

Memory Verse

“Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.”
 (Psalm 20:7)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
1. God fought for His people so that they could receive the land of promise. 2. The Israelites’ obedience was an important part of their victories.	1. God is our sovereign Lord. 2. God’s sovereignty is shown in His power and in His judgment.	1. When we confront obstacles to our faith with God’s help, He will give us victory. 2. To achieve this victory, we must train ourselves to rely on God instead of “chariots” and “horses.”

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. The Gibeonites’ Deception (Josh 9)
- B. God Fights for Israel (Josh 11–12)
- C. The Sovereignty of God

Life Application: Conquering Our Battles with Faith

Memory Verse

Conclusion: With God by their side, the Israelites were able to overcome their enemies and finally conquer the promised land. Through their battles, we can learn to trust God in the same way, and He will give us victory in our spiritual journey to heaven.

Introduction

After the battles of Jericho and Ai, there were still many areas to be conquered. News of the Israelites' victories had also spread to the people dwelling in the land. As a result, their enemies began to ally with one another to defend themselves. But no matter who their opponents were, God led the Israelites to victory. Today, we'll be examining how the Israelites were able to conquer the southern and northern territories of Canaan under God's guidance.

A. The Gibeonites' Deception (Josh 9)

Let's read Joshua 9:1–27. The Israelites were skeptical at first, but eventually fell for the Gibeonites' trickery and made a covenant not to kill them. How did the Israelites allow themselves to be deceived?

1. They were blinded by praise (v. 8)

It is natural for us to feel flattered when we are complimented, which makes it easy for us to fall into the trap of seeking man's approval rather than God's. There are many other examples in the Bible of those who were blinded by praise, or who desired to receive glory from man instead of give glory to God. But the Bible teaches us that "When pride comes, then comes shame; but with the humble is wisdom" (Prov 11:2; cf. Prov 16:18). By remaining humble, we avoid being blinded by our own prideful nature, or by flattery that disguises the truth. Our eyesight remains clear.

~~2.~~

3.2. They were deceived by what they saw on the surface (vv. 12–13)

Paul warns, "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ" (Col 2:8). Paul and other apostles often warned the believers about the deceptions of false prophets (2 Tim 3:13; 1 Jn 4:1), for humans are easily swayed by what we see and hear. God sees a man's innermost thoughts, but we are unable to look beyond the surface. We are limited as human beings and being unable to see everything makes it easy for us to be deceived. To avoid this, it is important that we learn to slow down, reign in our words or our actions, and avoid making reckless decisions. As King Solomon wrote, "Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God" (Eccl 5:2).

4.3. They failed to inquire of God (v. 14)

The biggest mistake the Israelites made, of course, was failing to consult God. We do not know why they chose not to consult God. It is possible that they had grown confident in their own abilities, so they believed it would be alright to make their own decision. However, God wants us to turn to Him for everything, big or small. And we should learn to do so, not only because He is omniscient and knows what we do not, but also because He is our Father in heaven, and it is important that we humbly put His will above our own.

From this incident, we can see the importance of always inquiring of the Lord before making any decisions. It is easy for us to forget God's omnipotence and instead rely on our own senses or desires. As a result, there may be times when we are deceived by what we are able to see or hear, or when we fail to make a sound judgment because we have been blinded by our own desires and fail to ask God first. For example, our friends may lead us into doing things that are against God's will, or we may find ourselves desiring material possessions because all our friends have them. But instead of focusing on

others' actions and the world around us, we should keep our eyesight clear by relying on God's omniscience.

B. God Fights for Israel (Josh 11–12)

1. The Battle Against the Amorite Kings

The Amorites were descended from Canaan, the son of Ham, who is the son of Noah (Gen 10:1, 6, 15–16). They had already clashed once with the Israelites, driving them from the land (Num 13:27–29). Let's read Numbers 14:40–45. The Israelites had refused to enter the land of Canaan because of their fear, so God punished them to wander in the wilderness until the current generation passed away. Hearing this, the Israelites begged for forgiveness and tried to enter Canaan on their own. However, as Moses warned them, "For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and you shall fall by the sword; because you have turned away from the LORD, the LORD will not be with you" (v. 43). As a result, "the Amorites who dwelt in that mountain [...] drove [the Israelites] back from Seir to Hormah" (Deut 1:44).

After years of wandering in the wilderness, it was now time for them to face what the previous generation had feared. Let's read Joshua 10:1–14. This battle was different from their first fight against the Amorites. This time, they were following God's will. Joshua and the Israelites understood that God was on their side, fighting for them.

- a. He assured the Israelites of His presence (vv. 7–8):** Prior to the battle, God reassured the Israelites and proclaimed that He was fighting for them. Moses understood the true value of His presence, declaring to God, "If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here. For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us?" (Ex 33:15–16).
- b. He routed their enemies (vv. 10–11):** During the battle, it was God who routed the Israelites' enemies, to the point that more died by God's hand than by theirs. The Israelites learned, repeatedly, that God's power could overcome any of their enemies. Military strength, knowledge, or strategy didn't matter for either the Israelites or their enemies. All that mattered was whether God was fighting for His people.
- c. He listened to Joshua's prayer (vv. 11–14):** Joshua understood that God was not only able to help them in their time of need, but that He could also make the impossible, possible. Although Joshua was human as we are, God was willing to listen to his request because of his faith and trust. When fleeing from the Egyptians, Moses reassured the Israelites by proclaiming, "The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still" (Ex 14:14 NIV). God is willing to fight for us, but we need to have faith in His power.

At the end of the battle, Joshua and the Israelites were able to completely destroy the armies of the Amorites and take the city of Makkedah. The execution of the five kings was evidence of what the Lord would do to all of their enemies (Josh 10:24–25; Ps 110:1). Their victory came not from their own military power, but from their trust and belief in the Lord.

2. Conquering Southern and Northern Canaan

After the battle against the five Amorite kings, Joshua led the Israelites south and conquered the cities there: Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, Hebron, and Debir (Josh 10:40–42). (*Teachers: See Figure 01: Map of Central and Southern Conquests.*) After destroying these cities, they returned to Gilgal (Josh 10:43) before traveling north. However, they faced an obstacle when they set their sight

on the northern cities. Let's read Joshua 11:1–9. The northern armies of Canaan banded together to defend themselves against the Israelites. But God reassured Joshua, commanding him not to be afraid, and to “hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire” (v. 6).

From a strategic standpoint, this is an unusual command—at the time, horses and chariots were the ultimate advantage on the battlefield. To hamstringing the horses and burning the chariots meant that God did not want His people to take them and thus rely on them. He wanted them to instead continue to trust in God's power. Ultimately, because they followed God's command, they were able to achieve victory and destroy their enemies despite the northern Canaanites' superior forces. (*Teachers: See Figure 02: Map of Northern Conquests.*)

3. Defeating the Anakim

Lastly, Joshua was able to eliminate all of the Anakim from the land of Canaan (Josh 11:21). The Anakim were known as “giants” and excelled in battle; they were the same people who had previously driven the Israelites out of Canaan (Num 14:40–45). This time, however, the Israelites had already witnessed God's almighty power. They were unafraid, knowing that no matter who their enemy was, as long as God was on their side, they would be victorious.

The Bible records that they conquered thirty-one kings (Josh 12:24). Although some Canaanites still dwelt in the land, most of them had been conquered. The process took many years, but they were eventually able to take the land, find rest from war and, in the course of time, experience God's deliverance.

C. The Sovereignty of God

Although they had to face many different enemies, the Bible's records of the Israelites' battles against the Canaanites all follow a similar pattern. The Israelites would battle against a city, which the Lord delivered into their hands. This generation of Israelites did not necessarily witness the parting of the Red Sea, or perhaps they were quite young when it occurred. But through these events, they witnessed with their own eyes God's sovereignty, which can be seen clearly in several characteristics.

1. God Is Holy

He also commanded His people to destroy all the inhabitants of the cities – none were to be left alive (Josh 10:28, 30, 32–33, 35, 37, 39–40; 11:11–12, 19–20). Why did God give them this instruction? It may seem cruel that God wanted them to eliminate their enemies, but there are reasons for this command.

a. God was using His people to enact His judgment upon the wicked

The Canaanites were evil and wicked in God's eyes (Deut 9:5). He had given them time to repent, but they continued in their ways (Gen 15:16). To this end, He used the Israelites to enact His will.

b. God wanted His people to remove any Canaanite influences

There were many ways in which the Canaanites influenced the Israelites, including their cultural and religious practices. If Gentiles remained in the land, the Israelites would adopt their practices (Deut 7:3–4), and if they intermarried, they would be influenced by the Canaanites to worship other gods (Ex 20:3). As His people, the Israelites needed to remain holy, because God is holy.

2. God's Power

While conquering Canaan, God's power was consistently revealed, again and again. The

Canaanites had great military strength, but this meant nothing in the face of God's will and power. Let's read Psalm 56:3–4. "Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You. [...] In God I have put my trust; I will not fear. What can flesh do to me?" The Bible also says, "Say to those who are fearful-hearted, 'Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; He will come and save you'" (Isa 35:4; cf. Jn 14:27).

3. God Protects the Faithful

God was the commander-in-chief for His people. He fought for His people and, as long as they followed His commands, He gave them success. The only time they were defeated was when they disobeyed God's orders. When we fully understand God's judgment and power, it is more natural for us to trust Him, and to choose His will over our own. This obedience should not only come out of fear of His judgment, but also from the knowledge that He has the power to grant us victory in any battle that we may face.

Do you have family members who persecute you for your faith? Or do you perhaps struggle with some sort of addiction? All of us face different types of obstacles, whether physical, emotional, or spiritual. Some of struggle with health issues or feel overwhelming anxiety. But when we respond to God's sovereignty and cooperate with His commands, He will help us to overcome any spiritual battles.

The conquest of the land of Canaan ended on a victorious note, and the Israelites were finally able to rest in the land that God had promised the patriarchs so long ago (Josh 21:43–45). This same rest is a foreshadowing of the perfect rest that we will experience in heaven (Heb 4:5–11). To enter into this rest, we must do as the Israelites did—remember God's sovereignty, follow His commands, and trust in His will. When we diligently cooperate with God, we will achieve the same victory that the Israelites experienced!

Check for Understanding

1. **Why did the Israelites fall for the Gibeonites' deception?** They believed what they saw on the surface; they were blinded by praise; they failed to inquire of God.
2. **How can we avoid falling into similar deceptions?** Instead of focusing on others' actions and the world around us, we should keep our eyesight clear by relying on God's omniscience.
3. **How did God battle for the Israelites?** He assured them of His presence; He routed their enemies; He listened to Joshua's prayer.
4. **Why did God command the Israelites to hamstring the horses and destroy the chariots?** God did not want His people to take them and thus rely on them. He wanted them to instead continue to trust in God's power.
5. **What were two reasons for God's command for the Israelites to destroy their enemies?** God was using His people to enact His judgment upon the wicked; He wanted His people to remove any worldly influences.

Life Application

Conquering Our Battles with Faith

Hear, O Israel: You are to cross over the Jordan today, and go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourself, cities great and fortified up to heaven, a people great and tall, the descendants of the Anakim, whom you know, and of whom you heard it said, "Who can stand before the descendants of Anak?" Therefore understand today that the Lord your God is He who

goes over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and bring them down before you; so you shall drive them out and destroy them quickly, as the LORD has said to you.

(Deut 9:1–3)

Before the Israelites could inhabit the promised land, they needed to face several challenges first. The challenges that we face may not be nine-foot-tall giants, but they can still leave us feeling restless or fearful. However, we do not need to face them alone. God has promised that He will be with us and will give us the strength to achieve victory over any challenges. Through the many battles that Joshua and the Israelites fought, the foundation of their victory was always their trust in God’s almighty power and obedience to His commands. What are some of the challenges or battles that we face?

- Take a few moments and write down what “battles” you are currently fighting in your spiritual life. Do you have any sins that you struggle to remove from your life? Or are you burdened with fears or anxieties that interfere with your faith? (*Teachers: This activity can be done as a group or individually. Examples may be: fear, worry, guilt, doubt, anger, procrastination.*)

Although there could be many things holding us back from leading a victorious life of faith, there is only one solution that allows us to overcome such challenges. Let’s read Psalm 20:7–8. “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the LORD our God. They have bowed down and fallen; but we have risen and stand upright.”

We learned earlier that chariots and horses offered an incredible advantage on the battlefield, yet God commanded His people to hamstring the horses and burn the chariots so that they wouldn’t be able to take and use them. In the same way, we shouldn’t rely on any worldly or human strength. Just as God fought for His people, He also fights for us. But to be victorious requires that we first obey His instructions and trust Him completely. There may be times when we say that we trust in God, but when faced with difficulties, instead of turning to Him, we rely instead on our own methods or on the advice of our peers.

- Consider the obstacles that you are trying to overcome. When facing these obstacles, what are the “chariots” or the “horses” that you tend to rely on? Are there things or people that you turn to first instead of following God’s will? (*Teachers: As before, this activity can be done as a group or individually.*)
- For example, if you are struggling with worry, perhaps the only way you have learned to manage your anxieties is through escapism using games or books without learning to trust in God’s care. If you are battling a sickness, perhaps you rely entirely on your medication without turning to prayer, or if you are struggling with a bad habit, you try to break it with your own strength, using methods suggested by the internet or by friends, without asking God for help.

Although it is certainly possible to solve some problems through worldly means, in the end, these “chariots” and “horses” are imperfect solutions. They cannot guarantee that you will overcome any obstacles in your life. The only way to do overcome these obstacles is to bring ourselves before the Lord, choose to obey His instructions, and trust in His almighty power. Only then are we able to experience how God can transform our lives.

Let’s now come up with a way to overcome our spiritual battles. Instead of relying on chariots or horses, how can we train ourselves to rely on God instead?

1. **Select one of the things in your life that you want to overcome, and come up with an action plan: How can you conquer this with God’s help?** For example, if you struggle with spending

too much time on the internet, perhaps you can set aside time for a weekly Bible study with a fellow student to help you limit your time on the internet and to train you to focus on God instead.

(Teachers: Question #6 in the homework assignment refers to this portion of the Life Application.)

2. **Select one to three verses in the Bible that can serve as an encouragement and reminder for you to overcome these challenges.** Using the same example, a few verses you can pick from may be: Mt 6:6, 24; Ps 119:11; 63:6–8; Jas 4:8. *(Teachers: If they are having trouble finding verses, you can use a topical concordance to help the students search.)*

Memory Verse

“Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.”
(Psalm 20:7)

Meaning

1. This verse serves to encourage and remind us that our victory does not come from the things of this world, but from God. Chariots can represent technology or other man-made inventions, and horses can represent worldly strength. Both can fail us because they are limited; they cannot guarantee any success in our spiritual journey.
2. Instead of placing our trust in the things of this world, we should always remember to place our trust in God. He is able to help and comfort us better than anything in this world, and He has promised that when we go to Him, He will help us!

Conclusion

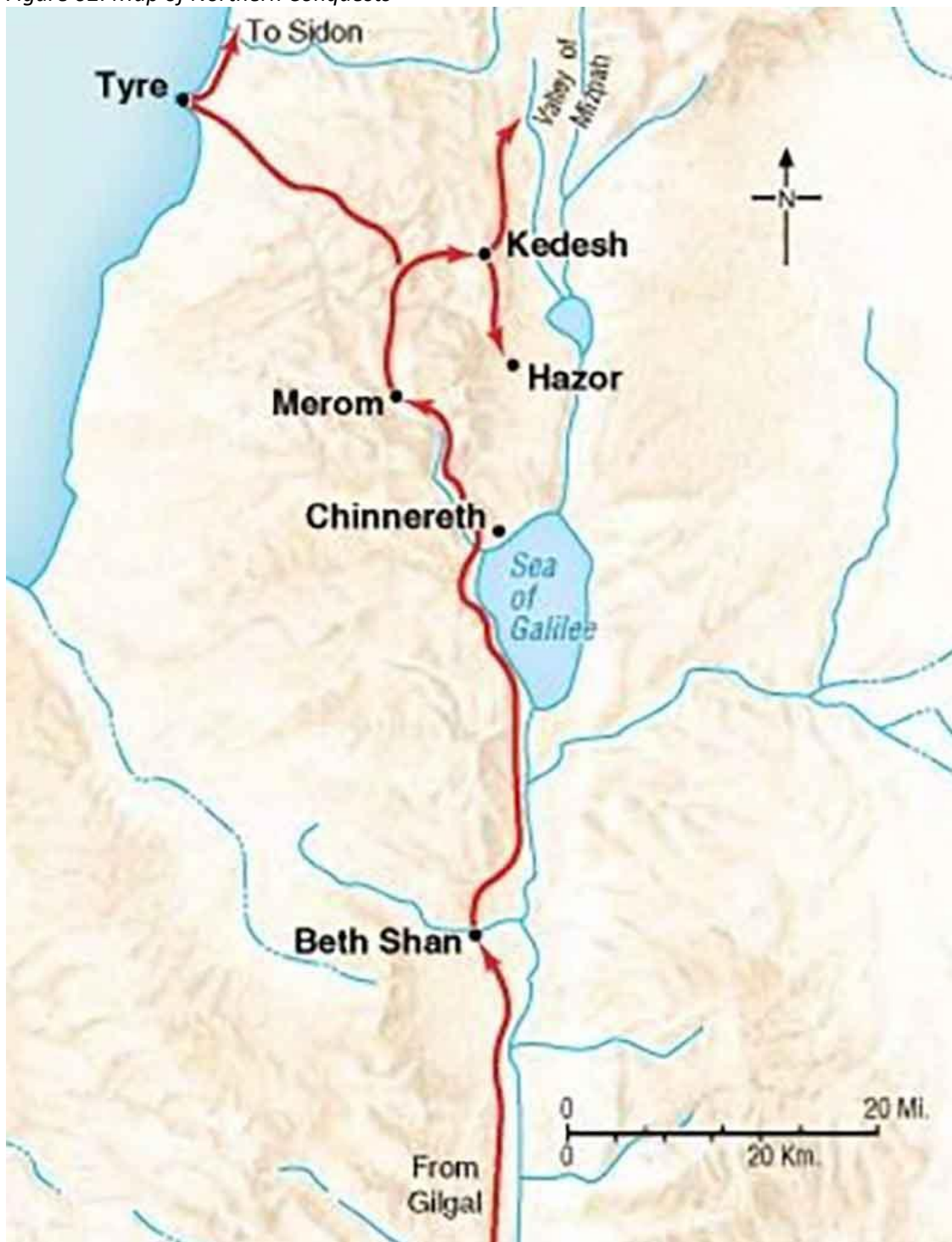
With God by their side, the Israelites were able to overcome their enemies and finally conquer the promised land. This process took many years, but they were faithful to the Lord’s commands and trusted in His power. As a result, God delivered their enemies into their hands. Through their battles, we can learn to trust God in the same way, and He will give us victory in our spiritual journey to heaven. It is inevitable that we will encounter many tribulations, but when we abide in God’s commands, we will find that He is also abiding with us (Acts 14:22). When we face difficulties, He is there to help us overcome.

Figure 01: Map of Central and Southern Conquests¹



¹ "Joshua, The Conquest of Canaan Central & Southern Campaigns," iBible Maps: 2021, accessed June 21st, 2021, <https://ibiblemaps.com/joshua-central/>.

Figure 02: Map of Northern Conquests²



² "Joshua, Conquest of Canaan, Northern Campaign," iBible Maps: 2021, accessed Jun 21st, 2021, <https://ibiblemaps.com/joshua-northern-campaign/>.

Lesson 11 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What do horses and chariots represent today? Why should we avoid relying on them?
Chariots can represent technology or man-made inventions, and horses can represent worldly strength. Both can fail us because they are limited, but God is able to help and comfort us better than anything in this world.
2. “And the LORD said to Joshua, “Do not _____ them, for I have _____ them into your _____; not a man of them shall _____ before you.” (Joshua 10:8)
fear, delivered, hand, stand
3. How did the Israelites allow themselves to be deceived? Give three reasons.
They believed what they saw on the surface; they were blinded by praise; they failed to inquire of God.
4. Why was the Israelites’ battle against the Amorite kings different from when they had previously fought?
The first time, the Israelites had tried to enter Canaan on their own, but as Moses warned them, the Lord was not with them. This time, however, they knew it was different—they were following God’s will, and He was on their side, fighting for them.
5. What must we do to experience rest in heaven, just as the Israelites were able to rest in the promised land?
We must do as the Israelites did—remember God’s sovereignty, follow His commands, and trust in His will. When we diligently cooperate with God, we will achieve the same victory that the Israelites experienced!
6. During class, we came up with an action plan to tackle something that we want to overcome. What was your action plan? Were you able to begin carrying it out this week? Why or why not?
Personal answers.