

An Altar to the Lord

What we can learn from Israel's early victories in the Land of Canaan

Joshua 6–8

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Prelude:

I. Israel existed to bless the world.

- A. However, the Lord did not make those blessings happen immediately, but
- B. He went through many stages of works,
 - 1. to bring us those blessings.
 - 2. This is the point of the Old Testament, and
 - a) it is the point of the Book of Joshua.
 - b) Joshua is in the Bible to show God working for Man's salvation.

II. We think of the crucifixion of Jesus

- A. as what God did to save man, but
- B. God did many things to lead up to the death of Jesus,
 - 1. preparing the way through promises, prophecies, laws, and covenants,
 - 2. that we might understand our need for a Savior.

III. Joshua 1 shows God preparing Joshua to lead Israel.

- A. Joshua 2 shows Joshua preparing the people to fight the Canaanites.
- B. Joshua 3 shows Israel finally crossing into the Land of Canaan.
- C. Joshua 4 shows Israel setting up memorials.
- D. Joshua 5 shows Israel preparing themselves spiritually for the coming battles.

Persuasion:

I. Joshua 6.1–27 – Israel Defeats Jericho

- A. Dread must have filled the hearts of the people of Jericho
 - 1. as Israel stationed themselves outside the city walls,

2. preventing anyone from entering or leaving Jericho (6.1).

B. Then the Lord let Joshua know that He had given the city to Joshua and Israel,

2 And the Lord said to Joshua: “See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor” (6.2).

1. Then He told them to march around the city once a day for six days

2. with seven priests blowing on trumpets and walking before the ark.

a) On the seventh day they were to march around the city seven times.

b) Then

(1) the priests would blow the trumpets,

(2) the people would shout, and

(3) the wall would fall (6.3–5).

C. They did as the Lord instructed, and

1. Joshua told the people to shout, but

a) he reminded them to spare Rahab and her family, and

b) he reminded them not to take anything,

(1) leaving everything for the Lord’s treasury, because

(2) the Lord gets the firstfruits, not the leftovers,

17b “Only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all who are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent. 18 And you, by all means abstain from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. 19 But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are consecrated to the Lord; they shall come into the treasury of the Lord” (6.16–19).

2. When they shouted the heavily fortified wall fell flat.

D. The warriors of Israel entered the city easily and destroyed everything,

1. burning the city with fire,
2. taking all the precious metals for the Lord, and
3. saving Rahab.
 - a) The Lord had promised Abraham
 - b) that in him the Lord would bless all the families of the Earth, and
 - (1) by sparing Rahab, who was not an Israelite,
 - (2) the Lord showed that He is interested in everyone
 - (a) who wants to do the right thing, and
 - (b) He made her an ancestor of
 - i) the One He would bring into the world
 - ii) to bless all the families of the Earth.

E. After the capture of Jericho, Joshua pronounced this curse,

26 “Cursed be the man before the Lord who rises up and builds this city Jericho; he shall lay its foundation with his firstborn, and with his youngest he shall set up its gates” (6.26).

1. This will come up later in the Bible.

II. Joshua 7.1–26 – Ai Defeats Israel

A. The next town should have been easy for Israel, but

1. something happened.
2. A man of the tribe of Judah, Achan by name, took something forbidden,
 - a) bringing a curse on Israel, and
 - b) defeat at the next town, because the Lord was not with them (7.1).

B. Joshua again sent spies, and

1. they reported back that Ai would be easy, and
2. Israel would only need two or three thousand men for the battle (7.2, 3).

C. Three thousand went to Ai and

1. fled before the inhabitants of it, and
2. even lost thirty-six men.
 - a) The hearts of the people of Jericho melted at the presence of Israel, but
 - b) the hearts of Israel melted before the people of Ai (7.4, 5).

D. In abject humility, Joshua

1. tore his clothes,
2. fell on his face before the ark for a long time, and
3. put dust on his head, and
 - a) the elders joined him.
 - b) He questioned why the Lord brought them over the Jordan.
 - (1) He was embarrassed and
 - (2) feared what would happen if news of this spread (7.6–9).

E. However, the Lord spoke to Joshua telling him,

1. to get up,
2. Israel had sinned,
3. He would not be with them anymore,
 - a) unless they took care of the problem, and
 - b) by a process of elimination
 - (1) the Lord said how they could find the offender,
 - (2) bringing forward the tribe that the Lord pointed out,
 - (a) then He would take a certain family,
 - (b) then He would take a certain household, and
 - i) finally He would narrow it down to the man (7.10–15).
 - ii) Then they would burn the offender.

F. Joshua did as the Lord commanded, and

1. Judah was chosen,
2. then the family of the Zarhites,
3. then Zabdi was taken, and
 - a) Zabdi's grandson Achan was chosen (7.16–18).

G. The Lord had not specified the sin, and Joshua asked Achan,

19 “My son, I beg you, give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession to Him, and tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me” (7.19).

H. Achan confessed that he took

1. a Babylonian garment,
2. two hundred shekels of silver, and
3. a wedge of gold worth fifty shekels (7.20, 21).

I. Joshua sent messengers to Achan's tent to retrieve the material, and then

1. brought the stolen goods,
2. all of Achan's other possessions, and
3. his family who conspired along with him, and
 - a) stoned them and burned them with fire (7.22–25).
 - b) They had troubled Israel, so the Lord troubled Achan and his family.

J. They renamed the place where they stoned Achan,

1. the Valley of Achor, and
2. they made a huge pile of stones over Achan and his family (7.26).

III. Joshua 8.1–29 – Israel Defeats Ai

A. Knowing that Joshua and Israel were dismayed

1. over the defeat at Ai, and

2. over what one of their own had done, and
 3. what they had to do to him,
 - a) the Lord reassured Joshua, telling him,
 - b) not to be dismayed, but
 - (1) to go to Ai, because
 - (2) the Lord promised that He had given Ai to Israel, but
 - (a) this time they could keep the spoil for themselves (8.1–2).
 - (b) If only Achan had not been impatient and greedy.
- B. They made a plan to draw the soldiers out of Ai
1. by pretending to flee from the soldiers of Ai.
 2. Then another group of Israelite soldiers
 - a) would enter the undefended city and
 - b) set it on fire (8.3–8).
- C. Then after planning the work, they worked the plan.
1. Joshua led some Israelites on the North side and fled before their enemies.
 2. The men of Ai chased after Israel.
 - a) Then the Lord told Joshua to raise his spear, and
 - b) the men waiting in ambush on the South side of the city
 - (1) attacked it, and
 - (2) set it on fire.
 - (a) Then the warriors of Ai were dismayed and
 - (b) Joshua and his soldiers who pretended to flee,
 - i) turned on their pursuers and
 - ii) attacked them.
 3. The children of Israel killed all the men and women,

- a) about 12,000 people, but
 - b) saved the king of Ai (8.9–25).
- D. Even as Moses had to hold up his hands while Israel fought their enemies,
- 1. so verse 26 says Joshua had to hold up his hand
 - 2. with which he held his spear until Israel won.
 - a) The Israelites took the livestock and spoil of Ai, but then
 - b) burned the city and made it a desolation.
 - (1) Then they hung the king of Ai on a tree, and
 - (2) at evening they took it down,
 - (a) cast it at the entrance of the city, and
 - (b) piled a huge heap of stones on him (8.26–29).

IV. Joshua 8.30–35 – Israel Hears the Word

- A. Israel obeyed Deuteronomy 27.4–8.

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 (Jos 8.30–32).

- 1. This was their land.
 - 2. The former inhabitants polluted the land with their sin.
 - a) Now Israel would sanctify the land
 - b) through worship of the one true God.
- B. This also fulfilled Deuteronomy 27.

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. 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 (Jos 8.33).

C. All the people heard all the Law.

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 (Jos 8.30–35).

1. This fulfilled Deuteronomy 31.9–13.
2. We cannot overemphasize the need to read all the word of God.

Exhortation:

I. Truly, the Book of Joshua shows God's love for all people.

- A. How does the Book of Joshua show God's love?
- B. The Book of Joshua shows God keeping His promise to Abraham
 1. to give the Land of Canaan to Abraham through his descendants.
 2. Why did God give Abraham the Land of Canaan?
 - a) God gave Abraham the Land of Canaan
 - b) that the nation that descended from Abraham might have a place, and
 - (1) there that nation would bring to the world
 - (2) the blessing that God promised through Abraham,
 - (a) that in him God would bless all the families of the Earth.
 - (b) God wants to bless all the families of the Earth, because
 - i) God loves the world, and

ii) this blessing took the form of Jesus of Nazareth.

II. What are you doing with the love of God?

A. For one thing, read the Book of Joshua.

B. Some of it you will find exciting, and

1. some of it you will find tedious, but

2. know that whatever you read in the Book,

a) God wants you to know that He is serious about our lives.

b) He wants to bless us, but

(1) He will cut off those blessings,

(2) if you refuse Him.