

Meditations on the Book of Joshua

Joshua 11

The Conquest of Hazor — The Anakim

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But, as we have said, this judgment of self produces dependence, which is manifested in blessed intercourse with God, such as had not been previously tasted by the soul to the same extent. Jehovah speaks to Joshua (v. 8), Joshua speaks to Jehovah (v. 12), and Jehovah answers him. (v. 14) Encouragement, power and victory are the precious fruits of that dependence which keeps our souls habitually having to do with Him. Now the Lord was no longer obliged to take part against them as at Ai, but He could fight for them. (vs. 11-14) We see them too gaining the most signal victory recorded in the word of God. "There was no day like that before it, or after it" (v. 14), a day which lasted twenty-four hours, thus allowing the children of Israel to gather in the very last fruit of their victory. The God of earth and heaven, the God of all creation can thus publicly declare that Israel is the object of His special favour; yes, these very people who were beaten before Ai, deceived by Gibeon, and whose ways might well have exhausted the long-suffering of God, but who are now a chastened people with broken and contrite hearts which "God will not despise." (Ps. 51: 17) And this very God hearkens to the voice of a man. (v. 14)

Beloved, we are all in the same condition. However feeble we may be, we can go to God by the Spirit of Christ, and present to Him the highest requests. Nothing was too great for Joshua to ask; he knew Jehovah's heart, and he knew the place His people occupied in it; he could ask that the heavens, the sun, and the moon might be at the service of His beloved people!

From this time nothing arrests Israel's victorious progress (v. 19); they must smite the enemies till none remain. The five kings are taken, and hung on five trees; Joshua sees his way to this more clearly, from a previous page in his history learnt in the presence of God. Joshua has got into the way which suits God's holiness. (vs. 26, 27) Encouraged himself by the word of God (v. 8), he can encourage the people (v. 25); Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, Gezer, Eglon, Hebron, Debir, are their victorious stages; they take possession of their inheritance, and then "they return unto the camp to Gilgal." (v. 43)

Joshua 11

THE CONQUEST OF HAZOR

Now that we are come to the description of the decisive battle by which the whole of Palestine is laid open to Israel, it is well to be reminded that the taking possession of Canaan is the main subject of the book of Joshua, and that the land of promise answers for us to the heavenly places.

But amongst the things therein contained, we have a special possession, which is Christ. We are "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." God desires that we should appropriate the riches of Him in whom we are, and that our hearts should enter into these things in such a manner as to make them our own. I do not speak of seizing them with the intelligence, which may be done in a certain sense, but not permanently, for whatever is not laid hold of by faith, slips through our fingers like water. We need to have our affections set on these things, if they are to be really our own, and, above all, we want an object for these affections, for, apart from Christ, the heavenly things themselves would not fill our hearts. That is why it says: "Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God."

Such is the main subject of the book of Joshua, but there is another connected with it. Whenever God presents to our souls heavenly things, Satan seeks in every way to hinder us from enjoying them. Hence the conflict open or hidden which we have to sustain, and which ends in a fatal defeat directly Satan succeeds in turning our eyes away from Christ, to the world, "the things on the earth," or ourselves. In Joshua 1-11, you find all these species of attractions. But when the heart is open and upright before God, He teaches us by means of these experiences to mistrust ourselves increasingly, and to trust in Him, bringing us ultimately to take down here the wonderful place (and it is the only great one) of a Christian walking in humility through this world with his heart and affections in heaven.

In Joshua 11 we see a last confederation linked with that of Joshua 9 (that of Joshua 10 having been destroyed). Here is a formidable army: "much people even as the sand that is upon the sea-shore in multitude" (v. 4); Satan seeks now to overwhelm Israel by numbers. It is the open and avowed enmity of the world against the people of God. It is no longer a question of artifices, but of an open assault; and this is what we must encounter, whenever, in a spirit of humble dependence and obedience to the word, we have baffled Satan in his wiles. It is then that he arouses the world against us.

Men combine to fight against God when their enmity against Him has reached its climax. They usually co-operate for the purpose of improving and reforming the world; hence all the political and philanthropic, and religious societies, which think to civilize, instruct and reform their fellow creatures. How little men, and alas! even Christians, are aware, that all this apparently praiseworthy activity, is but covert opposition to God, His word, and His purposes of grace. God is not seeking to improve man; this would be to belie His word which declares man to be irretrievably lost; moreover, if this foundation truth, humbling though it

be, be not accepted, there is need neither of salvation, nor of redemption through the blood of Christ. In short the very best human associations are, in reality, but the disguised opposition of the natural man to God.

In this chapter we have open opposition to God, but to God in the person of His saints. In the last days, when man's enmity is matured, the faithful remnant of Israel will be the world's point of attack, stirred up by Satan against the testimony of God. This present confederation has a chief, a rallying point, the great town of Hazor which was the head of all those kingdoms; and an innumerable army, "horses and chariots very many." The entire world with all its forces is leagued against Israel.

These things in principle repeat themselves in our day. It says: "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." (1 John 5: 4) Also it says: (1 John 2: 14), "Ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one;" that is to say, the prince of this world. We may observe in these two passages that the weapons of our warfare are, faith and the word. As with Christ in the desert, it was by the word that those "young men" had overcome Satan, and here we have the same truth.

From the close of Joshua 8 the word of God had taken its rightful place in the heart and thoughts of Joshua, and the people. It maintains the place in Joshua 10: 27-40; in Joshua 11 it forms their conduct habitually in everything; "Joshua did unto them as the Lord bade him." (v. 9) "He utterly destroyed them, as Moses the servant of the Lord commanded." (v. 12) And again we read: "As the Lord commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses." (v. 15) And in verse 20, "That he might destroy them as the Lord commanded Moses."

And here it is worthy of notice, that Joshua is not satisfied with obeying one special commandment as in verse 9, and as he had done many times previously, nor does he rest content with committing to others the responsibility of accomplishing all that Moses had commanded (Joshua 8: 35), but this man of God, arrived at the end of his eventful career, had "left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses." The word in its entirety, in so far as it had been communicated to him, was the object of his careful attention, and governed his walk and ways. What a power this gives! In Joshua 8, Joshua's heart and thoughts are formed by the word; here, as the sword of the Spirit, it nerves his arm, and Satan is powerless before him.

Notice how the word of God teaches one to judge every natural source of strength. They are but objects of judgment to the discerning eye of him who is faithful, and of no use to him. In obedience to the word of God "he houghed their horses, and burnt their chariots with fire." (v. 9) Then "he burnt Hazor with fire." (vs. 11, 13) The world's capital cannot be turned into a centre for Israel. This applies equally to Hazor, Rome, or Babylon; and although Babylon be not yet burnt with fire, let it be so as to our spirits, All the principles of the world, its governing power, that which constitutes its centre of attraction, ought to be a judged thing for us, in which we have no more part or lot than Israel had in Hazor.

The other towns are allowed to exist, and Israel takes the spoil of them; thus, in accordance with the word of God, affirming their right to take full and complete possession of the land of Canaan. It was indeed a great victory and a total overthrow. "Every man they smote with the edge of the sword, until they had destroyed them, neither left they any to breathe." (v. 14) The sword had fulfilled its work of destruction, as the Lord had commanded. Looked at spiritually, faithfulness will lead the believer to deal unsparingly with all that is of man: it can have no part in the land of promise.

Ah! how blessed and worthy of God it would have been had this state of things lasted, but it did not, as we shall soon see.

THE ANAKIM

Satan is defeated, his last army destroyed, and his cities taken; what remains? Israel find in their pathway the very people who, at the beginning, had struck terror into their hearts, and caused them to fall, the Anakim, who had hindered them from going boldly up to possess the land. In order to disparage Canaan, the spies had said to the people: "And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants, and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight." (Num. 13: 33) But what impression could the children of Anak make on the mind of one who is led by the word of God? Victory is his. "Joshua came and cut off the Anakim," and their towns, "cities great and fenced up to heaven." (Deut. 9: 1) "Joshua destroyed them utterly with their cities." (v. 21)

Joshua had received the word; he could count on God's promise: "The Lord thy God is he which goeth over before thee; as a consuming fire he shall destroy them, and he shall bring them down before thy face." (Deut. 9: 3) Ah! how small and petty our former fears and terrors appear, when we go on with God. What is a "man of six cubits and a span," with a "coat of mail of 5,000 shekels of brass," in the presence of "the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth," "the Lord of all the earth," before