

Joshua 10:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then said Joshua, Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out those five kings unto me out of the cave.

Analysis

Then said Joshua, Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out those five kings unto me out of the cave.

The timing indicator "then" (זֶה, az) connects this command to the previous verse's peaceful assembly. With the battlefield secured and forces regrouped, Joshua turned to the imprisoned kings. The deliberate pace—fighting the battle, pursuing enemies, reassembling forces, then dealing with the kings—demonstrates strategic discipline. Joshua didn't allow thirst for vengeance to distract from tactical priorities; he secured military victory before executing judicial sentence.

The command "open the mouth of the cave" (פְתַחו אֶת־פִּי הַקּוֹעַרְתָּה, pitechu et-pi hame'arah) reverses the earlier sealing (v. 18). The anthropomorphic imagery of the cave's "mouth" (פֶּה, peh) suggests a throat that had swallowed the kings, now commanded to disgorge them for judgment. The cave that seemed a refuge became a holding cell, demonstrating that no hiding place exists from God's justice (Psalm 139:7-12; Amos 9:2-3; Hebrews 4:13).

The phrase "bring out those five kings unto me" emphasizes Joshua's judicial authority as God's appointed leader. The Hebrew לפני (lifnei, "before me") indicates not mere physical presence but appearance before authority for judgment. This foreshadows the final judgment when all who have hidden from God will be brought forth to stand before Christ's throne (Revelation 20:11-15). There is no escape; every knee will bow (Philippians 2:10-11).

Historical Context

The execution of captured kings followed ancient Near Eastern warfare patterns but with distinctively Israelite theological dimensions. In typical ancient warfare, kings might be paraded in triumph, enslaved, executed, or incorporated into vassal relationships depending on political calculations. Egyptian reliefs show Pharaohs smiting captive foreign rulers; Assyrian annals describe torturing and executing rebellious kings as public examples.

Israel's treatment of these five kings, however, stemmed from herem warfare theology rather than political pragmatism. Deuteronomy 7:1-5 and 20:16-18 commanded total destruction of Canaanite populations to prevent religious syncretism. This wasn't ethnic genocide but covenantal judgment—any Canaanite who aligned with Israel (Rahab, Gibeonites) received protection. The command targeted religious-cultural systems, not races. Modern readers struggle with such accounts, but they must be understood within the framework of:

1. unique, non-repeatable, divinely commanded holy war
2. temporal judgment prefiguring eternal judgment
3. surgical removal of cancer threatening Israel's covenant faithfulness.

The public nature of the coming execution (v. 24) served pedagogical purposes—teaching Israel that God judges covenant-breaking kings and demonstrating to surrounding nations the futility of resisting Israel's God.

Archaeological evidence shows conquest-era destruction layers at many sites in this region, though interpretation remains contested.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Joshua's patient, strategic approach—securing victory before executing judgment—model the balance between zeal for justice and wisdom in pursuing it?
2. What does the image of kings dragged from their cave hiding place teach about the impossibility of escaping God's final judgment?
3. How should Christians understand Old Testament accounts of divinely commanded warfare in light of Christ's command to love enemies, recognizing both continuity (God's justice) and discontinuity (the Church's mission versus ancient Israel's role)?

Interlinear Text

וְהִזְכִּיר יְאֹוֶן	בְּמִעֵדָה:	וְיִאמֶר
Then said	Joshua	Open
H559	H3091	H6605
		H853
		the mouth
		H6310
		of the cave
		H4631
		and bring out
		H3318
וְנִזְכַּר לְהָרָן	בְּמִעֵדָה:	מִן
those five	kings	of the cave
H413	H2568	H4428
		H428
		H4480
		H4631

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