

QUESTION: Somewhere in the Bible it states that a son cannot be blamed for what his father does, and a father can't be blamed for what his son does. But in another place, it talks about where the father did something wrong and his whole family was killed. How is that?

ANSWER: You didn't mention the exact Scriptures you were wondering about, but I think these might be the ones: Joshua chapter 7 and Ezekiel chapter 18. If those are the Scriptures you meant, they do not contradict each other, because they are really talking about two different types of situations. Read the whole chapters, but here are a few verses:

- **Joshua 7:1** "But the children of Israel committed a trespass (sin) regarding the accursed things, **for Achan the son of Carmi..... took of the accursed things;** so the anger of the Lord burned against the children of Israel."
- **Joshua 7:10-11** "So the Lord said to Joshua, 'Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face? **Israel has sinned**, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. For **they have even taken some of the accursed things**, and have both stolen and deceived; and they have also put it among their own stuff.'"

In the case of Achan coveting, stealing and hiding the forbidden (cursed, contaminated) items, he disobeyed God and caused all of Israel to lose the battle against their enemies. His death and the death of his whole family was **(1.)** because the family members had been co-conspirators with him in hiding the stolen goods and lying about it, and their death was actually **an execution of criminals;** and **(2.)** To be an example to the rest of the people of Israel not to sin and try to hide it from God. That is why not only all of Achan's family members, but also his oxen, sheep and donkeys, and all that he owned, plus the stolen "accursed" items, were all burned and made into a memorial mound, so that **any time people passed by the mound, they would remember the terrible sin of Achan and his family.** It may seem like a harsh punishment from God, but it was meant to keep the whole nation of Israel from falling into similar sin. A New Testament equivalent might be the incident of Ananias and Sapphira, in Acts chapter 5. Both Ananias and his wife Sapphira lied to the church, and tried to lie to God, and they paid for it with their lives. **God struck both of them dead,** as an example to the early church, in order to keep the church pure from sin.

- **Joshua 7:24-26** "Then Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the garment, the wedge of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, and all that he had, and they brought them to the Valley of Achor. And Joshua said, 'Why have you troubled us? The Lord will trouble you this day.' So all Israel stoned him with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones. **Then they raised over him a great heap of stones,** still there to this day. So the Lord turned from the fierceness of His anger."

This has spiritual implications for us as Christians, in that, if we have hidden sin in our lives, we cannot have dominion and victory over Satan. This also applies to keeping mementos and things from our past life, if those things were part of some sinful activity. If you have been involved in any of the activities controlled by Satan and have NOT been willing to give them up and really repent of them, you will not be able to do spiritual warfare. **You are still in the enemy's territory!** Don't think you can call the psychic hotline one minute, and then resist the devil or do any kind of warfare the next. Don't think you can be involved in adultery or fornication (that's old fashioned language for ANY kind of sex outside of marriage between a man and a woman) and be successful in spiritual warfare. **If you have truly repented and left all this behind you, and these things are all in your PAST,** that's okay. I'm talking about Christians who want to straddle the fence - who are double-minded! James 4:8

says **"PURIFY your HEARTS, you DOUBLE-MINDED."** Being DOUBLE-MINDED means you are still entertaining some of the devil's thoughts or just your own SELFISH thoughts, and **your mind and heart** are not completely the Lord's. Also, don't keep things around "just in case" you might want to go back to them. **CLEAN HOUSE! Get rid of all OBJECTS** associated with sinful or idolatrous practices: religious or superstitious charms (rosaries, New Age crystals, etc.), incense, religious statues, drug paraphernalia, that bottle of booze hidden away somewhere, pictures, magazines, books, music, tapes, CDs, etc. (See Acts 19:13-20; Romans 13:14)

- **Deut. 7:25-26** "The graven images of their gods you are to BURN WITH FIRE, you shall not covet (desire to keep) the gold or the silver that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, lest you be SNARED BY IT (contaminated by it), for it is an abomination to the Lord your God. **And you shall NOT bring an abomination into your house and become a CURSED THING like it;** you shall utterly abhor it, for it is a CURSED (contaminated) thing." (See I Cor. 10:14-21; Psalm 106:37-38)
- **Deut. 18:9-14** ".....you shall NOT learn to imitate the **detestable** things of those nations. There shall NOT be found among you anyone who makes his son or daughter pass through the fire (human sacrifice), or one who uses divination (FORTUNE TELLING), or one who practices WITCHCRAFT, or one who interprets omens (ASTROLOGER), or a sorcerer, or one who casts a spell, or one who CONSULTS with FAMILIAR SPIRITS (PSYCHICS, New Age channelers), or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead (SEANCES). For whoever does these things is **DETESTABLE to the Lord**.....but as for you, the Lord your God has NOT ALLOWED you to do so."
- **Acts 19:18-19** "Many also of those who had believed (in Jesus) kept coming, **confessing and disclosing their practices.** And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began BURNING THEM in the sight of all, and they counted up the price of them and found it to be 50,000 pieces of silver."
- **Joshua 7:12-13** "Therefore the children of Israel **could not stand before their enemies**, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they have become doomed to destruction. Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you **destroy the accursed from among you.** Get up, sanctify the people, and say, 'Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, because thus says the Lord God of Israel: **"There is an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you."**"

So, how is the Scripture in Ezekiel different? The situation in Joshua was where the children and family were involved in the same sin as their father. In Ezekiel, the nation of Israel, in quoting this old proverb about the sour grapes, was **trying to SHIFT the BLAME from themselves onto their parents**, instead of being ACCOUNTABLE for their own sin. Also, it says that if a son sees his father's sin, and **does not follow in his father's ways, but follows and obeys God, he shall not be punished for his father's sins.** We are not told, but **Achan's sons and daughters evidently went along with their father's sin**, instead of repenting and turning away from it. Ezekiel is talking about individual responsibility for our own sins, and that **anyone can be forgiven**, if they repent and turn away from their own sins, and the sinful ways of their family members. **Each one of us is responsible for our own behavior, and our salvation is a matter for each person's decision alone.** When it says, "the soul who sins shall die," it means that God puts the consequences on each individual for their own sins.

- **Ezekiel 18:1-4** "The word of the Lord came to me again, saying, 'What do you mean when you use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying: **"The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge"**?' 'As I live', says the Lord God, 'You shall no longer use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine; the soul who sins shall die.'" (Verses 14-18) "If, however, he begets a son who sees all the sins which his father has done, and considers but does not do likewise.....but has executed My

judgments and walked in My statutes - **he shall not die for the iniquity of his father; he shall surely live!** As for his father, because he cruelly oppressed, robbed his brother by violence, and did what is not good among his people, behold, he shall die for his iniquity."

- **Ezekiel 18:19-20** "Yet you say, 'Why should the son not bear the guilt of the father?' Because **the son has done what is lawful and right**, and has kept all My statutes (commandments) and done them, he shall surely live. The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son....."