

CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE- PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
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DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 11

JOSHUA

CHAPTER 11-12

Joshua 11:15 – *“As the LORD commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all that the LORD commanded Moses.”*

INTRODUCTION

By now, we know more clearly how Joshua planned his military campaign to conquer the land of Canaan, which the LORD God had promised the children of Israel. His first strike at Jericho and Ai was to drive a wedge into the centre of the land, thus separating the land into two large regions, namely, south and north. He could then systematically use the central area to launch his conquests of the southern and northern regions. He took the south first by defeating its five kings spearheaded by Adonizedec, the king of Jerusalem (chapter 10). Having subdued the southern kings and their cities, he then turned to the north. This present study considers his conquest of the northern region.

One would expect that given the resounding military successes of Joshua and the army of Israel in the central and southern areas, the kings of the north would seek a peace treaty with the Israelites, like the Gibeonites. They knew that the LORD God was with His people Israel. They also heard of the LORD'S power, which was instrumental in the fall of Jericho, and surely knew why Rahab was saved. The news elicited a response that will result in their demise and capitulation. The northern portion of the Promised Land will now be taken over by God's people just as He said.

In chapter 11, the account is shorter than chapter 10. One city is described in detail. No miracle is mentioned and the description of a sustained pursuit of the enemies is given. A coalition of kings is mentioned similar to the one in the south. Note that the literary style is much more simplified than that of chapter 10. The chapter basically divides into four movements: the nations that grouped together forming the military coalition; their defeat by Joshua; the destruction of Hazor, and the victory over the Anakim. With the conquest of the northern region, the occupation of the whole land of Canaan would be complete.

Mopping up operations remained to be done by the individual tribes after the Land had been apportioned by lot. This subjugation would be done by the individual tribes

of Israel at the time when the land was allotted to them.¹

The following is an outline of the chapters 11 and 12: 1) The Alliance (Joshua 11:1-9); 2) The Total Defeat (Joshua 11:10-20); 3) The Anakims Destroyed (Joshua 11:21-23); 4) A Review of Moses' Conquests (Joshua 12:1-6); and 5) A Review of Joshua's Conquest (Joshua 12:7-24).

COMMENTARY

The Alliance – 11:1-9

The opening words of this chapter are the same as those in chapters 9 and 10. The kings and the leaders of the north rallied together to attack Israel, when they heard how Joshua and the children of Israel had destroyed Jericho and Ai, and made a peace treaty with the Gibeonites, and conquered the kings in the south of Canaan. They had not discerned that Israel's source of power was the presence and work of God, like Rahab and the Gibeonites. Rahab said (2:9): *"I know that the LORD hath given you the land,"* and the Gibeonites (9:24), *"Because it was certainly told thy servants, how that the LORD thy God commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land before you."* They acknowledged that the battles

were with God and knew that they had no hope of success. But the rest of the kings and leaders of the other nations thought that their battle was with Israel. They rallied the people together, and gave hope of success that they could destroy Israel. Joshua and Israel were as destructible as any other nation they had defeated in the past. They failed to see that God was with Joshua and Israel and therefore they were invincible. It was not a physical but a spiritual warfare that they were in.

The northern region of Canaan was the remaining area to be conquered. Only the names of two kings were mentioned, that is, Jabin, king of Hazor, and Jobab, king of Madon. The city, Madon, was situated about 8 kilometres northwest of the Sea of Galilee; and the other two cities, namely, Shimron and Achshaph, were situated around the Sea too. The localities of the inhabitants of the region — the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perrizzite, the Jebusite, the Hivite — are identified by the writer (11:2, 3). It indicates that a large cross-section of the inhabitants of Canaan lived in this northern fertile region.

Jabin, king of Hazor, on the other hand, was undoubtedly the most influential king among all the kings. His city Hazor was a big fortified stronghold of the Canaanites in the mountains north of Lake Merom. The city was prosperous because the trade route running from Syria in the north to

¹ Numbers 26:52 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 53 Unto these the land shall

Egypt in the south passed through it. So, Jabin was wealthy, powerful and influential. He was the ringleader who rallied the other kings to form a military pact to attack Israel.

The military might of these four kings combined was more superior to that of Israel in experience, manpower and equipment. They had warriors on horseback and charioteers, equivalent to our modern day armoured vehicles and tanks, whereas Israel did not have any of these. It was therefore the most formidable force, which Joshua had ever faced. Humanly speaking, Israel could not survive against such a force and would be totally defeated and destroyed by the confederate kings. These four kings, who were confident of success, assembled their armies at Lake Merom to engage in battle against the army of Israel led by Joshua.

The Total Defeat – 11:10-20

As in previous occasions, the LORD spoke and encouraged Joshua to be strong and courageous. The LORD emphatically promised Joshua, saying “I will,” that He would give to Israel the enemies totally defeated and destroyed in one day. This indicates that the LORD did not allow Joshua to think for a moment that victory was won on his strength. The LORD also instructed Joshua specifically to hamstring the horses and to burn the chariots of the enemies (11:6). The battle was the LORD’S. Being assured of victory by

the LORD, Joshua took the offensive and sprang a surprise attack on the enemies by the Lake of Merom. The LORD delivered the enemies to Israel. The Israelites decisively struck the enemies who fled to various adjacent locations — Zidon, Misrephoth-maim and Mizpeh. The enemies were totally defeated and destroyed. None remained. All the kingdoms of the coalition were taken. It was by God’s mercy that the Israelite army which was much inferior in manpower and equipment could defeat a coalition army which was bigger, stronger and more powerful. Josephus, the Jewish historian, who lived in the first century, conjectured that the northern confederacy had 300,000 infantry soldiers, 10,000 cavalry troops and 20,000 charioteers. The battle is the LORD’S and the glory is His alone.

Joshua hamstrung the horses in obedience to the LORD rendering them useless so that they could not be used again for war by Joshua and Israel. Joshua also burned the chariots, which the enemy had depended on for their success. God’s intention was clear. He did not want the Israelites to turn their hearts to depend on these things.² To be dependent on any thing is in reality a

² Deuteronomy 20:1 When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, *and* a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the LORD thy God *is* with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

Psalm 20:7 Some *trust* in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

substitute for God, and that is an affront to God, and should be destroyed.

The destruction of Hazor was specially mentioned by the divine writer. Joshua at the time of the war, turned back against Hazor, killed Jabin, the king, exterminated the inhabitants, and destroyed the city (11:10-11). However, the other lesser cities which “stood still in their strength” were left standing. This was done with the intention of letting the Israelites later on to live there.³ The Israelites were allowed to carry off all the “spoils” and livestock of these cities.

The key to Joshua’s success was that he was on the LORD’S side for he obeyed the LORD and carried out His will implicitly. The LORD commanded Moses. Moses faithfully and accurately commanded Joshua. Joshua in turn performed accordingly and “left nothing undone of all that the LORD commanded Moses” (11:15). His obedience brought him victories and the acquisition of the whole land of Canaan — the central district, the south represented by Mount Halak, and the north represented by Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon under Mount Hermon. Not one of the cities made

³ Deuteronomy 6:10 And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not,

peace with Israel except the Gibeonites. The wars with those kings lasted “a long time” (11:18). It lasted seven years.⁴ Victory did not come easily. God’s sovereign will does not neutralize man’s responsibility and action.

The warlike stance of the Canaanite kings was attributed to the fact that the LORD hardened their hearts (11:20). They came to attack Israel, and this became the ground and the opportunity for Israel to utterly destroy them as the LORD commanded. This seems to present a moral problem to some people. They argue, “that if it is what the Scripture states, and that is precisely it, then the Canaanites should not be charged for being belligerent.”

The sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man are taught here. If we try to reconcile it in favour of the sovereignty of God then man’s responsibility would be negated or at least diminish. Then can man be held responsible for their own acts of sins? On the other hand, if we reconcile it by emphasizing the responsibility of man, the dilemma would be to diminish God’s sovereignty. Then God is no more God for He is not able to control the rejection and wickedness of some

⁴ Caleb in Joshua 14:10 said that the LORD had kept him alive for forty five years in the wilderness. The wandering of the Israelites in the wilderness from Kadesh-Barnea, where they sinned against God, lasted thirty-eight years. Therefore, the conquest of the Promised Land lasted seven years.

sinful men. The key is Not to reconcile. This is an arena that is beyond our finite minds to comprehend. The believer simply teaches what the Bible reveals and stops there. The reconciliation of these two twin doctrines is beyond mankind. These doctrines are like parallel lines that do not meet on this earth but only at the throne of God. Man has sinned and there he is judged for his sin. Yet the LORD is over all sovereign and He has hardened the heart of wicked men that they cannot repent even if they wish to.⁵

The Anakims Destroyed – 11: 21-23

The special mention of the cutting-off of the Anakims (or Anakites) from the areas of their settlements is significant. Not all of them were destroyed. Those in Gaza, Gath and Ashdod, the cities in the west on the coastal strip of land, remained. They were mentioned because one of the reasons why the Israelites did not enter and occupy the

Promised Land from Kadesh-Barnea was the presence of these Anakims – the sons of Anak who were giants. The Israelites felt then that they saw themselves “as grasshoppers”. The spies feared them and succeeded in persuading the Israelites not to enter Canaan on that occasion. The children of Israel’s defeat and destruction of the Anakims demonstrated that God gave them the victory which they could have achieved forty years earlier and enjoyed the land.

Finally, Joshua and the children of Israel “took the whole land” (11:23). It was in the sense that Joshua now had complete control of all Canaan and the land “rested from war”. There were no more battles to fight. Joshua had broken the power of the Canaanites. The Canaanites would not be able to stage any future aggressive and concerted action against Israel. However, much of the land needed to be completely subdued and possessed. The kings of the major cities were destroyed including the inhabitants in those cities. But many of the lesser cities and villages, which did not join the confederacy to wage war against Israel, remained. The statement that Joshua would divide the land and distribute it to the various tribes, anticipates the chapters to follow.

⁵ Deuteronomy 9:4 Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the LORD thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the LORD hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee. 5 Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

A Review of Moses' Conquests – 12:1-6

This chapter divides naturally into two: the subjugation of the countries on the eastern side of Jordan by Moses, and the subsequent settlement of the two and the half tribes—the first part (verses 1-6); and the conquest of the Canaanite nations on the western side of Jordan by Joshua—the second part (verses 7-24). The review of victories by Moses on the eastern side has some significance. The kingdoms formerly ruled by King Sihon of the Amorites and King Og of Bashan, an area stretching from the river Arnon to Mount Hermon including the plains were conquered. The tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh viewed the land, wanted it, and asked Moses for it. It was not the best because they would be separated from the majority of the tribes who would settle in the Promised Land proper. Since only the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh were living on the outer side of Jordan, they feared that one day, they might be regarded as non-Israel because the majority of the Israelites lived in Canaan, the western side of the river. This mention of the minority tribes stresses the unity of the twelve tribes forming the nation Israel. They must always be united.

A Review of Joshua's Conquest – 12:7-24

The review of the territories taken by Joshua in all his military

campaigns is mentioned as a reminder that the two and the half tribes were also part of Israel. The writer gives a geographical survey of the land of Canaan stretching from Lebanon in the north to Mount Halak in the south.⁶ A list of thirty-one kings is given. These kings had rejected the LORD God of Israel and persisted in their idolatrous and immoral practices. God had judged and inflicted punishment on them and their subjects for their wickedness. Israel could and should still look back on this impressive list, and the divine power they could have relied on against her enemies if they are today on the side of God.

PRACTICAL VALUE

The most comforting truth from the pages of the book of Joshua, thus far, is that God promised and kept His Word. God is still the same today and forever. Just as Joshua trusted God, surely we too can trust God implicitly and do His will. To behave otherwise is to court disaster. If the Israelites had trusted God and entered into Canaan, many Israelites would not have died in the wilderness because of their sin of unbelief. They could have enjoyed forty more years of the land, which flows with “milk and honey”! Have we been guilty of the same, not trusting God but opting for comfort zones of

⁶ North to South of Canaan, of present Israel, is only 240 kilometres (150 miles) and east to west is about 80 kilometres (50 miles).

our life in the world rather than be on God's side, obeying Him and doing His will?

Jesus already warned and assured His disciples (John 16:33): *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.* No one who has put his trust in God has ever regretted for doing so. Do not be like the two and the half tribes, who were attracted by the green pastures of east Jordan and forfeited the best they could have on the other side.

It was the LORD who had hardened their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle (Joshua 11:20). In Biblical philosophy of history, *nothing* happens by accident: *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father* (Matthew 10:29). Victories and defeats display God's sovereign power, holiness and His providential control of the destinies of men and nations. He is not a God who is far off but One in Whom we live and move and have our being.⁷

Stuart Briscoe remarks that Joshua exemplifies three qualifications of a Christian leader. They are: firstly, he had a keen and trained mind which was steeped in the knowledge of the Word of God and the history of his

people; secondly, he had a childlike heart which not only believed God but expected to see God act; and thirdly, he had the hide of a rhinoceros which was necessary for a man of war who had to make tough decisions. As a leader, he was a model of faith and godly character to his people. He stood by the promise made to Rahab by the spies. He kept faith with the Gibeonites. He refused to use his position for personal gain. He was a leader who was persistent, relentlessly and tirelessly focused on the goal set before him. These qualities are equally applicable to every ordinary Christian today than ever before. AMEN

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Joshua 11:1-9; Acts 5:34-39; Deuteronomy 20:1-4.

TUESDAY: Joshua 11:10-20; Romans 1:24-28.

WEDNESDAY: Joshua 11:21-23; Revelation 11:15.

THURSDAY: Joshua 12:1-6; Psalm 96:9-13.

FRIDAY: Joshua 12:7-24; Revelation 19:1-6; 1 John 5:4.

⁷ Carl Henry, *The Biblical Expositor*, Holman Co., 1960, p.216.

Discussion Questions

1. The enemies of God are normally greater in numbers and military might and possess more money. Why is that so? Explain how this understanding helps you in your battle for the truth today.

2. Why did God instruct Joshua to hamstring the horses and destroy the chariots? These were very expensive spoils of war. Was not that wasteful?

3. Why is it so difficult for people to accept the doctrines of Man's

responsibility and God's sovereignty and not try to reconcile them?

4. What important point does the author stress in Joshua 11:15? Why is this important?

5. There was no miraculous intervention by God in the battles with the northern kings as there were in previous chapters. How do you think that the Israelites knew that God was still the one giving them the victory?

6. What is the natural and spiritual value of making a list of battles fought and won?
