Joshua 11:1-12:24
The Completion of the Conquest

Review and Introduction

By the time we finish our talk this morning, we will have reached the halfway point in our study of the book of Joshua. We will see the completion of the conquest and find Joshua prepared to distribute the land among the various tribes. That narrative is in the chapters that are to come. But as we begin, let's quickly recap what we have seen so far.

In chapter 1, we saw the transition of leadership from Moses to Joshua, and God's command to "be strong and courageous" in obedience. This forms a main theme of the book. In chapter 2, the narrative shifted to show things from the Canaanite point of view. There, the fear of the Lord had caused their hearts to melt, but one woman, Rahab, chose to place her faith in the Lord God of Israel and, as a result, she and her family were saved.

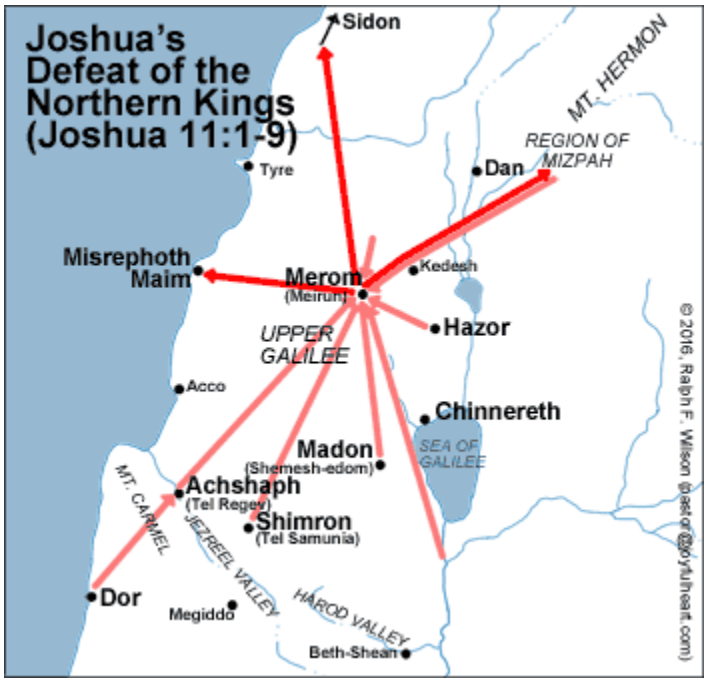
In chapters 3 and 4 the Israelites crossed the Jordan River, and commemorated that miracle with the erection of stones to mark the occasion. It was the first of several such monuments to the work of the Lord that were still visible at the time the book of Joshua was written. In chapter 5 the Israelites renewed the rite of circumcision, long forgotten in the desert wanderings, and once again declared themselves willing to obey the Lord. Chapter 6 narrated the 'battle' of Jericho, really a ceremonial procession resulting in another great miracle from the Lord.

From this victory, things took a bad turn in chapter 7. There, the account of the defeat at Ai as a result of Achan's sin was revealed. Thankfully, Israel repented, punished Achan and his family, and, as a result of this obedience, were victorious in their second attack on Ai, the account of which we found in chapter 8. Chapter 9 tells us of the trickery of the Gibeonites, largely as a result of the failure of Joshua and the other Israelite leaders to seek the Lord's wisdom. This error in judgement had immediate consequences, since city-states of southern Cannan attacked Gibeon. That account is given in chapter 10, where God used two miracles, an extended period of daylight and hailstones, to bring southern Canaan under Israelite dominion.

Today we will look at the conquest of northern Canaan. We will notice many similarities with the account in chapter 10, particularly a coalition of city-states, God's promise of victory, Joshua's obedience, and the resulting defeat of the enemy. Then, we will look at a list of praise and thanksgiving that summarizes the conquest of the land of promise. So let's begin.

The Northern Alliance

"[1]Then it came about, when Jabin king of Hazor heard about it, that he sent word to Jobab king of Madon, to the king of Shimron, to the king of Achshaph, [2]and to the kings who were of the north in the hill country, and in the Arabah - south of Chinneroth and in the lowland, and on the heights of Dor on the west - [3]to the Canaanite on the east and on the west, and the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, and the Jebusite in the hill country, and the Hivite at the foot of Hermon in the land of Mizpeh. [4]Then they came out, they and all their armies with them, as many people as the sand that is on the seashore, with very many horses and chariots. [5]So all of these kings gathered together, and came and encamped together at the waters of Merom, to fight against Israel" (11:1-5).



Again we see that the narrative begins with someone hearing a report. Jabin (Jabin may have been not a personal name but a title, such as Pharoah), the king of Hazor heard about the Israelite victories in southern Canaan. Since the Israelites already controlled the central hill country, northern Canaan was all that remained to be conquered. The king of Hazor was not going to wait to see what happened.

The details given in the text are designed to emphasize the totality of the northern region that came to attack the Israelites. There is the mention of kings, cities, regions, and a variety of people groups. Historical sources and modern archaeology have provided evidence of many of these cities. Merom, for example, is attested in many sources. Madon was about 5 miles west of modern

Tiberias. Shimron was about 5 miles west of Nazareth in the hills. Achshaph was further northwest from there.

The four regions listed are the hill country to the north, the Arabah, the western lowlands and the heights of Dor. The Arabah was the Jordan River Valley between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea (Chinneroth was an older name for the Sea of Galilee). The city of Dor was located on the coast. Clearly, the king of Hazor cast the net wide in recruiting allies for his coalition.

There are six people groups listed in the coalition. These are the same as those found in Joshua 9:1, though they are given in a different order. Recall that the southern coalition had been made up primarily of Amorites. This coalition was far more ethnographically diverse. It included "the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, and the Jebusite in the hill country, and the Hivite" (v. 3). That the Jebusites were associated with Jerusalem is yet another indication that allies were sought from far and wide by the king of Hazor.

Thus we see that the coalition had wide geographical spread and was numerous beyond measure. But, in addition to their numbers "as many people as the sand that is on the seashore" (v. 4), this coalition also possessed a technological advantage, namely "very many horses and chariots" (v. 4). Horses and chariots were devastatingly powerful weapons at this time. Even though the stirrup had yet to be invented (allowing the rider to free his hands from the reins and use weapons instead), the horse and chariot could ride into and over the enemy, thus dispersing them and making them more vulnerable. A nation with horses and chariots against foot soldiers had a distinct advantage.

Scripture is clear that Hazor was the dominating partner, as it should have been. Archaeological research had revealed that the upper city was some 30 acres in size, and the lower city an additional 175 acres in size. This was huge for the time. Scholars estimate the population to have been about 40,000. It was located about 8 miles north of the Sea of Galilee and occupied the main north-south route from the Jezreel Valley to the great cities of Syria and Mesopotamia. Hazor was *the* power in the region of northern Canaan.

The point of all this detail is, of course, to demonstrate the awesome power of Israel's enemies and thus give glory to the Lord for the ensuing victory. As with every other battle in the conquest, the Lord gave the victory. The job of Joshua and the Israelites was to be strong and courageous in obedience. The enemy might be more numerous, it might have better weapons, but Israel had the Lord God fighting on its side.

A Quick Victory

"[6]Yet the LORD said to Joshua, 'Do not be afraid because of them, for tomorrow at this time I am going to turn all of them over to Israel as good as dead; you shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire.' [7]So Joshua and all the people of war with him came upon them suddenly at the waters of Merom, and attacked them. [8]And the LORD handed them over to Israel, so that they defeated them, and pursued them as far as Great Sidon, and Misrephoth-maim, and the Valley of Mizpeh to the east; and they struck them until no survivor was left to them. [9]And Joshua did to them just as the LORD had told him; he hamstrung their horses and burned their chariots with fire" (11:6-9).

The news of the coalition reached Joshua at Gilgal and, while Scripture does not relate how Joshua took the news, it is clear that the Lord was quick to reassure him. "Do not be afraid because of them, for tomorrow at this time I am going to turn all of them over to Israel as good as dead; you shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire" (v. 6), the Lord promised. This echoed a promise that Joshua surely remembered from long ago,

> "When you go out to battle against your enemies and see horses, chariots, and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt, is with you" (Deuteronomy 20:1).

While that promise had been made to Moses, certainly he passed that truth along to Joshua as he mentored him. Scripture does not tell us how long it had been since the southern campaign in Canaan. Perhaps it had not been all that long ago, and Joshua knew that his army needed rest. In any case, the size of the coalition in the north must have caused concern. God's promise was certainly reassuring.

It seems that Joshua set out with the army immediately. The plan was to come upon them suddenly and force the attack. Such a surprise attack reminds us of the strategy at Gibeon. But in this case, there was another reason for taking the initiative in forcing the fight. These enemy forces grouped along the road leading to Hazor in the north. The place, Merom, was in the hill country, about 4,000 feet in elevation. Thus the terrain would reduce, if not eliminate totally, the tactical advantage of the enemy chariots, which would be far more destructive on the open plains.

But despite Joshua's clever strategy, Scripture is clear that the key to Israel's victory is that "the LORD handed them over to Israel" (v. 8). This victory, like all the victories, was a gift from the Lord. There was no extraordinary miracle, no hailstones or extended day, but still God was at work, and the victory was His.

The pursuit of the fleeing enemy forces seems to have taken the Israelites in many directions from the original scene of the battle at Merom. Some pursued westward through the Jezreel Valley, others north along the Acco plain, past Tyre and on to Sidon. Still others went through Misrephoth-maim, and some chased the enemy through the Valley of Mizpeh further to the east. It was a total victory for the Israelites, the enemy fled in every direction, a certain sign that theirs was not an organized retreat.

Scripture also tells us that Joshua obeyed the Lord to the letter, "And Joshua did to them just as the LORD had told him; he hamstrung their horses and burned their chariots with fire" (v. 9). The wording is identical (God's instructions and Joshua's actions).

Hamstringing the horses (cutting the tendon behind the back knee) made them useless for warfare. Some argue that this was done because the Israelites did not know how to use chariots in warfare, but a better explanation is that God, from Whom the command came, wanted their reliance to be on Him and Him alone. That, too, had been something the Lord insisted on when giving instructions for the conquest.

> "[14]When you enter the land which the LORD your God is giving you, and you take possession of it and live in it, and you say, 'I will appoint a king over me like all the nations who are around me,' [15]you shall in fact appoint a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses. One from among your countrymen you shall appoint as king over yourselves; you may not put a foreigner over yourselves, anyone who is not your countryman. [16]In any case, he is not to acquire many horses for himself, nor shall he make the people return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the LORD has said to you, 'You shall never again return that way'" (Deuteronomy 17:14-16).

In Israel's future, even King David did not make military use of chariots. Indeed, he wrote,

> "Some praise their chariots and some their horses,
> But we will praise the name of the LORD, our God" (Psalm 20:7).

Unfortunately, King Solomon did not heed this command. In addition to his one thousand wives and concubines, kept a force of some 1,400 chariots for war. That was one of the many signs during his reign that Israel was moving away from the worship of the One, True God.

<u>Continued Obedience</u>

But here, during the conquest, Joshua was no King Solomon. "[10]Then Joshua turned back at that time and captured Hazor, and struck its king with the sword; for Hazor previously was the head of

all these kingdoms. [11]They struck every person who was in it with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them; there was no one left who breathed. And he burned Hazor with fire. [12]Joshua captured all the cities of these kings, and all their kings; and he struck them with the edge of the sword and utterly destroyed them, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded. [13]However, Israel did not burn any cities that stood on their mounds, except Hazor alone, which Joshua burned. [14]And all the spoils of these cities and the cattle, the sons of Israel took as their plunder; but they struck every person with the edge of the sword, until they had destroyed them. They left no one breathing. [15]Just as the LORD had commanded His servant Moses, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did; he left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses" (11:10-15).

The battle won, the enemy fleeing in all directions, Joshua returned to Hazor. Joshua's obedience required that there was total destruction of the enemy, particularly the city of Hazor. There were to be no survivors. This was clearly due to the prominence of the city in the region, since Hazor "was the head of all these kingdoms" (v. 10).

The obedience of Joshua is what is stressed in this section. The concluding statement that "as the LORD had commanded His servant Moses, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did; he left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses" (v. 15) shows this. Three verbs describe the action to make it clear that there was total destruction of the population "they struck every person with the edge of the sword, until they had destroyed them. They left no one breathing" (v. 14).

This total destruction of the population, not simply soldiers but civilians as well, may seem out of touch with our modern human rights and Geneva convention, but that is not the case. Rather this points to the importance of the holiness of God. As we will see soon, this action was neither unjust nor cruel. It was merited by the Canaanite population as a result of their resistance to the sovereign will of God.

The point here, though, is to stress Joshua's obedience, "Joshua captured all the cities of these kings, and all their kings; and he struck them with the edge of the sword and utterly destroyed them, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded" (v. 12). Hazor itself was burned. It along with Jericho and Ai are the only cities to be burned during the conquest.

The other cities remained for the Israelites to make use of. The people were wicked, their gods were false, but their cities and fortifications, their cattle and wealth, could be used by the Israelites. This

reminds us that there is a distinction between the sacred and the worldly. The Israelites kept the plunder allowed by the Lord, but the people had to be totally destroyed.

A Summary of the Conquest

Chapter 11 concludes with a summary of the conquest, and an important additional military encounter. "[16]So Joshua took all that land: the hill country and all the Negev, all the land of Goshen, the lowland, the Arabah, the hill country of Israel and its lowland [17]from Mount Halak, that rises toward Seir, even as far as Baal-gad in the Valley of Lebanon at the foot of Mount Hermon. And he captured all their kings, and struck them and put them to death. [18]Joshua waged war a long time with all these kings. [19]There was not a city which made peace with the sons of Israel except the Hivites living in Gibeon; they took them all in battle. [20]For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, to meet Israel in battle in order that he might utterly destroy them, that they might receive no mercy, but that he might destroy them, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

[21]Then Joshua came at that time and eliminated the Anakim from the hill country, from Hebron, Debir, Anab, and from all the hill country of Judah and all the hill country of Israel. Joshua utterly destroyed them with their cities. [22]There were no Anakim left in the land of the sons of Israel; only in Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod some remained. [23]So Joshua took the whole land, in accordance with everything that the LORD had spoken to Moses; and Joshua gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. So the land was at rest from war" (16-23).

There are a few details to glean from this brief summary. First, the geographic details emphasize the extent of the conquest. "[16]So Joshua took all that land: the hill country and all the Negev, all the land of Goshen, the lowland, the Arabah, the hill country of Israel and its lowland [17]from Mount Halak, that rises toward Seir, even as far as Baal-gad in the Valley of Lebanon at the foot of Mount Hermon." (v. 16-17). Mount Halak divided Israel and Edom in the south. Baal Gad was the northernmost boundary, in the valley of Lebanon near Mount Hermon.

Another thing we can see is that there were additional battles beyond those mentioned in the book thus far, since "Joshua waged war a long time with all these kings" (v. 18). This is made more explicit in the list that follows in chapter 12. The condensed reports in these battle narratives can give the false impression that all this happened quickly. Not so. This, too, had been promised.

> "[29]I will not drive them out from you in a single year, so that the land will not become desolate and the animals of the field become too numerous for you. [30]I will drive them out from you little by little, until you become fruitful and take possession of the land" (Exodus 23:29-30).

That is why the stress is on the conquering of kings, not of towns, And the language that again emphasizes totality, "He captured all their kings, and struck them and put them to death" (v. 17). The kings were destroyed, but the towns remained so the Israelites had places to live. This is consistent with what we have seen thus far in our narrative. Also, we are reminded that only the Gibeonites had made peace with Israel and avoided destruction.

But the keynote of the passage is sounded in verse 20, "For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, to meet Israel in battle in order that he might utterly destroy them, that they might receive no mercy, but that he might destroy them, just as the LORD had commanded Moses" (v. 20). Hearing this language, we immediately think of Pharaoh (Exodus 4-14). But we must always remember that God's actions in Egypt were tied to Pharaoh's defiance.

> "[1]And afterward Moses and Aaron came and said to Pharaoh, 'This is what the LORD, the God of Israel says: "Let My people go so that they may celebrate a feast to Me in the wilderness."' [2] But Pharaoh said, 'Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and besides, I will not let Israel go'" (Exodus 5:1-2).

These Canaanites had no excuse. They had heard of Israel's victories (2:9-11; 5:1; 9:1, 3; 10:1; 11:1). Their hearts had melted with fear at the prospect of war against the people of the God of Israel. The text makes it clear that their hearts were hardened because of their rebellion against the will of God that led to their armed resistance to the Israelites. Their hearts had sunk with fear, but they could have made a profession of faith (Rahab) or tried to negotiate (Gibeon). Instead they chose to resist. That is why there was no mercy.

There is also a final military encounter mentioned in the narrative. "[21]Then Joshua came at that time and eliminated the Anakim from the hill country, from Hebron, Debir, Anab, and from all the hill country of Judah and all the hill country of Israel. Joshua utterly destroyed them with their cities. [22]There were no Anakim left in the land of the sons of Israel; only in Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod some remained" (v. 21-22).

The Anakin were the very definition of terror to the Israelites. That may be why they receive special mention here. Remember the report of the twelve spies.

> "[28]Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. And indeed, we saw the descendants of Anak there! . . . [31]The men who had gone up with him said, 'We are not able to go up against the people, because they are too strong for us.' [32]So they brought a bad report of the land which they had spied out to the sons of Israel, saying, 'The land through which we have gone to spy out is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people whom we saw in it are people of great stature. [33]We also saw

the Nephilim there (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight'" (Numbers 13:31-33).

Nevertheless, God had promised victory, and God was ever faithful. With the defeat of the Anakim, the promise of Deuteronomy 9:1-3 was fulfilled.

> "[1]Hear, Israel! You are crossing the Jordan today, to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than you, cities that are great and fortified to heaven, [2]a people who are great and tall, the sons of the Anakim, whom you know and of whom you have heard it said, 'Who can stand against the sons of Anak?' [3]So be aware today that it is the LORD your God who is crossing over ahead of you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and He will subdue them before you, so that you may drive them out and eliminate them quickly, just as the LORD has spoken to you" (Deuteronomy 9:1-3).

The passage is a clear reminder that our fears, our worries and anxieties are so often needless. I am reminded of a favorite passage from *Pilgrim's Progress*.

"Looking very narrowly before him as he went, he saw two Lions in the way. Now, thought he, I see the dangers that Mistrust and Timorous were driven back by. (The Lions were chained, but he saw not the chains). Then he was afraid, and thought also himself to go back after them, for he thought nothing but death was before him. But the Porter at the lodge whose name is Watchful, perceiving that Christian made a halt as if he would go back, cried unto him saying,

"Is thy strength so small? Fear not the Lions, for they are chained, and are placed there for trial of faith where it is, and for discovery of those that have none. Keep in the midst of the Path, and no hurt shall come unto thee" . . . . Then I saw he went on, trembling for fear of the Lions, but taking good heed to the directions of the Porter; he heard them roar, but they did him no harm."
John Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*

Our lack of faith makes us not see the chains.

It is only fitting that the account of the conquest should end with these most feared people. But we can also see that, while Israelites territory was rid of the Anakites, clearly they remained in other places in Cannan, such as Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod, places that were later associated with the Philistines. Thus they occupied lands in the southwest along the coast. This serves as a reminder that Israel never possessed all the land west of the Jordan River. There remained the Gibeonites, and there remained unconquered land.

The chapter concludes with an anticipation of the distribution of the land, "Joshua took the whole land, in accordance with everything that the LORD had spoken to Moses; and Joshua gave it as an inheritance to Israel " (v. 23). That there was rest from war meant that while there was land the Israelites did not possess, there would be no more general wars at this time. The conquest was finished.

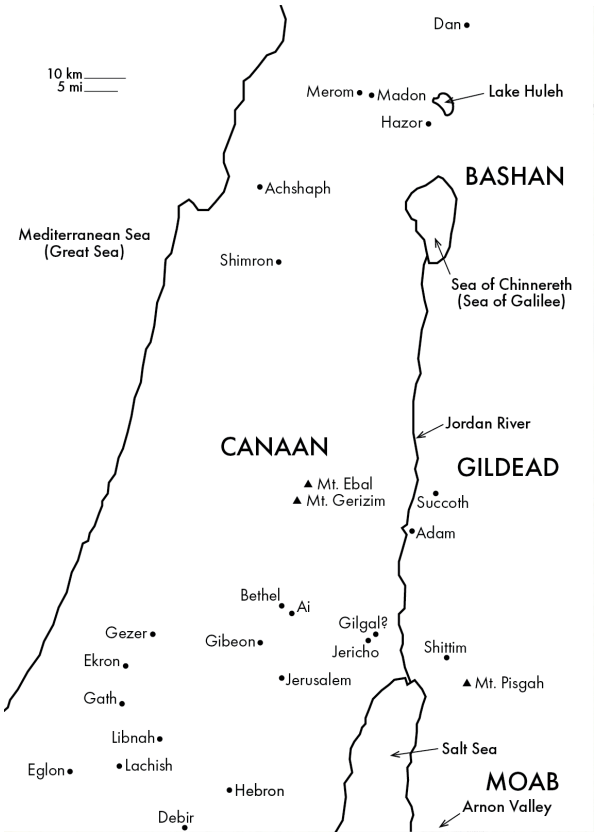
Praise and Thanksgiving

Chapter 12 might seem like a weary list of unpronounceable names, but it is so much more than that. It is a list of praise and thanksgiving, added by the writer as something of an appendix to the narrative of the conquest. "[1]Now these are the kings of the land whom the sons of Israel defeated, and they took possession of their land beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise, from the Valley of the Arnon as far as Mount Hermon, and all the Arabah to the east: [2]Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon and ruled from Aroer, which is on the edge of the Valley of the Arnon, both the middle of the valley and half of Gilead, even as far as the brook Jabbok, the border of the sons of Ammon; [3]and the Arabah as far as the Sea of Chinneroth toward the east, and as far as the Sea of the Arabah, that is, the Salt Sea, eastward toward Beth-jeshimoth, and on the south, at the foot of the slopes of Pisgah; [4]and the territory of Og king of Bashan, one of the remnant of Rephaim, who lived at Ashtaroth and at Edrei, [5]and ruled over Mount Hermon, Salecah, and all Bashan, as far as the border of the Geshurites and the Maacathites, and half of Gilead, as far as the border of Sihon king of Heshbon. [6]Moses the servant of the LORD and the sons of Israel defeated them; and Moses the servant of the LORD gave it to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh as a possession.

[7]Now these are the kings of the land whom Joshua and the sons of Israel defeated beyond the Jordan toward the west, from Baal-gad in the Valley of Lebanon even as far as Mount Halak, which rises toward Seir; and Joshua gave it to the tribes of Israel as a possession according to their divisions, [8]in the hill country, in the lowland, in the Arabah, on the slopes, in the wilderness, and in the Negev; the Hittite, the Amorite and the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite: [9]the king of Jericho, one; the king of Ai, which is beside Bethel, one; [10]the king of Jerusalem, one; the king of Hebron, one; [11]the king of Jarmuth, one; the king of Lachish, one; [12]the king of Eglon, one; the king of Gezer, one; [13]the king of Debir, one; the king of Geder, one; [14]the king of Hormah, one; the king of Arad, one; [15]the king of Libnah, one; the king of Adullam, one; [16]the king of Makkedah, one; the king of Bethel, one; [17]the king of Tappuah, one; the king of Hepher, one; [18]the king of Aphek, one; the king of Lasharon, one; [19]the king of Madon, one; the king of Hazor, one; [20]the king of Shimron-meron, one; the king of Achshaph, one; [21]the king of Taanach, one; the king of Megiddo, one; [22]the king of Kedesh, one; the king of Jokneam in Carmel, one; [23]the king of Dor

in the heights of Dor, one; the king of Goiim in Gilgal, one; [24]the king of Tirzah, one: in all, thirty-one kings" (11:16-12:24).

The account begins with lands conquered prior to the crossing of the Jordan River. In contrast to the kings who ruled west of the Jordan River, these kings controlled regions rather than towns, largely due to the sparser population density. The limit of the conquest of these lands is the Arnon Gorge and Mount Hermon. These two locations delineate the southern and northern extremes of the land conquered by Israel east of the Jordan River.



The account of Sihon and Og is found in Numbers 21:21-35. Those victories are mentioned here to emphasize the unity of God's people. It is also a reminder that God had given victories east of the Jordan River as well as in the land of Promise.

Sihon, king of the Amorites, had controlled the southern half of the conquered territory from Beth Jeshimoth and Mount Pisgah near the Dead Sea in the south to the Sea of Galilee in the north. Og, the king of Bashan controlled the region north of Sihon, known simply as Bashan. The point of the narrative is to remind us of the unity of Israel, and the previous allocation to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manesseh.

The remainder of this section is very similar to other lists of conquests found in Ancient Near-East sources. In fact, the account reads very much like those of Egypt telling of their campaigns in Palestine. But here the purpose is not to brag about the military conquests of some Pharaoh, but to recount the faithfulness of the Lord.

The order given in the list of praise and thanksgiving generally follows the narrative in Joshua 6-11. After a general overview, it begins with Jericho and Ai, then turns its attention to the conquests in the south and then the north, though not precisely. Some sites are not mentioned, such as Shechem and Dothan.

The purpose of the list is theological. It is validation of the promise (Genesis 12:7; 13:15; 20:18). It shows the glory of God as He brought about the fulfillment of His promises to His people. Joshua had demonstrated that he was the true successor to Moses. He completed the work (in human terms). He had been obedient as Moses had been obedient, but Israel could only take the land with God's presence among them. In every major battle (Jericho, Ai, Gibeon, and Merom), God is explicitly identified as fighting for Israel and bringing about the victory.

Throughout the conquest, God used different means. At Jericho, it was a ceremonial procession. At Ai, they set an ambush. At Gibeon, the Lord used a hailstorm and an extended period of daylight to ensure victory. In each, of course, the Israelites fought, but the battle was the Lord's.

Takeaways

Thus we come to the end of the conquest. There has certainly been an emphasis on battles, but that was not all. In addition to battles, there were sacred rites and rituals as well. The rites of purification in Joshua 5 and the renewal of the covenant described in Joshua 8 come to mind. They serve to remind us that the people had to be holy, and they had to obey. That was made clear when Achan sinned. His direct violation of a specific command of God removed the Israelites from God's protection, as the defeat at Ai showed. God demanded holiness from his people. And He still does.

These chapters have also reminded us that we need endurance and perseverance. The conquest of the land took time, and like the conquest, God's work in our lives takes time, and we must be faithful to obey throughout the duration. We will not be sanctified in a day. God will complete the work He has begun in us, but that process will take our entire lives.

A final thought is this. The list of kings and cities destroyed must have been kept as a memorial to the work of God. Like the piles of stones near the Jordan River, at the gates of defeated cities, and covering the mouth of a cave, it serves as a clear that all of this could not possibly have been done by the Israelites alone. They were not a military power until they entered Canaan. The conquest can only be explained because the Lord was with them.

But the specificity of the list reminds us that there is value in detailing our blessings rather than using Christianese to speak of them generally. We ought to take time to think not about our blessings in general, but meditate on all the many specific blessings we have. It will take a good, long while I'm certain, but it will be time well spent.