

Joshua's Northern Campaign.

Joshua 11: 1-9.

Sunday evening, April 25, 2010.

I. Another coalition.

- A. Jabin, the king of Hazor, heard of Joshua's campaign in the south-land.
Hazor was a city about seven miles North of the Sea of Galilee. It was the major city of the region. It is likely that the other kings in the region were under tribute to Jabin, and therefore at Jabin's disposal.
- B. The region from which this coalition of forces is formed was very large. It included all of Galilee, from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River; the Southern half of today's Lebanon, and the region East of the Jordan river known today as the Golan Heights of Syria.
- C. This force far outnumbered any army Israel could put together. Our text says that it was an army that was as the sand on the seashore in multitude. Josephus, in commenting on this battle, records that there were 300,000 foot soldiers; 10,000 men on horses, and 20,000 Egyptian chariots.
- D. It seems that the Canaanite kings chose the location of the battle for they positioned themselves on the fairly level land surrounding Lake Merom, (now lake Huleh) and located on the Jordan River, about ten miles upstream from the Sea of Galilee. This area would have favored the use of their horses and horse-drawn chariots.
- E. Israel had never fought a battle against such a formidable opponent.
Humanly speaking Israel was on a fool's errand.
 1. The sheer numbers were absolutely overwhelming.
 2. Israel had no horses nor chariots.
 3. Israel had no experience in fighting an enemy which had horses and chariots, much less an enemy which had these in overwhelming numbers.

II. Provision and Reassurance.

Lest the hearts of the people would be terrified at such a formidable opponent, the Lord comes to Joshua and speaks words of reassurance to him. The Lord assures Joshua of the victory the Lord will give him, and He also indicates the timing of the confrontation. It is to be the next day. "Tomorrow, about this time, I will deliver all of them slain before Israel." Joshua 11:6.

Application:

It is instructive to see how Israel is providentially brought to this battle. The Lord started them off with smaller ones. At first it was just the city of Jericho, followed by the city of Ai. Then it builds up to a coalition of cities and kings in the South of the land. God is training His people in warfare. Each time He shows them how He goes before them, and how it is He who gives them the victory, (or withholds it as in Ai.)

There are a few principles at work here:

1. The Lord proportions our strength to our battles, and our battles to our strength.
"As your days, so shall your strength be." Deuteronomy 33:25.
2. The supernatural help Israel received from the Lord was not meant to do the work for

her, rather it was meant to teach Israel to give herself vigorously, and without reservation, to the work that the Lord had called her to do.

3. So it was with the early preaching of the gospel in the NT age. The early onslaughts against the kingdom of darkness were accompanied by many supernatural signs. Once the truth of the message preached was thus fully established, God's servants had to learn that victory and progress would come along the ways of applying themselves to the work God had called them to do, and by the use of ordinary means.

III. Regarding the horses and chariots...

- A. The Lord reminds Joshua that he is to hamstring the horses. This was done to the back legs where all the strength of the horse is located. A tendon is severed rendering the horse useless for war or labor or travel.
In Deuteronomy 17:16 the multiplication of horses was forbidden to Israel by the Lord.
- B. The chariots were to be burned with fire. Chariots were not directly forbidden by the Lord, but as these were horse drawn implements of warfare, the prohibition of horses would by implication involve the chariots as well. As such their destruction is ordered along with the directive regarding the horses.

Application:

Why was Israel forbidden to multiply horses, and by implication chariots as well?

1. It was because the Lord wished to keep His people humbly dependent on Himself.
The carnal heart is very eager to put its trust in our own strength and provisions.
2. It is hurtful to the life of faith, and to our walk with God, to possess things that draw our hearts away from the Lord and cause us to trust in ourselves.
3. It is better to be without worldly advantages than to have them at the expense of the welfare of our souls.
4. Joshua and the people of Israel self-consciously practice self-denial here.
Purposefully they say "No" to keeping these horses and chariots which, humanly speaking, certainly could have come in handy.
5. Purposefully they say "Yes" to the Lord, and they choose Him for their protection and provision and for the portion of their souls.

Have you ever turned down, or turned away from, a situation or an opportunity bringing you great worldly advantage; perhaps a large amount of money or a certain job or business opportunity, or some association with a well known or high placed person because you deemed it dangerous to the welfare of your soul?

Would you ever do so? Are you alert to the possibility that you may have to make such choices at some point?

Even more than this, have you ever turned down a situation or opportunity for the welfare of the souls of others? This the Lord Jesus did when He emptied Himself and became a poor servant to make many rich. 2 Corinthians 8:9.