

Sermon Outline

“AND THE LORD GAVE THEM REST”:
A CHRISTIAN READING OF THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

THE VICTORIES OF THE PROPHET MOSES

JOSHUA 12:1-6

I. Introduction

II. Two Lists of Victories (Joshua 12:1-23)

- A. In Joshua 12, we have two lists of kings that were defeated by Israel.
 - 1. The first list, verses 1-6, comprises the kings who were defeated under the leadership of the prophet Moses.
 - 2. The second list, verses 7-24, are the kings who were defeated under Joshua.
- B. What are the possible purposes of these lists?
 - 1. To teach future Israelites why their tribes have the land that they do.
 - 2. To show Israel that Moses and Joshua provided prophetic leadership for the nation of God in its formative years.
 - 3. To teach God’s people to submit to the holy authorities God has placed over them, whether prophet, priest, or king.
 - 4. To exhort future leaders of God’s people to be as trusting of and obedient to God as Moses and Joshua were.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What possible function did the lists serve to the original audience?

III. Introductory Statement (Joshua 12:1)

- A. Chapter twelve begins with an introductory statement: “Now these are the kings of the land whom the people of Israel defeated and took possession of their land beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise, from the Valley of the Arnon to Mount Hermon, with all the Arabah eastward:”
 - 1. This statement covers all the land under Israel’s control.
 - 2. The Valley of Arnon marks the southern boundary.
 - 3. Mount Hermon marks the northernmost boundary—130 miles (209 km)
 - 4. “all the Arabah eastward” refers to the land east of the Jordan between those boundaries (i.e. northern Jordan and southern Syria) (Robert Hubbard, *Joshua*, 360).
- B. But the kings that are in focus here are not those of the land that Joshua had just subdued.
 - 1. They are in the land “beyond the Jordan, toward the sunrise.”
 - 2. The land in view here is east of the Jordan.
 - 3. The land here was the land taken under the leadership of the prophet Moses.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What does the fact that pockets of resistance remain tell us about the limits of the gift of the Promised Land? (2) Why does God allow the Church's struggles to remain?

IV. Sihon of the Amorites (Joshua 12:2, 3)

- A. After that brief introduction, we come to the list itself.
- B. First on the list, we have "*Sihon* king of the Amorites..."
—Sihon "lived at Heshbon and ruled from Aroer, which is on the edge of the Valley of the Arnon, and from the middle of the valley as far as the river Jabbok [near the Dead Sea], the boundary of the Ammonites, that is, half of Gilead, and the Arabah to the Sea of Chinneroth [i.e. Sea of Galilee] eastward, and in the direction of Beth-jeshimoth, to the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, southward to the foot of the slopes of Pisgah" (vv 2, 3).
- C. The conflict between Israel and Sihon can be found in Numbers 21.
 - 1. As Israel was making its way through the wilderness, they had to pass through the land of the Amorites.
 - 2. Israel sent messengers to Sihon and asked him for permission to pass through his land (Num 21:22).
 - 3. Sihon did not allow Israel to pass through his territory (Num 21:23), and also attacked Israel.
- D. God's Church responds in self-defense (Num 21:24): "And Israel defeated him with the edge of the sword and took possession of his land from the Arnon"—which is a gorge in the River Jordan that enters the Dead Sea—"to the Jabbok,"—which a river somewhere near the Sea of Galilee—"as far as to the Ammonites, for the border of the Ammonites was strong."
- E. Under the prophetic leadership of Moses, Israel defeats the forces of Sihon, the king of the Heshbon, and possesses their land, all the way to the border of the Ammonite kingdom.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) Where did Sihon rule? (2) How did Israel get into conflict with Sihon?

V. Og of Bashan (12:4, 5)

- A. But while Israel was staying in Sihon's former territory, another threat raises its head—Og the king of Bashan (vv 4, 5).
- B. Go back to Numbers 21 for the context.
 - 1. Moses sent Israelites to spy out Jazer (Num 21:32).
 - 2. "Og the king of Bashan came out against them, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei" (Num 21:33).
 - 3. In Numbers 21:34, we read, "The LORD said to Moses, 'Do not fear him, for I have given him into your hand, and all his people, and his land. And you shall do to him as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived at Heshbon.'"

4. Israel defeated Og and possessed his land.
- C. Again, God leads his people to victory through his prophet Moses.”

***Questions for reflection:** (1) Who was Og? (2) What does the Lord say to Moses concerning Og in Num 2:34?

VI. Moses and Israel Defeat the Enemy (Joshua 12:6)

- A. In verse 6, we have a summary of what Moses did for Israel: “Moses, the servant of the LORD, and the people of Israel defeated them. Moses the servant of the LORD gave their land for a possession to the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh.”
- B. Although Moses did not have the honor of giving the rest of Israel their land, he had the privilege of helping three tribes come to their resting place.
- C. For this, along with all the other things that he did, Moses is remembered as a hero, a great leader of the nation.
- D. But there again, the title given to Moses is important.
 1. Moses is “the servant of the LORD.”
 2. This sets him apart from all the other heroes of the great civilizations.
 3. What differentiates the civilization of God from the civilizations of man is that in the civilization of God, heroism is always related to God, specifically obedience to God.
 4. Once again, Moses is not a hero primarily because he led the people of Israel to victory.
 5. He is a hero because he did everything as the Lord’s faithful servant.
- E. The challenge for us: What kind of heroism do we want to instil in our children and ourselves?
 1. God’s Word teaches us to honor the obedient human being; the man or woman who loves the Lord, cherishes his Word, and strives to advance his holiness in the world.
 2. That is biblical heroism. That is heroism at its best.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) Why is the title “the servant of the LORD” important? (2) What kind of heroism is Scripture instilling in us? (3) How does this challenge what you value today?

VII. A History Written By God

- A. What can we Christians learn from the list of victories that we see in Joshua 12:1-6? How is the Holy Spirit taking up this passage and speaking to us today?
- B. First: *This list of victories teaches future Israelites—especially those from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh—why they have the land that they do.*

1. Long ago, the prophet Moses led Israel to defeat Sihon king of the Amorites and Og king of Bashan.
 2. That is why Israel is able to occupy their land.
 3. The Promised Land today is in a very different situation.
 4. The land once occupied by those three tribes is now part of the country of Jordan.
 5. There is still a very important lesson for us here: The God of the Bible is the God of real-life history.
 6. He is the God who works in history, and not just in mystical feelings and religious symbolisms.
 7. The fact that these historical accounts are given shows us that God wants his people to know their history.
 8. Today, history in general is not highly valued.
 - a. We live in more pragmatic times.
 - b. We are addicted to the short-term and to the immediate.
 - c. Combined with our natural narcissism, we are not going to care about communities larger than ourselves.
 9. But God wants his Church to realize that we are connected to a long stream of events that have been taking place.
 10. We need to see ourselves from a larger perspective.

—The Church today stands in an unbroken line with the ancient Church of Israel.
 11. How Reuben, and Gad, and Manasseh got their land is also a part of our history.
- C. Second: *This list calls attention to the servant of the Lord, the prophet Moses.*
1. Moses provided prophetic leadership for the nation of God during its formative years.
 2. Moses was chosen by God to lead his people.
 3. And as such, Moses is a symbol of the kind of leaders God wants his Church to have.
 4. While you and I are no longer under the prophet Moses, we are called to look back to the great prophet leaders whom God has given to our holy nation.
 5. In an age where we are seeking heroes to emulate, wise sages to guide us, we can always look back to the great heroes of the faith:
 - The prophet Moses
 - The prophet Joshua
 - The Judges whom God raised to lead and save his people
 - The prophet Samuel
 - The prophet king David, etc.
 6. We should never think that God will leave his Church without a prophet leader.
 7. Today, our great prophet king who stands in the place of Moses and Joshua is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
 8. Our Lord Jesus continues to lead his Church today through thick and thin.
 9. No matter the struggle; no matter the confusion of the times, let it never be said that the Church has no King!

—Our King is Christ Jesus the Son of God!

D. Third: *We should trust the Prophet King whom God has placed over us.*

—Just as the Church depended on Moses to lead them so many years ago, the Church today depends on Jesus to lead us on this final leg of our journey into the final Promised Land, the new heavens and the new earth.

E. Fourth: *The lists are an exhortation to future leaders of the Church to be as trusting and as obedient to God as Moses and Joshua were.*

1. This ties back in with the issue of heroism: What kind of leaders should we endeavor to be?
2. Since leaders of the Church come from the people of the Church, what kind of people should we endeavor to be?
 - How should trusting and obeying look like in our lives today?
 - Where in your life do you need to *see* Christ Jesus your loving Lord?
 - Where in your heart do you need to fall in love with Christ Jesus again?

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What are four lessons that the Lord may be teaching us from the list of victories in Joshua 12:1-6? (2) Why should sacred history be important to the Christian? (3) Using Moses as a model, what kind of leader does the Church need? (4) “We should trust the Prophet King whom God has placed over us.” Who is this Prophet King? What does it mean for Jesus to be Head of the Church? (5) What kind of people do Moses and Joshua inspire us to be?

VIII. Christ Jesus As Our Strengthening

How was it that the prophet Moses was able to lead Israel against such enemies? It was because he met God. He knew God. He saw God. And those encounters with the Lord never leave you. They sustained Moses all the days of his life. They helped him face down great evil powers. While you and I have never seen the Lord Jesus Christ with our own eyes, we do see him in his Word. And we are called to trust in what the Scriptures reveal about our Lord. He is the living *Bread* who gives us life (Jn 6). He is *the Vine* who gives us strength (Jn 15). He is *the glorious Son of God* who is described in Revelation as having eyes like fire and a face shining with the glory of God (Rev 1:13). This is the Jesus who loves us. This is the Jesus who died for our sins. This is the Jesus who calls us to serve him with our whole lives. If ever we need strength to stand up to the powers of the world, we need to keep our Lord Jesus always at the front of our minds and in the center of our hearts. Only then, will we see the enemy kings for the weaklings that they really are. Only then, will we have victory over sin and evil in our lives.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) How are we to show godly strength today? Where does this strength come from? (2) Are you resting in Jesus today?