

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** (קדבר יהוה אשר צוה 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

לְבָקָר בְּזַיִן בְּקָרְבָּנָן וְשַׁלְּלָה בְּבָקָר הַיְאָנָה בְּקָרְבָּנָן
H7535 Only the cattle and the spoil of that city H1931 took for a prey H1992
H929 H7998 H5892 H962

אֲשֶׁר יְהִי הַקְּדָבָר
H834 of the LORD unto themselves according unto the word
Israel H3478 H1697 H3068

אֲתָּה יְהוָשָׁעַ
H853 Joshua
which he commanded 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.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org