

JOSHUA CHAPTER 8

The Conquest of Ai

2 Tim 3:16-17 (NKJV) **All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is PROFITABLE for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.** (N.B) [John 5:47](#)

- There is much for us to learn in the conquest of Ai!

8:1 Encouragement and Direction from the Lord to Joshua:

- Fear not... take **ALL** the army with you... I **have** given you Ai and its King **and its land.**
- Now that Joshua has put away sin from the Camp of Israel our All-Holy God is willing to engage with them: **Heb 12:14**
- God doesn't tolerate sin and rebellion – if that is the route we take **HE LEAVES** us.
cf Ezek ch 10: the Spirit of God departed from the Temple because of sin and rebellion.
Ezek ch 11: He returned after their repentance...
 - Joshua's 3,000 failed at Ai for **the same reason**: they were out of the Divine Will!
 - So God allowed them to experience their own impotence: Jn 15:5
- So now, the Lord said **Arise! Go up to Ai.** Joshua had obviously imitated Moses again in returning to prostrate before God in the Ark of the Covenant.
 - he has returned to his position of waiting on God: Is 40:31

- (NB) Joshua has learned a **bitter** lesson that **treacherous Israelites** are to be dreaded **more** than the awful Canaanites!
- the Apostles learned this at the Last Supper... there was an 'achan' among them!
 - the lesson is that corrupt Christians – especially leaders do more damage to the Church than persecutors **because that damage is from within the camp.**

- (NB) Joshua is instructed to turn **from the Throne of Grace to the Field of Battle.**

At the Throne of Grace we are reconciled to God... once we have recovered we must take on the enemy again: cf Jn 20:17 (the Magdalene on Easter Day)

Lk 22:32 **I have prayed for you Simon, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.**

- 8:1** **I have given you** (Israel)... it was God's decision AB AETERNO to give this whole land to His Chosen People – **not** because they were better than others but because **He** wanted to set up His Reign on Earth **in this land** which is at the centre of the Earth.
cf Gen 17:5 God told Abraham **I have made you the father of many Nations...**

- (NB) When **we** go into spiritual warfare we must remember Jesus' words: **In the world you will have trouble; (ACHOR) but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.** Jn 16:33.
That's why St Paul said in 1 Cor 9:26 **I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air...**

- (NB) 1 Tim 6: 12 **Fight the good fight of the faith, lay hold on ETERNAL LIFE, to which you were called...**
Ps 56: 3-4 **When I am afraid I will trust in you... in God whose Word I praise. In God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal men do to me?**

8:2 Do to Ai to her King what you did to Jericho and her King...

- with **this** difference: **you can have the spoil, the cattle for yourselves...**

- In Jericho everything was to be given to God but human nature is too weak for that
- so God lets **them** take advantage from the spoils of war!

Q. What is in this **for us**? a) we must be **uncompromising** in dealing with evil
b) we give Satan no quarter!

1 Thess 5:22 **Abstain from every form of evil.**

Q. Why can they take the spoils of war **HERE** in Ai?

Jericho was the **First Fruits** of Canaan and the First Fruits had to be given to God as **His** portion.

- once that offering was made, it blessed the **WHOLE ENTERPRISE** and guaranteed Victory.

cf Ex 23:19 – this was why ACHAN's sin was so serious. It put God's whole plan for setting up His Reign into jeopardy.

THE METHOD of conquering Ai was **completely** different from that of Jericho. They had failed to comply with **God's Ways**... so now they are **reduced** to human ways, which are more tedious and laborious.

8:3 The **whole** army is to be involved (not 3,000!) **30,000** were sent ahead **BY NIGHT** (darkness).

So **stealth** is being used against Ai whereas in Jericho everything was done in full daylight

... Jericho was conquered by a miracle from God (Light)

... Ai was conquered by the schemes of men (darkness).

→ • Israel had missed God's **BEST** and settled for **SECOND BEST**.

→ Even though God had promised them **Victory at Ai** they now had to **work hard** for it.

... so it is with us in **mortifying the flesh** ...

1 Cor 9:27 (NKJV) **I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest when I have preached to others I should be lost myself** (JB)

1 Jn 5:4 It is our **Faith** that gives us Victory over the world...

Joshua's 30,000 had to operate **secretly**, silently and sacrificially if they were to get victory

- so it is with us also: our spiritual battles are hidden from the world we want to conquer:

Mt 16:24 **If anyone wants to be a follower of MINE, he must deny himself and take up his own cross and follow Me...**

1 Cor 9:25 **Everyone who participates goes into STRICT training....**

Rom 8:37 **Thus we become MORE than Conquerors through Him who loved us.**

& Rom 16:20 **The God of Peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.**

Note: that the same method employed in conquering Ai – the weaker target! – are needed **by us** in spiritual warfare...

Note: that the **TWO TESTAMENTS** (OT and NT) are like 2 eyes enabling us to SEE with proper perspective. We have to go forward with **total** trust in God

→ and with **total** submission to His Holy Will

- **This** is what enables **the God of Peace to bruise Satan under your feet**: Rom 16:20
- But **we** must RESIST Satan steadfast in faith: 1 Pet 5:9
- Then God will finish the work He began in us: Phil 1:6
- Yet, like Joshua and his men we must **work out your salvation in fear and trembling**: Phil 2:12
- Mighty forces are at work against us but the Final Victory is not in doubt: 1 Cor 15:58
- Jn 16:33 **Fear not, I have overcome the world.**

THE PLAN:

- 8:4** The 30,000 men were to lie in ambush near the city in a position hidden from **the Watchers**
- 8:5-6** Then Joshua and the rest of the army will approach the city openly – where they **will** be seen by the watchmen on the walls... the men of Ai will leave the city to fight Joshua. He will flee before them – as happened previously.
- 8:7** When all the men of Ai are out of the city then the 30,000 will go into it and destroy it.
- 8:8** The city is to be set **on fire**...
- 8:9-13** Joshua is obeyed.

Note that the **CONTRAST** to the taking of Jericho couldn't be greater!

- **There** is no stealth or deceit when God is at work! Everything was in the open...
- **Here** Joshua lured the King and army of Ai away from their citadel, leaving it totally vulnerable to attack...
- **There in Jericho** Joshua was the great leader under the Commander of God's Army.
- **Here** he has to pretend to run away in fear.

On a Higher Plane: we see that in the battle against evil in the world:

- a) Jesus lured Satan out of his fortress and took him on in single combat in His Passion.
- b) Jesus defeated the Enemy by using methods unknown to Satan → Love, Forgiveness, Humility and total trust in God.
- c) Christians quietly gather in prayer away from the gaze of the Enemy.
- the victim souls lure him out of his fortresses and take him on through, with and in Jesus – so the gates of Hell will **not** prevail.
- d) We have to learn **more** about spiritual warfare so that we can participate more deeply in the Victory of Christ **in His Church** **And so, we will not be outwitted by Satan – we know well enough what his intentions are:** 2 Cor 2:11 (JB)
 - What Satan is doing today is immersing everyone **IN THE WORLD** – in TV, Media, technologies of all kinds which
 - 1) deny the Truth
 - 2) give a false sense of security
 - 3) gives us the Antichrist agenda

In true believers Satan tries to:

- Tries**
- 1) puff us up with pride eg 1 Chron 21:1
 - 2) to stir up rebellion against God's Providence in our lives: **Job** 1:11, 2:7-9
 - 3) to produce a spirit of cowardice to induce us to betray Christ under pressure: Lk 22:31 (Peter)
 - 4) to compromise with the world and bargain with its leaders to betray Christ: Jn 13:2 (Judas)
 - 5) to drive us to lose faith and trust in God... even to suicide: Mt 27:5 (Judas)
 - 6) to turn our minds from the simplicity of the Gospel: 2 Cor 11:2-4
 - 7) to get us to accept the low moral standards of the world: 1 Cor 7:5
 - 8) to confuse us with questionable "revelations" from various sources: 2 Cor 11:14-15
 - 9) to raise slander and false accusations against true believers: Rev 12:10
- 8:14**
- Unity of mind and heart **IN ACTION:** As we saw in Jericho the **unity** of God's people is vital.
 - The victory in spiritual warfare lies **IN UNITY** also: Matt 18:19 (2 agree!)
 - Each soul has its unique place in **God's plan** to set up His Kingdom Rule on Earth.
 - We must **ACT** like a **BODY** (1 Cor 12) where all the parts synchronise to produce a result.
 - Joshua kept **the goal** in mind – so if we keep to the **VISION** of the New Era of grace and glory we have the motivation to act **AS A BODY** against evil today.

8:15 Joshua reminds his men that it is **God's Will** to conquer this land for the **Kingdom of God**, so their warfare is obedience to God's Will... **as is ours!**
Ps 127:2 (NKJV) **Unless THE LORD guards the city, the watchmen stay awake IN VAIN!!**

8:16 Here both **BETHEL** and **Ai** are included since they were close-by. This will be a 2 for 1 engagement! Killing 2 birds with one stone!

Note that the **city on fire** was to be the signal for Joshua in the valley of Achor that the ambush was successful – see vs **20-21**

That night Joshua trusted the 30,000 lying in ambush and he stayed with the rest of the army.

8:17 Joshua learned from Jericho not **TO HURRY** the assault. Everything has to be in right order for success. 5,000 men were sent to cut Bethel off from helping Ai. Ai was now fully surrounded and cut off from escape.

(Mk 13: 33-37) Notice that Joshua's men are **awake**, alert, and ready to strike when at the right time.

Notice that when Christians "sleep" the enemy sows tares among wheat: Mt 13:25

Notice that in the way city-states were constructed in those days that it was a miracle that 30,000 would **not be seen** for 48 hours!

- they must have been very **STILL** and **SILENT**

Perhaps it was a repeat of Gen 35:5 **a divine terror struck the towns round about, and no one pursued the sons of Jacob?**

2 things (1) the King of Ai **did not** send out spies to see if everything was secure...

(2) He rushed out of the city to engage Joshua leaving the city defenceless...

- It is similar to Pharaoh's army rushing after the fleeing slaves certain he would win.

- The **last encounter** with Israel left the King of Ai with **a false sense of security** so he rushed headlong into disaster.

8:18 **Stretch out the spear that is in your hand towards Ai for I give it into your hand.**

- this was the word Joshua waited for!

- Throughout the Exodus whenever Moses had to act on God's behalf he was told to **RAISE HIS STAFF** (Rod). Joshua is in **a war** so he raises his **SPEAR**

- **this** was the signal for those in ambush.

Both Joshua and his men are back in obedience to the Captain of God's Army again.

Notice vs 26! **Joshua did not draw back his hand...** until it was all over.

- Remember Moses on a height praying with his hands raised until the battle with the Amalekites was won... Joshua was **leading** Israel in **that** battle: Ex 17:11

- In **this** battle against Ai Joshua is **now in Moses'** position - on a height praying - hence he could hear the word from the Lord.

8:28-29 Ai was made into **a heap = a ruin** forever, like Jericho.

Its King was hanged and then buried under a heap of stones at the gate of the city: **Amos 5:10**

Israel renews its Covenant with God: 8:30-35: [Journey back to God](#)

8:30 **Joshua built an altar to the Lord... on [Mount Ebal](#)**



Notice the contrast:

- a) the death of the enemy King to the worship of the King of Kings!
- b) the corpse under the heap of stones and the sacrifice to God **on** top of the altar of **WHOLE STONES**
- c) **any** stones to cover the malefactor – **the BEST** for God.
- d) the corpse at the **gate of judgement** (Amos 5:10) - to the Altar of God on the Mount - **[place of Mercy](#)**

Give God the Glory: Joshua stopped the campaign to give glory and praise to God.

- With Jericho, Bethel and Ai, Joshua had conquered the frontier towns and had gained a strong foothold in the Promised Land. One might expect that he would push on to further victories.
- In fact he did the opposite! He made the **long journey** to Mount Ebal **in Samaria**
(a) To worship God (b) renew the Covenant (c) engrave the Law on Stones
- this was a lengthy pause before continuing their campaign.
- Since this action was taken in the early stage of the campaign, it was a mighty **Act of Faith** that God was giving them the rest of the land!
- in **this event** Joshua is treating Canaan **as** the Lord's Land – so he declares **God's Law** from **Mount Ebal**.

- **THE ALTAR** which Joshua built was similar to what Moses built at Sinai: Ex 20:24
 - both were erected on a Mount – where all the people could see it.
 - both were erected at the command of the Lord
 - a) after the events of the Crossing of the Red Sea...
 - b) after the events of the Crossing of the Jordan River...

Joshua, the obedient one, is shown anxious to fulfill God's Will as revealed to Moses. We fulfill God's law also as revealed to Jesus.

The Book of Deuteronomy gave Israel much instruction on what to do.

8:30-31 and how to behave once they entered the Promised Land.

- Joshua sees to it that these instructions are carried out as long as he lives. His last testimony in chap 24 says: **As for me and my House, we will serve the Lord.**

- Ⓝ The altar of sacrifice was the **MEETING PLACE** between the **All-Holy God** and **sinful man**
 - there the "commerce" of redemption took place
 - where an animal's life was given in lieu of God's children

Holocausts → when the animal was burnt – the Holocaust was offered in reparation for sin.

Communion → when the animal was just killed and its **BLOOD** offered – it was **COMMITMENT** to God, so they **ate** the roasted flesh to **have communion** with the sacrifice - thus ratifying their offering of themselves to God.

Sacrifices

For the altar God asked for a simple erection of stones (untouched by human skills)

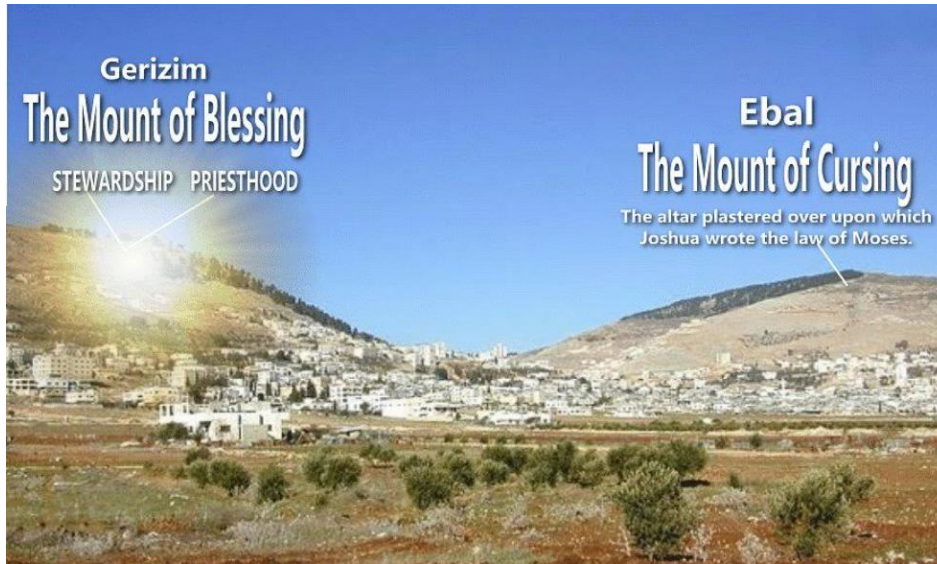
- any polishing of the stones was considered **contamination** by God: Ex 20:26; 1 Kg 18:31-
- the altar had to be **God's work** alone.
- it was to be naked, simple and unadorned – **as our souls are** before His Presence.

ALTAR AT EBAL



Yeshua – Jesus fulfilled all this on the highest level in His Crucifixion.

- He, Himself was the naked, simple and unadorned Altar of God.
- He was the pure Victim whose Blood was offered for all of us in Redemption.
- He was the Holocaust for the whole of Humanity – Burnt in the Fires of Divine Love for us.
- We, too, eat His Flesh and drink His Blood in order to participate as fully as possible and to confirm our commitment to God and His Holy Will.
- In Matt 23:19 Jesus said that **the altar sanctifies the gift laid upon it.**
- So it was **Jesus' own Person** who sanctified **THE CROSS** for us all.



- (NB) Jesus Himself (is) our Altar where we do business with God: Heb 13:10-15
- the very ruggedness of the Cross showed forth both the Humiliation and the Perfection of our Saviour.
- We saw Him without Beauty or Majesty – no looks to attract our eyes:** Is 53:2
- Yet He is God's **Precious Corner Stone**, the **VITAL** part of God's Kingdom: 1 Pet 2:4,6
 - No human being could **improve THIS** Altar!

Two Mountains:

Joshua brought the people to an extraordinary place where a valley lay between the two mountains.

- The acoustics in the place was so perfect that those in the valley could hear what was shouted from the mountain tops. It was a perfect amphitheatre.
 - these mountains were **Gerizim** and **Ebal in Samaria (not called Samaria in Joshua's day)**
 - later in history the famous city of **SHECHEM** was built in the valley.

(Why) did they come **here?** See Deut Chap 27:1-end ← Read this

- Moses instructed them to go there. He also told them to **proclaim** the **Blessings** and **Curses** of the Covenant from the two mountain tops... in the hearing of all Israel.
- Moses named the heads of the Tribes who were to stand on each Mountain also!
 - a) Mt Gerizim: **to bless** the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph and Benjamin
 - b) Mt Ebal: **to curse** the people: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan & Naphtali

Mt Gerizim is fertile, has plenty of water and life **(Blessings)**
Mt Ebal is full of stones, infertile, with no water **(Curses)**
- Moses also instructed them to write **the LAW:** the **10 WORDS** on Stones so that the people could read and remember them.

Notice that the events on these mountains was **NOT** to celebrate Israel's victories but to recognise God as their King and Lord and to establish God's Law in this new land.

→ **this** was their **TAKING POSSESSION** of the Gift God offered to them through Abraham: Deut 27:9b

→ they could only **STAY** in this land according to the **Terms of the Covenant.**

- If they broke the Covenant they ceased to be the owners of this land... as was demonstrated in later years when they were exiled.

- (a) to Assyria – where the people of the Northern Kingdom of Israel never returned
- (b) to Babylon – where the Tribes of Judah and Benjamin eventually returned to become known as "JEWS" - (i.e.) **JUDEANS**

So, we saw that only a Remnant from the Exodus entered the Promised Land.

- And only a Remnant of **that** Remnant was still there when **CHRIST** came in the Incarnation.

These mountains are in the area called **SAMARIA** in **later** history.

In recent times Joshua's altar has been discovered!

→ In 2019 the archaeologists discovered a tiny tablet bearing the name of **Yahweh**

→ This land tablet has the most ancient Hebrew **ever** found... **from time of Joshua.**

His altar was on **Mount Ebal, the side of the curses - where the altar was needed!**

→ This altar was discovered in **1980's** by archaeologists.

- **Ebal** was the place for the Altar because **SIN causes us** to be cursed - **unless we go to the altar and repent.**

- this was the desolate mountain.

→ This is the **Mountain of Decision**: choose God!

Shechem is the **Valley of decision!** (in Jn 4) Jesus called the Samaritans to leave the empty way of life they were living and **Follow Him** to Redemption and new life.

- **Golgotha** was the **Real Mountain of Decision** for the Human Race.

- It was a desolate place where Jesus **became sin for us**: 2 Cor 5:21, so that the Blessings of Redemption would reach the ends of the Earth.

8:33 For **this solemn assembly** on the Mountains of Samaria, the Priests brought the Ark of the Covenant **to be present** when Israel committed herself to the Lord **IN HIS PRESENCE** in the Ark.

- a new generation of God's People have now ratified the **Covenant of Sinai** made 40 years earlier without **ANY** signs or marvels – just as with their own experience of walking with God.

- **If you love Me, you will keep my Commandments**: Jn 14:15

Notice that after all their experiences in the wilderness **A PEACE OFFERING** is now made to God **and** in His Presence. They are **reconciled to God** and can begin again anew.

- **Thus Joshua finalises the story of the struggles of this people in the Book of Numbers.**

8:34 Joshua read the books of the Law to the people so that everyone was aware of their obligations to God. cf **Deut 27:14**– it was the **Levites** who made the proclamation **and all the people shall answer Amen!** **So be it!** Deut 27:14/15 cf Deut 4:5-6

Finally: Notice the mention of **THE STRANGER** in your midst: 8:33 **[not descendants of Abraham]**

- Since the time they left Egypt there were **Gentiles** among the people, for many Egyptians joined the Exodus: cf Num 11:4
- Since the fall of Jericho **Rahab** and her whole family have joined Israel **also... this is the beginning of the Gentiles joining the Chosen People of their own free will.**

8:35 Joshua insisted on **the whole Law** being read to everyone – **including the children** for everyone has the right to know the truth.
