

## **A DAY OF DEFEAT**

As spiritual leader of the theocracy, Joshua had been promised victory – “No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just, as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you.” (Josh.1:5; 3:7; 6:2; Heb.13:5)

He had tasted sweet victory at the Jordan (ch.4) and than at Jericho (ch.6). He was unprepared for defeat.

How could such a defeat at Ai happen to us? Like so many, Joshua was fully prepared to do battle with the enemy outside but unprepared for the enemy in-house.

We will examine our lesson text by the following four homiletical points.

- |              |                       |                         |
|--------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| • Josh.7:1   | Righteous indignation | Anthropopathism (anger) |
| • Josh.7:2-3 | Reconnaissance        | Ai (piece of cake)      |
| • Josh.7:4-5 | Retreat (Josh.7:8)    | Afraid (hearts melted)  |
| • Josh.7:6-9 | Reputation            | Abolish (God’s name)    |

**This lesson will study SEVEN aspects of the Day of Defeat at Ai and the initial doctrinal mishandling of it.**

**1. The defeat at Ai came as a big shock to Joshua, the elders, the military, and all Israel. They were riding on a spiritual high after two great victories of Jordan River and Jericho.**

How can one possibly understand such a defeat? How could this happen to us since we were so well prepared? How could this happen to us since we were promised victory by God?

This was like Nebraska being defeated by Slippery Rock 21- 3 in 1983.

**2. As leader of the theocracy, Joshua struggled with these questions for an appropriate explanation.**

There is a spiritual lesson for all spiritual advancing believers who are committed to walking by faith in this world for victory – “And this is the victory that overcome the world – our faith.” (1 John 5:4)

Where does the fault belong for defeat when it isn’t obvious?

**3. Joshua and the elders took responsibility for the defeat since they were the leaders (Josh.7:6).**

But they didn’t take the blame for the defeat. They had carried out the plan given to them to the letter. It had done by those under their command. Because of integrity towards the position of divine delegated authority, they took responsibility for it.

This is the correct attitude for anyone holding the position of divine delegated authority (husband, parent, boss, government leaders, teachers and coaches).

The truth was stated by God – “But the sons of Israel acted unfaithfully in regard to the things under the ban.” Defeat wasn’t related to the actual battle but to the ban.

**4. Joshua and the elders recognized their responsibility to appeal to the divine chain of command.**

They didn't retreat from responsibilities. They were accountable to one another and God.

They understood the authority of the divine chain of command - Lord to theocracy (Joshua and elders) to Israelites – “There is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.” (Rom.13:1)

They are showing their understanding of this by putting dust on their heads (Gen.2:7; Ps.104:29; Eccl.12:7). They are saying that they know that they are nothing apart from the grace of God.

**5. In spite of knowing this truth, they engaged in blame. Notice three questions ask by Joshua (Josh.7:7).**

Blame was wrong thinking. If continued, it will lead Joshua to personal spiritual defeat. It is typical old man thinking. Like so many things, it can be traced all the way back to Adam and Eve (Gen.3:12-13) [the woman you gave me and the serpent deceived me].

However, Joshua blamed God – “Why did You?” (Josh.7:7) and he blamed the fighting soldiers – “Israel turned their backs.” (Josh.7:8)

It is true that God allowed defeat to occur. And it is true that Israel retreated from the battle.

**Principle:** But false assumptions lead to false interpretations lead to false expectations lead to false applications.

**6. Joshua misinterpreted the reason for defeat.**

He went from shock to subjective thinking to a false doctrinal assumption. “for some reason that Joshua can't understand God did this to them (Josh.7:7-9).”

Joshua's deep sigh was the clue – “Alas, O God.” (Josh.7:7) What should Joshua have done? Joshua was like a person in a stalled car in the 6 o'clock traffic on major highway allowing the pressure of the situation to project blame upon himself and others rather than focusing on the solution to the problem.

- Stop the blame game and subjective thinking of old man. God doesn't make mistakes.
- Reverse concentration and return to the filling ministry of Holy Spirit for spiritual guidance in truth.
- Identify the general category of problem (war against the city of Ai; defeat when promised victory) and reduce it to the specifics (inheritance city and under the cherem ban – “But as for you, only keep yourselves from the things under the ban, lest you covet them and take some of the things under the ban, so you would make the camp of Israel accursed and bring trouble on it.” (Josh.6:18)
- Then apply the faith cycle to it.

**7. It is true that the Israelite army retreated but the truth is that they couldn't have acted any other way since they were under divine discipline – “Israel cannot stand before their enemies.” (Josh.7:11-13).**

- Defeat is NOT the norm and standard of the CWL unless there is sin (Josh.7:11).
- Victory is the norm and standard of the CWL for walking by faith – “For we walk by faith, not by sight.” (2 Cor.5:7)

Joshua should have gone down the divine chain of command as well up it (tribal leaders to families to household to man) to resolve this problem (Josh.7:14). The problem Joshua struggled with to despair had already been addressed doctrinally but overlooked because of a false assumption (Josh.6:17-18; 7:1, 11).