

Joshua 11; Psalm 20; Trusting in God until the Battle is Won I. Refusing to Use Man's Weapons II.  
Trusting in the LORD until the End

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, how many battles have you fought in? Although there are a few veterans in our church who can rightly say that they have fought in a battle- the fact is you are all in a battle every day! You are all on active duty- called to be soldiers in the army of Christ today. But being a soldier in a spiritual battle is not for the faint of heart. It is a long, difficult battle- one that lasts for years! Well, today as we return to Joshua, we come to the conclusion of the first half of the book. At the end of chapter 11 we find a break as chapter 12 gives us a summary in which the names of the kings both Moses and Joshua defeated in battle are listed. Having defeated the southern Canaanite tribes in ch. 10, this week we see the victory over the northern tribes in the land of Canaan. This evening we consider this theme: Jesus Christ trains Israel for an extended battle as they wait upon Him for final victory.

### **I. Refusing to Use Man's Weapons**

In our first point we see that when our God trains the Israelites for battle, He teaches them not to use man's weapons. So the weapons that the Canaanites use in our passage are horse and chariot- but the LORD makes it clear that these are not to be accepted or used in Israel. So the solution is found in v. 6 and 9- hamstringing the horses and burning the chariots. Now why was this such a big deal? Think about it- Israel could have really used these captured horses and chariots- it would have made their battle against the other armies so much easier. Horses and chariots were the heavy artillery of the day- the tanks of modern warfare. Kind of like Ukraine getting their tanks as we speak in the hopes of turning the tides of the war. These chariots were free- captured from the enemy. Why not use them? Well, the Israelites had to learn that victory comes from the LORD and not from military might! As we read in Psalm 20- some trust in horses and chariots- but God's people must trust in the LORD and trust in Him alone! You see, the temptation would be to start trusting in these weapons for victory- and when the victory was

received they would give thanks to the implements of war and not to God. As Dt. 17:16 makes clear, the Israelites and their kings were not to amass horses and chariots. So in order to remove this temptation, the horses were to be hamstrung- the main tendon in the rear leg of these animals would be cut making the animal lame and useless in battle. And the chariots were wooden, two wheeled chariots with iron plating. These were to be burned and thus the temptation to trust in them would be removed. If your horse and chariot causes you to sin, cut them out and burn them up. Added to this fact, the horse and chariot was a common symbol of a military deity. As illustrated in II Kings 23, the horses were dedicated to the sun deity. It seems that the sun god rode in a chariot pulled by horses across the sky in the pagan Canaanite view. So this source of idolatry would be removed as well. The point that the LORD is making in Israel is that victory does not come by military might and man's wisdom. This point is impressed upon the Israelites again and again. This is not just some military conquest- one nation taking the land from another. This is a spiritual battle- and the only hope for victory is found in obedience to the LORD. In trusting in Him and not trusting in man or military might! We will trust in the Name of the LORD- He will give us the victory just as He has promised! The nations will collapse and fall- but we will stand secure in His name as Psalm 20 states! Now this fact applies to the church today as well. We are all soldiers- just as the Israelites were! Our battle is not against flesh and blood- thus our weapons must be spiritual in nature! We fight against false teaching by proclaiming the truth! We fight against fear and doubt by being bold in our prayers! The battle belongs to the LORD- so it is in the LORD that we trust! It is always a temptation for the church to incorporate earthly means- to try to win the victory over this world by using worldly weapons. But the church does not use force or manipulation- instead of an eye for an eye- within the church we turn the other cheek! We do not trust in the Supreme Court, presidents or governors to save or protect the church! Fellow man and his devices are not the source of our hope for future victory! We do not use man's tactics- like trickery and deceit- to win the day! No- we do not say that the ends justify the means. We need to be very careful- conscious of where we look

for aid and in whom we place our trust! Are we looking to the earthly weapons- man and his wisdom and ways; or are we trusting in the LORD and looking to His hand for victory? Man says, “try harder, do better, work longer, use any means necessary, cheat and deceive in order to win.” But our God says- only the truth can destroy strongholds. One more brief application- we see that the fight against sin and temptation must be radical and whole hearted. Knowing that the horses and chariots would be a source of temptation, Joshua removes the temptation. Jesus said in Mt. 5:29- if your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out! God’s people must be dedicated to purity and obedience- fleeing from the source of temptation when possible. Or as I Thes. 5:22 says, abstaining from every form of evil. So the battle that we are drafted into by Jesus Christ is one that takes constant vigilance- being watchful- identifying sin and the source of temptation. Refusing to trust in the idols of mankind- but rather trusting in the LORD alone!

## **II. Trusting in the LORD until the End**

Now that we have considered the weapons of man and how God’s people will use the spiritual weapons of the Word and prayer as we fight our spiritual battle, in our second point we find the duration of this battle! In other words, how long should we expect the battle to last and when will it end? In this point we will see that our God calls us to persevere! To stand fast and firm in the faith over the long haul! So as we go back to our text, we find in v. 18 that Joshua made a long war with these king- the war took a long time. Now this is instructive- too often we think that spiritual battles should be quick and easy. But the warfare is long and the battle endures! For Joshua and the Israelites, this initial stage in the conquest of the land lasted around 7 years. But the focus is on the “long” or the enduring nature of war in v. 18. The spiritual battle is not for the faint of heart. We should not expect an easy or quick victory! Yes, we can be discouraged by temptations, trials, hardships and sin that is present in our lives. Things we thought we had overcome rear their ugly head again. But the Christian life is one long, hard battle. Waiting upon the Lord as we take up the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the

Spirit. We called to stand firm- being bold and courageous. Let us never shrink back in fear- or give up when the warfare is long and the battle endures! As it is often said, the Christian life is a marathon and not a sprint. As Eph. 6 puts it, we wrestle against spiritual forces of evil and this present darkness. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints. The enemy is too find no quarter here! So strengthen weak hands and feeble knees. As we find in Heb. 12, do not grow weary or fainthearted. So let us stir up one another each day for the battle is at hand- the war rages and the battle continues.

But the battle would not last forever. Remember that this land had been promised to Abraham- and the God of the covenant keeps His word. The sin in the land would be purged- the rebellious people would be removed. So in v. 20 the LORD hardens the hearts of the Northern Tribes- and they all gather together against Joshua. It was God's plan- His will to destroy the Canaanites- and He does this by hardening the hearts of His enemies. As we also find in Exodus with Pharaoh, the enemies of God's people are filled with hatred and seek to attack the people of God. God is merciful in protecting His people- and God is just as He pours out His anger and wrath upon the Northern tribes in Canaan. We should not be surprised that the world hates us- for they hated our Savior who has gone before. Our very presence on this earth exposes their sin- and they love their evil deeds more than the light. The seed of the serpent makes war against the seed of the woman- the world gathers to battle against the church. The antithesis is evident not only in Joshua 11- but continues to be seen today. As Jesus says in John 15, the world hated Him and His Father. You are not of this world, and that is why the world hates you. But that is not to say that the war is never over- that it will never end? No, as we find in v. 23, Joshua took the land and the land had rest from war. So this first, major stage of the conflict comes to an end. The territory has been taken and the major cities have been destroyed. The war God's people fight is not an endless war- there is a time of final and complete victory. When we look at the wars around us today, there does not seem to be a clear beginning nor a clear end. No declaration of war

and no VE Day to mark its end. But there was a clear beginning to this spiritual war- it started in Genesis 3. God said, I will put enmity between you and the serpent- the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent will fighting each other. But as Jesus said, take heart, I have overcome the world! The battle that God began in the Garden will be ended when Jesus comes back on the last day! There will be rest, peace, Shalom! The rest that the land had in Joshua 11 was only a picture of a future rest that is coming. As Heb. 4:8 proves, if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. So then there remain a Sabbath rest for the people of God. Joshua was not the one to secure this lasting rest! The Land of Sabbath rest would not be those few acres in the land of Canaan! No, it would take the coming of Jesus to secure this promised rest- rest from our weary works of sin. Rest from the attack of our enemies. Rest for the land itself and rest for our weary body and souls. Although we may be currently in the midst of the battle, we can rest assured that Rest has been secured and is coming! A time when the land and the people of God will have perfect peace and rest! And on that day, all wars will be over and every battle will cease! But until then, do not grow weary of doing good- keep fighting the good fight of faith- trusting in the LORD and His anointed One to deliver the rest that He has promised!

As we close, Joshua 11 marks the conclusion of the first stage of the Canaanite conquest. Jesus Christ trains Israel for an extended battle as they wait upon Him for final victory. Jesus does this same training with us- we are equipped for spiritual battle with His Spirit and Word. But we can take heart- to stand fast as we remember this truth from Col. 1:12. The Father has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son. Victory is not attained by using human or earthly means; no we use spiritual weapons. Victory comes only after a hard struggle and the battle is fought. And victory is secured for us by Jesus Christ! We have an inheritance in the land of rest- a victory over our enemies secured by our NT Joshua! Thanks be to God who gives us victory through Jesus Christ!