

Joshua 10:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it came to pass, when they brought out those kings unto Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war which went with him, Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them.

Analysis

And it came to pass, when they brought out those kings unto Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war which went with him, Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them.

This public ceremony served multiple purposes. The phrase "Joshua called for all the men of Israel" (וַיִּקְרָא יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֶל-כָּל-אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל, vayiqra Yehoshua el-kol-ish Yisra'el) indicates assembly of the entire army—maximum visibility for maximum pedagogical impact. Joshua specifically addressed "the captains of the men of war" (קִצִּינֵי אַנְשֵׁי הַמִּלְחָמָה, qetsinei anshei hamilchamah), honoring military leaders and reinforcing leadership hierarchy.

The command "put your feet upon the necks of these kings" (שִׁמוּ אֶת-רַגְלֵיכֶם עַל-צַוְנֵיהֶם, simu et-ragleichem al-tsavarei hamelachim ha'eleh) enacted ancient Near Eastern victory symbolism (Psalm 110:1). Placing one's foot on an enemy's neck signified total domination and humiliation. Egyptian and Assyrian victory reliefs show pharaohs and kings with feet on conquered enemies' necks. This wasn't sadistic cruelty but ritualized demonstration of complete victory—

psychological warfare as much as physical.

The repetition "they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them" emphasizes obedient execution of Joshua's command. This ceremony strengthened troop morale, demonstrated God's faithfulness in delivering enemies into their hands, and prepared Israel psychologically for subsequent conquests. Christ quotes Psalm 110:1 (echoing this imagery) as messianic prophecy (Matthew 22:44), showing His ultimate victory over all enemies, with the final enemy death itself placed under His feet (1 Corinthians 15:25-27).

Historical Context

The symbolic act of placing feet on enemies' necks appears throughout ancient Near Eastern iconography and texts. The Egyptian temple at Medinet Habu shows Ramesses III with his foot on captives' heads. Assyrian reliefs from Nineveh depict similar scenes. The practice communicated absolute victory—the victor literally standing over the vanquished, who were rendered prostrate and powerless. This visual symbolism transcended language barriers, making it effective psychological warfare.

The specific involvement of military captains served to reward and honor those who had fought bravely, binding them to Joshua's leadership through participation in victory's consummation. Ancient military culture relied heavily on honor and shame; this ceremony distributed honor to Israel's leaders while maximizing shame on defeated Canaanite kings. The reversal was complete—kings who had ruled proudly now lay prostrate beneath Israelite commanders' feet.

The theological dimension distinguishes this from mere human triumphalism. This wasn't arbitrary humiliation but enacted judgment on covenant-breaking peoples whose sins had reached full measure (Genesis 15:16). The Amorites' wickedness—including child sacrifice, temple prostitution, and extreme violence—had invited divine judgment. Israel served as God's instrument of temporal judgment, prefiguring eternal judgment to come (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does this ceremony of subjugation prefigure Christ's ultimate victory over sin, death, and Satan—and what does it mean that believers share in His triumph?
2. What role does public testimony of God's victories play in strengthening faith and encouraging believers facing their own battles?
3. How can we maintain the biblical tension between celebrating God's justice in defeating evil while avoiding triumphalistic cruelty toward defeated enemies?

Interlinear Text

וַיְהִי	כְּהוֹצִיאָם	אֶת	הַמֶּלֶךְ יָם	הָאֵלֶּה					
H1961	And it came to pass when they brought out	H853	of these kings	H428					
	H3318		H4428						
אֶל	יְהוֹשֻׁעַ	וַיִּקְרָא	יְהוֹשֻׁעַ	אֶל	כָּל	אֶת	יֵשׁ	לְ	יִשְׂרָאֵל
H413	that Joshua	called	that Joshua	H413	H3605	for all the men	of Israel		
	H3091	H7121	H3091			H376	H3478		
וַיֹּאמֶר	אֶל	קִצִּינֵי	אֲנָשֵׁי	הַמִּלְחָמָה	וְהָלַךְ	וְ	אֶת		
and said	H413	unto the captains	of the men	of war	which went		H854		
H559		H7101	H582	H4421	H1980				
	וַיִּקְרָבוּ	וַיִּשֹׁם	אֶת	בְּגִלְיָהֶם	עַל	צַמְרֵיהֶם:			
And they came near	and put	H853	their feet	H5921	upon the necks				
H7126	H7760		H7272		H6677				
	וַיִּקְרָבוּ	וַיִּשֹׁם	אֶת	בְּגִלְיָהֶם	עַל	צַמְרֵיהֶם:			
of these kings	H428	And they came near	and put	H853	their feet	H5921			
H4428		H7126	H7760		H7272				
	וַיִּקְרָבוּ	וַיִּשֹׁם	אֶת	בְּגִלְיָהֶם	עַל	צַמְרֵיהֶם:			
upon the necks									
H6677									

Additional Cross-References

Romans 16:20 (Parallel theme): And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

Malachi 4:3 (Parallel theme): And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts.

Psalms 107:40 (Parallel theme): He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way.

Psalms 110:5 (Kingdom): The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.

Psalms 110:1 (Parallel theme): The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

Deuteronomy 33:29 (References Israel): Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.

Psalms 18:40 (Parallel theme): Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies; that I might destroy them that hate me.

Psalms 91:13 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

Judges 8:20 (Parallel theme): And he said unto Jether his firstborn, Up, and slay them. But the youth drew not his sword: for he feared, because he was yet a youth.