

## **Joshua 8:23-35—Provisions for Holy War: Spoils, Power, & Worship**

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Have you ever heard the saying: “You can’t accomplish much without wealth?” You probably have. That saying is particularly true when it comes to having dominion for Jesus Christ. But the issue is: What is the wealth that you need for this great and costly task? Is “wealth 财富” limited to money in the bank or on your financial investments? You will hear today how God provides for his people in their strategy of conquering the land for Christ.

Our headings are:

**Spoils for God’s People**

**Power for God’s People**

**Worship for God’s People**

Our goals are: That you will **learn of the wealth God has provided for his church** so that she can have dominion over the world and that you will then **embrace and use that wealth to advance Christ’s kingdom.**

### **Spoils for God’s people**

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.

**1. Israel captured Ai, Bethel who helped Ai, and their kings.** Israel chased down their enemy who ran into the desert and killed them all. Then Israel returned to Ai and killed all who were there...men, women, and children. **Joshua did not stop...and could not stop...until all the enemy – men, women, and children of Ai were totally destroyed.** God commanded this destruction and that must bring an end to all discussion. It was total destruction 全盤毀坏 of a wicked people whose sins God could no longer stand. God judges 审判 the children for the sins of the parents – just like you are sinful because of your parents. God was particularly furious at those who lift up their hands to hurt his covenant people. And God especially judges this way if the children and parents refuse his opportunity to repent and submit to him. In all, they killed about 12,000. And **while the people of Ai suffered horribly in their judgment, their worse judgment was waiting for them in hell.**

**2. Ai’s judgment gives you a solid basis for warning the wicked so they will turn to God and be saved.** You can point the sinner to the seriousness of sin 罪的严重性 against a holy God and then show him that if he submits to the true Joshua, Jesus, that he would not face the true Joshua’s judgment. And you can say: “While there is life so there is hope, but the time will come when you will be no more opportunity.”

Hebrews 10:26 For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 **but a certain fearful expectation of judgment**, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries 只好恐惧地等待着审判, 和那快要吞灭众仇敌的烈火. 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.

**3. Joshua and all Israel received much spoils – plunder- from the town of Ai and Bethel.** God promised them plunder and God kept his promise. All the earthly things Israel needed 需求 God provided for them. There was no shortage of food, clothing, or animals. They could continue to conquer Canaan!

**4. You need God's material provisions as well.** This is one reason Christians must not hold up poverty as if it were a virtue. You need money to plant churches and send missionaries. You need money to print books and run seminaries. You need young people to be able to afford law school so they can defend Christians who are being persecuted. You need money to help the needy.

### **Power for God's People**

28 So Joshua burned Ai and made it a heap 废墟 forever, a desolation to this day.

**1. After taking everything God had provided them in Ai, Joshua and Israel then burned the rest** of the things of Ai. Wasn't this proof that Jehovah was the true God who fulfilled his promise? Would this not have encouraged Israel, especially after their shameful defeat and death of 36 of their soldiers in Ai before? Would this not have put fear in the other nations of Canaan when they saw this? Wouldn't they be reluctant to fight against a God so powerful?

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.

**2. Then Joshua hanged the king of Ai.** He did this publicly because, as leader who led his people into sin, he deserved worse punishment than the other citizens of Ai. (The Septuagint says that it was a double tree- suggesting a cross.) But Joshua did not leave the body to hang on the tree overnight. Desecration 侮辱 of the body was not permitted...like allowing animals to eat the body. Rather, Joshua removed the body and buried it with a pile of stones. This showed he was interested in justice; he did not have a murderous rage.

Deuteronomy 21:22 "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.

Would this not have encouraged the faith of Israel as they saw God's promises of power? Would this not have destroyed the courage of the leaders of Canaan when they saw the death and display of one of their own?

**3. Doesn't Jesus Christ also have the same power as well...that he gives to you today for your dominion work?**

Luke 4:36 Then they were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying, "What a word this is! **For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits**, and they come out."

Revelation 19:11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a **white horse**. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He **judges and makes war**. 12 His eyes were like a **flame of fire**, and on His head were **many crowns**. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. 13 He was clothed with a **robe dipped in blood**, and His name is called The Word of God.

**Aren't you called, led by your might warrior, to capture the world so men would either surrender to God or be destroyed? To bind and to loose 疏松?**

Matthew 16:19 "And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and **whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven**, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Luke 9:1 Then He called His twelve disciples together and **gave them power and authority over all demons**, and to cure diseases.

Acts 1:8 "But **you shall receive power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and **you shall be witnesses** to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

So how well are you using the power and tools that God has given to you?

### **Worship for God's People**

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.

#### **1. There was another gift that God gave his people to help with their conquest of Canaan: Worship.**

Worship is the means by which **God gives you unmerited 不配得 instruction and favor**. So it is not surprising that Israel stopped and enjoyed this gift before marching and striking the Canaanites with the sword, as one might have expected. Worship was the means **by which they were equipped** for battle.

Matthew 6:33 "**But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.**

#### **2. Let us consider the worship.**

**a. To worship God, Joshua built an altar on Mt. Ebal** (which was the mountain from which the curses were pronounced, so it was needed). **The altar for worship was made exactly as God said: With no human tool used,** but with naturally existing stones, as they were taught. Man cannot add any beauty to what God has decreed.

Deuteronomy 27:5 "And there you shall build an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones; you shall not use an iron *tool* on them. 6 "You shall build with whole stones the altar of the LORD your God, and offer burnt offerings on it to the LORD your God. 7 "You shall offer peace offerings, and shall eat there, and rejoice before the LORD your God.

**b. They offered burnt offerings, which showed a total dedication 全面献上 of their lives to God, and peace offerings, which showed fellowship between the offerer and God.**

If God comforts you with gifts, you must praise and live for him.

**c. Accompanying the sacrifices were the writing and reaffirming 重新确认 of God's law.**

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.

**3. Along with the altar for sacrifice was the Ark of the Covenant - a beautiful picture of the presence of God. The** cover of the Ark of the Covenant was called the mercy seat.

**4. And all the religious and political leaders were in worship in submission to God,** the prince and the pauper 穷光蛋, God is never far from his worship and he commands all men to worship. Converts (strangers) to Jesus Christ were there also.

33...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.

**5. In this worship note a few more things!**

**a. The priests pronounced blessings upon the people—the priestly benediction, as Moses said.**

Deut 11:29 "Now it shall be, when the LORD your God has brought you into the land which you go to possess, that you shall put the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal.

**b. The law was read again...the whole law**...so Israel could hear the curses, along with the blessings. God knew that the blessings have more effectiveness when the curses were put beside them. No doubt there were explications 论述 of the law and recitations 诵读 as well. When the law is missing, laxity takes over.

**c. All of Israel was included in the worship of God.** Note the sin of modern churches that exclude children from being part of the worship. Children were always included in worship. Jos 8:35 2Ch 20:13 Ezr 8:21 Ne 12:43 Mt 21:15.

Deuteronomy 31:11 "when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. 12 "Gather the people together, **men and women and little ones, and**

**the stranger who is within your gates**, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God...

**Even in the midst of their enemies worship was essential.** Worship was nourishing and Israel had to be fed. This was the same area where Jacob had stopped when fleeing from Esau and worshipped God and was where God equipped him. As a result, God put his fear in Jacob's enemies.

Genesis 35:5 And they journeyed, and **the terror of God was upon the cities** that were all around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob.

There is no ground for cowardly abdication of pure worship, even at a time when the world harasses us.

### **Conclusion:**

Remember, every financial blessing you have is a gift from God and you must use it as God directs. Take the time to learn how to use God's gifts to advance his kingdom...and I am not just talking about tithes, but how you use your money in the home or business. Remember that the church has power. This means you must not be intimidated 威逼 by the world...or of rebellious members. You have to capture the world for Christ. Don't let their mocking or teasing stop you from pressing on. Remember the blessings of worship, the place where you are renewed in the covenant by the Word and Sacrament, where you pray, and where elders watch over your souls. If you lose your job because you won't work on Sunday, don't worry. God will provide what you need. Make use of these gifts; don't ignore them.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Do you see how rich you are for the task God has given to you? Let me encourage you now to your duty 责任 with the words of the Apostle Paul: Romans 1:16 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek." Not only are you commanded to capture the world for Christ, but you must see how the world desperately needs to be captured for Christ.

Finally, a word for the non-Christian: Will you receive the cursings of God or the blessings of God? If you reject his blessings, cursings in this life and for eternity in hell are inevitable and automatic 自动 I pray that you will plead with God for blessings that come because Jesus died on the cross as a substitute for those who are under his curse.