**Olivet Baptist Church**

***3500 Edmondson Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21229***

**Wednesday Night Bible Study (7:00 pm)**

**Book of Joshua – Facilitator: Rev. Alex O. Stone**

**Classes Presented on “Zoom” November 9th & November 16th**

**MEETING ID: 395 133 283 PASSCODE: 281215** **or Call**: 1-646-558-8656

**Overall Theme: The Seven Year Conquest of “The Promise Land” (1:1–13:7)**

1. **Destruction of Jericho (Joshua 6:1 – 6:27)**
2. **Defeat at Ai (7:1 – 7:9) / Sin of Achan (7:10 – 7:27)**
3. **The Fall of Ai (8:1 – 8:29) / The Covenant Renewed (8:30 – 8:35)**
4. **The Failed Treaty with the Gibeonites (9:1 – 9:10)**
5. **The Sun Stands Still (10:1 – 10:15)**
6. **Victory Over the Amorite - Kings Executed (10:16 – 10:43)**
7. **The Northern Conquest (11:1 – 11:15)**
8. **Summary of Joshua’s Conquests (11:16 – 11:23)**
9. **The Kings Conquered by Moses & Joshua (12:1 – 12:24)**
10. **Unconquered Portion of the Promise Land (**Why?**) (13:1 – 13:7)**

**The Destruction of Jericho**

**6** Now Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel; none went out, and none came in. 2And the Lord said to Joshua: “See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, *and* the mighty men of valor. 3You shall march around the city, all *you* men of war; you shall go all around the city once. This you shall do six days. 4And seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark. But the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. 5It shall come to pass, when they make a long *blast* with the ram’s horn, *and* when you hear the sound of the trumpet, that all the people shall shout with a great shout; then the wall of the city will fall down flat. And the people shall go up every man straight before him.”

6Then Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, “Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark of the Lord.” 7And he said to the people, “Proceed, and march around the city, and let him who is armed advance before the ark of the Lord.” 8So it was, when Joshua had spoken to the people, that the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the Lord advanced and blew the trumpets, and the ark of the covenant of the Lord followed them. 9The armed men went before the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rear guard came after the ark, while *the priests* continued blowing the trumpets. 10Now Joshua had commanded the people, saying, “You shall not shout or make any noise with your voice, nor shall a word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I say to you, ‘Shout!’ Then you shall shout.” 11So he had the ark of the Lord circle the city, going around *it* once. Then they came into the camp and lodged in the camp.

12And Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the Lord. 13Then seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark of the Lord went on continually and blew with the trumpets. And the armed men went before them. But the rear guard came after the ark of the Lord, while *the priests* continued blowing the trumpets. 14And the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. So they did six days.

15But it came to pass on the seventh day that they rose early, about the dawning of the day, and marched around the city seven times in the same manner. On that day only they marched around the city seven times. 16And the seventh time it happened, when the priests blew the trumpets, that Joshua said to the people: “Shout, for the Lord has given you the city! 17Now the city shall be doomed by the Lord to destruction, it and all who *are* in it. Only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all who *are* with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent. 18And you, by all means abstain from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. 19But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, *are* consecrated to the Lord; they shall come into the treasury of the Lord.” 20So the people shouted when *the priests* blew the trumpets. And it happened when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat. Then the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city. 21And they utterly destroyed all that *was* in the city, both man and woman, young and old, ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword.

22But Joshua had said to the two men who had spied out the country, “Go into the harlot’s house, and from there bring out the woman and all that she has, as you swore to her.” 23And the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father, her mother, her brothers, and all that she had. So they brought out all her relatives and left them outside the camp of Israel. 24But they burned the city and all that *was* in it with fire. Only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the Lord. 25And Joshua spared Rahab the harlot, her father’s household, and all that she had. So she dwells in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho. 26Then Joshua charged *them* at that time, saying, “Cursed *be* the man before the Lord who rises up and builds this city Jericho; he shall lay its foundation with his firstborn, and with his youngest he shall set up its gates.” 27So the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame spread throughout all the country.

***Defeat at Ai***

**7** But the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things, for Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed things; so the anger of the Lord burned against the children of Israel.

2Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which *is* beside Beth Aven, on the east side of Bethel, and spoke to them, saying, “Go up and spy out the country.” So the men went up and spied out Ai. 3And they returned to Joshua and said to him, “Do not let all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not weary all the people there, for *the people of Ai are* few.” 4So about three thousand men went up there from the people, but they fled before the men of Ai. 5And the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men, for they chased them *from* before the gate as far as Shebarim, and struck them down on the descent; therefore the hearts of the people melted and became like water.

6Then Joshua tore his clothes, and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the Lord until evening, he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads. 7And Joshua said, “Alas, Lord God, why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all—to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Oh, that we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan! 8O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turns its back before its enemies? 9For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear *it,* and surround us, and cut off our name from the earth. Then what will You do for Your great name?”

**The Sin of Achan**

10So the Lord said to Joshua: “Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face? 11Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived; and they have also put *it* among their own stuff. 12Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, *but* turned *their* backs before their enemies, because they have become doomed to destruction. *Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you.* 13Get up, sanctify the people, and say, ‘Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, because thus says the Lord God of Israel: “*There is* an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you.” 14In the morning therefore you shall be brought according to your tribes. And it shall be *that* the tribe which the Lord takes shall come according to families; and the family which the Lord takes shall come by households; and the household which the Lord takes shall come man by man. 15Then it shall be *that* he who is taken with the accursed thing shall be burned with fire, he and all that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of the Lord, and because he has done a disgraceful thing in Israel.’ ”

16So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel by their tribes, and the tribe of Judah was taken. 17He brought the clan of Judah, and he took the family of the Zarhites; and he brought the family of the Zarhites man by man, and Zabdi was taken. 18Then he brought his household man by man, and Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken.

19Now Joshua said to Achan, “My son, I beg you, give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession to Him, and tell me now what you have done; do not hide *it* from me.” *20And Achan answered Joshua and said, “Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and this is what I have done:* 21When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it.”

22So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver under it. 23And they took them from the midst of the tent, brought them to Joshua and to all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the Lord. 24Then Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the garment, the wedge of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, and all that he had, and they brought them to the Valley of Achor. 25And Joshua said, “Why have you troubled us? The Lord will trouble you this day.” So all Israel stoned him with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones. 26Then they raised over him a great heap of stones, still there to this day. So the Lord turned from the fierceness of His anger. Therefore the name of that place has been called the Valley of Achor to this day.

**The Fall of Ai**

**8** Now the Lord said to Joshua: “Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; take all the people of war with you, and arise, go up to Ai. *See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land.* 2And you shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king. Only its spoil and its cattle you shall take as booty for yourselves. Lay an ambush for the city behind it.”

3So Joshua arose, and all the people of war, to go up against Ai; and Joshua chose thirty thousand mighty men of valor and sent them away by night. 4And he commanded them, saying: “Behold, you shall lie in ambush against the city, behind the city. Do not go very far from the city, but all of you be ready. 5Then I and all the people who *are* with me will approach the city; and it will come about, when they come out against us as at the first, that we shall flee before them. 6For they will come out after us till we have drawn them from the city, for they will say, ‘*They are* fleeing before us as at the first.’ Therefore we will flee before them. 7Then you shall rise from the ambush and seize the city, for the Lord your God will deliver it into your hand. 8And it will be, when you have taken the city, *that* you shall set the city on fire. According to the commandment of the Lord you shall do. See, I have commanded you.”

9Joshua therefore sent them out; and they went to lie in ambush, and stayed between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of Ai; but Joshua lodged that night among the people. 10Then Joshua rose up early in the morning and mustered the people, and went up, he and the elders of Israel, before the people to Ai. 11And all the people of war who *were* with him went up and drew near; and they came before the city and camped on the north side of Ai. Now a valley *lay* between them and Ai. 12So he took about five thousand men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of the city. 13And when they had set the people, all the army that *was* on the north of the city, and its rear guard on the west of the city, Joshua went that night into the midst of the valley.

14Now it happened, when the king of Ai saw *it,* that the men of the city hurried and rose early and went out against Israel to battle, he and all his people, at an appointed place before the plain. But he did not know that *there was* an ambush against him behind the city. 15And Joshua and all Israel made as if they were beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness. 16So all the people who *were* in Ai were called together to pursue them. And they pursued Joshua and were drawn away from the city. 17There was not a man left in Ai or Bethel who did not go out after Israel. So they left the city open and pursued Israel.

18Then the Lord said to Joshua, *“Stretch out the spear that is in your hand toward Ai, for I will give it into your hand.”* And Joshua stretched out the spear that *was* in his hand toward the city. 19So *those in* ambush arose quickly out of their place; they ran as soon as he had stretched out his hand, and they entered the city and took it, and hurried to set the city on fire. 20And when the men of Ai looked behind them, they saw, and behold, the smoke of the city ascended to heaven. So they had no power to flee this way or that way, and the people who had fled to the wilderness turned back on the pursuers. 21Now when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city and that the smoke of the city ascended, they turned back and struck down the men of Ai. 22Then the others came out of the city against them; so they were *caught* in the midst of Israel, some on this side and some on that side. And they struck them down, so that they let none of them remain or escape. 23But the king of Ai they took alive, and brought him to Joshua.

24And it came to pass when Israel had made an end of slaying all the inhabitants of Ai in the field, in the wilderness where they pursued them, and when they all had fallen by the edge of the sword until they were consumed, that all the Israelites returned to Ai and struck it with the edge of the sword. 2*5So it was that all who fell that day, both men and women, were twelve thousand—all the people of Ai.* 26For Joshua did not draw back his hand, with which he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai. 27Only the livestock and the spoil of that city Israel took as booty for themselves, according to the word of the Lord which He had commanded Joshua. 28So Joshua burned Ai and made it a heap forever, a desolation to this day. 29And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until evening. And as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his corpse down from the tree, cast it at the entrance of the gate of the city, and raise over it a great heap of stones *that remains* to this day.

**Joshua Renews the Covenant**

30Now Joshua built an altar to the Lord God of Israel in Mount Ebal, 31as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses: “an altar of whole stones over which no man has wielded an iron *tool*.” And they offered on it burnt offerings to the Lord, and sacrificed peace offerings. 32And there, in the presence of the children of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written. 33Then all Israel, with their elders and officers and judges, stood on either side of the ark before the priests, the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, the stranger as well as he who was born among them. Half of them *were* in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel. 34And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and the cursings, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. 35There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, with the women, the little ones, and the strangers who were living among them.

**The Treaty with the Gibeonites**

**9** And it came to pass when all the kings who *were* on this side of the Jordan, in the hills and in the lowland and in all the coasts of the Great Sea toward Lebanon—the Hittite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite—heard *about it,* 2that they gathered together to fight with Joshua and Israel with one accord.

3But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, 4they worked craftily, and went and pretended to be ambassadors. And they took old sacks on their donkeys, old wineskins torn and mended, 5old and patched sandals on their feet, and old garments on themselves; and all the bread of their provision was dry *and* moldy. 6And they went to Joshua, to the camp at Gilgal, and said to him and to the men of Israel, “We have come from a far country; now therefore, make a covenant with us.” 7Then the men of Israel said to the Hivites, “Perhaps you dwell among us; so *how can we make a covenant with you?”* 8But they said to Joshua, “We *are* your servants.” And Joshua said to them, “Who *are* you, and where do you come from?”

9So they said to him: “From a very far country your servants have come, because of the name of the Lord your God; for we have heard of His fame, and all that He did in Egypt, 10and all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites who *were* beyond the Jordan—to Sihon king of Heshbon, and Og king of Bashan, who was at Ashtaroth. 11Therefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spoke to us, saying, ‘Take provisions with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say to them, “We *are* your servants; now therefore, make a covenant with us.” ’ 12This bread of ours we took hot *for* our provision from our houses on the day we departed to come to you. But now look, it is dry and moldy. 13And these wineskins which we filled *were* new, and see, they are torn; and these our garments and our sandals have become old because of the very long journey.” 14Then the men of Israel took some of their provisions; but they did not ask counsel of the Lord. 15So Joshua made peace with them, and made a covenant with them to let them live; and the rulers of the congregation swore to them.

16And it happened at the end of three days, after they had made a covenant with them, that they heard that they *were* their neighbors who dwelt near them. 17Then the children of Israel journeyed and came to their cities on the third day. Now their cities *were* Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath Jearim. 18But the children of Israel did not attack them, because the rulers of the congregation had sworn to them by the Lord God of Israel. And all the congregation complained against the rulers. 19Then all the rulers said to all the congregation, “We have sworn to them by the Lord God of Israel; now therefore, we may not touch them. 20This we will do to them: We will let them live, lest wrath be upon us because of the oath which we swore to them.” 21And the rulers said to them, “Let them live, but let them be woodcutters and water carriers for all the congregation, as the rulers had promised them.” 22Then Joshua called for them, and he spoke to them, saying, “Why have you deceived us, saying, ‘We *are* very far from you,’ when you dwell near us? 23Now therefore, you *are* cursed, and none of you shall be freed from being slaves—woodcutters and water carriers for the house of my God.”

24So they answered Joshua and said, “Because your servants were clearly told that the Lord your God commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you; therefore we were very much afraid for our lives because of you, and have done this thing. 25And now, here we are, in your hands; do with us as it seems good and right to do to us.” 26So he did to them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, so that they did not kill them. 27And that day Joshua made them woodcutters and water carriers for the congregation and for the altar of the Lord, in the place which He would choose, even to this day.

**The Sun Stands Still**

**10** Now it came to pass when Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem heard how Joshua had taken Ai and had utterly destroyed it—as he had done to Jericho and its king, so he had done to Ai and its king—and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were among them, 2that they feared greatly, because Gibeon *was* a great city, like one of the royal cities, and because it *was* greater than Ai, and all its men *were* mighty. 3Therefore Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem sent to Hoham king of Hebron, Piram king of Jarmuth, Japhia king of Lachish, and Debir king of Eglon, saying, 4“Come up to me and help me, that we may attack Gibeon, for it has made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel.” 5Therefore the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, *and* the king of Eglon, gathered together and went up, they and all their armies, and camped before Gibeon and made war against it.

6And the men of Gibeon sent to Joshua at the camp at Gilgal, saying, “Do not forsake your servants; come up to us quickly, save us and help us, for all the kings of the Amorites who dwell in the mountains have gathered together against us.” 7So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor. 8And the Lord said to Joshua, “Do not fear them, for I have delivered them into your hand; not a man of them shall stand before you.” 9Joshua therefore came upon them suddenly, having marched all night from Gilgal. 10So the Lord routed them before Israel, killed them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, chased them along the road that goes to Beth Horon, and struck them down as far as Azekah and Makkedah. 11And it happened, as they fled before Israel *and* were on the descent of Beth Horon, that the Lord cast down large hailstones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died. *There were* more who died from the hailstones than the children of Israel killed with the sword.

12Then Joshua spoke to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel: “Sun, stand still over Gibeon; and Moon, in the Valley of Aijalon.” 13 So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the people had revenge upon their enemies.

*Is* this not written in the Book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and did not hasten to go *down* for about a whole day. 14And there has been no day like that, before it or after it, that the Lord heeded the voice of a man; for the Lord fought for Israel. 15Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal.

**The Amorite Kings Executed**

16But these five kings had fled and hidden themselves in a cave at Makkedah. 17And it was told Joshua, saying, “The five kings have been found hidden in the cave at Makkedah.” 18So Joshua said, “Roll large stones against the mouth of the cave, and set men by it to guard them. 19And do not stay *there* yourselves, *but* pursue your enemies, and attack their rear *guard*. Do not allow them to enter their cities, for the Lord your God has delivered them into your hand.” 20Then it happened, while Joshua and the children of Israel made an end of slaying them with a very great slaughter, till they had finished, that those who escaped entered fortified cities. 21And all the people returned to the camp, to Joshua at Makkedah, in peace. *No one moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel.*

22Then Joshua said, “Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out those five kings to me from the cave.” 23And they did so, and brought out those five kings to him from the cave: the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, *and* the king of Eglon. 24So it was, when they brought out those kings to Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said to the captains of the men of war who went with him, “Come near, put your feet on the necks of these kings.” And they drew near and put their feet on their necks. 25Then Joshua said to them, “Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; be strong and of good courage, for thus the Lord will do to all your enemies against whom you fight.” 26And afterward Joshua struck them and killed them, and hanged them on five trees; and they were hanging on the trees until evening. 27So it was *at the time of the going down of the sun that Joshua commanded*, and they took them down from the trees, cast them into the cave where they had been hidden, and laid large stones against the cave’s mouth, *which remain* until this very day.

**Conquest of the Southland**

28On that day Joshua took Makkedah, and struck it and its king with the edge of the sword. He utterly destroyed them—all the people who *were* in it. He let none remain. He also did to the king of Makkedah as he had done to the king of Jericho. 29Then Joshua passed from Makkedah, and all Israel with him, to Libnah; and they fought against Libnah. 30And the Lord also delivered it and its king into the hand of Israel; he struck it and all the people who *were* in it with the edge of the sword. He let none remain in it, but did to its king as he had done to the king of Jericho. 31Then Joshua passed from Libnah, and all Israel with him, to Lachish; and they encamped against it and fought against it. 32And the Lord delivered Lachish into the hand of Israel, who took it on the second day, and struck it and all the people who *were* in it with the edge of the sword, according to all that he had done to Libnah. 33Then Horam king of Gezer came up to help Lachish; and Joshua struck him and his people, until he left him none remaining.

34From Lachish Joshua passed to Eglon, and all Israel with him; and they encamped against it and fought against it. 35They took it on that day and struck it with the edge of the sword; all the people who *were* in it he utterly destroyed that day, according to all that he had done to Lachish. 36So Joshua went up from Eglon, and all Israel with him, to Hebron; and they fought against it. 37And they took it and struck it with the edge of the sword—its king, all its cities, and all the people who *were* in it; he left none remaining, according to all that he had done to Eglon, but utterly destroyed it and all the people who *were* in it.

38Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to Debir; and they fought against it. 39And *he took it and its king and all its cities; they struck them with the edge of the sword* and utterly destroyed all the people who *were* in it. He left none remaining; as he had done to Hebron, so he did to Debir and its king, as he had done also to Libnah and its king.

40So Joshua conquered all the land: the mountain country and the South and the lowland and the wilderness slopes, and all their kings; he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God of Israel had commanded. 41And Joshua conquered them from Kadesh Barnea as far as Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even as far as Gibeon. 42All these kings and their land Joshua took at one time, because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel. 43Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal.

**The Northern Conquest**

**11** And it came to pass, when Jabin king of Hazor heard *these things,* that he sent to Jobab king of Madon, to the king of Shimron, to the king of Achshaph, 2and to the kings who *were* from the north, in the mountains, in the plain south of Chinneroth, in the lowland, and in the heights of Dor on the west, 3to the Canaanites in the east and in the west, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite in the mountains, and the Hivite below Hermon in the land of Mizpah. 4So they went out, they and all their armies with them, *as* many people *as* the sand that *is* on the seashore in multitude, with very many horses and chariots. 5And when all these kings had met together, they came and camped together at the waters of Merom to fight against Israel.

6But the Lord said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid because of them, for tomorrow about this time I will deliver all of them slain before Israel. You shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire.” 7So Joshua and all the people of war with him came against them suddenly by the waters of Merom, and they attacked them. 8And the Lord delivered them into the hand of Israel, who defeated them and chased them to Greater Sidon, to the Brook Misrephoth, and to the Valley of Mizpah eastward; they attacked them until they left none of them remaining. 9So Joshua did to them as the Lord had told him: he hamstrung their horses and burned their chariots with fire.

10Joshua turned back at that time and took Hazor, and struck its king with the sword; for Hazor was formerly the head of all those kingdoms. 11And they struck all the people who *were* in it with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying *them*. There was none left breathing. Then he burned Hazor with fire. 12So all the cities of those kings, and all their kings, Joshua took and struck with the edge of the sword. He utterly destroyed them, as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded. 13But *as for* the cities that stood on their mounds, Israel burned none of them, except Hazor only, *which* Joshua burned. 14And all the spoil of these cities and the livestock, the children of Israel took as booty for themselves; but they struck every man with the edge of the sword until they had destroyed them, and they left none breathing. 15As the Lord had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did. He left nothing undone of all that the Lord had commanded Moses.

**Summary of Joshua’s Conquests**

16Thus Joshua took all this land: the mountain country, all the South, all the land of Goshen, the lowland, and the Jordan plain—the mountains of Israel and its lowlands, 17from Mount Halak and the ascent to Seir, even as far as Baal Gad in the Valley of Lebanon below Mount Hermon. He captured all their kings, and struck them down and killed them. 18Joshua made war a long time with all those kings. 19There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, except the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon. All *the others* they took in battle. 20For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that He might utterly destroy them, *and* that they might receive no mercy, but that He might destroy them, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

21And at that time Joshua came and cut off the Anakim from the mountains: from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, from all the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel; Joshua utterly destroyed them with their cities. 22None of the Anakim were left in the land of the children of Israel; they remained only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod. 23So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord had said to Moses; and Joshua gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. Then the land rested from war.

***The Kings Conquered by Moses***

**12** These *are* the kings of the land whom the children of Israel defeated, and whose land they possessed on the other side of the Jordan toward the rising of the sun, from the River Arnon to Mount Hermon, and all the eastern Jordan plain: 2One king was Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt in Heshbon *and* ruled half of Gilead, from Aroer, which is on the bank of the River Arnon, from the middle of that river, even as far as the River Jabbok, *which is* the border of the Ammonites, 3and the eastern Jordan plain from the Sea of Chinneroth as far as the Sea of the Arabah (the Salt Sea), the road to Beth Jeshimoth, and southward below the slopes of Pisgah. 4*The other king was* Og king of Bashan and his territory, *who was* of the remnant of the giants, who dwelt at Ashtaroth and at Edrei, 5and reigned over Mount Hermon, over Salcah, over all Bashan, as far as the border of the Geshurites and the Maachathites, and over half of Gilead *to* the border of Sihon king of Heshbon. 6These Moses the servant of the Lord and the children of Israel had conquered; and Moses the servant of the Lord had given it *as* a possession to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh.

**The Kings Conquered by Joshua**

7And these *are* the kings of the country which Joshua and the children of Israel conquered on this side of the Jordan, on the west, from Baal Gad in the Valley of Lebanon as far as Mount Halak and the ascent to Seir, which Joshua gave to the tribes of Israel *as* a possession according to their divisions, 8in the mountain country, in the lowlands, in the *Jordan* plain, in the slopes, in the wilderness, and in the South—the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: 9the king of Jericho, one; the king of Ai, which *is* beside Bethel, one; 10the king of Jerusalem, one; the king of Hebron, one; 11the king of Jarmuth, one; the king of Lachish, one; 12the king of Eglon, one; the king of Gezer, one; 13the king of Debir, one; the king of Geder, one; 14the king of Hormah, one; the king of Arad, one; 15the king of Libnah, one; the king of Adullam, one; 16the king of Makkedah, one; the king of Bethel, one; 17the king of Tappuah, one; the king of Hepher, one; 18the king of Aphek, one; the king of Lasharon, one; 19the king of Madon, one; the king of Hazor, one; 20the king of Shimron Meron, one; the king of Achshaph, one; 21the king of Taanach, one; the king of Megiddo, one; 22the king of Kedesh, one; the king of Jokneam in Carmel, one; 23the king of Dor in the heights of Dor, one; the king of the people of Gilgal, one; 24the king of Tirzah, one—all the kings, thirty-one.

***Remaining Land to Be Conquered***

**13** Now Joshua was old, advanced in years. And the Lord said to him: “You are old, advanced in years, and there remains very much land yet to be possessed. 2This is the land that yet remains: all the territory of the Philistines and all *that of* the Geshurites, 3from Sihor, which *is* east of Egypt, as far as the border of Ekron northward (*which* is counted as Canaanite); the five lords of the Philistines—the Gazites, the Ashdodites, the Ashkelonites, the Gittites, and the Ekronites; also the Avites; 4from the south, all the land of the Canaanites, and Mearah that belongs to the Sidonians as far as Aphek, to the border of the Amorites; 5the land of the Gebalites, and all Lebanon, toward the sunrise, from Baal Gad below Mount Hermon as far as the entrance to Hamath; 6all the inhabitants of the mountains from Lebanon as far as the Brook Misrephoth, *and* all the Sidonians—them I will drive out from before the children of Israel; only divide it by lot to Israel as an inheritance, as I have commanded you. 7Now therefore, divide this land as an inheritance to the nine tribes and half the tribe of Manasseh.”

**Commentary: the conquest of jericho (chap. 6:1-13:7)**

a. The strategy of the conquest of Jericho (6:1–7)

**Joshua 6:1**. **Jericho** was a beleaguered city. Orders had been given to close all the gates, and no traffic was permitted **in** or **out**. As Rahab had disclosed to the spies (2:11) the residents of Jericho were filled with terror because of **the** advancing **Israelites** (cf. 5:1).

**Joshua 6:2.** But there this impressive fortress stood, in full view of Joshua whose conversation with the Commander of the Lord’s army continued. This Commander, **the Lord** Himself, promised victory to **Joshua** and announced that He had given **Jericho into** his **hands**. The city, **its king**, and its army would all fall to Israel. The tense of the Hebrew verb is prophetic perfect (**I have delivered**), describing a future action as if it were already accomplished. Since God had declared it, the victory was assured.

**Joshua 6:3–5.** The battle plan Joshua was to use was most unusual. Ordinary weapons of war such as battering rams and scaling ladders were not to be employed. Rather Joshua and his **armed men** were to **march around the city once** a day **for six** successive **days** with **seven priests** blowing **trumpets** preceding **the ark** of the covenant. **On the seventh day** they were to circle Jericho **seven times** and then **the wall of** Jericho would **collapse** and the city would be taken.

In the Bible the number seven often symbolizes completeness or perfection. There were seven priests, seven trumpets, seven days, seven circuits of the wall on the seventh day. Though God’s plan of action may have seemed foolish to [[1]](#footnote-1) men it was the perfect scheme for this battle.

What was the significance of the blaring **trumpets**? These instruments were “jubilee trumpets” (lit. Heb.) used in connection with Israel’s solemn feasts to proclaim the presence of God (Num. 10:10). The conquest of Jericho was not therefore exclusively a military undertaking but also a religious one, and the trumpets declared that the Lord of heaven and earth was weaving His invisible way around this doomed city. God Himself, in effect, was saying in the long blasts of these priestly trumpets, “Lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in” (Ps. 24:7). When Christ returns, He, the King of glory, will enter cities in triumph. The conquest of Jericho was a similar kind of triumphant victory.

**Joshua 6:6–7**. No battle strategy appeared more unreasonable than this one. What was to prevent the army of Jericho from raining arrows and spears down on the defenseless Israelites pursuing their silent march? Or who could stop the enemy from rushing out of the city gates to break up Israel’s line, separating and then slaughtering them? **Joshua** was an experienced military leader. Certainly these and similar objections to the divine strategy flashed into his mind. But unlike Moses at the burning bush who argued with lengthy eloquence against the Lord’s plan (cf. Ex. 3:11–4:17) Joshua responded with an unquestioning obedience. He lost no time in calling together **the priests** and soldiers, passing on to them the directions he had received from his Commander-in-chief.

b. The sequence of the conquest of Jericho (6:8–21)

Joshua 6:8–9. It was perhaps a little after dawn when a long procession began to unwind out of the camp of Israel. First came **the armed guard** marching under tribal banners, then **seven priests** with **trumpets**; next **the ark** of God, and last **the rear guard**. The army thus had prominent places in the procession but Jericho would fall not through their prowess but [[2]](#footnote-2) because of the power of God.

**Joshua 6:10–11**. Preserving absolute silence (except for the seven priests blowing their trumpets) this strange parade made its way toward Jericho and then **around the city** like a serpent. Jericho then covered about eight or nine acres and required less than 30 minutes to march around. When the circuit was completed, to the amazement of the Canaanites who probably anticipated an immediate attack, the Israelites **returned** quietly **to camp**.

**Joshua 6:12–14**. The same procedure was followed **for six days**. No fortress had ever been conquered in this fashion. This strange strategy was probably given to test the faith of **Joshua**. He did not question; he trusted and obeyed. This procedure was also designed to test Israel’s obedience to God’s will. And that was not easy in this case. Every day they were exposing themselves to ridicule and danger. A Jericho soldier may have looked down from the wall on the army of Israel and asked, “Do they think they can frighten us into surrender by the sound of their rams’ horns?” And the rest may have joined in a loud chorus of raucous laughter.

Probably the Israelites received their orders on a daily basis so that their obedience was not a once-for-all matter but a new challenge every morning. That is the way God often deals with His children. They are required to do their “daily march” with little or no knowledge of tomorrow (Prov. 27:1; James 4:14; cf. Matt. 6:34). The faith of the Israelites triumphed over their fear that the enemy would attack. They also triumphed over any expectation of ridicule and scorn. Never before and seldom after this historic event did the thermometer of faith rise this high in Israel.

**Joshua 6:15–20a.** **On** that fateful **seventh day** the procession made the circuit of the walls **seven times**. This parade—consisting of the armed guard, the seven **trumpet**-blowing **priests**, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant, and the rear guard—may have taken about three hours. (On the word **devoted** in vv. 17–18 see comments on v. 21.) (As Joshua recorded, Israel experienced disastrous consequences because of an immediate violation of God’s instruction in vv. 18–19.) At the end of the seventh circuit the clear voice of **Joshua** rang out, **Shout! For the Lord has given you the city!** Also he told them to spare **Rahab** and her family (cf. 2:8–13). So when the priests blasted on **the trumpets … the people gave a loud shout**. That shout reverberated through the hills around, startling wild animals and terrorizing the dwellers of Jericho in their homes. At that moment **the wall** of Jericho, obeying the summons of God, **collapsed** (lit., “fell in its place“).

**Joshua 6:20b–21.** The men of Israel clambered over the debris. Finding the inhabitants paralyzed with terror and unable to resist, the soldiers utterly destroyed all human and animal life in Jericho, except for Rahab and her household (cf. v. 17). Though critics have charged that this destruction is a blemish on the Old Testament, it is clear that Israel was acting on divine command. The responsibility for this destruction rests therefore with God and not the Israelites.

The city of Jericho and everything in it was “to be devoted (*ḥērem*) to the Lord” (v. 17). The NASB renders those words “shall be under the ban,” a more literal translation. Verse 21 includes a verb form of that noun *ḥērem*: **They devoted** (*wayyaḥărîmû*, from *ḥāram*) **the city to the Lord**. The idea is that the city’s contents were to be given over to the Lord by totally destroying them. To convey this, the NIV adds **and destroyed**. (The verb *ḥāram* is trans. “totally destroyed” in 10:28, 35, 37, 39–40; 11:11–12, 21 and “destroy them totally” in 11:20; cf. 1 Sam. 15:3, 8–9, 15, 18, 20. The noun *ḥērem* is trans. “devoted” or “devoted things” in Josh. 6:17–18; 7:1, 11–12, 15; 1 Sam. 15:21; “devoted to destruction” in Lev. 27:29; “set apart for destruction” in Deut. 7:26. Sometimes, however, the idea of destruction is not in the word; cf., e.g., Lev. 27:21, 28.)

The contents of Jericho were to be given “to the Lord” as the firstfruits of the land. Just as the firstfruits of a crop, given to the Lord, pointed to more crops to come, so the conquest of Jericho [[3]](#footnote-3) signified that Israel would receive all of Canaan from Him. No loot from Jericho was to be taken by the people. In carrying out the *ḥērem*, people and animals were to be killed (Josh. 6:17, 21), and other things were either to be destroyed or set apart, as in this case, for the purposes of the sanctuary. These items included “silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron” (v. 19). All was “devoted” either to destruction or to the Lord’s “treasury”; all was to be forfeited by the people.

Furthermore, God has the right to visit judgment on individuals and nations in sin. Is there evidence that the iniquity of the Canaanites was full? Few would question that the idolatrous worship and licentious lifestyle attested by archeological discoveries (e.g., the Ras Shamra tablets) justified the divine judgment on Jericho.

Finally, God’s purpose was to bless the nation of Israel in the land and to use her as a channel of blessing to the world. But this would be greatly hindered if they were infected by the degenerate religion of the Canaanites. Gleason Archer declares, “In view of the corrupting influence of the Canaanite religion, especially with its religious prostitution … and infant sacrifice, it was impossible for pure faith and worship to be maintained in Israel except by the complete elimination of the Canaanites themselves” (*A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*.) Chicago: Moody Press, 1994, p. 297). Sin is desperately contagious. To compromise with evil is dangerous and invites spiritual disaster.

Various suggestions have been made as to why the walls of Jericho fell at the precise moment when the people shouted:

(1) An earthquake caused the destruction.

(2) Israelite soldiers undermined the walls while the others marched.

(3) Vibrations set up by the trumpet blasts and soldiers’ shouts caused the collapse. (4) Shock waves caused by the marching feet of the Israelites were responsible.

However, it was a supernatural event. This is clear from the fact that all the wall was destroyed except the portion by the house of Rahab. Actually it is unnecessary to determine the exact means God employed in this or any other miracle. A New Testament writer, reviewing this event centuries later, was content to write, “By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days” (Heb. 11:30).

Archeological evidence for the collapse of Jericho’s walls in Joshua’s day is not as clear as was once supposed. This can be explained by the fact that further excavations have determined that in its long history Jericho has had some 34 walls. (Jericho is one of the oldest cities in the world. Many archeologists hold that it was inhabited as early as 7000 b.c.) The many earthquakes in the area, the thoroughness of Joshua’s destruction of the city, and the process of erosion over five centuries until it was refortified in Ahab’s time (1 Kings 16:34) also contributed to the meager remains and the extreme difficulty of relating these remains to the time of Joshua’s attack. The most significant evidence seems to be extensive pottery remains found on the mound and in the tombs of the area. These findings point to an occupancy of Jericho until about 1400 b.c. Under the pottery is a thick burned layer of ash representing a major destruction. This no doubt points to Joshua’s destruction and burning (Josh. 6:24) of the city. (For a thorough discussion of the archeology of Old Testament Jericho, see Leon Wood, *A Survey of Israel’s History*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970, pp. 94–9.)

c. The sequel to the conquest of Jericho (6:22–27)

As the story of this great Old Testament event moves quickly to its end, two matters

are briefly mentioned: the rescue of Rahab and the burning, sacking, and curse on

the city.

**Joshua 6:22–25**. Like an oasis in this doleful account of Canaanite extermination is the story of Rahab’s deliverance. Before the **city** was **burned** (v. 24), **Rahab** was **spared. Joshua** kept the promise made to Rahab by the two spies (cf. 2:12–21) and sent those same **young men** to the **house** where the scarlet cord hung from the [[4]](#footnote-4) window. She and **her entire family** followed them without hesitation to the appointed **place outside** the doomed city. Rahab and her family, being Gentiles, had to be ceremonially cleansed; the men were no doubt circumcised before they could be identified with the people of Israel. Rahab’s history is an example of the grace of God operating in the lives of an individual and **her family**. Regardless of her past life she was saved by faith in the living God and even became a part of the messianic line (Matt. 1:5). In keeping with the biblical pattern, Rahab and her family were spared from divine judgment (cf. Gen. 7:1; 1 Thes. 5:9) because of their faith.

**Joshua 6:26.** Devoting **Jericho** to destruction (cf. comments on v. 21) included the pronouncing of a curse on anyone who would dare to refortify the **city** by rebuilding **its foundations** or **its gates**. Though the site was later occupied for brief periods (18:21; Jud. 3:13; 2 Sam. 10:5) the prohibition against the rebuilding was not violated until the days of King Ahab, 500 years later. Then, as an indication of the apostasy of that period, Hiel the Bethelite attempted to rebuild Jericho’s walls, but it cost him the lives of his two sons Abiram and Segub (1 Kings 16:34).

**Joshua 6:27**. But the chapter recording the spectacular victory in Israel’s first battle in Canaan does not end on a minor note. The final words take the reader back to the triumph and its effects: **So the Lord was with Joshua** (cf. 1:5, 9; 3:7), **and his fame spread throughout the land**. The secret to success at Jericho was not Joshua’s military genius or his army’s skill in warfare. Victory came because he and the people fully trusted God and obeyed His commands (1:6–9).

**2. the defeat at ai (chap. 7)**

Unexpectedly Israel next tasted defeat. Up to this point in the Conquest the army Joshua led had experienced only victory. The possibility of a military defeat was the remotest thing from the Israelites’ minds, particularly after the triumph over Jericho. Yet God’s people are never more vulnerable, never in greater danger, than right after they have won a great victory.

Ai was the next objective on Israel’s path of conquest. It was smaller than Jericho but was at a strategic junction of two natural routes ascending from Jericho to the hill country around Bethel. Defeating Ai would also lead to the ultimate control of the main “ridge route” running from north to south along the central highlands.

Many archeologists have identified Ai with the site et-Tell (“the ruin”). Excavations at et-Tell, however, have not yet produced evidence of a settlement there in the time of Joshua. The geography of the area fits perfectly with the details found in Joshua 8. So perhaps the king of Ai was the leader of forces mobilizing for the battle which occurred at a place that was *already* a ruin rather than a city. Some archeologists, however, are looking for alternative locations of Ai and excavations are underway at the nearby site of Khirbet Nisya.

Though there may still be some question regarding the location of Ai, the importance of the happenings there can be seen from the amount of biblical material given over to a discussion of Israel’s defeat (chap. 7) and her victory at that site (chap. 8).

a. Disobedience (7:1)

**Joshua 7:1**. The chapter opens with the ominous word **But**. The gladness of victory was soon replaced by the gloom of defeat. And all this was because of the disobedience of one man. Jericho was placed under God’s *ḥērem* (“ban for destruction”; 6:18–19), meaning that everything living was to be put to death and valuable objects were to be dedicated to the Lord’s treasury. *No Israelite soldier was to help himself to the booty—but that temptation was too strong for one man.*

Though one might wish to give credit to the discipline of Joshua’s forces because only one of his soldiers gave in to temptation, even this one did not escape God’s notice. God saw Achan’s sin in taking **some** of **the devoted things**, and because of it God’s wrath **burned against** the entire nation. He considered them collectively responsible and withheld His blessing until the matter was made right. In fact it is apparent that Israel’s history would have ended here if God’s anger had not been turned away.

b. Defeat (7:2–5*)*

**Joshua 7:2**. Unaware of Achan’s disobedience and eager to take advantage of the first

victory, **Joshua** made preparations for the next battle by sending spies 10 miles northwest of **Jericho to Ai**, which was **east of Bethel**. This seems to have been his regular practice (cf. 2:1). (**Beth Aven** [”house of evil“] later was a nickname [Hosea 10:5] for Bethel [”house of God“]. But here it seems to be another place about three miles north of **Ai**.)

**Joshua 7:3.** When the spies **returned** they spoke with great confidence. They said that **Ai** could easily be conquered with only **two or three thousand men**. The city had **only a few men**, they said. But the spies were wrong. Actually Ai had 12,000 men and women, or about 6,000 men (8:25). Later, when God gave the orders to **Joshua**, He told him, “Take the whole army” (8:1). Though smaller than Jericho, Ai was well fortified and her soldiers well entrenched. Israel was guilty of underestimating the strength of her enemy and of overestimating her own strength. On this occasion there is no mention of prayer and no evidence of dependence on God.

It is a deadly error to underrate the enemy’s power. Christians often fail to realize that their enemies are powerful (Eph. 6:12; 1 Peter 5:8). So believers suffer the consequences in ignominious spiritual defeat.

The calamity that befell Israel was due, at least in part, to minimizing the enemy and to assuming that one victory guaranteed another. But life simply does not work that way. Yesterday’s victory does not make a believer immune from defeat today. He must continually depend on the Lord for strength. Speaking of a Christian’s conflict with evil Paul wrote, “Be strong in [[5]](#footnote-5) the Lord and in His mighty power” (Eph. 6:10).

**Joshua 7:4–5**. But Joshua sent only **3,000 men** to **Ai**, where sadly they did not conquer

but **were routed**. They rushed in terror down the steep pass which they had so confidently climbed in the morning, till the pursuers caught them at some **stone quarries**, where **36** Israelite soldiers were slain. The rest escaped and returned to camp.

As the report of the defeat spread rapidly through the camp the people were utterly demoralized. **The hearts of the people melted, and became like water**. Even though this was Israel’s only defeat in the seven-year Conquest of Canaan, the significant matter was not the loss itself or even the deaths of the 36 soldiers. Israel was suddenly filled with terrible misgivings that the Lord’s help had been withdrawn. They knew of no reason why it should have been. Had God changed His mind?

c. Dismay (7:6–9)

**Joshua 7:6–9.** **Joshua** also was stunned by the defeat. In keeping with ancient rites of mourning the leader and the elders **tore** their **clothes** and **the elders** put **dust on their heads** (cf. Job 1:20; 2:12). They **fell** on their faces **before the ark of the Lord … till evening**. Then Joshua’s perplexity was verbalized as he asked the Lord three questions:

(1) **Why did You … bring** us here—**to destroy us?**

(2) **What can I say, now that Israel has been** defeated?

(3) **What then will You do** to protect **Your** reputation?

 Joshua seemed to blame God for the defeat and did not even consider that the cause might have been elsewhere. In his first question he even adopted the thinking of the spies against whom he had so vehemently protested at Kadesh (cf. Num. 14:2–3). Joshua’s greatest concern was that the news of this defeat might somehow reduce the respect of the heathen for God’s **own great name**. Consequently their **name** would be wiped out, that is, they would be destroyed and never remembered.

d. Directions (7:10–15)

**Joshua 7:10–11.** The Lord’s reply **to Joshua** was brusque. **Stand up! What are you doing down on your face?** God then explained the cause of the defeat and the need for action. The cause of the disaster was with Israel, not God—**Israel** had **sinned**. In His indictment God angrily used an accumulation of verbs. Advancing from the general to the particular He charged Israel with sinning, violating the **covenant**, appropriating **some of the devoted things** (*haḥērem*, “things devoted for or designated for destruction“; cf. 6:18–19 and comments on 6:21), *stealing, lying, and concealing the* ***stolen*** *goods.* (The goods are named in 7:21.) Till these transgressions were repudiated and expiation made for them, the sin of one person was considered the sin of the nation.

**Joshua 7:12**. After the fall of Jericho it was recorded, “So the Lord was with Joshua” (6:27). But now the grim announcement came from God, **I will not be with you anymore unless** this sin is judged and the **devoted** things are destroyed.

**Joshua 7:13–15**. **The Lord** then revealed the steps to be followed in the purging process. First, **the people** were to **consecrate** themselves. No victory over **their enemies** was possible till this problem was dealt with. Second, they were to gather on the next day to identify the offender, presumably by casting lots (cf. comments on vv. 16–18), exposing first the guilty **tribe**, then **the clan**, then **the family**, and finally the individual. Third, the culprit and all his possessions (not merely the stolen goods) were then to be burned. This sin was considered by God **a disgraceful thing**. Achan’s sin was in deliberate disobedience to God’s instruction (6:18), and it made the entire nation liable to destruction. If the Israelites did not destroy the Canaanites’ goods, God might destroy the Israelites!

e. Discovery (7:16–21)

**Joshua 7:16–18**. **Joshua** rose **early** on the fateful day. All **Israel** was assembled for the ritual of determining [[6]](#footnote-6) determining the offender. This was probably done by drawing lots, perhaps by taking inscribed potsherds out of a jar. But since God knew who was guilty, why did He not simply reveal his identity to Joshua? The answer is that this dramatic method would impress on the nation of Israel the seriousness of disobeying God’s commands. Since the method took time it would also give the guilty person an opportunity to repent and confess his sin. If Achan had responded in this way and thrown himself on the mercy of God no doubt he would have been pardoned as was the guilty David centuries later (Pss. 32:1–5; 51:1–12).

There was a grim silence as the process narrowed from the selection of the tribe of **Judah** to **the clan of the Zerahites**, to the family of **Zimri**, and finally to the trespasser himself, **Achan**. This was no quirk of fate; it was the direction of God’s providence. Solomon described the process well: “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord” (Prov. 16:33).

**Joshua 7:19–21**. Strangely, **Achan** had remained silent throughout the entire procedure, though surely fear gripped him and his heart may have pounded furiously as each step brought his discovery nearer. At length **Joshua** addressed **Achan** tenderly but firmly, for though Joshua hated the sin he did not despise the sinner. A public confession confirming the supernatural exposure of the guilty person was necessary.

Achan’s response was straightforward and complete. He confessed his sin and gave no excuses. But neither did he express sorrow for disobeying God’s order, betraying his nation for booty, and causing the defeat of Israel’s troops and the death of 36 men. Any remorse he may have felt was probably only because he got caught.

The three crucial steps in Achan’s sin are familiar: he **saw;** he **coveted;** he **took**. *Eve took the same tragic steps in the Garden of Eden* (Gen. 3:6), as did David with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11:2–4).

The objects Achan took from Jericho and hid **in the ground inside** his **tent** included

1. **a beautiful robe from Babylonia**, perhaps [[7]](#footnote-7) acquired by someone in Jericho who

 traded with a Babylonian,

(b) **200 shekels of silver**, weighing about 5 pounds, and

(c) a **50**-shekel (1¼-pound) **wedge of gold**.

Achan may well have reasoned, “After all, I have been deprived of the good things of life these many years in the wilderness. Here is a beautiful new and stylish garment and some silver and gold. How could God want to withhold these things from me? They will never be missed, and I am entitled to some pleasure and prosperity.” But there was a specific command against taking any of Jericho’s booty. (Joshua had told the people that *all* the silver and gold were to be put in the Lord’s treasury; Josh. 6:19.) God’s Word can never be rationalized away without penalty.

f. Death (7:22–26*)*

**Joshua 7:22–25**. Achan’s confession was quickly verified; the stolen objects were found where he said they were. They were then **spread … out before the Lord** to whom they belonged. Then the wretched man was led out **to the Valley of Achor** with the spoil, all his family, his animals, and all his other belongings. The fatal stones felled Achan and his children, and fire consumed their bodies and belongings. Having stolen “devoted” objects Achan himself became contaminated and under the doom of destruction. Since children were not to be executed for their father’s sins (Deut. 24:16) it is assumed that Achan’s family (except for his wife, who was not mentioned) were accomplices in the crime (cf. comments on Num. 16:28–35).

**Joshua 7:26**. The final stroke was accomplished by the raising of a historical marker, **a large pile of rocks**, over the body of **Achan**. This seems to have been a common method of burial for infamous individuals (cf. 8:29). It served in this case that good purpose of warning Israel against the sin of disobeying God’s express commands.

The Hebrew words for Achan and Achor are probably related. Thus Achan, which possibly means “troubler,” was buried in **the Valley of Achor**, the Valley of “Trouble.” But because [[8]](#footnote-8) Israel was willing to deal with the sin problem in her midst, God’s burning **anger** (7:1) was **turned** away and He was ready to lead them again to victory.

**3. the victory at ai (chap. 8)**

a. The setting of the battle (8:1–2)

**Joshua 8:1**. The momentum Israel had achieved by the miraculous crossing of the Jordan and the supernatural victory over Jericho was stopped by the defeat at Ai. Gloom and despair permeated not only all those in the camp but also the heart of Joshua. But with Achan’s crime judged, God’s favor toward Israel was restored and He reassured **Joshua** that He had not forsaken him or the people. When Joshua heard God’s words of encouragement his heart quickened, for these were the same words Moses spoke in Kadesh Barnea when he sent out the 12 spies (Deut. 1:21). They were also the words Moses said to Joshua 40 years later when he was turning the reins of leadership over to the younger man (Deut. 31:8). And Joshua heard them again when God spoke to him just after the death of Moses (Josh. 1:9). Now at this crucial time in Joshua’s life it was good to be reminded and reassured that God was ready to lead if Joshua were ready to listen to *His* plan, which he was.

God’s plan involved using all the fighting men of Israel. Though the primary cause of the defeat at Ai was Achan’s sin, a secondary cause was underrating the enemy (cf. 7:3–4). That error would now be rectified. God said for Joshua to **go up and attack Ai** and He promised to turn the place of defeat into a place of victory.

**Joshua 8:2**. Before the actual plan of battle was revealed to Joshua he was told that the spoil of **Ai** and also its **livestock** could be taken by Israel. Jericho had been placed under the ban but Ai was not. What an irony! If only Achan had suppressed his greedy and selfish desires and obeyed God’s word at Jericho he would later have had all his heart desired and God’s blessing too. The path of [[9]](#footnote-9) obedience and faith is always best.

b. The sequence of the battle (8:3–29)

The order of events at Ai differed entirely from that at Jericho. The Israelites did not march around the walls of Ai seven times. The city’s walls did not fall miraculously. Israel had to conquer the city through a normal combat operation. God is not limited to any one method of working. He is not and will not be stereotyped in His operations.

**Joshua 8:3–9.** The strategy for the capture of Ai was ingenious. It involved placing **an ambush behind** (west of) **the city**. God Himself had told **Joshua** to do this (vv. 2, 8). The outworking of this plan involved three contingents of soldiers. The first was a group of valiant warriors who were sent by **night** to hide just **west** of the city of **Ai**. Their assignment was to rush into the city and burn it after its defenders had deserted it to **pursue** Joshua and his army. This unit numbered **30,000**, and while this seems like an excessively large number of soldiers to hide near the city, the presence of large rocks in the region made it possible for all these men to remain hidden.

**Joshua 8:10–11**. The second contingent was the main army which walked the 15 miles from Gilgal **early the next morning** and camped in plain view on the **north** side **of Ai**. No doubt this **entire force** included many thousands of soldiers. Led by **Joshua**, this army was a diversionary force to decoy the defenders of **Ai** out of the city.

**Joshua 8:12–13.** The third contingent was another **ambush** numbering **5,000**

who were positioned **between Bethel and Ai** to cut off the possibility of reinforcements from Bethel aiding the men of Ai. **Joshua** was in **the valley** north of Ai, a deep ravine in the hills.

**Joshua 8:14–22**. The plan worked to perfection. **When the king of Ai saw** Israel’s army he took the bait. Pursuing the Israelites who pretended defeat, **the city** of **Ai** was left unguarded. At Joshua’s signal the other troops **quickly** entered and **set** the city **on fire**. The consternation of **the men of Ai** was complete as they witnessed the billows of flame and **smoke** rising into the sky. *Before they could gather their wits they were* ***caught in*** *a pincer movement of Israelite soldiers and were destroyed.*

**Joshua 8:23–29**. After **killing all** Ai’s soldiers, Israel’s army reentered the city **and killed** all its inhabitants. The dead soldiers and citizens totaled **12,000. Plunder** was taken from the city by Israel’s soldiers as God had said they could do (v. 2). The city was made a **heap of ruins**. Ai’s **king**, previously spared, was hanged **on a tree** till **evening** and then was buried beneath a **pile** of stones (cf. Achan’s similar burial, 7:26). The king’s **body** was taken off **the tree** at **sunset** because of God’s command (Deut. 21:22–23; cf. Josh. 10:27).

Thus Israel, restored to God’s favor, won a great victory. After failure came a second chance. One defeat or failure does not signal the end of a believer’s usefulness for God.

c. The sequel to the battle (8:30–35)

**Joshua 8:30–31**. After the victory of Ai **Joshua** did a strange and militarily foolish thing. Instead of securing the central sector of the land with further victories he led the Israelites on a spiritual pilgrimage. Why? Simply because **Moses … had commanded** it (Deut. 27:1–8).

Without delay Joshua led the men, women, children, and cattle from their camp at Gilgal northward up the Jordan Valley to the place specified, the mountains of **Ebal** (Josh. 8:30) and Gerizim (v. 33) which are at Shechem. The march of about 30 miles was not difficult or dangerous since they passed through a sparsely populated area. But how did the Israelites avoid a confrontation with the men of the city of Shechem, a fortress which guarded the entrance to the valley between the mountains?

The Bible does not record every battle of the Conquest and the record of the capture of Shechem may have been omitted. Or the city at that time may have been in friendly hands or it may simply have surrendered without resistance. But why was this location chosen? These mountains are located in the geographic center of the land and from either peak much of the Promised Land can be seen. Here then, in a place that represented all the land, both at the time of entrance into Canaan and also when his leadership was ending (cf. 24:1), Joshua challenged the people to renew their covenant vows to the Lord.

The solemn and significant religious ceremonies at this location involved three things. First, **an altar of uncut stones** was erected on **Mount** Ebal and sacrifices (consisting of **burnt offerings** and **fellowship offerings**; cf. Lev. 1; 3) were **offered to the Lord**. Jericho and Ai, in which false gods of the Canaanites were worshiped, had fallen. Israel now publicly worshiped and proclaimed her faith in the one true God.

**Joshua 8:32**. Second, **Joshua** set up some large **stones**. On their surfaces he wrote a copy of **the Law of Moses**. How much of the Law was inscribed is not stated. Some suggest only the Ten Commandments were written, while others think the stone inscription included the contents of at least Deuteronomy 5–26. Archeologists have discovered similar inscribed pillars or stelae six to eight feet long in the Middle East. And the Behistun Inscription in Iran is three times the length of Deuteronomy.

**Joshua 8:33–35.** Third, **Joshua read … the Law** to the people. **Half of the people** were positioned on the slopes **of Mount Gerizim** to the south, the other **half** were on the slopes **of Mount Ebal** to the north, and **the ark of the covenant** surrounded by **priests** was in the valley between. As **the curses** of the Law were **read** one by one, the tribes on Mount Ebal responded, “Amen!” As **the blessings** were likewise read the tribes on Mount Gerizim responded “Amen!” (Deut. 11:29; 27:12–26) The huge natural amphitheater which still exists there made it possible for the people to hear every word and with all sincerity Israel affirmed that the Law of the Lord was indeed to be the Law of the land.

From this point on the history of the Jews depended on their attitude toward the

Law which had been read in their hearing that day. When they were obedient there was blessing; when they were disobedient there was judgment (cf. Deut. 28). It is tragic that the affirmations of this momentous hour faded so quickly.

**C. The southern campaign (chaps. 9–10)**

Israel’s failure to consult the Lord was a major factor in her defeat at Ai and the prayerlessness of her leaders was about to precipitate another crisis. It all came about when it was least expected. The people had just returned to camp at Gilgal after hearing the Law of God read to them at Mounts Ebal and Gerizim. Much of the Law was inscribed on stones as Israel affirmed her willingness to obey God’s Word. It was a time of spiritual victory; it was also a time for a subtle attack from Satan. When God’s people think they “have it made” they are most vulnerable to the enemy’s assault.

This story unfolds in the next two chapters of the Book of Joshua—the alliance with the Gibeonites (chap. 9) and the defense of the Gibeonites (chap. 10).

**1. the alliance with the gibeonites (chap. 9)**

a. The deception of the Gibeonites (9:1–15)

**Joshua 9:1–2.** Israel’s victories over Jericho and Ai aroused the whole country to concerted action. These verses prepare the reader for the southern and northern campaigns of the Conquest, described in chapters 10 and 11.

The frightened **kings** are grouped according to three geographical areas: those from **the hill country** of central Palestine, **the western foothills** (valleys or lowlands), and the coastal plain stretching north to **Lebanon**. That *they were not able to unite as planned into one fighting force is a tribute to the success of Joshua’s strategy in driving a wedge through the backbone of Canaan.* But powerful confederations did form in both the north and the south. Truces were declared in tribal wars and deadly enemies were ready to make common cause against the invasion force of God’s people.

**Joshua 9:3**. Not all Israel’s enemies wanted to fight. The Gibeonites were convinced they could never defeat Israel in war so they pursued peace. Located in the hill country only six miles northwest of Jerusalem and about the same distance southwest of Ai, **Gibeon** was known as “an important city” (10:2) and was head of a small confederation including three neighboring towns (cf. 9:17).

**Joshua 9:4–6**. After consultation they adopted an ingenious plan to send emissaries to **Joshua** disguised as weary and worn travelers who had been on a long journey. One morning **in the** Israelite **camp at Gilgal** this strange deputation arrived, their **wineskins** old and patched, their **sandals** worn thin, their **clothes** dirty and torn, and their bread **dry and moldy**. As the visitors passed through the bystanders to seek out Joshua, the Israelites no doubt wondered who the strangers were, where they came from, and why they were there.

Untruthful answers were given as soon as the Gibeonites found Joshua. They told him, **We have come from a distant country; make a treaty with us**. But why the emphasis on being from a far country and the deceptive performance to “prove” it? Apparently the Gibeonites had become aware of the provisions in the Mosaic Law permitting Israel to make peace with cities that were at a considerable distance, but requiring them to wipe out completely the cities of the seven nearby Canaanite nations (Deut. 20:10–18; 7:1–2).

**Joshua 9:7.** At first Joshua and his staff were hesitant and not altogether convinced. They said **But perhaps you live near us**. It was well for them to be on their guard for things are not always what they seem to be. Evil men often try to take advantage of the righteous.

The travelers from Gibeon were called **Hivites** (cf. 11:19); they were descendants of Canaan, a son of Ham (Gen. 10:17). Possibly the Hivites were also the Horites (in Gen. 36:2 Zibeon was called a Hivite, but in Gen. 36:20 he was called a Horite).

**Joshua 9:8–13**. **Joshua** probed with questions and the wily Gibeonites told their tale. They insisted that they came from a great distance to show respect to the powerful **God** of the Israelites, to be allowed to live at peace as Israel’s **servants**. Word had reached them of what God had done for the Israelites **in Egypt** (probably the plagues and the crossing of the Red [Reed] Sea) and of God’s victories over **Sihon** and **Og** (Num. 21:21–25; Deut. 2:26–3:11). Interestingly, however, they made no mention of Israel’s recent victories over Jericho and Ai because if they had come from a far country they would not have heard of these recent battles. Pursuing this clever ruse they presented their credentials—moldy **bread**, patched **wineskins**, ragged **clothes**, and worn-out **sandals**—and the suspicion of Joshua and the leaders dissipated.

**Joshua 9:14–15**. *Caught off guard by the cunning strategy of the Gibeonites,* ***the leaders of*** *the Israelites concluded a formal* ***treaty*** *with* ***them***. But **Joshua** and the Israelites made at least two mistakes. First, in sampling **their provisions** they accepted as evidence things that were highly questionable. If the visitors were true ambassadors with power to conclude a treaty with another nation they should have had more substantial credentials. It was foolish of Joshua not to demand them.

The second and primary reason for Israel’s failure is stated in verse 14: *the leaders* ***did not*** *seek direction from God.* Did Joshua think the evidence to be so beyond question that they needed no advice from Yahweh? Did he think the matter too routine or unimportant to “bother” God with it? Whatever the cause it was a mistake to trust their own judgment and make their own plans. This holds true for believers in all ages (James 4:13–15).

b. The discovery of the ruse (9:16–17)

**Joshua 9:16–17**. In **three days** Israel learned that they had been “taken” because the **Gibeonites** lived only about 25 miles from Gilgal, in Canaan proper and not in some far country. An exploratory force confirmed the fraud by discovering the nearby location of **Gibeon** and its three dependent **cities**. “A lying tongue lasts only a moment” (Prov. 12:19). Sooner or later trickery and deceit are exposed. Truth will win out.

c. The decision of the leaders (9:18–27)

**Joshua 9:18–19**. How provoked **the Israelites** were when they discovered they had been duped! The people in fact wanted to disregard the treaty and destroy the Gibeonites, but Joshua and his staff said that the enemies’ deception did not nullify the treaty. The agreement was sacred because it had been ratified **by** an **oath** in the name of **the Lord, the God of Israel** (cf. v. 15). To break it would bring down the wrath of God on Israel, a tragedy that later came to pass during David’s reign because Saul disregarded this oath (cf. 2 Sam. 21:1–6).

**Joshua 9:20–27**. Joshua and the princes were men of integrity, men who stood by their word. Though humiliated by what had transpired they did not want to bring disgrace on God and His people by breaking a sacred treaty. Yet, though Israel would not go back on their pledge the deceivers must be punished. **Joshua** therefore addressed **the Gibeonites**, rebuking them for their dishonesty, and announced that they were cursed to perpetual slavery. This slavery would take the form of their being **woodcutters and water carriers for** the Israelites. In order to keep the Gibeonites’ idolatry from defiling the religion of Israel their work would be carried out in connection with the tabernacle where they would be exposed to the worship of the one true God.

So the very thing the Gibeonites hoped to attain they lost. They desperately wanted to remain free men; in the end they became slaves. But the curse became a blessing. It was on behalf of the Gibeonites that God worked a great miracle (cf. 10:10–14). Later the tabernacle was pitched at Gibeon (2 Chron. 1:3); still later some Gibeonites helped Nehemiah rebuild Jerusalem’s wall (Neh. 3:7). Such is the grace of God. He is still able to turn a curse into a blessing. Though it is usually true that the natural consequences of sin must run their course, the grace of God can not only forgive but also overrule mistakes and often bring blessings out of sins and failures.

**2. the defense of the gibeonites (chap. 10)**

a. The cause of the conflict (10:1–5)

**Joshua 10:1–2**. Attention shifted suddenly from Gibeon to **Jerusalem**, five miles south. Near panic had seized **Adoni-Zedek** its **king** and for good reason. The treacherous surrender of the Gibeonite cities completed an arc beginning at Gilgal and extending through **Jericho** and **Ai** to a point just a few miles northwest of Jerusalem. The handwriting was on the wall. Jerusalem’s security was being severely threatened. If the advances of Israel’s armies continued without challenge Jerusalem would soon be surrounded and captured.

**Joshua 10:3–4**. So the **king of Jerusalem** sent an urgent message to four other kings of southern Canaan stressing the fact that **Gibeon** had **made peace** with Israel, a traitorous and punishable act. This might pave the way for other cities to surrender in like manner. It was a signal for war. Immediate action had to be taken against Gibeon.

**Joshua 10:5**. There was a quick response. Little time elapsed before the united force of a **five**-king southern confederacy was laying siege **against Gibeon**. The **kings** were **of the Amorites**, that is, of Canaan’s hill country (cf. comments on Gen. 14:13–16).

b. The course of the conflict (10:6–15)

**Joshua 10:6**. Faced with certain slaughter, **the Gibeonites** sent a runner to **Joshua in … Gilgal** with an insistent appeal for **help** against the overwhelming force that pressed on them. But why should Joshua respond to this cry for help from the very people who had deceived him? Why not just sit back and let the Canaanites fight among themselves? The Israelites would then be rid of evidence of an embarrassing failure.

**Joshua 10:7–8**. That this was not an option for Joshua is made clear by his immediate reaction. Some suggest that this is evidence that the covenant between Israel and the Gibeonites’ league was a mutual defense pact. But the scriptural record does not state that. And it seems preposterous that Israel would obligate herself in a treaty to go to the rescue of a “distant” nation which Israel assumed about the Gibeonites when the treaty was adopted.

The reason for Joshua’s response lies in the area of military strategy. Up to this time Israel’s army attacked one fortified city at a time, at best a long and drawn-out offensive procedure for conquering the entire land of Canaan. But now Joshua sensed he had the strategic break he needed. The combined Amorite armies of southern Canaan were camped together in an open field outside Gibeon. An Israelite victory would break the backs of the enemy forces of the entire region. Furthermore God assured **Joshua** that he need **not be afraid of them** (cf. 1:9; 8:1) for God would give him victory.

Gathering his forces, **Joshua** and his men **marched** the 25 miles **from Gilgal** to Gibeon under cover of darkness. It was a tiresome journey with an ascent of 4,000 feet up steep and difficult terrain. There was no opportunity to rest. The army was fatigued and faced a powerful foe. Clearly God must intervene or all would be lost.

**Joshua 10:9–10**. Motivated by God’s promise of victory, **Joshua** led a **surprise** attack on the Amorite armies of the south, possibly while it was still dark. *Panic seized the enemy and after a short stand in which many were killed they broke and fled in wild* ***confusion*** *toward the west.* Their escape route was through a narrow pass and down the Valley of Aijalon with the Israelites in hot pursuit. This was not the only time that the highroad which led down from the central hill country has been the scene of a rout; in a.d. 66 the Roman general Cestius Gallus fled down this descent before the Jews.

**Joshua 10:11**. The Amorites however were not able to escape. Using the forces of nature to fight for Israel **the Lord** caused **large hailstones** to fall on the enemy with deadly precision so that **more** were killed in this way than by **swords**.

This entire passage provides a striking illustration of the interplay between the human and divine factors in achieving victory. Verses 7–11 alternate between Joshua (and Israel) and the Lord. They all played important parts in the conflict. The soldiers had to fight but God gave the victory.

**Joshua 10:12**. But **the day** of the battle of Beth Horon was wearing on and **Joshua** knew that the pursuit of the enemy would be long and arduous. At the most the military leader had 12 hours of daylight ahead of him. He clearly needed more time if he were to realize the fulfillment of God’s promise (v. 8) and see the total annihilation of his foes. Joshua therefore took to **the Lord** an unusual request: **O sun, stand still over Gibeon, O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon**.

**Joshua 10:13–15**. It was noon and the hot **sun** was directly overhead when Joshua uttered this prayer. **The moon** was on the horizon to the west. The petition was quickly answered by the Lord. Joshua prayed in faith, and a great miracle resulted. But the record of this miracle has been called the most striking example of conflict between Scripture and science because, as is well known, the sun does not move around the earth causing day and night. Instead, light and darkness come because the earth rotates on its axis around the sun. Why then did Joshua address the sun rather than the earth? Simply because he was using the language of observation; he was speaking from the perspective and appearance of things on earth. People still do the same thing, even in the scientific community. Almanacs and journals record the hours of sunrise and sunset, yet no one accuses them of scientific error. [[10]](#footnote-10) The “long day” of Joshua 10, however, must be explained. What *did* actually happen on that strange day? The answers are numerous (an eclipse, clouds over the sun, refraction of the sun’s rays, etc.). But the best explanation seems to be the view that in answer to Joshua’s prayer God caused the rotation of the earth to slow down so that it made one full rotation in 48 hours rather than in 24. It seems apparent that this view is supported both by the poem in verses 12b–13a and the prose in verse 13b. (**The Book of Jashar** is a Heb. literary collection of songs written in poetic style to honor the accomplishments of Israel’s leaders; [cf. David’s “lament of the bow” in 2 Sam. 1:17–27].)

God stopped the cataclysmic effects that would have naturally occurred, such as monstrous tidal waves and objects flying around. Evidence that the earth’s rotation simply slowed down is found in the closing words of Joshua 10:13: **The sun … delayed going down about a full day**. The sun was thus abnormally slow or tardy in getting to sunset, that is, its progression from noon to dusk was markedly lethargic, giving Joshua and his soldiers sufficient time to complete their victorious battle.

An important fact that should not be overlooked is that the sun and moon were principal deities among the Canaanites. At the prayer of Israel’s leader Canaan’s gods were compelled to obey. This disturbance to their gods must have been terribly upsetting and frightening to the Canaanites. The secret of Israel’s triumph over the coalition of Canaanites is found in the words, **Surely the Lord was fighting for Israel!** In answer to prayer **Israel** experienced the dramatic intervention of God on their behalf and victory was assured.

c. The culmination of the conflict (10:16–43)

**Joshua 10:16–24**. Taking every advantage of the extended day **Joshua** continued in hot pursuit of the enemy. **The five** strong **kings** and their armies had left their fortified cities to fight Israel in the open. Now Joshua was determined to prevent their retreating back to **their** walled **cities**. When word came that **the five kings** had **hidden in** a **cave** Joshua himself did not stop to deal with them but vigorously pursued the Amorite soldiers, killing all but a **few** who escaped to **their fortified cities**. Then returning to the guarded **cave** he brought out the captured **kings** and executed them. But first, following an eastern custom of conquerors, often pictured on Egyptian and Assyrian monuments, **Joshua** instructed his field **commanders** to **put** their **feet** on the kings’ **necks**. This was a symbol of the complete subjugation of the defeated enemy.

**Joshua 10:25–27.** Then, using words identical to those God had given him, **Joshua** urged his soldiers **not** to **be afraid** or **discouraged** (cf. 1:9; 8:1) but to **be strong and courageous** (cf. 1:6–7, 9). The victory over the Amorite kings was a [[11]](#footnote-11) sample of Israel’s future victories in Canaan, for Joshua said, **This is what the Lord will do to all the enemies you are going to fight. Joshua … killed the kings** and their bodies were exposed by **hanging** till sundown (cf. 8:29). Then they were thrown **into the cave** which was blocked by great **rocks**, as had been done earlier (10:18). These rocks became another memorial of Israel’s victorious march through Canaan.

**Joshua 10:28–39**. The defeat of the five kings and their armies sealed the doom of southern Canaan. In a series of quick raids **Joshua** attacked the key military centers themselves to destroy any further military capability. First he **took Makkedah** (v. 28), **Libnah** (v. 29), **Lachish** (v. 31), and **Eglon** (v. 34). These cities, ranging roughly from north to south, guarded the approaches to the southern highlands. Centuries later both Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar followed the same strategy in their attacks on Judah.

**Joshua** next drove into the heart of the southern region and defeated its two chief walled cities, **Hebron** (v. 36) and **Debir** (v. 38). But Jerusalem and Jarmuth, two of the five confederates (v. 5), were bypassed. No explanation is given as to why the defeat of the city of Jarmuth is not mentioned. As for Jerusalem, no doubt Israel’s troops were too weary to undertake this difficult task as they returned to camp at Gilgal. At any rate this pagan “island” in the land was to be troublesome to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin until it was conquered by David (2 Sam. 5:7).

**Joshua 10:40–43.** The extent of Israel’s campaign in the south is summarized in verses 40–41 (cf. 11:16). The **region of Goshen**, *not* the Goshen in Egypt (Gen. 45:10; 46:34; 47:1, 4, 6), was probably the area around Debir in southern Canaan. A town named Goshen was 1 of 11 towns “in the hill country” which included Debir (Josh. 15:48–51). Perhaps the area was named for the town. The impressive sweep of victories recorded in Joshua 10 is given credibility by the concluding statement, **All these kings and their lands Joshua conquered in one campaign because the Lord, the God of Israel, fought for Israel**. With such confidence, **Joshua** and his tired army **returned** to **Gilgal** to make preparations for completing their task.

D. The northern campaign (11:1–15)

After the exhausting military campaign in the south, Joshua was not to enjoy any prolonged period of recuperation before facing an even greater challenge, a massive coalition of forces in the north. But he was equal to the task.

Israel’s leader was both a military genius and a spiritual giant. Militarily, his tactics were skillful:

1. His battles were all offensive. When he learned that an attack was impending,

he preceded it by an attack of his own.

1. He used the element of surprise [[12]](#footnote-12) (e.g., against the five Amorite kings besieging

Gibeon, 10:9; against the many kings at the Waters of Merom, 11:7; and against Ai when he staged a decoy-rout, 8:14–19).

1. He sent his soldiers to harry the retreating enemy, to prevent them from reaching

their cities (10:19–20).

Spiritually, Joshua served as an example to the people: he stood by the promise his spies made to Rahab; he kept faith with the deceptive Gibeonites; he could have used his position for personal gain but he did not. With such a leader at the helm of affairs in Israel, the Conquest entered its final phase.

**1. the confederation (11:1–5)**

**Joshua 11:1–3**. The alarm of **the northern** Canaanite **kings** was aroused by Joshua’s crushing victories in the south. **Jabin, king of Hazor**, organized a desperate attempt to stop the conquest of the land by the army of Israel. No doubt his attempt would have had a better chance of success if he had joined the coalition of Adoni-Zedek (10:1–3), marching in force from the north to merge with the southern armies to crush Israel at Gibeon. But God restrained Jabin from that move and now he reacted to the crisis with dispatch and near panic.

Messengers fanned out rapidly to the north, south, east, and west, with an urgent call to arms. This may have been quite similar to the summons Saul issued later to Israel to follow him to Jabesh Gilead, killing a yoke of oxen and sending pieces of the animals by couriers who cried, “This is what will be done to the oxen of anyone who does not follow Saul and Samuel” (1 Sam. 11:7). **Kinnereth** (Josh. 11:2; cf. 13:27; 19:35; Num. 34:11; Deut. 3:17; 1 Kings 15:20) is an early name for the Sea of Galilee and also the name of a town on the coast of the lake. “Kinnereth,” meaning harp, may refer to the lake’s harp-like shape. The New Testament [[13]](#footnote-13) sometimes refers to the Sea of Galilee as the Lake of Gennesaret, a Greek spelling for the Hebrew Kinnereth (e.g., Luke 5:1).

**Joshua 11:4–5**. Though there was no love lost among those **kings** of the north, the threat of annihilation forced them into an alliance and they rendezvoused a few miles northwest of the Sea of Galilee in a plain near **the Waters of Merom**.

The combined army was impressive. Not only did it include soldiers **as numerous as the sand on the seashore**, but in addition they had **horses and chariots** in great numbers. Josephus, a Jewish historian of the first century a.d., speculated that this northern confederacy included 300,000 infantry soldiers, 10,000 cavalry troops, and 20,000 chariots. *The odds against the Israelites seemed overwhelming. How could Joshua hope to win this battle?*

**2. the conflict (11:6–15)**

The vast host of Canaanites were pitched at the Waters of Merom (v. 5). It was probably their plan, after organizing their detachments and adopting a strategy, to sweep down the Jordan Valley and attack Joshua at Gilgal. But Joshua did not wait for the battle to come to him; he was in fact already marching toward Merom, a five-day trek from his home base. And as he marched he had a lot of time to think about the immense array awaiting him. No doubt he trembled at the prospect of the battle that loomed before him.

**Joshua 11:6**. Then God spoke. The promise He gave **Joshua** was unmistakably clear: **Do not be afraid of them** (cf. 1:9; 8:1) **because by this time tomorrow I will hand all of them over to Israel, slain**. *This was just what Joshua needed and Israel’s leader took God’s promise at face value, believing that He would give them the victory over their formidable foe.* God even told Joshua specifically **to hamstring** (cripple by cutting the leg tendons) **their horses and** to **burn their chariots** (cf. comments on 11:9).

**Joshua 11:7–9**. The battle took place in two phases. The next day **Joshua** surprised the enemy, attacking them **at the Waters of Merom** and chasing **them** westward to the coast (**to Greater Sidon** and **to Misrephoth Maim**), **and** eastward **to the Valley of Mizpah**. Following God’s direction (v. 6) to the letter Joshua killed all of the enemy, **burned their chariots**, and lamed **their horses**.

But why did God command such drastic action, burning the chariots and hamstringing the horses? Because the Canaanites used horses in their pagan worship (and so later did Judah; cf. 2 Kings 23:11). Also there was danger that Israel might trust in these new weapons of war rather than in the Lord. The Psalmist David declared, “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God” (Ps. 20:7).

**Joshua 11:10–14**. In the second phase of the conflict in northern Canaan **Joshua** returned after routing the enemy army and **captured** all the cities of the defeated kings. **Hazor**, however, was singled out for special treatment, probably because it was by far the largest city of ancient Palestine (200 acres in size, compared with Megiddo at 14 and Jericho at 8). Occupying a position of immense strategic importance **Hazor** dominated several branches of an ancient highway which led from Egypt to Syria and on to Assyria and Babylon. This location on the trade routes contributed to the city’s wealth. **Hazor** alone among the northern cities was both seized and **burned**. Though **Joshua** may have decided to save the other captured **cities** for later Israelite use, he determined to make an example of **Hazor**, capital **of all these kingdoms** (city states) and the convener of their armies. If great Hazor could not escape, the Canaanites would be forced to acknowledge that any city could be burned if Joshua so decreed.

**Joshua 11:15**. Thus *a decisive victory was won in the north. And the key was obedience to God*. **Joshua … left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses**.

E. The review of the victories (11:16–12:24)

*Victory in the north brought the formal end of the Conquest*. But before giving the record of how the land was apportioned among the tribes, the author paused to review and summarize the scope of Israel’s triumphs in Canaan. He included a description of the conquered geographic areas (11:16–23) and a list of the defeated kings (chap. 12).

**3. the conquered areas (11:16–23)**

**Joshua11:16–17**. The battles fought by **Joshua** and his troops ranged over lands that stretched from border to border, from south to north, and from east to west. **The hill country**, the **Negev**, the **Goshen** area, **the western foothills, the Arabah, and the mountains** refer to the central and southern portions of the land (cf. 10:40). “The Negev” is the desert area southwest of the Dead Sea and “the Arabah” is the depression of the Jordan Valley north and south of the Dead Sea. **Mount Halak** is in the southern desert region; **Baal Gad** (exact location unknown) was in the far north, **in the Valley of Lebanon** perhaps 30–40 miles north of the Sea of Galilee.

**Joshua 11:18–20**. The period of the Conquest lasted **a long time**. Victory did not come easily or quickly; it rarely does. Yet in all the military confrontations only one city, **Gibeon**, sought **peace**. The rest were taken **in battle**, God having **hardened their hearts** (cf. comments on Ex. 4:21; 8:15) to fight **Israel** so that they might be destroyed. The Canaanites’ day of grace was gone. They had sinned against the light of God’s revelation in nature (Ps. 19:1; Rom. 1:18–20), in conscience (Rom. 2:14–16), and in His recent [[14]](#footnote-14) miraculous works at the Red (Reed) Sea, the Jordan River, and Jericho. Now the sovereign God confirmed the hearts of these unrepentant people in their stubborn unbelief before judging them.

**Joshua 11:21–22**. Special mention is made of **the Anakites**, the giants who had terrified the spies 45 years before (Num. 13:33; cf. comments on Josh. 14:10), of whom it was asked, “Who can stand up against the Anakites?” (Deut. 9:2) But under **Joshua** those supposedly invincible foes were utterly **destroyed. Only** a few remained, in the remote cities of **Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod**—which later proved to be an unfortunate oversight on Joshua’s part because in David’s time Goliath came from Gath to defy Israel and her God (1 Sam. 17).

**Joshua 11:23**. The section concludes with a declaration that summarizes the Book of Joshua as a whole. **So Joshua took the entire land** (cf. v. 16). This looks back and condenses the history of the Conquest in chapters 1–11. **And he gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal divisions**. These words look forward and summarize the distribution of the land in chapters 13–22.

But how is the statement, “Joshua took the entire land,” to be understood when later it was written that “there are still very large areas of land to be taken over“? (13:1) To the Hebrew mind the part stands for the whole. It thus only needs to be demonstrated that Joshua took key centers in all parts of the land to validate the statement that he had conquered the whole land.

A. J. Mattill, Jr. has meticulously analyzed the conquest of Canaan by surveying the geographical divisions of the land and the representative parts of it subdued by Joshua (“Representative Universalism and the Conquest of Canaan,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 35. January 1964:8–17). Included are conquered sites on the coastal plain, the Shephelah (foothills), the central plateau, the Jordan Valley, and the Transjordan [[15]](#footnote-15) Transjordan plateau. No area was totally bypassed. Joshua did indeed take the entire land, just as God promised he would if he followed the divine Word rather than human wisdom (cf. 1:8). Also see comments on 21:43–45. On the concluding statement **Then the land had rest from war** (11:23), see comments on these words in 14:15.

**4. the conquered kings (chap. 12)**

Chapter 12, in concluding the story begun in chapter 1, *gives a detailed catalog of the kings defeated by Israel. The preceding chapters obviously then list only the major battles. Only here is the complete list of conquered kings found.* It is not claimed that Israel occupied all these cities. Certainly Joshua did not have sufficient manpower to leave a controlling garrison in each place. Joshua no doubt expected the respective tribes to occupy those towns.

**Joshua 12:1–6.** First were recorded the victories under **Moses** on the **east** side **of the Jordan**. These were important victories over **Sihon** and **Og**. Sihon had ruled over a stretch of land about 90 miles south to north from **the Arnon Gorge** at about the midpoint of **the Sea of the Arabah** (also called **the Salt Sea** and the Dead Sea) up to **the Sea of Kinnereth** (cf. comments on 11:2). Og ruled over a stretch of land extending north from Sihon’s northern boundary for about 60 miles (cf. Num. 21:21–35; Deut. 2:24–3:17). This territory was assigned to the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh (Num. 32; cf. Josh. 13:8–13). (On **Geshur** and **Maacah** see comments on 13:13.)

**Joshua 12:7–24**. In this section 16 **kings** of southern Canaan are enumerated first (vv. 9–16) and then 15 kings of northern Canaan (vv. 17–24).

It is surprising to find recorded **31 kings** in a land approximately 150 miles from north to south and 50 miles from east to west. But it must be remembered that these kings reigned over city-states and had only local authority. Apart from the confederations formed by the kings **of Jerusalem** (10:1–5) and **Hazor** (11:1–5), the lack of a central government in Canaan made the Israelites’ task easier than it would have been otherwise.

As to the meaning of Joshua’s victories one writer stated, “There has never been a greater war for a greater cause. The battle of Waterloo decided the fate of Europe, but this series of contests in far-off Canaan decided the fate of the world” (Henry T. Sell, *Bible Study by Periods*. Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1899, p. 83).

**III. The Division of Canaan (chaps. 13–21)**

A. The portions for the two and one-half tribes (chap. 13)

Having successfully removed the major military threats to Israel’s survival in Canaan, Joshua the aged soldier now became an administrator. The land conquered by bloody warfare had to be assigned to the various tribes and Joshua would oversee this important transaction. It would be a service less exhausting and more suited to his advancing years.

To many people this section of the Book of Joshua, with its detailed lists of boundaries and cities, seems tedious. Someone has said, “Most of this long section reads like a real estate deed.” And that is precisely what is found in these lengthy narrations—legal descriptions (after the manner of that ancient day) of the areas allocated to the 12 tribes. Title deeds are important documents so these should not be regarded as insignificant or superfluous.

*This was a climactic moment in the life of the young nation.* After centuries in Egyptian bondage, decades in the barren wilderness, years of hard fighting in Canaan, the hour had arrived when the Israelites could at last settle down to build homes, cultivate the soil, raise families, and live in peace in their own land. *The days of land allotment were a happy time for Israel.*

**5. the divine command to divide the land (13:1–7)**

**Joshua 13:1a**. God directed **Joshua** to divide the land west of the Jordan at this time because he was **very old**. Since Joshua died at the age of 110 (24:29), he probably was at least 100 at this time. God’s commission to Joshua had included not only conquering the land but also distributing it among the tribes (cf. 1:6). He must therefore move on quickly to this new assignment.

**Joshua 13:1b–7**. **The land that** remained **to be taken over** is described from south to north and included Philistia (vv. 2–3; see comments on the Philistines at Gen. 21:32); Phoenicia (Josh. 13:4), called here **the land of the Canaanites** but designating the inhabitants of the Syro-Palestinian coastland; and **Lebanon** (vv. 5–6). All this land was now to be allotted to the **nine** and one-half **tribes** since God promised to **drive … out** all the enemy (v. 6).

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