

Week 24

Key Verse: Ephesians 6:18 NIV. And pray in the Spirit, on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Joshua 7:1 – 11:23

One of the themes of the Bible is God's holy warfare against Satan and sin. Back in Genesis 3:15, God declared war on the devil. We know the Victor, but the battle is still raging. Just as God punished the sinful nations in Joshua's time, He will continue to punish sinful people. The Israelites fought spiritual as well as physical battles with the enemy, who was out to influence them with evil. We fight spiritual battles with the world, the flesh, and the devil. God fought for them and God fights for us. He has provided the armor and weapons we need. See Ephesians 6:10-18.

Day One: Joshua 7:1 – 26. Defeat

This chapter emphasizes the importance of prayer. Joshua had just experienced victory and now he neglected to pray before the next battle, resulting in devastating consequences. We should never be too busy to pray or to think that prayer is not needed every day. We can learn from Achan's example of the progression of sin--he saw, he coveted, and he took. See James 1:15.

God had many ways of speaking to people in the Old Testament: angels (Gen. 32:1), dreams (Dan. 2), by special objects called Urim and Thummim (1 Sam. 30:7-8), and by casting "lots." We may not know exactly how this was done, but we can be certain that God controlled the results. This passage does not explain how the decision was made.

Ai was a small town of about 12,000. Joshua planned carefully for this battle, even sending out spies to check out the territory.

1. What began the defeat at Ai?

See Ephesians 2:1-3 for a glimpse of sin that ruled Achan and still rules many people.

2. What was Joshua's response to their defeat?

3. Have you ever experienced defeat? How did you react?

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4. How did God respond to Joshua's prayer?

5. Read Proverbs 28:13. How should people respond when they sin? Did Achan have time to repent?

6. What was the cost of his sin to him, his family, and the entire tribe of Israel?

7. After reading Deuteronomy 24:16, what did you learn about Achan's family?

8. What was the purpose of the heap of stones?

Prayer: Ask God to reveal anything in your life that hinders your victory.

Day Two: Joshua 8:1 – 35. Victory

This time Joshua was under the leadership of the Lord as he led the Israelites into battle. Victory is ours when we allow God to lead. The Israelites' renewal of the covenant reminds us that we need to keep His Word in our hearts and minds at all times.

The valley between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim formed a natural amphitheater, so everyone who was standing to hear the reading of the first five books of the Bible could hear Joshua clearly. Today, we are in the valley between Mount Calvary, where Jesus paid for our sins, and the Mount of Olives, where He will return in triumphant glory. On that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem. See Zech. 14:4.

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Joshua did three things at this time—he built an altar, made a copy of the law (this was the sixth stone memorial in the book of Joshua), and he read the blessings and curses, which are found in Deuteronomy 28. Joshua built the altar in the same place where Abraham built one in Gen. 12:6 & 7. They offered burnt offerings (Lev. 1:1-17) and fellowship offerings (Lev. 3:1-17 & 7:11-18). A person would give a burnt offering to God to show he had given himself completely to God. A fellowship offering was brought to indicate the person wanted to have fellowship and peace with God. Romans 12:1(NIV): “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.” Take note of the reference to the “mixed multitude” in Joshua 8:35 and remember the rabble in Ex. 12:38. Also see Deut. 31:12. The renewing of the covenant in verses 30-35 is known as the Palestinian Covenant.

9. Why did Joshua increase the size of the army for the second battle of Ai?

10. How did Joshua celebrate Ai’s defeat?

11. Who needed to hear the word of the Lord? Refer to verses 30-35.

12. What is our role in sharing the word of the Lord?

Unlike the battle of Jericho when everything belonged to the Lord, after this battle God allowed the Israelites to have the possessions of the city. If Achan had only exercised a little patience, he could have enjoyed the bounty provided by the Lord. God always provides, and we should be careful not to get ahead of Him.

Prayer: Colossians 4:3 & 4

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Day Three: Joshua 9:1 – 27. Deception By the Enemy

Here we read that Joshua neglected to pray prior to making an important decision. He and the Israelites are tricked by the enemy. We need to beware of our enemy, Satan; he is the father of lies and master of deception.

In Deut. 20:17, God was very explicit in His directions about the Hivites (the Gibeonites were Hivites). Gibeon was just north of Jerusalem and was known as el-Jib. It was a larger city than Ai or Bethel.

In Gen. 9:26, Noah predicted that Canaan would be a slave of Shem. The indenture of the Gibeonites fulfilled this in part. 1 Chron. 9:2, Ezra 2:43 & 58, and Neh. 3:26 refer to “temple servants or Nethinim.” Many Biblical scholars believe these may have been Gibeonites. Joshua 9:22 indicates their duties were to cut wood and carry water. The ceremonies in the tabernacle and later in the temple required a lot of wood and water.

If you want to learn more about “oaths” see: Ex. 20:7, Lev. 19:12, & 1 Sam. 14:24.

13. What influenced Joshua’s decision to enter into a treaty with the Gibeonites? (Ex. 34:12 and Deut. 7:2 & 6, Moses warning)

14. What should Joshua have done differently? What should we do before making important decisions? (James 1:5 & Prov.3:5 & 6) Sometimes faith requires patience; we should not rush into important matters.

15. What was the result when the truth was revealed?

16. Do we take in the enemy today? If so, name some tactics Satan uses against us.

Prayer: 1 Thessalonians 2:1 – 5

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Day Four: Joshua 10:1 – 28. The Power of Prayer

While Israel was renewing the covenant on Mt. Ebal, the five kings in Canaan were plotting an attack. The former allies of the Gibeonites became their enemies after they joined with Israel. God used Joshua's mistake to protect Gibeon and help Joshua conquer five kings in one battle, instead of a series of battles for that part of the land. When we make a deal with the enemy, we can also expect trouble, but God in His great mercy can use our mistakes for His glory.

17. The gathering of the five Amorite kings to attack the Gibeonites was God's gathering of the enemy for their defeat. What was the Gibeonites' response to the threat?

18. What was Joshua's prayer? Was this a reasonable request? (Is our faith like Joshua's?)

19. How did God intervene on Israel's behalf? (three things)

20. Name some ways God has intervened in your life. Was there a connection between your prayer and God's intervention?

21. How did Joshua encourage his army? (Refer to what God told him in verse 8)

Only the God of the Universe, Creator of all things, could cause the earth to stop its rotation without everything falling apart.

Prayer: James 5:16

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Day Five: Joshua 10:29 – 12:24. Success

22. What other victories did God give the Israelite army? (Joshua 10:29- 11:23)

23. What made Joshua such a successful leader?

24. What should leaders today do to ensure success?

Prayer: Encourage others, 1 Thessalonians 5:11 – 13

Joshua 11:16 – 23 is an account of all the good things God had done for Joshua and Israel. We should keep an account of all the good things God has done for us. As we worship God, we can give thanks for His goodness. God directs the Israelites to remember His great deeds and His laws and to teach them to their children (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). We keep scrapbooks of memorial events of our lives. We should keep a mental scrapbook or journal of God's work in our lives and use it in prayers of thanksgiving to Him.

Although the Israelites defeated the king of Jerusalem as well as the other four kings, they did not possess the city until the time of David.

We learned in these chapters the importance of prayer. We should seek the Lord at all times, on all occasions, and with all kinds of prayers and requests; keeping in mind that nothing is too difficult for the Lord. We must keep alert so as not to be taken in by the half-truths and lies of the evil one.