

Joshua 10:30

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD delivered it also, and the king thereof, into the hand of Israel; and he smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein; he let none remain in it; but did unto the king thereof as he did unto the king of Jericho.

Analysis

And the LORD delivered it also, and the king thereof, into the hand of Israel—the emphatic "also" (gam, גַּם) stresses divine consistency. Just as Yahweh delivered Makkedah, so He delivered Libnah. Victory resulted not from superior Israelite tactics but from covenant faithfulness: "the LORD delivered." The Hebrew natan (נָתַן, "delivered/gave") emphasizes gracious gift rather than earned conquest. Throughout Joshua, this verb attributes victory to divine agency, not human prowess (6:2; 8:1, 18; 10:8, 12, 19, 32).

And he smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein—the repetition of identical language from verse 28 creates rhythmic pattern showing methodical fulfillment of God's herem command. The phrase "all the souls" (kol-nephesh, כּוֹל-נֶפֶשׁ) means every living person, sparing none. Modern readers struggle with this wholesale destruction, but biblical theology understands it as:

1. divine judgment on extreme wickedness (Genesis 15:16; Leviticus 18:24-30)
2. prevention of covenant compromise (Deuteronomy 7:1-6),
3. typological prefigurement of final judgment.

But did unto the king thereof as he did unto the king of Jericho—this

refrain appears repeatedly (vv. 28, 30, 37, 39), emphasizing consistent justice.

The king of Jericho was killed when the city fell (6:21), establishing the pattern. Kings, representing their cities' spiritual and political corruption, received no special mercy. This contrasts with ancient Near Eastern practice of often sparing royalty for ransom or vassalage. God's justice recognized no elite exemptions.

Historical Context

The fall of Libnah followed immediately after Makkedah, suggesting a coordinated one-day campaign or sequential strikes in rapid succession. Joshua's strategy capitalized on psychological momentum—each city's fall demoralized the next, creating cascading panic among Canaanite coalitions. Ancient warfare often depended heavily on morale; when soldiers believed their cause hopeless, resistance collapsed quickly.

The repetitive formula "as he did to X, so he did to Y" reflects ancient Near Eastern literary convention found in conquest annals across cultures. Assyrian and Egyptian conquest accounts similarly employ repetitive patterns to emphasize thorough victory. However, Israel's formula uniquely attributes success to Yahweh rather than royal prowess or divine images carried into battle.

Libnah's king dying like Jericho's king demonstrates that herem applied universally, not selectively. Archaeological evidence suggests that Late Bronze Age Canaanite cities were highly stratified societies with kings exercising absolute power. These monarchs often led cult practices including child sacrifice and ritual prostitution (practices condemned in Leviticus 18:21-30). Their execution represented judgment on systemic corruption, not merely political conquest.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does the phrase 'the LORD delivered' shift credit from human achievement to divine grace in your understanding of spiritual victories?
2. What does God's consistent application of judgment (treating Libnah's king as Jericho's king) reveal about His impartiality and the certainty of His justice?
3. How do you balance the difficult reality of God's judgment in the conquest with His revelation as a God of love and mercy in Christ?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּתֵּן	יְהוָה ה	גַּם	אוֹתָהּ ה	בְּיָד	יִשְׂרָאֵל	וְאֵת
delivered	And the LORD	H1571	H853	thereof into the hand	of Israel	H853
H5414	H3068			H3027	H3478	
לְמֶלֶךְ	וְהֶ	לְפִי	חֶרֶב	וְאֵת	כָּל	
it also and the king	and he smote	it with the edge	of the sword	H853	H3605	
H4428	H5221	H6310	H2719			
הַנֶּפֶשׁ	אֲשֶׁר	בָּהּ	לֹא	הָשָׂא יר	בָּהּ	שָׁר יד
and all the souls	H834	H0	H3808	that were therein he let	H0	none remain
H5315				H7604		H8300
עָשָׂה ה	לְמֶלֶךְ	כְּאֲשֶׁר ר	עָשָׂה ה	לְמֶלֶךְ		
in it but did	it also and the king	H834	in it but did	it also and the king		
H6213	H4428		H6213	H4428		
יְרִיחוֹ:						
of Jericho						
H3405						