

Joshua Chapter 11 – John Karmelich

1. In this lesson, we wrap up the war campaign of Joshua and the Israelites. We have one "big battle scene left" which is this chapter, number 11. For those of you who have been with me since I started Joshua, we've had "battle chapter after battle chapter". The underlying lesson is about battling and defeating anything and everything that draws us away from God. So, here is the "last" battle chapter left: The underlying point of this chapter is about facing an enemy that is bigger and more powerful than we are. That is what the Israelites get in this chapter.
 - a) Note that we are now wrapping up the first half of the book of Joshua. The second half of the book no longer focuses on "battles" and is mostly about the Israelites dividing up the land by tribe. We will get into "dividing up the land" in future lessons on Joshua.
 - b) What is not stated directly in the text, but is important to mention is the total time spent by the Israelites fighting in the land was about seven years. One can read the book of Joshua and get the false impression that the first eleven chapters were all completed in a matter of days. What one has to understand is that the actual battle times, especially that of Chapters 10 and 11 covered a time span of a good number of years.
 - i) Later in this lesson I'll give some bible passages that show how we know what is the time period covered in these battles.
2. I gave a clue as to my lesson title in the opening paragraph, but didn't write it out. My title for this lesson is "Learning to trust God in battles bigger than we can handle". In this lesson the Israelites fight against an army that is probably bigger in size and definitely is better equipped with better weaponry. The lesson is about having victory over "bigger" foes and issues.
 - a) So far in the book of Joshua we have seen a number of major miracles where God is helping the Israelites conquer the land. In this chapter, we don't read of any miracles. More importantly we do read of God giving the Israelites victories in great battles.
 - b) The main point is the Israelites trusted God in a situation that was bigger than they were. The Israelites were able to win this battle and defeat the last group of kings in the land.
 - c) What is interesting to mention at this point is that there are a lot of military schools that teach about Joshua's battles from a military stand point. Joshua's tactics are studied at West Point (The U.S. Army Military Academy.) It is said that Hitler's generals studied Joshua. Jewish soldiers today are taught about Joshua's military strategy.
 - i) The point is such teaching focuses on Joshua using speed, cunning and knowledge of the local territory (geography) all to his advantage. Usually these teachers avoid the issue of God helping Joshua and simply focus on Joshua's battle tactics.
 - ii) Whether or not Joshua's military tactics made a difference, I am convinced that without God's help, these victories never would have happened.
 - d) This leads me back to my title. While the "war tactics" is interesting from a historical aspect, it is not the focus of this lesson. The important point is that the Israelites trusted in God and He lead them to victory over their enemies. The idea for us is that we can win over situations (such as overcoming sin issues or say, healing broken relationships) that are way to big for us to handle on our own if we are willing to turn it over to God.
3. Here's a question to ponder: Isn't all this "battle stuff" getting a little repetitive by now? We have been reading chapter after chapter with the point being the Israelites faced this challenge or this group and God helped the Israelites be victorious over whoever was the problem of the moment.
 - a) So here we are in the last chapter about the wars in the land. In this chapter Joshua faced a big group of people in the northern part of Israel. Naturally the Israelites won with God's help, and essentially we come to the "happily ever after" portion of the book of Joshua. So, what is so special about this chapter and why should I study it? As usual, I am happy you asked that question. ☺

- b) To answer that question and tie it to our lesson theme, what one has to understand that this lesson covers the final victory by the Israelites. Yes, they have more land left to conquer, but this is the end of the section of the book of Joshua that focuses on defeating the enemies of the Promised Land. Once we learn to handle issues that are "bigger than we are", we can handle "anything", which is why this is the last "battle" chapter.
- c) Let me put the issue this way: What is the ultimate issue that we face in life? (I am speaking to those who have committed their lives to Christ). The answer is to live a life that makes a difference for Jesus in all that we do.
 - i) Of all the things we do in life, what make a difference for the next life? It can't be "money or things" because we can't take that stuff with us into the next life. What does make an eternal difference for us is how much effort we have made for "God's kingdom" in this lifetime.
 - ii) What I am saying is that I'm not impressed with people who say they believe in Jesus but never do anything about it. I'm impressed with people who believe in Jesus and then live a life with that belief as the central focus of their life.
 - iii) Making a difference for Jesus can be as straightforward as raising Godly children and getting involved in one's local church. It may mean using one's spare time and spare income for God's kingdom. The essential idea is that we focus whatever time God gives us in this world to make a difference for Him.
- d) This does lead us back to Chapter 11. Here, the remaining living kings in the land of Israel organize a battle against the Israelites. To make a long story short, the Israelites win, and now they have defeated every significant king in the land of Israel as God has commanded them to do.
 - i) Now let's get back to you and me. At the end of our life, God wants us to look back at our life and say "we have made a difference for Him." The idea is that we have accomplished what God wanted to do through us. This generation of Israelites has done "just that" by conquering the land as God required them to.
 - a) Yes there is always more to do. I have heard that many Christians on their deathbed have worried about the fact they haven't done enough.
 - ii) The real point is we never know how long our life is going to be. It could continue for many more years or it could end today. The point is to use whatever time God has given us to make a difference for Him. The "what to do" question is based on whatever God has called us to do and it is different from person to person.
 - iii) God called Joshua to conquer the land and for the most part, and by the end of this chapter, Joshua has accomplished this assignment. God may call on you or me to say, lead a bible study group, or be involved in a worship team or just be involved in some project for Him. The question is not so much the "what", but are we being loyal to what God called us to do. Yes there is always more to do, but the question is are we being loyal to what God called us to do today.
- e) If all of this is confusing you, let me explain it this way: The Israelites still have more battles to fight here in Chapter 11. Here they win this battle without any significant miracle mentioned. God does speak here, but only to tell Joshua that he is going to win. The point is the Israelites trusted in God in a battle that was "bigger than they could handle" and God then made it possible for the Israelites to win that battle.
 - i) The point for us is that in the things we do for God, the ultimate victory is guaranteed. As the battles are being won for God in our life, the point is we do achieve victory for God whether we see the end results or not. We are to be loyal to what God has called us to do and we let Him worry about the results.
- f) I should also add that we are only half way through the book of Joshua. That means that God still has more work for 's Joshua, which of course, is the second half of the book.
- g) OK, I've been yapping for over two pages now. ☺ Time to start the text.

4. Chapter 11, Verse 1: When Jabin king of Hazor heard of this, he sent word to Jobab king of Madon, to the kings of Shimron and Acshaph, ² and to the northern kings who were in the mountains, in the Arabah south of Kinnereth, in the western foothills and in Naphtali Dor on the west; ³ to the Canaanites in the east and west; to the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites and Jebusites in the hill country; and to the Hivites below Hermon in the region of Mizpah. ⁴ They came out with all their troops and a large number of horses and chariots--a huge army, as numerous as the sand on the seashore.
- a) This chapter opens up in a similar fashion to how Chapter 10 opened up:
 - i) In Chapter 10, there were a bunch of kings worried about Israel.
 - ii) Here in Chapter 11, we have a different bunch of kings worried about Israel.
 - iii) In Chapter 10, those kings focused on defeating the Gibeonites. Those kings didn't like that the Gibeonites sided with Israel and wanted to teach them a lesson.
 - iv) Here in Chapter 11, this different group decides to attack Israel directly.
 - v) In Chapter 10, all the kings that fought in that chapter ended up being killed by the Israelites.
 - vi) By the end Chapter 11, all these "other" kings and their armies will end up dead.
 - vii) Chapter 10 was about the kings in the Southern Part of Israel.
 - viii) Chapter 11 is about the kings in the Northern Part of Israel.
 - b) So other than the fact this group of "Northern kings" decides to take on Israel directly and the group in the last chapter took on Israel indirectly, what is the difference? The difference is size. As best as anyone can tell, the size of this army was notably larger.
 - c) There was a first century historian named Josephus. He wrote a history of the Jewish nation up to that time. His account of this battle is that the group of the northern kings had 300,000 soldiers, 10,000 cavalry ("soldiers on horses") and another 20,000 chariots.
 - i) The chariots of this group were designed to be pulled by four horses each. They were designed for attack. It was the ancient equivalent of the "tank".
 - ii) Even if Josephus' numbers were off, the one idea we do get from the text is that this army was large and it would be the largest army the Israelites would face.
 - iii) Know that these "northern" kings were not the best of friends. They were each leaders of individual cities. From what we know of history, they did not get along. Yet, here was this enemy (the Israelites) that was a threat to all of them, so therefore, they put their differences aside in order to take on the Israelites.
 - d) OK, John, time to fire off you're favorite part of these lessons: Why should we care? ☺
 - i) Let's face it, God could have written most of this chapter in one line and said in effect, "The rest of the people of the land fought against the Israelites and lost". In other words, why give us all of these details and what is the significance?
 - ii) The significance is that this is the first time that Joshua would face "straight on" an army that was at least as large as the Israelites and most likely even larger. Further, this is an army that is going to take on the Israelites directly. There is no direct element of surprise in that this army knew who they were fighting.
 - iii) OK John, I sort of get all of that. How does this affect me? The answer is, that in life, we are sometimes going to face things that are bigger than we are. Even if we never have to face an army, we are going to face challenges that are bigger than us.
 - a) OK, so I have to face things that are big and challenging? How does this text help me? The answer starts with the fact that we have to admit that based on our own strength, we would be unable to beat this enemy.
 - b) The answer then is to realize the only way we can overcome this "obstacle" is to fully rely on God's help. It is the old saying that "God and us" make a majority. We can overcome any obstacle if we are to fully trust in God.

- c) The bible is full of stories of people winning battles that "without God's help" they never would have won. David defeating Goliath comes to mind. The point is this chapter in Joshua is not an isolated example of the Israelites taking on "something" that is bigger than them.
- iv) Let me try to get more practical here: Let's suppose we are battling an addiction and we can't defeat it on our own willpower. Or let's suppose there is some problem in our life that we would like to eliminate it, but we have learned (or are not willing to admit) that we cannot win this battle by our own strength.
 - a) Whatever our issue(s) is, the point is that from our perspective, that problem is the equivalent of a large army being organized against us and it appears that this "army" is much bigger and stronger than we are.
 - b) So how do we have victory over an issue that we are sure that God wants us to have victory over? Step one is to admit that we cannot win this issue without God's help. The second step is to ask God to show us how to overcome this issue. The third step is to follow that advice, even if it doesn't "make sense" to you.
 - c) OK, suppose we have prayed and haven't received a great answer on how to deal with that issue. The answer is pray some more and then wait on His timing. God is not required to work on our timing. There may be something that God wants to show us prior to taking on our "issue".
 - d) Sometimes it is just a matter of us "stepping forward" and facing the issue and watching how God works. Other times, there are other issues to face prior to taking on the "key issue" of the moment.
 - e) I often have learned that it is a matter of "complete surrender" of an issue before God can and does work through us. In other words, there may be more to the "issue at hand" that God wants us to think about and deal with first. I'll talk about this idea more through the lesson.
- e) OK in the meantime, the Israelites are facing a large army, and I'm getting sidetracked. ☺
 - i) The main thing to get out of the first four verses is that the kings who lived in the northern part of what we call Israel are uniting and form a large army.
 - ii) The leader of this group was "Jabin king of Hazor". Historians are not sure if Jabin was his name or his title. It is common for kings to be spoken of by their title. The best example I can give is when Roman Emperors called themselves "Caesar".
 - iii) The text also mentioned that these different kings were Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites and Jebusites. The important thing to remember here is that these groups were not all part of the same family. They were different "nations" with different backgrounds that happen to live in the same area. As I stated earlier, history teaches us that these groups constantly fought amongst each other. The only reason they were uniting was to fight a common enemy.
 - iv) So why was this "Jabin" the leader? First, remember that Jabin was the king of a city called Hazor. Historians believe that Hazor was the most powerful of all of these cities. We do know that Hazor was located along the main trade route.
 - a) Know that the land of Israel is a natural land bridge between three continents. The main highway to travel from Egypt to Europe or the western part of Asia ran through Israel. This route ran through Hazor, so this city may have been rich through trade along this route.
 - v) The important thing here is that Jabin, the king of Hazor organizes this large army. This combined army also had weapons the Israelites do not have. This is the chariots and horses mentioned in the text. Even if the Israelite army was as large (I doubt it), this group had superior technology to fight in battles.

5. Verse 5: All these kings joined forces and made camp together at the Waters of Merom, to fight against Israel.
 - a) OK, where is the "Waters of Merom" and why should I care? To make it simple, "Merom" is an early Old Testament name for what we call the "Sea of Galilee", a fresh water lake.
 - b) Understand that most of northern Israel is "hill country". This area that is called here the "Waters of Merom" is an area by the lake, which is good place for an army to organize. An army needs food and fresh water and the lake provided both (think fish).
 - i) In other words if the size of the army didn't scare the Israelites and their weaponry didn't scare the Israelites, the location of this army was also a problem.
 - c) So, put yourself in the position of the average Israelite. Yes they have won lots of battles so far, all with God's help. Now they are staring at a bigger army with better weapons.
 - i) My point is the fear of this army had to be real. Even if one is trusting in God, it is so easy to get our eyes off of God and put our eyes on a "real problem" that is visual and right in front of us!
 - ii) The lesson of this chapter is about trusting God with a situation that is "too big too handle" on our own. It is another way of showing our complete dependence upon God especially when whatever is in front of us is way to big to defeat on our own.
6. Verse 6: The LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them, because by this time tomorrow I will hand all of them over to Israel, slain. You are to hamstring their horses and burn their chariots."
 - a) The good news is that Joshua prayed about this situation and got an answer from God.
 - b) God's essential response is in effect "By this time tomorrow I will hand them over to you".
 - i) It does not mean the entire army will be defeated in one day. It does mean that in one day we essentially will have victory. The clean up operation will take time.
 - c) Think about that principal as we battle the issues of our lives. God promises us victory of we let Him lead us to that victory. Usually once we trust God to lead us, we "instantly" have victory, but the "clean up operation" takes a lot longer to accomplish.
 - i) Let's say we are battling some sort of sin issue. Once we decide to take it on with God's help, we may instantly be victorious over that issue, but we still have to face that issue and the consequences of that issue for a long time.
 - ii) Let's say we are trying to face some sort of "damaged relationship issue". We can only overcome that issue with God's help and on His timing. That issue is too big to handle on our own. The "time issue" may be for us to contemplate what we have done. The classic line in relationship issues is that only God can fix the other person. It is up to "God and us" to look at our parts and deal with our end of it.
 - a) We then trust in God to deal with the other person's issues as we can't do anything about it on our own. I usually find that the "healing" does not begin until I have contemplated my part and faced my own issues prior to dealing with the "other person".
 - b) As far as the other person, I am reminded of my favorite definition of "submission". It is learning to duck so God can get a good shot at the other person! ☺ It is about loving that other person unconditionally and letting God deal with the other person, as opposed to us trying to fix them!
 - d) Meanwhile, Joshua was about to face this large army and God told Him in a sense to not worry because if he is trusting in God, the opposing army is as good as defeated.
 - e) Verse 6 has another important sentence. The last part of this verse is God giving the instructions to Joshua to "hamstring their horses and burn their chariots."
 - i) From a human standpoint if we defeat an army with a large number of chariots (or say, guns or tanks), once we defeat them, then their weapons should be ours.
 - ii) Let's face it, there is always another battle to fight tomorrow. If we can take their weaponry, we now have the stuff needed to fight another battle even better.

- f) So why did God require the Israelites to "hamstring their horses and burn their chariots?"
 - i) It is based on a law in Deuteronomy. (Have you noticed by now we can't get through a lesson in Joshua without quoting Deuteronomy at least once? ☺)
 - a) Guess which Old Testament book Jesus quoted more than any other? Yes, it is Deuteronomy, so I don't feel so bad quoting it so often in these lessons.
 - ii) Deuteronomy 20:1 says that when you see an army bigger or better equipped than you are, don't be afraid as God is fighting for you.
 - iii) Deuteronomy 17:16 teaches that the kings of Israel were not to multiply horses. Why is that? One reason was that the Egyptians worshipped horses and God didn't want the Israelites to follow that practice. The other idea behind this law is that the Israelites are to be completely dependent upon God and not on "horses" for battle victories. If the Israelites had a whole bunch of chariots and horses to pull them, the Israelites would now be trusting in their weapons and not in God.
 - iv) So are you saying our modern armies should burn all of their weapons and just trust in God? No. In fact, God never told the Israelites to destroy what weapons they were using, which were mainly bows, arrows and spears.
 - a) The point is not that God is "anti-technology". The point is that in life's situations, God wants us to fully trust in Him to overcome whatever obstacle is in our way, and not rely on our own strength and ability.
 - v) Getting back to these verses, to hamstringing a horse means to hurt their tendon in a way so they no longer can be controlled. If done right, it is merciful in that the horse can still live, but it can no longer be controlled by a horse rider.
 - a) It must have been tempting for the Israelites to want to keep a few chariots and horses. I could see soldiers thinking about that possibility.
 - b) Now think back to the battle of Jericho. One person decided to keep a few things that he was not supposed to. God made the Israelites lose their next battle and that thief has to be killed. The lesson is when God tells us to do something we need to completely obey Him with no compromise.
 - c) The idea is about being completely dependent upon God and not "stuff".
 - d) Again, it not about being "anti-technology", but about trusting God to win battles in lie the way God wants us to win them: By whatever is "His method" of the moment and whatever He requires of us.

7. Verse 7: So Joshua and his whole army came against them suddenly at the Waters of Merom and attacked them, ⁸ and the LORD gave them into the hand of Israel. They defeated them and pursued them all the way to Greater Sidon, to Misrephoth Maim, and to the Valley of Mizpah on the east, until no survivors were left. ⁹ Joshua did to them as the LORD had directed: He hamstrung their horses and burned their chariots.

- a) So here is the actual battle between the Israelite army and this combined army of forces in the northern section of Israel. We don't get a lot of battle details but just the key fact that the Israelites had won the battle.
- b) Again, there are good historians out there that like to fill in the details of the "how" question of battle tactics. My view is that God wants us to focus on the "why" issue and not the "how" issue. The "why issue" is that the Israelites did as God commanded and won. The "why issue" is to once again teach us to be dependant upon God as He can handle whatever obstacle is in our way, even if it seems to big for us to handle.
- c) Notice that the end of Verse 8 says in effect Joshua won until "no survivors were left".
 - i) That must have taken a little bit of time. The point is if we are trusting in God, we can defeat whatever issue is right in front of and us and "defeat it to death".
 - ii) Does that mean we can defeat a particular sin to a point where we are never tempted by it again? While that is possible, I suspect the more likely situation is as long as we are trusting God, we can have victory over any particular issue.

- d) Verse 9 then says that Joshua did burn the chariots and hamstring the horses.
 - i) The point is Joshua did completely as God commanded him to do.
 - ii) Often the biggest mistakes we make in life is when we don't follow through completely with what God wants us to do. I have found that the biggest issues that come back to haunt me are issues that I didn't follow through upon.
 - e) OK, so what does that mean practically? God does not speak to us audibly and give us complete instructions on what to do. How do we apply this to us?
 - i) It starts with God's word. That is our guide on how to defeat the sin issues that we face in life and how to completely deal with them. If we regularly (think daily) take the time to read through the whole bible, it is amazing how we can relate to the stories that are told and the principals that we can apply to our lives.
 - ii) This also includes prayer. Prayer is not just to knell and ramble off names of people that are on our hearts at the moment. Prayer is also about pouring out our issues to God and telling Him how helpless we are to deal with them without his help. Prayer is also to contemplate what we have done wrong in a given situation and how we are to act better in the next confrontation of that issue. Prayer is to ask God what to do and to listen for His answers.
 - iii) Let me give an example: "Lord, I have really messed up in this situation. I feel helpless and don't know how to remedy it. I know that You are a God that is greater than any mess that I have made. I know that You can fix things that are too big for me to take on myself. I can't fix other people, but through You, I can work on my own issues. Show me the areas that need to be changed and work through me to change me for the better. Heal the situation in front of me and help me to go forward knowing that You are guiding me through this situation."
 - f) Ok, everyone exhale. ☺ Joshua is still fighting a battle and we have more text to read.
8. Verse 10: At that time Joshua turned back and captured Hazer and put its king to the sword. (Hazer had been the head of all these kingdoms.)¹¹ Everyone in it they put to the sword. They totally destroyed them, not sparing anything that breathed, and he burned up Hazer itself.
- a) In these verses we have the death of the king of Hazer and his city was burned.
 - b) If you recall from the battle of Jericho story, God required that the entire city of Jericho and everything in it to be burned to the ground. After that the Israelites were welcome to keep the spoils of war of every city thereafter.
 - c) Yet, here, we read of Hazer also being burnt to the ground. So if (as best we can tell), God did not require that the Israelites burn this city to the ground, why did they do it?
 - i) I see it as a sign of gratitude. Joshua understood that it was not his battle tactics that got Israel to win this battle, but their dependence upon God. Therefore, Joshua offered up to God the "first" of their winnings by burning this city.
 - ii) Know that God does not personally benefit from our gratitude. When God does something for us, we should show gratitude to get our focus on Him. In other words, gratitude to God is a good thing for our sakes, and not for "God's sake".
 - iii) Going back to the question of "Why burn this city to the ground?", I suspect there might have been more to it. If Hazer was the city that controlled the trade route in the area, burning it may have been to send a message to business traders who use this route that the Israelites and the "God of the Israelites" were now in charge.
 - iv) Remember that the text mentions that Hazer was the head of all these kingdoms. That simply means it was the ringleader of this large army.
 - d) The text also mentions that all people living there were "put to the sword". That means that all women and children were killed as well. As I've stated in previous lessons, the point not that God wants us to put the "bystanders" to death. The point is that these specific people were being judged by God and the Israelites were the instruments of God's judgment against these nations.

9. Verse 12: Joshua took all these royal cities and their kings and put them to the sword. He totally destroyed them, as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded. ¹³ Yet Israel did not burn any of the cities built on their mounds--except Hazor, which Joshua burned. ¹⁴ The Israelites carried off for themselves all the plunder and livestock of these cities, but all the people they put to the sword until they completely destroyed them, not sparing anyone that breathed. ¹⁵ As the LORD commanded his servant Moses, so Moses commanded Joshua, and Joshua did it; he left nothing undone of all that the LORD commanded Moses.
- a) Let me explain the word "royal". It means that these cities were the most significant in the northern part of what we call "Israel". As I stated, Hazor was along the main trade route that ran through Israel. Maybe these other cities also benefited from this trading route and that is why they were called the "royal" cities.
 - b) The point is Joshua destroyed all people that lived in all of these "royal" cities. The Israelites only burned to the ground the city of Hazor. As to the other cities, the Israelites were free to keep the livestock and material things from those cities. Remember that armies still need to eat and what was found in those cities were the provisions for the Israelite armies.
 - c) I should comment a little on Verse 15. It says that Joshua, like Moses did as the Lord commanded. What does that refer to?
 - i) Back in Deuteronomy, it says that the Israelites are to utterly "wipe out" all the residents of the land of Israel (See Deut. 7:1-3). It means that both Moses and Joshua did as God told them to do. Again, it does not mean the Israelites are to kill all nonbelievers. This was a specific judgment against a specific group of people ordained by God and recorded by Moses in the book of Deuteronomy.
 - d) As I stated in the introduction we have a good guess that all of this conquering took about seven years. We know this based on the age of "Caleb". Caleb was the only other spy besides Joshua who gave a positive report about conquering the land. Caleb was forty years old when Moses sent him as a spy (Joshua 14:7). From the time of the spy mission until the time the Israelites entered the land was another 38 years (Deuteronomy 2:14). That means that the battles in the land began when Caleb was 78 (40 plus 38 years). Finally, Joshua 14:7 says that Caleb was 85 when he received his allotment of land. If one subtracts 78 from 85, that means Caleb and the Israelites spent seven years from the time the Israelites first entered the Promised Land until Chapter 14.
 - i) My point? Just that one should not read all of these battles as occurring in a few days. The time span of all of the war activity was a seven-year time span.
 - e) Verse 15 is a good summary statement. It is saying in effect that Joshua did everything that God had wanted him to do and now in effect, "Joshua's mission is completed".
 - i) It does not mean that the land was now 100% empty other than Israelites.
 - ii) There will still be other battles to fight, but God is saving those for another day.
 - f) Going back to Deuteronomy, (you sort of knew that was coming ☺), God said that he would drive out the enemies a "little at a time". (See Deuteronomy 7:22).
 - i) The literal idea is that God would not have the Israelites battle the whole country at once. If the Israelites did and won, it would have gone to their head. If God drove out all of the enemies of Israel in one big "swoosh", then the Israelites would develop a big ego and not learn to trust God with whatever is in front of them.
 - ii) God works the same way in our life. God does not make all of our problems go away in one big "swoosh". Instead we have to learn to be dependant upon God in order to take on those issues at a rate and a pace that we can learn from and we can be dependant upon Him.
 - iii) The related point is God never gives us a battle that is too big for us to handle. At the same time, God works on "our level" to conquer the issues of our life at a pace and a rate that we can handle.

10. Verse 16: So Joshua took this entire land: the hill country, all the Negev, the whole region of Goshen, the western foothills, the Arabah and the mountains of Israel with their foothills, ¹⁷ from Mount Halak, which rises toward Seir, to Baal Gad in the Valley of Lebanon below Mount Hermon. He captured all their kings and struck them down, putting them to death. ¹⁸ Joshua waged war against all these kings for a long time. ¹⁹ Except for the Hivites living in Gibeon, not one city made a treaty of peace with the Israelites, who took them all in battle.
 - a) This paragraph is one of those "summary statements" that are common in the bible.
 - i) This paragraph goes to a lot of trouble to list geography. In other words, God wants us to know that this "land" as defined in the text belongs to the Israelites.
 - ii) Does that mean that the land belongs to the modern Israelites as well? The way I look at it is, this particular piece of real estate is "God's land". If He decides to give it to the Israelites eternally, who am I to argue or question otherwise? The extended answer is I wouldn't want to "push God" and find out if I'm wrong!
 - b) This text places a high value on "showing gratitude". The reason the bible spends so much space giving the details of the victories is not so we can show how great is the Israelites, but how great God is, when we learn to trust Him and be dependant upon Him.
 - c) Notice in Verse 19, The Gibeonites are singled out again. They are singled out as the only group of people who were not killed in the land. That is because they were willing to put their trust in God, even if they went about it in a sneaky way.
11. Verse 20: For it was the LORD himself who hardened their hearts to wage war against Israel, so that he might destroy them totally, exterminating them without mercy, as the LORD had commanded Moses.
 - a) Verse 20 is a lecture all unto itself. The key point is that God "hardened the hearts" of those who fought against Israel. These are all the people the Israelites killed in the battles.
 - b) The big question is, "Is it fair for God to harden hearts?" Does that mean a person who has his or her heart hardened by God never has a chance to be saved in the first place?
 - i) Here is the way I look at this. First of all, God knows who has a "heart" for Him and who "potentially" has a heart for Him. Therefore, God takes those who are already inclined to turn away from Him, and He (God) hardens their hearts.
 - ii) In other words, God takes those who "never would" consider turning to Him and "hardened their hearts" to make it more difficult for that person to turn to Him.
 - iii) This is a New Testament principal as well. There is a "point of no return with God". We as humans can never know what that point is and we should never, ever give up on people. Even with having that attitude of not giving up, we have to accept the fact that it is "God's world" and He has every right to "harden" who He wants to harden and soften whatever heart God wants to soften. If we understand that, we just to have to accept that fact, as well, fact.
 - iv) It doesn't mean we should pray for someone's heart to be hardened. It simply means that there have been (and are) people who refuse to turn to God and He in turn "gives them what they want". He makes it harder to turn to Him.
 - v) It is like warning someone to "not to slide down that slippery slope". Let's suppose that after they are warned, they go down that path anyway. They had the choice to do it or not. Now that they have made that decision, God makes it "harder" for them to turn back. (See Romans 1:26-32) on this principal.
 - a) I have to end this with another reminder that we as humans can never know when it is too late for someone. We can only judge actions, we cannot judge people's hearts.
 - c) The people who fought against Israel fell into this category, and the whole idea of the Israelites wiping out those who lived here was a "mercy killing". That means since these people would never have a heart for God, they were as "good as dead" anyway in terms of how they lived their life in terms of making an eternal difference.

12. Verse 21: At that time Joshua went and destroyed the Anakites from the hill country: from Hebron, Debir and Anab, from all the hill country of Judah, and from all the hill country of Israel. Joshua totally destroyed them and their towns. ²² No Anakites were left in Israelite territory; only in Gaza, Gath and Ashdod did any survive.
- a) Apparently, Joshua was in the mood for more fighting once the big battle was over. ☺
 - b) In these verses we read of Joshua and the Israelites taking on a group called the "Anakites". A logical assumption is that they were not part of the army that the Israelites battled in this chapter, but they are still among the people that God "hardened their hearts" and among the people that God called on the Israelites to destroy.
 - c) OK, once again, why are these verses here and why should I care? ☺
 - i) First, understand it was necessary for the Israelites to take them on as again, they were part of the people that God told the Israelites to eliminate from the land.
 - ii) The spiritual application is essentially, "Once we have eliminated (or for the time being allowed God to stop) a significant sin from our life, we should not take that as a sign to just "stop battling sin and enjoy life". There are always other battles to fight and God wants us to eliminate all things that separate us from Him.
 - a) To put it another way, while we are working with God to deal with one sin issue, don't hesitate to ask God to also deal with any related issues that are in the "same neighborhood" as the issues we are dealing with.
 - d) There is another "literal" point being made here. There are three cities mentioned that Joshua did not attack. They are Gaza, Gath and Ashdod. Later, these three cities will be prominent in the book of Judges and in 1st and 2nd Samuel. You may have heard of the "Gaza Strip" in Israel. This is the same location as "Gaza". This was also the home of the Philistines. The point is because Joshua failed to deal with these cities, the people who lived here became a problem for the Israelites for many hundreds of years after that.
 - i) The application? Whatever we fail to deal with will come back to haunt us.
 - e) So, what is so special about the Anakites that they get a special mention? This happens to be the group that Goliath the giant was a part of. Further, if you recall the story of the 12 spies sent by Moses (Joshua was one of the spies), 10 of them said the land was too hard to conquer and there were giants in the land. The "giants" refer to the Anakites. This was an ancient race of people that were tall. By our best estimate, Goliath was 9 to 10 feet tall.
 - i) How this "special" race of people got here is a classical Christian debate. Some suspect they were a "unique breed of angels and humans" while some just think they were a tall group of humans. The point as it relates to the story is that Joshua knew that God was on His side and was not afraid to take them on.
 - f) I want you to think about why the Anakites are mentioned at this point of the text.
 - i) Prior to dealing with them, the Israelite army just had their biggest test. They defeated an army that was bigger and better equipped. God helped the Israelites defeat an army that was probably bigger, and definitely had better weapons.
 - ii) The point is once we learn to completely trust God we can take on "things" that through our own strength or through our own eyes are way too tough to handle.
 - iii) The Israelites were able to defeat this five king-army solely because they have grown in their faith to the point where they have learned to trust God to lead them to victory over any and all enemies, even those that seem too big to handle.
 - iv) This leads us back to the Anakites. These were the people the Israelites were first afraid of before they ever entered the land. These were the people who the ten bad spies brought back a report about. (See Numbers 13:27-28). I'm sure the Israelites who actually entered the Promised Land heard the stories about the Anakite "giants" from their parents who heard the "bad spy" report.
 - a) Once the Israelites learned to trust God, they could defeat even the strongest "foe" that was the Israelites' biggest fear a "generation" ago.

13. Verse 23: So Joshua took the entire land, just as the LORD had directed Moses, and he gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal divisions. Then the land had rest from war.
- a) In this verse, we read of Joshua giving the land of Israel to the Israelites. In future chapters, we'll discuss this more in detail. The other point here is that the land had rest from war. OK, what does that mean?
 - i) We just read in the last verse that Joshua never defeated three cities (Gaza, Gath and Ashdod), which in the next few books of the bible are associated with the Philistines.
 - ii) If you recall from a lesson back, the Israelites never conquered the City of Jerusalem, but did defeat their king.
 - iii) My point is there is more conquering to do, yet we read here in Verse 23 that the "Land had rest from war" and Joshua could now divide up the land.
 - b) What is going on at this point is that Joshua had defeated every "significant" king in the land of Israel. As best we can tell, the Israelites had been at war for about seven years.
 - i) While there were still people left to defeat, all the major kings (i.e. leaders) were now eliminated.
 - ii) So why was it time to rest? Well, after spending about seven years of one's life fighting, it was time to take a break. If you recall from the opening lesson, two and one half tribes of Israel settled east of the Jordan River. That means the wives and children of these soldiers waited there until the war was over. The wives and children of the other Israelites lived at the "base camp" during this war campaign.
 - iii) So, did Joshua quit prematurely? That is a classical debate question.
 - a) Some argue that because certain cities were spared and they became a problem for future generations, Joshua should have kept going.
 - b) Others argue that we can't read people's minds and it may have simply been a time for rest. After fighting wars for a significant amount of time, there comes a time where one needs a significant break and "readjust" to life as a non-soldier.
 - c) Instead of focusing on what the Israelites failed to do, it would be helpful to focus on what the Israelites did do: They killed a lot of kings and conquered a lot of cities in Israel.
 - i) For the most part, the land was conquered. The Israelites could enjoy a time of rest as there were no significant leaders left to organize an attack.
 - ii) The next chapter, Chapter 12, is simply a list of kings that were defeated by the Israelites. I originally was going to cover Chapter 12 in this lesson, but I'm already running long. The main point as it relates to Chapter 11 (which is this lesson) is that it is essential to take time off from the battle to stop and give credit to the God who made victory possible. In other words, what God wants from us in exchange for leading us to victories in life is to show gratitude to Him.
 - iii) God does not want gratitude for His sake. God is not a god who "needs things" like a pat on the back. God wants us to show gratitude for our sakes! It is to stop and acknowledge what He has done for us and to show our appreciation.
 - a) What is the point of showing such gratitude? It helps us to trust God all the more. The next time we are in "trouble", God just may work more in the background and remind us that He is there working for us.
 - b) The point is gratitude helps us to get our focus on Him and appreciate all He does for us. He does lead us to victory over the issues that separate us from Him and it helps our faith if we show appreciation for that fact.
 - d) On that happy note, we'll save Chapter 12 for the next lesson and I'll wrap it up here.

14. Let's pray: Father, there are times in our lives where we look at what is in front of us and it is "way to big" for us to handle. We know that given our strength, we are no match for what we have to face. Help us to remember that "God and me" make a majority. We can have victory over any all things that are displeasing to You and separate us from You. Guide us to victory in our life as we learn to trust You with all aspects of our lives. Finally, give us the rest we need to have the strength to go and fight another day. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.