

THE SEQUEL TO THE BATTLE... WORSHIP

Joshua 8:30-35

After the victory at Ai, Joshua did something that was *foolish* from a *military* stand point...but *glorious* from a *spiritual* stand point. Instead of securing the central sector of the land with further military campaigns, he led the Israelites on a *spiritual pilgrimage*. Why? Because this is what he had been instructed to do by Moses.

“Then Moses and the elders of Israel charged the people, saying, ‘Keep all the commandments which I command you today. So it shall be on the day when you cross the Jordan to the land which the Lord your God gives you, that you shall set up for yourself large stones and coat them with lime and write on them all the words of this law, when you cross over, so that you may enter the land which the Lord your God gives you, a land flowing with milk and honey, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, promised you. So it shall be when you cross the Jordan, you shall set up on Mount Ebal, these stones, as I am commanding you today, and you shall coat them with lime. Moreover, you shall build there an altar to the Lord your God, an altar of stones; you shall not wield an iron tool on them. You shall build the altar of the Lord your God of uncut stones, and you shall offer on it burnt offerings to the Lord your God; and you shall sacrifice peace offerings and eat there, and rejoice before the Lord your God. You shall write on the stones all the words of this law very distinctly.’”

~Deuteronomy 27:1-8

So as soon as the campaign against Ai was completed, Joshua led the men, women, children, and livestock from their camp at Gilgal northward up the Jordan Valley to the place that Moses had specified...the mountains of Ebal (vs. 30) and Gerizim (vs. 33) where Shechem is located. The march of about 30 miles was not particularly difficult or dangerous since they passed through a sparsely populated area.

Why was this location chosen? These mountains are located in the geographic center of the land and from either peak much of the Promised Land could be seen. This was the strategic center of Canaan. Here, in a place that represented all of the land, twice Joshua would challenge the people to renew their covenant vows to the Lord. Here, as they were entering into Canaan, and later, when his leadership was ending (Joshua 24:1).

I. THEIR WORSHIP: (vs. 30-34) An acknowledgement of God

Then Joshua built an altar to the Lord, the God of Israel, in Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded the sons of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of uncut stones on which no man had wielded an iron tool; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the Lord, and sacrificed peace offerings (vs. 30-31)...

The solemn and significant ceremony at Shechem involved three things:

- An altar of uncut stone...erected on Mount Ebal...where sacrifices consisting of burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings were offered to the Lord.

Burnt Offering...(Leviticus 1:2-17) The burnt offering was an offering for *atonement for sin* in general. It enabled *unholy* people to approach a *holy* God.

Peace Offering...(Leviticus 7:11-38) a Fellowship offering...a Thanksgiving offering. The peace offering was an expression of *gratitude*...and it expressed a desire for *fellowship* with God.

The burnt offering and peace offering typifies the type of fellowship believers have today with God that came *through the cross...atonement for sin* and an *intimate, personal, Father / family relationship*.

This was directly opposite of the worship that the Canaanites had to the *false gods*...those *gods* that were worshiped in Jericho and Ai. Israel now publically worshiped and proclaimed her faith in the one true God...Yahweh.

- The writing of the Law...

He wrote there on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written, in the presence of the sons of Israel (vs. 32)...

Joshua set up some large stones where he wrote on their surfaces a copy of the Law of Moses. It isn't stated how much of the Law was inscribed. Some believe that only the *Ten Commandments* were written...while others think the stone was inscribed with at least Deuteronomy 5-26. What is noted is that it was the Law of Moses...the Word of God.

- **The reading of the Law**...reading of the Word.

All Israel with their elders and officers and their judges were standing on both sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, the stranger as well as the native. Half of them stood in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the Lord had given command at first to bless the people of Israel. Then afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the book of the law (**vs. 33-34**)...

Joshua then read the Law to the people. Half of the people were positioned on the slopes of Mount Gerizim to the *south*...while the other half were on the slopes of Mount Ebal to the *north*.

The ark of the covenant of the Lord was in the valley between the two mountains surrounded by the Levitical priests.

II. THEIR WITNESS: (**vs. 35**)...their response to the Word.

There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel with the women and the little ones and the strangers who were living among them (**vs. 35**)...

As the curses of the Law were read one by one, the tribes on Mount Ebal responded, "Amen!" As the blessings were likewise read, the tribes on Mount Gerizim responded, "Amen!" (**Deuteronomy 27:12-26**).

"It shall come about, when the Lord your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, that you shall place the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal."

~Deuteronomy 11:29

The huge natural amphitheater that the two mountain peaks formed still exists there today. And that is what made it possible for the people to hear every word. And with all sincerity, Israel affirmed that the Law of the Lord was indeed to be *the Law of the land*.

From this point on, the history of the Jews depended on their *obedience to the Law* which had been read in their presence that day. When they were *obedient*...there was *blessing*. When they were *disobedient*...there was *judgment* (**Deuteronomy 28**).

It is tragic that the affirmations of this momentous hour faded so quickly.

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- *The difference between Old Testament theology and New Testament theology...the difference between Law and Grace. In Old Testament theology...If you obey Me...then I will bless you. In New Testament theology...Since I have blessed you...will you obey Me?*
- **When we experience God...when we see God at work...the response will always lead to worship.**