

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Joshua: God's Faithful Giving Of The Promised Land To Israel

Part II: God's Giving Israel Victory Over The Canaanites, Joshua 5:13-12:24

G. Rightly Responding To Humanly Superior Foes Or Problems

(Joshua 11:1-15)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

In today's world, people often face humanly superior foes or trials that can leave them immobilized with fear:

(1) The lead editorial in The Wall Street Journal, May 26, 2015, p. A12 ("Rise of the Regional Hegemons") complained about "the Obama Administration's expectation . . . that 'the international community' will replace receding American power with a new cooperative order working through the United Nations." The editor added, "That hasn't happened, and it won't," and he ended, claiming, "This is the dangerous new-old world that Mr. Obama is leaving his successor," but the editor offered no solution for the reader to know how to address this predicament.

(2) The other editorial on the same page (Ibid., "\$25,887,000,000,000") told how the "Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond has again" added up "all the implied and explicit government guarantees backing the U. S. financial system," and it equals nearly "\$26 trillion," showing "how far we've moved from a private financial system," implying that the taxpayer is vulnerable to harm by actions of officials with seemingly no apparent solution in sight.

(3) A letter to the editor on that page reflected this same foreboding sense of facing humanly unsolvable trials or superior foes: David A. Samuel of Baltimore wrote of the May 19 journal editorial, "Bad Deal in Baltimore," claiming, "Once again" teachers unions and public schools were being blamed for the city's recent riots where the real culprits were "welfare, single-parent teen 'households' and . . . an abject lack of personal responsibility and a morally bankrupt culture . . ." Mr. Samuel's sense of hopelessness was seen in his words, "(T)he blame never ends . . ." (Ibid.)

(4) Locally, believers can face humanly superior foes or trials that can leave them immobilized with fear: in the last several weeks, I have witnessed about ten cases where believers face trials they find impossible to solve.

Need: *So, we ask, "How does God want me to respond effectively to humanly superior foes or troubles I face?!"*

I. Joshua 11:1-5 reports on a humanly superior foe and problem that Joshua and Israel's army faced:

- A. The king of Hazor, the largest city ever built in Palestine in the Biblical period with its nearly 40,000 people (Z. P. E. B., v. Three, p. 50), a city located ten miles north of "Chinneroth," the Sea of Galilee and head of all of the other Northern Canaan kingdoms (Jos. 11:10b), reacted to Israel's Joshua 10 conquest of Southern Canaan by summoning all Northern Canaan to fight Israel. (The MacMillan Bible Atlas, 1968, p. 46, map 59)
- B. This coalition rendezvoused west-northwest of the Sea of Galilee "in a plain near the Waters of Merom," with foot soldiers, cavalry and chariots in immense number, as "the sand that is upon the sea shore," Jos. 11:4 KJV.
- C. Their likely plan was to muster their forces at the Waters of Merom and "sweep down the Jordan Valley and attack Joshua at Gilgal" in the open plain where Israel's foot soldiers would be no **human** match for the cavalry, chariots and myriads of Northern Canaanite foot soldiers, Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 353.

II. The Joshua 11:6-15 text describes the solution to this problem, and we view it for our insight as follows:

- A. First, upon hearing of this enemy threat, Joshua had known of his need to be pro-active, to take his fight to the enemy at the Waters of Merom before letting them sweep down on his vulnerable camp of Israel's families at Gilgal -- so he was already on "a five-day trek from his home base" to fight his foes in their territory, Ibid.
- B. Second, Joshua 11:6a, 7 reveals that God's message to Joshua on fighting this battle came the day before he engaged the enemy at the Waters of Merom, so he had faithfully stayed the course for four days in the best course of action he could humanly take to address his foes while he also looked to God for further instructions.
- C. Third, we can rightly add that Joshua must have sought the Lord's guidance due to lessons learned at Ai and Gibeon (Joshua 7:1-11; 9:14), so he was beseeching the Lord's help and wisdom while also acting responsibly.
- D. Fourth, with just a day left on his trek before engaging the enemy, God gave Joshua a message that informed him and that teaches God's people in all ages how to handle humanly superior foes or troubles, Joshua 11:6:
 - 1. God told Joshua not to fear, for the next day about that time, He would deliver all of his foes slain over to Israel, a pledge followed by God's call that Israel burn their chariots and hamstring their horses, Jos. 11:6.
 - 2. This Joshua 11:6a divine promise and the following Joshua 11:6b order are connected in the Hebrew text by two expressions to offer a great lesson on facing humanly superior foes or unsolvable problems:
 - a. The Hebrew text at Joshua 11:6a uses a play on the word "face," which word does not appear in English translations, but that significantly ties God's Joshua 11:6a pledge to His Joshua 11:6b call: (1) Joshua was

not to fear "from+the **faces**+of them [*mi+pne+hem*]," for God would deliver up all the Canaanites slain "to+the **faces**+of Israel [*li+pne+yisrael*]," Jos. 11:6a; Kittel, *Biblia Hebraica*, p. 339. (2) The expression *mi+pne* we render "because of [the enemy]" where the expression *li+pne* we render "in front of, before [Israel]," and as the pronoun "I" (*'anoki*) unusually appears in the text, and that before the verb "give" as an emphatic pronoun, translated "I Myself" (Ibid.), **God** was *literally* saying, "***Do not fear from the faces of them, for about this time tomorrow, I Myself will give them all slain before the faces of Israel!***"

3. With this understanding, God's Joshua 11:6a words clarify His reason for having Israel destroy the enemy chariots and hamstring their horses after the battle in Joshua 11:6b: ***God was teaching Israel that if He ALONE would enable their foot-soldiers to defeat the humanly superior Northern Canaanite infantry, cavalry and chariots, Israel was to destroy the enemy chariots and hamstring their horses to KEEP Israel relying on God ALONE versus turning to rely on horses and chariots for future victories.***
4. This lesson is vividly echoed by David's words centuries later in Psalm 20:7 KJV: "Some trust in chariots (chariot armies), and some in horses (cavalry): but we will remember the name of the Lord our God."
 - E. Thus, trusting in God alone for the victory, Joshua and Israel's men arrived at the Waters of Merom and in faith made a surprise attack on the Canaanites, and the Lord delivered them into Israel's hands, Joshua 11:7-8a.
 - F. Israel slew many of the enemy, and chased them 20 miles northwest to Tyre and environs and northeast 20 miles into the Valley of Mizpeh north of the Sea of Galilee (Ibid., *The MacMillan Bible Atlas*, p. 47, map 62; Ibid., *Zon. Pict. Ency. of the Bib.*, v. Four, p. 252), slaying all of the fleeing Canaanites, Joshua 11:8b.
 - G. Joshua then fulfilled God's call to hamstring the enemy horses and to burn their chariots, leaving Israel's foot soldiers to rely on the Lord and not such weapons of human might for future military victories, Joshua 11:9.
 - H. Next, Joshua turned back to attack the city of Hazor of 40,000 people that was behind the Northern Canaanite coalition, and Israel defeated it, slaying its king and all its people and burning the city with fire, Jos. 11:10-11.
 - I. Under Joshua's oversight, Israel then defeated the other involved Northern Canaanite cities, slaying all of their people but saving the spoils and structures for Israel later to inhabit in obedience to the Lord, Joshua 11:12-15.

Lesson: (1) ***When Joshua faced a humanly vastly superior force of Canaanites, he (a) became pro-active, sensibly taking the battle to the enemy versus waiting for his foes to attack Israel's vulnerable camp, (b) he faithfully held to this course until God led him further (c) and he prayerfully sought God's help (d) while relying entirely on God for the victory. (2) God thus gave him the victory, (3) and Joshua and Israel continued to trust in God alone.***

Application: (1) ***May we believe on Christ alone to obtain eternal life, John 3:16 with Acts 4:10-12. (2) If facing humanly superior foes or unsolvable problems, (a) may we pro-actively initiate the most sensible course of action to address it, (b) may we stay the course in this action until God instructs us further, (c) praying for God's wisdom and guidance and (d) rely on God for the victory. (e) Then, may we ALWAYS trust in Him for FUTURE victory!***

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

In an interview with the publication, "Dallas Connection" in the Winter of 2000, Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Bible Exposition at the Dallas Theological Seminary, reported that when he first attended the seminary as a student in 1937 to 1941 during the bleak era that led up to and included the start of World War II, "We were moved by the sacrifice of the faculty, who were underpaid -- not paid -- and yet gave themselves to their teaching with passion. It was Dr. Chafer's [DTS's founder] faith that so marked me, for he would share with us on occasion the many times the Seminary was on the verge of closing because of lack of finances. And then he'd share the spectacular way in which God answered prayer. Dr. Chafer was such an example of one who walked by faith. It marked us profoundly."

The lives of faith by men of God who faced super-human obstacles, lives marked by (1) committing oneself to the best human course of action to take -- teaching God's Word in His calling though underpaid (2) and faithfully sticking to that divine calling regardless of the hardship faced (3) while praying for God's sustenance and wisdom and (4) relying on the Lord for success in the whole endeavor -- all of this profoundly marked a whole past generation of students who in turn became very effective men of God for the Church.

We today need to follow in their footsteps and in the footsteps of Joshua of old: we should address seemingly super-human foes or obstacles (1) with sensible pro-active decisions, (2) sticking to that course of action in faithfulness (3) all while praying for God's wisdom and help and (4) relying on Him for success. In doing so, we will see the Lord bless us as He blessed Joshua in Joshua 11 and past generations of believers.