

# The Conquest of Northern Canaan

## Introduction

### a. objectives

1. subject – The Israelites complete the conquest of northern Canaan and the destruction of the Anakim
2. aim – To cause us to understand the compatibility of God's will over against the hardened human will
3. passage – Joshua 11:1-23

### b. outline

1. The Conquest of Hazor (Joshua 11:1-15)
2. The Conquest of Northern Canaan (Joshua 11:16-20)
3. The Conquest of the Anakim (Joshua 11:21-23)

### c. opening

1. the **structure** of this chapter
  - a. **IMO:** the chapter contains three (3) pericopes, based on a comparison of **vv. 6, 18, 21**
    1. the first pericope (**vv. 1-15**) describes the destruction of another Canaanite alliance
      - a. **v. 6** = events that occur in a short period of time (**i.e.** a few days)
    2. the second pericope (**vv. 16-20**) describes the *long-term* conquest of N Canaan
      - a. **v. 18** = events that occur over a period of about seven years (**see below**)
    3. the third pericope (**vv. 21-23**) describes the destruction of the Anakim
      - a. **vv. 21** = sometime within the period described in the second pericope
  - b. **IOW:** **chap. 11** describes the conquest of N Canaan (**i.e.** above Jerusalem) over a period of time, starting with *another* alliance needing to be dealt with, and including the overthrow of an "old foe"
    1. this chapter ends the *narrative* section of the *original Conquest* under Joshua
      - a. **chap. 12** will summarize the kings defeated under Moses and Joshua
      - b. **chap. 13** will begin the division of the land amongst the tribes by Joshua
  - c. **i.e.** the S territory was taken care of in **chap. 10** (and in a single *long* day); the N territory will take a longer period of time (because it is much more populous; **see below**)

## I. The Conquest of Hazor (Joshua 11:1-15)

### Content

#### a. another alliance made against Israel (vv. 1-5)

1. (**again**) an alliance of Canaanite kings gathers against Israel (**i.e.** taking an *offensive* tact)
2. this alliance is led by Jabin, king of the ancient city-state of Hazor
  - a. Hazor is located N of the Sea of Galilee, in the far NE hill country (**i.e.** the area just above 1<sup>st</sup> C Capernaum; the E border of the area of Jesus' N ministry)
  - b. his **initial alliance** (**i.e.** his immediate allies) include the cities of: Madon (king Jobab), Shimron (unnamed king), and Achshaph (unnamed king)
    1. these four (4) specific kings are mentioned in the list of **chap. 12** as defeated by Joshua
  - c. his **larger alliance** (**i.e.** allies around him) include the kings in: the N hill country (around Hazor), the Arabah S of Chinneroth (**i.e.** the W shore of the Sea of Galilee), the lowland (**i.e.** around the upper Jordan River, the Naphoth-dot W (? along the Mediterranean, SW of Hazor)
  - d. his **complete alliance** (**i.e.** at-large forces willing to join him) include: the Canaanites in the E and W (**i.e.** others in his own cultural background), various groups in the hill country (**i.e.** scattered Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites), and the Hivites under Hermon in Mizpah (**i.e.** not Gibeon)
3. this alliance is described as "*a great horde ... like the sand that is on the seashore*"
  - a. a massive number of armed men flowing out of the various city-states throughout N Canaan
  - b. **note:** this is an indication of the *difference* between the N and the S in Canaan
    1. the territory of S Canaan is largely wilderness (**i.e.** the Negev) – the number of city-states in the S is small, thus the *effort* needed to overcome it took only a (miraculously long) day
    2. the *entire* area to the S of Jerusalem is allotted to only two (2) tribes: Judah and Simeon
      - a. **i.e.** it would require much more space *per household* to survive there
    3. the territory of N Canaan is rich and abundant, stretching across from the Jordan Valley to the Mediterranean (including the hill country) and N to Lebanon
      - a. 7½ tribes will occupy this territory since less land per family will be needed
4. thus ... it will take **much, much longer** to overthrow the natives of the N ...

## b. the destruction of the alliance (vv. 6-9)

1. the Lord (**again**) speaks to Joshua about the situation he faces (**v. 6**)
  - a. he tells (reminds) Joshua not to be afraid of them – **i.e.** the size of their armed force is *daunting*, but the power of Yahweh (and his purposes) is *greater* than their human power
    1. **IOW:** Joshua, you knew this would be necessary *eventually* – so do not shrink back just because the *task* seems so monumental
    2. **principle: no matter how monumental our problems may seem to us, they are nothing compared to the power of our God to overcome them as he deems fit**
      - a. **e.g.** the sin that so easily **entangles** us *seems* to be insurmountable
  - b. he tells Joshua that “*tomorrow at this time*” he will give these forces over to his army
    1. **possibly:** that the battle against this foe will (also) take only a day to complete, or
    2. **probably:** that by this time tomorrow, the defeat of this enemy will be obvious, although the battle may take more time to complete (**i.e.** the conquest of N Canaan will still drag on)
    3. **either way:** the Lord confirms to Joshua that this massive enemy will be defeated
  - c. he tells Joshua to “ *hamstring their horses*” and “ *burn their chariots*”
    1. this army had come *with a vast and impressive weaponry*
    2. but ... Israel was not to place their confidence in military hardware – they were not to take these weapons of war for themselves *and then find their future confidence in them* (**Deut. 17:16**)  
“... [any future king of Israel] must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the LORD has said to you, ‘You shall never return that way again.’”
    3. **i.e.** Israel was to always be looking to *the means provided by God* for their confidence
      - a. **e.g.** the Bible is **utterly sufficient** for us as *the Lord’s means* to aid us in all of life
2. the Lord gives this force to Israel, and they chase down this enemy and destroy it all (**vv. 7-9**)
  - a. and Joshua obeys the Lord re: the horses and chariots

## c. the destruction of the city of Hazor (vv. 10-15)

1. Joshua now leads the forces of Israel *back* against the *originating* city: Hazor (**vv. 10-11**)
  - a. destroying *completely* the originating city in the N would send a message: the judgment of God has arrived (**i.e.** just like the complete destruction of Jericho further S)
2. Joshua then *recounts* what Israel did *to the other cities of the alliance* (**vv. 12-14**)
  - a. they killed *every human being* in each city – but, they *did not* burn each city (like Hazor); instead, they took the contents of each as *plunder* (**i.e.** because they *owned it* under God’s promise)
3. Joshua then confesses his *obedience* (in all things) to Moses before him and to Yahweh (**v. 15**)
  - a. **IMO:** this verse is a **transition** to the summary given in the next pericope ...

## II. The Conquest of Northern Canaan (Joshua 11:16-20)

### Content

#### a. the extent of the N Conquest (vv. 16-17)

1. the description given is *in absolute terms*: Joshua “*took all that land*” = the military campaigns of the Israelites during the lifetime of Joshua were *utterly successful*: they accomplished what was purposed
2. and, the description covers *the entire territory* of Canaan: the “boundary” markers (Mount Halak and the Valley of Lebanon) set the area from far in the N-S and E-W
3. **IOW:** the *initial Conquest*, under Joshua (when the Israelites *first enter Canaan*) is successful **insofar as it goes** ... not *every* Canaanite city is addressed, but the entire N territory sees some Israelite victory during this time, as the people move northward from Gilgal and begin settling the land

#### b. the length of the N Conquest (v. 18)

1. “*a long time*” = the *actual time needed* to accomplish the Conquest of N Canaan will take **5-7 years**
  - a. Caleb was 40 when he went as a spy under Moses into Canaan (**Joshua 14:7**)
  - b. Caleb was 78-80 at the beginning of the Conquest – 38-40 years later (**Deut. 2:14 = 38**)
  - c. Caleb was 85 when he received his territory at the end of this initial conquest (**Joshua 14:10**)
  - d. thus, the Conquest under Joshua would last ~5-7 years (**85-78 or 85-80**)
2. but ... it is not over – the remaining effort to dislodge the natives will take until David (**c. 1010bc**)

#### c. the reason for the N Conquest (vv. 19-20)

1. we will complete the **historical narrative** of the chapter first ... then return to these verses ...

### III. The Conquest of the Anakim (Joshua 11:21-23)

#### Content

##### a. the conquest of the Anakim (vv. 21-23)

1. "at that time" = sometime during the period above – **i.e.** during the conquest of N Canaan
2. Anakim = the descendants of the people of Anak, the *Nephilim* (**i.e.** the **giants** of **Num. 13:33**)
  - a. **i.e.** the Canaanites that frightened 10/12 spies sent by Moses when they first arrived at Canaan
  - b. **note:** it is *fitting* that Joshua would end this narrative by outlining the destruction of *the very people that had caused Israel to be frightened and wander for 40 years in the wilderness*
    1. the very people that *only he and Caleb* (**see above**) said could be taken ...
3. Joshua successfully destroys the Anakim *in the central part of the country* – some will remain in Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod (**i.e.** the W territory along the coast, of the eventual Philistines)
  - a. "and the land had rest from war" (**v. 23**) = the time of conquest under Joshua comes to an end, and the narrative can switch to allocating the land (**i.e.** the Conquest will continue under *others*)

##### b. the success of the northern Conquest under Joshua (vv. 19-20)

1. Joshua notes that "not a city ... made peace with ... Israel" = not a city (**except Gibeon**) chose to negotiate a peace treaty with Israel – they *all* attempted to defend themselves (or attack directly)
2. **question:** why – why would *every city* (except one) enter a battle *they knew they would lose*?
  - a. if nothing else: they saw the power of Israel moving from city to city – why wouldn't some choose to sue for peace in the face of what they could *clearly see moving towards them*?
  - b. **IOW:** is God's love such that he always "offers" a way of salvation to sinners?
3. **answer:** because "it was the Lord's doing to harden their hearts"
  - a. **maybe:** Yahweh withdrew from their *naturally rebellious and sinful hearts* any active sense of his grace towards them – he "lifted" his hand of mercy and they acted *by their nature* (**passive**)
  - b. **more likely:** Yahweh specifically *hardened* the evil nature of their hearts so that they would *desire all the more* to rebel against him – he *purposely took away* any lasting element of response towards him that *might* cause them to seek him out (**active**)
    1. the same *active* sense is seen in Pharaoh (**Exodus 10:1-2**) and in the Jews (**Romans 9:18**)
    2. **the active sense of judgment upon the reprobate to give them what they truly want**
4. **question:** isn't it *grossly unfair* for God to *purposely prevent* some people from coming to him?
  - a. **note:** this is how **synergism** arises – in order to "fix" the obvious implications of passages like this, the *synergist* "remakes" the nature of God such that he always "offers" salvation to everyone
    1. synergism = a cooperative effort between man and God, where each "does his part" – where God is *obligated* to respond to the will of men (and assuming our will is *neutral* towards him)
    2. but ... synergism *fails* to account for the **majority reality: few actually come to him**
  - b. **answer:** a proper view of God *always* grants to him the sovereignty to act in human affairs *entirely as he wishes* – that God is free to do as he wills in the nature and affairs of men (**Romans 9:18ff**)  
"[As seen in Pharaoh] So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills. You will say to me then, 'Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?' But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, 'Why have you made me like this?' Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use [art] and another for dishonorable use [toilet]?"
    1. it makes "grace" **grace** = the **radical choice** of God to lavish his gifts of mercy and forgiveness on beings who **would only have rebelled against him if left to themselves**
    2. it makes "grace" **wonderful** = it affords to God *from the elect* a proper worship and glory – the action of God to *purposely regenerate us (in heart) and draw us to Christ (in faith) makes us a people that cannot help but give him all glory and honor forevermore*