

Lesson 7: Worship in a War Zone – "Altars of Renewal"

Focus: The importance of renewing our covenant with God, even in the midst of challenges.

Introduction – Spiritual Warfare: Be able to 'stand'

- **Ephesians 6:12** reminds us that our battle is not against flesh and blood but against the spiritual forces of darkness. Therefore, we are admonished to put on the full armor of God to **stand** firm.
- **Joshua's Failure at Ai (Joshua 7):** Initially, the Israelites fail to conquer the city of Ai, and they are defeated. This defeat occurs because sin was present in the camp, showing that they lacked the spiritual armor necessary to succeed. The defeat highlights that certain aspects of the armor of God (faith, salvation, etc.) were missing. Scripture states that Israel could not **'stand'** against Ai.
- We make the comparison with Ephesians 6

Sin in the Camp:

- Joshua and the leaders discover that **Achan** had disobeyed God's command by taking forbidden items from the city of Jericho, leading to Israel's defeat at Ai.
- The sin was a direct violation of God's instructions, and it brought failure and defeat to the entire nation. The Israelites needed to correct their wrongdoing before they could move forward in obedience.

The King of Ai – A Gruesome Parallel:

- The Israelites correct the sin, and are able to stand against Ai
- After the victory, the king of Ai is hung, but he is guilty of idolatry
- Notice the rule concerning hanging from trees: seen in **Deuteronomy 21:22-23**.
- This foreshadows Christ, who was innocent, but "cursed" and hung on a tree for our sins.

Building an Altar – The Significance of Mount Ebal:

- **Deuteronomy 27:** The Israelites are instructed to build an altar on Mount Ebal after entering the Promised Land.
- The people of Israel are reminded of the blessings and curses of obedience versus disobedience.

The Covenant Renewal:

- The Israelites travel 20 miles through enemy territory to Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim to renew their covenant with God.
- This journey symbolizes their commitment to God, even when obedience seems difficult.

Application – Time to Renew Our Covenant:

- The altar at Mount Ebal symbolizes God's mercy and the renewal of our relationship with Him after mistakes. We are reminded to act in faith, even when it requires sacrifice. Is it time for us to renew our covenant with God?