

THE BATTLE OF AI

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The battle of Ai in Joshua chapter 8 is a great example of faith to us, much like the battle of Jericho in Joshua chapter 6. In chapter 6, God had promised to deliver Jericho into Israel's hands (verse 2), and then gave Joshua and Israel a precise plan to follow in order to receive this promise (verses 3-5). If Joshua and the Israelites had not believed God's promise, they would not have followed these instructions and the walls of Jericho would not have fallen. But, by faith, they followed these instructions to the letter, and the walls fell exactly like God said they would (Josh 6:6-20). In the same way, God promised Joshua that the king of Ai, his people, his city and his land were given into their hands (Josh 8:1). God said they would do to Ai and her king as they had done to Jericho and her king (Josh 8:2).

God's instructions to conquer Ai

God gave Joshua specific instructions to follow in order to bring about the fall of Ai. In Joshua 8:2, God told Joshua to "*lay thee an ambush for the city behind it.*" The details of the ambush God commanded to be set were passed from Joshua to his men. Joshua 8:3-8 says, "So Joshua arose, and all the people of war, to go up against Ai: and Joshua chose out thirty thousand mighty men of valour, and sent them away by night. And he commanded them, saying, *Behold, ye shall lie in wait against the city, even behind the city: go not very far from the city, but be ye all ready: and I, and all the people that are with me, will approach unto the city: and it shall come to pass, when they come out against us, as at the first, that we will flee before them, (For they will come out after us) till we have drawn them from the city; for they will say, They flee before us, as at the first: therefore we will flee before them. Then ye shall rise up from the ambush, and seize upon the city: for the Lord your God will deliver it into your hand. And it shall be, when ye have taken the city, that ye shall set the city on fire: according to the commandment of the Lord shall ye do.* See, I have commanded you."

Israel's faith in God's commandments

As in the case of Jericho, if Joshua and the Israelites had not believed God's promise to deliver Ai to them, then they would not have followed these instructions and Ai would not have been conquered. But, by faith, they followed the Lord's instructions to the letter, and Ai fell to Israel just as God had said it would (Josh 8:3-29). Thus, the battle of Ai in Joshua chapter 8 teaches us the important lesson that without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb 11:6), and we will receive none of God's promises if we do not believe (Jas 1:5-7). As with the fall of Jericho, the battle of Ai in Joshua chapter 8 is also an example that blessings do not come by faith *only*. Joshua and the Israelites demonstrated a *living* faith, a faith that was accompanied by works of obedience (Jas 2:14-26). If they had had faith that God was going to give them a victory over Ai, and then did nothing, the city would not have fallen. They had to obey. Likewise, Jesus Christ is the author of eternal salvation

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(continued)

unto all them that *obey* him (Heb 5:9).

Following God's pattern

Finally, the battle of Ai teaches us that *complete* submission to God's word without any alterations is required in order to inherit the promises of God. God gave Noah an exact pattern to follow in order to be saved from the Flood (Gen 6:13-21), and "*Noah did according to all the God commanded him*" (Gen 6:22; 7:5; Heb 11:7). On mount Sinai, God gave Moses a precise pattern to follow in making the tabernacle and all its instruments (Exod 25:9), and then told Moses to "*make them after their pattern, which was showed thee in the mount*" (Exod 25:40; Heb 8:5). Everything was indeed made "*according unto the pattern which the Lord had showed Moses*" (Num 8:4). God gave Israel an exact pattern to follow in building an altar to Him (Exod 20:22-26), and the children of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh built an altar after this pattern as a witness to everyone that they were part of God's people on the other side of the Jordan river (Josh 22:10-34). The "*pattern of the altar of the Lord*" was the witness (Josh 22:28). God gave David an exact pattern to follow in building the temple (1 Chr 28:19). David gave this same pattern to Solomon (1 Chr 28:10-18), and charged him to build the temple after that pattern (1 Chr 28:20), which Solomon did (1 Kgs 5-6; 2 Chr 2-5). In the same way, God gave Joshua and Israel a precise plan to follow in order to conquer Ai and they followed God's pattern without making any additions, subtractions, alterations, revisions or adjustments of any kind. Similarly, we need to understand that God's entire word for man is a pattern that must be followed to the letter without any deviation whatsoever. In Deuteronomy 4:2, God commanded Israel, "*Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.*" In Deuteronomy 12:32, the Lord said again, "*What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.*" Proverbs 30:5-6 says, "*Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.*" The New Testament gives the same commandment as the Old concerning not adding or taking anything from what God has said. Revelation 22:18-19 says, "*For I testify unto every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*" Ai was conquered only after Israel followed God's plan *exactly*. We too must obey God fully in order to receive the promise of eternal life (Matt 7:21-23; Luke 6:46; Heb 5:9; Rev 22:14).