



“The righteous . . . shall grow  
like a cedar in Lebanon”

Psalm 92:12

Reading Companion  
to the Book of  
**Joshua**

*“So they read in the book in the law of God . . .  
and caused them to understand the reading”*

Nehemiah 8:8

By

Bill Daniels

## Preface

The contents of this book were the essence of a course taught in the Bible College at New Germany Baptist Church in 2007. In order to present these materials in a form more readily available for further class use we have kept the class divisions used in the course. Therefore listed separately on the Contents page you will find the starting pages for both the 20 class portions as well as the 24 chapters of Joshua.

And “*so Joshua took the whole land*”. Such valuable lessons of faith and obedience we find in this fascinating account of the conquest. Joshua’s taking of the Promised Land for Israel finds important parallels in Christ’s conquest of all the kingdoms of men in His return to His kingdom, and in the believer’s conquest by God’s power of the old sin nature within. May the Lord lead His true children out of the barren wilderness of selfish living and into victory in their Promised Land of fruitful productivity in dependence upon our Captain of the Lord’s host.

Bill Daniels

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“So Joshua took the whole land,  
according to all that  
the LORD said unto Moses  
... for an inheritance unto Israel”

(Joshua 11:23)

## **Class 1 – Introduction**

This book of Joshua is the account of Israel's conquest in taking their Promised Land. Conquest not only of the land under the leadership of the earthly captain of the Lord's army, but a picture or foreshadowing as well of the ultimate victory over sin upon earth and within man under the mighty leadership of the Captain of the Lord's hosts, the Lord Jesus Christ. Under man's leadership the job was marvellous but incomplete, the pockets of darkness that remained soon coming back to haunt them. Under Christ's divine leadership the job will be finished! For God promised long ago in Daniel 9:24 that through Christ's conquering work He will;

- *“Finish the transgression”.*
- *“Make an end of sins”.* Not only sin as in our sin nature, but sins as in our practice.
- *“Make reconciliation for iniquity”.*
- *“Bring in everlasting righteousness”.*

Joshua's book begins the second main grouping of books in our Old Testament (O.T.), commonly referred to as the “Historical Books”. The first group is of course the books of Moses, or the “Pentateuch”. Five books in the first group, twelve in the second.

Though much or most of the Pentateuch is historical in nature as well, yet it is this second group that has been given the title “Historical”.

## **Joshua, the Man**

Joshua was likely born in Egypt. This son of Nun was Hoshea at first (Num. 13:8). It was Moses who changed his name to Jehoshua, or Joshua (Num. 13:16). Hoshea means “salvation”. Joshua means “Jehovah saves” or “Jehovah is salvation”. The change directs focus away from the man, in the vital role he would play on the ground, to the Lord, the true source of Israel’s salvation from all enemies. Complete dependence upon the Lord for deliverance was the principle Moses sought to fix into the fabric of Joshua’s character by this name change it would seem.

Joshua first appears on the scene in Exodus 17, as the man Moses chose to lead Israel in their defence against the Amalekites at Rephidim (vs. 8-16). He was then one of the 12 spies who scouted Canaan from Kadesh Barnea, as the representative of the tribe of Ephraim. He and Caleb were the only two of the twelve willing to trust God for the victory against what seemed frightening obstacles (Num. 14:6-9). Note the strength of their faith and passion

there in countering the fearful doubts expressed by the other spies, tearing their clothes in frustration (vs. 6). There was no casual preference for the things of God.

Joshua's most outstanding characteristics were his faith and courage (Num. 13-14). He as well was graced with a full measure of "*the spirit of wisdom*" from the day Moses "*laid his hands upon him*" and commissioned him (Deut. 34:9). The Lord noted as well that he was "*a man in whom is the Spirit*" (Num. 27:18). When wisdom takes up personhood and speaks in Proverbs 8 her words are all about success in life and life eternal for the soul who loves her. Being "*a man in whom is the Spirit*", and thus a man of wisdom, how exceedingly successful a man Joshua became upon earth;

- Though there were other factors involved, his first command against the Amalekites was successful (Ex. 17).
- Joshua and Caleb were the only two of the first generation who succeeded in entering the Promised Land, because they rightly believed the Lord quite able to keep His ancient promise to give them the land (Num. 26:65).

- How effectively Joshua's godly influence was passed on to his followers, who continued to serve God after his death (Judges 2:7).

Such admirable, useful traits most certainly arose out of Joshua's active, personal walk with God (Ex. 33:7-11). Compare a similar pattern in young Samuel (I Sam. 2-3).

*"He hath shown thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God"* (Micah 6:8).

Though Joshua was a man of great leadership qualities, it seems his chief quality was consistent with his name, *Jehovah* is Salvation. He was a man who walked in dependence upon God, and therefore his God was able to shape and hone the man into what he needed to be for the hour in which he lived. Even so it was with David;

- Who first was a sincere worshipper of God, singing his praise to the Lord he loved.
- Then, when anointed by Samuel, *"the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward"* (I Sam. 16:13).
- Then God revealed Himself working in and

- through David in his service to Saul and with Goliath's defeat.
- Then the wisdom of God was displayed in him, winning a following among men (I Sam. 18:5, 12, 14-15).

Thus Joshua was a man full of faith, filled with the Spirit, full of courage, and drawing a faithful following after him. It is the way of successful leadership. Compare in Acts 4:8-13 a similar pattern of Spirit-filling bringing wisdom and boldness and success.

## **Joshua, the Book**

This book of Joshua is named after the main character of the book, the human captain of the conquest of the land of Canaan, who himself seems to have been the author (24:26). It is a book of *action*, and interesting action. The theme of course is the possession of the land. We see this from the opening verses; *“Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses”* (1:2-3). The main purpose of the book is to give the official record of God's

faithfulness to do as He said, to fulfil His promises to lead His people into the Promised Land (Gen. 12:7; 13:14-17). As well, it is the chronicle of God's searing judgment brought upon the wickedness of Canaan come to the full. This was a holy war. This was not only the Lord following through to give to Israel what He promised. He had purposed as well to destroy the wicked, idolatrous Canaanites because their sin was so abominable (Gen. 15:16). Their "worship" of their filthy deities involved such things as religious prostitution, snake worship, and infant sacrifice. God sought by their annihilation to prevent their evil ways from infecting others, and particularly His people (Deut. 7:1-6).

## **Distinctives**

The conquest of the land as described in this book was basically in three main actions;

- A central thrust involving Jericho, Ai, and the central hill country (10:1-33).
- A southern campaign (10:34-43).
- A northern campaign (11).

To a certain extent Joshua and the army of Israel simply responded to whatever was the obvious next step. But in so doing they effectively split the forces

of the land in half, dealing with the southern confederacy and then followed by the northern confederacy. It seems these major battles spanned a period of about 7 years, judging by Caleb's statement in 14:10 that it had been 45 years since promise was given to him, which would have been 38 years before the Jordan crossing.

There is a distinct emphasis in this book on the word of God and the importance of it (1:8; 8:32-35; 23:6-16; 24:26-27). The Bible was not formed through the uncertainties of oral tradition. From the days of Moses the book of God was being written and treasured by His people.

Conspicuous in this book as well is the utter failure of man when God is absent, and the complete and overwhelming victory of man when God is present and working in man's behalf.

In a measure we see in this book historical representation of spiritual truths. As Joshua led God's people Israel into their Promised *Land* of rest, a *place* promised by God and received by faith, even so Jesus leads every believer into their promised *life* of rest, a *Person* promised by God and received by faith. Jesus is that "*Captain of the Lord's hosts*" seen in 5:14 where the earthly captain meets his

heavenly counterpart. It is not by accident that the name “Joshua” is the Hebrew version of the English “Jesus”. Joshua becomes a type of Jesus Christ, the Spirit-filled Captain victoriously leading in the conquest against the wicked inhabitants of earth, and against wickedness in man’s soul.

## **Lessons in Leadership**

Consider the way Joshua came to leadership, describing lasting leadership principles;

- Joshua’s grandfather, Elishama, was head of the tribe of Ephraim (I Chron. 7:26-27; Num. 1:10). There was perhaps a following in the tradition of his forefathers, displaying the power of tradition and example. When you begin to lead for God in your generation you begin something good for generations to follow, leaving in your wake a heritage of blessing. Missionaries are usually missionary kids. Compare Timothy’s leadership arising from the sincere faith of his mother and grandmother (II Tim. 1:5).
- Joshua was first the watchful servant of Moses (Josh. 1:1; Ex. 33:11), and this for 40 years (patience). Note his loyalty to Moses (though misplaced) when other men were

prophesying as well in Numbers 11:27-29. Something of the great leadership abilities of Moses rubbed off on Joshua over those many years. He saw firsthand how a great man of God handled the threat of Egypt, and the triumph at the Red Sea, and thirst at Marah, and apostasy at Sinai, and Amalek's treacherous attack, etc. He was with Moses even on Sinai (Ex. 24:13; 32:17). In the same way Elisha was first the servant of Elijah, Timothy was first Paul's helper, and God's faithful witness, Stephen, was first a servant (deacon?) of the Jerusalem church. *"Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all"* (Mk. 10:43-44). God's way to exaltation is through humility. Every good leader was first (and remains) a good servant.

- Joshua showed himself faithful, and by this means began to be marked out for God's special input (Ex. 17:14).
- Joshua himself walked in a personal relationship with the Lord (Ex. 33:11). Unlike Gehazi with Elisha, Joshua was not merely the servant of God's *man*, but the servant of *God*. In the same way when Jesus appointed

the 12 disciples it was “*that they might be with Him . . . and that He might send them out to preach*” (Mk. 3:14). The order is significant. In our effective service of the Lord we must first be *with* Him. Compare the wonder in the Jewish leaders with the adequacy of Peter and John in Acts 4, noting “*that they had been with Jesus*” (vs. 13).

- Joshua displayed his faith in God when returning with enthusiasm from spying the land (Num. 13:16-14:38). It is a vital ingredient of spiritual leadership.
- He was appointed or called of the Lord (Num 27:15-23; Deut. 31:14), in answer to Moses’ prayer (Num. 27:15-18).
- His appointment was publicly made known (as in ordination). He was evidently appointed by Moses (Num. 27:15-23; Deut. 34:9), with the Lord’s hand obviously upon him as well (Josh. 3:7 & 4:14).

## **Basic Outline**

Chapter 1-5 – Entering the Land.

Chapter 6-12 – Conquering the Land.

Chapter 13-22 – Dividing the Land.

## Chapter 23-24 – Joshua’s Final Challenge.

### **Highlights**

#### **Chapter 1**

Words of challenge – *Be Strong!!* The Lord’s challenge here on the brink of action is much like that of Moses in Deuteronomy (7:24; 11:24; 31:8, 23), but with a strong focus on *courage*.

God’s Book is central to success (vs. 7-8).

#### **Chapter 2**

Spies sent to Jericho. They were encouraged by the report (vs. 23-24).

#### **Chapter 3**

The Jordan crossing illustrates a step of faith. The Lord commanded them to do something seemingly impossible and unreasonable. They went forward solely based upon the command and promise of God even though the river was still flowing strongly (vs. 13-16). Only when they were actually standing in the water did the river stop. Compare Christ’s “*give ye them to eat*” in Mark 6:37.

## **Chapter 4**

The priests stood in harm's way in the middle of the river until all the people had passed (vs. 10). How often the man of God is called upon to stand in harm's way for the people, as any true witness must put himself in the way of scorn and hatred for the sake of those who will hear.

## **Chapter 5**

First things first. All were circumcised (vs. 2-9) and Passover was kept (vs. 10-11). All righteousness was fulfilled, even while they were in enemy territory with their minds turned toward war.

The manna ceased. They were spoon-fed no more (vs. 12).

Joshua met with the Captain of the Lord's host (vs. 13 ff).

## **Chapter 7**

Achan's offense displays principles of sin;

- Sin cuts off the flow of God's help and blessing.
- Others suffer for the rebellion of one.
- Sinners cannot hide in the crowd. *"Behold*

*your sin will find you out”.*

## **Chapter 8**

Ebal & Gerazim was again the lesson of first things first. If we honour God by honouring His words, God will take care of life’s battles. Many folks “cannot” come to church because they are too busy making a living. Honour the Lord of life first, holding His things high, and He will see to your living. *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matt. 6:33). *“Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine”* (Prov. 3:9-10).

## **Chapter 9**

Gibeon’s effective subtlety is a lesson on the peril of fighting the Lord’s battles without dependent prayer.

## **Chapter 14**

Caleb’s faithful testimony and example (vs. 6-14) – *“I wholly followed the Lord my God”*.

## **Chapter 23**

Joshua's challenge and warning focused on their God who had done for them all that He had promised them (vs. 23:5, 10, 14, 15). When all is said and done, we will know the truth of the same, that God will certainly accomplish His every promise and threat.

## **Chapter 24**

Joshua's final charge at Shechem, where the nation began in the land. Note God's emphasis on all that *He* did (vs. 2-13).

The response of the people (vs. 14-18).

Joshua renews the covenant (vs. 19-28).

## **Class 2 – Joshua 1**

As suggested earlier, Joshua is another O.T. foreshadow pointing to Jesus Christ. They even share the same name. “Jesus” is the English rendering of “Iesous”, which is the Greek form of the Hebrew name “Joshua”. Canaan pictures that place of the believer’s rest, given by God and claimed by faith. Not a picture of heaven, but of the victorious Christian life. Such a life is a series of battles, yet always in the context of victory and blessing. The Captain of the Lord’s host (Jesus Christ) seeks to lead His people into the Promised Land of rest in the victorious, Spirit-filled Christian life. Ultimately He will lead His people into His very presence in His earthly kingdom and beyond. Many a believer still lives a wilderness existence, murmuring and complaining, more venom than victory, rebelliously leaning toward Egypt (the world), disobeying God, unhappy, unsettled, and going in circles. They have been freed from sin’s cruel bondage through the mighty miracle of new-birth, but have not followed the Lord into the victorious life of really trusting Him for the full inheritance of all of the rest and blessing He has for us in Christ. They have not wholly bowed in submission to the Lord. They have not conformed their way to His Word and will, but are rather still conformed to the world (Rom. 12:1-

1:1 *Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying,*  
1:2 *Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.*

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2). “When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you” (Heb. 5:12).

The people of Israel came out of the book of Numbers positioned on “*the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho*” (Num. 36:13). Then comes the book of Deuteronomy, the “second law” as the name means, the repetition and application of the law to the new generation. Then Moses died, followed by this reconfirmation of Joshua’s commission.

### **1:1-9** – Joshua’s Commission

Vs. 1 – “*Moses’ minister*” – God resists the proud but graces the humble. Joshua’s exaltation to leadership by the Lord here is a commentary on his humility. He had proven himself fit for the task through 40 years as the loyal servant of Moses.

Vs. 2 – “*Moses my servant is dead*” – Moses was denied the privilege of entering the Promised Land because of his unbelief, striking the rock in anger when he was told to speak to it (Num. 20:7-12). Yet

though he had failed the Lord in that incident, he was still referred to as “*My servant*”. Our God in His love is firm but full of grace. Moses must die before they could enter the land, but the Lord Himself took care of the burial of His beloved servant in some unmarked valley of Moab (Deut. 34:5-6).

So now the leadership role passed to Joshua. We can well imagine how overwhelming it must have been for him. Who could ever replace Moses, a man unique among the greatest leaders of history? But Joshua too was called of God with gifts of his own, fitted perfectly for this next phase of Israel’s history. There was no place for insecurity with God’s call upon his life.

*“Arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people”*  
– The historian Josephus states that Joshua was 85 years old at this point. Being 110 years old when he died (Judges 2:8), he therefore ruled over Israel for 25 years.

This was no small commission the Lord placed upon Joshua, looking at it from a human perspective. The Jordan River was then in flood (3:15). It would be one thing to tell a man to cross the swirling torrent before them, or even to send across all the men who were fit and strong. But God’s command

was that “*all this people*” must cross! Hundreds of thousands of them!! Women and children, the elderly and infirm, with all of their belongings and livestock and with all of the temple fittings. No bridges, no boats. The Lord had in fact given a specific way in which the ark must be carried, which could not be done by floating it. And why must the whole lot cross anyway? The women and little ones of the trans-Jordan tribes would be staying (vs. 14). Why not just send the men across to the conquest and leave all the wives and little ones on this side? Why put the women and children in harm’s way as well? There was a sense in which God’s command did not make sense. Yet we hear no questions from Joshua’s mouth, a display of his faithful confidence in his God.

The land of Palestine belonged to the nation of Israel by God’s grant. It still does, and they will have all of it in God’s good time. The Lord made promise of this to;

- Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3, 7; 13:14-17; 15:7-21; 17:8).
- Jacob (Gen. 28:10-13; 35:12).
- The 12 tribes (Gen. 49).
- Moses (Ex. 3:17).

1:3 *Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.*

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- Israel repeatedly throughout the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy, note Deut. 11:22-25.

Vs. 3 – *“That have I given unto you”* – Do you hear how the Lord had already given the land to them. They need only believe His words, march over, and claim it. Compare Joshua’s commission here to our own in Matthew 28. God has already given victory in His mission to reach the lost. It is ours to take His gospel to the ends of the earth in His strength, claiming for Him those souls who will believe. Both commissions carry the promise of the Lord’s presence.

In a similar sense the work of salvation is already complete. A soul need only believe God’s promise and receive it by faith. As well, we who are in Christ already have the blessing of rest in the sure hope of glory. We have already been blessed with *“all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ”*. We need only believe, receive, and enjoy the settled rest, hope, joy, and satisfaction such assurances from the sure words of God are meant to deliver to our hearts. Note that we have the same promises

- 1:4 *From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.*
- 1:5 *There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.*
- 

Joshua had;

- Vs. 5 – *“I will be with thee”* compares well with *“Lo, I am with you always [all the days], even unto the end of the age”* (Matt. 28:20). Though the furnace be fired *“seven times more than it was wont to be heated”* the Lord will be there standing with the one standing for Him (Dan. 3). Though *“thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee . . . they shall not overflow thee”* (Isa. 43).
- Vs. 5 – *“I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee”* compares with *“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”* (Heb. 13:5). Compare David’s charge to Solomon in I Chronicles 28:20.

People can be as changeable as the seasons, but God never changes, nor does He change in His commitment to our best. *“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever”* (Heb. 13:8).

Vs. 4 – The boundaries of the land God would give

to them, to the south was “*the wilderness*”, and Lebanon to the north, the eastern boundary the River Euphrates, and to the west the Mediterranean. This was the same land area promised to Abraham (Gen. 15:18-21).

“*All the land of the Hittites*” – It seems the Hittites were the dominant power of the tribes of Canaan at that time. We can well imagine the stirring to courage such a word must have brought to Joshua with God’s assurance that the giant of the Hittite nation would fall before them! There was a distinct scent of the impossible over the suggestion that such a small and relatively new nation could defeat the great power of the land, who were thoroughly entrenched, secured behind great and strong walls, armed with the most modern weaponry, and quite determined to fight for every square metre of what was theirs. It was much like David before Goliath of Gath. The youngster armed with a sling against the giant, who was well armed, seasoned, and HUGE! But great and fearfully intimidating giants fall before the child of God walking in the Spirit! For our God has proclaimed, “*Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for Me?*” (Jer. 32:27). It is never a question of our *own* strengths or abilities, but of the great God beside us, and of His call and command. If God has called

*1:6 Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swear unto their fathers to give them.*

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us to the work and commanded us to “*arise, go over this Jordan*”, then His mighty power will be with us for the task. But when the Lord is left out of the life of one such as Saul, though he be king and in a position of greatest honour, importance, and power among men, when faced with the giants of life he becomes a cringing idiot, handing his armour over to a teenager to do his fighting for him.

Vs. 5 – Not only was their victory certain, but there would be a measure of ease in the conquest as well. Joshua would find no man a serious opponent. As Moses left behind him a trail of men who sought to stand against him and failed (Pharaoh, Korah, Amalek, Balak, Baalam, Og, etc.), so there would be a similar list of fallen foes in the wake of Joshua’s passing.

Vs. 6 – The Lord’s repeated call to courage was perhaps in response to what He saw in Joshua’s heart, with the daunting task before him and the sandals he must fill. That the Lord would so insist that he be strong, courageous, and encouraged may perhaps indicate in the man at this juncture a

1:7 *Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.*

1:8 *This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.*

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leaning toward weakness, fear, and discouragement. Joshua knew that in himself there was no strength for such a task. As Moses' response, "*who am I . . . that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?*" (Ex. 3:11). As David's self-estimation that he was "*a poor man, and lightly esteemed*", "*a dead dog*" and "*a flea*" (I Sam. 18:23; 24:14). Every great servant of God sees himself as utterly incapable of the task before the Lord can do great works through him. Timothy must have felt the same insecurity when first left "on his own" in ministry, and certainly so upon the death of the Apostle Paul. Joshua needed such a word from the Lord at such a time. May the Lord's words to this great leader ever stir us to courage in His work. With God no man is too little for the biggest tasks!

Vs. 7-8 – "*This book of the law*" – The Lord's words

to Joshua were quite emphatic on this matter of strict obedience of “*the book of the law*” Moses had written. He was not free to pick and choose what he preferred to focus on and follow, but must “*observe to do according to all the law*”.

“*Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left*” – The Lord’s solemn words were now reinforced with a negative. Do not allow yourself to be pulled into any sidetrack or diversion. Keep yourself centred on God’s path of right. Guard from being drawn “*to the right hand or to the left*”, to one side or the other, to one extreme or another. Keep yourself balanced over the centre line of God’s instruction. Do not neglect those parts of it you perhaps do not prefer. Do not unduly emphasize any aspect over another. Guard against so stressing God’s holiness to the exclusion of His love, thus becoming overly severe, strict, or harsh, without the tender compassions of God. Do not so emphasize God’s love to the exclusion of His holiness, thus becoming syrupy sweet and sickeningly soft on right principles, with no real standards, strength of conviction or purity of life. Such benign, compromising worldliness will lead you down the road to ruin. Do not so highlight your subjective, inward relationship with God that you lose sight of the need to walk worthy of Him in practical ways. Yet do not consider your actions to

be everything, such that you forget to strive to believe right. We must worship and delight in the true God in loving devotion. Keep yourself in balance, incorporating all of His words, and you will prosper wherever life should take you (*“whithersoever thou goest”*).

*“Thou shalt meditate therein day and night”* – This is a direct command in the Hebrew. Here is the only Book in all the world that we are expressly commanded by our Creator to read and hold in our minds and mouths. This command to meditate indicates that understanding will not tend to come through mere surface attention. There is required a deliberate, unhurried process of pondering to fully comprehend and apply the wealth of God’s words to our lives. Compare Psalm 1:2; 119:97.

*“That thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein”* – Compare a similar statement in vs. 7. Mere theoretical speculations will not do. Make practical, down-to-earth application of His words, with every intention of observing them in thought and actions, carrying them out with heart, mind, and mouth (James 1:22). And *“all that is written therein”*. Again, all of it! Not just what is convenient or comfortable for you. Though receiving great promise of victory, Joshua’s success

was wholly dependent upon his unshakably keen observance of God's words written by Moses, pondered repeatedly, understood, applied, and obeyed. An uninterrupted study. A careful laying to heart. An inflexible adherence. If he would obey in this whole-hearted way it would go well with him. We have before us here a threefold underscore on the promise of prosperity. Yet if Joshua would not, it would not go well. Here is the one matter success depended upon for God's leader in his generation. He was already assured of success, if he would just hold this one matter sacred.

Wherein has anything of this principle changed? Joshua did keep this command with courage and went down in history as one of the greatest examples of success the world has ever seen. What a lasting lesson for us today! An earnest life of obedience to God was and is the key to real and lasting success, in this life and in the next, and in all of life's battles. There is no getting around it! By the testimony of the God who cannot lie, a successful life is not a matter of our education, degrees, grades, or intelligence, our astounding skills, tireless energy, or stunning ideas, our financial ability, backing, or breaks. Prosperity before God is a matter of *the personal application of what He has said!* Full stop! (Ps. 1:1-3; I Ki. 2:3-4;

Deut. 17:18-20).

I am intrigued with the contrast between vs. 6 & 7. In vs. 6 the Lord encourages strength and “*a good courage*” to take the land. Then in vs. 7 the Lord encourages strength and *great* courage (“*very courageous*”) to keep His words. We are given the impression that the Lord considered the military campaigns of Canaan’s conquest a relatively easier project compared to the consistent keeping of His words. At least on the same par. Alexander the Great, one of the most impressive military generals the world has ever seen, with flashing speed and dazzling finesse conquered the known world. But he could not conquer his own passions and died a drunkard in the prime of his life. Nobody could stand against Israel in her Golden Age during the reigns of David and Solomon. Military victories seemed an easy thing in those days. But Solomon’s (and David’s) unconquered passion for many women, moving their hearts against God’s words, brought it all down. The same could be said of Samson. The hardest battles we will ever face, more gruelling than any commander has ever been up against, will be waged around God’s Book and the keeping of it! The most ferocious skirmish line has always been (and remains) the observance of God’s words. Greater strength of character will be

1:9 *Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.*

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required there, to do right, than any earthly general ever needed to win a battle.

If you are unsaved and unsafe outside of salvation in Jesus Christ at this moment, you must understand that it is because Satan has thus far been successful in defeating you one way or another, succeeding in keeping your attentions from the life-changing Word of God. *“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them”* (II Cor. 4:3-4).

Why do we not, as God’s children, practice the pre-eminence of His Word? Let’s be honest with ourselves. It is precisely because;

- We do not *want* to see and hear what we are going to see and hear by looking into the *“perfect law of liberty”*.

We do not *want* to quit what we fear we will find forbidden there.

1:10 Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying,  
1:11 Pass through the host, and command the people, saying,  
Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass  
over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the  
LORD your God giveth you to possess it.

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- We do not *want* to do what God might require of us.
- We do not *want* to change, even if it is the God of heaven, our Creator, who requires it of us.

Therefore we avoid the Book or nibble only around the edges of it, that we might be able to say, “I just did not know!” Yet we must understand that the Lord still holds us responsible and accountable for what you and I knew to know. We knew how to know. But we have refused to apply ourselves to it.

### **1:10-15** – Joshua’s Command

Vs. 10-11 – A word to all the people.

Vs. 11 – “*Within three days*” – “The third day” by Hebrew idiom. Seems the mission of the spies took place prior to this, though recorded in the next chapter.

Vs. 12-15 – A word to those who were granted the land on the east of Jordan. Reuben, Gad, and half

- 1:12 *And to the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, spake Joshua, saying,*
- 1:13 *Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, The LORD your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land.*
- 1:14 *Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle, shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side Jordan; but ye shall pass before your brethren armed, all the mighty men of valour, and help them;*
- 

of Manasseh's tribe were reminded of their promise to help finish the job (Num. 32). There had been a touch of impropriety in the request of these tribes to settle on the trans-Jordan side. They were asking for a cut of the land before the job was finished, before God's purpose to take Canaan was complete. There would be a natural tendency in them toward reduced earnestness in the combined purpose to conquer all of the land when they had already received conquered land. As well their request raised the threat of turning all the people to the easy way of just settling in that area already conquered, thus coming short of the full measure of what God intended for them. A potential Kadesh-Barnea rebellion all over again. And there was a selfish element, making first grabs at what looked good instead of letting the Lord lead in portioning out the land by lots. Moses warned these tribes in Numbers 32 against the danger of their backing out on the larger fight. And here is the context of that famous warning, *"be sure your sin will find you out"* (Num.

1:15 *Until the LORD have given your brethren rest, as he hath given you, and they also have possessed the land which the LORD your God giveth them: then ye shall return unto the land of your possession, and enjoy it, which Moses the LORD'S servant gave you on this side Jordan toward the sunrising.*

1:16 *And they answered Joshua, saying, All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go.*

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32:23). If they failed to find it in their hearts to adequately help in the whole conquest, they could be sure the Lord would find them! One significant result of this action was that their women and little ones, in staying on the east side, were left out of important things to take place on the other side; involvement in the rolling away of their reproach at Gilgal, the visual object lesson of blessing and cursing for obedience or disobedience at Mounts Ebal & Gerazim, the miraculous victories with stunning evidence of their mighty God on their side, and years of worship around the tabernacle. Their families were not there for vital events designed to confirm their hearts in dependence on their God. There is always loss when we refuse to fully, patiently follow God's way, refusing to wait on His perfect will. These eastern tribes seldom feature in any matters of importance in the years ahead. They seem later to be more involved in national problems than national pride (chapter 22), more *bother* than true *brother* (Judge 5:15-16). They were among the

*1:17 According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: only the LORD thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses.*

*1:18 Whosoever he be that doth rebel against thy commandment, and will not hearken unto thy words in all that thou commandest him, he shall be put to death: only be strong and of a good courage.*

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first carted off to captivity (I Chron. 5:23-26). Partial commitment to God's purposes brings only partial blessing from God.

### **1:16-18** – People's Response

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### **Ponder Points**

Many folks struggle with the idea of God's people going to war and the wholesale slaughter of the people of Canaan commanded by God. How can such actions be consistent with a God who is love? But we must put such things in their proper context and acknowledge that the Lord had given to the people of Canaan a witness of the true God from the days of Abraham to Jacob. They had graciously received many centuries in which to repent of their false and filthy religion (Gen. 15:16). Yet they refused the Lord's word. In Leviticus 18 we read how they defiled the land with their incest, adultery, homosexuality, and even sexual involvement with

animals. Though individuals such as Rahab were saved by faith, as a whole God's judgment *must* fall upon them for their sin come to the full; as at Sodom and Gomorrah; as in the days of Noah's Flood. It was a case of God bringing just judgment upon such a sinful people, and it was a matter of the Lord ridding the land of their defiling influence upon His own people.

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Faith is nothing more, nothing less than taking God at His word, regardless of what we are facing on the ground. Notice how the Hebrews 11 record of men and women who lived, loved, and laboured by faith leaps in time from the Red Sea crossing (vs. 29) to Israel's defeat of Jericho (vs. 30). As if little worth mentioning happened in the 4 decades between. The implication is that their 40 years of wilderness wandering, being faithless and fruitless years, were really *wasted* years. Only when we finally begin to step out for God in obedience, no longer rebelling but taking Him at His word, do we at last begin to live lives worthy of heaven's note.

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When we see what God did for Joshua and the people of Israel, and the way He did it, we are stirred to consider what He might do in and through and for us in our day. He may not work in just the same

way, not having made the same promises to us in our day. But He is the very same miracle-working God! *“Is there anything too hard”* for Him?

## Class 3 – Joshua 2

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*2:1 And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into an harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there.*

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### **2:1-7** – Spies Received & Hidden

Vs. 1 – Why send spies? Spies only got them into trouble at Kadesh Barnea. One would think Joshua would avoid the survey thing altogether since the Lord had told them in no uncertain terms that He had already given them the land (1:2-4), and that no man would ever be able to stand before him (1:5). Was Joshua a bit shaky around the edges of his faith? Did he really need to take these precautions when success was already ensured? Perhaps Joshua followed this procedure because it was the Lord who told them to send the spies at the first from Kadesh Barnea (Num. 13:1-3). With Joshua we know it was not likely because he was unsure of success. Perhaps he was just unsure of how best to proceed. As a wise precaution he did not make it a public thing this time, but it was done “*secretly*” lest an unhappy report return and the people again be discouraged. That lesson he had certainly learned well. If indeed it was indication of a small

measure of weakness in Joshua's faith we will see again how the Lord turns even human weakness into an opportunity for grace. Rahab will find deliverance as a result, even as the sailors met the true God through Jonah's flight of rebellion.

Jericho was not an easy berry to pick as a man looked at it. Considered by some to be the oldest city on earth, we read that it was a well-fortified stronghold with double wall around. The inner wall was 4 metres thick, the outer wall 2 metres thick, towering 10-11 metres high, 5 metres between walls, with the gap spanned by houses built on the top of the wall. And we find the people of Jericho on sharpest alert to the approaching threat from the east.

Jericho sat in an open valley at the head of the pass up from the Jordan Valley into the central hill country of Palestine. Thus it was a key city and a logical first stop in the taking of the land. From the launching pad of a victory here Israel would drive a wedge westward, dividing the land in two.

*“And came unto an harlot's house, named Rahab”* – How the men came to stay at Rahab's house we are not told. Obviously it was of the Lord. Again it was as Jonah's experience on the sea, where the Lord

was busy there with more than just the correction of His wayward servant. For He was graciously fishing for the souls of the sailors on that boat as well. Even so here. Regardless of what men are busy with, and regardless of God's main movements on earth at the moment, He is ever given to His purpose to reach the souls of the lost. Even within the process of delivering His judgment upon the sinful sons of men, as here, yet He still seeks for souls who are searching for truth.

Now some folks have struggled with this description of Rahab as a harlot or prostitute. They struggle with the fact that such an immoral woman would be the only one in the city to respond in faith. And there is concern that such a carnal Canaanite would even end up in the line of Christ (Matt. 1:5), "staining" the human ancestry of our Saviour. Therefore some have suggested that the description of Rahab here should rather be translated "inn-keeper" rather than prostitute. But there is no need to play games with the text of God's words. In Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25 she is referred to as "*the harlot Rahab*" and "*Rahab the harlot*". "*Harlot*" in these New Testament (N.T.) portions is *porne* (πορνῆ) in the original Greek. No possibility of reading her as an inn-keeper in those portions. So we let the N.T. interpret the O.T. for us, helping to

- 2:2 *And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, Behold, there came men in hither to night of the children of Israel to search out the country.*
- 2:3 *And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab, saying, Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house: for they be come to search out all the country.*
- 

keep us honest. Remember that it was a woman of a similar character who first responded to Jesus in faith at Sychar as well (Jn. 4). And it was such women who having been redeemed and changed followed Jesus in His earthly ministry. Tamar gave birth to Phares by Judah through acting the part of a prostitute. She too is listed in Christ's genealogy (Matt. 1:3). And Solomon is found there as well, born of "*her that had been the wife of Urias*" (Matt. 1:6). Please understand that Rahab is so exalted by God to a place of honour in His Word in order to highlight what she did. As Abraham of old, she "*believed in the LORD; and He counted it to [her] for righteousness*" (Gen. 15:6). That Rahab was a harlot did not make her any more vile a sinner than the next man or woman, though she is perhaps among the last kind of people we might expect to see saved in Jericho. Compare Christ's words to the religious leaders of Israel, that "*publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you*" (Matt. 21:31). Indeed of such is the kingdom. Those first invited to God's feast made excuse to abstain (Matt.

- 2:4 *And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were:*
- 2:5 *And it came to pass about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the men went I wot not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them.*
- 2:6 *But she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof.*
- 

22). Yet it is such as these who are found in the highways and hedges of life who are often willing to come to God. But praise God He *changes* people who believe in Him. And this He underscores by placing such a one as Rahab in that coveted line of Messiah. Even so Ruth the Moabite was blessed and transformed and included in that line.

Vs. 2-3 – Jericho would have been on highest alert with the nation of Israel camped just across the river from them and threatening attack. They were very likely expecting spies to be sent. So the two strangers were seen entering Rahab's house and the king immediately sent for their collection.

Vs. 4-6 – Expecting this very thing, perhaps even seeing the king's soldiers coming with her house perched up above the city streets on the top of the wall, Rahab hid the men on the flat roof of her house among the stalks of flax. In processing flax after

harvest the stalks are first soaked in water for many days to loosen the fibres, and then they are laid out in the sun to dry, as Rahab was apparently doing on her roof. After the stalks are dried they are commonly stood together in stacks before processing into linen. It was apparently within these stacks that the men were hidden, expecting a search, yet a search that amazingly never took place. The king's messengers simply believed Rahab's lies, the words of a harlot (vs. 7).

Vs. 5 – *“The time of shutting the gate”* would have been at sunset. In such cities the gate would then remain closed after sunset with none allowed in or out until morning.

Some interesting questions arise with the seeming success of Rahab's lies here, questions folks have wrangled over ever since Joshua recorded it in the Book. Could it be that she was right to do what she did in this circumstance? What else could she have done? What would you have done? Does a good and godly end justify a godless means to that end? We might attempt to justify her actions in suggesting that;

- Rahab was part of a corrupt people whose sin had come to the full. Therefore she likely held a much lesser view of the wrong of lying.

- She was confronted with the option of two evils, a lie or death for the men. And their deaths of course would mean sure death to herself and family in the coming destruction as well. Can she be faulted for choosing the least of two evils?
- Her faith was a new thing, with little enough opportunity to learn of the Lord's righteous ways.
- Eastern hospitality made a host duty-bound to care for a guest at all cost. Remember Lot's offer of his own daughters to be abused for the protection of the men spending the night in his home (Gen. 19:8).

Though the Lord condemns lying as a sinful departure from His own righteous way, yet even this act was born out of her faith in God and desire to protect God's own. James commends her for her protection of the spies, risking her own life to do it, as an outward evidence of her inward faith (James 2:25), though he makes no mention of her lie. Her act showed her crossover from loyalty to her own people to loyalty to the Lord's purpose and people. We see the same in Jacob, who was willing for doubtful means motivated by faith in God's promise as well. Though the Lord allows such measures to

*2:7 And the men pursued after them the way to Jordan unto the fords: and as soon as they which pursued after them were gone out, they shut the gate.*

*2:8 And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof;*

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succeed because of the genuine faith behind them, He still punishes for the evil of dishonesty. We tend to assume that if Rahab had not lied the men would have been captured and killed. Yet this outcome should properly have been left in the hands of He who can do anything. Never is the Lord in need of doubtful help from man to accomplish His purposes, though He is quite able and willing to use doubtful help to His ends. Never does He allow that *any* situation either necessitates or excuses such dishonesty. It is our work to represent He who is truth upon this earth, and trust Him to see to all eventualities.

### **2:8-21** – Covenant Between Spies & Rahab

Vs. 8-11 – Rahab’s conviction. With the turning of the king’s messengers in pursuit of the spies in the obvious direction of their supposed flight, toward the river, a very interesting and revealing conversation follows between Rahab and her two guests.

2:9 *And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you.*

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Vs. 9 – She knew and used the name of Jehovah (“*the LORD*”), and expressed her complete confidence that He had given the land to Israel. She related as well how this same conviction, with great fear of impending loss and doom, was felt by all the people of her city. And somehow she was aware that this effect ranged even wider to “*all the inhabitants of the land*”. All “*faint because of you*”, she affirmed. The hearts of all were literally melting with panic over Israel and her God. This was the Lord’s doing, according to His promise in Deuteronomy 2:25 that He would “*put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations that are under the whole heaven, who shall hear report of thee, and shall tremble, and be in anguish because of thee*”. Here was the first evidence of it. These men must surely have been stirred to encouragement in a God who does just as He says, according to a normal, literal reading of His promises.

Vs. 10 – The reputation of the Lord’s wonderful works for and through His people had gone before them, fuelling Canaanite fears.

2:10 For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed.  
2:11 And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.

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Vs. 11 – Here is Rahab’s confession of faith. She was quite convinced through the reports of the Lord’s miraculous works that *“the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath”*. No shred remained in her of a clinging to the false gods of her people. As Ruth would later do, Rahab renounced the false and grasped in faith the true God. And the strength and sincerity of her faith is seen in Rahab’s earnest plea for her preservation and that of her family.

Note the dual effect on the hearers of word of the Lord’s mighty judgments upon the men of earth, and the deliverances of His people (Heb. 4:2). The heart of every unbelieving soul faced the dead-end of fear with all courage vanished. Though they had learned what the Lord can do, they would not bow or believe in the Lord of glory. No help, no hope, quite stripped of courage, but no turning. Only terror in their resolute stubbornness. Yet Rahab’s heart was moved by the same words from fear to

*2:12 Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD,  
since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew  
kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token:  
2:13 And that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and  
my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and  
deliver our lives from death.*

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faith in the true God, even through the small bit of information she had received about the Lord, and even though the message was all negative (as Jonah's at Nineveh). It was not a matter of how much she knew. It was what she *did* with what she had that made all the difference. She was the only one who found help and hope. She was the only one looking for it. Therefore of the many inhabitants in Jericho at that time, hers is the only name coming down to us. We do not even know the names of the spies! The Lord sees to it that such simple, sincere faith finds the help and hope it needs. He was the One orchestrating this meeting of a sincere seeker with His messengers. He would do the same again in Jesus' day, bringing His Servant into contact with Zacchaeus and Bartimaeus to their eternal benefit on the streets of this same city.

Vs. 12-13 – Rahab's plea. Not only did she fully believe in God's mighty power, she hoped for His mercy as well. If the mighty works of the Lord she had heard of were spent in behalf of a people whom

He held dear and protected, then perhaps there was some hope that she could be a part of His people, among those under His wings. Do you see how she had fully forsaken trust in herself or her people or her king or their army? Now her only hope was that the LORD God of heaven above and earth beneath might actually have room under His wing for her? There has never been a human heart sincerely reaching out for divine mercy in this way that has ever escaped the Lord's attention! And thus He in His grace arranged a meeting with His "missionary" team, who could lead this fallen woman through to express and affirm her faith in the true God. She saw, she heard, she believed, she cried, she received, she was delivered! Her *soul* saved from God's eternal judgment, and her *life* saved from the destruction of her city and people. And there began then the Lord's tender process of teaching and leading her away from her idolatry, harlotry, and dishonesty.

Do not miss again how there were many others around Rahab who received the blessing of deliverance as well because of her faith. Her house became the one place of true refuge in all the city of Jericho. But as with Noah's ark, it was a place of refuge only for those who believed her report. Compare the same in the woman at the well (John

4). Her faith turned her thoughts immediately to others also in need of the One she had found. No one has ever responded to the Lord in faithful obedience and not brought benefit to a circle of influence around them. Even the crucified and dying thief, saved in the final moments of his life, had his faith in Jesus recorded in the Book. And though he immediately died, through this account he has blessed countless souls through the centuries through the record of his “deathbed” conversion.

Consider as well Rahab’s risk in sharing with family and friends her “disloyal” covenant with the enemy in seeking to lead them into her safe house. Her loyalty to the invading force would have been looked upon with the same bitter contempt as Jeremiah’s faithful prophesy of Assyria’s coming victory over his own people. Leading others to refuge in God’s only “house” of safety always involves personal risk. Such a message always (rightly) implies every other earthly faith doomed to utter destruction. And this is never an endearing message for those who proudly hold to their false beliefs.

Vs. 14 – *“If ye utter not this our business”* – If she squealed on them and they were caught and killed obviously all promise of deliverance was off since

- 2:14 *And the men answered her, Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the LORD hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee.*
- 2:15 *Then she let them down by a cord through the window: for her house was upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall.*
- 2:16 *And she said unto them, Get you to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers be returned: and afterward may ye go your way.*
- 2:17 *And the men said unto her, We will be blameless of this thine oath which thou hast made us swear.*
- 

word of their oath would never get back to Joshua. There seems a measure of emphasis in their warning against uttering “*this our business*” (vs. 14, 20). Perhaps because they had already seen her willingness to deceive when pressed hard enough by necessity. None can comfortably trust the honesty of one they have observed being dishonest with others.

Vs. 16 – “*Get you to the mountain*” – There is a range of mountains to the north and west of Jericho with many caves. It was a clever direction to go, with all expectation that they would run to the east, to the river. And it was wise counsel to “*hide yourselves there three days*” until the search party gave up and returned. They of course were trusting her to not redirect the searchers into the mountains after them. Trusting that she was no phoney in her testimony of faith in God.

2:18 *Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee.*

2:19 *And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him.*

2:20 *And if thou utter this our business, then we will be quit of thine oath which thou hast made us to swear.*

2:21 *And she said, According unto your words, so be it. And she sent them away, and they departed: and she bound the scarlet line in the window.*

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Vs. 21 – “*She bound the scarlet line in the window*” – That line hanging from her window on the wall represented escape. It was the means of escape for the spies, who climbed down by it to safety. And it was the means of Rahab’s escape and that of her house who were spared by the sign of it. There is surely a sense in which the meaning of that scarlet line shimmers beyond to the Lord Jesus Christ, the only One by whom man can escape the wrath to come. Even as the blood of the sacrificial lambs sprinkled on the door, that sign by which the faithful family huddled within escaped the death angel in Egypt. “*In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sin, according to the riches of His grace*” (Eph. 1:7). Jesus is the only line, the only avenue, the only way out by which a soul can escape God’s just condemnation

2:22 *And they went, and came unto the mountain, and abode there three days, until the pursuers were returned: and the pursuers sought them throughout all the way, but found them not.*

2:23 *So the two men returned, and descended from the mountain, and passed over, and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all things that befell them:*

2:24 *And they said unto Joshua, Truly the LORD hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us.*

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upon the race of man.

## **2:22-24** – Return & Report to Joshua

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### **Symbolisms**

Rahab, with all the people of Jericho, was doomed! Their complete destruction with none escaping was the righteous sentence declared upon them by the Judge of all flesh. Though God's wrath had not yet fallen, it would just now surely fall! Though still they were "*eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage*", within a matter of hours the sounds and sights of life and joy in Jericho would be brought to an abrupt end. The conquering army was just across the way and on its way. They were a city of people condemned, helpless, and without hope of deliverance, like the people of Nineveh in the days of Jonah's ministry. But unlike those at

Nineveh, sin had come to the full in Jericho, as in all of Canaan. Therefore there was no Jonah, no preacher bringing warning, no 40-day window of grace, no delays!

The city of Jericho becomes something of a symbol of the race of sinful man on earth, condemned and awaiting God's imminent destruction. Rahab becomes a symbol of believers saved out of the corrupt, condemned race of mankind and gathered to Joshua/Jesus, that conquering Captain of the Lord's Hosts. Where before Rahab was "*far off*", among the enemies of the Lord, now no longer is she an alien "*from the commonwealth of Israel*" and a stranger "*from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world*" (Eph. 2:12-13). Now by faith she is "*made nigh by the blood of Christ*". The spies represent God's use of human means or messengers to help lead searching souls to salvation. The scarlet line a symbol of Jesus as the only way out of the doomed city of man.

Man's inherent awareness of his gathering doom leaves him in fear and anguish at the core of his being, with the stubborn gates of his understanding firmly shut. All of his lifetime he is subject to the bondage of that fear, refusing to understand that Jesus became flesh in order that through death He

might be a Messenger of deliverance from the bondage of death and fear (Heb. 2:14-15). The faithless heart defiantly holds out some confidence in his own ability to cope and comes at last to eternal ruin. The heart of faith sees the hopelessness and helplessness of our situation here before the overwhelming power of the Almighty. And knowing there is no hope of winning, the heart of faith bows in surrender, finding at last the help it could not find in itself. The result of it is that in spite of the gathering storm clouds of judgment one such as Rahab can sleep a rest of peace, while all those around are wakeful with worry and fretting with fear.

When the Lord at last begins to close in on the world bringing His judgment close, when at last it is just across the river, and even as if circling seven times in the seven final years of the tribulation period, the overwhelming fear and feel of looming doom will turn the hearts of men either to despair without hope, or to faithful surrender finding help. What will you do with the threat of God's consuming wrath upon you in your sin? What is Jesus to you? Stepping stone to heaven, or stumbling block spilling you into an eternal hell?

*“And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind*

*him to powder” (Matt. 21:44).*

*“He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (Jn. 3:36).*

“And as...the feet of the priests  
that bare the ark were dipped into  
the brim of the water... the waters  
which came down from above  
stood and rose up upon an heap”

(Joshua 3:15-16)

## **Class 4 – Joshua 3**

In chapter 2 we saw Rahab the prostitute express her faith in the Lord and find rescue, a woman later honoured by God through His mention of her in that great record of men and women of faith in Hebrews 11. She was among a people marked for death according to the righteous judgment of God. But she was an individual saved out of a condemned race by the grace of God through faith in the promise of God. She was saved in the same way any and every soul is saved in every age. It is God's grace in saving such a one that is underscored by her honourable mention there in Hebrews 11, even over other godly individuals such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel, or Elijah and Elisha.

We come now to the crossing of the River Jordan in chapter 3. *An absolutely incredible account!* God had purposed to destroy the seven nations on the other side by means of the invading army of His people Israel. The people of Canaan were to be completely destroyed;

- Because they had sold themselves to immoral abominations. In Leviticus 20, after listing several sins of sexual deviance (adultery, incest, homosexuality, bestiality) and

repeatedly stating the sure punishment of death due to those practicing such, the Lord again forbids such abominations in His own people in vs. 23, pointing out that such were *“the manners of the nation, which I cast out before you: for they committed all these things, and therefore I abhorred them”*.

- And because the people of Canaan had given themselves over to godless spiritualism. Again, after listing several types of occult practice in Deuteronomy 18 the Lord then states that it was *“because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee . . . for these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners”* (vs. 12-14). Israel’s taking of Canaan was at the same time God’s invasion of Satan’s domain, light driving back the borders of darkness.

## **Chapter 3** – Crossing Jordan

### **3:1-6** – Preparations for Crossing

Vs. 1 – As the sun began to brighten the eastern sky on the morning after the spies returned with their encouraging report Joshua was up early and busy with the great task of moving the people from

*3:1 And Joshua rose early in the morning; and they removed from Shittim, and came to Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over.*

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the plains of Moab to the brink of the Jordan. There was no foot-dragging with him, indicating no doubts in him either. To be sure it was purely faith in God's promise that moved Joshua, for he had no clear direction as of yet how the Lord would manage to get such a great body of people across such a great body of water. Yet again, no delay and no arguments! The Lord did not see fit to give Joshua the whole plan, only a lamp unto his feet lighting the way with command and promise enough for him to take the next step. But each step of obedience brought new light, leading up to one of the most marvellous miracles the Lord has done on earth.

We can well imagine the buzz of excitement among all the people as they made the trek over the few kilometres to the Jordan's edge. Yet what a sight must have met them when they came at last to look down over the long slope of the Jordan Valley. How very mixed the response must have been among them, with a tangle of emotion and confidence, faltering fear and fixed faith. There would surely have been a wide range of both strong and weak faith among the multitude. For before them was

*3:2 And it came to pass after three days, that the officers went through the host;*

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what could only be described as a humanly impossible obstacle. As we know, the Jordan was then in flood. It was spring (April or May), with the river swollen from melted snow from the mountains of Lebanon to the north. They were looking at a very full flood plain! What would have normally been a 50-60 metre crossing would have been well over twice that as they looked down upon this natural barrier. The Jordan flows with a measure of speed, certainly when in flood. The river falls over 300 metres from Galilee to the Dead Sea over a distance of about 110 kms, thus averaging over a 2.5 metre drop per kilometre. Men with babies and aged parents and grandparents in their household must have inwardly cringed, fighting back misgivings if not outright doubts. But we hear of no dissent among the people, for it was a very different generation from that at Kadesh Barnea.

Vs. 2 – For three more days they remained there on the eastern bank before crossing, for there were things they must do. We must remember that they were a vast group of over 2 million people without the speed of communication characteristic of our digital age. Keeping folks informed is important to

3:3 *And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it.*

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good administration, but a procedure that took time in their context. As well, they were following the Lord's lead, who was moving slowly and deliberately with them. The Lord wanted all attention riveted on such a major motivational event as the coming miracle would prove to be. They were about to march right into enemy territory. And this supernatural crossing would provide all necessary assurance that the God of heaven was with them, leading the way through Joshua. Nothing must take place so fast here that some should miss it.

Vs. 3 – *"The ark of the covenant"* was to be their lead. The ark becomes a key point of focus in this chapter, mentioned 10 times within these 17 verses. In the course of Israel's travels the ark always took a central position among them, whether they were moving or at rest. But in this event the ark, carried by the priests, would move from the middle of their camp to lead the way west across the river. And all were to fall in behind it. The ark of course pictured the presence of the Lord in the midst or heart of His people at all times whether on the move or at rest. Yet now, when facing the threat of a troubling

3:4 *Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore.*

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barrier, He moved to the front, taking the lead in facing the obstacle. He then stands in the middle of harm's way while His children pass safely through life's threatening situations.

Vs. 4 – The people must not crowd the ark in their excitement. As a precaution against this an open space was to be maintained around the ark of at least 2000 cubits or over 900 metres, nearly a kilometre. This because the ark was sacred and could not be touched. The Lord knows how people are given to excitement, and especially on such an occasion as this. Those behind could easily, unknowingly force those before against the ark with disastrous results. Compare Uzzah's death at David's happy ark-shifting celebration (II Sam. 6). It was sensible precautions against a victorious occasion resulting in tragedy.

We see again that what the Lord does, whether miraculous or mundane, He does *“decently and in order”*. I am reminded of Christ's command before His miracle of feeding the 5000 that *“all sit down by companies upon the green grass. And they sat down*

*in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties*” (Mk. 6:39-40). Perhaps this arrangement was partly so that all could see the proceedings. And then in an orderly fashion He distributed to the disciples and they to the people. So it was to be here on the brink of Jordan. A momentous event led by the Lord would not be done in a shoddy manner.

Perhaps the great open space around the ark was also so that all could better see. The setting was perfect for such an event, theatre-like, with all the people ranging up the slope of the valley and up and down the river, a clear line of sight to every part of the congregation.

*“That ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore.”* – There is a world of meaning in these words. They were to keep their eyes on the ark, that sacred representation or evidence of the invisible God’s presence, because the Lord was leading them through a passage they had never before travelled, across unfamiliar ground. Even so we are to keep our eyes on Jesus, that exalted One in whom we see the invisible God. And as we follow Jesus through life we too are led in a way, miraculous ways, in which we have never before travelled. And ultimately we are led right across the great divide,

3:5 *And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for to morrow the LORD will do wonders among you.*

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through the unknown “*valley of the shadow of death*”, but without fear of evil “*for Thou art with me*”. For “*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth Thee*” (Isa. 26:3). For the one with eyes fixed on the ark of the Lord and the Lord of the ark there is only peace in any new and unfamiliar situation.

Vs. 5 – “*Sanctify yourselves*” – No preparations for war here as we might expect, only preparations of the heart. To sanctify ourselves means to set ourselves apart for the Lord alone and to separate from evil, even as we would confess and put away known sin before partaking of the Lord’s Table. Compare Jacob and family stripping themselves of every “*strange god*” and token of superstitious trust and burying it all before their return to Bethel (Gen. 35:1-4). Much, much more important it is that one be right with the Lord than “ready” for war. This was likely the same kind of sanctification Moses commanded at Sinai (Ex. 19:10-15), involving physical cleansing of body and clothing, abstinence from physical relations between husband and wife, and a heart condition of focus and devotedness to the Lord. It seems this need of united sanctification

3:6 And Joshua spake unto the priests, saying, Take up the ark of the covenant, and pass over before the people. And they took up the ark of the covenant, and went before the people.

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had to do with the fact that the Lord was about to “do wonders among” them. So the doing of wonders among them was dependent upon their sanctification? Could it be that *we* do not see the Lord doing more wonders among us or within the church of our day because we have not sanctified ourselves? When Moses had at last put every detail of the tabernacle just as the Lord had said, only then did the glory of God’s presence fill the tent (Ex. 40). Compare Isaiah 40:3-5. God does not use beautiful vessels, or talented vessels. He uses *clean* vessels (II Tim. 2:21). Trust in our own measures and arm and strength and abilities will not win the day when we need the Lord’s miracle touch to move forward.

Vs. 6 – It seems this is now the morning of the big event. Joshua gave the thumbs up to the priests to proceed to the river with the ark. Consider their faith and obedience when all before them still appeared quite impossible.

### **3:7-8** – The Lord’s Words to Joshua

*3:7 And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee.*

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Vs. 7 – The Lord encouraged Joshua with word of his exaltation before the people, that all would see and understand without a doubt that the Lord was with Joshua and communicating directly with him even as He had with Moses. Joshua had been officially appointed by Moses and by the Lord, but this day God would stamp His clear mark upon him. We must understand that the people had not heard the Lord’s voice directly, nor had their immediate leaders or the priests. They only knew what Joshua said the Lord had said. And things were looking pretty doubtful on the ground. It had been 4 decades since the crossing of the Red Sea, and most of these people were unborn or small children at that time. So an under-current of uncertainty must surely have been running strong in many a heart there on the east side, doubts that would of course be thoroughly dissipated by the time they came to the west side. For they would see the Lord doing just as Joshua said that day. They would know beyond doubt that Joshua was indeed the Lord’s man and a fit leader. This event would fuse the people behind him, serving to elevate his words and mission and authority as from the Lord (4:14). In a

*3:8 And thou shalt command the priests that bear the ark of the covenant, saying, When ye are come to the brink of the water of Jordan, ye shall stand still in Jordan.*

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similar way a man may be ordained and duly appointed to a ministry, but people need to see God working in the man through His gifts for ministry. And see how there now comes a day when the Lord at last exalts the one who has faithfully, quietly lived for Him for years.

Vs. 8 – The Lord gives the added instruction that once their feet were in the water they were to stop and stand. It was a bit like the rod of Moses touching the water of the Red Sea, bringing the miracle parting, or like Elijah’s mantle later used by both he and Elisha to strike and part the Jordan (II Ki. 2). In each case the waters must first be touched by human agency before God miraculously parted them. It is a reminder of always the tight connection between human and divine will and action. God will not do for man what he can do for himself. Man cannot do what God alone can do. Both have a part in God’s works on earth.

### **3:9-13** – Joshua’s Words to the People

Vs. 9 – Joshua now called the people together and began to explain to them just how they were going

3:9 *And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, Come hither, and hear the words of the LORD your God.*  
3:10 *And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites.*

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to accomplish what he was proposing to do. It seems they had received little of the how of things before this point. And the sight of that river would have been a matter of stumbling for many. They were being called to trust the Lord's word through His human leader. And yet again there amazingly was no expression of dissent.

Vs. 10 – What they would see with their own eyes that day would be proof enough that the Lord was among them, and proof enough of the *kind* of Lord among them. They would come to realize that their God would certainly not fail them in driving out the seven nations of the land listed here before their marching feet. This day they would see clearest evidence of “*the living and true God*”, for no mere *man* could possibly orchestrate what was about to unfold before their eyes. They would see the mighty work of the God of creation, who hears and sees and speaks. A moving, active God with willingness and ability to go before them into the fearful unknown. One who is utterly adequate for their defence. And

- 3:11 *Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan.*
- 3:12 *Now therefore take you twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, out of every tribe a man.*
- 3:13 *And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap.*
- 

this in contrast to the stone-cold idols of the land, with mouths and eyes and ears that neither speak nor see nor hear. Moses too understood the desperate need of the Lord being with them, insisting before the Lord, “*if Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence*” (Ex. 33:15). Nothing has changed in this regard in our current age. It is still “*the living God . . . Lord of all the earth*” with us, yea *within* us and going before us today that makes all the difference.

### **3:14-17** – Parted and Passed Over

Picture the scene. Four priests making their winding way down the long slope to the river on a clear spring morning. They carry on their shoulders the ark of God with the mercy seat and the golden cherubim above it, carrying it by the poles in the familiar way prescribed by the Lord. It is an event! With the masses of the people now following at a distance, belongings all packed and carrying their

*3:14 And it came to pass, when the people removed from their tents, to pass over Jordan, and the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people;*

*3:15 And as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,)*

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children. The crowd and cattle now flooding over the brim of the valley and filling the slope to the north, south, and east as the priests approach the river. All is quiet but for the threatening roar of the river far below them. The atmosphere among the watching crowd is electric with anticipation mingled with doubts. The angels of heaven look on as well, with Satan and his host bound and seething, powerless to stop what God has purposed and promised.

The tight group of priests, small in the distance, dwarfed by the mighty, moving river, perhaps involuntarily hesitate at the water's edge. Even when standing right there, centimetres from where the foamy, brown waters lapped at the shore, there still was not the least indication of any effect upon the powerfully flowing river. And then, bravely, obediently, faithfully the priests press forward until they are actually standing knee-deep in the swirling, muddy water of the Jordan. Creation itself seems to hold its breath in the stillness. Then quite

*3:16 That the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho.*

*3:17 And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.*

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suddenly the river was swept right back as if by a great, unseen hand before the eyes of all, falling to a trickle and then its flow stopped completely! As if the river were cringing away in fear of the ark! Even as the psalmist taunts, “*What ailed thee O...thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back?*” (Ps. 114:5). Imagine two million people standing in stunned silence at the startling spectacle of it! As far as the eye could see to north and south what was just now a raging river had gone to dry land. The entire threat, the impossible, impassable barrier just simply vanished before their eyes. The people turned then to see the priests again moving forward, and now stopping and standing in the middle of the dry river channel. And the command to cross came rippling through the crowd up the hillside. And people all around began with a lurch moving down the slope, leading their household and animals behind, perhaps hurried by a measure of fear that the water might soon come boiling back down the river channel like a run-away freight train (4:10).

Now there is a little devilish bent in me that likes to imagine Canaanite lookouts up in the hills on the other side watching the strange proceedings below. Can you even imagine the eyes popping and jaws dropping in bewildered horror as they looked down upon what so suddenly and unexpectedly transpired before their eyes as well? “Please tell me I did not see that!! How did they do that!!” And not just with a normal flow, but with the river in flood! Like it was made to order, and indeed it was! The timing was too perfect. They or their God was too obviously in control of that. And then just as they were quite finished with their crossing, down the river channel came the rushing Jordan again (4:18). Like those people somehow just turned off the tap and then turned it back on again! Can you picture such thoroughly rattled lookouts turning tail and running back to their people with word of what they saw, and trying to make them believe it? And Rahab perhaps stirred with word of it to more earnest effort in seeking to convince family and friends to join her without delay in her safe house. Even as threat of God’s gathering judgment stirs us to “*persuade men*” to join us “*in Christ*”.

Some folks try to explain this event by natural phenomena of some type, as they do the Red Sea crossing (earthquake or landslide upriver). It was

just God, “*the LORD your God . . . the living God . . . Lord of all the earth*”.

Vs. 16 – There is no certainty of the location of this area where “*the waters . . . stood and rose up upon an heap*”. This “*city of Adam*” is mentioned only here in the Bible. It seems to have been upriver quite a ways. Most estimations put it at least 25 kms north of this crossing at Jericho. So if the river was flowing at say 10 kms/hr that would mean the priests stood there for at least 2½ hrs waiting for the water level to drop. But this kind of delay is not implied here. Seems the Lord not only stood the water of Jordan “*upon an heap*”, but He miraculously removed the water between “dam” and Dead Sea as well, in the same way that He created the stars complete with light beams millions of light-years long to be visible on earth from the day of their creation. Or perhaps He actually swept the water back upriver to this piling up point?

Now with their crossing they obviously were committed! There could be no turning back. But it seems likely none were worried about that anymore. They had crossed over as well to a new awareness of the God who can do *anything!* They had come to recognize that the God who had miraculously done what He had promised in their crossing would

surely do what He had repeatedly promised in giving them the land. Barriers just are not a problem with Him.

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## **Ponder Points**

A faith response to God's promises usually requires us to *act* on God's promises before we can expect to see the Lord's supernatural work. God often works according to our faith. And our faith is displayed in action (James 2). Abraham's willing move to offer Isaac brought God's miraculous provision of the ram substitute. Joshua was sticking his neck out here for the Lord in response to His promise, as were the priests standing down there in the water before the whole nation when as yet they were not provided with the least tangible indicator that the Lord would actually do what He had said. Joshua risked not only failure but dismissal as leader, and perhaps even death at the hands of a thoroughly disenchanted people should this radical ploy fail. Obedience to God's word will always appear radical in our up-side-down world. A leader must take risks for God if he would be God's leader. He will have to turn a deaf ear to many a doubting Thomas in order to do what the Lord has revealed to him in His Word. He will have to risk the "I told you so's" of the scorners.

## **Class 5 – Joshua 4**

Israel's wanderings in the wilderness are perhaps a picture of a believer still living as he did before he was saved. As God's purpose for the nation of Israel was for them to leave the wilderness and enter their Promised Land of rest and victory, even so His purpose for every believer is that we make the cross-over from our old way of life to a new life of victory in surrender to Jesus Christ.

In chapter 3 we considered the wonder of Israel's miracle crossing of the Jordan. Trusting to self at Kadesh Barnea brought defeat. Looking only to their own abilities there, they were correct in concluding that it could not be done. And as we shall soon see, selfishly touching things forbidden brings defeat as well. But when God's people simply trust and obey there is victory. These two vital words, trust and obey, faith and obedience, express all that the people of Israel really did that day. God did all the rest! What is a response of faith more than trusting God enough to obey Him and leaving the rest to Him? Faith is doing what the Lord says because I am convinced enough that what He says is right and best, against the carnal counsels of my own heart. When one is willing to simply believe and obey God's words the results

4:1 *And it came to pass, when all the people were clean passed over Jordan, that the LORD spake unto Joshua, saying,*  
4:2 *Take you twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man,*

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can be earth-shaking in their monumental significance.

The interesting point has been made that both with Joshua in their river crossing and Jesus in His baptism, the Jordan marked the key point of their arising and entering into the heart of their ministry and purpose on earth. Both of these Captains of salvation God elevated at the Jordan, magnifying Joshua *“in the sight of all Israel”* and publicly introducing Jesus there as His *“beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”* (Matt. 3:17). Jesus was in fact baptized on the east side of the Jordan at Bethabara (Jn. 1:28), a name meaning “house of the ford” or “place of passage”, perhaps referring to that place of Israel’s passage across the river. Interesting that those two Captains were coming up out of the Jordan heading in opposite directions. Joshua and the people were crossing out of their wilderness wanderings and into the land, while Jesus went up out of Jordan into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Could there be some significance to Christ’s 40 days in the wilderness answering to their 40 years out there?

*4:3 And command ye them, saying, Take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm, twelve stones, and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave them in the lodging place, where ye shall lodge this night.*

*4:4 Then Joshua called the twelve men, whom he had prepared of the children of Israel, out of every tribe a man:*

*4:5 And Joshua said unto them, Pass over before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of Jordan, and take ye up every man of you a stone upon his shoulder, according unto the number of the tribes of the children of Israel:*

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## **Chapter 4** – Events Around the Crossing

### **4:1-9** – Stone Memorials

Vs. 1-3 – After all the people had crossed it came time to call the twelve chosen representatives of the tribes (3:12) to their task of collecting stones out of the river for a memorial to be placed where the people would camp their first night in the land. Such memorials made from stones may seem an insignificant matter to us, but it was the Lord Himself who instructed Joshua in this task as well. To the Lord it was certainly a matter of importance that they do this. He wanted a visual object lesson set up to help them never forget this incredible miracle.

Vs. 4-5 – These were not hand-sized stones but shoulder boulders, probably as big as each man could easily carry. They were taken from the area

4:6 *That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones?*

4:7 *Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever.*

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in the middle of the river channel where “*the priests’ feet stood firm*” holding the ark.

Vs. 6-7 – The purpose of the rock memorial was to form a perpetual reminder to the following generations of this miracle crossing of the Jordan given by God to His people. God was thinking beyond the present, to the coming generations. He wanted a lasting reminder right here beside this well-travelled road at a common crossing point of how He so powerfully put Israel in their land. The Lord was remembering the forgetfulness of people.

Understand with me the import of this memorial. The Lord would not consider it necessary to perform miracles of this kind for every generation. No national field trip across the dry Jordan riverbed every 40 years or so would be needed. The Lord was not planning to provide supernatural tutoring to lead each individual to faith, as some today insist we must expect. By God’s design it would be

*4:8 And the children of Israel did so as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones out of the midst of Jordan, as the LORD spake unto Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them unto the place where they lodged, and laid them down there.*

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enough for the following generations that they see a pile of rocks, and be informed of what the Lord did years ago, or generations ago. The mere report of what the Lord did at the Red Sea and across the Jordan was enough to lead Rahab to faith. In the same way the Lord expects that the solid rock memorial of His eternal words should be enough to convince each individual of His mighty power. Every new generation or individual in it does not need to see God's mighty miracles to believe. All men are called upon to believe what God has already done and faithfully recorded in His Bible. Some demand the idolatrous experience of miraculous manifestations because they will not simply believe God's record.

Vs. 9 – Whether by his own invention or the Lord's intention we are not told, but Joshua also put together another pile of twelve stones out in the centre of the Jordan. It was a second memorial that marked the very place where the priests had bravely “*stood firm*” for Israel. A marker that obviously

4:9 *And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant stood: and they are there unto this day.*  
4:10 *For the priests which bare the ark stood in the midst of Jordan, until every thing was finished that the LORD commanded Joshua to speak unto the people, according to all that Moses commanded Joshua: and the people hastened and passed over.*

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would later be covered by the Jordan. Yet an editorial note is included here, either by Joshua or perhaps later by Samuel or Ezra, that those stones were still “*there unto this day*”. Stated so certainly it seems to imply that perhaps the top of that pile could be seen when the river was flowing normally?

#### **4:10-13** – The People Pass Over

Vs. 10 – The priests stood their ground without faltering, while the people hurried across, likely with a measure of apprehension or fear. Those bravely obedient priests were the first to venture out into the middle, and the last to leave that fearful position. It was by no means an enviable place to be. But they had it to do if they would obey God and provide a guiding influence and comfort to God’s people in the crossing. Should the water suddenly come raging back down the river they would have no time to get out of the way. They could not drop the ark of God and run for their lives. They “*stood firm*” in harm’s way. Thus they stood

*4:11 And it came to pass, when all the people were clean passed over, that the ark of the LORD passed over, and the priests, in the presence of the people.*

*4:12 And the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, passed over armed before the children of Israel, as Moses spake unto them:*

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in the gap, visually communicating courage and comfort to God's people in leading all on to do what they must do. Even so it is with everyone who steps into a place of spiritual leadership, bravely becoming an example of godliness in their generation. If spiritual leaders are disobediently dodging every hard profession or humble confession, living on the fringes of the real issues, and keeping their hides out of harm's way, such selfish "leaders" will communicate little real motivation to others around them. We must be willing to do and say the hard things, to take the difficult stands if we are going to move the fearful and wavering to follow on with courage.

Vs. 12-13 – The 2½ tribes given land on the east side sent over about forty thousand men to help with the conquest. This notation is made at this point to show that they honoured their promise made to Moses and then again to Joshua (1:16-18). Or did they? In Numbers 26 we find an interesting record of the sum *"of all the congregation of the*

*4:13 About forty thousand prepared for war passed over before the LORD unto battle, to the plains of Jericho.*

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*children of Israel, from twenty years old and upward...all that are able to go to war” (Num. 26:2).* This soldier census was taken on the plains of Moab just before they crossed the Jordan. And the record of these particular tribes granted land on the east side reveals the following count;

- Of the tribe of Reuben – 43,730 (vs. 7).
- Of Gad – 40,500 (vs. 18).
- Of Manasseh – 52,700 (vs. 34). Only ½ of this tribe claimed land on the east. So let’s assume 26,350 chose to live to the east.

Thus the total available soldiers “*able to go to war*” from the east side = 110,580. In this light the 40,000 men who crossed over with their western brothers seems rather a low percentage of the total number of men fit to fight among them, 36% to be exact. Where are the rest of them? So they sent a contingent of fighting men, but not “*all the mighty men of valour*” as Joshua had said (1:14). When Joshua had indicated that only “*your wives, your little ones, and your cattle, shall remain in the land which Moses gave you in this side Jordan*” (1:14), it

seems these tribes decided to include 64% of their able-bodied men among these stayers as well! For every man marching west to war two stayed home, perhaps with thoughts of protecting and providing for the women and children. But suddenly their windy assurances of unquestioned obedience and prickly pronouncements of death upon “*whosoever he be that doth . . . not hearken unto thy words in all that thou commandest him*” (1:18) sound a bit hollow.

These eastern brothers are like many who speak great glowing words of commitment to the Lord and others, but it is quite another story when it comes time for close consideration of what such commitment really costs. Words are easy, and theirs are now rather cheapened by this passing mention of practical results.

Jacob once accused his firstborn, Reuben, of being “*unstable as water*”, warning that he would “*not excel*” (Gen. 49:4). From the start Reuben’s tribe were a people without the firmness of resolve characterized by solid ground. Compare Deborah and Barak’s poetic expression in Judges 5, when singing the praises of those who helped in a later engagement with enemy forces, where again Reuben was scarce. “*For the divisions of Reuben there were*

*great thoughts of heart,” they sang, “Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart. Gilead abode beyond Jordan”* (vs. 15-17). Great thoughts! Great swelling boasts of help! But when it came down to it they were mostly missing! This little cheat surely did not escape Joshua’s notice. But it seems he just quietly let it pass without comment. Just the record of it here written in the Book. Rather than forcing them to keep their words, Joshua allowed them room to express themselves negatively. They would suffer tomorrow for their dodgings today.

As well, think about how it must have been hard on the 40,000 faithfully joining the westward march to war. The men remaining behind (majority) would have had first choice on land, flocks, houses, wives, etc., while these spent the next 7 years in the fight for the land. But we must not think God *“unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward His name”* (Heb. 6:10).

*“The plains of Jericho”* – This is the area on the west bank stretching about 12 kms from the Jordan to the foot of the mountain passes. Today it is barren desert, but at that time it was covered with a forest

*4:14 On that day the LORD magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life.*

*4:15 And the LORD spake unto Joshua, saying,*

*4:16 Command the priests that bear the ark of the testimony, that they come up out of Jordan.*

*4:17 Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, Come ye up out of Jordan.*

*4:18 And it came to pass, when the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD were come up out of the midst of Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up unto the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks, as they did before.*

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of palms that surrounded Jericho, known then as “the city of palms”. They camped on the brim of that plain, at the edge of the palms, in that area to become known as Gilgal.

#### **4:14** – Joshua Magnified

With all things miraculously happening just as Joshua had said, none could argue that it was the Lord who was speaking *to* and *through* him. The Lord did just as He had promised in 3:7.

#### **4:15-18** – Priests’ Job Complete

Vs. 18 – Here was the clincher that this was indeed a miracle of God. Only when, and *exactly* when the priests bearing the ark followed all others up out of the river’s reach did the water come rushing back down the channel. There could be no doubt that it

4:19 *And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho.*

4:20 *And those twelve stones, which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal.*

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was the Lord who was suspending the normal laws of nature, and doing this just for them.

#### **4:19-24** – Memorial at Gilgal

Vs. 19 – So God’s people had landed at last on the rim of their Promised Land. It was fulfilment, with finesse, of a promise made by God half a millennium before (Gen. 12:7). A promise in fact followed by many long centuries silent of further confirming revelation in Egypt. But even centuries of silence *never nullify a promise of God!* And now here they were, actually there with their feet on the soil! There would come another 400 silent years before prophecies of Messiah’s coming would be literally, completely fulfilled, and again now many centuries of silence since He came and left and the N.T. was completed. But there will come a day when *we* at last will actually be found standing with Christ in His earthly kingdom. Centuries of silence are meant to sift the hearts of men, displaying those who will simply cling to the promises of God in contrast to those who will not. Men may die in faith

4:21 *And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones?*  
4:22 *Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land.*  
4:23 *For the LORD your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over:*

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without having received the promises. But “*having seen them afar off*”, even through silent centuries, faith remains ever “*persuaded of them*”, embracing them, showing the faithful to be strangers and pilgrims on earth.

So “*the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month*”. It was the 10<sup>th</sup> Nisan, four days before Passover. They arrived on the very day that the Passover lamb was to be set apart (Ex. 12:3). It was the same calendar day of Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the Lamb of God presenting Himself for sacrifice. God had obviously arranged the timing, giving another indicating pointer to the underlying reason for the whole indaba. This was the land to which God’s Messiah would one day come, that One who is “*our Passover*”, to be “*sacrificed for us*”.

Vs. 24 – This marker was to serve in two directions;

4:24 *That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the LORD your God for ever.*

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- To lead the hearts of the people of Israel to “*fear the LORD your God for ever*”. It was a token of trust, a lasting reminder that they had nothing to fear with God on their side and everything to fear should they ever make the Lord their enemy! “*For ever*” here is literally “all days” in the Hebrew behind the English. Not only were they to continue to fear the Lord into the hazy distance of eternity, but *every day* along the way.
- To remind parents of their responsibility to constantly show and tell their children of the Lord and His ways and doings (Deut. 6).
- To impress the Gentile world with the Lord’s mighty hand.

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## **Ponder Points**

The taking of Canaan from the heathen and giving it to His people was a token of what the Lord will do more completely in His return to His earthly kingdom. “*That He may give them [His people] the*

*heritage of the heathen*” (Ps. 11:6). *“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth”* (Matt. 5:5). The heathen, and Satan behind them, have been fuming ever since that first take-over. For it is a token of their weakness and a surety of the future and final conquest yet to come.

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With the crossing of the Jordan Israel entered into a new era of their history. No longer the wandering, aimless trek through the wilderness, killing time while the Lord was killing off those who voted no. That purposeless, fruitless era was all left behind with their crossing. Now they were fused together with a distinct mission to fully claim their inheritance.

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Could their coming up out of the river with new and distinct purpose and resolve picture the believer’s baptism? Could it be that those memorial stones left in the river with the water forever rolling over them is an image of baptism unto death in the water? In our salvation and then baptism we identified with Jesus Christ in His death and burial, as if dead and buried with Him, as if some part of us left behind. This pictured in baptism. It is a vital change-point when our old self was shed and left buried in death. Again, as Jacob and company

shedding their carnal trusts before returning to Bethel. The stones pulled out onto shore perhaps an image of resurrection out of the water to newness of life in the promised land of conquest and productivity? In our salvation and then baptism we identify with Jesus Christ in His resurrection as well, as if knowing “*newness of life*” with Him. In Romans 6 we are commanded to reckon ourselves dead to sin but alive to God in newness of life. We must keep our eye to those stones marking the position of our inheritance to which we have miraculously come now in God’s promised land of blessing.

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Compare the two ordinances of the church in this regard;

- Communion – Looking back to *Christ’s* death for us, and ahead to His coming again to us.
- Baptism – Looking to *our* death and resurrection with Christ.

.....

Joshua’s men carried the rocks out and over to their new inheritance. Jesus, the Rock, carries His people out and over to their new inheritance.

.....

In some ways this crossing was opposite to that at the Red Sea;

**Red Sea**

**Jordan**

A rescue, with enemy pressing from *behind* them

The enemy was being pressed *before* them

They were on their way *out*

On their way *in*

God's *defensive* help in their flight

God's *offensive* help in attack

“And the LORD said  
unto Joshua,  
This day have I rolled away  
the reproach of Egypt  
from off you”

(Joshua 5:9)

## Class 6 – Joshua 5

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*5:1 And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites, which were on the side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites, which were by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over, that their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel.*

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### Chapter 5

Israel had just crossed the Jordan (their Rubicon) and there was no turning back. They had landed in enemy territory with both feet and the Lord had firmly closed the door behind them. Chapter 5 now marks a transitional few days on the verge of their campaign. It was a time for putting things right before the Lord, before moving in to receive their promised inheritance. Before the Lord can use His vessels they must be “*sanctified and meet for the master’s use and prepared unto every good work*”.

#### **5:1** – Response of the Nations

The Canaanites had probably been figuring on a good bit of time still with the swollen river running in between, forming a natural shield. But suddenly the threat was right at their doorstep, causing even

5:2 *At that time the LORD said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time.*

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greater paralysis among them with word of that miracle crossing sent like wildfire through their ranks. No god had ever done that for his people! Again, it was Exodus 23:27 fulfilled. Though some likely refused to believe the report of the parted Jordan none could argue with the whole nation suddenly on the west bank with the flooded river now behind them.

### **5:2-9** – A Time for Circumcision

In Genesis 17 the Lord followed His promise to Abraham of the inheritance of “*all the land of Canaan*” with the ordinance of circumcision (Gen. 17:8ff). It was the “*token of the covenant betwixt Me and you*”. But the people of Israel had neglected obedience to this command in the wilderness as Joshua explains in vs. 4-7. This was an indication of the spiritual condition of that now dead, faithless, no-vote generation. But this new generation is a different kind of people. They have believed and obeyed without question even when to do so ran against reason, and God had rewarded their faithful obedience with the miraculous. But now the Lord would test their faith further.

Vs. 2 – “*Circumcise again the children of Israel the second time*” – This was not a re-circumcision, nicking a bit more off those already circumcised. They were to ensure that all men and boys not yet circumcised were now circumcised as the sign of the covenant between them and their God.

“*The second time*” – Perhaps indicating that there had been such a national check-up and follow-through in Egypt as well. Though we see times of compliance motivated by the Lord in Jewish history, they were not a people given to consistent obedience. Even Moses had been inconsistent in this. When God called Moses from the wilderness to Egypt He first had to make sure his accounts were up to date with the circumcision of his own sons (Ex. 4:24-26). Even so here at the beginning of this new chapter of Israel’s national history.

When a child of God is ready to go on to a new level of exploits for God there must first come such a moment as this, a time of making the hard, painful cuts in putting all things right before Him. A time of gladly wearing all the signs of full allegiance, “*the marks of the Lord Jesus*” (Gal. 6:17). Compare again Genesis 35:1-5.

Now circumcision can be quite a debilitating

- 5:3 And Joshua made him sharp knives, and circumcised the children of Israel at the hill of the foreskins.*
- 5:4 And this is the cause why Joshua did circumcise: All the people that came out of Egypt, that were males, even all the men of war, died in the wilderness by the way, after they came out of Egypt.*
- 5:5 Now all the people that came out were circumcised: but all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, them they had not circumcised.*
- 

procedure for adults (remember Shechem in Genesis 34). So do not miss the seeming absurdity of the situation. Here they are on enemy turf expecting attack, and with their minds turned to war, and yet systematically slicing themselves to temporary incapacitation! Talk about “friendly fire” or being their own worst enemy! But there was a confidence in them, for the Lord had so incredibly removed the obstacle of the Jordan before their eyes. They knew the Lord was with them in power and they could trust even His seemingly unreasonable commands. And how much easier on them it would have been had they obeyed His appointed way in the first place, circumcising all boys on the eighth day after birth (Gen. 17:12).

Vs. 3 – Joshua obeyed without comment, though it must have been the most difficult, unpopular, and seemingly foolish thing to do. But again, no complaint is registered from among the people either. The Lord knew the truth of vs. 1, that the

- 5:6 *For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people that were men of war, which came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD: unto whom the LORD swore that he would not shew them the land, which the LORD swore unto their fathers that he would give us, a land that floweth with milk and honey.*
- 5:7 *And their children, whom he raised up in their stead, them Joshua circumcised: for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them by the way.*
- 5:8 *And it came to pass, when they had done circumcising all the people, that they abode in their places in the camp, till they were whole.*
- 

Canaanites were more cringing in terror than poised to strike. But though the people didn't know the full extent of this they were learning to trust the Lord's counsel through Joshua. The Lord would have our obedience to what He says, without doubt, rationalization, or hesitation.

Do you see the pattern here? As in sanctifying themselves before their crossing (3:5), this beginning of their existence as a nation in their land was all about acts of spiritual dedication rather than military preparations. It seems *spiritual* preparation is the only really necessary kind of preparation. God's ability and presence, not our own, is ever the key to all true earthly and heavenly success.

Vs. 9 – With the completion of the distasteful task

5:9 *And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day.*

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the Lord announced, *“This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you”*. Therefore the name of the place became *“Gilgal”*, which means “rolling”. It was that place where God rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off His people. Understand what is happening here. All the men and boys shed their foreskins at what became known as *“the hill of foreskins”* (vs. 3). Again, circumcision was required by God of the children of Israel as a sign of His covenant with Abraham;

- That God would give to him and his descendants the Promised *Land*.
- That He would make Abraham’s descendants into a great *nation*.
- That He would *bless* that nation.
- And that through that nation He would bless all people of earth (with salvation through Israel’s Messiah).

*The land, the seed or nation, and the blessing, was*

God's unconditional promise to Abraham and to the nation that would descend from him. And the physical mark or indicator that a man was a part of that covenant nation was his circumcision. But there is something else happening here. Combined with and perhaps symbolized by the shedding of their foreskins there at Gilgal was this rolling away of *"the reproach of Egypt from off them"*. What reproach of Egypt? Remember that these people of Abraham's covenant had left that Promised Land and had become captives in Egypt for hundreds of years. For centuries it had come to look like God was not going to do what He said in blessing them as a nation in that Promised Land. For many centuries in Egyptian exile all they had was a promise! A promise that all of Egypt would have considered quite laughable! In Egypt the Jews had lived under the scorning taunts that their hopes based upon God's promises were foolish and empty. After all, how many centuries must pass before it becomes obvious that God is not going to keep His promises, or is not able to, or does not even exist? At least He is not going to do it literally, insists the mocker (*"scoffers"* of II Peter 3). Maybe God meant His promises to Abraham to be understood in some mystic, allegorical, heavenly sense, since it is just not happening down here where we live and breathe. There would have been a continual

attitude of mocking challenge over the absence of any indication of God fulfilling His words. In fact, right up to the point of the priests standing in the water of Jordan they were still proceeding on little more than mere promises. For as far back as anybody could remember there in Egypt things had always been the same. This expressed in the scoffer's words; "*Where is the promise of His coming [your land]? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they did from the beginning of the creation*" (II Pet. 3:4).

Is this not the very same attitude so common today concerning the Bible prophecies of things future? They tell us the things spoken in the N.T. concerning the future could never come to pass, certainly not *literally*. It must be that God does not mean for us to understand such prophecies to be literally fulfilled. Look at it, man! It has been *centuries!* In fact, not just hundreds of years, but *thousands* of years since the N.T. prophecies were recorded. Do you see? "*The reproach of Egypt*" was this, that through all of the many years God's people were out of that land promised to them and held captive in Egypt it just did not look like they could ever be brought back into that Promised Land as a nation. It certainly did not *look* like God would ever actually do what He had assured Abraham He

would. And then at last there they were at Gilgal, with all scorning reproach thoroughly scattered!

Maybe such an attitude of doubt was part of the reason why the people had discontinued circumcision in the wilderness. Was there any need to carry on with the sign of God's promise to Abraham of land, seed, and blessing? After their no vote perhaps most thought it was all over between them and the Lord, the promise off. It seems that faithless generation began to wonder, with scorning Egypt, whether those promises to Abraham would ever be fulfilled? Do you see it? Circumcision expressed the identification of those people with God's promise to Abraham. Circumcision displayed their confidence that God would keep those promises. *Our nation – blessed – in that land.* But if we have lost confidence in the Lord to fulfil His promises, then what meaneth the sign?!

An interesting question is why Moses did not insist upon circumcision throughout their wilderness wanderings. His faith was strong in the God who accomplishes what He proposes to do, bringing them out in order to bring them into the land. And the Lord had already made a major issue of circumcision with Moses, threatening his life in Exodus 4 until his son was circumcised. Yet

apparently he too later drifted away from the importance of it again, perhaps shying from the unpopular task of being the one to enforce it.

Even when the Lord forcefully brought Israel out of Egypt there would have continued great doubt and reproach in Egypt. Two million people scampering off into the barren wilderness did not offer much promise of survival for more than a few days out there. They would be expected to die of thirst first. Even if they did get a couple of fortunate rains, they could not possibly last for long. But God thumbs His nose at every sceptic! Not only did they *survive*, they *thrived* out there in the desert, God even arranging and using circumstances such that He preserved them there for *four decades!!* Yet still they carried something of that reproach in their wandering. As long as they wandered aimlessly around the wilderness they were not *in* the Promised Land yet. To this the sceptic would clutch, a bit more desperately now. But *all reproach was rolled away there at Gilgal!* With their circumcision, God was declaring His covenant still very much in effect. For they were now actually *in the land!* He would indeed fulfil His promises and bless them as a nation in the land. In fact He had already begun to do it. So this event at Gilgal constitutes a *pledge* and a *declaration*. God's pledge

to His people that He would now give them all of the inheritance of the land of Canaan, just as He had said He would. And a declaration to all of creation that He is the promise-keeping God. Though His promises to them were very old, centuries old in fact, and though for so many years all they had was a promise, still God's promises came to pass, completely, literally, actually, just as one would simply understand them. *What He says, He will do, just as He says He will do it!* The Lord gloriously, powerfully rolled off and cast away the reproach of all doubters of His promises to Abraham there at Gilgal.

Now understand how we are in the very same situation as they. We who know Christ and believe His Word endure the reproach of not just one nation but of all nations. That taunt, whether spoken or only thought, speaks the same; "You are a fool to rest your hopes in the silly promises of some dusty ol' book". Like the silly girl waiting for years, trusting the promise of the boy she loves who said he would come back and marry her someday. There must eventually come a point where it is obvious that his words were empty words. "This ancient book speaks of impossible things!" they would tell us. "These things could not possibly come to pass! They certainly will not come to pass *literally!* There

- 5:10 *And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho.*
- 5:11 *And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the selfsame day.*
- 

must be some other explanation”. It is a scepticism bred and fed by Satan’s bitter hatred of all that is God’s. Do you see? This is why folks get all twisted up in their interpretations of a book like John’s Revelation. They are squirming under that same “*reproach of Egypt*”.

Simple answers to simple questions please! Did the promises, though very old, come to pass then? Yes! Completely? Yes! Literally, actually, as one would simply understand them? Yes, yes, yes! God actually did just what He had told Abraham He would do. He put that nation in that land and blessed them there. And He did it for all creation to see it, in such a way that none could argue that it was Him doing it. And in so doing He once and for all rolled off the reproach of all doubters of His promises. Every reproachful sceptic left stunned and speechless! Time is immaterial with God. Here is the true essence of Peter’s statement “*that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*” (II Pet. 3:8). “*In His time*”

*5:12 And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.*

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*He shall show who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords”.*

In the same way as at Gilgal *Christ’s return* will roll off the reproach of the scoffing world. The day will come. All will come to pass just as He has spoken. Watch and see! Be encouraged. Believe His promises enough to obey His words.

### **5:10-11** – Passover Kept

### **5:12** – Manna Ceased

Once they had begun to eat of the grain from off the land, found in the now deserted fields, orchards, and storehouses, they had no more need of the manna. Therefore God’s manna ceased from that point. Again, as with the river flowing back the moment all had crossed, this timing to the day, after the Lord had daily sent that “*corn of heaven*” for 40 years, serves to confirm their supernatural God who was watchfully superintending over them. The Lord graciously supplied them until the day they no longer needed His supply. And do not forget

*5:13 And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?*

*5:14 And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant?*

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those incredible clusters of grapes brought back to Moses by the spies 4 decades prior. Can you imagine how wonderful the variation now of fruits, nuts, and grains after living almost entirely on manna all of the years of their lives?

### **5:13-15** – Captain of the Lord’s Host

Joshua was probably surveying the city of Jericho at the time of this encounter, seeking before the Lord the best plan of attack, when the Lord Himself met him there. We know it was the Lord;

- By Joshua’s response and attitude of complete devotion.
- By the Lord not forbidding his worship, as mere angels are always given to do.
- By the required shoe removal, as when “*the angel of the LORD*” visited Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3:5).

5:15 *And the captain of the LORD'S host said unto Joshua,  
Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon  
thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.*

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This was no vision, but “*a man*”, indeed the Son of Man, standing “*over against him*”. The “*sword drawn in His hand*” implied the Lord’s wholehearted approval and involvement in this invasion.

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## **Ponder Points**

All of the men and boys of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh left on the east side were not there in Gilgal to be properly circumcised, thus rolling away their reproach. They still carried their reproach.

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The Lord reaffirmed His covenant or commitment to His people by miraculously putting them in the land, and so now He required of them at Gilgal that they reaffirm their commitment to Him through the sign of circumcision, displaying that they were His covenant people. God said, “I will do as I said”. His people responded, “We believe, and we will gladly wear the mark showing that we are Yours and believe in You”.

We must understand though that circumcision had a bigger meaning than just a physical sign of God's covenant with His people. Circumcision is the cutting away of something, the removal of something that covered. The Lord often referred to His unlistening people as "*uncircumcised of heart and ears*", with hearts and ears covered, with souls insensitive to God's encouragements. Jeremiah used these words in speaking of the stiff-necked people of Judah; "*To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it*" (Jer. 6:10; see 9:25-26). Moses thundered in Deuteronomy 10:16; "*Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked.*" So an uncircumcised heart is a stubborn heart, dulled and insensitive, unhearing and unconcerned. While circumcision was the cutting away of the foreskin, it pictured as well the cutting away of that which covers or stands in the way of receptive, sensitive, listening heart and ears. Stephen expressed the same meaning when he boldly spoke before the Pharisees in Acts 7; "*Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost . . . Who have received the law . . . and have not kept it*" (vs. 51 & 53). Those who are uncircumcised of heart and ears

always resist God's Spirit, not keeping His words. The Apostle Paul later explains at the end of Romans 2 that true circumcision is that *inward* circumcision of a heart that "*keeps the righteousness of the law*", not the *outward* circumcision of the flesh. God's circumcised nation was also meant to picture a receptive people, sensitive to His words, with ears and eyes uncovered, hearing, and seeing.

We find an interesting association in Colossians 2:9-13. Paul indicates there that when we were saved and baptized in Christ it was like we were circumcised. It was like we rolled off the sins of our flesh. A positional truth expressing what God did in our behalf when we were saved. Yet Colossians 3 follows with the experiential or practical side. In salvation, pictured in baptism (as in their crossing), we die to our old life in a positional sense. But now it is ours to make this death a reality in our experience by putting to death "*the works of the flesh*" (Gal. 5:18), or "*the old man with his deeds*" (Col. 3:9). As the Israelite must put off a bit of flesh, so the Christian must put off "*the body of sins of the flesh*" (Col. 2:11). We must apply the knife, joining the great Husbandman in the pruning of our lives of every fruitless work and all debilitating carnal deeds. Only then can we march on in victory and

fruitfulness. “I have rolled off your sin. I have declared you righteous” saith the Lord, “Now you be righteous! I have made you Mine, now live like you are mine! I have bathed you every wit, now you keep your feet clean as you walk through this world” (John 13).

God said at Gilgal, “I will do as I said”. And as at Gilgal, He affirms to *us* that He will keep His promises to us. He has already begun to do it. He has already rolled our sin off from us. He has already declared us righteous in His sight. He has already begun to deliver us from sin and ruin, a deliverance He will complete in Christ’s presence. He has already given us the deposit of the indwelling Holy Spirit within us. He who has begun a good work in us *will surely finish the job*.

His people said there at Gilgal, “We believe it! And we will gladly wear the mark showing us to be Yours, and that we believe that You keep Your promises”. Even so our God calls upon us to affirm the same, that we are His people, marked as His, the people of His promises, believing His words. When we resolve to believe God’s promises and acknowledge them to all, when we determine to live for Him, putting off the sins of the flesh and refusing to join the world in their carnal ways, believe me,

*we will be marked!!*

“So the LORD was with Joshua;  
and his fame was noised  
throughout all the country”

(Joshua 6:27)

## Class 7 – Joshua 6

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6:1 *Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in.*

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### Chapter 6

#### 6:1-7 – Plan of Attack

Vs. 1 – “*Straitly shut up*” expresses strictest security. Nobody was allowed in or out of the city. This is quite understandable with the spies who had successfully entered and left Jericho a couple weeks prior. Their walls and gates were their pride, hope, trust, and fortress. The greatest fear inside the walls of Jericho would be that someone might get in, create a diversion, and then throw the gates open to the invaders, or perhaps that sympathizers within might attempt the same. So it was all attention to their one great manmade trust, that their wall remain firm and without breach.

Woe to the man whose only hope is the dirt of earth, mud and stone, though piled so impressively thick and high! It is a picture we see here of all who peg their hopes in things earthly; ability, gun, money, army, strong walls, high tower, or lofty, unapproachable Masada. The Lord has left a trail

- 6:2 *And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour.*
- 6:3 *And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days.*
- 

through history scattered with the disappointed dreams and hollow hopes of those who trusted in earthly towers of one form or another.

Vs. 2 – This now is “*the Captain of the Lord’s Host*” (5:13-15) come to relate to His captain on the ground the plan of attack on Jericho. It is a message all about victory and all because of the Lord.

“*See, I have given into thine hand Jericho*” – The Lord would give it all; city, king, and army. In fact it was as His words at the beginning (1:3), as if already done (“*I have given*”). Yet as always there was a part the people must get up and do. Still they needed to step out and claim by faith and obedience what the Lord had already given. Even so salvation is a work Jesus finished on Calvary. It is an eternal benefit as if already given, yet the vital step remains for every individual to appropriate that benefit, to come with faith in God’s promise and obedience to His command to believe and repent and call upon Him.

- 6:4 *And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets.*
- 6:5 *And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him.*
- 

Vs. 3-5 – It was to be unconventional warfare to say the least. Instead of moving toward or against the city they were to move *around* it. It was an approach that would surely carry an appearance of foolishness or confusion from the world's angle. But when has our God concerned Himself with the appearance of His way to the unsaved world? He's quite willing to use *"the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and . . . the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty"* (I Cor. 1:27).

Here is the common problem with the compromising church of our day, so given to introducing worldly, manmade methods that will not appear so foolish or useless or irrelevant or unintelligent to the world. Why? Because they are unwilling to hear the taunts from the wall of the world while they do God's work in God's way. They are unwilling to bear the reproach Christ was willing to bear. And because they are unwilling to give God all the glory. Folks

like a cut in the honours by the promotion of their clever methods in winning for God. They want to write a book about their cunning approach or new twists on the message. But such novel methods often tend to collect and entertain the goats more than finding and feeding God's sheep. When we just follow God's method, proclaiming His message, there is victory, and victory that is real and lasting. It seems the Lord purposely points His people to methods that appear foolish in order to force man to surrender any share in the glory. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but are "*mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds*" (II Cor. 10:4). This truth is so well illustrated in the approach at Jericho.

This rather odd parade around the city was to be done once a day for six days and then seven times on the seventh day. Notice the prevalence of sevens in vs. 4. Seven priests, carrying seven trumpets, on the seventh day, having circled seven times. The number seven often expresses completion in the Bible, here perhaps relating a completion of *opportunity* granted to those within to come to repentance. For many years they had heard the same reports that had led Rahab to faith. This was now the final countdown, a seven-count. There was still opportunity for those clinging to their earthly

trust to recognize;

- How very feeble their security.
- How very fearful their position among those condemned of God.
- How very foolish to trust in manmade hopes.
- How very close the only house of true safety, right there among them.

While the Lord's approach in dealing with this city may have looked a merry spectacle to those within the walls, little did they realize *it was all for them!* Even so it is with the last-days scoffers who read God's delay as indication of His failure rather than a window of grace, all for them (II Pet. 3). Even so those mockers of Christ on the cross who read such a shameful death as the result of His own sin, when it was in their behalf that He died.

In the same wonderful way the Lord has given to the whole of mankind many centuries on this earth to come to Him. As the story of man ultimately descends to his worst in the last days of the Tribulation period the Lord again will be giving the final seven-count in those seven last revolutions of the calendar leading up to Christ's return, filled with the horror of seven seal, trumpet, and bowl

judgments. It will again be the completion of opportunity before Jesus at last returns to crush the great flashing idol of man's impressive kingdoms, pictured in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan. 2). As foreshadowed in Jericho the Lord will then bring an end to the days of man's evil dominion on earth. Never so great an earthly enemy will arise in the Antichrist of those last days, and yet the Lord with ease will bring him to nothing with all the armies of earth gathered against Christ at His return. Just as all the power of Jericho's resistance so suddenly fell flat with their wall.

Think about how it again took faith and courage in Joshua to take such a seemingly strange method to his people. But no more odd than the river crossing. And again, never a word of murmuring concern is recorded from among God's people. And never the least argument from Joshua, unlike Moses in his call to ministry at the burning bush (Ex. 3 & 4). Do we have a lesson of followers like their leaders here? Moses earnestly argued with the Lord to the point of angering Him, and Moses faced an argumentative people all the decades of his leadership over them. Such a contrast in Joshua, who never once argued with the Lord and never faced resistance from his people. We receive back what we give to the Lord? We reap what we sow? Responses here are a quiet

- 6:6 *And Joshua the son of Nun called the priests, and said unto them, Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD.*
- 6:7 *And he said unto the people, Pass on, and compass the city, and let him that is armed pass on before the ark of the LORD.*
- 

testimony to the reason for their stunning victories. There had arisen among this generation an unlimited faith in what the Lord has said, and unquestioning obedience. The victory way is the way of growth “*from faith to faith*” in what God has said. This was partly another test from the Lord to see if they would simply trust and obey His words. Again, His way often runs against the grain of convention, to the point of unreasonableness. And His way often exposes His people to ridicule from the world, as this march surely would do. Submission here required quiet, steadfast humility in spite of scorning mockery from the walls of man’s feeble fortress.

Vs. 6 – Joshua went to the priests before he spoke to his generals, for this was primarily a spiritual matter. A *divine* work more than a military manoeuvre. The emphasis was where it should be. As in chapters 3 & 4, note again the prominence of the ark, mentioned 10 times in the first half of this chapter. The ark was again the point of focus in this daily circular procession, representing the

6:8 *And it came to pass, when Joshua had spoken unto the people, that the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns passed on before the LORD, and blew with the trumpets: and the ark of the covenant of the LORD followed them.*

6:9 *And the armed men went before the priests that blew with the trumpets, and the rereward came after the ark, the priests going on, and blowing with the trumpets.*

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presence of the Lord among them. The attention here is all about what proceeded and followed the ark, this taking now a central position (cf. vs. 11). Again, as at the river crossing, their eyes were to the *ark* rather than to the *obstacle*. In the same way our eyes are to Jesus Christ (“*looking unto Jesus*”) rather than to life’s obstacles. When circumstance manages to divert our eyes from Him we, as Peter, become overwhelmed by the waves.

### **6:8-27** – March to Victory

The procession;

- “*The armed men*” or soldiers led the way (vs. 9).
- Then came “*the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams’ horns*” (vs. 8).
- Then the priests carrying the ark (vs. 8).
- Then a “*rereward*” coming “*after the ark*”, perhaps of armed men or of all the people, as

*6:10 And Joshua had commanded the people, saying, Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout; then shall ye shout.*  
*6:11 So the ark of the LORD compassed the city, going about it once: and they came into the camp, and lodged in the camp.*  
*6:12 And Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD.*

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many as wished to follow (vs. 7, 9).

- In this formation they circled the city once a day for six days, and then seven times on the 7<sup>th</sup> day.
- Their hike around the city was about 1½ kms. The Jericho of that day was a bit over two rugby fields across judging by the old city mound of about 9 acres. Adding a couple more rugby fields to the diameter to put them out of bow shot from the wall, the result is a hike diameter of about 420 metres, or a circumference of a bit over 1.3 kms. A leisurely pace (30 steps per minute) would walk this in about 45 minutes.
- They then returned each day to their camp at Gilgal.
- While the seven priests were to blow their trumpets as they went, the rest of the people must keep a solemn silence, not responding

- 6:13 *And seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD went on continually, and blew with the trumpets: and the armed men went before them; but the rereward came after the ark of the LORD, the priests going on, and blowing with the trumpets.*
- 6:14 *And the second day they compassed the city once, and returned into the camp: so they did six days.*
- 6:15 *And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times.*
- 

at all to any taunts from the wall. This would have been difficult, requiring a great deal of patience.

- On the 7<sup>th</sup> and final day, after seven trips around (perhaps 5½ hours), the priests gave the signal of a long blast on their trumpets, upon which the people were to “*shout with a great shout*”, trusting God’s promise that with this the wall would come down (vs. 5, 16, 20).
- All were then to run straight into the city from where they were at that point.

Imagine seeing this lot from the perspective of Jericho. It would surely have looked an interesting parade. A fearful thing at first perhaps, because of the terrifying reputation preceding these people. But then after the first couple of days Israel’s approach would take on the appearance of inability or indecision or confusion. How easy it would have

- 6:16 *And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city.*
- 6:17 *And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.*
- 

been for Jericho to begin to think their great impressive wall was too much for these Sons of Jacob they had so feared. Their “medicine” was just too strong! How great the temptation to back-pat themselves and release their tension with bellowed taunts from their wall. These before whom the flooded Jordan was reportedly swept back just could not seem to figure out how to handle their staunch city. I wonder if there was even some second-thoughting taking place among those in Rahab’s house as well.

Vs. 17-19 – All people and animals were to be put to death and all things burned. Only metallic items (gold, silver, brass, and iron) were to be kept and “consecrated unto the LORD”.

“*The city shall be accursed*” – The word translated “accursed” here can also mean “devoted”. The entire city was dedicated, either to death and fire or to the Lord’s treasury in the case of metals. Jericho with all its contents was to be completely given to the Lord, perhaps in the sense of it being the

6:18 *And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.*

6:19 *But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD.*

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firstfruits of the harvest of the land, like the firstfruits of all increase. The spoils of all the rest of Canaan the Lord would give to His people, but this first city was His. This likely was the reason for the curse upon the one rebuilding it as well. The city was never meant to belong to men again, and its ruins were to be a continual reminder of God's hatred of man's sin come to the full. The Lord was leaving a trail of memorials behind His conquering host.

Consider how severe the threat upon the one touching or taking for himself from the Lord's first portion of the increase, "*lest ye make yourselves accursed...and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it*" (vs. 18). Compare Malachi 3:8-12, "*Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed Me*" (vs. 9). Are we ever wise to deny our God the firstfruits of all our increase? Not only has He given *warning*, but He has made great *promise* to those who honour Him in this (Prov. 3:9-10; II Cor. 9:6-11).

*6:20 So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.*

*6:21 And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.*

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Vs. 20-21 – Mission accomplished. Their shout was a shout of faith, a step of obedient faith. For again, up to that very moment there was no visible indication of any effect upon the city’s security. No cracks had formed in the wall. No bits of masonry falling here and there. No cries of concern or scurrying to make repairs from inside. No shaken foundations. Only that great wall still standing rock solid, the rim of it echoing with the continual jeers of laughing doubters. All Israel had visibly managed to cause was a well-trodden pathway around the city. It might have seemed a silly thing to some to join in with this shout in the context, but God had spoken! Hebrews 11 tells us those walls came down by faith (vs. 30). So these people of God shouted in full confidence that the Lord would do as He said. And as they obeyed in faith, suddenly over the great roar of two million shouting voices could be heard the terrible rumble of that mighty mountain of fortification coming down in a great dust cloud. The week of marches would have lulled the people to a

lack of fear. And the fact that this day brought a change in pattern with Israel's multiple march around the perimeter may very well have resulted in many being up on the wall watching. And thus many of the city-dwellers, perhaps most of the fighting men, were likely killed in the crushing rubble as that wall "*fell down flat*". There is no need to find some natural means whereby the wall came down. It was the Lord who flattened it by miraculous means, just as He had swept back the river.

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## **On the Side**

On the matter of the destruction of every "*man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword*", as considered previously, we must remember some things;

- The Lord had given these people a witness of the true God in Israel's patriarchs.
- The Lord had given these people centuries to repent of their false and filthy religions.
- God is holy, and His just judgment *must* fall upon determined sinners for their sin come to the full, as at Sodom and Gomorrah and the whole earth in Noah's Flood. What difference

*6:22 But Joshua had said unto the two men that had spied out the country, Go into the harlot's house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye sware unto her.*

*6:23 And the young men that were spies went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had; and they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel.*

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does it make if God uses the instrument of flood, fire, or invasion?

- These people had sold themselves to the abominations of immorality (Lev. 20:23) and godless spiritualism of the occult (Deut. 18:12-14).
  - We can trust our God to do what is right.
- .....

Vs. 22-25 – A further miraculous aspect is implied in that apparently the portion of wall on which Rahab's house stood did not fall down, thus allowing their rescue by the spies while the city was being taken and burned. In spite of Rahab's existence among the condemned people of Canaan, in spite of her past life of moral impurity, in spite of her dishonesty, yet the record of her rescue and gracious preservation is here, with all who believed with her. This account of preservation in the context of annihilation of all else displays both the

6:24 *And they burnt the city with fire, and all that was therein: only the silver, and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD.*

6:25 *And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day; because she hid the messengers, which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.*

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goodness and severity of God. Though He will indeed deal with man in the severity of strictest justice, yet He is never unwilling to redeem those individuals who respond to Him in repentance and faith.

Could we perhaps see in the rescue of Rahab and company before the city was torched a picture of the church removed from earth in the Rapture before the fire of God's judgment falls? As Enoch was removed and Noah and family sheltered before the Flood came. As Lot and family were removed from Sodom before the fire fell. In Christ we are delivered "*from the wrath to come*" (I Thess. 1:10; 5:9).

Vs. 26 – Joshua's curse was that God would leave Jericho's rebuilder childless at the end of the project. This prophecy was fulfilled over 5 centuries later in a man of Bethel named Hiel, who lived in the days of King Ahab's reign over Israel (I Ki. 16:34). In his effort to rebuild this ancient city he lost his firstborn, Abiram, when laying the

*6:26 And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the LORD, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it.*

*6:27 So the LORD was with Joshua; and his fame was noised throughout all the country.*

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foundations at the outset, and he lost his youngest, Segub, when setting up the gates in the final stages. There may perhaps have been other children lost in between.

Vs. 27 – Word was spreading and preceding them now, even more quickly than with their victories on the Trans-Jordan side. And yet the focus is upon *Joshua's* fame. Do you see? Joshua sought no share in the glory. He did not insist on introducing methods fit to display his own military brilliance. He did not argue with the Lord. Instead he humbly followed the Lord's unconventional, even embarrassing instructions without question. Yet see how the Lord now shared with him a measure of the glory! The way up is down. With the Lord, the way to honour is through humility.

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## **Ponder Points**

Again the Lord knocked flat an impossible obstacle

that stood in the way of the victory of His people. And again, this they received through simple faith and obedience to His seemingly strange commands. All they did was believe and do what they were told in spite of appearances, and God did the really hard part. Consider some other comparably “foolish” commands;

- That we simply deny ourselves illegitimate pleasures.
- That we simply proclaim the cross though it appear “*foolishness*” (I Cor. 1:18).
- That we simply call for the repentance of false religionists as the most effective way of genuinely reaching them for Christ (Acts 14:15).
- That we scatter in order to increase (Prov. 11:24-25).
- That we humble ourselves in order to be exalted (I Pet. 5:6).

## Class 8 – Joshua 7

Perhaps the most obvious lesson we have learned in our study of this book of Joshua thus far is the complete and overwhelming victory of man when God is present and working in man's behalf. All human preparations have been more of a spiritual nature than military, with all focus upon ensuring that God's people are right with Him. And yet never has history known a people to accomplish such great things, so easily, and in so brief a time period. There are no human heroes in this story, only men and women right with God and in faith quietly doing what He says without murmuring, even though what He says appears utterly unreasonable. The Hero here is that "*Captain of the Lord's host*" who met with Joshua near Jericho. The Lord Himself is the One on display, working in behalf of a people who were simply, faithfully following His lead.

Now in this 7<sup>th</sup> chapter of Joshua the other side of the coin begins to show itself. What happens when God's people do not trust, do not obey? As conspicuous as man's utter victory when with the Lord, just as evident in this book is the utter failure of man when God is absent, either because man in his pride leaves Him out, or because man in his lust offends Him away. Both very typical human

7:1 *But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel.*

7:2 *And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Bethaven, on the east side of Bethel, and spake unto them, saying, Go up and view the country. And the men went up and viewed Ai.*

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responses are here in this chapter before us.

## **Chapter 7**

### **7:1-5 – First Defeat at Ai**

Vs. 1 – The first word (“*But*”) is pivotal. This chapter marks the first setback they faced, and some valuable lessons learned in the process. Achan’s trespass, bringing trouble to his house and to the whole nation, was to “*take of the accursed thing*”. Again, all of Jericho was dedicated to the Lord (6:17:19), either to death and fire or for the Lord’s keeping. Achan took both something dedicated to the fire and something dedicated to the Lord’s treasury. The mention of the man’s father, grandfather, great grandfather, and tribe here displays the wider circle of those dragged into his shame. No man decides to sin without sending a shuddering impact upon every soul his life touches. The beginning and ending of this verse relates the

- 7:3 *And they returned to Joshua, and said unto him, Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour thither; for they are but few.*
- 7:4 *So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men: and they fled before the men of Ai.*
- 

interesting principle that though it was the sin of one man and his family, yet the Lord faulted “*the children of Israel*” as a whole for the trespass. It is the same corporate principle seen in a righteous man using the 1<sup>st</sup> person (“we have sinned”, “our sin”) in his prayer of national confession before the Lord (Ezra 9, Nehemiah 1, Daniel 9).

Vs. 2-4 – Do not miss the element quietly missing here. In all previous moves Joshua waited for word from the Lord. In this case he proceeded on the word of his human advisers without any indication of appeal to the Lord;

- Men who proved to be quite wrong in their assessment of the strength of Ai (“*they are but few*”), for there were certainly more fighting men there than “*two or three thousand men*” could handle (8:25).
- Men who could not know that “*the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel*”, and therefore “*the Lord was departed*”

from them as from Samson after his haircut.

- Men who were showing serious overconfidence in their own abilities, with no mention of the Lord at all in their assessment (compare Numbers 14:8-9).
- Men concerned about troubling people, that *“not all the people labour thither”*, when according to the Lord’s way Israel did all they did together. When later allowed back into the land the heavenly Captain said *“take all the people of war with thee”* (8:1).
- Men whose rising pride diminished their careful attention to detail, of their enemy’s true power and of their Master’s true plan.
- Men who were already shading toward forgetfulness that though Jericho fell into their hands with ease, it had little to do with their own doing or counsel.

The sad story here is the missing verse between vs. 3 & 4, for there was the point when Joshua should have waited on the Lord for His counsel on the matter of Ai. But the Lord, apparently not seeing even a leaning toward this in Joshua, quietly let him run on ahead in his haste without hindering him. When a man is given to following his own heart

*7:5 And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men: for they chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down: wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water.*

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the Lord goes quiet and lets him run right into the quagmire of human wilfulness. The heartache is that others are inevitably hurt in the process. This failure was a stunning wake up call to the natural leaning in Israel (in all of us) toward;

- Dependence on human wisdom and strength.
- Hasty, impatient decisions.
- Prayerlessness.

The same battle plan isn't always best, and it's the Lord who knows the best way forward at each point. Compare God's differing approaches with David against the Philistines in II Samuel 5:17-25.

Vs. 5 – The result of this whole debacle was that Israel had a taste of the melting hearts their reputation was causing in all the people of the land (2:11).

**7:6-9** – Dismay Before the Lord

Vs. 6 – Joshua with the elders mourned in prayer

7:6 *And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads.*  
7:7 *And Joshua said, Alas, O Lord GOD, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan!*

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on their faces (vs. 10) before the Lord all the rest of that day and into the evening. Obviously their entire national existence depended on their continued victory.

Vs. 7-9 – In these three verses we hear the three points Joshua made before the Lord in prayer;

Vs. 7 – Did You bring us this far only to destroy us? There is an unfair accusatory tone here, as if God was at fault. Joshua had yet to see his own fault in neglecting God’s counsel at the first.

- Vs. 8 – What can be said for God’s people in flight before their enemies?
- Vs. 9 – What becomes of “*Thy great name*” when our name is cut off from the earth? He chased the thought of one defeat through to total defeat. This concern for God’s name was the reason for this man’s greatness in

7:8 *O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs  
before their enemies!*  
7:9 *For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall  
hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name  
from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?*  
7:10 *And the LORD said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore  
liest thou thus upon thy face?*

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leadership. Though Joshua's assessment was a bit unfair on the Lord, the quality of his genuine loyalty to God shined through the dark storm of circumstance. Real godliness is ever concerned with the Lord's name on this earth, and how our actions and those of others affect it.

### **7:10-15** – The Lord's Instructions

Vs. 10 – The brusque manner in which the Lord handles Joshua here (“Get up”) is again indication that this captain was a part of this catastrophe in failing to seek the Lord's will sooner. Yet note the prominence of Israel as a whole in the Lord's accusation in vs. 11-12. It was all about a sinning “*they*” rather than about a sinning “*he*”.

Vs. 12 – The Lord refused to “*be with [them] any more*” until “*the accursed thing*” and “*the accursed*” one were destroyed. They would either have the accursed thing or the Blessed One among them.

- 7:11 Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff.*
- 7:12 Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you.*
- 7:13 Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow: for thus saith the LORD God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you.*
- 

They could not have both. And these two options brought with them either defeat or victory in their earthly endeavour. It is a sobering thought indeed that the whole body can be so negatively affected by the sin of one. This is why the *need* of church discipline. No body of believers can know God's blessing without it. It is not a good or loving thing to "mercy" or tolerate those God has told us not to tolerate.

Vs. 13-15 – Joshua was instructed on how to deal with the situation. Instead of simply revealing the name of the offender the Lord would expose first the tribe, then the family, then the household, then the man. The purpose of this method perhaps to give the man the chance to come forward and expose himself. And as well to vividly display how nothing escapes the Lord's attention. He is quite able to so

7:14 *In the morning therefore ye shall be brought according to your tribes: and it shall be, that the tribe which the LORD taketh shall come according to the families thereof; and the family which the LORD shall take shall come by households; and the household which the LORD shall take shall come man by man.*

7:15 *And it shall be, that he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath: because he hath transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel.*

7:16 *So Joshua rose up early in the morning, and brought Israel by their tribes; and the tribe of Judah was taken:*

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suddenly expose a secret sinner to men. As well, God's method of revealing Achan highlights again the whole heritage hurt by the man's fall to evil.

When the offender was found there was to be no mercy. By his sin of disobedience in stealing from the Lord, Achan attached himself to "*the accursed thing*". Thus he and all of his must join in the fate of Jericho.

### **7:16-23** – Exposure and Disclosure

Vs. 16 – "*Joshua rose up early*" – Again this man never wasted time when he knew what the Lord required of him.

Vs. 16-18 – We are not told how each of these entities "*was taken*" or revealed by the Lord. Perhaps through the casting of lots (Prov. 16:33), or

7:17 *And he brought the family of Judah; and he took the family of the Zarhites: and he brought the family of the Zarhites man by man; and Zabdi was taken:*  
7:18 *And he brought his household man by man; and Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken.*  
7:19 *And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me.*

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by the Urim and Thummim, that ability for “*the judgment of the children of Israel*” granted to the high priest (Ex. 28:30). But in the end Joshua was left with a man standing before him exposed and trembling before all, whose sin had found him out.

Vs. 19 – Joshua did not shy away from necessary confrontation. It is never a happy place to be, but certainly a needful pursuit in all who aspire to be leaders for God in their generation.

Vs. 21 – Achan relates the age-old process of the practice of sin;

- “*I saw*” – Even as Eve “*saw that the tree was good for food*” (Gen. 3).
- “*I coveted*” – As Eve looked upon “*a tree to be desired to make one wise*”. The right response at this point was to *flee* with all haste, as Joseph from the hands of the temptress (II Tim. 2:22). But instead Achan

7:20 *And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done:*

7:21 *When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.*

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chose to “*regard iniquity*” in his heart (Ps. 66:18). That evil wish to disobey arising in his heart should immediately have been driven out. But he *yielded* to temptation because he did not *run* from it. The evil one is powerless without our consent, and “*will flee from you*” when effectively resisted.

- I “*took them*” – As Eve “*took of the fruit thereof, and did eat*”.

Just as Eve involved her husband and even the whole human race in her choice to sin, so Achan involved his house, and even the whole nation in his. “*He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house*” (Prov. 15:27).

“*Indeed I have sinned*” – Achan’s response was to coldly confess what he had done. One wonders what might have been the outcome had he shown genuine repentance with a publican-like plea to God for mercy.

*7:22 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it.*

*7:23 And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD.*

*7:24 And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor.*

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### **7:24-26** – Stoned and Buried

Achan's loot was found hidden under the family tent. It was not possible that his family would have been unaware of it. And therefore they too became a part of his wrong when they refused to stand against him in it. What we see here is hard justice, but it really was fair. Modern law would call Achan's family "*accessories to the crime*". To help someone do wrong or to not stand in their way, even a wife or child, is to become party to the crime. It is to stand in agreement, even if unhappy agreement. Understand it! Mrs. Achan condemned herself to death when she chose to keep her mouth shut concerning her husband's crime and not stand against him, and she helped her children to the same. And each one of those Achan children condemned themselves to death when they chose to not do the hard thing in confronting their Dad and

7:25 *And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones.*

7:26 *And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day.*

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standing up to him in his wrong. It is the same to this day with the woman or child who is afraid to cross her husband or dad, to stand up against his evil choices. Each family member takes an awful chance when they become an “accessory” to wrong or evil in their home. They show their loveless heart in their willingness to subject the members of their family to the consequences of wrong. If it is wrong then it is heading to ruin! And if it is heading to ruin then they do wrong who hide behind some twisted idea of submission or loyalty. Our family and friends need us to be in their face when they choose the way of sin, with enough real love burning in our heart for them and for the rest of our family to face the wrong-doer. It is not love to just keep quiet and let one destroy himself and perhaps the rest of the family in his foolishness. As an accessory to his crime, *you* become answerable to God for your weakness. “Oh,” you say, “but you do not know what it is like to confront him with wrong, or what he is like when he is angry!” But what is the *right*

thing to do? “No, but I just want to keep the peace!” Oh yes? Well, I am sure it was a peaceful place out there in the Achan family graveyard of Achor Valley after God’s judgment was executed upon the whole family. Is that the family peace you are looking for? If it is wrong, it is wrong my friend! And we are wrong to not stand up to wrong, *whoever* and *whatever* that might involve. To avoid this shows our *hate* for the one in the wrong, and for all others involved. To avoid this shows our *self-* preservation and selfish unwillingness to sacrifice for the one in the wrong, by refusing the hassle and hurt and heartache of confrontation. This same principle is true of anybody in a subordinate position, whether work, church, government, or family. Perhaps it is for just such a time as this that the Lord has raised you up. Do you see much that you might lose by that confrontation? A job? A marriage? Peace? How big is your God who has promised to meet all of your needs in the doing of right? And what better could you do for those you really care about? What else can I do before a *God* I love? It was the responsibility of this condemned family to love their God more than their husband and father. There was a point where he might have reversed himself and saved himself from God’s judgment had the only other humans who knew been there to demand he do right. But in letting him down his family let

themselves down as well, and so must suffer the same fate as he.

So alas, they were led as a family to a valley named Achor, meaning “trouble” or “troubling”, where the Lord troubled these who had so troubled His people (vs. 25). And there Achan and all that was his were “dedicated” to the Lord in the same way as at Jericho, killed and burned. Then a memorial of stones was raised over their grave as a reminder of God’s fierce judgment upon sin, and upon those who dare to trouble His people.

In the name of love for others *live for God and run from sin!* A man’s godless choices bring loss and shame to his family, friends, church, and neighbours, not only to himself. Even as the constant reminder of Proverbs that a child’s rejection of God’s wisdom and way not only disgraces himself but also shames his parents who gave him life (Prov. 17:21, 25; 19:13; 29:15). No man sins on his own! Compare the great loss of Lot and family through Lot’s carnal choices, ending in the most complete ruination of their property and name (Gen. 20). The whole group is inflicted with loss when *one* chooses sin. You cannot choose sin without firing a scatter-gun of devastating effect into your society (and progeny).

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## **Ponder Points**

As Achor became known as that valley where God brought trouble upon those troubling His people through their lust and greed, even so it was that place where God's favour was restored to His people when sin and sinners were rooted out and dealt with justly and with merciless severity. Hosea prophesied of that coming day when the Lord "*will give . . . the valley of Achor for a door of hope*" (2:15). The people of Israel have often found themselves in the dark "valley of trouble" through their trespass of the Lord's words. It is where they currently dwell, and have since they crucified their Messiah. It is where they will remain until Jesus Christ returns to their rescue and national repentance. Only then will God's favour finally be restored to His people, only when sin and sinners are at last completely rooted out and dealt with justly and with merciless severity.

Please remember the spiritual principles taught in this chapter;

- Many suffer for the rebellion of one.
- Offenders cannot hide in the crowd, for "*Behold, your sin will find you out.*"

- Sin cuts off the flow of God's help and blessing.

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Remember the lesson of Hebrews 12, where the Lord insists we be *alert* to the first signs of a bitter root of corrupt designs, doctrines, or deeds in others which might lead them on to departure from the way to life in Christ (apostasy). As long as it is hidden under the ground ("*root*") little can be known or done (as with Judas Iscariot's hidden heart). But the first sprouts of evidence must be observed and handled with bold, loving, prayerful confrontation. There must even be the readiness to painfully remove that bitter root if necessary, lest "*thereby many be defiled*" and the peace of the church be lost (Matt. 18:15-18). Compare King Asa's hard handling of his own mother in order to keep the revival fire burning in II Chronicles 15:16. Achan was such a bitter root, who greatly troubled his people with many deaths as a result of his evil choices. His removal was the only way to restored peace.

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As "*stewards of the manifold grace of God*" (I Pet. 4:10) we exercise the spiritual gifts He has given. In administering God's gifts we are commanded to "*minister the same one to another*". There is a

communal sense in which every gift given to an individual believer is the common property of the whole church, with each child of the Father appointed as a steward of what he has received. Thus we are to use our gifts for the building up and encouragement of the whole, none reserving or confiscating any gift for his own personal use only, or denying his service to all. As the city of Jericho, every gift the Lord has given to His children is consecrated to the Master for *His* use, to be used in *His* way. And every man who would take of that which is consecrated to the Lord and turn it to his own use becomes a bit of an Achan, secretly hiding under his tent a wedge of the Lord's gold.

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As Achan's dependents were held liable to stand up against their father's wrong and were stoned with him for not doing it, even so the children of Gomer were called upon, in Hosea 2:2, to join in pleading against their corrupt mother. The nation of Israel and her leaders were as the mother, and the individual people of the nation were as the children (related, though not in a place of authority). The children must plead with the mother, for her judgment would fall upon them as well, just as Achan's sin consumed his whole household and troubled the nation. See again how the Lord holds responsible the people of a land and of a family to

Speak out against and resist the corrupt direction of leaders.

“...he read all the words of the law,  
the blessings and cursings,  
according to all that is written  
in the book of the law”

(Joshua 8:34)

## Class 9 – Joshua 8

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*8:1 And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear not, neither be thou dismayed: take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land:*

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### Chapter 8

#### 8:1-2 – The Lord was Back

Vs. 1 – *“Fear not, neither be thou dismayed”* – With God’s judgment properly executed in Achan’s removal it was like a new beginning for the nation. The Lord was again speaking His assurance and encouragement to Joshua as at the first (1:9). This captain had been in utter despair with their defeat. What could be the end of Israel running before their enemies but their complete annihilation, the failure of God’s promises, and God’s name made a mockery among the heathen. Joshua needed to know that in this offence they had not offended the Lord away. Therefore this gracious visitation assuring him that their God was back by their side again. With proper severity executed upon sin standing in the way the God of pardons is back with us. We cannot overlook sin in our midst and expect the Lord to be with us in power. Only when sin is fully dealt with,

8:2 *And thou shalt do to Ai and her king as thou didst unto Jericho and her king: only the spoil thereof, and the cattle thereof, shall ye take for a prey unto yourselves: lay thee an ambush for the city behind it.*

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confessed, and separation from it made is victory restored. And so Joshua again had the Lord's assurance of victory at Ai.

Vs. 2 – That “*thou shalt do to Ai . . . as thou didst unto Jericho*” did not mean the same battle plan, only that there was to be the same handling of the Canaanites there, death to all. In fact there were significant changes this time. It seems the Lord gave Joshua little of any particular plan of attack on Ai, only the mention of ambush and assurance of victory. Joshua was apparently given a measure of freedom to use his own ingenuity in this action, with the stipulation that he was to “*take all the people of war*” with him as at Jericho, a force amounting to more than half a million men. And as well the people would be free this time to take of the spoils of the city. It was God's gift to them.

And there lies the grave of Achan in the quiet, windswept valley of Achor, together with the family he brought such terrible trouble upon in his greed. Silent testimony to a man who *just could not wait!* Only a few days later Achan would have had, and

8:3 *So Joshua arose, and all the people of war, to go up against Ai: and Joshua chose out thirty thousand mighty men of valour, and sent them away by night.*

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lawfully, the very pleasure he demanded unlawfully at Jericho. God is quite willing to give His children pleasures, in *His* time and place and way. But many a soul brings God's judgment upon himself through the same rebellious impatience of Achan, wanting what the Lord in His grace plans to give, but wanting it now in a forbidden time and way. Trust Him for the right time. No one was ever sorry or disappointed that he waited on the Lord for His best. "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*" (Matt. 6:33).

### **8:3-13** – Plan of Attack

Ai was about 30 kilometres to the west and over a kilometre above their Gilgal camp down on the Jericho plain of the Jordan River valley. The city was situated up at the top of that central highland ridge running north and south down the middle of Palestine. It was a long march uphill over rugged terrain for Joshua and his army, with the rest of the people remaining at Gilgal. They came to a place where they could survey the setting of the city from the north, across a valley running to the southeast,

- 8:4 *And he commanded them, saying, Behold, ye shall lie in wait against the city, even behind the city: go not very far from the city, but be ye all ready:*
- 8:5 *And I, and all the people that are with me, will approach unto the city: and it shall come to pass, when they come out against us, as at the first, that we will flee before them,*
- 8:6 *(For they will come out after us) till we have drawn them from the city; for they will say, They flee before us, as at the first: therefore we will flee before them.*
- 

and there Joshua laid out his plan.

Vs. 3 – A contingent of 30,000 “*mighty men of valour*” were chosen as an ambush force.

Vs. 4 – These in the quiet of night were to move to a place of concealment on the far side of the city to the southwest, and close to it. It was a position from which they could keep an eye on the city without being seen, and from which they could see Joshua across the valley as well. Their assignment was a simple one, to quickly run into the city of Ai and get it burning as soon as Joshua gave the signal with his spear pointed toward the city.

Vs. 5-6 – At daylight the main army would move into the valley toward the city, as if to attack. Joshua may perhaps have been careful to not let the entire force be seen from the city. He expected the people of Ai, in their over-confidence due to their previous success, to again come out after them.

- 8:7 *Then ye shall rise up from the ambush, and seize upon the city: for the LORD your God will deliver it into your hand.*
- 8:8 *And it shall be, when ye have taken the city, that ye shall set the city on fire: according to the commandment of the LORD shall ye do. See, I have commanded you.*
- 8:9 *Joshua therefore sent them forth: and they went to lie in ambush, and abode between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of Ai: but Joshua lodged that night among the people.*
- 8:10 *And Joshua rose up early in the morning, and numbered the people, and went up, he and the elders of Israel, before the people to Ai.*
- 

And when that happened the main army would turn and run away, as if in fear. Over-confidence is a common failing in man, and would become the cause of Ai's downfall, even as it had been the cause of Israel's stumble. Yet see how the Lord turned Israel's failure to victory, their defeat fostering the necessary attitude in Ai to draw them out to their destruction.

Vs. 7-8 – With Ai's fighting men out of the city the ambush was then to move in, secure the city, and get it burning.

Vs. 10 – Joshua's numbering or counting of the army was perhaps in order to be able to record any losses among their own men.

Vs. 12-13 – The city of Bethel was close by and to the northwest. So as the main army approached

- 8:11 *And all the people, even the people of war that were with him, went up, and drew nigh, and came before the city, and pitched on the north side of Ai: now there was a valley between them and Ai.*
- 8:12 *And he took about five thousand men, and set them to lie in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of the city.*
- 8:13 *And when they had set the people, even all the host that was on the north of the city, and their liers in wait on the west of the city, Joshua went that night into the midst of the valley.*
- 8:14 *And it came to pass, when the king of Ai saw it, that they hastened and rose up early, and the men of the city went out against Israel to battle, he and all his people, at a time appointed, before the plain; but he wist not that there were liers in ambush against him behind the city.*
- 

from the north Joshua also split off another group of 5,000 to the west, apparently to block any help coming from Bethel against the ambushers.

### **8:14-29** – The Execution

Vs. 14 – As in their first engagement with Ai and just as Joshua anticipated, the king of Ai, seeing Israel’s approach, quickly roused all who were able to bear arms. And with the city gate thrown open they stormed out after Israel, completely unaware of the 30,000 behind them. Thus the turtle was drawn completely out of its shell.

“*At a time appointed*” perhaps refers to some previous arrangement between Ai and Bethel to work together in this counterattack, for we are later told that *both* Ai and Bethel were cleared of men in

*8:15 And Joshua and all Israel made as if they were beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness.*

*8:16 And all the people that were in Ai were called together to pursue after them: and they pursued after Joshua, and were drawn away from the city.*

*8:17 And there was not a man left in Ai or Bethel, that went not out after Israel: and they left the city open, and pursued after Israel.*

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their pursuit of fleeing Israel (vs. 17). It seems both cities fell to Israel that day. Perhaps this “*time appointed*” was an hour superstitiously deemed especially lucky or indicated by the stars.

Vs. 15-17 – According to plan, as Ai’s army came out Israel fled before them. Thinking Israel running in fear, every last man of Ai able to run joined the merry chase, even the more timid types. They were running with the hope in their hearts of once and for all putting an end to this fearful threat they had heard and trembled so much about. With the ploy so well executed, and the prospect of victory so great, and the threat seemingly all before them, they carelessly left the door standing wide open behind them, leaving the city open and utterly defenceless.

The plan worked to perfection. Not so much because it was such a great plan, but because the Lord was with them now! Perhaps any plan would have worked with equal appearance of brilliance,

8:18 *And the LORD said unto Joshua, Stretch out the spear that is in thy hand toward Ai; for I will give it into thine hand. And Joshua stretched out the spear that he had in his hand toward the city.*

8:19 *And the ambush arose quickly out of their place, and they ran as soon as he had stretched out his hand: and they entered into the city, and took it, and hasted and set the city on fire.*

8:20 *And when the men of Ai looked behind them, they saw, and, behold, the smoke of the city ascended up to heaven, and they had no power to flee this way or that way: and the people that fled to the wilderness turned back upon the pursuers.*

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*with the Lord.*

Vs. 18 – God gave the word to Joshua to “*stretch out the spear*”, the signal to those lying in ambush to quickly run to their appointed work.

Vs. 19 – In a matter of moments they were through the gates, securing the city, and setting it alight. It is likely that they did not flame the whole city of Ai, for that would have left little in the way of spoils to be shared. They at least got things unneeded by them burning (barns, towers, wooden structures relating to the walls, etc.). With the sight of the smoke of the burning city and the unmistakable message it telegraphed to the field, two things happened;

- Vs. 20 – The happy Canaanites, sodden with imagined victory, realized with a shock what

8:21 *And when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city, and that the smoke of the city ascended, then they turned again, and slew the men of Ai.*

8:22 *And the other issued out of the city against them; so they were in the midst of Israel, some on this side, and some on that side: and they smote them, so that they let none of them remain or escape.*

8:23 *And the king of Ai they took alive, and brought him to Joshua.*

8:24 *And it came to pass, when Israel had made an end of slaying all the inhabitants of Ai in the field, in the wilderness wherein they chased them, and when they were all fallen on the edge of the sword, until they were consumed, that all the Israelites returned unto Ai, and smote it with the edge of the sword.*

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had happened, and suddenly it was not any fun anymore! Picnic turned to panic!!

- Vs. 20-21 – Joshua’s “fleeing” army turned as a group, a *very large* group, and the running suddenly turned to the other direction. Pursued turned to pursuer.

Vs. 22 – The men of Ai and Bethel turned, only to meet the 30,000 now coming from the west, and became hopelessly pinched between Israel’s forces with nowhere to run.

Vs. 23-25 – All of the men were quickly put to death and the king taken alive, and then all others in the city were killed, as at Jericho. The count of men and women of Ai and Bethel who died that day is given in vs. 25 at 12,000.

8:25 *And so it was, that all that fell that day, both of men and women, were twelve thousand, even all the men of Ai.*

8:26 *For Joshua drew not his hand back, wherewith he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai.*

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Vs. 26 – Joshua, with spear held aloft until every last inhabitant was destroyed, is an image of the Lord in the severity of His justice. It was not a time for mercy, for that time had already passed. There comes a time after long mercy when the Lord must stretch out the spear of His judgment. And He does not withdraw it until all is “*utterly destroyed*”. There came a time when the rain must fall, and not stop falling until all on earth but Noah and family were snuffed out. Do not see harsh man in this action, working his cruel purposes apart from lenient God. See it for what it is in truth; holy God, working His just purposes in and through obedient man. Compare Moses with hands stretched out until victory over the Amalekites was achieved (Ex. 17:11-13).

Vs. 28-29 – The city with its people and king came to a smouldering end, a “*heap of stones*” all that was left of man’s fortresses, their king’s grave only a heap within the heap. More monuments these heaps became;

- Monuments to man’s weakness when the

*8:27 Only the cattle and the spoil of that city Israel took for a prey unto themselves, according unto the word of the LORD which he commanded Joshua.*

*8:28 And Joshua burnt Ai, and made it an heap for ever, even a desolation unto this day.*

*8:29 And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until eventide: and as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his carcase down from the tree, and cast it at the entering of the gate of the city, and raise thereon a great heap of stones, that remaineth unto this day.*

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Lord at last stretches out the spear of His judgment.

- Monuments to man's inability to outthink or outmanoeuvre the Lord.
- Monuments to man's folly to think that he could ever destroy the Lord or His people.
- Monuments to man's eventual utter destruction when the way of sin is chosen over the way of the Lord's righteousness.
- Monuments to the eventual inheritance of all the earth by God's own.

The body of Ai's king was not allowed to hang into the night in obedience to Deuteronomy 21:22-23. How careful they were to avoid the defilement of disobedience again.

*8:30 Then Joshua built an altar unto the LORD God of Israel in mount Ebal,*

*8:31 As Moses the servant of the LORD commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of whole stones, over which no man hath lift up any iron: and they offered thereon burnt offerings unto the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings.*

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### **8:30-35** – Ebal & Gerazim

Again this move is interesting at this point. With their focus upon war, and with stunning victories to their name across the middle of Canaan, yet Joshua now moved the entire congregation from Gilgal some 50 kms north up the Jordan valley and west to that place at the geographic centre of Canaan, where the twin mounts of Ebal to the north and Gerizim to the south meet at Shechem. It was a location rich with national history. This was the place where the Lord first appeared to Abraham and spoke to him in the Promised Land (Gen. 12:4-7), where He first planted their flag saying “this is it!” It was the place where Abraham built his first altar to the Lord in the land. It was to this place that Jacob arrived when returning to the land from Padanaram. Again, he too erected an altar there. It was at Shechem that Jacob purchased the first land owned by an Israelite in Palestine (Gen. 33:19). It was from Shechem that Joseph was sold into Egypt by his brothers (Gen. 37), and yet it was there to

that piece of ground that the bones of Joseph were carried and buried (Josh. 24:32). So as those tribes descending from Israel stood now on Ebal and Gerizim, it was;

- A point of return to their national roots.
- A place of renewal of their hearts in their covenant before the Lord.
- A pinnacle of remembrance of the words of He who was their Keeper.

Many years later, when Joshua was an old man and ready to die, he called the nation back to Shechem (chap. 23-24), and there he challenged the people again with all that God had done for them, calling them back to renew their covenant with the Lord again.

When Moses spoke to Israel on the other side of the Jordan in Deuteronomy 11:26-29 of when they entered the land, he spoke of the necessity of this trip to Ebal and Gerizim, and of God's blessing for obedience and cursing for their disobedience. They were to "*put the blessing upon mount Gerizim, and the curse upon mount Ebal*". In Deuteronomy 27-28 Moses gave further instruction concerning this event and what was to take place there;

8:32 *And he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel.*

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- They were to make a pillar of plastered stones on Ebal, upon which they were to write “*all the words of this law*” (Deut. 27:2-3), probably all of the blessings and curses recorded in Deuteronomy 27-28, setting the flag of God’s words at the top-dead-centre of His land.
- They were to build an altar of uncut stones (27:5-6), a symbol of Jesus Christ, that place of sacrifice “*not made with hands*”, i.e. divine.
- They were to offer burnt offerings and peace offerings on that altar in the heart of their land (27:6-7) as they had done when their covenant was first established with the Lord (Ex. 24:4-5). This was a renewal of their vow, “*All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient*” (Ex. 24:7). The burnt offering expressed their whole givenness to the Lord, the peace and thank offerings their happy communion with Him.
- Half of the tribes were to stand on the slope of “*Gerizim to bless the people*”, and half on the slope of “*Ebal to curse*”.

*8:33 And all Israel, and their elders, and officers, and their judges, stood on this side the ark and on that side before the priests the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, as well the stranger, as he that was born among them; half of them over against mount Gerizim, and half of them over against mount Ebal; as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel.*

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- Then the Levites were to read the blessings and cursings of God's law (Deut. 27:15-28:68). Apparently these mountains form an acoustic effect such that sound carries well, making it possible for all to hear over the valley and up the slopes. Such public readings of God's words became an important aspect of the gatherings of this nation, especially in times of spiritual revival (Ex. 24:7, 7; II Ki. 23:2; Neh. 8).
- With each reading of blessing or cursing the people on their respective mount, either of blessing or cursing, were to shout "Amen".

It was to be a graphic, picturesque object lesson, with the sun (Son) smiling down upon this people, all together and spread over the centre of that land promised to them, reaffirming together their covenant with their God and their allegiance to His words. It was an event meant to make a lasting impression upon the eyes and ears and hearts of

God's children, that all might remember Who promised and gave them this land, and Who made their life in the land a blessing, and Who could and would just as easily make it a cursing. This was the event to which Joshua led his people that day, a people happy in their God, standing upon the crest of *their* land, riding the crest of the wave of victory, and victory sourced only in the Lord. How well Joshua knew that if they were going to continue to ride that crest it would only be through obedience to God's words. Again we find spiritual preparation made much more vital than military. It was the right time for this event, with the object lesson of Ai still fresh in their hearts. For that bitter defeat was a memorable object lesson of just what they now read in Deuteronomy on the mounts. God's blessing is withdrawn when God is forgotten and the defilement of sin is embraced. His blessing is restored when sin is dealt with and He is again put first. It was a time for ensuring against God's curse upon them in their endeavour.

The principle of this of course is still true to this day. When we walk in the light with a heart and life that is right there is joy and fruit and blessing in and through us from the hand of our God. When we walk with the world in rebellious disobedience all is lack-lustre and lifeless, frustration and cursing.

8:34 *And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law.*

8:35 *There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them.*

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Vs. 35 – The indication here is that they read largely from the five books of Moses that day, if not all of it. And notice that there were no Junior Church classes where the “*little ones*” could hear stories of butterflies and bumblebees, and colour in picture cut-outs of plastered altars and flaming cities. They were all there all day, old and young, listening to the words of God read in their hearing. Compare Nehemiah 8. God expects us to leave life’s battles and gather for the reading and exposition of His word, making no excuses for the “*little ones*”, that they cannot understand or it is over their heads.

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## **Ponder Points**

The village of Sychar was later located right next to the old site of Shechem in the same valley under the shadow of the mounts. When a very different hearted Israel was in the process of rejecting their Messiah, it was to this valley that Jesus returned with His disciples. And there He met a Samaritan

woman at “Jacob’s Well” “*near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph*” (Jn. 4:5). While His own people were expressing their rejection, Jesus made that same place the starting point of His mission to a people who would be more willing to receive Him. There began a revival among the Samaritans, which would later expand under the ministry of Philip (Acts 8). And there Jesus called His disciples to lift their eyes to the larger harvest of the world. There at that starting place of His own people in the land, Jesus began His ministry *to the world*, beyond His own largely rejecting nation.

## Class 10 – Joshua 9

We see in this chapter two of Satan's common approaches in his attempt to cope with the forward marching church of God on earth. Sometimes the head-on attack;

- As when the Jewish rejecters of Galatia nearly stoned Paul to death.
- As Balak's initial, head-on effort through Balaam to curse God's people directly.
- As the threats of physical attack from their enemies against Nehemiah and company when building the wall.

Sometimes the subtle, deceptive infiltration of error into the camp of truth;

- As when the Jewish teachers introduced into Galatia a subtle mix of law and grace, polluting the true gospel with "*another gospel*" and seeking to draw the redeemed back under the law, giving rise to Paul's writing of the book of Galatians.
- As Balaam's Plan B, to lead the men of Israel into pagan worship through the seductive efforts of the Moabite women, seeking to bring

*9:1 And it came to pass, when all the kings which were on this side Jordan, in the hills, and in the valleys, and in all the coasts of the great sea over against Lebanon, the Hittite, and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, heard thereof;*

*9:2 That they gathered themselves together, to fight with Joshua and with Israel, with one accord.*

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God's curse upon them by making them corrupt.

- As the more subtle efforts against Nehemiah while they were building, and then later the infiltration of Tobiah into the temple.

Satan works both ways. Now in overt confrontation, now in covert infiltration. Now in throwing into terror, now in sowing in some error. In the first two verses of this chapter we see those who would oppose Israel through direct confrontation beginning to gather. Then in the Gibeonites we see Satan's effort to corrupt through subtleties.

## **Chapter 9**

### **9:1-2** – Nations of Canaan Uniting

Desperation moved these otherwise separate city-states to unite against their common foe.

9:3 *And when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and to Ai,*  
9:4 *They did work wilily, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles, old, and rent, and bound up;*

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### **9:3-15** – Gibeon’s Deception

Understand this crafty approach in its context. Satan had been badly losing the battle of *strength*, and so he turns now to *subtlety*. And see how this new attack comes at the peak of spiritual victory. The people of Israel were freshly back from Shechem, where they had united their hearts before the Lord in planting the flag of His Word at the centre of their land. It was then that Satan suddenly hit them with another, unexpected, very different kind of attack. He brought his battery of temptations against Jesus in the same way, immediately after Jesus declared Himself at His baptism. Whenever a child of God gets right with God and steps forward into His service you can be sure Satan will be found “*standing at his right hand to resist him*”, sending strong temptation in an effort to destroy the rising threat.

Vs. 3-6 – “*Make ye a league with us*” they proposed. Gibeon was only 11-12 kms southwest of Ai, well

- 9:5 *And old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy.*
- 9:6 *And they went to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country; now therefore make ye a league with us.*
- 9:7 *And the men of Israel said unto the Hivites, Peradventure ye dwell among us; and how shall we make a league with you?*
- 

within those people of whom the Lord had said “*thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them*” (Deut. 7:2). This the Lord only said of the 7 condemned nations of Canaan. Of “*cities which are very far off from thee, which are not of the cities of these nations*” the Lord had also spoken in Deuteronomy 20:10-15. If such far off cities came in peace they were to be allowed to live, but they would become tributaries to Israel, “*and they shall serve thee*”. If they came with aggression then they were to be defeated and their spoil taken. Somehow the Gibeonites were aware of these details, and realized that their only hope for survival was to pose as a city “*very far off*” from Canaan and coming in peace.

These people are an interesting study. They show a great deal of insight, and even a measure of attention to and faith in God’s words. Do not miss how it was their attention to the detail of God’s

9:8 *And they said unto Joshua, We are thy servants. And Joshua said unto them, Who are ye? and from whence come ye?*  
9:9 *And they said unto him, From a very far country thy servants are come because of the name of the LORD thy God: for we have heard the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt,*  
9:10 *And all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites, that were beyond Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon, and to Og king of Bashan, which was at Ashtaroth.*

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words that preserved their lives. So it is today. As well, they were putting all their trust in Joshua and the elders of Israel, that they would not go back on their word once given, that their character was of the type that “*swears to his hurt and changes not*”. In other words they were trusting that the men of Israel were of more trustworthy stuff than they themselves were. They came with a lie, with a low standard of integrity. Yet they came staking their very existence on a higher standard of integrity in God’s people. Strangely there was in them an awareness of the moral integrity of Israel’s God, and therefore of His people. How could they have known what they knew about God and His words?

Vs. 9-10 – They came with flattery concerning “*the name of the LORD thy God*”. Let the warning bells ring whenever you find yourself being flattered. Too often a swindle comes clothed in the same.

9:11 *Wherefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spake to us, saying, Take victuals with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say unto them, We are your servants: therefore now make ye a league with us.*

9:12 *This our bread we took hot for our provision out of our houses on the day we came forth to go unto you; but now, behold, it is dry, and it is mouldy:*

9:13 *And these bottles of wine, which we filled, were new; and, behold, they be rent: and these our garments and our shoes are become old by reason of the very long journey.*

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Though the fall of Jericho and Ai was their concern (vs. 3) they were careful not to mention these events. This in keeping with their story that they had been on the road from afar, and thus would not yet have heard of more recent events. Their lives depended on a well planned and executed act. Our hats off to them, for they performed well. Their story is in fact the longest lie in the Bible.

Vs. 12-13 – The only credentials they had to present were mouldy bread and worn-out clothing.

Vs. 14 – “*Asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD*” – Israel’s leaders again fell right back into the same cause for their first defeat at Ai. They trusted themselves to make their own judgments based on earthly evidence alone.

*“Pride goes before destruction,  
and a haughty spirit before a fall.”*

9:14 *And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD.*

9:15 *And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation sware unto them.*

9:16 *And it came to pass at the end of three days after they had made a league with them, that they heard that they were their neighbours, and that they dwelt among them.*

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Only through the pride of a man thinking himself sufficient does he neglect to ask counsel of the Lord. Perhaps it is an indication as well that these leaders had yet to really see their fault in the previous trouble at Ai. Perhaps they tended to lay the blame in that event to bad spying more than to bad leading (or praying). And so Joshua and the elders fell to the same again. But this time they had no one to blame but themselves. Hey it is easy for us to pick up on their failure here. Almost as easy as falling into the very same ourselves in neglecting to ask “*counsel at the mouth of the LORD*”.

Vs. 15 – Israel’s leaders both vowed to let the Gibeonites live and “*made a league with them*”, placing Gibeon under Israel’s protection.

### **9:16-21** – Discovery & Debate

Vs. 16-18 – Upon hearing that the Gibeonites were among those condemned by the Lord, the leaders stood by their vow though making them very

*9:17 And the children of Israel journeyed, and came unto their cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon, and Chephirah, and Beeroth, and Kirjathjearim.*

*9:18 And the children of Israel smote them not, because the princes of the congregation had sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel. And all the congregation murmured against the princes.*

*9:19 But all the princes said unto all the congregation, We have sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them.*

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unpopular with their people. It took real courage to stand on their word;

- Though under heavy pressure to change their decision.
- Though wearing the red face of embarrassment.
- Though they sorely wished to undo their error.
- Though they had been led into this league by a lie.

They stood firm on the fact that two wrongs do not make a right. The famine in David's day and judgment upon Saul's house for dishonouring this oath shows that the Lord was with them in this difficult stand (II Sam. 21:1-9).

It was the Lord who allowed these leaders of Israel

9:20 *This we will do to them; we will even let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we swore unto them.*

9:21 *And the princes said unto them, Let them live; but let them be hewers of wood and drawers of water unto all the congregation; as the princes had promised them.*

9:22 *And Joshua called for them, and he spake unto them, saying, Wherefore have ye beguiled us, saying, We are very far from you; when ye dwell among us?*

9:23 *Now therefore ye are cursed, and there shall none of you be freed from being bondmen, and hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God.*

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to come to such a hard lesson, to help them in their remembrance of dependence. They did not seem to get it the first time. They could not miss it the second time. The Lord is always teaching in every direction in everything He does. His leaders have not arrived at some plateau of perfection above all others. They too are subject to the failings of pride and the hammering of God's hard lessons.

### **9:22-27** – Confrontation & Consequences

Vs. 26 – Though these foreigners had been threatened with God's judgment, and had now become objects of the anger of God's people, yet Joshua "*delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, that they slew them not*". He whose name was "Jehovah is salvation" became the saviour of the people of Gibeon.

9:24 *And they answered Joshua, and said, Because it was certainly told thy servants, how that the LORD thy God commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you, therefore we were sore afraid of our lives because of you, and have done this thing.*

9:25 *And now, behold, we are in thine hand: as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do.*

9:26 *And so did he unto them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, that they slew them not.*

9:27 *And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the LORD, even unto this day, in the place which he should choose.*

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Vs. 27 – Note how the sentence of the elders upon the Gibeonites, though a punishment, put them in the way of blessing. By their privileged service “*for the altar of the LORD*” they were put up close to the tabernacle, that witness of Christ on earth. As well they were ever a part of Israel’s yearly feasts, which again testified of Christ in His death, resurrection, and return.

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## **Ponder Points**

See by this example the cleverness of Satan and his followers. It is simply not within our power alone to make our way through life’s decisions without failure. We are taught by this example to live in continual dependence upon the Lord in every decision.

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Consider that it is when we are closest to the Lord that we must be looking most expectantly for Satan's attacks. When in the context of greatest spiritual victories it is then that we are brushing closest to the seeds of spiritual defeat.

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We find in these Gibeonites another of those interesting "redemptive analogies" of God's Word. As we have considered, Joshua = Jesus = "Jehovah is salvation". Joshua in many ways pictures Jesus, as the Captain of the Lord's host, leading His people to victory and deliverance and inheritance. Now consider with me those interesting Gibeonites in their dealing with Joshua;

- They recognized the futility of fighting against Israel. They knew they could not win. They had concluded that militarily they were no match. This is interesting since they themselves were known as a force to be reckoned with (10:1-2). Thus there was great potential for pride in them. Yet they did not allow pride to keep them from humbling themselves before Joshua. Neither did pride ever later lead them to rise up in revolt. Perhaps they could see that *God* was with Israel (9:24-25), like Nicodemus could see

that God was with Jesus. They knew their gods were no match for this God. They could see that all were falling before this people of God.

They understood that without Joshua's word, they were all as good as dead. They could see that their only hope was centred in that captain of the Israelite nation. Joshua's assurance of preservation was the only ticket to their salvation. At all cost they must secure his promise or all was lost (vs. 6, "*they went to Joshua*"). They could only trust their souls to his honour, that he would keep His promise if they could get it. Again, how did they know they could trust him for that? It certainly proved true (9:26). There simply was no other option for them. They believed and acted upon their belief that that Captain of God's earthly host was the *key* to their rescue from certain destruction.

They were a people condemned to destruction, by virtue of their *place* of dwelling among a whole people group condemned by the Lord and by virtue of their own personal wickedness. They were just as much a part of the sin of Canaan coming to the full as all others in that cursed land. *Their*

*own sin* had come to the full!

- They were a pliable, compliant people. While all others in the land were hardened, attempting only military confrontation, a response that would only bring upon them the very destruction planned for them, these few Gibeonites were rescued by their simple conclusion that it was no solution to fight the Lord. They gave in to the Lord and were blessed!

It is a testimony to the Lord's accurate assessment of the full measure of evil in that land that only these few responded with compliance rather than violence. It is a testimony to the very interesting nature of man, that though all are of the same material, all are not of the same nature. The Gibeonites were a people equally condemnable in a land of the condemned (living dead). They all faced the same pressure of the same threat coming at them with access to the same information. Yet these responded with compliance, while the others were only more completely hardened unto destruction by what confronted them (9:1-2). Some are softened to compliance unto salvation by the heat of God's threat of judgment, and others are

hardened to arrogance unto destruction. “*We are in thine hand*” (9:25) was their response, placing themselves under the power and possession of Israel. Note the usual proportions, with these few believing while the vast majority perished. “*Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it*” (Matt. 7:13-14).

- *They were a believing people!* Their response was a faith response. They believed that there was no other hope but to appeal to Joshua, and that there *was* hope in an agreement with Joshua. If they could just get his word of their preservation they were safe. We know they believed these things or they never would have risked their lives to make this attempt. Oh sure, their faith was deficient. They were much like Jacob with his deceptive, part-way faith. They were of the nature of Rahab, expressing her faith with a lie. They possessed a measure of faith in the value of God and His things, yet not faith enough to trust God to give it in His time and way. They were confident as to where the place of true blessing is, but thinking that maybe the Lord

needed their help in bringing His purposes to pass. Such double-minded, part-way faith is a lot like us. And behold! Their faith, though so deficient, was honoured by God for the faith that it was! And they were given a place among His people. Granted, it was a place of lowly servanthood, but it was life and safety where all others who tried any other way perished. Just as all who tried any way other than obediently looking to the serpent on the pole perished in the wilderness (Num. 21). And being in, not only were they safe from Israel's swords and spears, but they were in league with *God's own power*, receiving His full protection from attack. They were safe from the swords of all others as well! How earnestly and effectively Joshua and company will speed to their aid in the next chapter (10:6-10). And the Lord Himself will cut loose with His even more effective heavenly arsenal against their common enemies (10:11). How easily Joshua might have let the attacking kings have the Gibeonites. It might have been considered an easy way out of a difficult situation, for it would not be Israel lifting their hand against them. But Joshua's word was good, not only to *mercy* them in not attacking but to *grace* them in their protection at great

sacrifice. Later it was the Lord Himself who stood up for them against the abuse of Saul's house (II Sam. 21).

God *responds* to faith in man, He *rewards* such faith, even deficient faith. And because of their faith, what they truly were as condemned and condemnable men was overlooked by "Jehovah is Salvation". In Joshua's case, because he was a human, fallible representative of the Saviour, his incompetence brought their deliverance. In Jesus' case, man's deliverance is all of grace.

Consider these parallels applied to mankind;

Man is condemned by God, every one of us. Our sure judgment is looming just as theirs in Canaan, as if an invading army with the power of Almighty God behind it were already moving across the land toward us, leaving complete destruction in its wake. And this because of man's wickedness, ripening at last unto God's just judgment. Every one of us is "*of unclean lips*", dwelling "*among a people of unclean lips*".

We too must respond by faith, believing God for what He says;

- About man – That all are condemned. That sin is man’s current reality. That righteousness is every man’s desperate need. And that judgment is our sure outcome.
- About Jesus Christ – As with Joshua, that help and hope is found only in Him, in that Person. That except for *Christ’s* word we are as good as dead men. Our only hope is in a word of assurance of preservation from that Captain of the Lord’s host. If you have not secured that from Him then you are without hope. If you have, then you are without worry or fear.

About God – That He will honour our faith, deficient though it may be. That He will grant us rescue from certain death. That He assures us that He will overlook the condemned nature of our sinful soul. That He will give us a place among His people. It is a place of servanthood to be sure, for we cannot expect more, but we will be in the fold and safe forevermore.

- As the Gibeonites, so mankind must not dare to choose the route of resisting God.

Compliance before Him is our only hope, fully placing ourselves under His power and possession. We dare not allow pride to keep us from the blessing of compliance to God, or lead us to later revolt against His leadership. There is simply *no hope* in rebellion.

In summary, as the Gibeonites so every man must;

- Bow to God's will in compliance, not defiance.
- Believe that he is condemned, as good as destroyed.
- Believe that a pledge from Jesus is his only hope.
- Believe that God will honour that faith in Jesus, and not only will He no longer be the *Destroyer* of the believer, but He now becomes his *Protector!*

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As with Rahab, the preservation of the Gibeonites is an indication of the grace of God, even in the midst of His judgment. And again it was a receiving motivated, yea forced by God rising to judgment. Compare the same with Jonah's sailors. Compare the same with the "*great multitude which no man could number*" to be saved out of the "*Great*

*Tribulation*” (Rev. 7).

“And there was no day like that  
before it or after it,  
that the LORD hearkened  
unto the voice of a man:  
for the LORD fought for Israel”

(Joshua 10:14)

## Class 11 – Joshua 10

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*10:1 Now it came to pass, when Adonizedek king of Jerusalem had heard how Joshua had taken Ai, and had utterly destroyed it; as he had done to Jericho and her king, so he had done to Ai and her king; and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel, and were among them;*

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In chapter 9 Joshua and the leaders of Israel gave their word to the crafty Gibeonites that they would not be destroyed. Though Joshua and the elders of Israel had been tricked into their vow, still they viewed their word as sacred, fearing God's displeasure should they dare violate that agreement. Compare Ezekiel 17:12-19, where the Lord considered Himself involved in Zedekiah's vow to the pagan King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (II Ki. 24:17-20). God takes our word seriously, even if we do not. As well, Israel had entered into league or union with the Gibeonites. Though they as a people would be slaves, yet they were under Israel's protection. This protective agreement would now be put to the test.

### Chapter 10

#### 10:1-5 – Confederacy Against Gibeon

*10:2 That they feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city, as one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all the men thereof were mighty.*  
*10:3 Wherefore Adonizedec king of Jerusalem, sent unto Hoham king of Hebron, and unto Piram king of Jarmuth, and unto Japhia king of Lachish, and unto Debir king of Eglon, saying,*

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Vs. 1 – What had been the city of Salem (“peace”) in the days when Melchizedek was king (Gen. 14:18) had by this time become Jerusalem (“city of peace”). The names of this city’s kings, old and new, are similar in meaning;

- Adoni-zedek means “lord of righteousness”.
- Melchizedek means “king of righteousness”.

Seems it was a common type of title for Jebusite kings of Jerusalem.

Do not miss the change over the centuries from Melchizedek, that godly priest of the Most High God, to this leader of forces against the Lord. Understand that the presence of a man like Melchizedek was further testimony to the true God in that land, and that further testimony rejected.

Perhaps we see in this Adoni-zedek a picture of the coming Antichrist, with the Lord so evidently joining in the battle here, even as He will in the last days.

*10:4 Come up unto me, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon: for it hath made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel.*

*10:5 Therefore the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, the king of Eglon, gathered themselves together, and went up, they and all their hosts, and encamped before Gibeon, and made war against it.*

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Vs. 2 – “*They feared greatly*” – The arrow of Israel’s victories was angling toward Jerusalem. Their rapid advance from Jericho west to Ai and southwest to Gibeon meant that Jerusalem, just a few kilometres southeast of Gibeon, would likely be next. That a power as strong as Gibeon felt it necessary to fully submit to Israel was a fearful token of doom for their neighbours.

Vs. 5 – “*Amorites*” seems to be a general term for the people of the region, though they were Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem (15:63). Compare the Gibeonites as both Hivites (9:7; 11:19) and Amorites (II Sam. 21:2).

It seems the purpose of this allied army was to destroy Gibeon before Israel could join them, and then perhaps to use this city as a frontline of defence against the advancing invaders. Their purpose as well was likely to punish Gibeon for their treason against the common Canaanite cause.

*10:6 And the men of Gibeon sent unto Joshua to the camp to Gilgal, saying, Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us: for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the mountains are gathered together against us.*

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Consider again the redemptive analogies considered previously, of the Gibeonites as a picture of one who recognizes his condemned condition before God, and yet who comes to find assurance in a word from Jesus, our Joshua. Now think how this further experience of the Gibeonites fits with ours in Christ as well. Satan through his world system bitterly persecutes the believer for leaving his kingdom of darkness for the kingdom of light (Col. 1). This in itself becomes a declaration of war. Satan hates every loss, for he knows it is a gain for the King of kings he so despises. And so he wastes no time attacking the new believer, as here. But when that child of God in humble dependence cries to his heavenly Joshua, that Captain of the Lord's host runs to his aid bringing victory.

### **10:6-15** – Southern Confederacy Defeated

Vs. 6 – Gibeon's call was urgent, for this combined army laying siege to their city was no small threat.

Vs. 7 – Though Joshua might have chosen to be

*10:7 So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he, and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valour.  
10:8 And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee.*

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slack here in helping Gibeon, yet he fully honoured his agreement with them. He with the leaders had given their word and they stood by it, however grudgingly some might have followed Joshua's command. This was no easy march in behalf of their crafty confederates to the west by any means. The entire army travelled some 30 kms west and over 1 km up, on foot and through the night (vs. 9). Again, obedience is in evidence among them as a whole, for we have no record of the least murmur in the ranks. And again God gave them complete victory. The lesson is clear. With complete, united obedience there is victory, for God was with them.

Vs. 8 – Perhaps along the way, more likely before leaving, the Lord gave Joshua the assurance of victory, indicating that the honouring of this vow was according to His will and would contribute to the larger battle against His enemies. After the failures they had so recently seen through lack of dependence upon God, it is doubtful Joshua would have made a move without first inquiring of the Lord. He may have considered this circumstance

10:9 Joshua therefore came unto them suddenly, and went up from Gilgal all night.  
10:10 And the LORD discomfited them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them along the way that goeth up to Bethhoron, and smote them to Azekah, and unto Makedah.  
10:11 And it came to pass, as they fled from before Israel, and were in the going down to Bethhoron, that the LORD cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died: they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword.

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something of a penalty for their foolish lack of dependence before, now sucked into trouble for it. He needed to know if and how he should respond. The Lord rewarded his inquiry with a welcome word of confidence.

Vs. 10-11 – Hailstones from heaven. This was to be a most unusual day in Israel’s history. *“The LORD discomfited”* or confounded the allied efforts, quickly turning the tide against them. *“The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD”* (Prov. 21:31). How easily our God can arrange the circumstances to achieve His desired outcome. We tend to point to the circumstances, either fortunate or unfortunate for us, but it is all a question of whether the Lord is with or against us. *He is our good fortune!*

It seems Israel took the allied forces completely by

surprise in appearing on the scene so soon and so suddenly, perhaps even out-running any scouts on the lookout. Many of the Amorite forces were killed “*with a great slaughter*” in the immediate battle around the city of Gibeon. There then followed a long flight and pursuit, first to the west through Beth Horon, then swinging south through the Aijalon Valley toward Makkedah. As soon as things turned to the west the Lord met the fleeing confederacy with a storm of hailstones of a calibre to kill men! Such that the number of dead attributed to the Lord’s hail was even greater than those killed by Israel’s swords. The Lord will again turn to this method in the last days (Rev. 16:21; 11:19). The Tribulation judgments seem to be a combination of all previous judgments, but to the max! That this heavenly bombardment was a miracle of God and no coincidence is evident in that Israel was untouched by the hailstones while the Amorite allies were cut to shreds by them. In fact they were hammered by this devastating hail from the time they were heading down to Beth-Horon “*unto Azekah*”, a distance of over 30 kms! Yet again, Israel was untouched all along that way. It was a storm following closely only over the heads of the Canaanites, hounding their every move. The Lord was doing His own stoning of these who were

*10:12 Then spake Joshua to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon.*

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so worthy of it (the original smart bombing).

See well how the Lord can be a cloud of protection for the one receiving Him, as with Israel in their flight from Pharaoh, and yet He can be a cloud of destruction for those rejecting His will. And see how a false “lord of righteousness” allied with earthly forces proved no match for a people allied with the true Lord of Righteousness.

Vs. 12-14 – Request for an extension granted. As that fateful day began to wind down Joshua could see that they would not to be able to finish the job by sundown. This would perhaps give the fleeing allies the opportunity to regroup or scatter, thus prolonging the process of rooting them out in completing their conquest of the south. So it was a crucial point with everything in Israel’s favour. Joshua’s men were of course tired. They had run through the night, and they ran right into a day of more running in pursuit of God’s enemies (they had covered about 60 kms within 24 hours). But no complaints do we hear. It was the Lord giving them wings as eagles, to “*run, and not be weary*”. But if

*10:13 And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day.*

*10:14 And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the LORD fought for Israel.*

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they could, through a final thrust, just finish the job that day, they could then rest in the comfort of essentially half of their great task accomplished with the back of the south completely broken! So before all Israel Joshua boldly asked of the Lord an extension on the day in the poetic form of vs. 12, as if commanding the sun and moon. It was a prayer of full faith and confidence that their God could do even this, earthly captain boldly asking it of heavenly Captain before all. And amazingly Joshua's request was granted (Hab. 3:11)!

Some folks get twisted up over the language of appearance used in Joshua's prayer. But he spoke in the same way that we would speak of "sunrise" and "sunset", as if the sun does the moving, though of course we know the earth spins relative to a stationary sun. Compare the similar miracle in Hezekiah's day when the sundial moved back 10 degrees (II Ki. 20:8-11).

10:15 *And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp to Gilgal.*  
10:16 *But these five kings fled, and hid themselves in a cave at Makkedah.*  
10:17 *And it was told Joshua, saying, The five kings are found hid in a cave at Makkedah.*

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Vs. 13 – Though there are many theories as to how this happened, it seems the earth simply stopped spinning for a period of “*about a whole day*”. “*The book of Jasher*” records the same wonderful event. They were granted by God a double day “*until*” the southern confederacy could be fully destroyed.

Vs. 14 – “*There was no day like that before it or after it*” – This verse confirms that this was no mere poetry, but a truly incredible day! In fact never was there a day like that one in the history of man. Never was it made so evident that the Lord Himself joined with His people in the fight.

### **10:16-27** – Kings Captured and Killed

This portion is a rehash of the previous summary account. Compare the similar approach in Genesis 2.

Vs. 18-19 – With the discovery of the hiding kings some soldiers were left to guard their find while the rest of Israel’s army pressed on to finish off the

10:18 *And Joshua said, Roll great stones upon the mouth of the cave, and set men by it for to keep them:*

10:19 *And stay ye not, but pursue after your enemies, and smite the hindmost of them; suffer them not to enter into their cities: for the LORD your God hath delivered them into your hand.*

10:20 *And it came to pass, when Joshua and the children of Israel had made an end of slaying them with a very great slaughter, till they were consumed, that the rest which remained of them entered into fenced cities.*

10:21 *And all the people returned to the camp to Joshua at Makkedah in peace: none moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel.*

10:22 *Then said Joshua, Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out those five kings unto me out of the cave.*

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allied army.

Vs. 21 – All returned to camp happy with a task well done.

Vs. 24-25 – Their feet placed on the necks of their foes was a display of their unquestioned victory over all opposition. It is a picture of the ultimate end of all the wicked who stand against the Lord. Compare Malachi 4:3.

Even so the Captain of the Lord's host would have us handle our own conquest of evil's dominion, putting our feet upon the neck of the sin that so easily besets us, putting it to death. *"Mortify [put to death] therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection,*

10:23 *And they did so, and brought forth those five kings unto him out of the cave, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon.*

10:24 *And it came to pass, when they brought out those kings unto Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war which went with him, Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them.*

10:25 *And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies against whom ye fight.*

10:26 *And afterward Joshua smote them, and slew them, and hanged them on five trees: and they were hanging upon the trees until the evening.*

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*evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col. 3:5).*

### **10:28-43** – South Completely Taken

This section describes the taking of the whole of the south by God’s people. Once the southern confederate army was entirely wiped out there was little resistance left. There remained only the matter of breaking into the walled cities of the south over the following months and bringing God’s judgment upon all the condemned Canaanites there.

Do you remember in the negative report of the ten spies how they described the cities of Canaan they had seen as “*very great*” and “*walled up to heaven*” (Num. 13:28; Deut. 1:28)? Yet did you notice that

- 10:27 And it came to pass at the time of the going down of the sun, that Joshua commanded, and they took them down off the trees, and cast them into the cave wherein they had been hid, and laid great stones in the cave's mouth, which remain until this very day.*
- 10:28 And that day Joshua took Makkedah, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and the king thereof he utterly destroyed, them, and all the souls that were therein; he let none remain: and he did to the king of Makkedah as he did unto the king of Jericho.*
- 10:29 Then Joshua passed from Makkedah, and all Israel with him, unto Libnah, and fought against Libnah:*
- 10:30 And the LORD delivered it also, and the king thereof, into the hand of Israel; and he smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein; he let none remain in it; but did unto the king thereof as he did unto the king of Jericho.*
- 

there is not a word in Joshua's account here of any particular difficulty in handling those terribly secure cities. As if the over-stated strengths of these cities proved really insignificant. Either the spies made more of them than they really were, or the Lord made less of them than their appearance threatened. Likely a bit of both. And what became of "all the people that we saw in" the land that were "men of great stature", such that "we were in our own sight as grasshoppers"? (Num. 13:28, 31-33). How they elaborated to the point of celebrating the fearful aspects of those great big Canaanites, without ever a mention of their great big God! Where is now the menace of those great giants the spies so centred on in their rebellious "evil report"? It seems these giants dwelt in this very area of the

10:31 *And Joshua passed from Libnah, and all Israel with him, unto Lachish, and encamped against it, and fought against it:*  
10:32 *And the LORD delivered Lachish into the hand of Israel, which took it on the second day, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein, according to all that he had done to Libnah.*  
10:33 *Then Horam king of Gezer came up to help Lachish; and Joshua smote him and his people, until he had left him none remaining.*  
10:34 *And from Lachish Joshua passed unto Eglon, and all Israel with him; and they encamped against it, and fought against it:*  
10:35 *And they took it on that day, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein he utterly destroyed that day, according to all that he had done to Lachish.*

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south (11:21-22). But again, not even a mention now when it came to it. As if the threat of them just dissolved away before a people doing what the Lord told them to do. Faithless people have a way of hyping up the fear factor in some needed confrontation. But great, glowering giants melt away and fall before the forward marching church of God, walking in dependence upon the Lord of glory. When allied to Him the most ominous threats shrink to unmentionables.

Vs. 40 – Joshua’s purpose was not only to crush all military resistance but to utterly destroy “*all that breathed*”. Compare Deuteronomy 20:16-17. We see here the Lord’s people walking in complete obedience, dealing with His enemies exactly as He had specified, no matter how difficult it might be to

*10:36 And Joshua went up from Eglon, and all Israel with him, unto Hebron; and they fought against it:*  
*10:37 And they took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and the king thereof, and all the cities thereof, and all the souls that were therein; he left none remaining, according to all that he had done to Eglon; but destroyed it utterly, and all the souls that were therein.*  
*10:38 And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to Debir; and fought against it:*  
*10:39 And he took it, and the king thereof, and all the cities thereof; and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed all the souls that were therein; he left none remaining: as he had done to Hebron, so he did to Debir, and to the king thereof; as he had done also to Libnah, and to her king.*

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do that or to explain it. Again, without the least compromise. And it was a chain of easy victories, each leading on to the next.

Vs. 41 – The south side of Canaan extended right down to Kadesh-Barnea, that place where the Lord first commanded them to take the land, and where they had first determined not to obey the Lord in this command. The mention of Kadesh-Barnea here is a revisit, but now approaching from the victory side, riding the crest of God’s promise. The clear indication is that Joshua and Caleb had been *right* to trust the Lord, even for what seemed so impossible back then. Here they were now in firm possession of the whole southern half of the land, from Gibeon to Kadesh-Barnea. It is a reminder of the folly of ever refusing to follow the Lord, and

*10:40 So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the LORD God of Israel commanded.*

*10:41 And Joshua smote them from Kadeshbarnea even unto Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even unto Gibeon.*

*10:42 And all these kings and their land did Joshua take at one time, because the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel.*

*10:43 And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp to Gilgal.*

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again of the overwhelming victory available to those who cling in dependence upon Him. Compare Ephesians 1:19.

## Class 12 – Joshua 11

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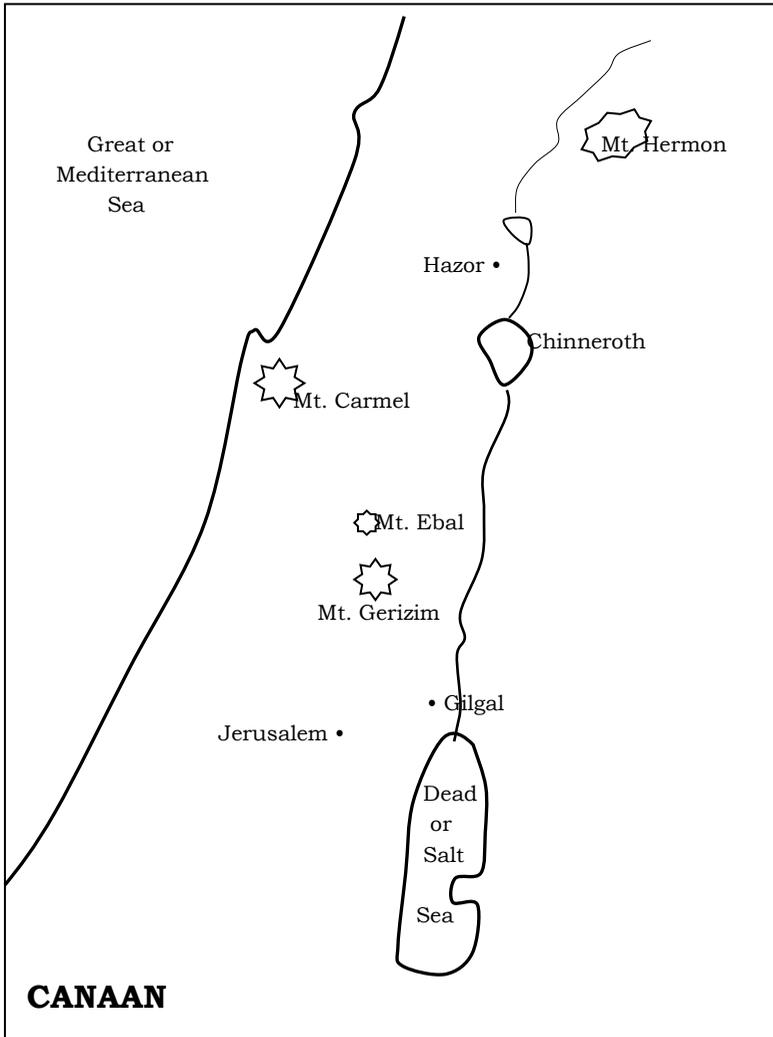
- 11:1 And it came to pass, when Jabin king of Hazor had heard those things, that he sent to Jobab king of Madon, and to the king of Shimron, and to the king of Achshaph,*
- 11:2 And to the kings that were on the north of the mountains, and of the plains south of Chinneroth, and in the valley, and in the borders of Dor on the west,*
- 11:3 And to the Canaanite on the east and on the west, and to the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Jebusite in the mountains, and to the Hivite under Hermon in the land of Mizpeh.*
- 

We come now to the last major campaign in Israel's conquest of Canaan. The entire southern half of the land having fully fallen into Israel's hands, the focus of attention now turns to the north, the only portion yet to be taken.

### Chapter 11

#### 11:1-5 – Northern Kings Gathered

Vs. 1 – For the Canaanites to the north the news from the south was not good. And so, as Adonizedek of Jerusalem took the lead in forming the southern coalition, so King Jabin of Hazor took the lead in the north. It was time to act. They had good cause for worry!



It seems the city of Hazor formed some sort of key, capital city role in the north at that time (vs. 10). This city was situated to the north of the Sea of

11:4 *And they went out, they and all their hosts with them, much people, even as the sand that is upon the sea shore in multitude, with horses and chariots very many.*  
11:5 *And when all these kings were met together, they came and pitched together at the waters of Merom, to fight against Israel.*

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Galilee, near where there once was a smaller lake at the headwaters of the Jordan. It may be that this lake was called Merom at that time (later called Huleh). Or perhaps “*the waters of Merom*” referred to the well-watered slopes to the west of the lake itself where Hazor was situated. This lake later turned to a marsh, which was eventually drained in more recent times.

Vs. 2-3 – This alliance took in the area of what later came to be known as the province of Galilee to the west of the Sea of Galilee. This sea at the head of the Jordan was called Chinneroth or Chinnereth or Kinnereth in Joshua’s day. The Greek rendering of this old Hebrew name is Gennesaret (Lk. 5:1). The area involved was from Galilee to the Mediterranean, and from Mount Carmel in the south to Mount Hermon to the north.

Vs. 4-5 – “*As the sand that is upon the sea shore in multitude*” – The historian Josephus suggested that this combined force totalled 300,000 infantry,

10,000 cavalry, and 20,000 war chariots. Certainly the mention here of the vast numbers involved indicates a much larger threat than anything Israel had faced to the south. As well it seems this is the first time Israel came up against chariots in their invasion. By choosing the more level lands in the area of Merom to face Israel this northern alliance purposely placed themselves in a context where they could best bring their cavalry and chariots to bear.

Returning to that record referred to earlier in Numbers 26 of the sum *“of all the congregation of the children of Israel, from twenty years old and upward . . . all that are able to go to war”*, we find the count on Joshua’s side as follows;

- Of Reuben, Gad, & ½ of Manasseh – 40,000
- Other half of Manasseh – 26,350
- Of Simeon – 22,200
- Of Judah – 76,500
- Of Issachar – 64,300
- Of Zebulun – 60,500
- Of Ephraim – 32,500
- Of Benjamin – 45,600
- Of Dan – 64,400

11:6 *And the LORD said unto Joshua, Be not afraid because of them: for to morrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel: thou shalt hough their horses, and burn their chariots with fire.*

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- Of Asher – 53,400
- Of Naphtali – 45,400

**Total = 531,150**

It seems Israel outnumbered even this formidable force, unless the figures of Josephus are off. But chariots were a significant factor in the warfare of those days, like armoured vehicles in modern warfare. Columns of chariots by the thousands driven into the ranks of an infantry could have a devastating effect. Chariots later made the difference for the inhabitants of the valley against Judah (Judges 1:19), and were the deciding factor for that later Jabin, who with “*nine hundred chariots of iron . . . mightily oppressed*” God’s people (Judges 4:3).

### **11:6-14** – Northern Alliance Defeated

Vs. 6 – That Joshua and company were able to arrive at Merom “*tomorrow about this time*” indicates that they were already on the move to the north. Again, it was not Joshua’s nature to waste

around! It seems there was enough concern due to the nature of the threat and the potential for discouragement among His people that the Lord saw fit to reassure Joshua again of certain victory. Echoing quietly from the distant past are the words of Moses, as if with a vision before him of this very confrontation; *“When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the LORD thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt”* (Deut. 20:1).

They were to *“hough their horses, and burn their chariots with fire”*. To *“hough”* a horse is to cut the tendons of the back legs, thus crippling the animal and rendering it useless for battle. Rather than keep such captured weapons of war, the Lord specifically required their destruction, for *He* was the strength of His people. The children of Israel were to be a people living in complete dependence upon their God for victory. Nor did they need an impressive arsenal of weaponry to ward off any would-be attackers, as in our modern world. All such concerns or interests were to be given into the hands of;

- He who can generate the noise of many horses and chariots and cause the battle to be won by mere decibels, as when the Syrians

besieged Samaria in II Kings 7:6.

- He who can surround any surrounding host with countless *“horses and chariots of fire round about”*, as when Syria came after Elisha in II Kings 6:16-17.
- He who can quietly leave a proud man without an army in the morning, as Sennacherib’s host when besieging Jerusalem in II Kings 19:7, 35.

The Lord wished to prevent His people from learning to trust in their own abilities or machinery. Though *“some trust in chariots, and some in horses”*, He would have His people *“remember the name of the Lord our God”* (Ps. 20:7). To this end the kings of Israel were not to multiply horses to themselves (Deut. 17:14-16). Isaiah later pronounced, *“Woe unto them that . . . stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!”* (Isa. 31:1) Where David disobeyed this in a small measure (II Sam. 8:14) Solomon later carried it to the extreme, leading on to his fall (I Ki. 4:26; 10:26, 28-29).

The Lord ever searches the earth for those perfect of

*11:7 So Joshua came, and all the people of war with him,  
against them by the waters of Merom suddenly; and they  
fell upon them.*

---

heart toward Him, for those who simply believe and obey Him, that He might show Himself strong in their behalf. Compare God's counsel to Asa in II Chronicles 16:7-9.

Vs. 7 – Again we see here the same method used by Joshua against those to the south in falling upon them “*suddenly*” (10:9). Unexpected speed was his only strategy. Perhaps Israel again surprised their opponent by running the last stretch through the night, pouncing on them with startling suddenness. Israel may very well have arrived before the coalition had fully hammered together into a united force the disconnected parts of their several smaller armies. So it seems this northern alliance managed little more than to gather themselves together nicely for Joshua to more easily slaughter the whole lot at once.

Hey, when you have an assurance of victory from the mouth of God why drag your feet about it? Joshua's unhesitating, forthright fervour in running to conflict, willingly facing the most threatening enemy, displays his fullest confidence of faith in

God's words of promise, a promise Joshua was correct to understand quite literally by the way. The Lord had without fail proven Himself good for His word so many times before. At its root the word "enthusiasm" originally meant "inspired or possessed by God". This captain of the Lord's host was full of enthusiasm in His service for the Lord, and in the particular task his God had given him to do. As the Lord's counsel to all of us through Paul in Romans 12, he was "*not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord*" (vs. 11). "*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might*" (Eccl. 9:10). "*Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ*" (Col. 3:23-24).

We too have our God's assurance of victory, and of His presence with us "*always, even unto the end of the age*". Why then our timid delay in taking the conquering message of the gospel right over the top of God's earthly enemies in our own day? Why our uncertain hesitancy about standing upon the truth in the face of the prevailing error around us? Is it not simply because we do not have the confidence of a Joshua in God's sure words? Why would we doubt when we have every reason to believe? As

Joshua always took the offensive, never sitting around waiting for conflict to come to him, even so the church should ever be on the offence. Not waiting for the occasional enquiry to come our way, but taking the truth to our world with *enthusiasm*, generating enquiries through our energetic confrontation of error with the truth. Even so it was with the vibrant, forthright approach of the early church through the Spirit's filling and leading.

Consider how Joshua's rather harsh marching orders are our own as well. As Joshua followed God's command in showing no concern or mercy for God's enemies, even so we must be without concern or mercy for the cherished views of the countless false shepherds around us, regardless of how tolerant our society demands we be, regardless of how long-standing the ancient heritage of the heathen, regardless of how great the host of those committed to the folly of false belief. We are to run to the destruction of such false notions with the keenness of this captain, steam-rolling the truth right over the top of all error. Now such an approach is sure to disappoint and discourage, even terrify and enrage the "Canaanites" around us. So be it! As Joshua here, as Jesus in His day, as the Apostle Paul in his, we must not overly concern ourselves with the vain traditions of God-deniers

*11:8 And the LORD delivered them into the hand of Israel, who smote them, and chased them unto great Zidon, and unto Misrephothmaim, and unto the valley of Mizpeh eastward; and they smote them, until they left them none remaining.*

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brutally squashed by the gospel. Godless error must be mercilessly overwhelmed with God's truth. Paul called the ancient religion of the Lycaonians "*vanities*" and demanded that these people "*turn...unto the living God*" in Acts 14:15. He boldly, openly dismissed the idolatry of his day "*saying that they be no gods*" (Acts 19:26).

It is interesting to see that in this final major clash, the one at last clinching the case for Israel in the land, there is no evidence of miracles, as in their previous encounters, at least no mention of it. No wobbly walls, drawn out days, or hail damage. God's people simply, obediently stood up to God's enemies as they were told to do, and the victory was theirs without much fanfare. Supernatural manifestations are not needed by the Lord to accomplish His purposes. In this case it seems He just handed them the victory through more normal military means.

Vs. 8 – Victory was complete and attributed to the Lord's delivering. As before, the problem quickly became more the sweat of pursuing the fleeing foe

- 11:9 *And Joshua did unto them as the LORD bade him: he houghed their horses, and burnt their chariots with fire.*
- 11:10 *And Joshua at that time turned back, and took Hazor, and smote the king thereof with the sword: for Hazor beforetime was the head of all those kingdoms.*
- 11:11 *And they smote all the souls that were therein with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them: there was not any left to breathe: and he burnt Hazor with fire.*
- 11:12 *And all the cities of those kings, and all the kings of them, did Joshua take, and smote them with the edge of the sword, and he utterly destroyed them, as Moses the servant of the LORD commanded.*
- 

than facing their combined power. Those fearful chariots were turned to greater speed in retreat rather than greater clout in the clash.

Did you notice how there was much more detail given on the fall of the southern confederacy than on this northern conflict. Seems a bit strange since this was the decisive battle ushering in their uncontested possession of the Promised Land. Perhaps less is said here to express the ease with which the Lord led His people through an even greater force. Whether *with* many or few. Whether *against* many or few. The Lord has never had the least difficulty handing His people the prize of victory when it is His will to do so. His will, not our weapons, is ever the only real issue.

Vs. 13 – There is great focus here on the burning of Hazor. Perhaps because this city had formerly been

- 11:13 *But as for the cities that stood still in their strength, Israel burned none of them, save Hazor only; that did Joshua burn.*
- 11:14 *And all the spoil of these cities, and the cattle, the children of Israel took for a prey unto themselves; but every man they smote with the edge of the sword, until they had destroyed them, neither left they any to breathe.*
- 11:15 *As the LORD commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all that the LORD commanded Moses.*
- 11:16 *So Joshua took all that land, the hills, and all the south country, and all the land of Goshen, and the valley, and the plain, and the mountain of Israel, and the valley of the same;*
- 

the rallying point of all others (vs. 10), the city was completely levelled in order to demoralize the remnant of Canaanites from any further uprising.

### **11:15-23** – Summary of Victories

With their crushing victory over the northern confederacy the conquest of the land was essentially complete. There now begins a summary report of what the Lord had accomplished through His people.

Vs. 15 – *“He left nothing undone of all that the LORD commanded Moses”* – See again how simple obedience was the key to their success.

Vs. 16 – *“So Joshua took all the land”* – Only small pockets of resistance were left now, to be handled by the individual tribes. But all Canaanite ability to

*11:17 Even from the mount Halak, that goeth up to Seir, even unto Baalgad in the valley of Lebanon under mount Hermon: and all their kings he took, and smote them, and slew them.*

*11:18 Joshua made war a long time with all those kings.*

*11:19 There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites the inhabitants of Gibeon: all other they took in battle.*

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respond or combine into any larger threat had been utterly wiped out.

Even so it is with we who are in Jesus Christ. The back of sin and Satan's power has been broken through Christ's death and resurrection. All that remains in us are the small pockets of sinful resistance of our "old man" for us to handle in the Lord's strength as we walk with Him.

Vs. 17 – Halak was the southernmost point of Canaan, in line with the southern tip of the Dead Sea. Hermon is the northernmost point, some 70 kms north of the Sea of Galilee. So they owned all of it, the whole land, from Halak to Hermon.

Vs. 18 – Again the indication was that the conquest was not as immediate as it appears.

Vs. 20 – *"It was of the LORD to harden their hearts...that He might destroy them utterly"* – As

*11:20 For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as the LORD commanded Moses.*

*11:21 And at that time came Joshua, and cut off the Anakims from the mountains, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel: Joshua destroyed them utterly with their cities.*

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with Pharaoh in the days of the Exodus (Ex. 5:2; 7:3-4, 13), this comment assumes all of the Lord's previous works of grace in their behalf were rejected. They had heard. They had time and plenty of it. They had more opportunity to turn than any other area of Canaan. Rahab's response of faith was available to them, but denied. So as one determinedly hardens his heart against the Lord he finds the Lord quite willing to help confirm him in his hardness (Rom. 1). It was the Lord's purpose to "*destroy them utterly*", even as it is His ultimate purpose to do the same with all who choose to reject His only way of salvation in Christ.

Vs. 21-22 – Before Joshua could call the job complete he had some giants to deal with. These Anakim or sons of Anak were the terror of those 10 spies so many decades before, a threat blown up out of all proportion in their faithless hearts (Num. 13:32-33). Yet when it came to it the job received only a brief mention of a couple verses. Again,

11:22 *There was none of the Anakims left in the land of the children of Israel: only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod, there remained.*

11:23 *So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war.*

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reflecting little real difficulty worth mentioning. The removal of the dreaded Anakim was the final, telling indication of having fully taken the land.

It was from Gath that Goliath later came with the Philistines in the days of Saul to defy Israel and her God (I Sam. 17:4). Goliath stood just short of 3 metres (10 feet), wearing a 75 kg coat of mail, and carrying a weaver's beam for a spear, with an iron spearhead of over 10 kgs (much heavier than a standard shot put). Yet the Lord used a young "*stripling*" with the fearless faith of Joshua to bring that enemy down too.

.....

## **Ponder Points**

Judges 4 indicates that some years after Israel's defeat of this northern alliance, the Canaanites apparently rebuilt and reoccupied the city of Hazor. Deborah called Barak to lead Israel against a second "*Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor*", who

for twenty years “*mightily oppressed the children of Israel*”. Compare the Lord’s parable in Matthew 12:43-45. Because the tribes did not follow through and fully conquer their allotted territories in the Lord’s strength, they came to regret their failure later. The early chapters of Judges give the resulting dark progression;

- From Canaanites among Israelites (1:29).
- To Israelites among Canaanites (1:32).
- To Canaanites dominating Israel (1:34; 4:2).

Why? Because “*the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD*” (Judges 2:11-13, 19; 4:1). When walking in obedience with their God, dealing hard with all evil, God’s people rose to dominance. When walking in “*evil in the sight of the LORD*” they quickly fell under the dominance of others. The very same principle remains true to this day!

“But unto the tribe of Levi  
Moses gave not any inheritance:  
the LORD God of Israel  
was their inheritance”

(Joshua 13:33)

## **Class 13 – Joshua 12-13**

We have seen much of the faith and fervency of Joshua, captain of the Lord's host. The account of him in God's Word stands among the greatest success stories the world has ever seen. Yet in the record of Joshua's victories we see no massive military might or weaponry, little indication of his own exceptionally cunning tactics. If we could point to any human method that worked for him it would be his speed in so suddenly arriving on the scene of conflict, having run to the clash. Yet even in this it was largely Joshua's haste to obey the Lord. When he knew God's mind and knew the certainty of success from the mouth of God he ran without hesitation into the most fearful confrontation with unwavering confidence. Joshua never asked for confirming signs as Abraham (Gen. 15:8), Hezekiah (II Ki. 20:8), or Gideon (Judges 6). He never pined for a greater earthly edge. He had all the edge he needed in heaven. We never see this man wringing his hands in a quandary after the Lord had spoken to him. When he knew from God he moved, with resolute, decisive purpose. Joshua was simply a man of unquestioning obedience to the Lord and unfaltering faith in His words. And as a result he led a people much like himself. Our attitudes are caught more than taught from those in leadership

over us. Joshua is an example to God's children in every age of the way the Christian life should be lived in the fullness of fervency and confident faith in God's words. We too are involved in an urgent spiritual conflict (Eph. 6), both against evil in our world and against evil in our own hearts. We too are to run to the most intimidating tasks when we know the mind of our God, though it means conflict. And we are to run with all fervency and faith, with all confidence in He who has called us to such, with all assurance of ultimate victory. For we have His word that He will never leave us nor forsake us.

## **Chapter 12**

This chapter is a summarized record of Israel's victories on both sides of the Jordan, first on the east under the leadership of Moses, then on the west under Joshua.

### **12:1-6** – Defeated Kings on the East

A summary of the land taken under Moses to the east of the Jordan. The land on the eastern side was bound by the River Arnon on the south and Mt. Hermon on the north.

### **12:7-24** – Defeated Kings on the West

A summary of cities taken under Joshua west of the

Jordan.

Vs. 9-16 – Kings of the southern confederacy, together with Jericho and Ai.

Vs. 17-24 – Kings of the northern alliance.

Here is the roll of the ruined of Canaan. Just as there is a Book of Life, so it appears there is a Book of Death. It is a record of those coming at last to destruction through their sin and rejection of the true God. Do not miss the quiet significance of Gibeah conspicuously missing from this list. For their humility and for the wisdom of their keen awareness, foresight and even faith in Joshua's word of promise they were spared by God, and thus they are found missing from this roll of the ruined. So it is to this day. Those who humbly bow before God are spared from His sure judgment. *"The prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished"* (Prov. 22:3; 27:12). None is more prudent than the one who responds to God's sure promise of His wrath poured out on the unredeemed, who runs by faith to refuge in Jesus.

## **Chapter 13**

### **13:1-6** – Areas Yet Unconquered

13:1 *Now Joshua was old and stricken in years; and the LORD said unto him, Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.*

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Though the Israelites under Joshua had crushed any force in the land sufficient to represent a threat, there remained scattered areas of Canaanite occupation. Again, these areas were to be handled by the tribes with the Lord's help and blessing as they followed Joshua's example, walking in obedient dependence upon their God. But the truth of it is that the tribes left much undone in finishing the conquest. The Geshurites and Maachathites were left dwelling among the Israelites on the trans-Jordan side (13:13). Judah could not drive the Jebusites out of Jerusalem (15:63). Neither Ephraim nor Manasseh could drive out the Canaanites (16:10; 17:12ff; Judges 1:27-28). And so it went.

Vs. 1 – I like the statement of the first part of this verse. Joshua was *“old and stricken in years”* and the Lord told him just that, that he was *“old and stricken in years”*. The Lord told His servant exactly what he was. He speaks fair and honest! He does not hedge or shade or speak in any kind of roundabout manner when He has a point to make. Some are not comfortable with this straight

approach from the Lord or from His servants. But those with nothing to hide or prove and with sincere hearts to please God would have it no other way. Joshua was likely into his 90's by this time, perhaps edging close to 100 years of age. He died when 110 (24:29).

Vs. 2-3 – There was a narrow stretch of land running for many kilometres along the Mediterranean Sea south from the city of Ekron, which became the land of the Philistines. This area became five principalities, the rule of which is commonly referred to as the “*five lords of the Philistines*” (Judges 3:3; I Sam. 6:4). Because this area was never conquered the Philistines later became a thorn in Israel's flesh, so often attacking across their border throughout Israel's early history.

It seems that some of the Geshurites, having been driven from the Trans-Jordan side (vs. 11-13), settled to the south of the Philistines toward Egypt. David and company attacked these and the Amalekites when living in exile to the south (I Sam. 27:8).

Vs. 4-6 – The northern region from the Sidonians on the Mediterranean across the mountains of

Lebanon to Mt. Hermon on the east, and all to the north of this was also left unconquered. “*The borders of the Amorites*” refers to that portion once ruled by Og east of Galilee. The Lord was ready to “*drive out from before the children of Israel*” all of these if they would trust and obey as did Joshua. But alas, Israel refused to believe and obey God for these areas.

### **13:7-33** – Division of Trans-Jordan

We may tend to find the detailed laying out of these tribal borders a bit of a hard read, just as any boundary descriptions in a deeds office might come across a touch on the dry side. But if you put yourself in the place of the heirs, and read it as if it were a description of your *own* inheritance, suddenly the reading takes on new meaning. We can well imagine the excitement for those involved, like the happy time of harvest after the long wait and hard labours leading up to it. It was important that an official, detailed record be made of the placement of boundaries, as if a survey were made and fixed markers put down with a careful written record drawn up. It is an eternal guard against any dispute or misunderstanding.

It seems these details will again come to importance in Christ’s coming earthly kingdom as well. In

consideration of their future significance these “dry” records of border details take on a similar meaning to Jeremiah’s signed, sealed, and duly preserved title deed to a portion of land in Anathoth, sold to him by his nephew even as the growing shadow of Nebuchadnezzar was falling across the land of Judah (Jer. 32:6ff). The evidence of that sale was used by the Lord as an object lesson, as an official proof that *they would be back!* Though they would be removed, yet land would be bought and owned and sold again by God’s people in their Promised Land. So here. That land will be distributed to the tribes of Israel again in Christ’s kingdom, this seemingly useless record becoming a vital document then. And the same excitement will prevail in that day as here at the first. For it will be a day of even greater victory and conquest;

- The *whole world* having fallen to Christ’s control then.
- *Every last enemy* of God crushed and fed to the birds, as in Joshua’s days (Rev. 19).
- Satan bound in the abyss throughout that 1000-year Golden Age on earth.

The sin of the saints all properly dealt with before the Lord – confronted, confessed, and cleansed.

13:13 Nevertheless the children of Israel expelled not the Geshurites, nor the Maachathites: but the Geshurites and the Maachathites dwell among the Israelites until this day.  
13:14 Only unto the tribe of Levi he gave none inheritance; the sacrifices of the LORD God of Israel made by fire are their inheritance, as he said unto them.

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Great will be the joy in the hearts of all in that day when the Lord turns “*the valley of Achor*” to “*a door of hope*” (Hos. 2:15-16). Israel, with all the saints, “*shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt*”.

The apportioning of the land was to be done in fairness according to the size of the tribe (Num. 26:54).

Vs. 7-13 – The land as a whole.

Vs. 14 – The tribe of Levi received no tract of land as the other tribes. The thought is repeated in vs. 33. Reason?

- Because “*the sacrifices of the LORD God of Israel made by fire are their inheritance*” (vs. 14).
- Because “*the LORD God of Israel was their inheritance*” (vs. 33).



Even so the Lord had said to Aaron decades before, that “*I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel*” (Num. 18:20). The Levites received only 48 towns with the surrounding pasture lands.

Perhaps there is a sense in which Israel's priests reflect our great High Priest in this as well. Jesus too received no earthly inheritance in His first coming. Being cast out of earth He became Heir only of heavenly blessing in the Lord's presence and service. And as the Levites exchanged a temporal, physical inheritance for an eternal, spiritual one, so we have made the same exchange in Christ. We have given up that which we cannot keep to gain what we can never lose.

Vs. 15-23 – Reuben's portion. This had been the land of the Amorites (Sihon). Reuben's land was bordered;

- On the south by the River Arnon, which flows west into the Dead Sea a little north of half way down along its eastern shore. Moab was south of the Arnon, extending down to the south end of the Dead Sea (Num.21:13). Edom was south of Moab and the Dead Sea.
- On the west by the Dead Sea.
- On the east by the country of Ammon.
- On the north by the city of Heshbon. This was the old capital of Sihon king of the southern portion of the Amorites. Thus Reuben's northern border ran east-west a little north of

*13:22 Balaam also the son of Beor, the soothsayer, did the children of Israel slay with the sword among them that were slain by them.*

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the northern end of the Dead Sea.

The Ammonites later made an issue of Israel's possession of the land between the Arnon and Jabbok rivers when picking a fight with Israel in the days of Jephthah (Judges 11).

Vs. 22 – Note the mention of Balaam's end, who in conspiracy with Moab sought to destroy God's people through the subtlety of sensual corruption (Num. 22-25). The Lord saw to it that this man met an ignoble end through the sword of His people. The brevity of this report of his death seems to highlight the insignificance of the end of such a useless life. Though he was a man with a notable reputation in his day and was offered even greater wealth and fame by the king of Moab, yet he came to nothing, his death little more than a passing comment. For he dared to set himself against the Lord in helping those against His people, and that when the Lord could not have made it clearer to Balaam how His blessed people were to be handled. Our God still keeps His ancient promise to Abraham of blessing or cursing upon those who bless or curse

His chosen nation of Israel. His eye still watches over them and always will.

Vs. 24-28 – Gad’s portion. This had been part of the land of Gilead to the east of the Jordan. Gad’s land was bordered;

- On the south by Reuben.
- On the west by the Jordan.
- On the east by Ammon.
- On the north by Manasseh.

Thus Gad’s land ran from the south end of the Sea of Galilee (?) to the north end of the Dead Sea.

Vs. 29-33 – Eastern Manasseh’s portion. This eastern portion of Manasseh took in part of Gilead and Bashan the old kingdom of Og. Eastern Manasseh was bordered;

- On the south by Gad, from the southern end of the Sea of Galilee or Chinneroth (?).
- On the west by Galilee and the river entering it from the north.
- On the east by the desert.
- On the north by Mt. Hermon.

It is questionable whether Manasseh was ever able to occupy much of the vast area of Bashan assigned to it.

“Now therefore  
give me this mountain,  
whereof the LORD spake  
in that day”

(Joshua 14:12)

## Class 14 – Joshua 14-15

Land allotments having been settled to the east on the trans-Jordan side, the attention now turns to the west and the subdivisions of Canaan. There remained 9 tribes and the other half of Manasseh to settle. Technically there were 13 tribes altogether with the double portion of Ephraim and Manasseh going to Joseph, but Levi in a sense was not counted among the 12 since they were not to receive a land portion (14:3-4). The Lord would do with Levi as He had said through Jacob centuries before and “*scatter them in Israel*”. Levi was scattered throughout Israel, and Simeon was scattered in Judah. So as to actual tribal land portions, in a sense there were only 11.

|                 |                   |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| <b>Asher</b>    |                   |
| <b>Benjamin</b> |                   |
| <b>Dan</b>      |                   |
| <b>Ephraim</b>  |                   |
| <b>Gad</b>      | On the east       |
| <b>Issachar</b> |                   |
| <b>Judah</b>    | With Simeon among |
| <b>Manasseh</b> | ½ each side       |
| <b>Naphtali</b> |                   |
| <b>Reuben</b>   | On the east       |
| <b>Zebulun</b>  |                   |

14:1 *And these are the countries which the children of Israel inherited in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel, distributed for inheritance to them.*

14:2 *By lot was their inheritance, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses, for the nine tribes, and for the half tribe.*

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## **Chapter 14**

### **14:1-5** – Introduction to Western Divisions

Vs. 1 – Moses had long before designated a council of twelve to be given the responsibility of dividing the land among the tribes (Num. 34:16-29). This council was to include the priest Eleazar, Joshua, and one named representative head from each of the ten (9½) tribes yet to receive an inheritance west of the Jordan.

Vs. 2 – The actual borders were determined with the help of a survey team who travelled the land taking notes (18:3-9). But the question of which tribe received which area was decided by the casting of lots. This too was by the instruction of the Lord through Moses (Num. 26:55-56). Such a method would leave no doubts that the outcomes were by the Lord's design, allowing no room for argument and bitterness among brothers. *“The lot is cast into*

14:6 *Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite said unto him, Thou knowest the thing that the LORD said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadeshbarnea.*  
14:7 *Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadeshbarnea to espy out the land; and I brought him word again as it was in mine heart.*

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*the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD” (Prov. 16:33).*

A principle we can glean from this is that the Lord is concerned that our handling of such situations both *be* fair and *appear* fair. We are wise to give thought to those potential roots of troubling bitterness that might spring up “*and thereby many be defiled*” (Heb. 12:15).

### **14:6-15** – Caleb’s Plea & Results

Caleb is one of those outstanding characters in the record of the conquest. We are told repeatedly that he was a man who “*wholly followed the LORD*” his God (vs. 8, 9, 14; Numbers 14:24; 32:12; Deuteronomy 1:36). It is the key to understanding the man and his success. Caleb never doubted from the beginning that “*If the LORD delight in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it us*” (Num. 14). He stood with Joshua at Kadesh-Barnea and spoke his faith in God with courage. They were

14:8 *Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt: but I wholly followed the LORD my God.*

14:9 *And Moses sware on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's for ever, because thou hast wholly followed the LORD my God.*

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lonely men standing against the crowd, against the tide of their entire society in fact, daring to state their disagreement publicly and stand by it in stark minority. Yet how blessed of God they were at the end for their courageous faith. For such men as Caleb it is all quite simple, though never easy. To not just trust the Lord for what He has said is to *rebel* against Him. To not trust Him for His promise, presence, and power is to *not trust Him!* To fear men is to not fear God. To fear God is to not fear men. Therefore Caleb's counsel so many years before at Kadesh-Barnea; "*Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land . . . the LORD is with us: fear them not*" (Num. 14:9). They had God's promise, and with it they had the choice of whether to believe Him or not. They chose not to believe while Caleb simply believed God. While all around him were walking by sight, he with Joshua walked by faith. While all around were seeing the impossible, men such as these see the God of the impossible. While others shrink from the problems and obstacles, such men of faith are drawn by the

14:10 *And now, behold, the LORD hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the LORD spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old.*

14:11 *As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in.*

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possibilities and opportunities. It is a whole right-side-up way of looking at things. They saw the obstacles, *and* the obstacles to the obstacles! And because Caleb believed, God rewarded his faith with another promise through Moses (Num. 14:24; Deut. 1:36), a promise of *personal* blessing this time. The fact that those words of promise were spoken 45 years before made no difference to Caleb. He was no quitter, and he knew God was not either.

Notice how we find no hint of bitterness in Caleb for his long decades of waiting, or for all the faithless friends and family members who had died all around him throughout those many years. He had helped dig many a grave! Caleb was like Joseph in this. He quietly, happily endured in his characteristic way, by faith, knowing that he had an inheritance promised by the promise-keeping God and waiting for him just over the river. We too endure the experiences of life in the very same way, by faith, knowing that we “*have in heaven a better and an enduring substance*”, “*a better country, that*

*14:12 Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the LORD spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced: if so be the LORD will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the LORD said.*

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is, *an heavenly*” (Heb. 10:34; 11:16). We endure knowing we will yet find that city we seek, *“which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God”*. Though we never receive God’s promises in this earthly life yet by faith we are *“persuaded of them”* and embrace them and confess that we are *“strangers and pilgrims on the earth”* (Heb. 11:10, 13).

The *“evil report”* brought by the other 10 faithless spies had related largely to the southern hill country where they saw those fearful giants. But Caleb was not a man to be intimidated by giants when God had promised victory. His God was still bigger. It is not that he turned a blind eye to the problems he faced. It is that he was not blind to the God above and beyond and bigger than those problems. He refused that prevailing spiritual blindness all around him that could not see God for the giant problems. In so responding Caleb made himself a giant of a spiritual kind. Because of Caleb’s faithful response in view of the fearful giants of the southern hill country therefore the Lord gave that very region of Canaan to this one who would dare to believe in his God for

14:13 *And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance.*

14:14 *Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite unto this day, because that he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel.*

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the victory. It was the Lord's reward to a man who so "*wholly followed the LORD*" his God.

Vs. 12 – Caleb was not resting on his past successes, but was wholly committed to the challenges yet before him in securing what was promised him. *The fight for the right does not stop till we drop!* Caleb's request was not based only on God's promise, but also upon his own intention to fully realize that promise in the Lord's strength. Even so it is in us. God has promised victory. But He means for the same vibrant intention to be burning in us as in old Caleb, that we too will wholly follow the Lord our God in striving to bring His promise of victory to reality both in our own life and in the lives of those around us.

Vs. 13 – With his blessing Joshua moved the council to give to Caleb what was his by right.

Vs. 15 – The area had been named for Arba, a great hero and forefather of the Anakims.

*14:15 And the name of Hebron before was Kirjatharba;  
which Arba was a great man among the Anakims.  
And the land had rest from war.*

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It seems Caleb later gave up Hebron to the Levites as a city of refuge, yet keeping the surrounding pasturelands and villages (21:11-12). Perhaps like giving a tithe? Even so we shall cast before the feet of the Lord the reward of crowns we receive for faithful service. All from Him, all for Him, all to Him, willingly!

## **Chapter 15**

### **15:1-63** – Judah’s Inheritance

Vs. 1-12 – Judah’s borders. Judah was the first tribe to receive her land to the west of Jordan, and received the lion’s share of it. Compare Jacob’s blessing upon Judah for his willingness to be taken instead of Benjamin in Egypt (Gen. 49:8-12). It is the mark of a true leader, elevating Judah’s tribe to a place of pre-eminence over all others. Judah’s land was bordered;

- On the south by a line running from the southern end of the Dead Sea southwest to the “River of Egypt”.

*15:13 And unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh he gave a part among the children of Judah, according to the commandment of the LORD to Joshua, even the city of Arba the father of Anak, which city is Hebron.*

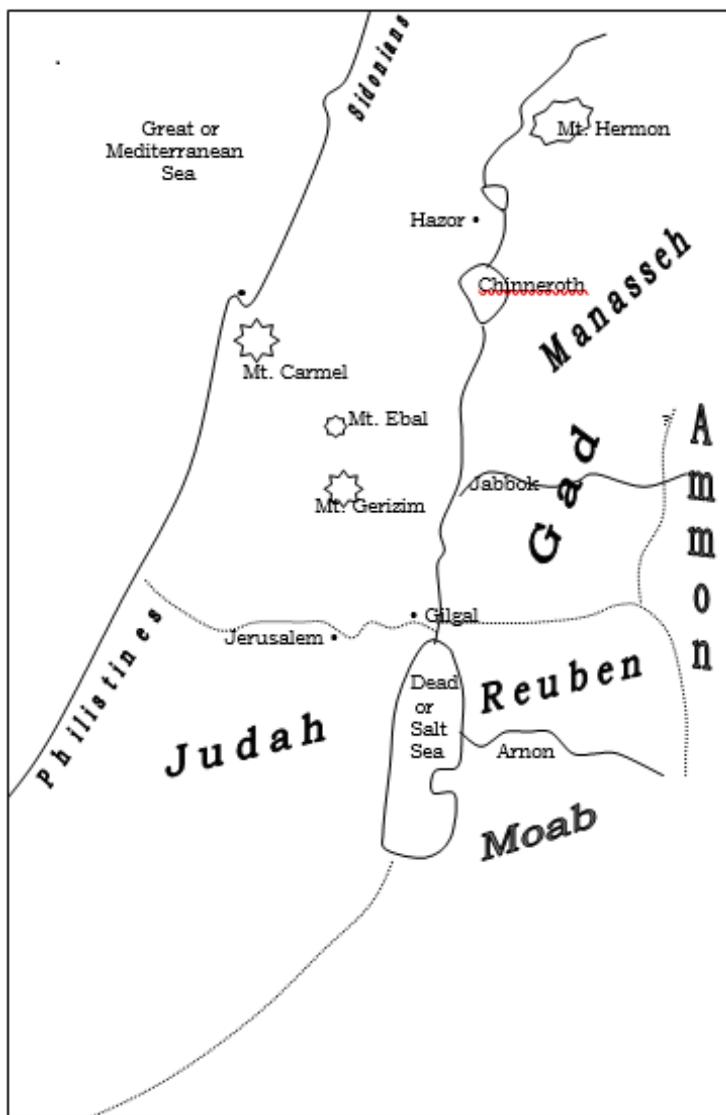
*15:14 And Caleb drove thence the three sons of Anak, Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai, the children of Anak.*

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- On the east by the Dead Sea.
- On the west by the Mediterranean. Taking in Philistia.
- On the north by a line extending basically from the northern end of the Dead Sea west through Jerusalem to the coast.

The tribe of Simeon was given cities scattered throughout the south side of Judah's inheritance (19:1-9).

Vs. 13-20 – Judah's heroes. Caleb and Joshua were dropped from the same mould in many ways. Knowing their God had already promised victory they were not the type to waste around in seminars, meetings, committees, and discussion. They set right out for the point of concern. Had God not already promised? This great old saint with his people were an example to all the other tribes of how they too were to handle the Canaanites still living in their corner of the land. If Caleb and company



*15:15 And he went up thence to the inhabitants of Debir: and the name of Debir before was Kirjathsepher.  
15:16 And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjathsepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife.  
15:17 And Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife.*

---

could take the giants then no obstacle was too big for complete possession. This victory over the giants of the southern hill country is recorded in God's eternal Book of books as a victory to Caleb's honour, for the motivation of the action was all about this vigorous old warrior whose vitality with his faith in God to do as He says had never diminished throughout the many decades of his life. Caleb was indeed of "*another spirit*", and he communicated that spirit to those around him.

Vs. 16-17 – Caleb offered his daughter Achsah in marriage to the man strong to lead in victory against the city of Kirjath-sepher. Caleb's purpose was to find a man after his own heart, not only for the leadership of his people but for the hand of his daughter as well. One like himself who would also wholly follow the Lord in believing Him for the victory He had promised. For his courage and faith Othniel received the prize of Caleb's daughter, and later became Israel's first judge (Judges 3:9-11).

*15:18 And it came to pass, as she came unto him, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted off her ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wouldest thou?  
15:19 Who answered, Give me a blessing; for thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water. And he gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs.*

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We later see this same method for sifting out future leadership used around the life of David;

- David against Goliath (I Sam. 17:25).
- Saul's offer to David of Michal (I Sam. 18:25-27).
- The taking of Jerusalem (I Chron. 11:4-7).

Vs. 18-19 – We need to read into this interesting little nuptial scene the details of which this account only gives the summary. The details appear to be something like this;

- Caleb gave the couple a portion of land, likely as a wedding gift.
- It seems there was not an adequate water source on this portion (at least his daughter did not think so).
- During the wedding procession Achsah tried to motivate her groom to ask of her father an additional adjoining field with a spring, wishing to use the tenderness of such an

enchanted moment to her advantage it seems.

- Having little success in so moving Othniel for one reason or another, Achsah took it upon herself to do the asking right then and there.
- She hopped right off her donkey and went to it, displaying the same go-getter spirit of her father. Men tend to breed after their kind, as we see in this vibrant young couple.
- Her request was considered reasonable by her father, and so *request granted!* And more!
- Caleb gave for her bold request not only “*the upper springs*” but “*the nether springs*” as well.

The lesson is obvious. “*Ye have not because ye ask not*”. If such an earthly father, out of tender love for his child, will give even beyond what is asked, should we not expect our heavenly Father to give what is good for our need out of His tender love? (Matt. 7:7-11) You can be happy in life’s experience with a dry field if you want. Or you can ask of your heavenly Father a spring or two. He is quite willing to give to those wise to ask. So “*ask and it shall be given you*”. With the Lord, a world of having is just on the other side of faithful asking.

*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 unto this day.*

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Vs. 21-63 – Judah’s cities.

- Vs. 21-32 – Cities of the south.
- Vs. 33-47 – Cities of the lower foothills.
- Vs. 48-60 – Cities of the hill country.
- Vs. 61-62 – Cities of the desert region toward the Dead Sea.

Vs. 63 – It seems Judah did manage to take the south side of Jerusalem or the lower city (Judges 1:8, 21). But only in David’s day were the Jebusites completely driven from Jerusalem (II Sam. 5:6-7).

## Class 15 – Joshua 16:1-18:10

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*16:9 And the separate cities for the children of Ephraim were among the inheritance of the children of Manasseh, all the cities with their villages.*

*16:10 And they drove not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer: but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites unto this day, and serve under tribute.*

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The dividing of the land to the west of Jordan began with the three large tribes of Judah (chapter 15), Ephraim (chapter 16), and Manasseh (chapter 17).

### Chapter 16

#### 16:1-10 – Ephraim’s Inheritance

Vs. 9 – The mingling of Ephraim cities within Manasseh and cities of Manasseh within Ephraim is an interesting feature (17:9). The same seems to be true across other tribal borders (17:11). The reason for this is not given. Perhaps a policy to promote unity among the tribes?

Vs. 10 – Moses could not have been clearer; *“But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth”* (Deut. 20:16). The godless Canaanite idolaters were to be entirely

wiped out to the last breathing soul, *not taxed!* This was man's idea laid over the top of God's command. If Ephraim could force them to the paying of tribute then they had the victory over them and every ability to do as God had said! Just how profound the tragedy of this error can hardly be told! Reasons for this blatant disregard of the Lord's words are not given. Perhaps there was reluctance to follow through on such a seemingly harsh and merciless policy after the heat of the conquest had cooled down; false humanitarian sensitivities crowding out what God had declared right and proper procedure in this case. The cup of wickedness of these vile people was full to overflowing. Perhaps there was a loathing to eliminate such rich potential for income; materialism, or "*the lusts of other things entering in*" serving to choke out God's word and leading to unfruitfulness. Perhaps it was a bit of both, the one speaking excuse for the other. Perhaps it was fear of confrontation. But there is no temptation or task so great that it cannot be faced and conquered in dependence upon God. Perhaps a measure of plain old lazy love of ease was involved. The calibre of faith and fervency displayed by Joshua and Caleb was on the wane already as the people slowly turned from dependence on God for victory as in the conquest. Regardless of the reasons motivating this response it proved a fatal

policy in the long term, leading ultimately to Israel's spiritual and moral ruin (Judges 2:1-3, 10-15), though perhaps paying rich dividends for the moment in tax revenue. Every disobedience is the same, paying out immediate benefits of gratification, ease, happiness, wealth, etc., but finding the sinner out in the end. The "*bread*" of all sin is sweet to the taste, but its "*afterward*" always far more than makes up for any perceived short-term gain (Prov. 20:17). King Saul would one day fall to the same when allowing the cattle of the Amalekites to be taken for spoil when the Lord demanded the death of all, both man and beast (I Sam. 15). Saul later admitted that it was fear that moved him to do it. He was afraid to stand up against his people who wanted to keep the best of the enemy flocks. Because he feared man more than God such rebellion marked the end for Saul. Even so here, this evil oversight was the beginning of the end for these as well.

It is hard, thankless work to refuse to tolerate evil, whether it be wrong in your church, in your family, or in your own heart and life. The easy way will always be to just quietly overlook evil's presence, and come up with reasons why we should not get all bent out of shape about keeping its company. But again, evil always comes as a seed, with the

principle of propagation onboard. Like a cancer its purpose is not just presence but pre-eminence. Evil seeks not just to *cling* to a life, but to be *king* of your life. And as with any gangrene, the only way of wisdom is the harsh, brutal, merciless way, to take the knife to it early, yea immediately, before it has any chance to further its purpose to propagate. It is always hard to deal hard with evil and those who cling to it. It is always harder not to! When we pity, protect, and pander to the criminal instead of fully exposing him to proper severity, we open the door to a thousand more criminals whom justice would have shut out. In so doing we only multiply the collective hurt upon society, which we could have spared ourselves had we poured a proper potency of pain upon those to whom it was fairly due in the first place. Making deals with evil may reduce our pain or increase our pleasure for the moment, but it only enlarges the power and reach of pain in the end, laying torment in the laps of those we love as well. Because Israel would not trouble themselves to remove God's enemies from the land they scattered no end of trouble into the years ahead and into the generations to follow.

These Canaanites of Gezer mentioned here were not properly dealt with until the days of Solomon (I Ki. 9:16). And even then it was Pharaoh of Egypt who

*17:3 But Zelophehad, the son of Hepher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons, but daughters: and these are the names of his daughters, Mahlah, and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.*

*17:4 And they came near before Eleazar the priest, and before Joshua the son of Nun, and before the princes, saying, The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brethren. Therefore according to the commandment of the LORD he gave them an inheritance among the brethren of their father.*

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did the job, as a wedding present for his pagan daughter. New wife of King Solomon! Compromise kills again!

## **Chapter 17**

### **17:1-13** – Manasseh’s Western Inheritance

Vs. 1-2 – The descendants of Manasseh’s firstborn, Machir, inherited on the east of Jordan. All the rest of Manasseh’s descendants inherited on the west.

Vs. 3-4 – The question of what happens to a man’s inheritance when he has only daughters (and in fact this case in particular) had already been decided by the Lord across the river (Num. 27:1-11). These daughters of Zelophehad came now to claim what had already been promised to them.

Vs. 12-13 – There was a point when Manasseh was

17:12 Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities; but the Canaanites would dwell in that land.

17:13 Yet it came to pass, when the children of Israel were waxen strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute; but did not utterly drive them out.

17:14 And the children of Joseph spake unto Joshua, saying, Why hast thou given me but one lot and one portion to inherit, seeing I am a great people, forasmuch as the LORD hath blessed me hitherto?

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weaker, from a human perspective, and “*could not drive out*” the Canaanites (vs. 12). But then there later came a point when they were strong and could have, but “*did not utterly drive them out*” (vs. 13). There was no valid excuse for this, for not finishing the job, in the light of Caleb’s complete success against the giants to the south. The Lord had shown Himself quite ready to fight in behalf of His people if they would trust and obey Him for it. And again we find the same illegitimate policy of taxation rather than termination, as among those of Ephraim (16:10). Their greed is implicated here as the reason they “*did not*”.

### **17:14-18** – Sons of Joseph Complain

Remember how we saw none of this earlier. Never a murmuring complaint in those glory days when Joshua led the nation, running the length and breadth of the land from enemy to enemy. Yet now,

*17:15 And Joshua answered them, If thou be a great people, then get thee up to the wood country, and cut down for thyself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the giants, if mount Ephraim be too narrow for thee.*

*17:16 And the children of Joseph said, The hill is not enough for us: and all the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, both they who are of Bethshean and her towns, and they who are of the valley of Jezreel.*

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as soon as they were settled and idle and their focus began to turn from the Lord and dependence on Him, unrest is now found in their hearts and complaint on their tongues. There is probably a principle here. The unhappy griper is more than likely not right with God. Both of these tribes had refused simple obedience to the Lord's clear command concerning the Canaanites. Both instead chose a way that seemed smarter in their way of thinking, choosing rather to levy a tax on the Canaanites for the freedom to remain living among them. A freedom that was not allowed to them by God's demand. A freedom that was not Israel's to give! When man gets "smarter" than God, choosing ways that seem right rather than the way of simple obedience, you can be sure there is tragedy just around the corner. The tax money raised by such a means was dirty disobedience money anyway. *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death"* (Prov. 14:12). So understand it. They did not do what God said,

*17:17 And Joshua spake unto the house of Joseph, even to Ephraim and to Manasseh, saying, Thou art a great people, and hast great power: thou shalt not have one lot only:  
17:18 But the mountain shall be thine; for it is a wood, and thou shalt cut it down: and the outgoings of it shall be thine: for thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong.*

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and their failure to do what God said created a problem by restricting the land available to them. And then they had the gall to grumble about their cramped condition! As if it was Joshua's fault! They came with the demand that Joshua fix the problem created by their own rebellion! In essence they were insisting that other tribes receive smaller cuts in their inheritances in order to allow them the leeway to not do right! They were a cheeky lot. They wanted that filthy tax income and land enough for themselves as well!

Praise God for men like Joshua, with insight enough to see through and to stand in the way of such unreasonable rascals. Had they gotten away with this there would have been trouble with the other tribes. They would have been discouraged by the unfairness, and encouraged to make the same sort of unreasonable demands. Joshua is a study in wisdom in this confrontation. The injustice of their demand was enough to put anybody's back up. But Joshua patiently and graciously just turned their

own words against them. “If you are good for your boast, such ‘*a great people*’ as you say, then put that great and mighty manpower to good use. Turn it loose on all that vast hill country covered by forests. Cut out those trees and root out those stumps and turn that useless woodland area into fertile farmlands.” It was not exactly what they had in mind. They did not want to labour for their benefits. They wanted advantage served up to them on a platter. While entering God’s family is a free gift, in His family we receive His benefits and rewards through hard and honest labour.

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## **On the Side**

Notice where Joshua’s (and God’s?) mind was on the matter of environmental concerns. Joshua’s attitude seems to be that the land is there for man’s preservation and service, not vice versa. Joshua did not suggest a woodland national park. He recommended no survey team to assess the plight of the horny-toed hoot owl with the destruction of that precious wooded habitat. Rather an unfashionable response here, don’t you think? “If there is not room enough for man, well then cut those trees down and make room!” And I do not see the Lord stepping in to straighten out His captain either, before irreparable ecological damage was

done, saying, “Whoa! Not so fast there chief! There’s lions and lizards living up there! There will be need of a 657-page environmental impact study before the first axe falls.” No such concerns in evidence. Need room? Cut all those trees out and get on with it. It is a whole different world that makes man the servant of trees, trout, wildflowers, and wombats.

.....

“No, no!” says the sons of Joseph, “That will not do! It still would not be enough even if we shed all that sweat clearing the trees of the mountains, because all the valleys are filled with terribly armed and ugly Canaanites too!” It appears they had use only of the foothills! Could not go up, could not go down. No wonder they were shy of space. “We need more land!” What you are saying is you need more *foothills*. Is that it? Joshua’s point was right on target. “You need more room? *Go get it!* Remember now, ‘*thou art a great people, and hast great power*’ (vs. 17). You have got force enough on the ground, and you have got force enough in heaven.” If Caleb and company could face down the giants in the hills of the south with the Lord’s strength then certainly the “*great power*” of the “*great people*” of Ephraim and Manasseh could clear the hills and valleys of any obstacle, with the Lord.

Compare Paul's confidence in his day, saying, "*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*" (Phil. 4:13). I'm thinking it is the lazy, fearful, and self-important who are often the moaners in any setting. And the humble, faithful labourers often tend to be happy souls in most every circumstance.

Some important counsel to consider here;

- Beware the tendency to be unfairly biased in assessing your own cause. These were blind to their unfairness.
- Be willing to honestly hear the rebuke of others, for they may be able to see aspects hidden from your eyes.
- Beware the lust for something more when the Lord would have you to "*be content with such things as ye have*" (Heb. 13:5).
- Beware the incomplete obedience of compromise, making deals with evil when the Lord has said, "No deals!"
- Beware the lazy tendency to not finish the job, for it will come back to haunt you.

So Joshua spoke rebuke and turned them away. But he turned away their grumbling demand in such a way that peace was maintained. Compare

*18:1 And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there. And the land was subdued before them.*

*18:2 And there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes, which had not yet received their inheritance.*

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Gideon's equally gracious wisdom in dealing with irritable Ephraim, with the same result (Judges 8:1-3). Jephthah not so, with much less fortunate results (Judges 12).

## **Chapter 18**

### **18:1-10** – Land Survey

Vs. 1 – The congregation yet remaining at Gilgal now moved to Shiloh. From this point this site became their gathering place instead of Gilgal (22:9, 12; I Sam. 1:3), becoming both their civil and religious hub. There they pitched the tabernacle, and there the tabernacle of God remained throughout the centuries while the judges ruled. The purpose of this move may have been to put the tabernacle in a location more central to the land, but only the land to the west of Jordan. The move had the unfortunate result of putting greater distance between the nation's spiritual centre and their trans-Jordan brothers.

*18:3 And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, How long are ye slack to go to possess the land, which the LORD God of your fathers hath given you?*

*18:4 Give out from among you three men for each tribe: and I will send them, and they shall rise, and go through the land, and describe it according to the inheritance of them; and they shall come again to me.*

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Vs. 2-3 – There remained yet 7 tribes who apparently were making no moves to see to their own land allotments. It seems these were still living around the tabernacle now at Shiloh. Perhaps this had something to do with the move from Gilgal? The food available around Gilgal played out for these still living the life of nomads? The time had come for these remaining tribes to see to settling their own future in their own land. It appears there was some sense in which Joshua and the elders left motivation for land allotments to the tribes themselves. The first to come (Judah, Ephraim, and Manasseh) were the first served. But for some reason the rest just were not coming. There was need for the tribes to get settled into what would be their lot into the future, just as there is need for a child to come to maturity and leave the home nest to make his/her way in life. It seems a boot in the butt was necessary from Joshua to get them “kick-started”. Staying with what is familiar is always the easiest route, as long as the needs are being met sufficiently. Sometimes it takes one with enough

*18:5 And they shall divide it into seven parts: Judah shall abide in their coast on the south, and the house of Joseph shall abide in their coasts on the north.*

*18:6 Ye shall therefore describe the land into seven parts, and bring the description hither to me, that I may cast lots for you here before the LORD our God.*

*18:7 But the Levites have no part among you; for the priesthood of the LORD is their inheritance: and Gad, and Reuben, and half the tribe of Manasseh, have received their inheritance beyond Jordan on the east, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave them.*

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clarity of insight and foresight, with enough tough love to push others into the way they should go.

Vs. 4-9 – A land survey team of 21 men, 3 from each of the remaining 7 tribes, was appointed and sent out. Their purpose was to divide the remaining land on the west into 7 relatively equal portions. They were wise to involve only the tribes concerned. Perhaps the value of the land portions played a part in the sizing, more arable land portions smaller than less arable portions. We can well imagine how huge a task this would have been. Again, perhaps simple laziness in the face of such a huge task kept them from proceeding sooner.

Rare is the soul with the self-discipline to chase a difficult task through to completion. 'Tis an all too common human trait to tend to stall in the hard jobs, especially when there does not really appear to be a crying need to move for the moment. We are

*18:8 And the men arose, and went away: and Joshua charged them that went to describe the land, saying, Go and walk through the land, and describe it, and come again to me, that I may here cast lots for you before the LORD in Shiloh.*

*18:9 And the men went and passed through the land, and described it by cities into seven parts in a book, and came again to Joshua to the host at Shiloh.*

*18:10 And Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD: and there Joshua divided the land unto the children of Israel according to their divisions.*

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all much too given to laziness when comfortable. Much of the theme of this portion of Joshua is the matter of finishing the job, both in *clearing* the land and in *claiming* it. Whatever the task may be before us, however difficult, if it is God who has given it to us then we have it to do, and the sooner the better. Pick yourself up and keep plodding to completion.

“So they made an end  
of dividing the country”

(Joshua 19:51)

## **Class 16 – Joshua 18:11-19:51**

It is an interesting ponder that all of Jacob's children disappointed him when at last turned loose in their inheritance. Every tribe fell short of the earnestness of Joshua and Caleb to just follow through and finish the job of conquest. Surely it is an image of the characteristic waywardness of man and the supreme patience of God with man. In the same way all of us fall short of God's glory, even as believers. Jesus, as Joshua, broke the back of sin in the conquest of the cross, and now He too turns over the task of completing the conquest to the individual believer to carry on with faith and fervency, to finish the job in the field of his own heart and life and influence. But again, as with the tribes, how many seriously trouble themselves to get on with finishing the job? So many fall to listless complacency. So many are willing for the lazy tolerance of the presence of God's enemies within (evil thoughts, pride, grumbling complaint, impatience, bitter hate, etc.). Most of God's children do not really care all that much that pockets of the enemy remain. Many would even use the enemy within to "advantage" rather than dealing with it properly. We allow pride to motivate our service of God. We use man's lust for things forbidden and love of the outrageous and wish to be

entertained to build the church. All shades of the same willingness to make deals with evil, just as the taxing of the Canaanites within tribal borders rather than their complete removal according to God's command. All who allow such must suffer in the long term for their disobedience, for not seeing the urgency of the complete, immediate, brutal removal of all that God hates. Any "deal" with evil, allowing it's continued presence in God's temple (as with Tobiah in Nehemiah 13), every refusal to lift ourselves to urgency and diligence in the conquest of evil, every fearful flight from the necessary confrontations and conflicts will pay regrettable dividends in the end.

### **18:11-28** – Benjamin's Inheritance

Benjamin's lot fell between Judah to the south and Ephraim to the north. Though Benjamin was "*of the smallest of the tribes of Israel*" (I Sam. 9:21), their land basically 16 kms x 40 kms, yet it had the distinction of providing the nation's first king in King Saul. And within its boundaries fell the city of Jerusalem (or a portion of it), destined to become the capital city of all the earth.

Vs. 25 – The city of the wily Gibeonites (Hivites) fell within this little tribe as well. It was in this city of Gibeon that the Lord spoke to Solomon, promising

him wisdom, wealth, and honour (I Ki. 3:3-15).

Vs. 26 – Mizpeh was the city from which godly Samuel later judged the nation, and where he chose Saul as Israel’s first king (I Sam. 7:5; 10:17).

Vs. 28 – The people of Gibeath or Gibeah later fell to Sodom-like excess of homosexual perversion, bringing on a tribal powwow and confrontation, and leading to a devastating civil war between Benjamin and the other tribes (Judges 19-20).

### **19:1-9** – Simeon’s Inheritance

Simeon was given cities on the south side of Judah’s inheritance, and this for the practical reason that Judah had actually received too much land (vs. 9). Perhaps Benjamin and Dan were carved out of the meeting of Ephraim and Judah for the same reason? Comparing the census of “*all that are able to go to war in Israel*” of those “*twenty years old and upward*”, numbered on the plain of Moab before crossing (Num. 26), we find the people proportions as follows (assuming the number of available men fit to fight proportional to the total tribal populations);

| <b>Tribe</b>                             | <b>No. People</b> | <b>% People</b> | <b>% Land</b> |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| <b><math>\frac{1}{2}</math> Manasseh</b> | 26,350            | 5.4%            | 13.2%         |
| <b>Simeon</b>                            | 22,200            | 4.5%            | 0             |
| <b>Judah</b>                             | 76,500            | 15.6%           | 54%           |
| <b>Issachar</b>                          | 64,300            | 13.1%           | 2.4%          |
| <b>Zebulun</b>                           | 60,500            | 12.3%           | 2.4%          |
| <b>Ephraim</b>                           | 32,500            | 6.6%            | 7.5%          |
| <b>Benjamin</b>                          | 45,600            | 9.3%            | 2.7%          |
| <b>Dan</b>                               | 64,400            | 13.1%           | 3.2%          |
| <b>Asher</b>                             | 53,400            | 10.9%           | 7.9%          |
| <b>Naphtali</b>                          | 45,400            | 9.2%            | 7.3%          |

**491,150**

The “% Land” column consists of estimates based on a rough measure of the map, and this only of the land west of the Jordan. Note that Issachar and Zebulun were among the hardest hit, yet with no known complaints. Benjamin and Dan combined to put 1/5 of the people on 1/20 of the land!

So it appears there were some “mistakes” in portioning out the land, certainly in the amount of land assigned to Judah. Manasseh and Ephraim did quite well in comparison to their people ratios

as well. These, with Judah, are the only three tribes with land percentage exceeding population percentage.

Some principles to consider in light of these statistics;

- There could be no actual mistake with the Lord superintending through His appointed leaders, both civil and spiritual. The apparent oops of the mistakenly large portion given to Judah was partly the means by which the Lord fulfilled His ancient prophesy of the scattered nature of Simeon's inheritance (Gen. 49:7).

Even in sincerely seeking to walk with the Lord men may not put every step just right. They may very well make a misstep here and there. Their mistake not because the Lord had neglected to superintend, but because He was superintending, intending them to make the "misstep" that would send them in the direction He meant for them to go all along. Even as the mistake of that window left open leading to Louis Pasteur's discovery of the great answer of penicillin. A walk with the Lord does not make a man faultless. Rather such a walk allows God to show *Himself* faultless in directing man's steps (or

“missteps”).

- The Lord does not cut all the pieces of the pie the same size (as a parent must) or even proportionally so. Fairness does not mean the exact same measure for every man, whether in gifts spiritual or temporal, especially when we consider that all deserve nothing. Perhaps this is something of Christ’s point in the parable of the many labourers hired at differing hours but paid the same in Matthew 20. Fairness is at the discretion of the giver in the giving of his gifts. Children would be wise to keep this in mind.
- The first who came to claim their land received the most. Seems those with little gumption, needing to *be* motivated, received a more inadequate share for their sloth. And think about how the generations to follow suffered the consequences of the indolence of their ancestors!

With time Simeon seems to just fade out of the picture, being incorporated into Judah.

### **19:10-16** – Zebulun’s Inheritance

North from the Valley of Jezreel there was a huddle of four more tribes, Zebulun, Issachar, Asher &

Naphtali. Though having no access to the sea, Zebulun was positioned on important trade routes.

Vs. 13 – The city of Gittah-hepher or Gath-hepher was the home of the prophet Jonah (II Ki. 14:25).

Though not mentioned, the city of Nazareth, where Messiah would one day grow to manhood, fell within Zebulun's tribal allotment.

### **19:17-23** – Issachar's Inheritance

Issachar stretched from Mt. Tabor on the west to the Jordan on the east, and from Manasseh's northern border north to the southern end of Galilee. Her inheritance was largely made up of the vast, very beautiful, and fertile Valley of Jezreel.

Vs. 18 – Sunem was the city of the wealthy woman who provided a “prophet's chamber” for Elisha in his travels (II Ki. 4).

### **19:24-31** – Asher's Inheritance

Asher landed along the northern coast, stretching from Mt. Carmel to Tyre of the Phoenicians.

Vs. 26 – Carmel is where Elijah later confronted King Ahab's prophets of Baal, calling fire down

upon the altar there and rain upon earth after years of drought (I Ki. 18). Great lessons on the great worth of “*the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man*” occurred on that site (James 5:16-18).

Vs. 28 – Asher’s territory was to extend far to the north, even taking in “*great Zidon*”. Though Sidon was an impressively great Phoenician city in that day, the people of Asher were the only ones standing in the way of their having it. God meant it for them. Unfortunately they never took it, among many other towns (Judges 1:31).

Vs. 29 – Tyre was the fortified city built partly on an island off the coast. When taking the city centuries later Alexander the Great was forced to build a causeway out to the island.

### **19:32-39** – Naphtali’s Inheritance

Naphtali ran along the eastern side of Asher, and was bordered on the east by the Sea of Galilee. The Great Galilean Ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ took place largely within this tribal area.

### **19:40-48** – Dan’s Inheritance

Dan was given a portion to the west of Benjamin, stretching from Benjamin to the Mediterranean.

19:49 *When they had made an end of dividing the land for inheritance by their coasts, the children of Israel gave an inheritance to Joshua the son of Nun among them:*  
19:50 *According to the word of the LORD they gave him the city which he asked, even Timnathserah in mount Ephraim: and he built the city, and dwelt therein.*

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Dan's lot was considered by the tribe to be too small for their numbers. This may have been true, but much of their troubles were due to their own actions (or *inactions!*). For in faithless fear they allowed the Amorites to push them out of the lowlands into only the mountain regions of their portion (Judges 1:34).

Vs. 47 – A branch of the tribe later went north and took the area around Laish or Leshem north of Galilee, in the foothills of Mt. Hermon (Judges 18). This portion was called Dan as well. This move put a piece of Dan at the northernmost tip of the Promised Land. Ever after the term “*from Dan even to Beersheba*” described the north-south extremities of the land occupied by Israel (Judges 20:1).

### **19:49-50** – Joshua's Inheritance

Only after all the land had been parcelled out did attention turn to an inheritance for Joshua. Of the two great old saints who entered the land, Caleb

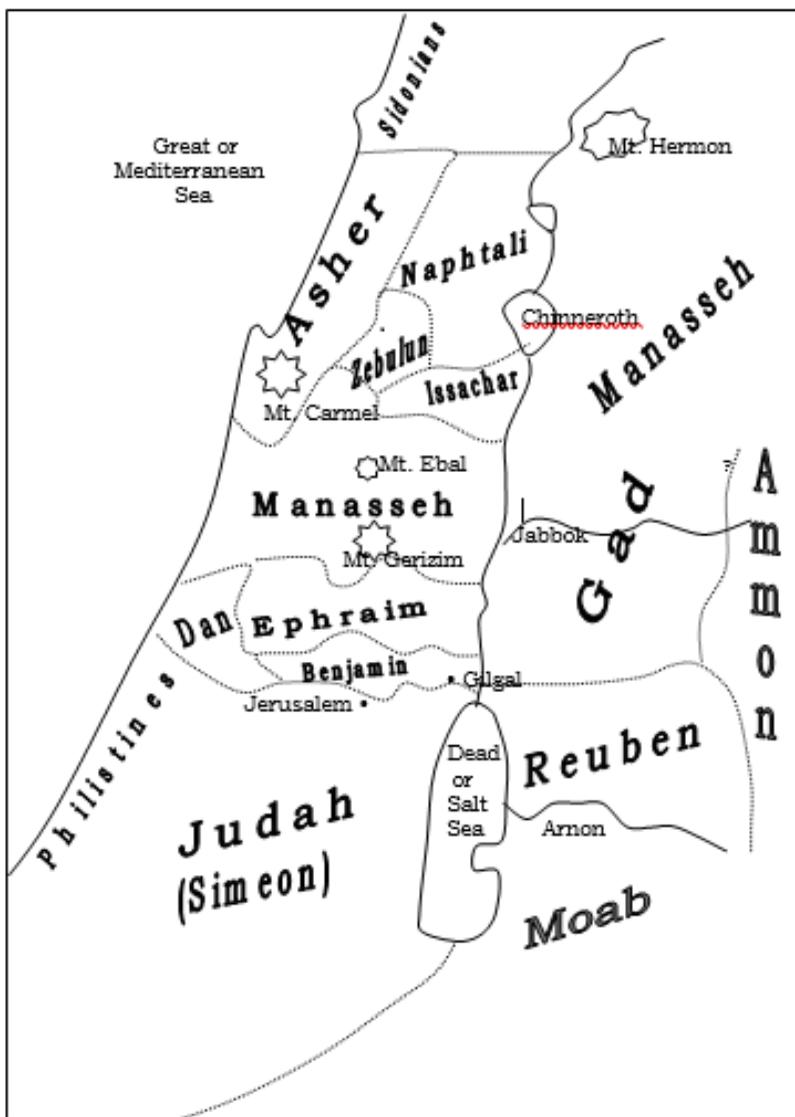
was among the first to receive and Joshua the last.

It was “*according to the word of the LORD*” that they gave him this city of Timnath-serah (or Timnath-heres, Judges 2:9) in the Ephraim hill country. Perhaps like Caleb, but not recorded, the Lord had promised this to Joshua and now gave it at the last. Throughout the remaining few years of his life Joshua was perched up there on the top of his world looking out upon the indisputable evidence of the God who keeps His word. The name of Joshua’s city means “the portion of the sun”. After a lifetime of faithfulness in the Lord’s battles this captain of the conquest settled in his inheritance, his reward in the sun. He had fought well, ever with faith and fervency. It was time to turn the reins over to the following generations. But we cannot help but see the impact of the retirement of such a key influence in the nation. We later learn that “*the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua*” (Judges 2:7). How very powerful and pivotal the effect of that life! Through a man of faith the Lord accomplished truly amazing things. The loss of him at the helm was a national loss, for there just was not the like of him leading over the land for many long decades. With the lack of such a man and the loss of such an influence we come out the end of the period of the

Judges with predictable results. All slid down to a day and a people and a land where “*every man did that which was right in his own eyes*” (Judges 21:25). When Joshua was alive the wolves of evil were hammered and hounded and held at bay, his very Spirit-infused presence like the bonfire keeping them away, fearful to encroach. When he died they sensed the change and slowly began their tentative advance. Such men are of the calibre to preserve an entire nation, empowered by God and pulling a mighty following after them toward the light. It is a marvel what kind of influence even one man wholly given to God can bring to bear upon his world. No man, no obstacle ever stood unmoved before Joshua, as the Lord had promised. And yet, when at last he was out of the picture, what happened? Who stood to take up his mantle and carry on his influence? Where was the one asking for a double portion of his spirit? What kind of an influence does your life bring to your day?

### **19:51** – Summary Statement

Here is the official closing statement of the section describing the distribution of the land among the tribes.



## Class 17 – Joshua 20-21

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*20:1 The LORD also spake unto Joshua, saying,  
20:2 Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for  
you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand  
of Moses:  
20:3 That the slayer that killeth any person unawares and  
unwittingly may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge  
from the avenger of blood.*

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Chapters 20 & 21 relate the concluding details in the division of the land.

### Chapter 20

#### **20:1-9** – Cities of Refuge

This brief chapter describes the assignment of six cities throughout Israel as cities of refuge. The designation of these special cities was earlier given by the Lord to Moses (Num. 35:9-34; Deut. 4:41ff; 19:1-13). There were to be three such cities on each side of the Jordan, positioned north, central, and south. The purpose of these cities was to provide a place of safety for one who took the life of another unintentionally (“*at unawares*” or “*by error*”, Numbers 35:11). The Law of Moses specified strict fairness in dealing with offenders, “*an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth*” (Ex. 21:24; Matt. 5:39). When the life of one was taken by another the

20:4 *And when he that doth flee unto one of those cities shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city, and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them.*

20:5 *And if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver the slayer up into his hand; because he smote his neighbour unwittingly, and hated him not beforetime.*

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nearest relative to the dead, called “*the avenger of blood*”, was responsible to take the life of the slayer in return (Deut. 19:12). But in the event of accidentally causing a death; not out of sudden anger, without record of previous bitterness between the parties involved, and without evidence of premeditation, the provision of refuge was necessary for the one responsible for the death.

The availability of these cities was not limited only to Jews, but also to Gentiles within their borders (Num. 35:15), indicating God’s interest in providing a place of refuge for those outside the Jewish race as well. Jewish tradition indicates that because of the importance of these cities to one fleeing the avenger the roads to these cities were well kept and the way well marked with signs.

Vs. 6 – Procedure upon the arrival of the killer at a city of refuge;

He would wait within the gates until he was

*20:6 And he shall dwell in that city, until he stand before the congregation for judgment, and until the death of the high priest that shall be in those days: then shall the slayer return, and come unto his own city, and unto his own house, unto the city from whence he fled.*

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given opportunity to present his case to the elders of the city. The gates of the city were the place of public hearings. There he would tell his story.

- He would receive protection and provision until a hearing could be arranged and a decision made by those in authority in the place where the death occurred.
- If evidence was found of anger in the death blow or premeditation, the killer would himself be delivered to death at the hands of the avenger of blood. In the event of an unfortunate accident one given to angry grudges against others could find his innocence a bit of a hard-sell! It pays to be kind.

If the death was proven an accident the killer was returned to the city of refuge and lived within the walls of that city.

- There he would find protection from any angry relative of the dead lusting for his

blood.

- His protection was surrendered the moment he stepped outside the walls of that city of refuge.
- If found outside the city the avenger of blood was not faulted for taking his life.
- Only after the death of the high priest then in office were all such accidental killers free to return safely to their own home. This might be a lifetime later.

There is no recorded O.T. incident of one of these cities of refuge being used in the specified manner.

Consider the merits of such a procedure;

- It served to preserve the sanctity of human life.
- It would strike caution in all against even the accidental death of others. You do not send an arrow into the air within a community of people. You do not continue to use an axe with a loose head. You do not serve or sell meat that has not been properly preserved. You do not leave a tree standing on your property when you know it has been weakened by wind or disease. You do not

leave a well uncovered, or covered with rotting timber. Folks were forced to think about what they do, to think safety.

Consider that refuge could only be found within the walls of the city. Whether the killer were found by the avenger far away from the city or just outside the walls, either way he was still *outside* that city of refuge and his life in danger. Distance from the city walls made no difference. His safety was only within. Such an arrangement might seem strange to us, but God often did things the way He did in order to illustrate the nature of man's relation to the Saviour, our "City of Refuge". For every unredeemed sinner is pursued by the violated law of God, that relentless Avenger of blood, demanding his death. But the one who has believed in Jesus Christ is safe "*in Christ*" from the law's condemnation. Safety is found only "*in Christ*". It was the same idea as dwelling safely within the house with the blood of the lamb on the doorpost, protected from the death angel passing over. It was the same thought as being secure within the ark of Noah with closed door, safe from the devastating Flood raging outside. If one should be swimming *near* the floating ark, right at the door in fact, would he be any closer to safety than if he were treading water on the other side of the earth? No, because

20:7 And they appointed Kedesh in Galilee in mount Naphtali, and Shechem in mount Ephraim, and Kirjatharba, which is Hebron, in the mountain of Judah.

20:8 And on the other side Jordan by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness upon the plain out of the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh.

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He is *outside* not *inside* that place of refuge. The threat, the danger runs right up to the walls. Even so it does not matter how “close” one is to the Good Shepherd’s fold;

- Having Christian parents or family but not “*in Christ*”.
- In church, part of a good Christian congregation but not “*in Christ*”.
- Wearing the name “Christian” never so sweetly, but not “*in Christ*”.
- *Close* to being saved, seriously considering it, standing right at the door of salvation in fact, *but not in!* Of such are the timid souls the book of Hebrews addresses.

*“There is therefore now no condemnation [only] to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1).*

Compare God as the “*Avenger*” of those who abuse others through immorality in I Thessalonians 4:6.

*20:9 These were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them, that whosoever killeth any person at unawares might flee thither, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood, until he stood before the congregation.*

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Vs. 7 – “*Galilee in mount Naphtali*” – Here is the first biblical mention of Galilee. What was then a district in the mountains of Naphtali sometime after Israel’s return from captivity became the name of the entire region north of Samaria and west of Jordan. The name Galilee means “circle”. Isaiah referred to it as “*Galilee of the nations*” (9:1) or the “circle of heathen”. The name perhaps came from the Gentile people circling the region.

## **Chapter 21**

### **21:1-42** – Levite Cities

Here is now the final division of the land, the assignment of 48 cities to the Levites. The presence of God’s priestly servants scattered throughout was meant to permeate the land with a spiritually preserving and uplifting influence. The priests and Levites were to serve a vital role among God’s people;

- Teaching Jacob God’s judgments, and Israel His law, as Moses sang in his closing song of

*21:1 Then came near the heads of the fathers of the Levites unto Eleazar the priest, and unto Joshua the son of Nun, and unto the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel;*  
*21:2 And they spake unto them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, saying, The LORD commanded by the hand of Moses to give us cities to dwell in, with the suburbs thereof for our cattle.*  
*21:3 And the children of Israel gave unto the Levites out of their inheritance, at the commandment of the LORD, these cities and their suburbs.*

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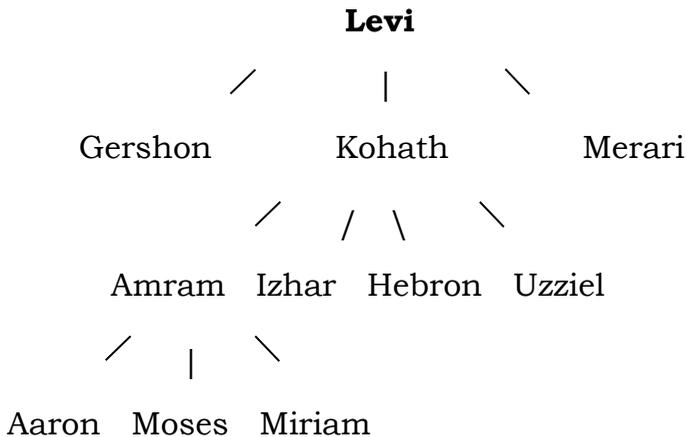
blessing upon the tribes (Deut. 33:10).

- Training the people to discern between good and evil, clean and unclean (Ezek. 22:26; 44:23).
- Judging in cases of dispute (Deut. 17:8-9; Ezek. 44:24).
- Serving as messengers of the Lord's presence (Mal. 2:7).

The priests and Levites were likely responsible to travel throughout the region of their residence to these ends, as Samuel later did.

Vs. 3 – Knowing and appreciating the valuable role the Levites fulfilled, it seems the people readily gave of their cities. It is probably not that Levites alone dwelt in these designated cities, but that they were granted the houses and corresponding fields needed.

Vs. 4-8 – The Levites were made up of three branches descending from the three sons of Levi; Gershon, Kohath, and Merari (Num. 3:17). Aaron, Moses, and Miriam were the grandchildren of Kohath through his son Amram.



Vs. 8 – Apparently the cities to be given to the Levites were first chosen or given by the tribes out of their inheritance. The lot then determined which branch of Levites were to occupy which cities or regions.

Vs. 9-26 – Kohathite Inheritance.

Vs. 9-19 – Among the descendants of Kohath only the descendants of Aaron served as priests, while

the rest of Levi's descendants served as Levites or helpers of the priests.

The first lot was drawn for thirteen cities of the priests, the descendants of Aaron, located in Judah and Benjamin. By God's providence the lot of the priestly line fell around Jerusalem where of course the temple would eventually be built and their labours would be focused. Though they had no notion of this then. This must have seemed odd at the time. For Shiloh was then the current place of the tabernacle, 35 kms to the north within the tribe of Ephraim. A bit inconvenient for them at that time, but consider the dilemma the priests would have later faced had the lot not turned out as it did. For not only was God's temple eventually built in Jerusalem, but with time the two southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin were divided from the ten northern tribes as well. What must have seemed a strange outcome at the time, surely a "mistake" as man viewed it, turned out to be the Lord wisely, knowingly making provision for future eventualities.

Vs. 11 – First on the list of cities given to the priests was the city of Hebron, which faithful Caleb had received. Caleb gave up the exclusive right to that hard-earned city, being content with the villages

and fields around it. Though he might have protested on the basis of God's promise to him, it is more likely he initiated this transfer. Again, priestly occupation probably did not mean that non-Levites could not live in the city as well. The advantage was a colony of priests right in their vicinity, with all of the spiritual benefits that entailed. A man of faith such as Caleb would have been sure (and quick!) to see the benefits of such a presence. Do you? Caleb was a man who trusted God for His care, though giving away much of what he had received from the Lord. He was not trusting in his lands. Our financial support of the Lord's work shows the same faithful confidence in the God who has given to us all we have.

Vs. 20-26 – Cities of the remaining Levite Kohathites were ten, localized in the area of Ephraim and Manasseh.

Vs. 27-33 – Gershonite Inheritance. Thirteen cities in the northern tribal areas of Asher, Issachar, Naphtali, and across into the eastern portion of Manasseh.

Vs. 34-40 – Merarite Inheritance. Twelve cities on the east of Jordan within the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and spilling over into Zebulun on the west.

*21:43 And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein.*

*21:44 And the LORD gave them rest round about, according to all that he swore unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand.*

*21:45 There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.*

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Vs. 41-42 – Summary of Levites possessions. Forty-eight cities, including the six cities of refuge. Ten of the Levite cities were east of the Jordan and 38 of them to the west.

### **21:43-45** – Statement of Conclusion

This is another summary statement, expressing the end of the account of the entire process of land division and occupation begun in chapter 13. The Lord's words to Joshua in chapter 1 at the outset of conquest were now fulfilled. As He had said, so He had done. *“God is not a man, that He should lie . . . hath He said, and shall He not do it? Or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?”* (Num. 23:19) *“There hath not failed one word of all His good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses His servant”* (I Ki. 8:56). God did what He said, all of it, both what He said to Joshua and what He had said concerning the nation as a whole. As He had promised Joshua, so it had come to pass

that no man had been able to stand before him all of his days, and the Lord had neither failed nor forsaken him (1:5). As His ancient promise to Abraham from the beginning, so He had done. *“I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee . . . all the land of Canaan”* (Gen. 17:8). And it was done. Thus is the basis of the confidence of God’s people in every age. Everything else yet unfulfilled that God has ever promised will come to pass in His good time and way, just as surely as did His assurances in the conquest.

The Lord does not change. His purposes are the same with all men at all times. No good thing does He withhold from those who would have His will and seek His blessing. *“No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly”* (Ps. 84:11). In Christ we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places. In eternity, when looking back upon how the Lord has dealt with us in this present life, these same words will surely be found in our heart and on our tongue. The Lord did not fail to bring to pass any good thing He promised. His words did not fall short in the least respect!

It might be argued that the Lord did not really give His people the whole of the land, with all those scattered pockets of Canaanites still present. But

even of this approach in their gradual taking of the land the Lord had before spoken (Ex. 23:29-30; Deut. 7:22).

## Class 18 – Joshua 22

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*22:1 Then Joshua called the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh,*

*22:2 And said unto them, Ye have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you:*

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As we come to chapter 22 the conquest of the Promised Land had come to an end. All portions of the land had been divided to the new owners, and the land was at rest.

### Chapter 22

#### 22:1-9 – 2½ Tribes Dismissed

Vs. 1 – Joshua called together the men of those tribes who had already planted their flag on the foothills of the mountains of Gilead to the east. Moses had told them they could have that land as long as they crossed over with Israel to help conquer the rest of the land before settling on their lot. To this fair request these had agreed. And to their credit, they had fulfilled all that Moses had required of them, staying with the conquest of Canaan and fighting alongside their brothers right to the end, through 7 long years.

*22:3 Ye have not left your brethren these many days unto this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God.*

*22:4 And now the LORD your God hath given rest unto your brethren, as he promised them: therefore now return ye, and get you unto your tents, and unto the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side Jordan.*

*22:5 But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.*

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Vs. 2-4 – For their faithful obedience they received Joshua’s praise.

Vs. 5 – Then Joshua gave a brief but passionate warning. Though their military obligations were fulfilled, their responsibility to walk in loving obedience and fellowship with the Lord ever remained as always. Maybe Joshua was concerned for the natural barrier the Jordan represented. More than just a river, the Jordan Valley is a deep trench a kilometre deep and 15 kms across. Perhaps Joshua was feeling a measure of foreboding concerning what would become of these men he loved and their families on the other side. They had shared the close camaraderie of men who fight together.

Vs. 6-7 - Then he blessed them and released them

22:6 So Joshua blessed them, and sent them away: and they went unto their tents.

22:7 Now to the one half of the tribe of Manasseh Moses had given possession in Bashan: but unto the other half thereof gave Joshua among their brethren on this side Jordan westward. And when Joshua sent them away also unto their tents, then he blessed them,

22:8 And he spake unto them, saying, Return with much riches unto your tents, and with very much cattle, with silver, and with gold, and with brass, and with iron, and with very much raiment: divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren.

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from their responsibility and sent them to their new home, giving them an honourable discharge.

Vs. 8 – Interesting that Joshua would suggest they “*divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren*”. These were the ones who had risked their lives in the war and left their wives and families for many long years and laboured for the good of the nation while the others stayed home. But Joshua wisely sought the unity and peace of the nation. Compare David’s similar principle stated in I Samuel 30:24. The rewards and honours of those who go are to be shared with those “*that tarrieth by the stuff*”, staying to perform the mundane support tasks. Both parts are necessary in their proper measure.

Vs. 9 – Off they gladly went to cross to their inheritance, happily burdened under the load of the “*much riches*” of their spoils, driving a great herd of

*22:9 And the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh returned, and departed from the children of Israel out of Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go unto the country of Gilead, to the land of their possession, whereof they were possessed, according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses.*

*22:10 And when they came unto the borders of Jordan, that are in the land of Canaan, the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh built there an altar by Jordan, a great altar to see to.*

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*“very much cattle”.*

## **22:10-20** – Altar & Confrontation

Vs. 10 – When they came to the west bank of the Jordan, before they crossed over, they built a huge altar there. They meant for it to be a witness of their part in the inheritance of the Lord centred at Shiloh (vs. 27). They were leaving many good friends and stirring memories behind in crossing over. It seems they feared the isolation from the main body of the nation to the west. But unfortunately their action on the Jordan shore was not the better part of wisdom. Though not an evil act, this proved to be an unthinking decision, quickly becoming a major point of national contention, and nearly leading to civil war. Had they remembered God’s command that three of the yearly feasts were to involve a pilgrimage to the tabernacle site (Ex. 23:14, 17) they would surely have seen how

*22:11 And the children of Israel heard say, Behold, the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh have built an altar over against the land of Canaan, in the borders of Jordan, at the passage of the children of Israel.*

*22:12 And when the children of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered themselves together at Shiloh, to go up to war against them.*

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unnecessary their action here. If they would just follow through and obey God's commands He had already organized for the maintaining of the nation's unity around Him and His worship. How often man's well-meaning ignorance or forgetfulness of God's words gets him into serious trouble (I Chron. 13:12). And how desperately the evil one sought to destroy this testimony of God on earth. What better way than to move them to destroy each other.

Vs. 11 – Somehow the report immediately flew back and circulated among the tribes on the Canaan side.

Vs. 12 – All ran together to Shiloh with war in their hearts for what they saw as apostasy in their erring brothers. They assumed these eastern brothers were building a rival altar to the Lord's altar at Shiloh. They thought surely this was an altar for sacrifices, in direct opposition to the Law of Moses. For God had said through Moses; *"Thou shalt say*

*22:13 And the children of Israel sent unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead, Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest,*

*22:14 And with him ten princes, of each chief house a prince throughout all the tribes of Israel; and each one was an head of the house of their fathers among the thousands of Israel.*

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*unto them, Whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers which sojourn among you, that offereth a burnt offering or sacrifice, and bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer it unto the LORD; even that man shall be cut off from among his people” (Lev.17:8-9).* Though they were surely sick of war, these western tribes were ready to run to a civil war over what looked like departure from the Lord and His true worship. Their concern is indeed commendable. Because they thought God’s words were being compromised they were poised and ready to fight.

Vs 13-14 – It is fortunate there was among them enough caution and foresight to take rebuke before taking arms. They appointed “*Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest*” to head the delegation of confrontation because they knew he would take no nonsense (Num. 25:6-18), and with him went heads of all of the ten tribes represented on the west side.

Vs. 15-16 – Their concerns were good concerns,

22:15 *And they came unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half tribe of Manasseh, unto the land of Gilead, and they spake with them, saying,*  
22:16 *Thus saith the whole congregation of the LORD, What trespass is this that ye have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following the LORD, in that ye have builded you an altar, that ye might rebel this day against the LORD?*

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though rather strongly and unwisely expressed. They went in *presuming* the worst rather than hoping for the best. They did not go with humble query seeking to assess the facts. They went quite convinced they knew the facts. *“This is a rebellious departure from the Lord!”* They used stirring examples still fresh in the thinking of all;

- They pointed to the judgment of Peor, where the Lord’s anger fell upon the congregation and 24,000 died.
- They reminded of the judgment upon Achan, where the Lord’s blessing on the whole was lost until sin and sinner were rooted out and dealt with severely. *“That man (Achan) perished not alone in his iniquity”* (vs. 20). His family died with him and men were lost in the battle at Ai as a result.

*You will surely bring the Lord’s anger down upon the whole congregation!* They were intensely concerned

*22:17 Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us, from which we are not cleansed until this day, although there was a plague in the congregation of the LORD,  
22:18 But that ye must turn away this day from following the LORD? and it will be, seeing ye rebel to day against the LORD, that to morrow he will be wroth with the whole congregation of Israel.*

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for purity of worship in these eastern brothers, for the sake of the well-being of the entire nation.

It is good and right for faithful believers to be earnestly zealous for the purity of the faith. Compromise of the truth *must* be forthrightly attacked, whenever, wherever, and in whoever it should show itself. For the well-being of the whole will be negatively affected by the compromise of the one, or the few. It is such a heartening thing to see such intensity of concern for the Lord's interests (though it would soon fade). Where are the earnest contenders for the holiness of God in the church of our day? Where are those bold against compromise? These understood that the Lord sees the congregation as a whole, like He sees the church as a whole. And He looks to every one of us to be individually responsible to see to the purity of the group. Earnestly and aggressively! Yet how thoroughly out of fashion in the modern church is the thought expressed in this encounter; "You have *no right* to offend the Lord with your sin, and to

*22:19 Notwithstanding, if the land of your possession be unclean, then pass ye over unto the land of the possession of the LORD, wherein the LORD's tabernacle dwelleth, and take possession among us: but rebel not against the LORD, nor rebel against us, in building you an altar beside the altar of the LORD our God.*

*22:20 Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? and that man perished not alone in his iniquity.*

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stand in the way of His blessing on us!!” Thoroughly *in* fashion is quite another thought; “You have no right to offend *me* with your rebuke, to stand in the way of my right to do what I want, though it be wrong! It is in fact *you* who are standing in the way of the Lord’s blessing on us with your judgmental, conditional love. If we would have God’s blessing then you had jolly well better accept me just the way I am!” Do you see the difference? Personal holiness and what is pleasing to the Lord are of *little* concern in the church of our day. Group or mutual acceptance is of vital importance, with the one essential doctrine being unity at the cost of any other doctrine. “Do not judge me! Just accept me!” It is the modern response to any effort at reproof of wrong. Yet have you ever noticed that the Lord doesn’t worry overly much about the personal sensitivities or dangers of offending such folks as Ananias and Sapphira? They lied to God and His leaders, and the Lord just dropped them quite dead (Acts 5)! We must beware of absorbing the

philosophy of the world around us, with the foolishness of their unconditional acceptance, and of their view that we are all free to believe as we like, and of their nonsense notion that nobody has the right to call wrong the opinions or actions of others. These are not God's ways! We tend to be far more anxious about human sensitivities than the *Lord* is! Far more concerned about offending people than we are about offending the Lord! The church of today has largely surrendered her right to rebuke. She has released her firm grip on the Lord's unchangeable standard of right, a standard that applies to all and at all times. Yet people in God's church do not have the right to believe as they like, and we do not have the right to just quietly let them! I have always been impressed with how hard, even harsh, God and His faithful servants are in dealing with sin. And the closer a man walks with the Lord the more intensely will grow his hatred for all that is displeasing to the Lord. Pastors who are kind and sweet and gracious and accepting are often considered to be the most godly types. But the truth is that a truly godly man is *hard* on sin, both in himself and in others. And more often than not this will be seen as an unloving, "holier-than-thou" sort of attitude among those less concerned with sin. Paul said, "*If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ*" (Gal. 1:10). The response of these

men speaks of the need for the strong action and firm handling of church discipline, a largely unacceptable practice within our worldly, permissive church today. It speaks of strong parental discipline, another unacceptable practice within our permissive society. The world says, “Leave them alone! They have the right to think and do as they like. And what right do you have to impose your own personal opinion of truth on them?!” But *the Lord* says, “Get in there and deal with it! They have no right to disregard My holy standard and make themselves an offence to Me. And you have no right to *let* them!” Do not be afraid to be strong for God, and strong against all that is against God and His way. You will make enemies in the world to be sure. You will make even more enemies among worldly Christians. *But you will have a Friend in heaven!!*

### **22:21-29** – Eastern Response

Vs. 22-23 – The men of the east were solemnly sincere. They invoked God’s judgment upon themselves if there was any shred of rebellion in their act. They insisted that their altar was not meant as an altar of worship or sacrifices (vs. 21-23, 26, 29). It was not meant as a symbol of *disunity*, but rather as a reminder of their *unity* with the western side (vs. 24-28). They too were

22:21 *Then the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh answered, and said unto the heads of the thousands of Israel,*

22:22 *The LORD God of gods, the LORD God of gods, he knoweth, and Israel he shall know; if it be in rebellion, or if in transgression against the LORD, (save us not this day,)*

22:23 *That we have built us an altar to turn from following the LORD, or if to offer thereon burnt offering or meat offering, or if to offer peace offerings thereon, let the LORD himself require it;*

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concerned about the separation of the Jordan's geographical barrier (vs. 25). They were afraid it would cause future division between east and west. They intended that the altar be a witness (vs. 27-28) between them into the future. They meant it to be a sign that they too had a right to cross the Jordan and worship at the Lord's altar at Shiloh. They were in extreme earnest to communicate that things were not at all as they were being interpreted.

When we hear the sincerity of these men, having made a bumbling mistake but genuine, there comes into clear and frightening focus a very important lesson as to how things might better have been handled. Oh be careful how you approach confrontational situations. These leaders flew in with all haste, with the motives of the others *already judged*, and this based only on circumstantial evidence with no firm confirmations. They came with an exclamation mark (!) rather than a question

22:24 *And if we have not rather done it for fear of this thing, saying, In time to come your children might speak unto our children, saying, What have ye to do with the LORD God of Israel?*

22:25 *For the LORD hath made Jordan a border between us and you, ye children of Reuben and children of Gad; ye have no part in the LORD: so shall your children make our children cease from fearing the LORD.*

22:26 *Therefore we said, Let us now prepare to build us an altar, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice:*

22:27 *But that it may be a witness between us, and you, and our generations after us, that we might do the service of the LORD before him with our burnt offerings, and with our sacrifices, and with our peace offerings; that your children may not say to our children in time to come, Ye have no part in the LORD.*

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mark (?). It was “*You have!*” rather than “*Have you?*” It was not, “*Is this rebellion?*” but “*You are rebels!!*” Again, we can admire the zeal for the truth and jealousy for pure worship in the eastern brothers, and we do well to admire this in them. But they were very rash and their approach potentially explosive! Like a church just dropping somebody from membership on the suspicion of a just cause, without first questioning, confronting, reasoning, pleading. “*He that answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame unto him*” (Prov. 18:13). “*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness*” (Gal. 6:1). Yet do not miss how it was through frank, open discussion that the air was cleared and serious misunderstanding

*22:28 Therefore said we, that it shall be, when they should so say to us or to our generations in time to come, that we may say again, Behold the pattern of the altar of the LORD, which our fathers made, not for burnt offerings, nor for sacrifices; but it is a witness between us and you.*

*22:29 God forbid that we should rebel against the LORD, and turn this day from following the LORD, to build an altar for burnt offerings, for meat offerings, or for sacrifices, beside the altar of the LORD our God that is before his tabernacle.*

*22:30 And when Phinehas the priest, and the princes of the congregation and heads of the thousands of Israel which were with him, heard the words that the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the children of Manasseh spake, it pleased them.*

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revealed, with reconciliation the happy result. Rather than fuming and harbouring resentment they confronted the wrongdoers and dealt with it, finding happy resolution.

As well, those eastern brothers did well to not respond with anger, even though they were rather roughly handled and wrongly accused. Consider the desperately unfortunate mess that might have resulted had they proudly refused to be pushed. Phinehas made the point in fact that it was their good response that “*delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the LORD*”, and out of each other’s hands as well. There is a principle here, a good example of wisdom’s response to reproof. Again, the wise counsel of Prov. (15:1). “*A soft answer turns away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.*”

*22:31 And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the children of Manasseh, This day we perceive that the LORD is among us, because ye have not committed this trespass against the LORD: now ye have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the LORD.*

*22:32 And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and the princes, returned from the children of Reuben, and from the children of Gad, out of the land of Gilead, unto the land of Canaan, to the children of Israel, and brought them word again.*

*22:33 And the thing pleased the children of Israel; and the children of Israel blessed God, and did not intend to go up against them in battle, to destroy the land wherein the children of Reuben and Gad dwelt.*

*22:34 And the children of Reuben and the children of Gad called the altar Ed: for it shall be a witness between us that the LORD is God.*

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## **22:30-34** – Conflict Resolved

Phinehas and the leaders were satisfied that their motives were pure, resulting in greatest relief and rejoicing.

“...ye know in all your hearts  
and in all your souls,  
that not one thing hath failed  
of all the good things  
which the LORD your God  
spake concerning you;  
all are come to pass unto you,  
and not one thing hath failed  
thereof”

(Joshua 23:14)

## Class 19 – Joshua 23

In these last three chapters of Joshua the old captain of the Lord's earthly host is now seen as a caring shepherd of the nation as well, bringing his final words to his people before his death. His theme is all about unswerving faithfulness; God's faithfulness to His people and theirs to God. Joshua earnestly talks to the heart of his people in these closing words, encouraging their devotion to the Lord, warning them of the grave dangers of departure from fidelity to their God. In chapter 22 are his brief final words to the returning eastern brothers. Here now in chapter 23 are his final words to the leaders who served so faithfully with him. Then in chapter 24 his final words to the nation as a whole.

Consider how Jesus Christ follows in a similar role. He came at the first as the Conqueror of sin and Satan through His death and resurrection (Psalm 22), nailing to His cross the handwriting of ordinances against us (Col. 2:14). Now in this current age that Great Shepherd of the sheep pleads with us to "*suffer the word of exhortation*" (Psalm 23; John 10). As Joshua of old, Jesus strives to make us "*perfect in every good work to do His will*" (Heb. 13:20-22).

23:1 *And it came to pass a long time after that the LORD had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua waxed old and stricken in age.*  
23:2 *And Joshua called for all Israel, and for their elders, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers, and said unto them, I am old and stricken in age:*

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## Chapter 23

Vs. 1-2 – It was now some years after the conquest and division of the land. Joshua must have been only a few years from his death at this point, perhaps in his early hundreds. That he was “*old and well stricken in age*” was apparently the motivation for these final public words. Compare Jacob’s final words to his sons gathered around his bed at the last in Genesis 49. The purpose of this public meeting was a last attempt to motivate God’s chosen people to firm and lasting faith and fidelity to their God. Joshua was not as King Hezekiah, happy as long as “*peace and truth be in my days*” (II Ki. 20:19), willing for trouble to come, even if through his own wrong, as long as it did not arrive in his own day. Joshua was concerned for the continuance of his people in faithfulness and God’s blessing into the future. But even with such concern in the current leaders the reality is that unless the Lord raises up a new generation of those with like commitment, the crest of the wave soon falls to lesser intensity, as the book of Judges

23:3 *And ye have seen all that the LORD your God hath done unto all these nations because of you; for the LORD your God is he that hath fought for you.*

---

describes. It seems it is rather a rare thing to see the following generation continuing on in equal or greater intensity than the previous. Only through an extraordinary work of the Spirit.

The meeting described in this chapter appears to be different from that in the chapter to follow. This one likely took place at Shiloh while that in chapter 24 was at Shechem. And apparently only the leaders of the people were involved here while the next involved all. Joshua's approach is to project into the future God's faithfulness to them in the past, *if* they would continue to walk with Him in the present. He runs a couple times around this same post, hammering his point by repetition.

Vs. 3 – *“Ye have seen all that the LORD your God hath done”* – Joshua begins by turning their attention to the Lord's faithfulness in their past. And do not miss how though it was Joshua who led his people to victory, the matter of his involvement was not even worthy of mention in Joshua's estimation. His words were all about the God who *“fought for you”*. This was not an occasion to boast

23:4 *Behold, I have divided unto you by lot these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, even unto the great sea westward.*

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about the good old days and the good old things *these men* had accomplished together, pulling out the photo albums and swapping stories of human heroes and heroic feats that had grown in splendour with the telling over the years. This was about the God who did just what He said. Not about the land they had won, but about He who is Victor over all, Giver of all, gracious to all who call upon Him in truth. Such modesty could only be found in such a God-centred man as this. Joshua knew in his heart what the sweet Psalmist later put into words and song; *“For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but Thy right hand, and Thine arm, and the light of Thy countenance, because Thou hadst a favour unto them”* (Ps. 44:3).

Note how *“these nations”* around and still among them were an urgent concern for Joshua. He makes reference to them 7 times in this chapter (vs. 3-13).

Vs. 5 – As *“God hath done”* in beginning to give the land (vs. 3), so He would complete the transaction. His beginning was His pledge of the ending. Even

*23:5 And the LORD your God, he shall expel them from before you, and drive them from out of your sight; and ye shall possess their land, as the LORD your God hath promised unto you.*

*23:6 Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left;*

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so it is in this current church age. The indwelling Spirit, already given by God to the believer, is His pledge to His child of *all* of God one day to be received (Eph. 1:13-14). And has this promise fallen unfulfilled since the Canaanites were never fully removed from the land? No. Joshua's day saw a partial fulfilment of it, with the potential for an even greater fulfilment then. For had they followed the Lord in unswerving fidelity they would have seen Canaan become more and more fully theirs. But only Christ's coming day and kingdom will bring the complete fulfilment. For no Canaanite of heart will enter that kingdom centred in this same land.

Vs. 6 – This matter of their obedience was a point of primary concern to this old saint. God's people must cling to God's words in complete obedience. God had challenged Joshua with the same at the first as well (1:7-8), and he himself had indeed clung to the Lord in simple obedience. It had been *proven* in Joshua's own life and leadership before them that to follow the Lord in simple obedience is to end in

victory. We have it on the authority of the Word of God!

They must be “*very courageous to keep and do all that is written in the book*”. Why such great courage required in the keeping and doing of God’s words? Because to do so puts you at odds;

- With the world. It makes you love what others hate and hate what others love. It makes you an “enemy” of short-term peace in your community (family, work place, etc.).
- With the flesh. It makes you a resister of temptation’s power, an “enemy” of your own fundamental nature. To have “*rule over his own spirit*” means a man has joined the *fight*, not the *flow*.
- With the devil. It puts you into the battle for righteousness in this earthly existence.

Courage is required to keep God’s Word because one so doing must ever fight the relentlessly driving force seeking to turn him “*to the right hand or to the left*”. Like walking the straight and narrow peak line of a steeply sloped roof. So Joshua left with them the essence of what the Lord had spoken to him at the outset of the conquest (1:7), bravery in obeying all that God commands. And none could fail to see

23:7 *That ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them:*

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how that combination of courage, faith, and obedience had worked for them. It moved *God* to work for them. See well how in faith Joshua followed through on the Lord's words. And here they were standing in victory.

Vs. 7 – No association with Canaanites (Ex. 34:12-16). Here was public and private enemy no. 1. Again, “*these nations*” were Joshua’s main concern for his people, that they not associate or mix with the Canaanites around them. Though they “*remain among you*”, you must not be found among them. Such complete separation speaks of the danger of too close an association, the very real susceptibility all the saints have in becoming tainted by the world. Joshua saw too close a friendship with the people as the avenue into too close a friendship with their corrupt gods and worship. Complete separation from every religious system not of God is what was required of them. There could be no true intimacy with those not a part of their covenant family. A certain aloofness with the world must be maintained. The end of such instruction ignored would lead on to God’s people serving and bowing

to “*other gods*” (vs. 16). What folly could be so great as to end up worshipping gods their own God had so effectively overwhelmed in the conquest? As did Amaziah in II Chronicles 25. Having attacked and defeated Edom, he then “*brought the gods of the children of Seir, and set them up to be his gods, and bowed down himself before them*” (vs. 14). The Lord’s anger was stirred of course, and His prophet was immediately knocking on Amaziah’s door, with ruin just around the corner. God’s children (or the devil’s in fact) cannot hope to find wise counsel for living among the Canaanites of earth. True wisdom is revealed only in the eternal words of God.

What of us today? Are you sure you have not been touched with the Canaanite brush? Are you sure you are not drawn to their gods? Gods of money (where’s your trust), power/influence (much of the purpose of occult practices), sensuality, sport, body/image (incorporating fashion, foods, exercise craze, health, etc.). It is always a question of masters. Who is your master? Who do you really follow? To whom do you cling? No one can follow the world and truly follow the Lord at the same time. Remember, even Solomon with the acme of wisdom onboard was not able to keep himself from falling to folly when too closely affiliated with false religion and religionists. Consider the careful balance of

23:8 *But cleave unto the LORD your God, as ye have done unto this day.*  
23:9 *For the LORD hath driven out from before you great nations and strong: but as for you, no man hath been able to stand before you unto this day.*  
23:10 *One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the LORD your God, he it is that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you.*

---

walking between patience with erring brothers, as in chapter 22, and separation from or refusal to walk with evil.

Vs. 8 – “*Cleave*” rather “*unto the LORD your God*”. Not only must we avoid the forbidden tree, but we must ever feed at the tree of life as well. “*Cleave*” is far beyond mere professing Christianity. So *obedience* to God and *separation* from the world were the two crucial matters Joshua left with them.

Vs. 9-10 – No enemy is too strong when with the Lord, resulting in a life (or a church) truly untouchable, unstoppable, undaunted, yea unbelievable! When with the Lord, there was no failure. When without Him, there is neither help nor hope.

“*One man of you shall chase a thousand*” – Beyond natural accomplishment. Compare Samson who was untouchable with the Spirit. Never is there a true human threat on the ground when the Lord is

*23:11 Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the LORD your God.*

*23:12 Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you:*

---

by our side. The only true threat is to face life or death without God.

Vs. 11 – “*Love*” and “*cleave*” are key words in our relation to the Lord. Here is the sum and total of the law’s requirements, to “*love the LORD your God*”.

Vs. 12 – No marriages with Canaanites (Deut. 7:3). The result would be pitfalls ranging from irritating to excruciating, deceptive, dangerous, and even deadly. Compare Judah’s familiar relation with the people of the land, resulting in an unfortunate marriage and great troubles (Gen. 38). Compare the same with Samson (Judges 14).

From vs. 12 onward there is heavy emphasis on warning as Joshua brings his message to a close. Obviously there were grave concerns in his heart, he being aware of a leaning away in the people already. He could see the growing acceptance of evil in their midst. If unchecked, he knew where it would take them with time. And so he warned of

23:13 *Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you.*

23:14 *And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.*

---

the danger of God's help removed (Ex. 23:33; Num.33:55; Deut. 7:16).

Vs. 13 – Loss of the land God had given would result for the nation. Three times the warning of this (vs. 15-16). The painful thorns and scourges of Israel's endless Palestinian/Arab woes are right here in this verse. God does what He says, both in rewards and punishments.

Vs. 14 – Greatest focus here on “*not one thing . . . all . . . not one thing*”. Again, as in 21:45, the captain's finger points to the fact that never has any good promise from the Lord ever fallen unfulfilled in the end. This is a greatly hammered point in this book.

Vs. 15 – The happy promise of vs. 14 is again turned to unhappy warning. Just as sure as the Lord's words for good and help, are His words for bad and hurt. It must ever be understood that just as the

*23:15 Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all good things are come upon you, which the LORD your God promised you; so shall the LORD bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you.*

*23:16 When ye have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you.*

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Lord never fails to carry out His promises, even so He never fails to carry out His threats. His faithfulness to His words carries across the line from triumph to trouble. How could we be so foolish as to hope for thoroughness in His brighter promises and slackness in His darker ones? As sure as is heaven, just as sure is hell! God is consistent in His nature. He is true to His words! So should we be, if we would be like Him.

Vs. 16 – Not only would they perish for their disobedience, but their trouble would not be very long in coming. And notice here that Joshua used the word “*when*”, not “*if*”. He knew what was coming even while pleading against their direction. He stood in a role something like Isaiah’s, when told to go and tell while assured that none would listen (Isaiah 6).

## Class 20 – Joshua 24

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*24:1 And Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God.*

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We come to the end of it with this class, the end of a very special moment in Israel's history. A crucial moment. A point of decision or renewal marked by more monuments. It was Joshua's last opportunity to turn the people away from a rising readiness for wrong in them. He had been there to see their fall to calf worship at Sinai, and then again to the carnal worship of the Moabite religion across the river. Though in each case the departure was dealt with most severely, still this unholy leaning remained in his people.

### Chapter 24

#### **24:1** – Call “*to Shechem*”

Having spoken to the leaders in chapter 23, the grand old captain and shepherd of Israel now called the whole nation together to Shechem for a most significant event. Remember from chapter 8 that Shechem was situated in the heart of the land, at

the hub of their inheritance, in the valley between the two mounts of Ebal on the north and Gerizim on the south. Ebal was the mount of cursing and Gerizim the mount of blessing. It was that historic place to which the nation had gone in obedience to the Lord after the defeat of Ai, erecting the banner of His law there in the centre of their land. And there they read God's blessings and cursings for the choice of obedience or disobedience. Do you remember the historic significance of Shechem?

- It was the point of entrance into this land God would give to them, where the whole blessing of the Promised Land began through Abraham (Gen. 12:6-7). It was the first city named in the land, the first place where the Lord appeared and spoke to His people in the land, the place where God first promised to give the land to Abraham and his descendants, the place of the first altar built in the land, and where the Lord was first worshipped in the land.
- It was the point of Jacob's return to the land.
- It was the point of Joseph's (thus the nation's) departure from the land to Egypt through rebellion.
- It was the place where their hearts were

renewed in their covenant before the Lord (Josh. 8), where the choice of two ways was displayed graphically before them.

- It was the pinnacle place of remembrance of God's words, inscribed on the altar erected there.

This was the obvious place for Joshua to bring the people back for a re-renewal of their covenant with their God, with those great object lessons of Ebal and Gerizim towering to north and south. The one, the stark reminder that to depart from the Lord is to walk head-long into His curse. The other, the clear promise that to walk with Him and in His way is to know the Lord's abundant blessing. "*Choose you this day*" on which mount you will reside.

One day this sacred site of Shechem would again become the place of departure, the Lord's departure from His rejecting people. For it was in that same place that Jesus began His non-Jewish ministry with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (John 4).

### **24:2-13** – History of God's Care

Joshua begins with a summary of the rich history of God's gracious dealings with them as a nation. *Greatest grounds for gratitude!* Do you see how in

24:2 *And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods.*

24:3 *And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac.*

24:4 *And I gave unto Isaac Jacob and Esau: and I gave unto Esau mount Seir, to possess it; but Jacob and his children went down into Egypt.*

24:5 *I sent Moses also and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to that which I did among them: and afterward I brought you out.*

---

vs. 3 it turns to first person as Joshua speaks? As if the Lord Himself is now speaking through the man's mouth. And it is all about what "*I did among them*". I have about 17 statements of the Lord's actions in their behalf circled in my Bible in vs. 3-13.

Vs. 3 – "*From the other side of the flood*", referring to the land of Mesopotamia beyond the Euphrates.

Vs. 7 – "*And ye dwelt in the wilderness a long season*" – Notice now that this is all that was said of 4 long decades of the gradual death of the 1<sup>st</sup> generation in the wilderness. Uneventful, unfruitful, wasted years! From God's perspective those decades were essentially a write-off. For they were years of judgment born out of faithless rebellion. Only when the children of Israel had at

24:6 *And I brought your fathers out of Egypt: and ye came unto the sea; and the Egyptians pursued after your fathers with chariots and horsemen unto the Red sea.*

24:7 *And when they cried unto the LORD, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them, and covered them; and your eyes have seen what I have done in Egypt: and ye dwelt in the wilderness a long season.*

24:8 *And I brought you into the land of the Amorites, which dwelt on the other side Jordan; and they fought with you: and I gave them into your hand, that ye might possess their land; and I destroyed them from before you.*

24:9 *Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and warred against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you:*

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last set their hearts in united obedience did they begin to see great and wonderful things accomplished through them. How many more wasted decades, unworthy of mention, shall we carry with shame to Christ's Judgment Seat?

Vs. 12 – *“I sent the hornet before you”* – Nobody knows for sure what this refers to. Some interpret as literal swarms of hornets preceding Israel's entrance into the land. Some see hornets as figuratively referring to heart-melting fear of Israel among the Canaanites (5:1), which we know preceded the conquest. Compare Rahab's words (2:9-11). Compare Exodus 23:27-28, where *“I will send My fear before thee”* and *“I will send hornets before thee”* seem to be parallel statements. Whatever it was it appears it was still about to

*24:10 But I would not hearken unto Balaam; therefore he blessed you still: so I delivered you out of his hand.*

*24:11 And you went over Jordan, and came unto Jericho: and the men of Jericho fought against you, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I delivered them into your hand.*

*24:12 And I sent the hornet before you, which drave them out from before you, even the two kings of the Amorites; but not with thy sword, nor with thy bow.*

*24:13 And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat.*

---

happen as they were gathered on the plain of Moab ready to cross (Deut. 7:20).

### **24:14-25** – Call to Commitment

Joshua now calls his people to a solemn public vow, whether they would be faithful and obedient to the true God or not. It was not enough for him to preach a sermon to this effect. He demanded their word, their vow that they would stand by it. In King Asa's day there was such a national vow made as well, but even at threat of death there for those who dared abstain (II Chron. 15:12-15). Compare the similar pattern commonly found in Paul's epistles. First a review of what God has become and done for us, then the call to a worthy walk based on the record of His grace (Eph. 4:1). Compare "therefore" of vs. 14 with that in Romans 12:1.

24:14 *Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD.*

24:15 *And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*

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Vs. 14 – Sincerity is not enough. One given to falsehood, though sincere, cannot please the true God by such sincerity. Our service for the Lord must be both “*in sincerity and in truth*”. Love for the true God is directly proportional to love for His true words. Faith in the true God is the work of the Spirit through His words. All that is sincerely for the true God will be thoroughly founded in His true words.

Vs. 15 – “*As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD*” – To his call Joshua added the weight of his own example. “It is Gerizim for us!” he proclaimed. This spoken as if a challenge. Wherever others might come down, *his* choice was made, his heart quite set. There was in this man no shred of reservation or hesitation. It just was not going to matter what life dished up by way of circumstances. Compare the same resolve in Micaiah, “*As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak*”

(I Ki. 22). There is powerful encouragement to others in such fixed, unwavering commitment. Such rock-like resolve leads a following much more readily than quivering vacillation ever could.

*“Choose you this day”* – Ultimately it comes down to a man’s own decision. We are always coming to the crossroads of choices. The option is ever before us of the ways of both blessing and cursing. Will you *“present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God”*? Or will you lay your life in the devil’s hands to do his bidding? *“To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness”* (Rom. 6:16).

We too live in a day of idols or false gods, as countless as the Hindus. They are the more refined gods of pleasure, power, and possessions perhaps, but they are idols nonetheless. The Lord’s command through Joshua is sharp and clear, *“Put away the gods”* (vs. 14, 23). This implies his knowledge of some measure of inappropriate worship among the people even at that point. In light of all the splendour of God’s good blessing upon you, be done with all dabbling with false gods and make the decision to *“serve the LORD”*. Note the great prominence of this phrase throughout

24:16 *And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods;*  
24:17 *For the LORD our God, he it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed:*

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Joshua's challenge (9 times within vs. 14-24). The N.T. echoes the same admonition; "*Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God*" (I Cor. 10:31). Wherever, whenever, whatever, with whomever, it is His service and I am His servant! Resolved and settled! This same resolute, "*as for me*" sort of stance is often seen in the Psalms governing David's life as well;

- Psalm 26:11 – Others may choose the way of cheat and deceit, "*but as for me, I will walk in mine integrity*".
- Psalm 35:13 – Though others serve me evil for my good, "*as for me*" I will return them good for their evil.
- Psalm 55:16 – Others may trust in their vanities, but "*as for me, I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me*".
- Psalm 69:13 – Though the mouths of others spout folly, "*as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O LORD*".

24:18 *And the LORD drove out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the LORD; for he is our God.*  
24:19 *And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.*

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Do not miss Joshua's inclusion here of "*and my house*". See the firm fatherly hold of a godly man upon the hearts of his children. No uninvolved or permissive parenting here. By God's grace his children would follow him to Gerizim, to live on that mount of blessing. The Lord knew Joshua as He knew Abraham, that he would "command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment" (Gen. 18:19).

Vs. 19 – "*Ye cannot serve the LORD*" – The point seems to be that they could not serve *both* the holy God and unholy gods, for "*He is a jealous God*". The Lord will not share His people with the lie of empty falsehoods. He will not share His temple with Satan. It is why we cannot accept the view that true believers with the Spirit dwelling within can be indwelt by demons as well. The Lord does not share His things with evil. The moment you and I make the decision to touch what is sin, we have made the decision to leave God out.

24:20 *If ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good.*

24:21 *And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the LORD.*

24:22 *And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the LORD, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses.*

24:23 *Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the LORD God of Israel.*

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Vs. 21 – “*We will serve the LORD*” – Three times they asserted this (vs. 16, 24). In a lie detection exercise such repetition might make them suspect. It seems Joshua was more trusting of their actions than their words, therefore the challenging “*if*” in vs. 20. Genuine love of the truth will be shown in practical hatred of the false. It seems the old shepherd just was not seeing this in them. He was looking for *proof* of their sincerity by their actions. At Ephesus there resulted a great bonfire of books of “*curious arts*” worth 50,000 pieces of silver through Paul’s preaching (Acts 19:19). It was proof of the genuineness of their repentance and conversion. Joshua was only hearing windy words here!

### **24:26-33** – Memorials

Three forms of memorials are found in these closing words.

24:24 *And the people said unto Joshua, The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.*

24:25 *So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.*

24:26 *And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the LORD.*

24:27 *And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the LORD which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God.*

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Vs. 26 – Written memorial. Joshua wrote the record of it in the book we have before us.

Vs. 27 – Rock memorial. It was an old custom to set up a stone, or a pile of them. We have seen it before at Gilgal, in the middle of the Jordan river bed, as a marker between Jacob and Laban, etc. These were places and sights designed to cause folks to think of something or remember something. The ordinance of Communion is like that in the N.T. church, a memorial to be observed by the Lord's people throughout their lives on earth "*in remembrance*" of Jesus. It is a reminder of the Saviour who died on the cross and of my sin that put Him there. It was at Shechem that Jacob commanded his family to "*put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean*" (Gen. 35:2). And it was there "*under the oak which was by Shechem*" that Jacob buried the collection of their pagan icons and amulets. Now

24:28 *So Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance.*

24:29 *And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old.*

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appropriately at the same place (under a descendent of Jacob's old oak perhaps?) Joshua set up a stone of testimony, "*lest ye deny your God*". Again, he was evidently concerned for the direction of His people, lest they fall into the folly of idolatry. He did not say "stay away" but "put away the *strange gods which are among you*". This bent already in them, together with the Canaanites still among them, was a combination laden with the most deadly potential.

Vs. 29-33 – Grave memorials. We are told of three graves in these closing verses, graves of godly men. It seems a strange way to end such a victorious book, but these are important memorials as well. They were reminders that one generation was passing away, throwing down the challenge to the next. No generation can live on the manna of past generations. Each new generation must stir up their own leadership and learn for themselves to live upon the Bread of Life.

Vs. 31 – See again how far reaching the effective

24:30 *And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathserah, which is in mount Ephraim, on the north side of the hill of Gaash.*

24:31 *And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the LORD, that he had done for Israel.*

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influence of one soul wholly given to God. The record seems clearly to lay this positive national response to Joshua's credit. Through his life, leadership, and closing words of challenge Joshua set the tone for the nation, even into the years ahead. His courageous character was so boldly imprinted upon the memories of all the men who had served under him. *They loved him!* The entire nation was filled to overflowing with highest admiration for the old captain. He was their captain still. And that commitment to the man translated into a commitment to the Lord similar to his. That is not a wrong. Some may tend to look upon that negatively, insisting that folks should be looking to the Lord and not to people. But it is good and right to follow the faithful example of others. "*Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God*" the writer of Hebrews instructed, "*whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation [manner of life]*" (Heb. 13:7). Paul as well often encouraged others to be imitators of him as he sought to imitate Christ (I Cor. 4:16;

24:32 *And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph.*

24:33 *And Eleazar the son of Aaron died; and they buried him in a hill that pertained to Phinehas his son, which was given him in mount Ephraim.*

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11:1; Phil. 3:17; I Thess. 1:6). But each new generation needs its own new examples. Will you be such a one? One whose grave becomes a memorial of a life lived on Gerizim?

Vs. 32 – They had carried Joseph’s embalmed body all that way through the many years of their wilderness travels (Ex. 13:19), and then across with them into Canaan to be buried at Shechem. Joseph had “*taken an oath of the children of Israel*” centuries before, that they would do this (Gen. 50:25). It was from Shechem that Joseph was sold into Egypt by his brothers (Gen. 37), and so it was there to that piece of ground that the bones of Joseph were returned and buried. On this Joseph had insisted because he knew that “*God will surely visit you*” to do as He said, putting them into the land. The burial of Joseph at Shechem was an object lesson to all, of that assurance featuring so prominently in God’s Word; “*Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed*” (Rom. 9:33; 10:11; Isa.

28:16).

In time Joseph's hope in God's promise was and will be rewarded, because the Lord does as He says. Do you see why this event is mentioned here? It serves as the final underscore of this prominent theme. Joseph was another who trusted that God would keep His promise, and *he was not disappointed!* God did bring them out. And God did bring them in. ***As He said!***

