

Joshua 8:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Only the cattle and the spoil of that city Israel took for a prey unto themselves, according unto the word of the LORD which he commanded Joshua.

Analysis

Only the cattle and the spoil of that city Israel took for a prey unto themselves—Unlike Jericho, where all spoil was herem (devoted to God and banned from personal use), God permitted Israel to plunder Ai's livestock and goods. The phrase **according unto the word of the LORD which he commanded Joshua** (כִּדְבַר יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה אֶת־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, kidvar YHWH asher tzivvah et-Yehoshua) points to God's specific instruction in verse 2.

This distinction teaches that God's commands are not arbitrary but purposeful. Jericho's total herem demonstrated God's absolute holiness and Israel's dependence on Him alone. Ai's permitted plunder showed God's provision for His people. The difference between the two cities reveals that obedience requires listening to God's specific instructions, not applying one command universally. Achan's sin was taking what God forbade; Israel's blessing was receiving what God permitted.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern warfare typically granted victorious armies rights to plunder conquered cities—livestock, goods, precious metals, and captives. God's selective permission here (after Jericho's total ban) would have been a welcome economic boost for Israel's army. The distinction also reinforced the lesson of Achan's

judgment: obedience to God's specific commands brings blessing; disobedience brings death.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How do you discern when God's past commands apply to present situations versus when He gives new instructions?
2. What does God's provision of plunder at Ai teach about His care for His people's practical needs?
3. How does this contrast with Jericho demonstrate that obedience requires listening, not assuming?

Interlinear Text

ב ק	הַבְּהֵמָה ה	וּשְׁלֵל	הָעִיר	הַיָּא	בָּזַז ו	לָהּ מ
H7535	Only the cattle	and the spoil	of that city	H1931	took for a prey	H1992
	H929	H7998	H5892		H962	
יִשְׂרָאֵל ל		כְּדִבַּר		יְהוָה ה	אֲשֶׁר ר	
Israel	unto themselves	according unto the word	of the LORD		H834	
H3478		H1697	H3068			
	צִוָּה ה	אֶת	יְהוֹשֻׁעַ:			
which he commanded		H853	Joshua			
H6680			H3091			

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 8:2 (Parallel theme): And thou shalt do to Ai and her king as thou didst unto Jericho and her king: only the spoil thereof, and the cattle thereof, shall ye take for a prey unto yourselves: lay thee an ambush for the city behind it.

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