

### Quest Completed

*Joshua 10:16-12:24*

*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.*

**Joshua 11:23**

*For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. <sup>7</sup> **I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.** <sup>8</sup> Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.*

**2 Timothy 4:6-8**

**Introduction:** One of the joys of being part of Christ's family is participating in different areas of life together. We get to be there when babies are born, when birthdays are celebrated, moves, graduations, operations, tragic news, times of unexpected rejoicing, and even death. This week we were privileged to be a part of a retirement dinner for Bill Windham after 32 years of faithful service for the LAPD. I wish every Christian who has worked in a secular environment could have observed. The testimonies were given by a vast array of different officers, support staff, and others who had worked alongside Bill throughout his years of service. From bosses, partners, friends, and daughters, there was a consistent theme: this was a man who was excellent in his job, was kind and compassionate to those he worked with, and made his family a top priority. He served, prayed with, and exemplified Christ in his years on the job, being a light in the midst of a twisted and dark place. He set out over 3 decades ago to do a good job, and over time, completed his task.

We come to a transition in the book of Joshua. What has been covered in meticulous detail up until now is now recorded in a more rapid fire approach. There were three main phases to the conquering of the land of Canaan: **1)** moving all of Israel from one side of the Jordan to the other, making sure they were adequate defenses but also supply lines for the rest of the conquest, culminating in the taking of Jericho and Ai, key defensible positions. **2)** The southern campaign, which consisted of destroying numerous strong hill cities. This was begun when five bound together to attack Gibeon in chapter 10, and the mop-up duty in the end of the chapter. **3)** The northern campaign, which is told in chapter 11 and includes incredibly sparse detail for such an immense battle front. This would conclude the main commission given to Joshua. After this it was up to the individual tribes to clear out any further resistance and occupy the land. Joshua would have the task of handing off leadership and challenge the people to continue what he started (ch. 24), but after this, Joshua's leadership is not nearly as prominent.

What is clear in this text is what has already been clear until now. The glory did not rest on what Joshua accomplished but on what God did. The work, the pathway, and the impetus to conquer the land was God's alone. That's why the emphasis on the first chapters of Joshua was on **spiritual preparation more than military expedition**. What Israel had to focus on was obedience to all God called them to and trust that He would make the path straight. This is also why the battles themselves are not glorified (which we typically would) and not much ink is given to how Joshua overcame fortifications, chariots, and multitudes of soldiers. **In understanding this, we are strengthened in our resolve in our mission, to glorify God in making much of Christ through the gospel in all nations.** We know our mission and less is stated about tactics and more about trusting God to move. What he calls us to is full obedience until the end, so that we could fight the good fight, finish the race, and keep the faith.

## I. **A Rundown of Conquest**

Last week we looked at the beginning of the conquest of the Southern kingdoms of Canaan. We see on the map (map #1) where these were located. This was started as a super-pac of 5 nations came and attacked Gibeon, causing Joshua to come up with his mighty men and engage in battle. God assured Joshua victory, caused panic among the other nations, threw down large hail stones to kill the enemy, and prolonged the day so that the battle could be won. Because of this, the Southern campaign was not a long, drawn out affair but more of a blitz across the land, finally bringing Joshua back to Gilgal (10:43). Here are a few highlights from each campaign:

### A. Southern Campaign (10:16-43)

#### The capturing of kings:

As the 5 kings fled from the Israelite onslaught, they hid themselves in the cave at Makkedah. Joshua, who had prayed for the day to be extended already, shrewdly called for the mouth of the cave to be closed shut so that he could continue to pursue the rest of the soldiers until only a few made it back to their walled cities. Only then did he open the cave and brought the five kings out in front of his commanders and men. Then Joshua did a few amazing things: 1) He had his commanders stand on the necks of the kings (a sign of victory and submission) and reminded his soldiers that their job was not done but that God would allow them to continue until the end. 2) He took, hung, and moved the kings into the cave, and sealed it. Leaving nothing left undone, he went ahead and conquered Makkedah itself with the sword, because, well, why rest now.

#### The boundaries extended:

There were 5 main cities conquered: **Hebron** (a place where the patriarchs lived and where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were buried, as well as Joseph (Gen. 50:25); **Jarmuth, Lachish, Eglon**, as well as **Libnah, Makkedah, and Debir**. It is interesting to note that **Jerusalem** was not taken at this time, and would not be taken for centuries until David did in 2 Samuel 5:6-7.

Joshua 10:40-43 laid out the boundary lines of the conquest:

- The hill country
- The Negev – or desert to the south
- The low land or foothills
- The mountain slopes

This created an immense buffer zone and ability for the people to begin to occupy.

### B. Northern Campaign (11:1-23)

#### The battle odds:

Similar to the super-pac in the south, there was a similar occurrence in the north. The ring leader was Jabin, king of Hazor, a key strategic city that historically was a significant gatekeeper from the north to south. Joshua 11:4 describes how they came against Joshua:

*And they came out with all their troops, **a great horde**, in number **like the sand that is on the seashore**, with very **many horses and chariots**.<sup>5</sup> And all these kings joined their forces and came and encamped together at the waters of Merom to fight with Israel.*

There are many questions here, since it did not seem that Joshua possessed this type of firepower, so it opens questions as to how he defeated his enemy. The key, however, is found in God's command:

**Joshua 11:6** *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."*

God gave Joshua the victory over a vast and powerful army. And so Joshua would not trust in horses or chariots (Psalm 20:7), the horses were disabled and the chariots burned. As long as Joshua would trust the Lord, he did not need advanced weaponry or superior firepower. In fact, Joshua cleared out the rest of the northern area, but it was God at work behind it all:

**Joshua 11:20** *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.*

### The boundary:

Now, from north to south, there was peace. God gave the land into Joshua's hand, and except for a handful of places (that became problematic since the people did not finish the job, including the Anakim in Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod, which is where Goliath would come from – 11:22) the land was secure. This was the land that was promised to the tribes of Israel, and the job to be done now was drive the rest out and live. The people of Israel were given **security, peace, possessions, livestock, and land**, all that they needed to succeed. They had possessed the land by faith, now they had to continue to live by faith, which we will see is the difficult part. God delivered on His promise, and would continue to do so, and to the degree that they believed it would determine future success.

## II. A Review of Conquest (12:1-24)

Chapter 12 gives a summary or review of the entire conquest starting on the East side of the Jordan River and secured by Moses. What is recounted is the Baskin Robbins history of the conquest: 31 kings and cities were given over by God to the nation of Israel, a wandering band of slaves who started in the most improbable way (fleeing the mighty Egyptian juggernaut through the Red Sea) and conquering 31 walled cities with hardened militaries and modern weaponry. 31 kings that tried their best to stand up to the wave of destruction, but God was greater. God took a group of nobodies and brought them out of slavery, across a desert, and into a land where He could be their God and they could be His people. God is still doing this today: taking nobodies, against all common convention and logic, and turning them into a force to reach the nations with the gospel to become worshippers eternally in His kingdom. If God did it then, He will continue to do it today. We trust and worship the same God, and we confidently believe that He will build His church and nothing, not hell itself, will prevail against it (Matt. 16:18). Now, as we look back at Joshua's leadership, we see **six key things that marked him as a leader**, both in this episode and taking the rest as a whole. This has been modified from observations made by James Boice in his commentary on Joshua (Baker books, 1989).

## III. A Recap of Leadership in Conquest

### A. Laser beamed focus to the main goal

We are limited beings. We are not omnipotent which means we are limited in our strength, power, and ability. Contrary to what we tell our kids sometimes, we cannot do "anything" and even setting our mind to something does not mean we are going to accomplish it. However, we are told what our clear mission in life is, and when we do that, we will ultimately be successful.

Joshua was given a gift of an opportunity by God when he found the kings in a cave. He could have stopped then, claimed victory, and busted out the victory cigars. However, Joshua was not willing to sacrifice his long term mission for short term gain. He deferred something that was good (he eventually dealt with the kings) so that he could take care of his main mission, the one he asked God to secure by extending the sun. Leadership in life is knowing not only what to say “yes” to, but what are the good things to say “no” to in order to accomplish the most important.

We often struggle to understand our purpose and intent of life. Is life about getting a job, then a better job, a house, then a better house, a spouse, kids that go to college, and a secure retirement? Is it about achieving a position, doing something big (ending something, starting something, etc)? What is the laser beamed focus that we should have, letting everything else become secondary? What is the clear “main thing” in our life that separates a nominal life from an exemplary one?

CHRIST. Our whole hearted, passionate, no looking back pursuit of Christ is the focus of our life.

*“When Jesus is your passion you’ll never be without purpose.” Kevin DeYoung*

So many other things crowd into this passion, especially good things. We get side-tracked by life, food, future, entertainment, and other things that dull our heart for Christ. When Christ is our pursuit and purpose, we take all of these other things with thanksgiving without replacing Him. We also take everything, including suffering, trial, rejection, and persecution because our joy is not set on those things but on Him. Is Christ all? Has pursuit of Him allowed you to deny yourself, take up your cross in suffering, and follow Him (Luke 9:23)? Is this the focus of your life? What needs to go, including the good things, that distract you? When was the last time you took personal inventory of your life, including your time and money, and tested to see if Christ was all over all of them? Do you want to know God’s will for your life? Don’t pursue His will, pursue Him.

### **B. Trickle down entrustment**

**Joshua 10:25** *And Joshua said to them (his leaders), "Do not be afraid or dismayed; be strong and courageous. For thus the LORD will do to all your enemies against whom you fight."*

Joshua’s leaders needed encouragement for the long-haul. They needed to know that though they would be up against immeasurable odds, they needed to trust the Lord. So Joshua passed on the encouragement that he had received from the Lord so often, repeating the words that God had given him to them. He also allowed his men to taste the victory, deferring the credit of victory to them. Leadership, like encouragement, should be a trickle down type of activity.

**2 Timothy 1:12-14.** *But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has **been entrusted to me.***<sup>13</sup> *Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.*<sup>14</sup> *By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, **guard the good deposit entrusted to you.***

**2 Timothy 2:2** *and what you have heard from me in the presence of many **witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.***

Leadership in the church and home must follow the same principle: we must pass on what has been passed on to us, and do so with encouragement as well as admonition. Often what is needed for our young men, kids, and those we are discipling is to know that they do not need to be afraid, but that they are able to accomplish their mission because the Lord is with them. Are we allowing our kids to think, try, and fail? Are we encouraging them by allowing them to engage in the things that we could do

better right now, but giving away opportunities for them? This is why we will have other men teach from this pulpit, new leaders lead small groups, and interns to be trained up. We want to entrust to others what is entrusted to us, and perpetuate it into the future.

### C. Consistency over celebrity

If Joshua was alive today, he would no doubt be a celebrity. We are enamored with those who blog often, speak on big stages, and who are generally well known. However, Joshua was not enamored by celebrity but was defined by consistency. Think about the daunting task: take out 31 kings and kingdoms...go! It would be like trying to eat an elephant. But Joshua mastered the mystery, the secret to success, the hidden gem to master industry: there are no mysteries, no short-cuts, only consistent, logical, faithful, step by step, determined progress in life. Joshua had his marching orders, put his head down (but eyes up) and went about to accomplish it.

This is the same model of greatness for us. How do we define greatness? Not by followers or renown, but by determined faithfulness to the task before us. We are not defined by the amount of people we've "led to the Lord" (since God saves and God gets the glory), but by our obedient pursuit of Christ. How do we do this? Pursue Christ in His Word, through prayer, worshipping Him in all areas, including corporate, serving others, proclaiming the sweetness of Christ who don't know Him, giving our money and time, seeking to love the unlovely, and repeating. There is no mystery, but we have freedom from our sin and past to pursue Christ with our whole heart.

### D. Early mistakes instructed rather than branded

Joshua learned how to fail forward. The greatness of the Bible is that it never sanitizes its heroes. Joshua clearly made a sinful decision with the Gibeonites when he did not seek counsel from the Lord and potentially made a hasty decision in sending soldiers up to Ai, without realizing there was sin in the camp. These left scars, for sure, but Joshua did not allow himself to be defined by his sin or mistakes, but was willing to learn from these and move forward in faith. This is exactly what Paul learned and modeled:

**Philippians 3:12** *Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.* <sup>13</sup> *Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: **forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,*** <sup>14</sup> *I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

Do not let your past define your future. Jesus paid for the sin of your past since He has paid the full price of the sin in the future (Col. 2:13-14). Our failures in the past cause us to be more dependant on God in the present and help us press forward to the future.

### E. Differentiates between believing and believing in

What set Joshua apart? While others might have believed in God, **Joshua believed God!** You might ask if there is a difference, and you would be right to ask, because the difference is the that which differentiates between heaven and hell, a God given faith and a belief that demons possess (see James 2:14-26). Many people believed in God (including those who were being wiped out by this God in Canaan), but Joshua placed his faith in God and that meant he followed him implicitly, leaving all behind. Believing in God means it affects our thoughts but not our heart and actions. This type of faith never goes to the level of salvation.

Jesus dealt with this in John 6. In verses 60-71, Jesus interacted with those who had been following Him, who had believed Him. After explaining that following Him would mean taking Him as the bread of life,

thus eating His flesh and drinking His blood (John 6:56), those who had been following had a hard time understanding and accepting His teaching. This led to:

**John 6:66-69** After this **many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.** <sup>67</sup> So Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" <sup>68</sup> Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, <sup>69</sup> **and we have believed, and have come to know,** that you are the Holy One of God."

In other words, there were some who believed because they saw, but that was not enough to save. Only those who believed to the point of following were saved. A leader believes God more than simply believing in God.

#### **F. Obedience to all commands, not just easy ones**

Finally, Joshua was obedient to complete everything God commanded, not just some:

**Joshua 11:15** *Just as the LORD had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did. **He left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses.***

We live in a culture that delights in cafeteria style belief: taking a little of this, a little of that, but definitely staying away from the mystery meat! We craft God after our own thought and define obedience around our own logic, even trying to bend scripture to fit OUR passions. Joshua's greatest accomplishment was not the burning of chariots, 31 kings crowns, or military stripes. His greatest accomplishment was sheer obedience to all the audacious, overwhelming, and seemingly impossible commands God gave. This was and is the nature of true success, and Joshua believed it.

Do these characterize us? Which of these areas do we lack faith, action, or resolve? What would characterize change in these areas? What would be different if we lived now like Joshua lived then?

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