

Joshua 8

Crash of AI

and the Renewal of the Covenant

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Read Joshua 8

Remembering the structure of the Book of Joshua CROSS TAKE DIVIDE SERVE

Elements of the story God's assurance – Military strategy – Taking of Ai – Israel obeys God's commandment – God's judgment upon Ai – Covenant renewal

- Chapter 8 opens up with God's encouragement to Joshua: *Do not fear and do not be dismayed*
 1. This encouragement is a gracious reminder that God is going to fulfil His promise
 2. The encouragement is especially needed after the Israel broke God's covenant and suffered the consequences of the trespass
 3. Contrast with the previous chapter's heading (... *anger of the LORD burned against the sons of Israel* – Joshua 7:1
 4. Compare with chapter 1:9 (*Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go*) – the public punishment for Achan's sin and the burning of the things devoted to destruction restored the presence of God among Israel
- The whole chapter "naturally" consists of two parts:
 1. Conquest of Ai

2. The renewal of the covenant

Israel at Ai – again The LORD God graciously grants Israel "a do-over" after restoring the people of Israel following their breaking of the covenant

- *Arise and go – all the fighting men – up to Ai, for I have given into your hand the king of Ai, and his city, his people and his land.*
- The command is given in the form of *indicative - imperative* structure
- The command is similar to the God's command given to the Israelites before the conquest of Jericho
- The comparison with Jericho is made explicit in verse 8:2 (*And you shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king*)
- There is one difference, however; unlike with Jericho where God commanded a complete destruction, at Ai God allows for the spoils of war
- Next, we read about the divine military strategy for the taking of Ai:
 1. God is the source of the military planning – He commands the exact time of the counterattack
 2. It is the divine power, divine action that made possible for the Israel to capture Jericho; the same divine power is needed to capture Ai (the little city of Ai – according to the spies in chapter 7)
 3. The events at Jericho and Ai are to *show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us* (2 Corinthians 4:7)
 4. Following the defeat at Ai, there may have been a doubt among the Israelites regarding God's power – *was God not strong enough to conquer Ai for us?*
 5. God's revelation in chapter 7 and 8 makes it clear that it is not so – it was Israel's sin that resulted in their defeat; God does not change and the conquest of Ai in chapter 8 shows that God is all powerful
 6. Isaiah 59:1-2: *Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull that he cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God and your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he does not hear.*

- Joshua's stretched out hand with a javelin (verse 18) signifies God's control over the Israel's military action (a visible sign of the invisible reality); it also parallels the Israel's victory over Amalek (Exodus 17:8-16) – Joshua was present there!
- Joshua keeps holding the javelin until all the inhabitants of Ai are devoted to destruction
- God's gracious, generous provision for the people of Israel – God allows them to keep the livestock and the spoils of war
 1. Contrary to the serpent's lie, God is not cruel, He does not whimsically restrict good things from us
 2. "When God's priority is recognized and satisfied, he then gives to his people. God never seeks to impoverish his people. It is only as his people lose sight of his generosity, his provision, his goodness, that the cancer of covetousness consumes them" (Dale Ralph Davis)
 3. *Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart* (Psalm 37:4) – we should view *the desires of your heart* as an object that God gives us if we delight in Him; in other words, if we delight in the LORD he will give us what to desire (according to His will), not what we desire
 4. God wants our obedience and graciously provides us with all the blessings in Jesus Christ
 5. Romans 8:32: *He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?*
 6. Contentment with God's goodness is the antidote for apostasy (Dale Ralph Davis)
- Judgement upon the king of Ai – he was killed and hung on a tree until the evening time
 1. It will happen again in Joshua 10:26-27
 2. Hanging on the tree was not the means of death, but followed death
 3. Deuteronomy 21:22-23 provides us with a context – the man who deserved to be punished by death was hang on a tree to serve as a warning to the people of Israel

4. "The body was not *accursed of God* because it was hanging on the tree; it was hanging on a tree because it was accursed of God. And the body was not accursed of God simply because it was dead ... but it was accursed because of the reason (crime against God's law) for the death." – Peter Craigie.
5. Apostle Paul reminds us that the King of Kings became a curse for us – the picture of Jesus hanging on the tree (Galatians 3:13)

The renewal of the covenant A fitting end to the capturing of Jericho and Ai

1. Some commentators view the ending of the chapter 8 (verses 30-35) as "out of place", not fitting the conquest narrative
2. The renewal of the covenant fits nicely into the structure of chapter 5-8 (Dale Ralph Davis):
 - Heading, 5:1 (compare 9:1; 10:1; 11:1)
 - Firstfruits, 5:13 – 6:27 (success) – the war of the LORD
 - Curse, 7:1-26 (failure) – the anger of the LORD
 - Restoration, 8:1-29 (success) – help of the LORD
 - Conclusion, Covenant word, 8:30-35
3. Joshua conducts the covenant renewal ceremony according to the commandments Moses spoke to the children of Israel (Deuteronomy 11:29-32 and 27:1-14)
4. When Joshua reads all the words of the law (verse 34) it reminds the Israelites of the priority of the complete obedience to the word of God as the reason for success (compare chapter 1:8)
5. All the word of the law of God are to be obeyed by all the people of Israel, both native born and sojourners, both the rulers of Israel and the common people are to be ruled by the law of God. this is Israel's first priority
6. The renewal of the covenant at Shechem serves also as a testimony to God's faithfulness:
 - It was at Shechem that God first promised Abram the land (Genesis 12:5-7)
 - Jacob returned safely to Shechem after fearing his brother Esau (exiled from the promised land)

- And now here we see Abraham's seed, Jacob's family enjoying the fulfillment of God's promise regarding the land