

## **The Battles Of Life**

### **Joshua 11:1-23**

#### **Introduction**

We Christian's can broadly divide our lives into season's of battle and season's of rest. In chapter 10 Joshua battles the enemies lurking— hiding in the caves. In chapter 11 Joshua battles the enemies out in the open!

In this chapter Joshua and the armies of Israel will engage and destroy the people occupying the northern regions of the Promised Land. The chapter describes the victory over the Northern Alliance who engage in what looks like a last ditch effort to prevent Joshua and the children of Israel from occupying the Promised Land.

It provides the Christian believer with a picture of how our enemies seek to defeat and destroy us. In the North there is a call to war to every known king in the region; and the response is breathtaking. A huge army is mobilized with horses and chariots and their number according to the text is “as the sand on the seashore.”

#### **The Season's Of Battle (vv.1-15)**

*Joshua 11:1 (NKJV) 1And 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,*

*2and 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,*

*3to 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.*

*4So 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.*

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

The name *Jabin* means “intelligent”.

The name *Jobab* means “howler”.

The name of the king of Shimron—is not mentioned. We think this is Tel Shimron—about 5 miles due west of Nazareth in the hills north of the western end of the Jezreel Valley (see Joshua; Richard S. Hess pp. 208-209).

Merom was north and west of the Sea of Galilee.

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The army was significant (“as many people as the sand that is on the seashore in multitude, with very many horses and chariots”).

According to historian Josephus—the estimates of the size of the army were 300,000 armed foot soldiers; 10,000 horsemen and 20,000 chariots. Were those estimates accurate? We have no way of knowing. **But this is what we do know. This was the largest army Israel ever faced.**

### What will Joshua do as he faces an enemy more powerful and more in number?

Paul tells us in the book of Romans (15:4) “For everything that was written in the past was written for our learning” or written to teach us—that we through patience and endurance—that we might have hope.”

What is the big lesson or the big idea? Joshua and the people of Israel must fight battles, they must engage the enemy if they are to occupy the Land promised to them!

Our Christian life is often called a battle or struggle or warfare. We have enemies that war against our soul. **What do all our enemies have in common? They oppose God. They oppose the plan of God and the will of God.** Paul reminds the Christian that unlike the Children of Israel we battle “*not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers*”.

We are engaged in a spiritual struggle. But we are also given assurance of divine protection and in the end—ultimate victory.

In broad terms Paul described a war—on the outside—and a war on the inside. The war on the inside is described in Romans 6 and 7 “for what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep doing” (Rom.7:19). Paul continues “But I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law” (Rom. 7:23). Again Paul writes “For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor.10:3-5).

Paul encourages Timothy “to fight the good fight” (1 Timothy 1:18) and “endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Timothy 2:3).

Christians often surrender to Satan instead of opposing Satan. We surrender to our enemy instead of surrender to Christ.

We are given weapons and armor for our seasons of battle.

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#### The Assurance Of The Lord In The Season Of Battle (v.6)

*6But 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.”*

Once again the Lord assures Joshua of victory. Joshua was assured victory over his enemies. He then is given instructions concerning the enemies weapons! They are to be rendered inoperative.

In the past victories the Lord conquered Jericho by causing the walls to fall down—and later the sun to stand still. **In chapter 11 we don’t read about any supernatural or miraculous intervention—yet God gives a simple—but profound promise—“I will deliver all of them slain before Israel.” How can we know God is with us—even if we don’t see a miracle?**

The Bible says without faith it is impossible to please God? Can you trust God—will you trust God—absent a miracle?

Christian—sin cannot be left lurking in the caves and sometimes must be fought in the open. The Word of God reminds us that we are to confess sin and forsake sin and condemn sin.

Our culture calls on us to rename sin—rationalize sin—find excuses to keep sin and sometimes even celebrate sin.

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

*8And 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.*

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

In the ancient world chariots were the heavy weapons of war. In many ways they served the function of tanks. These were powerful weapons meant to provide a tactical advantage. Nations want nuclear capability—to have a strategic advantage. The point—can superior weaponry insure victory or security? God says—no.

Why would God ask Joshua to hamstring the horses (cripple them) and burn the chariots?

The obvious answer seems to be that God did not want Joshua and the children of Israel to trust in horses and chariots but rather trust in the Lord. It could be that God does not want these weapons used in a future confrontation.

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### **Joshua 11:1-23**

*10Joshua 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.*

Hazor played a major strategic role along the North—South passage and was considered a major stronghold. In fact—it was the greatest stronghold in the North.

The city was by far the largest city in the Promised Land. Larger than Jerusalem—14 times larger than Megiddo—25 times larger than Jericho. It controlled the North South trade routes. It was along the road between Egypt and Syria and Assyria to Babylon.

*11And 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 burns the city. This victory will insure the fact that Israel will control the Northern regions.

*12So 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.*

Note Joshua's unflinching obedience.

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

*14And 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.*

*15As 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.*

Obedience brought victory.

### **The Season's Of Victory (vv.16-22)**

*16Thus 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,*

*17from 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.*

In broad terms we are given a picture of victory and conquest—"Joshua took all this land". We are given a description of the conquered territories from the southern point (Mount Halak) to the northern point (Baal Gad).

The lands of the captured kings were conquered and possessed (v.17).

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

How long? Some scholars estimate seven years.

*19There 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.*

This passage gives us a peek into the hard—stubborn—obstinate—unbelieving hearts of the Canaanite peoples! None of them seeks peace except the Gibeonites who obtained peace through deceit.

*20For 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.*

We also learn that God allowed their hearts to harden. **Did God harden their hearts to keep them from being saved? I don't think so. I think it was evidence of evil and unchanging hearts!**

Remember these are nations—people—who reject God and oppose God. **These were people who denied that God was the source of life—and the giver of all things. In their own heart and in their own imaginations—they would not submit to this God. They rejected grace.**

*21And 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.*

The battle mission also included a plan to defeat the Anakim—a race of giants who opposed God.

These are the same Giants that terrified the 10 of the 12 spies 40 years earlier (see Numbers 13:33).

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

This would be a stronghold for many future generations.

### **The Season's Of Rest (v.23)**

*23So 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.*

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### Joshua 11:1-23

What was the result of Joshua's persistent and obedient engagement of the enemy? Victory. The people received their inheritance—God's Promised Land. The people experienced a time of rest from war.

We should note a couple of things. All of Joshua's battles are offensive—not defensive. Joshua does not dig in or build fortified defensive structures. He employs field warfare. When Joshua learns that an attack is about to take place—he anticipates the attack and attacks himself. He often employs the element of surprise. Joshua comes to the kings at Merom—suddenly.

In WW1 Marshall Foch—in the second battle of Marne—was asked about his situation—he sent back this dispatch; “My left falters. My center is weak. My right crumbles. I am attacking.”

Joshua—too was always attacking—because those were his orders!

### Conclusion

The key to Joshua's victory was complete obedience to the Lord. “Just 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” (v.15).

The strongest criticism Joshua receives from his critics—his utter unfailing commitment to render the enemy—destroyed.

The world—and the flesh—and the devil—Satan—will ask you to think through all the reasons why you should be soft on sin. Like the ancient kings—intellect and howl—they will howl when you refuse to be soft on sin.

Jesus is the one who will deal—catastrophically with the sin problem. Let the whole world go on notice: **God will not tolerate sin indefinitely. Sin will be dealt with. The Canaanite people were not the only people to experience God's wrath.**

*“Bloody Assyria, sensual Babylon, vice-ridden Greece, degenerate Rome have each been consumed by the results of their own lust. Later ages saw the decline of Spain with its Inquisition and more recently the collapse of the Third Reich. The greatest nations in the world today are by no means immune from God's punishing hand—and neither is any individual who dares to sin deliberately against the will and purpose of the Sovereign Lord of the earth” (see Bible Knowledge; Scripture Press; March 1972 p. 83).*

And what of our own nation? What is its future?

In 1863 Abraham Lincoln issued this proclamation:

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### **Joshua 11:1-23**

We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven. We have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown, but we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand that preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God who made us: It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.”