

Lesson 5 – Joshua 11-12

Text: Joshua 11-12

Key Passages:

- Joshua 11:4 – The kings of the north formed a powerful alliance to attack Israel.
- Joshua 11:15 – Joshua did everything that had been commanded by God.
- Joshua 11:20 – God helped the Canaanites harden their hearts to help destroy them.

Main Storyline:

Jabin, the king of a large fortress city called Hazor, heard about all the battles that Israel had won over the southern kingdoms of Canaan. He decided, as the kings of the southern region had, to form an alliance with the other kingdoms. (Hazor was located about 8 miles northwest of the Sea of Galilee, and it was the dominant city of the region with roughly 200 acres within its walls. In comparison, Jericho had only about 7 acres.) These kings and their armies assembled together at the waters of Merom (located about 6 miles west of Hazor) to attack the Israelites. The combined force of all of these northern kings was incredible, containing innumerable numbers of soldiers, horses, and chariots. It was probably far more powerful than any other army that Israel had faced up to that point.

God once again exhorted Joshua not to be afraid, as He was about to deliver them all to Israel to be killed. God gave them special instructions, however, regarding the horses and chariots of the Canaanite army: they were to hamstring the horses and burn the chariots. Note that hamstringing was not to completely maim the horses, but to prevent them from being used in future battles (not able to run anymore). This seems to be another of God's measures to prevent the Israelites from relying on themselves (horses/chariots) and not on God (compare also with Deuteronomy 17:16 and 2 Samuel 8:4).

Joshua obeyed God's commandments. He attacked the large Canaanite army (seemingly in another ambush) and overwhelming defeated them, by God's providence. The Canaanites tried to scatter and escape, but the Israelites chased them until every soldier had been killed. Joshua also had all of the Canaanite horses hamstringed and burned all of their chariots. Israel then invaded Hazor, killed its king and all its inhabitants, and then burned the city as they had burned Ai and Jericho. As for the rest of the cities, they killed all the inhabitants, but they did not burn them (they would be returning to these cities at some point to live). They also plundered the spoils of war from these cities.

Joshua continued to fight and be victorious for a long time against the Canaanite kings, as God had commanded. No city decided to make peace with Israel except for Gibeon. God had hardened their hearts against Israel, much like He had hardened the heart of Pharaoh against releasing the Israelites. As a result of their disobedience and hard hearts, God destroyed them by way of Israel under Joshua. They were also able to destroy all of the Anakim (giants) in Canaan, except for in the cities of Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod (Philistine cities). This is significant; compare with one of their fears in Numbers 13-14.

Joshua 12 summarizes the Israelite campaign in Canaan. Thirty-one kings had tried to defeat them, and every single one fell by the hand of the Israelites. None could field an army strong enough to defeat them with the Lord on their side. Of course, these battles in Canaan only represented the beginning of the fighting that the Israelites would have to conduct. They had taken control of the land, certainly, through their victories, but many Canaanites remained (villages, etc.). God planned that they would defeat these smaller groups little by little after they divided the land (Deuteronomy 7:20-26).

Lessons/Applications:

- 1.) Even in the face of terrible odds, God will provide victory if we trust Him (Revelation 19:11-21).
- 2.) As hard as it is, we must learn to trust less in ourselves and more in God (Matthew 6:25-34).
- 3.) God hardens the heart of he who refuses to repent in order to punish him (Romans 1:20-32).