



# **TRANSPARENCY BEFORE GOD**

## **INTRODUCTION:**

The English word **“transparency”** means the “quality of being seen through clearly.” Likewise, something is said to be **“transparent”** if it is “so clear a thing that one can see through it; as, transparent glass; transparent gauze.” (The Winston Simplified Dictionary for Schools, 1938, p. 860). (Old dictionary, concise definitions). Transparency is not only a visual phenomenon but can also be spiritual or mental, such as God’s ability to “see” or detect the thoughts of our hearts or minds, as in Jeremiah 17:10 and Revelation 2:23.

The fact that we are all transparent before God, whether we think so or not, provides us with the opportunity to agree with God. The more we agree with God that we are completely transparent to Him, the more likely we are to live carefully before Him in all situations of our lives. But the less we agree with God about our transparency before Him, we begin to think that there are some situations (usually of our choosing) which are not especially important to Him and over which He does not watch.

Our goal in this study is to look into Scripture at someone who believed that God saw her and at some men who did not believe that God saw them. We will also examine the destiny of those who attempt to hide something from God as well as God’s unequalled ability to reveal hidden things.

## **GOD SEES US:**

One of the first persons to understand that God could actually see her was Hagar, the Egyptian girl who was Sarah’s maid (Genesis 16:1-16). Sarah, as the wife of Abram (Abraham) was unable to bear a child – much to her chagrin. So she gave Hagar to Abram to bear a child to her husband. Hagar became pregnant by Abram but before she gave birth to the child, she ran away from Sarah, who treated her harshly. As she fled, an angel of the Lord told her to return to Sarah and then prophesied over her several things about the male child she would carry and deliver, including his name – Ishmael (verses 6-12). Hagar was concerned that it was the Lord who spoke to her and called Him: “You-Are-The-God-Who-Sees.” She even added: “Have I also here seen Him who sees me?” (verse 13)

Hagar did bear this child to Abram and he was named Ishmael as the angel specified (verse 15). It would be another fourteen years before Isaac, the son of promise would be born to Abram by his wife Sarah (verse 16).

### **GOD DOES NOT SEE US:**

God showed Ezekiel, in visions, the great abominations that the house of Israel committed in God's sanctuary (Ezekiel 8:6). He then showed Ezekiel the wicked abominations that were being practiced in hidden portions of the Temple, where idols of the house of Israel were carved on the walls and where various rooms of idols were darkened (verses 7-12). The elders of the house of Israel who practiced idolatry in the dark, "every man in the room of his idols, said, "The Lord does not see us, the Lord has forsaken the land." (verse 12)

It took self-deception and audacity on the part of the elders of Israel to say that "the Lord does not see us." But there's more to their story. Their practice of idolatry **in dark rooms** took them to an even lower spiritual level: "Son of man, these men (elders of Israel) have set up their idols **in their hearts**, and put before them that which causes them to stumble into iniquity." (Ezekiel 14:3)

Their idolatry had taken them from attempts at hiding it in **dark rooms** to hiding it in **darkened hearts**. Each level of increased darkness in their practice of idolatry only increased their confidence that God could not see them.

### **HIDING SOMETHING FROM GOD:**

When we hide things from God, believing He does not know about the things we are hiding, it is usually an indication that we have committed sin from which we do not intend to confess and repent. When we do not intend to confess and repent of our sin, perhaps because we are actually ashamed of it or because we enjoy the sin, we are quick to use the only other alternative left to us – **HIDE IT! COVER IT!** Every time this pattern of hiding our sin is repeated, we feel less transparent before God. We suffer the loss of our innocence in God's sight.

#### **ACHAN: JOSHUA 6:18-19 AND 7:1-26**

As the battle of Jericho neared its conclusion, Joshua gave very strict orders that no one of Israel must take any personal spoil (plunder) from Jericho. The **only** exception to that command was permission to take silver, gold and vessels of bronze and iron **to be placed "into the treasury of the Lord."** (Joshua 6:19). Anyone keeping personal spoil ("accursed things")

would, himself, become accursed. In addition, anyone taking and keeping personal spoil would "...make the camp of Israel a curse and trouble it." (6:18) The truth of these orders and the penalties for their violation would soon be apparent.

Considering the serious nature of Joshua's orders to the Israelites not to be greedy (covetous), at the risk of endangering their entire camp, it seems inconceivable that any Israelite would find it in his heart to **defy** those orders. But someone did! His name was Achan, of the tribe of Judah. He "took of the accursed things; so the anger of the Lord burned against the children of Israel." (7:1)

God's anger was immediate. God allowed the men who spied out the city of Ai to give an over confident report on the size of the armed force that they thought should be sent against Ai (7:1-3) And sure enough, the men of Ai put the undersized Israelite force to flight and "...the hearts of the people melted and became like water." (7:4-5). The Israelites suffered an unexpected loss in this battle for Ai. Joshua was extremely troubled about it and prayed earnestly to understand the situation. Finally, God told Joshua that someone took of the accursed thing at Jericho and that he must identify and destroy that person. (7:12-13)

The search for the guilty man was very systematic, first identifying the tribe of the man, then the family, then the household and finally the man himself. Apparently, each level of identification was done by lot, indicated by the words "was taken." (or "was chosen by lot"). (7:16-18) If indeed, these choices were made by lot, it would not be the only time that God would use the lot to convey His will on a matter of great importance.

**(See also 1 Samuel 14:42; Proverbs 16:33; Acts 1:24-26 and Psalm 22:18; Matthew 27:35).**

**Before we proceed: what do you find these references telling us in relation to our topic?**

When Achan was openly identified as the one who took personal spoil at Jericho, Joshua questioned him, hoping for a public confession before taking further action. Joshua got what he was looking for, as Achan said the following: "And Achan answered Joshua and said, 'Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and this is what I have done: 'When I saw

among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it.” (7:20-21)

Without question, Joshua was glad to know who the offender was so the matter could be brought to closure and Israel could be restored to its former strength. However, Joshua wanted to be sure that Achan’s confession was in keeping with the decisions, by lot, that led to Achan’s identification as the offender. Joshua simply had some men go to Achan’s tent to verify that the items listed by Achan were really there (7:22). The men found all of those items and displayed them to Joshua, to the Israelites and to the Lord. (7:23)

It was at this point that Joshua initiated the execution of Achan, the offender who transgressed God’s covenant by doing something that was a “...a disgraceful thing in Israel.” (7:15)

God had already told Joshua how the offender must be executed: “Then it shall be that he who is taken (presumably by lot under God’s control and guidance) with the accursed thing shall be burned with fire, he and **all** that he has...” (7:15) So Joshua did exactly what God said to do to the convicted offender: “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 the 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.” (Joshua 7:24-25)

By way of after thought, Achan hid (or tried to hide) his covetousness by physically burying the items he coveted. But he greatly underestimated God’s ability to see the unseen! He simply did not account for the fact that he, too, was transparent before God. His miscalculation cost him everything – his own life, the lives of his family and all of his possessions, including the objects of his covetousness. I doubt that Achan would now say: “A little coveting never hurt anyone.”

### **GOD REVEALS HIDDEN THINGS:**

If it is not yet apparent from Achan’s experience that it is utterly futile to think we can actually hide something from god, Jesus’ words on the matter speak very clearly: “For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known.” (Luke 12:22) And

again: “For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light.” (Mark 4:22)

Although we may complain that God’s capacity to know all of our secrets is a violation of our privacy, we should be aware that His intimate and complete knowledge of our secrets is actually for our protection and accountability. If God could not know the secret, hidden things of our heart, mind and conduct, we could knowingly hide virtually anything from Him without any possibility of His warning and intervention to keep us from doing ourselves eternal harm.

### **SELF REFLECTION:**

1. Are you harboring any “secrets” that you think God doesn’t see?
2. Can you allow Him to search through all parts of your heart/life to reveal what is displeasing to Him?
3. For those things He may show you, be quick to repent and give your complete obedience to Him. **It DOES matter for eternity!**