

I Love it When a Plan Comes Together

Joshua 12:1-24

Preached by Phillip Kayser at DCC on Sunday, October 1st 2023

I. Introduction - Why preach on this list of kings and cities?

Some of you might wonder about the value of preaching on a chapter that simply lists a bunch of conquered territories and kings - but as one commentary phrased it, "it is a roll call of God's faithfulness."¹ It teaches us about God's faithfulness to His promises and the importance of *remembering* God's faithfulness from generation to generation. And I think that is a good point. I wish that commentary had amplified a bit on what he meant by that, but like most of my commentaries, he only had two small paragraphs on the entire chapter. In any case, the more I have read and prayed over and re-read this section, the more I am convinced that it really does give us a number of very practical lessons. And as I reminded myself of material in dictionaries, archaeology books, and geography books, these ideas kind of jelled. And I pray that it will be a blessing to you.

II. Trusting God should not be seen as being in opposition to planning & wise strategies (vv. 1-24)

In addition to being a roll call of God's faithfulness, a second lesson I would like to draw out is that trusting God should not be seen as being in opposition to planning & wise strategies. Certainly we have witnessed some amazingly miraculous interventions in the previous 11 chapters. Those interventions made it crystal clear that Joshua would not have been able to conquer the land apart from God's supernatural aid. For example, God alone could have made Jericho's walls fall flat.

But God still expected human planning and human activity. I was telling David last week that I wasn't sure whether I would give any of the war strategies in this book, but I think I should at least introduce them because they illustrate this point. The very order of conquest that was given in this chapter shows brilliant war strategy on God's part, and in many of the cases, brilliant war strategy on Joshua's part. I am not a war expert, so there is no way that I can do this chapter justice, but I have read histories of Stonewall Jackson that show Jackson crediting some of his brilliant war strategies to the book of Joshua - and also teaching from Joshua at the Virginia Military Institute. To what degree that happened or not I have not been able to verify. In any case, many scholars agree that the way Joshua conducted war would have taken getting intelligence about the enemy, understanding the lay of the land, would have required massive organizational skills, leveraging the natural

¹ David G. Firth, *The Message of Joshua*, ed. Alec Motyer and Derek Tidball, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2015), 139.

environment to his advantage, communication skills, strategy, and detailed planning. Of the 30 or so modern military tactics that I am familiar with, quite a few were used earlier in the book. Now, I am not teaching military people, so I have not focused on those. And I will barely introduce you to some of the more obvious examples in this chapter without boring you with the nitty gritty details.

But let me begin by pointing out that commentators are agreed that the order of the territories and kings listed in this chapter follows the actual order in which each of those territories was taken.² The Gilgal in verse 23 is not an exception, since that is a totally different Gilgal than their base of operations - a totally different location. In any case, when you study the geography of the land, you can see why this order was probably the best order.

And we will start in verses 1-6. The two kingdoms that were conquered on the east side of the Jordan River were conquered under Moses in verses 1-6. There were many reasons why this was the best place to start, but I will just mention two. This territory gave the Israelites the perfect place to initially house the children, women, and the flocks while the men took shifts guarding that newly acquired territory and shifts joining the bulk of the army in conquering new territory. In Numbers 32 the men say, “Our little ones, our wives, our flocks, and all our livestock will be there in the cities of Gilead; but your servants will cross over, every man armed for war, before the LORD to battle.” Obviously the families began to occupy new territory on the West side of the Jordan River when it became safe to do so. But those who guarded the territory on the East side of the Jordan acted as a buffer that kept any attacks from happening from the east - namely from Syria, Ammon, Moab, and Edom. There were many other good reasons for this being the first place to conquer.

And the specific cities mentioned in the first 6 verses were very strategic. For example, in Gilbrant’s dictionary, he deals with the geography of Salcah in verse 5, saying, “It occupies a strategic position at the southeast approach of the fertile Hauran Valley, the southern approaches to Damascus and the western end of the desert route to the Persian Gulf.”³ He

² For example, one study Bible says, “The kings are mentioned in the order of conquest.” *The Wartburg Project, Holy Bible: Evangelical Heritage Version Study Bible* (Midland, MI: Northwestern Publishing House; Wartburg Project, 2019), Jos 12:7–24. Richard Hess says, “The order in which the towns are listed generally follows that of the sequence of conquests in chapters 6–11. It begins with Jericho and Ai.” Richard S. Hess, *Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary, vol. 6, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 252. Matthews says, “The list of conquered kings roughly follows the sequence of the Israelite conquest in Joshua 6–11.” Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament, electronic ed.* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Jos 12:9–12.

³ Thoralf Gilbrant, “סַלְכָה,” in *The Old Testament Hebrew-English Dictionary, The Complete Biblical Library* (WORDsearch, 1998).

who controlled this city had a huge advantage against any invaders. OK, enough on verses 1-6.

Most of the chapter is a listing of kings on the *West* side of the river. Why was it so important to take Jericho and Ai first? Some liberal commentaries believe that this was foolhardy because Jericho and Ai were built to be able to withstand just about any attack other than starving them out in a siege, and even if they were to do a siege, it would have left Israel vulnerable to attack from others. They would have been exposed while surrounding either of those two cities. Archaeology shows that the structure of the city of Jericho was pretty amazing. We've looked at this before. Richards describes Jericho's walls this way:

[They] were of a type which made direct assault practically impossible. An approaching enemy first encountered a stone abutment, 11 feet high, back and up from which sloped a 35 degree plastered scarp reaching to the main wall some 35 vertical feet above. The steep smooth slope prohibited battering the wall by any effective device or building fires to break it. An army trying to storm the wall found difficulty in climbing the slope, and ladders to scale it would find no satisfactory footing. The normal tactic used by an army to take a city so protected was siege, but Israel did not have time for this, if she was to occupy all the land in any reasonable number of months.⁴

But if they didn't take Jericho, Israel would constantly be vulnerable to attacks on their rear as they entered the land. As Richards words it,

This key city, just above the Israelite base of Gilgal, gave access both to the heart of Palestine and to Joshua's source of supply across the Jordan. It also controlled two trade routes up into the central highlands. In taking Ai and Bethel (8:17; 12:16), Joshua cut the land in two and was then able to campaign against a divided enemy. He dealt first with the Southern and then with the Northern kings.

Other commentators agree. Wilkinson & Boa say,

Joshua's campaign in central Canaan (6:1-8:35) places a strategic wedge between the northern and southern cities preventing a massive Canaanite alliance against Israel. This divide-and-conquer strategy proves effective, but God's directions for taking the first city (Jericho) sound like foolishness from a military point of view.⁵

It seemed like foolishness *only* because both cities seemed unconquerable. So that is why God miraculously intervened in the case of Jericho. Once those two cities were taken, it opened up perfect opportunities for Joshua to make rapid attacks on the south and then on

⁴ Lawrence O. Richards, *The Teacher's Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1987), 169.

⁵ Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1983), 55.

the north. By the end of chapter 8 they had a solid foothold in the land that was much more difficult for the enemy to repulse.⁶

But we need to hurry on and just give a sampling of the tactical wisdom of at least some of the moves that Joshua made. Verse 11 mentions Jarmuth. French excavations at this site have revealed a Canaanite town with massive defenses and all kinds of evidences of why this was a pivotal city to control. They *had* to control it. For one thing, that city guarded the whole corridor up into the central hills, like nearby Beth-Shemesh.⁷ Once that was taken, it quickly opened up other opportunities for much easier conquest. It's like each victory is building on the previous ones in terms of military logic.

Verse 19 mentions Madon and Hazor. Powell says of Madon, "The site controls a strategic segment of the ancient road from Egypt to northern Syria, near the point where the highway begins its descent to the Sea of Galilee."⁸ It would be really cool to have an animated video showing the tactical advantages that Joshua was little by little gaining. In any case, Madon was the logical next step after the previous towns, which I won't take the time to comment on. Williams and Horton say about Hazor,

Located eight miles directly north of the Sea of Galilee, Hazor sat at the crossroads of two important trade routes: (1) The Great Trunk Road stretched from the Egyptian delta to the city of Damascus, and eventually to upper and lower Mesopotamia... And (2) the Beqa' Valley Road stretched north from the Jordan River Valley and the Sea of Galilee into the Beqa' Valley of central Lebanon.⁹

Anyone who has knowledge of those two trade routes knows how important they were for Joshua to control. He couldn't get control of them without the previous territories being conquered. Well, in the same way, he couldn't conquer the next ones without Hazor being

⁶ Many commentators point this out. Youngblood summarizes, saying, "Joshua's strategy was to divide and conquer. He struck first in central Canaan by taking the city of Jericho and surrounding territory. Then he launched rapid attacks to the south and north. This strategy quickly gave the Covenant People a foothold in the land. After weakening the enemy's position with this strategy, Joshua led numerous minor attacks against them during the next several years." Ronald F. Youngblood, F. F. Bruce, and R. K. Harrison, Thomas Nelson Publishers, eds., *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1995).

⁷ William G. Dever, *Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 64.

⁸ Mark Allan Powell, ed., "Hattin, Horns of," in *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary (Revised and Updated)* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 365.

⁹ William C. Williams and Stanley M. Horton, eds., *They Spoke from God: A Survey of the Old Testament* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House; Logion Press, 2003).

conquered first. It's military strategies and tactics. (And I'm only giving you the general gist of these strategies - there is actually much more involved.)

I don't want to bore you with war tactics too much, so I'll just mention one more verse. Verse 21 says, "the king of Taanach, one; the king of Megiddo, one." Both of those cities gave leverage to Joshua's next battles. For one thing, several authors point out that if you can control those two cities, you can completely control the heavily traveled pass going southwest into the Plain of Sharon.¹⁰ But Harstad points to *other* military benefits. He says,

These are the first references to Megiddo in the Bible. It is located on the western edge of the Jezreel Valley near the foot of Mount Carmel. Its importance lay in its strategic position overlooking a narrow pass of the Via Maris, the ancient super-highway that connected Egypt with Mesopotamia. The city stands just east of where the Wadi Ara enters the Jezreel Valley. That wadi is the shortest pass through the Carmel Range.¹¹

OK, I'll stop there. Hopefully I have given enough detail to prove to you that a lot of planning went into deciding which order to take these cities and kings. There were some battles that were simply thrust upon him, but there were others that show a great deal of thought. Courson says,

Joshua's strategy was essentially based upon three elements: stealth, speed, and knowledge of the terrain. But the real secret of Joshua's success was that he "wholly followed after the Lord his God" (Joshua 14:8).¹²

In other words, trusting God's supernatural power to be with you every step of the way is not at all incompatible with planning and wise strategies and taking steps. In fact, the one presupposes the other. Courson finishes by saying,

Sometimes in the Spirit-filled life, people say, "Strategy and organization are not necessary..." But when I read Joshua, I see in his Spirit-filled model a great emphasis on strategy. Yet although organization is a very good servant, it's a very bad master. It must not be what determines what we do. We know if organization is our master by how we start our day. Do we begin it on our knees in prayer — or [do we begin it] with our Daytimer?

¹⁰ See discussion in David M. Howard Jr., *Joshua, vol. 5, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 282.

¹¹ Adolph L. Harstad, *Joshua, Concordia Commentary* (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Pub. House, 2004), 480.

¹² Jon Courson, *Jon Courson's Application Commentary: Volume One: Genesis–Job* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 674.

If I begin my day on my knees saying, “Lord, by Your Spirit, inspire my thoughts, write upon the table of my heart what You would have me to do,” then organization is in its proper place.¹³

Does that make sense? Christians sometimes think it is unspiritual to make their plans too detailed. They think that is not trusting God. But that is nonsense. If we are walking in the Spirit, the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of order, arrangement, planning, and wisdom. Paul says so in 1 Corinthians. He is not the Spirit of disorder. And if we are filled with the Spirit, that should show itself in our planning and orderliness. By the way, some people pit spontaneity against planned order in worship, saying that spontaneity is more atuned to the Holy Spirit. I disagree. It is true that *when* we plan, we should plan with deep prayerful dependence upon the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit wants us to plan and to be orderly. That includes in our worship.

Let’s apply this to you. Do you plan out your year for your family? Do you have workable strategies to help you prepare for your Golden years? Do you have a plan for your children’s education - not just for what happens next week, but for what will be needed every step of the way in order to accomplish your long-term educational goals? Does the Bible illustrate Spirit-led spontaneity? Obviously yes, but it also richly demonstrates Spirit-led planning (with Nehemiah being one of my favorite examples of that). Planning and wisdom can be one of many evidences that you are filled with the Holy Spirit. Randomness, haphazardness, lack of diligence, and laziness shows the opposite. I think this is an important point. Canaan was not won by being spontaneous. Yes, there was adaptability and flexibility, but that’s totally compatible with planning. In fact, the Lord seems to supernaturally bless with far more than we could plan when we seek to plan in the Spirit.

III. Perseverance in carrying the torch (vv. 1-6)

The next thing that I see is perseverance in carrying the torch. And let me explain what I mean by that metaphor. Harper’s Dictionary of Classical Antiquities¹⁴ describes two kinds of torch races in ancient Athens. They were both called lampadedromia. One was a relay race where the team would pass a lit torch from runner to runner and the first runner to bring their team’s torch to the finish line with sufficient fire on it to be able to light the Olympic fire represented the winning team. But it had to stay lit. A similar race was by a single runner, but with the same goal - keep the torch lit till the finish line. The idea was not just speed, but faithfulness in keeping the flame alive. The focus was on the flame.

And I think either race is a perfect description of Moses. I think it is cool that God let Moses be part of the conquest. Verse one describes Israel as being the entire team, and verse 6

¹³ Courson, *Ibid.*, pp. 674–675.

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<https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.04.0062:id=lampadedromia-harpers>

shows Moses as a key player in the race before he handed off the torch to Joshua. But the phrase, “Moses the servant of Yehowah” shows where the true focus was. They weren’t serving Moses and Moses wasn’t self-serving. Everything Moses did was for the Lord. Same with Joshua. Thus their goal was not just victory, but victory by God’s grace and to God’s glory. Without the flame of Yehowah, their striving would be losing. But it was also a race. In other words, there was a start and a finish with a lot of hard work in between. Yet there was also the satisfaction they would all have at the end of each battle as they received God’s “Well done thou good and faithful servant.”

God had given them a mission impossible, yet by following God’s plans and doing their own subordinate planning, they finished the job. They didn’t finish what *future* generations would be commissioned to do, but they finished the job that God had given to *them* - *their* part of the relay race.

Brothers and sisters, teach your children the concepts in this relay race that Moses and Joshua illustrate. Your children may not initially appreciate the privilege of being part of God’s race because God’s warfare race involves a lot of self-sacrifice and work. But they are part of a covenantal relay team that started before them, must be passed on to them, and must be carried well enough that it can be passed on to their children. And the sense of satisfaction is not just felt by the final member of the team who reaches the goal. Each runner can look back on his own segment of the race with a sense of satisfaction. And there is a sense in which each day has its own race. We can teach our children to plan out their day, to carry out their plans, and then to look back with satisfaction and gladness of heart at all that was accomplished, giving thanks to God. My wife would have our children clean and organize a room really well, and then point out to the children how satisfying it is to look back at a job well done. This is going to teach them God-centered future orientation.

And it is motivating. There is nothing more frustrating and *demotivating* than feeling like you are on a meaningless treadmill going nowhere. You work, but you don’t know why. You don’t see a purpose. God made us to be people with a purpose, a goal, and acting out the steps to that goal. If you want the satisfaction of being able to hear from Christ’s own mouth, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant,” you need to start getting better at planning out your day, your week, your quarters, and your year. There will be mistakes, corrections, and ups and downs, but it is satisfying to see progress. But you won’t know the degree to which you have made progress without a detailed plan.

IV. God alone is absolute Monarch (vv. 1-24)

The fourth lesson is that God alone is the absolute Monarch. The writer drives this truth home 31 times as he lists kings who were overthrown over and over again and yet there is no mention of an Israelite king to take that pagan king’s place. Joshua ruled under God. He was not an absolute monarch.

Commentators point out that the odd usage of the word “one” that occurs thirty-one times in verses 9-24 is a literary device to help us focus on something - God’s herem war against kings. It says,

the king of Jericho one
 the king of Ai (near Bethel) one
 the king of Jerusalem one
 the king of Hebron one
 the king of Jarmuth one
 the king of Lachish one
 the king of Eglon one
 etc., etc., and then adding them all up it ends by saying, “thirty-one kings in all.”

It’s almost like he is counting on his fingers or doing simple arithmetic. One plus one plus one plus one done 31 times equals thirty-one kings. But it isn’t just to teach the obvious principle of addition in arithmetic. It is to emphasize the fact that thirty-one absolute monarchs have been overthrown and replaced with no human king. King gone, king gone, king gone... but with no human king to replace them. *That’s* what stands out. They are each replaced with God alone being the absolute Monarch over Israel.

And the rest of the Scripture shows us why. It’s called the Regulative Principle of Government. Civil officers may only do what God has explicitly authorized them to do in civics. It’s the opposite of the freedom principle for individuals. The individual is told that he can do anything he wants except that which is in disobedience to a command or a prohibition. But with civics, God hugely restricts their role and says that He alone is the absolute Monarch and magistrates and kings must act as God’s servants doing His will *and only His will*. The later kings of Israel (even though they had the label “king”) were not supposed to be absolute monarchs. They were called to reflect God’s rule by completely submitting to Him. Paul Hinlicky comments on this passage, saying,

There is an odd addition of the numeral “one” in the MT after each king’s name, as if counting on one’s fingers... [This forces the reader to focus] on the kings as the special target of herem warfare ... making the negative point that the land grants to follow are not to be more of the same under a new name. A radical alternative to political sovereignty is being presented in the land grants. ... [The tyrant kings] have been overcome by [a] unified Israel under the command of Joshua.” This distribution will thus be the work of the anti-king, the man Joshua, whose name denotes his person: “YHWH saves,” a salvation incarnate in his life’s work as servant of YHWH in the making.

I love that. If any of you aspire to political office, make sure that you act as God’s representative first and foremost. Romans 13 calls magistrate’s God’s servants who are supposed to be a terror to evil works and a joy to good works. Be in prayer for men like Ken Paxton, the Christian Attorney General of Texas who has been lied about and attacked precisely because he has been a terror to evil works. He has been suing the lawless civil officers in the Federal and state governments and seeking to make them abide by the law. That’s why they went after him. Don’t believe what Karl Rove and others have said about him. After four months under a gag order where he couldn’t even defend himself against all the leaked allegations, he was vindicated on all counts and found innocent and is ready to go back to battle the evils that are out there. He explicitly says that he is seeking to serve Jesus Christ His Lord and Savior by upholding law. But this has forced him to resist tyranny.

We need more men like him. He is a great example of interposition against would-be autonomous kings.

V. A multi-generational battle plan

The next lesson I see in this chapter is that God had a multi-generational plan. No one generation can do everything. And they shouldn't be discouraged about that fact. We just need to make sure we are faithful in doing what God has placed before us.

A. The conquest of Moses' generation was a downpayment of further land (vv. 1-6)

The first sub-point says that the conquest of Moses' generation in verses 1-6 was a downpayment of further land. God encouraged them with some fairly easy conquests against giants. Verse 2 speaks of "Sihon king of the Amorites..." Let me remind you of who the Amorites were. Amos 2:9 describes this conquest in these words:

Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, Whose height was like the height of the cedars, And he was as strong as the oaks; Yet I destroyed his fruit above and his roots beneath.

The entire nation of Amorites were giants like we talked about last week. And by the way, not all giants were evil. I should have mentioned this last week. Genesis 14:13 speaks of Mamre the Amorite and his two brothers, all three of whom were allies with Abraham with their respective families. They were believers. The next chapter says that even of the rest of the Amorites, it would be a few generations before the iniquity of the Amorites would be full. But in any case, Israel was given a boost to their faith when God enabled them to conquer the giants who occupied king Sihon's land.

And then verses 4-6 outline the wins against more giants:

Josh. 12:4 The other king was Og king of Bashan and his territory, who was of the remnant of the giants, who dwelt at Ashtaroth and at Edrei, 5 and reigned over Mount Hermon, over Salcah, over all Bashan, as far as the border of the Geshurites and the Maachathites, and over half of Gilead to the border of Sihon king of Heshbon. 6 These Moses the servant of the LORD and the children of Israel had conquered; and Moses the servant of the LORD had given it as a possession to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh.

B. The conquest of Joshua's generation (vv. 7-24)

Then, as has already been mentioned, verses 7-24 list the thirty-one kings that Joshua and the Israelites conquered in *Joshua's* generation. After Jericho and Ai, it moves in a general south-to-north orientation.

C. The conquest left for future generations (13:1)

But chapter 13:1 shows that there will be a conquest left for future generations. It says,

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.

This is not contradicting the statements made earlier that he *finished* the conquest commanded by Moses and that the land had *rest*. He finished what God expected of *his* generation, but he didn't finish what God expected of *future* generations. Indeed, it would take 400 years before every last parcel of the land was completely conquered. And that serves as a type of the era we live in as the Gospel goes forth. There are ups and downs, but an overall advance of His kingdom. And there is coming a day when all the world will be evangelized.

The point is, don't get discouraged that the work of future generations is not yet completed. Focus on your *own* responsibilities. To use the language of Nehemiah, work on your portion of the wall.

VI. A battle plan that considered territories (vv. 1-9)

I won't spend a lot of time on the remaining points, but verses 1-9 show that Joshua's battle plan considered territories. And so should ours. Missions organizations have done a phenomenal job of looking at the lay of the land for entire countries around the world - their ethnic makeup, languages, the religions, demographics, the political and economic climate, and numerous other data points that will enable missionaries to be more successful. I appreciate that about modern missions. Many missions agencies could have a better worldview, but they at least get this point right. Missions must consider territories as a whole. Businesses need to do so.

VII. A battle plan that considered strongmen (v. 1,2,4,9-13)

Next, Christians must also consider the demonic strongmen in a nation, just as Joshua's battle plan considered the strongmen in Canaan. Satan creates strongmen by tackling the leverage points in society. Most Christians have sadly ignored those leverage points. And I would say that Satan has been quite successful in Washington, DC. And we should pray against these demonic strongmen and support Christians who are suffering under their tyranny. How do we do that? How do we go after demonic strongholds, whether those are strongholds within us, within our extended family, in our city, or in our nation? How do we do that?

First, you identify the things God hates and learn to hate them yourself. If you can enter these battles with *God's* perspective on these enemies, it will energize you. Just as one example of God's perspective, Proverbs 6:16-17 says,

Prov. 6:16 These six things the LORD hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: 17 a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, 18 a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, 19 a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren.

And I will just illustrate praying these verses with one little battle that I have recently been involved in. The Lord led me to pray against a stronghold that is controlling both Democrats and some Republicans in Texas. When Attorney General Ken Paxton (who was voted in for a third term in November) once again started going after tyrannical laws and government agencies and private corporations that promote such tyranny he started getting vicious opposition. But then he filed numerous lawsuits against the Biden administration (many of which he was winning). But he immediately had impeachment proceedings coming against him. Imagine that. When money and power is involved, even Republicans cave, and it was ten Republicans who joined the Democrats in the impeachment. Anyway, while he was being investigated, his salary was cut off so that he couldn't hire lawyers, the investigative committee wouldn't tell him what the charges were so that he could defend himself. Instead, he was put under a gag order where he couldn't talk about his case to anyone. Yet the investigative committee was constantly leaking lies to the media. But even though he came under attack by media, big corporations, the Biden administration, and even some in his own party as a result of this so-called leaked information, his gag order made it so that he could not contradict the lies that they were printing. Even conservatives started believing the lies being said about this Christian. And it is easy to feel helpless when you see things like that happening to a brother in the Lord. But let me read you just one of my prayers that I prayed, laying claim to Proverbs 6.

Father, you have said in Proverbs 6 that you hate a lying tongue, and the investigative committee has been lying through their teeth and leaking information that amounts to absolute lies while putting a gag order on Ken Paxton and not allowing him to defend himself. This is injustice. I am only asking for the truth that you love to come out and for the lies that you hate to be exposed. May their lies come back to bite them. Show Your true character of hating a lying tongue in this situation. These are people who are shedding innocent blood, and you say that you hate those hands that shed innocent blood. Would you paralyze the hands of those who are doing so? You hate a heart that devises wicked plans, and I hate those wicked plans myself. I align myself with Your will. I am asking that Your will would be done on earth as it is in heaven. Father, may those wicked people fall into the very pit that they have been digging for Ken Paxton and may you comfort him and surround him with a protective wall. You have said that if we ask anything that is according to your will, you will answer it, and I am asking that your hatred for those who run to evil, and your hatred for false witnesses, and your hatred for those who stir up strife would flare out against the enemies of Ken Paxton and that you would allow the Senate to vindicate him on all counts.

That's a way you can war, even from a distance, against strongmen. Anyway, in my notes I have verses that can be claimed in faith to tear down strongholds and every wicked thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. Some of the strongholds in our city are the infant massacre sites such as Planned Parenthood, the neopagan temples starting up as

well as the liberal churches that are embracing neopagan ideals. The LGBTQ perversion is a stronghold in our nation and in most corporations and cities. But many don't recognize that there are worldview strongholds such as scientific rationalism and New Age irrationalism. I think the government funded schools from kindergarten through college have been strongholds that demons are using to leverage their goals in our nation.

But there can be personal strongholds that we claim Scripture against as well - strongholds such as slander & gossip. Don't just endure it. Take it to the Lord and go on the attack through prayer. Many times these are demonic strongmen who stir these things up. Scripture speaks of a spirit of jealousy. Well, don't just address your flesh if you feel jealousy coming on. Go after the demonic spirit of jealousy. And I will put into my notes some of my favorite Scriptures for going after our *personal* demonic strongmen.¹⁵

VIII. Joshua did not let short-term gains deter him from long-range objectives

The next lesson that I see in these verses is that Joshua did not let short-term gains deter him from long-range objectives. After winning the huge territory on the east side of the Jordan it could have been tempting to be satisfied with that. That was a huge territory, and it was some of the best of the land. But Joshua always had his long-range objectives in mind.

I'll just use finances as an illustration. Long-range objectives can be financial independence, starting a business, financing business opportunities for your children or grandchildren, being able to give much more for kingdom projects, paying off debt, etc. Those are all legitimate long-range goals. After you have established your long-range goals, it is absolutely critical to establish a road map to get you there, with monthly and yearly short-range goals and strategies (such as investment vehicles). When emergencies happen that ruin your plans, you retool how to reach your goals. Of course, all of that takes discipline,

¹⁵ PRIDE Proverbs 6:16-17; 11:2; 13:10; 16:5; 27:2; James 4:6 SLANDER & GOSSIP Titus 3:2; Proverbs 11:13; 16:28; 17:9; 6:16-19; 15:1 UNFORGIVENESS Proverbs 24:17; 6:14-15; Mark 11:25; Luke 17:3-4; Eph. 4:31-32 IMMORALITY Rom. 14:17; II Cor. 7:1; I Peter 1:15-16; Hebrews 12:14 LYING Proverbs 6: 17 & 19; 10:18; 12:22; 21:6; Eph. 4:25, 29; Col. 3:9 ENVY Psalm 37:1; Proverbs 3:31; 14:30; I Cor. 13:4 JEALOUSY Proverbs 6:34; 27:4; Ecc. 4:4; Song of Solomon 8:6 GREED & COVETOUSNESS Proverbs 15:27; Ecc. 5:10; Matt. 6:19-21; Eph. 5:3; I Tim. 6:17 INGRATITUDE Psalms 68:19; 89:1; 118:1; Isaiah 63:7; Phil. 4:6 BITTERNESS & HATRED Proverbs 10:12, 18; 15:17; Psalm 32:2; Matt. 5:43-44; Eph. 4:31; I John 4:20; UNBELIEF & FAITHLESSNESS I Samuel 12:22; Psalm 18:30; 36:5; I Thes. 5:24; II Timothy 2:13,19; WORRY & ANXIETY Psalm 127:2; 55:22; Jer. 17:7-8; Matt. 6:25-28; Phil. 4:6-7; I Peter 5:6-7; FEAR Proverbs 29:25; Psalm 27:3-4; 118:6; Isaiah 12:2; II Timothy 1:7; I John 4:18-19; WORLDLINESS John 15:19; Rom. 12:2; Col. 3:2; II Timothy 2:4; Titus 2:12; I Peter 2:11; I John 2:15-17; JUDGMENTAL SPIRIT Rom. 2:1; 14:4, 13; I Cor. 4:5; James 4:12; Matt. 7:1-3

and it is easy to lose sight of where we are headed in the mad rush of day-to-day survival. But it is critical that we not let short-term gains (or losses) deter us from long-range objectives.

Well, the same is true in missions. Our long-range goals cannot be winning souls. Winning souls is a short-range goal. The Great Commission calls for much loftier long-range goals where the entire culture and nation is disciplined to live as Christians. This was the way William Carey worked in India - and it produced the most transformational missions paradigm ever. So along with saving souls missionaries need to scramble to come up with curriculum to disciple people in how to fulfill their callings. There needs to be thought put on how to develop national leaders, etc. OK, enough said on that.

IX.A battle plan that was systematic (vv. 1-24)

Last week we saw the substance of the last point, so I won't develop it this morning - that we need to be systematic.

But I will end by reiterating that kings were deposed so that God alone would be the absolute Monarch. You too need to step down from being the lord of your life and tell God that You are willing for Him to conquer you and turn you into a servant like Joshua, whose names means, Jehovah Saves. He conquers you to save you. May our lives point to Jesus more and more. Amen.