

PROMISED LAND 1: Lesson Two, The Campaigns ***Joshua 5:13 – 12:24***

Subject: Joshua fought central, southern, and northern campaigns in the Promised Land.

Main Idea: Battles are fought and won when we heed the right Voice.

Principles:

1. *God's instructions sometimes contradict human logic.*
2. *Constant alertness to dangers prevents us from being lulled into a false sense of security and a resulting attitude of self-reliance.*
3. *We fight as though victory is dependent on us, but we trust knowing victory is all up to God.*

Introduction

We are in our *Promised Land 1* study, covering the periods of Israel's conquest and settlement of Canaan, the land God promised them. We have been able to apply these historical lessons to our lives by correlating Israel's Promised Land to the abundant life Jesus offers us this side of Heaven (John 10:10). In the first chapters of Joshua, we discovered that Israel had to be *prepared* to enter the land because *they would have to fight* to gain their full inheritance. We discussed the fact that, in this life, *believers are also engaged in warfare*, spiritual warfare to inherit the fullness of life in Christ that has been gifted to us. All spiritual riches (peace, joy, faith, etc.) have already been given to us *and are within us*, but we must feed our new spirit with the truth of God's word and apply it so that our minds, emotions, and will are progressively sanctified. The application of truth is the point at which we meet great resistance and the inner life is our primary battleground. As we can all attest, our actions largely result from what is going on inside us.

In this lesson, on Joshua 5:13 through Joshua 12, we find Israelites engaged in various battles to overtake Canaan, including the well-known Battle of Jericho. These chapters in Joshua are also full of application for our lives today. Since we are learning to know the story of the entire Bible, our application in this lesson will again focus on the larger theme of conquest of the Promised Land.

- There are lessons in these chapters about the strategies our enemy uses to try and defeat us.
- There are also lessons about how we can be victorious in our battles.
- Over all of this, there is the important lesson that God secures the outcome, according to His good purpose and promises.

Have you ever struggled within to distinguish the voice of God from your own voice, or even the voice of the enemy, when you are in the middle of some kind of battle? Of course, we know that God's word contains our battle plan and Jesus has assured us that His sheep know His voice (John 10:4). However, when I am in the heat of battle, I sometimes struggle to distinguish His voice from competing voices. The past few weeks I have personally wrestled with these competing voices more than usual.

Our battles are fought and won when we heed the *right Voice*! So how do we know one from the other? The Israelites' successes and failures in battle reveal a few of the tactics our enemy cunningly uses to suggest plans that will ultimately lead to our defeat.

I. **Central Campaign Launched** – Joshua 5:13 – 6:27

A. **Palestine in the Late Bronze Age**

i. Political Description

1. In Joshua’s day, Canaan was checkered with independent or loosely confederated city-states, each with its own “king,” as chapters 5 – 12 attest.
2. Three great powers vied for control of the seaports and trade routes through Palestine: the Neo-Hittite Empire to the north, the Egyptians to the south, and the Hurrians to the northeast. Near the end of Joshua’s lifetime, the Hittites overthrew the Hurrians and the Assyrians filled the vacuum of power they left. The competition between these three powers resulted in a stalemate with regard to complete control of Palestine. Egypt was nominally in control of the region, but for the most part, left Canaan’s independent city-states to govern themselves.ⁱ

ii. The Local People Groups

1. *Background*

- a. The Promised Land was the “Land of Canaan.” As noted in the previous lesson, the terms “Canaanite” and “Amorite” are used somewhat interchangeably in the Scriptures to describe the people groups who occupied its city-states.
- b. The name *Canaan* traces back to the descendant of Noah by that name. Canaan’s wicked descendant Nimrod founded the world’s first centers of power. Canaanite history is bound together with the Phoenician tradition. By the time Joshua was dead and Judges ruled Israel, the Canaanites’ center of power was increasingly transferred to Phoenicia proper, centered around the port cities of Tyre and Sidon, north of Israel on the Mediterranean coast.ⁱⁱ

2. *Religion and Culture*

- a. The Canaanites/Phoenicians were a highly literate, wealthy, educated, and sophisticated society. Many were bilingual or even trilingual. Yet their culture was particularly violent and intensely, sexually obscene (as their literature attests).
- b. Canaanite religion can be summarized as appealing “to the bestial and material in human nature.”ⁱⁱⁱ The most prominent deities in their pantheon of gods were El, Baal, Hadad, and Dagon, as well as Asherah and Anath, goddesses of sex and war.

- c. At least six hundred years before Joshua’s time, God told Abraham that his descendants would be gifted the Land of Canaan, but not until the sin of the local residents reached its full measure (Genesis 15:16). Therefore, while Joshua and the Israelites arrived at Canaan to receive what God promised, they were also sent by God as His instrument of judgment against the Canaanites because of their extreme depravity. It would have been impossible for God’s holy people to coexist with them unscathed.

- iii. Strategic Value of Jericho

1. The Israelites’ first camp inside the Promised Land was at Gilgal, in the eastern, central region of Canaan. It sat in the river valley between the Jordan River and Jericho. From there, the Israelites would have seen steep hills rising to their west. Jericho was strategically located, for it controlled the way of ascent into these mountains.
2. The strategy that the Israelites used, under God’s sovereign direction, was one of dividing and conquering. By controlling the central region of Palestine, they cut off the powers in the north from those in the south. From their location at Gilgal, Jericho was the key to accessing that central region.

B. Joshua and the Commander

- i. Identity of the Commander: Sometime before the battles began, Joshua had a private encounter with a “man” with a drawn sword who identified Himself as the “commander of the army of the Lord” (5:14).
 1. Some Bible students believe that Joshua met an angelic messenger, but the Commander of the Lord’s army was more likely the same One sometimes referred to in the Old Testament as the “Angel of the Lord.”
 2. The Old Testament contains a number of references that imply the Lord manifested Himself in physical form. Just as a “man” appeared to Joshua, a “man” also appeared to Abraham and to Jacob in Genesis, and in these instances the “man” was identified as the Lord. Bible students refer to such divine self-revelations as theophanies (or “Christophanies,” based on the reasoning that the second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, is the person of the Godhead who is known to have put on flesh). The facts that the “man” whom Joshua met received his worship (Joshua 5:14) and told Joshua he was standing on holy ground (Joshua 5:15) support this view. According to Revelation 19, at the end of this age, Jesus will lead the armies of heaven in battle with a drawn sword.

ii. The Army of the Lord

1. What is meant by “the army of the Lord”? This question is often debated. Since the Israelites were God’s instrument of judgment on the local Canaanites, it could be that the Lord was speaking of Israel as His army.
2. However, He may also have been referring to the angelic hosts that comprise His heavenly army. As we read about the “battles” that took place, it becomes obvious that they were not won by Israel’s might. The Lord and His heavenly host were ensuring the outcome.

iii. Joshua’s Response

1. Joshua asked the “Commander” if He was for Israel or for their enemies. This question was answered by a call to worship. Joshua was told to take off his shoes since he was standing on holy ground. This scene is reminiscent of Moses’ encounter with God at the burning bush (Exodus 3:2-6).
2. Warren Wiersbe makes the application: “In Christian ministry great public victories are won in private as leaders submit to the Lord and receive their directions from Him. It’s doubtful that anybody in the camp of Israel knew about their leader’s meeting with the Lord, but that meeting made the difference between success and failure on the battlefield.”^{iv} The Lord was “Commander-in-Chief.” Joshua understood that he was second-in-command.

C. The March Around Jericho

- i. The Nature of the Battle Plan: The Lord gave Joshua instructions for taking Jericho that would have been met with derision by a lesser man. The plan made no sense from a military point of view. The essence of the battle plan was a solemn, ritualistic march around the securely barred city (6:1). However, the ceremony indicated judgment against the residents of Jericho, judgment that would be carried out by God’s power and under His authority.
- ii. Execution of the Battle Plan
 1. Joshua followed the Lord’s orders exactly. The Israelites marched around the city of Jericho once a day for six days. An armed guard, seven priests sounding seven trumpets, and the Ark of the Lord led the processional. Except for the sound of the trumpets, they marched in eerie silence and then returned to their camp for the night.

2. On the seventh day, the Israelites marched around the city seven times with seven priests sounding seven trumpets (6:4-5). We should note the repetition of the number seven, which is used throughout the Bible as a symbol of completion. God's holiness demanded justice. The time of His patience was complete and judgment had come. Furthermore, God's victory on Israel's behalf would be complete.
3. At the sounding of a long trumpet blast and a signal given by Joshua, all the people gave a loud shout and the walls around the city collapsed. The Israelites charged in, destroyed every living thing with the sword, and burned the city. Rahab and her family were exempt because of her faith. Objects made from substances that would not burn (such as precious metals) were put in the treasury of the Lord.

D. Basis of Judgment

i. God's Holiness and Our Sinfulness

1. According to the Bible, God is holy and, therefore, His standard is perfection. We, on the other hand, are all sinners (every single one of us), and the deserved consequence of sin is death. God has mercifully provided a means of salvation by faith in His provision (Christ), but none of us has ever deserved such mercy.
2. According to Romans 1 and 2, all people possess some general knowledge of God through nature (creation) and through their conscience. Sometimes, these are called "General Revelation." By this knowledge alone, each of us can easily be condemned.
3. The Canaanites, however, possessed *additional* knowledge (sometimes called "Special Revelation"): knowledge of all God's miracles in bringing Israel out of Egypt forty years earlier, including their deliverance at the Red Sea. They had also heard of the recent victories God had given Israel over the Amorite kings Sihon and Og, east of the Jordan, and how He had made it possible for the Israelites to cross the Jordan River on dry ground during its flood stage.

ii. God's Patience, Grace, and Judgment

1. A minimum of 600 years had passed since the Lord told Abraham that the Amorites' sin had not yet "reached its full measure" (Genesis 15:16): roughly 200 years in which the Patriarchs lived in Canaan, 430 the Israelites lived in Egypt, and another 40 years the Israelites wandered in the wilderness.

2. Each of the seven days Israel marched around Jericho, its inhabitants were given yet another opportunity to repent. Every person had the opportunity to follow Rahab's example and throw him or herself at the mercy of Israel's God. The Canaanites refused (by their own will) to acknowledge the living God, even after they received special revelation of His omnipotence. For this reason, Joshua 11:20 indicates that God passed judgment by hardening their hearts, revoking any further opportunity to repent.

E. Concept of Hērem

i. Meaning

1. The Lord decreed that Jericho and all that was in it were "devoted to destruction" (also sometimes translated "devoted to the Lord," "liable to destruction," or "under the ban"). The Hebrew word that is used in this verse (and elsewhere) is derived from the noun *hērem* and indicates holy war.
2. As the NIV Bible notes, "The Hebrew term refers to the irrevocable giving over of things or persons to the LORD, often by totally destroying them."^v
3. Behind this is the concept that God is the owner of all the earth. He has the right to recall one's life, family, and possessions. God shows no favoritism. As He did to the Canaanites in Joshua's day, so also he later used the Assyrians and Babylonians to render judgment against the Israelites for the same sins.^{vi}

ii. Implication

1. It is difficult to accept the slaying of young children along with responsible adults. However, many generations of Canaanites had proved that these people were not moving toward God but away from Him. Any children spared would likely have carried their parents' pagan influence into yet another generation and also spiritually endangered the Israelites.
2. God is not accountable to us for His judgments, but we know He is just. Considering the Bible's teaching about future judgment, perhaps God was merciful in bringing swift death on the Canaanite children at a young age. Those who live short lives will have less for which to be accountable than those who have lived long but immoral lives. Our eternal condition is far more important than length of life on earth.

Summary Statement: The strategy that brought down Jericho was not one any human would have devised.

Capturing Jericho was essential to Israel’s success in other regions. Did Joshua wrestle within himself over the logic of God’s battle plan? What kind of a military strategy was marching around a walled city in silence, blowing horns, and (eventually) shouting? We cannot speculate about what Joshua did or did not think, but we do know that he obeyed. If a “voice of reason” ever cast doubt in his mind about this strategy, he knew it was not the voice of God. Joshua had bowed his knee to the “Commander of the army of the Lord” and took his orders from Him alone.

Principle: *God’s instructions sometimes contradict human logic.*

Application: Doing what God says doesn’t always make sense to us.

- Submitting in love to a cranky, rude spouse seems illogical.
- Living by faith in God’s promises when we have waited a long time for prayer to be answered is foolish, by human standards.
- Forgiving those who have genuinely hurt us goes against the grain.
- Feeding on God’s word, on prayer, and on healthy activities when our bodies crave toxins or mental indulgences may not sound like an appealing trade.

When we are fighting these kinds of battles, we often hear a “voice of logic” in our heads. The voice says, “*Be logical!* There is no way *that* will work! You really think things will be better if you submit? How is praying about this going to help? Sure, go ahead and stand firm in so-called ‘truth,’ but is forgiving this person really going to make you feel any better about what they did to you? Neither will going for a walk and rehearsing Bible verses satisfy you in the way certain other indulgences will! What you’re considering doing just isn’t logical.”

Battles are fought and won when we heed the right Voice. It is imperative that we are familiar enough with God’s word to distinguish His voice from this voice that presents itself as “the voice of reason.” Obeying God’s word may not always seem logical to us, but it is the only plan that leads to victory.

Transition: With Jericho completely destroyed, the way of ascent into the central mountains was open and the Israelites felt confident about moving on to take Ai.

II. Central Campaign Completed – Joshua 7 – 9

A. A Surprising Defeat

i. A Small but Strategic City

1. Although the location of Ai has yet to be positively identified by archaeologists, the Bible tells us it was near Bethel and, without doubt, strategically located in the central hill country. Capturing Ai would put the Israelites one step closer to controlling the central region of the Promised Land. Joshua 6:27 tells us that all the land heard about what happened at Jericho. No doubt, the men of Ai were expecting the encounter.

2. Unlike the strong fortress at Jericho, the Israelite spies discovered that Ai was a place where relatively few people lived. The spies advised Joshua to only send a small part of the army to take the city because of its smaller size. However, the men of Ai routed the Israelites and killed thirty-six of them!
 3. After the amazing victory at Jericho, it was a surprising defeat, but we are given no indication that the Israelites sought God before planning their attack. Still riding on the confidence they gained at Jericho, they underestimated the power of the force they would encounter and assumed one victory would lead to another. They forgot their need to depend on the Lord.
- ii. Joshua's Response: The shocking defeat created great fear in the hearts of the Israelites. Joshua and the elders of Israel fell before the Lord in mourning.

B. Achan's Sin

i. The Lord's Revelation

1. *Corporate Responsibility*

- a. The Lord told Joshua, in no uncertain terms, that the blame for the defeat lay with Israel. In direct disobedience to God's orders, an Israelite named Achan coveted, took, and hid some of the "devoted things" at Jericho.
- b. 7:1 tells us, as a result, "the Lord's anger burned against Israel." The Lord told Joshua, "*Israel* has sinned; *they* have violated my covenant which I commanded them to keep [my emphasis]" (7:11).
 - i. This is one of several places in which the Bible teaches that the actions of one individual affect a whole group (2 Samuel 21:1-9; Acts 9:4; Colossians 1:24). The New Testament teaches that this is true with regard to the impact of Adam's original sin on all humankind.
 - ii. God's words to Joshua reveal that He had no double standard with regard to His treatment of Israel and the Canaanites.

2. *Impact to Israel*: By devoting Jericho to destruction, God had reclaimed what was rightfully His. Achan had presumed to take what was God's alone to take. The result of Achan's sin was that, just as the Canaanites were liable to destruction, now Israel was "liable to destruction" (7:12). This sin explained Israel's defeat at Ai. God said He would not be with them anymore unless they destroyed whatever among them that had been devoted to destruction.

3. *Revelation of the Guilty Person*

- a. The Lord told Joshua that all Israel was to gather the following morning and He would identify the violator (by a process that is not explained, presumably the casting of lots).
- b. The guilty party was to be destroyed by fire, along with all that belonged to him. God is serious about sin, holiness, and absolute obedience to His commands. Israel had just entered the land they were to purge of sin and in which they were to live as God's holy representatives.
- c. The importance of what happened is emphasized by the fact that two entire chapters (Joshua 7 – 8) revolve around the incident and that it was memorialized by the Israelites with a large pile of rocks (7:26). Dr. Donald Campbell concludes, "Israel's history would have ended here if God's anger had not been turned away." ^{vii}

ii. Achan's Death Sentence

1. Tribe-by-tribe, clan-by-clan, family-by-family, and man-by-man, the winnowing process revealed Achan as the guilty individual. One must wonder how different the outcome might have been for him had he immediately confessed and thrown himself on God's mercy. Instead, Achan remained silent until the Lord identified him. Only then did he confess that he had taken some of the plunder from Jericho and hidden it under his tent.
2. Joshua took Achan, the plunder, and all Achan's possessions and family members and gathered them to be stoned and burned. Perhaps the family members knew of the hidden goods and helped keep the secret. The punishment was severe but necessary.
3. Ironically, in the subsequent overthrow of Ai, the Israelites were permitted by God to keep the plunder. If only Achan had trusted and waited on God, he could have had anything he wanted.

C. An Empowered Victory

- i. Joshua 8 tells of the Lord's encouraging words to Joshua, His very specific instructions for an attack on Ai by ambush, and Israel's victory. Whereas Joshua had sent only 3,000 men to Ai on their failed attempt, the Lord told him to take the whole army with him (8:1).
- ii. The Lord gave Israel success. As the Lord permitted, they kept the plunder but burned the city and impaled the king.

D. Covenant Renewal

- i. Moses had commanded the Israelites to renew their covenant with the Lord once they arrived in Canaan. He directed them to two specific mountains, Ebal and Gerizim, roughly thirty miles north of Ai's presumed location, where the ceremony was to take place. Following the violation at Ai, there was no better time for such a recommitment.
- ii. The ceremony included the reading of all the Law (which might have implied the book of Deuteronomy rather than all of the Pentateuch), the offering of sacrifices, and the pronouncement by the people of the blessings and curses of the Law.
- iii. Mounts Gerizim and Ebal sit side by side and are situated in a way that creates a natural amphitheater. This allowed the people standing on one mountain to clearly hear everything spoken by those on the other. By their words they affirmed the Deuteronomic principle that full obedience to the Lord's commands would result in blessing and disobedience would result in cursing. They had just witnessed proof of this at Ai.

E. Forming of Alliances: Chapter 9 begins by telling us that all the Canaanite kings continued to hear about the movements and successes of the Israelites. For this reason, alliances between city-states were formed for strengthening their position. One such alliance was made among the Hivites who lived in the center of the land. Among their cities were Kephirah, Beeroth, Kiriath Jearim, and Gibeon. The Gibeonites represented all four.

F. The Hivite Coalition (The Gibeonites and their Allies) – Joshua 9

- i. The Deception
 1. These people came up with a different plan. They resorted to a ruse to deceive the Israelites into believing they lived far away and had traveled a great distance to enter a treaty with them.
 2. The Israelites, almost unbelievably, repeated the mistake they made before invading Ai on the first occasion and failed to consult the Lord before entering the treaty. Three days after entering the treaty, they discovered that the cities of these people were right in the heart of the Promised Land!
 3. When they confronted the Gibeonites, the Gibeonites responded that they “were clearly told” that the Lord Himself had commanded Moses to wipe out all the inhabitants of the land. They could have opted, as Rahab had, to confess their sin and unite with God's people. Instead, they preferred an ill-gotten type of peace. It saved their lives in the moment, but did nothing to change their eternal state.

4. We are not told what the treaty entailed, but apparently it guaranteed wartime assistance and protection of lives. It did not, however, prevent the Israelites from forcing the other parties into servitude, and that was what they did. (The Israelites were apparently angry enough to have broken the treaty but Joshua exerted his leadership and insisted the treaty, which was made in the name of the Lord [9:18], must be kept, 9:26.)
 - ii. Central Canaan Secured: With the cities of the Hivite coalition under Israel's control, the Israelites achieved a firm position in central Canaan.

Summary Statement: After their great victory at Jericho, the Israelites suffered some failures before they moved on to victory.

- Israelite lives were lost at Ai. They had assumed they could take the smaller city, but they should have consulted God first and examined themselves for any impurity. Sin is always a barrier to victory. Achan knew he had sinned but listened to the voice that told him no one else would be affected and he could keep his sin hidden. The Israelites, for their part, assumed they could relax their heightened state of spiritual alertness after the great victory at Jericho. Ai, they thought, would be easily taken.
- Later, the Israelites fell unwittingly into a compromise with the Gibeonites because they failed to consult God. They *presumed* (just as the inner voice of reason surely suggested) that entering a treaty with “people from a distant country” (9:6) would not threaten their position.
- At Ai and with the Gibeonites, we see the Israelites had been *lulled by previous victory into a false sense of security and a resulting attitude of self-reliance*.
- They had successfully ignored a voice that may have urged them to “be logical” at Jericho but succumbed to the enemy's suggestion on this occasion: “Relax! You don't need to take all this so seriously. Just do whatever seems best since God is obviously going to fight for you anyway.”

Principle: *Constant alertness to dangers prevents us from being lulled into a false sense of security and a resulting attitude of self-reliance.*

Application: We must remain ever alert, lest we fall into the danger of self-reliance.

- The enemy's voice will whisper to us, “Ah, it's just a *small* sin. You will be able to manage this.” Maybe, like Achan, you have believed that you can control the outcome of your “private sins” by keeping them hidden. “*No one will find out,*” you think, “and even if they do and there are consequences for me, *no one else will be hurt.*”
- Or, it may tell us that since we have trusted Christ as Savior and Lord, we are on a secure road. The big battle has been won. “Now,” the voice says, “everything will be fine. This particular decision has *no serious consequences so, no need to pray or consult your Bible.* Just do whatever you think is best. After all, the answer seems pretty obvious.”

1 Peter 5:8 tells us, “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”

Our battles are fought and won when we heed the right voice. Satan wants us to believe that one victory immediately guarantees the next. He does not want us to remain alert.

Transition: The Gibeonite coalition in central Canaan was not the only alliance to form. Another was formed among five Amorite kings in the south (described in Joshua 10) and a third among a multitude of kings in the north (described in Joshua 11).

III. The Southern and Northern Campaigns – Joshua 10 – 12

A. The Southern Kings Attack on Gibeon – Joshua 10

- i. Impact of Gibeonite Treaty: The Gibeonites’ treaty with Israel particularly alarmed the king of Jerusalem. Not only had Gibeon, an important city, become Israel’s ally, his other probable concern would have been that Jerusalem’s access to the Mediterranean coast had been cut off. The Gibeonites and the three cities that had formed a coalition with them sat on both sides of the two main roads that led from Jerusalem to the coast.^{viii}
- ii. Confrontation with the Southern Coalition
 1. The king of Jerusalem appealed to four southern kings in Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon. Together, these five Amorite kings (10:5) moved up to attack Gibeon (presumably to reopen the roadways).
 2. When the Gibeonites appealed to Joshua for help, the Lord assured Joshua of victory. After an all-night ascent into the mountains, the Israelites took the southern kings by surprise.
 3. The retreat of the five kings took them through Makkedah, where Joshua captured and confined them in a cave until their armies were completely defeated. Joshua then returned to Makkedah and put the five kings to death, together with the king of Makkedah.
 4. What began as a rescue mission ultimately led to the defeat and subduing of the southern region, even beyond the cities of the five attacking kings!
- iii. The Sun Standing Still and the Hailstorm
 1. It was in this campaign that the “sun stood still in the sky,” according to Joshua 10:12-13. Bible skeptics and Bible students have both sought to explain this statement. Of course, the God who created all things certainly *can* stop the earth’s rotation for twenty-four hours, hold everything on the earth that is normally suspended on it by the force of gravity, and prevent other cosmic disasters.

2. However, without rejecting God’s omnipotence over His creation, some Bible scholars do see other options. One thought is that the literary features of the passage may suggest the language is figurative.^{ix} Another popular opinion suggests that the Hebrew word *dōm* in verse 13 does not indicate that the sun “stopped” but that it was “silent.” The failure of the sun to shine is explained by the hailstorm God sent. In other words, the hailstorm gave the Israelites renewed energy to battle on for twenty-four hours by shielding them from the heat of the sun during the day, as they naturally would be throughout the night.^x
3. To whatever degree supernatural phenomena were involved, the main point of the passage is that, “the Lord was fighting for Israel” (10:14)! The kings of the Southern Coalition were defeated and, as a result, Israel subdued the entire region.

B. The Northern Kings Unite – Joshua 11

- i. A Large Coalition: The defeat of the kings in the central and southern regions brought about a coalition in the north, with an army “*as numerous as the sand on the seashore*” (Joshua 11:4). Kings from the east, west, and hill country also joined them (11:2-3).
- ii. Israelite Victory: Again, the Lord gave Joshua assurance of victory. Joshua again attacked suddenly with his entire army. He totally destroyed their royal cities and put all of their people to the sword (11:12-14). There was no impressive miracle that occurred on this occasion. Nevertheless, it is clear that the Lord gave this vast army “into the hand of Israel” (11:8).
- iii. Summary of Joshua’s victory – 11:15-12:24.
 1. *Length of Conquest*
 - a. By reading Joshua 5-12, it may seem as though Israel conquered Canaan in just a few days. However, verse 18 indicates that these wars were not won in a few short days but over a long time. By some of the insights we get about Joshua’s age in Joshua 14, we can determine that it took five years (possibly seven)!
 - b. According to Joshua 14:10, forty-five years passed between the time the twelve spies brought Moses varying reports (about their ability to conquer Canaan) and the time Caleb finally received his inheritance in Canaan. Since thirty-eight to forty of these years were spent in desert wandering, the length of time over which the battles described in chapters 6-12 took place was five to seven years.

2. *Thoroughness of Conquest*

- a. Among those destroyed were the Anakites (Joshua 11:21-22), the “giants” so feared by Israel’s twelve spies some forty years earlier (Numbers 13:28).
- b. Joshua 12 lists the kings of the Transjordan who were defeated by Moses (12:1-6), followed by the list of kings west of the Jordan whom Joshua defeated (12:7-24).
- c. Joshua 11:15-23 emphasizes Joshua’s complete obedience to the Lord. That chapter ends, “Then the land had rest from war.” However, as we learn in the last half of the book, *that rest was fragile*, for despite Joshua’s great victories, substantial portions of the land were yet to be taken.

Summary Statement: It was God who gave the Israelites victories in the north and in the south, but as chapters 10 and 11 indicate, *the Israelites still had to participate* in the battles. Joshua did not remain static in the camp in Gilgal. He mobilized for battle.

If you have been a Christian for any amount of time, you have, no doubt, had to put great effort into certain spiritual battles. But looking back, you are able to see that your victories were completely given by the Lord! He gained the victory, *but we still had to engage in the battle*.

Principle: *We fight as though victory is dependent on us, but we trust knowing victory is all up to God.*

I must wonder whether Joshua wanted, at some point, to just give up. In our next lesson, we will find that, even in his old age, he still had to keep fighting for additional tracts of land that had remained unconquered. Although we do not find it in the Bible text, I can hardly doubt that Joshua must have heard a voice, from time to time, encouraging him to stop fighting. “Isn’t it time for someone else to fight these battles for you? Aren’t you tired? Shouldn’t you have finished this by now? At least for now, just give it up.”

Illustration: I confess that I hear this voice often. I am thankful for the relative isolation that has allowed me the quiet I need to write the *GOD of the WORD* materials for five and a half years now. I am also thankful for the wonderful group of men and women who meet with me weekly so I can gauge the benefit of what I have worked on during the previous week. However, I humbly admit that the number of hours I sit at my computer drains me. Although I am exceedingly grateful that the Lord brings perfectly timed lessons into my life, lessons that require me to apply the same truths that I suggest to you, sometimes applying those life lessons only exacerbates the strain on me of the writing.

The past three weeks, as I have written on spiritual warfare, I have felt this strain more keenly than usual. Last night, I felt so weary that, as I finally shoved back from my desk to go directly to bed, I almost did not answer my ringing phone. The voice said, “I am calling with good news! The leaders of the evangelical churches of Thailand would like to consider translating the *GOD of the WORD* studies for their many pastors, just as we are already doing in China!” I was so stunned by the news that I hardly responded. When I hung up, I made my way to bed and, as I tried to sleep, I actually felt as though I could hear angels rejoicing with me. Perhaps my personal battles over the past few weeks were actually the result of a greater spiritual battle to try to convince me to set this work aside.

Conclusion

What battle are you weary of fighting? In Galatians 6:9, Paul exhorts weary believers *not to give up!* Our enemy wants to convince us to stop fighting, “for your strategy makes no sense!” He says, “Just relax your effort. Your sins are small. They will impact no one else. You don’t need to take this to heart.” He whispers, “You are tired. You have fought long and hard. Everyone will understand if you need to give up.”

But these are the tactics of the one who seeks our destruction! Our battles will be fought and won by heeding the *right* Voice, the Voice that urges us to stick with the Bible’s battle plan. To keep fighting!

One day you will look back and realize that, although great effort was required on your part

- to persevere,
- to remain alert,
- and to do what may have, at times, seemed illogical,

the Lord was ensuring your victory!

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ⁱⁱⁱ Kitchen, K. A. (1962). *Canaan, Canaanites* in *New Bible Dictionary* (p. 166). Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press.

^{iv} Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *Be Strong* (p. 65). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^v *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. (1984). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

^{vi} Utley, R. J. D. (2000). *Old Testament Survey: Genesis - Malachi* (61). Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International.

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^{viii} Rasmussen, Carl G. (1989). *Zondervan NIV Atlas of the Bible* (p. 94). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

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