

The Conquest of Canaan; Southern Campaign Completed

Joshua 10:28-43

Joshua 10:28-43 - *“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.²⁹ Then Joshua passed from Makkedah, and all Israel with him, to Libnah; and they fought against Libnah.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.³¹ Then Joshua passed from Libnah, and all Israel with him, to Lachish; and they encamped against it and fought against it.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.³³ Then Horam king of Gezer came up to help Lachish; and Joshua struck him and his people, until he left him none remaining.*

³⁴ *From Lachish Joshua passed to Eglon, and all Israel with him; and they encamped against it and fought against it.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.³⁶ So Joshua went up from Eglon, and all Israel with him, to Hebron; and they fought against it.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.³⁸ Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to Debir; and they fought against it.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.*

⁴⁰ *So Joshua conquered all the land: the mountain country and the South^[b] 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.⁴¹ And Joshua conquered them from Kadesh Barnea as far as Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even as far as Gibeon.⁴² All these kings and their land Joshua took at one time, because the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel.⁴³ Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal.”*

Background Notes

Israel's conquest of Canaan was not an undisciplined takeover by a bunch of wild desert nomads running around like uncontrolled animals! No, Israel's conquest of Canaan was a well-planned military operation. It was carried out by battle-hardened troops and God Himself directed it.

The Israeli troops were battle-hardened. You may be thinking that Jericho was the first battle that Israel fought, but that's not so. Jericho was the first battle on the west side of the Jordan River, but Israel had already fought a number of battles up and down the east side of the Jordan River. Deuteronomy 3:3-5 says, "*So the LORD our God also delivered into our hands Og king of Bashan, with all his people, and we attacked him until he had no survivors remaining. And we took all his cities at that time... All these cities were fortified with high walls, gates, and bars, besides a great many rural towns.*" All the battles against those cities took place before Israel crossed the Jordan and marched around Jericho. So the Israeli army under Joshua was a well-oiled military machine.

The military strategy for conquering the land of Canaan was pretty straightforward: "Divide and Conquer" -- first a central campaign to divide the Land, followed by a southern campaign, and then a northern campaign to finish the conquest of the Land. The battles of Jericho and Ai were the main part of the central campaign. The battle with the five kings who attacked Gibeon in the early part of chapter 10 was the beginning of the southern campaign. In the last section of Joshua 10 we have the completion of the southern campaign.

You will hear the names of Old Testament people and places pronounced in different ways. The pronunciation depends on whether you go with the English pronunciation or pronounce the word as it sounds in Hebrew -- but don't worry about it. Just pronounce it with authority and move on! Nobody will know the difference anyway -- right?

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. Faithful warriors let nothing escape.

Several times in this passage we read that Joshua completely conquered the pagan opposition -- in verse 28-39 they conquered the enemy at Makkedah, the enemy in Libnah, the enemy in Lachish, the enemy in Eglon, the enemy in Hebron, and the enemy at Debir. In verse 40 we have the summary. So Joshua conquered all the land in the south: the mountain country, the lowland, the wilderness slopes, and all their kings. He left no one remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God of Israel had commanded.

The Lord had commanded this complete sweep because the land and its inhabitants had become defiled with gross idolatry and immorality. God was judging and cleansing the land. Listen to the words of Leviticus 18:24-27: "*Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you.* ²⁵ *For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants.* ²⁶ *You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations, either any of your own nation or any stranger who dwells among you* ²⁷ *(for all these abominations the men of the land have done, who were before you, and thus the land is defiled).*..." So we can see why God commanded and permitted all the death and destruction.

There are spiritual lessons for us here. Joshua is a handbook of spiritual warfare for the Christian, and all the enemy opposition represents and illustrates various forms of spiritual opposition that we face in our lives as believers. Here's the point: in spiritual warfare, faithful warriors let nothing escape.

In 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 we read, *"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵ casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ..."* Notice, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Let me ask you this morning, is every your every thought captive to the obedience of Christ? Or have some thoughts escaped? Faithful warriors let nothing escape.

A few weeks ago a young man told me that he had read some material that was not pleasing to God, and now he could not control his thought life. No wonder! You can't put defiling stuff into your mind and expect not to think about it. Don't fill your mind with trash! Take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ! Faithful warriors don't play around with enemy forces. Faithful warriors let nothing escape.

2. Faithful warriors return to Gilgal.

In verse 43 we read, *"Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal."* Gilgal was Israel's base camp. Whenever they finished a major battle they would return to Gilgal. Gilgal was where they entered the Land. Gilgal was where the "reproach of Egypt" had been rolled away. Gilgal was where they had set up the twelve stones from the riverbed after the Ark had led them through the Jordan River, to remind them of how God had brought them into the Land. Gilgal was where they celebrated the Passover. Gilgal was where the new generation had been circumcised.

In the spiritual picture that the Lord has given us in Joshua, Gilgal represents the place of self-judgment and the place of spiritual strength for the believer. As Israel was physically circumcised at Gilgal, so we must practice spiritual circumcision. We must "return to Gilgal" by continually applying the knife of God's Word to the strong desires of our sinful natures. Spiritual circumcision is the "death to self" principle. It is the judgment of self in the light of God's Word. We must continually return to Gilgal.

Faithful warriors return to Gilgal. When the Israelites saw the monument of twelve stones that had been set up there on the bank of the Jordan at Gilgal, they were reminded of how God brought them into the Land. It was only by God's grace that they had been brought out of Egypt, across the wilderness and into the Land of Promise. Without God's miracle of the parting of the Red Sea, and the manna in the wilderness, and the stopping up of the Jordan River, they would have been nowhere. They would have been dead in the wilderness, not starting a new life in the Promised Land.

They remembered all this whenever they returned to their base camp at Gilgal, and we must do the same, spiritually speaking. When we return to the base camp of Gilgal in the Christian life, we are kept humble and spiritually

strengthened. As we remember what God has done for us in saving us by His grace alone, we are humbled. As we practice spiritual circumcision and judge ourselves, we are strengthened and enabled to go out and fight further spiritual battles in His strength. Only then can Christ truly live His life through us.

Returning to Gilgal and Galatians 2:20 go together, spiritually speaking. Galatians 2:20 says, *“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”*

Faithful warriors return to Gilgal. Every time we celebrate the Lord’s Supper, we return to Gilgal. We are humbled as we judge ourselves. As we remember what the Lord has done for us by His marvelous grace, we are filled with gratitude and strengthened to go out and face the spiritual opposition in this world.

Practical Application

“If God is for us, who can be against us?”

If God is for us, who can stand against us? Answer: No one! Verse 42: *“All these kings and their land Joshua took at one time, because the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel.”* In spiritual warfare we don’t have to fear the enemy, we just have to follow the Lord because He’s fighting for us – and if God is for us, no one can stand against us!

Last week I read about a group of Christian teenagers that call themselves the *Joshua Generation*. They meet every day around their school’s flagpole to pray. They picked the name *Joshua Generation* because they understand that the book of Joshua is about spiritual warfare. They pray because they know when God is on our side, **no one** can prevail against us!