

## OH ME, OH MY, THEY SNOOKERED AI!

### I. Joshua 8:1-29

A. During the Revolutionary War the *Battle of Cowpens* took place on January 17, 1781 in South Carolina. Led by famed Brigadier General, Daniel Morgan, the Continental Army faced off against the British who'd already captured Savannah, Charleston, and Camden. The Continentals, joined by Patriot Militia, formed a unique plan. The more ragtag looking Militia marched out against the Brits first, fired off a couple volleys, then feinted a hasty retreat. Sensing victory, the Redcoats swiftly charged. But then lying in wait, up pops the hidden Bluecoats and they quickly rout the British. If you've ever watched the movie, *The Patriot*, with Mel Gibson, this battle is the one loosely portrayed. Today we read of a similar battle plan that took place 3,000 years earlier...

B. Last Sunday we read about the debacle of the first battle of Ai (*A-eye*). It might as well've been called the *Battle of Black Eye* as Israel was thoroughly trounced. The loss happened because a man named Achan secretly stole forbidden plunder from the ruins of Jericho and hid it in his tent. (Essentially he stole from God!) The deed escaped everyone's notice except for God. The loss was a teachable moment for God's people. They fled the battlefield with the fear of the Amorites; but they'll return to the battlefield with the fear of the Lord. Watch what happens...

### C. Joshua 8:1-29 (ESV) is the rematch...

1) **V1: 1** *And the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not fear and do not be dismayed. Take all the fighting men with you, and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, and his people, his city, and his land. (Like many have famously quipped: "**God said it; I believe it; that settles it!**")*

2) **V2: 2** *And you shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king. Only its spoil and its livestock you shall take as plunder for yourselves. (This time Israel gets to keep the spoils! Jericho's plunder belonged to God. God gets the firstfruits. So we give to Him off the top, not our leftovers. But here comes the battle plan...) Lay an ambush against the city, behind it."*

3) **V3-4: 3** *So Joshua and all the fighting men arose to go up to Ai. And Joshua chose 30,000 mighty men of valor and sent them out by night. 4* *And he commanded them, "Behold, you shall lie in ambush against the city, behind it. Do not go very far from the city, but all of you remain ready. (He sends warriors by night to set an ambush. Then what?)*

4) **V5: 5** *And I and all the people who are with me will approach the city. And when they come out against us just as before, we shall flee before them. (It's called a feint. A ruse. A bluff. A snooker maneuver. Misdirection. Trickeration!)*

5) **V6-7: 6** *And they will come out after us, until we have drawn them away from the city. For they will say, 'They are fleeing from us, just as before.' So we will flee before them. 7* *Then you shall rise up from the ambush and seize the city, for the LORD your God will give it into your hand. (No marching or blowing rams horns or shouting?' **Nope, not this time!**)*

6) **V8: 8** And as soon as you have taken the city, you shall set the city on fire. You shall do according to the word of the LORD. See, I have commanded you.” (“**God said it; I believe it; that settles it!**”)

7) **V9-12: 9** So Joshua sent them out. And they went to the place of ambush and lay between Bethel and Ai, to the west of Ai, but Joshua spent that night among the people. **10** Joshua arose early in the morning and mustered the people and went up, he and the elders of Israel, before the people to Ai. **11** And all the fighting men who were with him went up and drew near before the city and encamped on the north side of Ai, with a ravine between them and Ai. **12** He took about 5,000 men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, to the west of the city. (**Maybe a second ambush or a portion of the main ambushers. It appears Bethel is allied with Ai for this pending battle and they too will pay accordingly.**)

8) **V13-15: 13** So they stationed the forces, the main encampment that was north of the city and its rear guard west of the city. But Joshua spent that night in the valley. **14** And as soon as the king of Ai saw this, he and all his people, the men of the city, hurried and went out early to the appointed place toward the Arabah to meet Israel in battle. But he did not know that there was an ambush against him behind the city. **15** And Joshua and all Israel pretended to be beaten before them and fled in the direction of the wilderness. (**Satan is known to be a masterful deceiver. But God can easily deceive the deceiver. He sees through all the devil's lures and schemes and traps. Nothing gets past God! He's never swindled!**)

9) **V16-20: 16** So all the people who were in the city were called together to pursue them, and as they pursued Joshua they were drawn away from the city. **17** Not a man was left in Ai or Bethel who did not go out after Israel. They left the city open and pursued Israel. **18** Then the LORD said to Joshua, “Stretch out the javelin that is in your hand toward Ai, for I will give it into your hand.” And Joshua stretched out the javelin that was in his hand toward the city. **19** And the men in the ambush rose quickly out of their place, and as soon as he had stretched out his hand, they ran and entered the city and captured it. And they hurried to set the city on fire. **20** So when the men of Ai looked back, behold, the smoke of the city went up to heaven, and they had no power to flee this way or that, for the people who fled to the wilderness turned back against the pursuers. (**In Canaanite-eeze they cried out, "Rut Ro!"**)

10) **V21-22: 21** And when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had captured the city, and that the smoke of the city went up, then they turned back and struck down the men of Ai. **22** And the others came out from the city against them, so they were in the midst of Israel, some on this side, and some on that side. And Israel struck them down, until there was left none that survived or escaped. (**It was Custer's last stand on steroids!**)

11) **V23-29: 23** But the king of Ai they took alive, and brought him near to Joshua. **24** When Israel had finished killing all the inhabitants of Ai in the open wilderness where they pursued them, and all of them to the very last had fallen by the edge of the sword, all Israel returned to Ai and struck it down with the edge of the sword. **25** And all who fell that day, both men and women, were 12,000, all the people of Ai. **26** But Joshua did not draw back his hand with which he stretched out the javelin until he had devoted all the inhabitants of Ai to destruction. **27** Only the livestock and the spoil of that city Israel took as their plunder, according to the word of the LORD that He commanded Joshua. **28** So Joshua burned Ai and made it forever a heap of ruins, as it is to this day. **29** And he hanged the king of Ai on a tree until evening. And at sunset Joshua commanded, and they took his body down from the tree and

threw it at the entrance of the gate of the city and raised over it a great heap of stones, which stands there to this day. **(Joshua obeys Deuteronomy 21:22-23 (NCV): 22 If someone is guilty of a sin worthy of death, he must be put to death and his body displayed on a tree. 23 But don't leave his body hanging on the tree overnight; be sure to bury him that same day, because anyone whose body is displayed on a tree is cursed by God. You must not ruin the land the LORD your God is giving you as your own.)**

**D. So now we have three stone memorials in the Promised Land: One commemorating God's faithfulness in bringing His children across the Jordan River on dry ground; one a reminder of Achan's unfaithfulness in stealing from God; and one for a wicked pagan king whose ways were a stench in God's nostrils. Which memorial do you think was the biggest tourist attraction?**

**E. What's next? Joshua renews the Covenant with God. They build an altar and offer sacrifices to the Lord. Joshua makes a brand new set of God's Commandments and I suspect this set is large enough for public view. And he then reads aloud the Law handed down through Moses, every last word of it, so that going forward it's fresh in all the people's minds & hearts. (At least for Joshua the adage held true: "God said it; I believe it; that settles it!")**

**F. Of course time will pass. God's Law will be broken many times over in the years and centuries ahead. No one will keep it completely. Lawbreakers will live up to their name, twisting and breaking it many times over, in big ways and small. That is, until the Law-Keeper, the Son of God, the Word Made Flesh arrives. He keeps every jot & tittle of that Law! He keeps it for His Father. And He keeps it for us!**

**G. When He comes, He amazingly manifests the mercy and love of God. His words and His miracles affirm *Who* He is. The long promised Messiah! The Righteous One! What happens? The blind see! The deaf hear! The lame walk! Lepers are cleansed! The hungry are fed! The dead rise! And God's Law will be kept completely for the first time ever! He keeps it for His Father. He keeps it for us!**

**H. The crowds swarm to Him. But the experts in the Law despise Him. The chief ruling lawbreakers have the Law-Keeper arrested, falsely tried, and executed on a bloody Roman cross. They believe they've won. Satan and his minions believe they've won. But this was God's plan from before time. Our shameful guilt of sin was placed upon Him. In turn, Jesus' law-keeping record He imputes to us. He declares you & me *not guilty! Justified! Just-as-if-I'd* never sinned! Our Lord, was hung upon a tree, brutally executed like the king of Ai. He became a curse to vanquish the curse of the law. He suffered what we deserved. He saved us from sin and death and He secured for us life forevermore!**

**\* Here's something to be thankful for today and for the rest of eternity: The Good News of Jesus Christ! 2 Corinthians 9:15 (ESV) declares: "Thanks be to God for His inexpressible Gift!" Or how about Psalms 103:11-12 (ESV): "For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us." And John 4:10 (NIV) completes the trifecta: "This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." **Yes Lord, we give thanks to You and we do so with grateful hearts!****

**\* Close with Prayer...**

## [Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff](#)

### [Joshua 8:1-29 \(ESV\)](#)

**1** And the LORD said to Joshua, “Do not fear and do not be dismayed. Take all the fighting men with you, and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, and his people, his city, and his land. **2** And you shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king. Only its spoil and its livestock you shall take as plunder for yourselves. Lay an ambush against the city, behind it.” **3** So Joshua and all the fighting men arose to go up to Ai. And Joshua chose 30,000 mighty men of valor and sent them out by night. **4** And he commanded them, “Behold, you shall lie in ambush against the city, behind it. Do not go very far from the city, but all of you remain ready. **5** And I and all the people who are with me will approach the city. And when they come out against us just as before, we shall flee before them. **6** And they will come out after us, until we have drawn them away from the city. For they will say, ‘They are fleeing from us, just as before.’ So we will flee before them. **7** Then you shall rise up from the ambush and seize the city, for the LORD your God will give it into your hand. **8** And as soon as you have taken the city, you shall set the city on fire. You shall do according to the word of the LORD. See, I have commanded you.” **9** So Joshua sent them out. And they went to the place of ambush and lay between Bethel and Ai, to the west of Ai, but Joshua spent that night among the people. **10** Joshua arose early in the morning and mustered the people and went up, he and the elders of Israel, before the people to Ai. **11** And all the fighting men who were with him went up and drew near before the city and encamped on the north side of Ai, with a ravine between them and Ai. **12** He took about 5,000 men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, to the west of the city. **13** So they stationed the forces, the main encampment that was north of the city and its rear guard west of the city. But Joshua spent that night in the valley. **14** And as soon as the king of Ai saw this, he and all his people, the men of the city, hurried and went out early to the appointed place toward the Arabah to meet Israel in battle. But he did not know that there was an ambush against him behind the city. **15** And Joshua and all Israel pretended to be beaten before them and fled in the direction of the wilderness. **16** So all the people who were in the city were called together to pursue them, and as they pursued Joshua they were drawn away from the city. **17** Not a man was left in Ai or Bethel who did not go out after Israel. They left the city open and pursued Israel. **18** Then the LORD said to Joshua, “Stretch out the javelin that is in your hand toward Ai, for I will give it into your hand.” And Joshua stretched out the javelin that was in his hand toward the city. **19** And the men in the ambush rose quickly out of their place, and as soon as he had stretched out his hand, they ran and entered the city and captured it. And they hurried to set the city on fire. **20** So when the men of Ai looked back, behold, the smoke of the city went up to heaven, and they had no power to flee this way or that, for the people who fled to the wilderness turned back against the pursuers. **21** And when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had captured the city, and that the smoke of the city went up, then they turned back and struck down the men of Ai. **22** And the others came out from the city against them, so they were in the midst of Israel, some on this side, and some on that side. And Israel struck them down, until there was left none that survived or escaped. **23** But the king of Ai they took alive, and brought him

near to Joshua. **24** When Israel had finished killing all the inhabitants of Ai in the open wilderness where they pursued them, and all of them to the very last had fallen by the edge of the sword, all Israel returned to Ai and struck it down with the edge of the sword. **25** And all who fell that day, both men and women, were 12,000, all the people of Ai. **26** But Joshua did not draw back his hand with which he stretched out the javelin until he had devoted all the inhabitants of Ai to destruction. **27** Only the livestock and the spoil of that city Israel took as their plunder, according to the word of the LORD that He commanded Joshua. **28** So Joshua burned Ai and made it forever a heap of ruins, as it is to this day. **29** And he hanged the king of Ai on a tree until evening. And at sunset Joshua commanded, and they took his body down from the tree and threw it at the entrance of the gate of the city and raised over it a great heap of stones, which stands there to this day.

### **Deuteronomy 21:22-23 (NCV)**

**22** If someone is guilty of a sin worthy of death, he must be put to death and his body displayed on a tree. **23** But don't leave his body hanging on the tree overnight; be sure to bury him that same day, because anyone whose body is displayed on a tree is cursed by God. You must not ruin the land the LORD your God is giving you as your own.

### **2 Corinthians 9:15 (ESV)**

**15** Thanks be to God for His inexpressible Gift!"

### **Psalm 103:11-12 (ESV)**

**11** For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him; **12** as far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us.

### **1 John 4:10 (NIV)**

**10** This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

### **Bonus Goodies**

**Joshua and the Conquest of Canaan (From Dust to Glory) - R.C. Sproul**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NvZYhYfvDag>

**Two Battles with AI - Bible Animation (Joshua 7-8) - CartoonWorks**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uVQusPryR6Y>

**Is God More Wrathful in the Old Testament? - Ligonier Ministries**

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/is-god-more-wrathful-in-the-old-testament>

**Why Did God Command the OT Killing of Women & Children? - Dr. Theodore Cabal**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYBjetEebEY>

**The Battle of Cowpens - National Park Service**  
<http://www.nps.gov/cowp/historyculture/the-battle-of-cowpens.htm>

**The Patriot - Final Battle Scene (Loosely Based on the Battle of Cowpens)**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P2wUPG0tusk>

### [More Verses, Quotes, Excerpts, & Extras](#)

#### [Galatians 3:10-14 \(ESV\)](#)

**10** For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.”

**11** Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” **12** But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” **13** Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us--for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”--**14** so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

#### [Joshua 8:30-35 \(ESV\)](#)

**30** At that time Joshua built an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, on Mount Ebal, **31** just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the people of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, “an altar of uncut stones, upon which no man has wielded an iron tool.” And they offered on it burnt offerings to the LORD and sacrificed peace offerings. **32** And there, in the presence of the people of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written. **33** And all Israel, sojourner as well as native born, with their elders and officers and their judges, stood on opposite sides of the Ark before the Levitical priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD, half of them in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded at the first, to bless the people of Israel. **34** And 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. **35** There was not a word of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the sojourners who lived among them.

#### [Quote by Jerry Bridges](#)

"Christ exhausted the cup of God's wrath. For all who trust in Him there is nothing more in the cup. It is empty."

#### [Quote by Zacharias Ursinus](#)

"God grants and credits to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, as if I had never sinned nor been a sinner, as if I had been perfectly obedient as Christ was obedient for me."

#### [Quote by Charles Spurgeon](#)

“If some of you plume yourselves with the notion that you are righteous, I pray God to pluck those fine feathers off you and make you see yourselves, for if you never see your own nothingness, you will never understand Christ’s all-sufficiency. Unless you are pulled down, Christ will never lift you up.”

### **Quote by William Barclay**

“The Cross is the proof that there is no length to which the love of God will refuse to go, in order to win (people's) hearts. The Cross is the medium of reconciliation because the Cross is the final proof of the love of God; and a love like that demands an answering love. If the Cross will not waken love and wonder in people's hearts, nothing will.”

### **Quote by John MacArthur**

“...Whether you’re talking about redemption, justification, reconciliation; whether you’re talking about the removal of sin and transgression, whether you’re talking about propitiation or covering--all of those are corollaries in a sense to the great truth of substitution, that Christ took our place on the cross... To put it as simply as I can put it, if Christ is not my substitute, then I still occupy the place of a condemned sinner. If my sins and my guilt are not transferred to Him and He does not take them, then they remain with me. If He did not deal with my sins, then I must deal with them. If He did not bear my penalty, then I must bear it. There is no other possibility. It is either Him or me... The bottom line is this: either Christ took my sins and bore them or I will. Either He paid the penalty for my sin, or I will pay it in hell forever.”

- John MacArthur, Sermon titled, *"The Suffering Jesus: Our Substitute and Shepherd,"* June 11, 1989.

### **Quote by John Calvin**

“This is our acquittal: the guilt that held us liable for punishment has been transferred to the head of the Son of God... We must, above all, remember this substitution, lest we tremble and remain anxious throughout life--as if God’s righteous vengeance, which the Son of God has taken upon Himself, still hung over us... To take away all cause for enmity and to reconcile us utterly to Himself, He wipes out all evil in us by the expiation set forth in the death of Christ; that we, who were previously unclean and impure, may show ourselves righteous and holy in His sight.”

- John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. 2, p.p. 506, 510.

### **The Destruction of the Canaanites**

Introduction to Joshua - The ESV Study Bible

The account in Joshua presents the sensitive reader with a deep problem, namely, the apparently wholesale slaughter of the indigenous Canaanite population in order to allow the people of Israel to occupy their land. How did Israel have any right to seize that land? And how can it be God's will for them to spare none of those who resisted them in defense of their own land? Could this be a level of barbarism that God tolerated in the OT but now forbids in the NT?

Certainly people hostile to the Bible decry ancient Israel for its "ethnic cleansing," and many sensitive Christians find this deeply troubling as well. To handle the topic

thoroughly would take a longer essay, but the discussion here can guide thoughts for further reflection.

One must begin by acknowledging that the questions are legitimate. Christians rightly condemn this kind of behavior in other circumstances, and there is no warrant today for nations to destroy other nations in order to take their land. But there are special features of the command to Israel that both make it unique (and therefore not open to be imitated) and allow it to be seen in a moral light. This command is one reason why Exodus records the call of Moses in such detail (Ex. 3:1-4:17; cf. Num. 12:1-15): Moses is God's unique choice to be the lawgiver for His people, and the commands given through Moses come from God's own mind (cf. Deut. 18:15-20). Believers accept God's appointment of Moses to speak His will. Without this command from God as delivered through Moses, Israel would have had no right to the land.

A second point to clarify is that the Pentateuch sets out laws for warfare, distinguishing between battles fought against cities outside the Promised Land (Deut. 20:10-15) and those fought against cities inside the land (Deut. 20:16-18). It is only the latter case that requires Israel to spare no one ("*you shall devote them to complete destruction*"); see the notes on Deuteronomy 20:1-20 and 20:16-18. The law appears to be unconditional and implacable. With these clarifications, one can now outline why this command is not an unsolvable "problem."

(1) A fundamental OT conviction is the Yahweh, the God of Israel, is the Creator of all there is, and therefore the owner of all lands. He has the right to distribute territories according to His good and holy will (cf. Ex. 19:5; Ps. 24:1). As the universal Creator, He is also the universal Judge, to whom all people everywhere are accountable: cf. Genesis 6-8 (the flood story affects all kinds of people); Genesis 11:1-9 (the Tower of Babel); Exodus 12:12 (judgment on the gods of Egypt); the prophetic oracles about the nations (see chart, p. 1264). The NT shares this basic conviction: cf. Acts 14:15-16; 17:24-31. This means that God has the ultimate rights over the land of Canaan, and that He has the right to bring the Canaanites to judgment for their moral condition and deeds.

(2) Since all people are sinners, all are rightly subject to God's judgment. The Pentateuch gives a moral rationale for the removal of the Canaanites, seeing it as divine judgment for their iniquities (see note on Gen. 15:13-16; cf. Lev. 18:24-30; Deut. 9:5). This action against these peoples, then, is an expression of God's judgment on them through the agency of Israel. This judgment therefore announces the moral nature of God to the whole world for their instruction (that announcement in all its clarity is itself part of the blessing that Israel is to bring to the whole world). In ways that are not entirely clear, the faithful will participate with God in carrying out the final judgment (1 Cor. 6:2; Ps. 149:6-7), and Israel's bringing of judgment on the Canaanites foreshadows that great responsibility as well (see note on Josh. 6:17).

God's judgment allows no double standard: He did not base His choice of Israel on any merit of theirs (Deut. 7:6-9), and He calls them to embrace His love faithfully.



Unfaithfulness will lead to judgment upon Israel itself, whether at the level of the individual (Ex. 22:20) or the whole people (Josh 7:11-12; Mal. 4:6; cf. Lev. 18:28). This cannot be called "ethnic cleansing," since the treatment is just, regardless of ethnicity.

(3) Further, the Sinai Covenant sets Israel up to be a "theocracy," a unique combination of what's now called "church" and "state." Membership in the people is both political and religious, and thus "citizens" are under obligation to be faithful in observing the covenant. Those who carry out egregious violations must be removed (e.g. Deut. 13:5; 17:7; etc.), and if Israel were to allow unrepentant Canaanites to remain in the land, they would drag the whole people down into idolatry, injustice, and evil (e.g. Deut. 7:4; 12:29-31), which, sadly, is just what happened. Christians are not to carry out this kind of warfare, because the people of God are no longer identified with a particular nation-state.

(4) Finally, even though the laws about destroying the Canaanites are stated in an uncompromising and unconditional way, (in keeping with the rhetoric of ancient Near Eastern conquest accounts, which allows for this kind of unqualified statement), the way Israel applied those laws apparently made room for some of the Canaanites to surrender and survive, particularly if they professed faith in the One true God (see note on Josh. 2:9 for Rahab and her whole family; see note on 9:1-27 for the Gibeonites; cf. 11:19). This means that the appearance of implacability in these laws is just that, an appearance, and there is an implied allowance for exceptions. This is another point showing that, strictly speaking, the command given to Israel is nothing like "ethnic cleansing." since ethnicity itself is not the reason for the action.

These factors--God's right to allocate land and judge the world with perfect justice; the need to protect the purity of the Israelite theocracy; and the provisions for even the Canaanites to be saved--all illustrate the justice that lies behind these provisions. At the same time, it is also clear that the practices known as genocide and ethnic cleansing are indeed evil, and the Israelites were not commanded to commit them. These factors were a unique part of Israel's mission; no people today have any right to use them as a warrant to support injustice.

- Theological Essay, Introduction to Joshua, *The ESV Study Bible*, Crossway, p.p. 390-391.