

He Turned Aside From Nothing

Joshua 11:10-15.

Sunday, May 9, 2010

I. Joshua turns back... Vs. 10.

- A. That is he turned back from the pursuit of the remnants of Jabin's great army comprised of a coalition of many kings in the northern region of the land.
- B. It had been an army "with as many people as the sand on the seashore in multitude with very many horses and chariots." Vs. 4
If we may believe the testimony of the historian Josephus, there were 300,000 foot soldiers, 10,000 men on horses, and 20,000 Egyptian chariots with their horses.
- C. This had been a great victory which the Lord worked for His people Israel. They had been greatly outnumbered, and had nothing to put over against the horses and chariots of the Canaanite army.
Like the Psalmist later, they had learned to say, "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will trust in the Name of the Lord our God."
They learned again in a new way that safety and victory ultimately come from the Lord and not from numbers and equipment.

II. This turning back was not a retreat.

- A. Our text says that Joshua turned back and took Hazor. Vs. 10.
- B. He burned Hazor with fire because it was the principal city, and it was the head of all the other city-states whose kings made up this coalition, and who no doubt owed their allegiance to Jabin, the king of Hazor. Thus Joshua made an example out of Hazor, utterly destroying this great city.
- C. Furthermore, this was not a retreat because our text says that, "all the cities of those kings (of the coalition headed by Jabin), Joshua took..."
- D. None of the inhabitants of Hazor, the principal city, and all the surrounding city-states were left alive; "they left none breathing." Vs. 14.
- E. The surrounding cities themselves however Joshua spared, and he gave them, together with all the spoils, to the people, for them to inherit them.
- F. These cities are said to have stood "on their mounds." The Hebrew word is "tel," and it means a mound or a hill that is created by successive city ruins, and the rebuilding on top of the old ruins. Many such mounds dot the landscape of Israel to this very day as is indicated by the vast number of towns and villages that have the term "Tel" in their name.

III. The testing of Joshua's Faith.

It is worth our while to stop here for a few brief moments to consider what Joshua's faith went through by way of testing and stretching in these events.

- A. Joshua's faith was stretched and tested when he was put over against such a formidable opponent. Would he, and could he put himself in the Lord's hand, and go on the offensive against such an overwhelming and intimidating enemy? What about the women and children, the wives and possessions left in Gilgal? Was Joshua not putting them all in Jeopardy by doing so? What about being prudent; is not prudence a virtue?

Application:

Here we see that there is a certain holy recklessness to faith; a recklessness that is seen in Abraham when he packs up his house in Ur of the Chaldeans and starts wandering, “not knowing where he was going,” and again when he goes to offer up Isaac on Mount Moriah. It is seen in Moses when he abandons his privileged status as a prince in Egypt, and joins the persecuted people of God. It is seen in countless others on the pages of the history of the people of God. (Think of Rebekah.)

Do not be surprised if you were to encounter such moments in your life, and yet approach such moments prayerfully, thoughtfully and prudently. At such times take the spirit and disposition of Abraham’s servant, Eliezer, as recorded in Genesis 24.

Finally, think of the Lord Jesus Christ here as He approaches the cross, and He “recklessly” abandons Himself into the Father’s hands while embracing the painful and shameful death of the cross.

- B. His faith is stretched and tested yet again when the Lord tells him to hamstring what must have been about 30,000 horses, and to burn 20,000 Egyptian chariots. Incidentally: A horse is hamstrung by severing the tendon of the largest and most powerful muscle in the horse’s rear legs. It does not keep the horse from walking as it still has the use of smaller and less powerful muscles in its legs. It will keep the horse from running however, and from pulling heavy loads, and walking great distances as well.

This must have been something that went totally against all the military instincts Joshua possessed as a general. It must have gone against all the instincts Joshua possessed as a human being. What a colossal waste this seemed to be; what eminently useful equipment was going to waste here!

This is how it must have seemed to the disciples when the Lord told them over and over again that He was going to Jerusalem to suffer and die. He was such a talented man; He was so good and wise and He did so much good! And now he was going to throw it all away? No wonder Peter took Him to task over this saying “This shall not happen to You!” Matt 16:22.

- C. Finally let us not underestimate the stretching and testing of Joshua’s faith when he must put to death the entire Canaanite population. Old and grey-haired men and women; pregnant women; mothers clinging to their nursing infants. All this was to be done, not out of the base fallen carnal instincts of the sinful human condition, but from hearts that had risen to the place of fellowship with the God in whose eyes they had found mercy. It must have seemed all so questionable; not like things good and godly people would do. No doubt this gave rise to several instances where Israel failed to put all the natives of the land to death. Yet not so with Joshua. By faith he received a good testimony Hebrews 11:2. It literally reads like this in vs. 15: “He turned aside from nothing of all that the Lord had commanded Moses.” So did also the greater Joshua, the Lord Jesus, in giving Himself to the work that the Father had prepared for Him to do. He had this testimony: “This is My beloved son in whom I am well pleased.” And in this same spirit we may have this same testimony one day: “Well done, good and faithful servant.”