

The Conquest of Ai (Part 1)

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[0:00] Joshua chapter 8, where we're going to be tonight, Joshua chapter 8.

In fact, I'm going to read the entire chapter, though we're not going to get all the way through that tonight. Get close. Then we're going to have to skip a week, and we'll get back to it and finish up chapter 8.

Of course, Vladimir will be here next Sunday. He'll be preaching also Sunday evening, so we'll be treated to that as well. So let me go ahead and read this chapter. Joshua chapter 8, verse 1.

Now the Lord said to Joshua, Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed or discouraged. 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. And you shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king.

[1:14] Only its spoil and its cattle you shall take as booty or plunder for yourselves. Lay in ambush for the city behind it.

So Joshua rose and all the people of war to go up against Ai, and Joshua chose 30,000 mighty men of valor and sent them away by night.

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.

And 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, just like they did the last time, that we shall flee before them, for they will come out after us, till we have drawn them from the city, for they will say, They are fleeing before us as at the first.

Therefore, we will flee before them. Then you shall rise from the ambush and seize the city, for the Lord your God will deliver it into your hand.

[2:23] 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.

Joshua therefore sent them out, and they went to lie in ambush, and stayed between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of Ai. But Joshua lodged that night among the people.

Then Joshua rose up early in the morning and mustered the people, and went up, he and the elders of Israel, before the people of Ai. 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. So he took about five thousand men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of the city.

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.

[3:23] 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. And Joshua and all Israel made as if they were beaten before them and fled by the way of the wilderness.

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. 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.

Then the Lord said to Joshua, Stretch out the spear 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.

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.

[4:28] 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.

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. 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. But the king of Ai they took alive and brought him to Joshua.

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.

So it was that all who fell that day, both men and women, were twelve thousand, all the people of Ai. But Joshua did not draw back his hand with which he stretched out the spear until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai.

[5:43] 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. So Joshua burned Ai and made it a heap forever, a desolation to this day.

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.

Now Joshua built an altar to the Lord God of Israel in Mount Hebal, 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 stone, of whole stone, over which no man has wheeled in an iron tool.

And they offered on it burnt offerings to the Lord, and sacrificed peace offerings. 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.

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.

[7:05] 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.

And afterward he read all the words of the Law, the blessings and the curses, according to all that is written in the book of the Law. 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.

Ah, long chapter, isn't it? Well, I started to, well, started to stop. That didn't sound right. I had an idea of maybe stopping at verse 29, but I want to go ahead and read through the entire chapter, because it all goes together.

Now, even though we're not going to be able to cover all of that here tonight, but we'll be able to cover the lion's share of it. But before we really get into the, what I think are the main lessons of this chapter, there is a lesson for us right at the very beginning.

And I think, you know, you should take notice of how this chapter begins, and especially take notice of it in light of what took place in the previous chapter and all of that.

[8:26] And so what is, what's the first thing we see here in verse 1? Well, the Bible says, Now the Lord said to Joshua, so God is coming to Joshua, He's speaking to him, and what does he say to him?

Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed. That's how it's translated in the New King James. Discouraged would be a good way to describe that.

Don't be discouraged. Don't be fearful. Don't be discouraged. And I say to you that that is such a gracious act of God to do this for Joshua.

Especially, again, in light of the things that have transpired before that are still very fresh. Wounds, you know, spiritual wounds that are still quite sensitive and fresh.

And apparently, of course, because God knows the hearts and thoughts of every one of his children, of all mankind, apparently God could see discouragement in the heart of Joshua.

[9:31] And so he reassures him, don't be afraid. Don't be discouraged. Now think about it. From Joshua's perspective, think about this.

Israel had suffered a demoralizing defeat at the hands of Ai. And that's still fresh in his mind. Terrible thing. I mean, a city of a mere 12,000 people, we learn here in verse 25 of the chapter that I just read. Just 12,000 people. Now, put that next to, though we don't know the exact number, put that next to Israel's armies.

You know, just a mere fraction of the size of the forces of Israel's army. And we know it was huge. No, it was.

Because in chapter 8, verse 3, you know, Joshua is going to send just a portion of his army to the west side of Ai, and the Bible numbers them 30,000.

[10:40] Now, what's 12,000 citizens of Ai compared to just 30,000 troops? And that's not even the whole number of the troops of Israel, the armies of Israel.

And then, you know, they followed the advice of these spies. And Joshua, Joshua is the one to take the blame. He's the leader of Israel, and he sends out, allows to be sent out 30, excuse me, just 3,000 fighting men against Ai, and they were routed immediately.

And 36 of them were killed. I know that doesn't sound like a huge number, but this was demoralizing. And so this is fresh in Joshua's mind.

And not only that, but add to that, and this really is at the heart of the whole problem, Israel had sinned. And they're suffering sin in the camp that needed to be dealt with.

Achan, you remember, had disobeyed God's ban upon everything, everything in the city of Jericho. They could not take any of it. And no plunder.

[11:52] God had put it under the ban, and Achan had disobeyed. And he coveted some of it, and he took some of it, and he took it secretly, and he took it to his tent, and he buried it in the ground in his tent under some stuff.

That's what the Bible says. That's the Bible's word. Under stuff. And, you know, and so, you know, the result of that. And so here's Joshua. He's having to take Achan and his family, and they're taken outside of the camp, and they're stoned to death and burned.

And so Joshua, you know, this is a discouraging time for Joshua. Disobedience. God's people are disobedient.

They're defeated. They're under the discipline of God. And Joshua was discouraged, yet how gracious God is to lift him up. Here, the very beginning. Do not be afraid.

Do not be afraid. Do not be discouraged. You know, discouragement is one of Satan's most effective tools against God's people. Did you know that? Yeah, he has other tools that are very effective.

[12:59] Discouragement is one of his very effective tools, and not just for God's people at large, but specifically God's leaders, his pastors, his leaders.

Discouragement is a terrible, terrible thing in the ministry. And so God is so gracious, and he wants to reassure Joshua here. Something grand is about to happen, and I think Joshua's thinking, all is lost.

All is lost. Look what we've done. Yes, we obeyed God's instructions to deal with the sin in the camp, but what now? And God says, don't be afraid.

Don't be discouraged. So then there are three, I think three major points of revelation in this chapter, or I might say kind of sections of the chapter, movements of the chapter, three of them. We'll look at two of them here tonight, and leave the third for a couple of weeks from now. First of all, the first thing that we need to see is this promise of God.

[14:05] It's the sovereign promise of God. There's a sovereign promise of God that is given to Israel right here in just a few words, but that's all it takes.

God said to Joshua in verse 1, I'll remind you again, look at it. Take all the people of war. He said, take all the people of war with you, and arise, go to Ai.

And then he says this. Here's the promise. See, I have given it into your hand, given into your hand, the king of Ai, his people, his city, his lands.

That's a promise. It's a sovereign promise. The victory is sure, as if the battle had already taken place. I mean, God uses that kind of language.

See? That is, look out ahead of you. Here's what's going to happen. It's sure victory, as if the victory had already been won. And really, by the way, that's why I call this the sovereign promise of God,

because in the sovereign mind of God, the victory, indeed, it was already won.

[15 : 16] It was already theirs. Just the matter of some formalities here that needed to be done. And why? Because the battle is the Lord's.

That has been the case from the very beginning. And that's why Joshua and Israel went so wrong when they attempted to take Ai on their own, with their own devising, and in their own strength. They thought, now the battle is ours. All right? Jericho was yours, God. Now Ai is ours. The battle is the Lord's. And so, as it was with Jericho, it will be with Ai, even though, of course, the method of victory is going to be quite different here, with Ai.

I mean, totally different. But the end result will be the same. Verse 2, And you shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king.

So, total defeat, complete destruction, complete annihilation. It's going to be exactly the same.

[16 : 26] And it's interesting, I want you to think about it, if Israel had just waited on God, I mean, that's just as plain as the nose on my face.

If Israel just waited and not jumped the gun, then there would have been no demoralizing defeat at the hands of this little, you know, little community called Ai of a mere 12,000 people.

We're to assume that means 12,000 lives, including women and children. Just 12,000. We can't imagine how small their army then would have been if Israel just waited.

You know, they could have seen this great victory. And what a lesson that is for us. I mean, how typical it is of us. And I'm just going to include all of us here, okay? I'm in here.

How typical that we trust God for the big battles, you know, our Jerichos. We have those. But when a relatively small battle comes along, kind of like little Ai, we say, God, I've got this.

[17 : 41] Got this. Now, we don't say that. But that's how we act. I got this one. You know, I won't be needing you for this one.

And the result is what? Defeat. Demoralizing defeat. Defeat out of nowhere. You know, we're just not expecting it. It's a big shocker, big surprise.

Well, what? The big deal here. There's something else interesting as well. Not only consider that, you know, if Israel just waited on God, but think about Achan.

If Achan had just waited, he just waited. You know, he just had to have that gold that he saw, that wedge of gold and silver and some other things.

If he had just waited and trusted God and obeyed God and waited on God, then there would have been no reason then for him to take that gold and such and from Jericho and hide it in his tent.

[18 : 45] He could have obtained those same things. Very likely could have obtained those same things from Ai and with God's blessings.

I mean, that's what we understand from verse 2. He says, only, and that's just a word that means that there's an exception now. This is different from Jericho. Now, I said this about Jericho and all these things were under the ban, but now Ai is different.

Only with Ai, it's spoil and its cattle, all of its livestock, you shall take as plunder for yourselves.

Gave permission. You know, if Achan had just waited. What a lesson this is. Now, aren't you thankful that God doesn't deal with us as severely as he did with Achan?

We kind of explain why that was for that time and God's purpose in that. but how often do we jump the gun, get ahead, and we covet things, want things that God may one day allow us to have, but we're not going to wait.

[19 : 59] We're going to get it now. You know, get it in our own way and it just, it doesn't satisfy, does it? It just doesn't work out. And if we would just wait for God's blessings, then they would truly be blessings to us.

We would respond to them as wonderful blessings of God rather than things that we have taken hold of ourselves. It's just kind of the American way.

All right, so the sovereign promise of God, the battle is the Lord's, therefore the victory then is sure because it's his battle and it is as sure as if it had already taken place, already happened.

See, he says, I have given you, past tense, even before the battle takes place. I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land.

Second, not only the sovereign promise of God, but the second thing, and we'll spend a little more time on this and this will be all that we'll deal with tonight, the strategic plan of God.

[21 : 10] is an amazing plan. And really, there are two plans going on here, two things at work, two things that God desires to accomplish.

There is the plan for victory, that's first of all, that's the part that we can see so easily. But there's also something else, another plan, and it's a plan for judgment. We'll get to that here in a minute. And if we don't see that, then we're not going to understand all of the various aspects of the victory because we're going to wonder, well, you know, about killing all of these people and babies and hanging up the king there, leaving him out there all day for everybody to see.

If we don't see, if we see just the plan for victory and not God's plan for judgment, then we're going to misunderstand. Understand what God is telling us in this passage.

Let's begin with the plan for victory. Now, of course, this is not like Jericho. The strategy is quite different, isn't it?

[22 : 23] This is more of conventional warfare, isn't it? I mean, we can kind of sink our teeth into this and say, you know, this is just really interesting. I could see an army doing this very thing.

So this is more conventional, not like the strategy at Jericho. You know, circle the city and then the walls come down and you walk on in and destroy the people and so forth.

That's very unconventional. But this is conventional. Verse 2, and here it is in kind of a sentence, though there's more to it, and of course the scripture describes it in more detail as we go along, but in verse 2, lay an ambush for the city behind it.

Now, that's the main part of God's strategy here. to ambush the city, an ambush. Lure them out, ransack the city, burn it, then flank their army and victory.

There's the strategy, kind of in short description. The Bible gives us a much longer description of it. And it is interesting. Let's just kind of walk through this, verse 3 again.

[23 : 34] So Joshua rose, and all the people of war, that means Israel's entire army, to go up against Ai, and Joshua chose 30,000 mighty men of valor, valiant men, and sent them away by night.

Now, why did he do that? Under the cover of darkness. So I've read this, and it just says what it says, but I'm thinking how hard would it be to conceal 30,000 soldiers, you know.

And, you know, this relatively small community called Ai, I'm just thinking, you know, a place where everybody knows what's going on all around them. But that's what he did. Sent them out under the cover of darkness, and they are the ambush force.

All right. 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. So you're not going to be a long way away, you've got to be close.

Still, difficult to see how they could be concealed that way. Be close so that, he says, and all of you be ready. Verse 5, then I and all the people who are with me will approach the city.

[24 : 55] This will be from the north. And it will come about when they come out against us as at the first. What does that mean? Just like they did the last time we tried this, when we were defeated.

When they come out, they shall, that we shall flee before them, just like we did last time. Only last time we really were running away.

We'll flee from them for they will come out after us till we have drawn them from the city. So here's the strategy to lure them out. For they will say, here they come again.

These idiots will show them just like we did before. They will say, they are fleeing before us as at the first, therefore we will flee before them.

By the way, think about this. Why would the A-I-ites, say that real fast, that's why I said that slow, A-I-ites, yeah, why would they take this bold initiative to come out against them?

[26 : 12] Is it because they're brave? Could be. Could be that they've just figured this out, or at least they thought they have. And I just think the kind of reasoning, we're not going to stay inside these walls and have these walls fall down on us.

We're going to take the battle to them, you know. I don't know if that's true, but that was their tactic. We'll go after them. Worked last time, it'll work this time.

Then what? Well, verse 7, then you shall rise from the ambush and seize the city for the Lord your God will deliver it into your hand. The battle is the Lord. So it's a trap, isn't it?

plain and simple. It's a trap. And also I find it interesting that God is using Israel's past defeat to give the enemy a false confidence.

Don't think that it would have worked if, you know, this hadn't already worked before. Interesting, isn't it? God could actually use our defeats for our benefit at a later time, for his purposes.

[27:25] And so, you know, the past defeat was kind of the key to alluring the enemy into this trap. Verse 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 so I have commanded you. and just adding that little part lets us know that this plan is not just an option, something to throw out there, maybe you ought to think about this, think this will work.

This was a command of God and it was to be obeyed because he is the captain of the Lord's host. Okay. So, victory is the supreme promise of God, a promise that we must believe, must be believed.

And victory is a strategic plan of God, a plan that must be obeyed. And victory will come. And Joshua and Israel did obey, didn't they?

They did. Verse 9, Joshua therefore sent them out. And they went to lie in ambush and stayed between Bethel and Ai, both of these cities west of the west side of Ai.

[28:37] Bethel is west of the city. But Joshua lodged that night among the people. Then Joshua rose up early in the morning, just like he did, by the way, before the battle of Jericho, and mustered the people, numbered them, got them together, and went up, he and the elders of Israel, before the people of Ai.

So the stage is set, isn't it? All the pieces are in place. Joshua and the people are north of the city of Ai, almost in plain view, so that the people of Ai could look out and say, here they come again.

And yet, they didn't know it, but 30,000 valiant soldiers are to the west of the city, and they're lying in wait for the signal from Joshua, so that they could sack the city of Ai and set it on fire.

And then, by the way, we'll discover, then after they set it on fire, then they'll join the battle by flanking the enemy. And so, then the enemy will eventually be in between the two, you know, 30,000 soldiers coming from Ai, and the rest, the balance of Israel's armies coming from this direction, and they're caught right in the middle, and defeat is just imminent.

All right, so, then when we get to verses 11 to 13, these verses are kind of a repetition of it. And some scholars have supposed that this was kind of a review or even a flashback to the commands that Joshua gave, the instructions really God gave through Joshua.

[30:19] And the benefit of these verses is that these verses kind of expand on some of the details. So, let's look at it again real quick. Let me just make a couple of comments about it. Starting with verse 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. So, here they are to the north, all encamped, and there's just a valley between them and the city of Ai, which means what? People of Ai could very clearly see them.

There they are. So, he took about 5,000 men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai on the west side of the city. And right off, if you've been paying attention, you're wondering, 5,000, I thought it was 30,000.

So, what's the difference? I don't know. I don't know. There's been some speculation about it, that actually in the language, it could mean 5,000 units, that together equal 30,000 men.

But that, you know, you can't prove that. there just seems to be a discrepancy and we don't really know the answers because we're just not smart enough. But there is no discrepancy with God here. And so, it could be that some have thought that maybe since Bethel is very close, that 5,000 were actually used of the 30,000 to do the initial sacking of the city.

[31:53] Nobody in there except women and children, so they didn't need all 30,000. And the others would be out just in case, you know, possibly either some of the troops of Ai or maybe even troops coming from Bethel would flank them and so they just made sure.

And that's possible as well. And you can just take your pick. There are other possibilities as well. All right, so, the 5,000, they set an ambush between Bethel and El on the west side of the city.

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, valley there before Ai.

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, did not know, totally ignorant of these troops that were encamped west of there, ready to ambush, did not know about that.

And Joshua and all Israel made as if they were beaten before them and fled by the way of the wilderness. So they're turned tail and running and in kind of a disarray to give the impression that just like before, they're running from the battle, they've been defeated.

[33:31] 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. That's the key. We're drawn away, that's the whole strategy, draw them away from the city.

There was not a man left in Ai, no one left there other than women and children and we're to probably suppose the elderly are still there in the city.

Or, and here's a perplexing part of this, or Bethel. No one left in Ai or Bethel. What does that mean? No one left in Ai or Bethel, it says, who did not go out after Israel so they left the city open and pursued Israel.

Now, Bethel is west of the city of Ai. The ambush was set up between Ai and Bethel. Bethel, by the way, was a larger city, larger than Ai.

In fact, some have supposed that Ai was kind of a military outpost for Bethel. So it could be that their armies were, you know, were connected in that way and many of their troops were there in Ai or it could mean, since Bethel is never mentioned again, which implies that Bethel was destroyed here at the same time that Ai was, even though we don't have a description of it.

[35:00] That there was such a close unity between the two and Ai being the military outpost that they defeated Ai but also Bethel as well. I don't know.

So they left the city open and pursued Israel. Then the Lord said to Joshua, stretch out your spear. Alright, so here the battle is about to take place.

You know, all the pieces are all set. And the people of Ai, the king and his army, they have taken the bait and they are now headed out.

They don't even know it but they're headed toward their utter defeat. And God brings the victory. victory. And so as you read on it's just really quite an interesting story isn't it?

We can just almost imagine being there and seeing all this. We can even see someone making a movie about this and no doubt you know they will. I'm not sure if they have.

[36:02] If they have, I've missed it. But it's just really kind of an exciting thing. You know, you can just almost picture it. Here's Joshua in Israel and they are there on a little high place before the valley and there's the city of Ai and the armies of Ai come out.

You know, they're going to take care of these Israelites. They're a bunch of cowards anyway. And Israel turns and flees and Ai, you know, sucked right into it, hook, line and sinker.

And they come after them and then the ambush takes place from the west and they sack the city and the people that are remaining there and they start burning, burning it.

And the soldiers of Ai, they look behind their shoulder and the smoke is rising up in the air. And so they know their city's on fire, no one there to protect it.

And lo and behold, the 30,000 soldiers who have gone by way of Ai, they're now coming toward the enemy, the soldiers of Ai, the armies of Ai.

[37:01] And so they're caught in between and there's a tremendous defeat. It's all done. God gives the victory. Incredible story. The strategy. The strategy of the Lord.

His plan is just impeccable. But I again would say to you that victory was only part of God's strategy, God's plan, God's purpose.

That's the part that we like to read about and it's exciting and rightfully so. You know, what a wonderful, mighty thing that God has done in behalf of his people.

The battle is the Lord's and he has brought victory. But his plan is also for judgment. And if we don't see that part of it, then we're going to misunderstand, misinterpret, react in the wrong way to certain elements of the victory.

And so we must understand that this is judgment. judgment upon the people of Ai and upon their king who is representative of them.

[38:16] And that's why you have the king, his judgment separated from the rest of the people. It's judgment. And, you know, there's some pretty gruesome details in this chapter about this.

I mean, let's just face it. Death, bloodshed, even women and children. And, you know, this thing about the king and hanging him and hanging him out there, letting everybody just see it.

He's out there all day just hanging there. And we just think that's so barbaric, really, in our way of thinking, our sensibilities. But we have to understand that Israel here is God's instrument of

judgment.

judgment. Okay, they have no king. God is their king. And though God has a plan for Israel and it's, he's working out his plan of redemption through him that will eventually come to us as well.

But God is king and he's using his people as instruments of judgment upon a wicked and vile people in the land of Canaan.

[39:23] That's what he's doing. These people, people of Ai, the people of Jericho, the people of Bethel, the other people of this land, the Hittites, Amorites and all these people, their time has come.

Their sin is full from God's perspective. And so look at verse 23. But the king of Ai, they took alive, brought him to Joshua.

They've got plans for him. God does. 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.

So it was that all who fell that day, both men and women, were 12,000, all the people of Ai. That's all of them. For Joshua did not draw back his hand.

Remember, he held out the spear, or some versions have javelin. It's a word that probably means a very long sword. And he held that out throughout the entire battle.

[40:40] It was signifying the presence of God and his direction that they continue with the battle until the sword is withdrawn. And so he held the sword out, and they continued until the sword was withdrawn, with which he stretched out until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai.

And what did they do with the king, king Ai of Ai? Verse 29, and the king of Ai, he hanged on a tree until evening, till sundown.

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 it, raise over it a great heap of stones that remains to this day.

Now, that's pretty gruesome. At least from our way of thinking, our perspective, gruesome. I've seen things in movies, but maybe we're a little bit more desensitized to these kind of things in our day than we once were.

But still, this is even barbaric. Every citizen of Ai, every one of them, and possibly Bethel as well, though it's not described in Scripture, they're killed, destroyed.

[42:00] The king of Ai captured, and they hang him on a tree and leave him hanging there all day until sundown. And then they take his body down and leave it there outside the walls of the city.

And they heap a big pile of stones on top of him and so forth as a memorial of what God did there, his judgment there.

Now, why did Joshua do this? And maybe the more important question is, why did God so command him to do that and allow this very, quote, barbaric act?

Well, in regard to the king, what they did with him, it was in complete accord with Deuteronomy 21, chapter 21, verses 22 to 23.

Let me read it to you. If a man has committed a sin deserving 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.

[43:02] That's exactly what the dead, the king of Ai, prescribed by God's law. You see, the king of Ai is representative of the people here.

Now, they were all put to death, I mean, in battle, and destroyed. The king of Ai was reserved for a more visible, more representative of God's judgment upon the people of Ai.

He was hanged. A curse. He was under the curse of God. And God carried out his judgment. And, you know, it's just a picture, a symbol of God's harsh judgment upon sin is what this is.

I mean, the king's dead. I mean, after they hang him, and while he's hanging there, he could care less about that. So, we don't think about the king, you know, just being so humiliated, hanging there dead from a tree.

No, all that's over. It continues to be symbolic, a picture, a very vivid picture of what God thinks about sin and his judgment toward sin.

[44:23] And, you know, by the way, if you think that was really cruel and barbaric for the king, think about where he went the moment he did die in judgment, in torment.

Let me end tonight with this thought. And you might have trouble making this connection, but I try real hard, and I'll try to communicate this as best I can.

You should read this story about what they did with the king, king of Ai. You should read that and the details about that and be reminded of someone else.

Be reminded of someone else who hung on a tree. A cross. And hung outside the city. Not Ai, but the city of Jerusalem.

And, of course, you know who I'm talking about. Because they took Jesus just as they took this king and Jesus, though, who had never done anything wrong, never sinned.

[45 : 34] And they took him and they crucified him. They nailed him, his hands and his feet, took a Roman cross. They put a crown of thorns on his head. They drove a spear in his side.

They, you know, did all kinds of unspeakable things. And none of that mocked him and ridiculed him and blasphemed him as he hung there on that cross. And just as the king of Ai is hung upon a tree and left hanging until midnight, until nightfall, rather, they did the same to Jesus.

Did the same to him. And so, I just want you to think here. we react to the eighth chapter of Joshua and we say about the eighth chapter of Joshua how horrible, how barbaric, how repulsive that is.

I mean, just picturing that in our mind, such repulsive, a corpse hanging on a tree. I like the way one preacher put it.

Listen to this very carefully. He said, you turn 180 degrees from Joshua chapter 8 and you walk until you reach the New Testament and you see the Son of God hanging on a cross because sin is repulsive.

[47 : 08] It's repulsive. It is repulsive to God because that's what sin deserves. Repulsive. And you realize that we sit in our churches and we're hearing his word and we're singing his praises and we're enjoying assurance of sins forgiven and the hope of glory because one has hung upon a tree in our place and in our stead and borne the guilt of our sins and borne the punishment that that guilt deserves and borne it to the full.

Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now I'm found blind but now I see so the sovereign promise of God the battle is the Lord's the strategic plan of God plan of victory also plan of judgment and then one more that we'll get to next time a couple weeks the sanctified people of God that will be number three won't be won't be Thank you.