

Life in the Promised Land

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 14 September 2025

Preacher: Joe Dugger

[0 : 00] If you would, go ahead and open your Bibles to Joshua. So, I want to show you something this morning.

I want to show you something that I find pretty incredible about God's Word. So if you've been here for any length of time at all, then you know my stance on Scripture. I believe that Scripture is God's Word, and I believe that God's Word is sufficient for any and everything that we might face in this life.

You also know my commitment to expository preaching, exegetical preaching. You can see that in my commitment to line-by-line, verse-by-verse preaching. And, you know, you get to a chapter like Joshua chapter 12, and if you have your Bibles turned there, then you can see it.

And you say, how are you going to preach that? At least I did. So, full disclosure, I have studied this week. I have prayed this week.

And when I got here this morning, I had no idea what I was going to say. And I mean that sincerely. I studied. This was not from a lack of study. This was not from a lack of praying. It was not from a lack of reading Scripture.

[1 : 17] I was stumped. On the one hand, we had a very, very tumultuous week just in the nation, in the country. And so I, you know, I wondered if I should preach something else.

So as I was praying, I even asked God, God, do you want me to preach from another text? He didn't let me off the hook. And so I want to show you this morning something that I find remarkable about Scripture.

And that is that even passages like this chapter, these chapters, where we talk about the kings who were defeated and the lands as they're distributed.

Even in these passages, Scripture is once again proven true. And that Scripture I'm referring to, by the way, is 2 Timothy 3, 16 and 17, which reads, All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be equipped for every good work.

Complete, equipped for every good work. You know, it's like one of the things, you read this and you're like, did I read that right? All Scripture, including Joshua 12, like how are we supposed to teach that? What's the purpose? But all of it is applicable, all of it is good and useful and profitable for teaching, training in righteousness, all of these things.

[2 : 36] And so today we're going to stay in this chapter, and I want to show you what I believe that God showed me, which is how this seemingly obscure, admittedly boring section of Scripture applies to our lives today.

Let's pray together before we go to the Word. Lord God, we come to you now. As we study your Word, we come to learn from you. Speak to us, O God.

Fill our hearts with your truth. Mold us. Help us to leave this place looking more like your Son. And it's in his name that we pray. Amen.

So there are three explicit takeaways that I see in these chapters, and there's one implicit reality that I think will strengthen us in the week ahead.

All right? So the first takeaway, the first really profound takeaway from Joshua chapter 12 is thank the Lord for what he has done. Thank the Lord for what he has done.

[3 : 36] So what we see here in Joshua chapter 12, I'll read a few verses at a time, but it's, The Israelites struck down the following kings of the land and took possession of their land beyond the Jordan River to the east and from the Arnon River to Mount Hermon, including all of the Arabah eastward.

King Sihon of the Amorites lived in Heshbon. He ruled from Aror on the rim of the Arnon River along the middle of the valley and half of Gilead up to the Jabbok River, the border of the Ammonites. The Arabah east of the Sea of Chinnereth to the Sea of Arabah, that is the Dead Sea, eastward through Beth-Jeshemoth and southward below the slopes of Pisgah.

Again, not very exciting reading, I admit. Okay? But what we're reading about is the conquest of the land. On the way into the land, the people of Israel, led by Moses at this point, were trying to pass through the land of King Sihon, and he did not want them to pass through their land, and so he attacked them.

And God told Moses and told the people, do not worry about this guy, I've got this, don't worry about this, you're going to win. And the people did that. They routed King Sihon, and it was a large victory, by the way, it was a profound victory.

[4 : 44] In fact, that victory is what sparked the fear in the hearts and lives of the Canaanites. And then they kept on moving, and they took out Og of Bashan. By the way, Og was one of the giant-type people.

I don't know if he was like as big as Goliath or anything like that, but you can hear it in the name, Og. It sounds like a big guy, you know what I mean? But Og was a big guy, and he led a people of big guys. And the people of Israel still won that battle on the way in.

And so we've actually seen this, we've talked about this multiple times. This has been brought up multiple times in this conquest, these victories on the east side of the Jordan. But here's what you see.

Moses, the Lord's servant, and the Israelites struck them down, and Moses, the Lord's servant, gave their land as an inheritance to the Reubenites, Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh. If you remember, those two-and-a-half tribes were like, hey, this land is great for pastors.

Can we have this land instead of being in the land? And Moses was at first pretty upset with them. But then after taking some time to hear them out, he agreed that this land would be good for them. So this land has already been distributed.

[5 : 48] They knew where they were going to be. They made a deal with Moses that they would go in and they would fight with the other Israelites to win, to take the land. And then after that time, they would get their land on the east side of the Jordan.

And then from Joshua 12, 7 through verse 24, what you see is literally a list of the kings and kingdoms in the south and in the north in Canaan that the men of Israel fought against and won. And through this list, most of these battles have been, or kingdoms or kings even, have been mentioned already. There's a handful that were not mentioned yet. But what you see is that the total number of the kings and kingdoms, the areas that they took over, was 31.

This was a pretty spectacular victory, especially considering they only lost once at the Battle of Ai. Beyond that, they had five to seven years of conquest where God just gave them this land. And so anytime you see a history like this, a list, it is by nature boring, right? To us, to us. But imagine you're an Israelite living in the land and you're starting to question the goodness of God, the faithfulness of God.

[7 : 04] Have you ever questioned the faithfulness of God? Where do you go when you question the faithfulness? Well, you go back. You look at what God has done. You look at the victories that God has given.

And so for an Israelite in the land, this list is exciting. You know, this church has a history that was published in 1986. I was not born yet.

But 1986, this church had a history published. And look, I've read it. And let me just tell you, it doesn't make for exciting reading, okay?

It's not like the most amazingly written historical narrative of all time. It's a list. These people were members. These people were pastors. These people did certain things.

These churches were planted. All these different things. See, it's exciting for me to see that and to read it because I'm a part of this church, right? It is boring reading in the sense that it's listing. But it's exciting for me to read that.

[8 : 00] And I'm a part of this church. And I'm like, wow, God has really worked and been faithful to First Baptist Lewisburg for well over 100 years. That's unbelievable. That's exciting. You know, for someone who's not connected to this church, like, for example, if I gave this list to the pastor of the church that I came from in Texas, he would probably just throw it away.

It doesn't make for exciting reading unless you're connected to the story, right? So for the people of Israel, this is extremely exciting. This is the testament to the Lord's faithfulness.

And what they did, what they showed us in listing this and codifying this is that it is important for God's people to be intentional and careful and descriptive in remembering the things that God has done.

You know the song, Count Your Many Blessings, right? Count them one by one. I think, I don't know who wrote that one. Any idea? Was that Fanny Crosby? I feel like they all are. Or B.B. Warfield, right?

That's another one. Okay. Anyways, whoever wrote that one, I think they were onto something. We should be very careful, very intentional to remember the things that God has accomplished in our lives, in the lives of our family, in the lives of our church, in the lives of our community.

[9 : 24] We should be careful and intentional. We should be careful and intentional to remember the things that God has done. You see, the other thing here in this chapter is it shows us that these kings who stood against the people of Israel and ultimately opposed the Lord never stood a chance.

God is over all earthly kings. He is the king of kings, the Lord of lords. There is no one who can stand against the Lord and win.

So not only were the people of Israel encouraged when they considered the faithfulness of God, but they were emboldened when they remembered the power of their God.

Nothing can stand against him. And that's exactly why it's important for us to carefully list the things that God has done. So let me ask you, do you have a, I don't know, does anybody in there, whenever you do your quiet time, you're reading, do you journal?

Do you, like, take notes and write down what God is showing you through his word, things like that? Anybody a journaler? Okay, we've got two. Kind of expected more. Okay, anyways, I guess you're not creative.

[10 : 32] I'm not either, so don't worry. I don't really journal things. I, like, type on the computer. You know what I mean? I'm just not creative enough. My handwriting isn't pretty enough. But anyways, we should be careful to list specific things, sometimes even with specific dates, when God has moved, when God has done amazing things.

Like, we celebrate the day of birth. We call it a birthday, right? Every year, we remember when we were born. We remember when our children were born. We remember when relatives were born. And we celebrate that because it's an important thing, right?

And it's an important date, so we keep the date. Same thing with the things that God does. What God shows us, what God teaches us through his word. We should take intentional time to remember and reflect and be thankful to God.

God's people are called to live lives of thankfulness. So, keep a record of the things that you've seen God accomplish. You know, it's easy sometimes when bad things happen, and by the way, a lot of bad things happen in this world.

It's easy to look at the bad situation and say, why did God let this bad thing happen? But it's also just as easy to forget to ask, why is God so unbelievably good and kind and loving?

[11 : 42] Why did he give us his son? Why does he show us grace? Why did he teach me and grow me in his word? Why is our God so good?

And when we remember the work of God, we're able to live lives of thanksgiving, lives of thankfulness. The second thing I want you to see in this as we consider Joshua 12 and 13 is that we should trust that the Lord is sovereign.

You know, again, a world of unrest, right? We're in a world of unrest. We're in a world of evil things, of suffering, of painful things.

And it's in the moments of suffering and pain that we start to question certain important truths about God. But one thing we can never forget is that God is, in fact, the sovereign Lord over all the universe.

Not only is he over all of the kings and powers and dominions, he has a plan that cannot be thwarted. When we think about tragedies, we have a hard time resting in the sovereignty of God.

[12 : 47] We turn to fear. We turn to doubt. We turn to anger. But God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and sound judgment. That's, by the way, 2 Timothy 1, verse 7.

Sound judgment says God is in control. God is sovereign. God is the sovereign Lord over this universe. In this list of God's victories, and make no mistake, this is God's list of victories, we see an

impenetrable truth that we can rest in, and that is the land was God's to give.

It wasn't the possession of the Canaanite kings. The land was God's. The land is God's. This church building is God's.

Right? God is the sovereign over all. He is able to take from and give to whomever he pleases. God is the sovereign Lord.

Colossians 1 says that it is by him, through him, and to him that all things exist. Joshua and the Israelites could rest in God's sovereign word and promises.

[13:59] He said that he would give them the land, and he did. He said that they would have victory in battle and no one would be able to stand against them, and they did. He said that they would receive an inheritance, and guess what?

They did. God is sovereign, and he is faithful. We can trust God's word, and we can trust the sovereign God who knows us better than we know ourselves, and he knows what will bring him the most glory better than we do.

So when we face tragedy, when we face trials, when we have hard times, we can trust that God is glorified in the way that we grow in our faith.

We grow in our reliance on him. We grow in endurance. God is faithful, and he is sovereign. The Israelites went where God led them to go, and they did what God commissioned them to do.

And then, if you remember, verse 23 of chapter 11, they rested in the land. Verse 23 of chapter 11 says, Joshua took the entire land in keeping with all that the Lord had told Moses.

[15:08] Joshua then gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal allotments. After this, the land had rest from war. They trusted in the word of the Lord. He is sovereign.

They trusted in the work of God. They joined in. He is sovereign. And then they trusted in the rest that God gave them, and they rested. So just as a reminder, when you face things that are very challenging in life, and we do, we should remember God is in control.

He knows our days before we do. He knows how long our lives will be before we do. We don't know till the end. God knows from before time even began.

We serve a sovereign God. No kingdom, no ruler, no evil can stand against or oppose to the Lord. He is sovereign.

So remember that God is in control. And just as a reminder, that may not always look like we want it to. But just because things don't turn out the way that we want them to does not mean that God is any less in control.

[16:13] And just because we see bad things happen to people does not mean that God is any less of a protector. God is faithful, and he is sovereign, and we can trust in him.

We'll go over to chapter 13. I want you to see this final aspect here, this third truth from these chapters, and that is that God wants his people to be unified.

God wants his people to be unified. So chapter 13 is interesting, okay, because it tells us, like I said before, information that we already know. If you go to Numbers 32, I don't expect that you will, but if you go to Numbers 32, you'll find that this land on the eastern side of the Jordan has already been allotted.

It's already been portioned out to Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh. They know where their land is. So why, serious question, why did Joshua take the time to include that in this land allotment section?

Well, it's because God wants his people to be unified. The people to the east and the people in the land of Canaan, after time went on and generations passed and so on and so forth, pretty soon they wouldn't recognize each other anymore.

[17:32] They wouldn't know each other anymore. They wouldn't welcome those from the east into the west to worship together. So what would they do? Well, Joshua recorded their land allotment as a reminder that this is their inheritance from the Lord and that his people should be unified throughout the generation.

So if there was ever any question for those people on the east, they could say, no, no, look, look at the word, it's written. We know this is our land. We know that we are part of you. We're Israelites. We're part of the Lord's people.

So we're looking at a strong statement here to the call to unity among God's people. So Joshua explains all of this, and they know where they're going to be, but he explains it again anyways because he wants the people to be unified throughout the generations.

There's another couple important aspects here in Joshua chapter 13 that we should address as well. And the first one is, in case you were wondering, age doesn't really matter in terms of your service to the Lord.

Did you know that? Like you can't be too old to serve. You can't be too young to serve. Age, not really a factor to the Lord. Look at this, Joshua chapter 1. And Joshua was now old, advanced in age, and the Lord said to him, very bluntly, by the way, you have become old, advanced in age, but a great deal of the land remains to be possessed.

[18:56] This is the land that remains. So what you see here, by the way, is there are areas of the land of Canaan that had not been possessed by the people of Israel. So what has happened is they took these 31 kingdoms, they had this land worked out, and they knew that they had control over the land, but there were still people groups living in different areas.

And so they had this responsibility. Look, the land is not completely cleared out, but you can go ahead and apportion it to the people by casting lots, and then their responsibility is to dispossess the rest of the people, the remnant, okay?

So that's what you see here in Joshua chapter 13. But Joshua's age did not stop him from service. Look at verse 6, the second half of verse 6. I will drive them out before the Israelites, only distribute the land as an inheritance for Israel, as I have commanded you.

Therefore, divide this land as an inheritance to the nine tribes and the half-tribe of Manasseh. So the Lord told Joshua, look, you're old, you're advanced in age, and your ministry is not over. It's just changed the way that it looks.

Ministry does change with age. When you're younger, you're not trusted as much as you are when you're older. And when you're older, you're not able to do the same things that you were able to do when you were younger.

[20:09] Please don't hit me after this, okay? Joshua went from being able to fight and lead in battle to instead being someone who was a land surveyor, right?

It's a very different ministry, but nonetheless, it was still the calling from God on his life. Age doesn't matter. God still calls you to serve. So if you're older, you're still called to serve. It just might look different.

It might look like you need to really spend time praying, developing a strong prayer ministry. It might look like you need to spend time leading a small group Bible study, right? Different things than maybe playing with kids, right?

Like, hey, sometimes that gets hard, you know? I'm only 30, and man, sometimes it's hard, you know what I mean? Like, as you get older, your ministry might change, but God still calls you to serve him.

And the other important thing that you see in Joshua chapter 13 is these notes about the Levites, okay? Look at Joshua 13, 14, and 33. It says, He did not, however, give any inheritance to the tribe of Levi.

[21:12] This was their inheritance, just as he had promised the food offerings made to the Lord, the God of Israel. And then verse 33, it says, But Moses did not give a portion to the tribe of Levi.

The Lord, the God of Israel, was their inheritance, just as he had promised them. So the Levites didn't get a portion of land. And in a lot of ways, they got a way better deal.

They have a spiritual inheritance as God's chosen priestly line. Their inheritance wasn't going to be land and grass. It was the Lord himself. In a spiritual sense, we have an inheritance most similar to the Levites.

Ephesians chapter 1, verse 11 through 14 says, In him, we have also received an inheritance. In him, being in Christ. Because we were predestined according to the plan of the one who works out everything in agreement with the purpose of his will, so that we who had already put our hope in Christ might bring praise to his glory.

In him, you were also sealed with the promised Holy Spirit when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and when you believed. The Holy Spirit is the down payment of our inheritance until the redemption of the possession to the praise of his glory.

[22:31] So how do you know that you're saved? Well, God's given you his Holy Spirit. How do you know that you'll stay saved? Well, God doesn't take back the down payment. He has put this down payment on your very soul by sealing you with the promised Holy Spirit, so that when you die, when your life on this earth comes to an end, your life in heaven begins because you are sealed and secure by the work of God the Holy Spirit.

You will receive your inheritance, which is to stand in God's glory for the rest of eternity, and you can rest in that confidence. You can trust that confidently because the Holy Spirit of God dwells within you and has sealed your salvation.

So in Christ you are saved. By the Holy Spirit you are sealed. And when you are in heaven, you'll receive the inheritance, which is seeing the glory of God. So what is our inheritance as Christ followers?

Our inheritance is the Lord God himself. Very similar to the Levites. The inheritance that we receive is standing in the presence of the Lord. But I want you to understand, this whole chapter, again, it's a picture of unity.

God calls his people to unity. God calls his people to unity. United we will be in heaven. So united we should be here on earth.

[23 : 52] Philippians chapter 2 explains the call to unity. If then there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, make my joy complete by thinking the same way, having the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. Everyone should look not to his own interest, but rather to the interest of others.

How were the tribes of Israel going to be united? Well, they could have been united by considering others as more important than themselves, by being humble with one another.

How can we as a church be united? By considering others as more important than ourselves, by being humble. So if Philippians 2, 1 through 4 explains the call to unity, Philippians 2, 5 through 8 explains the model.

Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. Instead, he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity.

[25 : 02] And when he had come as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. So how are we supposed to be humble people who seek the unity of God's church?

Well, by adopting the same attitude as that of Christ. By looking to the model, the author, the perfecter of our faith, Jesus Christ himself. So I said at the beginning that these couple chapters point us to three explicit, very clear takeaways.

One was that we should be thankful. God's people should be thankful. Number two is we should trust in the sovereignty of God. And number three would be that God calls his people to unity. And then I also said that there is a fourth, kind of subtle and implicit takeaway that I think will strengthen us in the days ahead. And so underneath all of this, even going back into the conquest in Joshua, you know, Joshua's chapters six through 11, looking at the actual fighting that took place, underneath all of this is this really beautiful picture and reality that our hope does not rest in the things of this world.

Okay, the people of Israel, I said Joshua 11, 23, they were able to rest in the land without war, but that rest did not last. If you keep reading through Joshua and then you get into the judges, you find out that that actually lasted just a short while.

[26 : 25] They were attacked on every side very quickly. The rest that they had was not eternal rest. In fact, the book of Hebrews makes this really clear that Joshua took them into the land, but the rest that they had was not an eternal rest.

The rest in this life is short-lived. The peace that we find when we look for peace in the things of the world is short-lived. It is not eternal because sin has so deeply corrupted us.

So we can't rest in this world or the things of this world. If you rest in political power, you should understand that political figures and political movements come and go.

If you rest in this church building, you should understand that church buildings come and they go. If you rest in people, you should understand that people come and go. The only place that we can find rest is in the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Jesus Christ, our Savior.

And if you find your rest in Christ, if you set your hope on Jesus, then he promises rest that's lasting, eternal, that you'll receive an inheritance with him in glory.

[27 : 40] So these victories point us to Jesus. He is our ultimate hope and he is our ultimate rest. See, the people of Israel looked for the Messiah.

They knew that peace, shalom, rest was coming. They knew it was coming in the Messiah and the Messiah has come. His name is Jesus. And he died on the cross taking the punishment of our sin, the punishment that we deserve.

And by faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, we can be saved because three days later he rose again. And here's the other thing. Jesus is our hope and he's coming back.

Thank God this earth is not all that there is. Thank God this life is not all that there is. If the people of Israel put their hope in the fact that they won these battles against 31 kings, then they would have hope for a while, but then pretty soon they'd face other kings.

We have hope in the risen Savior who conquered death, who conquered sin, and who gives life, eternal life.

[28 : 51] And I want you to see too that Philippians chapter 2, that hymn of praise about the humility of Jesus, it doesn't end with him dying. It goes on, Philippians 2, 9 through 11 says, for this reason, God highly exalted him, specifically because of his humility, because he lived on this earth as a man, because he set aside the glories of heaven to live here in the sin around us.

Because he set those things aside, because he humbled himself, and because he died on the cross and rose again, God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

We live in a world that worships self. We live in a world that worships false gods. And like the song that we sang as the call to worship, come, now is the time to worship, says, the greatest treasure remains for those who gladly choose him now.

Because I promise, if you stand on that day proclaiming Jesus as Lord reluctantly, the punishment is severe.

But if you gladly submit to Jesus Christ as the Lord of all in this life, then on that day, you will stand in the chorus of thousands praising his name because he is the exalted king of kings and Lord of lords.

[30 : 29] He's above every other name. He's above my name. He's above your name. He's above every king's name. He's above every name. He is exalted and on the throne. So I want you to close. I want you to think about with these four things.

One, be thankful for God's work. Two, trust in the sovereign God. And three, seek biblical unity with fellow believers. And then finally, look ahead to the day of Christ. Look ahead to the day that Christ will return.

And if you don't know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, amazingly, Joshua 12 and 13, I think, show us the need to look ahead to the day of Christ and to rest in him, to place your faith in him, to seek him for the forgiveness of your sins, for mercy and grace.

So don't leave here today without receiving Christ as your Lord and Savior. And once he's the Lord of your life, he makes the decisions and you go with where he leads.

And for those of us who are in Christ, I want to encourage you to be thankful and to trust that God is in control and that Jesus is going to come again.

[31 : 42] And everything that's broken in this world is going to be made right. Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, you are good. God, thank you for your word.

Thank you for your truth. Even in these obscure passages, we can still see how you, King Jesus, are on the throne and should be the object of our praise and hope.

God, I pray that you would bless the remainder of this service, be glorified in this place, and it's in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen.