

General Church Education



The Battle of Ai

Joshua 8

Lesson 10

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 4: The Lord Is the Hero

For ages 9-10

The Battle of Ai

Joshua 8

Teacher Background

The Israelites prepared to attack Ai a second time, after their disappointing defeat. The Lord promised victory if they followed His plan. He ordered thirty thousand men to lie in wait north of the city and five thousand to camp in the valley in sight of the city. The king of Ai spotted the men in the valley at dawn and came out to attack. The Israelites ran away as if beaten, and the men of Ai left the city to pursue them. When Joshua stretched out his spear, the warriors lying in wait ambushed the city and set it on fire. Turning around, the citizens saw smoke rising from the city and ran back. The children of Israel turned too, trapping the citizens of Ai between two groups of warriors and killing them all. Joshua held out his spear until Ai was destroyed. Then the children of Israel worshiped the Lord, built an altar, sacrificed, and read the book of the law.

The city of Ai pictures knowledge of natural things. In enemy hands, it stands for using knowledge of natural things selfishly, so that it stands in the way of our spiritual life, represented by the nearby city of Bethel. To overcome these enemies, we must realize that power to overcome springs from the spiritual truths we know. Joshua's outstretched spear represents the Lord's infinite power over our enemies. After the victory, the people worshiped the Lord, reminding us of the way we need to keep the Lord's laws before us, remembering them in humble and grateful worship.

Key Ideas

- The Lord gave Joshua the strategy for victory over Ai.
- The Lord's Word teaches us strategies so we can recognize and overcome evils.
- Reading the Word brings us closer to the Lord and reminds us that everything good is from Him.

From the Writings

‘Bethel’, means knowledges of celestial things, but ‘Ai’ means the knowledges of worldly things. See *Arcana Coelestia* 1453.1.

“‘Stretch out your hand’ means an exercising of power. ‘Stretching out’ is connected with exercising control. ‘Hand’ means power. There is power in the hand or arm when it is stretched out. When therefore Jehovah is said to stretch out His hand or arm, boundless or infinite power in action is meant. This explains why Jehovah told Moses when miracles were to be performed, to stretch out his hand or his rod. The same thing is meant by Joshua's being told to stretch out his javelin. Jehovah said to Joshua, Stretch out the javelin that is in your hand towards Ai. When Joshua stretched out the javelin that was in his hand towards Ai, the ambush rose up quickly out of their place and ran, as soon as he stretched out his hand, and came to the city and took it. Joshua did not withdraw his hand which he had stretched out together with the javelin until all the inhabitants of Ai had been utterly destroyed. Being representative of God's almighty power, this too, like all other representative actions when they were commanded in those times, had force.” *Arcana Coelestia* 7673

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Vocabulary

booty—a prize seized in war
ambush—lying hidden so as to attack in surprise
muster—assemble or gather (for battle)
spoils—objects taken in war
desolation—ruined or devastated
strategy—plan of action

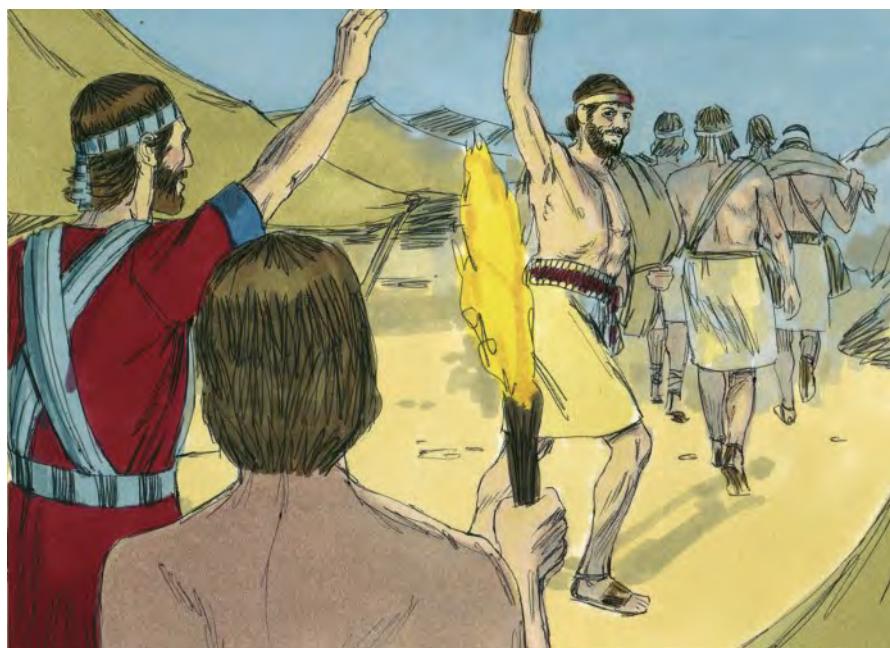
The Second Attack on Ai

Joshua's army had attacked Ai with just a few thousand men and suffered a surprising defeat. One warrior had disobeyed the Lord during the battle of Jericho and taken spoils for himself that were to be given to the Lord. Achan was searched out and removed, and the children of Israel were now ready to try to take the city again. This time they would listen to the Lord. He told them,

Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; 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. (Joshua 8:1)

This time, instead of giving all the valuable spoils to the Lord the people were to keep the spoils and cattle for themselves.

Read Joshua 8:2.



The Lord's Battle Strategy

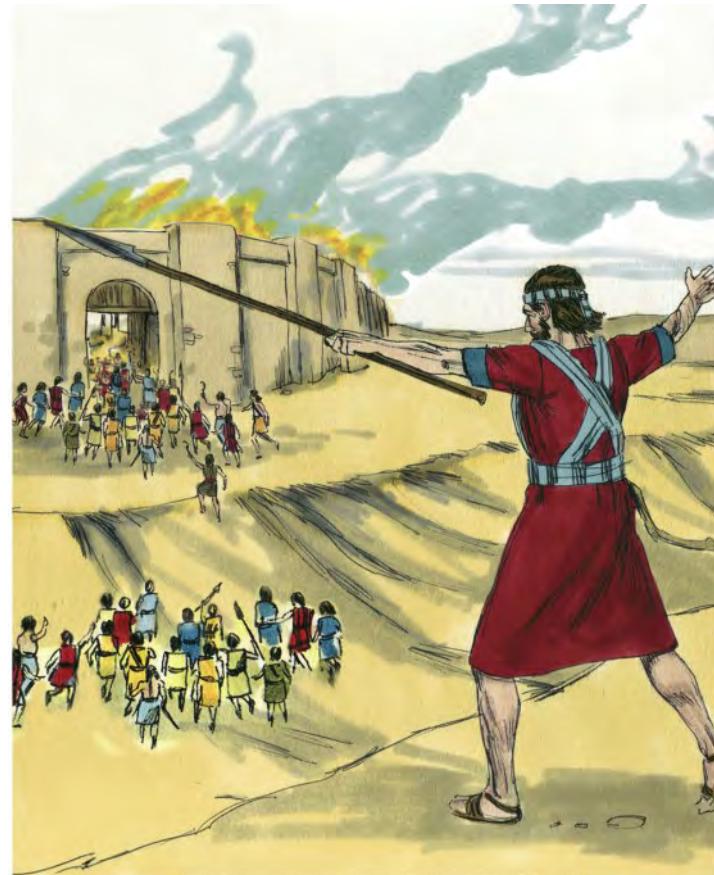
The Lord gave Joshua a detailed strategy to win the battle. First, he chose thirty thousand warriors and sent them away by night to the west side of the city, between Ai and Bethel. They were to stay in hiding, ready to rush into the city when Joshua gave the signal.

Read Joshua 8:3-8.

Early in the morning Joshua and the rest of his soldiers marched to Ai, and camped on a hill on the north side of the city. Between them and the city of Ai was a valley. Joshua and five thousand warriors crept into the valley at night. They were within easy reach of the warriors of Ai. In the morning the king saw the warriors right there, and rushed out to fight. Joshua's men ran away, drawing the men out of the city. The soldiers of Ai chased them, leaving the city with no protection.

Then Joshua gave the signal! He raised his spear and pointed towards Ai. Moses had done the same thing in battle many years before with his rod. The spear brought the Lord's power. Like Joshua, we can call for the Lord's power to be with us if we are struggling to do what is right.

Read Joshua 8:9-18.



The City Is Destroyed

When the warriors waiting in ambush saw the signal they rushed into the city. They took the city and set it on fire. The fighting men of Ai looked back and saw the city on fire. Smoke was rising into the sky. They had been tricked! And now they were trapped. The Israelites who had run away turned and attacked them from behind. At the same time, the soldiers in the city dashed out and attacked from the other side. The men of Ai were surrounded. They all died.

The army of Israel went back to Ai and destroyed everything in it. Not a single person escaped alive, except the king, who was later captured and hanged.

Read Joshua 8:19-29.

After the battle, the children of Israel kept the spoils for themselves. Ai and everything in it stands for worldly ideas. We can use worldly ideas to serve ourselves or we can use them to serve the Lord. Once the people looked to the Lord they could keep the spoils, because the spoils were no longer bad. The city and all the bad things it stood for had been destroyed.

The Lord Is the Hero

Joshua is a hero because he bravely led his army in battle. But it was the Lord who told him how to fight and who brought victory. Above all, the Lord was the Hero, leading and protecting Israel. The Lord does not want to kill and destroy, but He let the Israelites do it for many reasons. One

reason was that all the people in the land of Canaan at that time were so bad that they had to be destroyed.

What bad things do we need to “destroy”? Every time we want to do selfish or wrong things, the Lord wants us to “attack” those feelings and get rid of them.

The Covenant Is Renewed

Moses had told the children of Israel to build an altar when they were reached Mount Ebal. Joshua built, as Moses had commanded, and offered burnt offerings to the Lord. Then the stones were whitewashed and Joshua wrote the law of Moses on them. He gathered people in the valley between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerezim, before the ark, and read the law. Read Joshua 8:30-35.

The children of Israel did not have books like ours. Printing was not yet invented. Most people could not read. Someone would read the laws aloud to everyone else or people would recite them from memory. This was the only way people could know the Word. Today the Word is written down. Most people can read. So we can read the Lord’s Word ourselves and become closer to the Lord by following His commandments.

Discussion Questions

- Compare Israel’s two battles against the people of Ai. In what ways was the second battle of Ai different from the first battle of Ai?
- What do you think the children of Israel learned from the first battle of Ai? What do you think they learned from the second battle?
- Everyone experiences failure at some point. What lessons can we learn from failing that we cannot learn from succeeding?
- What lessons can we learn from succeeding that might be difficult to learn from failing?
- Why were the children of Israel allowed to keep the spoils of the battle after their victory over Ai?
- Why is remembering the Lord important? What are some of the ways we can remember the Lord?
- How did Joshua know to build the altar to worship the Lord?
- Some parts of the Word have several names. What is another name for the “Book of the Law”? Where is this part of the Word found in a copy of the Word or Bible?
- The place where Joshua recited the Law to the people is in a valley between two mountains, Mount Ebal and Mount Gerezim. The sound carried especially well there between the mountains. Have you ever visited a place where sound carried well over a long distance? What was it like? How was it different from other places?

Activity Overview | The Battle of Ai, The Covenant is Renewed

Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

Therefore you shall obey the voice of the Lord your God, and observe His commandments and His statutes which I command you today. Deuteronomy 27:10

Projects

Choose one or two activities.

- Sequence the Battle of Ai
- “Javelin” Balloon Pop: Fighting Evil
- Picture to color—The Capture of Ai (Joshua 8)

Additional Activity Ideas

- The Lord gave the children of Israel victory at Ai when they obeyed His commandments. In what ways can obeying the commandments bring success? Choose an activity on the Ten Commandments from several available online at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/highlight-i-am-the-lord-your-god/>.

Activity 1 | Sequence the Battle of Ai

<p>The Israelites ran out of the city and attacked the men of Ai.</p>	<p>Joshua sent soldiers into hiding behind the city.</p>	<p>Joshua's army pretended to be beaten and ran away from Ai.</p>	<p>1. Cut apart the cards. 2. Lay out the cards with the events in the correct sequence. 3. Check your cards with the answer sheet.</p> <p>4. Mix up the cards and try again. See how quickly you can do it. Keep going this until you can sequence the cards without looking at the answers.</p>
<p>Joshua raised up his spear.</p>	<p>Joshua sent spies to Ai.</p>	<p>The king of Ai saw the Israelites and came out of the city to attack them.</p>	<p>The men of Ai ran after and saw the city on fire and ran back to Ai.</p> <p>The men of Ai ran after Joshua's army into the wilderness.</p>
<p>Joshua went out to battle in front of Ai.</p>	<p>Joshua's army turned back from the wilderness and attacked the men of Ai.</p>	<p>All of the inhabitants of Ai were killed.</p>	<p>The soldiers who had been hiding ran into the city.</p> <p>The soldiers set fire to Ai.</p> <p>Joshua chose 30000 warriors to attack Ai.</p>

Activity 1 | Sequence the Battle of Ai Answers

1. Joshua sent spies to Ai.
2. Joshua chose 30000 warriors to attack Ai.
3. Joshua sent soldiers into hiding behind the city.
4. Joshua went out to battle in front of Ai.
5. The king of Ai saw the Israelites and came out of the city to attack them.
6. Joshua's army pretended to be beaten and ran away from Ai.
7. The men of Ai ran after Joshua's army into the wilderness.
8. Joshua raised his spear.
9. The soldiers who had been hiding ran into the city.
10. The soldiers set Ai on fire.
11. The men of Ai turned and ran back to Ai.
12. The Israelites ran out of the city and attacked the men of Ai.
13. Joshua's army turned back from the wilderness and attacked the men of Ai.
14. All the inhabitants of Ai were killed.

Activity 2 | “Javelin” Balloon Pop: Fighting Evil

The children of Israel’s battles against the nations living in Canaan picture the way we are to use true ideas from the Word to fight against false thoughts and selfish feelings. This activity encourages “fighting” against selfishness by writing selfish words on balloons, large bubble wrap, or inflated plastic bags, and then popping them.

Materials Needed

- something that can be popped, such as 10-12 balloons, large bubble wrap, “air pillows”, or inflatable plastic bags
- magic markers to write on balloons, etc.
- a “spear” or “javelin”, e.g. a long stick, broom handle.



Directions

1. If using balloons or plastic bags, inflate and secure them. If using “air pillows”, separate them into separate units.
2. Write the name of a selfish thought or feeling on each of them. A word bank is provided below to give you a few ideas.
3. Place the balloons or pop-able material on the floor.
4. Take a “javelin” or “spear” in your hand, raise it up. Think about true ideas and good actions that could overcome the selfish thoughts and feelings.
5. With the spear raised, crush the balloons or air pillows with the spear or your feet. When all are popped, stand in victory over them, then lower the spear.

Word Bank

greed	being right	lying
anger	me first	cheating
hatred	mean	hurting
coveting	mad	put down
jealousy	stealing	boasting

