

A Coalition of Five Kings is Defeated

Joshua 10:16-27

Joshua 10:16-27 - *“But these five kings had fled and hidden themselves in a cave at Makkedah. ¹⁷ And it was told Joshua, saying, “The five kings have been found hidden in the cave at Makkedah.” ¹⁸ So Joshua said, “Roll large stones against the mouth of the cave, and set men by it to guard them. ¹⁹ And do not stay there yourselves, but pursue your enemies, and attack their rear guard. Do not allow them to enter their cities, for the LORD your God has delivered them into your hand.” ²⁰ Then it happened, while Joshua and the children of Israel made an end of slaying them with a very great slaughter, till they had finished, that those who escaped entered fortified cities. ²¹ And all the people returned to the camp, to Joshua at Makkedah, in peace. No one moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel. ²² Then Joshua said, “Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out those five kings to me from the cave.” ²³ And they did so, and brought out those five kings to him from the cave: the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon.*

²⁴ So it was, when they brought out those kings to Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said to the captains of the men of war who went with him, “Come near, put your feet on the necks of these kings.” And they drew near and put their feet on their necks. ²⁵ Then Joshua said to them, “Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; be strong and of good courage, for thus the LORD will do to all your enemies against whom you fight.” ²⁶ And afterward Joshua struck them and killed them, and hanged them on five trees; and they were hanging on the trees until evening. ²⁷ So it was at the time of the going down of the sun that Joshua commanded, and they took them down from the trees, cast them into the cave where they had been hidden, and laid large stones against the cave’s mouth, which remain until this very day.”

Background Notes

The armies of the five kings that had joined forces against the Gibeonites were now defeated, and their troops were running away in defeat. The five kings themselves fled and had hidden in a cave, but Joshua found out their hiding place and temporarily sealed up the cave with the five kings inside! Can you imagine how surprised these five kings must have been when large stones were suddenly rolled over against the opening of the cave, their only means of escape? They knew that their doom was sealed.

Meanwhile, Joshua and the Israeli army went on and pursued the enemy before the enemy forces could retreat to their fortified cities. After the battle was over, Joshua and the people of Israel returned to the cave. Verses 22-23: *“Then Joshua said, “Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out those five kings to me from the cave.” And they did so, and brought out those five kings to him from the cave...”* (The king of Eglon here, incidentally, has nothing to do with King

Eglon of Moab in Judges 3.) The Makkedah area in Israel has a lot of caves. This is the same area, by the way, where David hid out with his men at the cave of Adullam, when he was running from King Saul. On some of our Holy Land tours we have stopped in this area and enjoyed exploring some of these caves.

When Joshua brought the five kings out the cave, he had his army captains place their feet on the necks of the kings. This gesture symbolized that these pagan nations had been conquered by Israel. After the kings were executed by hanging on five trees, they were buried in the same cave where they had hidden.

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. The faithful believer should be efficient in spiritual warfare.

When Joshua shut the five kings up in the cave, he was being efficient in the way he defeated those pagan nations. Rather than deal with these kings immediately, he put them under guard so that they were checked and ineffective. Meanwhile, he used his energies and forces to deal with the armies of those kings. The armies were more of an immediate problem, and they had to be dealt with quickly, before they had a chance to escape.

I think that we can see a spiritual lesson here. Remember, Joshua is a handbook for spiritual warfare. All of these armies and all of these enemies in the land of Canaan picture in some way the spiritual opposition that we face in spiritual warfare. The world, the flesh, and the devil as our spiritual opposition are all illustrated throughout the book of Joshua. We must face all three of these forms of spiritual opposition in spiritual warfare.

The particular aspect of spiritual warfare that we have before us in Joshua 10 is our battles with sins of the flesh, or the sinful nature. Satan tries to capitalize on the fact that we have a sinful nature, and that sinful nature must be kept under control or we'll be defeated.

Some sins are more open – like the troops out on the field, and some sins are more hidden – like the kings in the cave. In most cases, the hidden sins of the flesh are the “root sins.” Just as the enemy troops traced their origin and power to the hidden kings, we can usually trace our open sins to their origin and power -- the hidden but powerful “root sins.”

Here's the point. In dealing with sin in our personal lives and in the life of the church, we must deal with the open sins **and** the hidden sins – we've got to deal with both. Dealing with the hidden sins is not done overnight. Hidden sins are deeply rooted and require time to uproot. Open sins, however, must be dealt with immediately. Immorality - drunkenness - bad temper – gossip and strife - idolatry! These are open sins and should be dealt with, disciplined and eliminated immediately. Hidden sins may take a very long time to uproot – it may even be a life-long process to deal with all the entangled and insidious roots.

Let's look at a couple of "root sins" as examples. 1 Timothy 6:10 says, "*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*" The love of money is a root sin and can be hidden in the heart, but the open sins of stealing and cheating and even murder flow from this root sin.

Another example: pride is a root sin and can be hidden the heart, but the open sins of jealous actions, of gossip, of slander and boasting all flow from this root sin. Pride is a very insidious hidden sin, and allowing the Lord to deal this root sin is often a life-long process.

So we see that there really is this matter of "efficiency" in spiritual warfare. Don't let the open sins escape. Deal with them immediately, before they do any more harm. Keep the hidden sins in check, deal immediately with the open sins, and then deal in the long term with the "root sins" of the flesh. We need to do this in our own lives, and we need to do this in the lives of our churches.

Open sins, like Achan's sin of stealing from Jericho, must be dealt with and eliminated immediately. Israel had to do that before they could move on. Faithful believers should be efficient in spiritual warfare.

2. The faithful believer will be effective in spiritual warfare.

Faithful believers must be **efficient** in spiritual warfare by eliminating the open sins and not letting them escape, and faithful believers must also be **effective** in spiritual warfare because they don't leave the root sins hidden. Joshua brought out the pagan kings. Just as Joshua brought them out of the cave and judged them, so we must deal with the sins of the flesh that are hidden in our hearts -- the root sins. Only then will we be truly effective in spiritual warfare.

That hidden root sin of pride must be admitted and judged. That hidden root sin of the love of money must be admitted and judged. The hidden root sin of selfishness must be admitted and judged. The hidden root sin of evil thoughts must be admitted and judged. The hidden root sin of self-righteousness must be admitted and judged.

I think that we might have a picture of that hidden root sin of self-righteousness in Adoni-Zedek, the king of Jerusalem. His name means "the Lord of righteousness," of all things! How deceptive is the sin of self-righteousness! It continues even when we are Christians, and it tries to usurp the place of the Lordship of Christ. We need to pray like David did in Psalm 139:23, 24 "*Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*"

We need to let the Lord Himself (pictured in Joshua here) deal with our hidden root sins of the flesh. Notice that the five kings were killed and hung on five trees. Deuteronomy 21:23 says, "*.he who is hanged is accursed of God.*"

These pagan kings were under the curse of God, and the hidden root sins of the flesh that are pictured here are also under the curse of God. We need to realize this. These sins are not something that we can laughingly brush off as “a quirk of my personality”! The Lord Jesus had to die for these sins. The Lord Jesus had to make a curse for us because of these sins. Read Galatians 3:13 *“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree...”*

Yet some Christians are content to live with these hidden sins. They deal with the open sins, but those hidden root sins -- that love of money, that pride, that selfishness, the evil thoughts, the self-righteousness -- they keep those sins hidden in the cave. They fail to bring them out and expose them for what they really are. They fail to judge them and eliminate them. The Lord had to go to the cross because of those sins. How dare we not deal with the hidden sins of the flesh? The faithful Christian will be effective in spiritual warfare.

Notice that the dead kings were buried in the same cave where they had hidden. This may be part of the picture as well. Until we get our resurrected bodies, we still have the sinful nature. Our responsibility is to keep the sinful nature in the place of death. The faithful Christian will do this, because the faithful Christian will be effective in spiritual warfare.

Practical Application

Let's put our foot down on sin.

Again we have a little play on words here, but it may be helpful. In verse 24, Joshua had his army captains put their feet on the necks of the kings. We saw in our background studies that in that culture this gesture symbolized that these pagan kings had been conquered by Israel.

Do you see the spiritual lesson? Romans 16:20 says, *“And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet...”* What a great day that will be! But in the meantime, we must put our foot down on sin. We must recognize that sin and Satan were conquered at the cross, and as a result we must recognize sin in our lives and deal with it. We must keep the hidden root sins in check and judge them before the Lord. Let's put our foot down on sin.