

Joshua 8:1-22 – Holy War – Assurances of Victory

Calvin, TSK, Poole, Geneva, Delitzsch, Trapp, HebrewLexicon, JFB, Bezuyen, Gill, Henry, INT, Expositor?

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Israel was disillusioned幻想破灭by the defeat they suffered at the hand of the small town of Ai. They had run like scared dogs from a handful of soldiers. But with Achan and his family found and executed, and that impurity of worship removed, Israel had to get back to the task of conquering the land and then wait for Abraham's Seed.

Isn't it wonderful that loving covenant God did not abandon his people because of their sin? Isn't it wonderful that he did not allow them to indulge放纵in feeling sorry for themselves? He called them to get up...and fix the problem. Today you will hear how God continued to revive the spirits of Israel so they would return to the fight.

Our headings are:

God's Promise of Victory

God's Plan for Victory

Man's Participation in Victory

Our goals are: That you **will learn that trouble in the church does not mean that God has changed his purpose for your lives, but that you will, empowered and encouraged by God's Word and Spirit, continue the fight for dominion for Jesus Christ.**

God's Promise of Victory

1 Now the LORD said to Joshua: "Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed吓住; 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. 2 "And you shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king. Only its spoil赃物和 its cattle **you shall take as booty赃物for yourselves.**

1. God encouraged Joshua to go out in battle again. "Do not be afraid," God said. Joshua had no reason to be afraid. We know it is difficult for many people to overcome past fears when it is associated with some terrible circumstances of their lives. For instance, if a pilot were involved in a plane crash he could become so fearful that he never wanted to fly again. The mental burn精神创伤could be so severe that he couldn't overcome it. Or if a soldier saw much bloodshed in war, the scar of war could be so great that he avoided war at all costs and panicked whenever he heard a gunshot. But even though Israel endured such a tragic defeat, **because they were called by their covenant God to go again**, they got on their figurative saddles and headed to Ai. They did not question God. Their faith in God made them obedient to his call.

2. But God didn't just call them to battle, God assure Israel of victory over the king of Ai? He assured them that they would do to Ai's king as they did to Jericho's king-utterly destroy him. What an incentive! No government, no business, no wealthy man, no husband, no wife, and no parent can assure you of success in life. If they did, you couldn't rely on it with certainty as they have no means to guarantee it. But when God gives assurance, you can be sure – better than money in the bank – that he will accomplish it. He is willing and able to do what he has promised.

3. And then God added the “icing on the cake.” God promised them many spoils战利品to enjoy after they obeyed. No one can assure you of the benefits of investment. If your financial advisor makes those guarantees, take it with a grain of salt. Most people endured losses in the past few years. Your investments can be stolen, lost, or taxed away. But when God promises good things, you can be assured of it, not only in this life, but in the life to come.

4. But why did God want “all the people of war” to go up to Ai when a few thousands were enough to destroy this small town? God wanted many witnesses to see his faithfulness when Ai would be destroyed. Further, this overwhelming defeat would put fear into the hearts of neighboring towns, making their hearts melt, killing their desire to fight.

5. Have you too not been promised the same victory as well over the nations – using the Sword of the Spirit圣灵的宝剑?

Psalm 2:8 Ask of Me, and **I will give You The nations for Your inheritance**, And the ends of the earth for Your possession.

Matthew 28:19 "Go therefore and **make disciples of all the nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Isaiah 56:5 Even to them I will give in My house And within My walls a place and a name Better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name **That shall not be cut off.**

Isaiah 9:6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 **Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end**, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice...

This is the stone that grew and filled the whole earth, as in Daniel. Find encouragement in this.

God's Plan for Victory

2...Lay an ambush for the city behind it." 3 So Joshua arose, and all the people of war, to go up against Ai; and Joshua chose thirty thousand mighty men of valor勇气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逃离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."

1. God told Israel to lay an ambush behind Ai, send some soldiers to feign假装an attack from the front, and then tell the attackers from the front, when they saw the soldiers of Ai coming out, to turn and run away to trick the men of Ai to chase after them to fight. Then when Ai's soldiers chased after the fleeing Israelites, those in ambush behind the city were to enter Ai and burn it –

people, animals, and all. This was wise military strategy that nations have used to fight for thousands of years.

2. Are there lessons for God's plan for victory today in our spiritual war for dominion? Yes!

a. You don't always have to have the same approach of winning the lost with the Spirit and the Sword.

Matthew 10:16 "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves 灵巧像蛇，驯良像鸽子。

People aren't only conquered by "in your face" preaching. You live the Gospel. You write about the Gospel. You can use social media. You can ask questions of others and let them see express their own sin and guilt. Remember how Solomon asked for a sword to cut the baby in two? He did not intend to do so, but it was a picture of wisdom. So you too must learn to use wisdom in conquering the world for Christ.

b. Jesus Christ has given the command to rule the world and he accomplishes this through the Spirit who applies the Word of God – his Word which details his work on the cross to the wicked man which makes him surrender and brings him into his kingdom. The approach might be different, but the weapon (the Gospel) is the same. Are you a willing fighter with God's Word and Spirit?

3. Side Note: God told Israel to deceive Ai, to lie by actions. Those who misunderstand God's law and think that everyone must always speak the truth have a hard time reconciling this view with God's explicit directions to Israel to lie. You don't have to tell others your PIN for your bank card. Further, if you kill in some circumstances to protect innocent lives, you certainly are able to lie to do so. And make no doubt about it, Israel was lying to the men of Ai, but it was a good lie – to protect the innocent life of the Israelites. You see, the 9th command is not about lying but about promotion of justice. Keep this in mind. This was intelligent planning – initiated by God.

Man's Participation in Victory

9 Joshua therefore sent them out; and **they went to lie in ambush**打埋伏, 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**调集**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. 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.

1. Israel did as God demanded, setting an ambush behind Ai and sending some men to attack from the front to lure the soldiers of Ai out.

2. But more than soldiers were there. The elders (V10) of Israel, maybe the 70 leaders, were there with the Israelite soldiers as well. They were there to **maintain justice** and maybe to make sure that the **spoils of war**战利品**were rightly divided**. And they were there **to be witnesses** to what God would do so they could pass on to succeeding generations the remarkable work of God. These men were acting in faith...acting on the promises of God.

Hebrews 11:33 who through faith subdued制服kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

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.**

3. Seeing the Israelite soldiers coming from the front of the city, the king of Ai charged them, he and all his soldiers, not knowing that Israel had laid an ambush at the back of the city. They thought their past success was guarantee of future success – like Israel thought when they attacked Ai earlier. The Aiites did not even bother to close their gates, such was their arrogance. But God was about to bring them low.

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.

4. Israel pretended to run away to lure the soldiers of Ai (who were assisted by the soldiers Bethel – a tributary of Ai) away from the city. So the soldiers of Ai left their city exposed. This plan was so successful, that not one soldier was left in Ai.

18 Then the LORD said to Joshua, "**Stretch out the spear**(javelin) 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.

5. Then Joshua raised his javelin – the symbol of power -like Moses raise his staff before the Red Sea – and the men of Israel hiding in ambush behind Ai, rose, entered and burned it, and then came out against the Aiites who were chasing the other half of the Israelite soldiers. Upon looking back, the Aiites saw Ai on fire and the Israelites coming out of the city. And when the fleeing Israelites saw the fire in Ai, they turned back to trap the Aiites in the middle. They destroyed Ai. Destruction of Ai brought horror to the wicked but happiness to the godly, just like God's judgment on the Jews in AD70 brought horror to the Jews and joy to the Christians they were persecuting. So sing of God's justice! The wicked are on slippery ground! God often blinds their eyes so they walk right off the cliff.

6. An interesting point here is that God was preparing Israel for the ending of miracles. They had to plan and work for victory. The same thing happened at the Great Commission. So learn not to rely on miracles. Plan. Think. Work.

Conclusion:

God promised victory to Israel and encouraged them to believe his promise. God gave them specific plans for how they would achieve that victory. God used the Israelite people as part of his plan to gain the victory.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Having been brought across your spiritual Jordan – from death to life – through Jesus Christ, **didn't God promise victory of his kingdom over the world** when he said that “Christ shall have dominion over land and sea?” **Didn't God promise that his Word was sharper and more powerful than any two-edged sword and that you must preach the Gospel** to bring men to their knees? Didn't God say that **you must go all over the world and use this weapon to conquer the world for Christ**? You may personally not go to Honduras to preach, but will you remember to pray for, encourage, and financially support Pastor Langedoen there, for example? And will you remember to live the Gospel? And will you support and pray for your minister's preaching of it? This is how you will bring victory in this holy war.

Finally, if you are not a Christian, hear this: God will win. His enemy will lose. If you don't surrender to him, you are his enemy and he will destroy you. But you have a reason to hope. You can wave the white flag of surrender and say to him: Let me live. I am not worthy to be called your son and I deserve to die, but Jesus bore my sins when he died on the cross. If you do this, he will save you.