

Then the Land Rested From War.

Joshua 11:16-23

Sunday evening, May 23, 2010.

- I. It was a rest from a protracted war.
 - A. Our text says that “Joshua made war a long time with all those kings.”
Conservative estimates are that it took Joshua at least 25 years to conquer all of the promised land.
 - B. It was large in area.
 1. Our text looks at the land from West to East, mentioning the lowland or the coastal plain along the Mediterranean Sea; next the mountain range which separates the coastal plain from the Jordan Valley, and finally the Jordan Plain or Valley. In addition two other regions are singled out: Goshen, which is the rich pasture land stretching out North-westward from Jerusalem, and “All the South,” which is the Negev Desert today.
 2. Next Joshua describes the land looking at it from South to North. From Mount Halak, which is midway between the Southern tip of the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aquaba, and the ascent of Seir, which is the land South-east of the Dead sea where the descendants of Esau lived. This was the Southern boundary. Looking to the North, the boundary was the Valley of Lebanon, through which the Litani river flows today, and Mount Hermon where the Jordan river originates.
 - C. Joshua is now estimated to be about 100 yrs. old; he would live to be 110 years old. Bringing Israel into the promised land and settling her there was Joshua’s life work.
- II. It was a rest that constituted peace from the Canaanites; not with the Canaanites.
 - A. Peace with the Canaanites was forbidden.
 - B. Utter destruction of all the Canaanite people was commanded. The measure of their iniquity was now full.
- III. It was a rest that could not come about until even the Giants were driven from the mountains.
 - A. They are referred to as the Anakim, or the sons of Anak. Some of them survived until the days of David who slew one of the Anakim, Goliath of Gath. Goliath stood 9’4” tall according to 1 Samuel 17:4.
 - B. No wonder the 10 spies who brought an evil report concerning the land upon their return said that they looked like grasshoppers in the sight of these giants.
 - C. Bringing the land to the place of peace meant for Joshua, among other things, that he had to face and defeat these giants. And with god’s help he did.
- IV. The hardening of the Canaanites hearts.
 - A. Our text says that the Lord hardened the hearts of the Canaanites... that He might utterly destroy them, and that they might receive no mercy, but that He

might destroy them.

- B. Since there is other Scripture saying that the Lord does not delight in the death of the wicked, and that He is not the Author of evil (such as the evil of hardened hearts), how do we understand statements such as these?
1. The answer lies in the process that hardens the heart. It is not an evil process; not a process that has evil as its intention.
 2. As a matter of fact it is a good and gracious process. It is the very same process that leads the elect to their salvation.
 3. Whenever the power and the glory, the wisdom and truth, the grace and goodness and longsuffering of God are manifested in the sight of sinners, there will follow one of two kinds of results: Either their hearts are broken or at least softened (As with the Gibeonites), or their hearts are hardened as Pharaoh's heart was hardened as a result of encountering the mighty and wise arm of the Lord.
 4. Encountering any manifestation of God's power and wisdom; grace and goodness, is a work of grace on God's part; it is Him extending an opportunity for repentance to sinners. "Do you not know that it is the goodness of God that leads you to repentance?" Romans 2:4.
 5. So it went with the Pharaoh of Egypt, and so it went with the Canaanites. Both lived under the clear manifestations of God's power and wisdom, His grace and goodness, toward His own people. When such manifestations of God are resisted, increasing hardness of the heart is the inevitable result. Iron that is red-hot (as the sinners heart is with sin), when it comes in contact with cold water (the cool, refreshing, living water of grace), either cracks and breaks or is greatly hardened as a result.
 6. By manifesting Himself plainly in the sight of the Canaanites the Lord did in fact deliver them over to the hardening of their hearts, which is what their evil nature dictated them to do. The Lord however can not be charged with any wrongdoing in the process as He was only good and gracious to them in the process. He could have overturned them all at once as He did with Sodom and Gomorrah.

Applications:

1. Do not be surprised that the battles leading us into rest are long and protracted ones.
2. You can never enter into rest by making peace with the Canaanites of your old nature.. They must be executed by uniting them to the cross of Christ.
3. To enter into rest you will have to face, and with God's help defeat, some giants.
- 4.. Pray for god's grace to soften and break your heart, and be aware and guarded about the possibility of hardening your heart.

A redemptive historical perspective:

Even though Joshua did lead Israel into rest acc. to Vs. 23, Hebr. 4 enlarges on this theme saying that it was not the ultimate rest God had in mind. David would later speak of an as yet future rest as quoted in Hebr. 4:7. The true and ultimate rest is provided for us by the Lord Jesus Christ. Inwardly already here and now. Outwardly in the new heavens and earth. Joshua's rest spoken of in Josh. 11:23 could be no more than a shadow of the true and eternal rest. Let us be diligent to enter into the true rest provided by Christ.