

# *“The Evidence of What God Did”*

## *Joshua 11:16-23*

Intro:

Several years ago, I was a missionary pastor in a small church that celebrated its birthday every year. We did that because it had been born recently enough that the people remembered the day of its birth, and because we wanted to remind ourselves of what God had done in the birthing of that body of believers. Every year, one man who had been key to the birth of that body of believers, would recite some of the almost miraculous things that God did to help in the beginning of the church.

**Joshua 11:16-23** serves somewhat in the same way. We find the writer of Joshua taking time to remind us of what God has done to give the land of promise to the Jewish people. As we scan this passage there are at least two lessons that we need to review, and remember about God’s work for His people. First, we learn that God sometimes does His work over a long period of time. Second, we learn how God is greater than anything we fear.

*I. How God Works (v. 16-20)*

*II. How God conquers our Fear (v. 21-23)*

*I. How God Works (v. 16-20)*

A. The phrase: **“Thus Joshua took all this land,”** in **verses 16** and **23**, bracket the account. Thus we recognize the writer’s purpose is to glorify God and review what the LORD did through Joshua in the conquest of Canaan.

B. The writer reminds us of the conquest of the South and the North Country. He also goes out of his way to remind us of God’s help in this endeavor. God hardened the hearts of the kings and brought them out in one united army to fall before the Divine empowered army of Israel.

C. It is easy for us to read these condensed conquest accounts and think that it did not take long for these battles to take place. That is why the writer gave us **verse 18**.

**“Joshua made war a long time with all those kings.”**

1. Most think that this conquest, even with the expediency that God provided for all the kings to band together took anywhere from five to seven years, God did not give them the land overnight. There are several good reasons for this, not the least of these is that they were not fully ready to inhabit all of the land in a short period of time.

2. There is a principle here that we see often in the Bible and in our lives. God is never in a hurry. His timing is perfect, but ours frequently is not as perfect. Do you remember

a man named Caleb? In chapter 14 when Joshua is handing out the inheritance, Caleb comes to him and lays out his claim. **(Joshua 14:7-10)**

***“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. Nevertheless my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt, but I wholly followed the LORD my God. 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.’ 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.”***

3. God made specific promises to Caleb and to Joshua on the day that the Children of Israel refused to take the land. The LORD finally fulfilled these promises 45 years later.

Do you remember Abraham coming into the land in **Genesis 13**? He was 75 years old when he traveled to the land of Canaan with His barren wife Sarai. 25 years later God gave him Isaac the one through which the promises would be fulfilled. 25 years Abraham waited for the promise of God.

Do we recognize that God is never in a hurry? He is always on time. We may feel like the Pennsylvania Dutch who say, “too soon old, to late smart.” The truth is God will always do His work in His time.

The writer to the Hebrews knew this and exhorted the Hebrews not to give up hope. ***“For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise” (Hebrews 10:36).***

Do we recognize that we too have need of endurance to hold on till the promise comes?

## ***II. How God conquers our Fear (v. 21-23)***

A. The second lesson we need to learn here is how our God conquers our fear.

***“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. None of the Anakim were left in the land of the children of Israel; they remained only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod” (Joshua 11:21-22).***

B. Why does the writer make so much fuss over these Anakim dudes? There were a lot of very significant people groups that Joshua and the people of God conquered in the Promised Land. There were the Hittites, Jebusites, Canaanites, and the Amorites, just to name a few. So, why does God the Holy Spirit through the writer highlight this group?

1. The answer is in the history of the people of God when they sent out the spies 45 years before. The record is found in **Numbers 13:28, 32-33**. As you read this feel the fear that seeps out of the pores of these spies. **(Numbers 13:28)**

***“Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there”***

Later in this chapter, the spies continue giving voice to their fear.

***“And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, “The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight” (Numbers 13:32–33).***

Fearing the Anakim cost Israel 40 years of wandering and a whole generation died off. Fear kept Israel from possessing the blessings that God had for them.

2. Even 40 years later, the fear of these giants pops up. When Moses rehearsed all that God had done in bringing them to the land said, **(Deuteronomy 1:28)**

***“Where can we go up? Our brethren have discouraged our hearts, saying, ‘The people are greater and taller than we; the cities are great and fortified up to heaven; moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakim there.’”***

Their unbelief, which allowed their great fear, cost these Jews dearly. I wonder how much our fear costs us?

C. When Joshua and the Children of Israel went into the land, they did battle with these giants and God wants the people of Israel and us to know that it was these unbeatable giants that they beat because God helped them. In other words, their fears were ungrounded. God was and is ***“able to do exceedingly abundantly above all we can ask or think.”***

1. Fear can cost us blessing. We may not lose our lives and delay the blessing of God on our nation for 40 years, but fear can make us unable to enjoy the promises and joy of God.

2. Fear is a very real enemy that we must fight continually in our lives. Consider three sets of verses to help us in fear.

David wrote in **Psalm 56:3** this important verse. ***“Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.”*** We need to determine ahead of time what our response to fear will be.

**Philippians 4:6-9** prescribes a practical procedure when we are afraid.

***“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are***

*noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”*

Finally, in **Hebrews 13:5-6** the writer to the Hebrews closes his letter by telling that we have nothing to fear.

*“Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ So we may boldly say: “The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”*

So, then, why are we afraid?