

Joshua 12:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The king of Tirzah, one: all the kings thirty and one.

Analysis

This final verse of Joshua's conquest catalog summarizes Israel's comprehensive victory: 31 defeated kings. The phrase 'all the kings thirty and one' (kol-melachim shloshim ve'echad, כָּל־מֶלָכִים שְׁלֹשִׁים וְאֶחָד) provides precise numerical accounting of conquered territories. Each king represented an autonomous city-state, showing Canaan's fragmented political structure facilitated Israelite conquest. Had Canaan been unified under single rule, conquest would have been nearly impossible for Israel's tribal confederation. The number 31 demonstrates the comprehensive nature of God's judgment on Canaanite civilization and His faithfulness in giving Israel the land. The meticulous listing (verses 9-24) serves as permanent memorial documenting fulfilled prophecy. Archaeological evidence confirms many of these cities' existence and destruction during the Late Bronze Age/Iron Age I transition. From a Reformed perspective, this catalog testifies to God's sovereignty in orchestrating history—fragmenting Canaanite power, timing the conquest precisely, and ensuring complete victory fulfilling promises to Abraham. The 31 kings' defeat prefigures Christ's ultimate victory over all earthly and spiritual powers opposing God's kingdom (Colossians 2:15, Revelation 19:11-21).

Historical Context

The 31 kings included both Transjordanian rulers defeated under Moses (Sihon and Og, verses 2-6) and 29 Canaanite kings defeated under Joshua (verses 9-24). This catalog documents approximately seven years of sustained military campaigning (compare Joshua 14:7, 10). Canaanite city-states during the Late Bronze Age typically controlled surrounding agricultural land and villages, with

kings ruling from fortified urban centers. The political fragmentation resulted from Egypt's declining imperial control and absence of dominant local power. The Amarna Letters (14th century BCE) document this fragmentation with numerous Canaanite kings requesting Egyptian intervention against rivals and invaders. Tirzah, mentioned last, later became capital of the northern kingdom until Omri built Samaria (1 Kings 14:17, 15:21, 33, 16:23-24). The precise enumeration of 31 reflects ancient Near Eastern practice of official record-keeping for administrative, legal, and commemorative purposes. These records established territorial claims, documented treaty obligations, and provided historical testimony. Joshua's list differs from typical ancient conquest accounts by emphasizing divine agency rather than human heroism—victory came through God's power, not merely Israel's military prowess.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does the comprehensive defeat of 31 kings encourage faith that God will complete His promised work in your life?
2. What does Canaan's political fragmentation teach about God's sovereignty in orchestrating circumstances for His purposes?
3. How do Israel's victories over earthly kings prefigure Christ's ultimate victory over all opposing powers?

Interlinear Text

מֶלֶךְ יָם	תִּרְצָה ה	וְאַחַד:	כָּל	מֶלֶךְ יָם	שְׁלֹשִׁים יָם	וְאַחַד:
The king	of Tirzah	and one		The king	thirty	and one
H4428	H8656	H259	H3605	H4428	H7970	H259

