

This chapter describes Joshua's campaign to conquer northern Canaan. The LORD fulfills His promise of giving the land to Israel by hardening the hearts of the kings in Canaan so that they will come against Israel and be destroyed (v. 20). Thus the LORD is able to fulfill His promise of giving Israel the land incrementally so that the wild animals would not take over the land (Deut. 7:22).

1 And it came to pass, when Jabin king of Hazor had heard *those things*, that he sent to Jobab king of Madon, and to the king of Shimron, and to the king of Achshaph, 2 And to the kings that *were* on the north of the mountains, and of the plains south of Chinneroth, and in the valley, and in the borders of Dor on the west, 3 *And to* the Canaanite on the east and on the west, and *to* the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Jebusite in the mountains, and *to* the Hivite under Hermon in the land of Mizpeh.

“And it came to pass, when Jabin king of Hazor had heard *those things*” – Chapter 10 described the southern campaign in which Joshua conquered the portion of Canaan to the south and west of Jerusalem. A coalition of 9 kings had heard that the Gibeonites had made a peace treaty with Israel (Josh. 9:3-27) and had come against Gibeon to punish them (Josh. 10:1-5). The Gibeonites called for Joshua's help, who came and defeated this massive army (Josh. 10:6-27). After that, Joshua continued his campaign throughout southern Canaan (Josh. 10:28-43). Jabin, the king of Hazor (the leading city of northern Canaan [v. 10]), has now heard about Israel's victories and is concerned about the threat posed by Israel. Hazor was a city NW of the Sea of Galilee in the northern portion of Canaan.

“that he sent to Jobab king of Madon, and to...” – Jabin sends messengers to the neighboring kings in northern Canaan in order to rally their help in protecting their territory from an invasion by Israel.

4 And they went out, they and all their hosts with them, much people, even as the sand that *is* upon the sea shore in multitude, with horses and chariots very many. 5 And when all these kings were met together, they came and pitched together at the waters of Merom, to fight against Israel.

Horses and chariots gave soldiers an advantage over mere infantry and so these kings bring as many as possible. Israel was outmatched by this army, both in numbers and in military equipment (horses and chariots). Merom was a lake north of the Sea of Galilee formed by the Jordan river and the “waters of Merom” were a collection of springs a few miles west of the lake. These kings choose this location to meet and combine their armies into a massive military force in preparation to fight against Israel.

6 And the LORD said unto Joshua, Be not afraid because of them: for to morrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel: thou shalt hough their horses, and burn their chariots with fire.

Joshua and Israel could easily have become fearful of the overwhelming enemy forces that had come to destroy them but the LORD reassures Joshua. The LORD promises to give them victory the next day, enabling them to slay the entire enemy army. After the victory Joshua is to hamstring the enemy's horses and burn the chariots so that they could not be used for war against Israel.

7 So Joshua came, and all the people of war with him, against them by the waters of Merom suddenly; and they fell upon them. 8 And the LORD delivered them into the hand of Israel, who smote them, and chased them unto great Zidon, and unto Misrephoth-maim, and unto the valley of Mizpeh eastward; and they smote them, until they left them none remaining.

Assured by the LORD, Joshua makes a surprise attack against the massive army while they are still in their camp. The LORD immediately gives Israel the advantage and the enemy army flees for their lives. However, the army of Israel chases them down until every enemy soldier is dead.

Verses 9-17: After the complete victory over the massive combined army, Joshua then advances on the cities from which those armies had come, destroying and burning each one. The LORD gave Israel complete victory in each case.

18 Joshua made war a long time with all those kings.

In a time without mechanized vehicles or other modern technology, the conquest of Canaan took years. Estimates vary from 5 to 7 years, based on such clues as the age of Caleb (Josh. 14:10). The LORD had informed them that the conquest of Canaan would not happen overnight. **Deut. 7:22** “*And the LORD thy God will put out those nations before thee by little and little: thou mayest not consume them at once, lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee.*”

Verses 19-22: The only Canaanites that had made peace with Israel was the Gibeonites (Josh. 9:3-27). The remainder decided to fight Israel and were destroyed, as ordained by the LORD (v. 20). The giants (Anakim) of the land were all destroyed except for those in Gaza, Gath and Ashdod, cities in what would later be known as the land of the Philistines. Goliath later comes from Gath (1 Sam. 17:4).

23 So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war.

This verse makes a statement summarizing Joshua's conquest of Canaan, fulfilling all that the LORD had said to Moses. Once the conquest was completed, Israel was able to receive and enjoy their inheritance as divided out by Joshua.