

## **Joshua Chapters 11 to 14**

### **Conquests in northern Canaan (Joshua 11 v 1 to 23)**

After Israel's conquest of the south, the northern kings come together to fight Israel.

Two things indicate that Israel is facing challenges they have never faced before:

- (i) the size of the enemy army, "like the sand that is on the seashore" (v 4); and
- (ii) their technological superiority, with "very many horses and chariots".

Israel's challenges seem to increase at each step: from Jericho, to Ai, to the battle with the southern kings (Joshua 10), and to this battle, culminating in the defeat of the Anakim giants (v 21). Often we find that difficulties facing us in our Christian walk get harder, God using each victory as a springboard for what we face in the future...

- What were the reasons for Joshua's final victory here?
- Note the finality and harshness of Joshua's treatment of his enemies (e.g. v 9, 11, 12, 14) – why was this necessary? See Matthew 18 v 8, 9, Colossians 3 v 5, 6.
- "Joshua took the whole land" (v 23), yet in Joshua 13 v 1 the Lord tells him "there remains yet very much land to possess" – how do you reconcile these two statements?

Notice this is the first time horses and chariots are mentioned in the Book of Joshua. They were prohibited in the Torah (Deuteronomy 17 v 16) – why? One reason was that the people of Israel were encouraged to put their trust in God, rather than rely on horses for victory (Psalm 20 v 7, Proverbs 21 v 31). But there may have been another 'spiritual' reason: 2 Kings 23 v 11 suggests that horses and chariots were sometimes associated with idol worship and possibly occult practices.

The "waters of Merom" (v 5, 7) were in the valley of Esdraelon, overlooked by Megiddo, where in the last days the kings of the world will assemble for war against another 'Joshua' (see Revelation 16 v 16).

The Anakim were a race of giants dwelling in the south of the land of Canaan, near Hebron (Joshua 15 v 13, 14). Their name may come from a Hebrew root meaning 'strength' or 'stature'. Their formidable appearance, as described by the 12 spies sent to search the land, filled the Israelites with terror. The Israelites seem to have identified them with the Nephilim, the giants before Noah's flood (Genesis 6 v 4, Numbers 13 v 31 to 33). Joshua finally expelled them from the land, except a remnant that found a refuge in the cities of Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod (v 22). The Philistine giants (Goliath and his brothers) whom David encountered several hundred years later (2 Samuel 21 v 20 to 22) were descendants of the Anakim.

Control over the whole land was gained by destroying the key cities and their people. But the people of Israel under Joshua didn't take every city or village – each tribe had to gain mastery over its own territory after the land was allocated.

### **Land still to be conquered, inheritance east and west of Jordan (Joshua 13, 14 v 1 to 5)**

The word "inheritance" occurs over 50 times in the Book of Joshua. The land was not earned, but given by God – but not 'freehold'. The land was effectively 'leased' to the tribes of Israel, who were therefore 'tenants'. And the rent? Obedience... Two and half tribes (Reuben, Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh) had as their inheritance land east of the Jordan, as conquered previously under Moses. The remaining nine and half tribes had as their inheritance land west of the Jordan.

- What special inheritance was given to the tribe of Levi, and why? See Joshua 13 v 14, 33; Joshua 14 v 3, 4.

**[MORE OVER...]**

The Levites had no land for an inheritance, but instead received a greater inheritance: God himself. If there is any tribe that Christians are spiritually connected to, it is the tribe of Levi. We also are called priests (1 Peter 2 v 5) and have a special inheritance in God (Ephesians 1 v 11, Colossians 1 v 12, and 1 Peter 1 v 4).

### **Caleb's request and inheritance (Joshua 14 v 6 to 15)**

Caleb, from the tribe of Judah, was one of the twelve spies who scouted out the land of Canaan some forty-five years previously when Israel was on the threshold of entering the Promised Land (the story is told in Numbers 13).

- Caleb “wholly followed the Lord” (v 8, 9, 14). What other outstanding qualities does Caleb display here? Which of these qualities should we try to emulate?
- At the age of 85, was he looking forward to a peaceful retirement in some quiet valley (v 12)?

As Judah is the first tribe to receive its allotment on the west side of the Jordan, Caleb was the first among the people of Judah to receive his inheritance. Though he is advanced in age, his strength is undiminished. At eighty-five he is out leading the fight, and not against just any foe, but against the notorious Anakim. In fact, Caleb wants a fight! He could have asked for an easy assignment, but he knows that these enemies must be faced, and reckons that he may as well be the one to do it. He does not leave the work to someone else, though he could have, especially at his age.

This is how God wants us to be in our spiritual life as we advance in years: growing older, but never weaker – rather, ever stronger in Jesus...