

Message #21**Joshua 11:1-15**

As we go through this book of Joshua, it is obvious that God is not concerned about our numbers; it seems that we are. God is actually trying to bring His people to the point where they realize that our numbers are not the key to our success; our obedience to God's Word and our trust in God is the key to our success.

If we are faithful to God, we will have some enemies that will come up against us and some of those enemies will be bigger, stronger, smarter and wealthier than we are. That is what seems to mean something to us, but that means nothing to God.

God delights in taking a small group of people who are living life in full obedience to His Word and He delights in protecting them and delivering them from tremendous obstacles. That is a key lesson of Joshua 11:

WHEN GOD'S PEOPLE UNITE IN OBEYING GOD'S WORD AND DOING HIS WILL, THEY WILL HAVE ENEMIES WHO WILL SEEK TO DESTROY THEM; BUT THEY WILL EXPERIENCE ONE VICTORY AFTER ANOTHER NO MATTER HOW INTIMIDATING THE ENEMY.

Listen, if you are obeying God you will have some attacks come against you. But you will also experience one victory after another. One by one you will see enemies fall. God delights in delivering His faithful people. He loves to have His people stand in awe of what He has done. Certainly He expects His people to do their part. He expects His people to meet their responsibilities, but He loves to intervene and do great things with them and for them.

There are five historical facts brought out in this part of Joshua:

HISTORICAL FACT #1 – More enemies group together to fight against Israel. **11:1-5**

Now according to **verse 43** of chapter 10, there was slight break in the action, but not much. When you are in the warfare, you usually don't get some prolonged vacation. Every victory we ever experience will be hard fought against a relentless enemy.

Some take the position that we are called to faith and not called to fight. Some take the position to let go and let God. But the truth is a passive Christianity is not Biblical. We are called to an active Christianity. Ephesians 6:12 says we struggle against satanic powers; I Tim. 6:12 says we are to "fight the good fight of faith." Hebrews 12:4 says we are to strive against sin. We are in active war.

To this point, Israel has been experiencing victories in the central and southern part of the Promised Land, but now the warfare hits to the north.

Now there are five historical observations we want to make:

Historical Observation #1 - These enemies had a leader. **11:1a**

When word of Joshua's southern victories reached the north, one man immediately went to work on getting a northern coalition together to stop Israel.

The enemy leader is Jabin, king of Hazor. Hazor was a key city in the northern part of the Promised Land. Satan works through people and usually there will be a key ringleader.

Now what appears to me to be the case is that Israel is in Gilgal enjoying a break and all of a sudden they find themselves in another confrontation with another leader.

Historical Observation #2 - These enemies had a motive. **11:1b**

The motive for wanting to fight against Israel is that they had "heard" that Israel was beating one enemy after another.

Now you would logically think that this group would say, perhaps we should seek to get right with Israel like those Gibeonites did; but instead they decide to dig their heels in against her and they want to fight.

When things are going good, there will be enemies that will seek to stop it.

Historical Observation #3 - These enemies had a unity. **11:2-3**

What is listed in these verses is eye-opening. There are Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites and Hivites. These groups at times could not get along with each other and now they are uniting together against Israel. People who hated each other are now uniting in their hatred against Israel.

Moses had specifically predicted that God would give victory over these people and Moses told Israel destroy them all because they are God-haters (Deut. 7:1-10). The people of these nations hated God and they hated the truth of God and God said they are all to be destroyed.

Historical Observation #4 - These enemies had numbers. **11:4**

When enemies are coming against you, it typically won't be just one. There were so many of these enemies joined together that they were as numerous as the seashore. They had an impressive military strength, which featured many horses and many chariots.

Josephus estimates that there were 300,000 infantry or footmen, 10,000 cavalry or horsemen and 20,000 chariots. Josephus said that when Joshua and his military saw this, they were not full of hope; they were stricken with great terror (*The Complete Works of Josephus*, p. 107).

This was the largest and best armed military enemy that Joshua and Israel had ever seen or faced.

Historical Observation #5 - These enemies had a united place to gather. **11:5**

There was obviously good communication between these enemies. They had devised a carefully thought out plan to destroy Israel. This coalition of enemies had done their homework. They had a common meeting place and in their minds, Israel was going to be defeated. They met at the “waters of Merom” which offered them and their animals good water. This was located just a few miles northwest of the Sea of Galilee. They felt this strategic place would give them an upper hand.

Our enemies are not foolish. They plan and they unite and they have strategy. But our God knows it all and if we remain faithful to Him, we will see those enemies toppled.

HISTORICAL FACT #2 – God informs Joshua that all enemies will be destroyed. **11:6**

God says to Joshua, don’t let these numbers get to you, you have nothing to fear. Why? **Because God is in sovereign charge and He will give total victory.** Don’t miss this. In and of ourselves, we need to be afraid; but if we are faithful to God, we have nothing to fear because God is the Sovereign God who determines the outcome and God promises victory to His faithful people. **Enemies cannot ever beat the sovereignty of God.**

Now at the end of **verse 6**, God tells Joshua to make sure that he hamstringing their horses and burns their chariots. This idea of hamstringing a horse is the idea of crippling a horse by cutting the leg tendons.

Now why didn’t God want Joshua to keep this military equipment and horses for himself? The answer is found in Isaiah 31:1—God never wanted His people to think that their success was due to their reliance upon their horses or chariots.

According to II Kings 23:11, horses and chariots were used to worship a false god and even Judah was guilty of falling for this. **Victory and success is due to our faithfulness to God and our reliance upon Him. Our boast is not in horses or chariots, but in the Lord (Ps. 20:7).**

This is a critical point to see. God permits enemies to come against us so we can learn that He is the One who is giving us victory. **He does not want us depending on ourselves for any victory; He wants us totally and completely depending on Him.**

We sometimes forget that our security and our key to victory is our relationship with God. We can begin to think that our security lies in our job or investments or in ourselves. We may begin to think that we are smart, successful and strong. Truth is we are nothing. Our key to success and victory is our relationship with God.

HISTORICAL FACT #3 – Joshua and Israel experience great victory. **11:7-9**

Keep in mind that at this point Israel is somewhat battle fatigued. They have not had much rest; but sometimes that is the way it is in warfare.

Verse 7 is powerful. Joshua and Israel came to the place where these numerous enemies are and Israel attacks them. They go on the offensive. Do you see this? They are outnumbered; they are outmanned; they are up against a mighty military force and they attack them.

According to **verse 8**, Israel chased them in two directions: northwest toward Tyre and Sidon and northeast to the Valley of Mizpeh.

They chased them and destroyed them until there was no survivor left.

Verse 9 says they were very obedient to the Word of God. Joshua made certain of that.

Israel attacked exactly as God had directed. They hamstringed the horses and burned the chariots. As a result, God gave them victory.

When we are right with God, battles against enemies can be exciting. The positive thing about having powerful enemies against us is that we get to experience great victory over those enemies.

HISTORICAL FACT #4 – Joshua takes out the capital of the north. **11:10-11**

Israel was chasing the enemy westward, but Joshua turned back and went to Hazor, which was the capital of these kingdoms. This was the Washington D.C. of the Promised Land.

This was the king and place that instigated this uprising against Israel (**11:1**) and she would pay a high price. Joshua went to this city and destroyed everyone and burned down the city. There are only three cities that are actually burned by Joshua and his armies—Jericho, Ai, and Hazor.

There is a great lesson to learn here. The central power against us will typically be the last to fall. For example, Satan is the ultimate enemy against God and God's people and he will be the last to be destroyed. When powers rise against you and you are faithful to God, watch how they fall. God will usually move from the weakest enemy to the strongest. But one by one the enemies will fall.

HISTORICAL FACT #5 – Joshua captured all the cities and Israel enjoyed all the spoils.

11:12-15

Now keep in mind that all of these people had the same opportunity as Rahab and the Gibeonites. They could have sought to get right with God and Israel; but they were not about to do that.

God is not unfair. He gave these people time and opportunity to respond to Him and they didn't do it so eventually time runs out and God destroyed them. Hell will not be unfair for people who burn there forever. God has given people plenty of time to believe on Jesus Christ and if they do not do that, eventually time will run out and they will be destroyed.

So **verse 12** says Joshua captured all the cities and all the kings and he utterly destroyed them. Moses had specifically singled out these people by name (Deut. 20:16-17) and said when you take that land “utterly destroy” them and they did.

According to **verse 13**, Israel did not burn all the other cities, just Hazor. Some pay a higher price than others because of their leading of unjust cause. In fact, according to **verse 14**, this became part of their spoils.

What a remarkable story. Israel is not only beating enemies; she is now enjoying the spoils. There is nothing wrong with enjoying life while doing battle in war.

But notice what **verse 15** says—all of this was done in full obedience to God.

Ladies and gentlemen, do not miss this. All of these good things were happening to these people because these people were obeying God's Word, and when you get a group of people who have that focus they will experience victory. That group will see God do many wonderful things. That is the story of Joshua 11.