

Joshua – Part 3

Victorious! – Joshua 10-13

Jericho, a large, heavily fortified city, was the first to be conquered after Israel entered the land of Canaan. It stands as a testament to God's faithfulness, power, and mercy. It reminds us that with faith, we too can overcome the seemingly insurmountable walls in our lives, trusting in God's promises and His unfailing love for His people.

Ai, an inconsequential unfortified city, was the next city. After Jericho, it seemed like it would only take a handful of men to overcome it. But sin had entered the camp when they cleared out Jericho; one man's lust for the things of the world caused punishment on all Israel. Thirty-six men were killed, and the Israelites were defeated.

After dealing firmly and decisively, seeking instructions from God, and taking His presence with them, Israel was able to conquer Ai. The key to gaining victory on the battlefield of life is taking control of our inner enemy—the flesh. Once we do that, spiritual warfare ceases to be a problem because God wins the battles for us.

The third problem that we must overcome is that of special attacks by Satan, like the deception the Gibeonites used on Israel. Although Israel was suspicious, a treaty was made with them instead of destroying them as God had commanded. When they found out they had been deceived, they could have used that as an excuse to destroy them, but an oath had been made. Instead of destruction, they chose to make them slaves forever. The Gibeonites became “cutters of wood and drawers of water for the house of God” (Josh. 9:23-27). This was a curse, meant to subject their enemy to the lowest form of servitude without destroying them, but it meant a relationship.

Nonetheless, Gibeon's deception led directly to the defeat of the five “kings of the Amorites,” who intended to subdue Gibeon for their defection. God used the Amorite kings to move Israel from the central nations to destroy the southern ones.

I. Battle for the South

“Now it came to pass, when Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem [Jebus], had heard how Joshua had taken Ai, and had utterly destroyed it; as he had done to Jericho and her king, so he had done to Ai and her king; and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel, and were among them; they feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city; as one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all the men thereof were mighty,...” he called for four other mighty kings to join him in taking out Gibeon because of their treaty with Israel. (Josh. 10:1-6).

Adoni-zedek's territory was only six miles from Gibeon, and these battles were just too close for comfort. He felt the rapid takedown of Jericho and Ai must have inspired great fear and dread to cause Gibeon to form a treaty rather than fight. They were a royal city, far greater than Ai, and all their men were mighty. Adoni-zedek decided that he would need reinforcements to keep his own kingdom from being overthrown.

The king had some degree of superiority over the other four kings because when he called for their aid, they came with all their warriors and joined forces to fight against Gibeon. Their unprovoked attack indicates they must have been enemies before this.

Adoni-zedek counted on Gibeon's newly formed relationship with Israel. He hoped to use it to draw them in and damage their forces enough to keep them from attacking their cities, and at the same time, punish Gibeon for their desertion.

The five kings and their armies came rushing down to Gibeon, "like our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion... seeking whom he may devour" (I Pet. 5:8), and Gibeon begged Israel's help. Because of their treaty, Joshua went up from Gilgal with all his mighty men to help them. God reassured him, "Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand, there shall not a man of them stand before thee." (Josh. 10:8).

Sometimes, catastrophes come at us so fast we don't know which way to turn. They're like the kings rushing in to devour Gibeon and Israel. If we let them, they can shatter us, shake our faith, and make us cry out to God in panic. But Joshua stood fast and depended on God to do the work—and God honored his faith. Even though Adoni-zedek didn't know it, *he* was playing right into Joshua's hands. Only God could have saved the outnumbered Israelites! Only God can bring us through the hard times. Instead of the need to pick off the cities one by one, Adoni-zedek brought everyone to Joshua!

Israel marched all night, and as promised, God went before them and performed two miracles to negate the enemy armies. "The Lord discomfited them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them along the way..." (Josh. 10:10). "Discomfited" does not mean just making them uncomfortable. We don't know how they were discomfited, but it threw them into a panic and confused them. This allowed Joshua and the army to kill them with a great slaughter at Gibeon so that they fled from Israel.

At another time in Scripture, when God "discomfited" the people, He thundered with a great thunder, sending arrows of lightning (II Sam. 22:15). This seems to go with what has occurred now. As the Amorites fled before Israel, "the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them." These hailstones killed more than the men of Israel slew. (Josh. 10:1d-11).

But Joshua saw that, if they had *just a little more time*, they could finish the fight effectively. Joshua wanted to complete their victory before the enemy had a night to rest and regroup. (Josh. 10:14). In front of all Israel, Joshua spoke to the Lord, "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon (E); and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon (W)," and God honored his prayer. Some commentaries say that both the sun and moon could be seen at this time since the "sun stood still in the midst of heaven." The Bible says there has never been a day like this before or after it that God heeded the voice of a man, but "the LORD fought for Israel" and allowed them to fight the battle for a full 24-hour period.

This is probably one of the greatest miracles in Scripture. No one knows how God caused it to occur without interrupting the environment, but in God's omnipotence, He intervened to halt His universe. To limit God to our meager understanding is to disrespect God. Only in one other place in the Bible is this miracle mentioned, Habakkuk 3:11. It is also recorded in the extra-Biblical book of Jasher (Josh. 10:13), a collection of poetic songs that praise the heroes of Israel. (II Sam. 1:18).

When the five Amorite kings saw that the tide of the battle was turning against them, they fled. They did not die with their warriors; they did not serve their people. These

kings fled when the power of death became too great for them to handle. Because they didn't know the God of Israel, His mercy, love, or promises, they had relied on their own prowess, greater numbers, and military wisdom. That power, though, became completely undone in the face of God's omnipotence.

The kings found a cave and hid in it rather than risk their lives and their crowns. Gibeon had humbled themselves and sought the support of Israel through humility, but the Amorites, in their pride, sought supremacy. There was no repentance, no healing. Five earthly kings, accustomed to being lauded and obeyed, had come up, not against Israel, but against the King, Almighty God.

When Joshua found out where the kings were hiding, he sent his men to roll great stones across the mouth of the cave to prevent their escape. He set guards to ensure they remained inside to be dealt with later. The rest of the army pursued and fought the enemies to keep them from barricading themselves in their cities. God delivered them all into their hand until they were consumed.

When the soldiers returned, Joshua removed the Amorite kings from the cave and told his captains to "put their feet upon the necks of them." This did not hurt them, but was a symbol that Israel now had complete domination over their kingdoms. That would come later when they were hanged. After this great battle at Beth-Horon, the land was practically theirs for the taking. Individual victories remained to complete the conquest. Joshua journeyed south and destroyed the Amorite kingdoms. (Josh. 10).

When we look at the evil around us and think it is so much greater than we are, we mustn't forget that it is God who fights for us, just like He did for Israel. "Ye shall not fear them: for the LORD your God, He shall fight for you" (Dt. 3:22). A dark cave can't protect us. We need to take shelter in God, our Protector, and only hope in times of trouble. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of Me, saith the LORD" (Isa. 54:17).

Joshua 10 concludes, "And all these kings and their land did Joshua take at one time, because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel. And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp to Gilgal" (v. 42-43).

II. Battle for the North

God's purpose for His people is complete victory. Following the defeat of the southern kings and kingdoms, God directs Israel to the northern kingdoms. To stop before achieving complete victory would be like someone offering to give you a gift of \$10,000, but you are willing to take only \$10. It seems a little silly not to take all that is offered. But many are willing to take only salvation when God's offer to us is spiritual wealth beyond comprehension: blessings of victory over sin, fellowship with Him, fruitful service, and an eternal home in heaven...and leave these extras all behind!

Sometimes, we find ourselves looking at a huge project and, even though it isn't quite finished or quite perfect, we think it's "good enough." We are tired of working on that project and are ready to move on to something more exciting or different. Our responsibility is to complete the conquests that God has given us, just like He expected Joshua to conquer all the nations of the Promised Land. Follow-through is important in business and in sports, but it is especially true in spiritual endeavors. Anyone can begin a race well, but what is really important is how you finish it.

While it doesn't take very long to read Joshua 10-11, it took a long time for these events to happen: "Joshua made war a long time with all those kings" (Josh. 11:18). In fact, it took seven years. These were not all quick, easy victories. Some victories may have been easier to win than others, but over the long haul, God regularly uses a slow pattern to teach His people. Hebrews 10:36 reminds us, "For ye have need of patience [endurance], so that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise."

At this point, only three major engagements with the enemy, Jericho, Ai, and the hills near Gibeon (Beth-horon), have been required to take over the central and southern nations. "And it came to pass, when Jabin, king of Hazor, the head of the northern kings, had heard those things, that he sent to..." multiple kings in the north, in the mountains, in the plains, in the valley, in the east and in the west, "and they went out, they and all their hosts with them, much people, even as the sand that is upon the seashore in multitude, with horses and chariots very many...to fight against Israel."

Joshua has a BIG problem: more kings, more armies, with superior numbers and superior armament. But he still has the same GOD, the one who has been taking care of all Israel's enemies. Josephus, the Jewish historian, wrote about this incident many years later, claiming that these nations numbered 300,000 foot soldiers, 100,000 cavalry, and 20,000 chariots. Even if these are exaggerated numbers, the Bible says they were "as the sand of the seashore in multitude," a large hoard of people.

But God told Joshua, "Be not afraid because of them: for tomorrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel: thou shalt hough [hamstring] their horses and burn their chariots with fire." Hamstrung horses were often unable to carry riders or gallop. So, Joshua's army fell on the Canaanites in what was one of the bloodiest and violent battles of the entire conquest. They chased them, and smote them, "until they left them none remaining" (Josh. 11:1-8).

When the victory was complete, Joshua commanded all the horses be made lame and the chariots destroyed. This would continue to leave Israel undermined in the face of other enemies, but God knew what was best for them. David wrote in Psalm 20:7, "Now know I that the LORD saveth His anointed; He will hear him from His holy heaven with the saving strength of His right hand. Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God."

By his unswerving compliance with God's command, Joshua demonstrated that he was willing to move when God said move. His bold trust in God made him willing to accept any challenge with courage and fearless faith. When the Lord goes before us, He prepares the way, overcomes opposition, and enables us to win battles for His glory. Joshua's leadership overrode any temptation that the Israelites may have had to give up the conquests and settle for "good enough."

But God had no intention of allowing Israel to quit fighting the battles until they had successfully destroyed the Canaanites. No nation except Gibeon sought a treaty, "For it was of the Lord to harden their [the Canaanites] hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that He might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favor, but that He might destroy them, as the Lord commanded Moses" (Josh. 11:20). God controlled the enemy so that the outcome He desired for Israel was accomplished. And there was still a "large" group to destroy.

III. Facing the Anakim Giants

Remember the Anakim, the giants that had caused such fear that they refused to go into Canaan forty years before? They were a formidable race of giants, known for their great size and strength, first mentioned in Numbers when the twelve men were sent to spy out Canaan. In Israel's world, they were synonymous with "terror!" It was the sight of the Anakim that triggered their report that "we were like grasshoppers in their sight" (Numb. 13:32-33).

Moses had named the Anakim specifically when speaking of the nations that God would deliver into Israel's hands: "A people great and tall, the children of the Anakims, whom thou knowest, and of whom thou hast heard say, 'Who can stand before the children of Anak!' Understand, therefore, this day, that the Lord thy God is He which goeth over before thee; as a consuming fire He shall destroy them, and He shall bring them down before thy face: so shalt thou drive them out, and destroy them quickly, as the LORD hath said unto thee" (Deut. 9:2-3). God now shows that their fears were groundless!

"And at that time Joshua came and cut off the Anakim from the mountains: from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, from all the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel; Joshua utterly destroyed them with their cities. None of the Anakim were left in the land of the children of Israel; they remained only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod" (Josh. 11:21-22). These cities remained in Philistine territory. Fear had caused the Israelites to feel like "grasshoppers" against the giants, but now, they walked over them as so much grass in a field. So much for the giants!

"So, Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord said unto Moses, and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war" (Josh. 11:23). Joshua 12 gives us a quick summary of all the kings and their city-states that were destroyed, a total of 31 kings.

IV. Inconsistency???

But wait...is there inconsistency in God's Word? There is no way because the Bible is without error and contradiction! But why, then, does Joshua 11:23 say that "Joshua took the whole land," and yet Joshua 13:1 says "there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed?" No inconsistency, but it means we must study a passage in context and in its historical setting to understand its correct meaning. If this is done, there will never be an error or inconsistency in God's Word.

These verses emphasize the balance between immediate fulfillment and the need for continued effort in God's promises. This gives us insight into the constant movement, the ongoing nature of God's promises. Joshua fulfilled the initial conquest of the land in full obedience and faithfulness to God's Word. But that wasn't the end of the conquests because "there remained much more" that would eventually need to be possessed.

We also must understand that there is continuity in God's plan. We've seen from the promise to Abraham, followed by his seed being enslaved, to their release and journey to the Promised Land, the need for continued movement and faithfulness in the face of challenges to receive the promised reward.

Since Joshua is a type, or picture, of Jesus, we can see that He has initially conquered Satan and death through Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection. He said, "It is finished" (Jn. 19:30) in the same manner Joshua is saying, "The war is won." Israel

had conquered the nations, but there would still be skirmishes. In fact, there are still battles being fought today for that land. When Jesus died and we accepted His payment for our sin, Satan and death were conquered, our sins are no longer seen by God because He only sees the holiness of Jesus around us. But there are still sins, skirmishes, that must be overcome.

Positionally, we have the victory because we are God's child. Heaven is ours to look forward to. Practically, we may not have claimed the entire victory that God wants to give us. We have our inheritance, but we still have skirmishes in the form of anxiety, fears, addiction, greed, selfishness, impulsiveness, and many other things that must be overcome to become holy as God wants us to be. These things tend to grow and remain if not removed, like those pockets of enemies that pop up and need to be conquered by Israel. If they aren't taken care of and "utterly destroyed," they remain a hindrance in our daily lives. They must be rooted out and destroyed.

So, no inconsistencies in God's Word are found. We just have to see His Word through eyes that are open to what He has to show us.

Conclusion:

How big is the God you serve? Is He big enough to perform miracles on your behalf? Does your faith limit what God is able to do for you?

The truth is that Christ sits at the right hand of the Father, far above all the rulers, authorities, and dominions; He has everything under His feet. (Eph. 1:20-22). That means that *every* power that threatens to harm us, or seeks to destroy us, is chained, even though the chains are not visible to us. No spiritual power that threatens our life can come between us and God.

That doesn't mean we won't have opposition in our lives because we will. But, when it comes, we can know for certain that God will never leave us, that He is there, going before us and fighting for us. God may not work out the problems the way we think they should be, but I doubt anyone in Israel expected the hailstorm, or the extra-long day, the walls to come down because of a shout, or the seas to part! Our problems will be resolved better than we can ever imagine because God is in control.

Joshua accomplished things for God against some mighty big, overwhelming odds because he trusted God. He chose faith over fear. So, when the situation seems hopeless...that's the time for faith! And, if you really think about it, with God, there is no hopeless situations. Pin your hope on Him!

"With God, all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26b) because He "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the Power that worketh in us" (Eph. 3:20). What can be more reassuring than that?

Dividing Canaan (Joshua Part 4)

- 1)** Read Joshua 15-19. What 3 things did God give Israel?
- 2)** How would you have felt if you were the tribe of Levi and did not receive any inheritance?
- 3)** What can we take away from Joshua 14 that will help us as we age?
- 4)** How would you describe Caleb as you read Joshua 14-15? (Also, Numb. 14:24; 32:11-12; Dt. 1:36)
- 5)** What does it mean to “cast lots?” (see also Leviticus 16:8; Acts 1:26). What/Who was the deciding factor for the questions that the lots were trying to discern?
- 6)** What was the complaint of Manasseh about their portion of land? (Josh. 17). How did Joshua tell them to take care of it?
- 7)** In Joshua 18, how does God work with man to separate the parcels of land?

Conclusion:

In our busy, fast-paced world, it can be tough to stay focused and committed to God, but Caleb's life shows that it can be done. Six separate times, Scripture records that Caleb wholly followed the Lord. To some, believing in God means they are content simply to follow the crowd. Caleb, however, followed wholly, or wholeheartedly. The Bible says that this was because Caleb had a "different spirit." He was willing to stand out as a person in the minority when it came to serving the Lord. (Numb. 14:24).

Caleb believed what God said, so he didn't see the obstacles that might hinder entry into Canaan. Ten others, who went with him to spy out the land, could only see the obstacles. (Numb. 13:30). He took God at His word, so Caleb lived how God said, in uncompromising obedience.

But it wasn't just a matter of living, Caleb lived patiently waiting on God's answers. He persevered even when it seemed God's promises took a long time. For forty-five years, he had held on to the promise that God would bring them into the Promised Land and give him the portion that Moses had spoken of.

So, not only was Caleb a person who served God wholeheartedly, but he was willing to stand for God, to believe what He promised, and patiently wait for the fulfillment of the promise. Can you say these things about the way you live your life, or do you just follow along with the crowd and participate in their discontent?

Psalm 119:10-12 tells us the secret to wholehearted service, "With my whole heart have I sought Thee **(seek God)**: O let me not wander from Thy commandments **(obey God)**. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee **(Memorize His Word)**. Blessed art Thou, O LORD: teach me Thy statutes **(Maintain a teachable spirit)**. Are you willing to serve God wholeheartedly?