



Conquest Completed Joshua Chapters 11 and 12

Introduction

Joshua and the Israelite army had successfully concluded the southern campaign for possession of Canaan. They now had the opportunity to enjoy a little rest and reunion with their families at Gilgal by the Jordan River. We do not know how long they rested. It could not have been longer than a few months at most, for the northern kings were uniting to mount a massive offensive against Israel, either to prevent further conquest of the land, or to thrust them out completely. The latter is still the stated intent of their Palestinian descendants 3,400 years later, as this is being written.

Outline of Joshua 11 and 12

- I. Northern Campaign - Joshua 11
- II. Naming Conquered Kings - Joshua 12

I. Northern Campaign - Joshua 11

A. Coalition of Northern Kings - Joshua 11:1-5

1. Led by the king of Hazor - 11:1-3

Word of Israel's conquest and control of the south of Canaan soon reached the north. King Jabin of Hazor, the capital city of the region, alerted the northern kings, listed in Joshua 11:1-2:

- Jobab, king of Madon
- king of Shimron
- king of Achshaph
- kings north of Hazor
- kings in the mountains
- kings in the plain south of Chinneroth
- kings in the lowland
- kings in the heights of Dor in the west

In summary, Canaanites of the east and west, of the Amorite, Hittite, Perizzite, Jebusite or Hivite nations, were summoned to fight.

2. All their armies assembled - 11:4

A great armed force assembled, *as the sand that is on the seashore in multitude, with very many horses and chariots*. In the time known as the Middle Bronze period, iron was used for tools and chariots. The Israelites, first as slaves and then nomads, had only swords and spears.

3. The waters of Merom - 11:5

The northern armies *came and camped together at the waters of Merom*, later called Lake Hula, between the Sea of Galilee (then Chinneroth) and Mount Hermon. They probably plotted their strategy determining which plain to cross, since chariots could not wage war in the hill country.

B. Comfort and Commands for Joshua - Joshua 11:6-9

1. But the LORD - 11:6

God makes the difference in any situation. Here He offered Joshua comfort with the familiar but surely appreciated assurance: *“Do not be afraid...for tomorrow about this time I will deliver all of them slain before Israel.”* Then God gave Joshua the command, *“you will hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire.”*

2. Israel attacks - 11:7-8

With utmost confidence, therefore, Joshua did not wait to be attacked as they conferred by the lake. With the element of surprise working for him, Joshua scattered the enemy in all directions by the power of Almighty God. *The LORD delivered them [the northern armies] into the hand of Israel who defeated them and chased them.*

Can you imagine those Israelite foot soldiers chasing chariots! Some went toward “Greater Sidon” westward, others to the brook Mizpah eastward. It didn't matter which way the chariots fled, for they were all destroyed in the end. The specific details recorded indicate an eyewitness account.

3. Joshua did...as the LORD had told him - 11:9

Joshua proceeded to hamstring their horses and burn their chariots, as commanded. This is the first occasion when horses and chariots are mentioned in a battle against Israel in the Promised Land. Only with God's help could Joshua's army outfight such superior might and probably superior numbers. Psalm 20:6-9 was true for Joshua and Israel.

*Now I know that the LORD saves His anointed,
He will answer him from the 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.
They have bowed down and fallen;
But we have risen and stand upright.*

C. Cities Taken - Joshua 11:10-15

1. Hazor - 11:10-11

Joshua turned back from Merom where he burned the chariots. He then took Hazor, which was *formerly the head of all those kingdoms*. He killed King Jabin who must have fled there. Hazor was utterly destroyed and left *with none breathing*. Yigael Yadin, the archeologist who excavated Hazor in 1954, estimated that forty thousand people lived there at the time of Joshua's conquest.

2. All the cities of those kings - 11:12-15

Joshua utterly destroyed the Canaanites in all the cities, just as Moses had commanded (Deuteronomy 20:16-17), but burned only Hazor. Israel was allowed to take the booty and livestock as the spoils of war. All this was done as God had commanded Moses, as Moses commanded Joshua, *and so Joshua did*.

3. Total destruction

The reason for total destruction of the Canaanites is found in Deuteronomy 20:18. God had given Moses the principles that were to govern warfare when Israel entered the Promised Land. Moses made sure Joshua and the people knew God's commands. In one of his final addresses to the nation before his death, Moses reminded them of the need to "*utterly destroy*" the people of the cities in the areas where they would live live, "*Lest they teach you to do according to all their abominations which they have done for their gods, and you sin against the LORD your God.*"

God knows the frailty of the human heart and weakness of the flesh. The wilderness generation had easily succumbed to temptation by the women of Moab. They were easily enticed to bow down to the pagan gods and commit gross immorality. *So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel* (Numbers 25:3). As a result, twenty-four thousand Israelites died in a plague (Numbers 25:9).

God's command to "*utterly destroy*" the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites (Deuteronomy 20:17) was to protect His people from succumbing to temptation, turning to idols, and breaking His commandments, thus denying the LORD their God.

D. Conclusion to Northern Campaign - Joshua 11:16-23

1. Mount Seir to Mount Hermon - 11:16-17

All the land now belonged to Israel, from the southernmost peak, Mount Seir in Edom, to the northernmost peak, Mount Hermon, in the valley of Lebanon.

2. A long war - 11:18-19

We are told it was *a long war with all those kings*. It lasted seven years. (In Joshua 14:10, Caleb mentioned it had been forty-five years since the previous generation had refused to enter the land and thirty-eight of those years had been spent in the wilderness.) It was also an arduous war. Of all the Canaanite cities, only Gibeon attempted to make peace. All others fought hand-to-hand, battle by battle warfare. It was not glamorous but it was glorious, for it was a war of obedience to God, a war in which Israel scourged the evil from the land.

In Genesis 15:13-16, God had told Abraham he would die in the land of Canaan and that his descendants would be slaves in a foreign land for four hundred years. "*But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.*"

"Thus God waited to give the promised land to Israel until the iniquity of the Amorites was 'complete'. The LORD does not arbitrarily punish; He allows people to run themselves into hell, which makes His verdicts fitting. In Abraham's day, the Amorites had not yet become corrupt enough to lose Canaan, and so it did not go immediately to Abraham. When it did, God used His people, Israel, to carry out His sentence. Men can sin brazenly only for a short time; judgment will surely fall when their evil works are complete" (R.C. Sproul, Ligonier Ministries).

As in the words of the "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" (Julia Ward Howe, 1861), God, through Joshua and the armies of Israel, was "trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath [were] stored" he had "loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword." We are not given the names of any of the soldiers who faithfully fought the battles, but they were disciplined, efficient, and determined. No murmurers or deserters are mentioned in the ranks. This was a new and different generation from the one that left Egypt.

3. A hardened enemy - 11:20

For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that He might utterly destroy them, and that they might receive no

mercy, but that He might destroy them as the LORD had commanded Moses. God allowed the hardening of Canaanite hearts, as He allowed Pharaoh's. God's judgment was determined upon them because after four hundred years they still pursued their corrupt and ungodly lifestyle.

Israel herself would in time become idolatrous like the pockets of nations she failed to completely destroy. God would use other nations as a scourge against Israel too. Then it would be apparent that the problem was not with Israel destroying entire populations but with those cases where she failed to do so.

4. *As the LORD commanded Moses* - 11:12-23

Four times (in verses 12,15,20,23) we are reminded that this was all according to God's plan and instructions to Moses.

5. Rest from war - 12:23

Even though there were still pockets of Canaanites untouched, God's people had accomplished their objective as a whole and the remainder would be up to the individual tribes at the local level.

II. Naming the Conquered Kings - Joshua 12

A list is given of all the kings conquered by the Israelite armies. It includes those conquered by Moses, east of the Jordan River, as well as by Joshua.

A. Under Moses' Leadership - Joshua 12:1-6

Moses' battle-ground had been east of the Jordan. It was an area almost as large as Canaan and dominated by two kings of enormous strength.

1. Sihon, king of the Amorites - 12:2-3

The first was Sihon who controlled the area of the Moabites and the Ammonites. Today this land is the country of Jordan.

2. Og - 12:4-5

North of Sihon was Og, king of Bashan, who ruled an area which stretched from the river Arnon to Syria.

This territory east of the Jordan, known as Gilead, had been given by Moses to the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and the half tribe of Manasseh, at their request. The one condition had been that they cross the Jordan and fight with their brothers to conquer the land of Canaan. They had promised Moses, "*We will not return to our homes until every one of the children of Israel has received his inheritance. For we will not inherit with them on the other*

side of the Jordan and beyond, because our inheritance has fallen to us on this eastern side of the Jordan." This is a promise they had faithfully kept.

B. Under Joshua's Leadership - Joshua 12:7-24

1. The extent of the conquest - 12:7-8

The thirty-one kings Joshua had conquered west of the Jordan are listed. A summary of the land conquered is given. The area included, *the mountain country... the lowlands...the Jordan plain...the slopes...the wilderness, and...the south.*

2. The conquered kings - 12:10-24

- Central kings - verse 9

The central kings included the kings of Jericho and Ai.

- Southern kings - verses 10-16

These were the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, Eglon, Gezer, Debir, Geder, Hormah, Arad, Libnah, Adullam, Makedah, and Bethel.

- Northern kings - verses 17-24

The conquered kings of the north were the kings of Tappuah, Hopher, Aphek, Lasharon, Madon, Hazor, Shimron Meron, Achshaph, Taanach, Megiddo, Kedesh, Jokneam in Carmel, Dor, Gilgal, and Tirzah.

Applications

1. Do you sometimes feel like a "cog in the wheel," a nameless, faceless person doing a routine job, far down the line? It may not be glamorous but it can be glorious. If you are being obedient to God, doing what He wants where He wants you, you are possessing your spiritual possessions and holding or even gaining ground for the cause of Christ. And remember, there is rest ahead.
2. Child of God, as a soldier, will you take fresh courage today in your calling as a spouse, parent, single person, student, worker, or retiree? Remember that God is using your surrendered life to accomplish His purpose, now hidden, but one day to be revealed.
3. Will you today make sure you are following your Joshua, Jesus, in every detail? Then you can be assured of His comfort and victory.