

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Let's pray...

[Jos 8:1-23 NKJV] 1 **Now** the LORD said to Joshua: "**Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; take all the people of war with you, and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land.**"

Chapter Eight begins much differently than chapter seven did.

Remember, I pointed out last week that chapter seven began with a big **but**.

And that but was there – because of the sin that had entered the camp.

As Achan took of the accursed thing and brought trouble into the camp.

And it was the sin that prevented the Children of Israel from continuing to claim the land that was promised to them.

They suffered their first defeat at the hands of Ai because of it.

They became discouraged because of it.

However, when Joshua finally goes before the Lord – the Lord commands him to do something about it and we saw at the end of the last chapter that judgment comes upon Achan and his family because he failed to repent.

Chapter eight doesn't begin with a but – it begins with a **now**, which indicates that there is a continuation of what we saw at the end of chapter seven.

The chapter begins with Joshua seeking council from the Lord. Remember, that was different than what happened last week as Joshua decided to attack Ai with a plan that relied on his own understanding instead of God's.

Joshua is once again being led by the Lord.

And the first thing the Lord commands Joshua is to not be afraid or dismayed.

What would Joshua have to be afraid of???

**Failure!!!**

He was afraid that what happened to Ai would happen again.

The Achan incident might repeat itself.

One of the most important things to learn from this chapter is that it doesn't matter how many times we get knocked down – but what matters is how many times we get back up.

And in the same way that sin can halt our walk as believers; the fear of failing will also bring our walk to a halt.

Instead of getting back up – we stay down and we remain down.

And we do this because we continuously reflect upon our past failures, instead of always looking ahead.

The Children of Israel could have said – we made it this far – let's just stay here.

Let's be content on these few steps of faith we took.

However, that is not what God had intended – He told Joshua every place that the sole of your foot has treaded – I have given you.

Paul speaks about this in his epistle to the church in Philippi.

**[Phi 3:13-14 NKJV] 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing [I do], forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**

When we suffer a spiritual defeat – we are to get up.

Church, to press toward the goal involves getting up more times that we get knocked down.

That is what God is commanding Joshua – you are not done yet. Get up.

Notice also that God also commands Joshua to take all the people of war –

This is much different than the last chapter where the spies, in their overconfidence in their own might, advised Joshua to only send two or three thousand men.

**2 "And you shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king. Only its spoil and its cattle you shall take as booty for yourselves. Lay an ambush for the city behind it."**

I asked you to highlight the words, as you did – as the Lord is speaking to Joshua.

You see, The Lord isn't telling Joshua that they are going to defeat Ai using the same military plan they used against Jericho.

They are not going to march around Ai – He is implying that victory will come to them as they return to the obedience of His every command.

And if we want to achieve victory after a defeat, we have to return to being obedient to His word.

If they are obedient, they will be victorious – just like against Jericho. However, the difference is that this time, they get the spoils of victory.

God demanded the 1<sup>st</sup> fruits – which was Jericho. Now, they will get all the spoils.

If only Achan had waited one more chapter, he would have gotten the spoils he desired. He didn't want to wait upon God for his blessings and now he loses out on them.

**3 So Joshua arose, and all the people of war, to go up against Ai; and Joshua chose thirty thousand mighty men of valor and sent them away by night. 4 And he commanded them, saying: "Behold, you shall lie in ambush against the city, behind the city. 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 it will come about, when they come out against us as at the first, that we shall flee before them. 6 "For they will come out after us till we have drawn them from the city, for they will say, '[They are] fleeing before us as at the**



**first.' Therefore we will flee before them. 7 "Then you shall rise from the ambush and seize the city, for the LORD your God will deliver it into your hand. 8 "And it will be, when you have taken the city, [that] you shall set the city on fire. According to the commandment of the LORD you shall do. See, I have commanded you."**

So the Lord gives Joshua a military plan.

And the military plan is very similar to the debacle of the plan that Joshua came up with on his own in the last chapter.

It consists of Joshua and his guys are going to go to Ai and then flee – that is what they did before. The men of Ai chased them down the hill and they lost 36 men.

The thirty thousand men of valor that I asked you make a note of – these are the ones that are going to ambush the

city once the men of Ai chase after Joshua and the group that is with him.

**9 Joshua therefore sent them out; and they went to lie in ambush, and stayed between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of Ai; but Joshua lodged that night among the people. 10 Then Joshua rose up early in the morning and mustered the people, and went up, he and the elders of Israel, before the people to Ai. 11 And all the people of war who [were] with him went up and drew near; and they came before the city and camped on the north side of Ai. Now a valley [lay] between them and Ai. 12 So he took about five thousand men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of the city.**

These five thousand men that we see here in verse 12, they are a different group. These guys will be there to make sure that none of the guys from Ai would be able to escape.

So let's see the execution of the plan.

**13 And when they had set the people, all the army that [was] on the north of the city, and its rear guard on the west of the city, Joshua went that night into the midst of the valley. 14 Now it happened, when the king of Ai saw [it], that the men of the city hurried and rose early and went out against Israel to battle, he and all his people, at an appointed place before the plain. But he did not know that [there was] an 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 So all the people who [were] in Ai were called together to pursue them. And they pursued Joshua and were drawn away from the city. 17 There was not a man left in Ai or Bethel who did not go out after Israel. So they left the city open and pursued Israel.

In their previous battle with Ai, the Children of Israel were beaten by their self-confidence.

Yes, Ai was a much smaller city than Jericho.

We will see that there were only 12,000 people who lived in Ai.

However, we must remember that sometimes it is the little things that become great obstacles in our Christian walk.

However, it is only through our reliance upon God that we overcome even the little things.

In Ai 2.0, Ai is defeated by their self-confidence – they thought it was going to be the same outcome as the previous time.

So they leave their small city defenseless.

**18 Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Stretch out the spear that [is] in your hand toward Ai, for I will give it into your hand." And Joshua stretched out the spear that [was] in his hand toward the city. 19 So [those in] ambush arose quickly out of their place; they ran as soon as he had stretched out his hand, and they entered the city and took it, and hurried to 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 to heaven. So they had no power to flee this way or that way, and the people who had fled to the wilderness turned back on the pursuers. 21 Now when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city and that the smoke of the city ascended, they turned back and struck down the men of Ai. 22 Then the others came out of the city against them; so they were [caught] in the midst of Israel, some on this side and some on that side. And they struck them down, so that they let none of them remain or escape. 23 But 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 where they pursued them, and when they all had fallen by the edge of the sword until they were consumed, that all the Israelites returned to Ai and struck it with the edge of the sword. 25 So it was [that] all who fell that day, both men and women, [were] twelve thousand--all the people of Ai. **26 For Joshua did not draw back his hand, with which he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai.**

From verses 18-26, we have the account of the ambush.

I want you to note that God is the one who directed Joshua to stretch out his spear.

God is the One who was in charge. Everything was being done according to His timing.

And the ambush continued until all the inhabitants of Ai were dead. It was at this point that Joshua was allowed to pull back his spear.

God was still in charge of when the battle ended because He is the one that set the conditions for the victory. Not Joshua.

As long as his spear remained lifted up, the Children of Israel continued to fight because the battle was not over.

This event is very similar to another event that Joshua was in.

Turn with me to the book of Exodus 17.

**[Exo 17:8-13 NKJV] 8 Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. 9 And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek.**



**Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand." 10 So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. 11 And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. 12 But Moses' hands [became] heavy; so they took a stone and put [it] under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. 13 So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.**

So in this event in Exodus, we have a young Joshua fighting the Amalekites while Moses is up on a hill with Aaron and Hur holding up the rod of God.

When he raises it up, they are winning and when he lowers them, they start to lose.

And the reason that Moses would drop his arms is because his arms would get tired. These battles would go on for hours.

But it wasn't the rod that gave them victory – it wasn't a magic rod.

You see, what Moses was doing as he lifted up the rod – he was interceding on behalf of Joshua and his men.

He was praying for them – they still had to fight but, ultimately it was the prayer that brought them the victory – that is why Aaron and Hur propped up his arms, so that he would continue to pray for them.

And here, Joshua is the one that is interceding on behalf of his men that are fighting and defeating the inhabitants of Ai.

**27 Only the livestock and the spoil of that city Israel took as booty for themselves, according to the word of the LORD which He had commanded Joshua. 28 So Joshua burned Ai and made it a heap forever, a desolation to this day. 29 And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until evening. And as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his corpse down from the tree, cast it at the entrance of the**

gate of the city, **and raise over it a great heap of stones**  
[that remains] to this day.

At the end of the battle of Ai, Joshua follows one more command and does something that is very noteworthy, and that is that he hangs the King of Ai on a tree.

**Why???**

**Because the scriptures commanded it.**

**[Deu 21:22-23 NKJV] 22 "If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, 23 "his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the LORD your God is giving you [as] an inheritance; for he who is hanged [is] accursed of God.**

Church, because of sin, we are all cursed to hang on a tree.

The wages of sin is death – that is what Romans 6:23

However, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, He redeemed us by taking our place on the tree.

Our curse was laid upon Him on the cross.

**[Gal 3:13 NLT] 13 But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing. For it is written in the Scriptures, "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."**

You see, in taking the curse upon Himself, Jesus paid the debt we owe to God for our own sins. This is a free gift of

God that is offered to all - complete forgiveness for all of our sins. All we need to do is to receive the gift.

So what we see here in chapter eight – is a shadow of what happened to Jesus on the day He was crucified.

Remember, His body had to be removed from the tree before sundown – because it was the Sabbath.

And then what happened to the Jesus' body – it was laid in a tomb.

The King of Ai, when they take him down from the tree – what do they do?

They bury him under a pile of rocks. They build the tomb around him.

**30 Now Joshua built an altar to the LORD God of Israel in Mount Ebal, 31 as Moses the servant of the LORD had 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 has wielded an iron [tool]." And they offered on it burnt offerings to the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings. 32 And there, in the presence of the children of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written. 33 Then all Israel, with their elders and officers and judges, stood on either side of the ark before the priests, the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, the stranger as well as he who was born among them. Half of them [were] in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of 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 the cursings, according to all 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.**

After the victory over Ai, Joshua does something significant. Instead of moving along to the next city to conquer, he takes them on a 22 mile pilgrimage to Mount Ebal.

And across from Mount Ebal is Mount Gerizem and there is a 2 mile wide valley in between these two mountains.



So he puts half the tribes on one mountain and half the tribes on the other mountain and he proceeds to read to them the Book of the Law.

All of it.

To all the men all the women and all the young children.

They were taught by which way they would be blessed and by which way they would be cursed.

Joshua didn't sugarcoat anything – he gave them a verse by verse study – like we do here.

There was no alternative.

Their response to the Book of the Law - would lead to death or to life.

The purpose of this pilgrimage is so that what happened in chapter seven would not be repeated.

They had to learn from their mistakes – they had to come to the conclusion that the only way they were going to continue to walk in faith and claim their inheritance was by being obedient to His word and to place their trust in Him.

Ai was a learning experience for the Children of Israel.

However, the subsequent chapters will provide us with the details whether they actually learned their lesson from Ai.

May we rely upon His word to guide us and may we learn from the mistakes that we have made and get up and continue to press on without taking our eyes off of Him.

Amen.

## Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.