



**CHRISTIAN
ENDEAVOUR**
for Christ and the Church



Conquering the Land

Our homes are burning ...

The capture of Ai

Joshua 8

Teaching aim

To show that we need to follow God's instructions for our life.

Setting the scene

The people of Israel had tried to capture Ai in their own strength but God saw to it that they were defeated. The Israelites were defeated for two reasons:

They were told not to take any of the spoils for themselves when they captured Jericho but Achan took some for himself and caused Israel to sin.

They tried to do it without God and we must remember that God was the commander of the armies of Israel.

Joshua prayed to God. Achan and his whole family were killed for disobeying God and then God told the people to go and take Ai.

God's instructions

Read Joshua 8:1-2. God was going to be the commander of Israel so He gave Joshua some instructions.

Q. What special command did God give to Joshua personally? - *Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.*

Q. What promise did God give to Joshua? - *The city of Ai with its king and all its people were already given into the hand of Joshua.*

All the inhabitants of the city were to be killed just as they were in Jericho but, this time, the people were allowed to keep all the plunder and livestock. God told Joshua to set an ambush behind the city.

The conquest of Ai

Read Joshua 8:1-3-29. 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 to set an ambush behind the city. Joshua took the rest of the army and advanced on the city.

Q. What orders did Joshua give the men in ambush? - *Do nothing until they saw him and his men run away with the enemy after them. They were then to enter the city and set it on fire.*

As planned, Joshua and the men with him let themselves be driven back before the enemy, and they fled towards the desert. The army in ambush rose up, entered the city, captured it and set it on fire. When the men of Ai looked back and saw the smoke of the city, they had no chance to escape in any direction, for the Israelites had caught them in a trap.

Q. What happened to the inhabitants of Ai? - *They were killed by the Israelites.*

The king of Ai was captured alive and brought to Joshua.

Q. What did Joshua do with the king of Ai? - *He hung him on a tree, threw his body at the city gate and covered it with a large pile of rocks.*

God gave complete victory to Israel because they followed His instructions.

Joshua honours God

Read Joshua 8:1-3-30-34. It is always important when God answers our prayers to thank Him and give Him all the glory.

Q. What did Joshua do to honour God? - *Built an altar to the Lord on Mount Ebal.*

Q. How did he build the altar? - *He built it of uncut stones according to what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses.*

They offered to the Lord burnt offerings and sacrificed fellowship offerings and Joshua read all the words of the law to the people.

Q. Why was it so important in those days to read God's word in public? - *They had no Bibles so that they could not read the law for themselves.*

Summing up

Israel learned a great lesson at Ai. They learned to follow God's word in every detail. Without God, they were powerless before the people of Ai but, with God, they had complete victory.

If you are a Christian, you must follow all God's instruction in the Bible regarding your life otherwise you will be working against God. God has a plan for your life and, if you pray and read your Bible every day, He will reveal His plan to you.

Resources

Discussion

- If we need God's help in order to be successful, is there any need for us to make plans?
- What lessons can we learn from the story of the battle for Ai?
- What things have happened to us this year that we should thank God for?

Prayer points

Thank God that:

- We have the Bible and that God allows us to come into His presence and talk to Him in prayer.

Pray for:

- The decisions that you have to make now and in the future.
- Those in positions of authority in government that they will seek God's guidance before making decisions.