

GENERAL JOSHUA HUNG FIVE KINGS ON TREES

Joshua 10:1-43

Key Verse: 10:8

"The Lord said to Joshua, 'Do not be afraid of them; I have given them into your hand. Not one of them will be able to withstand you.'"

In the last chapter we learned the Gibeonites' survival strategy. Their strategy was utter deception. After checking them out superficially, General Joshua made a promise before God to them that he would not kill them. Later, he discovered that they were not people from a distant country; they were neighbors. Even though their deception was clearly discovered, General Joshua honored the promise before God to them that they would live and did not kill them; he made them lifetime woodcutters and water carriers in the desert. When somebody is deceived thoroughly and later finds that he was deceived, revenging blood boils in his heart. It is indeed great that General Joshua first thought about the promise before God and made the Gibeonites live according to their survival strategy. Hail to General Joshua! Hail to Israel who honored the promise before God! In today's passage we learn that the soldiers of Israel had to have a great war campaign against five kings because the five kings thought the Gibeonites betrayed them, and mainly because they were afraid of General Joshua and his army. Let's see what happens in today's passage, chapter 10:1-43.

First, the five kings in the land, out of fear, resist the army of Israel (1-6). The Amorite kings were like American Indians inhabiting the promised land without God's permission. They enjoyed rich products

and honey and milk, and they were tall and big and looked strong, like American men. At that time, five Amorite kings lived in the promised land. Among them was Adoni-Zedek, king of Jerusalem. Jerusalem resembled Dien Bien Phu, high on a mountain with level ground around it. Many years later, after David was established as king of Israel, he made Jerusalem his capital city. It is because Jerusalem was a very ideal place as a capital city, especially for defense against enemy attack. But the king of Jerusalem, who occupied it illegally, without God's permission, teased King David, "Even the blind and the lame can ward you off. Ha, ha, ha." (2Sa 5:6) The primitive king of Jerusalem thought it was impossible for King David to conquer the fortress of Jerusalem. It was because Jerusalem was like Dien Bien Phu, which the French army was very proud of. In Joshua's time, the king of Jerusalem was a leading figure over the kings of four nations. The king of Jerusalem heard that Joshua had taken Ai and totally destroyed it, doing to Ai and its king as he had done to Jericho and its king, and that the people of Gibeon had made a treaty of peace with Israel. The king of Jerusalem was very upset, first because the Gibeonites under his influence had succumbed to Israel. Next he heard what God had done through General Joshua and the Israelite army, so he became very difficult. The king of Jerusalem tried to dignify himself with the tassels of a king's robe which moved left and right. But the king of Jerusalem became fearful. He should not be fearful, because he had an impregnable fortress city and he had four other allied nations. So the king of Jerusalem could fight against Israel with his united four kings. Victory was more than sure. But strangely, fear crept into his heart and circulated in his blood veins. The king wanted to be dignified and authoritative to his subjects under him. But his face became blue, like a miner in a tungsten mining company, whose face is blue after

work. His two legs began to shake violently. Why was he so fearful? It was because God was with Israel, and God gave power and spirit to General Joshua and the army of Israel. On the other hand, God planted fear in the hearts of the Amorite soldiers who were living in the promised land without paying rent, enjoying all the riches of the land. When the king of Jerusalem heard the Gibeonites had made a treaty of peace with Israel, his fear circulated in his blood veins. When a king trembles with fear, like a tree in the forest, his people are all very much alarmed, so much so that they cannot drink a cup of water or eat. Formerly, Gibeon was an important city, like one of the royal cities. It was larger than Ai and all its men were good fighters. The king of Jerusalem thought that the Gibeonite soldiers were like an American Marine Corps regiment deployed as a front-line defense. And he thought they were very loyal to him. But they betrayed the king of Jerusalem and made peace with Israel. A sense of betrayal caused the bones of the king of Jerusalem to make a cracking sound. In the past, the king of Jerusalem had ordered other kings. But this time he appealed to other kings. Look at verse 3. "So Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem appealed to Hoham king of Hebron, Piram king of Jarmuth, Japhia king of Lachish and Debir king of Eglon." He said, "Please. Come up and help me." He did not just say, "Help me." He said, "Help me attack Gibeon because it has made peace with Joshua and the Israelites" (4). It is very funny. No king has used the words, "help me," even in the face of death. Most of the kings in history died like kings. But the mighty king of Jerusalem pleaded, "help me" to the other subordinate kings. He pleaded with the other kings because he felt he lost his mighty first defense line. He also remembered the mighty work of God through General Joshua and the army of Israel. Two things come to our minds. Firstly, fear paralyzes any man, even a mighty king, the king of Jerusalem; even

the most ruthless king, Herod the Great, who bragged that he was fearless, killed his two sons in fear. Secondly, we learn that those who have fear in their hearts are already defeated before fighting. President Herbert Hoover was fearful. So he made many compromises in the course of his presidency. He drove America into a deep IMF crisis. We call it the Great Depression. America could not stand by itself and America owed a lot of money to European countries. President Franklin Roosevelt succeeded his presidency. As he overcame his paralysis, he overcame the Great Depression in America by the help of his wife. Mrs. Roosevelt must have been a devoted Christian. She helped her husband overcome his stroke. Next, she helped him become the President of the United States of America. Next, she also helped Franklin Roosevelt to overcome the Depression. Later, President Franklin Roosevelt said, "There is nothing to fear, but fear itself." That's true. Here we learn that those who have no God in their hearts are always fearful. But those who believe in God do not fear anyone except God. Here we also learn that a good wife can raise her husband into a great man, even though he is crippled. I believe that Christine Akins has determined to do so.

Then the five kings of the Amorites in the promised land—the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish and Eglon—joined forces. They moved up with their troops and took up positions against Gibeon and attacked it (5), so that they might recapture their first defense line where the Gibeonites lived.

The Gibeonites, who cheated General Joshua and Israel, were also alert toward the five kings around their city. Finally they came to know that the five kings were coming to attack the Gibeonites and then the

army of Israel. The Gibeonites sent word to General Joshua in the camp at Gilgal. The delegates pleaded with General Joshua, "Do not abandon your servants. Come up to us quickly and save us! Help us, because all the Amorite kings from the hill country have joined forces against us" (6).

Second, General Joshua's awesome fighting spirit (7-11). Look at verse 7. "So Joshua marched up from Gilgal with his entire army, including all the best fighting men." Here we see General Joshua's awesome fighting spirit. We also see that even though he was a great general who made slave-like people into fighting soldiers, he could not correct his bad habit of not praying. Again, he did not pray to God for this war, which was not just a battle. He had already failed to pray right before battles two times. But this time, before a great war with five kings, he first drew his sword and stirred up his soldiers' morale, saying, "Let's march to destroy the five kings against us!" He was Moses' aide. He had done so many things as Moses' aide while Moses was praying and meditating on the word of God. He was growing up as a soldier, but he was not a man of prayer. He did not know that prayer was the most potent weapon. A habit is very difficult to overcome to all people, except us. So General Joshua marched up from Gilgal with the entire army, including all the best fighting men. Joshua must have thought that he won the war with the five kings before fighting because of his general's victorious spirit.

But God did not think so. The Lord said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them; I have given them into your hand. Not one of them will be able to withstand you" (8). God was so tolerant toward General Joshua. God is also a good shepherd; he knew Joshua was afraid inwardly to fight against the five kings, even though he pretended to be a triumphant general. So God

said to General Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them." Joshua had to overcome his fear first, before defeating the allied armies. God also promised General Joshua that he had given the Amorite kings into his hand. It means that he pledged to General Joshua victory over them. Again he repeated, "Not one of them will be able to withstand you." Then General Joshua's spiritual condition became perfect and indomitable.

General Joshua did not know what he was doing. Even with a victorious spirit, in the sight of God he was not strong enough to defeat five allied kings. God Almighty knew that there was fear in his heart to fight a war against five kings. So God said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them; I have given them into your hand. Not one of them will be able to withstand you" (8). God knew him very well, that he was not prayerful. But this time God prayed for him and also encouraged him to overcome his inner fear. Just as a heavyweight boxing champion who is afraid of the opponent is inferior to him, Joshua had had great inner fear. He did not know he had fear. He thought he had a mighty triumphant and victorious spirit only. But God saw that he had fear in the corner of his heart. So God encouraged him, "Joshua, do not be afraid of them. I have given them into your hand. Not one of them will be able to withstand you, Joshua." After God's word came upon him and he prayed secretly for the Lord's help and for forgiveness of his lack of prayer, his conquering spirit was like a one thousand German tank battalion. Let's see what he did. General Joshua commanded his army to march from Gilgal, taking all night. When Joshua arrived, the Amorites were in great confusion, like heavy drug addicts. They even began to kill each other and started to flee. General Joshua and the army of Israel pursued them along the road going up to Beth Horon and cut them down all the way to Azekah and Makkedah (10).

God Almighty wanted to establish all the people of Israel as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. So God spared them in the war. Almighty God also made them strong like triumphant generals. It was not to make Israel a bigoted nation or a traditional nation, but to make them a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. They first needed soldier training. They should be like generals, and some like sergeants. When we see this world superficially, it seems that God's people fight against the Gentile kings. But it is not true. God is training each of his people to raise them like triumphant generals. Thank God for his great purpose for world mission. In order to help General Joshua and the Israelite army, God attacked the Amorite armies with hailstones which were bigger than their heads. In actuality, the army of Israel had a slave background and General Joshua was all of a sudden a general. So their rear attack after defeat seemed to have been horrible. So God killed them by hurling hailstones down on them from the sky. The hailstones were bigger than their heads and the hailstones only fell upon their heads. So all of them died from brain damage. Their bodies were moving, but their heads were dead. In this way the Almighty God gave Israel victory. The one who compiled the book of Joshua said that more enemy soldiers died from hailstones than from the swords of Israel.

Third, "O sun, stand still over Gibeon" (12-15). God gave great victory to the army of Israel so that they might experience victory in God. There is no victory without God. There is only sorrow and fatalism and the wish to live forever in this world made of dust and rocks. That was the Amorites' mentality. But God made General Joshua strong and he ran to Gibeon all night and destroyed the allied armies of five kings. Still, he was not

tired at all. I don't know about the soldiers following him. Maybe they wanted to have a lunch-eating privilege or at least a restroom privilege. But General Joshua did not give them any privilege. Only "Advance, advance! Charge, charge! Advance and charge!" General Joshua's spirit was indomitable. And the army of Israel followed his command without any restroom privilege, even though all night and all day, twenty-four hours, had elapsed.

Some of the soldiers of Israel wanted a dinner privilege. On the contrary, General Joshua gave a thunderous command to the sun, "O sun, stand still over Gibeon, O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon." What a surprising challenge even to the sun, which is the head of the universal satellites. The sun is very punctual. Wherever his favor rests, people can live happily. Wherever his favor doesn't rest, people feel their tongues are dried up. To this sun, General Joshua commanded, "O sun, stand still over Gibeon." From Joshua we learn two things: his loyalty to God and his indomitable spirit. He knew that he was Moses' aide. He knew that he had become the commander of the Israelite army. However, he did not have any experience in being a commanding general. But the Spirit of God in him enabled him to command the sun, the head of the universal satellites. What a surprise! Normal people cannot command an attacking lion: "You get away from me." Rather, they are paralyzed before being eaten up. But Joshua's indomitable spirit given by God even commanded the sun. What a ridiculous and sincere command. Because of God's purpose for world salvation and because God was with Joshua, even the sun obeyed. Even if this was only a story, it is a terrible story to understand.

The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day. We cannot really say how long it was delayed in the middle of the sky. So the author says, "There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the Lord listened to a man. Surely the Lord was fighting for Israel!" (14) All the soldiers from the five kings were cut by the sword or had pierced each other with their own swords. The Israelite soldiers had been fighting, delaying the sunset, after an all-night dash to Gibeon to protect the people of Gibeon. It seems to be reasonable that they stay over one night to take some rest and eat and calm down their swords flashing from enemies' necks. What did General Joshua do? Suddenly General Joshua commanded them to return to Gilgal, where the Israelite army's camp was. After fighting for a long time, completely exhausted, not eating properly or relieving themselves properly, not to mention resting some, they never expected to go back to the headquarters at Gilgal. When God gave General Joshua spirit, he did not know fatigue. He did not understand the army of Israel. Only God's Spirit in Joshua was moving around. It was a thunderous command. The army of Israel returned to the camp, that is the headquarters of the army of Israel at Gilgal. They had to walk back all night from Gibeon to Gilgal by jogging all the way, singing, "God's victory! God's victory! Glory to God! Honor to our General Joshua!" And no one complained. The human body can be so lazy that a man in his twenties can be a mental patient. On the other hand, young men in their twenties can be like Joshua when they receive God's Spirit and triumphant general commandership.

Map of the battle ground in the promised land

Fourth, General Joshua made five kings cavemen (16-28). Now the five

kings had fled and hidden in the cave at Makkedah (16). When Joshua was told that the five kings had been found hiding in the cave at Makkedah, he said in a thunderous command, "Roll large rocks up to the mouth of the cave, and post some men there to guard it. But don't stop! Pursue your enemies, attack them from the rear and don't let them reach their cities, for the Lord your God has given them into your hand" (16-19). Here we see that General Joshua was amazed that the kings were in the cave. So he blocked the entrance of the cave with a large stone and posted a guard. When General Joshua thought about five kings escaping, he realized that there were still many runaway enemies. So he commanded his soldiers to pursue their enemies and attack them from the rear. There are traditional rules. In boxing, one must fight with the fist. But one heavyweight boxer bit the champion's ear one time because he was losing. He was disqualified. Even baseball has rules. In the war, there was a rule that when they captured a surrendered army they must keep them safe. But General Joshua didn't mind shooting them in the back and killing them instead of making them POW's. As a result, General Joshua and the Israelites destroyed them completely—almost all the men. But the few who were left reached their fortified cities. There is no completeness in the human world. The whole army of Israel then returned safely to General Joshua in the camp at Makkedah, and no one uttered a word against the Israelites.

The mighty king of Jerusalem and his subordinate four kings became captives, where there was one hole for the sunshine. They were in king's robes with sashes around their shoulders and king's crowns on their heads. But they became captives. We are reminded of Diogenes, one of the Greek philosophers who taught self-control. He used to live in a

cave. The world conqueror, General Alexander the Great, made a courteous visit. But Diogenes did not come out from the cave and told Alexander the Great, "Don't block the sunlight coming into the cave," and sent him away. Diogenes had a philosophy, so he became a caveman. One historian said that all men are like cavemen. For example, a person who lives in an apartment with a cellular phone, a girlfriend's and a boyfriend's telephone numbers, a bottle of wine, and a habit of procrastinating school homework is just like a caveman. Such people are cooped up in an apartment. The five kings, especially the king of Jerusalem, were used to sitting on the throne and enjoying glory, power and majesty. But all of the five kings, including the king of Jerusalem, became meaningless cavemen.

After destroying all the visible enemies, General Joshua commanded them to open the mouth of the cave and bring those five kings out to him. So they brought the five kings out of the cave—the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon. When they had brought these kings out, General Joshua summoned all the men of Israel and said to the commanders who had come with him, "Come here and put your feet on the necks of these kings." So the five kings in the promised land were laid down and all the Israelite commanders under General Joshua stepped on the necks of the five kings in a line. Here I think it would have been better to step on their stuck-out stomachs instead of their necks, because there was a danger to kill a king if his neck is trodden. I am just kidding.

Look at verse 25. "Joshua said to them, 'Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Be strong and courageous. This is what the Lord will do to all the enemies you are going to fight'" (25). After killing so many

enemies, the soldiers of Israel were a little bit tired and were afraid the enemies' would regroup and counterattack. But Joshua remembered God's promise to them and quoted exactly God's promise to them. Then General Joshua showed them another dramatic sight. General Joshua himself struck and killed the kings and hung them on five trees. They were left hanging on the trees until evening. Biblically speaking, it is very significant. The enemies of God will be beaten to death and next hung on a tree all day long so that the crows can eat them up and after sunset buried so that they might be the food of earthworms. The five kings thought they were smart and that there was always a hiding place in the world. The five kings knew how to retreat and advance and win final victories until they came to their thrones. In short, they knew how to hide and appear. But there is no hiding place in the world. It is because God knows where everyone is. When Adam hid himself behind the tree, God called him, "Adam? Adam? Where are you?" (Ge 3:9). This story tells us that God is looking for each of us; we cannot hide from God. The five kings hid in the cave. Still, God enabled General Joshua to find the five kings in the cave or in the earth. We should not hide from God. We should not be afraid and become like cavemen. We must honor God as God and be full of high morale.

Fifth, General Joshua conquered southern cities (29-43). After this event General Joshua and all the army of Israel with him moved on from Makkedah to Libnah and attacked it. It was not a good strategy. Without giving time to rest, Joshua just pushed them too hard. But God Almighty gave that city and its king into his hand. The city and everyone in it Joshua put to the sword. He left no survivors there and General Joshua did to its king as he had done to the king of Jericho (30). His killing

of Satanic enemies, who were all in the form of human bodies, is always thorough. A more wicked person looks more handsome, like Rock Hudson, or as beautiful as Elizabeth Taylor, who is still living to take care of her beauty even though it is impossible. Satan's appearance always looks beautiful. A country like America sold all cotton clothes at the beginning period. But Moravian country people sold a lot of Chinese silk to its rich men and to many drunkards who wanted to look like somebody. Perhaps the Amorite kings were like this. But General Joshua was not deceived by these silky and colorful men and women. General Joshua did to them as he had done to the king of Jericho. General Joshua and all the army of Israel moved from Libnah to Lachish and the Lord handed Lachish over to Israel. General Joshua took two days to conquer the five kings and their soldiers and the southern cities. Horam king of Gezer had come up to help Lachish. But Joshua defeated him and his army—until no survivors were left (33). He did the same to Eglon. He also did the same to Hebron. Again General Joshua attacked Debir and its king and its villages and put them to the sword. So Joshua subdued the whole region, including the hill country, the Negev, the western foothills and the mountain slopes, together with all the kings. He left no survivors. He totally destroyed all who breathed just as the Lord, the God of Israel had commanded. Joshua subdued them from Kadesh Barnea to Gaza and from the whole region of Goshen to Gibeon. All these kings and their lands Joshua conquered in one campaign.

When God gave Joshua the promise of victory and the spirit of prayer and commandship, Almighty God also was with him. In one campaign he conquered the major part of the promised land. We must remember, "...because the Lord, the God of Israel, fought for Israel" (42).

When God is with us, there is always victory, happiness, conquest and a sense of being a blessing. Especially, we find the meaning of life when we fight for the plan of salvation of God. May God grant us the indomitable Spirit of God when we fight for God's plan of world salvation.