

## ***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. *The Lord has not given us a spirit of timidity (2 Timothy 1:7).*

### **Introduction**

I wonder how many decisions you and I made just in the past week. Every time we got up in the morning, we decided not to stay in bed. You probably decided whether to eat breakfast and what you would eat. If you travel to work, you may have made a dozen small decisions concerning your commute. From the moment we rise until the moment we fall asleep, we are continually making decisions. Some decisions we can make with hardly a thought, while others are of enough consequence to stop us in our tracks. Do you tend to be a fast decision maker or a slow one? When it comes down to it, the speed with which we make decisions isn't nearly as important as whether we make the right choices.

In the first chapters of Joshua, we discovered that the Israelites would have to fight to gain their full inheritance, the land of Canaan. In this week's lesson, we find them engaged in various battles, including the well-known battle of Jericho. We discover that although God secured their victory, there were at least a couple of setbacks along the way. The Israelites had spiritual battles to win before they gained physical victories. The same is true for us: our inner lives are usually the primary battleground. Like the Israelites, before we gain outward victories, we must first *make the inner decision* to listen to and obey God. The trouble is that we often hear competing voices.

Have you ever struggled to distinguish the voice of God from your own inner voice, or even the voice of the enemy? We know that God's word contains our battle plan and that Jesus has promised His sheep know His voice (John 10:4). However, because we live in a fallen world and have a sinful nature within us, this side of heaven, we will hear a lot of competing voices. Sometimes, distinguishing them can be difficult.

The chapters in this week's lesson suggest that on at least a few occasions, the Israelites' victory was threatened because they listened to the wrong voice. If we are going to successfully fight and win our battles, we must learn (as Joshua did) to heed the *right Voice* – the Voice of our Lord and Commander!

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

### A. Palestine in the Late Bronze Age

- i. Political Description: The Promised Land was the land of Canaan, a name that can be traced back to a descendant of Noah. In Joshua’s day, Canaan was checkered with independent or loosely confederated city-states, each with its own “king,” as chapters 5-12 attest. 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 left by the Hurrians). 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, Canaan’s city-states were self-governing.<sup>i</sup>
- ii. The Local People Groups
  1. *Background*: The scriptures use the terms “Canaanite” and “Amorite” somewhat interchangeably to describe the people groups who occupied Canaan’s city-states. By the time Joshua was dead and Judges ruled Israel, the Canaanites’ center of power was increasingly within Phoenicia proper, centering around the port cities of Tyre and Sidon, north of Israel on the Mediterranean coast.<sup>ii</sup> Thus, Canaanite history is bound together with the Phoenician tradition. The 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). 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. Their religion appealed “to the bestial and material in human nature.”<sup>iii</sup>
  2. *Judgment Foretold*: 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 the land God promised them, God also planned to use them as His instrument of judgment on the extremely depraved Canaanites. It would have been impossible for God’s holy people to coexist with them unscathed.
  3. Geography and Strategic Value of Jericho: The Israelites’ first camp inside the Promised Land was at Gilgal, in the valley between

the Jordan River and the city of Jericho, in the eastern, *central* region of Canaan. From their location, 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. Whoever controlled the central region of Palestine, had the ability to cut off the powers in the north from those in the south. Under God’s sovereign direction, the Israelite strategy was one of dividing and conquering.

## **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). Some Bible students believe that Joshua met an angelic messenger, but more likely, he met the same One sometimes referred to in the Old Testament as the “Angel of the Lord.” 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 fact that the “man” whom Joshua met received his worship (Joshua 5:14) and told Joshua he was standing on holy ground (Joshua 5:15) supports 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: What is meant by the phrase “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. 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: Joshua asked the “Commander” if He was for Israel or for their enemies. This question was answered by a call to worship. Joshua was instructed to take off his shoes, since he was standing on holy ground. The scene is reminiscent of Moses’ encounter with God at the burning bush (Exodus 3:2-6). 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."<sup>iv</sup> The Lord was "Commander-in-Chief" and 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 a lesser man would have been met with derision. From a military point of view, the plan made no sense. The battle plan was entirely dependent on a solemn, ritualistic march around the securely barred city (6:1). However, the ceremonial march indicated an impending judgment on Jericho's residents that would be carried out by God's power and 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. The processional was led by an armed guard, seven priests sounding seven trumpets, and the Ark of the Lord. Except for the sound of the trumpets, the Israelites 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). The number seven is used throughout the Bible as a symbol of completion. God's holiness demanded justice and the time of His patience with the Canaanites was complete; judgment had come. The Israel's victory would also 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 and destroyed every living thing with the sword. Because of Rahab's faith, only she and her family were exempt. The Israelites burned the city, putting objects that would not burn (such as those made from precious metals) into Lord's treasury.

### D. Basis of Judgment

- i. God's Holiness and Our Sinfulness: According to the Bible, God is holy, and therefore, His standard is perfection. On the other hand, we are all sinners and deserve death. God has mercifully provided a means of salvation by faith in His provision (Christ), but none of us has ever deserved such mercy. 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. 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 and the more recent victories He had given them over the Amorite kings Sihon and Og, east of the Jordan. They had also heard that He had made Israel’s crossing of the Jordan River on dry ground possible during its flood stage.

- ii. God’s Patience, Grace, and Judgment: 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 in which the Israelites lived in Egypt, and another 40 years in which Israel wandered in the wilderness. Each of the seven days Israel marched around Jericho, its inhabitants were given *yet another opportunity* to repent. Every one of them could have followed Rahab’s example and thrown him or herself at the mercy of Israel’s God. But even after hearing of His omnipotence, the Canaanites refused to repent. Therefore, God hardened their hearts (Joshua 11:20), revoking any further opportunity.

### E. Concept of Hērem

- i. Meaning: 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. 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.”<sup>v</sup> Since God is the owner of all the earth, He has the right to recall one’s life, family, and possessions. As He rendered judgment on the Canaanites in Joshua’s day, so He later judged the Israelites for the same sins, using the Assyrians and Babylonians as His instruments.<sup>vi</sup> God shows no favoritism.
- ii. Implication: It is difficult to accept the slaying of young children along with responsible adults. However, many generations of Canaanites had proved unwilling to seek the living God. Instead, they became increasingly perverse. Any children Joshua spared would have likely carried their parents’ pagan influence into yet another generation, and also spiritually endangered the Israelites. 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:** Capturing Jericho was essential to Israel’s success in other regions. The strategy that brought it down was not one a human military leader would have devised.

What kind of a military strategy was marching around a walled city in silence, blowing horns, and (eventually) shouting? I wonder, did Joshua wrestle within himself over the logic of God’s battle plan? If a “voice of reason” cast doubt about this strategy in his mind, we know he didn’t heed it. Once Joshua had bowed his knee to the “Commander of the army of the Lord.”

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

**Application:** God has given us minds with amazing ability and He doesn’t intend to make understanding His will complicated. Once we have submitted ourselves to Him as completely as we know how and are not knowingly in sin, we can safely rely on our own reasoning for many of life’s decisions. We do not need to wrestle with every one of them. However, there are times when God clearly gives us orders that defy human logic.

- For example, giving money away is not a means by which we would naturally expect to receive blessing, and yet that’s what God has told us to do (Malachi 3:10).
- Submitting in love to a cranky, rude spouse or forgiving those who have genuinely hurt us goes against the grain.
- Living by faith when prayers have seemingly gone unanswered seems foolish.
- Giving up a lucrative career to serve the Lord in a line of work that is less well-paying defies logic.

One thing I’ve discovered about the voice of logic is that it is a nag! And it often kicks in when I’ve just made, or am on the verge of making, a hard but right decision. When I delay acting, this nagging voice causes me to doubt that it was right and I start to feel confused. For example, I may feel the Lord prompting me to give some cash to a needy person on the side of the road, but if I hesitate, this voice kicks in. I may very well walk away without giving and hear that nagging voice of rationalization the remainder of the day. I’ve had similar experiences when the Lord is prompting me to commit additional time to His work.

Please realize that I’m not saying that we should always act against reason. Battles are fought and won when we heed the *right* Voice. Most of the time, God expects us to use common sense. The secret to knowing when God is calling us to defy human logic is a good, working knowledge of His word (His will never contradicts His written word), daily submission to

His revealed will (the things He has told us to do in His word), a close walk with Him that includes daily prayer for wisdom and discernment.

**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. Defeat at Ai

- i. A Small but Strategic City: 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 Canaan’s central region.
- ii. A Surprising Defeat: Joshua 6:27 tells us that all the land heard about what happened at Jericho. The men of Ai were surely expecting an encounter. Unlike the strong fortress at Jericho, the Israelite spies discovered that Ai was a place where relatively few people lived and they advised Joshua to only send a small part of the army. However sound this reasoning seemed, they underestimated the force they encountered. The men of Ai routed them, killing thirty-six Israelites! 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 had gained at Jericho, they forgot their dependence on the Lord and assumed one victory would lead to another.
- iii. Achan’s Sin: The shocking defeat created great fear in the Israelites’ hearts. Joshua and the elders fell before the Lord in mourning. In no uncertain terms, the Lord told Joshua that the blame for the defeat lay with Israel. God had no double standard with regard to His treatment of Israel and the Canaanites. As a result of Israel’s sin, “the Lord’s anger burned” (7:1). In direct disobedience to God’s orders, an Israelite named Achan listened to the voice of covetousness and kept some of the “devoted things.”
- iv. Impact to Israel: By devoting Jericho to destruction, God had reclaimed what was rightfully His. Achan presumed to take what was God’s and apparently convinced himself that no one else would be affected. But just as the Canaanites were liable to destruction, now Israel was “liable to destruction” (7:12). God said He would not be with Israel anymore, unless they destroyed whatever among them that had been devoted to

destruction. 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 Lord told Joshua, “*Israel* has sinned; *they* have violated my covenant which I commanded them to keep [my emphasis]” (7:11). The New Testament teaches that this is true with regard to the impact of Adam’s original sin on all humankind.

- v. Revelation of the Guilty Person: 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). The guilty party was to be destroyed by fire, along with all that belonged to him. Tribe-by-tribe, clan-by-clan, family-by-family, and man-by-man, the winnowing process revealed Achan as the guilty individual. One wonders how different his outcome might have been 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.
- vi. Punishment of Achan and Family: 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. Ironically, in the subsequent overthrow of Ai, God permitted the Israelites to keep the plunder! If only Achan had trusted and waited on God, he could have had anything he wanted.
- vii. Significance: 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 His holy representatives. 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 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.”<sup>vii</sup>
- viii. An Empowered Victory: Joshua 8 tells of the Lord’s encouragement to Joshua and very specific instructions for an attack on Ai by ambush. Whereas Joshua had sent only 3,000 men to Ai on their failed attempt, the Lord told Joshua to take the whole army with him (8:1). The Lord gave Israel success. They burned the city and impaled the king, but with the Lord’s permission, kept the plunder.
- ix. Covenant Renewal: Moses had commanded the Israelites to renew their covenant with the Lord once they arrived in Canaan. He had 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.

Mounts Gerizim and Ebal sit side by side 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. Following the violation at Ai, there was no better time for recommitment. The ceremony included the reading of all the Law (which might imply 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. By their words, the Israelites affirmed the Deuteronomic principle that obedience to the Lord's commands would result in blessing and disobedience would result in cursing. They had just witnessed proof of it at Ai!

- B. The Hivite Coalition (The Gibeonites and their Allies)** – Joshua 9: Chapter 9 begins by telling us that all the Canaanite kings continued to hear about the movements and successes of the Israelites. To strengthen their position, the city-states formed alliances. 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.
- i. The Deception: 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. The Israelites, almost unbelievably, repeated their earlier mistake 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! 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.
  - ii. Servitude of the Gibeonites: 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.)

**Summary Statement:** After their great victory at Jericho, the Israelites suffered several setbacks.

First, let us consider Achan's failure. Achan fell prey to the *powerful voice of covetousness*. When we've fought hard and gained a victory, it's easy to be covetous: to convince ourselves that we deserve a little indulgence. James warns against this powerful voice (James 3:13-4:3). Like the voice of reason, it can't be blamed on the evil, spiritual realm. It is inherent in our own sin nature (Romans 7). It is difficult to hear the voice of God when our own desires get in the way. This is why, when we are making a decision, our first prayer should be, "Lord, make me *willing* to do whatever you want me to do." It is difficult to discern that we are only to purchase a single apple when our hearts are already set on the entire fruit basket. Covetousness is a powerful voice.

But there is another lesson for us. Joshua and the military leaders failed to consult the Lord before attacking Ai or committing to the Gibeonite treaty. Apparently, after their great victory at Jericho, they assumed they could relax their heightened state of spiritual alertness. Previous victory lulled them into a false sense of security and a resulting attitude of self-reliance.

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

**Application:** A false sense of security is like white noise. It dulls our sense of hearing, drowning out warning signals.

The apostle Paul warned us, "If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you do not fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). The most unexpected spiritual defeats often follow victories, because it is a time when we tend to let down our guard. The voice says, "Now, everything will be fine. No worries. All is well. You can relax." It also deceives us when life is sailing along smoothly: "Plan as you please. You're in God's favor. He will cover you." The truth is that one victory does not automatically guarantee the next.

The voices of covetousness and false security come from deceptiveness of our own hearts, but the evil, spiritual forces in the heavenly realm love to piggyback on them! Our battles are fought and won when we heed the right voice.

**Transition:** Joshua 10:8 indicates that Joshua waited on the Lord before finishing his central campaign, and as a result, the Israelites achieved a firm position in central Canaan. The Gibeonite coalition in central Canaan was not the only alliance that formed against Israel. One led by five Amorite kings organized in the south (Joshua 10) and a third among a multitude of northern kings (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 particularly alarmed the king of Jerusalem. Not only had Gibeon, an important city, become Israel's ally, 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 Mediterranean coast.<sup>viii</sup> Essentially, Jerusalem's access was cut off. 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).
- ii. Confrontation with the Southern Coalition: 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. The five kings' retreat took them through Makkedah, where Joshua captured and confined them in a cave until their armies were completely defeated. Later, Joshua returned to Makkedah and put the five kings, and also the king of Makkedah, to death. 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: It was in this campaign that the "sun stood still in the sky," according to Joshua 10:12-13. Bible skeptics and Bible students alike have sought to explain this statement. Of course, the God who created all things can certainly stop the earth's rotation for twenty-four hours, hold in place everything on the earth that is normally suspended by gravity, and prevent other cosmic disasters. However, some scholars believe that the Bible text allows for other explanations. One thought is that the literary features of the passage could suggest that the language is figurative.<sup>ix</sup> Another popular opinion is that the Hebrew word *dō·m* in verse 13 does not indicate that the sun "stopped" but that it was "silent." The text states that God sent a hail storm, and their suggestion is that the cloud coverage "silenced" the sun (it failed to shine), shielding the Israelites from heat, and thus the Israelites energy was renewed to fight for twenty-four hours.<sup>x</sup> 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 Israel subdued the region.

**B. The Northern Kings Unite** – Joshua 11:1-14: 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). Again, the Lord gave Joshua assurance of victory, and again, Joshua attacked suddenly. 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).

### C. Summary of Joshua’s Victory – 11:15-12:24.

- i. Length of the Conquest: By reading Joshua 5-12, it may seem as though Israel conquered Canaan in just a few days. However, 11:18 indicates that these wars were not won in a few short days but over a long time. 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. This is confirmed by some of the insights about Joshua’s age in Joshua 14.
  
- ii. Thoroughness of Conquest: Joshua 11:15-23 emphasizes Joshua’s complete obedience to the Lord. Among those destroyed, Joshua 12 lists both the kings of the Transjordan, whom Moses defeated (12:1-6), and the kings west of the Jordan, whom Joshua defeated (12:7-24). Additionally, Joshua 11:21-22 mentions the Anakites, the “giants” so feared by Israel’s twelve spies some forty years earlier (Numbers 13:28). Chapter 11 concludes, “Then the land had rest from war.” However, the last half of the book reveals that 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.

I must wonder whether at some point, Joshua wanted to just give up. In our next lesson, we will find that he was still battling for tracts of land that had remained unconquered into his old age. I can hardly doubt that Joshua must have occasionally been tempted by the voice of false security, encouraging him to stop fighting: “Isn’t it time for someone else to lead Israel in battle? Aren’t you tired? Shouldn’t you have finished this by now? If you stop fighting, someone else will take up the cause.” Joshua had a fallen sin nature. Like the rest of us, competing voices surely threatened to lure him from his mission.

Based on the number of times the Lord told Joshua not to be afraid, I’m confident that Joshua also struggled against *the deceptive voice of timidity*. While the voices of reason and false

security lead us to trust solely in our abilities, the voice of timidity suggests that we can never trust our own good judgment or God-given skill. Reason and false security tell us that we are good enough; the voice of timidity declares that we are never adequate.

Two insightful verses in chapters 10-11 indicate that Joshua learned from previous mistakes and thereafter listened closely to the Lord's voice. For just before he fought the northern campaign and the central one that led to southern victories, he heard the Lord say, "*Do not be afraid... I have given them into your hand*" (10:8; 11:6).

**Principle:** *The Lord has not given us a spirit of timidity (2 Timothy 1:7).*

In my experience, timidity likes to hide behind a pretense of humility. It loves to discourage us from bearing testimony to God's work in our lives. It says, "You're talking about yourself. That's prideful. Just sit quietly and smile. You'll appear very humble that way." We may also hear this voice when we're exercising our spiritual gifts or given opportunities to exercise them: "You should say no to this opportunity; that's the humble thing to do," or, "If you keep doing this, you're likely to become prideful. You should stop now before that happens."

Speaking of Timothy's spiritual gift, Paul wrote to his son in the faith, "Fan into flame the gift of God... for the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love, and self-discipline" (2 Timothy 1:6-7).

The voice of timidity is deceptive; it discourages us from stepping out in faith.

## Conclusion

There are many voices that can keep us from obeying the voice of God – the nagging voice of logic, the dulling lullaby of false security, the powerful voice of covetousness, and the deceptive voice of timidity are just a few. Joshua ultimately fought and won the Lord's battles because he listened to the right Voice. You and I will face a lot of decisions this week. The speed with which we make them isn't nearly as important as listening to and obeying the right Voice.

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