

In our last lesson, we talked about how God stopped the flow of water in the Jordan River to allow the Israelites to walk through. The Israelites camped at Gilgal. They followed God's instructions and the walls of Jericho fell. Rahab and her family were the only ones saved in Jericho.

The next city after Jericho was the city of Ai. Joshua sent spies to look over the city. (Joshua 7:2) The spies returned to Joshua and told him not to send a large army of people to fight at Ai. They said there were not a lot of people there. They thought they could win the battle very easily.

Joshua sent an army of only 3,000 men to fight at Ai. (Joshua 7:3) The army thought God would help them fight the battle. But, God did not help them. Thirty-six Israelites were killed in the battle. Joshua did not understand why God did not help them.

God told Joshua that someone had sinned. God would not help the Israelites until Joshua found the person who sinned against God.

Remember that God had told the people not to take anything out of Jericho to keep for their own. God told Joshua that someone had taken something. Someone disobeyed God.

Joshua brought each tribe before him until he found the person who had disobeyed God. That man's name was Achan. Achan saw some things in the city of Jericho that he wanted. Achan took the things and buried them under his tent. Joshua sent men to Achan's tent to get the things he had stolen. Achan told Joshua, "I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel". (Joshua 7:20)

Achan was punished because of his sin. Achan and his family were destroyed.

God did not help the Israelites in the battle at Ai because of the sin of Achan. Achan's punishment showed the people that God would not allow them to disobey Him without being punished.

God told Joshua to go back into battle at Ai. God told Joshua not to be afraid because He would be with them. (Joshua 8:1) Joshua had a special plan. Joshua and his army went towards Ai. He told some of the men to hide until time to attack the city of Ai.

Joshua took the rest of the men with him and camped at a different place. The next morning, Joshua and his people went towards the city. When the men of Ai saw them coming, they left the city and went running out to fight them. Joshua wanted the men of Ai to think that the Israelites were afraid. He and his men turned around and started running away. (Joshua 8:16) The men of Ai continued to run after them.

Joshua stopped and stretched out his hand and pointed his spear toward Ai. (Joshua 8:18) That was Joshua's signal for the other group of his army to attack. They ran into Ai and burned everything in the city. (Joshua 8:19) The men who ran after Joshua looked back and saw their city burning. Joshua and his army turned around and went back to fight them. Joshua's plan worked. God was with them and helped them win the battle.

Joshua led the people to a valley between two mountains, Ebal and Gerizim. Joshua built an altar and worshipped God. Joshua wrote the law of Moses on stones. Joshua read every word of the law to all of the Israelites. (Joshua 8:34)

Some strangers came into the Israelite camp at Gilgal. The strangers told Joshua they were from a far away country. They said they were very poor. Joshua made a promise to the men that they would not be killed. Then the strangers left.

Three days later, someone came into the Israelite camp and told Joshua the strangers were really from Gibeon. Gibeon was the next city after Ai. The strangers had tricked Joshua. Joshua had already made a covenant with them and would not break his promise. He did not kill them. But, Joshua made slaves of the people because they had lied to him.

The king of Jerusalem heard what the men of Gibeon had done. He called together some of the other kings in the country to talk about what had happened. They decided to go together to destroy Gibeon.

When the people of Gibeon found out they were going to be attacked, they sent men to tell Joshua. Joshua put together an army to go and help the people in Gibeon. (Joshua 10:7) The battle went on all day. Joshua knew they would not win the battle before it was dark. Joshua prayed to the Lord, “Sun, stand still over Gibeon; And moon, in the valley of Aijalon.” (Joshua 10:12) The sun did stand still, and the moon stayed in the valley. Joshua wanted it to stay light until they could win the battle. God answered the prayers of Joshua.

Joshua led his army into the southern part of Canaan. They took over all the cities in that part of the land. Then Joshua and his people returned to their camp at Gilgal. There was a small lake near Gilgal. It was the water of Merom.

The last great battle that Joshua and his army fought was at the waters of Merom. Jabin, the king of Hazor, called together 12 kings from the north. They all agreed to join together and fight against the Israelites. God told Joshua, “Do not be afraid...” (Joshua 11:6) Joshua marched his army toward Lake Merom. (Joshua 11:7) The Israelites won the battle.

Joshua went through the north and took over the few groups that were left. All together, Joshua conquered 31 kings. (Joshua 12) It was God who gave the Israelites the victory in taking the land of Canaan. God had promised Abraham the land of Canaan for his descendants. That promise had been fulfilled.