

August 12

Scriptures: Read Joshua 11 & 12

Key Verse: “So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord had said to Moses; and Joshua gave it as an inheritance to Israel... Then the land rested from war.” (Joshua 11:23)

Overview

The battle of Beth Horon (when the sun stood still) was the decisive battle that broke the power of the kings in the southern territory and gave Israel control in that region. When news of this great victory spread northward into the region of the Galilee, the kings representing the various nationalities and locations in that area immediately formed a strong united league. This second great victory at Merom gave Israel control over the northern territory as well.

In this battle, the Lord had once again encouraged Joshua, “do not be afraid”; and once again God gave him a promise: “I will deliver all of them slain before Israel.” The Lord also gave specific instructions: “hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire” (11:6). To hamstring a horse is to sever the tendons above the ankle, thus making the horse useless. This is a curious instruction. But it has significance. The Lord had previously commanded, through Moses, that Israel was not to amass horses and chariots, for this could lead them into disobedience by traveling back to Egypt for trading and breeding the horses (Deut.17:16). Israel was also to know that their strength in war was due to the power of God, not to their number of horses and chariots; they were to trust only in the Lord (Ps.20:7).

The hearts of the wicked nations were hard, unrepentant, and hateful toward the God of Israel and His people, so much so that none but the Hivites of Gibeon tried to make peace with Israel. Joshua explained that this was the plan of God’s judgment: “that they should come against Israel in battle, that He might utterly destroy them” (11:20). They were under the ban and doomed to total destruction.

Joshua successfully fulfilled the divine mandate to purge the land of evil. “He left nothing undone of all that the Lord had commanded Moses” (11:15). This means that, as well as destroying the wicked inhabitants, he and the Israelite army broke down all their idolatrous places and idols. Therefore, the land was relatively peaceful, since the main battles had been won, and the land was also purged of idolatry and consecrated to God. Now the moment of settlement could finally arrive and the people of God could enjoy the Promised Land of their inheritance (11:23). Once again, God allowed Israel to enrich themselves with the spoil of war, and most of the cities were left intact so that the Israelites could simply move in and take up residence without having to do much work. Everything was already done for them as had been prophesied (cf. 24:13; Dut.6:10-11).

Chapter twelve briefly summarizes the various battles that took place over an extended period of time (11:18; about seven years, 14:7-10). The list of the thirty-one defeated kings from scattered locations within Canaan shows how extensive the conquest had been for the children of Israel. Yet we read that there were still portions of the land and inhabitants that had escaped Joshua’s

conquest (13:1). It was the responsibility of the tribes to continue the work of purging the land; for this they needed courage and perseverance.

Just as Moses and Joshua won the great battles which gave the children of God their freedom and inheritance, so our Lord Jesus Christ won the great battle for us on the cross, giving us redemption and freedom from sin. Yet, we, like the tribes, have to persevere and continue in the ongoing battle against sin and “fight the good fight”, claiming territory from Satan, bringing people from the kingdom of darkness to light that they also might “receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith” in Jesus Christ (Acts 26:18).

Prayer

You are a conquering God, O Lord. Grant us favor in Your sight through the cross of our Lord Jesus so that we may conquer and rout the deceit and wickedness of our human hearts. We desire to live in full surrender to You.