

Joshua 11:1-15

Following the battle of Jericho, the book of Joshua narrates the movements and the battles of Israel's army in its victorious Southern campaign.

After this, the Israelites again faced another alliance of Canaanite city-states; this time from the North.

These are difficult chapters filled with hard realities.

Nevertheless, the text points us back to the sovereign God and his actions (**cf 11:20**).

Summary

Joshua 11:1-15, the Lord exercises His sovereign rule over the hearts of the Canaanites to make them stubborn and resistant but also manifested His sovereign grace towards Israel.

1. Overwhelming Odds vv. 1-5

Jabin, king of Hazor, heard about Joshua's impressive victory over the Amorite alliance and the cities of southern Canaan and so organized an extensive coalition to resist Israel's advance northwards (**Josh 11:1-3**).

This list of kings and people groups summarizes all of Canaan but also serves as a reminder of the Lord's promise to the Abraham and his descendants that they would inhabit this land (**Gen. 15:18-21; Exod. 3:7-8**).

Israel, who was to be like the sand on the seashore (**Gen 22:17-18**), faced an overwhelming enemy army described the same way (**Josh 11:4**).

Can God's covenant purposes and promises overcome these insuperable odds?

God's people were not to rely upon the strength of conventional warfare; they were to trust in Him (**Deut. 17:16**).

This is the continuing issue that all of God's people face.

"Will we bind our hearts to this world through sight or will we anchor our hope in the next world through faith in the promises of God?"

We must engage in a constant repetition of the promises.

2. Conclusive Victory vv. 6-9

The Lord did not stand on the sidelines watching the conquest of Canaan unfold.

He was at the forefront of the action leading Joshua and his army into victory.

Whenever Joshua faced a battle, the Lord reassured him of his presence and power by telling him not to be afraid and he did so here again (**Josh 11:6**).

Over and over again he hears this same message from God because he needs to hear it over and over again.

God's word remains the same and comes with freshness and power to meet each new need.

With God's word guaranteeing victory, 'Joshua and all his warriors came suddenly against [the northern alliance] by the waters of Merom and fell upon them' (**11:7**).

We see here again in the book of Joshua, both divine sovereignty and human responsibility. God promised the victory and Joshua used wisdom to lead his troops into battle and to engage the enemy in a location to his maximum advantage.

God's sovereignty and human responsibility are not incompatible.

Israel fought the battle and the Lord gave his people total victory (**11:8**).

The narrative concludes with Joshua's obedience to all that God had commanded (**Josh 11:9**). God's blessing and Israel's obedience went hand in hand.

We cannot expect the Lord to bless our endeavors if we are unwilling to do his will.

Nevertheless, Israel did not deserve or earn God's blessing by their obedience.

Every spiritual blessing believers have in Christ, come on the same basis of sovereign grace (**Eph 1:4-7**).

3. Sovereign Judgment vv. 10-15

Having obeyed the Lord and dealt with the enemies' horses and chariots, Joshua turned the army back southward to attack and destroy Hazor and the other cities of the coalition (**11:10-15**).

He then attacked all the other cities of the alliance, captured them, struck them and devoted them to destruction but did not burn them.

By not burning these other cities the Lord provided Israel with places to live, cities and houses that they did not build just as he had promised (**Deut. 6:10-11**).

Though Israel was not allowed to take any of the spoils from Jericho, after that victory the Lord allowed the Israelites to take livestock and other goods from the cities they conquered (**Josh 11:15**).

The execution of the ban against the Canaanites reminds us that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (**Heb. 10:31**)

God is the just and sovereign judge of all those who rebel against Him.

He is holy and must punish sin but he is also loving, gracious and merciful (**John 3:16; 1 Pet. 2:24; Rom. 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 4:10**). Christ died so that God might be just and yet also be the justifier of all those who have faith in Jesus (**Rom. 3:26**).

The Lord's destruction of the northern alliance leaves us with no doubt as to his holy anger with sin but the cross of Calvary and the empty tomb assure us that his holy anger has been perfectly appeased by the work of Christ.

Have you experienced the peace and forgiveness of God through Christ?

Or do you await the judgment of the God who deals decisively with rebels?

Canaan's last stand provides another example of the sovereign power of God.

It also presents us with a startling example of his sovereign grace and sovereign judgment.

Under which one are you?