



Joshua 6-8

Tape #7065
Joshua Chapter 6-8
By Chuck Smith

Let's turn now to Joshua, chapter 6 - as the children of Israel have crossed over Jordan, and now begin to possess the land of promise. Again, we must point out, that their history is typical history. And the crossing over Jordan is typical: of our reckoning our old life to be dead, crucified with Christ; no longer in Romans chapter 7 but moving from Romans chapter 7 into chapter 8. Chapter 7 is the wilderness experience of the children of Israel: trying, in the flesh, to please GOD; coming to that helpless dilemma of realizing the perversity of my own nature. *When I desire to do good, evil is present with me. The good that I would do I do not: that which I would not, I do. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?* ; but that deliverance in Romans chapter 8, as Paul begins to come to an understanding of the walk and the life in the Spirit. So Joshua, leaving now the area of the wilderness, coming through Jordan; death to the old man, reckoning him to be dead; and now beginning to possess their possessions. And the first city to be conquered is the city of Jericho.

Now Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in.

The fear of the children of Israel were upon the inhabitants of Jericho. So they shut up the city; though they were not really being besieged as such, yet for fear of the children of Israel, they had shut the city up.

And the LORD said to Joshua, See, I have given Jericho into your hand, Look Joshua, it's yours; I have given it to you.

Now, GOD said this concerning the entire land. *Every place that you put your foot I have given to you as a possession.* It was something that had already been given to them by GOD, but it was necessary for them to go in and to appropriate. GOD has given to us a glorious life of victory in Jesus Christ, an overcoming life in Christ, victory over those areas of the flesh that had defeated us for so long. I do not have to be a slave to my flesh any longer. Every place I claim, every place I put my foot, the LORD has given to me for a possession. I have to, by faith, go in and possess that which GOD has given to me. Though it was theirs, GOD had given it to them, yet it was necessary that they go in and possess it. They had to appropriate these promises of GOD, even as we do.

Look, I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, the mighty men of valour. Now you shall march around the city, all of your men of war, you shall go around the city once. And this shall you do for six days. And seven priests shall bear the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark: but the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. Then it shall come to pass, when they make a long blast with the rams' horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, that all of the people shall shout with a great shout; and then the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall go up every man straight before him.

So GOD gave to Joshua now the battle plan: and it does seem rather different and unique. They are to march around the city: the priests bearing the ark of the covenant, once a day for six days, the priests going before them blowing these rams' horns. On the seventh day they are to encompass the city seven times while the priests are blowing the rams' horns, and then they are to let out a long blast on the horns, the

people are to shout, the walls are going to fall; and from wherever they are positioned outside of the walls, they are to rush in to the city so that the city will be attacked simultaneously from all sides, as they come rushing into the city from whatever position they might be at.

Now, there are those who have difficulty with miracles. Their difficulty with miracles has to stem from their difficulty with GOD. If you have a proper concept of GOD, you should have no problem with miracles. But if you do not have a proper concept of GOD, then miracles can be a real stumbling block. And there are those who try to explain the miracle of the walls falling flat at the blast of the trumpets and the shout of the people as something of a natural phenomenon: that the daily marching around the walls sort of loosened the foundation of the walls. And that when they finally made the long blast on the trumpets and shouted, that was just enough to topple the things, - you know. I sort of feel sorry for these fellows who try so hard to rationalize the miraculous within the Bible. I've seen the walls of Jericho, I've seen the remains of the walls of Jericho, and surely it would take more than a blast on a rams' horn to bring them down.

Now I heard that Enriquo Carrusso could put a glass on a table, and he can stand back 17 paces, and with that powerful voice of his, he could hit a note and the glass would shatter. Well, that's a glass and not the walls of Jericho. There's no natural explanation, the only possible explanation is that GOD worked a miracle and brought the walls down.

I've got here a rams' horn: this is the kind of thing that they were blowing. And if you think that the sound of this thing could bring down a wall, I feel sorry for you. But here they were, marching around, blowing these things for seven days. And these things are not that melodious, you can only hit about three notes on this thing: [he then blows on the rams' horn, the congregation applauds.] This is Rosh Hashanah: if they live in the neighborhood, they might think the Messiah is come! But you can see the folly of trying to bring a wall down with that thing.

So Joshua the son of Nun called the priests, and said to them, Take up the ark of the covenant, let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD. He said to the people, Proceed, march around the city, let him who is armed advance before the ark of the LORD. And so it was, when Joshua had spoken to the people, that the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the LORD, advanced and blew the trumpets: and the ark of the covenant of the LORD followed them. And the armed men went before the priests that blew the trumpets, and the rear guard came after the ark, while the priests continued, blowing the trumpets. Now Joshua had commanded the people, saying, You shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, nor shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I say to you shout; then you shall shout. And he had the ark of the LORD circle the city, going around it once: then they came into the camp, and lodged in the camp. Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD. The seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD went on continually, blew with the trumpets: the armed men went before them; but the rear guard came after the ark of the LORD, while the priests continued blowing the trumpets. The second day they marched around the city once, returned to camp: and so they did for six days.

Now, don't you suppose the people in Jericho at this point were wondering, "Just what in the world is going on?" Here these guys, with their armor, their swords and shields: marching. Behind them are these priests blowing the trumpets, behind them, the ark of the covenant, and behind them the rear guard coming up: the armed rear guard. Here, everyday, these guys make one circle around the city and go back to camp. These guys are just blowing on these trumpets. And this happens day after day. I am certain that there was just a lot of speculation within Jericho as to just what was going on out there. And I wouldn't be surprised if some of the people of Israel didn't wonder a little bit too of what was going on. You know, "Have we made a mistake in following Joshua? Now, this is a weird way to take a city." Surely it points out the Scripture

where GOD declared, “My ways are not your ways, saith the LORD. My ways are beyond your finding out.” It is not mine to question the ways of GOD, ‘tis mine to obey the voice of GOD. My problem is the desire for understanding: “GOD, how is this going to do anything? LORD, how is this going to bring the walls down?” And I want to understand, I want GOD to show me, I want to reduce the thing to my comprehension. But this, we must recognize, is a step of faith in obedience to the Word of GOD, though it doesn’t seem logical. I cannot understand the strategy. But they’re doing it in obedience to the command of GOD, and that is what is important: faith! Obeying the command of GOD, though I may not understand just what GOD is doing.

So it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, they marched around the city seven times in the same manner: and on that day only they marched around the city seven times. And on the seventh time, it was so when the priests blew the trumpets, that Joshua said to the people, Shout; for the LORD has given you this city. This was a shout of faith. The walls were still up; but it was the shout of victory in faith. Now the city shall be doomed, by the LORD, it, and all who are who in it: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are in her house, because she hid the messengers that were sent. And you, the warning by all means keep yourselves from the accursed things, lest you become accursed, when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.

This is the beginning of the conquest of the land. This is the beginning of the spoiling of the land. And this battle was so completely God’s, and in God’s hands, that God required that all of the booty from the battle come to Him. All of the spoils were to be brought to the house of the LORD. They weren’t to touch the spoils themselves. When they conquer the other cities, then the spoils will be divided: but not with Jericho. The word “accursed” can also be translated “devoted.” These things were to be devoted to God. *Keep yourselves from these devoted things, lest you become accursed, if you take of the devoted things, and you make the camp of Israel a curse.*

All of the silver, and gold, vessels of bronze and iron, are consecrated to the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD. So, the very specific warning of Joshua to the people. So the people shouted when the priests blew the trumpets: and it happened, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, then the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.

Now, in the New Testament, in the book of Hebrews, chapter 11: is a book that is devoted to faith, the definition of faith, and the accomplishments through faith. And in one of the notable accomplishments, through faith, that are mentioned in Hebrews, the eleventh chapter, is the walls of Jericho falling. *By faith -- Hebrews 11:30--the walls of Jericho fell flat, when they had been encompassed by the children of Israel [seven days.]* So it was a faith in God; it was a miracle that God wrought as a result of their faith and obedience to His commands.

Then the people went up, and took the city. And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young ox, sheep, donkeys, by the edge of the sword. But Joshua had said unto the two men that had spied out the country, Go into the harlot’s house, that is, Rahab’s, and from there bring out the woman, and all that she has, as you swore to her. And the young men that had been spies went in, and brought out Rahab, her father, her mother, her brothers, and all that she had; so they brought out all of her relatives, and they left them outside the camp of Israel. But they burned the city, and all that was in it with fire: only the silver, and the gold, and the vessels of bronze and iron, they put in the treasury of the house of the LORD. So Joshua spared Rahab the harlot, her father’s household, and all that she had; so she dwells in Israel to this day; because she hid the messengers, who Joshua had sent to spy out Jericho.

At this point, again in Hebrews: chapter 11, the chapter of faith: Rahab is mentioned. *By faith Rahab was saved and all that were in her house.* So Rahab's faith brought for mention. And the other place in the New Testament where Rahab is mentioned is in the gospel of Matthew, when you are dealing with the genealogy of Joseph, the husband of Mary: he happened, in his genealogy, that Rahab figures in that genealogy; which is interesting: here she was, not born as one of the members of the nation of Israel, brought into the nation, she was a harlot prior to her being brought into the nation, but yet became, in the genealogy of David, actually, and on down to Joseph. So, interesting that God's grace is so manifested upon this woman. A woman of faith, and her faith is brought for special mention.

Then Joshua charged them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the LORD, who rises up and builds this city of Jericho: he shall lay its foundation with his firstborn, and with his youngest he shall set up its gates.

So here is sort of a prophecy of Joshua: the city has been leveled, it's flattened; and Joshua pronounces a curse upon the man that would rebuild the city. And he tells them that he will lay the foundation of the city at the time of his firstborn son; and with his last son, he will raise up the gates of the city. Now, turn to I Kings, chapter 16:34 -- and you find this interesting prophecy of Joshua fulfilled, almost 500 years later. *In his days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho: he laid its foundation with Abiram his firstborn, and with his youngest son Segub he set up its gates, according to the word of the LORD, which he had spoken through Joshua the son of Nun.* And so, over 500 years later, this fascinating prophecy of Joshua was fulfilled.

The city of Jericho was rebuilt by Hiel, it was again later destroyed, and rebuilt again just before the time of Christ. It was destroyed in around 68 AD. The city of Jericho at the time of Christ was built on a different site than on the ancient city of Jericho that was destroyed by Joshua. Today, you can go to Jericho and you can stand on the mound, on the top of the Tel, and you can look down, and see the remains of the city of Jericho: some of the walls of the houses that have been excavated. It's a very interesting thing to stand there, and look at the ruins and realize, here is where this passage of Scripture was fulfilled: of God destroying the city, as Joshua obeyed the commandment of the LORD.

There is, next to the Tel, the modern city of Jericho, which is a typical Arab city. It is a city that is filled with fruit stands because the city of Jericho is a very verdant area, and a lot of citrus fruit is grown in that area: excellent citrus fruit, pomelo, and large oranges; a great place to get orange juice. For you that have been there, you remember all of the bananas, and all of the fruit that is sold around the city of Jericho.

Chapter 7

But the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed or, consecrated things: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the devoted things: so the anger of the LORD burned against the children of Israel. Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Bethaven, on the east side of Bethel,

So, that would be on the Jericho side of Bethel. Bethel is on up the canyon from Jericho, probably 10 miles. Jericho lies at 1,300 feet below sea level - approximately 1,280 feet below sea level. By the time you get to Bethel you are probably 1,200 to 1,500 feet above sea level. On the way up, just at about at sea level is this city of Ai; it's on the east side of Bethel. It was just a small little city.

Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, to spy out the country. So the men went up and spied out Ai. You know, "Take a look at the area where we're going to be going. Probably, not only to see

what cities that are there, but to find out the best route, the best road to move all of these people up the valley. *And they returned to Joshua, and said to him, Do not let all of the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai; don't weary all the people there; for the people of Ai are so few.*

Now, here they are coming flush from victory. One of the major cities was the city of Jericho. A major city because of the fact that this valley was so productive and could support a lot of people. When you get on up the canyon there, it's quite barren; it isn't nearly as productive as is the area of Jericho. And so, here is Ai: just a little city up the canyon. And these guys are flush with victory: "Look Joshua, we don't need the whole army to take this little place; just send two or three thousand fellows up there; let them wipe it out and take care of it; because we don't need the whole army for this."

There was that self reliance that came in so quickly. As they began to conquer the land, they had an utter reliance upon God. In the conquest of Jericho, it was depending upon God: it was faith in God, obedience and faith in God. But now, flushed with victory, they feel: "Well, we don't really need the help of God anymore; we are able to do this. Just send two or three thousand"; and it is so immediately reverting to the flesh and the fleshly ways. And it is so typical of our progress in the walk and life of the Spirit. God gives me a victory over one of the big problems in my self life, and I have this glorious victory, I'm rejoicing in the LORD because I have such victory over the self life. And here's another little nagging area of my flesh, and the Spirit lets me see that also is not pleasing to the LORD: and I say, "Oh, fine LORD. I would be glad to take care of that: I won't do that again." And that's just the area where I get wiped out, where I get defeated: when I turn from a total reliance upon the LORD to reliance upon myself, and in my flesh. And this is what we have to be careful about. You see, this idea of touching the accursed thing: GOD wanted all of the credit, and all of the glory, and all of the spoils for the victory of Jericho. "Don't you touch that." When GOD works a victory in your life, He wants all the credit and glory for it. He doesn't want you touching that.

It's interesting that when I talk to GOD about my problems, I am in just a broken, helpless state: "GOD, I need Your help. GOD, I can't do anything about it; LORD, I'm just wiped out, LORD. Help me LORD; I'm miserable, LORD. Help me please", and GOD helps me. And then when I tell someone else about how I stopped it, I say, "Well, you know I just felt that I shouldn't be doing that anymore: and so I set my mind, and figured, 'well, I've got to be strong in this', and I just really, you know, squared back my shoulders.." Interesting, isn't it: how that we like to take the credit and get the glory for what GOD has done? But there's a danger to that. Because GOD will let me stumble at the next little thing that comes along. And so, here's Ai: not much to it, just a little village. "We don't need the whole army: two or three thousand is all you need to send up there. Let them wipe it out, Joshua. Let's go, man."

So about three thousand men went up: but they fled before the men of Ai. And the men of Ai struck down about thirty six men: for they chased them from before the gate as far as Shebarim, and they struck them down on the descent: as they were coming back towards Jericho, therefore the hearts of the people melted, and became like water. And Joshua tore his clothes, fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until evening, both he and the elders of Israel, and they put dust on their heads. What a sight! They've been defeated by this little town of Ai, and Joshua's lying there on his face, putting dust on his head, lying before the ark of the covenant. And Joshua - and he sounds much like the children of Israel at this point, and their complaints to Moses through the wilderness journeys. And Joshua said, Alas, O Lord GOD, - and that word "alas" is evidently a word of hopelessness.

When Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, woke up in the morning and saw that the city of Dothan was surrounded by the Syrian army, the chariots, he saw all of the chariots of the Syrian army, he went into Elisha, and said, "Alas, alas." And so, it's a word that probably means, "We've had it. It's all over." So

Joshua said,

Alas, Lord GOD, why have you brought this people over the Jordan at all, to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites, to destroy us? oh that we would have been content, and dwelt on the other side of Jordan! Boy! that sounds like the people talking to Moses, doesn't it? "Why did you bring us out of Egypt? Oh, that we would have been content and stayed in Egypt. Why did you bring us out here anyway? To destroy us?" And he's sounding just like they sounded, and he's talking to GOD about this:

O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turns its backs before its enemies! For the Canaanites and all of the inhabitants of the land will hear of it, and will surround us, and cut off our name from the earth: and then what will you do for your great name? "GOD, You are in big trouble!" And I like God's response to Joshua: So the LORD said to Joshua, Get up; why are you lying like that on your face? And GOD begins to deal with the problem. Israel has sinned, they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken some of the devoted things, and have both stolen, and deceived, and they have also put it among their own stuff.

Now, Joshua prayed second rather than praying first. A mistake that we often make. Had he prayed first, GOD would have revealed the problem, and they could have saved themselves the defeat at Ai. They could have corrected the problem before they ever went. But it's that business of being flushed with victory: you go forth in self confidence, thinking, "Well, I don't need the LORD's help. I know how it's done, now. I know how we have taken Jericho, I understand the principles of victory, and so I don't need God's help anymore: I can do it now on my own." Never do we become independent of God's help. GOD never brings you to that place where you don't have to rely and trust in Him. In fact, the further I go, the more I find I must rely and trust in Him. The further I go, the more, with Paul, I realize that *in me [that is in my flesh,] there dwells no good thing.* And I realize my total dependency upon GOD.

So the LORD puts the finger on the problem: "There's sin in the camp, Joshua."

Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, and turned their backs before their enemies, because they have become doomed to destruction: and neither will I be with you any more, unless you destroy the accursed from among you.

Jesus said to the church of Ephesus that unless they repented, he was going to remove the candlestick from its place. And of course, we remember that the place of the candlestick: Jesus was walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. And now he is saying to the church of Ephesus, "Unless you will repent, and return to your first love, I am going to remove the candlestick out of his place." And GOD is warning Israel, "Look, I'm not going to be with you anymore until you get things right." Don't expect GOD to compromise with sin in your life. Don't think that GOD will peacefully coexist with sin. It is so abhorrent to GOD: that the presence of sin in your life, and the presence of GOD is mutually exclusive. GOD will not make a covenant or a compromise. And with sin in your life; He said, *"I'm not going to dwell anymore with you, until you get rid of it, until you destroy the accursed from among you."*

Now get up, and sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow: because thus saith the LORD God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel: you cannot stand before your enemies, until you take away the accursed thing from among you. And in the morning therefore you shall be brought according to your tribes: and it shall be, that the tribe which the LORD shall take shall come according to families; the family which the LORD shall take shall come by households; the households shall come man by man. And it shall be, that who is taken with the accursed thing shall be burned with fire, he and all that he has: because he has transgressed the covenant of the

LORD, because he has done a disgraceful thing in Israel.

So God is going to reveal who the man is. And as we mentioned this morning, the Urim and the Thummim were the oracles that were kept by the priest whereby they divined the will of God, whereby God would show them these things. And they don't know exactly what the Urim and the Thummim were; they believe that maybe they were a white rock and a black rock in a pouch. And the priest would reach in, and the black rock would be rejection, and the white rock white would be acceptance. And so as the tribes went by, and he picked out the rocks, when the tribe of Judah came by, the black rock came out: and they would say, "Oh, it's the tribe of Judah."

And so Joshua rose early in the morning, he brought Israel by their tribes; and the tribe of Judah was taken: And he brought the family of Judah; and the Zarhite family was taken: they brought the family of the Zarhites man by man; and Zabdi was taken: And then they brought the household man by man; and Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. So Joshua said to Achan, My son, I beg you, give glory to the LORD God of Israel, make confession to him; tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me.

Joshua's tenderness with this guilty fellow: this fellow has brought, really, defeat to the people of Israel, he's put them in a tremendously precarious position. And yet the tenderness of Joshua. The guy is sentenced to death: God said, "When I reveal the man, you are to burn him with fire", so the sentence of death is hanging on this guy. But yet, Joshua is tender towards him, "My son, I beg you, give glory to the LORD God of Israel, now make confession; tell me what you have done; do not hide it from me."

And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I have done: so the confession of sin: "I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel." When I saw, and notice the progression of sin, When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I desired them [I coveted them], and took them;

Notice, first of all, "I saw", and then, "I desired [I coveted]", and then, "I took." Isn't that the way sin so often progresses in our life? First of all, we see it. And then we begin to desire it. And finally we take it. It all begins with the seeing. "Let no man say when he is tempted, that he is tempted of God: because God doesn't tempt man with evil, But man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own desires, his own lusts. And lust when it is conceived - that is, when you take it, - brings forth sin." So, this is it: he saw it, he desired it, he took it.

And they are hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, the silver is under it. So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and, there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver under it. And they took him from the midst of the tent, brought them to Joshua, and to the all the children of Israel, laid them out before the LORD. Then Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the garment, the wedge of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, all that he had: and they brought them to the valley of Achor. And Joshua said, Why have you troubled us? the LORD will trouble you this day. So all of Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned him with stones. Then they raised over him a great heap of stones that are still there to this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger. Therefore the name of the place has been called, The valley of Trouble, to this day. "Achor" is the Hebrew word for "trouble"; because he troubled Israel with his sin.

Some wonder why they took the whole family. Because the whole family was probably a part of the whole thing. He probably drew his whole family into his conspiracy; they, no doubt, all saw him hide the

gold, and hide the silver, and were, no doubt, a party to it.

Chapter 8

Then the LORD said to Joshua, Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed: Joshua was on his face, he was fearful of what would happen. Take all the people of war with you, arise, go up to Ai:

Now they are doing it God's way. They had first tried doing it their own way, they had defeat. Now they're doing it God's way, they're going to experience now God's victory. And there is always our way to do a thing, and God's way to do a thing: our way usually ends in defeat, God's way in victory. And God begins to lay out the battle plan for Ai.

You shall do to Ai and his king as you did to Jericho and its king: only its spoil, and its cattle, you will be able to take as booty for yourselves: so lay an ambush for the city behind it. So Joshua arose, and all the people of war, to go up against Ai: and Joshua chose thirty thousand men of mighty valour, and he sent them away by night. And he commanded them, saying, Behold, you shall lie in ambush against the city, behind the city: do not go very far from the city, but be all of you ready: Then I, and all of the people that are with me, will approach the city: and it will come about, that when they come out against us, as at the first, we will flee before them, (For they will come out after us) until we have drawn them from the city; for they will say, They are fleeing before us, as at the first, therefore we will flee before them. And then you shall rise from the ambush, and seize the city: for the LORD your God will deliver it into your hand. And it will be, when you have taken the city, that you shall set the city on fire: according to the commandment of the LORD you shall do. See, I have commanded you. And Joshua therefore sent them out: and they went to lie in ambush, and they stayed between Bethel and Ai, So they went around the other side of the city from the Jericho side. They went on the west side of the city towards Bethel. But Joshua lodged that night among the people. Then Joshua rose early in the morning, and mustered the people, and went up, he and the elders of Israel, before the people to Ai. And all the people of war, who were with him, went up, and drew near, and they came before the city, and camped on the north side of Ai: now there was a valley between them and Ai. And so he took about five thousand men, and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of the city. And when they had set the people, all the army was on the north of the city, and its rear guard on the west of the city, and Joshua went that night into the midst of the valley. Now it happened, when the king of Ai saw it, and the men of the city hastened and rose early, and went out against Israel to battle, he and all of his people, at the appointed place, before the plain; but he did not know that there was an ambush against him behind the city. And so Joshua and all of Israel made as though they were beaten before them, and they fled by the way of the wilderness. So all the people who were in Ai were called together to pursue them: and they pursued Joshua, and were drawn away from the city. And there was not a man left in Ai or Bethel, who did not go after Israel: so they left the city open, and pursued Israel. Then the LORD said to Joshua, Stretch out the spear that is in your hand toward Ai; for I will give it into your hand. And Joshua stretched out the spear that he had in his hand toward the city. So those in the ambush arose quickly out of their place, they ran as soon as he had stretched out his hand: they entered the city, took it, and hastened to set the city on fire. And when the men of Ai looked behind them, and saw, and, behold, the smoke of the city ascended to heaven, they had no power to flee this way or that way: and all of the people who had fled to the wilderness turned back on their pursuers.

And so, here was the battle strategy: Joshua and his men, coming up the city as the three thousand had done earlier. As the men of Ai come out, they begin to retreat again just as though they were afraid of the battle. And as they retreat, the men of Ai are all encouraged: they all pour out of the city to chase them; and then Joshua gives the signal, and those guys that are behind the city in ambush move in and take the city, set the city on fire; and then Joshua and his guys quit running: and these guys turn, and they look

behind them, and they see the smoke of Ai ascending and they realize they have got no place to go. And so Joshua and his men begin the mopping up operations against these men: whose hearts for war have been taken, they are defeated, there is nothing left for them to fight for.

And so when the men of Ai looked behind them, and saw, and, behold, the smoke of the city ascended to heaven, they had no power to flee this way or that:..Now when Joshua and all of Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city, the smoke of the city was ascending, they turned back, and they struck down the men of Ai. Then the others came out of the city against them; so they were caught in the middle of Israel, some on this side, and some on that side: and they struck them down, so that they let none of them remain or escape. But the king of Ai they took alive, brought him to Joshua. It came to pass, when Israel had made an end of slaying all of the inhabitants of Ai in the field, in the wilderness where they pursued them, and when they had fallen by the edge of the sword, until they were consumed, that all of the Israelites returned to Ai, struck the city with the edge of the sword. And so it was, that all who fell that day, both men and women, were twelve thousand, all of the people of Ai. For Joshua did not draw back his hand, with which he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all of the inhabitants of Ai. Only the livestock the spoil of that city Israel took as a booty for themselves, according to the word of the LORD which he had commanded Joshua. So Joshua burned Ai, and made it a heap for ever, a desolation to this day. And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until evening: and as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded they should take his corpse from the tree, cast it at the entrance of the gate of the city, and raise over it a great heap of stones, that remained there to this day.

Joshua wrote this book at the end of his career, so at the time he was writing, these things were still existing: these piles of stones, and all that were left in various areas, they were still there to the day of Joshua's death.

Now Joshua built an altar

So they moved on now past Bethel, and they are in the area that later was to be known as Samaria. They are near Shechem, the place where Isaac had dug the well years earlier, where Abraham had first built the altar when he came into the land. There is in this area today, the modern city of Nablus; and so it is pretty much right in the center of the country geographically: from north to south, and east to west, they're just about in the heart of the country when they get to mount Ebal, and mount Gerizim.

So Joshua built an altar to the LORD God of Israel in mount Ebal, And as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of whole stones, over which no man has wielded any iron tool: In other words, the stones of the altar were not carved, they weren't chiseled flat.

Now, when you go over to that land today, one of the things that is so impressive are the carvings upon the stones. You really wonder how many man hours were involved in preparing those stones for the walls, and those stones that have the fancy ornamentations carved on them. You would think a guy could spend his whole life in carving some of those stones, because they were doing it with primitive type of tools: iron tools; and it could not have been an easy task.

But God did not want any carved stones to be used for the altar. He did not want anything that would draw attention to man's work. The stones had to be natural as God created them; nothing that would bring glory to man. If you see a stone that has glorious carvings on it, you think, "My, what an artist. What intricate work. How magnificent." And you are prone to glory in man. When you come before God there is no place for man to receive glory. And thus, the altars that were to be built to God, ['Help us now'] weren't to be like a lot of ornate altars that you see today. Have you seen some of the altars in Mexico? The gold,

and all of the ornate work. God didn't want that. He wanted things to be very natural. The altar of God was to be of uncut stones, natural stones so that man's attention would be only upon God through nature, not upon man's work: God would receive the glory. And so he made this altar out of these stones, like was commanded.

They offered on it the burnt offerings: which were the offerings of consecration to God. And then they sacrificed peace offerings, which were offerings of fellowship. The burnt offering was an offering of, "God, we're consecrating ourselves to you." It was a renewal of their consecration. The peace offering was, "God, we recognize You as our LORD; we want to live in fellowship with You." And so there on Ebal, on this stone altar, natural stones: these offerings were made unto the LORD in recognition of what God had done.

And there in the presence of the children of Israel he wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written. Then all of Israel, with their elders, and the officers, and the judges, stood on either side of the ark before the priests, Here's the whole nation gathered now in this little valley between mount Gerizim, and mount Ebal; even as they were commanded to do before they came into the land. they, standing on either side of the ark before the priests the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, the stranger as well, as he who was born among them; half of them were in front of mount Gerizim, and half of them in front of mount Ebal; as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel.

So, the priest on mount Ebal declaring the blessings upon Israel if they would keep the covenant of God, and keep the law of God; and then those men on top of mount Gerizim pronouncing the curses that would come upon them if they broke the law of God, if they broke the covenant: and the curses that would come upon them. It must have been quite a scene. The acoustics there are tremendous: men on top of mount Ebal can call, and down in the valley you can hear them. The same from Gerizim: the acoustics are something spectacular there. And I imagine that this is a pretty awesome sight: the people of God, gathered there in the valley, the ark of the covenant in the midst of them, half the people on one side, half on the other; and from mount Ebal we hear these voices calling out the blessings of God upon the people if they would walk in the statutes of the LORD and keep His covenant, and from mount Gerizim the calling out, "And cursed be the man who would fail to walk in the statutes of the LORD"; and thus, the whole book of Deuteronomy was rehearsed before the people there.

Afterwards he read all of the words of law, the blessings and the cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law. That would be the book of Deuteronomy. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua did not read before the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers who were living among them. Now you think I'm long winded on Sunday nights, but man, he read the whole book of Deuteronomy to them as they are standing there with their little kids! I mean, you're sitting, and it's fairly comfortable on upholstered pews; but here, they were standing with their families as he read the entire book of Deuteronomy to them - didn't leave out a word! All of the blessings, all of the curses - and the whole book of the law - read to the people.

We will have mercy, and we will quit at this point. Next Sunday night we'll take it up in the ninth chapter as we go on to the conquest of all the land, and receiving the promises that God has for us.

Next week, that interesting case where the sun stood still in the valley of Aijalon: fascinating story. Again, people have a problem with that because they have a problem with God. I don't have a problem with it. God can do anything. I'm convinced.

May the Lord be with you, and bless you. May, indeed, we learn from the book of Joshua and learn from the history of Israel. It is our desire to enter in to the full blessings that God has for His people. Our desire to inherit all that God wants us to have as His children, our desire to experience and know the victories that God would give to us over the self life, that we might walk in the Spirit, following after God - His people, He acknowledging us as such. And so may the Lord be with you as we journey on, and as we take, and begin to lay claim to the promises of God, and begin to possess that glorious life that God has promised to us: that life of victory, that life of joy, that life of blessing as we walk in the Spirit in fellowship with Him. May you begin to experience some of God's victories in your life as we journey this week in a continued relationship with Him, as we walk by faith, trusting God.