

Our Conquering LORD

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Date: 06 August 2017

Preacher: Jason Webb

[0:00] King of Hazor heard of this. He sent word to Jabod, king of Madon, to the kings of Shimron and Aksheph, and to the northern kings who were in the mountains, in the Arab, south of Kinareth, in the western foothills, in a Naphoph door to the west, to the Canaanites in the east and west, to the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, and Jebusites in the hill country, and to the Hivites below Hermon in the region of Mizpah. They came out with all their troops and a large number of horses and chariots, a huge army, as numerous as the sand on the seashore.

All these kings joined forces and made camp together at the waters of Merim to fight against Israel. The Lord said to Joshua, Do not be afraid of them, because by this time tomorrow I will hand all of them over to Israel, slain.

You are to hamstring their horses and burn their chariots. So Joshua and his whole army came against them suddenly at the waters of Merim and attacked them, and the Lord gave them into the hand of Israel.

They defeated them and pursued them all the way to the greater Sidon, to Mishraph of Mame, and to the valley of Mizpah on the east, until no survivors were left.

Joshua did to them as the Lord had directed. He hamstrung their horses and burned their chariots. At that time Joshua turned back and captured Hazor and put its king to the sword.

[1:38] Hazor had been the head of all these kingdoms. Everyone in it they put to the sword. They totally destroyed them, not sparing anything that breathed. And he burned up Hazor itself.

Joshua took all these royal cities and their kings and put them to the sword. He totally destroyed them, as Moses, the servant of the Lord, had commanded. Yet Israel did not burn any of the cities built on their mounds, except Hazor, which Joshua burned.

The Israelites carried off for themselves all the plunder and livestock of these cities, but all the people they put to the sword until they completely destroyed them, not sparing anyone that breathed.

As the Lord commanded his servant Moses, so Moses commanded Joshua, and Joshua did it. He left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses.

So Joshua took this entire land, the hill country, all the Negev, the whole region of Goshen, the western foothills, the Arabah and the mountains of Israel with their foothills, from Mount Helik, which rises towards Seir to Baal Gad in the valley of Lebanon below Mount Hermon.

[2:50] He captured all their kings and struck them down, putting them to death. Joshua waged war against all these kings for a long time. Except for the Hivites living in Gibeon, not one city made a treaty of peace with the Israelites, who took them all in battle.

For it was the Lord himself who hardened their hearts to wage war against Israel, so that he might destroy them totally, exterminating them without mercy, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

At that time, Joshua went and destroyed the Anakites from the hill country, from Herban, Debir, and Anab, and all the hill country of Judah, and from all the hill country of Israel.

Joshua totally destroyed them and their towns. No Anakites were left in Israelite territory. Only in Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod did any survive. So Joshua took the entire land, just as the Lord had directed Moses, and he gave it as an inheritance to Israel, according to their tribal divisions.

Then the land had rest from war. Well, tonight I'm going to try to do something I've never done before.

[4:11] I'm going to try to cover two and a half chapters of the Bible. Up to this point, the author of Joshua has been going at a pretty leisurely pace.

He's covered in detail the crossing of the Jordan River, the taking of Jericho, the back and forth with Ai, the treaty with Gibeon, the big battle against the five southern Canaanite kings, and that great battle that we spent a couple of weeks on.

But now the pace totally changes in the book of Joshua, and that means my exposition of the book is going to have to change too.

You know that moment in the movie when the heroes had enough, and the music changes, and from then on out he's going to finish the job.

And that's sort of almost like what we have here, when Joshua called the commanders of his army to step on the necks of the kings, the five kings, and he said, this is what you're going to do to all of your enemies.

[5:23] It seems like from that moment on, it's not a matter of if, it's just a matter of when. The music changes, the pace totally picks up, and we are going to rush today headlong to the end of the conquest.

And so from that very day, the very day that Joshua had them step on the necks of the Canaanite kings, he took that city, Makeda.

And from Makeda they went to Libna, and then Lachish, and they destroyed Libna, and then they came to Lachish, which was a very strong fortress city.

Hundreds of years later, the Assyrians invaded Israel, and they came up against the city of Lachish.

And in order to take it, they had to build a 250 foot long, not 250 feet high, 250 feet long ramp to get up over the walls.

[6:25] And it was such a big deal for Sennacherib, the king of the Assyrians, that he included the taking of Lachish in his annals, sort of like these are the highlights of my rule.

You can see the ramp there even to this day. It was an incredible defense because the city was just filled with a small militia, and they held off the entire Assyrian army for weeks until this ramp was built.

In chapter 10, you can read, it's in verse 32, the Lord handed Lachish over to Israel, and Joshua took it on the second day.

It took a long time. He had to take it the second day. So Joshua came to Lachish, says he took it on the second day. The Lord was fighting for Israel.

The Lord is fighting for Israel. And God says, who is my equal? Who will you compare me to? When the Lord goes to war. And so from Lachish to Eglon, to Eglon, to Hebron, to Deber, and then the whole southern region is now subdued.

[7:44] And it doesn't go into very much detail. It just records it. This is what happened. These are the cities, and this is what happened. The Lord was fighting for Israel. But in front of them was still the northern kingdoms.

In front of them, there was so much more to do. There were bigger armies. There were more kingdoms. There were bigger challenges that lay in front of them. But the Lord had promised.

The Lord had promised. It wasn't going to be by Israelite swords or Canaanite strategy that was going to determine what happened. The Lord of heaven, the Lord of earth, had promised Abraham, I am going to give your children this land.

And God's word, and God's promise, was going to decide who won these battles. And it was going to decide who got to be king in this area, who lived and who died.

And so as we now go into chapter 11, as we go into chapter 11, we see that the kings of the earth don't learn their lesson very well, do they?

[8:55] They don't learn their lesson. Earlier had been five kings, and now in the first five verses we read, we don't even know exactly how many kings we're talking about.

More than five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten kings come together. We don't know exactly. Jabin, the king of Hazor, started putting together this northern coalition.

And it wasn't going to be like any army that Israel had ever faced before. It was going to be bigger. It was going to be stronger. They were going to finally put an end to this Israelite menace.

This Israelite invasion was going to be ended. And so verse four says, they came out with all of their troops and a large number of horses and chariots, a huge army, as numerous as the sand on the seashore.

And it's interesting that they came, they took their stand, they all came together, on the side of a small lake, just north of the Sea of Galilee.

[10:06] So I want you to imagine this army as Joshua saw them, line upon line, stretching for perhaps miles. And there are chariots and horses, and it's been put together.

It's been built to destroy the people of God. It is an army to fight God.

And beside this small lake, they take their stand. And then here is Israel with their army. And so, so far, they've seen a lot of success.

They've seen a lot of success in victory. But, this was the biggest challenge that they had ever had before. I think it was C.S. Lewis, I'm not sure, but I think it was him that said, God rewards those who stand in one trial with a harder one the next time.

He's ever increasing our faith, ever challenging in our faith. And they had fought five armies, and they had won convincingly. But now here is something greater.

[11:16] And it wouldn't be surprising, would it, if there was some fresh fear in their hearts. Joshua was a man just like us. And when bigger challenges, harder challenges, more strenuous trials come upon us, we easily become afraid.

It's easy to wonder if those past victories are going to translate to new victories. It's easy to wonder, is God's past help going to translate to new help?

Well, I guess it always does, doesn't it? Those who put their hope in the Lord are never put to shame. And so Joshua was like us. New challenges met new uncertainty, new fear.

And so the Lord speaks again, and it's that refrain that it has to be one of the central messages of Joshua. Do not be afraid. Do not be afraid, because by this time tomorrow I will hand them all over to Israel, slain.

The Lord has a present planned for Israel. And He's gift wrapping it that very night. And He is going to hand them all over, slain.

[12:34] So hamstringing their horses and burn their chariots. And on the basis of God's word, Joshua, with that encouragement in his sails, Joshua and his whole army, they come together suddenly against this enemy at the waters of Merah.

And it was a repeat of last time. The last time was five kings, now it's who knows how many, ten, twelve kings. It's a repeat.

And we could say, but there were so many. There was more of them. They had horses. They had chariots this time. They outnumbered Israel. They outnumbered Israel.

But, again, who was fighting for Israel? It's the Lord. And the Lord says, who is my equal? I'm the king. Are any of these kings my equal?

No. And so they came against him and the enemy scattered and Israel pursued them into every corner until none survived. And then Joshua hamstringed the horses and he burned the chariots.

[13:45] Now, earlier we had imagined these thousands and thousands of enemies, this huge army with the long lines and shining armor ready to destroy the people of God.

And now I want you to imagine the scene again. And this time, it's not long lines. Imagine the wind blowing over the plains of northern Israel.

The wind blowing over bodies. And wrecked chariots. Smoldering, burned wrecks. You can imagine the quiet after the battle.

The God of peace had made peace. And if his enemies will not submit and none of them did, Brother Tim read it for us.

It was only Gibeon who made a treaty. They saw what happened and they didn't think for a moment, should we do this? Should we keep on fighting?

[14:53] They didn't even think about it. To a man, they rose up against God and now the God of peace will have peace. Psalm 46, verse 9.

He makes wars to cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and he shatters the spear and he burns the shields with fire.

Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted on the earth.

So, what was all of this about? What has all of this conquest been about? Well, it was God keeping his promise to give Israel a land of their own.

He had promised Abraham, your children will have this land. Now he's keeping his promise. It was about the Lord giving justice to the Canaanites. The cup of his wrath was full.

[15:59] He had waited now for 400 years. 400 years of long suffering. And now the cup is full.

And God is paying them back. But Psalm 46 tells us about something else God was doing. He was exalting himself among the nations.

So, I have a question. On the day after that battle, who stood tall that day? the Jabin king of Hazor or Jobab king of Medad?

That morning, whenever the battle started, they had strutted their stuff with their army all around them. Our Proverbs talks about that. A king is very proud when he's surrounded by his army.

Well, who stood tall on that day? Well, the pride of men must come to an end. And that day, their pride came to an end.

[17:07] And God says, who is my equal? Who is my equal? Are all these little kings my equal? No. And they're shattered.

And so, God says, I will be exalted on the earth. And I want you to take heart, family of God. I want you to take heart. Because what God has done in the past, He will do again in the future.

He will be exalted. There's not a lot of kings exalting in God today. There's not a lot of people giving God His honor or the honor that's due Him.

But He will be exalted and kings will be humbled. Revelation, 2 Thessalonians, pictures a great revolt at the end. It's the last army built to destroy the people of God.

And they surround Jerusalem, this great revolt. And they only gather to be destroyed. They only gathered to make their own destruction more swift.

[18:14] And the Lord has fought. And He is fighting. And He will fight for His people. And so what happened next? Well, Joshua began from this battle on to take the kingdoms of the north. To take kings and cities and defeating them one by one. One after another. One king fell. And then another king fell. One city fell. And the Lord had said from now on you will walk on their necks.

And they walked on their necks just as the Lord had said. And one by one they fell until in chapter 11 verse 23, Joshua took the entire land and the land had rest from war.

It was the end of the conquest. It was the end of the conquest. Now, then we go into chapter 12.

After you play a season of football or soccer or whatever sport you're playing, basketball, you like to go and look back on your record. How did you do that last season?

[19:30] Well, we came up against these people and we won, we lost, whatever it is. And chapter 12 is sort of like that. It's sort of a record you know, ESPN is always talking about this team's record last year and what their record might be this year.

And that's what I'm talking about. This is chapter 12. Joshua 12 is a record of wins and losses. You know, Google is actually really great.

I was able to look up the 1989 Bremen Lions football season. I've, every day or every time I come into Bremen I see on the sign, 1989 Class A state football champs.

So, I looked it up at their record. Their wins and their losses. And the 1989 season didn't start out so hot. The Bremen Lions lost their first game to Northwood.

And then there were four wins. And then the Lions met the mighty Knox, whatever they are, and went down into defeat.

[20:35] Knox was the best in the conference that year. And then the next week, Gemtown dealt them another loss. So, four and three.

Not looking good. I don't know what happened after that. Bo Hunt must have found his Wheaties or ate his spinach because it was nothing but wins after that.

Eleven and three with the state championship. Not a bad year at all. But look at Joshua chapter twelve. Look at the Lord's record.

And look at his competition. Well, how did he do? Well, in the first five verses or six verses or so, at the beginning of the season, he had Moses in at quarterback and down went Sihon and down went Og, both on the east side of the Jordan.

and then Joshua comes in and it's one after another. There's the king of Jericho and the king of Jerusalem and the king of Lachish and on and on it goes. Thirty-one kings in all that Joshua took.

[21:43] Sometimes it was one at a time. Sometimes it was five at a time. And sometimes it was six, seven, eight, nine, or ten playing at a time.

Raymond only played one team at a time. God was taking six or seven or eight or nine or ten kingdoms on at once and God says, who is my equal? Who will you compare me to?

And so we see the world against us and we see those great challenges in front of us and we can be afraid. And can God help me with this challenge? Now there's a lot of enemies against me.

Now there's this challenge is this trial stacked on two or three other trials and we wonder can I get through it. But don't miss this overarching lesson of Joshua that God is faithful.

It doesn't matter how many obstacles or challenges or kings are in front of you at one time or the whole list put together. God is faithful. God is strong and God is good to his people and so don't be afraid.

[22:51] Don't be discouraged. Every one of these kings that we read here we don't know most of their names. Every one of these kings was an opportunity for Israel and for Joshua to be afraid.

To doubt God. To wonder if this was going to be the last time. If this was going to be the final thing. But every king fell. Every trial they faced they made it through and that's true for you.

God will see you through everything. until you reached when the land was at rest. Until you reached the rest. God will see you through it all.

It's his promise. It's the record. It's what he's done in the past and what he does in the past he does for us now. chapter 13 the next part of the book is ready to open up.

We're not going to go into 13 but this is the beginning of the second section. And if you thought this was fast, you haven't seen anything yet.

[24:09] Next time we're in Joshua we might be covering up to eight chapters. chapters. Because here's where the conquest ends. The land is at rest. And now they're going to start dividing up the land.

They're going to start receiving what God had promised them. But now before we move on to that next section, I want to go back and look at chapters 10 and 11 and 12 and ask how did Israel get to that point?

How did they finish? How did they win through? How did they get to this point? Because I want to do that. They've received what God had promised.

Don't you want to receive what God has promised? The crown goes not to those who start. The crown goes to those who finish. And so how did they do it?

How did they get to the next section of receiving that promised land and they start living in it? How do I make it to heaven? and start living on all of God's everything he's promised me there?

[25:18] Well I see four things just in the passage tonight. Four key points. And the first is that they believed God. They believed God. They believed what God was telling them.

When God spoke, they took it as truth and acted upon it. God and they believed God.

They believed God. They believed God. They believed God. They saw all the other kings, all 25 or whatever of them that were left, and they believed God.

God. And so they go from Makeda right down the road one after another. God said I'm going to fight for you and they believed him.

And so they got up and they went and they fought the next city and the next city always knowing you know what God's going to be there for us. God's going to be there for us. Let's keep going. They believed him.

[26:24] Or look in chapter 11 or think about chapter 11 with this huge army in front of them. The Lord said by this time tomorrow I'm going to hand them all over to you slain. And the next verse says so Joshua and his whole army came up against them.

The Lord promised and then there's a little connecting word so. So they attacked. So how are we ever going to make it to the end?

It has to be faith in action. It has to be faith continually moving us forward. Moving us to the next day. Moving us through the next challenge of God says this so I'm going to do it.

God says that he's going to be here for me so I'm going to believe him and rely upon him. It's faith in action that gets you to the end. It's faith that actually works. That's the point of the book of James.

What's real saving faith? It's faith that works. And Rahab believed and she gave lodging to the spies. She believed in God. She thought God was worth living for.

[27:34] She thought God was worth taking risks for. She thought God was worth serving and so she hid the spies. She believed God. She believed God and so she acted. And you remember Rahab was living with Israel now.

She lived with them for all the rest of her days. Hebrews 11, by faith the walls of Jericho fell and then the author of Hebrews says, I don't have time to tell you about Gideon and Barak and Samson and etc.

who through faith conquered kingdoms and ministered justice and gained what was promised. And that's what I'm talking about.

And that's what I want. Right now we're those who have hope. But we want to see hope end with us receiving everything God has promised.

So how did they gain what was promised? It was through faith. Real faith motivates action. Real faith motivates life. And so let me ask you, what is your faith doing? What is your faith doing in your life?

[28:39] How is it changing you? How is it moving you forward? How is it moving you closer to God and closer to the end? How is faith giving you courage and changing your priorities?

They believed in God. They thought God is not going to let us down. So they went and fought again. And you know what? He never did. He never let them down.

And He won't let us down either. Won't let us down either. So there were four points. The second is they obeyed. Did you catch that motif in the chapter?

Chapter 11. The Lord said, hamstring the horses, burn the chariots. And a few verses later, Joshua hamstring the horses and burns the chariots. Or look at 11.

12. Joshua took all these royal cities and their kings and put them to the sword. He totally destroyed them as Moses, the servant of the Lord, had commanded. And then verse 15.

[29:46] As the Lord commanded his servant Moses, so Moses commanded Joshua. And Joshua did it. He left nothing undone, all that the Lord had commanded Moses.

And verse 23. So Joshua took the entire land just as the Lord had directed Moses. What was moving Joshua from the next city to the next city to the next city until they had conquered it all, until the land was at peace?

Well, it was this, I need to obey God. God commanded us to do this, and so I'm going to do it. the last generation, these folks, parents, they mistrusted God, and they disobeyed him, and they died in the desert.

And you know what is really sad? Is they had the very same promise given to them. If they would have believed, if they would have obeyed, they would not have died in the desert, they would have gained what was promised.

But they didn't believe. They didn't obey. The Bible says they rebelled. But their children obeyed.

[31:11] There's hope for us parents. Our children can actually obey where we fell. But their children obeyed the whole way. And so how do you get to the end? How do you make it to heaven? Well, there's no way around obedience.

And that's the dynamic. That's what wins the prize of the good and faithful. I'm going to trust God and I'm going to do what God says. I'm not going to give up on obedience.

Third, God was at work. So how did they make it? Was it just their faith and their obedience? No, the whole time God is at work, obviously he is fighting for them.

You see God at work in the hail. And you see God at work in the sun standing still. You see God at work in crafting the victories and giving them to Israel. But you see God at work even more subtly.

You see him at work in the hearts of all these people. Look at what verse 20 says. Chapter 11, verse 20.

- [32 : 16] Tells us that the Lord the Lord was at work. For it was the Lord himself who hardened their hearts to wage war against Israel so that he might destroy them totally, exterminating them without mercy as the Lord had commanded Moses.

Over all the visible planning, over all the strategy, God who has access and keys to every heart was behind the scenes working.

Why didn't any of these kings make peace? Why did they all rise up and throw themselves against Israel and destroy themselves?

Well, it says the Lord himself had heart in their hearts. He laid the reins on their necks and he just let them go wherever they wanted.

They wanted to fight God. They wanted to fight God's people and so they got to fight God. They got what they wanted.

- [33 : 33] They got to fight the one who can't be conquered and so they destroyed themselves. Historians say that Japan lost the Second World War on December 7, 1941.

The day they attacked Pearl Harbor was the day they lost the war. It was really not the beginning of the war. It was just now the countdown begins. How long is it going to be until they lose?

The reason that they say that, one historian put it like this, it was a fundamental miscalculation of the American character.

Again, you read that. Japan didn't understand what they were doing. They thought that it was going to work out in some other way.

They didn't understand whose tail or what tail they were pulling on. They thought that they could come to some sort of uneasy peace after doing this. It was a fundamental miscalculation of the American character.

- [34 : 34] That's what happened with all of these kings. it was this fundamental miscalculation and misunderstanding of God's character. They either didn't think he was real or they thought they and their gods were going to be stronger than he was.

They didn't think he could do anything and so they just kept fighting. They kept fighting, thinking that somehow they could win and God left them in their delusions.

delusions. That's when you know God has now said fine. You wanted that? You can have it. When God leaves you in your delusions that's when you know his patience has run out.

He says you're going to destroy yourself and he lets you do it. It's God letting you go. It's God letting you go further and further in your sin.

And what I would say is don't miscalculate. Don't misunderstand God's character. That is not mercy.

- [35 : 43] That is not God somehow not caring. That is God letting you destroy yourself. But you see God was at work.

He never gave up his sovereignty. The fullness of time had come and no king was going to stand in God's way. He had access to every heart. He was governing all of these kings and all of their actions all of the time.

And the comfort here brothers and sisters is that God is our God. It can look like there are so many enemies and they're so strong. How am I ever going to make it?

But God is in control of all of this. the fourth and last. Israel, how did they make it to the end? Well, Israel and Joshua committed to the process.

They committed to the process. It doesn't say this on the surface, but if you do the math, everything we've covered so far in Joshua, it took seven years.

[36 : 54] It doesn't seem like that as you're reading and it seems like, oh, it just happened so quickly. It wasn't two months or six months. It wasn't a three-week campaign. It was seven years. And we come to that number based on, we're going to read later about Caleb.

And Caleb says, I was 38 and then now I'm 85. And when you do all the math, you realize that the time entering and crossing the Jordan to the time that Caleb received his land, it was seven years.

It took the whole process seven years. And you see a hint of that in 1128, or 1118, excuse me, 1118, where it says Joshua waged war against all these kings for a long time.

As you read it, it can seem like, oh, it just happened really quickly. But no, it took a long time. One battle followed another.

And some were little. And some were bigger. But it was ongoing. The land was not handed to them.

[38 : 05] And it didn't come in two months. It came after a long time. And so how did they make it? How did they get to the rest? Well, they realized that this wasn't going to be an overnight operation.

They were committed to the process. They were willing to keep going until the end. And they weren't happy with what they had. And so they kept going. And maybe some of you have just begun your Christian life.

And I just want to say, you really need to come to terms with, this is not a sprint. It is a marathon. Maybe some of you are in the middle of the race and some of you are near the end.

But wherever you are on that course, wherever you are on that course, I want you to hear the Israelite voices.

Remember in Hebrews chapter 12, he talks about these people and he says, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses. witnesses. You know who are some of those witnesses that say, it's worth it to believe in God.

[39 : 20] It's worth it to trust him. It's worth it to persevere. You know who some of those witnesses are that are lining the way? It's these Israelites who fought and fought and fought and obeyed and believed and kept going until the land was at rest and they received it.

They're surrounding us saying, keep on running. God is faithful. It's worth it. It's worth it. And so since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us run with perseverance.

The race marked out for us. So Israel had some setbacks in their conquest. They had failures with Ai and Gibeon. They fought hard battles, but year after year, they kept at it.

Remember the two and a half tribes that were on the other side? And they said, we're not going home until our brothers have their land. Well, for seven years they were away from home, fighting.

They were committed to it and they finished the task. And that's how they obeyed God. That's how they believed to the very end. And so, dear saints, let's do the very same thing.

[40 : 41] Let's finish the race. You know, the crown is for those who finish. It's not for those who start. It's for those who finish.

And so, let's run with perseverance, the race marked out for us, until we come to the point where we enter into the rest that God has promised. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do pray that you would give us that persevering grace that when knocked down and in hand-to-hand combat with trials and sin and challenges and we think we're tired, we're worn out, I pray, Lord, that you would give us grace to keep going, to keep running.

And I pray that you would give us that grace to lock arms with our brothers and sisters who are in this race with us, not to think that we're in it all by ourselves, but here we are, just like Israel was not one man fighting, but a whole army, a whole people, a whole family of God, going to war and helping each other, help us to be that kind of family here, that together we would persevere, that the younger would challenge the older and the older would challenge the younger, and that together as one man and one family and one army, one church, we together would cross the finish line and receive the things that you have promised.

We believe that your word is true. We believe that you are preparing for us, Lord Jesus, mansions and glory.

We believe those things. We believe our best things are in front of us. Will you please give us grace to believe it more and to live upon you more.

[42 : 43] Pray that today would be a day of salvation. Those here who are lost, you would trouble their sleep and make them have dealings with you.

I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. God bless you.