

Scriptures for Today: Joshua 8:1-35 – God brings victory at Ai; an altar built at mount Ebal

Today's Message: **Worship and Preaching – God's Word commanded an altar and Bible preaching.**

INTRODUCTION

Last week, Joshua's presumptuous sin led to the death of 36 men at Ai. And, we saw the horrifying impact of one man's sin on his family and all Israel. Remember Achan! Today, we will observe God's perfect _____ for victory at Ai. We will see a brilliant military strategy which has been studied and employed by military generals throughout history and around the world. After victory, Joshua will obey God's Word and build an altar for _____. Afterwards, he will lead one of the most glorious _____ preaching services in the holy Bible! When God made the earth, He planned for this day when His Word was preached from the mountain tops with all God's people answering, " _____!"

LEARNING TOGETHER

1. The Text Joshua 8:1-35

- **Inspiring words** – God did not want Joshua to dwell in guilt; He said press _____!
 8:1-2 *"And **the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear not, neither be thou dismayed...**"*
- **War-time strategies** – The "*ambush idea*" given by God proved to be the _____ plan.
 8:3-17 *"And **there was not a man left in Ai or Bethel... they left the city open...**"*
- **Outstretched spear** – God gave victory; He told Joshua to hold out the spear in his _____.
 8:18-29 *"Joshua **drew not his hand back, wherewith he stretched out the spear...**"*
- **Altar needed** – Joshua built an altar unto the LORD God of Israel ____ Moses commanded.
 8:30-31 *"Then **Joshua built an altar... as it is written in the book of the law...**"*
- **Blessed words** – Joshua wrote a copy of the law upon the stones and read _____ word.
 8:32-35 *"And **afterward he read all the words of the law... blessings and cursings...**"*

2. The History Deuteronomy 27; Genesis 12 and 35

- **Altars** – Joshua built the altar as commanded at the appointed time. Abraham built an altar unto the LORD in Shechem and then again between Bethel and Ai. Jacob built an altar at Bethel – and then God changed his name to Israel.

Deuteronomy 27:1-10; Genesis 8:20; 12:4-8; 26:23-25; 28:19; 35:1-15

NOTE There is a significant connection between the altars noted and the land in our text. When Joshua builds the altar, he must have been nearly in the same place where Abraham and Jacob built their altars. Now, that is incredible to imagine!

- **Shechem** – God told Moses exactly what He wanted the children of Israel to do after the altar was built as commanded. The people would be divided ½ on mount Gerizim (*blessings*) and ½ on mount Ebal (*curses*). The approx. 20,000 Levites spoke with a loud voice and all the people answered, “Amen.”
Deuteronomy 27 and 28; Genesis 33:18-19; Joshua 24:1, 32

NOTE What a thing it must have been to hear God’s Word on this day! Scientists have tested the natural amphitheater at Shechem between mount Gerizim and mount Ebal and it does indeed work! Jacob’s well is in this place... (John 4)

3. The Lessons **Philippians 3:13-14; 2:12-16; John 4:23-24; Psalm 51:17**

✓ *Joshua needed encouragement from God to move past mistakes and sin to achieve victory.*

- **Keep pressing forward** – It was not time to dwell on the problems; it was time for war!

Prov 24:16 “For a just man **falleth seven times, and riseth up again...**”

Php 3:13-14 “...but **this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind...**”

Truth: God knew that Joshua needed encouraged to move past _____ to victory!

Learning: **You must listen to the right voices. The voice of truth will guide you!**

✓ *Joshua obeyed God and held that spear in his hand until the enemy was utterly destroyed.*

- **Strengthen your grip** – That must have been some grip on that sword for God’s glory!

Php 2:12-16 “**Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ**”

2 Tim 1:12-14 “**Hold fast the form of sound words... keep by the Holy Ghost...**”

Truth: God brought victory by the soldiers as Joshua _____ forth his spear!

Learning: **The devil will never stop trying to loosen your grip on God’s Word!**

✓ *Victory over Ai brought an opportunity for God to be worshipped and His Word obeyed.*

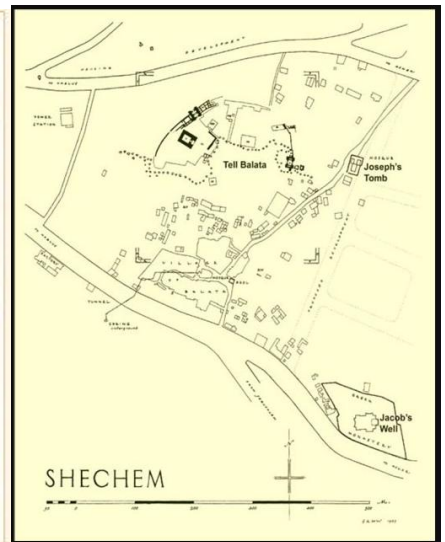
- **Come to the altar** – The altar worship prepared God’s people to obey His blessed words.

John 4:23-24 “...**in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.**”

Psalm 51:17 “...**sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart**”

Truth: The altar is where sinners come in humble repentance to _____ upon God.

Learning: **God is seeking true worshippers today. Will you meet Him at the altar?**



The narrow pass where ancient Shechem is located at the modern city of Nablus, view west. Mt. Gerizim is on the left and Mt. Ebal on the right. Dr. James C. Martin.