CAPITOL COMMISSION
Gospel Hope & Spiritual Strength for Government Leaders

MOPray

DR. JOHN BATTAGLIA • MISSOURI STATE MINISTER
P.O. BOX 891, JEFFERSON CITY • MISSOURI, 65102 • (573) 355-4161

Weekly Bible Study Schedule | Tuesday, March 25, 7:00-7:45 AM | HHR #3
Capitol Commission is NON-PARTISAN and MULTI-DENOMINATIONAL

INTRODUCTION

From Jericho to Ai – a short journey, a small army, and a big failure. A man named Achan disregarded God's command to not take any spoil from the victory over the city of Jericho. The plunder was dedicated to God. It was the first city conquered in the Promised Land and Jericho was under divine judgment. God is the one who fought Israel's battles. The first fruits of the city were "set apart for the LORD". Chapters seven and eight tell the story of Israel missing God's mark, repentance, and restoration.

MISSING GOD'S MARK

7:2-4 – Joshua sent some of his men from Jericho to spy out the town of Ai, east of Bethel *(10-15 miles north of Jerusalem)*. **When they returned, they told Joshua, "There's no need for all of us to go up there; it won't take more than two or three thousand men to attack Ai. Since there are so few of them, don't make all our people struggle to go up there." So approximately 3,000 warriors were sent, but they were soundly defeated. The men of Ai chased the Israelites from the town gate as far as the quarries and they killed about thirty-six who were retreating down the slope. The Israelites were paralyzed with fear at this turn of events, and their courage melted away.**

Thirty-six men died, Israel was confused, and God's name was mocked. Israel grew accustomed to God being with them fighting their battles just as He did in Jericho, a fortified city with monumental walls. The name Ai means "ruins". Yet this city of ruins was vital for Israel's conquest of Canaan.

I could imagine the Israeli spies telling Joshua, "we got this". They invaded Ai just like they did in the past but with different results. Gripped by fear they were pulled away from faith. Confidence in their God was taken away. The Jerichoites heart's melted because they feared Israel's God. The Israelites heart's melted because they assumed their past testimony would automatically be their present testimony.

7:7 – Then Joshua cried out, "Oh, Sovereign LORD, why did you bring us across the Jordan River if you are going to let the Amorites kill us?

Joshua said to God: "why did you…"? It is natural to ask why in times of grief. Asking why questions is not offensive to God. It is a normal human response. In sickness, the death of family members and friends, disappointments, broken relationships, and personal violations, questions are understandable. Joshua was confused and curious, eager to hear the word of the LORD.

7:11-12 – Israel has sinned and broken my covenant! They have stolen some of the things that I commanded must be set apart for me. And they have not only stolen them but have lied about it and hidden the things among their own belongings. That is why the Israelites are running from their enemies in defeat.

What is important to know about Israel's defeat? They did not seek the LORD before the military strike. Human wisdom and reliance on one's might deceived them to think, "we got this", it is an easy win. Have you ever thought that you do not need to check-in with God? Seeking God for His guidance and wisdom should be done before we make decisions. Israel's natural eye did not see what was happening in the spiritual. Sin was in the camp.

7:14, 16, 18 – "In the morning you must present yourselves by tribes, and the LORD will point out the tribe to which the guilty man belongs"…Early the next morning Joshua brought the tribes of Israel before the LORD, and the tribe of Judah was singled out…Zerah came forward with his family…and Zimri's family was brought forward person by person, and Achan was singled out.

The Hebrew name Achan means "trouble". And he certainly brought great trouble to himself, his family, the tribe of Judah, and all of Israel.

REPENTENCE TO GOD

7:19-20 – Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, by telling the truth. Make your confession and tell me what you have

done. Don't hide it from me." Achan replied, "It is true! I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel.

True repentance is more than feeling sorrow and regret. It is a 180-degree turn away from sin and back to God. It is changing our direction and actions we align with God's will. It is a transformation of the heart and mind. New thinking leads to new behavior.

Achan's sin brought judgement on himself, his family, and the community of Israel. Your decisions effect those in your life and the larger population. Israel was defeated and 36-soldiers were killed because of Achan's sin. Israel had recently entered the Promised Land, God was not about to let sin live and spread. Sin must be dealt with. God is holy and just; in the Old Testament sin was dealt with through judgment.

Achan and his family were executed in the Valley of Achor, a place of trouble and death but also future restoration. God promises to redeem this very place and turn it into a valley of hope!

> *"I will make…the Valley of Achor into a gateway of hope."* Hosea 2:15

The gates of hope point to the mercy in Jesus, the Christ. He took the punishment of our sin upon Himself. Rather than being stoned like Achan we are saved by the cross of Jesus. Jesus dealt with our sin. God does not want to punish you—He wants to restore you through Jesus!

> *But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.* 1 John 1:9

God is no longer angry with Israel. He restored them to right relationship.

RESTORATION BY GOD

8:1-2 – Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid or discouraged. Take all your fighting men and attack Ai, for I have given you the king of Ai, his people, his town, and his land. You will destroy them as you destroyed Jericho and its king. But this time you may keep the plunder and the livestock for yourselves. Set an ambush behind the town."

No doubt on Joshua's mind was the recent defeat incurred by the army of Ai. The LORD's first words were that of encouragement. Could it be Joshua's thoughts flashed back in time to when he first became leader of Israel.

Moses my servant is dead. Therefore, the time has come for you to lead these people, the Israelites, across the Jordan River into the land I am giving them. I promise you what I promised Moses: 'Wherever you set foot, you will be on land I have given you. This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:2-3, 9

God was faithful to do everything He said He would do. God made a way where there was no way for Israel to enter the Promised Land. Joshua fulfilled God's promise to lead Israel into the Promised Land. And he knew God would do it again.

The LORD gave Joshua a strategy to ambush Ai and defeat the city. The Spirit of God and a military strategy pointed them in the right direction. Joshua knew exactly what to do, and that the LORD would fight their battle.

8:18-19 – Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Point the spear in your hand toward Ai, for I will hand the town over to you." Joshua did as he was commanded. As soon as Joshua gave this signal, all the men in ambush jumped up from their position and poured into the town. They quickly captured it and set it on fire.

Joshua pointed the spear to Ai as Moses pointed his staff to the Red Sea. God was with Israel at the Red Sea and He was with Israel at the city of Ai. Following the victory the LORD renews His Covenant with Israel in verses 30-35.

8:32-35 – Then on the altar they presented burnt offerings and peace offerings to the LORD. And as the Israelites watched, Joshua copied onto the (uncut) stones of the altar the instructions Moses had given them. Then all the Israelites and foreigners were divided into two groups. One group stood in front of Mount Gerizim, the other in front of Mount Ebal and between them stood the Levitical priests carrying the Ark of the LORD's Covenant.

Joshua read all the blessings and curses Moses had written in the book of instruction.

God knew Israel would need reminding of God's Covenant and He knows we need reminding of who God is, how we are called to live, and what we can become.

God restores what is surrendered to Him.

Lessons from Defeat