

• *In one military campaign the whole southern region conquered*

After the victory at Gibeon, Joshua was easily able to sweep down to the south defeating the various cities and kings. He conquered Makkedah¹, Libnah², and Lachish³. Lachish was a strong fortress. It took two days to defeat it. Joshua also conquered Gezer⁴, Eglon⁵, Hebron⁶, Debir⁷ – all of them towns in the south. In each case the entire population was executed. Joshua's words came true 'so shall you do to all your enemies' ⁸.

Joshua 10:40–43 summarises the position. Joshua conquered the whole southern region west of the river Jordan, applying the God-given command to execute the population ¹. He overcame the entire area from the extreme south (Kadesh-Barnea) to the centre of the land². In one military campaign the whole area was conquered ³. Then there was a break and for the moment the armies of Israel returned to their base in Gilgal⁴.

- ¹ 10:28
- ² 10:29–30
- ³ 10:31–32
- ⁴ 10:33
- ⁵ 10:34–35
- ⁶ 10:36–37
- ⁷ 10:38–39
- ⁸ , 10:25

- ¹ 10:40
- ² 10:41
- ³ 10:42
- ⁴ 10:43

1. Inheriting God's gift is a matter of cooperating with what God is doing

• *Sometimes sudden dramatic & easy*

• *Sometimes by God's overruling*

• *Sometimes by conflict*

• *Sometimes severe conflict*

• *By faith and patience*

1. Inheriting God's gift is a matter of cooperating with what God is doing. Constantly in the narratives of Deuteronomy and Joshua the people of Israel are told that God is giving them their inheritance. Yet at the same time there is a lot of activity on the part of Joshua and the people. This is characteristic of the scriptural teaching concerning inheritance. God gives it; men and women take it by faith.

Sometimes parts of the inheritance are given dramatically, suddenly and easily, as Jericho was given by miracle and with ease. Sometimes parts of the inheritance are given by God's overruling as Gibeon was given to Joshua. Yet he had fallen into bad error and sin when he was deceived into making a covenant with them. Sometimes parts of the inheritance are given by conflict as were these cities of southern Canaan, where Joshua had to pursue them and with much effort destroy the last remnant of opposition to his inheritance. Sometimes the conflict is worse than at other times, as Lachish was an exceptionally difficult city to take. (Later warriors also found this place difficult; note 2 Chronicles 32:9 and Jeremiah 34:7.) This is the way it is in the Christian life. By faith and patience we must inherit promises. God promises to fulfil His plans for our lives, yet we on our side must go through great conflict. Sometimes the battle is easily won. God seems to work miracles for us. Sometimes the battle is hard and long. Certain areas of what God wants to give us might be particularly onerous and require a double effort. There are 'Lachishes' in our lives. The battle is the Lord's but we have to do some fighting as well.

2. When God is at work much can be achieved in a very short time

2. When God is at work much can be achieved in a very short time. When the Israelites were on the eastern side of the River Jordan the thought of capturing Canaan must have seemed very intimidating. Forty years previously the spies who were sent out to explore the land came back with a very intimidating story. 'It certainly does flow with milk and honey', they said, 'but the cities are fortified and very strong. We are not able to go up against it. The land devours its inhabitants. We will be like grasshoppers if we go there'¹. Yet in the event Joshua and his friends conquered the land in a very short time. At one point – despite the mistake in connection with the people of Gibeon – they conquered five Canaanite tribes in one battle.

¹ see Numbers 13:27–33

• *God working on their behalf*

The explanation was that God was working on their behalf. It is not necessary to think that the work of the Lord in our lives must take a long time. Nor is it necessary to think that extending His kingdom must take centuries and a lifetime of strenuous endeavour. It all depends on whether God is working on our behalf! The Israelites might have thought that it would take a lifetime for even a tiny part of the Canaanites to be removed, but actually it only seems to have taken a few weeks and sometimes whole areas of territory were taken in just in a few hours of fierce conflict. When God is at work events may move with incredible speed.

3. After conflict the place of fellowship must be visited

3. After conflict the place of fellowship must be visited. When the southern campaign is finished, Joshua and his soldiers return to Gilgal. It was there that they had their base. That is where the wives and children of the soldiers were to be found. There they had been circumcised and had prepared themselves for conflict. There they had kept the Passover which spoke of protection by the blood of the lamb. There the tabernacle was to be found¹.

¹ Joshua 6:6

• *Staying fresh – time to think, pray, gain a sense of proportion and hear God’s voice*

It all spoke of the need of a time of refreshing before the next phase of conflict should be undertaken. For the Christian, the secret of staying fresh in battle is to return often to the place of fellowship. Jesus would say to His disciples ‘Come apart and rest awhile’, when they were in the middle of difficulty and wearisome circumstances. Although we must not make a god out of expensive holidays, we must still be aware of the needs of our body. There are times when we need to think, to pray. It is not a matter of being idle, but it is a matter of having time to gain a sense of perspective and hear the voice of God.

• *Gathering strength for the next stage*

The rest at Gilgal does not last all that long. Soon kings from the far north will be gathering their forces and Joshua will face an army bigger than any he had ever faced in his life. He needed his time at Gilgal. He was not exactly on vacation! He had to gather strength and wisdom for the next stage in God’s work. Soon his adversaries would be many; and he would have more to do to gain his inheritance.

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