

Joshua 10, 11 & 12

Crushing the Might of the Canaanites

1. Gibeon's break with the Canaanite alliance

From now on, Gibeon joins forces with the Israelites. This greatly alarms the Canaanites in southern Canaan.

Question 1: What is the reason for that alarm? (See vv.1a,1b,2.)

Adonizedek, the king of Jerusalem, does not allow the alliance against Israel to be breached at the start of the ensuing campaign. Gibeon has forsaken their common cause (9:1,2).

Question 2: What action does he undertake? (See vv.3,4.)

Adonizedek instantly receives help. He is not the only one who feels threatened. Together, the Canaanites use every possible means to resist Israel, for whom they were so afraid, and subdue them.

Question 3: This is the first time that Israel is faced with a large, hostile army, led by several kings. The Canaanites will put up a desperate fight. What danger does that pose to the Israelites (cf. 1:8,9)?

Find Joshua 11:20. This verse provides deeper insight into their urgency to resist Israel.

2. The firmness of the covenant with Gibeon (10:6-9)

Gibeon is threatened. However, they have made a covenant with Israel. Gibeon asks Joshua for help, since it was the aim of the covenant to help each other against any threat (9:15).

Question 4: Was the honour of the name of the LORD the key issue here? (See outline 8 section 5 paragraphs 3,4 and 6.)

Joshua keeps his word, as he had done previously when he had protected Gibeon from the Israelites who wanted to put the Gibeonites to the sword (9:26). Joshua musters all his men and advances his troops against the Canaanites.

Gibeon would find out what the consequences are of having Israel as a covenantal partner, as would Adonizedek and his allies; only, the latter would find out to their own condemnation.

Question 5: You can read v.8 to find out what the consequences were. (Also, see Joshua 1:7 and 8; then, the LORD spoke in general terms.) Who ensured the firmness of the covenant? (See vv.10- 12.)

The LORD fights for Israel, yet not to the exclusion of Israel's involvement.

Question 6: Verse 9 shows how the Israelites had to exert themselves. What was the purpose of their using effort?

3. The manner in which the LORD fought for his cause (10:10-15)

The LORD throws the Canaanites into confusion. The following verses show how he did that. He used hail and a day of extraordinary duration.

The LORD throws down great hailstones from heaven, so that more enemies die from them than by the weapons of the Israelites. Hail is distinctively God's weapon (Job 38:22,23). During the Exodus he used it against the Egyptians and during the entry he employed these projectiles against the Canaanites. Those hailstones, however, never hit Israel!

On that day, Joshua prays (speaks) to the LORD, "Sun, stand thou still at Gibeon, and thou Moon in the valley of Aijalon."

Question 7: *Why did Joshua pray in this manner? (See v.13a.) Complete victory threatened to slip out of the hand of the Israelites (and thus out of the LORD's hand!). What is the connection between Psalm 44 (esp. vv.1-9) and this event?*

Joshua spoke to the LORD 'in the sight of Israel'. In other words, he was leading the Israelites in prayer.

Joshua's prayer was remarkable. Yet, the LORD granted his requests. That day was twice as long as usual (v.14). This shows that the battle was of such great importance to the LORD, that he guided the path of the sun and the moon differently than usual. The LORD is King of heaven and earth. He heard this prayer for the sake of his work and his nation; he did it in view of the fulfillment of his promises.

In v.13, reference is made to the Book of Jashar. In that book this history is mentioned also. We do not know anything about this book. It is not part of the Holy Scriptures. The reference to this book made it plain to the Israelites that this account is reliable. If they wished they could verify these events in another book.

4. The conclusion of the battle (10:15-27)

When their battle seems lost, the five kings flee to a cave at Makkedah. In order to prevent the Israelites from concentrating their efforts on these kings, Joshua traps them in their cave by rolling great stones against its mouth and has men guard the entrance.

Question 8: *What required Israel's (continued) attention first of all? (See v.19.) Does this indicate that Joshua is revengeful and warlike? (See v.19 again.)*

The people return unharmed (!) back to Joshua (v.21).

After the Israelites return, Joshua deals with the five kings. He forces them to lie face down on the ground and orders the leaders of Israel to put their feet on the necks of these kings.

Question 9: *Why did these leaders have to do this? (See v.25.) Their task had only just begun. (See Deut 7:22 and Ps 110:1; in clear, prophetic language this Psalm speaks about the Lord Jesus Christ, our King.)*

Subsequently, Joshua smites these kings and has them impaled. Toward evening, Joshua has their bodies removed and thrown in the cave. The land was not allowed to be defiled (Deut 21:22-23). God required that any curse had to be removed from the land that he had

¹Tr. note: In the RSV no mention is made of impalement in v.26; instead, the kings are said to be hung (up)on trees.

promised. After all, this was clear from the ban that already on many occasions had been placed on something or somebody as a result of God's judgment. This land was to be a holy land for his holy nation.

Question 10: *How would God's people truly be made holy? Think about how Christ died. (See e.g., Jn 19:31.)*

Large stones are placed in front of the cave. These stones, also, serve as a memorial. We may read, "...which remain to this very day." This means that those stones were still there when the book of Joshua was written. This was the meaning of this memorial for Israel: "These kings died under God's curse and judgment." For Israel it served as a warning.

5. The result of the battle (10:28-43)

Joshua is now able to conquer Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, Hebron, and Debir, the cities of the Canaanites. Horem, the king of Gezer who attempted to help Lachish, is utterly defeated, as well. All those cities are placed under the ban.

Joshua, together with the rest of the Israelites, shows in his actions obedience to the LORD's Word (his commands), and the LORD maintains his promises.

In 15:13-17 we read that Joshua has to renew the fight against Hebron and Debir. This implies that ch.10 tells about the first in a series of battles against the Canaanites. However, those first battles definitely crushed the might of those southern nations (v.40).

A miracle happened. In one great battle Joshua conquers these nations, but that does not mean that it was the last one. (cf. ch. 11:18. See also Outline 7 section 2.)

Question 11: *How was it possible for Joshua to deal these kings such an enormous blow? (See v.42.)*

6. The battle of northern Canaan (11:1-15)

The victory of Israel in the south does not escape the attention of the nations who live in the northern part of Canaan. Jabin, the king of the powerful city Hazor, mobilizes all the forces of the north. Hazor was strategically located: it was built at the place where the business route from Mesopotamia and Damascus to Egypt crossed the river Jordan.

Hazor's coalition is extremely powerful. They know that their lives depend on this battle.

Question 12: *Point out two things from v.4 that, according to the Canaanites, must have inspired fear in the hearts of the Israelites.*

Israel again has to rely on the LORD; and the LORD again promises that he will fight for them. The emphasis in v.6 lies on the word 'I'.

Question 13: *What is Israel's responsibility at this critical moment? (See v.6.)*

The Israelites are supposed to hamstring their horses. We may consider that cruel. However, we must not forget that these animals were a component of the might of Jabin's armies. They were the tanks of the past. By hamstringing their horses, Israel takes the power of their enemies (God's enemies!) away.

Question 14: *In view of their own interests, Israel has no choice but to deal radically with the horses and chariots. Why is that so? (See Deut 17:16 and especially Ps 20:8.)*

Even though the Israelites will not fight the Canaanites in the plains, as they were used to doing, Joshua trusts in the LORD and is obedient. They enter the battle at the waters of Merom.

The LORD ensures that the Israelites are able to completely overpower their enemies. Joshua obediently devotes his enemies to the LORD, including their chariots and horses (vv.8,9) and cities (vv.10-14) .

7. The conquest completed (11:16-23)

In vv.16 and 17 we find a description of all the land that Joshua conquered. Joshua fought against these kings for a long period of time (v.18). (See question 9)

Question 15: *For how long did Joshua fight against them? (cf. 14:10 with Deut 2:14.)*

Besides Gideon, no other nation tried to establish a covenant with Israel. All their other enemies had to be subdued by force (v.19). The reason for this we find in v.20 (see also Deut 7:16). Another reason is that the glory of the LORD would be demonstrated even more, as he had demonstrated to the Pharaoh in Egypt (see Ex 7:3-5). It was the LORD who gave the victory; yet, people remain responsible for their actions (read 2 Thess 2:11 in connection with the previous verse).

All the Canaanites made the decision to harden themselves against Israel. That was their own choice. However, anyone who hardens himself against God and his people ultimately pushes himself into a corner. In this way they incur God's judgment. The LORD gives them over to themselves. (Read Deut 2:30 ff. and Rom 1:28; the reaction of Rahab is quite different from that of the other Canaanites: she chose for the LORD and was blessed.)

Special mention is made of the Anakim (=Nephilim).

Question 16: *Considering what is written in Numbers 13:33, can you explain why the Anakim are mentioned?*

After the battle, the Israelites divide the land. They are God's people who apportion the inheritance they received from God (v.23).

8. The defeated kings (12:1-24)

Chapter 12 may seem like a merely statistical overview. However, in this chapter we also read about God's faithfulness. That is how we ought to read this chapter; in one glimpse we see the faithfulness of the LORD.

Something to consider: were these verses a tedious list of names for the Israelites? No, every name was meaningful to them. The names spoke about the battles and the victories the LORD had granted to them. Not one of them was to be forgotten!

Every name in this chapter proclaims God's faithfulness to his nation. It also speaks about the faith of his children, who faithfully obeyed God's Word in which his promises abound. Every

victory counts. Every single victory, which the LORD gives, deserves a separate celebration. Israel is free to live in God's land as his children. We, even more so, have every reason to celebrate our salvation from eternal death through our Lord Jesus Christ!

Chapter twelve is meant to make us thankful for and stand in awe of God's blessings to his nation.

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