

Message #23

Joshua 12:1-24

There are some people who think that the Christian life is a life of peaceful tranquility without any conflict or confrontation. Frankly such a notion is not possible, nor is it Biblical. Certainly we all desire a life that is peaceful; but to reach that desire there are hard fought battles against real enemies. The road to peace is a road filled with conflicts and confrontations and when God's people purpose to obey God, they will experience the victory and peace they long for.

As we have been going through this book of Joshua, we have seen some important things:

- 1) Getting to the place where God wanted Israel to be was not easy or quick; it was a process and at times it was difficult.
- 2) Getting to the place where God wanted Israel to be meant she had to fight many different battles against many different kinds of enemies.
- 3) Getting to the place where God wanted Israel to be meant persistent obedience over a process of time.
- 4) Getting to the place where God wanted Israel to be meant all enemies were destroyed.

As we come to Joshua 12, what we learn is that Israel had tremendous victory over every enemy who stood against her. Specific enemies were targeted and defeated. The victory was very precise according to the leading of God. But no victory was easy. Jericho was probably the easiest, but even Jericho required that when the walls came down they had to go in and take the city.

Along the way, Israel was learning a lesson of obedience and she learned the lesson of fighting a good faithful fight. There is a great lesson to be learned from this chapter:

REGARDLESS OF WHO THE ENEMY IS AND REGARDLESS OF HOW MANY ENEMIES WE FACE, OUR RESPONSIBILITY IS TO OBEY GOD AND WAGE A GOOD WAR AND ONE BY ONE THOSE ENEMIES WILL BE DEFEATED AND WE WILL EXPERIENCE VICTORY AND PEACE.

Let us suppose that you have a bug problem and you hire an exterminator to come in and spray to kill the bugs. Now the exterminator tells you to leave the house so he can spray. So let's say you leave and a few hours later return and you find dead bugs all over your house. Now would you let the bugs stay there because the exterminator didn't clean them up? No, you would clean them up yourself. The exterminator did his job, now we would need to do our job.

This is the way it is in warfare. God has given us victory but we have the responsibility to clean things up. We can trust God for the victory, but we need to obey God and do some clean-up work.

Verse 1 sets the stage for the historical recap. Israel now controlled land east of the Jordan, north to Mt. Hermon, south to Arnon and southeast, including all the Arabah as far as the Sea of Galilee down to the Salt Sea or Dead Sea.

What is listed in this chapter is a group of kings who were defeated by Israel in taking this land. This land includes the Promised Land and also land east of the Jordan. It took many years, but finally God had given victory.

Now this chapter breaks down into a list of victories by two different key leaders of Israel:

VICTORY LISTING #1 – The victories of Moses east of the Jordan. **12:2-6**

Although Moses was not around to enjoy the peace and rest in the Promised Land, he was a big part of the reason why Israel had made it. Moses had been a great servant of the LORD. It was his leadership that began the process of getting Israel to and into this land. Moses was not forgotten by God and he was not forgotten by Joshua and Israel.

John Miles was God's choice of man to really establish and develop the Grand Rapids School of the Bible. He is the reason many Bible Churches were established in the Midwest and he is the reason thousands of lives were impacted for the glory of God. Today, many who think of the school do anything but honor him. In fact, they tend to honor a man who frankly was not Mr. Miles' friend. Well Joshua did not let that happen to Moses. He honored him.

There were two specific leaders mentioned who were defeated when Moses was leading Israel. These were powerful leaders who did not just control cities, but entire regions. It is interesting that these two leaders were so well-known by the Canaanites that Rahab knew their names and knew what Israel had done in toppling them (Joshua 2:10).

Defeated Leader #1 - Moses defeated Sihon, the king of the Amorites. **12:2-3**

Sihon ruled about 90 total miles east of the Jordan, from south to north. He lived in Heshbon and controlled valleys and mountain ranges. The story of his destruction is found in Numbers 21:21-25; Deut. 2:24-37; Deut. 29:6-7.

Sihon was a power-crazed ruler. When Israel wanted to pass through his land, he would not permit it and gather his military force to march out against Israel (Num. 21:21-23). That was his end. Israel took all his land, including Heshbon, his own city.

Sihon represents the big and powerful enemy who blatantly tries to prevent God's people from getting to where God wants them to be. Sihon-types will be defeated, no matter how impressive they may appear to be.

When we find we are threatened by some dominant leader who seems to have targeted us, this is a good story to remember. God can destroy them and give us victory.

Defeated Leader #2 - Moses defeated Og, the king of Bashan. 12:4-5

Og was a king who literally had a bed of iron that was 6 feet wide and 13 ½ feet long. This was truly a “king size” bed (Deut. 3:11). Og ruled about 60 miles north of the northern boundary of Sihon, east of the Jordan. His territory featured some Rephaim, who were giants who were mighty warriors.

The story of Og and his forces is found in Deuteronomy 3:1-22. As soon as Israel had defeated Sihon, they were moving north and ran into Og with all of his military. God told Moses to take them and they did.

The cities of the land of Og were fortified cities, featuring high walls and gates and bars (Deut. 3:5). But one by one they fell through the power of God.

Now when Israel came up against these two military leaders, they were not battle-tested soldiers. They were a group of people wandering in the land east of the Jordan. They can come from Egypt, having been slaves. But these two enemies both fell and the land was given to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

When we find ourselves up against scary enemies who appear to be gigantic, it is good to remember that God has no trouble giving us victory over these kinds of enemies.

God started taking the land with Moses. He directed the people according to the Word of God and God gave them victory.

There were some impressive enemies that came up against Israel but God used an unlikely group of people who were faithful to Him to accomplish great things.

I think it is very significant that Joshua is the one who keeps the historical record of what Moses did in view. He realized that them getting the land was not just about him, but it was connected to Moses and he never wanted Israel to forget about that.

Sometimes when a new leader takes over, they don't want to honor and remember the previous history or leader. This is happening in many churches today. A new minister comes in and wants to totally change things and forgets about the things that brought about the blessings of God.

VICTORY LISTING #2 – The victories of Joshua west of the Jordan. 12:7-24

What we have here is a list of kings, many of whom we have seen fall in our journey through Joshua. The list of kings is in the chronological order in which they engaged in battle. It is clear that God keeps records. God keeps books with lists of names in them.

Most in this listing never thought they would lose against Israel. Most of these enemies thought Israel didn't have a chance. That is the way some of our enemies may think about us. They may think we can't win. But what they apparently don't realize is that you cannot beat the power of God.

Now the Promised Land described here is approximately 160 miles long from north to south and 50 miles wide from east to west.

Verses 7-8 inform us that this was tough country to take. It was filled with valleys, mountains, hills and deserts.

When Joshua first took Israel across the Jordan into this land, there were 16 hostile kings in the southern part of Canaan (12:9-16) and 15 hostile kings in the northern part of Canaan (12:17-24).

Now the kings, for the most part, controlled a city. Each city was a war and each war was led by an opposing king. These were real enemies and real battles and in this text 31 of them are named. These were 31 battles that needed to be fought.

Some of the kings tried to form a coalition against Joshua and others just went up against him one on one. But in the end, all 31 kings were destroyed. It did not matter if they lived in the mountains, plains, valleys or by the sea; they all fell one by one.

God gave victory over every single enemy. As His people faithfully obeyed His Word, He was faithful to give them victory.

What I think is so interesting is that these political leaders seemed to sail along in life for quite a while. They had their power and they had their prosperity and they thought they were on top of the world. That is until God decided it was time for judgment. God knew each one by name and He destroyed every one of these God-mocking politicians. One by one God tracked them down and destroyed them.

Political leaders would be very wise to take a serious look at this chapter. They may sail along for a while; but there will come a day when God will track them all down. So one day the script will read God defeated and destroyed the Presidents of the United States who mocked Him and His Word. God defeated and destroyed the governors who made mockery of Him and His Word. God defeated and destroyed those mayors of cities that promoted things that were not Biblically right.

God is not interested in partial victories. God wants complete victory. God is not interested in leading us to half of His blessings; He wants us to have all of His blessings. So we must take enemies on, one by one. Fight them all in obedience to God's Word.

We may fight 31 battles, but if we are faithful we will experience 31 victories. That is the story of Joshua 12.