

Battles Against Ai

KEY VERSE

Joshua 7:11



Lesson Overview (TEACHER)

TRANSITION

Lesson 32 narrated Israel's miraculous crossing of the Jordan River and victory at Jericho through God's power. Lesson 33 details a setback at Ai due to Achan's sin, followed by a strategic victory over the city. A deceptive covenant with the Gibeonites highlights the need for obedience and discernment.

CENTRAL TRUTH

Obedience ensures God's victory; disobedience brings defeat.

KEY TEXTS

Joshua 7:1–9:27

SPOTLIGHT ON THE GOSPEL

Achan's hidden sin brought defeat to the whole nation, showing that one man's disobedience affects everyone. Jesus bore our hidden sins on the cross, bearing the wrath we deserve. He died under God's judgment and rose victorious so that, by trusting Him, our sin is removed forever and we stand forgiven before God.



Family Devotional (PARENT)

This section explains what the Family Devotional covers for parents to use with their children each day of the week. Each devotional reinforces the lesson taught in Sunday School.

DAILY DEVOTIONS

- Day 1 **Battles Against Ai** (Sunday School review)
Joshua 7:1–9:27
- Day 2 **Israel Defeated at Ai**
Joshua 7:1–9
- Day 3 **Sin in the Nation**
Joshua 7:10–15
- Day 4 **The Sin of Achan Exposed**
Joshua 7:16–26
- Day 5 **The Fall of Ai**
Joshua 8:1–29
- Day 6 **Joshua Renews the Covenant**
Joshua 8:30–35
- Day 7 **The Trickery of the Gibeonites**
Joshua 9:1–27

LAST WEEK



NEXT WEEK



Battles Against Ai

ISRAEL DEFEATED AI

NOTE: Do not read this commentary aloud to the children. The commentary is designed to help educate and prepare the teacher for the lesson. The teacher's goal in studying the commentary is to better understand the lesson.

Before the attack on Jericho, the LORD had stipulated that all the possessions of Jericho were to be destroyed (6:17a), nothing was to be preserved for personal use (v18), and all precious metals were to be given to the “treasury of the LORD” (vv19,24b). Sadly, this stipulation had been violated by a man named Achan (7:1a). He had taken some of “the devoted things” (v1b; this phrase is repeated for emphasis throughout this account). The LORD was aware of this sin (v1c), but it was unknown to Joshua.

After the victory at Jericho, Joshua turned his attention to a small town called Ai (v2a). He sent some spies to reconnoiter the location (v2b); they returned and suggested that this town would not require a large force to conquer it (v3), so Joshua sent only a few thousand men to attack Ai (v4a). But the men of Ai turned the tables on Joshua's men, who “fled before the men of Ai” (vv4b,5b), and thirty-six were killed (v5a).

This defeat discouraged the people of Israel (v5c), and Joshua was distraught—he tore his clothes, he prostrated before the ark, and he (along with the elders of Israel) put dust on his head (v6). These actions expressed grief and deep sorrow. Joshua prayed to the LORD and questioned why the nation had suffered this defeat (v7a). He even suggested that perhaps the nation should have stayed on the other side of the Jordan River (v7b). He lamented the defeat and suggested that it gave encouragement to the nations in the land to fight against Israel and that this would diminish the LORD's “great name” (v9).

The LORD curtly told Joshua to “Get up!” (v10); the LORD was not impressed with this anguished display. Joshua was told bluntly, “Israel has sinned” (v11a) and that this loss was a judgment from the LORD because someone had disobeyed the LORD—someone had taken some of the possessions from Jericho (v11b). The LORD explained that Israel would continue to be defeated (v12a) unless they obeyed His stipulations and “destroy the devoted things” that had been taken from Jericho (vv12b–13). Again, the LORD commanded Joshua to “Get up!” (v13a). He was to consecrate the people and call for a solemn assembly of the people. They were to appear before the LORD by tribes and clans (v14a), then by households, then “man by man” (v14b). This process would eventually discover who had stolen the devoted things and committed “an outrageous thing in Israel” (v15). Joshua organized this solemn assembly and did as the LORD commanded. The LORD identified that the culprit was a man from the tribe of Judah, from the clan of Zerahites, from the household of Zabdi, the son of Carmi—his name was Achan (vv16–18; 7:1). Joshua confronted Achan with his guilt (v19), and he confessed, “I have sinned” (v20). Achan had taken a cloak from Shinar, 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold, which he had hidden in his tent (v21). Joshua retrieved the stolen items and “laid them down before the LORD” (vv22–23). Because of this sin, Achan and his whole family and all of his possessions were brought to the “Valley of Achor” where they were stoned to death and burned up (vv24–26). *This judgment showed the nation that the LORD took the sins of disobedience, covetousness, theft, and lying very seriously; such sin must not be tolerated.*

ISRAEL'S VICTORY OVER AI

After the sin at Jericho had been exposed, confessed, and the punishment imposed, the LORD encouraged Joshua, “Do not fear and do not be dismayed” (8:1a). *It was time to turn the nation's attention back to the conquest and once more to take up the battle against Ai (v1b).* The LORD promised victory (v1c); He instructed that

Ai and its king be destroyed as Jericho and its king were destroyed (v2a). This time, He informed Joshua that the spoil of Ai could be taken “as plunder for yourselves” (v2b). The LORD then gave Joshua a tactical plan for the battle to come; they were to design an ambush against the city (v2c). To accomplish this plan, Joshua chose 30,000 “mighty men” to deploy to a position near Ai. 5,000 of them (v12) would hide on the other side of the city and prepare an ambush; when given a prearranged signal, they would attack (vv3–4; vv12–13). When a larger force of the fighting men of Israel attacked Ai, and the forces of Ai came out of the city to fight them, they would feign running away (v5). As the overconfident men of Ai were chasing the main forces of Israel (v6), the 5,000 men who were hiding in ambush would enter the city behind Ai’s forces and destroy it (vv7–8). Joshua carried out the plan; the forces of Israel “went to the place of ambush” (v9a) and Joshua patiently waited until daylight (“Joshua spent that night among the people” vv9c,13).



When the king of Ai saw Israel’s forces, he did as it had been predicted—the men of Ai went out of the city “to meet Israel in battle” (v14). When “Joshua and all Israel pretended to be beaten” and ran, all the forces of Ai pursued them (vv15–16); this left the city virtually empty (v17). At this point, the LORD ordered that the prearranged signal be given (v18), and the men set in the ambush attacked the city and set it on fire (v19). Then the fighting men of Israel—who had appeared to be fleeing—turned back on their attackers and “struck down the men of Ai” (vv20–21). The diminished forces of the city attempted to resist, but they were easily defeated (vv22,24–26,28). The king of Ai was taken and hanged (vv23,29a); in death, he was treated with disrespect as an example to other cities of what happens to those who oppose the forces of the LORD (v29b). In a solemn service, Joshua and the nation rededicated themselves to the LORD. Joshua “built an altar to the LORD”—following closely the instructions found in “the Book of the Law of Moses”—and offered appropriate sacrifices (vv30–31). Joshua made copies of the law (v32) and “read all the words of the law” in the presence of the people—even “the little ones” and the foreigners (“strangers”) among them (vv33–35).

ISRAEL DECEIVED BY THE GIBEONITES

The news of Israel’s victories spread to all the nations between the Jordan River and the “Great Sea” (the Mediterranean Sea), and a coalition was formed to fight Israel (9:1–2). However, the inhabitants of the city of Gibeon knew that resistance was futile (vv3–4a; vv9b–10), so they engaged in a clever deception. Although the city of Gibeon was not far from Ai, representatives of the city came to Joshua in disguise, wearing worn out clothes and carrying stale foodstuffs to make it look like they had traveled a long distance (vv3–6,12–13). They said they were “From a very distant country” (v9a) and asked him to “make a covenant” peace with them (v11). *This story seemed plausible and without consulting the LORD (v14)—even though Israel had been warned to not make a treaty with any nation in the land of promise (Exod 34:12)—they “made a covenant with them” (Josh 9:15).* Soon, however, the deception was discovered (v16) but because of the covenant that they had made—since they had made an oath before the LORD (vv18–19a)—it was decided that the Gibeonites should be allowed to live (vv20–21a). However, for their deception, the Gibeonites were forced to become the servants of Israel (vv21b–27).

LESSON SUMMARY

Joshua 7:1–9:27 recounts Achan’s sin of taking Jericho’s devoted items, causing Israel’s defeat at Ai. After his confession and punishment, God granted victory through an ambush on Ai. Joshua renewed the covenant with sacrifices and readings of the Law. The Gibeonites deceived Israel into a peace covenant despite God’s command not to make any covenants with the people of the land. The Gibeonites became servants when their ruse was uncovered, demonstrating the consequences of disobedience.

Personal Preparation

The following section is provided for you to use as a devotional. This will help you prepare for your upcoming Generations of Grace lesson time. *Check off your progress as you go.*

- ☐ **PRAY** for wisdom to understand what you are about to read and to effectively teach the lesson.
- ☐ **REVIEW** last week's lesson and the central truth.
- ☐ **IDENTIFY** this week's central truth along with the transition, key texts, and key verse(s) from this lesson's title page.
- ☐ **READ** this week's key texts from Scripture and choose which passages you want to read aloud to the children during your lesson time. Record on the right hand page under **READ**.
- ☐ **STUDY** the commentary and identify the italicized sentences to summarize the lesson and central truth below.

- ☐ **SUMMARIZE** your notes from above into the **LESSON OUTLINE** on the right hand page. Add any additional questions that you want to reference while teaching your lesson (one question provided per point).
 - ☐ **PREPARE** your activity, craft, or coloring page for this week's lesson by visiting our website's additional resources page. Select the introduction, illustration, or application that you would like to use in your classroom along with any visual aid you may decide to use while teaching.
 - ☐ **PLAN** your music time by choosing songs that pertain to this week's narrative theme. Check the additional resources on our website for recommendations.
 - ☐ **RE-WRITE** this week's spotlight on the gospel in your own words on the teaching outline under **CONCLUDE** on the right hand page.
 - ☐ **PRAY** about how you can apply this lesson to your life and that you would communicate the central truth and spotlight on the gospel clearly in your lesson.
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**Additional
Resources**
gracecurriculum.org



Additional Resources

gracecurriculum.org

Teaching Outline

This section is designed to be used as a clean copy of your notes for teaching the lesson. Follow the teaching outline below as a step-by-step guide during your Sunday School lesson.

- ☐ **PRAY** with your class that the children would understand the central truth and gospel message, and that you would teach the children effectively.
- ☐ **REVIEW** last week's lesson and the central truth to begin your lesson.
- ☐ **INTRODUCE** this week's lesson and the central truth using the selected introduction, illustration, or application from our additional resources page.

- ☐ **READ** the key texts from Scripture you selected that connect to the central truth.

- ☐ **TEACH** your class using your summarized notes and questions from the **LESSON OUTLINE**. The points provided are the main headers from the commentary. Use the visual aid you selected and always connect your lesson back to the central truth.



LESSON OUTLINE

1. ISRAEL DEFEATED AT AI (JOSHUA 7:1–26)

- Why did Israel lose against the small town of Ai?

2. ISRAEL'S VICTORY OVER AI (JOSHUA 8:1–35)

- How did Israel defeat the people of Ai?

3. ISRAEL DECEIVED BY THE GIBEONITES (JOSHUA 9:1–27)

- How did the Gibeonites deceive the Israelites?

- ☐ **CONCLUDE** this week's lesson with the spotlight on the gospel and tie it into the central truth and the lesson you just taught.

- ☐ **PRAY** for the children hearing this lesson that they would be saved and follow the LORD.