

## **Dr. David Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 16, Northern Campaign and Summary**

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This is Dr. David Howard in his teaching on the books of Joshua through Ruth. This is session 16, Joshua 11 through 12, Northern Campaign and Summary.

Greetings. We are now poised to consider the final battles in the book of Joshua. These are in the northern part of the land of Canaan. These are in chapter 11 of the book.

So, if you open your Bibles to that chapter, as we have seen and mentioned several times, chapters 9, 10, and 11 go together in the sense that each of them begins with a coalition of Canaanite kings coming against Israel. And in the first case, it's a coalition of kings from the hill country, chapters 9, verses 1 and 2. In the second case, it's a coalition of southern kings around Jerusalem. In chapter 10, verse 1, following, and now in 11, it's in the north.

The lead character, the lead king against Israel is a king named Jabin or Yabin, the king of Hazor, Hatzor. That's a very prominent city up in the northern part of the country, farther north than the Sea of Galilee. Hazor, Hatzor has been excavated in the 20th century.

It's a huge mound and it's clearly a very important city and lots of things have been discovered up there. But the list of peoples that he enlisted came from apparently all over the country. It's not quite as precisely geographically contained as some.

And it mentions even, for example, in verse 3, the Jebusites. The Jebusites were inhabitants of what later became known as Jerusalem, and that's in the southern part. So, battles up in the north included a coalition that included at least some from the south.

It might indicate the level of threat that the Canaanites perceived that the Israelites posed to them such that they cast the threat far and wide to get the coalition together to oppose the Israelites. Notice in verse 4, that they come with a great horde of people, a number like the sand that is in the seashore, and with very many horses and chariots. So, we've mentioned in other segments about the chariots being the backbone of the army.

And here's an interesting little fact. The Hebrew word for chariot is Merkabah. In the modern Israeli army, the main battle tank for a long period of time has been called the Merkabah tank.

And so, it would kind of indicate the equivalence that the chariots were the ancient equivalent of modern-day tanks. A very impressive horde. It mentions the number like the sand in the seashore.

So, in a way, the way that the story is being told here, and we know of course that God helps them and gives Israel the victory, kind of reminds us of chapter 3 when it talks about the waters of the Jordan overflowing their banks at that time of the year. Kind of shows the imposing challenge that is then met by God stopping up the waters. Here the imposing challenge is this vast horde that nevertheless God gives into the hands of the Israelites.

So again, God speaks to Joshua in verse 6 and again encourages him, and tells him don't be afraid. Tomorrow, he will give them all over to Israel and hamstring their horses, burn their chariots, etc. So, they do this and verse 8 says the Lord gave them into the hand of Israel.

And that's obviously a great victory. Interestingly that the way the battle is told, there are almost no details of the battle told here in a way that had been told, for example, at the Battle of Gibeon in chapter 10 or Battle of Jericho or Ai. It's just mentioned in very brief summary details.

They chase them down a way, a long way away in verse 8. And then Joshua obeyed, verse 9, did exactly what the Lord did. And then he turned back at that time and captured Hazor, Hazor, and struck the king with the sword. And then in verse 11, they burned Hazor with fire.

And we mentioned in earlier context that when you look carefully, it's only three cities that are mentioned that Israel burned specifically, Jericho, Ai, and now Hazor. And so, if we're looking through the archaeological record, we should not be surprised that there's very little trace of Israel's presence in a destructive way because they were not burning cities in a widespread manner. That's why the destruction layer that we mentioned previously around 1200 or a little later, probably was not necessarily due to the Israelites coming and burning.

They left very little trace of what they did. They basically chased out and killed the inhabitants but did not destroy the cities. They moved in and inherited cities that they did not, homes they did not build, cisterns they did not dig, vineyards they did not plant, and so on.

So that is another indication here of that. None of the cities of the mountains, verse 13, these are these big what are called cells. In Canaan for sure, cities tended to be built on prominent places for defense purposes.

And so, you have the walls built here and then the cities built. And for a period of time, decades or even centuries, that would flourish. But eventually, the city would be destroyed, and leveled.

And then eventually, because it was a good location, usually a water supply nearby, there would be another city rebuilt on top of that, on the ruins, and eventually more. And there are these levels that would be built one on top of the other. And some went quite a few levels up.

And over time, they were abandoned. And so, nature took its course. And there's this kind of a mound built over top of this city.

And archaeologically today, of course, we can dig down through these to find the different levels. And the earlier, the farther down you go, the earlier we are. And that's what is the subject of archaeological digs throughout the Holy Land and the nearby lands.

So, this is mentioning none of those cities that stood on those tells. The Hebrew word is told there. Did Israel burn except Hazor alone and then take the spoil? Notice what it says in verse 15.

Another example of obedience. We've mentioned the theme of obedience throughout the book. And just as the Lord had commanded Moses a servant, so Moses commanded Joshua.

And so, Joshua did. He left nothing undone that the Lord had commanded Moses. So, there's that theme right through here.

And then in verse 16 and following, we have a kind of summarizing statement, the same way we had at the end of chapter 13, I'm sorry, chapter 10, verses 40 to 42, summarizing the campaign in the south. Here we have a summarizing statement about the campaign in the north. So, Joshua took all the land, verse 16, hill country, all the Negev, all the land of Goshen.

It's kind of referring to the south, the lowland, the Arabah, but coming up north up to 17, Mount Halak, towards the east, and Baal God, the Valley of Lebanon, and Mount Hermon, which is up in the north, capturing the king, expecting to put them to death. But then there's a really interesting statement here. And verse 18 says Joshua made war a long time with all these kings.

So, a surface reading of these chapters, it takes us just a few minutes to actually read through chapters 9, 10, and 11, especially 10 and 11. It feels like this all happened bang at one time or within a few days or a few weeks. But that gives us a clue as to

these battles maybe were not as easy as we can think of necessarily, or they certainly took much longer than we think of.

Scholars think for various reasons that the actual battle phase of the book may have taken five to seven years. And then there are indicators that Joshua and Caleb, the ages that they lived to, there may have been another 25 years or so. So probably the span of time that the book of Joshua covers is close to 30 years, 25 to 30 years.

It feels like it's all happening in a compressed time, but it really was not. And this is one verse that gives us an indicator of that. Nobody made peace, verse 19, except the inhabitants of Gibeon.

And then we have a statement in verse 20 that's kind of difficult to deal with sometimes. And it says the fact that these other cities did not make peace was that it was the Lord's doing to harden their hearts. So they should come against Israel to battle in order that they should be devoted to destruction.

There's that word haram again and should receive no mercy, but be destroyed just as the Lord commanded Moses. So that's a difficult one to deal with on many levels. It reminds us of God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart back in the book of Exodus.

And back in the book of Exodus, there are three different ways of expressing the idea of hardening the Pharaoh's heart. Sometimes it's the Pharaoh hardening his own heart, sometimes it's God, and there are different perspectives there. Those three terms occur 20 times in the chapters of the plagues in Exodus.

And for the most part, it's the Pharaoh hardening his own heart. It's not until the end that we see God hardening his heart. It seems as if the Lord's hardening of Pharaoh's heart has to do with sort of him, God leaving him to his own devices.

The Pharaoh's inclination and desire was to oppose Israel and its God. And finally, God said, enough, I'm just going to deal with the Pharaoh and do so very harshly. And so here, obviously earlier in the book, we've seen the Canaanites being very afraid and opposing Israel and Jericho and Ai and then later.

So, it would appear that the battles were taking place. God was letting them take their course in the way they wanted to go. But as we've mentioned several times by now, there was still the idea, the option for them to turn to God. Rahab is the example.

Gibeonites is another example. And so again, even here, it doesn't seem to be an absolute condition that God was intending completely to destroy them because he obviously allowed some exceptions.

The final battle seems to come in verses 21 to the end of the chapter where they're confronting a group called the Anakim or Anakites. And they're from the hill country and Joshua devoted them to destruction. At the end of verse 21, there was none left, verse 22.

And so, Joshua took the whole land, verse 23, and he gave it as an inheritance to Israel. And then it says, the final statement of verse 11 says, the land had rest from war. It's the first-time rest has been mentioned in the book since chapter one, when Joshua talks to the Transjordan tribes talking about the Lord giving you rest there.

But it is a theme that we find here in the book. And part of this whole trajectory of the Pentateuch into the book of Joshua is that they're going to have rest. Now, we'll say one thing more about that.

We'll say two things. There are two places in the book of Joshua where it says the land itself had rest. One is right here.

The next is in chapter 14, verse 15, which now is part of the book where it's talking about the distribution of the land. But in verse 15, at the end of the chapter, that's the last sentence also of that chapter, and the land had rest from war. We have a number of places where in Deuteronomy, Samuel, and Kings, there's also this idea of rest in the land.

It's repeated half a dozen times in the book of Judges, where we're told that the land had rest for X number of years, 40 years or 80 years. So that's an important part of this whole dynamic. The rest had been promised back in Deuteronomy chapter 12 and chapter 25.

One final thing to mention is that the book of Hebrews mentions the Sabbath rest as well in chapters 3 and 4 of Hebrews. It contrasts the rest in the Old Testament that the book of Hebrews claims that Joshua did not give his people rest, Hebrews chapter 8, verse 4, as opposed to the Sabbath rest that is inaugurated by Christ, his coming. So, there's a little bit of a contrast there.

But I would say the perspective in the book of Joshua is that this rest is a good thing. It's not a permanent rest. It's not a spiritual rest, but it is a temporal rest from the wars that are placed.

So, the mood is dramatically changed after this. And pretty much the rest of the book is much more sedentary and peaceful. And this statement sets the stage for the next portions of the book.

So, all the loose ends seem to be tied up now. And Joshua is emerging as a strong leader. And there's the new task of distributing the land.

So, we'll move right into the final chapter of the first section of the book, which is chapter 12. And chapter 12 is not really giving us any new storyline. The battles are done and we're ready to move into the distribution of the land.

But it's interesting because chapter 12 kind of forms a wrap-up, an appendix to the whole first section of the book. There's a narrative wrap-up in chapter 11, verses 16 to 23, kind of the summary there. But this chapter kind of repeats it from a different angle, namely giving the list of the kings and the territories that were conquered.

So repeated again, chapter 12, verse 1, here are the kings of the lands whom the Lord, people of Israel defeated, took possession of the lands. It mentions the names of some of the kings. East of the Jordan, mentions it, verse 6, Moses, the servant of the Lord and the people of Israel defeated these people.

So, the first six verses are looking backward at what God had done under Moses. And then chapter 12, verse 7, mentions the kings and the peoples whom Joshua and the people of Israel defeated. And they took their land and noticed what it says in verse 7. It says, parenthetically in the middle of the verse, Joshua gave their land to the tribes of Israel as a possession according to all their allotments.

We've seen that earlier in chapter 11 as well. So this forms kind of the preview of what we're going to see in the next part of the book, chapters 13 to 21, with the distribution of the land, that Joshua, along with Eleazar the priest, stands in a position of authority on God's behalf and giving the land now to Israel. He's giving them title to the land, not in perpetuity, not forever.

The land is always God's, but yet he's now giving it. And we see here the first time where we see Joshua himself in a position to be actually giving that land to tribes. Then we have here, starting in verse 7 and following, we have the list of the kings, but there are two different sections here.

The first section, verses 7 and 8, gives us a picture of the territories, and the parts of the land that are given. And then from verses 9 and following, we have the list of the kings. When you count them up, it's 31 kings.

That's mentioned in verse 24, but it goes carefully, one by one. So verse 8, the king of Jericho, one. The king of Ai, which is beside Bethel, one.

The king of Jerusalem, one. The king of Hebron, one, et cetera. So here it feels like the author of the book of Joshua may have had a list that was kept and passed down and he was able to incorporate it here, but it's a very carefully constructed list.

Today it would be in a spreadsheet and it would be in the columns here and so on. And in a sense, it lends verisimilitude. It lends the feeling of truthfulness that, yeah, we know that it's happening and we can identify the kings, we can identify the cities, we can identify the territories for all of this.

So, the narrative account in chapters 9 to 11 gives, and actually, 6 to 11, gives us the storyline of the things, but this is the data, the raw data of just the facts and the numbers. It's kind of a fitting way. It's a hard chapter to read.

It's not very interesting to read from our perspective, but we don't know where a lot of these cities were. But from the perspective of the author of the book and the audience that he's writing for, it's one that helps them see that this land is theirs and these were given by God through Joshua, and here are the kings that were overcome. This is part of their territory and that forms the foundation for the lead-in to the real detailed chapters about the distribution of the lands in chapters 13 to 21.

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