

p 53 WEEK 7: TAKING MORE LAND, HANGING MORE KINGS

Joshua 9:1–12:24

The Place of the Passage

Israel's experiences at Jericho and at Ai are a paradigm for interpreting the outcomes of all of their future victories or defeats. Achan's sin brought humility and self-suspicion on Israel's part; Jericho and the eventual victory at Ai brought great encouragement. After an interesting episode with some slick characters, this section amounts to a blitz across Canaan, a compressed account of victory after victory. These chapters of conquest bring us to the conclusion of the first half of the book, after which we read about the settling of the land.

The Big Picture

Joshua's conquest of the land winds down to a close, but not without a twist and another magnificent demonstration of the Lord's fighting for his people.

p 54 Reflection and Discussion

Read through Joshua 9:1–12:24, then study this section of Scripture using the questions below. (For further background, see the *ESV Study Bible*, pages 408–415; available online at www.esvbible.org.)

1. The Gibeonites Bring Crumbly Bread (9:1–27)

This chapter is one big contrast. Who is the contrast between? How are they alike, and how are they different? What do we learn about the Gibeonites in 10:2 that adds to the drama?

Israel is victorious in the face of direct assault, but vulnerable to deception. Joshua knew the prohibition against making a covenant with the Canaanites (Deut. 7:2) and did not show proper caution. What does Joshua 9:14 reveal about Joshua's deeper problem?

Given all the stories that could be told of Joshua's conquests, why do you suppose this story was included (see Deut. 7:2 and Joshua 2)?

p 55 2. Five Kings Hang from Trees (10:1–43)

Chapter 10 ends with this summary: “The LORD God ... fought for Israel” (10:42). List the ways God fought for Israel. Although unmentioned, what character from earlier in the story is responsible for these victories?

We have read numerous indications of God’s purpose to exalt Joshua. Here again, as with the king of Ai, Joshua dramatically slays these kings (10:24–27). How might God’s promise to the Serpent in Genesis 3:15 inform Joshua’s method of execution?

In Joshua 10:28 the narrative picks up speed. What words or phrases are repeated? What’s the significance of this repetition?

3. Joshua Finishes the Job and Takes Inventory (11:1–12:24)

Joshua 11:4–5 describes armies gathered “like the sand that is on the seashore.” This imagery will be used to describe future battles in Scripture, including [p 56](#) history’s final battle before God’s final judgment (see Judg. 7:12; 1 Sam. 13:5; Rev. 20:8). What is this image intended to convey?

In Joshua 11:15 we read a familiar verb, repeated here three times. What key verse from chapter 1 stands behind this verse?

Joshua 11:20 gives us new insight into Israel’s battles: “It was the LORD’s doing to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle.” Does this mean that the Canaanites were like puppets, controlled by God and therefore without personal guilt? What indications from Scripture lead you to answer this way?

Joshua 11:23 closes the first half of the book on a good note, indicating that the “land had rest from war.” Yet verse 22 speaks of inhabitants that remain. Based on Moses’ teaching, what are we to conclude about Israel from their unfinished work?

[p 57](#) Chapter 12 is a detailed inventory of every place and king taken by Israel under Moses (12:1–6) and Joshua (vv. 7–24). While these people and places are unfamiliar to us, what would this catalog have represented to an ancient Israelite reader of this book?

Read through the following *Gospel Glimpses*, *Whole-Bible Connections*, and *Theological Soundings*. Then take time to consider the *Personal Implications* these reflections have for your walk with the Lord.

Gospel Glimpses

CRUMBLY BREAD FOR AN UNBREAKABLE COVENANT. The story of the Gibeonite deception can make us scratch our heads. They are an entertaining bunch, but who are these people, and what are they doing in the story? An important purpose emerges as we consider the parallels between these Gibeonites and Rahab: both are Canaanites set apart for destruction; both have heard about and fear Israel and her God; both know they are doomed unless they are accepted by Israel; both plead for mercy, albeit in a suspect and clumsy fashion; both are received and integrated into the covenant community. So it appears that God, even through Israel's foolish failings, is working out his plan (Deut. 7:2; Josh. 9:14). As promised, God is extending the blessing of Abraham to the nations (Gen. 12:1–3), a blessing fulfilled ultimately in the church.

FEARLESS BECAUSE THE LORD IS A FIGHTER. The Lord has not called Joshua to lead Israel in a merely human battle fought by merely human means. He uses his people, but he also throws stones and stops the sun (Josh. 10:11–13). For this reason, Joshua reminds the people, “Do not be afraid or dismayed; be strong and courageous. For thus the LORD will do to all your enemies against whom you fight” (Josh. 10:25). Christians can have this same confidence in the face of sin, death, and the Devil, because Jesus Christ suffered God's hail-throwing wrath that we deserve. The author of Hebrews tells us Jesus came so that “through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14). Because of Christ's death, we can be fearless in the face of our own [p 58](#) death, for Jesus has dealt decisively with our guilt before God as a “merciful and faithful high priest,” suffering God's wrath against our sin (Heb. 2:17).

Whole-Bible Connections

FEET AND NECKS. Joshua's method for killing kings is deliberate and symbolic. These kings rule Canaanite outposts of Satan. In Genesis 3:15 God promised the Serpent that a son of Eve “shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” With the feet of Joshua's men on the necks of these kings, Satan gets a taste of what will come when Jesus Christ puts “all his enemies under his feet” (1 Cor. 15:25; see also Eph. 1:20–23). Adam himself was given “dominion” over the world, and in Joshua we see the exercise of God's dominion through Joshua. This conquering hero foreshadows the dominion Christ will ultimately exercise when all things are put under his feet (1 Cor. 15:26; Rev. 20:14; 21:8).

REST FROM WAR. In chapter 1, Joshua quoted Moses in speaking to the people: “The LORD your God is providing you a place of rest and will give you this land” (Josh. 1:13). Now, at the conclusion of the battle we read, “And the land had rest from war” (11:23). By way of reminder, “rest” has deep theological significance, reaching back to the seventh day, when God rested from creation, and forward to the Sabbath rest coming to believers in and through Christ (Gen. 2:2–3; Heb. 4:1–11).

Theological Soundings

HAILSTONES AND MIRACLES. With stunning regularity the world works according to God's providential designs; however, God is pleased at times to break that regularity to demonstrate his sovereign rule. Miracles may present a difficulty for some, but the acceptance of miracles is

basic to Christianity and to any reading of Scripture that honors it as God's Word. God is the creator; everything else is his creation. As Psalm 115:3 tells us, "Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases." This includes hurling hailstones on his enemies and stopping the sun in the sky (Josh. 10:11, 13), miraculous acts of providence preparing the way for the virgin birth and Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

SOVEREIGNTY AND RESPONSIBILITY. Joshua 11:20 gives us new insight into Joshua's victory over his enemies: the Lord "harden[ed] their hearts." The apostle Paul answers a common question regarding God's absolute sovereignty and man's real responsibility: "Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!... He has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills" (Rom. 9:14–18). The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart to demonstrate his power [p 59](#) and proclaim his name (Rom. 9:17). Though mysterious, this hardening is not incompatible with human responsibility, for just as the Lord holds Pharaoh culpable, so he holds these Canaanites guilty for their sin (see Lev. 20:1–5; Deut. 9:5). By hardening the hearts of those whose hearts are already set against him, the Lord allows the full extent of human sinfulness to show itself. Nowhere is the mingling of divine sovereignty and human responsibility better seen than at the cross, where "Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, [was] crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men" (Acts 2:23; see also 4:27–28).

Personal Implications

Take time to reflect on the implications of Joshua 9:1–12:24 for your life. How does this passage lead you to praise God, repent of sin, and trust in his gracious promises? Write down your reflections under the three headings we have considered and on the passage as a whole.

1. Gospel Glimpses

2. Whole-Bible Connections

3. Theological Soundings

[p 60](#) 4. Joshua 9:1–12:24

As You Finish This Unit ...

Reflect in prayer on the stunning stubbornness of human sin, and on the specific ways in the past in which your own rebellion from God took on the kind of irrational insanity of the kings listed in these chapters. Praise God for his mighty power to conquer his enemies and keep his promises.

