

# JOSHUA—WEEK 9

## THE RECORD



F. Michael Slay

*A DEEP Study*

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

*Joshua, Week 9 — The Record*  
*The Cover Picture is by Jean Fouquet (1420–1477)*  
*On display in Paris at the Bibliotheque nationale de France.*

Joshua leads the Israelite army to conquer all of Canaan. He burns Hazon, like he did Jericho and Ai, but leaves the other cities intact as an inheritance for Israel.

The LORD makes a point of claiming that this was all His design, even the ill-advised actions of the Canaanite kings.

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1 Joshua 10:28–43

*On that day Joshua took Makkedah, and struck it and its king with the edge of the sword. He utterly destroyed them—all the people who were in it. He let none remain. He also did to the king of Makkedah as he had done to the king of Jericho.*

*Then Joshua passed from Makkedah, and all Israel with him, to Libnah; and they fought against Libnah. And the LORD also delivered it and its king into the hand of Israel; he struck it and all the people who were in it with the edge of the sword. He let none remain in it, but did to its king as he had done to the king of Jericho.*

*Then Joshua passed from Libnah, and all Israel with him, to Lachish; and they encamped against it and fought against it. And the LORD delivered Lachish into the hand of Israel, who took it on the second day, and struck it and all the people who were in it with the edge of the sword, according to all that he had done to Libnah. Then Horam king of Gezer came up to help Lachish; and Joshua struck him and his people, until he left him none remaining.*

*From Lachish Joshua passed to Eglon, and all Israel with him; and they encamped against it and fought against it. They took it on that day and struck it with the edge of the sword; all the people who were in it he utterly destroyed that day, according to all that he had done to Lachish.*

*So Joshua went up from Eglon, and all Israel with him, to Hebron; and they fought against it. And they took it and struck it with the edge of the sword—its king, all its cities, and all the people who were in it; he left none remaining, according to all that he had done to Eglon, but utterly destroyed it and all the people who were in it.*

*Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to Debir; and they fought against it. And he took it and its king and all its cities; they struck them with the edge of the sword and utterly destroyed all the people who were in it. He left none remaining; as he had done to Hebron, so he did to Debir and its king, as he had done also to Libnah and its king.*

*So Joshua conquered all the land: the mountain country and the South and the lowland and the wilderness slopes, and all their kings; he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the LORD God of Israel had commanded. And Joshua conquered them from Kadesh Barnea as far as Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even as far as Gibeon. All these kings and their land Joshua took at one time, because the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel. Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal.*

This makes Sherman's march through Georgia look like nothing. Why does scripture hit us with all the details? To counter our natural tendency to look away. God leaves no room for us to deny the severity.

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I bought a book titled "*The Difficult Sayings of Jesus.*" Totally disappointing. It's a perfect example of the human tendency to not face the deep and difficult truths of scripture. One by one, the author explains all the *difficult sayings* away. He cannot accept that Jesus meant what He said.

2 Joshua 11:1–9 (ESV)

*When Jabin, king of Hazor, heard of this, he sent to Jobab king of Madon, and to the king of Shimron, and to the king of Achshaph, and to the kings who were in the northern hill country, and in the Arabah south of Chinneroth, and in the lowland, and in Naphoth-dor on the west, to the Canaanites in the east and the west, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, and the Jebusites in the hill country, and the Hivites under Hermon in the land of Mizpah. And they came out with all their troops, a great horde, in number like the sand that is on the seashore, with very many horses and chariots. And all these kings joined their forces and came and encamped together at the waters of Merom to fight against Israel.*

*And the LORD said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid of them, for tomorrow at this time I will give over all of them, slain, to Israel. You shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire.” So Joshua and all his warriors came suddenly against them by the waters of Merom and fell upon them. And the LORD gave them into the hand of Israel, who struck them and chased them as far as Great Sidon and Misrephoth-maim, and eastward as far as the Valley of Mizpeh. And they struck them until he left none remaining. And Joshua did to them just as the LORD said to him: he hamstrung their horses and burned their chariots with fire.*

Joshua’s outnumbered this time. It’s the fulfillment of Deuteronomy 20:1.

*“When you go out to war against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and an army larger than your own, you shall not be afraid of them, for the LORD your God is with you, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.” (ESV)*

This time the enemy is massive and well-organized. No clown kings here. Victory looks impossible.

Perfect. Now God gets all the glory.

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Okay, but hamstring? As a verb? To do to horses?!? What’s that all about?

It’s all about peace. Despite all the blood and guts going on here, peace is coming. They won’t be needing chariots and war horses because there isn’t going to be any more war. Joshua is to hamstring the horses and burn the chariots to show that he doesn’t need them.

It’s hard to know exactly what hamstring means in this context. Joshua isn’t supposed to kill the horses, just hamstringing them from being able to make war. It’s some kind of restriction or injury.

Just like we’ve seen before, this is nuts from a military strategy point of view. You should keep the weapons you’ve captured to be ready for the next war.

But the LORD tells Joshua to destroy the very things that could come in handy in the future. It’s another test of faith.

Joshua has to trust that he’s not going to need anything but what God provides.

## 3 Joshua 11:10–15 (ESV)

*And Joshua turned back at that time and captured Hazor and struck its king with the sword, for Hazor formerly was the head of all those kingdoms. And they struck with the sword all who were in it, devoting them to destruction; there was none left that breathed. And he burned Hazor with fire. And all the cities of those kings, and all their kings, Joshua captured, and struck them with the edge of the sword, devoting them to destruction, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded. But none of the cities that stood on mounds did Israel burn, except Hazor alone; that Joshua burned. And all the spoil of these cities and the livestock, the people of Israel took for their plunder. But every person they struck with the edge of the sword until they had destroyed them, and they did not leave any who breathed. Just as the LORD had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did. He left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses.*

Notice that only Hazor is burned. As with Jericho and Ai, Hazor gets this unique treatment. The orchards and livestock of all the other cities are preserved. Unlike the chariots and war horses, those things will be useful going forward. This fulfills Deuteronomy 6:10–11a.

*“And when the LORD your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—with great and good cities that you did not build, and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant—” (ESV)*

This makes a tough point about God’s purposes. He created all those people for the purpose of building things that the Israelites will take. That may not be the only purpose, but it’s the one scripture highlights.

We’ve seen this bit about purposes before. God created Pharaoh (and his obdurate behavior) for a purpose no one saw coming.

*But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth. — Exodus 9:16 (ESV)*

In fact, this whole incredible saga, from Genesis on, has always had, as its central purpose, God’s glory. It’s not just about glorifying God; it’s all about glorifying God. Nothing else is significant.

This is a sticking point with reformed theology. We cannot bear to see ourselves as insignificant. Someone’s whole life can exist for the sole purpose of serving as an example of what not to do. It makes us as disposable as Kleenex. Without God’s grace, that’s what we are—vessels created for destruction.

*You will say to me then, “Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?” But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?” Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory. — Romans 9:19–23 (ESV)*

4 Joshua 11:16–23

*Thus Joshua took all this land: the mountain country, all the South, all the land of Goshen, the lowland, and the Jordan plain—the mountains of Israel and its lowlands, from Mount Halak and the ascent to Seir, even as far as Baal Gad in the Valley of Lebanon below Mount Hermon. He captured all their kings, and struck them down and killed them. Joshua made war a long time with all those kings. There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, except the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon. All the others they took in battle. For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that He might utterly destroy them, and that they might receive no mercy, but that He might destroy them, as the LORD had commanded Moses.*

*And at that time Joshua came and cut off the Anakim from the mountains: from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, from all the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel; Joshua utterly destroyed them with their cities. None of the Anakim were left in the land of the children of Israel; they remained only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod.*

*So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD had said to Moses; and Joshua gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. Then the land rested from war.*

Peace at last. This completes scripture’s description of a long series of battles. It was brutal, but no worse than many other wars.

*You cannot qualify war in harsher terms than I will. War is cruelty, and you cannot refine it; — William Tecumseh Sherman*

Sherman was right. War reveals aspects of human nature we would never admit to—until confronted with the proof. Even after the mind-numbing devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Japanese high council deadlocked 3-to-3 over whether to surrender. At that time the US was planning an invasion that would have leveled Japan. Military experts say the casualties would have run into the millions.

But in case of a tie in the high council, the emperor gets a tie-breaking vote, and Hirohito voted to surrender. Within a few decades, Japan was a hub of prosperity.

Today’s passage is turning a corner like that.

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Notice how the LORD takes the credit for the utter destruction of the Canaanites.

*For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that He might utterly destroy them, and that they might receive no mercy, but that He might destroy them, as the LORD had commanded Moses.*

Every fact recorded in scripture is actually two facts: the fact we read about, plus that God chose to tell us that fact. Here God chose to tell us that the “utter destruction” is all His doing.

He’s making it crystal clear that the Canaanites were “*vessels of wrath prepared for destruction.*”

5 Joshua 12:1–24 (ESV)

*Now these are the kings of the land whom the people of Israel defeated and took possession of their land beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise, from the Valley of the Arnon to Mount Hermon, with all the Arabah eastward: Sihon king of the Amorites who lived at Heshbon and ruled from Aroer, which is on the edge of the Valley of the Arnon, and from the middle of the valley as far as the river Jabbok, the boundary of the Ammonites, that is, half of Gilead, and the Arabah to the Sea of Chinneroth eastward, and in the direction of Beth-jeshimoth, to the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, southward to the foot of the slopes of Pisgah; and Og king of Bashan, one of the remnant of the Rephaim, who lived at Ashtaroth and at Edrei and ruled over Mount Hermon and Salecah and all Bashan to the boundary of the Geshurites and the Maacathites, and over half of Gilead to the boundary of Sihon king of Heshbon. Moses, the servant of the LORD, and the people of Israel defeated them. And Moses the servant of the LORD gave their land for a possession to the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh.*

*And these are the kings of the land whom Joshua and the people of Israel defeated on the west side of the Jordan, from Baal-gad in the Valley of Lebanon to Mount Halak, that rises toward Seir (and Joshua gave their land to the tribes of Israel as a possession according to their allotments, in the hill country, in the lowland, in the Arabah, in the slopes, in the wilderness, and in the Negeb, the land of the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites): the king of Jericho, one; the king of Ai, which is beside Bethel, one; the king of Jerusalem, one; the king of Hebron, one; the king of Jarmuth, one; the king of Lachish, one; the king of Eglon, one; the king of Gezer, one; the king of Debir, one; the king of Geder, one; the king of Hormah, one; the king of Arad, one; the king of Libnah, one; the king of Adullam, one; the king of Makkedah, one; the king of Bethel, one; the king of Tappuah, one; the king of Hopher, one; the king of Aphek, one; the king of Lasharon, one; the king of Madon, one; the king of Hazor, one; the king of Shimron-meron, one; the king of Achshaph, one; the king of Taanach, one; the king of Megiddo, one; the king of Kedesh, one; the king of Jokneam in Carmel, one; the king of Dor in Naphath-dor, one; the king of Goiim in Galilee, one; the king of Tirzah, one: in all, thirty-one kings.*

The Bible contains many lists of details and genealogies that don't exactly make for good beach reading.

But their presence teaches something. This kind of record keeping is essential. Since the dawn of recorded history, societies have built repositories of deeds, wills, genealogies, and other boring documents.

Without them we couldn't do essential things such as a real estate title search.

This shows what the Bible is. It's not a novel; it's a record. Its purpose includes record keeping. If you're looking for beach reading, check out something from the fiction section.

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This shows the truth of scripture in two ways. First, the boring bits don't read like fiction. The Bible conveys a sense of duty to report, as opposed to entertain. If that isn't interesting, so be it.

Second, all these details provide a mountain of opportunities for error. Made up "facts" (e.g., false accusations) are typically short on details because each detail provides a chance to be contradicted. These details show that scripture is supremely confident in its reporting.

*Questions for reflection or discussion*

1. What's the most difficult Bible passage for you?
2. Ever felt like your faith was being tested?
3. Do we all have "common use" or even "dishonorable use" moments?
4. Have you ever seen a hardened heart that seemed supernaturally hard?
5. Have you ever searched official records?

*Items for prayer:*