

CHAPTER 12

This chapter is a summary of Israel's conquests.

I. Their conquests under Moses, on the other side Jordan (for we now suppose ourselves in Canaan) eastward, which we had the history of, ~~<021>~~ Numbers 21:24, etc. And here the abridgment of that history (v. 1-6).

II. Their conquests under Joshua, on this side Jordan, westward.

1. The country they reduced (v. 7, 8).

2. The kings they subdued, thirty-one in all (v. 9-24). And this comes in here, not only as a conclusion of the history of the wars of Canaan (that we might at one view see what they had got), but as a preface to the history of the dividing of Canaan, that all that might be put together which they were not to make a distribution of.

~~<021>~~ JOSHUA 12:1-6

SUMMARY OF ISRAEL'S CONQUESTS

Joshua, or whoever else is the historian before he comes to sum up the new conquests Israel had made, in these verses receives their former conquests in Moses's time, under whom they became masters of the great and potent kingdoms of Sihon and Og. Note, Fresh mercies must not drown the remembrance of former mercies, nor must the glory of the present instruments of good to the church be suffered to eclipse and diminish the just honour of those who have gone before them, and who were the blessings and ornaments of their day. Joshua's services and achievements are confessedly great, but let not those under Moses be overlooked and forgotten, since God was the same who wrought both, and both put together proclaim him the Alpha and Omega of Israel's great salvation. Here is,

1. A description of this conquered country, the measure and bounds of it in general (v. 1): *From the river Arnon* in the south, to *Mount Hermon* in the north. In particular, here is a description of the kingdom of Sihon (v. 2, 3),

and that of Og, v. 4, 5. Moses had described this country very particularly (~~REF~~ Deuteronomy 2:36; 3:4, etc.), and this description here agrees with his. King Og is said to dwell at Ashtaroth and Edrei (v. 4), probably because they were both his royal cities; he had palaces in both, and resided sometimes in one and sometimes in the other; one perhaps was his summer seat and the other his winter seat. But Israel took both from him, and made one grave to serve him that could not be content with one palace.

2. The distribution of this country. Moses assigned it to the two tribes and a half, at their request, and divided it among them (v. 6), of which we had the story at large, Numbers 32. The dividing of it when it was conquered by Moses is here mentioned as an example to Joshua what he must do now that he had conquered the country on this side Jordan. Moses, in his time, gave to one part of Israel a very rich and fruitful country, but it was on the outside of Jordan; but Joshua gave to all Israel the holy land, the mountain of God's sanctuary, within Jordan: so the law conferred upon some few of God's spiritual Israel external temporal blessings, which were earnest of good things to come; but our Lord Jesus, the true Joshua, has provided for all the children of promise spiritual blessings — the privileges of the sanctuary, and the heavenly Canaan. The triumphs and grants of the law were glorious, but those of the gospel far exceed in glory.

~~REF~~ JOSHUA 12:7-24

SUMMARY OF ISRAEL'S CONQUESTS

We have here a breviate of Joshua's conquests.

I. The limits of the country he conquered. It lay between Jordan on the east and the Mediterranean Sea on the west, and extended from Baal-gad near Lebanon in the north to Halak, which lay upon the country of Edom in the south, v. 7. The boundaries are more largely described, ~~REF~~ Numbers 34:2, etc. But what is here said is enough to show that God had been as good as his word, and had given them possession of all he had promised them by Moses, if they would but have kept it.

II. The various kinds of land that were found in this country, which contributed both to its pleasantness and to its fruitfulness, v. 8. There were mountains, not craggy, and rocky, and barren, which are frightful to the

traveller and useless to the inhabitants, but fruitful hills, such as put forth *precious things* (^{<63315>}Deuteronomy 33:15), which charmed the spectator's eye and filled the owner's hand. And valleys, not mossy and boggy, but *covered with corn*, ^{<19613>}Psalms 65:13. There were plains, and springs to water them; and even in that rich land there were wildernesses too, or forests, which were not so thickly inhabited as other parts, yet had towns and houses in them, but served as foils to set off the more pleasant and fruitful countries.

III. The several nations that had been in possession of this country — Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, etc., all of them descended from Canaan, the accursed son of Ham, ^{<01015>}Genesis 10:15-18. Seven nations they are called (^{<8101>}Deuteronomy 7:1), and so many are there reckoned up, but here six only are mentioned, the Gergashites being either lost or left out, though we find them, ^{<01016>}Genesis 10:16 and 15:21. Either they were incorporated with some other of these nations, or, as the tradition of the Jews is, upon the approach of Israel under Joshua they all withdrew and went into Africa, leaving their country to be possessed by Israel, with whom they saw it was to no purpose to contend, and therefore they are not named among the nations that Joshua subdued.

IV. A list of the kings that were conquered and subdued by the sword of Israel, some in the field, others in their own cities, thirty-one in all, and very particularly named and counted, it should seem, in the order in which they were conquered; for the catalogue begins with the kings of Jericho and Ai, then takes in the king of Jerusalem and the princes of the south that were in confederacy with him, and then proceeds to those of the northern association. Now,

1. This shows what a very fruitful country Canaan then was, which could support so many kingdoms, and in which so many kings chose to throng together rather than disperse themselves into other countries, which we may suppose not yet inhabited, but where, though they might find more room, they could not expect such plenty and pleasure: this was the land God spied out for Israel; and yet at this day it is one of the most barren, despicable, and unprofitable countries in the world: such is the effect of the curse it lies under, since its possessors rejected Christ and his gospel, as was foretold by Moses, ^{<6323>}Deuteronomy 29:23.

2. It shows what narrow limits men's ambition was then confined to. These kings contented themselves with the government, each of them, of one city and the towns and villages that pertained to it; and no one of them, for aught that appears, aimed to make himself master of the rest, but, when there was occasion, all united for the common safety. Yet it should seem that what was wanting in the extent of their territories was made up in the absoluteness of their power, their subjects being all their tenants and vassals, and entirely at their command.

3. It shows how good God was to Israel, in giving them victory over all these kings, and possession of all these kingdoms, and what obligations he hereby laid upon them to *observe his statutes and to keep his laws*, ^{<19454>}Psalm 105:44, 45. Here were thirty-one kingdoms, or seignories, to be divided among nine tribes and a half of Israel. Of these there fell to the lot of Judah the kingdoms of Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, Eglon, Debir, Arad, Libnan, and Adullam, eight in all, besides part of the kingdom of Jerusalem and part of Geder. Benjamin had the kingdoms of Jericho, Ai, Jerusalem, Makkedah, Beth-el, and the nations of Gilgal, six in all. Simeon had the kingdom of Hormah and part of Geder. Ephraim had the kingdoms of Gezer and Tirzah. Manasseh (that half-tribe) had the kingdoms of Tappuah and Hephher, Taanach and Megiddo. Asher had the kingdoms of Aphek and Achshaph. Zebulun had the kingdoms of Lasharon, Shimron-meron, and Jokneam. Naphtali had the kingdoms of Madon, Hazor, and Kedesh. And Issachar had that of Dor. These were some of the great and famous kings that God smote, *for his mercy endureth for ever; and gave their land for a heritage, even a heritage unto Israel his servant, for his mercy endureth for ever*, ^{<19477>}Psalm 136:17, etc.