

**Message #19****Joshua 10:15-28**

What do you think God wants us to do to our enemies? Now before we answer that, let's specify some of our enemies. There is a list of them in the book of Galatians and that list includes specific things that will clearly devastate our lives. These are enemies of our flesh: immorality; impurity; sensuality; idolatry; jealousy; outbursts of anger; envying; dissensions; factions; drunkenness; carousing; just to name a few (Gal. 5:19-21). Now these enemies are in war with the Holy Spirit that lives within every believer. Do you think that these enemies are just going to automatically disappear? Well, they won't. We need to identify these enemies and declare war on them. This is exactly what God wants us to do.

Do you think He wants us to be dominated by them for the rest of our lives? Do you think that His will is that we suffer one defeat after another and never have victory? That cannot possibly be the will of God. God wants us to totally and completely destroy and demolish every enemy we have. God is not interested in us palling around with enemies. He wants them destroyed (Rom. 6:11-13). If you ever want to see an O.T. example of this principle, it is right here in Joshua.

When Israel was in the process of taking the Promised Land, five Amorite kings formed a coalition against Israel. These enemies would not go peacefully. They would not willingly submit to the authority of God. In fact, they were in war against God's authority.

**Now don't forget this point, these enemies had approximately 420 years to make up their minds as to whether or not they would yield themselves to God.** God made it clear that He intended to give this land to Israel and He also made it clear that if any nation properly submitted to Him and to Israel, He would bless them. We know that people living in this land knew of how God had dried up the Red Sea and destroyed the Egyptians (Josh. 2:10). So these enemies are not innocent bystanders. These are true opponents of God.

What we see here is this:

**GOD GRACIOUSLY GIVES PLENTY OF TIME FOR ENEMIES TO RESPOND TO HIM AND HIS WORD; BUT WHEN TIME RUNS OUT, HE WILL TOTALLY AND COMPLETELY DESTROY THEM.**

When a N.T. believer reads this section of Joshua, it seems so brutal, so far removed from the Christian life. But let us remember that when Jesus was here on earth, He taught His people that a relationship with Him meant warfare (Matt. 10:34-39; Luke 22:36). If the horrors of warfare are foreign to us, then perhaps we need to check our spiritual lives, for those who are right with God are destined for war. We are at war with our flesh, this world and the devil and his forces. Why did Paul say that the N.T. believer needed to put on spiritual armor? We are in war.

Now there are five main historical narrative parts to this episode:

**HISTORICAL NARRATIVE PART #1** – Joshua and all Israel return to Gilgal. **10:15**

Joshua and all Israel returned to Gilgal after having traveled to Gibeon and the surrounding areas (10:9). These men had travelled some 48 miles round trip. They had all been involved in the action. There was not one loss in battle and there was no disunity, but they certainly could use a break.

So after having been victorious in some intense battles, Israel was given a moment of rest. They returned back to their camp at Gilgal for some R & R.

When we have been fighting hard for God, He knows when we need a break in the action. He is fully aware of our battles and our enemies. He knows what we can take. God will not give any of His soldiers any more than they are able to bear. He will give moments of reprieve even in the midst of intense warfare.

**HISTORICAL NARRATIVE PART #2** – Five kings had hid themselves in caves. **10:16**

While Israel was in Gilgal relaxing, the five kings who had gone against Israel were hiding (10:5). This is a total reversal of things. **These five kings have gone from heading cities to hiding in caves**. This is where rebellion against God eventually leads—not exaltation, but humiliation.

These were some of the same cities that had intimidated the spies some 40 years before this moment. We may recall that the spies said the land could not be taken. But now these kings are not intimidating, they are intimidated.

Here is the power of God. He can cause the strongest enemy of His people to shake in his boots. God can break anyone. This is why Paul said we can leave vengeance on our enemies to God; He is the One with the power to break them and bring them to nothing.

Enemies of God initially appear to be so powerful, so dominant, so confident, so proud and so pompous. In the end, they will be broken. In the end they will shake in fear. One by one God will track them down and when the process begins, enemies will be found hiding in caves.

I cannot help but think of what God will do in the Tribulation to those high and mighty political leaders who mocked Him and His Word. They literally will be hiding in caves trying to hide from the wrath of God (Revelation 6:16). World leaders will be just like these five kings.

**HISTORICAL NARRATIVE PART #3** – The location of the five kings is revealed. **10:17**

Enemies cannot hide from God. They cannot get away from the seeing eye of God. Somehow it was discovered that the five kings had gone into a cave. These five kings hid themselves in the cave at Makkedah.

Now the specific location of this cave is unknown today. However, there is a definite article “the” in Hebrew before the noun “cave” which would indicate that this was a very specific cave that was known in this area.

It is completely ridiculous for someone to think he can hide from God. It is foolish for one to think that God doesn’t really see the sin or rebellion. I knew of a man who used to travel to big cities to do business and he thought he could get somewhat lost in his sin and in the big city. What ridiculous thinking. His sin was discovered and he learned it doesn’t matter what state, what city or what cave, you cannot hide from God.

This is why it is so important that we do not try to cover up stuff like Achan did. We need to be open and honest with God about everything, because He knows and sees everything.

#### **HISTORICAL NARRATIVE PART #4 – The five kings are sealed in the caves. 10:18-21**

Joshua did not want to deal with the kings at that precise moment, so he just sealed them up in their cave and assigned a guard to the sealed cave to make certain they would not escape (10:18).

Then Joshua sent his warriors in hot pursuit against all enemies. He did not want any of them to make it back to their cities (verse 19). God was obviously going to give them victory before they made it into their cities. So this pursuit was in fact of God.

According to verse 20 only a few made it to the cities. It was a massive slaughter. The enemies of God and of Israel had been destroyed.

In fact, verse 21 is amazing; all the survivors were brought back to Joshua at Makkedah and no one even dared to utter one negative word against Israel. God had so sovereignly worked against Israel’s enemies that they did not dare open their mouths.

When God is giving victory to His people, enemies will be so thoroughly humiliated that they will not even be able to open their mouths. Their mouths are shut.

I cannot help but think of Romans 3:19-20. There are many proud and arrogant people who think they are as good as God. There are many proud and arrogant people who think their works are as righteous as Holy God. There are many who actually believe they are right with God by keeping the O.T. law. God says there will come a day when they will get before Me and their mouths will be shut. I will call up My law and compare it to their lives and their mouths will be shut and they will be declared guilty.

What an amazing moment for Israel when people don’t ever utter one negative word about her. What a moment when she will be feared as the nation of God.

Alan Redpath, former British pastor of Moody Church (1953-1962), wrote something that is worth reading:

“I believe with all my heart that God’s purpose for His church today is the same—to make it a church to be feared. Speaking of the church for a moment in terms of a building, it should be a place to which people almost fear to come lest they be converted. A church as a fellowship should be composed of people who are uncompromising in their testimony, courageous in their faith and holy in their lives. In the church services there should be the awe and reverence demanded by the presence of God. This is God’s purpose not only for His church, but also for every truly regenerate man or woman of God—that they should be feared. The Christian man is he who is righteous in his conduct, uncompromising in his principles, passionate in his devotion to his Savior, sacrificial in his service, and transparent in his life. He has not life behind the scenes to which he retreats to indulge his appetite for things that he would be ashamed to do in the company of Christian people. His life will bear the closest scrutiny of his strongest critics, from which he will come out unscathed, a holy man of God continually” (*Victorious Christian Living*, pp. 151-152).

**HISTORICAL NARRATIVE PART #5- The kings are judged and destroyed. 10:22-27**

Enemies of God’s Word and work have leaders. There are those who lead others in ways that are contrary to God and His Word, and eventually those leaders will be destroyed. They are accountable and destructible. I cannot help but think of the words of James who said, “Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment” (James 3:1).

The actual process of their destruction is graphically described in these verses. These are five leaders; five kings and there are five steps in their judgment and destruction:

**Step #1 - The kings were brought out of the caves to Joshua. 10:22-23**

When these leaders first saw Joshua, they thought they would destroy him, when in all reality he would destroy them. These pseudo-leaders are facing God’s real leader and God’s real leader was about to destroy them.

**Step #2 - The kings are humiliated before all of Israel. 10:24**

Joshua demanded that the kings be brought before “all” the men of Israel. They were put on the ground and then Joshua had some of his men put their feet on their necks. What a complete reversal of fortune and power. These arrogant God-mockers are now down on the ground humbled before all to see.

When Jesus was here on earth, He said that those who humble themselves will be exalted, but those who exalt themselves will be humbled. Proud arrogant enemies of God had better realize there will come a day when they will be completely humiliated for all of God’s people to see.

**Step #3** - The kings become an illustration for all of Israel. **10:25**

As the kings are on the ground, Joshua encourages the people of God to be strong and courageous. They do not need to fear or be intimidated because this is what God does to His enemies. These enemies that at one time had appeared to be so dominant are not totally subservient.

We need to be strong and courageous in this world. Our tendency is to be intimidated and afraid. We need to see a passage like this because it shows us that enemies eventually are totally humiliated and destroyed.

**Step #4** - The kings are destroyed in conformity to God's Word. **10:26-27**

Destroying these kings was in complete conformity to God's Word. The Mosaic Law gave instruction concerning hanging (Deut. 21:23) and that was carried out in precise conformity to God's Word.

Sometimes judgment action needs to be taken and when it does, the Word must be followed.

**Step #5** - The kings and all with them are "utterly destroyed." **10:28**

There is a theme that shows up over and over again in Joshua 10 and that theme is "utter destruction" of enemies (**10:28**, 30, 33, 37, 39). God does not want His people victorious over a few enemies; He wants them victorious over all enemies.

Do not think for one moment that God will not punish and destroy. He is a God of grace, love and mercy; but He is also a God of vengeance, judgment and wrath.

**PARTING THOUGHTS**

- 1) When God gives us a break in warfare action, it does not mean the warfare is over.**
- 2) God knows and sees all enemies—no one can hide from Him.**
- 3) Even though those who are arrogant and godless may temporarily seem to dominate God's people, in the end they will be totally and completely humiliated and destroyed.**
- 4) God is a God of grace as seen with Gibeon; but He is also a God of wrath as seen here.**