

The Lord's Victory and Israel's Rest (Joshua 11:1-23 & Hebrews 4:1-11)

14-Jun-26

Joshua 11:1-23

When Jabin king of Hazor heard of this, he sent word to Jobab king of Madon, to the kings of Shimron and Akshaph, ² and to the northern kings who were in the mountains, in the Arabah south of Kinnereth, in the western foothills and in Naphoth Dor on the west; ³ to the Canaanites in the east and west; to the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites and Jebusites in the hill country; and to the Hivites below Hermon in the region of Mizpah. ⁴ They came out with all their troops and a large number of horses and chariots—a huge army, as numerous as the sand on the seashore. ⁵ All these kings joined forces and made camp together at the Waters of Merom to fight against Israel.

⁶ The Lord said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid of them, because by this time tomorrow I will hand all of them, slain, over to Israel. You are to hamstring their horses and burn their chariots.”

⁷ So Joshua and his whole army came against them suddenly at the Waters of Merom and attacked them, ⁸ and the Lord gave them into the hand of Israel. They defeated them and pursued them all the way to Greater Sidon, to Misrephoth Maim, and to the Valley of Mizpah on the east, until no survivors were left. ⁹ Joshua did to them as the Lord had directed: He hamstrung their horses and burned their chariots.

¹⁰ At that time Joshua turned back and captured Hazor and put its king to the sword. (Hazor had been the head of all these kingdoms.) ¹¹ Everyone in it they put to the sword. They totally destroyed them, not sparing anyone that breathed, and he burned Hazor itself.

¹² Joshua took all these royal cities and their kings and put them to the sword. He totally destroyed them, as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded. ¹³ Yet Israel did not burn any of the cities built on their mounds—except Hazor, which Joshua burned. ¹⁴ The Israelites carried off for themselves all the plunder and livestock of these cities, but all the people they put to the sword until they completely destroyed them, not sparing anyone that breathed. ¹⁵ As the Lord commanded his servant Moses, so Moses commanded Joshua, and Joshua did it; he left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses.

¹⁶ So Joshua took this entire land: the hill country, all the Negev, the whole region of Goshen, the western foothills, the Arabah and the mountains of Israel with their foothills, ¹⁷ from Mount Halak, which rises toward Seir, to Baal Gad in the Valley of Lebanon below Mount Hermon. He captured all their kings and put them to death. ¹⁸ Joshua waged war against all these kings for a long time. ¹⁹ Except for the Hivites living in Gibeon, not one city made a treaty of peace with the Israelites, who took them all in battle. ²⁰ For it was the Lord himself who hardened their hearts to wage war against Israel, so that he might destroy them totally, exterminating them without mercy, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

²¹ At that time Joshua went and destroyed the Anakites from the hill country: from Hebron, Debir and Anab, from all the hill country of Judah, and from all the hill country of Israel. Joshua totally destroyed them and their towns. ²² No Anakites were left in Israelite territory; only in Gaza, Gath and Ashdod did any survive.

²³ So Joshua took the entire land, just as the Lord had directed Moses, and he gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal divisions. Then the land had rest from war.

Hebrews 4:1-11

A Sabbath-Rest for the People of God

4 Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. ² For we also have had the good news proclaimed to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because they did not share the faith of those who obeyed. ³ Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, “So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’”

And yet his works have been finished since the creation of the world. ⁴ For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: “On the seventh day God rested from all his works.” ⁵ And again in the passage above he says, “They shall never enter my rest.”

⁶ Therefore since it still remains for some to enter that rest, and since those who formerly had the good news proclaimed to them did not go in because of their disobedience, ⁷ God again set a certain day, calling it “Today.” This he did when a long time later he spoke through David, as in the passage already quoted:

“Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts.”

⁸ For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. ⁹ There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; ¹⁰ for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. ¹¹ Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience.

There are **Bibles** in front of you

And a sermon **outline**

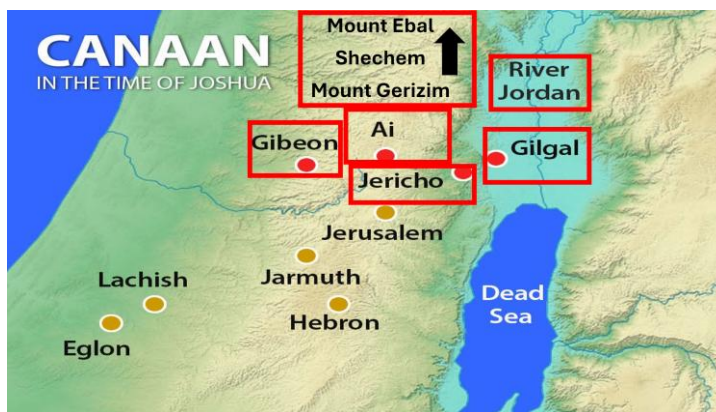
Please have your **Bibles opened** up at **Joshua chapter 11**

Let me pray first...

[Recap/Context \(Joshua 11:1-5\)](#)

Before we begin – let’s just **recap** where we got up to and get the **context** of today’s chapter

[Slide-Map]



So far, **Joshua and the Israelites**

[Click] made a **miraculous crossing** of the **River Jordan**

[Click] they made **camp** at **Gilgal** – where they **erected** some **stones** as a **memorial** of how **God helped** them cross the River

[Click] then they **conquered Jericho** – by simply **marching** around the city for **7 days** – and God brought the **walls of Jericho down!**

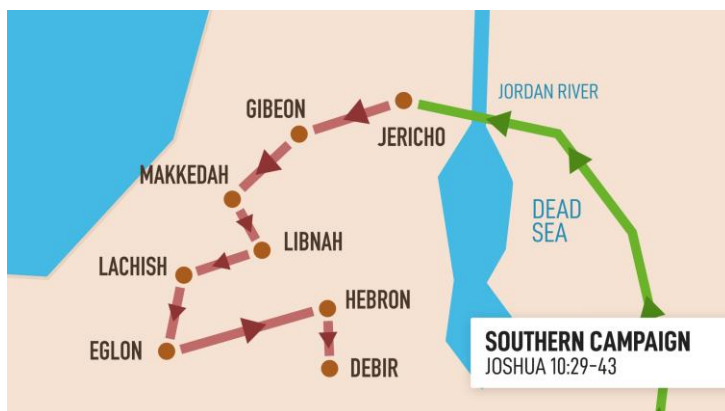
[Click] then they **conquered Ai** – but there was a slight **hiccup** when a guy named **Achan stole some silver and gold** from Jericho – which meant God wasn't with them in their first battle with Ai. But once **Achan's sin was dealt with - Ai was conquered.**

[Click] Joshua and the Israelites then went up north to **Shechem** – and at the Mountains of **Gerizim and Ebal** – God made the Israelites read from His Word – the **blessings** that the Israelites would receive if they were **obedient** to God – and the **curses** that would befall them if they were **disobedient** to God.

[Click] Then two weeks ago – the **people of Gibeon** – **pretended** to be from a **faraway city** and came to Joshua looking to make peace. **Joshua didn't check with God** if the Gibeonites were fair dinkum – and he **gave an oath to make peace** with them. Even when he found out that the Gibeonites had deceived him – **Joshua kept his oath** and the **Gibeonites** were made servants of the Israelites – working as **woodcutters** and **water carriers.**

Then last week – we saw how **Joshua** and the Israelites conquered the **Southern region of Canaan**

[Slide-Southern Campaign]



You can see the cities on the map that were conquered

Makkedah

Libnah

Lachish

Eglon

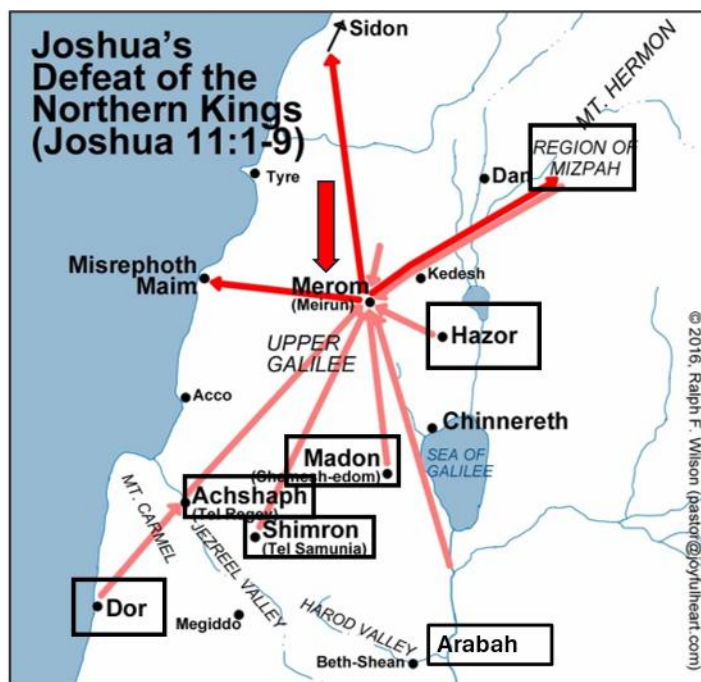
Hebron

And finally **Debir**

(pause)

That brings us to this week's chapter – chapter 11 – and Joshua and the Israelites **conquer the Northern part of Canaan**

[Slide-Northern Campaign]



V1 – When **King Jabin of Hazor** heard all that Israel and their God had done

Vv2-3 – He joined forces with the Kings of **Madon, Shimron, Akshaph, Arabah, Naphoth Dor, and Mizpah** – all marked on the map.

V4 – It’s a huge army – *as numerous as the sand on the seashore* – and they also had a large number of chariots and horses!

[Slide-Click-Merom]

V5 – They camped at **Merom** – ready to fight Israel

All this was prompted by what the northern kings heard about Israel’s success and victories so far.

As Christians, walking in victory we can become targets – especially when our Christian walk is going well – or our ministry is going well – the devil is awakened.

Despite their past victories – this next challenge for Israel was huge

[Slide-1st Point]

My 1st point – this morning – **“The Lord Wins the Battle for His People”** – that’s verses 6 to 15...

The Lord Wins the Battle for His People (Joshua 11:6-15)

Look at v6 - God told Joshua: ***“Do not be afraid of them, because by this time tomorrow I will hand all of them, slain, over to Israel. You are to hamstring their horses and burn their chariots.”***

God would not have told Joshua - not to be afraid – unless there was fear amongst the Israelites.

God’s reassurance would have been of great encouragement to Joshua and the Israelites; especially facing such a huge army with advanced military expertise of chariots and horses!

“Do not be afraid” is a **major theme** in the book of Joshua – and it reminds us that we do not have to be afraid in whatever challenges we face – because God is with us!

As the Apostle Paul reminds us in Romans 8:31 – *“If God is for us – who can be against us!”*

The challenges facing Israel seem to grow at every stage — from Jericho, to Ai, to the southern kings, and now to this great northern alliance.

Our Christian lives can often feel the same. As we walk with the Lord, the challenges we face may increase rather than decrease. Yet God uses each past victory to strengthen our faith and prepare us for the battles still ahead.

With the knowledge that God is with him and that God will give the enemy to them – Joshua and the Israelites – **obey immediately** – v7 – Joshua and his whole army make a sudden surprise attack at the waters of Merom.

The northern enemy was caught off guard – they were just assembling their army – when they were attacked!

And v8 – God gave the enemy into Israel’s hands – and the enemy is chased to the northern limits of Canaan.

And then v9 – is not the best verse for animal lovers [[the RSPCA may have to be informed](#)] – Joshua does exactly what he was told in v6 – and the enemies’ horses are hamstringed – and their chariots are burned.

There are **two reasons** for this

1st – So the enemy can’t use the chariots and horses anymore

2nd – So the Israelites can't use the chariots and horses either – they are to fully rely on God to fight the battle for them!

A little lesson here for us not to use the “devil's tools”...For example:

- A Christian businessperson might use dishonest practices because “that's how the industry works”
- A Christian might use gossip, revenge, or public shaming to defeat an opponent instead of the truth, patience, and forgiveness
- A minister might use charm, charisma, marketing, or entertainment more than prayer and faithful preaching from God's Word

Then in vv10-14 we see the complete destruction of the northern kings and their cities.

God has won the victory and completed His judgment on the wickedness of the Canaanites. And remember — this judgment had been foretold over 400 years earlier in Abraham's time. In Genesis 15:16, God said that Abraham's *descendants would return to the land only when “the sin of the Amorites” had reached its full measure.*

God's judgment did not come quickly or impulsively. For centuries He had been patient, but now the time of judgment had finally come.

And notice again in v15 – the complete obedience of Joshua – everything the Lord commanded Moses, Moses commanded Joshua, and Joshua did it – and left nothing undone!

Application

What we see here is that God promises victory, gives Joshua and the Israelites instructions and the response from Joshua is faithful obedience.

This continued pattern of obedience is also a major theme of the Book of Joshua. When Joshua and the Israelites fully obey God, things go smoothly; when they disobey God, it's a disaster!

They cannot expect God's protection if they don't obey God!

Likewise – Jesus has given us victory over sin, death and Satan.

The lesson for us is also to respond with faithful obedience to God — even when His commands do not make sense to us at first.

For us today, that might mean:

- forgiving someone who has deeply hurt us,
- loving our enemies instead of seeking revenge,
- remaining honest when dishonesty would benefit us,
- giving generously when we feel we do not have enough,
- or continuing to pray and trust God when we cannot yet see what He is doing.

God often calls His people to walk by faith, not by sight.

How can we remain faithful and obedient to God when we face long struggles or seasons of hardship?

Well - here are some ways:

- By trusting God's promises rather than the circumstances that we face

- Through worship, Bible study and devotions we can draw closer to God and this encourages us to be faithful and obedient!
- By having a greater knowledge of God's Word, so that we understand that God is always with His people
- Through faithful prayer and dependence on the Holy Spirit
- By encouraging one another in our Christian community
- By remembering what God did in the past
- By fixing our eyes on Jesus and persevering day by day
- Persevering in our trials in God's strength allows us to remain faithful and obedient
- Just like Joshua obeyed God fully, and our Lord Jesus obeyed His Father fully – we too are called to obey God fully!

My 2nd point – this morning is – “**The Lord Gives Rest to His People**” – that's verses 16 to 23...

[Slide-2nd Point]

The Lord Gives Rest to His People (Joshua 11:16-23 and Hebrews 4:8-10)

Vv16-17 – give a summary of the **whole conquest of Canaan** – Joshua has conquered from Mount Halak in the South to Mount Hermon in the North.

V18 says the war was **a long time**. We can estimate it to be about **7 years** based on the age of **Caleb** (14:7,10) – who was 40 when Moses sent him into Canaan to spy – and was 85 at the end of the conquest. If we then take off the 38 years of wandering in the wilderness after he returned from spying. We are left with 7 years for the conquest.

V19 – tells us the Hivites (aka Gibeonites) were the only ones who made a peace treaty

And V20 – tells us all the other cities/people were wiped out because **the Lord hardened their hearts.**

What we need to realise is that these cities/people hated Israel's God and hated the Israelites so much – God knew their hearts – so He handed them over to the sin that was in their hearts and hardened their hearts (Romans 1:24-28)

God doesn't make mistakes – if there were any people in Canaan who were inclined to believe in Israel's God – they would have been preserved!

There is a warning here for us – that if someone we know – gets so tied up in a hatred and unforgiveness – we must encourage them to repent and forgive – lest their hearts become so hard that God leaves them in that sin!

After all this – vv21-22 – there is **one more enemy** to tackle

Joshua went and destroyed the **Anakites!**

The Anakites are mentioned back in the book of Numbers 13:28-33 when Moses sent spies into Canaan – and the spies came back and reported there were Anakites on Canaan who were giants!

The Anakites were like the incredible hulks of Canaan – and back in Moses' day the people were so afraid of them – they didn't want to go anywhere near Canaan.

But here we are 40 years later – and these giant Anakites are no match for God and His people!

It's no coincidence that the Israelites faced these giants last – after God had trained the Israelites in battle during their conquest of Canaan!

God knows how to manage the battles in our lives.

And we must allow God to manage those battles. All too often we are convinced that we must go out and fight the giants in our lives first, when God wants us to face them last.

Joshua wiped most of the Anakites – but v22 – some remained in Gaza, Gath and Ashdod. In a nice twist – five hundred years later – a giant called **Goliath** – would come from Gath – and would be taken down by a young shepherd boy called David!

What giants stand before us today? Fear, sin, suffering, opposition? Remember: the battle belongs to the Lord.

(pause)

And so we come to the last verse – v23 -

V23 - So Joshua took the entire land, just as the Lord had directed Moses, and he gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal divisions. Then the land had rest from war.

We should not be surprised that the Lord gave Joshua and the Israelites victory – and that the land had **rest** from war!

Back in Exodus 33:14 God said: “***My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.***”

And in Deuteronomy 12:10 Moses said: *But you will cross the Jordan and settle in the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, and he will give you rest from all your enemies around you so that you will live in safety.*

So – the land has rest – and can breathe – and the people can rest from war too – just as God had promised.

But if we know our history of Israel – the rest Joshua’s victory brought was only **temporary**.

But there is a **greater Joshua** – who brings **a greater rest!**

And that’s where our **NT reading from Hebrews 4:1-11** comes in

[If you would like to turn to Hebrews 4 in your Bibles]

In Summary - Hebrews 4:1–11 reminds believers that although God promised His people rest, many of the Israelites in the wilderness never entered it because they responded with unbelief and disobedience. Even after Joshua led Israel into the land, God still spoke later through King David [Psalm 95:7-8] about a future “Today,” showing that the true and final rest had not yet been fully reached. That greater rest is now found in Jesus — rest from striving to save ourselves, and ultimately the eternal rest of God’s kingdom. Therefore, believers are urged not to harden their hearts like the Israelites did, but to persevere in faithful obedience because God still offers His rest “today.”

This rest is in a **person** not a **place** — in **Jesus Christ**. If you meet a troubled, crying child and try to comfort them and give them rest using ideas and logic, it

won't do much good. But when mummy comes, the child is happy again. In the same way, our true rest is not ultimately found in a place, a program, or other people — but in **ONE** person: the Lord Jesus Christ!

This **rest** for us is **three-fold**

1st – there is - **A Present Rest — Rest in Jesus Now**

Jesus gives spiritual **rest** now to all who trust in Him.

This present **rest** includes:

- Rest from trying to earn salvation by our own works. As Hebrews 4:10 says, *“**anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from their works.**”* We no longer rely on our own efforts to make ourselves righteous before God.
- Instead, through Jesus’ death and resurrection, we are forgiven, declared right with God, and have peace with Him.

Jesus Himself says in **Matthew 11:28–30**:

*“**Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.**”*

You see - Jesus also gives rest for our weary souls in the midst of life’s burdens.

The image is of us being yoked together with Him. Normally a yoke means sharing a heavy load, but with Jesus the burden becomes light — not because life is easy, but because He carries what would otherwise crush us.

2nd there is - **A Future Rest** — An Eternal Rest with God

Hebrews 4 also points forward to the final rest believers will one day enjoy in God's presence — a rest free from sin, suffering, temptation, death, and spiritual conflict.

That is why Hebrews 4:11 says: “*Let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest.*”

Christians already belong to Christ and already know His peace, yet we still await the fullness of all He has promised. One day, God's people will enjoy perfect and **eternal rest** with God in His eternal kingdom.

3rd – there is - **A Sabbath Rest Fulfilled**

The “**Sabbath-rest**” spoken of in Hebrews 4 points back to several important themes throughout the Bible:

- God resting on the Sabbath (Seventh) day after creation (Genesis 2),
- Israel finding rest in the Promised Land after the conquest
- And the weekly Sabbath rest God commanded His people to enjoy - the Sabbath Day was meant to be a gift from God — a reminder that His people were not slaves endlessly striving, but people who could rest in Him. Yet many Christians today struggle to slow down and truly rest in God's grace on the Sabbath.
- Ultimately, the Sabbath points forward to Jesus Christ, who gives the true and lasting rest that the Old Testament Sabbath only anticipated.

Conclusion

To finish up then - Joshua 11 reminds us that **the Lord both fights for His people and gives them rest** – and Joshua ultimately points us to Jesus greater victory over sin, death, and Satan — and He gives us true rest for our souls now and forever.

That is why the Apostle Paul says in Romans 8 – **we are more the conquerors:**

[Slide-Romans 8:37-39]

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Let's pray

Heavenly Father, thank You for reminding us through Joshua 11 that You are faithful, powerful, and worthy of our trust. Help us not to be afraid when we face difficulties, but to walk in obedience and faith each day. Strengthen us to persevere through long battles and to fix our eyes on Jesus, who gives true victory and eternal rest. May Your Holy Spirit help us encourage one another and live faithfully for You. In Jesus' name, Amen.