

Studies in the Book of Joshua
Lesson 7 - Joshua 8:1-35
The Abundant Life
Promise Restored

Israel now has one blazing victory and one embarrassing defeat to its credit. Ai controls the high point of the road from Jericho into the arteries of Canaan, so the city must be taken. Although Achan is dead, Joshua, won't sleep easily until he knows Israel is in the Lord's good grace again.

Now that the nation had been sanctified and their sin judged, God could again lead His people to victory. Note how the Lord used the defeat to good advantage, for the people of Ai were confident that they could overcome Israel again. Note too that God allowed the people to take the loot from Ai. Had Achan waited a few days, he would have had all the wealth he could have carried.

The plan was a simple one. Joshua sent 30,000 men to Bethel at night, and placed another five thousand between Bethel and Ai. Some of the soldiers attacked Ai and drew the men out of the city. At that point Joshua signaled the ambush, and his men entered the city and captured it. It was a complete victory! Joshua holding up his spear in vs. 26 reminds us of Moses holding up his hands when Joshua fought Amalek. Ai was made such a desolation that archaeologists cannot be certain of its location even today.

Joshua interrupted his military campaign to take the nation thirty miles to Shechem where he obeyed the commandments of Deut. 27:4–6. We are told that this valley is a natural amphitheater with wonderful acoustics. Joshua put the tribes of Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali on Mt. Ebal (the mount of the curses); and he put Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin on Mt. Gerizim (the mount of blessing). Joshua well knew that Israel's victory and possession of the land depended on their obedience to the Word of God. It was more important for the nation to hear the Word than to fight any more battles. Note that he also built an altar, for apart from the blood of Christ, we have no righteousness before God. The Law would have condemned and slain them had they neglected the sacrifices. We must admire and imitate Joshua's respect for the Word of God.

Read Joshua 8:1-29, pray and answer the following questions:

1. This time, who gives the orders regarding the attack on Ai? Why is this important? (8:1-2)

2. What do the Lord's words in 8:1-2 signify, in light of chapter 7?

3. What role does each of the following play in conquering Ai?
 - a. The Lord (See 8:1-2, 7-8, 18-19)

 - b. Joshua (See 8:3-13, 15, 18, 26, 28-29)

 - c. All Israel (8:3-13, 15, 19, 21-27)

4. The author of the book of Joshua gives detailed descriptions of only a few of the dozens of battles Israel fought.
 - a. In your opinion, why is the conquest of Ai important enough to recount in detail?

 - b. What does it contribute to the overall message of Joshua?

- c. What should later generations of Israelites have learned from this story?

Read Joshua 8:30-35, pray and answer the following questions:

5. In his farewell address to Israel, Moses instructed the nation to perform a ceremony at Mount Gerizim and Ebal. What did Moses tell Israel to do?
 - a. Compare Deuteronomy 27:1-4, 8 to Joshua 8:32
 - b. Compare Deuteronomy 27:5-7 to Joshua 8:30-31
 - c. Compare Deuteronomy 27:11-26 to Joshua 8:33
6. What did Joshua do besides what Moses had said? (8:34-35)
7. The defeat of Ai may have given Israel its first opportunity to proceed all the way to Shechem. Why do you think this was an appropriate time to renew Israel's commitment to the Lord and His covenant?

8. What important truths do you think Christians should learn from the accounts of the conquest of Ai and the covenant renewal at Ebal?

9. What might have been the purpose of reading God's law aloud before all the assembly of Israel? (8:34-35).

10. What's one truth from this chapter you would like to begin applying to your own life this week?

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