

A Study of the Book of Joshua

Sermon # 10

"The Final Conquest"

Joshua 11

God's purpose for His people is complete victory. We are told in 1 John 5:4, *"For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith."* If someone were to offer everyone in this congregation tonight a gift of \$ 10,000, we would think anyone who would not accept anything larger than \$10.00, a little muddled in their thinking. Yet this is the exactly what many Christians are content to do in their spiritual lives. The Lord offers them spiritual wealth beyond comprehension, but they take salvation but leave untouched the blessings of victory over sin, continued fellowship with God, fruitful service and the confident expectation of a glorious future.

1. IT IS ALWAYS TOO SOON TO QUIT 11:1-5

Ours is the responsibility of completing the conquest. The principle of follow through is important in business, in sports and in spiritual endeavors. In any endeavor in the spiritual realm it is follow that is "the" most important. It is one thing to begin a race well but what is important is how you finish it. It is one thing to begin to apply the principles of spiritual growth to your Christian life; but it is another to follow through to victory.

The battles to win Canaan are condensed into a very short narrative, it only takes 20 minutes or so to read chapters 10 and 11, but it took a long time for these events to transpire. Verse eighteen helps us to clarify our understanding on this point, it says, *"Joshua made war a long time with all those kings."* This was not a quick and easy victory. But in all fairness this appears to be one of the pattern's of God's work with his people. God's power still works, but we do not see it displayed necessary in bright flashes, but over the long haul. God calls his people to lasting fidelity over a long period of time. Even when God is at work, many days consist of washing your face, brushing your teeth, taking out the garbage and going to work. The writer of Hebrews reminds us in (10:36), *"For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise."*

Although Joshua had achieved stunning victories over the Canaanites during the first weeks of his invasion of their territory, it would require seven years to fully occupy and consolidate Israel's claims to all of the Promised Land.

2. NEW PROBLEM - SAME GOD (11:1-5)

Up to this point there have been only three major engagements with the enemy, at Jericho, at Ai and on the hills near Gibeon. Now in verse one we read, *"And it came to pass, when Jabin king of Hazor heard these things, that he sent to [the other kings of Canaan], (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. (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. (5) And when all*

these kings had met together, they came and camped together at the waters of Merom to fight against Israel."

Joshua is now faced with more kings, more armies composed of superior numbers and superior armament. Josephus the Jewish historian, writing about this incident many hundreds of years later stated that the combined forces of the Canaanites numbered 300,000 foot soldiers, 1000.000 cavalry, and 20,000 chariots. Even if these numbers are exaggerated the biblical account says that they are, *"as many people as the sand that is on the seashore in multitude, with very many horses and chariots."* But if Joshua is fearful of the size and armament of the foe it is offset by God's promise found in verse six, *"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 Lord had previously promised the children of Israel in Deuteronomy 20:1, *"When you go out to battle against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the LORD your God is with you, who brought you up from the land of Egypt."*

Although this is undoubtedly one bloodiest and violent of the battles of the entire conquest, all we are told is *"the Lord delivered them into the hand of Israel"* and *"they attacked them unto they left none of them remaining"* (v. 8).

When the victory was complete God commanded that the horses be rendered lame and implements of war be destroyed (v. 9). That on the face of it seems unreasonable, after all Israel was, to use modern terminology, seriously out gunned. But God knew the danger was that the Israelites would put their confidence in horses or chariots instead of Him. The psalmist declares, (20:7) *"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; But we will remember the name of the LORD our God."*

By his bold compliance with God's command Joshua demonstrated that he was willing to move when God said move. He was not reluctant to accept any new challenge that confronted him. Whatever unexpected force he might be faced with he was willing to take on with calm courage and fearless faith. We would do well as Christians to follow his example. We dare not draw back when faced with new challenges to advance. The LORD goes before us. He prepares the way. He overcomes the opposition. He enables us to take new ground for his glory.

There must have been a constant temptation for the Israelites to settle down comfortably in the areas already conquered. It may have seemed pleasant from them to stake out and enjoy the pastures, fields, orchards and cities for themselves. But this was not God's intention for them now, this would come later.

3. OUR FEARS ARE GROUNDLESS (11:21-22)

"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. (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."

In Israel's dictionary Anakim spelled terror. They were the race of giants that so terrified the original Israelite spies into Canaan. It was the sight of the Anakim that caused them to report 'we were like grasshoppers in their sight.' Here God exposes the groundlessness of their fear and dread .

"In Pilgrim Progress John Bunyan describes Christian's approach to the Palace Beautiful where he hoped to get lodging. He began to walk down a very narrow passage leading to the porter's lodge. Then he saw two lions in the way. Bunyan adds parenthetically; 'The Lions were chained but he saw not the chains.'" That is frequently the case – we fear because we don't see the chains." Yesterday as we passed out the Easter fliers Keith Freeman came across a very large and particularly unfriendly Rottwiler dog, at first he did not see he was on a chain and then he began to worry about the length of the chain.

"The truth is that Christ sits at the right hand of the Father far above all the rule and authority and dominion and according to Ephesians 1:20-22 he has every thing under his feet. That means that ever power that would harm us or seek to destroy us is chained. But sometimes we don't see the chains. "[Dale Ralph Davis. No Falling Words : Expositions of the Book of Joshua. (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1988) p. 100]

Forty years earlier the fear inspiring giants caused the Israelites to feel like "grasshoppers" but now Joshua trod them underfoot like so much grass in a field. So much for the giants.

Joshua's accomplishments are note worthy against such odds, it was possible because he trusted God. One writer put this way, *"When the situation is hopeless ... That's the time for faith! Actually there is no such thing as a hopeless situation for one who trusts in God... But the fact is that most of us turn to God only when we think the situation is hopeless. As long as we can find something in our circumstances on which to pin our hope we trust that possibility rather than God. Until we have used up all our options – see no shred of hope in our circumstancesThen – as a last resort – we may turn to God. Someone put this way: 'As long as we can think up possible answers – we depend upon human ingenuity – or luck – or coincidence – etc. Then, when alternatives are exhausted and there is nowhere else to turn... We give God His chance. How much better to trust God no matter what! [Richard Halverson, Perspective, Sept 28,1977, as quoted by Donald Campbell. Joshua: Leader Under Fire. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1981. p. 93]*

Conclusion

1. Lets always be ready to accept any new challenges given to us under God. Let keep on the move with Him. Do not allow ourselves to stagnate spiritually. Be bold enough to a take new territory with the LORD.
2. Leave nothing undone that the LORD has commanded us to do. Let's be diligent, earnest and through with any assignment He gives us. There should be no shirking of our responsibility to Him or to each other.
3. No matter how awesome the "giants" may appear in our experience, He is able to conquer them. Let not forget that he has already given us everything that we need to be victorious.