

Joshua 11:16-23

The book of Joshua tells the story of God redeeming His people from the land of Egypt and bringing them into the promised land. Israel did not just walk in and take possession of Canaan. They had to dispossess the nations who lived there.

This text brings to a close the major battles to conquer the land of promise. The focus again is on Joshua, as the Lord's agent, to bring Israel into their full inheritance. Joshua is a type of Christ.

He is a picture of Jesus and all that he has accomplished for our salvation.

Summary

Joshua 11:16-23 provides a summary of the conquest of all Canaan focusing on Joshua as the Lord's instrument to bring Israel into the full possession of all that God had promised His people.

1. Waged War vv. 16-20

God used Joshua to make war on the Canaanites. **Verses 16-20** provides a summary of all that has happened in the ongoing conflicts with the Canaanites.

Joshua took all the land. The expression 'all that land' refers not just to the northern conquest in the immediate context but to all of Canaan and is a summary of the land conquered from the fall of Jericho until now, which took Joshua a long time (**11:18**). The comprehensive nature of the conquest (**vv. 16-19**), which highlights the truth that God was fulfilling all of His promises (**Josh 23:14**). He is steadily and systematically accomplishing His purposes both in the world at large and in your life in particular.

These verses stress the key role of Joshua to demonstrate the way God fulfilled his promises. The Lord accomplished his plan through his chosen leader. Here is one of the striking parallels between Joshua and Jesus Christ. Every promise of God is reliable because of the trustworthiness of Jesus (**2 Cor. 1:20**).

2. Theological War vv. 20-23

All of the great battles in the promised land were fought because the Lord hardened the hearts of the Canaanites so that they would attack Israel.

This was for the purpose of destroying the Canaanites, devoting them to destruction, and showing them no mercy (**Josh 11:20**).

God took the initiative to judge the inhabitants of Canaan by making their hearts obstinate and unwilling to submit to Israel or come to terms of peace.

This points us to God's sovereignty.

Israel's possession of the land and the Canaanites' destruction can only be explained in terms of sovereign grace and sovereign judgment.

God's sovereignty is not a popular doctrine but the only true and living God does as he pleases (**Rom 9:14-18**), and it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands (**Heb. 10:31**).

Why does God harden people? Is he harsh and vindictive? Not at all.

God did not come to people who lived in blissful, spiritual neutrality and say, 'I think I will harden your hearts!' Like all men after the Fall, the Canaanites were born with depraved, rebellious hearts that were already hard toward God.

God made harder what was already obdurate as an act of judgment, in order that these people might ultimately be destroyed.

Does God harden everyone this way? Mercifully, no.

Even though everyone born depraved and spiritually dead toward God (**Eph. 2:1-3**) not everyone is left to become harder and eventually perish.

What God did with Israel, with Pharaoh, and with the Canaanites he continues to do. He has mercy on whom he chooses to have mercy, and others he hardens that they may continue in their rebellion and be judged.

Does it seem unfair to you that God should decide to save some and pass by others?

Rom 9:18-21 So then he [the Lord] has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills. You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?

Many come to texts like this and conclude 'this cannot mean what it appears to mean because that is not the way I think God is.'

With that attitude, we end up reducing the sovereign Lord of the universe into a god made in our image.

"The doctrine of God's sovereignty is not to be the speculative playground of theologians. God intends it to raise the intense personal question of your salvation. God intends you to ask, Am I one on whom the Lord has had mercy or am I being hardened for the day of judgment?"

Which is it with you?

Have you trusted in Christ or do you continue to cling to your sin and and your heart becoming more hardened towards?

This passage magnifies God, his sovereignty, and his grace.

The Lord hardens some but saves many.

God's sovereignty is the foundation of biblical faith.

This is why it is important to be in a church where the sovereignty of God is preached and taught and believed.