on the east side of Bethel, and spake unto them, saying, Go up and view the country. And the men went up and viewed Ai. And they returned to Joshua, and said unto him, Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; *and* make not all the people to labour thither; for they *are but* few. So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men: and they fled before the men of Ai. And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men: for they chased them *from* before the gate *even* unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down: wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water.

Why did the men of Israel flee from the people of Ai? It was because the Lord had left them. This one man's sin has triggered the anger of the Lord. In fact, the Hebrew text says, **the anger of the Lord glowed against the sons of Israel. God's anger was so hot that His face glowed. One man's sin has caused the guilt of that sin to ruin the good standing of the entire nation of Israel before God. We are seeing here a glimpse of the spiritual meaning of this battle around Ai. In the end all the inhabitants of Ai will be killed, not one excepted. This means it is pointing to the last battle on this earth where all the enemies of God shall be killed, and then they are arranged before the Judgment throne of Christ. Israel is a picture or a type or figure of the Israel of God (Rom 9:6, Gal 6:16) or the eternal church consisting of all the elect of God who will be judging with Christ. Therefore not one of them may be contaminated with sin. The name Ai means heap of ruins and it is located beside Bethaven which means house of vanity.** All these awful sounding names do not mean anything, except they fill the need for the spiritual interpretation of this chapter. And when we look at the battle at Ai we see that there are great similarities between the battle at Ai and the battle at Gibeah in

Judges 19, and we know that Judges 19 is connected to Gen 19 which shows the destruction of Sodom, which is a picture of the rapture and the judgment on the Last Day.

And look at the arrogance of the nation of Israel by not consulting God before they went to war against Ai.

#1. Israel Has Sinned (Josh 7:6-12, Eph 1:7, Ezek 18:20, Rom 6:23, Eph 2:1)

Jos 7:6-12 And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads. And Joshua said, Alas, O Lord GOD, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan! O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies! For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear *of it*, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name? And the LORD said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? 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.

God said, ~~Israel~~ Israel has sinned.³ Even though there was only one who has violated God's explicit commandments collectively Israel has sinned, and collectively they are guilty before God. Mankind stands as an organism before God. Only one sin is sufficient to contaminate the entire organism. Consider the man Achan: He walked through the Jordan, which was a picture of salvation; he was circumcised by Joshua; he was a courageous soldier for the Lord; he did almost everything right. Now he stepped out of line once, and BOOM the wrath of God descends on him. What is going on? **#1.** Achan was not an elect of God; his penalty is just and deserved. **#2.** Sin, like leprosy, must be dealt with outside the camp, for if it is left in the camp it is bringing the whole camp under a curse.

We should notice the difference between sin and salvation, for salvation occurs individually. No one is saved on the coattails of their father, or their pastor, or any other person. Each one is Born Again individually, but the atonement for the guilt of our sins is made collectively by the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross in AD 33, and Christ atoned only for the Israel of God, which means for all the elect of God (Eph 1:7).

Achan has attempted to rob God, and thereby Achan has sinned greatly (Josh 7:11). God describes it this way:

Jos 7:11 Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have also taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put *it* even among their own stuff.

And now, Judgment begins within the house of God. Sin has to be dealt with. God said in Ezek 18:20, *¶*he soul that sinneth it shall die,³and God said in Rom 6:23, *¶*or the wages of sin is death³and the death that God has in view is to be cast into the lake of fire and suffer for an eternity. And while we are talking about death, please note that death in the Bible does not mean a lifeless corpse. God defines death in Eph 2:1 where God said, *¶*nd you, who were dead in trespasses and sins.³How were we dead in trespasses and sins? We were corrupt in our body as well as in our soul, we were drawn to sin and our depravity continually increased, and we were running further and further away from God, and rejecting anything that might be a gift from God. This is the state of being dead to God, and this is the state of death when we would be cast into the lake of fire. It is a state of continual corruption in the walking dead. In Josh 7:11 God declared that Achan has disobeyed God's command concerning the destruction of Jericho, he has coveted certain things that were destined to be destroyed for they were accursed, he has stolen from God the gold and the silver, and has dissembled, meaning that he has deceived the children of Israel by acting deceptively, acting as if he was innocent of any wrongdoing.

#2. Get Up; Sanctify the People (Josh 7:13-21, 6:19, Gen 11:2)

Jos 7:13-15 Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow: 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. In the morning therefore ye shall be brought according to your tribes: and it shall be, *that* the tribe which the LORD taketh shall come according to the families *thereof*; and the family which the LORD shall take shall come by households; and the household which the LORD shall take shall come man by man. And it shall be, *that* he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath: because he hath transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel.

God says that He will direct Joshua to the person who is responsible for all this trouble. Joshua is going to cast lots, and God's providence will direct the lot to fall on the guilty person. What kind of lots did they decide to take? Most likely it was done by picking straws out of one hand, for within one stroke the tribe of Judah was chosen, which is one tribe out of thirteen. This was the only way one person out of half a million soldiers could be found quickly. But this lays down also a principle for us. The principle is that God is in control when we ask for the lot to be cast. When we gamble, we are in fact asking God to make the decision. Therefore it is a wicked thing for people to gamble for money. It is like asking God to arrange His providence so that someone else's money may come to us. This is more wicked than covetousness. Let us read about this here in Josh 7:16-21,

Jos 7:16-21 So Joshua rose up early in the morning, and brought Israel by their tribes; and the tribe of Judah was taken: And he brought the family of Judah; and he took the family of the Zarhites: and he brought the family of the Zarhites man by man; and Zabdi was taken: And he brought his household man by man; and Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. And

Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide *it* not from me. And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they *are* hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.

It took an act of God to pick out Achan, and Achan admitted to his sin of covetousness. The gold and the silver belonged to God (Josh 6:19), and thus he had stolen from God. Moreover, the Babylonish garment is in the Hebrew literally called a Robe of Shinar. What is Shinar? Shinar stands for Babylonia (Gen 11:2) where man began to build the tower of Babel, and where God interfered by confusing their languages. Shinar represents the kingdom of Satan, where after the flood people were going to build themselves a utopia, a kingdom on earth without God. They did not need God any more. And so, the Robe of Shinar that Achan took was more accursed than anything else. Covetousness means bypassing God's gifts and trusting in your own efforts to meet your own needs. Therefore covetousness is idolatry. But another principle that God taught us here in this story is that confession of sins does not mean salvation. Achan confessed his sins, but remained unsaved.

#3. The Valley of Achor (Josh 7:22-26)

Jos 7:22-25 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, *it was* hid in his tent, and the silver under it. And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD. And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones.

What a dreadful story. All that belonged to Achan, his wife, his sons, his daughters, and his cattle were all contaminated with Achan's sin. For Achan's entire family Judgment Day has come, like it has come for all the Canaanites who were going to be killed. There is no more grace or mercy on Judgment Day. First they were all stoned to death, and then they were burnt with fire. The act of cremation meant that it was symbolic of their destiny in Hell. This tells us how God looks at sin. This tells us that the wrath of God is severe. God does not say, 'rather would that you do not do it that way.' God is not like some of us parents who say, 'Next time you get a spanking.' God is consistent. He does send people to Hell. God deals with sin the same way. 'Unto this day.'

Jos 7:26 And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, 'the valley of Achor,' unto this day.

The Valley of Achor means the Valley of Trouble. Why did God say, **unto this day?** If we travel to the land of Palestine today, would we be able to find this place where Achan and all his family was stoned to death? Not very likely. This event took place almost three and a half thousand years ago. The words **unto this day?** must be understood spiritually. Achan was a member of the Old Testament church. The death of Achan is a picture of the Judgment of God on people in the church who remain unsaved. This is the second reason why God says, **Israel has sinned,** because God is pointing to the apostate church at the end of time. Achan was like Judas Iscariot, claiming that he was within the inner circle that belonged to Christ, but he was an imposter. There are many Judas in the church at the end of time. What are they stealing? They are stealing the glory of God. They are evangelizing a works gospel that will rob Christ of His sovereign glory. The destruction of Jericho was a picture of Judgment Day for all the people outside the church, but the death of Achan was a picture of Judgment Day for people who are inside the church. Let us now look at another aspect of this story.

#4. A Door of Hope (Hos 2:14-17, 2Cor 5:21, Hos 1:10-11, Rom 9:24-26)

Please turn in your Bibles to the Prophecy of Hosea, **Hos 2:14 (2X)**. You find Hosea as the last of the Major Prophets, after Ezekiel and Daniel, and then Hosea. God commanded the prophet Hosea to marry a harlot to act out God's relationship with the nation of Israel, the northern kingdom. Then Hosea married Gomer. Although Gomer still acted unfaithfully from time to time, like the nation of Israel did, Hosea still loved her and brought her back time and again. That is why we read here in **Hos 2:14-17** that Hosea, representing God, brought back Gomer.

Ho 2:14-17 Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, *that* thou shalt call me Ishi (My Husband); and shalt call me no more Baali. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.

Why is God using this language? **and I will give her the valley of Achor for a door of hope.** The valley of Achor is where Achan and his whole family was stoned and then burned with fire. What is the meaning of this statement, and what is the meaning of **that day?** in verse 16, and how does this apply to us? Before we begin to draw up some fantasies, let us be clear on one thing: Achan is not a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Achan is a wicked reprobate, whereas Christ is the spotless Lamb of God, and He may not be defiled with our sins. He can only be our Redeemer if He remains the spotless Lamb of God. He, the Judge of heaven and earth, stepped down from the Judge's bench and stood in front of God as the Judge to pay the guilt of our sins on our behalf. The guilt of our sins was imputed to His account. Our sins were not imputed on Him, but they were imputed to His account, so that Christ paid on behalf of us. That is what the Greek text says. To impute is an accounting term. Throughout the atonement Christ remained the spotless Lamb of God. I am

emphasizing this, because I know that many of you have been listening to the man on the radio who gave the wrong interpretation of 2Cor 5:21, as if Christ became defiled with our sins. You must take that heretical statement out of your memory. When we read Hosea 1 and 2 we ask ourselves: Who was Gomer? And then we find that Gomer was not only a picture of the nation of Israel, but Gomer was also a picture of the New Testament church. To begin with, Hos 1:4-9 tells us the bad news that Old Testament Israel will be rejected by God. But then the good news is stated in Hos 1:10-11, which tells us that the New Testament Israel of God will come into existence. Please turn one page to your left, to Hos 1:10-11,

Ho 1:10-11 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, *that* in the place where it was said unto them, *Ye are* not my people, *there* it shall be said unto them, *Ye are* the sons of the living God. Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head (Christ) and they shall come up out of the land: for great *shall be* the day of Jezreel.

And when will this prophecy come to fruition? Where was it said to them, *ye are not My people?* It was said to them in Hos 1:9. And where will it be said to them, *ye are the sons of the living God?* It will be said to them in Rom 9:24-26. Please turn in your Bibles to the Epistle to the Romans, Rom 9:24 (2X). The amazing thing is that God said it will be the same place where those two statements are made. Most preachers have not caught that, for they speak of the Book of Hosea that was written by Hosea, and the Book of Romans that was written by Paul the apostle. But since God said in 2Pet 1:21 that all Scripture was by the inspiration of God we understand that the whole Bible is One Book, written by God. People fail to realize that if these books were written by human hands then the concept of God and of sin and of Hell and all the other concepts in the Bible came out of the minds of men, and thus it puts the entire Christian religion on shaky grounds. Here we read in Rom 9:24-26,

Ro 9:24-26 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, *that* in the place where it was said unto them, *Ye are* not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God.

Here is the fulfillment of that prophecy in Hos 1:10, those who were not God's people have become God's people, and Gomer has become a picture of the New Testament church, because Hos 1:10 has become intimately tied to Rom 9:25. Let us return now to Hos 2:14 (2X). Hos 2:14 speaks of the return of Gomer. Paraphrased God says there behold I will entice her, or I will persuade her, and bring her into the wilderness like I brought the children of Israel into the wilderness after I rescued them out of Egypt. Then instead of reading speak comfortably unto her, we should read and speak to her heart for this is what the Hebrew text says. God speaks to our heart when He gives us ears to hear and eyes to see and makes us Born Again. Gomer is representing us now, for she is now representing the New Testament church. Can you see the love of God for His church? Can you see the love of God for those whom He calls His elect? Even though we are

inclined to backsliding He draws us again and again until we are in His fold safely and secure. How can we get a good understanding of the love of God? We can only get it by the grace of God. Remember grace is unmerited favor. Only by God's grace can we know, and thus we should ask the Lord for giving us this grace and wisdom and understanding of His great love.

- **The Magnitude of Sin and of Salvation** (1Cor 10:31, Eph 2:8-9, 1John 1:9)

As your pastor and teacher I can do my best to lead you in that direction by the following example: **First** we need to understand how great our sins are. You all know what a bar-chart is. Take a sheet of paper and make a drawing of a bar chart, two coordinates perpendicular to each other, and represent your sins and the sins of your wife, as bars on this chart, and you may add a few more people to this chart. The magnitude of your sins is represented by a bar. How high is this bar? It probably depends on how sinful you see yourself. But let God tell us now how high that bar should be. As you know, God created us for His glory, and we live for the purpose of giving Him glory. There are just too many references to that respect, but let me give you just one. We read in **1Cor 10:31**, whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. It means that whenever there is a minute in our life that we do not give glory to God we are sinning. Now, that puts a whole new perspective on sin. It means that if I live a very holy life I probably sin at least 100 times per day. Multiply that times 365 days a year, and times 80 years or so, and the result is close to 3 million. It means that at the end of my life I have slapped God in the face 3 million times. Now this bar on the chart representing my sins is reaching to the moon, and perhaps beyond that. This is the magnitude of my sins. It is infinite. Now I can understand that the penalty for those sins must also be infinite, an eternity in Hell, for God as the righteous Judge must fit the penalty to the crime. **Secondly**, all is not lost. The Good News is that God sent the Lord Jesus Christ to this earth to save me from this eternal condemnation. What did the Lord Jesus have to pay in order to set me free? He had to pay the full price, which was the equivalent of an eternity in Hell, for the righteousness of God may not be violated. This is what He suffered on the cross on my behalf. Then He gave this payment as a gift to me, totally free. I could not even pay 0.0000001% of it, for it is infinite and I am totally bankrupt. And if I wanted to pay for it, it would be an insult to God. That is why God emphasized in **Eph 2:9**, Not of works, lest anyone should boast. What gives me the assurance that Christ endured the equivalent of an eternity in Hell for me? God gave me the faith to believe this, and this is how I know that Christ indeed paid for all my sins. God says in **Eph 2:8**, For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. God's gift of faith made it clear to me that I belong to Him; He chose me before the foundation of the world, and Christ paid for me on the cross in AD 33, the full price. He gave me all that He had. How can I not be grateful? How can I accept this gift without thanking Him for the rest of my life? How can I receive such great salvation without giving Him all the glory that is due to Him? I wasted the first 40 years of my life by ignoring His free gift and the cross that He bore for me. I spurned His love for me for 40 years, and yet He still loved me and drew me to Himself with a force that I could not resist. And many of you can probably identify with that. And He forgave me all my riotous living, and honored me

greatly by making me an undershepherd under Him. By the grace of God I cannot imagine that I would go back to the sinful lifestyle I had 40 years ago. And yet I know that I still sin at least 100 times a day by not giving Him all the glory. But I also know that those sins have been erased 100%. Praise God for so great salvation. Praise God that He sent such a merciful Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. And praise God that He gave me the opportunity and the great honor to serve Him in the capacity of pastor. And yet I am just as great a sinner as anyone of you, because the bar on my chart like yours, reaches to the moon. But I am forgiven. And you see, that is where Gomer comes into focus again. Achan was a reprobate, but Gomer was an elect of God. The Lord continued to draw her through much chastening, until she was totally in the fold of Christ. So the Lord shall deal with each one of you when you feel His drawing, for He said in 1John 1:9; if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ³With whom have we cast our lot? Are we on the side of Achan, who stole from God, or are we on the side of Gomer, a sinful harlot who was far from perfect, but God had mercy on her? You see, if we are sinners on the way to Hell, there is still hope for us. Therefore we plead with God for mercy, and we pray to Him without ceasing. If there was hope for Gomer then there is hope for us also. Let us now return to the question I had in the beginning: How can the Valley of Achor be a door of hope? Please return to Hos 2:14.

- The Valley of Achor a Door of Hope (Hos 2:14-15, Dan 9:24, Hos 2:16-17, Rev 21:9, Prov 17:13)

Ho 2:14-15 Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak to her heart. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.

Look at this language now. God says; I will bring her into the wilderness. ³Where is that wilderness? Physically it is the wilderness that the children of Israel were in when they came out of the land of Egypt, which were the lands where they wandered in for 40 years. Then God says; I will give her her vineyards from there from the wilderness. But all that is on the east side of the Jordan River. And we then read; I will give her the Valley of Achor for a door of hope. ³But the valley of Achor is on the west side of the Jordan River. Now we understand that God does not have the physical locations in view, but the spiritual meaning of the Valley of Achor. In the Valley of Achor sin was dealt with, and sin was purged. God was satisfied. God was no longer the enemy, but God was on the side of Israel. Let us look at this in perspective. #1. The Garden of Eden was closed off until sin was dealt with. When was Adam's sin dealt with? It was when Christ died on the cross. Only then are we allowed back into the Garden of Eden and eat from the Tree of Life. #2. The Promised Land was closed off until sin was dealt with. When was Achan's sin dealt with? It was when Achan was stoned to death in the Valley of Achor. Only then were the children of Israel free to enter into the Promised Land. #3. The New Heaven and the New Earth is closed off until sin is dealt with. When will sin be dealt with? It will be when all the wicked have been judged and have been cast into Hell. Only then will all the saints be allowed to enter into the New Heaven and the New Earth. And so, the spiritual meaning of the Valley of Achor is the place where sin is dealt with. Since Gomer represents the New Testament church, when and where was it that

the sins of the New Testament church were dealt with? It was at the cross of Calvary. Christ is not represented by Achan, but in Christ the sins of the eternal church were dealt with, and through the infinite sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ the guilt of our sins was put away. It took the one and only sacrifice of Christ to finish the transaction, written so beautifully in Dan 9:24,

Da 9:24 Seventy sevens are determined upon thy people (the Israel of God) and upon thy holy city (the New Jerusalem), to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy (Christ).

And when we were Born Again in this century God the Holy Spirit took away the empty sins out of our soul. And so, this earth is the Valley of Achor, the Valley of Trouble. Achor means Trouble. And so, when the Lord Jesus Christ put away the guilt of our sins in the Valley of Achor, the Valley of Trouble, all the children of Israel, all the children of Christ who is now called Israel, have been qualified to enter into the Promised Land, the Kingdom of God, and this act of entering into the Kingdom of God is when we have been Born Again. That is how the Valley of Achor, the Valley of Trouble, became a door of hope, because the sacrifice of Christ gave us a door of hope. Look now how the language of Hos 2:16-17 corresponds to this interpretation. **Ho 2:16-17** And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, *that* thou shalt call me Ishi (My Husband); and shalt call me no more Baali (My Baal). For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.

Do we know what Yo more3means? Po more3means repentance and faith, which are gifts from God. This is a life-turning transformation. We need to pray God that He gives us this repentance and faith. When is it that we call Christ Our Husband, and we are the Bride of Christ? $\text{\textcircled{t}}$ that day $\text{\textcircled{t}}$ which is when we are Born Again in this century, God is giving us the understanding that we are now called the Bride of Christ (Rev 21:9). That is when we will call Him $\text{\textcircled{t}}$ Husband $\text{\textcircled{t}}$ That is when we have come to the conviction that Christ is the one whom we love above all, even above our earthly husband and above our children. And the names of our idols are taken away out

of our mouth, and they shall no more be remembered. God did that. This is the mercy of God.

And look now at the contrast between Achan and Gomer. Achan was an honorable soldier in the army of the Lord; he passed through the Jordan on dry ground; he was circumcised by the command of Joshua; he was a winner, for he helped destroy Jericho. But he was a thief, and a deceiver, like Judas Iscariot; his heart was unconverted; he was hiding his sin until the last day; he was unrepentant, even when through his fault 36 of his fellow soldiers were killed. Gomer was a harlot, a grievous sinner; despised by society and despised by the church; the mother of three children who were accursed by God; was falling back into adultery after her marriage to Hosea. But God had mercy on her, again and again. She was converted (Hos 2:16) and she repented (Hos 2:17) and God continued to care for her (Hos 2:18) and God continues to do that forever. Is God fair? Here is a soldier for Israel. He steps out of line once, and boom, he is condemned to Hell. Here is a

harlot, sinful all her life, and God makes her righteous? NO! That is not what God does. First God imputed all of Gomer's sins on the account of the Lord Jesus Christ, then He causes the Lord Jesus to suffer for the guilt of all her sins the equivalent of an eternity in Hell, then He looked at Gomer and she was clean, and then He declared her righteous.

O, the glorious mercy and love of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out. Truly as high as the heavens are above the earth so high are His ways past our ways and His thoughts above our thoughts. And we can never get tired of praising the love of God for us, unworthy sinners, and of praising Him for the wisdom He had in designing His plan of salvation for us. How can we ever spurn this love of God? And yet there are many who have spurned this love of God. I myself was one of them. I knew about the cross of Christ, and I believed that Christ was indeed crucified for our sins. But it did not change my heart. I was a believer, but I was an unconverted sinner. This tells us that if our faith has not come from God it does us no good whatsoever. This tells us also that we can hear the truth with our ears but remain unsaved. If it does not change our heart we remain unsaved. That is why salvation is not believing just the facts. Salvation must be a change of heart. Like the Lord Jesus said, **Verily, verily, except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.**

And so, if we are Born Again, can we honestly say, **God have mercy on me, a sinner?** Do we mean that? Is there repentance in our heart? And if we are Born Again is it possible that we have no gratitude in our heart? What does the Word of God say about that? Please turn to the Proverbs of Solomon, **Prov 17:13** (2X). At first glance this proverb does not seem to speak of any gratitude. But look again. God says in **Prov 17:13**,

Pr 17:13, who so rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house.

If we perceive that God has done something good for us, like God has given us a house where we can sleep, and God has given us sleep, and God has given us rest from our enemies, and God has given us a job and a car, we might be complacently grateful. But if God has given us salvation through Christ crucified, and we are ungrateful, we are in fact rewarding evil for good. Is that possible? No, that is not possible, for God says in **Prov 17:13** that evil shall not depart from our house. It means that we were never saved, for this proverb says that we are still on the way to Hell if we are not grateful. Therefore, thank God for giving us guidance in our understanding of His Word. **AMEN.** **Let us turn to the Lord in prayer.**