

CHAPTER 11

This chapter continues and concludes the history of the conquest of Canaan; of the reduction of the southern parts we had an account in the foregoing chapter, after which we may suppose Joshua allowed his forces some breathing-time; now here we have the story of the war in the north, and the happy success of that war.

- I.** The confederacy of the northern crowns against Israel (v. 1-5).
- II.** The encouragement which God gave to Joshua to engage them (v. 6).
- III.** His victory over them (v. 7-9).
- IV.** The taking of their cities (v. 10-15).
- V.** The destruction of the Anakim (v. 21, 22).
- VI.** The general conclusion of the story of this war (v. 16-20, 23).

<6100> JOSHUA 11:1-9

CONFEDERACY AGAINST ISRAEL

We are here entering upon the story of another campaign that Joshua made, and it was a glorious one, no less illustrious than the former in the success of it, though in respect of miracles it was inferior to it in glory. The wonders God then wrought for them were to animate and encourage them to act vigorously themselves. Thus the war carried on by the preaching of the gospel against Satan's kingdom was at first forwarded by miracles; but, the war being by them sufficiently proved to be of God, the managers of it are now left to the ordinary assistance of divine grace in the use of the sword of the Spirit, and must not expect hail-stones nor the standing still of the sun. In this story we have,

- I.** The Canaanites taking the field against Israel. They were the aggressors, God hardening their hearts to begin the war, that Israel might be justified beyond exception in destroying them. Joshua and all Israel had returned to

the camp at Gilgal, and perhaps these kings knew no other than that they intended to sit down content with the conquest they had already made, and yet they prepare war against them. Note, Sinners bring ruin upon their own heads, so that *God will be justified when he speaks*, and they alone shall bear the blame for ever. Judah had now *couched as a lion gone up from the prey*; if the northern kings rouse him up, it is at their peril, ^{<OLD>}Genesis 49:9. Now,

1. Several nations joined in this confederacy, some *in the mountains* and some *in the plains*, v. 2. Canaanites from east and west, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, etc. (v. 3), of different constitutions and divided interests among themselves, and yet they here unite against Israel as against a common enemy. Thus are *the children of this world* more unanimous, and therein *wiser, than the children of light*. The oneness of the church's enemies should shame the church's friends out of their discords and divisions, and engage them to be one.

2. The head of this confederacy was *Jabin king of Hazor* (v. 1), as Adonizedec was of the former; it is said (v. 10) Hazor had been the *head of all those kingdoms*, which could not have revolted without occasioning ill-will; but this was forgotten and laid aside upon this occasion, by consent of parties, ^{<Q23>}Luke 23:12. When they had all drawn up their forces together, every kingdom bringing in its quota, they were a very great army, much greater than the former, *as the sand on the sea shore in multitude*, and upon this account much stronger and more formidable, that they had horses and chariots very many, which we do not find the southern kings had; hereby they had a great advantage against Israel, for their army consisted only of foot, and they never brought horses nor chariots into the field. Josephus tells us that the army of the Canaanites consisted of 300,000 foot, 10,000 horses, and 20,000 chariots. *Many there be that rise up against God's Israel*; doubtless their numbers made them very confident of success, but it proved that so much the greater slaughter was made of them.

II. The encouragement God gave to Joshua to give them the meeting, even upon the ground of their own choosing (v. 6): *Be not afraid because of them*. Joshua was remarkable for his courage — it was his master grace, and yet it seems he had need to be again and again cautioned not to be afraid. Fresh dangers and difficulties make it necessary to fetch in fresh supports and comforts from the word of God, which we have always nigh

unto us, to be made use of in every time of need. Those that have God on their side need not be disturbed at the number and power of their enemies; *more are those that are with us than those that are against us*; those have the hosts of the Lord that have the Lord of hosts engaged for them. For his encouragement,

1. God assures him of success, and fixes the hour: *To-morrow about this time*, when an engagement (it is probable) was expected and designed on both sides, *I will deliver them up slain*. Though they were to be slain by the sword of Israel, yet it is spoken of as God's work, that he would deliver them up.

2. He appoints him to *hough their horses, hamstring them, lame them, and burn their chariots*, not only that Israel might not use them hereafter, but that they might not fear them now, their God designing this contempt to be put upon them. Let Israel look upon their chariots but as rotten wood designed for the fire, and their horses of war as disabled things, scarcely good enough for the cart. This encouragement which God here gave to Joshua no doubt he communicated to the people, who perhaps were under some apprehensions of danger from this vast army, notwithstanding the experience they had had of God's power engaged for them. And the wisdom and goodness of God are to be observed,

(1.) In infatuating the counsels of the enemy, that all the kings of Canaan, who were not dispersed at such a distance from each other but that they might have got all together in a body, did not at first confederate against Israel, but were divided into the southern and northern combination, and so became the less formidable. And,

(2.) In preparing his people to encounter the greater force, by breaking the less. They first engage with five kings together, and now with many more. God proportions our trials to our strength and our strength to our trials.

III. Joshua's march against these confederate forces, v. 7. He *came upon them suddenly*, and surprised them in their quarters. He made this haste,

1. That he might put them into the greater confusion, by giving them an alarm, when they little thought he was near them.

2. That he might be sure not to come short of the honour God had fixed, to give him the meeting at the enemies' camp, *to-morrow about this time*. It is fit we should keep time with God.

IV. His success, v. 8. He obtained the honour and advantage of a complete victory; he smote them and chased them, in the several ways they took in their flight; some fled towards Zidon, which lay to the northwest, others towards Mizpeh, eastward, but the parties Joshua sent out pursued them each way. So *the Lord delivered them into the hand of Israel*; they would not deliver themselves into the hands of Israel to be made proselytes and tributaries, and so offered up to God's grace (^{<61516>}Romans 15:16), and therefore God delivered them into their hands to be made sacrifices to his justice; for God will be honoured by us or upon us.

V. His obedience to the orders given him, in destroying the horses and chariots (v. 9), which was an instance,

- 1.** Of his subjection to the divine will, as one under authority, that must do as he is bidden.
- 2.** Of his self-denial, and crossing his own genius and inclination in compliance with God's command.
- 3.** Of his confidence in the power of God engaged for Israel, which enabled them to despise the chariots and horses which others trusted in, (^{<61917>}Psalm 20:7; 33:17.
- 4.** Of his care to keep up in the people the like confidence in God, by taking that from them which they would be tempted to trust too much to. This was *cutting of a right hand*.

<6110>JOSHUA 11:10-14

JOSHUA'S VICTORIES

We have here the same improvement made of this victory as was made of that in the foregoing chapter.

- 1.** The destruction of Hazor is particularly recorded, because in it, and by the king thereof, this daring design against Israel was laid, v. 10, 11. The king of Hazor, it seems, escaped with his life out of the battle, and thought himself safe when he had got back into his own city, and Joshua had gone in pursuit of the scattered troops another way. But it proved that that which he thought would be for his welfare was his trap; in it *he was taken*

as in an evil net; there he was slain, and his city, for his sake, burned. Yet we find that the remains of it being not well looked after by Israel the Canaanites rebuilt it, and settled there under another king of the same name, ~~1000~~Judges 4:2.

2. The rest of the cities of that part of the country are spoken of only in general, that Joshua got them all into his hands, but did not burn them as he did Hazor, for Israel was to dwell in *great and goodly cities which they builded not* (~~0150~~Deuteronomy 6:10) and in these among the rest. And here we find Israel rolling in blood and treasure.

(1.) In the blood of their enemies; *they smote all the souls* (v. 1), *neither left they any to breathe* (v. 14), that there might be none to infect them with the abominations of Canaan, and none to disturb them in the possession of it. The children were cut off, lest they should afterwards lay claim to any part of this land in the right of their parents.

(2.) In the wealth of their enemies. The spoil, and the cattle, they *took for a prey to themselves*, v. 14. As they were enriched with the spoil of their oppressors when they came out of Egypt, wherewith to defray the charges of their apprenticeship in the wilderness, so they were now enriched with the spoil of their enemies for a stock wherewith to set up in the land of Canaan. Thus is the wealth of the sinner laid up for the just.

~~0115~~JOSHUA 11:15-23

JOSHUA'S VICTORIES

We have here the conclusion of this whole matter.

I. A short account is here given of what was done in four things: —

1. The obstinacy of the Canaanites in their opposition to the Israelites. It was strange that though it appeared so manifestly that God fought for Israel, and in every engagement the Canaanites had the worst of it, yet they stood it out to the last; not one city made peace with Israel, but the Gibeonites only, who understood the things that belonged to their peace better than their neighbours, v. 19. It is intimated that other cities might have made as good terms for themselves, without ragged clothes and clouted shoes, if they would have humbled themselves, but they never so

much as *desired conditions of peace*. We here are told whence this unaccountable infatuation came: *It was of the Lord to harden their hearts*, v. 20. As Pharaoh's heart was hardened by his own pride and wilfulness first, and afterwards by the righteous judgment of God, to his destruction, so were the hearts of these Canaanites. To punish them for all their other follies, God left them to this, to make those their enemies whom they might have made their friends. This was it that ruined them: they *came against Israel in battle*, and gave the first blow, and therefore *might have no favour* shown them. Those know not what they do who give the provocation to divine justice, or the authorized instruments of it. *Are we stronger than God?* Observe here, That hardness of heart is the ruin of sinners. Those that are stupid and secure, and heedless of divine warnings, are already marked for destruction. What hope is there of those concerning whom God has said, *Go, make their hearts fat?*

2. The constancy of the Israelites in prosecuting this war (v. 18): *Joshua made war a long time*; some reckon it five years, others seven, that were spent in subduing this land: so long God would train up Israel to war, and give them repeated instances of his power and goodness in every new victory that he gave them.

3. The conquest of the Anakim at last, v. 21, 22. Either this was done as they met with them where they were dispersed, as some think, or rather it should seem the Anakim had retired to their fastnesses, and so were hunted out and cut off at last, after all the rest of Israel's enemies. The mountains of Judah and Israel were the habitations of those mountains of men; but not their height, nor the strength of their caves, nor the difficulty of the passes to them, could secure, no, not these mighty men, from the sword of Joshua. The cutting off of the sons of Anak is particularly mentioned because these had been such a terror to the spies forty years before, and their bulk and strength had been thought an insuperable difficulty in the way of the reducing of Canaan, ^{<DAIES>} Numbers 13:28, 33. Even that opposition which seemed invincible was got over. Never let the sons of Anak be a terror to the Israel of God, for even their day will come to fall. Giants are dwarfs to Omnipotence; yet this struggle with the Anakim was reserved for the latter end of the war, when the Israelites had become more expert in the arts of war, and had had more experience of the power and goodness of God. Note, God sometimes reserves the sharpest trials of his people by affliction and temptation for the latter end of their days. Therefore *let not him that girds on the harness boast as he that puts it off*.

Death, that tremendous son of Anak, is the last enemy that is to be encountered; but it is *to be destroyed*, ^{<4653>}1 Corinthians 15:26. Thanks be to God, who will give us the victory.

4. The end and issue of this long war. The Canaanites were rooted out, not perfectly (as we shall find after in the book of Judges), but in a good measure; they were not able to make any head either,

(1.) So as to keep the Israelites out of possession of the land: *Joshua took all that land*, v. 16, 17. And we may suppose the people dispersed themselves and their families into the countries they had conquered, at least those that lay nearest to the head-quarters at Gilgal, until an orderly distribution should be made by lot, that every man might know his own. Or,

(2.) So as to keep them in action, or give them any molestation (v. 23): *The land rested from war*. It ended not in a peace with the Canaanites (that was forbidden), but in a peace from them. There is a rest, a rest from war, remaining for the people of God, into which they shall enter when their warfare is accomplished.

II. That which was now done is here compared with that which had been said to Moses. God's word and his works, if viewed and considered together, will mutually illustrate each other. It is here observed in the close,

1. That all the precepts God had given to Moses relating to the conquest of Canaan were obeyed on the people's part, at least while Joshua lived. See how solemnly this is remarked (v. 15): *As the Lord commanded Moses his servant*, by whose hand the law was given, *so did Moses command Joshua*, for Moses was faithful, as a law-giver, to him that appointed him; he did his part, and then he died: but were the commands of Moses observed when he was in his grave? Yes, they were: *So did Joshua*, who was, in his place, as faithful as Moses in his. *He left nothing undone* (Hebrews he *removed nothing*) *of all that the Lord commanded Moses*. Those that leave their duty undone do what they can to remove or make void the command of God, by which they are bound to do it; but Joshua, by performing the precept, *confirmed* it, as the expression is, ^{<4626>}Deuteronomy 27:26. Joshua was himself a great commander, and yet nothing was more his praise than his obedience. Those that rule others at their will must themselves be ruled by the divine will; then their power is indeed their honour, and not otherwise. The pious obedience for which Joshua is here commended

respects especially the command to destroy the Canaanites, and to *break down their altars and burn their images*, ^{<FR>}Deuteronomy 7:2-5; ^{<FR>}Exodus 23:24; 34:13. Joshua, in his zeal for the Lord of hosts, spared neither the idols nor the idolaters. Saul's disobedience, or rather his partial obedience, to the command of God, for the utter destruction of the Amalekites, cost him his kingdom. It should seem Joshua himself gives this account of his most careful and punctual observance of his orders in the execution of his commission, that in all respects he had done as Moses commanded him; and then it intimates that he had more pleasure and satisfaction in reflecting upon his obedience to the commands of God in all this war, and valued himself more upon that, than upon all the gains and triumphs with which he was enriched and advanced.

2. That all the promises God had given to Moses relating to this conquest were accomplished *on his part*, v. 23. Joshua *took the whole land*, conquered it, and took possession of it, *according to all that the Lord said unto Moses*. God had promised to drive out the nations before them (^{<FR>}Exodus 23:2; 34:11), and to *bring them down*, ^{<FR>}Deuteronomy 9:3. And now it was done. There failed not one word of the promise. Our successes and enjoyments are then doubly sweet and comfortable to us when we see them flowing to us from the promise (this is *according to what the Lord said*), as our obedience is then acceptable to God when it has an eye to the precept. And, if we make conscience of our duty, we need not question the performance of the promise.