

## *The Promise Keeper*

### **Joshua 12**

NKJ Joshua 12:1 These are the kings of the land whom the children of Israel defeated, and whose land they possessed on the other side of the Jordan toward the rising of the sun, from the River Arnon to Mount Hermon, and all the eastern Jordan plain:

2 One king was Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt in Heshbon and ruled half of Gilead, from Aroer, which is on the bank of the River Arnon, from the middle of that river, even as far as the River Jabbok, which is the border of the Ammonites,

3 and the eastern Jordan plain from the Sea of Chinneroth as far as the Sea of the Arabah (the Salt Sea), the road to Beth Jeshimoth, and southward below the slopes of Pisgah.

4 The other king was Og king of Bashan and his territory, who was of the remnant of the giants, who dwelt at Ashtaroth and at Edrei,

5 and reigned over Mount Hermon, over Salcah, over all Bashan, as far as the border of the Geshurites and the Maachathites, and over half of Gilead to the border of Sihon king of Heshbon.

6 These Moses the servant of the LORD and the children of Israel had conquered; and Moses the servant of the LORD had given it as a possession to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh.

7 And these are the kings of the country which Joshua and the children of Israel conquered on this side of the Jordan, on the west, from Baal Gad in the Valley of Lebanon as far as Mount Halak and the ascent to Seir, which Joshua gave to the tribes of Israel as a possession according to their divisions,

8 in the mountain country, in the lowlands, in the Jordan plain, in the slopes, in the wilderness, and in the South -- the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites:

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 Hopher, 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 the people of Gilgal, one;

24 the king of Tirzah, one -- all the kings, thirty-one.

How do you preach a sermon on a chapter that seems to be simply a check-list of dead kings and conquered territories? As Dale Ralph Davies put it in his commentary on Joshua *“You might think I could do readers a kindness by foregoing comment on Chapter 12. It appears to be sheer tedium. After all, “the king of Hormah, one; the king of Arad, one; the king of Libnah, one; the king of Adullam, one” does not exactly engulf the reader in a glow of devotional warmth.*”

But like all good Reformed commentators Davis, does indeed go on to find enough edifying material to fill four pages of commentary. You have to remember when you come to any section of God's word that the good news is here too, sometimes its obvious, and sometimes it takes a little more searching to find it. *One young divinity student after submitting his sermon on an Old Testament passage to Martin Luther was rebuked by him, "young man I found nothing of Christ in your sermon" to which the young man answered "Herr Luther, Jesus isn't mentioned anywhere in these passages" to which Luther replied, "go back and look again".*

This is His word and to paraphrase the hymn, "he speaks to us everywhere."

So what is Christ telling us in these verses?

Well, I believe we can draw at least two applications from these verses and probably many more as well.

1) First as John Calvin pointed out, these verses place *"before our eyes as it were a living picture of the goodness of God, proving that there had been a complete ratification and performance of the covenant made with Abraham as given in the words, "Unto thy seed will I give this land."*

We forget that this chapter is the vindication of the truth of a great promise made literally hundreds of years before. God had promised Abraham that He would take this man from Ur of the Chaldees and make of him a nation – that promise was fulfilled, and then in turn that he would deliver that nation out of bondage – and that promise was fulfilled and then that he would give to them a good land – and now in these verses we are seeing that God has once again delivered on his promises.

Now at this point there just remained one promise God had made to Abraham that was yet to be fulfilled and that was: *And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.* That great blessing was fulfilled over a thousand years later. But all of these things had to happen first before a man named Jesus, who was that promised blessing, could be born over a thousand years later in Bethlehem.

God is the promise keeper and that is of tremendous importance, because of course trust in God's promises is that third and absolutely vital element in living faith. The true Christian not only believes in God, as James reminds us even Devils do that, the true Christian BELIEVES GOD.

Pail said this of Abraham regarding the promises of God:

*Romans 4:20 He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God,*

*21 and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.*

*22 And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness."*

*23 Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him,*

*24 but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead,*

*25 who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.*

Now what is the further application of that to us. If we can see here how God delivered on his promises, we can be assured that all the promises he has made to believers will be kept as well. To watch over them, to keep them in the faith, to work all things for their good, to bring them home, and

finally to finish the work of redemption when Jesus returns. And it is good that we see that God remembers his promises despite what are to us vast stretches of time. Although it has been almost 2000 years now, Jesus has not forgotten the promise to come back: ***“beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:8-9)***

2) As a final application, ***consider the way that the bible records God’s works in detail and rejoices over them.*** How different that is from the way we often pray, always in generalities. One of the reasons the Day of Congregational Thanksgiving last week was a blessing to me was that we were able to pray prayers of thanksgiving specifically for the providential mercies God has given instead of just general prayers.

I think one of the reasons we’ve lost touch with the idea that God works in his peoples lives is that we pray only in generalities: ***“We thank you God for your many blessings”*** that speaks of a God who is out there, generally affecting things positively but not actually working out his will bit by bit in everything that happens in our lives. The God on the other hand who is thanked for conquering kings and cities one by one is a God who is sovereignly bringing about his will in every event of his people’s lives. I don’t know about you, but I want to serve not the vague good vibes God of popular culture but the living God who oversees everything that happens, and who is actually casting down ***“every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God”***

Let me leave you with this thought, because I think we are prone to forget that when Jesus returns God’s people will be able to praise him with a similar laundry list of things that opposed the fulfillment of his promises that were cast down one by one, how glorious it will be when we are recounting a list that goes like this:

<b><i>Fascism....</i></b>	<b><i>One</i></b>
<b><i>Marxism....</i></b>	<b><i>One</i></b>
<b><i>Materialism....</i></b>	<b><i>One</i></b>
<b><i>Mormonism...</i></b>	<b><i>One</i></b>
<b><i>Islam.....</i></b>	<b><i>One</i></b>

And so on...

Take heart till that day – and know that you serve the one who has kept and will keep every promise in Christ Jesus - 20 For all the promises of God in Him **are Yes, and in Him Amen**, to the glory of God through us.