

Joshua Chapter 08 Commentary

1 And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear not, neither be thou dismayed: take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land: 2 And thou shalt do to Ai and her king as thou didst unto Jericho and her king: only the spoil thereof, and the cattle thereof, shall ye take for a prey unto yourselves: lay thee an ambush for the city behind it.

God tells Joshua, now that I have purged Israel of sin; he has given the city of Ai into his hand and orders them to kill all the inhabitants as they did in Jericho. The only difference is that God gives Israel the spoil and cattle. God tells Joshua how to take the city of Ai, by setting ambushments against it.

3 ¶ So Joshua arose, and all the people of war, to go up against Ai: and Joshua chose out thirty thousand mighty men of valour, and sent them away by night. 4 And he commanded them, saying, Behold, ye shall lie in wait against the city, *even* behind the city: go not very far from the city, but be ye all ready: 5 And I, and all the people that *are* with me, will approach unto the city: and it shall come to pass, when they come out against us, as at the first, that we will flee before them, 6 (For they will come out after us) till we have drawn them from the city; for they will say, They flee before us, as at the first: therefore we will flee before them.

Matthew Henry points out a stratagem used here that I had not even considered. As Joshua and Israel yielded before Ai to draw them out of the city, so Jesus, incarnate, yielded to the powers of darkness and gave his life on the cross. The powers of darkness thought they had overcome Jesus, but he arose victorious over death, hell, and the grave, early on the morning of the third day. By yielding to the enemy, the enemy was overcome by the power of Jesus in the resurrection from the dead. Christ has not yielded, nor ever will, to the powers of darkness since his resurrection.

7 Then ye shall rise up from the ambush, and seize upon the city: for the LORD your God will deliver it into your hand. 8 And it shall be, when ye have taken the city, *that* ye shall set the city on fire: according to the commandment of the LORD shall ye do. See, I have commanded you. 9 Joshua therefore sent them forth: and they went to lie in ambush, and abode between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of Ai: but Joshua lodged that night among the people. 10 And Joshua rose up early in the morning, and numbered the people, and went up, he and the elders of Israel, before the people to Ai. 11 And all the people, *even the people* of war that *were* with him, went up, and drew nigh, and came before the city, and pitched on the north side of Ai: now *there was* a valley between them and Ai. 12 And he took about five thousand men, and set them to lie in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of the city. 13 And when they had set the people, *even* all the host that *was* on the north of the city, and their liers in wait on the west of the city, Joshua went that night into the midst of the valley. 14 And it came to pass, when the king of Ai *saw it*, that they hasted and rose up early, and the men of the city went out against Israel to battle, he and all his people, at a time appointed, before the plain; but he wist not that *there were* liers in ambush against him behind the city. 15 And Joshua and all Israel made as if they were beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness. 16 And all the people that *were* in Ai were called together to pursue after them: and they pursued after Joshua, and *were* drawn away from the city. 17 And there was not a man left in Ai or Bethel, that went not out after Israel: and they left the city open, and pursued after Israel.

God gives Joshua instructions to set an ambush, which Joshua does, not only behind the city but also to the west of the city. Why to the west of Ai? Because Bethel was to the west, and it was the next place that the people of Ai could flee for refuge.

Israel flees before the men of Ai as before and all the men of Ai pursue after them. I am sure that the king of Ai thought; we will annihilate them and be through with Israel. Notice, they were so confident in their own strength, forgetting all the things they had heard of the God of Israel, foolishly, they didn't even close the city up as they went out to war.

18 And the LORD said unto Joshua, Stretch out the spear that *is* in thy hand toward Ai; for I will give it into thine hand. And Joshua stretched out the spear that *he had* in his hand toward the city. 19 And the ambush arose quickly out of their place, and they ran as soon as he had stretched out his hand: and they entered into the city, and took it, and hasted and set the city on fire. 20 And when the men of Ai looked behind them, they saw, and, behold, the smoke of the city ascended up to heaven, and they had no power to flee this way or that way: and the people that fled to the wilderness turned back upon the pursuers. 21 And when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city, and that the smoke of the city ascended, then they turned again, and slew the men of Ai. 22 And the other issued out of the city against them; so they were in the midst of Israel, some on this side, and some on that side: and they smote them, so that they let none of them remain or escape. 23 ¶ And the king of Ai they took alive, and brought him to Joshua. 24 And it came to pass, when Israel had made an end of slaying all the inhabitants of Ai in the field, in the wilderness wherein they chased them, and when they were all fallen on the edge of the sword, until they were consumed, that all the Israelites returned unto Ai, and smote it with the edge of the sword. 25 And so it was, *that* all that fell that day, both of men and women, *were* twelve thousand, even all the men of Ai. 26 For Joshua drew not his hand back, wherewith he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai.

Our victory over the temptations in life are already accomplished in Christ. Wherefore, when we are confronted with the enemy now in life, our commander, Christ Jesus, has already stretched forth his spear, the word of God, and we are not to slacken in battle for any cause. We are to be pressing forward with the sword of the Spirit and the word of God, as we learn from Paul in: ***Php 3:14 "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."***

We remember a similar happening, in the life of Israel, while Moses was in command. ***Ex 17:9-11; 9 "And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. 10 So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.***

11 And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: The difference in the two battles is: Moses was a shepherd and held up his staff; Joshua is a warrior, and he holds up his spear until complete victory is obtained. If you remember, when Moses's arms got tired and he let the staff down, Israel did not prevail, but when he held it up Amalek was destroyed before Israel. Thus, we see; Joshua does not lower his spear until the people of Ai are completely destroyed. Neither has our Commander in Chief, Christ Jesus, drawn back the sword of the Lord.

27 Only the cattle and the spoil of that city Israel took for a prey unto themselves, according unto the word of the LORD which he commanded Joshua.

Israel kept the spoils of war that God gave them, as the Lord commanded. When we are blessed by God to overcome our enemies and the temptations of life, God gets the credit for the victory, but we get to keep the spoils for ourselves. What are the spoils that we keep? The joy that God has given us victory; the life lessons we learn from the temptations and battles; all the benefits which bring joy and comfort to our lives. We get to keep the knowledge of how God overcame our enemies, as a sword of defense. We get to continue in favor with God and retain the blessings of God in our lives.

28 And Joshua burnt Ai, and made it an heap forever, even a desolation unto this day. 29 And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until eventide: and as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his carcass down from the tree, and cast it at the entering of the gate of the city, and raise thereon a great heap of stones, that remaineth unto this day.

Joshua, and Israel, do as God has commanded and they are the kind recipients, of the mercies of God, in the victory God has wrought for them. They burn the city as told and Joshua hangs the king. They leave him hanging until sundown, and then put his body at the gate to the city and pile stones thereon. The reason they don't leave him hanging overnight is found in: ***De 21:22-23; 22 "And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree: 23 His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.***

This heap of stones and the burnt city are a memorial to Israel, and to the rest of the inhabitants of the land of promise, of the great power of the God of Israel.

"***that remaineth unto this day.***" That is; the great heap of stones remained at the time the scripture was recorded. We find later in scripture that Ai will be rebuilt.

30 ¶ Then Joshua built an altar unto the LORD God of Israel in mount Ebal, 31 As Moses the servant of the LORD commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of whole stones, over which no man hath lift up any iron: and they offered thereon burnt offerings unto the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings. 32 And he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel. 33 And all Israel, and their elders, and officers, and their judges, stood on this side the ark and on that side before the priests the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, as well the stranger, as he that was born among them; half of them over against mount Gerizim, and half of them over against mount Ebal; as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel. 34 And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law. 35 There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them.

"***over which no man hath lift up any iron:***" Again, we see that the works of man are not to be included in the work of God. What do you mean? These stones were whole stones upon which no man had made any alteration. What can you offer to God that is acceptable? Only Jesus Christ and his finished work. You see, if we put our works in the offerings to God; we are offering to God filthy rags,

which we see in the scripture in: *Isa 64:4-6; 4 "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him. 5 Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved. 6 ¶ But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."*

If we change any of the commandments of God; we will have defiled them and suffer the consequence; as seen in: *Re 22:18-19; 18 "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: 19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."*

Joshua follows the commandments of God given to Israel, by Moses, in Deuteronomy chapter 27. There are two altars built, each of whole stones that man has not put any tool upon. One is the altar of sacrifice, and the other is the monument, upon which they wrote the commandments of God.

Notice, Joshua read all that was written in the presence of all of Israel, men, women, children, and strangers. This is a reminder to God ministers, and leaders; they are to read, to teach, and to preach, all the bible, not just the parts that people like to hear.

May God put such a reverential fear of him in our hearts, minds, souls, and bodies, that we desire to read and study all the bible. Not only that we read and study it, but that we desire to live in accordance with what God has commanded of his people, in this age of salvation by grace. May we so fear God that we teach our children all of God's word of truth, that they may grow up in the nurture of the word of God. Praying that God will choose them to continue the church upon the earth until the end of time. Lord, we ask your blessings upon us; We pray that you keep us filled with desire to be obedient children to you, and Christ our Saviour and Lord. We ask in Christ name and for his sake, Amen!