

Joshua 10:29–12:24

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[0 : 0 0] Preaching is from Joshua 10, 29 through 12, 24. Please remain standing for the reading of God's word. So Joshua struck the whole land, the hill country, and the Negev, and the lowland, and the slopes, and all their kings.

He left none remaining, but devoted to destruction, all that breathed, just as God, Lord God of Israel, commanded. And Joshua struck them from Kadesh Barnea, as far as Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, as far as Gibeon.

And Joshua captured all these kings and their land 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.

When Jabin, king of Hazor, heard of this, he sent to Jobab, king of Maiden, and to the king of Shimron, and to the king of Akshaph, and to the kings who were in the northern hill country, and in the Ereba, south of Kinneroth, and in the lowland, and in Naphath, Naphath-dor, on the west, to the Canaanites, in the east and west, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, in the hill country, and the Hivites, under Hermon, in the land of Mitzpah.

And they came out with all their troops, a great horde in number, like the sand that is on the seashore, and with very many horses and chariots. And all these kings joined their forces, and came, and encamped together at the waters of Merim, to fight with Israel.

[1 : 2 9] 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 Merim, and fell upon them. And the Lord gave them into the hand of Israel, who struck them, and chased them as far as the great Sidon, and Mizrathoth-Mame, and eastward as far as the valley of Mitzpah.

And they struck them until he left none remaining. And Joshua did to them, just as the Lord had said to him. He hamstrung their horses, and burned their chariots with fire. We're going to jump down to verse 16.

Verse 16. So Joshua took all that land, the hill country, and all the Negev, and all the land of Goshen, and the low land, and the Ereba, and the hill country of Israel, and its low land, from Mount Halak, which rises towards Seir, as far as Baal-gad, in the valley of Lebanon, below Mount Hermon.

And he captured all their kings, and struck them, and put them to death. Joshua made war for a long time with all those kings. There was not a city that made peace with the people of Israel, except the Hivites and the inhabitants of Gibeon.

[2 : 3 8] They took them all in battle. For it was the Lord's doing to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, in order that they should be devoted to destruction, and should receive no mercy, but be destroyed, just as the Lord commanded Moses.

And Joshua came at that time, and cut off the Anakim from the hill country, from Hebron, to Deber, from Anab, from all the hill country of Judah, and from all the hill country of Israel.

Joshua devoted them to destruction with their cities. There was none of the Anakim left in the land of the people of Israel. Only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod did some remain. So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord had spoken to Moses.

And Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel, according to their tribal allotments, and the land had rest from war. 12-7. Verse 7.

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 towards Seir.

[3 : 41] 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 Negev, 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 Deber, one.

The king of Gader, one. The king of Hormah, one. The king of Ered, one. The king of Libna, one. The king of Adullam, one.

The king of Makeda, one. The king of Bethel, one. The king of Tepua, one. The king of Hefur, one. The king of Aphek, one.

[4 : 46] The king of Lsharan, one. The king of Maiden, one. the king of Hazor, one, the king of Shimron Maran, one, the king of Akshaph, one, the king of Teanak, one, the king of Megiddo, one, the king of Kadesh, one, the king of Jachneum in Carmel, one, the king of Dor and Napath Dor, one, the king of Goyim in Galilee, one, the king of Tirzah, one, in all 31 kings. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated.

I've titled this morning's sermon 31 and 0. For those of you who may be unfamiliar with the sports world, it's a nod to how sporting records are stated. 31 wins and no losses. Undefeated, they say. If you're a sports enthusiast, you may have followed a team that has gone undefeated.

It happens most commonly in collegiate sports, on occasion in men's and women's basketball, men and women's basketball, most frequently in football, most recently the 2020 Alabama team.

LSU the season prior. And because I know there are people here from Clemson, they did it in 2018. It's incredibly rare in professional sports. It's actually never seen in baseball, basketball, hockey, or soccer. It has occurred in football, 2007 New England Patriots, though they lost in the Super Bowl. 1972 Miami Dolphins did it and won the Super Bowl. Super Bowl. I'm thinking about football because today's starts football. But shockingly, you'll want to know that the Chicago Bears actually accomplished this feat when David Helm was still alive in 1942 and 1934, albeit only in the regular season. When teams accomplish this feat, it's called a perfect season.

X number of wins accompanied by no losses. Flawless, without blemish, perfect, undefeated. For that year in that particular sport, there is simply no one better. I've taken the title from the final verse of chapter 12. You read it. And if I were to link it to the first half of verse 7 of chapter 12, it would read something like this. And these are the kings of the land whom Joshua and the people of Israel defeated. In all, 31 kings. Flawless, without blemish, perfect, undefeated. And if you've been following this series, you might say, well, there is a little asterisk because chapter 7, they almost lost, but didn't. Valiant challengers have arisen, but they all continue to fall to this nomadic group that had emerged from the deserts of Sinai. They were unstoppable. And whether it be one city or one king at a time or an alliance of kings that rise up against her, the outcome is always the same.

[8 : 23] Defeat for the challenger, victory for Israel. I have a huge task this morning to cover nearly three chapters in less than usual time. My aim is brevity. You can tell me if I meet my aim. But I want, this morning, I want to highlight a few theological highlights that these chapters yield for us. And what I mean by that theological highlights, I simply mean God-centered. What do these chapters tell us about God? What does the text clarify? Perhaps any misconceptions I might have about God? How does it give us clarity about the God of the Bible? And I'll say it from the outset. The resounding truth of these chapters is that God fights for his people and gives them victory. To restate it, God fights for us and gives us the victory. God fights for you and gives you the victory. We're not able to get through all the texts, so allow me to give you the contours of these chapters. The latter half of chapter 10 is a conquest map. If you were to map it, Israel crosses the Jordan. They proceed westward, meander south, and at the conclusion of the campaign, they return north back to Gilgal, their settling city. All between, the range is about seven to ten miles between each city that they travel. They go westward, southward, and all the way back home. A reading of the chapter would make it sound very methodical.

Then Joshua and all Israel passed on from Makeda to Libna and fought against Libna, and the Lord gave it to Israel its king into the hand of Israel. And he struck it with the edge of the sword, and every person in it, he left nothing remaining in it. And he did to its king as he had done to Jericho. And it occurs in chapter 10 to Libna, to Lachish, to Gezer, to Eglon, to Hebron, to Debir. The whole land falls before Israel.

No one is able to stand. And there it is. Joshua captured all these kings and their land at one time. Why? According to verse 42. There's the reason. Because the Lord fought for Israel.

As we enter into chapter 11, Israel is now met by a coalition of forces, a mass to confront them.

We are to get a sense that in all human terms, Israel is outmatched. Kings have assembled. Armies have gathered. To borrow the language of the psalmist, the kings of the earth have set themselves.

[11 : 18] The rulers take counsel together. The troops, according to chapter 11, verse 4, are a great horde in number, like the sand that is on the seashore. Language that was applied to God's people, you may know, to be innumerable, is now applied to their enemies. They are not only outnumbered, but outgunned. The enemy has a technological advantage. You see it. They have many horses and chariots. Israel is an underdog facing an insurmountable wall. It was a throng large enough to instill fear in even the bravest. So in verse 6, the Lord has to appear to Joshua and say, do not fear. Do not be afraid for tomorrow. This time I will give them all over to you, all of them.

And there's the word slain. The writer makes it clear that the reason for Israel's military success is there found in 11 verse 8. The Lord gave them into the hand of Israel.

When generations read these accounts, it would not be laden with military strategy. It would not recount particular decision-making. It would not be the grounds to boast of military forces or technological superiority. It would not speak of circumstance or chance, luck, or coincidence. The credit would all be attributed to the Lord. And the writer makes sure of that. The text makes it remarkably clear that the Lord fought for Israel, chapter 10, 14, and 42. That the Lord gave the land as a gift to Israel, chapter 10, 29, 32, 11, 8. Lest anyone read this and forget the reason for Israel's victory or the reception of the land came at their own devices. The text makes it clear. It's the Lord who fought and the Lord who gave. It would inspire such songs in Israel's songbook, some trust in chariots, some trust in horses, but we will trust in the name of the Lord our God.

You see, this is our story, and this would be our song as well. For you and I, our trust is in the name of the Lord. Those on earth may put confidence in chariots and horses, strength found in numbers, but none of that should be true for the Christian. Our explanation of things should fundamentally acknowledge that God fights on our behalf and gives to us graciously.

When the enemy is arrayed in splendor, the odds stacked against us, our backs against the wall, and all hope is lost. This is often, ironically, where God puts us so that we could put our trust in him. If we go through life believing that we are entirely self-sufficient, self-adequate, we will never discover the liberating power of God. Difficulty is God's way of drawing us to him.

[14 : 53] Impossibility is God's opportunity to demonstrate his ability. You see that at the opening of chapter 11. I imagine, God, this is going great. We're just going one city at a time, one king at a time, and God decides in chapter 11, hey, let's accelerate this process. Let's have all the kings get together.

I'm sure Joshua is like, eh, I kind of like the one at a time. The army has gotten bigger. The forces have gotten greater, but this is it, isn't it? That when all difficulty surrounds you, there is only one place to go, and that's to the Lord. Our tendency is for God to give us lives that avoid difficulty. God's tendency is to give us lives that are difficult so he himself can show up.

It's astounding, really. I know there are some in this room who will testify to just that truth.

That I was overcome with life, whether it be substances, whether it be alcohol, whatever it was, it claimed every paycheck, every thought, every waking moment. Death, it seemed, was constantly knocking at my door, and whether it would come from an overdose or overconsumption or overcome by darkness, it loomed. And they can attest to this. It wasn't more self-control.

It wasn't more self-will. It wasn't more self-confidence. It was not more resources, though they might have alleviated it. But it was in the darkest days to create a reliance upon God.

[17 : 04] They would say it was God who fought and God who gave and God who delivered. God who fought. You see, in all of life's victories, this is our banner.

The Lord fought for me. And here you have the end of chapter 11, really the end of an era.

The fighting was now over, or better put, the season of fighting was over because we were about to see there are some few battles take place. But verse 23 of chapter 11, and since you have it open, so Joshua took the whole land according to all the Lord had spoken, and Joshua gave it as an inheritance to Israel, according to their tribal allotments.

And the land had rest from war. What we read in Joshua is a condensed summary. There is much that is left out, and we are not to think that there wasn't great exertion by the people of God.

But in our final moments, I want to zoom in on a few verses of chapter 11. We know that battles raged on because the writer wants us to know in chapter 11, verse 18, that this wasn't just an overnight thing.

[18 : 25] The battle raged on for a long time with all those kings. And the contours of these chapters are that God fights for us and gives us victory.

But I want to zoom in on verses, really, 19 through 20. They're noteworthy. Because here, we not only see theological history in these chapters, but the narrator writes or adds something that's previously unknown.

When you read biblical stories, it's always good to see what the editorial comments are. And here is one of the lengthier ones. Yes, Joshua took all the land. The land was claimed.

Yet there still seemed to be residents that remained, according to verse 22. The land was in their control, but not in their full possession. This would explain maybe future battles in upcoming weeks.

But as we focus in on verses 19 and 20, let me just reread it. It was not a city that made peace with the people of Israel, except the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon.

[19 : 37] Israel took them all in battle. And here's that statement. For it was the Lord's doing to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, in order that they should receive no mercy, but be destroyed, as the Lord commanded Moses.

Here we are given stunning insight into the kings and cities that opposed Israel. They assembled to fight Israel under what appears to be the Lord's directive.

The hand of God rested upon the enemies of Israel in order to harden their hearts. That they should be devoted to destruction, receive no mercy, and be destroyed.

And these are incredibly challenging verses to process and swallow, because I know it opens up a whole host of questions about the nature of God, the will of God, his judgment.

And I can't resolve all of those in this morning, but it would be irresponsible if I didn't say something about this. So I want to say something to at least give you some tools on how to read these.

[20 : 59] The first is this. Violence grieves God. Yet, God uses violence to suppress evil.

It's actually established very early on in the pages of our Bible. You might remember this. Genesis chapter 6. And the Lord saw the wickedness of man was great in all the earth.

That every intention of their thoughts of their heart was only evil continually. And the Lord regretted that he made man on the earth and it grieved him to his heart.

And you know the story. The Lord sends a flood. See, the impetus for the flood was God's grief over sin.

But the violence that came from the flood demonstrates for us that God at times will use what's seemingly violent to drive out the inhabitants of the earth.

[22 : 11] So as the flood drove out the inhabitants of the earth, here we see the conquest of Canaan drives out the inhabitants of the land.

Some will say, oh, Bing, this is clearly genocidal. This is ethnic cleansing. But it's actually a pretty shallow reading of the text. Because as the flood judged all mankind, so does the conquest of the land.

And let me show you. You see, the land simply serves as this microcosm. A small model of what God does universally. God doesn't drive out the inhabitants because they're a particular ethnicity or skin color.

Or as if he's partial towards race. No. The conquest of the land is actually God's demonstration of his destruction of evil. You see, when we read Canaanites, Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites, we think of people, colors, nations.

But if you go all the way back to Genesis 15, where this whole promise was made. And when God says, I will give you the land to your descendants, Abraham. And there it is.

[23 : 26] You will drive out the Amorites. But it's not about the Amorites being Amorites. According to Genesis 15, it's actually the iniquities. The Amorites.

That leads God to drive them out. You see, the emphasis is not on, oh, it's this race that God is opposed to. No, I think when the Bible lists all these people.

Canaanites, Amorites, Hivites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Hivites. What it's actually doing is showing us it's all people. There's no one excluded from this.

That all of humanity in the land. Together as one is raising their fist against God. I know it's not ethnically motivated because God would do that to his own people in Joshua 7.

See, the land is not designed for a particular ethnicity. A la Israel. It's intended to model purity. That's why only the righteous live in the land.

[24 : 37] You have a prostitute, Rahab, that will live and dwell in the land. You have the Gibeonites who fear God and deviously contrive this means of establishing a covenant to remain in the land.

It's never an issue about race. It's an issue of rebellion. Rebellion against God. God devoted to destruction. Achan, the Israelite, from the tribe of Judah, which happens to also yield the Lord Jesus Christ.

Devoted to destruction. Achan, the Israelite, his loved ones, his very household. And that's important to note. Because when you read the Bible, some will say, oh, so ethnocentric.

Actually, if you continue to read the Bible, the land will vomit out Israel. He will actually send them into exile because they violated their covenant with him.

Items and people are devoted to destruction. It demonstrates God's intolerance of sin. He is merciless in his eradication of evil.

[25 : 53] This is immensely crucial to graphs, to make sense of these conquest narratives. For he is justified in his judgments. See, the judgment that befell these kings and cities was a result of their evil.

And I'm anticipating your next objection. No, no, no, not everyone was evil. It couldn't have been. Have you seen your little kids? Oh, I've seen my kids.

Yeah. Well, Bing, they're probably young, innocent lives. Nice people. Kind people.

Philanthropists. This is unfair that entire cities were eliminated because not all were guilty. There were certainly innocent men and women, boys and girls.

And I hear that. And sometimes it might be our American optimism or humanism and our desire to project intrinsic good on all humanity.

[26 : 55] We're innocent until proven guilty. Right? That's our constitutional assertion. And though it is helpful in implementing the rule of law in this country, the rule of God actually counters that declaration.

The Bible tells us that we're guilty until declared innocent. And this is our problem before God.

Well, okay, Bing, can you prove that people were guilty? I don't have to go far to prove that I'm guilty. I just, we've already talked about Achan. I need only to flip back a few chapters.

You remember what he did? How he was condemned? What was his sin? You might say, oh, he disobeyed. No, no, no. I know what he did. He stole.

And then he lied about it. Sure. But actually Achan confesses his very own guilt. And do you know what he confesses to?

[27 : 59] Chapter 7, verse 21. Well, there I was in this house. And I saw a beautiful cloak, loads of silver, a bar of gold.

And there, in verse 21, he confesses it. I coveted. Coveted? What about the theft?

What about the lying or the disobedience? Achan said, no, no, no, no. I know what I did. I coveted. And here you have.

It was his covetousness that condemned him. Have you ever coveted? Have you ever obsessed over something you didn't have?

Desired something that wasn't yours? Craved the life of another? To quote Jeremy Meeks. There's a little Achan in all of us. Enough to condemn us.

[29 : 04] Covetousness? That's it? That's it. That's it. Guilty. As charged. Now, can I apply that to cities?

I think there's a strong argument that you could to all of humanity. And we may now begin to see that the hearts of men and women are naturally set against God.

As many are consumed by God's judgment, we have this single exception. The Hivites. The inhabitants of Gibeon who sought to make peace with Israel.

Now, this is where the news turns good. Because when all have sinned and have hardened their hearts against God, we see that some will die in their opposition to God and toward his people.

But some will find this way of escape. In short, even through devious means, they crafted a covenant with Israel. A covenant that would deliver them from the wrath of God and spare them.

[30 : 08] Well, for the sake of time, allow me to fast forward to the fashioning of another covenant that would spare lives. That would pardon the guilty.

And you know where I'm going. The road to the cross. Their kings and nations would rise up against him. Rulers and authorities.

This Joshua we read about. This scene in Joshua would be repeated. Another coalition of forces would come together. And what did it look like? A king named Herod.

A high priest named Caiaphas. A governor named Pilate. The Roman Empire. The city of Jerusalem. Would all collectively mount their forces.

Joining them would be the forces. Evil forces of the heavenly places. The devil and his grand weapon of death. And they would now come.

[31 : 12] Not upon the people of God. But upon the Son of God. The Son of God representing the people. And the Bible takes us to another hilltop.

Outside Jerusalem. It was there. The Bible tells us a greater commander than Joshua. Jesus walked alone into battle on a cross. And what unfolds. And what unfolds. Only heaven knows.

But catch this. The Son of God would devote himself. To destruction. To destruction.

Through death on a cross. God his Father. Would say no more. No mercy. In this case. Divine mercy.

Withheld from the one. Who knew no sin. Who committed no crime. Who had no fault. And gave him over to be destroyed. The Son of God.

[32 : 12] In that moment. Was cut in covet. It seemed. Probably in Satan's mind. Victorious. But we know. If I may.

It was quite devious. Put the Son of God. To apparent death. Making an agreement. In his own body. Signed and sealed.

By his own blood. And so for three days. He remained. Buried and defeated. The perfect record. Seemed broken. The first L. They would say.

Yet. To fulfill the promise. I will not let my Holy One. See decay. I will not. Abandon. My son.

So God raised him back to life. Vindicating his innocence. And throwing him as king. And what appeared as God's first loss. Became. Another victory.

[33 : 09] God has set his king on his holy hill. Namely his beloved son. And all the nations. Will be his heritage. The ends of the earth. His possession. And as a result.

I have this charge. To preach to you. This morning. This divine offer. Of the forgiveness of sins. Because the covetousness.

That plagues you. Can be pardoned. The conceit. That consumes you. Can be commandeered. The blemishes on your record.

Can be blotted out. The guilt. On your record. Can be removed. At the cross. Of the Lord Jesus. Is where you find. The greatest depiction. Of God.

Fighting. For you. And. Giving you the victory. So rather. Your rebellious heart.

[34 : 04] Being further hardened. May it be healed. This is the great offer. Of the gospel. This is the good news.

Of the Bible. This is what we've watched. Transpire. As two. Young. Ladies. Have testified. To this morning. The reality.

That Jesus. Will save. At a bus stop. Will save. While you're whacking weeds. Over here. In the parking lot. That Jesus. Still saves. And his record.

Will remain perfect. As each life. As he conquers. Each life. Through love. There is no one like him. A perfect God.

No one better. 31 and 0. And counting. Father. Thanks.

[35 : 03] Be. To God. Who gives us. The victory. In Christ. Jesus. Father.

We pray. That we would experience. The power of God. Fighting on our behalf. Not only in these days.

In the days ahead. But lest we forget. We would turn back. And look. And see on that cross. The son of God. Fighting.

For the people of God. And giving us the victory. So father. As we sing. In response to you. Would our hearts.

Be strengthened. Would your gospel. Be declared. Would Christ. Be exalted. Amen. Well.

[36 : 01] I invite you to. That.