



"REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

KEEP CALM AND MARCH ON!

Marching through the Book of Joshua: Lesson 11

The defeat at Ai in Joshua chapter 7 was Israel's first and only military defeat in Canaan. This defeat is always associated with Achan's name, "the man who troubled Israel." But now, in chapter 8, God turns their shameful defeat into a glorious victory. Israel learns once again that victory for God's people is related to their dependence on God's power. Victory always depends on obedience to God's Word. I pray that God burns this truth deep into our hearts and that it changes us forever.

First Day

We left off in chapter 7 overlooking a great heap of stones in the Valley of Achor, or "trouble." Today, we see that trouble turn into hope.

1. Read Joshua 8:1-35. Divide the chapter into two sections. Title each section.
2. Choose one main verse from each section.
3. Write a brief summary explaining the main thought of each section.

Section 1:

Section 2:

4. Look up any words that are new to you. What words or phrases are repeated or emphasized?

5. Read Romans 8:28. How does this verse relate to Joshua 7 and 8?

6. What important new facts do you find in this chapter?

7. List two or three spiritual lessons you can immediately see in chapter 8.

That's it folks! Tomorrow we will secretly move into Ai with Joshua and the Israelites! (Shh! we must be very quiet!) Let's end today with a short recap of the chapter:

- a. **Israel obeys**
- b. **Israel has victory**
- c. **Israel worships God by reaffirming their covenant**

**I pray that this would be our path this week ...
obedience, victory, worship!**

Memory Verse of the Week: "Praise the Lord, call upon His name; declare His deeds among the people, make mention that His name is exalted."

Isaiah 12:4

Second Day

Spend some time today meditating on your memory verse. Are you declaring His works among the people?

1. Read Joshua 8:1-29.

2. Why do you think it was necessary for the Lord to encourage Joshua again in verse 1?

3. In verse 1, God gave Joshua: (write the phrase)
 - a. a word of cheer
 - b. a word of instruction
 - c. a word of promise

4. Think of a time recently when you felt God was encouraging you. How did He do it? With a promise? A direction? A confirmation?

5. List some ways that God encourages us.

6. What were the Israelites told to do to the city of Ai? What were they told to do that was not allowed in Jericho?

7. Why do you think they were allowed to do this?

We can see in chapter 8 how needless it was for Achan to covet any material goods. God was going to provide for Israel His way, but Achan was too impatient and greedy. Achan needed to learn to be content with God's goodness.

8. Are you content with what God has given you? Do you have a thankful heart or are you always dreaming about what you could have?

The "booty" or "spoils" usually consisted of captives of both sexes, cattle, and whatever the captured city might contain, especially metallic treasures. We know that in Canaan, no captives were taken (Deuteronomy 20:14, 16). The law of booty was that it should be divided equally between the army and the people of Israel.

We see God's anger turned away from Israel after they repent and are cleansed. God's forgiveness is an amazing thing. That forgiveness freed Joshua to move forward, rather than retreat with guilt or fear.

9. Read Psalm 32. This is David's song about the blessings of being forgiven. What's God's part in forgiveness? What's our part? What phrase, or phrases, minister to you from this psalm?

It is possible that Joshua neglected to seek God's counsel before moving ahead. We know he listened to the bad counsel of his friends, rather than God's instructions. Joshua could have given up, feeling guilty for the mistakes he made. After all, wasn't he supposed to be the leader? He could have allowed the fears of what he may do again hinder him from moving forward in his faith. Fear of failure is a toughy. Carrying around a load of guilt is another. But Joshua did quite the opposite. He brought the sin of Israel before the Lord and was cleansed. Joshua then got immediately back on his feet and moved forward, proceeding full steam ahead!

10. How does guilt hinder our walk? How does fear?
11. What did these men do after their mistakes?
- a. Peter: Luke 22:54-62, Acts 1:12-14
 - b. Paul: Philippians 3:12-14
 - c. David: Psalm 51:2,10-11
 - d. Judas: Matthew 27:3-5
12. Read Psalm 37:23-24 and Proverbs 24:16. What do these verses say about falling?
13. Have you made any mistakes recently? If so, did you (or are you)
- a. repentive like Peter, David, and Paul?
 - b. sorry for being caught, like Judas?
14. Are you allowing something to keep you from moving forward?

15. What does God say He will do to your sins after you confess them to Him?
- 1 John 1:9
 - Isaiah 43:25-26
 - Isaiah 44:21-22
 - Jeremiah 31:34
16. If God chooses to "forget" our sins, why do we hold on to them? Why are we so prone to guilt?

We'll end here for today. I praise God for the example of Joshua. I pray that we live as forgiven women, children of God, daughters of the King! What a "Reason to Rejoice"!

Third Day

Review your memory verse.

1. Read Joshua 8:1-29 again. Describe the battle plan. Whose plan was it?
2. How many men were told to lie in wait for the ambush?
3. What did Joshua remind them to do in verse 4? (two words)
4. How do those two words apply to Christians today? What are we supposed to be ready for? Give Scripture to support your answer.

Joshua sent 30,000 men to hide behind the city, waiting to ambush the people of Ai. God told Joshua to put another 5,000 men to lie in wait between Ai and Bethel, which was about two miles away. The surrounding

terrain was very rocky, making it easy to hide the soldiers. Still, hiding 30,000 soldiers was no small task. Would you say that this was just another one of God's miracles?

5. What was the result of the battle?

Due to Israel's defeat, Ai's self-confidence was elevated. This resulted in them pursuing confidently after Israel, leaving their own city unattended, which, by the way, is a military no-no! Self-confidence is a dangerous trap that the enemy sets for the Christian also (as in chapter 7). He has many strategies that we should be aware of (2 Corinthians 2:11).

6. What are some of the other traps the enemy sets for us?

God gave the Israelites the victory at Ai in a much different way than He gave them the victory at Jericho. God has many plans, strategies, and methods. We must never try to put "God in a box," expecting Him to work one way, the same way, in every situation. God has exciting plans for us, as well as many things to teach us. God taught Israel something different in Ai than He did at Jericho.

7. How was the victory at Ai more humbling than Jericho? What was required of Israel in either battle?

8. The Israelites were called to exercise their faith, yet adhere strictly to God's orders. What's the balance between faith, yet obedience; confidence, yet submission? How do Proverbs 10:4 and 22 shed some light on this?

Sometimes Christ carries His children as lambs in His bosom (Isaiah 40:11), while other times we are told to follow Him, like sheep (John 10:27).

9. Does He want to carry you right now in your present circumstance or is He calling you to follow?

God used all of Israel to present a united front before the enemy. They were evidently one body and one unit, with one purpose and one goal.

10. How does jealousy, discord, gossip, bitterness, or anger within the body of Christ cause a "divided front" against the enemy and the world? What can happen to the church and its witness to the world when one of these sins creeps in and is left unchecked?

11. Of the sins mentioned above, are any of them hiding in your heart? Are you causing any disunity in the body of Christ?

This ends our discussion for today. What do you think of the battle at Ai? Have you ever been ambushed by the enemy? It's kind of humiliating, isn't it? I **"Rejoice"** that God has told us to "be ready" for the enemy and has given us all the weapons of warfare (Ephesians 6) to use in our spiritual battle. We won't be caught by surprise if we're "ready and waiting."

Fourth Day

Review your memory verse.

1. Read Joshua 8:1-29 again. (You should know it by now!)
2. Where did Joshua stay before the battle? Did he have his own private tent set up? (vs 9) What does that tell us about Joshua?

3. Read 1 Peter 5:1-4. How is Joshua a good example of this description of a shepherd?
4. God told Joshua to "stretch out the spear in his hand toward Ai." How is this act similar to the event in Exodus 17:8-16?
5. What happened to the king of Ai?

Even though the king was brought to Joshua alive (vs 23), most likely he was killed before he was put on the tree. Kings were usually hung after they were put to death (Joshua 10:26-27). In Deuteronomy 21:22-23, the law said, "If a man has committed a sin worthy of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, 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." Most likely, the offender was hung on the tree as a warning to the rest of the people of how serious it was to break the law. The body of the King of Ai probably was a sign to all that Canaan stood under the judgment and curse of God (Leviticus 18:24-25, Deuteronomy 9:4-5).

6. Where did they put the body when they took it off the tree? What was it a memorial of?

7. Read Joshua 8:30-35.

We have a dramatic scene change between verses 29 and 30. We move from a battlefield to a worship service. Dale Davis, in his book, **No Falling Words**, says this: "We have been accustomed to reading a fairly continuous narrative of strategies and battles when suddenly, the war is cut and we are left looking at a slide of a worship service. We are wrenched from conquest to covenant."

The children of Israel journeyed 30-40 miles from Ai to the Valley of Shechem. According to Alan Redpath, this was supposedly one of the

loveliest valleys in Palestine. It was located 20 miles north of Ai, making it about 40 miles north of Jerusalem.

8. What else happened at Shechem? Read *Genesis* 12:6-7, 33:18-20, 28:13. Why is this place so significant for Joshua and the Israelites?

9. What was the first thing that Joshua did after the conquest? Who told him to do that? Read *Deuteronomy* 27:1-8 and 11:29-32. On what mountain did he do it?

It is significant that God told them to build the altar on Mount Ebal, which was the mountain of cursing (*Deuteronomy* 11:29), rather than on Mount Gerizim. This altar foreshadowed a perfect Jesus, the Head of the Church, being made a curse for each of His members (*Galatians* 3:13). Jesus redeemed us from the curse of the law.

10. What kind of stones were they supposed to use to build this altar? (Also read *Exodus* 20:25.)

This is the first time an "altar" is mentioned in the book of Joshua. The altar was the meeting place between God and man. It was at the altar that man was to be reminded both of his unworthiness before God and God's perfect holiness. God didn't want fancy, elaborately decorated altars. This altar was to glorify God and His workmanship, rather than man's own efforts or skill. There was to be no human effort. They were only to use the stones that were provided by God. Jesus Christ has become the altar for us (*Hebrews* 13:10). We only have access to the Father through Jesus Christ (*Acts* 4:12). At the altar of Christ we find forgiveness of sins (*Ephesians* 1:7, *Romans* 3:24-25), and we present our sacrifices of praise (*Hebrews* 13:15). We can't come to God on our own merits or good works (*Ephesians* 2:8). We have to do it God's way; the way that He provided for us. Again, we do that by admitting that we are sinners, asking Jesus Christ to forgive us, or "cover" those sins by His blood, and receive Him by faith. He is the "precious cornerstone" that God has provided for us (*1 Peter* 2:7).

As an interesting side note, the "cutting of stones" was a Canaanite practice, used many times to carve idols. This certainly would "defile" the altar.

11. What did they do on this altar, according to verse 31?

You can read about the "burnt offering" in Leviticus 1:3-17 and Psalm 66:15. "Peace offerings" are explained in Leviticus 3:1-17 and 7:11-19. The burnt offering was a token of their commitment to God and the "peace offering" (also called "fellowship offering") was an expression of gratitude to God for His goodness. A portion of the meat was given to the priests and another part was given to the offerer to eat with his family in the presence of the Lord.

12. What have you offered to the Lord as a token of your commitment to Him? What things can be considered as "offerings" to the Lord by Christians today?

We'll end here for now. It's exciting to see Israel walking obediently with the Lord, worshipping Him. This is not always the case. But for now, they are on the right track. I pray that we would ponder the path of our feet, not turning to the right or the left (Proverbs 4:25-26). Let's **"rejoice"** that we have so much to **"rejoice"** about!

Fifth Day

Write out your verse from memory. How did God use this verse to minister to you this week?

1. Read Joshua 8:32-35.
2. What did Joshua write on the stones? What had to be done to the stones first? Read Deuteronomy 27:2-4 again.

3. Read Deuteronomy 27 to get a better picture of exactly what was happening. Briefly describe this "renewal ceremony" in your own words.

4. According to Deuteronomy 27, which tribes stood in front of Mount Ebal? Which stood in front of Mount Gerizim?

These two mountains stood on either side of the Valley of Shechem. On one side stood Mt Ebal, barren and rocky. On the other side was Mount Gerizim, which was wooded and beautiful. The valley between the two mountains provided a natural amphitheater. Someone could stand on the top of one of the mountains and carry on a very clear conversation with the person on the top of the other mountain. This was the perfect setting for the Law of God to be read to all of Israel.

5. As the Law was read, how did the people respond?

6. Read Deuteronomy 11:26-28. When would Israel receive a blessing? When would they receive a cursing?

7. Why was it so important for Joshua to read the law to Israel?

8. Read Psalm 37:3. What is the result of having the law of God in your heart?

9. Read Proverbs 3:1-4. What does Solomon say about the law?

10. What does the Word of God do to our feet? Read Psalm 119:105

11. How does our mouth respond to the Word? Psalm 119:103, 131

12. How about our eyes? Psalm 119:148
13. What should our tongue be doing? Psalm 119:172
14. What effect should God's Word have on our heart? Psalm 119:111-112

We know that Christians are not "under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14, 7:1-6). This does not mean that we can ignore the law, and do whatever we please. Paul would say "No way, man!" (Actually, he said, "Certainly not!" Romans 6:1-2) We aren't saved by keeping the law, but the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us (Romans 8:4). We now walk in the Spirit, not under the law (Galatians 5).

It's important to plant His Word deep in our hearts. God's Word is the only thing that can change a heart. Do you need a "changed heart"? I sure do. I need God's Word to cleanse my heart and purify my thoughts. I need the Holy Spirit to fill me with the power to change my actions. Joshua knew how vital God's Word was to live a blessed life.

15. Eternal life brings us the blessings of Mount Ebal. What are some of the blessings we receive as believers? Give Scriptures to support your answer.
16. What was the most important thing you learned from this chapter? How do you plan to apply it?

I can just imagine the entire nation of Israel, standing very still, listening intently to the Law being read. After each pause, a loud "Amen" would ring through the valley. What a beautiful picture this puts in my mind. Lord, help me to respond with a roaring "**Amen!**" when I read your Word. Let me seek to obey it with all of my heart. Is that your prayer, too? Then ...
"AMEN!"

