

Joshua 11:15-12:24, Summary Of The Conquest

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Overview

Purposes of this section:

1. Transition between the description of the conquest and the details of the division of the land. Summarizes all the conquered kings and the geographical territory they occupy, and looks ahead (11:23; 12:7) to the distribution that follows in ch. 13-17.
2. Comparison of Joshua and Moses, both in their obedience to God and in the victories that God gives them. The narrator sees in Joshua the “prophet like unto Moses” of Deut. 18:15, just as Eve in Gen. 4:1 sees in Cain the fulfillment of the messianic promise in Gen 3:15. And indeed Joshua is the first of many successors of Moses, culminating in the another “Joshua,” one whose name in Greek is (like Joshua’s) “Jesus.”

The overall structure supports this comparison between Moses and Joshua. See handout.

- The history of Moses’ conquest in 12:1-6 includes geographical summary, list of conquered kings, and record of distribution of the conquered land.
- The first record of Joshua’s conquest in 11:16-23 has a similar ending (record of distribution), but its geographical introduction differs in having the extremes mentioned last rather than first, and the section is not organized as a list of kings.
- The second record of Joshua’ conquest in 12:7-24 is a king list and its geographical introduction is similar in structure to that of Moses’ history, but there is no record of distribution at the end.

Thus the two records of Joshua’s conquest amplify different features of the record of Moses’ conquest. The second provides archival territorial details, but the first gives us interpretive insight into both conquests. So start with the archival treatments.

11:15, Comparison of Joshua and Moses

15a, Moses passed on to Joshua the command that God gave him (that is, Moses). The emphasis is on how Joshua carries on the work that Moses began.

15b-16, Joshua obeyed Moses, thus fulfilling “all that the Lord commanded [not Joshua, but] Moses.” Again, the emphasis is not on Joshua as an independent servant of the Lord, but of him as Moses’ successor.

12:1-6, Transjordanian Kings under Moses

1, Geographical Summary (cf. 12:7-8)

Structured like 12:7-8, and unlike 11:16-17.

- Starts with reference to the conquered kings.
- Then the limits of the conquered territory,

- then features in the middle.
- Also includes a reference to the distribution of the land to the people.

See map for overview.

2-5, List of Kings

The original history is in Num 21:21-35, and again in Deut 2:26-3:11. Israel conquered other states as well, but these are mentioned because they were then distributed as inheritance to Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh. Note distinguishing features of each of these kings:

2-3, Sihon, the Hard-Hearted

Compare Deut 2:26-37. Israel made a peaceful initiative, but to no avail. Sihon could have retained his land if he had accepted their offer of peace; presumably, he falls under the category of those “far off” in Deut. 20. But “the LORD thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate,” Deut 2:30. He insisted on fighting, and is destroyed.

4-5, Og, the Giant

Compare Deut 3:1-11, and note that he is of the remnant of the giants *rephaim*, with a bed 13 feet long.

We recall the giants before the flood (Gen 6:4, *nephilim*), resulting from cohabitation of fallen angels with humans. Genesis notes that there were giants “also after that,” and we see traces of them in the records of the conquest.

- Num 13:33, the spies report seeing giants *nephilim*, whom they also call the sons of Anak.
- The word rendered “giant” for Og is *rephaim*, which first occurs in Gen 14:5 in parallel with the Zuzim and the Emim, named in Deut. 2:10, 20 and noted for their height.
- We naturally think also of Goliath, the champion of the Philistines, slain by David.

Thus demonic activity led to monstrosities, among them Og, whom Moses destroyed.

6, Summary of what Moses Did

Moses is clearly identified as the leader, and the distribution of transjordan to RGM/2 is reported.

12:7-24, Cisjordanian Kings under Joshua

Joshua’s record in ch. 12 follows a very similar pattern.

7-8, Geographical Summary, cf. 11:16

The items come in the same order as 12:1. See map for overview.

9-24, King List

Follows the general chronological order of the earlier part of the book, but includes other cities besides those named explicitly earlier, probably conquered during the associated campaigns.

- 9, Jericho and Ai
- 10-18, the southern confederacy led by Jerusalem
- 19-24a, the northern confederacy led by Hazor

BUT, there is no reference to the distribution of the land! This appears only in the first report of Joshua's conquests, in 11:16-23.

11:16-23, Joshua's Conquests

This section begins and ends like 12:7-24, with a geographical overview of the land conquered on the west bank of Jordan and a summary of how the land is distributed. However, the center sections differ.

- There, we have a list of the conquered kings, following roughly the order of the book up to this point, and including for the first time some cities that were not described in the detailed narrative.
- Here, we have two details about the conquest that highlight the parallel between Moses and Joshua, corresponding to the characteristics of the two kings whom Moses defeated.

16-17, Geographical Summary, cf. 12:7,8

Note chiasmic structure between the two, marked in the boundary extents in 11:17 and 12:7 (opposite order in both).

18-20, Hardening of Hearts

The hardening that the Lord imposed on Sihon (Deut 2:30) falls also on the inhabitants of Canaan (except for the Gibeonites).

The record is a sober one, and one repeated many times in the Scriptures. God hardens the hearts of unbelievers, lest they turn and escape his judgment. We have this same pattern with Pharaoh king of Egypt; the sons of Eli (1 Sam 2:25); Absalom (2 Sam 17:14), Ahab (1 Kings 22), and Sihon, including others. It is futile to argue that God is unfair:

1. "All have sinned." The canvas upon which he draws this terrifying picture of judgment is already warped and polluted. He is confirming people in their existing rebellion against him.
2. More fundamentally, he is the creator, and can do whatever he pleases with his creation. This is captured in the root (*ll*, which when applied to humans describes arbitrary, irresponsible action (Deut 22:14,17 "occasions," 1 Sam 2:3 "actions"), but in reference to God describes his glorious deeds (e.g., 1 Chr 16:8 and many times in the pss). (Cf. (*alilah*, Strong's 5949.)

Application: Both Moses and Joshua have victory over those who have wilfully turned away from God. Their resistance to the Lord is not to be seen as a fearful power that cannot be overcome; the Lord controls even this, and delivers them up to defeat.

21-22, Defeat of the Giants

The actual conquest of the giants in the area of Hebron (listed here) was partly under Caleb as part of the final conquest of the land, in 14:12-15.

Exceptions: some of these remained in Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod, cities of the Philistines. One of them in particular was Goliath of Gath.

Application: These giants recall the defeat of Og king of Bashan. Joshua, like Moses, see victory not only over hardened humans, but also over demonic forces. We may feel that it is one thing to face human opposition, another when demons come directly against us; but both must fall before the sovereign Lord of Creation.

23, Summary of Joshua's Conquest and Distribution

Like Moses, Joshua distributes the land to the children of Israel for their inheritance. We shall see the details of this distribution in the ensuing chapters.

“The land rested from war.” This “rest” is a recurring theme throughout Scripture. It consists of Israel in the land and at peace from their enemies, Deut. 12:10.

- Israel enjoys it only occasionally and for brief periods during the OT history (cf. Judges, kings)
- The Lord Jesus offers it to the nation in Matt. 11:28, but they refuse it (Matt 12 gathers together the rejection stories, and the rest of the book builds to the crucifixion).
- Peter offers it in Acts 3:20-21.
- It will finally be established during the coming millennial kingdom.