

- Take All the People of War (Josh 8:1-2)

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Please open your Bibles to the Prophecy of Joshua, Josh 8:1 (2X). Achan and all his family have been stoned and burned and buried under a great heap of stones in the Valley of Achor. Sin has been eradicated out of the camp of Israel, and the Lord turned from the fierceness of His anger. The Lord is back, leading the children of Israel.

The title of this sermon is **‘Eu>The Battle of AiX/b> (2X). When we look at the history of the conquest of the land of Canaan under Joshua we see that the children of Israel overthrew more than one hundred cities in the land, but only two battles around two of the cities have been extensively recorded, Jericho and Ai. Is that not remarkable? We wonder if there is a spiritual meaning to those two battles around Jericho and Ai. Let us look in perspective what we have seen so far in this Prophecy of Joshua. The first big event for the children of Israel was the crossing of the Jordan, which was a figure of Fedemption3through the cross of Christ. I have already shown that the crossing of the Jordan means that they now entered into the Promised Land, which was a type or a figure of their entrance into the Kingdom of God. The second big event was the conquest of Jericho. Let us now recognize the distinction between the battle of Jericho and the battle of Ai. The battle of Jericho was full of outward signs, such as hearing the commands from God, obeying the commands from God, rescue of the elect of God, judgment on all the non-elect, the results of sin, and judgment on all despisers of God and His law. It made us meditate on the outward signs we experienced upon first hearing the law of God, and then joining a church. But then came Ai, and it began with a shameful defeat. Battles, and more battles, and more battles. There are many battles in the Prophecy of Joshua. Why are there so many battles after we have entered into the Kingdom of God? It made us realize that perhaps these battles refer to our internal battles when we have entered into the Kingdom of God, for we are still in our sinful body. But let us first develop this event historically. God’s command to Joshua in Josh 8:1-2 was:**

- **Take All the People of War (Josh 8:1-2)**

Jos 8:1 And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear not, neither be thou dismayed: take all the people of war with thee and arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land:

Jos 8:2 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.

Take all the people of war with thee3means that Joshua had to take more than 500,000 soldiers to fight a city of about 12,000 inhabitants. It was an all out effort to fight this enemy; nothing should be left to the possibility of failure. And God said, Bay thee an ambush for the city behind it.3Take this city of Satan, but be wise as serpents. Be smart about how to conquer this city. And do not underestimate the fierceness of this enemy. Fear not, nor lose courage! How can Joshua lose courage with so great an army? And here we can begin to see the spiritual meaning of this battle. Fear not, for I have already given you this city in your hand: the king of Ai and his people, and his city, and his land. And you shall do unto the king of Ai as you have done unto the king of Jericho. Now we did not read in Joshua 6 that the king of Jericho was hanged on a tree. But here in Joshua 8 we read that this which was done to the king of Ai was also done to the king of Jericho.

Remember that the Lord is in charge of the battle. And here is another difference with the battle of Jericho: You can take the spoil thereof and you can take the cattle thereof, for now these material possessions do not play a role. We read about the first day in Josh 8:3-9,

#1. The Ambush (Josh 8:3-22)

Jos 8:3-9 So Joshua arose, and all the people of war, to go up against Ai: and Joshua chose out thirty thousand mighty men of valour, and sent them away by night. And he commanded them, saying, Behold, ye shall lie in wait against the city, *even* behind the city: go not very far from the city, but be ye all ready: And I, and all the people that *are* with me, will approach unto the city: and it shall come to pass, when they come out against us, as at the first, that we will flee before them, (For they will come out after us) till we have drawn them from the city; for they will say, They flee before us, as at the first: therefore we will flee before them. Then ye shall rise up from the ambush, and seize upon the city: for the LORD your God will deliver it into your hand. And it shall be, when ye have taken the city, *that* ye shall set the city on fire: according to the commandment of the LORD shall ye do. See, I have commanded you. Joshua therefore sent them forth: and they went to lie in ambush, and abode between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of Ai: but Joshua lodged that night among the people.

The first day Joshua draws up an elaborate battle plan. He chose 30,000 men and in the evening he sent them away to lie in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of Ai. Thus, when the Bible speaks of *behind the city* it is on the west side of Ai. And thus where is the gate of the city? It is on the east side of the city. But that night Joshua lodged among the people in Gilgal. Then came the second day and the second night in Josh 8:10-13,

Jos 8:10-13 And Joshua rose up early in the morning, and numbered the people, and went up, he and the elders of Israel, before the people to Ai. And all the people, *even the people* of war that *were* with him, went up, and drew nigh, and came before the city, and pitched on the north side of Ai: now *there was* a valley between them and Ai. And he took about five thousand men, and set them to lie in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of the city. And when they had set the people, *even* all the host that *was* on the north of the city, and their liers in wait on the west of the city, Joshua went that night into the midst of the valley.

Now we read that there were two cities involved in this battle, Ai and Bethel, but Ai was the target that was to be destroyed. Now on the second day Joshua chose another 5000 men to strengthen the ambush between Bethel and Ai on the west side of the city. But that night Joshua and the men of Israel pitched on the north side of Ai until all had taken their position on the north side and on the west side of the city. On this second night Joshua and a contingent of Israelites showed themselves in a valley on the east side of the city. Then the third day Jos 8:14-22,

Jos 8:14-22 And it came to pass, when the king of Ai saw *it*, that they hasted and rose up early, and the men of the city went out against Israel to battle, he and all his people, at a time appointed, before the plain; but

he wist not that *there were* liers in ambush against him behind the city. And Joshua and all Israel made as if they were beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness. And all the people that *were* in Ai were called together to pursue after them: and they pursued after Joshua, and were drawn away from the city. And there was not a man left in Ai or Bethel that went not out after Israel: and they left the city open, and pursued after Israel. And the LORD said unto Joshua, Stretch out the spear that *is* in thy hand toward Ai; for I will give it into thine hand. And Joshua stretched out the spear that *he had* in his hand toward the city. And the ambush arose quickly out of their place, and they ran as soon as he had stretched out his hand: and they entered into the city, and took it, and hasted and set the city on fire. And when the men of Ai looked behind them, they saw, and, behold, the smoke of the city ascended up to heaven, and they had no power to flee this way or that way: and the people that fled to the wilderness turned back upon the pursuers. And when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city, and that the smoke of the city ascended, then they turned again, and slew the men of Ai. And the other issued out of the city against them; so they were in the midst of Israel, some on this side, and some on that side: and they smote them, so that they let none of them remain or escape.

Now on the third day Joshua declared war, and all the men of Ai and of Bethel left their cities and attacked Joshua and his men. But Joshua and his men retreated in the direction of the wilderness, which was also on the east side of the city, thereby drawing the men further away from their beloved city. Then Joshua stretched out his spear, and the ambush quickly arose and took the city and set the city on fire. Then the children of Israel turned back from fleeing into the wilderness and attacked the men of Ai. From this point on the men of Bethel are no longer mentioned. The ambush had been successful, Ai was destroyed, and they left them none remaining, no one of the men of Ai escaped. Then God gives us a summary statement of the destruction of Ai in Josh 8:23-29,

- Summary of Ai's Destruction (Josh 8:23-29)

Jos 8:23-29 And the king of Ai they took alive, and brought him to Joshua. And it came to pass, when Israel had made an end of slaying all the inhabitants of Ai in the field, in the wilderness wherein they chased them, and when they were all fallen on the edge of the sword, until they were consumed, that all the Israelites returned unto Ai, and smote it with the edge of the sword. And *so* it was, *that* all that fell that day, both of men and women, *were* twelve thousand, *even* all the men of Ai. For Joshua drew not his hand back, wherewith he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai. 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. And Joshua burnt Ai, and made it an heap for ever, *even* a desolation unto this day. And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until eventide: and as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his carcase down from the tree, and cast it at the entering of the gate of the city, and raise thereon a great heap of stones, *that remaineth* unto this day.

Is this just a battle story? But no! Those three words, **unto this day** convey a world of information. What is the meaning of **unto this day**? It means that the principle contained in that verse applies unto this day. And when I read it tomorrow it is still true tomorrow. And when I read it next year it is still true next year. And thus the words **unto this day** mean that it is a principle which holds true until the end of time. If that is so, then it cannot refer to the historical meaning of that verse. For example, can we see today the great heap of stones at the entrance of the gate to the city of Ai that was destroyed 3400 years ago? Of course not! 3400 years is a very long time, and even the ruins of that city cannot be found any more. So, how is that great heap of stones going to remain unto this day? You see, with these words God tells us that we must search for the spiritual meaning of this passage, and not only of this passage but of the entire chapter in question. This is where the rubber hits the road. It must have something to do with the Gospel, for the Bible was written for the purpose of saving people in their soul. If I know the history of the battle of Ai, then what does that do for my soul? Nothing! It does not touch me at all. It is a story about people who lived a long long time ago in a land far far away, and it does not touch me in my heart. It is just a carnal story. But now we have to search for the spiritual meaning of this battle. Let us turn again to **Josh 8:1** (2X).

#2. The Spiritual Battle (Josh 8:1-22, Heb 1:14, Rom 6:4-8,12-14)

What is the Gospel? The Gospel is that the Lord Jesus Christ suffered and died for my sins on the cross, and the result of the Gospel is that this event has touched me in my soul so intensely that I want to be His servant forever. These two events, the act of God in Christ crucified, and the act of God in making me Born Again are the pivotal elements of the Gospel of salvation. When we speak of the spiritual battle in which we are involved with we cannot bring up Christ crucified, for only Christ can do that. Therefore the spiritual battle has to do with me becoming Born Again. Let us look at the stage that God has set before us. The king of Ai is the chief enemy. Who is our chief enemy? It is Satan. But he has been dealt with already in the battle of Jericho. Now we have a different battle. Who is chief enemy after Satan? The king of Ai represents ME in my unregenerate state. The king of Ai represents **jk**, and fill your name in there representing you in your unregenerate state before your salvation.

Joshua represents the Lord Jesus Christ as his name already indicates. The children of Israel represent the heavenly host who are sent by the Father to be ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation (**Heb 1:14**). And why is it necessary to kill the king of Ai? The old man, ME, has to die and the new man, ME, has to come in his place. Please turn to the Epistle to the Romans, **Rom 6:4** (2X). The Bible teaches that those who are in Christ were crucified with Christ, we died with Christ, we were buried with Christ, we rose from the grave with Christ, and we ascended with Christ into heaven. And when we died with Christ our old man died with Him, and when we rose with Christ from the grave we rose as a new man. This is not something that we do, but God does it to us altogether. This is why the king of Ai has to die. Think now of the king of Ai as one of us in our unregenerate state. Think of the king of Ai as ME. I live in the land of Canaan, representing the kingdom of God, which spiritually means that I am already in the church but I

am unconverted. I will put up a fight with anyone who tries to move me out of my comfortable environment, my city, my stronghold. Unknowingly I am in the midst of Satan's world which is the Bottomless Pit, full with enticements to sin. I have heard the Gospel in church, but it has left me unsaved. Why should I change? I am saved by faith. As long as I believe that Christ died for my sins I am safe and secure. But I have never been Born Again. This characterizes people who are in church every Sunday, but they still live in a sinful lifestyle, and they have no intention to repent. They do not know that they are not saved. And why does Christ have to kill me by an ambush? It is because I am very stubborn. I have been negotiating with the devil and he assured me that there was nothing wrong with my current lifestyle. Therefore I am very satisfied with my current lifestyle. But then Christ comes along and He causes me to be touched in my heart by the love of Christ. This is the battle of Ai, and I died. This is what we read in Rom 6:4-8,

Ro 6:4-8 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

We are buried with Christ by His washing of our sins on the cross. Baptism into death means the washing that He experienced when He was washed from our sins. Do not underestimate the enemy. The warriors of Ai are more fearsome than the warriors of Jericho. Other than Satan I am the greatest enemy. Christ had to strip me of all the things that I loved most, and then He brought a calamity in my life, which is represented by the city set on fire. Only then was I willing to listen and the result was that I believed in my heart that I have died with Christ. When I have died with Christ it is guaranteed that I shall be resurrected as a new creature in Christ.

How do I know if I have been indeed represented by the king of Ai? How do I know if I have died with Christ? Well, the answer lies in the question: How do I know if I have been born again? Have I ceased to be at war with Christ? Do I now love those people whom Christ loves? Do I now love to do those things that are pleasing in His sight, because I love Him who loved me so much that He gave all that He had for my sake? Do I forgive others like Christ forgave me? Do I now aim to live a lifestyle that is patterned after the life of Christ? Well, this is a totally different life. Can I see this change in myself? Can I say I have been Born Again? You can see I am not bringing up the law again. Our focus should not be the law, but our love for Christ. Then we read in Rom 6:12-14,

Ro 6:12-14 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

This last statement has been a source of much confusion. We are not under the law, but under grace. Indeed if we take this section of verse 14 by itself we arrive at a theology of antinomianism, meaning there is no law; do as you please, for anything you do is not criticized by the law but it is all a gift of grace. This is wrong! The correct reason why God made this statement is: For sin shall not have dominion over you. The power of sin over you has been broken, and you are no longer attracted by sin, for you are no longer a creature under the law but you are now a creature under grace. But the power of sin still exists over others who have not been Born Again.

Rom 6:12-13 explain why this is so. If you have indeed been Born Again, then let not sin reign in your mortal body, for you are now a new creature in Christ, and sin is no longer the stronger power in you, but the love of God is now the stronger power, for you are now alive from the dead. Our bodies are either instruments of righteousness or they are instruments of sin. Before we became Born Again all we could do was sin, for we were dead unto God. But after we were Born Again we are able to do things that are pleasing to God, and that is why we now can be instruments of righteousness. Again, Rom 6:7 reinforces this principle, for we read in Rom 6:7, for he that is dead is freed from sin. Look at that now, for we read here that when we died with Christ in AD 33 all our sins were removed from us. There is no sin so great that it cannot be removed from us. This is the love of Christ for us, and this love is given to us free of charge. How can we spurn such a great love? How can we turn our back on Christ if we know how great His suffering was for us? How can we be anything but be extremely grateful?

- **Unto This Day** (Josh 8:25, Rev 21:16, Josh 8:28-29, Phil 3:8)

How many men were there in Ai? God says in Josh 8:25, and so it was, that all that fell that day, both of men and women, were twelve thousand, even all the men of Ai. God did not say about twelve thousand; God did not say approximately twelve thousand, but God said twelve thousand exactly. That is how we should read the Bible. This means about four thousand men, about four thousand women, and about four thousand children. But this is amazing that only four thousand men were doing battle against the entire army of Israel of more than 500,000 men that drew the sword. The number 12,000 appears 16 times in the Bible. Could it be that the number 12,000 is only a symbol of something? And indeed this is what we would conclude if we study Rev 21:16,

Re 21:16 And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.

God uses the number 12,000 as a symbol for the fulness of what is in view. The 12,000 in Ai represented the fullness of all the inhabitants of Ai. It means that all the citizens of Ai were killed, not one escaped. But the actual number of fighting men at Ai must have been much larger than four thousand.

Let us now take a closer look at two verses: Josh 8:28-29.

Jos 8:28 And Joshua burnt Ai, and made it an heap for ever, even a desolation unto this day.

Jos 8:29 And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until eventide: and as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his carcase down from the tree, and cast it at the entering of the gate of the city, and raise thereon a great heap of stones, that remaineth unto this day.

If I am represented by the king of Ai, then what does Ai itself represent? Ai is the system of works with which I have surrounded myself. It was my pride and joy. It was my fortress. It was my past career as an engineer, and as a scientist writing articles that were printed in the Journal of Chemical Physics, as an inventor of a new kind of plastic, as a professor at the University of Southern California, as a scientist doing calculations in emulsion polymerization, and many other works for which I have established myself a name. And to all these I have said goodbye, and I can say with the apostle Paul in Phil 3:8, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but dung*, that I may win Christ.³ This is how my Ai is made a heap forever. And everyone who has had a similar career, and is now serving the Lord would agree with me that all that is a desolation unto this day. All the works that we have built to make our earthly life more comfortable, or more profitable, or more famous, or more intelligent, we do count them but dung, because our love for the Lord and the study of His Word and the love we receive from our fellow man are worth much more than all these things that we were attached to.

And then the king of Ai was killed and hanged on a tree and cast in the gate of the city and was buried under a great heap of stones, which remain unto this day. What do we see here? He king of Ai was my old man who died with Christ. He was a wicked man; that is what the Bible says. He was under the curse of God, for he was hanged on a tree. He also was cursed by God as indicated by the great heap of stones that were placed on him, like the burial of Achan in chapter 7. And Achan was definitely under the curse of God. I never want to see the old man again. Then is it true that this great heap of stones remain unto this day? Indeed this is spiritually true, for I did not put him there; Christ did it for me when He suffered and died for me on the cross He buried that old man there, and what Christ has done no man can disannul. The old man will remain there until Judgment day. Now, it is certainly true that some images of the old man remain in the back of my mind, for I am not yet perfect, and sometimes my impulses reflect a little bit of the old man. I am not a polished shaft without any burrs or grooves. And if I once in a while appear too direct or blunt please forgive me. I want to be a good undershepherd under the chief Shepherd, and take care of the flock of Christ. This then is the meaning of unto this day³ which occurs twice in this chapter.

#3. The Old Man and the New Man (Josh 8:29, Col 3:1-11, Rom 8:1)

Jos 8:29 And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until eventide: and as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his carcase down from the tree, and cast it at the entering of the gate of the city, and raise thereon a great heap of stones, *that remaineth unto this day*.

Who is this king of Ai. It is my wicked old man. He has been hanged and is dead since AD 33 unto this day. To Christ belongs all the glory. He did it for me, and then gave it to me all by grace. Ai has been destroyed, but Bethel has not been destroyed. The name Ai means ζ Ruin $\bar{\text{O}}$ and the name Bethel means $\bar{\text{T}}$ he House of God $\bar{\text{Y}}$ The Ruin has been ruined thoroughly, because it represented all unrighteous works. But the House of God remains until the end of time, and that is why Bethel was not destroyed.

Please turn in your Bibles to the Epistle to the Colossians, Col 3:1 (2X). When we have become Born Again and we suddenly realize that our wicked old man has been crucified with Christ, it does not mean that we suddenly

change from one day to the next, from the old man to the new man. We would like it to change quickly, but the fact of the matter is that the Lord has to teach us how to be more and more Christ-like. This takes some time. Therefore the Lord gave us passages such as [Col 3:1-11](#), teaching us what we should have abandoned and what we need to learn. For example, the Lord tells us in another passage that we should love our unsaved friends and family as ourselves, and pray for their salvation, and pray without ceasing. This is not something that we can do instantly. It takes years before we really know how to pray without ceasing for those whom we love. And thus, after we have learned that we now are alive as the new man, the Lord teaches us here how to live as a new man. [Col 3:1-4](#) (2X)

Col 3:1-4 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, *who is* our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

If indeed we have been risen with Christ, we must seek those things which are favored by God on high, where Christ is seated on the right hand of God. Is that not the nature of those who have been Born Again? Does God not say in [Rom 8:1](#), *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit?* We already know what it means to walk after the flesh. We have been doing that for 40 years. But what does it mean to walk after the spirit? [Col 3:2](#) explains it clearly: *Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.* The unsaved Gentiles seek for things on the earth, because they know not of other things to worry about. But we can meditate on how to bring the Gospel to the people we know, or we can think of the righteousness of God and what its consequences are, or we can pray for our attitude to be changed toward our loved ones. There are so many things we can meditate about, things which are of concern for eternal life, especially not our eternal life but the eternal life of others. Our prayers should be primarily for others. That is walking after the Spirit. On the other hand if we walk after the flesh we will be constantly worried about how we are obeying the law of God. If we make ourselves a list of what to do and what not to do, we are in fact living a life according to the law of sin and death. That is not walking after the Spirit. That is walking after our own flesh.

[Col 3:3](#) says, *For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.* In other words, our old man is dead; he has been crucified with Christ and he has died with Christ. And now our new life is hidden with Christ in God. What does that mean? It does not mean that we are now hidden. It does not mean that our new way of life is not visible to anyone. But it does mean that our present life is totally covered by Christ, who is in God. It means that all our actions and our emotions and our loves and our endeavors are now totally covered and approved by Christ, who gives us peace with all that we are doing. It is summarized by one verse, [Phil 4:7](#) and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. He is all that we live for. This is what it means that our life is hid with Christ in God. And when Christ shall appear we shall appear with Him. When on the last day Christ shall appear to judge the living and the dead we shall appear with Him to judge.

Therefore, since Christ is coming to judge the living and the dead watch how you live, and give an example as a faithful ambassador of Christ. And that is what we are reading in the following verses Col 3:5-11,

Col 3:5-11 **M**ortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: **F**or which things sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: **I**n the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. **B**ut now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. **L**ie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; **A**nd have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: **W**here there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond *nor* free: but Christ *is* all, and in all.

And so, what are the members of the old man? No, they are not his arms and legs, but they are all the sins of the reprobate mind for which sake the wrath of God comes when Christ shall appear; sins such as fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil lust, and covetousness. These members of the old man should be done away since the old man is dead. And in addition while you are working on these, also rid yourself of some of the more common day to day vices that you have been accustomed to over the years, such as anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, and filthy communication out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, but speak the truth in love. And continue to practice to put off the deeds of the old man, and to put on the new man which is growing in the knowledge of Christ and growing to be conformed in the image of Christ. This is what we should be striving for day by day. If we have been Born Again then Christ is present in all of us, and the glory of Christ is the common goal of all our endeavors. And remember that God is not a respecter of persons. God works equally well in Jews as in Greeks, in circumcision as well as in uncircumcision, in blacks as well as in whites. And then look at the results:

- **The Glorious Life of the New Man**(Col 3:12-17, John 15:12-13)

The following verses tell us of the wonderful life that we can already enjoy here on this earth, in the kingdom. Col 3:12-14 **P**ut on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; **F**orbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do* ye. **A**nd above all these things *put on* charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

This is how we engage in spiritual warfare. This is how we defeat Satan and all his demons. This is how the church in the first century AD conquered the Roman Empire, and this is how the Reformation in the 15th century overcame the evils of the false gospel. First we recognize that we indeed are the elect of God, for this is an integral part of the Gospel, and that we indeed have been Born Again, for without it we cannot even see the kingdom of God here on earth. But then this is how we live and this is our desire how to live: We practice bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, and this is going to make us so much more appreciating one another, and bearing up one another in prayer before God. This is what Christ meant when He said in John 15:12-13, **‘**Th style='mso-bidi-font-weight:normal'>This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. **G**reater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for

his friends. 3 This is indeed how we love one another. And notice that verse 13 is not speaking of a once in a lifetime occurrence of physically laying down our life for someone, but it is speaking of a daily sacrifice that we give because our loved ones need it. For example, if a woman cares for her paralyzed husband for 30 years, she is daily laying down her life for her husband. She sacrifices her time, and her efforts, and her love, to care for someone who cannot give her anything in return. It would be so much more enjoyable for her to live it up and to party three times a week, but she forgoes all that enjoyment and her only joy is to care for her husband. This is what it means to lay down our life for our friends. Or a woman spends all her free time to love her child, and to nurture her child in the ways of the Lord, and to be a good role model for her child, and she does that even though she runs out of time, and she has an outside job for she has difficulty to make ends meet. This is a sacrifice that she undertakes without having been asked for. This is what it means to lay down our life for our friends. It is a daily sacrifice. But look at the rewards. The rewards are that she gains the awareness that God loves her, for He has placed her in the path of this needy person who would not have survived without her help. And the awareness that God loves us is worth more than all the fortunes in the world. And the awareness that God loves us is spilling over into the hearts of others who will be to this woman a loving family, which she did not have. What a wonderful way to live a life that is so rewarding, and so filled with the wonders of God's grace, and with the love of God that is shed abroad in our hearts, so that we will love one another as Christ wanted us to live. What a wonderful way to see the battle of Ai in this light, and to see that the king of Ai is dead forever, under a great heap of stones, unto this day. Now, the critics may arise and claim that I have spiritualized this story too far, but I have derived everything from Scripture, and God will decide if this spiritualization was taken too far. I do not think so. The Gospel of salvation must be preached, and this is what we need to hear every Sunday. AMEN Let us turn to the Lord in prayer.