

Lesson 67

God Gives the Victory

God gave the Israelites victories when they were obedient.

Overview

Lesson Focus

God let the Israelites lose the first battle at Ai to point out Achan's sin and show them that victory could come only through complete obedience. God gave the Israelites victory over Ai and then over five Amorite kings, making the sun stand still until they defeated their enemies.

Key Passages

Joshua 7:4, 7:11, 10:11

Memory Verse

Joshua 1:9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

Prepare to Share

Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

God gave Joshua and the Israelites a great victory at the battle of Jericho. They saw God deliver the city into their hands by collapsing fortified walls. Joshua commanded the men entering the city to destroy everything except Rahab and her family and certain precious metals, which the men were to bring to the Lord's treasury (Joshua 6:17–19). The gold, silver, bronze, and iron objects were to be taken to the priests. One man, Achan of the tribe of Judah, disobeyed Joshua's command and took items from the spoil of Jericho, causing God's judgment to fall on all the people (Joshua 7:1). Joshua sent only 3,000 fighting men to the small city of Ai, but his men were defeated and 36 were killed (Joshua 7:4–5). The people were terrified, and Joshua and the Israelite elders mourned before the Lord. They knew that without the Lord on their side they would soon be destroyed.

God called Joshua to root out the sin in the camp, for that was why they had suffered a defeat. Using lots controlled by God, Joshua identified the guilty man among them as Achan. Achan confessed to taking a valuable cloak, 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold from Jericho (Joshua 7:16–21). Joshua sent men to find the items, which were buried in Achan's tent. With his sin exposed, Achan, his family, and all his possessions were taken to the Valley of Achor (trouble) and destroyed by the people.

God turned from his anger and commanded Joshua to attack Ai again, this time with the whole fighting force and an ambush. God promised to deliver the city

into Joshua's hands (Joshua 8:7). God gave the victory, and Joshua followed God's commands to destroy the city and its people. He burned the city and hanged the king of Ai.

News of Israel's victories reached the surrounding cities. Men in the city of Gibeon feared Israel and devised a way to trick them. They pretended to be from a distant land and came to the Israelites' camp at Gilgal. Joshua and the leaders failed to pray for guidance, and they were fooled by the Gibeonites' dry bread and worn clothing. They promised to let them live (Joshua 9:8–15). The Israelites were angry with their leaders when the deception was discovered, but Joshua refused to let them destroy the Gibeonites. Instead, he made them Israel's slaves (Joshua 9:23–27). But God used even this failure for his glory. Five Amorite kings surrounded Gibeon to attack them, forcing Israel to come to their aid. God again promised to deliver these enemies over to Joshua, and God threw them into a panic and then hurled hailstones down on them (Joshua 10:10–11). The Amorites fled. Not wanting any to escape when night fell, Joshua prayed and asked God to give him more daylight to pursue his enemies. God answered in a miraculous display of power over creation—the sun stood still and did not set for about another day (Joshua 10: 12–14). The coalition of kings was destroyed, and Israel took over their lands and cities in the southern area of Canaan. God fought for Israel and kept his promises of victory.

Historical/Apologetics Background

For many years, archaeologists excavated a site called et-Tell, which they believed was the Ai of Joshua. But evidence from this site did not line up well with details in Joshua 7–8, so they concluded the Bible was wrong. As is often the case, further investigation revealed that these scholars were in error. They were digging at the wrong site! A team of biblical archaeologists and researchers found an alternative site 9 miles north of Jerusalem called Khirbet el-Maqatir. The geography here fit the biblical account well, so they began excavations. Their findings revealed many reasons to believe this location was the lost city of Ai:

- A hill lies north of Ai, which matches Joshua's force camping on the north side with a ravine between them and Ai (Joshua 8:11, 8:13).

- A fortress gate faces north, which matches Joshua's description as he "drew near before the city" from the north (Joshua 8:11).

- A spot for the ambush, which is a valley west of Maqatir that could easily hide Joshua's ambush troops (Joshua 8:9, 8:12).

- The pottery and walls match Joshua's time period.

- There is evidence of fire in the form of ash layers, heated bedrock, and burned stones and pottery (Joshua 8:19–20).

These evidences and more confirm what we already know—that the Bible can be trusted in every detail. Man's ideas change, but the Word of the living God stands firm.

Another miracle under attack and often misunderstood is Joshua's long day, when God made the sun stand still during his battle against the Amorites (Joshua 10:12–14). One false story that has circulated for decades is that NASA computers have "found" Joshua's missing day. The story began in the

late 1960s and early 1970s, when the space program was in full swing. Supposedly, a computer at NASA calculated the positions of the earth, moon, and other solar system bodies far into the past and the future. A glitch was found in the fifteenth century BC, indicating that a day was missing from time. But this missing day could be explained by the biblical account of Joshua. As exciting as this story may sound, it is just that—a story. The main problem is that a computer can't find a glitch in the positions of solar system bodies because we must know exactly where things were at some time in the past prior to Joshua's day so the calculated positions can be compared. Today, computers can be used to determine how much the earth's rotation has slowed over time due to the tidal interaction between the earth and the moon. They can also calculate into the past when and where total solar eclipses should have occurred on the earth. But locations and rotation speed can't be compared when we don't know locations of solar bodies from before Joshua's time.

Despite the fact that NASA computers have not proven the account of Joshua's long day, that does not mean the miracle didn't occur. We have the inspired Word of God, which tells us this day happened: "There has been no day like it before or since, when the Lord heeded the voice of a man, for the Lord fought for Israel" (Joshua 10:14). We serve a mighty God!

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