

JOSHUA'S FINAL MILITARY BATTLE

Conquest of Northern Canaan

Joshua 11:1-15

After their military campaign in the *south*, Joshua and the Israelites didn't have much time to recuperate before facing an even greater challenge...a massive coalition of forces in the *north*. Here in **chapter 11**, Joshua is facing his final military campaign. The rest of the book is a mopping up of the battles and the apportioning of the land to occupy. This is the last real battle with the opposition in the land of **Canaan**.

I. A FORMIDABLE FOE: (vs. 1-5)

The alarm of the **northern Canaanite kings** (vs. 1-3) was aroused by the victories that they had heard about in the **south** by Joshua and Israel. So an urgent message went out in every direction (**north, south, east, and west**) with an appeal for all the other **kings** in the **northern region** to come together to fight against the Israelites.

They came out, they and all their armies with them, (vs. 4a)... Even though there was no love lost among those **kings** of the **north**, the threat of annihilation forced them into an alliance. (*The enemy of my enemy becomes my friend*). So they assembled a few miles *northwest* of the Sea of Galilee (Chinneroth...vs. 2) in a plain near the **waters of Merom** (vs. 5).

As many people as the sand that is on the seashore (vs. 4b)...

Josephus, a *first century Jewish historian*, speculated that this *northern confederacy* included:

- 300,000 infantry soldiers.
- 10,000 cavalry troops.
- 20,000 chariots.

With very many horses and chariots (vs. 4c)...This is a new element of warfare in the book of Joshua...horses and chariots. Never before in the book of Joshua have we seen the use of horses and chariots used. But it does fulfill the warning that had been given to them regarding the use of **implements of iron** in Canaan.

The odds against the Israelites seemed overwhelming.

II. A FAITHFUL FATHER: (vs. 6, 8)

Then the Lord said to Joshua (vs. 6a)...

God spoke (**Deuteronomy 6-7**)...Joshua believed.

“The Lord your God will clear away these nations before you little by little...The Lord your God will deliver them before you, and will throw them into great confusion until they are destroyed. He will deliver their kings into your hand so that you will make their name perish from under heaven; no man will be able to stand before you until you have destroyed them.”

~Deuteronomy 7:22-24

Do not be afraid because of them, for tomorrow at this time I will deliver all of them slain before Israel (vs. 6b)...The promise God gave Joshua was unmistakably clear...**Do not be afraid**.

This is the value of hiding God's Word in your heart. Joshua remembered what God had said through Moses...and what He had spoken directly to him.

Joshua 1:5, 11, 13; Joshua 2:9, 24; Joshua 6:2, 16; Joshua 8:1,7; Joshua 10:14, 25, 42

You shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire (vs. 6c)...

“When you go out to battle against your enemies and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt, is with you.”

~Deuteronomy 20:1

Hamstring...means to *cripple the horses by cutting the leg tendons*.

Joshua was commanded to cripple the enemies' horses and burn their chariots rather than capture them. In this way, the Israelites would not put their trust in the *implements of war* (horses and chariots), but in the Lord, Himself.

III. A FORCEFUL FIGHT: (vs. 7-15)

Joshua was both a **strategic military leader** and a **spiritual giant**.

- Joshua fought with confidence (vs. 7)...because he remembered the God he served.
- Joshua fought with compliance (vs. 9, 15)...He did what God said to do.
- Joshua fought with consistency (vs. 11-14)...

The battle took place in *two phases*. The *first phase* began the next day when **Joshua** surprised the enemy by **suddenly attacking them by the waters of Merom (vs. 7)**.

The Lord delivered them into the hand of Israel so that they defeated them (vs. 8a). Then **Joshua** and the **Israelite** army **pursued them**. One group was chased *westward* to the coast...**as far as Great Sidon and Misrephoth-maim**. The other to the **east** and the **valley of Mizpeh (vs. 8b)**.

Joshua did to them as the Lord had told him (vs. 9a)...A fierce and mighty fight that **Joshua** and **Israel** won.

He hamstrung their horses and burned their chariots with fire (vs. 9b)...**Joshua** was told to **destroy the chariots** and to **hamstring the horses** for *two reasons*. First, because the **horses** and **chariots** were used in *pagan worship* by the **Canaanites**...and later, so did **Judah (II Kings 23:11)**. Also, God did not want the **Israelites** to trust in these new weapons of war rather than trusting in the Lord.

“Some boast in chariots and some in horses, but we will boast in the name of the Lord, our God.”

~Psalm 20:7

In the *second phase* of the conflict in **northern Canaan**, **Joshua** returned after defeating the enemy army and *captured all the cities* of the defeated **kings**.

Hazor was singled out for special treatment since it **was the head of all these kingdoms**...and since it was by far the *largest city* of *ancient Palestine* (*200 acres* in size, compared with **Megiddo** at *14 acres* and **Jericho** at *8 acres*).

Hazor also occupied a position of immense strategic importance, dominating several branches of an ancient highway which led from **Egypt** to **Syria** and on to **Assyria** and **Babylon**. This location on the trade routes contributed to the city's immense wealth.

Hazor was the only **northern city** to be both **seized** and **burned... totally destroyed**. The other cities were *captured*, but *preserved*. They would later be *occupied* by **Israel** when **Canaan** was divided up and apportioned to the different tribes.

If the great city of **Hazor** could not escape...the **Canaanites** would be forced to acknowledge that any city could and would be *seized, defeated, destroyed, and burned* if **Joshua** so decreed.

Just as the Lord had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did; he left nothing undone of all that the Lord had commanded Moses (vs. 15)...Thus, a decisive victory was won in the **north**. And the key was *obedience* to God.

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- **When God promises something...consider it done.**
- **When God speaks...obey...even if it doesn't make sense.**
- **Even when faced with what appears to be insurmountable odds... when God is at work, all things are possible.**