



After the Ambush at Ai

Joshua 8:1-35,

“Then Joshua built an altar unto the LORD God of Israel in mount Ebal, As Moses the servant of the LORD commanded the children of Israel... and they offered thereon burnt offerings unto the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings.” (vs. 30-31)

Joshua and the nation of Israel had encountered a terrible and deadly defeat at Ai. They were defeated because of the disobedience of Achan in stealing of *“the accursed thing.”* Once they corrected their failure, God relieved their fears, (8:1); and he guaranteed victory. The spoil of this city would belong to Israel. What happened after the Ambush at Ai is a great spiritual lesson. It is applicable to our own life after we have corrected the failure, determined to follow God’s way and won the initial battle. We can’t rest, but must continue by including actions that match our heart.

There is little doubt that we will occasionally find failure in our lives; failures in our spiritual walk with the Lord. Once we have faced our familiar foe, fought and found victory what should we do? What direction should we take once we have repented from our sin and corrected our walk? This factual story of Joshua and the children of Israel, *“After the Ambush at Ai,”* can give us insight into a proper perspective and purpose of life once we have corrected our failure. Once the wrong is removed it is most profitable if we replace it with actions that match our heart.

I. **Worship Was Restored, (Vs. 30)**

A. The purpose of building the altar:

1. It was built to express praise: to God for the victory he gave and the victories he promised.
2. It was built to express dedication: to the purpose and plan of God. It was built as designed and demanded by God. They restored what was lost.
3. It was built to express faith: in God's means and manner of cleansing. They must be reminded to recognize their need for sacrifice: (there is need for constant confession). Sin is an ever-present and persistent and uncomfortable reality. The system of sacrifices, including the altar, pointed to the Messiah; no tools were used in its construction (Vs. 31).
4. It was built to express recognition; of the source of victory. Constant walk in conformity and fellowship is required but only possible in Christ. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.
5. It was built to express revival. Israel had deteriorated spiritually. The altar should have brought them to a place of peace and comfort. Christ is our altar and it is with Him that we are to walk. He is our constant access to God the Father. They had just won the victory and yet they built an altar. Why? Because they learned to not look lightly upon sin. They learned where the place of protection was. It was in conformity to the plan and purpose of God.

B. The place of building the altar:

1. Was in the presence of the curse: The word "Ebal" would remind them of ruin or heap of ruins. It is used collectively of Israel rather than of one single individual. The word's derivatives are iniquity and guilt. It seems to me to speak of sin, its outcome,

and its punishment. The curse! Joshua was leading the nation of Israel to recognize their sin, its consequences, but also the mercy and forgiveness of God based upon the promise of God's sacrifice. He did this by merging the two thoughts into one place. Guilt and forgiveness in Ai. After the Ambush this altar would remind them of their sin and its consequences. But, it would also remind them of divine grace, mercy, and forgiveness.

2. Was in the place of shame: This is in connection with the root word it comes from meaning to bend. In the place of shame and dishonor we find an altar that overturns the curse. The altar was built in "Ebal" meaning the place where God overturned our sin/curse and gave us victory. What a rich lesson we can learn from this example. You can't clean things up and then build an altar of worship. It is through the altar/Christ that we are made clean and able to worship.

II. Worship Was Expressed

- A. With one voice of praise: (they offered, vs. 31)
 1. Together they brought a peace offering. The peace offering indicated a right relation to God.
 2. It was an offering of thanksgiving, it was a freewill offering and in it both the priesthood and the one offering the sacrifice were to eat.
 3. We are in unity about our sin and guilt (we are all sinners). We are in unity about our need for cleansing, and about the means of that cleansing (through the precious blood of the Lamb).
 4. This was not just Joshua or the leaders but the entire nation. The entire nation was recognizing the truth and offering their worship together.

5. How sweet it is when brethren dwell in unity. Not unity at the expense of truth but unity right in the middle of truth.
- B. With one voice of prayer:
1. This was the logical and reasonable order in the offering of any sacrifice and worship.
 2. They united their hearts in confession; they surrendered themselves to His purpose and plan. They willingly offered their best to God and let Him know they meant business.
 3. Can you imagine any of this going on without the humble communing of hearts with God?
 4. This was not a day of fellowshiping with one another but a day of fellowshiping together with God. It was a solemn assembly.

III. Worship Brought a Choice (Vs. 34-35)

- A. To every one:
1. All the elders, officers, judges, Levites, strangers, woman and children were organized and present.
 2. It was important for everyone to hear and be presented with the same choice or opportunity.
- B. Of blessings or cursings: (Vs. 34)
1. Disobedience will bring the judgment of God while obedience will bring the blessings.
 2. They already knew this. They had just experienced it first hand but this isn't a once in a lifetime decision. It is an everyday decision.
 3. It is no wonder that it was this same man, Joshua, who also told Israel to "choose you this day whom you will serve, but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord."
 4. Our walk and work is incomplete. Crossing Jordan is not entering heaven. It is the victorious Christian life and we can walk in it or out of it.