

Joshua 8 The Conquest of Ai

Now the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not fear or be dismayed. Take all the people of war with you. Arise, go up to Ai; see, I have handed over to you the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land. 2 You shall do to Ai and its king just as you did to Jericho and its king; you shall take only its spoils and its cattle as plunder for yourselves. Set an ambush for the city behind it."

3 So Joshua rose up with all the people of war to go up to Ai; and Joshua chose thirty thousand men, valiant warriors, and sent them out at night. 4 He commanded them, saying, "See, you are going to ambush the city from behind it. Do not go very far from the city, but all of you be ready. 5 Then I and all the people who are with me will approach the city. And when they come out to meet us as they did the first time, we will flee before them.

6 They will come out after us until we have lured them away from the city, for they will say, 'They are fleeing before us just as they did the first time.' So we will flee before them. 7 Then you shall rise from your ambush and take possession of the city, for the LORD your God will hand it over to you. 8 Then it will be when you have seized the city, that you shall set the city on fire. You shall do it in accordance with the word of the LORD. See, I have commanded you." 9 So Joshua sent them away, and they went to the place of ambush and remained between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of Ai; but Joshua spent that night among the people.

10 Now Joshua got up early in the morning and mustered the people, and he went up with the elders of Israel before the people to Ai. 11 Then all the people of war who were with him went up and approached, and arrived in front of the city; and they camped on the north side of Ai. And there was a valley between him and Ai. 12 Then he took about five thousand men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of the city. 13 So they stationed the people, all the army that was on the north side of the city, and its rear guard on the west side of the city, and Joshua spent that night in the midst of the valley.

14 And it came about, when the king of Ai saw them, that the men of the city hurried and got up early, and went out to meet Israel in battle, he and all his people at the appointed place before the desert plain. But he did not know that there was an ambush against him behind the city. 15 Then Joshua and all Israel pretended to be defeated before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness. 16 And all the people who were in the city were called together to pursue them, and they pursued Joshua and were lured away from the city. 17 So not a man was left in Ai or Bethel, but they had all gone out after Israel, and they left the city unguarded and pursued Israel.

18 Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Reach out with the sword that is in your hand toward Ai, for I will hand it over to you." So Joshua reached out with the sword that was in his hand toward the city. 19 Then the men in ambush rose quickly from their place, and when he had reached out with his hand, they ran and entered the city and captured it, and they quickly set the city on fire. 20 When the men of Ai turned back and looked,

behold, the smoke of the city ascended to the sky, and they had no place to flee this way or that, for the people who had been fleeing to the wilderness turned against the pursuers.

21 When Joshua and all Israel saw that the men in ambush had captured the city and that the smoke of the city ascended, they turned back and killed the men of Ai. 22 The others came out from the city to confront them, so that they were trapped in the midst of Israel, some on this side and some on that side; and they killed them until there was not one left who escaped or survived. 23 But they captured the king of Ai alive and brought him to Joshua.

24 Now when Israel had finished killing all the inhabitants of Ai in the field in the wilderness where they pursued them, and all of them had fallen by the edge of the sword until they were destroyed, then all Israel returned to Ai and struck it with the edge of the sword. 25 So all who fell that day, both men and women, were twelve thousand—all the people of Ai. 26 For Joshua did not withdraw his hand with which he reached out with the sword until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai. 27 Israel took only the cattle and the spoils of that city as plunder for themselves, in accordance with the word of the LORD which

He had commanded Joshua. 28 So Joshua burned Ai and made it a refuse heap forever, a desolation until this day. 29 And he hanged the king of Ai on a tree until evening; but at sunset Joshua gave the command and they took his body down from the tree and threw it at the entrance of the city gate and erected over it a large heap of stones that stands to this day.

30 Then Joshua built an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, on Mount Ebal, 31 just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the sons of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, an altar of uncut stones on which no one had wielded an iron tool; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings.

32 And he wrote there on the stones a copy of the Law of Moses, which he had written, in the presence of the sons of Israel.

33 And all Israel with their elders, officers, and their judges were standing on both sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, the stranger as well as the native. Half of them stood in front of Mount Gerizim, and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded at first to bless the people of Israel. 34 Then afterward he read all the words of the Law, the blessing and the curse, according to everything that is written in the Book of the Law. 35 There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel with the women, the little ones, and the strangers who were living among them.

We will use five tools on our expedition that are built around five questions

What questions were provoked within you? Did anything confuse you? Did anything move you emotionally?

Did God instruct you to do something? Did you gain any insight into God's character?

Pauls Observations and insights

1. Having received instruction from God, Joshua knows Ai will fall into the hands of Israel.
2. Why does the word of God bring such conviction to Joshua after the previous defeat?
3. Having defeated Jericho, Joshua takes the opportunity to recall the victory for his own encouragement.
4. How might we best use our success stories to encourage us throughout our lives?
5. Notice how God permitted Israel the enjoyment of the spoils of war -why?
6. Joshua is a great leader, see how he uses Israel's defeat in his strategy to overcome his enemy, Ai, on the second attack.
7. He set into motion a 'honey trap', luring the men of Ai out of the city.
8. See how Ai was lured into a false sense of security having gained a partial victory over Israel.
9. Like Jericho, Ai must be annihilated because the word of the Lord said so!
10. Why was it important for Joshua to spend the night amongst the people? Winston did the same.
11. The king of Ai was presumptuous, what did he do?
12. Is there ever a right time to flee from your enemy?
13. Why would the king of Ai leave the city unprotected - without men.
14. The signal was the lifting of Joshua's sword that led Israel into her victory.
15. How might we use the strategy of 'lifting up the sword' to bring us into victory?
16. When the word of God is 'lifted up' there is nowhere for your enemy to run.
17. The victory of the battle is completed through Joshua's obedience; it led him into the victory.
18. The battle is won; Ai has fallen; and twelve thousand men and women died - how does that make you feel?
19. How important is it to carry out the complete instruction of God's Word to the letter?
20. Obtaining the spoils of the battle when God says it's okay, is different from doing it without His permission - why?
21. Why did they hang the king of Ai on the tree? And why did they take him down again?
22. All the stones that Israel erected to remember this battle are still there to this day. Is it still to this day?
23. Why is it important to not use tools in the making of an altar to the Lord?
24. Joshua got another addition of the law books of God.
25. Can you imagine the celebration of this victory together in the camp?
26. Why did Joshua read out load from the book of the law?
27. How can God's word help us in our times of difficulties?