

A Practical Study of JOSHUA

“The Path of Obedience Leads to Victory”

Study Number Eight – Joshua 8:1-35

The first five chapters form the division of the book of Joshua.

It is first of all, THE INVASION OF THE LAND.

Chapters 6-12, THE SUBJECTION OF THE LAND.

Thus far we’ve gone through the first seven chapters. So we’ve gone through the first division—The Invasion of the Land:

the COMMISSIONING OF JOSHUA,

the SPYING OF JERICHO,

the CROSSING OF THE JORDAN,

the MEMORIALS, and then

the CONSECRATION OF THE PEOPLE in anticipation of beginning to have conquest.

In chapter 6 we saw VICTORY.

In chapter 7 we saw DEFEAT.

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In chapter 8 we're going to see a VICTORY.

The reason for the defeat in chapter 7 was DISOBEDIENCE. And once that disobedience is cleared up, the people are allowed once again to experience victory.

So we can put over chapter 8 "VICTORY IN AI.". And to set the stage for our study here's a New Testament passage for us to focus on. It adds a lot of color to the passage.

Hebrews 12:5-11

And you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives." It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

God is a DISCIPLINARIAN and we have seen His discipline with His people in the last study in the tragic events that happened at the end of the chapter.

The Life of Dwight L. Moody was written by one of his brothers in 1900. Dwight L. Moody died in 1899. This is one of those books we have to be real careful that they don't disintegrate. The binding in it is so fragile because it's so old. In the book we read about how young Dwight L. Moody faced a mother who was indeed a disciplinarian:

(The Life of Dwight L. Moody by W.R. Moody)

While the mother was truly kind and loving she was withal a strict disciplinarian. Order was enforced by rules, with old-fashioned whippings as a penalty. These events were more or less frequent in the case of Dwight, who was the leader in all kinds of boyish mischief. In later years he described these punishments and his futile attempts to escape them:

“Mother would send me out for a stick, and I thought I could fool her and get a dead one. But she would snap the stick and then tell me to get another. She was rarely in a hurry, and certainly never when she was whipping me. Once I told her that the whipping did not hurt at all. I never had occasion to tell her so again, for she put it on so it did hurt.”
(source unknown)

God is in a regular program of taking His children to the barn. And when we understand that it's going to help us to

recognize that a lot of the stresses and difficulties in our life is because God is either cutting something out of our life or He's dealing with us because we're living in disobedience.

And every time we respond properly to discipline that comes into our lives, there's a fresh sensitivity to God. There's a fresh brokenness. There's a spirit of reception and a feeling of closeness with God and wanting to know what He's trying to teach us.

This has been a time of difficult hurt and pain for the nation to have experienced the defeat at Ai. But we can always tell the quality of character in a person by the way he rises to the task after he's experienced failure.

Lee Ezell in the little book *The Missing Piece* says:

(The Missing Piece: Finding God's Peace for Your Past by Lee Ezell)

“Lord, my life's a mess. It was a mess before I handed it over to You, and it's still a mess. Nothing's changed. I don't expect You to be a divine slot machine where I drop in the prayer and You spit out a blessing, but God, I sure could use a jackpot right now. I have no family, no home, and practically no money.”

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Ron Lee Davis in *The Healing Choice* tells us how we ought to handle these times:

(The Healing Choice by Ron Lee Davis)

In *The Road Less Traveled*, Dr. M. Scott Peck [says],

We must accept responsibility for a problem before we can solve it. We cannot solve a problem by saying, “It’s not my problem.” We cannot solve a problem by hoping that someone else will solve it for us. I can solve a problem only when I say, “This is *my* problem and it’s up to me to solve it.” But many, so many, seek to avoid the pain of their problems by saying to themselves, “This problem was caused me by other people, or by social circumstances beyond my control, and therefore it is up to other people or society to solve this problem for me. It is not really my personal problem.

As long as our focus is on making excuses or shifting blame, we will continue to experience failure because we will fail to learn, to grow, and to change.

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Psalm 37:23, 24

The steps of a man are established by the Lord;
He’s delighting in his way.
And though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down;
For the Lord is holding him up with His hands.

Now let’s get into the text because that’s where they are. They hurt. They’ve been disciplined. And now we’re ready to move

on.

v. 1 Then the Lord said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Take the whole army with you, and go up and attack Ai. For I have delivered into your hands the king of Ai, his people, his city and his land.

“Then the Lord said to Joshua, ‘Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Take the whole army with you, and go up and attack Ai. For I have delivered into your hands the king of Ai, his people, his city and his land.’”

Isn't that great?

“Then the Lord said to Joshua,”—they're back on speaking terms again. They're back in fellowship and communication is coming again from the Lord to Joshua.

He gives him TWO NEGATIVE COMMANDS and TWO POSITIVE ONES. Why the negative ones? Because he hurts. He's scared. He's frightened. He thinks, “Is this going to happen again?”

This is like when at first we don't succeed, try, try again. And we don't know whether we're going to succeed when we try, try again. He's going back to the very same thing where he failed the last time. So naturally he's apprehensive.

And isn't God good? He comes right where we are. And the

two negative commands are for Joshua.

1. “Don’t be afraid;” and
2. “Don’t be discouraged.”

How many times in the Word of God do we see that little statement “Don’t be afraid”?

Isaiah 41:10

Fear thou not for I am with you.

“Fear not for I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people.” (Luke 2:10)

“Fear not for I am a shield unto you and I am your exceeding great reward”—God says to Abram. (Genesis 15:1)

And so over and over again the Lord ministers to us in the times of our fear and anxiety.

And then “don’t be discouraged.”

Don’t get down in self-pity and feel sad about this. Let’s get on with it now. “Don’t be discouraged.”

In 2 Corinthians 4 we have the great therapy for discouragement:

2 Corinthians 4:1

Therefore since we have this ministry, as we receive mercy we do not lose heart.

2 Corinthians 4:16

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

“Don’t be afraid” and “don’t be discouraged.”

And then TWO POSITIVE COMMANDS now on the other side:

1. “Take the whole army with you,”
2. “and go up and attack Ai.”

Now why does He say “take the whole army”?

Remember in our last study what the spies said when they went up there and checked out the city? They said, “Take three thousand. Don’t bother everybody. Just a small group will be all that’s necessary because it’s a small town and no big deal. Just three thousand will do it.”

Now why does the Lord come back and with His wisdom just completely counters that? Instead of saying three thousand, He says to Joshua: “Don’t be afraid; don’t be discouraged. But

take the whole army...”

Why does He say that? There are TWO REASONS why He says that:

1. Joshua needs the security of every able-bodied man on this occasion.

He’s going back to the field of defeat so now he needs as much company as is available to him—and the Lord knows that. So He’s ministering to Joshua’s security needs by saying, “Take the whole army” this time. And we don’t know how many that is, but that is a bunch of humanity. So “Take the whole army...”

But, secondly:

2. It’s to teach Joshua a very, very big lesson. And that is, don’t listen to men and fail to listen to God.

Remember they never did pray. They just listened to the spies. They said take 3,000 and go and they never prayed once. They just went up there and they got their tails whipped. And now the Lord’s saying, “Whatever you do, always listen to Me.”

Now granted there’s safety in a multitude of counselors. Right? And so we seek advice from others. But then ultimately we come to the Lord and His Word and we take that counsel and put it altogether with His Word and we’re steered straight in the course that the Lord has for us. And so the Lord does

run it contrary.

There will never come a time in our life when we will not need all the resources available to us to have victory.

That's critical for us to learn. There will never come a time in our life when we have to deal with the little thing and we have plenty of resources to do it. God's grace will always be adequate for every demand.

We can say, "Oh that person had such a tragedy in their life. I could never have that happen to me." No we couldn't right now. But if it did, there would always be resources available for us to get through that in victory if we were drawing upon it. And when that time comes God will always meet us with resources adequate for any need.

Now as we come to this, TWO POSITIVE COMMANDS:

2. "go up and attack Ai."

Understand where Ai is now?

Gilgal is 900 feet below sea level, Ai is 3,000 feet above sea level. So they have a 3,900 foot rise all the way from Gilgal to Ai. They're going straight west toward the Mediterranean Sea. They're going right straight through the middle and they're going about 15 to 20 miles from Gilgal. So that's the trip. And there's a desert wilderness in between. It's called the Araba. So they're going to cross this, but all of it is going to be

practically uphill to Ai.

Go and attack it. What's the reason?

“For I have delivered into your hands the king of Ai, his people, his city and his land.”

You see when the Lord says He has done something, it is too late. Like the little guy begging not to be spanked—it's too late.

And God says, “I've made a decision. I've delivered him into your hands. Go, the time is gone.” They've had 440 years to get their act together and time has run out.

All of us face that. That's why the Bible says, “Number our days and apply our hearts to wisdom.” (Psalm 90:12)

We don't know that we'll be alive tomorrow. This might be the last chance we get to come to know Jesus Christ in a personal way. We really don't know how long we have. But as far as Ai's concerned, it's too late. The time is now here. Judgment is going to fall.

And that happens to Christians too.

In 1 Corinthians we have a very sober use of the word “delivered.” Here's a guy living in immorality in the church.

1 Corinthians 5:5

I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

There comes a time when it runs out and judgment is going to fall. And we'll never lose by waiting until God's time. And we'll only bring trouble on ourselves if we attempt to anticipate it. God says, "I have delivered them into your hands." Look at verse 2.

v. 2 You shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king, except that you may carry off their plunder and livestock for yourselves. Set an ambush behind the city."

"You shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king, except that you may carry off their plunder and livestock for yourselves. Set an ambush behind the city."

Isn't that great to be back in fellowship? What's the Lord saying? "It's just like old times Joshua! Just like we did it to Jericho on number one, we're going to do it to Ai now again. It's going to be a victory. And I want you to know, we're going to put the past behind us and we're going to go for it and this is the task of possession of the land."

Basically he's saying, "Fellowship is restored so let's get going! We have a job to do! Don't waste valuable time after you get back on track. Get going on the task you have to do."

And he says something very different, doesn't he?

“except”—WHAT?—“that you may carry off the plunder and livestock for yourselves. Set an ambush behind the city.”

What's different about that? Back there in Jericho He said don't touch a thing because it's all consecrated to the Lord. Didn't He? Now what's He saying? “Take all you want.” Why?

There is a FEAST OF THE FIRST FRUITS and all of that is dedicated to the Lord. The first fruits of the harvest are given to the Lord. We are supposed to give the first fruits of our labor to Him. We honor Him with that. The first fruits in the land was Jericho—it all belongs to the Lord. Now Ai—they can have the plunder.

Ever wonder what Achan would have done if he would have known this? The tragedy of Achan is that he couldn't wait so he went ahead and stole the stuff and lost his life and became a victim of judgment because he couldn't wait.

Are you pressured into something right now and it just bothers you so much to try to make a decision because you're facing a deadline?

We make the biggest mistakes in our life when we make mistakes under pressure. We are walking out of the will of God in those kinds of circumstances and we're going to come up on the short end and we're going to be so embarrassed

when down the line we see how God had intended it but we've made such a mess of it now we can't enjoy it. Ever had any experience like that in life before?

We get in such an intense hurry. And like Achan we take matters into our own hands. And we try so hard to fix it all up. That's what Lee Ezell says *The Missing Pieces*:

(The Missing Piece: Finding God's Peace for Your Past by Lee Ezell)

An old saying often helped me remember this truth: "God fixes a fix to fix you. If you fix the fix before you are fixed, He will have to fix *another* fix to fix you."

It took a fresh "fix" to show me just how much God had already done in my life.

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That's the way God does it. He says this time y'all can have it, now "set an ambush behind the city."

v. 3 So Joshua and the whole army moved out to attack Ai. He chose thirty thousand of his best fighting men and sent them out at night

"So Joshua and the whole army moved out to attack Ai. He chose thirty thousand of his best fighting men and sent them out at night"

This says "thirty thousand" in the text. Okay? And these

thirty thousand are supposed to be an ambush, and we can't flat put thirty thousand men in an ambush without being seen in the city. So there obviously is some need for a study of the Hebrew words and to maybe come up with a variant translation.

That word "thousand" can also mean officer or chief. It would be better to translate this verse that Joshua picked "thirty choice chief officers for a task of ambush." It's a commando raid. This is the SWAT team. This is the tactical squad.

They're going to go out at night, they're going to move up to Ai, whip around to the west side and stay in the bushes until exactly the right time. When all of this is done—and we get the picture of battle—we're going to have **THREE CONTINGENCIES**:

1. we have 30 men that's a SWAT team,
2. then 5,000 men who are in ambush on the southwest side between Bethel and Ai to keep reinforcements from coming, and then
3. the big army with Joshua up on the north side toward the city of Galilee.

Okay? When we have those three deployments in our mind we can understand what the Lord's instructions are here.

So let's say we have thirty men and military maneuvers work

great at night, and he's sending these thirty choice men out.

Now what are the orders he gives them?

v. 4 with these orders: “Listen carefully. You are to set an ambush behind the city. Don’t go very far from it. All of you be on the alert.

“with these orders: ‘Listen carefully.’”

See what happens after we’ve been disciplined?

“Listen carefully. You are to set an ambush behind the city. Do not go very far from it. All of you be on the alert.”

1. “set an ambush,”
2. “Don’t go far from it,” and
3. “All of you be on the alert.”

“Be on your toes and ready for military maneuvers.”

v. 5 I and all those with me will advance on the city, and when the men come out against us, as they did before, we will flee from them.

“I and all those with me will advance on the city, and when the men come out against us, as they did before, we will flee from them.”

Remember earlier they went up there and they were chased out of the city and there were 36 casualties.

v. 6 They will pursue us until we have lured them away from the city, for they will say, ‘They are running away from us as they did before.’ So when we flee from them,

“They will pursue us until we have lured them away from the city, for they will say, “They are running away from us as they did before.” So when we flee from them,”

v. 7 you are to rise up from ambush and take the city. The Lord your God will give it into your hand.

“you are to rise up from ambush and take the city. The Lord your God will give it into your hand.”

“It’s yours for the taking. You thirty men watch it. We’re going to come up to the city on the north side and then we’re going to turn and start running. So all of them are going to chase us because they’ve been reading the statistics of the last 36 Israelites that died last week. And when they all get out of the city, then you all go in because the city’s yours”—talking to the 30 men.

Now look at verse 8. Isn’t this good?

v. 8 When you have taken the city, set it on fire. Do

what the Lord has commanded. See to it; you have my orders.”

“When you have taken the city, set it on fire.”—What’s the next phrase?—“Do what the Lord has commanded. See to it; you have my orders.”

The other disobedience is taken care of and they’re in fellowship now. And Joshua wants to protect that above anything else and so he says, “Do what the Lord has commanded.”

Still concerned about the last loss isn’t he?

v. 9 Then Joshua sent them off, and they went to the place of ambush and lay in wait between Bethel and Ai, to the west of Ai—but Joshua spent that night with the people.

“Then Joshua sent them off, and they went to the place of ambush and lay in wait between Bethel and Ai, to the west of Ai—but Joshua spent that night with the people.”

Here they come making their 15-20 mile uphill trip. They come to the southern edge of Ai and they sneak around the backside to the west. They come up around the west side so they’re over here deployed and ready when everything happens in the north.

“Joshua spent that night with the people.”

Now, verse 10, what's it say?

v. 10 Early the next morning Joshua mustered his men, and he and the leaders of Israel marched before them to Ai.

“Early the next morning”—got us again, didn't it? Oh that's terrible but it all happens before 6:00.

“Early the next morning Joshua mustered his men, and he and the leaders of Israel marched before them to Ai.”

v. 11 The entire force that was with him marched up and approached the city and arrived in front of it. They set up camp north of Ai, with the valley between them and the city.

“The entire force that was with him marched up and approached the city and arrived in front of it. They set up camp north of Ai, with the valley between them and the city.”

What happened, as they're moving in from the east, the 5,000 split before they got to where they were invisible. And the 5,000 go down around the south so they can't be seen and they come up so that they're laying right between Bethel and Ai—so there's no reinforcements going to come from Bethel on this. Then the big army just heads straight north. And when they head north they get up here and that's the army that's seen by all the people in the city of Ai.

Now he's going to upset them here.

“The entire force that was with him marched up and approached the city and arrived in front of it. They set up camp north of Ai, with the valley between them and the city.”

v. 12 Joshua had taken about five thousand men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, to the west of the city.

“Joshua had taken about five thousand men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, to the west of the city.”

We talked about that.

v. 13 They had the soldiers take up their positions—all those in the camp to the north of the city and the ambush to the west of it. That night Joshua went into the valley.

“They had the soldiers take up their positions—all those in the camp to the north of the city and the ambush to the west of it. That night Joshua went into the valley.”

He wants to get the king of Ai to notice him and realize that he's ready for battle so he moves in the valley closer to the city just as it's getting ready to get dark.

v. 14 When the king of Ai saw this, he and all the men of

the city hurried out early in the morning to meet Israel in battle at a certain place overlooking the Arabah. But he did not know that an ambush had been set against him behind the city.

“When the king of Ai saw this, he and all the men of the city hurried out”—WHEN?—“early in the morning to meet Israel in battle at a certain place overlooking the Arabah.”—that’s the desert—“But he did not know that an ambush had been set against him behind the city.”

v. 15 Joshua and all Israel let themselves be driven back before them, and they fled toward the desert.

“Joshua and all Israel let themselves be driven back before them, and they fled toward the desert.”

v. 16 All the men of Ai were called to pursue them, and they pursued Joshua and were lured away from the city.

“All the men of Ai were called to pursue them, and they pursued Joshua and were lured away from the city.”

That whole thing is working to a T. Everything is perfect.

Was everything perfect in Jericho? Just exactly like clockwork. One time around the city—one day, six days. Seven times around on the seventh day—the thirteenth trip they blow the trumpet, shout and the walls fall down!

We can always tell when we're in the will of God if we get on a roll and the timing is perfect. And God starts pouring out His blessings on our life and it's beautiful to watch! And everything runs like clockwork. But when we're out of the will of God we're always fighting it and pushing and manipulating and trying to put down a guilty conscience and it's just not right and we know it!

And it seems like the wheels come off and the wagon turns over every time we turn around. And we're frustrated to the nth degree. That ought to tell us something. We're not in the will of God when it's like that and we're not honoring Him.

But now we are again! See what happened at Ai? They got whipped. But now everything's perfect! The three groups are deployed exactly the way the Lord said, the big army in the morning starts to flee and every man in Ai takes the bait and goes running after them—just exactly like the Lord said it would happen.

v. 17 Not a man remained in Ai or Bethel who did not go after Israel. They left the city open and went in pursuit of Israel.

“Not a man remained in Ai or Bethel who did not go after Israel. They left the city open and went in pursuit of Israel.”

v. 18 Then the Lord said to Joshua, “Hold out toward Ai the javelin that is in your hand, for into your hand I

will deliver the city.” So Joshua held out his javelin toward Ai.

“Then the Lord said to Joshua,”—WHAT?—“Hold out toward Ai the javelin that is in your hand, for into your hand I will deliver the city.’ So Joshua held out his javelin toward Ai.”

Why did God say that? Why did God say, “Pick up your javelin Joshua and hold it toward Ai”?

Sometimes in our life God asks us to do something again because we didn’t learn it the first time. Ever had to learn lessons twice and God brought it back around with some very similar circumstances because we messed it up so badly the first time and we have to learn it the second time?

We’ve all had to.

The very first battle that Joshua was ever in was at Rephidim. Rephidim was in the wilderness. They were coming up under Moses’ leadership out of the land of Egypt. In the valley in Rephidim Joshua was fighting the Amalekites.

Where was Moses? He was up on the mountain overlooking the field of battle with the staff and he held it in the air. Remember what happened? His arms got tired and down came the staff.

What did Joshua experience down in the field when the staff came down? He got his tail whipped didn’t he? So what did

Aaron and Hur do? Man they come running up, they put Moses on a rock and Aaron leans on one arm and Hur leans on the other one and the victory is won in the field because the staff was held up.

So Joshua's learning. "Look Joshua, this isn't your battle! I have delivered Ai into your hands and I'm the one giving the victory! You remember that and you keep that javelin up there so you don't forget what happened at Rephidim and don't do it again like you did at Ai ever again."

So he has a constant reminder now of who is responsible for the victory! As long as the javelin is up we have a whipping going on. But as soon as it drops, they're going to get defeated. And he remembers that well.

v. 19 As soon as he did this, the men in the ambush rose quickly from their position and rushed forward. They entered the city and captured it and quickly set it on fire.

"As soon as he did this,"—what happened?—"the men in the ambush rose quickly from their position and rushed forward. They entered the city and captured it and quickly set it on fire."

v. 20 The men of Ai looked back and saw the smoke of the city rising against the sky, but they had no chance to escape in any direction, for the Israelites who had been fleeing toward the desert had turned

back against their pursuers.

“The men of Ai looked back”

How do they feel when they look back?

“Oh no. We thought we had them whipped!”

And that’s what they’re thinking.

Lot’s wife turned around and looked back at Sodom and Gomorrah and turned into a pillar of salt. They didn’t turn into pillars of salt but they got scared. They were frozen in fear right there on the spot.

“[they] saw the smoke of the city rising against the sky, but they had no chance to escape in any direction, for the Israelites who had been fleeing toward the desert had turned back against their pursuers.”

Surprise!

v. 21 For when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city and that smoke was going up from the city, they turned around and attacked the men of Ai.

“For when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city and that smoke was going up from the city, they turned around and attacked the men of Ai.”

v. 22 The men of the ambush also came out of the city against them, so that they were caught in the middle, with Israelites on both sides. Israel cut them down, leaving them neither survivors nor fugitives.

“The men of the ambush also came out of the city against them, so that they were caught in the middle,”

They're just done. They have it coming and going here.

“with Israelites on both sides. Israel cut them down, leaving them neither survivors nor fugitives.”

v. 23 But they took the king of Ai alive and brought him to Joshua.

“But they took the king of Ai alive and brought him to Joshua.”

v. 24 When Israel had finished killing all the men of Ai in the fields and in the desert where they had chased them, and when every one of them had been put to the sword, all the Israelites returned to Ai and killed those who were in it.

“When Israel had finished killing all the men of Ai in the fields and in the desert where they had chased them, and when every one of them had been put to the sword, all the

Israelites returned to Ai and killed those who were in it.”

**v. 25 Twelve thousand men and women fell that day—
all the people of Ai.**

“Twelve thousand men and women fell that day—all the people of Ai.”

**v. 26 For Joshua did not draw back the hand that held
out his javelin until he had destroyed all who lived
in Ai.**

“For Joshua did not draw back the hand that held out his javelin until he had destroyed all who lived in Ai.”

**v. 27 But Israel did carry off for themselves the
livestock and plunder of this city, as the Lord had
instructed Joshua.**

“But Israel did carry off for themselves the livestock and plunder of this city, as the Lord had instructed Joshua.”

**v. 28 So Joshua burned Ai and made it a permanent
heap of ruins, a desolate place to this day.**

“So Joshua burned Ai and made it a permanent heap of ruins, a desolate place to this day.”

**v. 29 He hung the king of Ai on a tree and left him there
until evening. At sunset, Joshua ordered them to**

take his body from the tree and throw it down at the entrance of the city gate. And they raised a large pile of rocks over it, which remains to this day.

“He hung the king of Ai on a tree and left him there until evening. At sunset, Joshua ordered them to take his body from the tree and throw it down at the entrance of the city gate. And they raised a large pile of rocks over it, which remains to this day.”

Does that sound like chapter 7 in the Valley of Achor with what had happened there with Achan in our last study?

The judgment has fallen. All there is a pile of rocks as a monument and the memory of another victory.

The people had their chance, grace had run out and God executed in judgment.

Dr. Donald Campbell says there's a great lesson in this:

(No Time For Neutrality by Donald K. Campbell)

...Israel, restored to God's favor, won a great victory. After failure there was a second chance. We too should remember that one defeat or failure does not signal the end of usefulness for God. He is ready to forgive us, restore us, and use us.

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v. 30 Then Joshua built on Mount Ebal an altar to the Lord, the God of Israel,

“Then Joshua built on Mount Ebal an altar to the Lord, the God of Israel,”

Why? He’s learned a principle—WORSHIP FOLLOWS WAR.

After the victory in Jericho they didn’t do this and that’s why he got in so much trouble. He immediately goes into the Lord’s presence to be assured that everything’s okay and there is worship.

Understand where Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim are? They’re about 20 miles straight north toward the Sea of Galilee. And they’re two mountains very close together. Moses, in Deuteronomy 27, told Joshua to do this when he got into the land. He’s being obedient to the words of Moses in what’s happening here.

v. 31 as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded the Israelites. He built it according to what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses—an altar of uncut stones, on which no iron tool had been used. On it they offered to the Lord burnt offerings and sacrificed fellowship offerings.

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which no iron tool had been used. On it they offered to the Lord burnt offerings and sacrificed fellowship offerings.”

Two offerings—why do we offer a burnt offering? When we have sin in our life and we’re out of fellowship with Him we offer a burnt offering.

“Just in case some of you fouled it up and failed during the time we were fighting, we need to have some burnt offerings. We’ve got to cover all the bases. We’re not going to get another Achan taken in the camp. We’re going to get that solved with burnt offerings.”

Why the fellowship offerings? For everybody to rejoice and praise God in the victory because their relationship is right with Him. So they have these two offerings first on this new altar.

v. 32 There, in the presence of the Israelites, Joshua copied on stones the law of Moses, which he had written.

“There, in the presence of the Israelites, Joshua copied on stones the law of Moses, which he had written.”

Was he with Moses? Moses came down and saw Aaron and the golden calf, he threw down those first tablets of stone and busted them all to pieces. Remember that? He remembered that.

And does he know there are some tablets of stone in the Ark sitting right there in the middle of them? Yes. So once again he's inscribing the basic laws on the rocks for the people of Israel as they're gathered here in this gigantic company.

The Law is written after the altar is built. Now get a load of this. This is going to be such a great way to end all this.

v. 33 All Israel, aliens and citizens alike, with their elders, officials and judges, were standing on both sides of the ark of the covenant of the Lord, facing those who carried it—the priests, who were Levites. Half of the people stood in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the Lord had formerly commanded when he gave instructions to bless the people of Israel.

“All Israel, aliens and citizens alike, with their elders, officials and judges, were standing on both sides of the ark of the covenant”—it's right in the middle of this big company—“of the Lord, facing those who carried it—the priests, who were Levites. Half of the people stood in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the Lord had formerly commanded when he gave instructions to bless the people of Israel.”

Now remember Jesus must go through Samaria in John chapter 4 and the Samaritan woman at the well said “we worship here at Mount Gerizim.”

This is where we worship, on this mountain, you say Jerusalem is the place.” (ref. John 4:20) That’s Mount Gerizim. Mount Ebal is just a short distance away. This valley in between, they have the Ark sitting here and they have six tribes over here on Mount Gerizim and six tribes up here in the north at Mount Ebal. So in a north and south trajectory, this is the way it’s set up.

And what does Joshua do now that he has six tribes at Ebal and six at Gerizim?

v. 34 Afterward, Joshua read all the words of the law—the blessings and the curses—just as it is written in the Book of the Law.

“Afterward, Joshua read all the words of the law—the blessings and the curses—just as it is written in the Book of the Law.”

Now we don’t know why he divided the tribes the way he did. And why six of them—when the curses were read said Amen—and six of them—when the blessings were read said Amen. But we can look at the tribes—the four tribes of the handmaids.

Remember Bilhah and Zilpha? They had Gad and Asher and Dan and Naphtali. All four of those, when the curses are read, they’re saying Amen. And the other two tribes are Reuben and Zebulun. Those are the first and the last sons of Leah.

And so those are the six that are standing at one place—either Ebal or Gerizim—and when the curses are read they're saying Amen. All the rest of them—Benjamin, Joseph, Simeon, Judah, Levi and Issachar—are all standing over on the other side and they're saying Amen at the time of the blessings.

Now don't ask why. There's nobody that's explained it. That's one of the things we're going to have to ask the Lord. "Why did You put those six over there and why'd you put the other six on the other side?" We don't know. We'll just have to trust the Lord.

But there's something really great about this.

They are right back where we left them in chapter 1.

Remember in the commissioning of Joshua in chapter 1, what the Lord said to him:

Joshua 1:7, 8

Only be strong and very courageous, to be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.

Isn't that great? They're right back in the Word.

When we're in the middle of the Word of God and in the will of God—and we're in the Word of God—we're growing and maturing and we're developing and expressing an obedient heart.

We're going to leave them. The curtain drops on Joshua part 1 on these dear folks and we're going to leave them in the Word and in the fellowship. Isn't that a great place to leave them?

We started with the Word and we ended with it.

v. 35 There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua did not read to the whole assembly of Israel, including the women and children, and the aliens who lived among them.

“There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua did not read to the whole assembly of Israel, including the women and children, and the aliens who lived among them.”

Among whom and who? Rahab, of course, being one of them with her family.

Hebrews 12:11

No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later

on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

They're where they belong now—in the Word and in fellowship. The discipline has done its job.

Here are the lessons we get from our text.

Lesson #1: The Lord graciously comes and ministers to our needs in a time of uncertainty.

Oh how special God is to do that. He does that when Paul is on the ship having been tossed in the storm for two weeks—He ministers to him. Sitting in the cell after he failed before the Sanhedrin, the Lord comes and speaks to him. The Lord graciously comes and ministers to our needs in a time of uncertainty.

Lesson #2: Following the discipline God is always ready to get on with the program.

Lesson #3: The Lord's instructions are different each time so that we remain dependent.

If they were always the same we could say He's predictable and we wouldn't have to check in. But every time they're different. It was different at Jericho and different at Ai.

Lesson #4: Joshua and the Lord are working together in this victory.

Lesson #5: God blesses the plan with success.

When we do it His way it will be successful. God blesses the plan with success.

Lesson #6: WORSHIP FOLLOWS WAR.

Worship follows war on this occasion. They come back into the Lord's presence to praise Him and to offer the sacrifices.

Lesson #7: Joshua is sensitive to come back to the Lord after the victory has been granted.

He did not do that at Jericho but He does now.

We're the most vulnerable after we've had a victory and we need to come back into the Lord's presence at that time.

Lesson #8: The focus is on the Word of God again.

Lesson #9: The discipline has yielded the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Mrs. Cowman in *Streams in the Desert* quotes Psalm 71:20 and says this:

(Streams in the Desert by Mrs. Charles Cowman)

"Thou, who hast shown us many and sore troubles, will

quicken us again.”

God shows us the troubles. Sometimes, as this part of our education is being carried forward, we have to descend into “the lower parts of the earth,” pass through subterranean passages, lie buried among the dead, but never for a moment in the cord of fellowship and union between God and us strained to breaking; and from the depths God will bring us again.

Never doubt God! Never say that He has forsaken or forgotten. Never think that He is unsympathetic. He will *quicken* again. There is always a smooth piece in every skein, however tangled. The longest day at last rings out the even-song. The winter snow lies long, but it goes at last.

Be steadfast; your labor is not in vain. God turns again, and comforts. And when He does, the heart which has forgotten its Psalmody breaks out in jubilant song, as does the Psalmist: “I will thank thee, I will harp unto thee, my lips shall sing aloud.”

*“Though the rain may fall and the wind be blowing,
And cold and chill is the wintry blast;
Though the cloudy sky is still cloudier growing,
And the dead leaves tell that the summer has passed;
My face I hold to the stormy heaven,
My heart is as calm as the summer sea,
Glad to receive what my God has given,
Whate’er it be.
When I feel the cold, I can say, ‘He sends it,’
And His winds blow blessing, I surely know;*

*For I've never a want but He attends it;
And my heart beats warm, though the winds may blow.”*
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God is there. He's ministering in our lives and wanting to drive us back to the Book. There in the Word of God we begin to grow and develop.

Here's a challenge from Peter:

2 Peter 3:18

When all is said and done, grow in grace and in the knowing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Peter earlier said:

1 Peter 2:2

As a little baby desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.

Growth comes by exposure to truth. Our challenge is to continue to grow, change, develop and mature in Christ.

The Lord is so special. He seems to know just when we need encouragement.

Here's a great statement:

(Great Sermons on the Birth of Christ compiled by Wilbur M. Smith)

There is one question which every man here should lose no time whatever in answering, if it be not answered yet: What is my actual relation to Him, Who, for love of me, was conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary; my present Redeemer, and my future Judge?

by H. P. Liddon

p. 58

What's our relationship to Him?

Father, we thank You for these first eight chapters of Joshua. Thank You for the focus on the Word of God and thank You for the lessons we've learned as we've sat at Your feet and allowed Your Spirit to open up these chapters for us. May Your Holy Spirit be impressing upon our minds and hearts the things that are necessary in anticipation of further experiences of studying in Your Word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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A Practical Study of JOSHUA

“The Path of Obedience Leads to Victory”

Study Number Eight – Joshua 8:1-35

NOTES

v. 1 Then the Lord said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Take the whole army with you, and go up and attack Ai. For I have delivered into your hands the king of Ai, his people, his city and his land.

v. 2 You shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king, except that you may carry off their plunder and livestock for yourselves. Set an ambush behind the city.”

v. 3 So Joshua and the whole army moved out to attack Ai. He chose thirty thousand of his best fighting men and sent them out at night

v. 4 with these orders: “Listen carefully. You are to set an ambush behind the city. Don’t go very far from it. All of you be on the alert.

v. 5 I and all those with me will advance on the city, and when the men come out against us, as they did before, we will flee from them.

v. 6 They will pursue us until we have lured them away from the city, for they will say, ‘They are running away from us as they did before.’ So when we flee from them,

v. 7 you are to rise up from ambush and take the city. The Lord your God will give it into your hand.

v. 8 When you have taken the city, set it on fire. Do what the Lord has commanded. See to it; you have my orders.”

v. 9 Then Joshua sent them off, and they went to the place of ambush and lay in wait between Bethel and Ai, to the west of Ai—but Joshua spent that night with the people.

v. 10 Early the next morning Joshua mustered his men, and he and the leaders of Israel marched before them to Ai.

v. 11 The entire force that was with him marched up and approached the city and arrived in front of it. They set up camp north of Ai, with the valley between them and the city.

v. 12 Joshua had taken about five thousand men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, to the west of the city.

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v. 13 They had the soldiers take up their positions—all those in the camp to the north of the city and the ambush to the west of it. That night Joshua went into the valley.

v. 14 When the king of Ai saw this, he and all the men of the city hurried out early in the morning to meet Israel in battle at a certain place overlooking the Arabah. But he did not know that an ambush had been set against him behind the city.

v. 15 Joshua and all Israel let themselves be driven back before them, and they fled toward the desert.

v. 16 All the men of Ai were called to pursue them, and they pursued Joshua and were lured away from the city.

v. 17 Not a man remained in Ai or Bethel who did not go after Israel. They left the city open and went in pursuit of Israel.

v. 18 Then the Lord said to Joshua, “Hold out toward Ai the javelin that is in your hand, for into your hand I will deliver the city.” So Joshua held out his javelin toward Ai.

v. 19 As soon as he did this, the men in the ambush rose quickly from their position and rushed forward. They entered the city and captured it and quickly set it on fire.

v. 20 The men of Ai looked back and saw the smoke of the city rising against the sky, but they had no chance to escape in any direction, for the Israelites who had been fleeing toward the desert had turned back against their pursuers.

v. 21 For when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city and that smoke was going up from the city, they turned around and attacked the men of Ai.

v. 22 The men of the ambush also came out of the city against them, so that they were caught in the middle, with Israelites on both sides. Israel cut them down, leaving them neither survivors nor fugitives.

v. 23 But they took the king of Ai alive and brought him to Joshua.

v. 24 When Israel had finished killing all the men of Ai in the fields and in the desert where they had chased them, and when every one of them had been put to the sword, all the Israelites returned to Ai and killed those who were in it.

v. 25 Twelve thousand men and women fell that day—all the people of Ai.

v. 26 For Joshua did not draw back the hand that held out his javelin until he had destroyed all who lived in Ai.

v. 27 But Israel did carry off for themselves the livestock and plunder of this city, as the Lord had instructed Joshua.

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v. 28 So Joshua burned Ai and made it a permanent heap of ruins, a desolate place to this day.

v. 29 He hung the king of Ai on a tree and left him there until evening. At sunset, Joshua ordered them to take his body from the tree and throw it down at the entrance of the city gate. And they raised a large pile of rocks over it, which remains to this day.

v. 30 Then Joshua built on Mount Ebal an altar to the Lord, the God of Israel,

v. 31 as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded the Israelites. He built it according to what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses—an altar of uncut stones, on which no iron tool had been used. On it they offered to the Lord burnt offerings and sacrificed fellowship offerings.

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v. 35 There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua did not read to the whole assembly of Israel, including the women and children, and the aliens who lived among them.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Joshua 8:1-35 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What are the Lord's instructions in verses 1 & 2?

3. Describe in your own words how the children of Israel captured Ai.

4. What did Joshua do to make the victory complete, according to verses 28 & 29?

5. What did Joshua do in verses 30 & 31?

6. What is the next step that Joshua takes, according to verse 32?

7. Describe the scene in verse 33.

8. What final thing does Joshua do in verses 34 & 35?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: The Lord graciously comes and ministers to our needs in a time of uncertainty.

LESSON #2: Following the discipline God is always ready to get on with the program.

LESSON #3: The Lord's instructions are different each time so that we remain dependent.

LESSON #4: Joshua and the Lord are working together in this victory.

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