



## Joshua 11-21 Receiving the Land

We're going to be covering a lot of Scripture this morning because we're going to see the people of Israel finally take possession of the land of Israel.

We're laying a foundation of knowledge so that you can better understand other parts of the Bible. By the end of this sermon we'll have crossed a major marker in history – Israel will exist as both a people and a land. And this is important, because these are all things that occurred to prepare the way for Jesus and things Jesus said He was coming to fulfill. Jesus and His disciples taught from the Old Testament Scriptures, the passages we're studying now, so we need to take the time to understand them so that we better understand Jesus. And we're doing that this morning by continuing our study of the book of Joshua, which tells how the people of Israel came to live in what was called the Promised Land.

We've seen that originally it was called Canaan, and other groups of people lived there worshipping their own gods in a morally corrupt society. But God was patient with them, He waited 400 years, giving them space to turn from their sins and live for Him, until finally He declared their iniquity, their sin, their wrong-doing, had gone too far. God was now going to make this a place where His name was to be known, revered, and worshipped.

That's what we've been seeing so far in the book of Joshua. We watched as God parted the waters of the Jordan River so the people of Israel could walk through on dry ground. And then we saw the story of the miraculous battle against Jericho, the first city they encountered. After Jericho was the setback and ultimate victory over Ai. Then, Israel made peace with the Gibeonites who wanted to surrender. But making peace with the Gibeonites angered a bunch of the people who lived in the Southern part of the land, and they formed a coalition of five armies to come and fight Israel, so "The Battle of the Five Armies" was in the Bible long before the Hobbit trilogy ever came out.

Joshua and Israel won that battle, and went on to defeat many other towns, so when we begin chapter 11 they control most of what is Central and Southern Israel today. Only the Northern portion of the land remains under enemy control and that's where we see the fighting turn next.

Read with me:

**Joshua 11:1** And it came to pass, when Jabin king of Hazor heard *these things*, that he sent to Jobab king of Madon, to the king of Shimron, to the king of Achshaph, 2 and to the kings who *were* from the north, in the mountains, in the plain south of Chinneroth, in the lowland, and in the heights of Dor on the west, 3 to the Canaanites in the east and in the west, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite in the

mountains, and the Hivite below Hermon in the land of Mizpah. 4 So they went out, they and all their armies with them, *as many people as the sand that is on the seashore in multitude*, with very many horses and chariots. 5 And when all these kings had met together, they came and camped together at the waters of Merom to fight against Israel.

Now, I want you to stop and notice something. If you've been reading Joshua with us, do you notice how the drama keeps building? Do you notice how things are getting more and more difficult? At Jericho all they had to do was march around the city and God made the walls collapse. At Ai they actually had to fight for the city. And then, after they made peace with Gibeon Israel had to fight the armies of five cities all at once. Things get more and more complex; the enemy forces are grow larger and larger with each conflict. And now things go up another notch: these guys up north have

*Vs 4 - "as many people as the sand that is on the seashore in multitude, with very many horses and chariots."*

Do you ever feel like you're just going from one battle in life to the next, do you feel like the size and intensity of the things coming your way keeps increasing?

How are you responding to that? It might be very encouraging to some people, they might feel themselves growing in strength – but it might be discouraging to others – you might be wondering when you're ever going to get a break. Friend, I don't have any insight into the things coming your way – I don't know if this is going to be the last test or trial, or when the next one will come, or what it will be, but I can tell you this: [\(Heb 13:8\)](#) "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." The same God that brought you to it will get you through it.

If you remember the truth about what we've seen in Joshua, it's that God is the one doing the real fighting here. This is His war. He's using Joshua and Israel to do it, but it's all to accomplish His plan. And God has a plan for your life too. He has things that He wants to accomplish; He has purposes He will bring to pass. What you're facing is not pointless or random. That doesn't mean it's all good, but He can certainly bring good out of it. And that's why He allows the waves to keep coming. And He promises that nothing is going to come your way that you can't handle (1 Cor 10:13).

But here's the reality – you need to keep preaching this truth to yourself over and over again. You need to keep praying, keep worshipping, keep reading Scripture, keep going over the verses you've memorized, because the things you see in front of you will be discouraging at times, they'll be bigger, or more dramatic, or worse than anything you've ever dealt with before, but God is still there. He's always been there. And He does not change.

That's the message for Joshua right now, as he looks at an army bigger, stronger, and with more weapons than he's ever faced God says the same thing He's always said:

**Joshua 11:6** But the LORD said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid because of them, for tomorrow about this time I will deliver all of them slain before Israel. You shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire.” 7 So Joshua and all the people of war with him came against them suddenly by the waters of Merom, and they attacked them. 8 And the LORD delivered them into the hand of Israel, who defeated them and chased them to Greater Sidon, to the Brook Misrephoth, and to the Valley of Mizpah eastward; they attacked them until they left none of them remaining. 9 So Joshua did to them as the LORD had told him: he hamstrung their horses and burned their chariots with fire.

Joshua leads Israel in a lightning raid striking the opposing army while they’re still getting ready. And Israel attacks them “by the waters of Merom” which is a hilly place where it’s hard to use their chariots. The speed and violence of the attack caught the Northern Alliance off guard and God proved, once again, that His promises are true: He delivers all of them slain before Israel, destroys their chariots and ensures their horses no longer have any military value.

And now, after defeating the armies, it’s time for Israel to take over the cities:

10 Joshua turned back at that time and took Hazor, and struck its king with the sword; for Hazor was formerly the head of all those kingdoms. 11 And they struck all the people who *were* in it with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying *them*. There was none left breathing. Then he burned Hazor with fire. 12 So all the cities of those kings, and all their kings, Joshua took and struck with the edge of the sword. He utterly destroyed them, as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded. 13 But *as for* the cities that stood on their mounds, Israel burned none of them, except Hazor only, *which* Joshua burned. 14 And all the spoil of these cities and the livestock, the children of Israel took as booty for themselves; but they struck every man with the edge of the sword until they had destroyed them, and they left none breathing. 15 As the LORD had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did. He left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses.

That’s a line worth underlining in your Bible.

**Joshua 11:15** As the LORD had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did. He left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses.

Joshua did all of this because it was God’s command. And he left nothing undone. Friends, I hope with God’s grace, strength, and guidance that could be an epithet fitting for each of us. That we are seeking to glorify God through our obedience to His commands, no matter what we find in our way.

Can you look back on a series of campaigns in your life and recall how God brought you through this one, and that one, and how you learned a lesson or two there, and repented of

sin over here, but God led you, He nourished you, He carried you. Is your life a testimony of the triumphs of Christ?

And if not, why not? It might be because you're facing the wrong enemies, fighting the wrong battles, headed in the wrong direction, but it's certainly not because God doesn't want to lead you or that He's ever forsaken you. No, God our Savior is sufficient for every thing we'll ever face. So seek Him, receive Him, learn His commands and leave nothing undone. He's trying to lead you into blessings and victories.

In fact, Chapter 11 ends with a summary of all the other battles Joshua fought and won as he obeyed God's commands.

16 Thus Joshua took all this land: the mountain country, all the South, all the land of Goshen, the lowland, and the Jordan plain—the mountains of Israel and its lowlands, 17 from Mount Halak and the ascent to Seir, even as far as Baal Gad in the Valley of Lebanon below Mount Hermon. He captured all their kings, and struck them down and killed them. 18 Joshua made war a long time with all those kings. [some say 5-7 years] 19 There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, except the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon. All *the others* they took in battle. 20 For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that He might utterly destroy them, *and* that they might receive no mercy, but that He might destroy them, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Did you see that? Why did all of this fighting occur? Because “it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that He might utterly destroy them, *and* that they might receive no mercy, but that He might destroy them, as the LORD had commanded Moses.”

That's another one of those hard verses that people want you to explain away. But you can't. It's so simple, and straightforward and clear. It doesn't tell us why or how, but it says quite plainly what God has done. Like Pharaoh in Egypt, these people sinned and sinned and sinned of their own choice and finally God said, “Enough!” and He hardened their hearts and held them in place for judgment. Friends, don't ever lose sight of the fact that a holy and righteous God runs the universe His way, He defines what is and is not sin, and He alone sits in judgment for that sin. Keep chasing after sin, and you could find your heart hardened and destruction coming your way.

21 And at that time Joshua came and cut off the Anakim from the mountains: from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, from all the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel; Joshua utterly destroyed them with their cities. 22 None of the Anakim were left in the land of the children of Israel; they remained only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod. 23 So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD had said to Moses; and Joshua gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. Then the land rested from war.

OK, you need to know more about these Anakim, and the first thing you need to know is that it's an m, not an n. They are bad guys, but they don't grow up to become Darth Vader.

These are the guys that scared everyone away the first time Israel came to look at the land. When Moses was still alive, forty years prior to these events, he sent out a group of 12 men to spy out the land, and some of them saw Anakim, giants, and came back reporting that the Israelites were like grasshoppers in their sight. The Anakim may have been up to 7-9 feet tall, we have archaeological evidence of people in Egypt writing letters about them referring to them as 'fierce giants.' And you notice it says they were wiped out in the land, but they remained in Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod – does anyone remember where Goliath was from? Gath. Some think that Goliath was an Anakim fighting for the Philistines.

But now, at the end of this summary statement about all the land Israel took, notice what it says: Joshua cut the Anakim off. He utterly destroyed them. Those people that the other spies were scared of? Joshua drove them out. Because God was in it and Joshua knew it. He walked by faith and followed God's commandments, even when that meant 'Facing the Giants.' Yet another movie reference, which was not my intent.

It is my intent, that you notice God gave victory over the thing that seemed so impossible to others, the thing that seemed so big, and to make that connection in your life.

If Joshua taking the land is like the Christian growing in sanctification – what are the giants in your life? What are the sins that seem like they can never be defeated? What are the habits and hangups that feel so ingrained? What's the temptation that seems enormous? God can bring it down, He can drive it out, but you're going to have to go to war. You can't just live with it in peace. It's never going to be your friend. Jesus is your friend, and it's either Him or the giant, you've got to choose. Let God utterly destroy that sin, drive it from your heart, mind, and soul, and give you rest. Ask Him to give you the courage you need to face it, and to lead you into victory. He will, He wants to. And after the battles comes the blessings.

With the end of Chapter Eleven we come to a turning point in Joshua – the big battles are over. Chapter Twelve is a summary of all the kings Moses and Joshua defeated.

Then, we get to Chapter Thirteen, and read verse one:

**Joshua 13:1** Now Joshua was old, advanced in years. And the LORD said to him: "You are old, advanced in years, and there remains very much land yet to be possessed.

And then you get a description of the land that remains to be possessed – it's basically the southern and northern most parts of the land. But, God says, go ahead and divide up the land among the tribes of Israel anyway – assign the tribes to where they're going to live.

Remember, three of them already staked a claim on the Eastern side of the Jordan, so beginning with Chapter 13:8 you get a description of where they lived and their

boundaries, it's a lot of names of places you've never heard of, but this is how they did things back in the times before Google maps. As you read Chapter 13 you have Reuben's borders described first, then Gad from verse 24 to 28, and Half of the tribe of Manasseh from 29-33.

In Chapter 14 we see the land West of the Jordan, what we think of as the nation of Israel today, being divided up. And the first thing we find is Caleb coming to stake his claim. You remember Moses sent twelve spies out and ten came back afraid, but two - Joshua and Caleb, said "We can do this!" so God let them live and they were the only people from their generation who got to live in the Promised Land.

**Joshua 14:6** Then the children of Judah came to Joshua in Gilgal. And Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him: "You know the word which the LORD said to Moses the man of God concerning you and me in Kadesh Barnea. 7 *I was* forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land, and I brought back word to him as *it was* in my heart. 8 Nevertheless my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt, but I wholly followed the LORD my God. 9 So Moses swore on that day, saying, 'Surely the land where your foot has trodden shall be your inheritance and your children's forever, because you have wholly followed the LORD my God.' 10 And now, behold, the LORD has kept me alive, as He said, these forty-five years, ever since the LORD spoke this word to Moses while Israel wandered in the wilderness; and now, here I am this day, eighty-five years old. 11 As yet I *am as* strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me; just as my strength *was* then, so now *is* my strength for war, both for going out and for coming in. 12 Now therefore, give me this mountain of which the LORD spoke in that day; for you heard in that day how the Anakim *were* there, and *that* the cities *were* great *and* fortified. It may be that the LORD *will be* with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the LORD said."

Look! You don't mess with this dude! He's in his 80's and he's looking for a fight.

But what I really want you to see is this: when it's time to divvy up the land, Caleb is first in line – and he should be, but what does he ask for? He says, "Give me the giants!" Let me at 'em! He's had to wait forty+ years to finally have a chance to show that he really believes God can do this. And Joshua, his old friend says 'go for it!'

**Joshua 14:13** And Joshua blessed him, and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as an inheritance. 14 Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day, because he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel. 15 And the name of Hebron formerly was Kirjath Arba (*Arba was the greatest man among the Anakim*).  
Then the land had rest from war.

In Chapter Fifteen you find the borders of the tribe of Judah described, and you get a little snippet of the action that occurred when Caleb fought the Anakim at Hebron in verses 13-19. Then the chapter wraps up with a list of the rest of the cities Judah took possession of.

But notice something important in verse 63:

**Joshua 15:63** As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem to this day.

In the battle we saw last week, the Israelites killed Adoni-Zedek, the king of Jerusalem, but somehow the city itself slipped back into enemy control over time and it would remain outside of Israeli control until David finally took it hundreds of years later and established his capitol there.

Now, that's an interesting point to make, but it helps us see how much Joshua coming into the land really is like you or I becoming a Christian. There are large pieces of the territory of our lives that we are able to quickly surrender to God, but then there are other areas of holdouts that last for years, aren't there?

Israel was the chosen nation of God, they had a special relationship with Him, they were in the land He was giving to them, but they weren't occupying all of it, it could have been better for them. And so too with you and me. We're saved; we're chosen and accepted by God. We are Christians, but we're not occupying the fullness of what our Christian life could be, right? There are parts of your life where kings still live in caves, or cities that refuse to surrender. Friends, as we finish up Joshua and head into the book of Judges, we'll see the problems caused by the people who were allowed to remain in the land. And we already know what kind of problems are caused by the sin we allow to remain in our own lives. So don't grow weary, drive sin out, keeping fighting against the flesh and the enemy!

In Chapter Sixteen we see Ephraim receive their allotment, and again the same disappointment:

**Joshua 16:10** And [the tribe of Ephraim] did not drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites to this day and have become forced laborers.

And the same thing echoes in Chapter 17 where we find the Western half of Manasseh:

**Joshua 17:12** Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out *the inhabitants of* those cities, but the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land. 13 And it happened, when the children of Israel grew strong, that they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but did not utterly drive them out.

Rahab and the Gibeonites wanted to completely submit and surrender so they were accepted as part of the nation, but these Canaanites have no desire to become part of Israel, no desire to worship God – they were just determined to live in the land, so the Israelites made a deal with them.

And then, look at this, Ephraim and Manasseh had the audacity to ask for more land since they had let their enemies stay in place:

**Joshua 17:14** Then the children of Joseph spoke to Joshua, saying, “Why have you given us *only* one lot and one share to inherit, since we *are* a great people, inasmuch as the LORD has blessed us until now?”

15 So Joshua answered them, “If you *are* a great people, *then* go up to the forest *country* and clear a place for yourself there in the land of the Perizzites and the giants, since the mountains of Ephraim are too confined for you.”

16 But the children of Joseph said, “The mountain country is not enough for us; and all the Canaanites who dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, *both those who are* of Beth Shean and its towns and *those who are* of the Valley of Jezreel.”

17 And Joshua spoke to the house of Joseph—to Ephraim and Manasseh—saying, “You *are* a great people and have great power; you shall not have *only* one lot, 18 but the mountain country shall be yours. Although it *is* wooded, you shall cut it down, and its farthest extent shall be yours; for you shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots *and* are strong.”

Can I paraphrase his response for you? He says, “Look if you’re so great, get after it. Go fight and claim what is yours.”

You know what this reminds me of? This is the person who doesn’t want to deal with some aspects of sin in their lives but still wants to have their ‘best life now.’ They want all the blessings, but don’t want to have to do any work. They want to lead some kind of ministry, but don’t want to put their sin to death. They want to have it easy in daily life, but don’t want to face the things that are making life difficult. They have no faith in God, no willingness like Caleb to go looking for a fight. They’re consumers instead of producers who talk a good talk but have no actions to back it all up. And Joshua calls them on it.

Sometimes we need someone to do the same thing with us – to tell us like it is spiritually, to tell us that we’re not as mature as we think we are. If we were, we’d be climbing mountains swinging swords and axes and clearing the forests and killing giants not sitting around casting judgment and asking for something easier and better. Friends, I’m absolutely certain of this: God wants to give you more than you want to possess. But you’re going to have to fight for it. He’ll go with you, He’ll be there for you, but you have to follow and obey if you’re going to inherit all the boundaries God has set for you.

As we come into Chapter 18 we get a little more information on how those borders were established. In verses 1-10 we see that it was an act of worship to divide the land. Not only had God brought them out of Egypt, not only had He fought their battles in the land, now He was determining where each tribe would live. And we see that further described in the rest of Chapter 18 with the tribe of Benjamin. And then in Chapter 19 we see the borders of Simeon described, followed by Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan.

And finally, at the end of it all – Joshua takes his piece last in



**Joshua 19: 49** When they had made an end of dividing the land as an inheritance according to their borders, the children of Israel gave an inheritance among them to Joshua the son of Nun. **50** According to the word of the LORD they gave him the city which he asked for, Timnath Serah in the mountains of Ephraim; and he built the city and dwelt in it.

Does that sound familiar? He took a city in the same place Ephraim and Manasseh were complaining about. That's a leader for you. And it's also a man that believes that what God wants to give him is the best thing he could receive. Look with me at the final verse:

**51** These *were* the inheritances which Eleazar the priest, Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel divided as an inheritance by lot in Shiloh before the LORD, at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. So they made an end of dividing the country.

But you Bible students know that they weren't really done, were they? They had divided up all the land, but one tribe still needed a home: the tribe of Levi. The Levites served as priests and workers for the tabernacle – the place where Israel met to worship God. The men of this tribe and their families didn't get a region of their own, instead they were given cities among all the other tribes in something like a tithe of the land. God had given the land to the Israelites, and now they would give some of it right back to Him for use by His people, the Levites.

Chapters 20 and 21 give us a list of all the cities of the Levites and two things stand out – first is the six that were designated as cities of refuge –these were places where people guilty of manslaughter could go to escape vengeance. But notice also that one of those cities was Hebron – which you may remember was one of the cities that used to belong to the Anakim. Caleb worked hard to fight the giants others had been so scared of, he wiped them out, conquered their city, and then gave it to God for the servants of the LORD to live in. What do you make of that?

Well, it seems to me like it's a perfect example of how these long chapters full of places and names should relate to us. It reminds us of what it's like to take God at His word, believe He can do what He says He's going to do, then follow Him by faith as He does it, and when it's all over, to hand everything He's given you right back to Him in an act of worship.

That's what He's calling us to do with our lives – to come to Him in Christ, allow Him to drive out the Canaanites in our hearts, to take the hills and slay the giants, and then for us to lay everything back down at His feet thankful for what He allowed us to see and do and wishing we could have done more, because He's worth it.

Let's pray.