

ENTER AT YOUR OWN REST

Studies in the Book of Joshua

“Full blessing in the Christian life is not bestowed except to eager, hungry people who press in to receive it”

Alan Redpath

Text

Joshua 10:27-11:23

Topic

Joshua’s campaigns to conquer the land of Canaan culminate with a decisive victory by the waters of Merom where he hamstringing the enemies horses and burns their chariots

Title

“Chariots on Fire”

Joshua 11:15 As the LORD had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did. He left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses.

Joshua 11:16 Thus Joshua took all this land: the mountain country, all the South, all the land of Goshen, the lowland, and the Jordan plain—the mountains of Israel and its lowlands,

Joshua 11:17 from Mount Halak and the ascent to Seir, even as far as Baal Gad in the Valley of Lebanon below Mount Hermon. He captured all their kings, and struck them down and killed them.

Introduction

The Israelite soldiers knew their way around a sword.

Eleven times in chapters ten and eleven you read about their swordplay. The phrase that keeps recurring is, *struck it with the edge of the sword*.

No matter the terrain or the tactics of their enemies, the sword was sufficient in every battle.

It's not hard to see the Israelite's swords as typical of our sword, the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God, the Bible:

Ephesians 6:17 And take... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword...

As we read of their victories in Canaan the Lord intends for us to improve our own swordplay.

Reading through this summary of their campaigns two images emerge:

1. The image of the sword-wielding soldier.
2. The image of the sword-yielding servant.

I'll organize my thoughts around those two images and we'll see, #1 You've Been Enlisted As A Sword-Wielding Soldier, and #2 You've Been entrusted As A Sword-Yielding Servant.

#1 You've Been Enlisted
As A Sword-Wielding Soldier
(10:28-11:14 & 11:21-22)

Even if you haven't seen the movie you're probably familiar with the scene in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* where a sword-wielding man confronts Indiana Jones and he simply takes out his gun and shoots him.

Ever feel like that man? As if you'd come to a gunfight with a knife? It can seem as though we lack sufficient weaponry in the Christian warfare. In fact, our weapons are sufficient and superior.

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Armed with only swords the Israelites conquered Canaan. Reading through the summary of their campaigns you first notice that their swords were sufficient and superior regardless the terrain. Let me read a few selected verses while you listen for the various terrain upon which the battles were fought.

Joshua 10:40 So Joshua conquered all the land: the mountain country and the South and the lowland and the wilderness slopes, and all their kings; he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the LORD God of Israel had commanded.

Joshua 11:1 And it came to pass, when Jabin king of Hazor heard these things, that he sent to Jobab king of Madon, to the king of Shimron, to the king of Achshaph,

Joshua 11:2 and to the kings who were from the north, in the mountains, in the plain south of Chinneroth, in the lowland, and in the heights of Dor on the west,

Joshua 11:3 to the Canaanites in the east and in the west, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite in the mountains, and the Hivite below Hermon in the land of Mizpah.

Joshua 11:16 Thus Joshua took all this land: the mountain country, all the South, all the land of Goshen, the lowland, and the Jordan plain—the mountains of Israel and its lowlands,

Whether the enemy was behind walled cities or out in the open field, on any and every terrain the Israelites defeated them with their swords.

Your life involves many different terrains. Each of the environments in which you find yourself provides a unique challenge. You might be going through something right now that seems like a difficult uphill battle. Maybe something is snowballing down hill. Whether it's your marriage... Or your employment... Or some other circumstance, it is a unique terrain.

There you stand with your sword, the Word of God. You are to look at the Israelites winning battle after battle on every terrain and believe

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that you, too, have a weapon that is sufficient and superior for the task at hand.

Then, too, you see that the enemies of Israel employed many tactics. No matter; their swordplay won the day.

Let's look at some of the tactics they faced and glean insights from them about our own struggles.

As they campaigned first in the south city after city fell easily to them.

Joshua 10:28 On that day Joshua took Makkedah, and struck it and its king with the edge of the sword. He utterly destroyed them—all the people who were in it. He let none remain. He also did to the king of Makkedah as he had done to the king of Jericho.

Joshua 10:29 Then Joshua passed from Makkedah, and all Israel with him, to Libnah; and they fought against Libnah.

Joshua 10:30 And the LORD also delivered it and its king into the hand of Israel; he struck it and all the people who were in it with the edge of the sword. He let none remain in it, but did to its king as he had done to the king of Jericho.

Let's face it: Some battles are easier than others. If you've been a Christian for any length of time you've got a few victories under your belt.

Then something comes along that is a little more of a challenge:

Joshua 10:31 Then Joshua passed from Libnah, and all Israel with him, to Lachish; and they encamped against it and fought against it.

Joshua 10:32 And the LORD delivered Lachish into the hand of Israel, who took it on the second day, and struck it and all the people who were in it with the edge of the sword, according to all that he had done to Libnah.

Joshua 10:33 Then Horam king of Gezer came up to help Lachish; and Joshua struck him and his people, until he left him none remaining.

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Lachish didn't fall so easily. The battle went into a *second day*. Reinforcements came to aid the enemy and the Israelites had them to deal with as well.

Just because you have God's Word it doesn't mean every battle will be easily won. Won, yes; but often times you must persevere for a while.

It is precisely at this point you might begin to think God's Word needs supplementing. It doesn't. God is wanting to show you new things in order to grow you.

After Lachish the battles returned to 'normal.'

Joshua 10:34 From Lachish Joshua passed to Eglon, and all Israel with him; and they encamped against it and fought against it.

Joshua 10:35 They took it on that day and struck it with the edge of the sword; all the people who were in it he utterly destroyed that day, according to all that he had done to Lachish.

Joshua 10:36 So Joshua went up from Eglon, and all Israel with him, to Hebron; and they fought against it.

Joshua 10:37 And they took it and struck it with the edge of the sword—its king, all its cities, and all the people who were in it; he left none remaining, according to all that he had done to Eglon, but utterly destroyed it and all the people who were in it.

Joshua 10:38 Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to Debir; and they fought against it.

Joshua 10:39 And he took it and its king and all its cities; they struck them with the edge of the sword and utterly destroyed all the people who were in it. He left none remaining; as he had done to Hebron, so he did to Debir and its king, as he had done also to Libnah and its king.

Here we learn to not relax after a major victory but to keep on conquering. As we've said before in our studies in Joshua, there will be no end to our struggles until we are out of these bodies and with the Lord in Heaven. We can enjoy a spiritual rest but it is a rest we enter into as soldiers fighting against fierce and unrelenting foes.

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Joshua 10:40 So Joshua conquered all the land: the mountain country and the South and the lowland and the wilderness slopes, and all their kings; he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the LORD God of Israel had commanded.

Joshua 10:41 And Joshua conquered them from Kadesh Barnea as far as Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even as far as Gibeon.

Joshua 10:42 All these kings and their land Joshua took at one time, because the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel.

Joshua 10:43 Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal.

It was an all-terrain victory! The southern campaign over, they returned to base camp at Gilgal.

I like to think of our fellowship of believers as a base camp. It should be a place of refreshment and resupply, of rest and realization.

It says that they took their enemies *one at a time, because the LORD God of Israel fought* for them. *One at a time* indicates a strategy on God's part. He designed each battle to show them and grow them.

So, too, in your life. *One at a time* the Lord has prepared struggles and sufferings to reveal Himself to you. In each of them He fights for you if you will but wield the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

In chapter eleven we come to the northern campaign. It's greatest battle was by the waters of Merom against a powerful alliance of enemy combatants.

Joshua 11:1 And it came to pass, when Jabin king of Hazor heard these things, that he sent to Jobab king of Madon, to the king of Shimron, to the king of Achshaph,

Joshua 11:2 and to the kings who were from the north, in the mountains, in the plain south of Chinneroth, in the lowland, and in the heights of Dor on the west,

Joshua 11:3 to the Canaanites in the east and in the west, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite in the mountains, and the Hivite below Hermon in the land of Mizpah.

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Joshua 11:4 So they went out, they and all their armies with them, as many people as the sand that is on the seashore in multitude, with very many horses and chariots.

Joshua 11:5 And when all these kings had met together, they came and camped together at the waters of Merom to fight against Israel.

Joshua 11:6 But the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid because of them, for tomorrow about this time I will deliver all of them slain before Israel. You shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire."

The Israelites faced overwhelming numbers and impossible weaponry. God told them to not worry! Victory was in the bag.

Horses and chariots against swords. God loves to stack the natural odds against you so He can show you the value of His supernatural presence. No matter who or what you are facing, or how long the odds seem, you need not worry about the ultimate outcome.

Joshua 11:7 So Joshua and all the people of war with him came against them suddenly by the waters of Merom, and they attacked them.

Joshua 11:8 And the LORD delivered them into the hand of Israel, who defeated them and chased them to Greater Sidon, to the Brook Misrephoth, and to the Valley of Mizpah eastward; they attacked them until they left none of them remaining.

Joshua 11:9 So Joshua did to them as the LORD had told him: he hamstrung their horses and burned their chariots with fire.

Joshua 11:10 Joshua turned back at that time and took Hazor, and struck its king with the sword; for Hazor was formerly the head of all those kingdoms.

Joshua 11:11 And they struck all the people who were in it with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them. There was none left breathing. Then he burned Hazor with fire.

Joshua 11:12 So all the cities of those kings, and all their kings, Joshua took and struck with the edge of the sword. He utterly destroyed them, as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded.

Joshua 11:13 But as for the cities that stood on their mounds, Israel burned none of them, except Hazor only, which Joshua burned.

Joshua 11:14 And all the spoil of these cities and the livestock, the children of Israel took as booty for themselves; but they struck every man with the edge of the sword until they had destroyed them, and they left none breathing.

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It is as easy for the Lord to grant a big victory as it is a small one. Big and small are our designations based on what we see. For emphasis look at verses twenty-one and twenty-two.

Joshua 11:21 And at that time Joshua came and cut off the Anakim from the mountains: from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, from all the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel; Joshua utterly destroyed them with their cities.

Joshua 11:22 None of the Anakim were left in the land of the children of Israel; they remained only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod.

The descendants of Anak were bad dudes. Does the name Goliath ring a bell? These guys were big and fierce.

We just saw the Israelites face an innumerable army with amazing weaponry. In the Anakim we see an enemy that incites a different kind of fear. It seems as though you can't match up with him one-on-one.

When it's just you, feeling alone and forgotten by your fellow soldiers, you're not alone. It's an important realization. I've heard too many people criticize other believers for not being there for them. OK, that can be true. I respectfully say, "So what?" You have in Jesus a friend that sticks closer than any brother or sister, who said He would never, ever, no not ever leave you or forsake you.

And that segues us nicely to our second point,

#2 You've Been Entrusted As A Sword-Yielding Servant

(11:15-20 & 23)

The remaining verses focus on Joshua. They remind us of the simple secret of his victories over every enemy.

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Before we look at it let me say a word about verses sixteen through twenty.

Joshua 11:16 Thus Joshua took all this land: the mountain country, all the South, all the land of Goshen, the lowland, and the Jordan plain—the mountains of Israel and its lowlands,

Joshua 11:17 from Mount Halak and the ascent to Seir, even as far as Baal Gad in the Valley of Lebanon below Mount Hermon. He captured all their kings, and struck them down and killed them.

Joshua 11:18 Joshua made war a long time with all those kings.

Joshua 11:19 There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, except the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon. All the others they took in battle.

Joshua 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.

What are we to make of this hardening of their hearts by God? Keep in mind that whatever we make of it we cannot conclude that God could not or would not have saved them had they sought after Him. Right here in the midst of telling us He hardened their hearts we are reminded of the Gibeonites whom God spared. I would also remind you of Rahab and her family - saved from destruction in Jericho.

God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

We interpret this hardening of the human heart to be an activity by which God gives a person what they choose. If they choose to harden their hearts against God by despising His mercy, He hardens their hearts.

Back to Joshua. What was the secret of his soldiering?

Joshua 11:15 As the LORD had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did. He left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses.

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Joshua 11:23 So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD had said to Moses; and Joshua gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. Then the land rested from war.

We're taken back to Moses. It reminds us that, though a soldier, Joshua was first a servant. He obediently followed the commands of Moses as God's servant.

You might recall how all these battles in the Promised Land began. Back in chapter five we read,

Joshua 5:13 And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, "Are You for us or for our adversaries?"

Joshua 5:14 So He said, "No, but as Commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, "What does my Lord say to His servant?"

Joshua 5:15 Then the Commander of the LORD's army said to Joshua, "Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy." And Joshua did so.

The Lord stood before Joshua with His *sword drawn in His hand*. Joshua yielded his sword to the Lord and bowed before Him as a *servant*.

You and I are sword-yielding servants. The Lord will come to you and ask you to yield to Him. Will you obey what He has said in His Word? Until you will yield to His Word, you cannot really wield it in battle.

Maybe you are battling right now. Your marriage is crumbling. Your parenting isn't working. You can't stand going to work.

Jesus is standing there as you contemplate the battle. He wants you first to yield. For example. Let's say it's your marriage and there are no biblical grounds for divorce. Have you first yielded to the Word of God that you are to remain married? Because if you haven't, and you

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try to wield your sword, you'll just end up bloodying and being bloodied.

If you yield to Jesus, bowing down as His servant, then when you arise the Word becomes a powerful sword to defeat the anger, resentment, bitterness and such that is destroying you.

Yield, in order to wield.

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