

Joshua
Review to Renew
 Joshua 8

John Newton, a slave ship captain in the late 1700's, was radically transformed by Jesus. He wrote: *Amazing Grace & Looking to the Cross*

Our God is the God of *the second look*.

The Battle Setting (8:1-2)

God's favor toward Israel was restored and he reassured Joshua that he had not forsaken him or Israel.

The Christian life is not a miracle-a-day, as if God is some kind of good-luck charm. Jericho's defeat required a miracle. Ai's defeat did not.

Unlike Jericho, the spoils of this victory would be shared.

The path of faith and obedience is always best.

The Battle Sequence (8:3–29)

Yahweh revealed to Joshua that the military outpost of Ai was to be taken by ambush (**vv. 2, 8**). The details of the plan appear to be left to Joshua and it would involve a three-prong strategy.

Ambush force of 30,000 deploys the night before.

Joshua's decoy force deploys early the next morning.

Ambush force of 5,000 splits off from Joshua's main force to cut off Ai from Bethel.

NOTE: The city of Gibeon. The Gibeonites had a ringside seat to this whole operation. The stage is set for **chapter 9**.

For God's people, failure is not final. God leverages our failures to be the backdoor to success.

After his brilliant victory at Ai, Joshua takes Israel on a spiritual retreat to the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim at Shechem. (cf. **Deuteronomy 27:1–8**)

Shechem held significance for many reasons.

Abraham (**Genesis 12:6–7**)

Jacob (**Genesis 33:18–20; 35:4; 37:12–14**)

Ebal and Gerizim are located in the very center of Canaan, representing all the land. Upon their initial entrance and, again, at the end of Joshua's life (**chapter 24**), Israel came to this place to review and renew their covenant vows to Yahweh.

This spiritual retreat at Shechem involved three elements.

First, an altar of uncut stones was erected on Mount Ebal and two different sacrifices were offered up by the people—burnt offerings and fellowship offerings (cf. **Leviticus 1, 7**).

Second, Joshua set up large stones that were whitewashed and on their surface he wrote a copy of the Law of Moses.

Just the Ten Commandments or **Deuteronomy 5–28**?

Joshua 8:34 recalls the three major parts of the covenant: the laws to be obeyed, the blessings for obedience, and the curses for disobedience.

Third, Joshua read the Law to the people.

Half of the tribes on the slopes of Gerizim to the south, the other half on the slopes of Ebal to the north, with the Ark of the Covenant surrounded by priests in the valley, between.

As the blessing of the Law for obedience and the curses for disobedience were read one-by-one, the tribes hollered "AMEN!" antiphonally back-and-forth with the reading of each verse—those on Gerizim in response to the .

A profound side-note (**vv. 33, 35**): “Sojourners” i.e., “foreigners” joined Israel in this spiritual retreat, indicating that people from other nations, even Canaanites like Rahab, were already coming to faith in Yahweh and joining the covenant community. (cp. **Genesis 12; John 4**)

The whole point of this retreat was to underscore that Israel’s fellowship with God depended on them being faithful to their covenant relationship with him (**Deuteronomy 5-26**). If obedient, there was blessing; if disobedient, there was judgment (**chs. 27-28**), and all their obedience hung on a single command: LOVE God (**chs. 6 & 11**).

Application:

The spiritual retreat at Shechem is of enormous significance to us today. As Israel renewed their covenant commitment to God by reviewing the stipulations of that covenant, we do the same every time we take Communion.

Just as Israel of old, we are under obligation to keep the stipulations of the New Covenant God has made with us, if we expect to experience his blessing.

Jesus instituted Communion (**Luke 22:14-23**) and introduced the New Covenant (**John 13-15**) during the Last Supper with the disciples.

The elements of the Passover meal had symbolized Jesus’ death and resurrection for the past millennium of Jewish history.

This is my body, given for you...This cup is the New Covenant in my blood.

The elements of Communion symbolize THE blood sacrifice of our covenant relationship with God, just as the burnt offerings at Shechem did. Israel’s burnt sacrifice looked forward in faith to Jesus’ sacrifice. Communion looks back in faith to Jesus’ sacrifice.

Later, on their way to pray at Gethsemane, Jesus calls the disciples *friends*, which was the whole point of the fellowship offering that followed the burnt offering at Shechem.

What condition did Jesus give to be his friend? *Do what I command*; i.e., the stipulations of the New Covenant, and what did Jesus command? LOVE!

Earlier, Jesus said loving God supremely and loving one’s neighbor empathetically fulfills all the law and prophets!

With the New Covenant, it’s the same God and the same standard of holiness, but done in a new and living way—not laws of Moses chiseled in stone to be internalized from the outside-in, but a new way where God goes to great lengths to enable us to honor our covenant commitment with him and be blessed.

God gives us a new, responsive heart, infused with his holy will, and he permanently indwells us with his Holy Spirit, who empowers us to love from the inside-out.

Same God, same covenantal relationship, but not the rules chiseled in stone under Moses, but the law of love and liberty under Christ, obeyed in a new and living way with the help of the great Comforter.

All the commands in the practical sections of the NT epistles are, simply, tangible ways to LOVE.

Our obligation to keep the stipulations of the New Covenant are no less vital today than with Israel of old.

1 Corinthians 9:27 *I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.*

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 *Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God (New Covenant!)? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.*

Romans 8: 12-13 *Therefore, brothers and sisters, WE HAVE AN OBLIGATION—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die (curse); but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live (blessing).*

Note the book of **Hebrews** and its warning passages.

What does love look like?” **John 13:15, 34** *“I have left you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you...A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you are to love one another.*

Want to live a blessed life? Love God and love others with the same reckless abandon that Jesus loves you.