

## **Joshua 8:30-35**

What next after the victory at Ai? Move on to the next battle in Canaan campaign. Joshua and the nation did something unexpected, however. Both in Joshua 5, before the battle of Jericho, and here, after the battle of Ai, Israel paused for renewal. Renewal is an essential element of spiritual progress (**Eph 4:23; 2 Cor. 4:16**). Covenant renewal is an intentional return to the fundamentals of our relationship with God so that we might remember his commitment to us in Christ and so that we might reaffirm our commitment to him.

### **Summary**

**In Joshua 8:30-35, Joshua and Israel paused to renew covenant with the Lord as a reminder of who God is and what their relationship to Him must be if they were to keep their inheritance in the land.**

#### **1. Offered Sacrifices vv. 30-31**

Israel had recently gone from astonishing victory to devastating defeat and back to victory again within a brief period of time, after which Joshua built an altar to the Lord on Mount Ebal, exactly as Moses prescribed (c.f. **Deut. 27**). This teaches us that we can never approach God through our own works but only in the way that He has proscribed through His Son. After raising the altar, the people of God offered burnt offerings and peace offerings on it; offerings that were essential for the covenant renewal ceremony. In the burnt offering, after the chosen animal was sacrificed, a priest used its blood to make atonement or covering for sin. He then burnt the entire carcass on the altar (**Lev 1**). The peace offering, though similar to the burnt offering, differed, however, in that the worshipper kept part of the meat from the sacrifice and used it for a meal (**Lev. 3; 7:15, 30-34**). This meal represented the restored fellowship of the Israelite and his God. The peace offerings also included thank offerings (**Lev. 7:12-15**) as a means of giving praise to God for his goodness.

Israel offered these sacrifices on Mount Ebal, the mountain of curses (**Deut 27:9-26**). At the very place where God's people rehearsed the penalties inflicted on all those who break his law, at the place where the guilt and burden of sin would be felt most intensely, there the Lord made provision for forgiveness and communion with him. This scene provides us with a beautiful representation of the gospel. The fact that this ceremony began at an altar points us unmistakably to the fact that for Christians renewal begins at the cross. The only logical response to the gospel is whole-hearted dedication to the Lord Jesus Christ. If Jesus gave his all for you to secure your eternal salvation, why would you hold anything back from him?

#### **2. Transcribed Law vs. 32**

The covenant renewal ceremony also involved the transcription of the law.

Joshua wrote a copy of the law of Moses on stones in the presence of all the people (c.f. **Deut 27:2-3**).

These stones served as a memorial, a solemn reminder of God's actions. They also provided Israel with another copy of the word of God for all to see and read.

How great is our advantage to have the Scriptures so easily accessible

Do not take that blessing for granted.

### **3. Comprehensive Involvement vv. 33; 35**

The renewal ceremony involved all of Israel, leaders and people, including sojourners (aliens) as well as native-born Jews (**Josh 8:33; 35**). It is important to see this ceremony as a corporate event rather than an individualistic one.

Everything that happened was 'just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded'.

The emphasis is underscored again and again 'the word, the word, the word'.

Scripture plays a central role in the revelation of and establishment of the covenant.

Without God's word, how else would we know that God is our God and that we are his people? The reason for it all is 'to bless the people of Israel'.

### **4. Read Law vv. 34-35**

Joshua then read 'all the words of the law', which is further described as 'the blessing and the curse' (**Deut 27:9-28:68**).

When the people of Israel heard the blessings and the curses they were reminded of their solemn obligation to follow the Lord wholeheartedly.

Fear or reverence is the proper response to God's law.

Covenant renewal reminds us that we are obligated to obey God as well.

The Bible contains other examples of covenant renewal. In Nehemiah 8, Ezra read the law of God and explained it to the exiles who had returned to Jerusalem.

He taught the Scriptures, and the Israelites responded to what they heard.

This is the essence of core covenant renewal.

Covenant renewal takes place as God's people gather around God's word.

This is one of the primary reasons Christ has placed the church at the centre of his plan for spiritual growth. Christian nurture and maturing in the faith cannot occur in isolation from other believers.

The elements of covenant renewal found in Joshua 8 are exactly what we need if we are to renew our own walk with God. As we hear the gospel preached, we must be brought again and again to the person and work of Christ as the foundation, not only for salvation but for discipleship as well.

We must also have the word of God taught and applied clearly so that we might know his will and we must receive the Lord's word in the context of his people.