

LESSON THREE

THE CONQUESTS OF JOSHUA

A. THE LAND OF CANAAN:

The land of Canaan was an area of cities. There was no central government but many cities, each with its own king. To conquer the land meant to defeat each city in turn. Egypt was nominal overlord but the present Pharaoh was very little interested in his domain, and left the individual cities of Canaan to themselves as prizes of conquest for Israel. This does not mean that Israel's task was to be easy. The spies, 39 years before had given a true report, in speaking of Canaanites as vigorous people and their cities as strongly fortified.

The Canaanites fought frequently among themselves and with outside foes, which kept their warriors in fighting trim and well equipped. The cities were built to withstand siege for months at a time. Sometimes these cities banded together against a common enemy as they later did against Joshua, in both a southern and northern confederacy. Beside this the land was mountainous. It was a rugged country, difficult in which to travel and to fight wars.

Canaan was advanced in material culture. Cities were well laid out. Workers were skilled, and pottery was among the finest in the world. Extensive trade was conducted with foreign countries. In technical knowledge the Canaanites were much in advance of the Israelites who had spent the past forty years in the desert. This led to a grave danger for Israel. The danger was that the advanced knowledge of the Canaanites would influence the Israelites and eventually lead them to accept the worship of the Canaanite Baal.

Apparently God revealed the strategy of Moses to him. It was to attack the land at its midpoint, coming in from the east, and to divide it into a south and north section and then each of these to be conquered separately. He very likely had shared this plan with Joshua who now prepared to carry it out.

B. JERICHO:

The ancient city of Jericho lay directly before the children of Israel when they crossed over Jordan. It was located some five miles west of the Jordan and seven miles north of the Dead Sea. It was about average size for the cities of that day, covering an area of about eight acres. A great wall encircled the city of such strength and size that houses were built on it. It is thought that these walls were possibly forty to fifty feet high.

One day while Joshua was inspecting the city the Lord appeared to him. The Lord appeared to him as a man with a sword drawn in his hand and he told Joshua that he was the captain of the host of the Lord. The Lord gave Joshua definite instructions how he was to conquer Jericho. The plans were to have men of war, led by seven priests carrying the ark, walk around the city once each day for six days, and seven times on the seventh. At the close of the thirteenth time the priests should blow trumpets and the people shout with a loud voice. When they did the walls of the city would collapse and the army would enter. The plan was carried out as told to Joshua by the Lord. Thirteen times the city was encircled and the walls fell flat when the trumpets were blown and the people shouted. The army took the city with ease. All the people of the city were killed with the exception of Rahab and her family, and the city was leveled by

fire. No Israelite was permitted to enrich himself by spoil for God had placed a ban on the city declaring that it was a kind of firstfruits to Himself. Valuable metals, gold, silver and bronze were placed in God's treasury. Joshua further pronounced a curse on any that would rebuild the city.

C. ACHAN:

A great lesson is taught here of God's dealings with personal sin. The victory of the nation depended on personal obedience. God's displeasure because of disobedience was shown in the defeat of the army of Israel at Ai.

The city of Ai was the next objective before Israel. A small party was sent out by Joshua to inspect the city. They were not impressed by Ai's strength and advised that merely two or three thousand would be sufficient to take the city. Joshua sent the larger number - 3,000, but still they were defeated by the men of Ai who killed 36 men as Israel's army fled.

The reason for the defeat was the existence of sin in Israel's camp. Achan, of the tribe of Judah had sinned in disregarding God's ban on the items from Jericho and took for himself a Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver and a fifty shekel bar of gold. God revealed to Joshua that such a sin had been committed and told him to make inquiry as to the identity of the guilty party. The fault was found to be with Achan who had hidden these goods in his tent. These were recovered from their hiding place and Achan, his family, and all his possessions were stoned and burned.

Joshua now prepared to attack Ai the second time. He sent an ambush to hide in the valley between Ai and Bethel. The next day Joshua led another force in a frontal attack, and when the men of Ai came out from the city Joshua's force again retreated as if defeated. The ambush then arose and attacked the army of Ai from behind. Joshua's force then turned and the enemy was trapped. The result was that all 12,000 of the male inhabitants of Ai were killed, the king hanged and the city reduced to rubble. This time God permitted the Israelites to take of the spoil.

Here the Israelites were taught two lessons: the seriousness of sin and the error of overconfidence.

D. THE GIBEONITES:

Another great lesson was taught to Israel by the story of the Gibeonites. Everyone can be deceived if they fail to ask council of the Lord. One should not rest upon past experiences but ask God's guidance in every issue. By not doing this Joshua was tricked into making a league with the Gibeonites.

These people heard of Israel's early successes and saw wisdom in making peace with Israel. They contrived a trick wearing worn out clothing and bearing moldy bread to make themselves appear to have traveled from a distant country. They asked Israel to make a treaty of peace with them and it was granted. This was contrary to God's instruction, however, and the Israelites were held responsible though tricked because they had not asked council of the Lord (Joshua 9:14). When Joshua learned that they had been tricked, he and the elders kept the treaty but forced the Gibeonites to serve as hewers of wood and drawers of water unto the entire congregation. One good thing that came of this was the fact that Israel gained control in some cities in the central part of the land without having to fight.

E. THE SOUTHERN CAMPAIGN:

When news of the capitulation of Gibeon reached the other cities in the south, an alliance was made to resist Israel by first attacking Gibeon. Five kings formed an alliance and marched against Gibeon. They were first, Jerusalem; second, Hebron; third, Jermuth; fourth, Lachish; fifth, Eglon. The Gibeonites appealed to Joshua for help, and Joshua brought his troops by forced march the twenty-four miles distance, to Gibeon in one night. He took the attackers by surprise, routed them and pursued after them. The armies of the southern kings fled down the hills and God rained hailstones upon them. More died from these stones than by the swords of the Israelites. The five kings were captured and beheaded.

With this battle won, Joshua pressed on to conquer cities in all the southern area. Joshua continued south to subdue all the lower part of the land. His army even reached Kadesh-Barnea. Finally, Joshua returned to Gibeon where the campaign had started. Several months must have been occupied in making this extensive campaign. The cities had fallen with comparative ease. However, one city was not conquered at this time and that was the city of Jerusalem. It was not conquered until David seized it much later, then making it the capitol.

F. JOSHUA'S LONG DAY: (Joshua 10:12-14).

As Joshua stood on a hill watching the enemy flee before his troops he feared that the Canaanites might escape and so he commanded the sun and the moon to stand still, which they did until the conquest was complete. The verb translated "stand still" basically means "be silent," and so in some way it could be that God controlled the light and permitted Joshua to have a long day. We should note that it states "about" a whole day. It is thought that in the miracle as recorded in the twentieth chapter of II Kings when the shadow on the sun dial went back ten degrees for Hezekiah which was actually forty minutes, that this made up an exact day. In other words, Joshua's long day would be 23 hours and 20 minutes, and the other 40 minutes would be found in the miracle performed by the prophet Isaiah for Hezekiah. Science confirms the fact that there is a day that cannot be accounted for except by this miracle that took place for Joshua.

G. DEFEAT OF THE NORTHERN CONFEDERACY:

The northern or Galilean district now alone remained to be subdued. News of Joshua's remarkable conquest of the south traveled north and reached the ears of Jabin, powerful king of Hazor. Jabin fearing an attack on his region formed a confederacy. He planned to do better than the southern alliance by gathering a greater force. This confederacy grouped its forces in the vicinity of the waters of Meron, and the host numbered like the sand that is upon the seashore (Joshua 11:4). Joshua moved north and attacked them and probably surprised them. The huge enemy army was routed and chased far to the west. Joshua followed up this triumph by smiting with the edge of the sword. He then returned to the city of Hazor and burned it, something he did not do to the other cities.

This completed the conquest of Canaan though many areas were bypassed and resistance continued until the time of David. One principle region escaped Joshua's forces - that was the Mediterranean coastline. For the most part the coastal territory remained untouched, and was not completely subdued until conquered by David.

LESSON THREE

SELF HELP TEST

Fill in the blanks with the correct words:

1. _____ covered an area of about eight acres.
2. Israel was defeated at _____ because of sin.
3. Israel was deceived by the _____.
4. The shadow on the sun dial went back forty minutes for _____.
5. The city of _____ was burned by Joshua.
6. The land of _____ was an area of city states.
7. _____ was nominal overlord of Canaan.
8. Jericho was located five miles from _____.
9. Everyone in Jericho was killed except _____ and her family.
10. The king of _____ was one who marched against Gibeon.
11. The army of Joshua reached as far as _____.
12. Achan took a _____ garment.
13. The northern armies gathered near the waters of _____.
14. The Israelites marched around Jericho _____ times.
15. Joshua's long day was 23 hours and _____ minutes.
16. _____ formed the northern confederacy against Joshua.

Use these words to fill in the above blanks:

Hezekiah	Gibeonites	Jericho	Ai
Jordan	Hazor	Egypt	Canaan
Babylonian	Rahab	Eglon	Kadesh-Barnea
Jabin	Meron	thirteen	twenty