

## **The God of the Valleys (2)**

### **The Valley of Achor**

One of the most interesting valleys mentioned in the Scriptures is the Valley of Achor. There are four references to the Valley of Achor in the Scriptures. Perhaps the most well known of these is found in Joshua chapter 7, where Achan, who was called, *“the troubler of Israel”*, was stoned because of his disregard of God’s commandment. It is interesting to note that the word, *“Achor”*, means, *“trouble”*.

In the conquest of Jericho, a city that was cursed, Achan committed a trespass against the Lord, by stealing garments and gold and silver. Achan’s sin affected the whole camp of Israel and resulted in the judgment of God in their defeat at the hands of the army of Ai (Josh. 7: 1-21).

Achan, along with his family and possessions, was taken out to the valley of Achor and stoned to death because of his sin (Josh. 7:24-26). In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses gave instruction to God’s people regarding finding one slain in the field. The priests and elders were to take a heifer that had not been wrought with nor had worn a yoke. The heifer was brought down into a rough valley where its blood was shed as a means of atonement and the removing of guilt (Deut. 21:1-9).

Our blessed Lord Jesus was taken into a rough valley, where His precious blood was shed, as the only means of atonement for sin and reconciliation to God. By His spotless sacrifice, the guilt of sin has been removed forever.

After the judgment of God was executed against Achan, the Lord gave deliverance and victory to Israel against their enemies. Caiaphas, the high priest, made a statement in which he unknowingly predicted the death of the Lord Jesus, *“it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not”* (Jn. 11:49-51).

Just as Achan’s sin affected the whole camp of Israel, Paul reminds us in the book of Romans that one man’s sin affected the whole world. In reference to Adam’s sin in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:6-12), he wrote, *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”* (Rom. 5:12).

We are all under the sentence of death, subject to the righteous wrath of God because of our sin. The Lord Jesus, God’s well-beloved Son, bore the punishment we deserve and delivered us from the bondage and penalty of sin. He became the propitiation for our sins, and not ours only but also for the sins of the whole world (1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 2:2). Contemplating the cross and all that lay before Him, the Lord Jesus said, *“now is my soul troubled”* (Jn. 12:27).

The word, *“propitiation”*, can indicate a means of satisfying the judgment of God. It can also mean a covering for sin. Very often the expression means mercy seat. When God looked upon the blood-stained mercy seat, in the Old Testament, He accepted the blood of the sacrifice as a means of atonement for sin.

In this reference to the Valley of Achor, we might see the Lord Jesus as the good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep (Jn. 10:11).

The prophet Isaiah, wrote concerning the valley of Achor, *“And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me”* (Isa. 65:10). The valley of trouble and the place where God’s judgment against sin was carried out, is transformed into a valley of tranquility and peace; a place of provision and plenty.

The psalmist David, wrote, *“the Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures”* (Ps. 23:1-2). The prophet Ezekiel wrote of the Lord’s shepherd care of His people, *“I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down”* (Ezek. 34:15). So, the valley of Achor now becomes the place where *that great shepherd of the sheep* (Heb. 13:20), tends and cares for the flock which He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28).

The Lord through the prophet Hosea, speaks of giving the valley of Achor for a *“door of hope”* for His people (Hos. 2:15). Peter wrote of the hope of every child of God, *“blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”* (1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 1:3).

Paul wrote of the riches of a mystery which had been hid in past ages and is now revealed, which he referred to as, *“Christ in you, the hope of glory”* (Col. 1:27). The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews encourages us concerning the hope before us and within us, *“which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus”* (Heb. 6:19-20).

The Valley of Achor not only reminds us of the Good Shepherd, who gave His life for the sheep, and of the Great Shepherd who cares for the sheep, but here in the valley of hope, we are reminded of the Chief Shepherd, who shall soon appear (1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 5:4). *“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ”* (Tit. 2:13).

*Christ from the garden taken,  
To the rough valley led;  
By followers forsaken,  
To die in sinners’ stead.*

*His precious blood is flowing  
The guilt of sin removed;  
While grace and peace bestowing,  
His love and mercy proved.*

*In wondrous resurrection,  
He lives to intercede;  
Enjoying His protection,  
His purchased flock can feed.*

*Our every need providing  
Along the pilgrim way;  
Safe in Christ abiding,  
We wait the coming day.*

*Devotion for Him burning,  
The love of Christ constrains;  
The hope of His returning,  
Our longing heart sustains.*

*O, blessed consummation,  
Of all that grace begun;  
We bow in adoration,  
Of God’s beloved Son.*

**Bernie Payne**