TAKING GOD'S GIFT OF THE PROMISED LAND – SPIRITUAL VICTORY IN THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

by Paul G. Apple, 2005 – Revised Jan. 2026

CLAIMING GOD'S PROMISES FOR SPIRITUAL VICTORY REQUIRES ENGAGING AND CONQUERING THE ENEMY BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

> "*So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord had spoken to Moses, and Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. Thus the land had rest from war.*"
> *"So the Lord gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it. And the Lord gave them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and not one of all their enemies stood before them; the Lord gave all their enemies into their hand. Not one of the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass."*
> (**Joshua 11:23; 21:43-45**)

For each section in the Book of Joshua:

- Thesis statement … to focus on the big idea
- Analytical outline … to guide the understanding
- Devotional questions … to encourage life application
- Representative quotations … to stimulate deeper insight

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BACKGROUND

Faithlife Study Bible, Lexham Press:
Joshua is about bravery, rooted in faith in Yahweh. The book of Joshua takes place just after the death of Moses, Israel's longtime leader. It begins with God commissioning Moses' successor, Joshua, to lead the Israelites across the Jordan River to take possession of the land that had long ago been promised to their forefather Abraham (**Josh 1:1–5**; compare **Gen 17:8**). In the narrative, the Israelites engage in a military campaign against the nations that already live in the promised land, Canaan. Eventually, through God's intervention, they settle the land and allot territories to their 12 tribes (**Josh 14:1–5**). The narrative does not merely recount the events of the conquest of Canaan; it also interprets these events theologically. At the end of the book, Joshua charges Israel to choose Yahweh as their God, and the Israelites symbolically renew their covenant with Yahweh.

Chuck Swindoll:
Who Wrote the Book?
The book's primary figure gives it its title. Joshua means "*Yahweh saves*," an appropriate name for the man who led Israel, under God's command, to victorious conquest of the Promised Land. Scholars believe that Joshua himself or a scribe under his direction penned most of the book. Early chapters include firsthand experiences (the NIV uses the pronouns "*we*" and "*us*" in **Joshua 5:1, 6**, for example) and military details worthy of being known and recorded by a general. **Joshua 24:26** refers to Joshua writing a portion of the book himself. After Joshua's death, the high priests Eleazar or Phinehas may have supplemented some material in this book that alludes to events after the conquest (**15:13–19; 19:47; 24:29–33**).

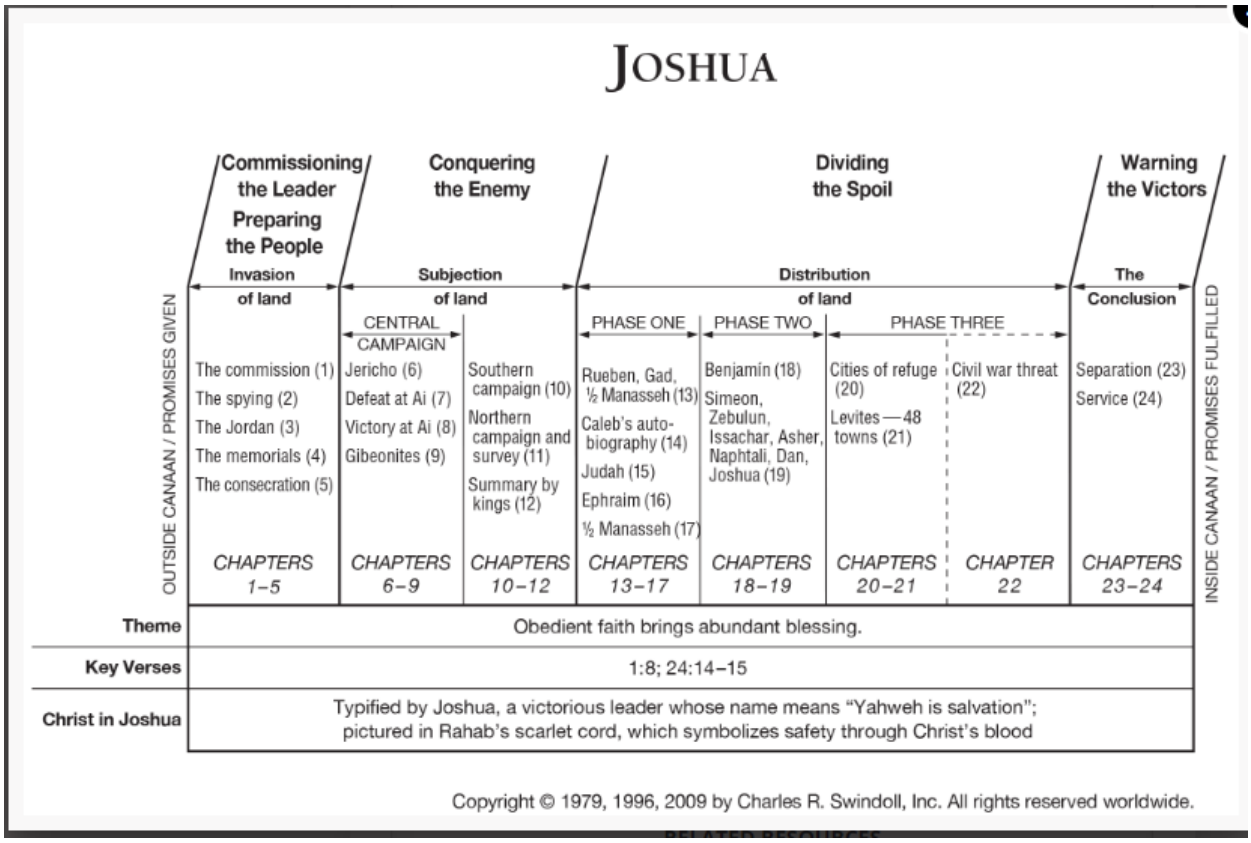
Why is Joshua so Important?
The book of Joshua records the culmination of Israel's journey to the Promised Land. Here we see God fulfill His promise to give the land of Canaan to Jacob's descendants. Joshua portrays the Lord as their general, the One who would lead His people in victorious battle if they would trust and obey.

Joshua recounted a story of contradictions. On the one hand, God gave the land that He had promised to the nation. On the other hand, the people failed to possess the land completely, allowing some inhabitants to remain. God fulfilled His side of the bargain, but the Israelites did not finish the job. The Canaanite peoples became a damaging influence on Israel as years went by.

In this book we find accounts of faithfulness: Rahab the harlot (**Joshua 2:1–21**), the battle of Jericho (**6:1–27**), and Caleb the warrior (**14:6–14**). We also witness disobedience and its consequences: Achan's sin (**7:1**) and the resulting loss at Ai (**7:5**), failure of some tribes to annihilate the enemy as God commanded, and even Joshua making a treaty with the Gibeonites without first seeking the Lord (**9:1–27**).

What's the Big Idea?

The book of Joshua was written to the descendants of those who conquered the land, as a historical account of how they had come to settle there. It celebrates God as general, defender, and king. It shows the geographical boundaries given to each tribe of Israel. Even more significantly, the book of Joshua serves as the connecting narrative between the days of Moses and the days of the judges, during which the book was first circulated. That which Moses began and endured in the wilderness, Joshua was able to claim victoriously in the land. God's promises through the ages were being fulfilled before the people's eyes. "*Not one of the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass*" (**Joshua 21:45**).



https://insight.org/resources/bible/the-historical-books/joshua

John MacArthur:

Background and Setting:

When Moses passed the baton of leadership on to Joshua before he died (**Deut. 34**), Israel was at the end of its 40 year wilderness wandering period ca. 1405 B.C. Joshua was approaching 90 years of age when he became Israel's leader. He later died at the age of 110 (**24:29**), having led Israel to drive out most of the Canaanites and having divided the Land among the 12 tribes. Poised on the plains of Moab, E of the Jordan River and the Land which God had promised (**Gen. 12:7; 15:18–21**), the Israelites awaited God's direction to conquer the Land. They faced peoples on the western side of the Jordan who had become so steeped in iniquity that God would cause the Land, so to speak, to spew

out these inhabitants (**Lev. 18:24, 25**). He would give Israel the Land by conquest, primarily to fulfill the covenant He had pledged to Abraham and his descendants, but also to pass just judgment on the sinful inhabitants (cf. **Gen. 15:16**). Long possession of different parts of the Land by various peoples had pre-dated even Abraham's day (**Gen. 10:15–19; 12:6; 13:7**). Its inhabitants had continued on a moral decline in the worship of many gods up to Joshua's time.

Historical and Theological Themes:

A keynote feature is God's faithfulness to fulfill His promise of giving the Land to Abraham's descendants (**Gen. 12:7; 15:18–21; 17:8**). By His leading (cf. **5:14–6:2**), they inhabited the territories E and W of the Jordan, and so the word "*possess*" appears nearly 20 times.

Related to this theme is Israel's failure to press their conquest to every part of the Land (**13:1**). **Judges 1–2** later describes the tragic results from this sin. Key verses focus on:

1) God's promise of possession of the Land (**1:3, 6**);
2) meditation on God's law, which was strategic for His people (**1:8**); and
3) Israel's actual possession of the Land in part (**11:23; 21:45; 22:4**).

Specific allotment of distinct portions in the Land was Joshua's task, as recorded in **chaps. 13–22**. Levites were placed strategically in 48 towns so that God's spiritual services through them would be reasonably within reach of the Israelites, wherever they lived.

God wanted His people to possess the Land:

1) to keep His promise (**Gen. 12:7**);
2) to set the stage for later developments in His kingdom plan (cf. **Gen. 17:8; 49:8–12**), e.g., positioning Israel for events in the periods of the kings and prophets;
3) to punish peoples that were an affront to Him because of extreme sinfulness (**Lev. 18:25**); and
4) to be a testimony to other peoples (**Josh. 2:9–11**), as God's covenant heart reached out to all nations (**Gen. 12:1–3**).

https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/macarthur_john/bible-introductions/joshua-intro.cfm

David Malick:

About Joshua:

A. He was the son of Nun, an Israelite of the tribe of Joseph (half-tribe of Ephraim) born in Egypt, who was a young man at the time of the Exodus (**Ex 33:11**)
B. His name was Hosea ("*salvation*"), but Moses called him Jehoshua or Joshua ("*YHWH saves*")
C. He was Chosen by Moses to be his assistant or personal attendant (**Ex 24:13; 32:17; 33:11**)

1. He was present on the mountain when Moses received the Law (**Ex 24:13ff**)
2. He was guardian of the tent of meeting when Moses met with YHWH

(**Ex 33:11**)
D. He was given charge of a detachment of Israelites to repel an Amalekite attack at Rephidim (**Ex 17:9**)
E. He was one of the twelve spies sent into the land who trusted in the Lord to give the land to the people (**Numbers 13:8; 14:30**)
F. He was commissioned by YHWH to become leader when Moses died (**Deut 31:14f, 23**).
G. He courageously served as a godly servant before the Lord to bring the people into the promised land

Message Statement:
Israel's occupation, distribution, and maintenance of the promised land reaches fulfillment in accordance with YHWH'S sovereign initiative and the people's obedient response to their covenant with him under Joshua.

Joshua and Judges a Study in Contrasts:

JOSHUA	JUDGES
Creates Faith	Exposes unbelief and Disobedience
Describes Israel's Possession of the Land	Describes Israel's Occupation of the Land
Occurs in Fulfillment of God's Promise	Experiences the Cursings and Blessings of the Mosaic Covenant
Presents a Unique Test of Faith	Presents the Normative Experience of a Sinful Nation
Presents the Consequences of Faithful Obedience	Presents the Consequences of Continued, Unchallenged Disobedience

Purposes of Joshua:

A. For God to bless Israel with a land that He promised in His election of Abraham and his descendants

B. For God to complete the formation of the nation as an elect people, governed by God under law, and occupying a homeland

C. To demonstrate for Israel that the gifts of the land rested in the historical fulfillment of YHWH's promises

D. To confirm that the Lord will fulfill His promises as the nation responds in obedience to the law of Moses

Alan Redpath:

I would suggest that the clue to the interpretation of this Old Testament book is found in the epistle to the Ephesians and in the epistle to the Hebrews. For example, in the third and fourth chapters of Hebrews we find that the land of Canaan is a picture of the spiritual rest and victory which may be enjoyed here on earth by every believer, a rest of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Again, the Ephesian letter speaks of life "*in the heavenly places*" – not in heaven, but in the experience of oneness with our Risen Lord in His victory here and now, the place of the fullness of God's blessing. I believe that we shall understand the real significance of the book of Joshua only if we recognize that what it is in the Old Testament the epistle to the Ephesians is in the New. This suggestion, of course, has to be substantiated from the Word of God itself.

Therefore, as in this opening chapter we survey the book and its meaning as a whole, I want you to think of the analogy between the land of Canaan and the land of full salvation which is the portion of every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

First of all, we realize that Canaan was the goal to which God was leading His people. When He appeared to Moses in the burning bush, He pledged Himself not only to deliver the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt, but also to bring them into a land flowing with mild and honey. . .

In other words, the deliverance from Egypt was only in preparation for the enjoyment of Canaan. The passover, the shedding of the blood, the crossing of the Red Sea, the destruction of Pharoah's hosts, all would have been useless unless they led to the place of rest in Canaan. Furthermore, it was only by possession of the land of Canaan that the promise of God to Abraham could be fulfilled. . .

The foundation of our faith – regeneration and justification – are deeply laid in order that they may carry the superstructure of sanctification and holiness. . . Yet is it not true that the majority of Christians come far short, and are content with a wilderness experience – justified, but not enjoying the possession of all their inheritance in Christ"

Full blessing in the Christian life is not bestowed except to eager, hungry people who press in to receive it. . . He desires every one of His children to press in against all the assaults of the enemy, that we may lay hold of that which is our inheritance in the Lord

Jesus Christ, knowing that every foe we shall ever meet in that battle already has been met and conquered by our Joshua.

Therefore, from these analogies which I have drawn I think you will see that this book of Joshua will open up for us what will be, to many people, new areas in God's plan of redemption for us all, new possibilities of spiritual victory, new secrets of the way of blessing. This book of Joshua will cease to be, if indeed it is now to any of my readers, a mere record off historic events, and will become a revelation of what God can do in and through the life that is utterly yielded to Him.

Henrietta Mears: "*Take possession of the land the Lord your God is giving you for your own*" (**Joshua 1:11**). It is God's to give! It is ours to possess!… No book has more encouragement and wisdom for the soldier of the Cross than this book of Joshua. It is full of spiritual truth… Joshua completes what Moses began! God never leaves His work unfinished. Remember the great Craftsman always has another tool sharpened and ready for use. Service awaits everyone. You can always honor God best by taking up your task with a strong and resolute heart that trusts God… Joshua led them into a life of faith. Joshua led them into possession… Remember as we study this book of Joshua that God gives—people take. This book focuses on overcoming the enemy and occupying the land. God says, "*Take it all*"… Moses must die before the children of Israel could go into Canaan. Moses could not even enter Canaan himself, to say nothing of bringing anyone else in. Israel had to wait until Moses was out of the way. To the Christian, Moses represents the law. **Joshua represents Christ**. Christ alone can lead us into the inheritance that is ours. Paul says, "*not by works, so that no one can boast*" (**Eph. 2:9**). Oh, that all Christians would simply lean on their faithful Joshua and follow Him only! Christ wants to lead us into what He has purchased on the cross for us… God called Joshua to lead the children of Israel into the Promised Land. We have the words that must have come to him in answer to a prayer for help in his great undertaking. "*As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you*" (**Joshua 1:5**)… Set your foot down. "*I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses*" (**Joshua 1:3**). Take it all. These words are just as true for us.

Ray Stedman:
The book of Joshua falls into <u>three main divisions</u>.

- Chapters **one** through **four** concern the entrance into the land and all that involves. If you are struggling right now with how to enter into a life of victory with Christ, how to move out of the wilderness of doubt, restless wanderings, and mere subsistence into the full blessing of the Spirit-led experience, then this is the section you ought to be concerned with -- Israel's entrance into the land -- out of the wilderness and into Canaan.
- Chapters **five** through **twenty-one** cover Israel's conquest of the land through many battles and conflicts as they came into the land of promise.
- Chapters **twenty-two** through **twenty-four**, including many passages from Joshua's own lips, set before us the perils and dangers in the land that we must guard against in order to remain in the place of victory that the land represents.

The land of Canaan is a picture, as we have mentioned, of the Spirit-filled life -- the life that God intended for every Christian to live. There are no exceptions to this. The Spirit-filled life is not just for certain advanced saints, but is provided by God for every one of his people. . .

The idea is, you can have all that you will take. You can have every bit of the spiritual life that you want. You will never get any more. God will never give you more than you are ready to take. So if you are not satisfied with the degree of your real experience of victory, it is because you haven't really wanted any more. You can have all that you want. "*Every place where the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you*."

One of the first things we learn in coming into this place of walking in the Spirit is that although it is a place of conflict**, every conflict can be a victory**. There need not be any defeats. It is a frontier, if you like, and there is nothing more exciting than life on a frontier. This life is especially frontier living in the victory of Christ.

The secret of living in the land includes both a promise and a presence; an obedient heart and an empowering spirit. . .

F. B. Meyer: Traces 5 parallels between the Rest of the Book of Joshua and the "*heavenlies*" described in Ephesians which stands for:

> "that spiritual experience of oneness with the risen Saviour in his resurrection and exaltation which is the privilege of all the saints, to which, indeed, they have been called, and which is theirs in him."

I. Each was the destined goal to which God's purpose led His people --
Are you still in the wilderness, or have you entered the Land of Promise? . . .
Test yourself by the promises made to Israel, which are types and shadows of eternal realities; and if they do not foreshadow facts in your spiritual experience, understand that you frustrate the purpose of God in your redemption. Leave those things which are behind to reach forth to the goodly land beyond the Jordan, apprehending that for which you were apprehended of Christ Jesus.

II. Each was impossible by the means of Law –

III. Each was entrusted to a representative –

IV. Each was missed by many –
The state of his Church must be a bitter sorrow to the heart of her Lord. Notwithstanding his agony and bloody sweat, his cross and passion; in spite of the earnest remonstrance of his Word and Spirit; thought he fair land of Canaan lies within view – et so few comparatively appear to have realized what he intended. All around, souls, redeemed by his blood, who have been numbered among his people, are perishing outside the land of blessedness in graves of worldliness, of self-indulgence, and masterful sin. We descry here and there a Joshua, a Caleb, or a tribe of Levites. But the majority seem to have come short.

V. Each was infested by many adversaries –

Luis Palau: List of the **Promises for Spiritual Victory** we should be experiencing:
1. CONTROL OVER THE LAW OF SIN (**Rom. 8:2**)
2. THE SENSE OF NEARNESS TO OUR FATHER AND THE EXPERIENCE OF HIS GUIDANCE (**Rom. 8:14-16**)
3. ALL THE EXPERIENCES OF LIFE UNDER HIS SOVEREIGN CONTROL (**Rom. 8:28**)
4. VICTORY OVER CIRCUMSTANCES (**Rom. 8:37**)
5. PEACE IN THE INNER PERSON, THE SPIRIT (**Col. 3:15**)
6. SELF-CONTROL (**2 Tim. 1:7**)

John Davis: The Book of Joshua contains at least four important theological themes which have practical values for today.

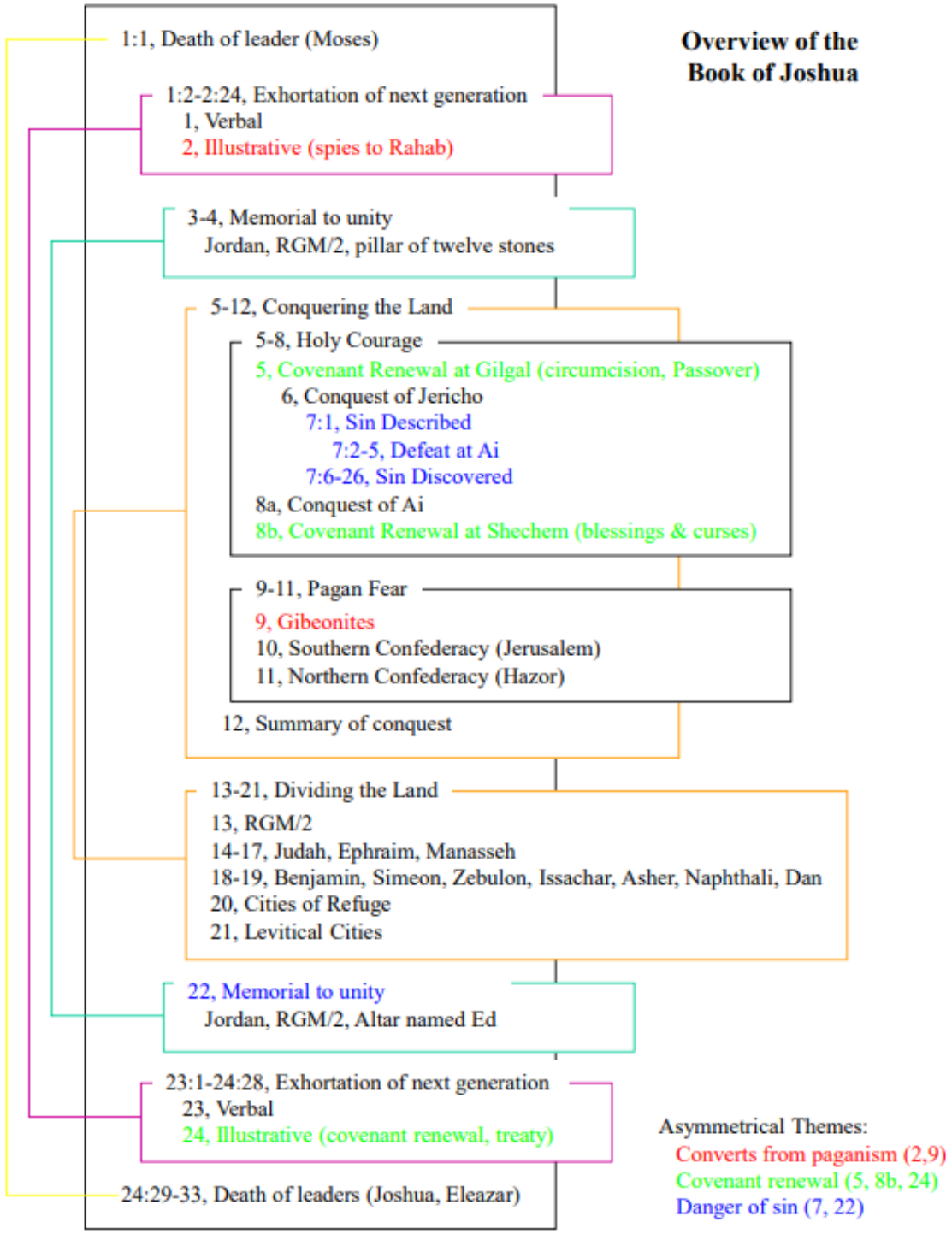
- First, the book is a lesson on the **covenant faithfulness** of Jehovah. The power of God was not only declared in covenant agreement, but also demonstrated.
- Secondly, the book demonstrates the **importance of the written word of God** (**Josh. 1:8; 8:32-35; 23:6-16; 24:26-27**). There was an authoritative body of written Scripture in the days of Joshua and this consisted of the books of Moses. There is no appeal to contemporary customs or oral tradition.
- Thirdly, the book points out the utter **failure of human effort apart from divine directives**. When Joshua and the children of Israel were faithful to God's word and His will, there was victory. When they abandoned His will in favor of their own genius, there was failure and frustration.
- Finally, the book is a commentary of **God's holiness and His judgment of sin**. The destruction of the cities of Canaan with their inhabitants was not merely to give Israel military control of the area, but it was, in effect, a judgment of God upon the wickedness of that land (cf. **Gen. 15:16; Deut. 7:5-6**).

Van Parunak: **Chiastic Structure of Book of Joshua**
The handout shows the **four-layered symmetry** of the book.

• The core, and the largest part of the book (**ch. 5-21,** 17 chapters out of 24), concerns the conquest and division of the land. Law of proportion: this is the main emphasis of the book. The focus of Joshua is on how God gives his victory over the enemy so that they can enter into the enjoyment of his blessings.

• The three layers of wrapping add important insights that show the circumstances and conditions under which this victory and blessing are to be realized.

In addition, there are three further themes that are not symmetrically arranged, but distributed between the core and the outer members.



Van Parunak, WIBC, 14 February 1999

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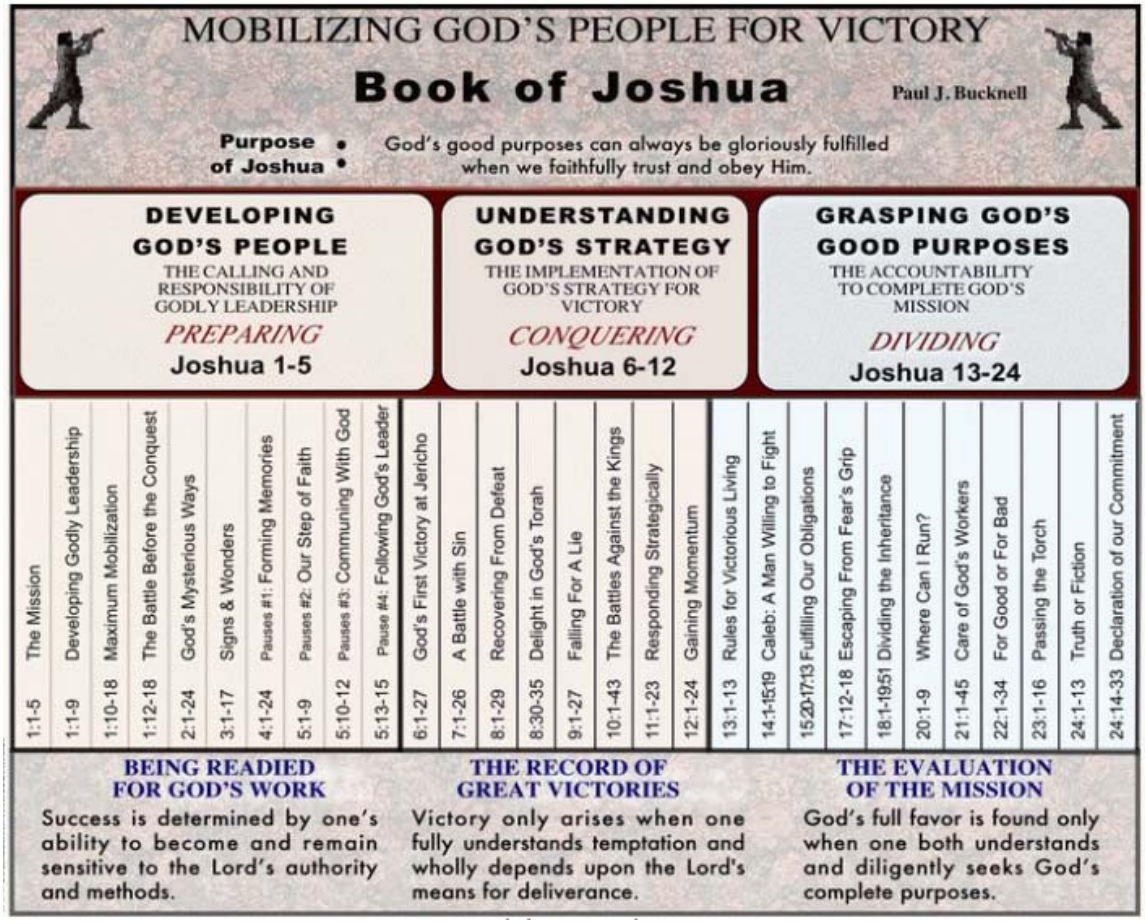
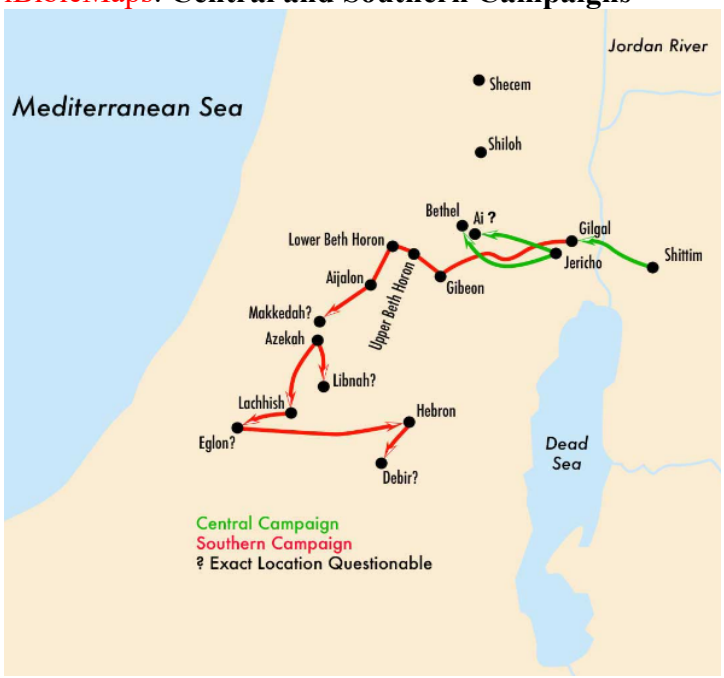
Paul Bucknell: https://www.preceptaustin.org/joshua_commentaries



iBibleMaps: **Central and Southern Campaigns**



Truth Snitch: **Northern Campaign (Joshua 11:1-15)**

JOSHUA OVERVIEW –

The book of Joshua begins where the book of Deuteronomy left off. It is a book of **Transition**. The new generation of Israelites is gathered in the plains of Moab just across the Jordan River from the Promised Land and the key city of Jericho. They are preparing to cross over the river and enter Canaan to eradicate its inhabitants according to God's command and take possession of their promised inheritance. They have mourned the loss of their respected leader Moses and are ready to rally behind the new leadership of Joshua.

As I tackle this book of Joshua I feel like one of those contestants on the Voice or American Idol where they choose to sing a song that was made famous by one of the judges – quite a daunting task. You might remember that Dr. Harmon has written a commentary on Joshua based on his sermon series delivered from this pulpit . . . so I will offer my insights recognizing that I am standing within the shadow of his expertise. We are blessed to sit under the ministry of such a faithful expositor of God's Word.

First, just a mention about the historical and geographic movement of the story line of the people of Israel through the first 17 historical books of the OT. We have just finished studying the Pentateuch – the 5 books of the Law. Only 3 of the 5 books really moved the plot line forward: Genesis, Exodus and Numbers. Leviticus and Deuteronomy were more supplemental and informational. Now the nation is going to move out once again as we track through to the Period of the Conquest, the Judges, the United Kingdom, the Divided Kingdom all the way to the post-exilic period after the Babylonian Captivity with only the 4 books of Ruth, 1&2 Chronicles, and Esther being supplemental. The 8 books beginning with Joshua that cover Israel's remaining history cover a time span of about 1000 years from the 14th to the 4th century B.C.

Authorship and Title:.
Chuck Swindoll**: Who Wrote the Book?**
The book's primary figure gives it its title. Joshua means "*Yahweh saves*," an appropriate name for the man who led Israel, under God's command, to victorious conquest of the Promised Land. Scholars believe that Joshua himself or a scribe under his direction penned most of the book. Early chapters include firsthand experiences (the NIV uses the pronouns "*we*" and "*us*" in **Joshua 5:1, 6**, for example) and military details worthy of being known and recorded by a general. **Joshua 24:26** refers to Joshua writing a portion of the book himself. After Joshua's death, the high priests Eleazar or Phinehas may have supplemented some material in this book that alludes to events after the conquest (**15:13–19; 19:47; 24:29–33**).

So we are immediately reminded that the **Commander in Chief** of God's troops is actually the Lord – Jesus is the one who conquers our enemies and gives us the victory. Joshua is simply his human instrument.

(**1:1-5**) Mission of Joshua

> "*Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying, Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving*

to them, to the sons of Israel. [3] Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. [4] From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun, will be your territory. [5] No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you."

The boundaries of the Promised Land are given here – a very large chunk of territory that will need to be apportioned out.

The Assurance of God's Presence is not a passive thing – as if God stands by and watches us fail. It is an Active Presence that facilitates our success.

Joshua is presented as a **type of Christ**. It is important to recognize that the great OT leaders of Moses, Joshua, David, etc. are all presented as types of Christ who is the Head of the Church. They are not types of local pastors. Even though the lessons we learn from their leadership all **apply** to how Christ's undershepherds need to perform their duties with authority delegated from Christ. In other words we must never lose sight of the invisible but very real leadership of Jesus Christ over every aspect of God's kingdom agenda. It is so easy to place our trust in human leaders rather than in the God who is accomplishing our victory.

Big Idea: Claiming God's promises for **spiritual victory** requires engaging and conquering the enemy by grace through faith.

This is a book about **spiritual victory in this life** – not about reaching the rest of heaven in eternity. A key to understanding the book is defining what the **rest of Canaan** involves. Some have suggested that crossing the Jordan River into Canaan is parallel to entering into heaven. But there will be no more enemies for us to face and conquer when we reach glory. There will be no more giants in fortified cities to threaten our peace and prosperity. The victory spoken of in Joshua is one of claiming and appropriating by faith the victory the Lord has already provided for us in this life. How sad that so many Christians are living defeated lives. Maybe you are struggling today with really experiencing the victory that the Apostle Paul talks about in **Romans 6-8**. Yes we still struggle with indwelling sin. *But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*. [**1 Cor. 15:57**] *We are more than conquerors through Him who loves us* (Rom. 8:37). So this is a very **practical book** for our sanctification.

Quick Summary of the book:
Spiritual Victory is the great theme of the Book of Joshua as God fulfills His covenant promise to lead Abraham's descendants into possession of the promised land of Canaan despite tremendous obstacles and powerful enemies. The people under Joshua's leadership needed to engage the enemy by trusting fully in the Lord and turning away from sin. The distribution of the conquered land reminds us of the spiritual rest that comes to God's people as they enjoy the blessings of victory. This account stands in contrast to the Book of Numbers which highlighted the failure and the wandering in the wilderness of a people who did not inherit the blessing because of unbelief. Consecration is the essential preparation for spiritual conflict. Victory gained must still be maintained by an ongoing commitment of faith and obedience.

The importance of Choosing Life –

- That is how Deuteronomy ended with a challenge from Moses as they prepare to enter the Promised Land on their mission to conquer and possess it
  Deut. 30:19-20 "*I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, [20] by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them*."

- That is how Joshua will end with a challenge issued after the successful conquest of the land – **Josh. 24:15** "*And if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD*."

The Structure could not be more simple – 24 chapters – divided right in half

- I. (**Chaps. 1-12**) Conquering the Land – Engaging and Eliminating the Enemies – Preparation and Warfare
- II. (**Chaps. 13-24**) Dividing up the Land and Settling it

This simple structure is supported by looking at the parallel closing verses of each of the major 2 sections – clarifying what God is accomplishing

Purpose of Book:

11:23 – last verse of the conquest section of the land
"*So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD had spoken to Moses, and Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. Thus the land had rest from war*."

21:43 – last verse of distribution section
"*So the LORD gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it*."

Demonstrates the **faithfulness of God** to his covenant promises to Abraham and the patriarchs; This fulfillment was crucial – 3 things make up a nation:

- common people – descendants of Abraham through the promised son Isaac
- defined constitution – clearly expounded in Deuteronomy
- possession of their own land – 3rd aspect of their nationhood now realized.

Timeframe:

- One month involved before crossing into the land – March to April of 1405 B.C. – right after the death of Moses
- 7 Year period of conquering the land – 1405–1398 B.C – not an easy task.
  Caleb reported to be 85 years old by the time of the completion of the conquest (**14:10**);

There will still pockets of resistance remaining; areas where the Israelites had not been aggressive enough in claiming their inheritance

- 18 year period involved in settling the land – 1398–1380 B.C. -- when Joshua dies (110 years old)

We will attempt to work our way through the book this morning, chapter by chapter according to a somewhat expanded outline (spending more time on the first half of the book – **Chaps. 1-12**). We will touch on some of the major highlights of each chapter.

I. (1-5) ENGAGING THE ENEMY — ENTERING THE PROMISED LAND
Spiritual, Moral, Physical and Military Preparation for the Conquest

II. (6-12) ELIMINATING THE ENEMY – TAKING POSSESSION OF THE PROMISED LAND

Joshua will lead 3 major campaigns – Victory will be achieved by faith and obedience rather than by military superiority or skillful tactics

A. **6-9** Center Campaign – slices land in half – prevents any powerful Canaanite coalition; brilliant military tactic
B. **10** Southern Campaign
C. **11** Northern Campaign
D. **12** Summary – will of Canaanites broken; major pockets of resistance conquered

III. (13-22) EARMARKING THE PROMISED LAND FOR ITS DIVINELY INTENDED PURPOSE – DISTRIBUTING IT AMONG THE TRIBES

[skip over most of this section]

A. **13** – Trans Jordan property to 2.5 tribes on other side of Jordan River
B. **14-15** -- Judah = crucial central tribe – Jesus would come from Judah – given significant focus; Jerusalem and Bethlehem in this territory
C. **16-17** -- 2 sons of Joseph – Ephraim and Manasseh
D. **18-19** -- other 7 tribes
E. **20** – 6 Cities of Refuge
F. **21** – 48 Cities for Levites

(23-24) EPILOGUE -- EXHORTING THE NATION OF ISREAL ONE FINAL TIME TO CONTINUED COVENANT OBEDIENCE

I. (1-5) ENGAGING THE ENEMY — ENTERING THE PROMISED LAND

A. (**Chap. 1**) Commission to Go to War – Transition from Moses to Joshua
CLAIMING GOD'S PROMISES FOR SPIRITUAL VICTORY REQUIRES A COMMITMENT TO COURAGE AND OBEDIENCE

Once they have crossed the Jordan River, they are fully committed; no turning back …no calling the rescue helicopters for a quick extraction … God is not going to part the waters and facilitate their retreat … Victory or Death … those are the options.

1. **Divine Charge and Reassurance (1:5-9)**

"*No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you.* [6] *Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.* [7] *Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go.* [8] *This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.* [9] *Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go*."

Characteristics necessary for victory: bravery, valor, fearlessness, heroism, confidence, nerve, guts, grit, backbone
Engaging the enemy on the spiritual battlefield … that takes courage!
How can God command courage?

Presence of the Lord with us guarantees our success – cf. the importance of the Shekinah Glory and the ark of the covenant – cf. the Incarnation of Christ as He comes to dwell among His people – God with us – and then sends us His Holy Spirit to indwell and empower us

Attention to the Word of God is our key resource – track this throughout the book

2. **Everybody Must Pull Their Weight – No Slackers (1:12-15)**

Some people have trouble catching the vision --
Gives a reminder to the Trans Jordan tribes – give priority to fighting with the nation; then you can go possess your land

3. **Commitment to Obey God's Appointed Leadership Unconditionally (1:16-18)**

Conclusion: "*ONLY BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS*" Repeating of this key charge

B. (**Chap. 2**) Avoiding the Grasshopper Mentality – The Mission of the Two Spies
We talked about this danger in the earlier account in Numbers of the first mission of the spies – where only Joshua and Caleb brought back a positive report. Here we have the account of Rahab providentially hiding the spies so they could complete their mission.
Grasshopper Mentality = that mindset that sees obstacles as Giants and ourselves as powerless grasshoppers.

GOD ASSURES HIS PEOPLE OF VICTORY BY EXPOSING THE FEAR AND DEFEATIST ATTITUDE OF OUR ENEMIES
(HERE HE USES A PROPHETIC PROSTITUTE = RAHAB)

We are not the ones who should be in fear and trembling. The victory has been won for us; Satan was defeated at the cross. Our enemies know that they cannot stand against the power of the Almighty. They are ready to be driven out. We must step out in faith and take the land that has been promised to us.

SPIRITUAL RECONAISSANCE: SWOT ANALYSIS – Jericho a strategic city on the crossroads of important trade routes – guarded by a 30' high wall - in fact a double wall --- 12 feet between the thinner outer wall and thicker inner wall
STRENGTHS / WEAKNESSES / OPPORTUNITIES / THREATS – I used to be in charge of performing these in my business management role -- whether with the Caterpillar dealership or with Johnson & Towers – we didn't just try to grow our business in haphazard fashion – we had limited resources and needed to deploy them strategically – make a plan and work the plan

How did they end up in the house of Rahab? Providence of God – a place where it would not be unusual to have strangers coming and going

Moral Problem – Was it legitimate for Rahab to lie in order to protect the spies from Jericho's soldiers?

- Some people answer No and claim that such lying is always wrong

- But look at how the NT Scriptures commend Rahab as a model of Gentile faith
  - Commended for her faith in welcoming and protecting the spies in **Heb. 11:31** "*By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace*"

  - Commended for her model of faith in action; living faith in **James 2:25** "*And in the same way was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works, when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way*?"

  - Commended most importantly by being included in the royal line of Joseph – **Matt. 1:5** – amazing grace of God to so elevate this former prostitute Establishing the legal right of Jesus to be the promised Messiah of the Seed of David; Her descendants became the kings of Israel and Judah!

- I would argue that in times of war and spying there is a legitimate need for deception –
  - How would you respond if enemies came into your home looking for your daughters – Oh they are hiding in the attic, let me get them for you??
  - What about deception in sports – When the QB fakes a handoff on a play action pass, does he call out: Just a fake .. I am actually planning to pass the ball
  - I don't think this legitimizes an entire mindset of situation ethics

2:8-11 Insight into the Victory God would Provide

"*Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof,* [9] *and said to the men, 'I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you.* [10] *For we have heard how the*

LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. [11] *And when we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath*.'"

C. (**Chap. 3**) Avoiding the Victim Mentality – Crossing the Jordan
STEPPING OUT IN FAITH SEEMS RISKY BUT IS THE ONLY COURSE OF ACTION THAT ALLOWS THE LIVING GOD TO WORK ON OUR BEHALF

Chapters 3-4 belong together – both discuss the crossing of the Jordan River – reminiscent of the crossing of the Red Sea earlier.

To achiever spiritual victory in our Christian walk we must avoid **the Victim Mentality --**
3 Manifestations of a **Victim Mentality**: (Instead of a Victor Mentality) – children of Israel were locked into these types of negative thought patterns as they wandered for 40 years in the wilderness … missing out on God's best for them –

1) Playing the **Beat Yourself Up** Game (**Woe is Me** Game) -- Mindset that bad things are destined to happen to you – expectation that things will go wrong; self-pity party
We aren't going to have anything to drink – We aren't going to have anything to eat …
God has led us out into this wilderness and forgotten all about us …
Meanwhile, God is performing one spectacular miracle after another to demonstrate His glory and to show the people His Providential love and provision for them.

2) Playing the **Blame** Game -- Mindset that it is not ultimately your fault for your bad lot in life – blaming environment or someone else; never facing your own responsibility – Placed the blame on Moses and Aaron – determined to appoint new leaders that would take them safely back to bondage in Egypt.

3) Playing the **Bitterness** Game – sense of resignation; giving up
"*Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness*!"

Stepping out in Faith is the only answer to the Victim Mentality
4 INITIATIVES IN STEPPING OUT IN FAITH

1. (:1) PUT IT IN GEAR WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT --
"*Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and he and all the sons of Israel set out from Shittim and came to the Jordan, and they lodged there before they crossed*."

2. (:2-6) PURSUE THE PRESENCE OF GOD -- FAITH RALLIES AROUND THE PRESENCE OF GOD – COUNTING ON HIS BLESSING – STAYING FOCUSED ON HIM
"When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God with the Levitical priests carrying it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it."

(:5) Consecration Precedes Any Demonstration of God's Power

"Then Joshua said to the people, 'Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.'"

3. (:7-13) PROVE THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE POWER OF GOD -- FAITH THAT IS WILLING TO TAKE GREAT RISKS WILL SEE DRAMATIC RESULTS -- The Demonstration of God's Awesome Power

"*And it shall come about when the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off, and the waters which are flowing down from above shall stand in one heap*."

4.(:14-17) PERSEVERE IN ORDER TO FULLY CARRY OUT GOD'S PLAN

I like the worship song from Singspiration Music:

Got any rivers you think are uncrossable?
Got any mountains you can't tunnel through?
God specializes in things thought impossible –
He does the things others cannot do.

Review:

- Avoid the Grasshopper Mentality
- Avoid the Victim Mentality
- Now:

D. (**Chap. 4**) Avoiding the Bigshot Mentality – Commemorating Spiritual Milestones
ESTABLISHING PHYSICAL MEMORIALS TO SPIRITUAL MILESTONES REINFORCES THE REALITY OF GOD'S POWER IN OUR LIVES AND ENHANCES OUR WORSHIP

The Big Shot Mentality = looking back at our past experience and giving ourselves too much credit instead of giving God all the glory – especially dangerous for spiritual leaders. We love to cultivate a hero worship type of mentality – look at all the memorials we erect to key leaders (usually after they have passed away).

Why has the Lord ordained that we practice the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper? We need visual reminders of spiritual truths.

2 Special Stone Monuments:

1) **Stones of Burial** – set up in the middle of the Jordan River **(:8)**
2) **Stones of Resurrection** – set up on the west bank in Gilgal **(:3)**

Leaving a Legacy for the next generation of God's saving Power
Gives you the opportunity to answer the question: "*What do these signs mean*?"

Perhaps you have heard the story of the little boy who asked his father, "How tall is the Eiffel Tower?" His father said, "I don't know, son; I don't have any idea." The boy said,

"How far is it from here to China?" His dad said, "I just don't know, son." "Well, how deep is the deepest part of the ocean?" His father said, "I really don't have any idea." The little boy said, "Daddy, how-oh never mind." His dad said, "That's all right, son. Ask questions. It's the only way you can get answers!"

What God has done in the past for others, He can do in the present for you:
4:23 – the nation was never to forget these 2 great miracles that God accomplished for them:
"*For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed, just as the Lord your God had done to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed*."
4:24 – Personal Application
1. Impressing our Enemies and Witnessing to the World: Reinforcing the Reality of God's Power in Our Lives
"*that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty*"
2. Enhancing our Worship and Commitment to God's Authority in our lives
"*so that you may fear the Lord your God forever*."

E. (**Chap. 5**) First Things First – Stepping Out in Faith Requires Submission to the Sign of the Covenant

MAKING HOLINESS AND WORSHIP TOP PRIORITY PREPARE GOD'S PEOPLE FOR VICTORY IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE
3 episodes in this chapter that involve spiritual preparation and consecration for Conquest:
1) Ceremony of circumcision – the sign of God's covenant with His people (:**2-9**)

Doug Goins: Imagine yourself as an Israeli soldier who has just been circumcised, waiting to get better, looking at this city in front of you, and thinking, "Why couldn't we have done this on the other side of the river? We can't move for a few days, and if they come after us, we're sitting ducks." It was a tremendous act of faith to remain in their places, waiting to heal. Joshua had to exercise faith in performing this amazing act on all these men. The people had to wait, obey the Lord, and trust him even though they were weak, in pain, and vulnerable to attack at this time. But the spiritual reality is that in weakness they were made strong.

2) Celebration of Passover (:**10-12**)

Kenneth Gangel: The celebration of Passover was important because the Israelites needed a reminder of God's commitment to them. Their dramatic and miraculous deliverance from Egypt provided a powerful demonstration of God's love for the nation and his intention to settle them in the promised land. Since most of the Israelites present were not even born at the time of the exodus, this memorial celebration became crucial.

Then their diet was upgraded (**v. 11-12**) and they started to eat the first fruits of the Promised Land.

3) Vision of the Commander In Chief (:**13-15**)

"*Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, 'Are you for us or for our adversaries?' [14] And he said, 'No, rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the LORD.'* [Seems like a strange answer] *And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, 'What has my lord to say to his servant?' [15] And the captain of the LORD's host said to Joshua, 'Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.' And Joshua did so*."

cf. Moses at burning bush; preincarnate theophany – appearance of Christ prior to His incarnation
This will not ultimately be a conflict between the Israelites and the Canaanites … it is the Lord Himself who is in charge and who will win the conflict as we submit to His leadership. It is the Lord's team that we must choose to align ourselves with.

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II. (6-12) ELIMINATING THE ENEMY – TAKING POSSESSION OF THE PROMISED LAND

A. (**Chap. 6**) Central Campaign Begins -- Faith Celebrates Victory Before the Walls Even Fall
WHEN PROPERLY PREPPED FOR BATTLE, GOD'S ARMY VANQUISHES ITS FOES BY A SIMPLE VICTORY SHOUT THAT UNLEASHES SUPERNATURAL POWER AND TOPPLES STRONGHOLDS

1) (:**1-5**) Unorthodox Battle Plan – essentially a ritual ceremony – a victory parade demonstrating faith in the Lord alone
- Jericho a sinful city and a strategic city
- 6 days of obedient repetition; 1 day of intensified activity
- Prominence of the ark of the covenant and the ministry of the priests
- Preservation of Rahab and her family (**v. 17, 22-25**)
- Utter destruction (**v. 21)**
- Exaltation of the Captain of our salvation **(:27)**

"*So the LORD was with Joshua, and his* [Joshua's] *fame was in all the land*."

B. (**Chap. 7**) Sin Snatches Defeat From the Jaws of Victory
THE MOMENTUM OF DEFEAT SNOWBALLS UNTIL RENEWED CONSECRATION DEALS WITH THE SIN IN OUR MIDST

- The sin of Achan leads to surprising defeat at Ai
- The anger of God
- The judgment against Israel
- The initial wrong response on the part of Joshua – making false assumptions
- Need for Renewed Consecration

God's response might seem like **overkill**; we recoil at reality and severity of God's holy justice; we might tend to excuse Achan; maybe God should give the poor guy a break; commands of God clearly communicated; items were banned without slightest ambiguity; Achan rationalized his disobedience; you cannot allow sin in the camp; don't trifle with God's holiness; you reap what you sow; Do I have any idols under my tent?

Chuck Swindoll: Four lessons from **chapter 7**:

(1) Surprising defeats can often be traced back to secret sins.
(2) Very private sins can lead to very public consequences.
(3) Temptation's lies can blind us to reality and deafen us to consequences.
(4) Sweeping acts of disobedience call for severe responses of discipline.

A different kind of memorial of stones (**v. 26**)

"*And they raised over him a great heap of stones that stands to this day, and the LORD turned from the fierceness of His anger. Therefore the name of that place has been called the valley of Achor* [= trouble] *to this day*."

C. (**Chap. 8**) Regaining Lost Ground – the Spirit Succeeds Where the Flesh Failed

Conquest of Ai

OUR MERCIFUL GOD STANDS READY TO LEAD US INTO VICTORY (WHERE PREVIOUSLY WE HAVE FAILED) BY ENCOURAGING US TO COURAGE AND FAITH IN OBEYING HIS BATTLE PLAN AND ALLOWING HIM TO BLESS INSTEAD OF CURSE

FOLLOWING GOD'S BATTLE PLAN GRANTS VICTORY WHERE PREVIOUSLY THERE HAD BEEN DEFEAT

Vs. 24-25 – How can God Command Total Annihilation of an Entire City?

Many people consider this to be a serious moral problem.

- A holy war – commanded by God – not Joshua's idea
- Cup of iniquity overflowing; Mercy exhausted – immoral and depraved religion
- Foreshadowing of final judgment and destruction
- Israelites function as instruments of God's judgment
- Prevent contamination of God's people (cf. surgeon cutting out cancer)
- Concept of Harem – everything devoted to the Lord

11:20 – most severe verse in the book – God presents Himself as central actor—story of the God who conquers

"*For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, to meet Israel in battle in order that he might utterly destroy them, that they might receive no mercy, but that he might destroy them, just as the LORD had commanded Moses*."

Question: Why does God let any of us continue to live?

(:34-35) stood and listened to Joshua reread to them all of the law of Moses – powerful time of teaching

D. (**Chap. 9**) Rash Commitments – Deception Takes Advantage of Our Limited Perception -- Spiritual Victory is Compromised When We Make Rash Commitments Apart from Seeking the Guidance of the Lord
SPIRITUAL VICTORY IS COMPROMISED WHEN WE MAKE RASH COMMITMENTS APART FROM SEEKING THE GUIDANCE OF THE LORD

Crafty scheme concocted by the inhabitants of Gibeon to deceive the Israelites and escape God' judgment. Presented evidence to back up their story.
Crucial mistake (:**14**) *they did not ask for the counsel of the Lord*.
Went ahead and presumptuously entered into a peace treaty that would come back to bite them later on.

Joshua did his best to try to mitigate a bad situation – cursed them by consigning them to act as slaves by making them woodcutters and water carriers (**vs. 27**).

E. (**Chap. 10**) Southern Campaign -- Unlimited Divine Weapons and Resources –
We Can Rout Our Enemies By Relying on the Lord's Unlimited Weapons and Resources

- DEADLY TARGETED HAIL (vs. 11)

> "*And it came about as they fled from before Israel, while they were at the descent of Beth-horon, that the LORD threw large stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died; there were more who died from the hailstones than those whom the sons of Israel killed with the sword*."

- MIRACULOUS EXTENDED DAYLIGHT (vs. 13-14)

> "*So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, Until the nation avenged themselves of their enemies. Is it not written in the book of Jashar? And the sun stopped in the middle of the sky, and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day.* [14] *And there was no day like that before it or after it, when the LORD listened to the voice of a man; for the LORD fought for Israel*."

Coalition of 5 kings launch campaign against Gibeon; Joshua keeps his word – stands by the treaty he had made with Gibeonites despite their deception

Documents the victories the Lord gave Joshua in the southern campaign.
Theme: **vs. 42 "***And Joshua captured all these kings and their lands at one time, because the LORD, the God of Israel, fought for Israel*."

Conquest Isn't Over Until It's Over
WHEN GOD CALLS US TO VICTORY WE MUST FINISH OFF THE ENEMY -- GOD GIVES THE VICTORY WHEN HIS PEOPLE UNITE TO ENGAGE THE ENEMY BEHIND THE LEADERSHIP OF HIS ANOINTED COMMANDER
I hate it in movies when the good guy strikes the bad guy down but then doesn't finish him off. Next thing you know he rises back up and attacks and you have to defeat him all over again.

F. (**Chap. 11**) Victory over the Northern Coalition in Obedience to the Lord's Commands
WE CAN BE CONFIDENT OF VICTORY WHEN WE OBEY GOD'S COMMANDS AND EXECUTE HIS GAMEPLAN

(:1-3) Impressive Geographic Coalition

"*Then it came about, when Jabin king of Hazor heard of it, that he sent to Jobab king of Madon and to the king of Shimron and to the king of Achshaph, 2 and to the kings who were of the north in the hill country, and in the Arabah-- south of Chinneroth and in the lowland and on the heights of Dor on the west-- 3 to the Canaanite on the east and on the west, and the Amorite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Jebusite in the hill country, and the Hivite at the foot of Hermon in the land of Mizpeh.*"

(:4-5) Impressive Number of Forces and Sophistication of Weaponry

"*And they came out, they and all their armies with them, as many people as the sand that is on the seashore, with very many horses and chariots. 5 So all of these kings having agreed to meet, came and encamped together at the waters of Merom, to fight against Israel.*"

(:6) Divine Initiative in Promising Victory

"*Then the LORD said to Joshua, 'Do not be afraid because of them, for tomorrow at this time I will deliver all of them slain before Israel; you shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire.'*"

(:23) Overall Summary

Joshua recounted a story of contradictions. On the one hand, God gave the land that He had promised to the nation. On the other hand, the people failed to possess the land completely, allowing some inhabitants to remain. God fulfilled His side of the bargain, but the Israelites did not finish the job. The Canaanite peoples became a damaging influence on Israel as years went by.

G. Chap. 12 – Summary of Kings defeated by Israel

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III.(13-22) EARMARKING THE PROMISED LAND FOR ITS DIVINELY INTENDED PURPOSE – DISTRIBUTING IT AMONG THE TRIBES

A. (13:1-7) Joshua's Final Clean-Up Instructions From the Lord – Specific Areas of Canaan Still Needed to be Conquered and Possessed
B. (13:8-33) Earmarking Land for the Eastern Tribes (Reubenites and Gadites) — Transjordan
C. (14:1 – 19:51) Earmarking Land for the Western Tribes
D. (20:1-9) Designation of the 6 Cities of Refuge
   a person could go for protection if involved in manslaughter but not homicide
E. (21:1-45) Designation of the 48 Levitical Cities
F. (22:1-34) Dismissal of Eastern Tribes Back to Their Homes

(23-24) EPILOGUE -- EXHORTING THE NATION OF ISREAL ONE FINAL TIME TO CONTINUED COVENANT OBEDIENCE

A. (**Chap. 23**) JOSHUA'S FAREWELL CHARGE:
STAY FAITHFUL TO THE LORD IF YOU WANT TO ENJOY GOD'S PROMISED BLESSINGS

B. (**Chap. 24**) DECISION TIME – AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE . . .
CONSIDERATION OF COVENANT HISTORY SHOULD PROMPT RENEWAL OF COVENANT COMMITMENT

- **(:1-13)** REVIEW OF SIGNIFICANT MILESTONES IN COVENANT HISTORY
- **(:14-24)** RENEWAL OF COVENANT COMMITMENT
- **(:25-28)** RATIFICATION OF COVENANT AFFIRMATION

Almost sounds like Joshua is trying to dissuade the people from making the commitment to serve the Lord. Actually Joshua trying to make sure they understand the seriousness of the choice they are making -- **24:14ff** – We will serve the Lord our God and obey Him.

(:29-33) EPILOGUE – ASSOCIATION OF JOSHUA'S BURIAL WITH THOSE OF JOSEPH AND ELEAZAR –
ALL IN THE PROMISED LAND AS A TESTIMONY TO THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

WHY STUDY THIS BOOK?

- To understand the intensity of the spiritual warfare of the believer (both as an individual and corporately as a local church) and what faith steps we need to take to successfully engage the enemy and overcome all obstacles

- To consecrate our hearts and then develop a commitment to courage and obedience in following the Lord's battle plan

- To appreciate that God gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ as we step out in faith and trust Him rather than in our own resources

- To learn lessons about spiritual leadership

- To grow in our confidence that God is faithful to keep His promises

- To take our sin seriously in light of the holiness of God who cannot compromise with sin

- To acknowledge God's sovereignty over all the nations and over all the forces that would oppose His kingdom agenda

- To expect God to accomplish great things

OUTLINE OF JOSHUA

TAKING GOD'S GIFT OF THE PROMISED LAND – SPIRITUAL VICTORY IN THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

BIG IDEA:
CLAIMING GOD'S PROMISES FOR SPIRITUAL VICTORY REQUIRES ENGAGING AND ELIMINATING THE ENEMY BY STRENGTH AND COURAGE FORTIFIED BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

I. (1:1 – 5:15) ENGAGING THE ENEMY -- ENTERING THE PROMISED LAND

A. (1:1-18) Commission to Go to War – Transition from Moses to Joshua -- Claiming God's Promises for Spiritual Victory Requires a Commitment to Courage and Obedience

1. (:1-9) The Commission of Joshua – "*Be Strong and Courageous*"
   a. (:1-5) Reaffirming the Mission and the Promises
   b. (:6-9) Responsibilities and Resources
2. (:10-18) The Charge to the People – "*Be Strong and Courageous*"
   a. (:10-11) Preparations for Invasion – Logistical Details of Organization
   b. (:12-15) Everybody Must Pull Their Weight
   c. (:16-18a) Commitment to Obey God's Appointed Leadership Unconditionally
   (:18b) Conclusion

B. (2:1-24) Avoiding the Grasshopper Mentality – The Mission of the Two Spies – Spiritual Reconnaissance (SWOT Analysis) – God Assures His People of Victory by Exposing the Fear and Defeatist Attitude of Our Enemies

1. (:1-7) Providential Protection Makes Us Untouchables and Frustrates Our Enemies
   a. (:1a) Visualizing Victory –Top Secret Reconnaissance Mission of the Two Spies
   b. (:1b) Friends in Low Places – the Assistance of Rahab the Harlot
   c. (:2-3) Enemies in High Places -- Blown Cover
   d. (:4-6) Providential Protection -- Risky Protection Provided by Rahab
   e. (:7) Futile Opposition -- Rabbit Trail Pursuit
2. (:8-11) Prophetic Insight Reveals the Defeatist State of the Enemy
   a. (:8-9) Summary Admission of Defeat
   b (:10) Conclusive Examples of the Power of the Lord
   c. (:11a) Losing All Heart
   d. (:11b) Confession of Absolute Sovereignty
3. (:12-21) Passover Type Deliverance (Redemption) Comes From a Simple Covenant Commitment
   a. (:12-13) Plea for Covenant Mercy
   b. (:14) Brokering the Deal
   c. (:15-16) Logistics of Escape for the Two Spies
   d. (:17-21) Logistics of Deliverance for Rahab and her Family

(:22-24) Conclusion: Spies Report Back to Joshua with Message of Assurance of Victory

C. (3:1-17) Avoiding the Victim Mentality – Crossing the Jordan –

Stepping Out in Faith Seems Risky But is the Only Course of Action That Allows the Living God to Work on Our Behalf – 4 Initiatives in Stepping Out in Faith

1. (:1) Put It in Gear When the Time is Right --
Introduction – Faith Involves a Commitment to Act on God's Promises and Wait upon God's Timing
2. (:2-6) Pursue the Presence of God --
Faith Rallies around the Presence of God – Counting on His Blessing – Staying Focused on Him
   a. (:2-3) God Always Leads the Way – We Must Follow
   b. (:4) Do Not Act Presumptuously and Profane what is Sacred
   c. (:5) Consecration Precedes Any Demonstration of God's Power
   d. (:6) Obedient, Faithful Leaders Encourage the Faith of God's People
3. (:7-13) Prove the Sufficiency of the Power of God --
Faith That is Willing to Take Great Risks Will See Dramatic Results
   a. (:7) God Validates His Chosen Leaders to Confirm Their Calling (or Giftedness)
   b. (:8) Faith Puts Us At Risk Where We Then are Called to Stand Still and See the Deliverance of the Lord
   c. (:9-13) The Demonstration of the Power of God Assures Us of Victory Over Our Powerful Enemies
4. (:14-17) Persevere in Order to Fully Carry Out God's Plan --
Stepping Out in Faith Requires the Perseverance to Fully Carry Out God's Plan
   a. The Obedience of the Priests
   b. The Obedience of the People
   c. The Sovereign Control Over Nature and Circumstances
   d. The Dominant, Victorious Presence of the Ark of the Covenant

D. (4:1-24) <u>Avoiding the Bigshot Mentality</u> – Commemorating Spiritual Milestones -- Establishing Physical Memorials to Spiritual Milestones Reinforces the Reality of God's Power in Our Lives and Enhances Our Worship

1. (:1-7) Communicating the Legacy of God's Saving Power to the Next Generations – Instructions for Establishing the Memorial
   a. (:1-3) Instructions from the Lord to Joshua Re Establishing the Memorial
   b. (:4-5) Instructions Relayed from Joshua to the People
   c. (:6-7) Explanation of the Significance of the Memorial
2. (:8-14) Exalting the Captain of the Lord's Army – Who Leads His People Into Victory in the Promised Land -- But Avoiding the Bigshot Mentality
   a. (:8) Obedience to the Lord's / Joshua's Instructions
   b. (:9) Second Monument Created by Joshua in the Jordan River
   c. (:10-11) Central Focus on the Ark of the Covenant
   d. (:12-13) Commendation of Certain Tribes ??
   e. (:14) Exaltation of Joshua
3. (:15-18) Focusing Attention on the Ark of the Covenant as the Key to God's Miraculous Power
   a. (:15-16) Command from the Lord to Joshua
   b. (:17) Command Relayed from Joshua to the Priests
   c. (:18) Miraculous Power of God Demonstrated in the Reversal of the Miracle
4. (:19-24) Explaining the Significance of the Memorial

a. (:19-20) Erecting the Memorial at Gilgal
b. (:21-23) Recounting the Miraculous Event
c. (:24) Restating the Special Significance

E. (5:1-15) <u>First Things First</u> – Stepping Out in Faith Requires Submission to the Sign of the Covenant –
Making Holiness and Worship Top Priority Prepare God's People for Victory in Spiritual Warfare

(:1) Disheartened Enemies – The Testimony of God's Awesome Power Reduces the Most Powerful of Enemies to Demoralized Defeatists

a. Powerful Enemies
b. Testimony of God's Awesome Power
c. Demoralized Defeatists

1. (:2-7) Making Holiness Top Priority (Demonstrated Here in Submission to Circumcision) Prepares God's People for Victory in Spiritual Warfare

a. (:2-3) Obeying the Command to Circumcise the People – Covenant Commitment
b. (:4-7) Explaining the Need for Circumcision at this Juncture – Covenant Failure

2. (:8-12) Making Worship Top Priority (Demonstrated Here in the Celebration of the Passover) Prepares God's People for Victory in Spiritual Warfare

a. (:8) Vulnerability (and time to reflect/worship) During the Healing Process
b. (:9) Victory Vindication
c. (:10) Observance of Passover
d. (:11-12) Diet Upgraded – First Fruits of the Promised Land

3. (:13-15) The Vision of the Commander-In-Chief Reinforces the Priority of Worship and Holiness

a. (:13-14a) The Surprising Visitor – Vision of the Commander in Chief
b. (:14b) Reinforcing the Priority of Worship
c. (:15) Reinforcing the Priority of Holiness

II. (6:1 – 12:24) ELIMINATING THE ENEMY – TAKING POSSESSION OF THE PROMISED LAND

(Remember: the goal was not just to conquer but to eliminate the enemy)

A. (6:1 – 8:35) Central Campaign

1. (6:1-27) <u>Faith Celebrates Victory Before the Walls Even Fall</u> –
When Properly Prepped for Battle, God's Army Vanquishes Its Foes by a Simple Victory Shout That Unleashes Supernatural Power and Lays Claim to God's Promises

a. (:1-5) Unorthodox Battle Plan
   1) (:1) The Enemy: Secure and Impenetrable (but Fearful)
   2) (:2) The Promise: the Gift of Victory and Conquest over Powerful Foes
   3) (:3-5) The Game Plan
b. (:6-14) Six Days of Obedient Repetition – the Victory Parade of the Army of God
   1) (:6) Ark of the Covenant Remains the Focus
   2) (:7-9) Armed Men Leading the Procession and Guarding the Rear

3) (:10) Restrained Silence Leading Up to Climactic Shout of Victory
4) (:11-14) Six Days of Repetition Recounted

c. (:15-21) Seventh Day of Intensified Activity and Climactic Conquest
1) (:15) Seven Circuits on the Seventh Day
2) (:16) Climactic Shout Expressing Confidence in Victory from the Lord
3) (:17-19) Valuable Loot Devoted to the Lord – Warning about the Ban
4) (:20-21) Climactic Conquest: Flattening the Walls

d. (:22-25) Saving Faithful Rahab (and Family)
1) (:22-23) Rescuing Rahab's Family
2) (:24) Burning the City (with the exception of the valuable metals)
3) (:25) Perpetual Testimony of Rahab

(:26-27) Conclusion: Long Term Consequences of Victory
1) (:26) Curse on Resurrection of our Foes
2) (:27) Exaltation of the Captain of our Salvation

2. (7:1-26) <u>Sin Snatches Defeat From the Jaws of Victory</u> –
The Momentum of Defeat Snowballs Until Renewed Consecration Deals with Sin in our Midst

(:1) Setting – Sin Stirs Up God's Anger

a. (:2-5) Without God Nothing is Possible – Unexpected Defeat at Ai
1) (:2-3) Natural Reconnaissance is No Substitute for Seeking the Lord's Guidance -- 3 Signs of Confidence in the Flesh:
2) (:4) The Failure of the Flesh Can Be Just as Dramatic as the Victory of the Spirit
3) (:5) Defeat Can be Costly and Deflating

b. (:6-9) Spiritual Leaders Cannot Let Defeat Snowball Into a Defeatist Attitude
1) (:6) Misdirected Mourning
2) (:7a) Blaming God is Never the Right Approach
3) (:7b) Lowering Expectations is Never the Right Approach
4) (:8-9a) A Defeatist Attitude Can Never be Tolerated
5) (:9b) Selfish Appeals to God's Glory Lack the Power of Faith

c. (:10-15) Repentance and Renewed Consecration are the Only Remedy
1) (:10) Rebuke of Response that demonstrated a lack of faith
2) (:11-12) Simple Diagnosis: Sin Leads to Failure
3) (:13) Call for Renewed Consecration
4) (:14-15) Accountability for Transgression

d. (:16-21) Confession of Covetousness Vindicates the Glory of God
1) (:16-18) Process of Pinpointing the Sinner
2) (:19) Exhortation to Repent to Vindicate the Glory of God
3) (:20-21) Confession of Covetousness

e. (:22-26) The Harsh Reality of Judgment Stands as a Sober Memorial to the Holiness of God
a. (:22-23) Urgency of Exposing the Sin
b. (:24-26) Sad Execution of Discipline

3. (8:1-35) <u>Regaining Lost Ground</u> – <u>the Spirit Succeeds Where the Flesh Failed</u> – Successful Conquest of Ai –
Our Merciful God Stands Ready to Lead Us into Victory (Where Previously We Have Failed) By Encouraging Us to Courage and Faith in Obeying His Battle Plan and

Allowing Him to Bless Instead of Curse

a. (:1-9) Following God's Battle Plan Grants Victory Where Previously There Had Been Defeat
    1) (:1-2) Lord's Instructions to Joshua
    2) (:3-8) Joshua Relays Battle Instructions to the People – Setting the Ambush
    3) (:9) Night of Preparation – Rallying the Troops
b. (:10-17) Baiting the Enemy Can Make Him Vulnerable to a Sneak Attack
    1) (:10-11) Setting Up Camp in the face of the Enemy
    2) (:12-13) Setting the Trap
    3) (:14-17) Taking the Bait
c. (:18-23) Trapping the Enemy Eliminates All Possibility of Escape When the Lord is Directing the Campaign
    1) (:18) Sign that the Lord is Running the Show
    2) (:19) Executing the Ambush
    3) (:20-22) Complete Slaughter of the Trapped Enemy – No way of escape
    4) (:23) Capture of King of Ai
d. (:24-29) Annihilating the Enemy Creates a Perpetual Memorial to the Power and Sovereignty of Almighty God
    1) (:24) Complete Slaughter of rest of population of Ai
    2) (:25) Impressive Total Body Count – Nobody Escaped
    3) (:26) Significance of the Sign of the Javelin
    4) (:27-29) Taking Care of Business
e. (:30-35) Celebrating Covenant Victory Should Involve Worship, Sacrifice, and Recommitment to the Law of Our Merciful God
    1) (:30-31) Worship and Sacrifice on the Altar
    2) (:32-35) Recommitment to the Law of God – Blessing vs. Cursing

B. (9:1 – 10:43) Southern Campaign

1. (9:1-27) <u>Rash Commitments</u> – Deception Takes Advantage of Our Limited Perception –

Spiritual Victory is Compromised When We Make Rash Commitments Apart from Seeking the Guidance of the Lord

(:1-2) Context – Southern Enemies Unite to Protect Their Turf
    1) (:1) Enemies Fear the Inevitable
    2) (:2) Enemies Rally Together to Make Last Ditch Stand

a. (:3-15) Deception of the Gibeonites Leads to Unwise, Compromising Peace Treaty
    1) (:3-5) Concocting the Crafty Scheme – Example of Strategic Planning
    2) (:6-13) Convincing the Skeptical Israelite Invaders
    3) (:14) Crucial Mistake on the Part of the Israelites
    4) (:15) Closing the Deal – Affirming the Peace Treaty with a Binding Oath
b. (:16-21) Exposing the Scam But Still Maintaining the Oath
    1) (:16) Discovering the Painful Truth
    2) (:17) Checking out the Situation
    3) (:18) Paying the Price for Foolish Decision-making

4) (:19-21) Trying to Make Lemonade out of Lemons

c. (:22-27) Making the Best of a Compromising Situation
   1) (:22-23) Holding the Deceivers Accountable
   2) (:24-25) Resignation to Their Fate
   3) (:26-27) Maintaining the Oath but Making Them Slaves

2. (10:1-43) Routing the Enemy

a. (10:1-15) Unlimited Divine Weapons and Resources –
We Can Rout Our Enemies By Relying on the Lord's Unlimited Weapons and Resources – Deadly Targeted Hail / Miraculous Extended Daylight
   1) (:1-5) Desperate Alliance for the Sake of Survival
      a) (:1-2) Greatness of Desperation
      b) (:3-4) Gibeon Targeted by Alliance Formed by the King of Jerusalem
      c) (:5) Goal = Trying to Gain a Foothold for Defense
   2) (:6-8) Divine Assurance of Victory over the Amorites
      a) (:6-7) Appeal to the Integrity of Treaty Commitment – Joshua Answering the Cry for Help from Gibeon
      b) (:8) Affirmation of Certain and Complete Victory
   3) (:9-11) Devastation Accomplished by Stepping out in Faith While The Lord Fought the Battle
      a) (:9) Action Required by Joshua and His Army – Stepping Out in Faith
      b) (:10) Action Performed Relentlessly by the Lord to Secure Victory
      c) (:11) Accuracy of Divine Stoning -- Nothing Wrong with the Lord's Aim
   4) (:12-15) Daytime Arrested to Finish the Conquest – Lord's Power Not Limited by Dimensions of Time and Space
      a) (:12) Asking for the Impossible
      b) (:13) Accomplishing the Impossible
      c) (:14) Answering with Unimaginable Intervention
      d) (:15) Arriving back at Camp

b. (10:16-28) Conquest Isn't Over until It's Over
When God Calls Us to Victory We Must Finish Off the Enemy
   1) (:16-21) God's Enemies Will Try to Avoid Extinction – You Can Run But You Can't Hide
      a) (:16) Crawling into a Hole
      b) (:17-19) Capturing them for Future Execution
      c) (:20-21) Calming any Voice of Opposition
   2) (:22-27) God's Enemies Must be Snuffed Out Completely – Stepping on the Neck of the Defeated Enemy
      a) (:22-23) Cowering in Defeat – The Frightened Five Amorite Kings who had Opposed Israel
      b) (:24-25) Conquest Symbolized by Stepping on Their Necks – The Reinforced Courage of the Leaders of Israel
      c) (:26-27) Completing the Public Execution and Burial Humiliation

   (:28) Epilogue – Summary of Conquest of Makkedah

c. (10:29-43) Conquest of Southern Canaan – "*Joshua and all Israel with him*"

God Gives the Victory When His People Unite to Engage the Enemy Behind The Leadership of His Anointed Commander

1) (:29-30) Conquest of Libnah
2) (:31-33) Conquest of Lachish and Gezer
3) (:34-35) Conquest of Eglon
4) (:36-37) Conquest of Hebron
5) (:38-39) Conquest of Debir
6) (:40-43) Summary of Conquests in Southern Canaan

C. (11:1-15) Northern Campaign -- <u>Victory in Obedience to the Lord's Commands</u> – We can be Confident of Victory When We Obey God's Commands and Execute His Gameplan

1. (:1-5) Massive Threat of the Northern Coalition
   a. (:1-3) Impressive Geographic Coalition
   b. (:4-5) Impressive Number of Forces and Sophistication of Weaponry
2. (:6-9) Major Victory in Accordance with God's Promise
   a. (:6) Divine Initiative in Promising Victory
   b. (:7) Direct Engagement in Battle Led by Joshua
   c. (:8-9) Deliverance Orchestrated by the Lord and Executed by Joshua
3. (:10-11) Mandated Destruction of Hazor's King and City
   a. (:10) Destruction of the King
   b. (:11) Destruction of the City
4. (:12-15) Summary of Victorious Northern Campaign
   a. (:12) Common Fate of the Canaanite Cities and Kings
   b. (:13) Unique Treatment of Hazor
   c. (:14) Contrast between Saving the Spoils and Livestock and Destroying the People
   d. (:15) Commands of the Lord and Moses Faithfully Executed

D. (11:16 – 12:24) <u>Summary of the Victorious Campaigns</u>

1. (11:16-23) Summary Concerning the Conquered Land Areas
   a. (:16-18) The Comprehensive Scope of Joshua's Conquests
   b. (:19-20) Obstinance Ordained by the Lord Destined These Cities for Destruction
   c. (:21-22) Obliteration of the Anakites
   d. (:23) Summary and Transition
2. (12:1-24) Summary Concerning the Conquered Kings
   a. (:1-6) Kings East of the Jordan (under Moses' Leadership)
   b. (:7-24) Kings West of the Jordan (under Joshua's Leadership)

III. (13:1 – 22:34) EARMARKING THE PROMISED LAND FOR ITS DIVINELY INTENDED PURPOSE – DISTRIBUTING IT AMONG THE VAROUS TRIBES

A. (13:1-7) Joshua's Final Instructions from the Lord in His Old Age – Past Conquests No Excuse for Neglecting Future Goals – Specific Areas of Canaan Still Needed to be Conquered and Possessed

1. (:1) Old Age Marks a Transition But Not a Cessation of Service
2. (:2-5) Opportunities Abound for Consolidating Possession of the Promised Land
   a. (:2b-3) The Southern Region

b. (:4) The Canaanite Region
c. (:5) The Northern Region

3. (:6-7) Obedience Must Mesh with God's Sovereign Activity
   a. (:6a) Divine Promise of Sovereign Activity
   b. (:6b-7) Delegated Responsibility for Distribution of God-Given Inheritance

B. (13:8-33) Earmarking Land for the Eastern Tribes –
God Was Faithful to Grant the Transjordanian Land to Reuben, Gad and Manasseh While Uniquely Blessing the Levites

1. (:8-14) General Survey of Transjordanian Lands
   a. (:8) Receiving Their Inheritance
   b. (:9-12) Reviewing Past Conquests
   c. (:13) Recognizing Remaining Challenges
   d. (:14) Respecting the Uniqueness of the Tribe of Levi
2. (:15-23) Towns Allotted to Reuben
   a. (:15) Statement of Distribution
   b. (:16-21) Description of the Territory
   c. (:22) Disposition of Balaam
   d. (:23) Summary Statement
3. (:24-28) Towns Allotted to Gad
   a. (:24) Statement of Distribution
   b. (:25-27) Description of the Territory
   c. (:28) Summary Statement
4. (:29-31) Towns Allotted to the Half Tribe of Manasseh
   a. (:29) Statement of Distribution
   b. (:30-31) Description of the Territory

(:32-33) Epilogue -- Summary
   a. (:32) Transjordanian Territory Distribution
   b. (:33) Unique Situation for Tribe of Levi

C. (14:1 – 19:51) Earmarking Land for the Western Tribes

1. (14:1-15) Distribution of Canaan Begins with Rewarding Caleb with the Hill Country of Hebron – You Can Count on Promised Rewards for Faithful Service
   a. (:1-5) Logistics of Distribution of the Land of Canaan
      1) (:1) Logistics Administered by Eleazar, Joshua and the Tribal Leaders
      2) (:2-4) Logistics Determined by Lot as Moses Commanded with No Land for the Levites
      3) (:5) Logistics Governed by God's Instructions
   b. (:6-12) Loyal Service of Caleb = Basis for His Reward Request
      1) (:6) Appeal of Caleb to His Faith Partner Joshua for Promised Reward
      2) (:7-8) Account of His Wholehearted Commitment to Following the Lord
         a) (:7) Mission Integrity
         b) (:8) Motivational Faith
      3) (:9) Anticipation of Promised Reward
      4) (:10-11) Advocating for the Reward
         a) (:10) Divine Sustaining of Life

b) (:11) Divine Sustaining of Strength

5) (:12) Appropriation of the Reward = Hill Country of Hebron

a) Reward Is Deserved

b) Reward Will Reap Dividends

c. (:13-15) Loyal Service of Caleb Rewarded with Gift of Hebron

1) (:13) Response of Joshua

a) Blessed Caleb

b) Bequeathed Inheritance of Hebron to Caleb

2) (:14) Reason for This Valuable Reward

3) (:15a) Reputation of the Inhabitants

4) (:15b) Rest from War

2. (15:1-63) Territory of Judah – The Importance of Judah is Reflected in the Prominence Given to the Allotment of Her Territory

a. (:1-12) Definition of Judah's Borders

1) (:1-4) Southern Border

2) (:5a) Eastern Border

3) (:5b-11) Northern Border

4) (:12a) Western Border

(:12b) Summary Statement

b. (:13-19) Caleb's Special Allotment Revisited – in Hebron, Debir and the Negev

1) (:13) Distributing the Inheritance to Caleb

2) (:14) Dispossessing the Inhabitants = 3 Sons of Anak

3) (:15-19) Designating the Incentive for Capturing Debir = Achsah

a) (:15) Pursuit of Acquiring Debir

b) (:16-17) Prize for Capturing the City = Achsah

c) (:18-19) Persuasion to Acquire Land and Springs of Water

c. (:20-63) Judah's Town List

(:20) Introduction

1) (:21-32) Southland – 29 Cities

2) (:33-44) Western Foothills

a) (:33b-36) Northern Group – 14 Cities

b) (:37-41) Southwest Group – 16 Cities

c) (:42-44) Southeast Group – 9 Cities

3) (:45-47) 3 Philistine Cities

4) (:48-60) Hill Country

a) (:48b-51) Southern Group – 11 Cities

b) (:52-54) North Group (West side) – 9 Cities

c) (:55-57) North Group – 10 Cities

d) (:58-59) Far North Group – 6 Cities

e) (:60) 20 Miles West of Jerusalem – 2 Cities

5) (:61-62) Desert (Northwester half of the Dead Sea) – 6 Cities

(:63) Epilogue – The Jebusites in Jerusalem with Judah

3. (16:1 – 17:18) Territory of Joseph: Ephraim and Manasseh -- Compromise and Complaining Never Advance God's Kingdom Agenda – Strive to Appropriate Your Inheritance in Christ

a. (16:1-4) Joseph's Southern Boundary

1) (:1-3) Defining Joseph's Southern Boundary

a) (:1) From Jordan to Jericho to Bethel

b) (:2) From Bethel to Luz to Ataroth
c) (:3) Westward to Gezer -- Ending at the Mediterranean Sea
2) (:4) Summary Statement
b. (16:5-10) Territory of Ephraim
1) (:5a) Summary Introduction
2) (:5b-8a) Geographic Description of Ephraim's Territory
3) (:8b-9) Some Cities Shared with Manasseh
4) (:10) Ephraim's Compromise Concerning Gezer
c. (17:1-13) Territory of Manasseh
1) (:1-6) Transjordan Territory Revisited
a) (:1-2) Sons of Manasseh Recounted
b) (:3-6) Exceptional Circumstances of Daughters of Zelophehad
2) (:7-13) Cisjordan Territory
a) (:7-11) Description of Geographic Borders
b) (:12-13) Manasseh's Compromise with the Canaanites
d. (17:14-18) Complaint of the Josephites
1) (:14) Complaint: Not Enough Land for Too Many People
2) (:15) Challenge of Joshua: Make it Work
3) (:16) Complaint Extended: Task is Too Dangerous
4) (:17-18) Challenge of Joshua Expanded: You Have Sufficient People and Power to Prevail

4. (18:1 – 19:48) Territory of Remaining 7 Tribes –
God Puts His People Exactly Where He Intends for Them to Prosper and to Serve Him Effectively
a. (18:1-10) Process for Distribution of Land to the Remaining 7 Tribes
1) (:1-2) Final Steps in the Distribution of the Inheritance Land
a) (:1) Requisite Staging for Final Distribution
b) (:2) Remaining Task
2) (:3-7) Fair Distribution Based on Investigative Survey of the Land
a) (:3) Urgency of the Task
b) (:4) Undertaking the Survey of the Land
c) (:5-7) Ultimate Division into 7 Portions – Recognizing Prior Special Dispositions
3) (:8-9) Faithful Completion of the Survey Mission
4) (:10) Finishing the Distribution by Casting Lots before the Lord
b. (18:11 – 19:48) Places of Distribution of Land to the 7 Tribes – (Borders and Cities)
1) (18:11-28) Territory of Benjamin
2) (19:1-9) Territory of Simeon
3) (19:10-16) Territory of Zebulun
4) (19:17-23) Territory of Issachar
5) (19:24-31) Territory of Asher
6) (19:32-39) Territory of Naphtali
7) (19:40-48) Territory of Dan

5. (19:49-50) Prize of Distribution of Land to Joshua
a) (:49) Joshua Waited to Receive His Distribution Until after All the Tribes
b) (:50) Joshua Received the City He Requested

(19:51) Epilogue – Overall Summary

D. (20:1-9) Designation and Proper Utilization of the 6 Cities of Refuge – God in His Mercy Established 6 Cities of Refuge for Those Who Committed Unintentional Manslaughter

1. (:1-6) Description of the Institution of Cities of Refuge
   - (:1-2a) Divine Initiative
   - a. (:2b-3) Demonstration of God's Mercy in Instances of Manslaughter
     - 1) (:2b) Institution of the Cities of Refuge
     - 2) (:3) Intention Explained
   - b. (:4-6) Detailing of the Proper Utilization of the Cities of Refuge
     - 1) (:4) Procedure Explained
     - 2) (:5) Procedure Justified
     - 3) (:6) Procedure Completed
2. (:7-8) Designation of 6 Cities of Refuge
   - a. (:7) Three Cities West of the Jordan
   - b. (:8) Three Cities East of the Jordan

(:9) Epilogue -- Summary
- a. Places Designated as Cities of Refuge
- b. Purpose of the Institution

E. (21:1-42) Designation of the 48 Levitical Cities = Crowning Act of Distribution – God Fulfills His Promise of Support for the Ministering Levites with Designated Cities from Each of the Tribes

1. (:1-3) Approaching the Leaders to Request Levitical Cities
   - a. (:1-2) Request Initiated by the Levites
   - b. (:3) Response of Obedience by the Nation
2. (:4-8) Allotments to the Levitical Families
   - a. (:4-5) To the Sons of Kohath
   - b. (:6) To the Sons of Gershon – 13 Cities
   - c. (:7) To the Sons of Merari – 12 Cities
   - d. (:8) Summary
3. (:9-40) Assignment of Specific Cities
   - a. (:9-19) Cities Assigned to the Aaronites
   - b. (:20-26) Cities Assigned to the Remaining Kohathites
   - c. (:27-33) Cities Assigned to the Gershonites
   - d. (:34-40) Cities Assigned to Merarites

(:41-42) Epilogue – Summary Report
- a. (:41) Final Count = 48 Cities
- b. (:42) Surrounding Pasture Lands Included

F. (21:43-45) Concluding Summary of God Keeping His Land Promise to Israel [Theme Verses] – God's Faithfulness to His Land Promise to Israel Is to Be Celebrated (In Its Immediate Context Although Not in Terms of Eschatological Fulfillment)

1. (:43) Gracious Gift of the Land to Israel
2. (:44) Secure Rest in the Land from All Enemies
3. (:45) Fulfilled Promises to Israel

G. (22:1-34) Dismissal of Eastern Tribes Back to Their Homes While Resolving Potential Crisis of Unity –

Corporate Unity Can Easily be Threatened by Misunderstandings Despite Significant Mission Successes

1. (:1-9) Context of Commendation for Mission Successes – As Joshua Dismisses the Transjordan Tribes
    a. (:1-6) Transjordan Tribes Summoned, Commended, Charged, Blessed and Dismissed
        1) (:1-2a) Summoned
        2) (:2b-3) Commended
        3) (:4-5) Charged
        4) (:6) Blessed and Dismissed
    b. (:7-8) Dismissal of Eastern Manasseh Half-tribe
        1) (:7a) Historical Explanation of Division
        2) (:7b-8) Blessing and Dismissal
    c. (:9) Departure of Transjordan Tribes
2. (:10-34) Crisis of Misunderstanding Requiring Resolution to Protect Israel's Unity
    a. (:10-12) The Crisis Threatening Israel's Unity
        1) (:10) Point of Contention = Large Altar Built on West Bank of the Jordan
        2) (:11-12) Potential for Rash Civil War
    b. (:13-20) The Accusation of Apostasy
        1) (:13-15) Investigative Delegation Led by Phinehas
        2) (:16) Imputing Motives of Unfaithfulness
        3) (:17-18) Fear of Corporate Judgment -- Based on the Historical Example of Sin at Peor
        4) (:19) Consider Other Options
        5) (:20) Fear of Corporate Judgment – Based on the Historical Example of Sin of Achan
    c. (:21-29) The Defense of Loyalty to the God of Israel
        1) (:21-25) Theological Defense
        2) (:26-29) Pragmatic Defense
    d. (:30-34) The Resolution of the Crisis – Preserving Unity
        1) (:30-31) Investigative Delegation Satisfied
        2) (:32-34) Corporate Israel Satisfied

IV. (23:1 – 24:33) EXHORTING THE NATION OF ISREAL ONE FINAL TIME TO CONTINUED COVENANT OBEDIENCE

A. (23:1-16) Joshua's Farewell Charge: Stay Faithful to the Lord If You Want to Enjoy God's Promised Blessings

1. (:1-13) Victory and Possession of the Land Tied to Faithful Obedience
    (:1-2) Last Words of a Godly Leader
    a. (:3-8) First Cycle of Remembrance and Exhortation
        1) (:3-5) Remembrance of All God Has Done and Promises to Do
            a) (:3) Remember God's Victories in Warfare
            b) (:4) Remember God's Blessings – the Apportioning of the Land
            c) (:5) Remember God's Promises -- Anticipation of Future Conquests
        2) (:6-8) Exhortation to Faithful Obedience

a) (:6) Live by Biblical Convictions
b) (:7) Avoid Corruption and Idolatry
c) (:8) Cling to the Lord

b. (:9-13) Second Cycle of Remembrance and Exhortation
1) (:9-10) Remembrance of God's Sufficiency in Granting Surprising Victories
a) (:9) Defeats Your Powerful Enemies
b) (:10) Fights for You
2) (:11-13) Exhortation to Exclusive Allegiance to the God of Israel
a) (:11) Love the Lord Your God
b) (:12-13) Maintain Your Distinctiveness as God's People

2. (:14-16) Faithfulness of God to Both His Blessings and Cursings – Warning against Spiritual Apostasy
a. (:14) Final Testimony: Faithfulness of God to His Blessings
1) You Can Trust My Testimony
2) You Can Trust God's Promises
b. (:15-16) Final Warning: Faithfulness of God to His Cursings
1) (:15) God Executes His Threatened Judgments – Don't Presume against God's Goodness
2) (:16) God Takes Apostasy Seriously – Don't Stir up God's Anger

B. (24:1-28) Decision Time – "As for Me and My House . . ." – Consideration of Covenant History Should Prompt Renewal of Covenant Commitment

1. (:1-13) Review of Significant Milestones in Covenant History
a. (:2b-4) History of God's Gracious Dealings with the Patriarchs
1) (:2b) Background of Idolatry
2) (:3a) Calling of Abraham
3) (:3b) Multiplication of Descendants Beginning with Isaac
4) (:4) History of Jacob and Esau
b. (:5-7) History of God's Deliverance in the Exodus from Egypt
1) (:5) Deliverance via Miraculous Plagues
2) (:6-7a) Deliverance via Crossing of the Red Sea
3) (:7b) Deliverance via Sustenance in the Wilderness for a Long Time
c. (:8-10) History of Victory in Transjordan Territory
1) (:8) Victory over the Amorites (Og and Sihon)
2) (:9-10) Victory over Balak and Balaam
d. (:11-13) History of Conquest of Canaan
1) (:11a) Crossing the Jordan
2) (:11b) Conquering Jericho and the Formidable Adversaries
3) (:12) Conquering the Two Renowned Amorite Kings
4) (:13) Crowning the Conquest with the Gift of Undeserved Productive Land

2. (:14-24) Renewal of Covenant Commitment
a. (:14-15) Call for Decision
1) (:14) Demonstrate Covenant Allegiance
a) Positive: Fear the Lord – Demonstrated by Service
b) Negative: Reject Idolatry – Demonstrated by Public

Repudiation
c) Summary: Serve the Lord – Demonstrated by Exclusive Allegiance
2) (:15) Decision Time
a) Only One Choice Makes Sense
b) Only You Can Make the Choice for Yourself
c) Options of Idolatry Abound
d) Only Option for Me = Serving the Lord
b. (:16-18) Commitment Affirmed
1) (:16b) Apostasy and Idolatry Rejected
2) (:17-18a) Allegiance to the Lord Has Yielded Historic Blessings
3) (:18b) Affirmation of Loyalty
c. (:19-24) Commitment Dialogue – Pledging Allegiance to the Lord
1) (:19b-20) Consequences of Apostasy
a) (:19b) Demand for Exclusive Allegiance
b) (:20) Danger of Incurring Divine Judgment
2) (:21-24) Reaffirmation of Allegiance
3. (:25-28) Ratification of Covenant Affirmation
a. (:25) Summary Statement of Covenant Ratification
b. (:26-27) Two Actions of Ratifying the Covenant
1) (:26a) Recording the Words of Commitment
2) (:26b-27) Raising a Stone Pillar to Memorialize the Commitment
c. (:28) Dismissal of the People to Possess Their Inheritance

(24:29-33) Epilogue – Association of Joshua's Burial with those of Joseph and Eleazar – All in the Promised Land as a Testimony to the Faithfulness of God

1. (:29-31) Land Inheritance for Joshua Finalized
a. (:29-30) Death and Burial of Joshua
b. (:31) Testimony of Effective Leadership
2. (:32-33) Land Inheritance for Joseph and Eleazar Finalized
a. (:32) Transfer of Bones of Joseph to Canaan from Egypt
b. (:33) Death and Burial of Eleazar

TEXT: Joshua 1: 1-18

TITLE: COMMISSION TO GO TO WAR

BIG IDEA:
CLAIMING GOD'S PROMISES FOR SPIRITUAL VICTORY REQUIRES A COMMITMENT TO COURAGE AND OBEDIENCE

INTRODUCTION:

Personal Perspective in studying Joshua:
I have a hunger for a greater level of spiritual victory in my Christian life. So this will not be the testimony of one who has scaled the Mt. Everest of Christian experience and is looking down on the rest of the poor struggling souls and exhorting them to climb higher. Hopefully, it is more in keeping with the spirit of what we have just studied in the Sermon on the Mount …

> Coming to you as "*poor in spirit*"; "*mourning over sin*" and yet "*hungering and thirsting for righteousness*" along with my brothers and sisters in the faith.

Important to nail down some background information about the book as a whole to set the stage so that we can fully appreciate the challenge before us in Joshua Chapter 1 (which is an OT Great Commission passage).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

2 TRAPS TO AVOID in Studying the Book of Joshua:

Trap #1 – Confusion about the **Identification of Joshua** –
Joshua is not a type of Pastor John MacArthur or your personal pastor (or name any radio personality you listen to); The people of God today want a **human Joshua** to follow rather than the invisible Lord Jesus Himself who is the Captain of our Salvation; that is why we must have a plurality of undershepherds … no one leader can bring to the table all that we need; Joshua is not a type of some super single pastor model of leadership … but spiritual leaders do need to pattern themselves after Joshua in many important respects (so there are a lot of leadership lessons … and hence a lot of lessons for those of us who are called to submit to our spiritual leaders as well)

It must be remembered throughout this study that Joshua (name means "*Yahweh is salvation*") is a **type of Christ** who leads us to spiritual victory and into His rest – not in heaven – but on earth as we submit fully to Him, trust in His power and come to experience the abundant life He desires for us.

Trap #2 – Confusion about the **Identification of Canaan** –
Thinking that crossing the Jordan represents a transition from this life through death into the joys of heaven; But Canaan was actually a place of conflict and conquest!

God's people must take responsibility to be strong and courageous and fight the good fight of faith; Don't settle for **victory one day in heaven**; God wants us to experience victory right now in the midst of our enemies; surrounded on every side by challenges; yet obeying Him and experiencing His grace in giving us the victory.

For some … a crisis experience putting them on a different level of intimacy with the Lord … for others … more of repeated experiences of crossing the Jordan River … but in both cases: God has **greater levels of spiritual victory** that He would like to give us in His grace

(Two commentators especially helpful: Alan Redpath and J Sidlow Baxter -- they both recognize that the OT lessons are types and examples to guide us in our new life in Christ)

THEME OF JOSHUA: TAKING GOD'S GIFT OF THE PROMISED LAND

- Both a gracious gift from our sovereign God;
- Yet personal responsibility and commitment required on our part.

FIRST 4 CHAPTERS: CORPORATE COMMITMENT TO GO TO WAR -- ENGAGING THE ENEMY

Kids, you all know the story of Joshua and the walls of Jericho falling down … these are the preparation steps leading up to that great victory.
Going to war is a topic much in our headlines these days; stories of heroism, sacrifice, casualties … but a much more important war taking place in the spiritual realm.

<u>3 OBSTACLES TO TAKING GOD'S GIFT OF THE PROMISED LAND (SPIRITUAL VICTORY)</u>
1) **People Paralyzed by Fear** – *Grasshopper Mentality* –
<u>Root Problem = Lack of Faith = the Mission is Impossible</u>
We are nobody … we are just going to get squashed
Kids, do you ever wonder what ants think of humans?
Hebrews 11 records the Faith Hall of Fame – all those heroes of the faith – but there is a significant gap between **verses 29-30** = the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness; That is where our story takes place … what has to happen in order to lead up to the walls of Jericho falling down? What are our walls of Jericho in our life?? What has to happen to make them fall down?? So that we can live as heroes of the faith as well??

Num 13-14 – Report of the 12 Spies --
Interesting that the Lord commissioned them to go check out the land – to get a vision for victory = "*Spy out the land I am going to give to you*" (**13:2**).
Not charged with determining whether or not to complete the assigned mission.
This was an issue of Obedience vs Rebellion – same with us.
The Lord had demonstrated His glory and power over and over again in amazing ways … yet the people refused to trust and obey.
Issue: Do we believe that *the Lord is with us* and able to give us the victory …
Or do we look at ourselves vs the obstacles and see ourselves as grasshoppers and the

obstacles as Giants that can't be conquered?
God specializes in killing Giants – remember David and Goliath … fall of Jericho …
What Giants do you face that want to keep you from experiencing God's victory and blessing? Have to face our giants … not run from them.

How many times did Jesus have to address His disciples with the simple command: "*Fear not*"

Need a **Vision of Victory** – focusing on **God's Promises**

2) **People with a History of Failure –** *Victim Mentality* –
Root Problem = Lack of Faith = We are too weak
We are abused and neglected … we will never amount to anything.
Look at the generation Joshua was trying to rally – a lot of baggage:
40 years wandering in the wilderness … experiencing death; tasting death everywhere they turned; waking up every day to the same old routine – where is the promised victory in the land of milk and honey – we have blown it and we will never experience God's blessing … (true for their parents – entire generation died out) ….
Settling for less than the Lord's best; conditioned to just make the best of things.
Isn't that how we often live as believers? That's just the way I am … given up on fighting certain battles …
Attitudes of discontent; murmuring; grumbling; resisting God's appointed leadership;
Inexperienced in knowing how to trust and obey – now stepping up to a difficult mission;

The Hope of the Gospel: "You can be what you are not now" – turning Simon into Cephas (Peter) – the rock; turning Saul into Paul

Need an **Attitude of Hope** – focusing on **God's Promises**

3) **Leadership Meltdown/Blowup** – *Big Shot Mentality* – huge trap for leadership
Root Problem = Exalting Self (Defined as Lack of Faith/Rebellion – making it all about the leader rather than all about God) – Moses commended as *meekest* of all men … but failed in that very area and was severely disciplined.
"We are too important to be treated this way by the hoi polio."

Numbers 20:1-13 Sin of Moses and Aaron --
Simple command (**vs 8**) "*Speak to the rock before their eyes that it may yield its water*"
Provoked to anger: "*Listen now, you rebels*" – Moses had had it with the people
Before he was quick to intercede on their behalf that the Lord might spare them; he was the meekest of all men, not taking offense … putting up with a lot … now he lashes out in anger.

What was so wrong about striking the rock twice with the rod??
(cf. **Exod 17:6** at Rephidim – similar incident – told to strike the rock in that instance)
Not treating the Lord as **holy** before the people.

Seems like such a harsh penalty for just a procedural error??

Primarily a **sin of unbelief** (same as the people) – **Discontent with their lot** just like the people were -- unbelief in the sovereignty and providence of God – Moses was on the hot spot – not content with letting the Lord do things His way

(Aside: He had trusted the Lord many times previously – using that same rod in obedience to the Lord as an effective leader –

Exod 7:20 – on the spot before Pharoah: struck the water that was in the Nile and it turned into blood … part of the plagues – the Lord came through

Exod 14:16 – on the spot before the Red Sea – about to be overtaken and destroyed by the pursuing Egyptians … "*lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it*" – the Lord came through huge)

The Lord wants to be seen as the one giving the victory – we cannot drum up victory. Key to the whole book of Joshua: Victory is due to the arm of faith ("*this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith*" -- **1 John 5:4**) -- Baxter

Why were Moses and Aaron not excited at the opportunity for the Lord to be exalted in the eyes of the people; where was the quiet confidence of faith? Not content with how the Lord was running the show; felt that they deserved more support and exaltation.

Need a **Submitted Will** – Focusing on **God's Promises** (again, you should be detecting a theme here)

WHAT WERE GOD'S PROMISES TO HIS PEOPLE? What's at stake?

1) **A LAND TO POSSESS** – PLACE OF REST AND INHERITANCE
   - Sovereignly given by God to His chosen people
   - No more wandering … but settled down with roots and security
   - Requires Victory over strong enemies – Satan not giving up this ground without a fight; as many as 7 different heathen nations to defeat and drive out;
   - For us, spiritual rest is to be found in the person of Christ who is our inheritance

2) **A LAND TO ENJOY** – RICHES OF GOD'S BLESSING

   "*a land which flows with milk and honey*"

   Not just manna to sustain them physically, but giving them richly all things to enjoy

   Parallels to book of Ephesians – all the riches of our spiritual blessings in Christ

(cf. J. Sidlow Baxter: Study the parallels between earthly inheritance of God's people described in Joshua with heavenly inheritance described in Ephesians – note points of similarity)

3) **A LAND TO SHARE** – TESTIMONY TO THE WORLD OF GOD'S GLORY
   - Not as a monument to their own glory and power but as a testimony of God's mercy and grace
   - We share Christ with others as the supreme revelation to the world of God's glory

This is what we hunger and thirst for this morning: a deeper experience of:

- grabbing hold of our spiritual rest and victory in Christ
- contentment and appreciation and worship and thanksgiving for all of our blessings
- compassion and love for others that they too might share in these riches

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CHAP. 1 -- BIG IDEA:
CLAIMING GOD'S PROMISES FOR SPIRITUAL VICTORY REQUIRES A COMMITMENT TO COURAGE AND OBEDIENCE

First Section in Joshua: **CORPORATE COMMITMENT TO GO TO WAR – TO ENGAGE THE ENEMY**
Once they have crossed the Jordan River, they are fully committed; no turning back …no calling the rescue helicopters for a quick extraction … God is not going to part the waters and facilitate their retreat … Victory or Death … those are the options.

We tend to think about our own individual spiritual warfare – our struggles for victory; for claiming God's promises; We forget that we are called to go to battle together as the church of God; we need one another; everyone needs to be pulling their weight; It takes a lot of energy and commitment to overcome inertia and step out in faith and engage the enemy – but that was the first assignment for Joshua as a leader stepping into the shoes of Moses – quite a challenge.

COMMISSION TO GO TO WAR -- really a RECOMMISSION – the people had failed earlier under the leadership of Moses and Aaron.
Commission issued by the Commander in Chief to His appointed leader.

Kenneth Gangel: Responding to God's call for leadership requires experience, strength, and courage. God had granted Joshua considerable experience before Moses' death. Now he commands Joshua to be strong and courageous.

Jerome Creach: The beginning of a narrative often presents information that is necessary for understanding the rest of the story. **Joshua 1** does this largely by connecting the reader to the values and theological ideals of **Deuteronomy**. It recalls that Joshua is Moses' successor, commissioned in **Deuteronomy 31:23** and reaffirmed in **Deuteronomy 34:9**. **Joshua 1** also points back to the instruction of Moses recorded in Deuteronomy, which, in written form, is now the primary authority for Joshua (**Deut. 31:24–29; Josh. 1:7–8**). In addition to the direct command to observe Moses' teachings, the language of Moses' *torah* appears in the chapter at every turn, creating further the impression that it is the standard by which Israel will be judged. **Joshua 1** has the strong sense of Israel's unity that also appears in Deuteronomy. Following and referring to Moses' speech in **Deuteronomy 3:18–22**, Joshua orders the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh to cross the Jordan armed with the other Israelites before returning to possess their territory east of the river (**Josh. 1:12–18**).

Concern over these tribes and their territorial allotment will occur again in **chapters 13** and **22**. Hence, **Joshua 1** prepares the reader for the remainder of the book by grounding the conquest and possession of the land in the theological interests of Deuteronomy.

I. (:1-9) COMMITMENT ON THE PART OF LEADERSHIP – BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS -- THE COMMISSION OF JOSHUA

A. (:1-5) Reaffirming the Mission and the Promises

1. (:1) Transition in Leadership

> "*Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying*"

A type of transition from the dispensation of law to grace –

> "*For the Law was given through Moses, grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.*" **(John 1:17)**

The law could never lead us into possession of the promises. It must be all by grace.

Again, Joshua is a type of Christ … so you couldn't have a better leader.
So this book should shed important light on the relationship between the law and grace – having been granted a new nature in regeneration we now have a radically changed disposition and attitude to the law as well as power to obey all righteousness after the pattern of our Lord (Pink)

Joshua had been faithful for many years in his role as Moses' servant before ever he was elevated by God into this realm of tremendous responsibility.
(**Num. 27** – only a part of Moses' spirit rested on him)

Meaning of the name Joshua ("*Yahweh is salvation*")

Ministry Leadership Transitions can be precarious – I have experienced several:

- PEF – college fellowship group
- Teen Haven – inner city ministry in Philadelphia

At least here you did not have to battle with the difficulty of former Leader (who was also the Founder of the ministry) letting go – Moses was no longer in the picture; Would have been easy for Joshua to feel all alone.

James McConville: So the beginning of Joshua is also a middle, since it presents itself as coming after events previously narrated. The charge to Joshua points back to texts that introduce him in various ways, as the servant of Moses and as the one commissioned to lead Israel after Moses' death (**Exod. 17.8-16; Num. 27.12-23; Deut. 1.37-38; 3.21-28; 31.1-23; 34.9**). **Joshua 1.1-9** takes an explicit lead from **Deut. 31.7-13** where Moses charges Joshua in words similar to God's words here. Also taken as read is the promise of the land, made ages before to the ancestors of Israel (**Deut. 1.8**).

The description of its extent makes a bracket between the beginning of Joshua and the end of Deuteronomy (**Deut. 34.1-4**) and harks back to promises recorded in Genesis (**Gen. 12.1-3; 15.18-21**). The opening of the book, therefore, signals that **an expected time has come**, a new era in which the person of Joshua would play the leading part and in which Israel would enter its God-given possession.

2. (:2) Foundational Mission

> "*Moses, My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel*."

We lose sight of what a monumental crisis it was for these people to cross the Jordan and expose themselves to the enemy; Privilege as well!

River at flood stage – no simple task to have 2 million people cross over;
It would be a clear declaration of war. A commitment to engage the enemy.

Jensen: The fact that the large size of the Israelite band is not made a prominent factor in the record of the book of Joshua speaks well for the orderliness and discipline with which Joshua maneuvered the hosts. In strict military fashion, reflecting the training he had received under Moses, Joshua delegated the offices under him to mobilize the people to the state of readiness.

What side of the Jordan are you living on?
God desires spiritual victory and rest for all of His children … not just some small elite group.

Think of the spiritual giants who have gone before us … great missionary pioneers … out to fulfill the Great Commission; they are now home with the Lord … we are the ones left to fulfill the mission.

Are we motivated by a **sense of Mission** – God has called us to Great Things – things that are not humanly possible …. But divinely enabled;
Let other people busy themselves with the tasks that don't require God's power.

Richard Hess: **vv. 2-5** -- This text **summarizes the book**.

- **Verse 2** describes the crossing of the Jordan as found in **1:1 – 5:12**.
- **Verse 3** outlines the 'conquest' **of 5:13 – 12:24**.
- **Verse 4** implies the distribution of the land in **13:1 – 22:34**.
- The emphasis on all the days of Joshua's life in **verse 5** is found at the end of Joshua's life in the final two chapters of the book. These verses also introduce the character of the LORD God of Israel. He is one of the main actors in the book. Here he reveals himself through his promises on behalf of Joshua and Israel. . .

A second twofold aspect of the book's message is implied in the two occurrences of the adjective *all* (Heb. *kol*) in *all these people* and in *every place*. The importance of the participation of all of the Israelites will become apparent in the responsibilities of the Transjordanian tribes and in the sin of Achan.

Helene Dallaire: The hardships that would accompany the leadership position were not unknown to Joshua. He had observed the people's rebellion at the base of Sinai (**Ex 32:1–6**), the jealousy of the elders against their leader (**Nu 12:1–2**), the deep personal struggles Moses had experienced since Egypt (**Nu 11:10–15**), and the stubbornness of the people in the desert (**Nu 14:1–4**). Nonetheless, Joshua showed no sign of hesitation or wavering in accepting his new task. He received his call with courage and determination, but would the Israelites accept him as their new leader? The answer is clear. As the end of the first chapter points out, the Israelites make a pledge of obedience to Joshua; they promise to follow his instructions wholeheartedly and to go wherever he commands them to go (**1:16–17**).

3. (:3-4) Scope of the Promise – It's HUGE – how big is our thinking??
"*Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun, will be your territory*."

David Howard: **Repetition of God's Promises** to Moses, then Joshua:

Joshua	Deuteronomy
I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. (1:3)	Every place where you set your foot will be yours. (11:24a)
Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Great Sea on the west. (1:4)	Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the Euphrates River to the western sea. (11:24b)
No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. (1:5a)	No man will be able to stand against you. (11:25a)

Prophetic events still to transpire related to the fulfillment of this promise. God is not done working with the nation of Israel.

Geography not my strong suit … Karen is my navigator … but apparently Israel did not enjoy dominion that far east until days of David and Solomon. (Jensen)

But our concern this morning is what we can learn about spiritual victory in our day.

There is no possession without appropriation.
Stepping out in faith is the key … we must take that initiative in response to God's direction.
"*Faith is the victory that overcomes the world.*"

4. (:5) Assurance of Divine Presence and Protection (Prospering them)
"*No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you.*"

Incredible promise of success and victory; what military commander has ever enjoyed such a guarantee?

How was God with Moses?

- as a baby – his ship was almost sunk before it got launched
- before Pharoah and his court
- before the pursuing Egyptian army, trapped against the Red Sea
- before the riotous and mutinous mob in the wilderness

No abandonment; No disappointments in trusting Christ.
Plenty of enemies will try to oppose us and defeat us .. but they will not be able to stand and succeed; Christ is building His church; the gates of hell shall not overpower it.

B. (:6-9) Responsibilities and Resources

1. (:6) Be Strong and Courageous – Victory is Guaranteed
"*Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.*"

Richard Hess: The occurrence of *be strong and courageous* in **Joshua 10:25** is set in the context of Joshua's encouragement to the people to fight against their opponents, similar to Hezekiah's usage of the expression in preparing the people to withstand the Assyrians (**2 Chr. 32:7**). Thus the term could be used in a variety of circumstances but always within a context of **God's presence and support**.

Characteristics necessary for victory: bravery, valor, fearlessness, heroism, confidence, nerve, guts, grit, backbone

Our reaction: How can you command something like that? We think: either you have the Right Stuff or you don't; either you are a Tom Cruise or a Charlie Brown

It doesn't take any courage to lie on the couch and watch TV …
Resting in our comfort zone doesn't require courage . . .
Engaging the enemy on the spiritual battlefield … that takes courage!

God remains faithful to all His promises;

What spiritual promises has Christ made to the church with respect to victory over Satan, sin, self and this fallen world?

How can we be strong and courageous?
How did David strengthen himself in the Lord?
Importance of **Ephes 6** – armor of God.

Kenneth Gangel:

- Joshua could be confident because God is competent.
- Joshua could be dependent because God is dependable.
- Joshua could trust because God is trustworthy.

2. (:7-8) Be Strong and Courageous -- Obedience is Essential / God's Word is Sufficient

> "*Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success*."

Robert Hubbard: The danger is that fears, feelings of inadequacy, and doubts may cripple the leader's resolve, muddle his mind, and shake his confidence. The resulting confusion, wavering, and tentativeness sow despair, if not dissent, among the followers and endanger the mission. The temptation, then, is to back off from risks, to strike compromises, or to retreat altogether. To "*be strong and courageous*" means to be steady, resolute, bold, and unafraid.

Importance of meditating on the Word – reflecting on it; digesting it slowly;
Kids: don't chew your food too quickly … take your time ….
No deviation from God's instructions allowed;
Prosperity and Success should be the goal … don't settle for anything less.

David Howard: the two words we find here in our passage in Joshua (**1:7–8**) speaking of **prosperity** and **success** are almost never used in the Old Testament to speak of financial success. Rather, they speak of **succeeding in life's proper endeavors**. This happens when people's lives are focused entirely on God and obedience to him. The focus of people's endeavors is not to be prosperity and success but rather holiness and obedience. A believer's consuming obsession should be holiness, for God himself is holy (**Lev 11:45; 19:2**, etc.), to love God with one's entire being (**Deut 6:5**), to keep his word with the same fervor (**Deut 6:6; 2 Kgs 23:25; Ezra 7:10**; etc.), and to "*fear God and keep his commandments*" (**Eccl 12:13**). When this happens, then God does bless (usually!), although not always in exactly the ways we might like him to. In this, the Old Testament has the same message that Jesus spoke when he said, "*Seek first his*

kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things [food, drink, clothing] will be given to you as well" (**Matt 6:33**). **Our priority is to seek God**.

Gordon Matties: Two word pictures in the text may clarify the ambiguity. One is that God's instruction is like a path from which Joshua ought not depart (**v. 7**; cf. **Ps 119:105**). This is a path of confidence and a source of strength and courage. In the story of God's presence with the ancestors, and in God's instructions, Joshua will find the patterns of divine initiative and human response that will guide him into the unknown but promised future. If Joshua continues to live by that story, he will discover the reality of God's promise. The divine promise is unequivocal; Joshua's faithfulness is not.

The other picture is of Joshua's being encouraged (even commanded) to meditate on God's teachings (**v. 8**). This is not simply a silent intellectual exercise, but especially a ruminating on Torah through vocal recitation. The Torah is always to be in his mouth (**v. 8**). The image has two connotations. One is of **internalization**: God's instructions are to be a source of constant meditation that nourishes all of life (cf. **Deut 11:18-19; Ps 1:2**, where the same expression is used). The other is of the **mouth as the origin of communication**. As God has spoken to Moses, and as Moses has spoken God's teaching to the people, so now Joshua is to repeat Torah aloud and to impart God's instruction to all who might hear. In doing so, Joshua fulfills the requirements for the human king (**Deut 17:19**).

These two word pictures suggest two implications. First, Joshua must **pay diligent attention to the way**, to the journey informed by God's instruction. In this action Joshua becomes the model for all listeners to the narrative. The shape of life lived in God's presence, with strength and courage, can only flourish if nourished by paying attention to the word, which "requires more than a… casual acquaintance,… but also an intimate knowledge" (Hauch: 82). Second, there must be **integrity between words and actions**. Both are grounded in **promise** and **presence**, which are prior to hearing and obedience. The book of the law illuminates the path because it is accompanied by God's presence.

3. (:9) Be Strong and Courageous -- God's Presence is the Difference Maker
(implies God's favor in protecting and prospering)
"*Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go*."

Cf. the Lord's promise of His presence in the Great Commission passage.
Cf. the quote in **Heb. 13:5.**
Why does the Lord have to repeat this basic command so many times?

Richard Hess: The divine discourse ends and Joshua begins to speak and act for the people. He will complete five tasks before the LORD again addresses him (in **Josh. 3:7–8**):

(1) commission officers to direct and to organize the Israelites;
(2) confirm the participation of the Transjordanian tribes in the 'conquest' of the land;
(3) send messengers to spy out the land and receive their report;
(4) address the people concerning preparation for crossing the Jordan River; and
(5) address the priests concerning the first act of crossing.

None of these items is explicitly mentioned in the LORD's charge to Joshua. They all depend upon prior knowledge of the events of Numbers and Deuteronomy.

II. (:10-18a) COMMITMENT ON THE PART OF THE PEOPLE – BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS -- THE CHARGE TO THE PEOPLE

A. (:10-11) Preparations for Invasion – Logistical Details of Organization

"*Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, 'Pass through the midst of the camp and command the people, saying, Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you are to cross this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you, to possess it.*'"

Combination of Human Responsibility and Divine Sovereignty in action

- The victory requires careful planning and execution
- But God gives the victory

Ryrie: The mission of the spies (**chap. 2**) apparently took place before this command to prepare was given. What is described in **3:2** may be the same as in **1:11**, or may have followed it.

Redpath: The hardest thing for any of us to do is to sit still and do nothing, to wait until we inherit the promises. But God has a great purpose to fulfill in every waiting time, although so often His people miss the purpose because of impatience with the Lord during the time of waiting. I want to think with you about that waiting time, the sitting still and counting the cost of what it means to inherit the blessing in Jesus our Lord.

B. (:12-15) Everybody Must Pull Their Weight

(Some People Don't Catch the Vision??)

"*And to the Reubenites and to the Gadites and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, 13 "Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, 'The LORD your God gives you rest, and will give you this land.' 14 "Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle shall remain in the land which Moses gave you beyond the Jordan, but you shall cross before your brothers in battle array, all your valiant warriors, and shall help them, 15 until the LORD gives your brothers rest, as He gives you, and they also possess the land which the LORD your God is giving them. Then you shall return to your*

own land, and possess that which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise."

Trent Butler: The book of Joshua deals extensively with the dialectic of **unity in geographical divergence**. The Christian church may face this as its biggest hurdle. Released from identity with one geographical spot, the church continues to struggle with the problem of expressing its loyalty to the one body when it is separated by so many different conditions produced by its historical development.

Special Circumstances of Certain Tribes (Reubenites, Gadites, half-tribe of Manasseh) (Cf. Numbers 32) – they had requested land east of the Jordan which was good for raising livestock; but they were still responsible to take their part in the military conquest alongside all of their countrymen.

Principle: **Fighting Valiantly Proceeds Resting in the Victory**

Jerome Creach: **Hebrews 3:7–4:11** ties the promise of rest to the certainty of God's abiding peace and salvation. The author declares that ultimate rest was available for Israel from the beginning (**Exod. 20:11**), but the Israelites were deprived of rest because of their lack of faith **(Ps. 95:11**). Rest did not come in completeness through Joshua; thus David (in **Ps. 95:11**) declared that the **chance for rest is still open**. Hebrews recognizes this rest as a state entered by faith and characterized by grace from God through Christ.

Principle: As believers, we can make choices that limit our entrance into the promised land and taking hold of God's promises. There is something hugely negative here about these tribes who preferred their own selection of land over what God had promised to them.

More Christians today living on the wrong side of the Jordan River – closer to the wilderness wanderings than the land flowing with milk and honey.

Redpath: Look through the terrifying record of the consequences of that choice made by those two and half tribes. Read **I Chronicles, chapter 5**. You will discover that these tribes, who had tasted of God's best and enjoyed God's victory, who had led the army of the people of God into the land of blessing, were the first to be captured by Assyrians when they invaded Israel. Taken captive, they never returned. They went down to defeat and into bondage, even though at one time they had led the people of God in the way of blessing. **Judges 5:16** says this: "*For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart*." I should think there were! They chose, they tasted of blessing, they had entered into the land of promise, but they hankered after the world, its pleasures, its indulgence, and its sin, and they were trapped and caught and ensnared in it.

C. (:16-18a) Commitment to Obey God's Appointed Leadership Unconditionally

"*And they answered Joshua, saying, 'All that you have commanded us we will*

do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you; only may the Lord your God be with you, as He was with Moses. Anyone who rebels against your command and does not obey your words in all that you command him, shall be put to death.'"

Trent Butler: In their conversation with Joshua, the eastern tribes make only one condition: they must see evidence that God is with Joshua as he was with Moses. The text has the easterners acknowledge by their loyalty that Joshua is the chosen and capable model of the leader after Moses, whatever office that leader may hold. They pronounce ahead of time the sentence for anyone who repeatedly fails to obey and follow Joshua. Such a traitor will face execution. Thus Knauf can conclude: disobedience over against a prophet is dangerous to one's health from then on.

Main application is our commitment to obey the Lord Jesus Himself unconditionally and to meditate upon His Word with the goal of applying it.
Can't pick and choose when it comes to the Commands of Christ –
Great Commission: "*teaching them to observe **all** that I commanded you*."

We know the history … not an easy mission for the Israelites; they only experienced mixed success; Why didn't the Lord give them instant and complete success??

Arthur Pink: Why didn't the Lord drive out all the Canaanites completely and immediately?

(**Ex. 23: 29,30**) – "*little by little*" – thus Israel was kept in a state of constant dependence before the Lord. That is one of His principal designs in all His dealings with people; to wean them from self-reliance and teach them to lean more and more upon Himself.

The spiritual application to the Christian of the above is simple and informative. God has nowhere promised to give him victory over all his enemies at once, and therefore he should not expect it. Nor would it be good for him if He did – pride and self-esteem would be the immediate outcome. "*Therefore will the Lord wait that He may be gracious unto you*" (**Isa. 30:18**). He has many things to say unto us, but we cannot bear them now (**John 16:12**); and He has victories to give us, but we are not yet fitted for them. As Israel were not to be discouraged by the slowness of their arms, neither must we be dismayed if victory be not ours at once – still less entertain the thought that success will never be achieved by us. In like manner, the possessing of our possessions, the present entering into and enjoyment of our heritage in Christ, is not attained all in a moment, but it is a progressive experience – "by little and little." Growth in grace is not an instantaneous thing like the new birth, but a gradual one: patience has to have her perfect work.

Richard Hess: For Christians, this opening chapter teaches that **leadership of God's people must be recognized by the people as God's choice.** The test for all such ministry is found in the knowledge of and obedience to God's Word, something that

can meet the practical needs of God's people (**1 Tim. 3:1–10; Titus 1:6–9**). Joshua's command to the Transjordanian tribes and their loyal promise provides an example of the importance of the unity of God's people and their support of his chosen leadership, as well as a sober note on the seriousness of any division (**Josh. 22; John 17; Acts 5:1–11; 1 Cor. 3**).

(:18b) CONCLUSION

"*ONLY BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS*"

Commitment to **Courage** and **Obedience** – How are we doing in those 2 key areas? The gift of victory is there for the taking … but we must be committed to step out in faith and engage the enemy.

Matt 28: 18-20 – in closing … note the parallels in our **Great Commission**

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How are we doing in terms of being "*strong and courageous*?" Where could we improve? What practical steps can we take?

2) In what sense should modern day pastors model their leadership after Joshua? In what sense are the circumstances different and they need to respect those differences?

3) Is our meditation on the Word of God geared towards obedience as its goal?

4) How does our commitment and expression of willingness to follow the Lord in whatever He commands fall short in various areas?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Robert Hubbard:
With **Joshua 1**, however, a new day dawns for Israel. Structurally, <u>three scenes</u> make up **Joshua 1**:

- Yahweh's dramatic commissioning of Joshua (vv. 1–9),
- Joshua's brief instructions to his officers (vv. 10–11), and
- a dialogue between Joshua and the two-and-a-half Transjordanian tribes (vv. 12–18).

<u>Several themes</u> thread their way through these three scenes, in reality the **central themes** of the entire book.

The first concerns the **transfer of authority** from Moses to Joshua (see **v. 18**). Long ago, Moses had designated Joshua as his successor (**Deut. 31:1–8**), and now his commissioning by Yahweh makes it official (**vv. 2–9**). His command that Joshua prepare Israel to cross the Jordan confirms Joshua as Israel's new leader (**v. 2**).

The second theme concerns the fulfillment of Yahweh's **promise of land**. Both the commissioning and the command serve a single aim, to deliver on Yahweh's promise to give Israel the land (**vv. 2, 3, 11, 15**). The narrator anticipates the two phases through which the fulfillment will become reality. He hints at the military defeat of Canaan's current occupants (**vv. 5a, 9, 14**), the story of **Joshua 1–12**. The threefold call for Joshua to be "*strong and courageous*" has the coming battles in mind (**vv. 6, 7, 9**; cf**. v. 18**). Two remarks foreshadow the distribution of land portions as Israel's "*inheritance*" (**vv. 6, 11**), the story of **Joshua 13–24**.

The third theme offers Joshua **reassurance that Yahweh will support Joshua** just as wholeheartedly as he did Moses (**vv. 5, 17**; cf. **3:7**). There is no point in Israel's moving forward if Yahweh's support were only lukewarm. To verify this, Yahweh assures Joshua of complete military success (**vv. 3–5a**) and promises never to abandon him (**v. 5b**).

A fourth theme stresses that the adventure about to unfold involves Israel as a **unified people**. The dialogue with the Transjordanian tribes sounds this theme, one that will echo in later references to "*all Israel*" (**3:7, 17; 4:14; 7:24; 8:33; 10:29; 23:2; 24:1**). Moses had granted the two-and-a-half tribes land east of the Jordan provided they help the other tribes conquer Canaan (cf. **Num. 32**). The book makes special efforts to track their faithful promise-keeping and to explain their unique inheritance (cf. **4:12; 13:8–33; 18:7; 22:1–8**). A later episode (**ch. 22**) will show some of the strains threatening that unity.

Finally, the author introduces the **absolute centrality of obedience** to the Instruction (*torah*) of Moses. Joshua's success hangs totally on his unswerving obedience to it (**1:7–8**), as does Israel's continued blessing by Yahweh in the future (**22:5; 23:6**; cf. **24:26**). The book carefully traces how Joshua and Israel carry out things that Moses had commanded (**1:13; 4:10; 8:31, 33, 35; 11:12; 14:2; 22:2**).

Redpath: **The Man God Uses** –
A faithful past, a sound vocation, a filling with the Word of God – what can we do to prove worthy of Him? Let us take our weakness, and our trembling, and our fears before Him; let there be an absolute submission to the indwelling power of His blessed Spirit. Let us ask that all these qualities that were revealed in Christ be imparted to us, that they may be real in your life and mine.

There is a price to be paid. Are you willing to pay it? Cancel every responsibility in your life other than what you believe to be God's will for you. Deliberately refuse any engagement which will keep you from meditation on His Word. We are living in an

age which has lost the art of being silent with an open Bible and waiting for God to speak.

Holwick: **A Time of Crisis:**

1) Replacing a beloved (and inspired) leader.
   a) Moses had brought them out of Egypt.
   b) He had led them 40 years in the wilderness.
   c) Now he was dead.
2) Holding diverse tribes together.
   a) Book will reveal tensions between the groups.
   b) Even a few defections would bring about defeat.
3) Facing a huge task - conquering the Promised Land.
   a) This had been a disaster the first time around.
   b) The land was filled with fortified cities.

Holwick: **Courageous leaders make an impact**:

When Chuck Swindoll was a small boy, he attended church every Sunday at a big Gothic Presbyterian fortress in Chicago.
The preaching was powerful and the music was great.
But for Swindoll, the most awesome moment in the morning service was the offertory.
Twelve solemn, frock-coated ushers marched in lock-step down the main aisle to receive the brass plates for collecting the offering.
These men, so serious about their business of serving the Lord in this magnificent house of worship, were the business and professional leaders of Chicago.

One of the twelve ushers was a man named Frank Loesch.
He was not a very imposing-looking man, but in Chicago he was a living legend, for he was the man who stood up to Al Capone.
In the prohibition years, Capone's rule was absolute.
The local and state police and even the F.B.I. were afraid to oppose him.

But singlehandedly, Frank Loesch, as a Christian layman and without government support, organized the Chicago Commission.
This group of citizens was determined to take Mr. Capone to court and put him away.
During the months that the Crime Commission met, Frank Loesch's life was in constant danger.
There were threats on the lives of his family and friends.
But he never wavered.

Ultimately he won the case against Capone and was the instrument for removing this blight from the city of Chicago.

Frank Loesch had risked his life to live out his faith.
Each Sunday at this point of the service, Swindoll's father, a
Chicago businessman himself, never failed to poke him and
silently point to Frank Loesch with pride.

Doug Goins: **A Hard Act to Follow**
Even godly leaders like Moses don't lead forever. There comes a time in every ministry when God calls for a new beginning with a new generation and new leadership. With the exception of Joshua and Caleb, the old generation of Jews had all died during the forty years of wandering in the wilderness, and Joshua was commissioned to lead this new generation into a new challenge that he had never faced before---entering and conquering the promised land.

I remember being in London and seeing the grave of John Wesley, the great English revivalist of the 1700s and founder of Methodism. There is a plaque on his grave that says, "God buries his workmen, but his work goes on." It was God who had chosen Joshua, and everyone in Israel knew that he was their new leader. . .

God commissioned Joshua to do three things: to lead the people into the land; to defeat the enemies they would face in all the fortified cities, all the Canaanite tribes in the land; and to claim the inheritance of the land. God could have chosen some supernatural means to accomplish these things, such as sending an angel. But he chose a person just like us, and he promised to give that person the power he would need to get the job done.

Joshua himself is a type of Jesus Christ. **Hebrews 2:10** calls Jesus the captain of our salvation. He has already won the ultimate victory over sin and death and hell. And now Jesus leads us in triumph through our own battles to possess the land. He shares the spiritual resources of his inheritance with us. He gives us his spiritual blessings---everything we need to follow in obedience to God's call in our lives. . .

What are you being called of God to arise and do today? What obedience to truth is required of you? How has God personally commissioned you to serve him and his people? Is there someone in whose giant shadow you will be serving, a loved leader you're being asked to follow, perhaps as a Sunday School teacher, staff person, or whatever? I talked to a woman this week who is being called of God to stepmother a family of children who desperately need to be loved, and she doesn't feel at all adequate for that calling from God. If none of these questions connects with you, then you have a different issue to deal with. It might mean that you're idling in neutral---gradually sliding backward, losing ground. Perhaps the call to you is to stand up and step out. Maybe it means saying, "Okay, Lord, what do you want me to do? What do you want me to possess? What do you want me to move into?" I pray that you're encouraged by this text, that it strengthens you and gives you a brave heart.

Steve Malone:
The reason many of the first century Christians had joy in spite of hardships and turned

their world upside down, is because they did not stop at going "almost", THEY WENT "ALL THE WAY" with God. THEY CROSSED OVER WHAT CAN BE CALLED THEIR SPIRITUAL JORDAN AND they ENTERED THE CHRISTIAN PROMISED LAND.

- A land where they realized and enjoyed the forgiveness of sin and no longer let guilt stifle their walk.
- A land where they truly knew that Christ was with them, they felt His presence as their Lord, Savior and Friend.
- A land where they walked in the newness of life, leaving behind the old.
- A land where they had true joy, a joy that was based on the unmovable rock of Jesus Christ and their relationship to Him, a joy resulting in an unquenchable praise and adoration.
- A land where they allowed the spirit and the Word to help them be more Christ-like.
- A land where they believed, used and saw in action the powerful privilege of prayer.
- A land where they gained victory over sin through the blood and power of the Lamb.
- A land where their cup was full and their hearts were satisfied.
- A land where they could stare death in the face and see it as sweet victory. Because for them "*to live was Christ and to die was gain*".

Sounds like a great place to live -- Doesn't it? Across the river is land flowing with mild and honey. A land where every Christian will experience the joy of salvation and rise above mediocrity and serve Christ wholeheartedly. Like the Israelites God has only one place that He intends for Christians to live after He delivers them from bondage.

As we study the early part of the book of Joshua today, we will see that our journey into our promise land is like the Israelites' journey in <u>4 respects</u>:

I. WE LIKE THEY, NEED TO LEAVE SOMETHING BEHIND

> **Hebrews 12:1** "*Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles – and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.*"

II. WE LIKE THEY, MUST DEVELOP GENUINE FAITH

III. WE LIKE THEY, MUST BE FULLY ARMED -- **Ephes 6:10-18**

IV. WE LIKE THEY, MUST FOLLOW GOD

Jensen: But the foes of Israel were many and formidable. Whether it was a flooded river to cross, a strong fortress to destroy, or an alliance of armies to conquer, the entrance and possession were impossible—without God. But God was with Israel, and God fought for Israel, and this made the difference. How very vital for the Christian intent on having God's best to learn that the enemies (so many!) of his soul are not

driven out by his impotent efforts, well intended as they may be, but by God's devastating dynamite; not by the arm of flesh, but by the whole armor of God (**Eph 6**).

Blaikie: "*I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee*," – an assurance which is extended in the Epistle to the Hebrews to all who believe. We are so apt to view these promises as just beautiful expressions that we need to pause and think what they really mean. A promise of Divine presence, Divine protection and guidance and blessing all the days of our life, is surely a treasure of inexpressible value. It is no slight matter to realize that this is in God's heart – that He has a constant, unvarying feeling of love toward us, and readiness to help; but we must believe this in order to get the benefit of it; and, moreover, He must be left to determine the time, the manner, and the form in which His help is to come. Alas for the unbelief, the suspicion, the fear that is so prone to eat out the spirit of trust, and in our trials and difficulties make us tremble as if we were alone! What a profound peace, what calm enjoyment and blessed hope fall to the lot of those who can believe in a God ever near, and in His unfailing faithfulness and love! Was it not the secret alike of David's calmness, of our Lord's serenity, and of the cheerful composure of many a martyr and many a common man and woman who have gone through life undisturbed and happy, that they could say – "*I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved*"? God grant us all that, like Abraham, we may "*stagger not at the promise of God through unbelief, but that being strong in faith we may give glory to God, and believe that what He hath promised He is able also to perform*."

. . .

First of all, the land had to be conquered; and there is no difficulty in seeing how necessary it was for one who had this task on hand to be strong and of a good courage, and to meditate on God's law. Then the land had to be divided, and the people settled in their new life, and Joshua had to initiate them, as it were, in that life; he had to bind on their consciences the conditions on which the land was to be enjoyed, and start them in the performance of the duties, moral, social and religious, which the Divine constitution required. Here lay the most difficult part of his task.

F. B. Meyer: Re Joshua afflicted with his inadequacies and so charged here with courage and strength:

It is when men are in this condition that God approaches them with the summons to undertake vast and overwhelming responsibilities. Most of us are too strong for him to use; we are too full of our own schemes, and plans, and ways of doing things. He must empty us, and humble us, and bring us down to the dust of death, so low that we need every straw of encouragement, every leaf of help; and then he will raise us up, and make us as the rod of his strength. The world talks of the survival of the fittest; but God gives power to the faint, and increase might to them that have not strength; he perfects his strength in weakness, and uses things that are not to bring to naught things that are. If Ehud had been right-handed, he might never have judged Israel; if Gideon had been the greatest instead of the least in his father's house, he would never have vanquished Midian; if Paul had been as eloquent in his speech as he confesses himself to have been contemptible, he would never have preached the Gospel from Jerusalem round to Illyricum.

Let us consider the sources of Joshua's strength:

I. A Faithful Past –
II. A Distinct Call –
III. The Sense of the Presence of God –
IV. The Indwelling of the Word of God –

Kenneth Gangel: **Avoiding Traps in Leadership Transition**
In his wonderful book *Making a Leadership Change*, Thomas Gilmore identifies some problems leaders face when they assume a new responsibility. He warns that the biggest traps lie in the path of connecting with existing staff:

> Leaders, especially early in their tenure, do not get fully developed options from which they select a path. Rather, a direction begins to emerge from a sequence of choices—about people, issues, resources … and from serendipity. … Traps arise from misunderstandings and the inability to discuss the situation freely (Gilmore, 136).

Indeed, Joshua faced numerous traps or there would have been no need for God to tell him, "*Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged*" (**1:9**). According to Gilmore, the first has to do with **patterns of delegation**, a lesson Joshua had seen in negative form by watching Moses before his confrontation with Jethro recorded in **Exodus 18**. Yes, Joshua had inherited a staff, and we learn about them in **Joshua 1:10** where they are called "*the officers of the people*." New leaders face a mutual learning experience with existing staff in order to provide a good working relationship within a reasonable amount of time. Since leaders early in their tenure do not want to appear unresponsive, they tend to give out signals suggesting they want involvement in everything. The result is an overloaded desk and staff relinquishing their independence—either eagerly or grudgingly.

The second trap centers on **internal versus external priorities**. Joshua had to keep the people balanced between the physical task of conquering cities and the less obvious but more important task of maintaining spiritual vitality. This is a challenge each of us faces every day as we struggle to enter the spiritual heights of "Canaan."

The third of Gilmore's traps deals with **handling resistance to change**. Picture a pastor who comes to a staff meeting making suggestions and asking for input. The staff responds, and the church leaders get involved. Knowing the practical realities of the church, they often cite difficulties that the pastor's ideas might encounter. He may interpret this feedback as resistance or lack of vision and in the future consult both staff and church leaders on fewer matters. If this happens they may identify less with his ideas and become bystanders, no longer feeling that their leadership is important.

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **The Principles of Victorious Christian Living (1:1-9)**
Introduction: "I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full victory, complete, total victory." Those words were spoken by General Eisenhower on June 6, 1944. These were the words that

he spoke to his troops just before they went into battle on that historic day that we now call D-Day. Think about those words. “We will accept nothing less than full, complete, total victory.” Now, when I read those words, friend, I think about the Christian life. You know why? Because our captain, the Lord Jesus Christ, expects the same of us. He wants His people to live in victory. That is God's plan for your life. **2 Cor. 2:14**

Joshua, his name actually was originally Oshia, but Moses changed it to Joshua. Oshia means salvation. Joshua means *Jehovah is salvation*. And he was a soldier. You remember in Exodus 17, he led the troops against Amalek. He was a spy. You remember when Moses sent out 12 spies to the land of Canaan. Joshua was one of those spies. And he and Caleb gave a good report while the others gave an evil report.

But also Joshua was a servant. In **Exodus 24-3**, he is called Moses' minister or Moses' servant. And he was with Moses up there in the Holy Mount when Israel rebelled in that golden calf episode, you know. And also there was a place where Moses set up a special tent where Moses and God could commune. And Joshua was always there just outside that tent. In fact, he guarded that tent. for Moses while he was there. So he wasn't just a warrior, he was a worshipper.

But here's the thing I want you to see. Did you know that Joshua in the Old Testament is a type and a figure for Jesus? He really is a figure of the Lord Jesus. **Hebrews 4.8** tells us that. Jehovah says. Joshua defeats our earthly foes. Jesus defeats our heavenly foes. Joshua brought Israel to the land of Canaan. Jesus brings us to our inheritance. Joshua, his counsel was rejected at Canaan Barnea. Jesus, He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. They didn't receive all of His counsel. Joshua was the captain of the army of Israel. Jesus is the captain of our army. And just like Joshua brings victory for Israel, Jesus is the one that brings victory for us.

Big Idea: **Five Principles for Living in Victory**

I. Don’t Live in the Past

God says to Joshua, Joshua, Moses is no longer here, now you need to move on. God doesn't want Joshua standing at the grave of Moses. God wants Joshua to move on. You don't need to nurse the wounds of the past. What you need to do is you need to let that go. And you need to turn and go forward in the future.

- Some people are haunted by past guilt.
- Some people live with past glory
- Some people hold on to past grudges

When Winston Churchill came to America, he was trying to form an alliance with Great Britain and the United States. And as you know, history bears that the relationship between these two countries hasn't always been that good. But when Churchill came to America, this is what he said. He said, “if present quarrels with the past then there can be no future.”

II. Remember, God has already Given You the Victory (1:3)

You know what Canaan stands for for the Christian? It stands for the victorious Christian life. . .Not a metaphor for heaven . . . Alan Redpath said, "the book of Joshua is to the Old Testament what Ephesians is to the New Testament." That's so very true. What's Ephesians talk about? Talks about our wealth, all the wealth and the treasure that we have in Christ. Talks about our walk, how we're to walk the Christian life. Talks about our warfare, how we have a warfare against an enemy. The book of Joshua is the same thing. . . For the believer, victory is not our destination. It is our point of origin. And so God says it's already yours.

- Canaan represents release from slavery
- Canaan represents refreshment
- Canaan represents rest (**Heb. 4**)
- Canaan represents reality -- I don't want to just hear sermons about those things [victorious living]. I want to experience those things.

III. Claim God's Promises (1:5)

God said, you have to put the foot of faith in the land of promise and claim it.

A. A Promise of Conquering Power

There are times in the Christian life when it's not easy, when there are challenges. Thereare times when there are giants that we face in the Christian life. But God has given us a promise. that through His divine power and resources, no giant will be able to stand before you. You can have victory.

B. A Promise of His Continuing Presence

"*As I was with Moses, so shall I be with thee. I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee*." The promises of God do not die with a man. The same promises God gave to Moses, He gave to Joshua. The same promises that God gave to Joshua, He's giving to you, and He's giving to me. No man shall be able to stand before you. In fact, if you compare Deuteronomy 11 and Joshua 1, you know what you're going to find? A total parallel. Everything that God said to Moses, God is now saying the same thing to Joshua.

IV. Refuse to Live in Fear (1:6)

How many times did God say "*be strong and of a good courage*?" Three times. Three times. Now when God said something once, you ought to listen. If he says something twice, you ought to really pay attention. If he says it three times, your antennas better go up. You better listen to what he's saying.

Do you think Joshua was wrestling with fear? I think, of course, he was. I was reading about Harry Truman. It's an interesting story. He was a very unknown person, a senator from Missouri. And he came from out of nowhere to be Roosevelt's running mate. And sure enough, Roosevelt was elected to be president again, and Harry Truman, the vice president. But on April 12, 1945, after being vice president for only a few months, Truman received a message that said, come to the White House, and come as quickly and as quietly as you can. Well, Truman left to go to the White House. He was thinking that the president's got some special job for me to do. But when he got to the White

House, he was met by Mrs. Roosevelt, and he met her in the sitting room, and she said to him, she said, Harry, the president died. Now, when that happened, he just sat there. He was too stunned to speak. I mean, think about it. Here was this great president, FDR, led the country through a depression. was leading them through the World War II, and the war wasn't over yet. There were still all these things to consider. What are you going to do about Hitler? What are you going to do about Japan? What are you going to do about Stalin? All these major problems. And now the president is dead, and now Truman is the president. And he was so stunned he couldn't speak. Finally, he managed to say to Mrs. Roosevelt, is there anything I can do for you? And she said, no, Harry, is there anything I can do for you? You're the one who's in trouble now. And later on, Harry Truman said, I felt like at that moment the moon and the stars and the planets all fell on me at once. He assumed this huge mantle, this huge responsibility of leadership. And friend, I think that's the way Joshua felt. This huge responsibility. And now he's filled with fear. But God says to him, **be courageous.**

Courage is not the absence of fear. It is the conquest of it. And it's really not courage unless fear is present. I mean, there has to be fear in order for courage to overcome it. John Wayne said, the great theologian John Wayne, he said, courage is being scared to death but saddling up anyway. . . The ultimate cause of all failure in life and of all unhappiness is that spirit of fear.

I was reading about General Patton. During World War II, he was praised for having so much courage in battle. And one time, Patton said this. He said, sir, I am not brave. He said, sir, the truth is I am an utter coward. But he said, I have learned from my whole life, and even as a young soldier, I've learned very early never to take counsel from my fears. And that's the difference. When you're afraid, you must choose to trust in the Lord. **Ps. 56:3, 11**

V. Meditate on God's Word Continually (1:8)

You keep my word in your heart, you keep my word in your mind. You know why? Because their greatest battle was the corruption from the land of Canaan, from all the enemies, the ungodliness of that culture, that influence that could seep into their life.

The real issue is not how many times have you been through the Bible, but how many times has the Bible been through you. What is meditation? When you think of meditation, sometimes you think about this Eastern mysticism and yoga. That's not meditation. They teach you to empty your mind. Here, God is telling you to fill your mind with his word. And it simply means the word meditation means to speak to oneself, to reflect at something over and over again. You know what meditation is? It is mental digestion. It is thinking deeply about what you have heard. It's also a word that means a musical notation and a pleasant reflection. So it's just thinking about it over and over and over again.

Act upon it. Why does God want us to meditate? Look again in verse eight. *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. Notice where it says that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein. You know why God wants us to meditate? Because meditation is the key to **application**.

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Learning to Lead (1:10-18)**
Introduction: This is one of the great passages in the Bible about leadership. Joshua came on the scene at a time when there was a crisis. And there was needed at that time forceful, decisive leadership. Examples of leadership crisis in our culture today.

I. Principles that Forge a Godly Leader

A. Communion Principle – A leader must be in tune with God (**1:10**)
It all starts with Joshua having that communion with God, walking with God, and getting his orders from God. You know why some people are reluctant to follow a leader? because they're not convinced that that leader is following God.

After spending time with God, after God telling him all these things, Joshua then turns to his officers and he said, here's what we're going to do. You know where that confidence, that encouragement, that courage came from? It came from time with God, getting his orders from the Lord.

B. Companion Principle – A leader must be able to delegate responsibilities to faithful people
There was a structure in place. There was an order of men that were under him, and these officers had a military function as well as a civilian function. **Deut. 16; Ex. 5**
You can't delegate the responsibility without also giving them authority.

Cf. **Ex. 18** – the Moses Syndrome -- in order for any leader to really be able to accomplish God-given objectives, he has to have faithful people around him that will also take up the mantle of responsibility and will be able to help this leader out.

C. Communication Principle – A leader must have a plan, and has to clearly communicate that plan.
A wise leader will structure his message to the audience so that everyone understands clearly what's being said. Many times, leaders try to sound too intelligent. Someone said, just because the water is muddy doesn't mean that it's deep. And I never try to sound deep, friend. I just try to be **clear**.

- With clarity
- With urgency
- With authority
- With certainty

D. Confrontation Principle – A leader must willing to tackle problems head on. (**1:12**)
A strong leader will foresee, perhaps, potential problems and difficulties and conflicts, and he is already ready to personally deal with those conflicts head on. We have to be

open and ready for attack. The leaders are vulnerable, and they will get attacked, and they suffer stress.

II. Principles Regarding the People following a Godly Leader

"*All that thou commandest us, we will do*."
Not everyone follows godly leadership.

A. They Responded with Unity **(:16)**

B. They Responded with Loyalty (:**17**)
Not a blind loyalty – but discerning.

C. They Understood Authority (:**18**)

TEXT: Joshua 2: 1-24

TITLE: AVOIDING THE GRASSHOPPER MENTALITY –
THE MISSION OF THE TWO SPIES
Bad report given by initial 10 of 12 spies:
"we became like grasshoppers in our own sight" (Num. 13:33)

BIG IDEA:
GOD ASSURES HIS PEOPLE OF VICTORY BY EXPOSING THE FEAR AND DEFEATIST ATTITUDE OF OUR ENEMIES
(HERE HE USES A PROPHETIC PROSTITUTE = RAHAB)

INTRODUCTION: TURNING THE TABLES

I had an interesting experience earlier this week at my conference for Caterpillar dealers out in Las Vegas that directly illustrated the main point we want to grab hold of in today's message. We had over 300 management representatives from most of the 58 dealerships in North America gathered together in one large ballroom to get pumped up and to **think big** about where our business is headed (in this case talking about our rental business and our sale of compact equipment). Cat corporate just achieved their overall goal of $30 billion in annual revenue … a couple of years ahead of schedule. The Cat executive opening up the conference challenged the group with this line of thinking:

> "*We are the 800 pound gorilla in the industry. Nobody can stand before us. We will be victorious in what we set our mind to accomplish. If one of our competitors were to walk into this ballroom right now and see what combined resources he was up against, he would be quaking in fear … knowing that he didn't stand a chance.*"

(Well maybe if I worked for John Deere … I'd say the same thing … I'd be wrong of course … just kidding … that's not the point)

The point of **Joshua chapter 2** is that we can't have a **Grasshopper Mentality** – God has called us to an agenda of spiritual victory and we need to move out in faith with an **expectation of success**. We as the church of the Lord Jesus Christ are much more than the 800 pound gorilla … we will see the testimony of Rahab in this chapter … we are Connected … our God is the Master of the Universe –"*the God in heaven above and earth beneath.*"

Turning the Tables: We are not the ones who should be in fear and trembling. The victory has been won for us; Satan was defeated at the cross. Our enemies know that they cannot stand against the power of the Almighty. They are ready to be driven out. We must step out in faith and take the land that has been promised to us.

Richard Hess: The story about Rahab functions in several ways in its place in Joshua. From the perspective of the literary context, it provides a view of the Canaanites as **chapter 1** did of the Israelites. As in **chapter 1**, one particular figure is highlighted. In

this sense, Rahab corresponds to Joshua as the faithful one of her people who is chosen to lead them to salvation, or at least to offer it to those who are interested. **Joshua 2** also anticipates the conquest of Jericho in **chapter 6.** In the broader context of the Pentateuch, ties are obvious with **Numbers 13–14** and **Deuteronomy 1** and the sending of the scouts from Kadesh Barnea with its disastrous results. In the contrasting account of **Joshua 2**, the role of Joshua is magnified as one who follows God and who leads the people. **Joshua 2** thus justifies the character of Joshua as a leader concerned for his people, for he gathers intelligence before leading them into hostile territory. It also describes how Joshua gives Rahab and her family an opportunity to deliver themselves from the coming destruction. Finally, **Joshua 2** affirms a theology of the **mission of Israel**. This is specified in the two longest monologues in the story: the confession and request of Rahab (**vv. 9–13**) and the conditional promise of the scouts (**vv. 17– 20**). Together these provide the justification for war, the provision of mercy for deliverance, and the expectations of Israel.

Jerome Creach: **Joshua 2** is one of the richest and most intricately woven narratives in the book. It employs irony, humor, and folkloric qualities to create an irresistible plot in which a prostitute outsmarts two groups of men in order to preserve herself and her family during the Israelite attack on Jericho. The narrative has suspense, sexual innuendo, and an underdog who triumphs—everything a modern audience expects in a great story! Because of these features, **Joshua 2** can and should be appreciated for its literary artistry. This chapter is also extremely important, however, for the theology of the book of Joshua.

Kenneth Gangel: **Strangers in the Attic** –
This chapter centers not on the spies or Joshua himself but on Rahab the prostitute. She demonstrates for us the wisdom and value of choosing faith and acting upon that choice. Her reward was enormous.

I. (:1-7) PROVIDENTIAL PROTECTION MAKES US UNTOUCHABLES AND FRUSTRATES OUR ENEMIES

You can't be thinking Grasshopper thoughts when you realize that God protects us against all odds

KING OF JERICHO TRIES TO CAPTURE THE TWO SPIES BUT FAILS

Most powerful leader in the land extremely frustrated by his inability to accomplish his mission of capturing the two spies (like trying to squish 2 little grasshoppers)

- he had the right intelligence on the ground – those spies were right under his nose … still couldn't find them … sort of like WMDs
- he had all the cards in his favor; home field advantage;
  the world vs 2 = pretty good odds
- snookered by little old Rahab the harlot

"*some trust in horses and some in chariots but we will remember the name of the Lord our God*" – no room for grasshopper thinking

A. (:1a) Visualizing Victory –
Top Secret Reconnaissance Mission of the Two Spies

> "*Then Joshua the son of Nun sent two men as spies secretly from Shittim, saying, 'Go, view the land, especially Jericho.'*"

SPIRITUAL RECONAISSANCE: SWOT ANALYSIS
(STRENGTHS / WEAKNESSES / OPPORTUNITIES / THREATS)

Timing Issue: when did this take place in the context of chaps 1-2
Remember **1:11** – the date was set – 3 days of preparation and then they would enter the land … so things are being presented out of order here chronologically … The spies had already returned with the critical intel info before Joshua set this timetable

Helene Dallaire: Joshua understands the value of spying and scouting out territory. Decades earlier, Moses had sent him along with eleven other men to examine Canaan's population, strength, agricultural conditions, and habitability (**Nu 13:17–25**). Joshua had learned that twelve spies were much too numerous to bring back an accurate and helpful report. He had learned that only two spies could do the job well (as he and Caleb had done); consequently, he sees fit to send only two men to scout out the area of Jericho.

Acting in FAITH is consistent with being SMART about it; acting with PRUDENCE --

1. Extremely dangerous mission for these 2 spies
   - no support or fallback – on their own to fend for themselves; had to be very brave and resourceful
   - Joshua must have selected 2 very heroic leaders for this important mission; He remembered what was required from his earlier heroics with Caleb
   - tried to slip into the country unobserved and blend in
   - must have been good swimmers! No parting of the Jordan for their crossing

2. Extremely sensitive mission
   - didn't communicate up front to the rest of the nation
   - Leadership needs to present the right message at the right time – here Joshua still wanted to get his ducks in a row before going public

3. Extremely strategic mission
   - significance of Jericho as the necessary stronghold from which to further invade the land

- A small city (maybe 6 acres) on the plains just West of the river Jordan and Northeast of Jerusalem.
- A city of great power and wealth guarded by a great 30' tall wall. In fact a double wall … 12 feet between the walls (inner wall very thick, outer wall very thin);
- People felt secure; impenetrable / Fortress mentality

B. (:1b) Friends in Low Places – the Assistance of Rahab the Harlot

"So they went and came into the house of a harlot whose name was Rahab, and lodged there."

1. Selection of Rahab

Why or How did they end up here?? Providence of God – unexplained to us
Rahab's house accustomed to having male visitors come and go; reputation well-known; the spies needed somewhere to stay

Keathley: Rahab's house was the only place where the men could stay with any hope of remaining undetected and where they would be able to gather the information they were seeking. Moreover, her house afforded an easy way of escape since it was located on the city wall.

Richard Hess: Why then do the spies choose the house of a prostitute? This house was more likely a tavern, hostel or way station, which could be used by visitors, than a brothel. There is evidence for such overnight places of accommodation and their use by travelling caravans and royal messengers in Canaan of the fourteenth to twelfth centuries BC.

2. Significance of Rahab

A model of Gentile faith – Commended highly in the NT

- Commended for her faith in welcoming and protecting the spies in **Heb. 11:31**

"*By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace*"

- Commended for her model of faith in action; living faith in **James 2:25**

"*And in the same way was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works, when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way*?"

- Commended most importantly by being included in the royal line of Joseph – **Matt. 1:5**

Establishing the legal right of Jesus to be the promised Messiah of the Seed of David; Her descendants became the kings of Israel and Judah!

Robert Massey: Isn't it interesting that in Matthew's account of the linage of Jesus, the only three women mentioned were all involved in sexual sin, Rahab, a prostitute, Bathsheba, an adulteress, and Tamar, who committed incest with her father-in-law. Oh the amazing grace of God.

3. Surprising Model of Rahab… who does she represent??

- she is a Canaanite – "*while we were yet enemies Christ died for us*" The Canaanites were the enemy. According to God's own command they were to be exterminated. All of them. Yet here is one of the enemy showing kindness and compassion to the Israeli spies.

- she is a woman – second class citizen; but not in God's eyes

- she is a prostitute – could never amount to anything; beyond Forgiveness in the eyes of most; tainted forever

- she is a trophy of God's grace – the type of instrument He loves to use to accomplish His purposes

Did you notice how the designation is "*Rahab the harlot*" … our sense of God's grace would be greatly magnified if we were labeled according to our past as well … Here is Paul the self-righteous; Clyde the drunkard; Wilma the gossip … we tend to look down on certain sins … but the Holy God recognizes the same root depravity and rebellion against His righteousness.

Here is the least impressive member of society being selected by God to play a critical role in world history (HIS Story) … by grace through faith made some key right choices (despite having an embarrassing history of making incredibly destructive choices).

You think you are a nobody … that God can't use you for something impressive?? Think again; we can never try to excuse ourselves from some mission God is calling us to by claiming to be too small and unimportant for the task – the gifts and calling belong to God – He is the one who equips and enables.

C. (:2-3) Enemies in High Places -- Blown Cover

1. (:2) Mission Exposed to King of Jericho

"*And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, 'Behold, men from the sons of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land.*'"

David Howard: The action in **vv. 2–8** moves along quickly and is described in rather choppy Hebrew. It is a straightforward account, however, of events setting the stage for the dramatic conversations of **vv. 9–14** and **16–21**.

Satan has always been *the accuser of the brethren* – whether it is bringing lies into our minds to try to make us deny the truth God has revealed about who we are and our relationship to Him (e.g. we are not grasshoppers!); or whether it is accusing us in some fashion by galvanizing opposition to us and to the program of God.

He is active in the world behind the scenes right now – going about as a roaring lion; seeking whom he can devour – we don't want to treat him lightly – but remember: the tables have been turned and he is the one who should be cowering in fear … not us

2. (:3) Intimidating Ultimatum Issued to Rahab

"*And the king of Jericho sent word to Rahab, saying, 'Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the land*.'"

Watershed decision: *Who is on the Lord's side; who will serve the king*?
Will Rahab remain loyal to Baal and to the king of Jericho; or commit treason and align with the God of Israel? -- both a political and religious decision

D. (:4-6) Providential Protection -- Risky Protection Provided by Rahab

"*But the woman had hidden the two men*"

Dangerous game of Hide and Seek – a lot at stake
Rahab had made a lot of bad choices in her life … but she turned things around when she risked everything and started making choices of faith
No matter how stained our past; no matter how humiliating; what type of bondage sin has created … there are oppts today for choices of faith
but will require repentance – casting off certain aspects of one's lifestyle

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Aside: Don't want to get off track here debating the issue of **Situation Ethics** …
Was it OK for Rahab to be deceptive in this situation?

Simple Answer: Yes – (many won't agree … I don't want to debate … not the point of this account) – just two quick observations:

- Rahab consistently commended in the Scriptures for her brave behavior here
- The Spy Game in the context of warfare brings with it a different set of rules than what we would be dealing with in the case of Situation Ethics when it comes to our personal behavior

Enough said… we are moving on

Richard Hess: The ethical issue is not the concern of the narrative. It stresses the deception, not in order to condemn Rahab but to magnify her personal risk in hiding the spies.

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E. (:7) Futile Opposition -- Rabbit Trail Pursuit

"*So the men pursued them on the road to the Jordan to the fords; and as soon as those who were pursuing them had gone out, they shut the gate*."

The fortifications and weapons of our spiritual enemies cannot frustrate the sovereign plans of God.
The king of Jericho thought he had all his bases covered … but he was clueless.

II. (:8-11) PROPHETIC INSIGHT REVEALS THE DEFEATIST STATE OF THE ENEMY

God wants His people to wake up and appropriate the victory He has already secured. Note how long the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness when they could have already been enjoying rest in the land of milk and honey. The enemies are quaking in their boots … have been for a long time … wondering when their defeat will be executed.

A. (:8-9) Summary Admission of Defeat

1. Intellectual Acknowledgment of Defeat

"*I know that the Lord has given you the land*"

2. Emotional Dread of Defeat

"*and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you*."

Sometimes our enemies don't look scared:
Why wasn't Goliath scared when David approached him? Enemies can be just plain dumb and uninformed as well … but where they are clued in … they know their fate.

Richard Hess: The concentric or **chiastic** construction thus appears:

vv. 9b–10a

A. *the LORD has given this land to you*
B. *a great fear of you has fallen on us*
B. *all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you*
C. *We have heard . . .*

v. 11

C1. . . *and so we have heard*
B1. *our hearts melted* (NIV mg.)
B1. *everyone's courage failed because of you*
A1. *the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below*

B. (:10) Conclusive Examples of the Power of the Lord

1. Removing all Obstacles -- Crossing of the Red Sea

"*For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt*"

What are the huge obstacles that prevent you from claiming God's promises for spiritual victory? You need to give those over to God in faith

Trent Butler: The prostitute gives them the late night news: the city is in a state of panic and terror, knowing the God of the Israelites has given his people the land. The people of Jericho have cause to fear because they know the story of Israel's deliverance from Egypt through the Reed Sea (**Exod 14–15**) and of the total defeat of Sihon and Og (**Num 21**). "Rahab confesses that what was foretold by the celebrants of the exodus (**Exod 15:1–18**) has come to pass." She confesses what she heard, though the source of the message is not given. Rahab becomes the first prophetic figure in the historical books as well as the first inhabitant of the land to join Israel and Israel's God.

2. Defeating all Enemies who stand in our way –
Destruction of Sihon and Og (two kings of the Amorites)
"*and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed*."

Deut 2:24-25 "*shall tremble and be in dread because of you*"
Deut 3:21-22 – important principle – God is fighting for us
Imagine a tag team fight where whenever you need help, God jumps into the ring and delivers the knockout blow

Satan knows what Christ accomplished on the Cross
Back to **Gen. 3** – the serpent bruised the heel of the seed of the woman;
But the promised Messiah crushed the head of the serpent—He is finished.

We sell compaction equipment that does a pretty good job if you want to use it to crush something … while I was off in Vegas this week, I imagine most of you spent Valentine's evening listening to a special promotion on 98 Rock …
There you would have heard jilted lovers bringing momentos of past relationships gone sour to a touching event where they could have our big yellow machine crush those momentos to smitherines and thus gain some sense of closure for their bitterness …
Real high class stuff

God specializes in Crushing His Enemies … not just slapping them on the wrist …obliterating them
"*It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God*" -- (**Heb 10:31**)

Matt. 8:29 – demons cast out into the herd of pigs
"*Have you come to torment us before the time*?"
Col. 2:15 – "*made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him*"
James 2:19 – the demons intellectually acknowledge the existence of God and shudder

C. (:11a) Losing All Heart
"*And when we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you*"

since they heard of this they have been expecting defeat

What would you think of someone who was given an inheritance of $25 million dollars and then took 40 years to get over to the bank to sign the papers so they could start using the funds?
The enemy was wondering: what took you guys so long to get here?

D. (:11b) Confession of Absolute Sovereignty

"*for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath*."

Significant testimony for one raised in a culture of polytheism and idolatry.
Same lesson that King Nebuchadnezzar had to learn the hard way …
This is where we need to hang our hat – **Psalm 139** – **Romans 8** --
Smart to get with the program.
Do God's people act like they truly believe this?

Goins: This powerful confession of God's absolute sovereignty suggests that Rahab isn't just gripped by fear, but deep inside she has a growing spiritual sensitivity to the supernatural God at work through all of these events.

Schaeffer: How did she know that? We are not told. Often in Scripture we find that people knew things, though we are not told how they came to know them. But Rahab knew! And what she knew was totally against her culture. She believed in a new God, a God totally and diametrically opposed to the gods of Jericho but a God above all other gods, a universal God. In the midst of the Canaanites, the Ammonites, the Amorites – in the midst of their horrible, polluted worship, laden with sex symbols and sex practices – Rahab affirmed a true theological proposition about who God really is.

III. (:12-21) PASSOVER TYPE DELIVERANCE (REDEMPTION) COMES FROM A SIMPLE COVENANT COMMITMENT

You can't help but see here the parallels to the Passover account where God delivered His chosen people from out of the bondage of Egypt.
Here God both delivers the two Jewish spies from the clutches of the enemy and then pledges deliverance for the Gentile family of faithful Rahab.
We won't ever think like grasshoppers if we remember our powerful redemption.
We are precious to the one who has gone to such great lengths to redeem us

A. (:12-13) Plea for Covenant Mercy

1. Based on mercy shown by Rahab

"*since I have dealt kindly with you*" Heb. *hesed*

Think of the huge reward that would have been hers for turning in the spies
"*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy*" **Matt. 5:7**

2. Extended to Her Household

"*that you also will deal kindly with my father's household*"

Not just saving her own skin

B. (:14) Brokering the Deal

"*So the men said to her, 'Our life for yours if you do not tell this business of ours; and it shall come about when the Lord gives us the land that we will deal kindly and faithfully with you*.'"

Look at the Compassionate Heart of God – now we have more insight into why this reconnaissance mission was necessary – God didn't need any help with the logistics of how to knock down the walls at Jericho; but He was giving this gracious opportunity to deliver a Gentile family from judgment and destruction.

C. (:15-16) Logistics of Escape for the Two Spies

1. (:15) Logistics of Escape from Jericho

"*Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall, so that she was living on the wall*."

- Providential that she was living on the wall

2. (:16) Logistics of Escape from the Pursuers

"*And she said to them, 'Go to the hill country, lest the pursuers happen upon you, and hide yourselves there for three days, until the pursuers return. Then afterward you may go on your way*.'"

- Significance of three day wait

D. (:17-21) Logistics of Deliverance for Rahab and her Family –
Symbol of God's Promised Blessing upon the Gentiles (part of Abrahamic Covenant)
The Sign of the Scarlet Thread

Turning the shame of the scarlet letter A for adulteress into the trophy of the scarlet thread of God's redemption and deliverance

Keith Andrews: She was told to leave a scarlet rope, the color of blood. This was no coincidence. Throughout the Scriptures blood is shown to cover our sin. Without the shedding of blood there is no redemption of sin. It is the blood of Christ that rescues us from destruction.

Helene Dallaire: Scholars have offered several interpretations for the scarlet thread. Some have interpreted it symbolically, pointing back to the Passover night in Egypt when God instructed Moses to put blood on the doorpost in order to spare the inhabitants of the house from certain death (**Ex 12:7**). Others point to the future messianic fulfillment, when the blood of Christ is shed for the redemption of all mankind. This type of symbolism must be handled with caution since nothing in the

text of Joshua mentions the events of the Passover night. A christological interpretation obviously comes much later and represents prophetic insights that could not have been intended by the original author of Joshua. Nonetheless, an allegorical interpretation of **Joshua 2** is not impossible in retrospect.

(:22-24) CONCLUSION: SPIES REPORT BACK TO JOSHUA WITH MESSAGE OF ASSURANCE OF VICTORY

> "*And they said to Joshua, 'Surely the Lord has given all the land into our hands, and all the inhabitants of the land, moreover, have melted away before us.*'"

Successfully completed their very difficult mission.
What mission lies before each of us?

What spiritual battles for victory do we face ….
Against Satan and our foes
Against the world and its attractions
Against our flesh and its enticements

Don't forget the **irony** of this passage:
the inhabitants were looking at Israel's God and were shaking in their sandals. The Israelites, who had seen the mighty works of God over and over again, were looking at their problems rather than God and were terrorized into unbelief. (Keathley)

As we leave here this morning, let's leave behind any grasshopper thinking and have the **Vision of Victory** and the assurance that God has provided for us.

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Homework / Memorize / Meditate:

NT Statements of Victory:
"*I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.*"
-- **Matt. 16:18**

"*the fields are white unto harvest*" – **John 4:35**

"*But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.*"
-- **Romans 8:37**

"*but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*"
-- **1 Cor. 15:57**

"*But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.*"
-- **2 Cor. 2:14**

"*It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery*." – **Gal. 5:1**

"*Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm*." -- **Ephes. 6:13**

"*For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus*." -- **Phil. 1:6**

"*When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory*." -- **Col. 3:4**

"*Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass*." -- **1 Thess. 5:24**

"*But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one*." -- **2 Thess. 3:3**

"*You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world*." -- **1 John 4:4**

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What challenges or obstacles give rise to grasshopper type thinking on your part?

2) What are some other NT passages that indicate that Satan and his demons already know they have been ultimately defeated?

3) If the Lord was going to hang a label on us (like He did on "*Rahab the harlot*"), what would the designation read?

4) What parallels do you see between the Passover experience of the Jews back in Egypt at the time of the exodus and Rahab's experience here?

* * * * * * * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Richard Hess: In one of the most nationalistic books in the Hebrew Bible, does it not serve the purposes of the promise to Abraham that "*all peoples on earth will be blessed through you*" (**Gen. 12:3**) to place side by side with the choice of a military leader and his initial preparations for battle, the story of a foreign woman who believed and was saved without arms or bloodshed?

Trent Butler: The NT understands the story of Rahab as an **example of faith**. She is one of three women, all with tarnished reputations, included in the **ancestors of the Messiah** (**Matt 1:5–6**). She is enshrined in the **faith hall of fame** (**Heb 11:31**). **Jas 2:25** praises Rahab as the prime example, alongside Abraham, of **justification through works**. Both Hebrews and James emphasize the role and significance of Rahab. The present OT context uses the narrative to give identity and courage to Israel, particularly to Israel without land and power. That Israelite identity includes the ironic fact that God uses not only his own prophets and leaders to bring faith and courage to disconsolate Israel, but also the most unexpected and immoral persons to further his purposes in the world.

Robert Hubbard: Though present behind the scenes, Yahweh's **providential work** through Rahab proves him to be a gracious and hands-on divine warrior. Whatever one's assessment of Joshua and the spies, Yahweh clearly follows up his commitments from **chapter 1**, a **harbinger of many victories to come**. . .

Certainly, such powerful intelligence will boost spirits in the Israelite camp and build momentum for the coming invasion. Enemy fear of Yahweh and Israel runs as a thematic thread through the book (see **5:1; 6:1; 9:1–3; 10:1–2; 11:1–5**). But for Israel the essential thing is **confidence in Yahweh**, the divine warrior. That Israel embraces the reality of his awesome power from the words of a Canaanite prostitute, Rahab, adds one last irony to the story. Through her, Israel learns that a terrified Jericho predestines Israel for inevitable victory. Through her, Yahweh brings good out of Joshua's perhaps less than sterling debut as commander-in-chief. Soon, the book will take great pains to trace Joshua's long career of exemplary leadership. Here, Yahweh deserves praise: He providentially delivers the imperiled spies from death and also graciously spares Rahab and her family. **He is indeed positioning Israel to conquer the land—finally**!

Gordon Matties: The reversals and ironic elements of Rahab's story lead us to ask whether this story, along with the preparatory first chapter, provides clues to the central focus of the book. The Transjordan tribes, the spies, and Rahab all represent ambiguous characters in the larger biblical narrative. Just as **Joshua 1** invites us to reflect on the theme of faithfulness by an unlikely group of Israelites who have chosen to reside outside the land, so **Joshua 2** invites us to reflect on the faithfulness of an outsider who dwells inside the gifted land (Polzin). **Joshua 1** and **2** together suggest that peoplehood is constituted by **commitment** (**Josh 1**) and **confession** (**Josh 2**). Peoplehood is not constructed simply by ethnic identity and geographical location. Reading **Joshua 2** in the light of its own literary and theological context, and in the context of the entire canon of Scripture, we find patterns for response and models for identity that correspond to a larger vision of the purposes of God.

Joshua 2 offers readers a way of seeing that shatters expectations. Foreigners are not simply those whom God will destroy for their wickedness, but also those who may confess the cosmic sovereignty of Israel's God. Israel is not simply a people who fails to recognize the purposes of God, as did spies of a previous generation, but a people who can also confess that God is the giver of the land and the one who can be trusted.

Israel may even learn to trust again in exile as it sees foreigners embracing Israel's cosmic Sovereign. And just as Rahab's story reminds readers of the earlier account of how Israel came to be constituted by various groups of peoples (a "*mixed crowd*," **Exod 12:38**), she now becomes a paradigm of faith for later readers. But more, Israel is invited to make its **confession of faith** in imitation of her, even as the spies, who use her very words, do. Yet **her action**, not simply her confession of faith, has become paradigmatic for writers of the NT.

Blaikie: A little explanation is needed respecting the time when Joshua said the Jordan must be crossed – "*within three days*." If the narrative of the first two chapters be taken in chronological order, more than three days must have elapsed between the issuing of this order and the crossing of the river, because it is expressly stated that the two spies who were sent to examine Jericho hid themselves for three days in the mountains, and thereafter recrossed the Jordan and returned to Joshua (**ii. 22**). But it is quite in accordance with the practice of Scripture narrative to introduce an episode out of its chronological place so that it may not break up the main record. It is now generally held that the spies were sent off before Joshua issued this order to the people, because it is not likely that he would have committed himself to a particular day before he got the information which he expected the spies to bring.

Doug Goins: It's interesting how the Israelite armies that advanced were to know which house was hers. The location of that house in or on the city wall would make it easy for the spies to escape and also for the house to be recognized by the advancing army. For about 250 years biblical critics claimed that this story was mythological, or at best historical fiction, because there was no evidence that there were houses built into city walls in the ancient near east. But the excavations in Jericho after the turn of the century showed that the city was surrounded by double walls with twelve feet between them. And they found evidence that simple houses were built on top of timbers that were spread between the two walls. These were like poor squatter's houses sitting on top of the city wall. . .

Two New Testament books mention Rahab, Hebrews and James. Hebrews makes a tremendous statement about her, comparing her to other heroes of faith. She is one of only two women listed in the hall of fame in **Hebrews 11**. Sarah, the wife of Abraham, is mentioned as a woman of faith, and then it says of Rahab, "*By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given friendly welcome to the spies*" (**11:31**). **Hebrews 11:6** says, "*And without faith it is impossible to please him. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.*" That describes the saving faith of Rahab. She was surrounded by unbelieving Canaanites, and yet she stood alone in faith.

James 2:21, 25 mentions two people who demonstrate a living, spiritual faith -- the man Abraham and the woman Rahab. They are the only two people mentioned: "*Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar?...And in the same way was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?*" The issue of works means

that faith is demonstrated, expressed, or exhibited. What they believed spiritually, they each acted on in the choices they made. Abraham demonstrated his faith at tremendous cost, but he was willing to trust God and offer his son. Rahab, as well, had a faith that had teeth to it, structure and strength. She stood alone against the entire culture that surrounded her. Until Jericho fell she had to stand for the unseen spiritual realities against the seen physical realities. She had to make a choice to trust the God of Israel whom she couldn't see, against the king of Jericho and the armies and the fortifications of that great city that she could see. By her faith, Rahab the harlot was deemed righteous.

Jensen: **Outline**

	THE SPIES	VERSES	RAHAB
1.	Spies are dispatched	**1**	
2.	Spies are protected	**2-7**	Rahab's works
3.	Spies are informed	**8-11**	Rahab's faith
4.	Spies promise safety	**12-22**	Rahab's reward
5.	Spies give report	**23-24**	

The place of Rahab in the history of Israel was twofold.

- *First*, she was chosen by God to provide the information which He desired Israel to have at this time, namely, that He had melted the hearts of the enemy in fear of Joshua and his hosts even as Moses had prophesied earlier (**Exodus 15:13-18**).
- *Second*, Rahab would be for all centuries to come a vivid example of the sinner, through whom God accomplishes His purpose and in whose heart He works a change. Concerning this latter, it is to be observed that a harlot is Israel's helper.

Robert Massey: heard the story recently of two friends who were talking to each other. One remarked to his friend and said, "Man, you look so depressed. Whatever could you be thinking about to depress you so?" His friend quickly replied, "My future". "Your future?" his friend said. "Whatever in the world would make it look so hopeless?" to which his miserable friend sighed and unhappily said "My past."

Wouldn't it be great if we never had problems in our past? However, most of us know that the past can load us down with baggage like guilt, depression, and fear. The past can certainly affect us and push us down. Everyday people carry scars from their past, and often these scars are still painful and tender.

Darren Ethier: So these three things stand out about Rahab's faith in this story.

- Her faith was based not on who she is but on who God is,
- her trust in God arose out of what she heard about God not necessarily from what she personally experienced, and
- Rahab's faith led to action!!

Barnhouse (quoted by J. Oswald Sanders): The death of our Lord Jesus Christ destroyed – brought to nought – "*him that had the power of death, that is the devil*." The word "*destroy*" has no suspicion of any such meaning as annihilation but rather that of rendering harmless, useless, worthless. Thus the Lord made a public example of Satan, and immediately proved the decline of Satan's power by taking the keys with which Satan pretended to some authority over the righteous spirits and, entering among them until the three days and nights should be accomplished, announced the freeing of those who had been detained.

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **From Wall of Shame to Hall of Fame (Chap. 2)**
Introduction: We are people of faith and it's because of our faith that we should stand out against the backdrop of a corrupt and sinful world. It is our faith that gives us victory over the world. This is a story about a woman whose faith helped her to overcome the world. Why is chapter 2 here? Because God wants us to see what real faith looks like.

She lives in a city under condemnation. And she is a woman of ill repute. Here's a pagan living in spiritual darkness. Here is a prostitute living in sinful depravity. Here's a Canaanite destined for sure destruction. And yet, despite all of that, what God is going to show us here in this chapter is that this woman has true faith in God.

Big Idea: **Three lessons about Faith that we learn from Rahab.**

I. True faith is often courageously displayed.
Every narrative, as you notice in the Old Testament, has some kind of crisis. And here, often God will use a crisis to reveal faith. Why would she risk her life to do that? And the reason is, is because she believed God. She believed that these men were from God.

Views about whether Rahab should have lied in this situation:
1) Situation Ethics – Joseph Fletcher -- is a situation where two absolutes are in conflict, to spare a life or to lie. And some will argue that these two absolutes collide absolutely and that there's no recourse in a fallen world other than just to lie.
2) Hierarchical Ethics – Norman Geisler -- absolutes have a gradation about that. That is to say that there are some absolutes more important than others. And when two absolutes are in conflict, you should obey always the higher absolute. And that's what the situation demands here. The higher absolute is to save a life. And so you yield to that absolute.
3) Non-conflicting Ethics – John Murray (*Principles of Conduct*) -- situations like this only appear to be in conflict when actually there's a third way which perhaps we sometimes cannot see. Walt Kaiser; Augustine; Aquinas; Calvin

Nowhere in Scripture does God condone her lie. That's never condoned in Scripture. What is rewarded is her faith. All faith that we exercise is imperfect faith.

II. Faith Is always Confidently Declared (:9)

True faith is always rooted in the Word of God.
She believes; She confesses; She turned to God from idols.

III. Faith Is always Concretely Demonstrated – James 2:14-25

Here's the key to understanding this apparent contradiction [between Paul and James regarding doctrine of justification]. Paul is talking about justification before God. James is talking about justification before men. Paul is talking about the root of salvation. James is talking about the fruit. of salvation. Paul's talking about what's beneath the surface. James is talking about what's above the surface. Paul is talking about justification before God. James is talking about justification before man. Paul is talking about the provision of salvation. James is talking about the proof of salvation.

Three elements of real faith:

- Intellectual
- Emotional
- Volitional

Rahab hears the facts. She believes. Then there's emotional. She wasn't the only one that had an emotional response after she heard the facts. There were others there who heard the same thing. And they were struck with fear. And they were trembling. Their hearts melted. But that wasn't enough for them to have real faith in God. Rahab's faith went beyond all that. There was also involved with it a commitment of her will, a volitional commitment to the truth of what she had heard. How do we know that? because she received the spies at the risk of her own life, and she sent them out. The Bible says another way.

She is actually inducted into the Hall of Fame of Faith in Hebrews chapter 11, where it says, *by faith, the harlot Rahab perished, not with them that believe not.* And she's a perfect illustration of **1 John 5:4**, where it says, *and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.* And then, of course, you know, she becomes part of Israel. She marries a Jewish man named Salmon. They have a son named Boaz. Boaz marries Ruth. They have a son named Obed. Obed was the father of Jesse, who was the father of David. And we also see Rahab in the lineage of the Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament. She becomes the great, great, great, great so on grandmother of Jesus. You talk about a victorious faith that overcomes the world. This is perhaps the greatest illustration of it in all of the Bible.

TEXT: Joshua 3: 1-17

TITLE: AVOIDING THE VICTIM MENTALITY /
STEPPING OUT IN FAITH – CROSSING THE JORDAN

BIG IDEA:
STEPPING OUT IN FAITH SEEMS RISKY BUT IS THE ONLY COURSE OF ACTION THAT ALLOWS THE LIVING GOD TO WORK ON OUR BEHALF

David Howard: **Chapters 3–4** belong together, since they both discuss the crossing of the Jordan River. The emphasis in these two chapters is not so much on the crossing per se—this could have been mentioned in a few short verses—as it is on Israel's proper observance and remembrance of this great, defining event. The crossing itself was an event on a par with the crossing of the Red Sea. Both involved God's miraculous intervention in parting (the Red Sea) or stopping up (the Jordan River) waters that were barriers to Israel. These are the only two events in the entire Bible where this type of divine intervention on behalf of the nation takes place.

Crossing the Jordan River to engage the enemy and attempt to claim God's promises for Victory was a great **Crisis of Faith** for a generation that had a lot of baggage –
Last week we looked at avoiding the **Grasshopper Mentality** = that mindset that sees obstacles as Giants and ourselves as powerless grasshoppers – but through the eyes of Rahab, God gave the two spies that were sent to check out Jericho the vision that the enemy was quaking in their boots and aware of the awesome power of the God of Israel.

As Christians we too easily fall into the **pity trap** of the culture around us – that "Woe is Me" spirit of despair where we view ourselves as helpless victims of the world around us and the enemy within; I can't possibly experience **spiritual victory** …

- my Dad was just a very weak person – look at my genes – I have serious limitations ….
- I know God has called me to be bold to witness … but I'm just a coward – that's just the way I am … I can't help it;
- our church doesn't even have its own building … what can God really expect us to accomplish? I think I will curl up here in my comfort zone and just try to avoid getting trampled by the world;
- Develop and use my spiritual gifts? That sounds awful risky – I need my free time and my own space just to relax and to do what I want to do

What does your inner voice say to you about your prospects for experiencing Spiritual Victory?

Today we are going to look at a second obstacle to claiming God's promises for spiritual victory in our Christian walk: **the Victim Mentality --**
3 Manifestations of a **Victim Mentality**: (Instead of a Victor Mentality) – children of Israel were locked into these types of negative thought patterns as they wandered for 40 years in the wilderness … missing out on God's best for them –

1) Playing the **Beat Yourself Up** Game (**Woe is Me** Game) -- Mindset that bad things are destined to happen to you – expectation that things will go wrong; self-pity party
We aren't going to have anything to drink – We aren't going to have anything to eat …
God has led us out into this wilderness and forgotten all about us …
Meanwhile, God is performing one spectacular miracle after another to demonstrate His glory and to show the people His Providential love and provision for them.

2) Playing the **Blame** Game -- Mindset that it is not ultimately your fault for your bad lot in life – blaming environment or someone else; never facing your own responsibility – Placed the blame on Moses and Aaron – determined to appoint new leaders that would take them safely back to bondage in Egypt.

3) Playing the **Bitterness** Game – sense of resignation; giving up
"*Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness*!"

Stepping out in Faith is the only answer to the Victim Mentality

4 INITIATIVES IN STEPPING OUT IN FAITH

1ST INITIATIVE IN STEPPING OUT IN FAITH

I. PUT IT IN GEAR WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT --

(:1) INTRODUCTION -- FAITH INVOLVES A COMMITMENT TO ACT ON GOD'S PROMISES AND WAIT UPON GOD'S TIMING

> "*Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and he and all the sons of Israel set out from Shittim and came to the Jordan, and they lodged there before they crossed*."

- No Procrastination – when the time is right, let's get moving
  Cf. trying to get an early start on vacation trips … lots of details to take care of, never goes as smoothly as you want
- Deliberate, careful action; counting the cost
- No small feat – **Chap 3** of the book of Joshua is about crossing over from the futile Christian walk of self-effort and defeat to the victorious life of faith that overcomes the world.
- A nation of 2.5 million people involved here; talking about quite a bit of real estate in the Jordan River … not some small path as is pictured in Sunday School stories

What has been causing us defeat in our Christian walk? Where do we need the victory? What types of Jordan Rivers … impossible boundaries … do we need to cross today?

What were the people thinking as they spent these three days of preparation waiting for the command to move out? How impossible the situation must have looked to them. They did not yet know how they were even going to cross the Jordan River.

Goins: There is a similar tension for the disciples of Jesus implied at the end of Luke and the beginning of Acts, after his resurrection and his ascension into heaven. Jesus had said, "...*Stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high*" (**Luke 24:49**). And for forty days the disciples had to wait for the promised gift of the Holy Spirit, the resource they needed to live a life of overcoming faith. Remember, the power of God was demonstrated for the church at Pentecost, and it would be demonstrated here for Israel on the fourth day at the Jordan in a miraculous crossing over into the promised land. But **waiting on the Lord** is hard to do.

Richard Hess: These events in Israel's history describe a time of **preparation** for this new generation who would be called upon to occupy the land. Although Christians are not called to carry out the same physical acts, preparation is necessary for any life of ministry and service. As with Israel's preparation, it involves hearing and believing God's Word and the discipline of obedience to that word. As with the spies, confidence in God's calling and direction in life can provide the spiritual strength to face great obstacles (**Matt. 17:20; Luke 17:6**).

2ND INITIATIVE IN STEPPING OUT IN FAITH

II. (:2-6) PURSUE THE PRESENCE OF GOD -- FAITH RALLIES AROUND THE PRESENCE OF GOD – COUNTING ON HIS BLESSING – STAYING FOCUSED ON HIM

A. (:2-3) God Always Leads the Way – We Must Follow

"*When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God with the Levitical priests carrying it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it*."

Notice how many times the ark of the covenant is referred to in this chapter (10 references in 17 verses – pretty significant – that is what I highlighted in my Bible) – the ark plays the central role – not the courageous leadership of Joshua or the willingness of the valiant warriors … It represents the presence of the Lord and His covenant commitment to bless His people as they obey His law
Important occasion – Levitical priests instructed to carry it here; normally the Kohathites had that responsibility.

Keeping our eyes on God is the message here
"*Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus*" – one of my favorite hymns; remember Peter taking his eyes off Jesus
Heb 12 – "*fixing our eyes on Jesus the author and perfector of our faith*"

B. (:4) Do Not Act Presumptuously and Profane what is Sacred

"*However, there shall be between you and it a distance of about 2,000 cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know by which you shall go, for you have not passed this way before*."

Don't Crowd God's Holy Space – would not want to accidentally bump into it …

We have been called to a relationship of intimacy with God … so much so that Jesus is not ashamed to be called our brother …

But we are never to forget God's awesome Holiness and Majesty and Transcendence – The Creator is far above the creature and to be feared and respected as such

David Howard: The verse begins with an emphatic particle (*ak*) that introduces the warning about keeping a one-thousand-yard distance from the ark, and the first sentence might be translated, "*Be very sure that a distance of a thousand yards remains between you and it*." This emphasizes the sacredness of the ark and the awesomeness of God's glory. Even though the ark symbolized God's presence among his people, his presence among them was not to be taken lightly or abused (as it was on a later occasion, when the ark was taken into battle in order to "guarantee" a victory over the Philistines [see **1 Sam 4:3–11**]). When the Israelites prepared for receiving the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai, they were to keep their distance from that mountain where God was as well (**Exod 19:12, 23–24**). These two aspects of God's nature—his close, comforting presence and his awesome, fearsome glory—are kept in a healthy balance in the Bible, but the latter is in danger of being forgotten in some wings of the church today.

2 Purposes mentioned for maintaining this space:

1) Need a clear line of sight -- so that everyone can keep their eyes fixed on the Ark; we are not called to depend on the sight and faith of another;
Our faith is a personal commitment through the only mediator that can faithfully represent us to the Father … the God-man Christ Jesus

2) Striking out into new territory – We need God's guidance and presence
Think of the exciting tension there must have been to travel to the moon and take that first step onto unknown terrain … God calls us at times to leave our comfort zone and step out in faith and tackle new frontiers and challenges … but we can be confident of His presence with us

C. (:5) Consecration Precedes Any Demonstration of God's Power

"*Then Joshua said to the people, 'Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you*.'"

God Demands our Personal and Corporate Purity before He is willing to work wonders on our behalf.
The urgency of crossing the Jordan and getting moving did not rise above the necessity of having prepared hearts.
Sometimes we can be all about action when we have neglected our devotion and worship.

What steps did the Israelites take to consecrate themselves:

- probably involved fasting
- probably involved abstinence from sexual relationships
- certainly involved asking the Lord to search their hearts for any sin

Remember the message of **Isaiah chapter 1** – God tells His covenant people that their idolatry is a stench to Him … He is sick of their sacrifices and prayers and offerings and solemn assemblies because their heart is not right – lots of activity – but no blessing from God – Repentance and faith have always been the conditions for God's blessing:

"*Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless; defend the orphan; plead for the widow*." Then He offers that great promise of forgiveness if we will repent and seek purity:
"*Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool*."

There can be no consecration if we have never humbled ourselves before the Lord; admitted our sinfulness and inability to save ourselves; and placed our faith in the death of Jesus Christ to pay the penalty for our sins. This is how we receive the free gift of forgiveness of sins and are able to be united with the resurrection life and power of our risen Lord.

But maybe we are hanging on to some sins that we just have been unwilling to give up ..There is no victory in that type of lifestyle … the message of Joshua is *'Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you*.'"

D. (:6) Obedient, Faithful Leaders Encourage the Faith of God's People

> "*And Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, 'Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over ahead of the people.' So they took up the ark of the covenant and went ahead of the people*."

Do you think it was an easy thing for the priests who were leading the way to walk out into the raging current of the Jordan River in its most volatile flood stage?
No, it was a crisis of faith for them .. but someone has to lead the way and encourage the others

God doesn't usually reveal to us all of the details of His plan for our future … He wants us to take one step at a time, trusting in Him and looking for Him to guide us into the next step
When **Abraham** was called to leave his homeland of Ur of the Chaldees .. he didn't know all that was ahead of him …
"*by faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going*"

neither did **Moses** – "*by faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen*" – He had his eyes set on the Lord

3RD INITIATIVE IN STEPPING OUT IN FAITH

III. (:7-13) PROVE THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE POWER OF GOD -- FAITH THAT IS WILLING TO TAKE GREAT RISKS WILL SEE DRAMATIC RESULTS

A. (:7) God Validates His Chosen Leaders to Confirm Their Calling (or Giftedness)

> "*Now the Lord said to Joshua, 'This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you.*'"

What an encouragement to Joshua! Remember, he is primarily a type of Christ … it was on the cross that God the Father lifted up His Son and exalted Him and then showed by raising Him from the dead that this truly is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased … and this very Lord Jesus will be the one ultimately exalted so that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess His Lordship

We need to be confident of God's presence with us.

B. (:8) Faith Puts Us At Risk Where We Then are Called to Stand Still and See the Deliverance of the Lord

> "*You shall, moreover, command the priests who are carrying the ark of the covenant, saying, 'When you come to the edge of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan.*'"

Leaving our comfort zone; river over a mile wide
The "Jordan River" – is not a wide river. Normally… It was about 40 feet wide at the widest point.

In the springtime – the normally narrow river flooded its banks. In places it could be around 150 feet deep and as much as a mile wide.

Not even easy to keep your balance in a raging river – especially when you are carrying something bulky like the ark of the covenant.

I wonder if there were spies from Jericho that were watching these events unfold and wondering at these strange tactics for entering into warfare.

C. (:9-13) The Demonstration of the Power of God Assures Us of Victory Over Our Powerful Enemies

1. (:9) The Power of God's Word

> "*Then Joshua said to the sons of Israel, 'Come here, and hear the words of the Lord your God.*'"
> When we are entering into battle, we can't get too much of the Word of God; that is our offensive weapon; the sword of the Spirit; that is how we combat Satan just as Christ did in His temptation.

2. (:10) The Power of God's Presence

"*And Joshua said, 'By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will assuredly dispossess from before you the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Hivite, the Perizzite, the Girgashite, the Amorite, and the Jebusite*.'"

We don't need to be experts in all of the nuances of these different enemies … we need to be confident in the power of the living God who is on our side and fighting for us.

Richard Hess: As has been observed, God promises '*wonders*' as a means of demonstrating his power over nations of the world and in order to preserve his own people. The structure of the instructions to Joshua also corresponds to that of Joshua's instructions to the people: specific directions follow promises of divine presence and support. The opening of Joshua's address has three parts: a call to listen to words of divine authority, a promise of God's presence, and a promise that God will dispossess the inhabitants of Canaan. The first part is a divine means of informing Israel that what is about to be said is important and therefore worthy of attention. The second part corresponds to God's promise of his presence with Joshua but the structure is slightly different from that of the first part, giving the sense of being more removed: God is *with* Joshua whereas he is *among* Israel. The *living God* (Heb. *'ēl ḥay*) is a phrase which occurs twice in the Psalms in parallel with God (**42:2 [Heb. 3]; 84:2 [Heb. 3**]) and once in **Hosea 1:10** (**Heb. 2:1**) in a reference to the future renewal of Israel and their reunion with their covenant God. This aspect of God, one who is faithful and keeps his promises, seems to be involved when God promises to dispossess the inhabitants of Canaan. The verb *drive out* (Heb. *yrš*) occurs in an emphatic form, to confirm the divine guarantee. It often describes Israel's occupation of the land (e.g. **Num. 14:24; 32:21; 33:52–53, 55; Deut. 4:38; 7:17; 9:3–5; 11:23**).

3. (:11) The Majesty of God's Presence – His Reputation is at Stake

"*Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over ahead of you into the Jordan*."

Theme of difficult cross overs we may be facing; natural fear of change; times of transition are difficult.
Theme of reaching our potential; fulfilling our dreams despite disappointments of the past.

4. (:12) The Power of Plural United Leadership

"*Now then, take for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man for each tribe*."

5. (:13) The Demonstration of God's Awesome Power

"*And it shall come about when the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the*

waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off, and the waters which are flowing down from above shall stand in one heap."

Robert Hubbard: Three wordplays in **v. 13** underscore the significance of the amazing event.

(1) According to Joshua, the event's trigger is the entry of the (lit.) "*soles of the feet*" of the priests into the river, a key phrase in both **vv. 8** and **13**. The Old Testament often associates that term (NIV "*set foot*") with the conquest of enemies (**Deut. 2:5; 11:24; 1 Kings 5:3; Mal 4:3**). The motif here may stamp the present story with a similar sense of conquest (cf. **Josh. 1:3; 4:18**): Yahweh asserts his authority over the Jordan River and all land westward.

(2) A second wordplay connects the "*standing*" (*ʿamad* [**v. 8b**]) of the priests with the ark mid-river as the actual cause of the "*standing (still)*" (*ʿamad*) of the Jordan's flow (**v. 13**; cf. **vv. 15–16**).

(3) A third wordplay makes an even wider, more important connection. The waters are to stand in a "*heap (of water)*" (*ned*), a term that elsewhere only describes what Yahweh did at the Red Sea (**Ex. 15:8; Ps. 78:13**). The pun hints that Yahweh is about to perform at the Jordan as stunning a miracle as he did at the Exodus. It also implies that the Jordan and Red Sea crossings are somehow connected, a point made explicit later (see **4:23**). In short, the river's waters are to be "*cut off*" and "*stand up in a heap*" upstream—an incredibly stunning way for the sovereign "*LORD of all the earth*" to open the gates of Canaan for Israel to enter!

4TH INITIATIVE IN STEPPING OUT IN FAITH

IV. (:14-17) PERSEVERE IN ORDER TO FULLY CARRY OUT GOD'S PLAN

A. The Obedience of the Priests (who carried the ark of the covenant)

They were charged with a very difficult and courageous assignment.

Talk about "*Be strong and courageous*!"

They had to stand in the middle of the Jordan and be the last to cross over.

Being a Leader in God's Army has always been about **being a Serva**nt

The priests did not have some cushy job where everybody catered to their needs and bowed down before them and served them hand and foot; the priests worked hard and sacrificially on behalf of the people; here they are charged with doing the dangerous duty on the front lines of the invading force.

B. The Obedience of the People

Leaving their comfort zone – "*when the people set out from their tents*"

Walking into new territory … yet with the history of how the Lord had enabled the nation to cross the Red Sea in fleeing from Egypt

Obedience is Faith in Action – whole book of James written to illustrate this point …

it's a dead faith that just sits around and agrees intellectually with what God has said … but God is a living God and He demands living faith of us … faith that steps out and acts on what He has commanded.

C. The Sovereign Control Over Nature and Circumstances

- heaping up the waters of the Jordan River; flood season of course
- shutting off the inflow from the streams and tributaries
- causing the land to be dry ground for the crossover

David Howard: These verses are the **climax** of the chapter—indeed, of all of **chaps. 3–4**. Here, the narrative slows to a crawl, so that the reader can savor the wonder of the miracle and view it from as many different perspectives as possible. The author, by writing in this way, affirms God's greatness and power and intervention on his people's behalf. The point is not so much that the people were able to cross over the Jordan, but the manner in which they were able to cross: by a glorious and mighty miracle of God. The immediate purpose of the miracle was obviously to get Israel across the Jordan. However, the larger purpose was—as it is with all miracles—to testify to God's greatness and faithfulness, both to Israel (**v. 10**) and to all the peoples of the earth (**4:24a**), and to stimulate proper worship of him (**4:24b**).

Being a **Victim** means you see yourself as limited by the circumstances that are dealt you; Being a **Victor** means you see yourself as under the Providential protection and guidance of an all powerful God who is working all things together for your good.

Goins: Although the Jordan River was only about a hundred feet wide most of the year, during the spring flood season it overflowed its banks and became up to a mile wide. But as soon as the Levites carrying the ark put their feet into the water, the river immediately stopped flowing and stood up like a wall about twenty miles upstream near the city of Adam. This was a miracle of God in response to the faith of the people.

D. The Dominant, Victorious Presence of the Ark of the Covenant

Referred to 10 times in this chapter … the dominant element

There could be no doubt whose doing this was; God does not like to share His glory with another – we will be looking at that concept next week in **Chapter 4** when we study how to overcome the mentality of Big Shots.

Goins: The ark symbolized the presence and power of God with his people. The ark was the sign that God was leading them. They weren't just a migratory people optimistically yet futilely thinking that they could go into the land of Canaan. They had to know that they were God's people, being led by him. The ark also symbolized the specific teaching and direction that God had given to his people. They had the assurance of his guidance and leadership as they moved into the new, completely unfamiliar territory. If they didn't follow the Lord, as symbolized by the ark, they would get lost and disoriented; they wouldn't know where to go or how to live.

CONCLUSION:

4 INITIATIVES IN STEPPING OUT IN FAITH

I. PUT IT IN GEAR WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT
II. PURSUE THE PRESENCE OF GOD
III. PROVE THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE POWER OF GOD
IV. PERSEVERE IN ORDER TO FULLY CARRY OUT GOD'S PLAN

I like the worship song from Singspiration Music:

Got any rivers you think are uncrossable?
Got any mountains you can't tunnel through?
God specializes in things thought impossible –
He does the things others cannot do.
(By Oscar Eliason (c) 1945, 1971 Singspiration Music.)

When it comes to claiming God's promises for spiritual victory, we can't look at ourselves as grasshoppers …. And we certainly can't look at ourselves as victims.

"*Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you*!"

* * * * * * * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What helps to remind us of the presence of the Lord with us at all times? (since we don't have the ark of the covenant to look at)

2) What steps should we take to consecrate ourselves?

3) Where do we see evidence all around us that the living God is among us and working in the midst of our church?

4) What are the mountains, the rivers, the obstacles that stand in the way of us fully claiming God's promises for victory?

Finally, are you willing to sanctify yourself today, to confess sin or uncleanness that needs to be washed by the blood of Jesus? Are you willing to consecrate yourself anew to God's purposes for you, to experience the wonders that he wants to accomplish in you and through you in the people that you live in community with and work with?

* * * * * * * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Redpath: The floods, the opposition of principalities and powers to the child of God, can never get past what our triumphant Lord Jesus conquered. The passage of Jordan

means facing the impossibility, following the dying, rising, ascending Jesus into the place of all power. Get a clear view of Him who can deal with the impossibility of your life before you have reached it. For in the name of the Lord Jesus I declare this truth, that, however subtle, however strong it may be, there is no attack of Satan on the child of God but first has struck the heart of the Lord. He overcame it at the Cross, and He bids us, His children to get a clear view of Him, to face again the impossibility that we have faced so often, then look up into His face and say, "Now, Lord Jesus, I believe that, although I cannot, you can." In that moment the roar of Jordan will be silent, its violence be checked, and we will go through on dry land. The path of the child of God from the wilderness to Canaan is by way of facing the impossible and looking up to a Risen Christ and getting hold of Him.

Goins: In the opening verses of Joshua 3, God illustrates for us three essentials for moving ahead by faith, claiming all that he has for us. This is what God desired for Israel and also what he desires for us. First, the Israelites were willing to wait on the Lord even when it was difficult to wait. Second, they were willing to follow the Lord unconditionally. And third, they were willing to consecrate themselves before the Lord.

The only way to go on is by faith. Faithlessness, or unbelief, says, "No, let's go back to where it's safe." But faith says, "Let's go forward to where God is working." Forty years before, Joshua and Caleb had assured the Jews with these words: "Let us go up at once, and occupy it; for we are well able to overcome it." That's faith. But the people said that they weren't able to. That's faithlessness. That unbelief cost the nation forty years of discipline in the wilderness. The apostle John assures us today, "*And this is the victory that has overcome the world---our faith*" (**1 John 5:4**).

Caselman (from Lucado): **Escaping The Victim Mentality**
Reading **John 5.1-15**
I want to begin by reading this piece from Max Lucado.

It is the heroin of the emotions, the angel dust of the spirit, the cocaine of the soul.
Injected into our system with the intentions of recovery, it has the capacity to kill.
It's available and alluring and its dealers and users are often Christians.
The name of the drug is pity.

No one dependent upon pity ever intended to get that way.
The first experiment with the drug is usually a legitimate problem; a
sickness maybe, cancer, a cold, a broken leg.
Perhaps it was taken to weather a crisis, death, bankruptcy, a divorce.

Whatever the cause, the treatment is the same, well-meaning friends treat us
with pity, kind words, sympathetic jesters, empathic tears.
Most of the time the treatment has its intended results.
Healing occurs and we pick ourselves up and we continue with our lives.

There are times, however, when a habit is formed.
The attention and compassion feel good.
The sudden flood of love and warmth gives us a type of high.
Well intentioned friends inject our veins with kindness, fill our room with the smoke of understanding.

My, it feels nice.
In fact it’s been a while since we felt such warmth and symphony.
So, instead of fighting to get back on our feet, we allow ourselves to ease into this addiction.

Motivation wains.
Creativity disappears.
Initiative exits.
Paralyses enters.

We love the process of healing so much that we don't want to get healed.
Instead of getting better, we convince ourselves that we're worse.
In time, we become pity junkies.
We thrive on the compassion of others.
We become masters of reciting our woes and will gladly retell the tale to anyone who will listen.
We bear our wounds to all who pass, begging for a sympathetic touch.

As is true with drugs, each dose of pity is less effective.
Soon the pity from others is not stout enough, so we manufacture our own.
We convince ourselves that we are a victim of everything.
Our parents didn't raise us correctly.
My boss doesn't respect me.
I was potty trained too early.
Society expects too much of me.
Nobody loves me, everybody hates me.
I think I'll eat some worms.

For those who follow this cycle to its end there's a predictable final step, anger.
We've become so efficient at convincing ourselves that we are victimized by the world, that the only logical reaction is anger.
Anger at the world, anger at family, anger at the church, anger at society.
Self-pity has paralyzed us to the point that we become useless to the family, to the church and community.

Church, the truth is, few people ever overcome self-pity, this angel dust of the soul.
It’s so very easy, because we are all susceptible aren't we?
We all have the potential for self-pity.
We all have problems in life, we all have situations in that are unfair.
We all have reasons to feel sorry for ourselves at some time or another.

Tragedy strikes;
Often times loving, caring friends,
The church, come to support us
As well they should.
We all need that kind of comfort and help in times of need.

And yet there are times that we don't get over our problem and move on.
We begin to enjoy that comfort....this pity.
We begin to enjoy those listing ears.
We search out only those friends who will pity us.
It becomes an ugly scene people needing people to further their victim mentality.
What Lucado calls pity junkies.

In this relationship, we learn to blame anyone, everyone and everything for who we are, and what we are doing.
Our conversations change to the point that they are only focused on self.
No matter what someone else may say or bring up, we always have a way to bring the conversation back around to us and our problems.
We begin to be bitter toward life.
You see, addiction to self-pity has tell-tale signs in our speech.

- I am not treated right.
- My boss doesn't respect me.
- I am not paid enough to do that.
- My coworkers expect too much of me.
- My children and spouse don't appreciate me, even though I work and slave for them.
- My parents never did like me.
- I was abused as a child.
- Even when I go to church, no one speaks to me.

It so easy to get addicted..... Isn't it?
Let me ask you a question Is this where you live?

Perhaps we know someone who is addicted to this victim mentality.
How do we change...if it's us?
Or how do we help someone else who is suffering from this heroin of the soul?
That's what the lesson is about tonight.

I want to do <u>two things</u> with this lesson.

- <u>Number one</u>, I want to insist that we become people persons... Because Jesus was. We'll see this in the narrative.
- <u>Number two</u>, I want us to note how to overcome the victim mentality.

Robert Massey: **Obstacles on the Way**

The dictionary defines obstacles as "something that stands in the way or opposes". Something that is between where you are, and where you want to go. Life is filled with obstacles.

I. BE SENSITIVE REGARDING THE PRESENCE OF GOD
II. BE SERIOUS REGARDING THE PURITY OF GOD
III. BE SECURE IN THE POWER OF OUR GOD

Keith Andrews:

You want to be great for God. And you want God to do great things through you. But hear you sit at an obstacle. The obstacle of past rejection, or past failure, or fear of failure, or fear of commitment, or just plain laziness has been put in front of you and you are paralyzed.

John Hamby: **Stepping out on Faith**

1. FAITH MAY REQUIRE THAT WE WAIT (**vv. 1-2a**)
2. FAITH RECOGNIZES THAT SOMETIMES GOD CHOOSES TO WORK IN NEW WAYS (**vv. 2b-4**)
3. FAITH MEANS THAT WE ARE WILLING TO STEP OUT (**vv. 5-8**)
4. FAITH IS AN OPPORTUNITY THAT CAN BE REJECTED (**vv. 9-13**)
5. FAITH AFFORDS GOD AN OPPORTUNITY TO DEMONSTRATE HIS POWER (**vv. 14-17**)

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **The River of Impossibility (Chap. 3)**

Introduction: The book of Joshua is a book about facing challenges and overcoming challenges and the power of our living God. This is the land that God had promised them for so many years, all the way back to the time of Abraham. And now finally, it was the time to cross over into Canaan. There's only one problem. They have a major obstacle in front of them. It is called the Jordan River. What stood in front of the children of Israel was a swollen river that was literally uncrossable. It was the flood season. What was normally a hundred feet wide had swollen to a mile wide. We're talking about two and a half million people. to cross this river.

Why is it that sometimes God commands us to do things at the worst possible time, perhaps for us? He does things in such a way where only He could get the glory, where we have to depend totally and completely upon Him for His power. God always does things in such a way so as to stretch our faith.

Big Idea: **Three things in this passage that will help you in facing impossible situations**

I. We Should Expect Miracles

"*tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.*"

He woke up expecting a miracle. I'm convinced the reason God doesn't do some things for Christians is they just don't expect it. They're just not expecting God to work on their behalf.

A. Face the River
Don't pretend it's not there. Realize it's there. Face it bravely. And do as much as you can do humanly possible. Confront that river in faith.

B. Watch God (3:3a)
When God moves, they were to move. When you see the ark moving, then you move.

C. Follow God (3:3b)

D. Honor God (3:4)

E. Sanctify Yourselves (3:5)

F. Step Out in Faith (3:8)

G. Cross the River (3:15)
This was a miracle from God. And by the way, when the priests got up out of the water, the Bible says the waters came right back into place.

II. Erect Memorials (4:1)
A memorial is a reminder to God's people. You know why? Because we have a tendency to forget what God does. Gilgal, by the way, comes from a word which means to roll away. It has the idea of a wheel in the Hebrew, but it means to roll or to roll away. It was a circle of stones. And every time Israel came to Gilgal, they would see that memorial and they were reminded of how God rolled away the reproach of Egypt for them and rolled away the reproach of all the other nations and did something great for his people. And Gilgal became a base of operation.

TEXT: Joshua 4: 1-24

TITLE: AVOIDING THE BIGSHOT MENTALITY /
COMMEMORATING THE SPIRITUAL MILESTONE OF CROSSING OVER

BIG IDEA:
ESTABLISHING PHYSICAL MEMORIALS TO SPIRITUAL MILESTONES REINFORCES THE REALITY OF GOD'S POWER IN OUR LIVES AND ENHANCES OUR WORSHIP

REVIEW:

Just a quick review of some of the key spiritual disciplines that we have touched on but that deserve more study:

THE SEVEN STEPS TO SPIRITUAL VICTORY
Chapter 1:
1) **Strengthening ourselves in the Lord** so that we obey the command to **be Strong and Courageous**
2) **Meditating on the Word of God** so that we are careful to **Obey it** completely
Chapter 2:
3) Avoiding the **Grasshopper mentality** by focusing on a **Vision of Victory**
Chapter 3:
4) **Consecrate yourselves – Waiting on the Lord** in preparation for the Lord doing wonders among you -- Will involve repentance; an undivided spiritual focus; separation
5) **Step out in Faith –** Avoiding the **Victim Mentality** by keeping our **Vision on Christ** – God does not start working until we step out in faith .. that is when the waters of the Jordan in our life our rolled back
6) **Persevere in Faith** – not enough to just stick our toes in the water – we need to live on the other side of the Jordan River – united with Christ experientially in His death, burial (crossing the Jordan) and resurrection (**Romans 6-8**)
7) Fundamentally, appreciate that **Spiritual Victory is a Gift** from our Sovereign God – Drives a positive attitude of Thanksgiving which puts the focus on God rather than us

How can it be a gift you say … look at all the spiritual disciplines we are called on to exercise .. we can only be successful in any of those by the Grace of God … not by our own efforts ..

INTRODUCTION:

We could stop here … we have all we need for spiritual victory … but we are going to study **chapter 4** … because there is one more major obstacle to claiming God's promises for spiritual victory in our lives… and this one usually rears its ugly head after we have had some measure of success already …

The Big Shot Mentality – looking back at our past experience and giving ourselves too much credit instead of giving God all the glory – especially dangerous for spiritual leaders.

We love to cultivate a hero worship type of mentality – look at all the memorials we erect to key leaders (usually after they have passed away)

You don't have to go far to view these … the Washington Monument; the Lincoln Memorial; it is the same in the realm of sports: Babe Ruth Museum; Vince Lombardi Trophy; or in the realm of entertainment – let's give them an Oscar; let's give them a Star on Hollywood

Sometimes we honor groups in a collective sense – memorials to the fallen veterans of WWII or the Vietnam world.

Not wrong to recognize significant accomplishments … but in the spiritual realm **we need physical memorials** to keep us focused on God's Power and Presence in our lives .. so we don't get puffed up with pride and start to rely on the flesh.

- Isn't that what **Baptism** is all about – the testimony of our conscience to the saving power of God in redeeming us from our sinful past and giving us new life in Christ – Do you think back on your baptism and see that stake in the ground where you publicly proclaimed your faith in the Lord Jesus – but that was a long time ago for most of us

- Isn't that what the **Lord's Supper** is all about – that type of physical memorial of the death of Christ on our behalf – we remember His death and our victory in Him until He comes .. The early church probably celebrated that weekly at their corporate meetings … important to participate on a regular basis

ESTABLISHING PHYSICAL MEMORIALS TO SPIRITUAL MILESTONES REINFORCES THE REALITY OF GOD'S POWER IN OUR LIVES AND ENHANCES OUR WORSHIP

2 Special Stone Monuments:

1) **Stones of Burial** – set up in the middle of the Jordan River
2) **Stones of Resurrection** – set up on the west bank in Gilgal

(Would be good Memorial Day message)

Richard Hess: This text focuses upon the memorial that the Israelites set up. There are three major emphases: the divine initiative comes through the leadership of Joshua; (2) the tribes cross the Jordan; and (3) a permanent memorial enables future generations to remember the '*amazing things*' (**3:5**) of the crossing.

I. (:1-7) COMMUNICATING THE LEGACY OF GOD'S SAVING POWER TO THE NEXT GENERATIONS – INSTRUCTIONS FOR ESTABLISHING THE MEMORIAL

A. (:1-3) Instructions from the Lord to Joshua Re Establishing the Memorial

The memorial of the 12 stones should encourage our faith in 3 key areas:

1) (:1-2) **Unity** -- All genuine believers are united in the one Body of Christ –

> "*Now it came about when all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan, that the Lord spoke to Joshua, saying, 'Take for yourselves twelve men from the people, one man from each tribe'*"

emphasis on ALL the nation; every tribe represented; no one left out

Ephes 4:4-6 (lot of parallels between book of Ephesians and book of Joshua)
"*There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.*"
Certainly not united organizationally … but don't let our points of distinction overrule our unity on the fundamentals of the faith

2) (:3a) **Connectivity** -- Necessary to revisit our past – remember where we came from

> "*and command them, saying, 'Take up for yourselves twelve stones from here out of the middle of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet are standing firm'*"

don't forget that the only reason we are living in this resurrection life is because we already died with Christ and were buried with Christ
can never completely lose touch with our past – we are the redeemed … but from what/ the converted .. but from where / … the saved … but how / … the elect … but why

3) (:3b) **Intimacy** – love relationship expressed in worship – stirred up by the memorial that is set up right where we make our home; base camp for Israelites; Concept of Abiding

> "*and carry them over with you, and lay them down in the lodging place where you will lodge tonight.*"

Note: Effort, Work involved in worshiping
How were the priests able to hold the ark of the covenant all day long??
Had to carry these 12 stones to Gilgal on their back – not some little pebbles

B. (:4-5) Instructions Relayed from Joshua to the People

> "*So Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the sons of Israel, one man from each tribe; and Joshua said to them, 'Cross again to the ark of the Lord your God into the middle of the Jordan, and each of you take up*

a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel."

Must have seemed like a strange request to these leaders … we have just come out of the danger zone … now you want us to go back to the middle of the riverbed?
But that is where the ark still is … we are always safe when we are walking by faith with our eyes fixed on the Lord

C. (:6-7) Explanation of the Significance of the Memorial – Legacy for Next Generations of God's Saving Power
We have a bad tendency to forget or overlook what God has done for us

> "*Let this be a sign among you, so that when your children ask later, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you?' Then you shall say to them, 'Because the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off.' So these stones shall become a memorial to the sons of Israel forever*."

Richard Hess: The purpose of this text is to establish a memorial by which future generations will learn of the identity of the people of Israel as the one nation whose God could do such great wonders. The explanation occurs in the centre of this passage and is given by Joshua. The discourse itself has a **chiastic structure**, as the NIV translation suggests:

A. to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you,
  B. 'What do these stones mean?' tell them that
    C. the flow of the Jordan was cut off
      D. before the ark of the covenant of the LORD.
      D1. When it crossed the Jordan,
    C1. the waters of the Jordan were cut off.
  B1. These stones are to be
A1. a memorial to the people of Israel for ever.

The chiastic structure provides an explanation concerning the significance of the memorial. It is a sign that educates future generations about their heritage and, more importantly, about their God. They will see that sign in the stones that came from the Jordan when its waters were cut off. They were cut off because the ark of the covenant passed through the Jordan.

Some kids ask more questions than others … Why this … Why that … a lot of times they stump us with unexpected questions we can't even answer …

Perhaps you have heard the story of the little boy who asked his father, "How tall is the Eiffel Tower?" His father said, "I don't know, son; I don't have any idea." The boy said, "How far is it from here to China?" His dad said, "I just don't know, son." "Well, how deep is the deepest part of the ocean?" His father said, "I really don't have any idea." The little boy said, "Daddy, how-oh never mind." His dad said, "That's all right, son.

Ask questions. It's the only way you can get answers!"

Do we have the type of communication in our homes where our kids ask us:
- What did your baptism mean to you?
- Why are we celebrating the Lord's Supper?
- Why are we going to worship service this morning?

What is our response?

Must be real to us before we can communicate that significance to our children
How genuine is our faith and our love relationship with the Lord Jesus … as perceived by our kids?

Robert Hubbard: Here the stones serve as both "*sign*" and "*memorial*" (*zikkaron*, **v. 7**; cf. **Ex. 13:9**). They authenticate that the past event actually happened and remind Israel of its continuing significance for later generations. But the stones bear no self-explanatory inscription (cf. **8:32**). Instead, their mute testimony will cause curious Israelite children to ask in the future, "*What do these stones mean*?" This is significant: The text assumes visits to the site by future generations, probably for some ritual remembrance if not reenactment, of the river crossing. Such visits served to keep alive its meaning over the centuries.

Legacy is a powerful theme – at work I am involved in a major marketing campaign to push the newer smaller Caterpillar products – called compact construction equipment – we are the leader in the industry in the big machines … but we are new to the game in some of the smaller equipment – Campaign called the Legacy Campaign … because the whole theme is we have taken everything good about our traditional equipment and applied it to the smaller equipment
- Same tough genes
- Same generation of tough
- Everything you've come to expect but now in a smaller package

We have a significant legacy to pass on to our children and to the next generation … how effective are we at getting that job done?

Significance of "*Crossing Over*" or "*Coming Up From*"

Sermon by David Roper brings this out

Look at how many times those phrases appear in this chapter

II. (:8-14) EXALTING THE CAPTAIN OF THE LORD'S ARMY – WHO LEADS HIS PEOPLE INTO VICTORY IN THE PROMISED LAND BUT AVOIDING THE BIGSHOT MENTALITY

A. (:8) Obedience to the Lord's / Joshua's Instructions – The Lord is the one running the show

"*And thus the sons of Israel did, as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, just as the Lord spoke to Joshua,*

according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel and they carried them over with them to the lodging place, and put them down there."

B. (:9) Second Monument Created by Joshua in the Jordan River

"*Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan at the place where the feet of the priests who carried the ark of the covenant were standing, and they are there to this day*."

Probably took them from the middle of the river and arranged them in some fashion:
In a circle?? Piled them up?? Like an altar??
Won't be visible once the waters flow back over;
Your reaction is probably the same as mine …Why not some type of an expedition to try to locate these stones on the river bed of the Jordan?
Look at all the efforts directed at finding Noah's Ark . . .

But why did Joshua make the effort to do this?? No one would ever be able to see this monument? What was the purpose?? **Thanksgiving to God** – He sees the memorial
- Marking the spot: God was here in a powerful way!
- **Stones of Death and Burial** – symbolic of our union with Christ in His death and burial – we passed that way … but are not going back – act of personal worship on the part of Joshua – avoiding the Big Shot Mentality – act of humility in recognizing that he too needed to pass through that death and burial symbolic experience – putting the attention back on God where it belongs

Ray Stedman: The other memorial was a series of twelve stones in the middle of the river which were to be placed where the priests stood while all of Israel passed over to the other side. The stones were put in place before the waters came back. This is a picture for us of how Jesus Christ stays in the place of death long enough for every area of our lives to pass out of the control of self and into the control of Christ.

C. (:10-11) Central Focus on the Ark of the Covenant – Key to Victory is the Presence and Favor and Power of the Sovereign God (not due to Joshua)
(This will be developed further as our third point in **verses 15-18**)
Leadership of Joshua derived from Moses / Role of the priests / obedience of the people

"*For the priests who carried the ark were standing in the middle of the Jordan until everything was completed that the Lord had commanded Joshua to speak to the people, according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua. And the people hurried and crossed; and it came about when all the people had finished crossing, that the ark of the Lord and the priests crossed before the people*."

How long do I have to trust the Lord in this difficult area?? Not up to us to determine the length of required perseverance … It's not over until the Lord says it's over ..
The people hustled … but it still took all day to fully carry out all that God had commanded.

David Howard: The verse ends tersely: *the people crossed over the Jordan quickly*. The message is clear: when God's people obeyed what they knew they were supposed to do, things went well for them. The first example of disobedience in the book comes in **chap. 7**, and the results are disastrous. God's desire was ultimately to glorify himself and have his people revere him (**4:24**).

Richard Hess: Two reasons are given for the crossing in this passage:
- obedience to God's directives and
- preparation for battle.

D. (:12-13) Commendation of Certain Tribes ??

(Or is it -- Aside Regarding the Partial Obedience of the Reluctant Tribes ??)

"*And the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh crossed over in battle array before the sons of Israel, just as Moses had spoken to them; about 40,000, equipped for war, crossed for battle before the Lord to the desert plains of Jericho*."

(Although they seem to be commended here … so not sure how to take this)

Charles Ryrie: This was less than half the total number of fighting men in these tribes, the others remaining on the E. Side of the Jordan to protect their lands and families. These 40,000 men led the crossing.

John Davis: **Verse 13** indicates that 40,000 men of the two and a half tribes actually crossed over the Jordan. It is clear from **Numbers 26:7, 18** and **34** that the total potential fighting force of these tribes numbered about 110,580 men. Why, then, did only 40,000 cross over? The answer is probably found in the situation on the east bank. The conquest might take some time, and the eastern tribes could not afford to leave their cities undefended. We might presume therefore that the remaining parts of their armies stayed on the east side for purposes of local protection.

E. (:14) Exaltation of Joshua

"*On that day the Lord exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; so that they revered him, just as they had revered Moses all the days of his life*."

1) First application is to Christ

2) But as we are in Christ, there is application to leaders of the church as well -- If we humble ourselves, God will exalt us at the appropriate time; there is a type of respect that is appropriate to show to spiritual leaders

III. (:15-18) FOCUSING ATTENTION ON THE ARK OF THE COVENANT AS THE KEY TO GOD'S MIRACULOUS POWER

A. (:15-16) Command from the Lord to Joshua

"*Command the priests who carry the ark of the testimony that they come up*

from the Jordan."

Ron Ritchie: This Ark was a symbol of the very presence of God. It was a wooden box within which were kept the **Ten Commandments** – the second set, the first being broken by Moses because of anger – **the Pentateuch**, the first five books of the Old Testament, a symbol of God's desire that we have his word in our hearts, the **Manna**, which is the symbol of God's provision for us of the Bread of Life, and **Aaron's rod**, a dead staff of wood which had budded as a sign confirming Aaron's authority as High Priest, and which is a symbol of resurrection out of death, of life from death.

B. (:17) Command Relayed from Joshua to the Priests

"*So Joshua commanded the priests, saying, 'Come up from the Jordan.'*"

C. (:18) Miraculous Power of God Demonstrated in the Reversal of the Miracle

"*And it came about when the priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord had come up from the middle of the Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up to the dry ground, that the waters of the Jordan returned to their place, and went over all its banks as before*."

IV. (:19-24) EXPLAINING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MEMORIAL

A. (:19-20) Erecting the Memorial at Gilgal

1. Providential Timing

"*Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth of the first month*"

Just in time to observe the Passover (**chap. 5**); exactly 40 years after leaving the land of bondage they now enter the promised land

2. Base Camp established at Gilgal – Significance of location

"*and camped at Gilgal on the eastern edge of Jericho*."

Etymology of the word unknown; possible that it already referred to "*a circle of stones*" – cf. **Josh 5: 9** – play on the root of the word "*roll*"

Doug Goins: Names always are significant in the Old Testament. The word Gilgal means, "*The reproach"has been rolled away*." A beachhead"has been established in the land of promise. Forty years of spiritual defeat and failure have been rolled away. And the fact that they have this beachhead at Gilgal means that they are now ready to follow the Lord wholeheartedly into the land that he is giving them.

Robert Hubbard: The narrator finally names the site where Israel camped—**Gilgal**, on the eastern edge of the territory (not the city) of Jericho. This marks the debut of the town that in **Joshua 5–10** will provide Israel "both a bridgehead in Canaan and a springboard to the mountainous interior."

Name Gilgal means "*to roll away*" or perhaps "*circle*"
Appropriate base camp for attacks on the hill country

Continued to be a prominent city – one of the three cities on Samuel's traveling route (**1 Sam. 7:16**)

Kenneth Gangel: Gilgal would go on to become a place of **historic significance** as well as the first encampment. In **chapter 5** circumcision and Passover are celebrated there; Samuel will make it one of his cities of judgment (**1 Sam. 7:16**); Saul will be anointed king in Gilgal (**1 Sam. 11:14-15**); and the apostasy of the city will be condemned by Hosea (**9:15; 12:11**) and Amos (**4:4; 5:5**).

3. Memorial Set Up – Celebrating **Spiritual Victory**

"*And those twelve stones which they had taken from the Jordan, Joshua set up at Gilgal*."

B. (:21-23) Recounting the Miraculous Event

1. (:21) Memorial Aimed at Generations to Follow

"*And he said to the sons of Israel, 'When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What are these stones*?'"

2. (:22) Memorial Testifies to the Miraculous Event

"*then you shall inform your children, saying, 'Israel crossed this Jordan on dry ground*.'"

3. (:23) Miracle Patterned After Earlier Crossing of Red Sea – 2 major events

Prophets never lost sight of these 2 events

"*For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed, just as the Lord your God had done to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed*."

What He's done for others … He'll do for you!

C. (:24) Restating the Special Significance

1. Impressing our Enemies and Witnessing to the World: Reinforcing the Reality of God's Power in Our Lives

"*that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty*"

2. Enhancing our Worship and Commitment to God's Authority in our lives

"*so that you may fear the Lord your God forever*."

Richard Hess: This sign has been accomplished in order that Israel might **fear God** throughout its life. To fear God is to give him **wholehearted loyalty**. Both the miracle and its remembrance, as well as the exaltation of Joshua, pointed to this purpose. The miracle directed the people's attention to loyalty towards God, his covenant, and his appointed leader of the people. The gospels record the signs and wonders of Jesus of Nazareth for the same twofold purpose: that those who hear might believe and that this belief might lead to fullness of life in commitment to Christ (**John 20:30–31**).

David Howard: The statement about the miracle being a **testimony to all the peoples** recalls the words of Rahab, who acknowledged that the inhabitants of Jericho had indeed heard about how great Israel's God was, when he defeated Sihon and Og in the wilderness (**2:10–11**). It also recalls the purpose of the tenth plague in Egypt, which was much more than merely to convince the pharaoh to release the Israelites. **Exodus 12:12** states that the tenth plague (if not also all the others) was God's challenge to the Egyptian gods: "*I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt*." All of these cases show that God performed miracles to attest to himself, along with the more immediate purposes of accomplishing certain ends for the people involved.

CONCLUSION: What are the stones we have erected in our families to mark milestones? Where has God shown Himself strong on our behalf?

ESTABLISHING PHYSICAL MEMORIALS TO SPIRITUAL MILESTONES REINFORCES THE REALITY OF GOD'S POWER IN OUR LIVES AND ENHANCES OUR WORSHIP

Special stories associated with each of these major events in my own life:
1) God's Direction in my life – **Prov 3:5-6** – verse engraved on piece of redwood tree

2) Marriage Partner – special kind of marriage certificate – from college fellowship group

3) Provision of Needs at Seminary – story of the frozen pot pies when I was down to my last nickel

4) Karen pregnant with our first child – after difficulty becoming pregnant

5) Provision of the house we have lived in for the past 23 years – special plaque

Good exercise sometime today … sit down with your family and try to point out the **significant stones** in your life

As we press forward to claim God's promises for spiritual victory in our lives, we will want to remember these **stones from the book of Joshua** –

Stones of Burial – showing we have left behind our old life of living in the flesh and by our own effort

Stones of Resurrection – showing we have crossed over the Jordan and are living on the other side where we are united with the life of Christ and have our rest in Him … no lack of battles and challenges … but the presence of the Lord to show Himself strong on our behalf

* * * * * * * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What **stones of remembrance** have we shared with our family to remind us all of the reality of God's power at work in our lives?

2) Why do you think Joshua created that **second memorial** in the middle of the Jordan River if it was only going to be covered over with the returning water?

3) What have we left behind in our journey as we have crossed over the Jordan? How does this passage connect with the message of **Romans 6-8**?

4) What type of **answers** do we have to the questions our children ask about spiritual realities? Can they sense the genuineness of our faith?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

David Roper: As you may know, Joshua is concerned with the conquest of Canaan. Within one generation, the small group of Israelites that came out of Egypt dispossessed the entire population of Palestine. We are so accustomed to reading the account and having it told to us as children that we sometimes lose sight of the monumentality of that achievement. It is absolutely unparalleled in history. There has never been anything like it. From the literature of this time we know that for a thousand years or more before the Israelites conquered Palestine, the Canaanite city-states were laid out geographically in patterns designed to optimize their ability to support one another militarily, and they had proven absolutely impregnable. They had stood against all the powers of the ancient Near East.

Yet when Joshua and his group of ex-slaves invaded the land, within one generation they had displaced almost the entire population! That is something unique in history. It never happened before, and has not happened since. It is so extraordinary that most modern, liberal, Old Testament historians have taken the approach that the book of Joshua is untrustworthy, and they have developed very radical re-interpretations of Israelite history in order to explain this conquest. It is unparalleled, so they presume it could not have occurred.

Chapters 3 and **4** of Joshua deal with the most significant event in the conquest. It is not the actual campaign, as we might expect. It is the entrance into Canaan across the river Jordan. There are two events in the history of Israel which the prophets refer to time and time again as the most significant in the history of Israel. The first is the deliverance from Egypt and the passage through the Red Sea with Moses. That is when they became a nation. From a group of slaves they became a people. The New Testament says that they were "*baptized into Moses*", identified with Moses, and they became a nation at this point in their history. The second most important event was the

journey, as one of the prophets describes it, "*from Shittim to Gilgal*"--this short, six-mile march from the east bank of the Jordan river to the west bank. This was so significant because it was in this action that they received the Land. From this point on, they were fighting a battle which was already won. By an act of the will, they crossed Jordan. And, by that act, Canaan was theirs. Though there were still battles to be fought, and the campaign had to be carried out, and there were some very difficult things that transpired; nevertheless the Land was theirs. God told Joshua, "*Every spot of ground that your foot rests upon is yours*." It was theirs by right of inheritance, and they entered into it by stepping across Jordan. . .

We have already said that this was one of the most important events in the history of Israel. For them, it signified the **cutting off** of their past. They made the decision to step into the land, and all of the old life was cut off from them. In fact, I am convinced that the name "*Hebrew*" comes from this event. Seven times this book says they "*crossed over*". The Hebrew verb which is used is the term from which the word Hebrew comes. They knew themselves to be people who had **crossed over**, who had left something behind.

Ron Ritchie: In your life what are some of the physical, emotional and spiritual memorial stones representing apparent impossible circumstances where Yahweh rolled back the waters so that you could walk over on dry land and begin to enjoy the fruit of his promises which he has given to us in Christ Jesus? What are the circumstances in your life by which the world can recognize that the hand of the Lord is mighty and that our hearts are filled with respect for him? What are some of the "physical" stones we have on display so that our children seeing them and touching them can ask, "What do these stones mean?" I encourage you parents to start diligently arranging your lives so that your children can indeed see and touch such memorial stones in your homes. Thereby you can share your life, share how God overcame the most impossible situation and set you and your loved ones free to walk across a flooding river on dry land. I encourage you to use those teachable moments to prepare the next generation and the next generation and the next generation to follow Yahweh, Jesus Christ, our Lord and wonderful Savior.

Doug Goins: That's what happened to Israel at the Jordan River. They were cut off from all the other peoples and from their old pagan lifestyle. Israel was a new nation, a new entity. God had given them a new law, a new way of doing things that was completely different, completely disassociated from their history of self-effort and striving. The nation had to make a clean break with the past. They were never to think of going back across the river. The first half of chapter 4 focuses on the depth of the river with its stones of memorial and really of burial. Those stones were to remind Israel that their old life was buried under the waters of the Jordan. That old life was dead. The second half of the chapter focuses on the coming up, the deliverance from the river, the stones of resurrection---for the monument in Gilgal was really a monument of resurrection. That was to remind Israel that because of the miraculous power of God they were now able to walk in newness of life.

John Hamby:

- There are **memories of places**, places that trigger memories just as the memorial stones in Gilgal. There are some significant places in your life that elicit memories. . .
- There are **memories of people**. These are memories of people who God has used in your life.
- There are also **mementos of the past**. If you were to come into my office and look around you would see miscellaneous objects that are reminders to me of life experiences, mission trips, etc. Each of those objects triggers memories of what happened then, of the things that God did and that I experienced, experiences that have changed my life.

Kenneth Gangel: New ideas and **change** are important in the progress of the Christian life. That's where Israel was at this point—facing a major national and geographic change. Nevertheless, the very fact of the change established the necessity for a **remembrance** exemplified in our passage by the memorial stones. Perhaps the key phrase of the chapter comes at us in question form: "*What do these stones mean*?" Change for the sake of change itself usually has no value. Change related to accomplishing the mission reflects positive willingness to adapt to shifting surroundings in order to achieve the will of God in our lives.

Faith requires that we look forward, but it also requires that we look back. Someone has said, "The greatest enemy of faith may be f**orgetfulness**." If we forget how God has worked and provided in the past, we may fail to trust him for the future. God told Joshua to arrange for a visible memorial that could be an object lesson. He knows we have memory lapses and faith failures, so he often acts to remind us when we need the change, or how we have been changed.

Gordon Matties: The narrative of the crossing portrays a God who leads and who commands. The story depicts the crossing as a reverse image of the exodus narrative. Israel's existence is shaped by a characteristic kind of memory, which looks back in order to move into the future. The story invites readers, whatever their time and location, to continue the pattern of an obedient, holy community with a faithful leader under the direction of their cosmic Lord. . .

Exodus, crossing the sea, and crossing the Jordan belong to a sequence of events in the memory of Israel that are always **contemporary**. Israel confesses its present faith as though the past belongs to today's experiences. The story of the crossing thereby becomes the story of every generation. Each generation is invited to begin here again. The focus of the story, therefore, is not the beginning, but the future. The questions of the children (**4:6**) imply not only an explanation of the past, but also invitation to create hope for the future. The future, however, is not simply a repetition of the past, either for Israel, for the nations, or for the church. Rather than establishing a conquest paradigm for later readers (with its victors and victims), the text offers another kind of paradigm, that of attending to God's actions and commandments. Drawing on this text, Menno Simons encourages readers to "teach our children rightly in the Word" so that, through

example and instruction, they may be “furnished to all manner of good works” (Menno Simons: 388-89). Through attending to Scripture and the presence of God’s Spirit in the body of Christ, the church continues to experience God’s presence and to live into God’s promised future.

TEXT: Joshua 5:1-15

TITLE: FIRST THINGS FIRST -- STEPPING OUT IN FAITH REQUIRES SUBMISSION TO THE SIGN OF THE COVENANT

BIG IDEA:
MAKING HOLINESS AND WORSHIP TOP PRIORITY PREPARE GOD'S PEOPLE FOR VICTORY IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE

INTRODUCTION:

Jerome Creach: **Transitions** from one age to the next and from one generation to another are gradual. The interests and values of successive groups overlap. In light of that common fact, **Joshua 5:2–12** makes a startling claim: not a single member of the wilderness generation entered the land! This **definitive break** was anticipated, of course, by stories of faithlessness in the wilderness (**Num. 14:30; Deut. 1:35**). But now **Joshua 5:2–12** shows that wilderness epoch came to a clear and decisive end. Following the account of Israel crossing the Jordan, this segment of the book functions much like a curtain fall in the theatre: it tells the reader that the Israelites who were forbidden to enter Canaan have exited the stage, and now a new generation has entered to possess the land. **Joshua 5:2–12** works in tandem with the book's opening emphasis on the death of Moses to show that the wilderness period is officially complete (**Josh. 1:1–2**). It does so through two vignettes:

- first, Joshua circumcises those Israelites born in the wilderness, making clear that all those who left Egypt with Moses and were circumcised by him are dead (**5:2–9**);
- then Joshua leads the newly circumcised Israelites in the first Passover in Canaan (**5:10**); that celebration triggers an end to the manna that sustained Israel in the wilderness (**5:11–12; Exod. 16:15**).

Richard Hess: With the establishment of Joshua's authority and with the Israelites encamped west of the Jordan in the Promised Land, the narrative pauses to reaffirm the covenantal relationship between Israel and God. The chapter considers

(1) the fear of Israel's enemies due to God's mighty acts;
(2) Joshua as covenant initiator;
(3) circumcision as an identification with the covenants of Abraham and Sinai; and
(4) the ceremony as a separation from Egypt and the desert and an identification with the covenanted land of Canaan.

The enemies of Israel are struck with fear at the news of Israel's God and his deeds; Joshua acts as leader of the people; Israel as a nation joins in a covenant ceremony that prepares them for the coming mission. Finally, the land of Canaan 'welcomes' Israel by providing the nation with its produce.

David Howard: Three episodes make up the chapter in the Hebrew Bible, and they continue in the spirit of **chap. 4**, since they are all concerned with **ritual preparations**

or **holiness** in one way or another, not with military preparedness or with "getting on with the action." That such spiritual preparations preceded the actual "conquest" of the land illustrates the priorities we have noted: God was going to give Israel the land, and Israel's task was to be sure it obeyed and was adequately prepared spiritually. Thus, the real "action" of the book is delayed by several important—even essential—preliminaries:

- the admonitions to Joshua about keeping the law and to the Transjordan tribes about keeping unity within the nation (**chap. 1**),
- memorializing God's miraculous help (**chap. 4**), and
- sanctifying the people (**chap. 5**).

The tasks ahead of battle were far too important to enter lightly—to enter unprepared in any way, including spiritually. Interestingly enough, the ritual ceremonies in this chapter are highlighted and emphasized in that they are bracketed by two seven-day periods: the first involved crossing of the Jordan, and the second involved marching around Jericho (**6:15**). Each of these seven-day periods was climaxed by a mighty work of God: the stopping of the Jordan's waters in the first instance and the destruction of Jericho in the second. . .

The first episode in **chap. 5** is the **ceremony of circumcision**. Circumcision was an original sign of the covenant with Abraham (**Gen 17:11**), and it was to be done for every male in every generation. However, it was not done during the wilderness wanderings (**v. 5**). This is ironic, since Moses, Israel's leader at the time, had had an experience earlier in which the Lord had tried to kill him because he had not circumcised his own son (**Exod 4:24–26**), yet he had apparently not been too concerned to encourage circumcision in the wilderness, because an entire generation had now crossed the Jordan who were not circumcised. This episode marks the beginning of Israel's true identification with the land of Canaan, and it contrasts the present generation of Israelites very starkly with the preceding generation, which rebelled against Moses and the Lord. . .

The **celebration of the Passover** marked a significant turning point in Israel's life, since immediately following this, they began to live off of the land they were about to possess. The miraculous provision of manna in the wilderness stopped now. This momentous event, closing off an epoch in Israel's history, is emphasized by several repetitions in the verses here. The event also is presented in such a way as to recall the first Passover, recounted in **Exodus 12**. This text, then, is a transitional one, looking back to two important parts of Israel's history—the first Passover and the provision of manna— and also looking forward to life in the land, when Israel would live off of its produce. . .

The concluding episode in **chap. 5** is somewhat different from the earlier ones, but it is linked with them in that it concerns **holiness** (the word "*holy*" is used for the first time in the chapter in **v. 15**), just as the earlier episodes concern the people's proper ritual preparation and relationship with God. All of the chapter's episodes reflect the same

outlook noted in connection with **1:7–8**, that **spiritual concerns**—not military preparations—were to be of first importance to the Israelites in their tasks ahead. This principle, of course, is one that still stands today: God wants our undivided loyalties and our holiness. Indeed, **Lev 19:2** ("*Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy*") is quoted by the apostle Peter (1 Pet 1:16) as still valid for Christians.

This brief episode forms the introduction to the **conquest narratives** that follow, since it tells of the commander of the Lord's army meeting with the commander of Israel's army. There is no clear resolution to this episode, but the obvious implication here is that the **Lord will fight for Joshua and Israel** as long as they maintain the proper priorities, and this is played out in the following chapters.

(:1) DISHEARTENED ENEMIES -- THE TESTIMONY OF GOD'S AWESOME POWER REDUCES THE MOST POWERFUL OF ENEMIES TO DEMORALIZED DEFEATISTS

A. Powerful Enemies

1. Kings of the Amorites

"*Now it came about when all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan to the west*"

2. Kings of the Canaanites

"*and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea*"

David Howard: Those standing in awe and terror of Israel here are all the kings of the Canaanites and the Amorites, two of the seven peoples mentioned in **3:10**. Here, they appear to stand for all seven groups.

Thomas Constable: This reference to the Amorites and Canaanites groups all the native tribes together. The people who possessed the South and the mountains of the land were mainly Amorites. Many of them had lived in Transjordan, and were the mightiest of the warriors among the pagan tribes. Those who lived in the North, in the lowlands by the Mediterranean Sea, and in the Valley of Jezreel, were mainly Canaanites. The Canaanites were typically traders rather than warriors.

The writer sometimes put all the native peoples in one or the other of these two groups. This depended on the area in which they lived (South or North, highlands or lowlands), or the general characteristic of the people that occupied most of that area (warlike or peaceful). Reference to the Amorites and Canaanites is probably a **merism**, a figure of speech in which **two extremes represent the whole** (e.g., "heaven and earth" means the universe).

B. Testimony of God's Awesome Power

"*heard how the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan before the sons of Israel until they had crossed*"

C. Demoralized Defeatists

> "*that their hearts melted, and there was no spirit in them any longer, because of the sons of Israel*."

Very important for otherwise they would have been bold to strike the Israelites at once while they were vulnerable and recuperating from the circumcision procedure.

Helene Dallaire: One can imagine these rulers planning their response to Israel and working on their military strategy, should the invaders approach their territory (cf. **Ps 2:1–2**). The tension mounts as conflict is now inevitable. And for Israel, there is **no turning back**. The waters of the Jordan River have returned to flood stage, and retreat is impossible and out of the question.

Richard Hess: This description of the Canaanite reaction follows the miracle of **chapter 4**. It explains why the Canaanites did not attack at once, and thus allows time for the circumcision of the Israelites, a period of weakness when they would be susceptible to defeat (see **Gen. 34**). Its usage of language previously associated with the first exodus foreshadows the significance of circumcision (**v. 4**) and explains why the Israelite offensive actions against both Jericho and Ai went unopposed by Canaanite forces.

Van Parunak: **Application**: We are often fearful in engaging in spiritual warfare, and need to remember that the Lord is able to intimidate our adversaries even more.

I. (:2-7) MAKING HOLINESS TOP PRIORITY (DEMONSTRATED HERE IN SUBMISSION TO CIRCUMCISION) PREPARES GOD'S PEOPLE FOR VICTORY IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE

A. (:2-3) Obeying the Command to Circumcise the People – Covenant Commitment

> "*At that time the Lord said to Joshua, 'Make for yourself flint knives and circumcise again the sons of Israel the second time.' So Joshua made himself flint knives and circumcised the sons of Israel at Gibeath-haaraloth*."

Ex. 4:25 – flint knives were the surgical instrument of choice

Thomas Constable: quoting Jay Fawver and R. Larry Overstreet:

> "Flint knives [cf. **Exod. 4:25**] are sharpened by chipping away at the edge of the stone, so that clean, sterile stone is exposed, since bacteria and viruses cannot grow in rock. Circumcision was thus performed with an instrument possessing comparable sterility to today's surgical scalpels. In view of the likelihood of infection following this operation with a contaminated instrument, use of the flint knife was enormously beneficial and therefore commanded by the Ultimate Healer (or in this case the preventer)."

B. (:4-7) Explaining the Need for Circumcision at this Juncture – Covenant Failure

1. (:4) All the circumcised men had died in the wilderness because of disobedience

"*And this is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: all the people who came out of Egypt who were males, all the men of war, died in the wilderness along the way, after they came out of Egypt*."

2. (:5) Their children who were born in the wilderness had not been Circumcised

"*For all the people who came out were circumcised, but all the people who were born in the wilderness along the way as they came out of Egypt had not been circumcised*."

3. (:6) Disobedience Disqualified Them From Entering the Promised Land

"*For the sons of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, that is, the men of war who came out of Egypt, perished because they did not listen to the voice of the Lord, to whom the Lord had sworn that He would not let them see the land which the Lord had sworn to their fathers to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey*."

4. (:7) Reinstitution of the Privilege of the Covenant Sign

"*And their children, whom He raised up in their place, Joshua circumcised; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them along the way*."

John Rea: The people had not purposely neglected the rite since Sinai, but apparently God had prohibited its practice because the nation was under his judgment. The people had rebelled against Jehovah repeatedly, had practiced idolatry, and had refused to enter the land (**Num 14:1-10**) promised them in the Abrahamic covenant (**Gen 15:18; 17:8**); hence they were forbidden to place on their children the sign of the Abrahamic covenant, which in spirit and in reality they had broken."

Robert Hubbard: The real question is why Yahweh commands that circumcision be done **now**. Amid Israel's risky intrusion into Canaan, **why** perform a religious rite that would sideline Israel's soldiers for days of painful recovery? . . .

But, in my view, the best explanation factors in all the motifs of **vv. 4–7**: the dead generation's failure and judgment, Yahweh's gift of land, and the younger generation's uncircumcised status. The uncircumcision symbolizes the whole sorry period of landless wandering and the cynical interpretive spin that Egypt gave it. The "*reproach of Egypt*" would be Egypt's biting ridicule that Yahweh had royally snookered poor Israel, promising the moon but leaving their high hopes bogged down in the desert sands (see **Ex. 32:12; Num. 14:13–16; Deut. 9:28**). Through circumcision (and in Canaan, too!), this generation confirms its obedient spirit and gives Yahweh warrant to declare the past humiliation dead and buried, never to be thrown accusingly at Israel

again. In essence, Yahweh welcomes this generation to his covenant and grants it a fresh start in his land. Henceforth, Israel will call the site where Yahweh "*rolled (it) away*" Gilgal, the name evoking memories of Yahweh's historic declaration.

II. (:8-12) MAKING WORSHIP TOP PRIORITY (DEMONSTRATED HERE IN THE CELEBRATION OF THE PASSOVER) PREPARES GOD'S PEOPLE FOR VICTORY IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE

A. (:8) Vulnerability (and time to reflect/worship) During the Healing Process

"*Now it came about when they had finished circumcising all the nation, that they remained in their places in the camp until they were healed*."

Trusting God can put us in a vulnerable position.

Goins: Imagine yourself as an Israeli soldier who has just been circumcised, waiting to get better, looking at this city in front of you, and thinking, "Why couldn't we have done this on the other side of the river? We can't move for a few days, and if they come after us, we're sitting ducks." It was a tremendous act of faith to remain in their places, waiting to heal. Joshua had to exercise faith in performing this amazing act on all these men. The people had to wait, obey the Lord, and trust him even though they were weak, in pain, and vulnerable to attack at this time. But the spiritual reality is that in weakness they were made strong.

B. (:9) Victory Vindication

"*Then the Lord said to Joshua, 'Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.' So the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day*."

Kenneth Gangel: The word for *reproach* (*herpa*) refers to shame or disgrace. Even though the people had been delivered from Egypt geographically, they had wandered around with the stench of Egypt upon them throughout all these forty years. The Abrahamic covenant and the Mosaic covenant lay idle while awaiting this revival at Gilgal. Recognizing national apostasy, Moses had exhorted the Israelites to repent before the Lord, implying the figure of circumcision (**Deut. 10:16**). Now by faith they had crossed into the promised land and showed their willingness to accept God's covenant terms again by submitting to circumcision, so the shame of their idolatry and lust for Egypt was finally rolled away. The old name meaning "*circle*" now took on new significance connected with the word *roll*.

C. (:10) Observance of Passover

"*While the sons of Israel camped at Gilgal, they observed the Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month on the desert plains of Jericho*."

Robert Hubbard: The last recorded observance of Passover took place at the beginning of Israel's second year out of Egypt (**Num. 9**). Thus, as Israel's first Passover in the new land, this celebration signals a **new beginning** for their national life. Indeed, the

narrator highlights two notable events in successive days to confirm the dawning of a new day for Israel. . .

In other words, in these brief events, sunset falls across Israel's sorry past forty years while a **joyous new day dawns** on the Israelite camp. Yes, battles lie ahead, but for the moment Israel pauses to reflect on Passover, celebration of salvation in the past, and to relish the present goodness of their new land and of the God who had brought them there.

Kenneth Gangel: The celebration of Passover was important because the Israelites needed a reminder of God's commitment to them. Their dramatic and miraculous deliverance from Egypt provided a powerful demonstration of God's love for the nation and his intention to settle them in the promised land. Since most of the Israelites present were not even born at the time of the exodus, this memorial celebration became crucial.

D. (:11-12) Diet Upgraded – First Fruits of the Promised Land

> "*And on the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. And the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten some of the produce of the land, so that the sons of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate some of the yield of the land of Canaan during that year*."

Kenneth Gangel: Just in case they needed another demonstration of God's care and provision for them, they began to eat **food from Canaan**, no longer dependent on the miracle manna provided in the wilderness. The God who had saved them from Pharaoh and provided for them in the desert would certainly give them victory and food in Canaan.

Helene Dallaire: For forty years, the Israelites had been sustained by manna provided daily by the hand of God. The day had finally come for them to graduate from this strict and dull diet to a regimen that included unleavened bread, roasted grain, and fresh produce from the land—probably the first harvest of the season. This changed eating habit signified that Israel would now have access to seasonal harvests to create scrumptious and delectable recipes. The nomadic lifestyle of the desert was finally being substituted with a sedentary one in a land flowing with milk and honey.

David Guzik: God always provides, but He is perfectly free to change the source of His provision from time to time. We need to trust in Him, not in His manner of provision, or we will stumble when those change.

Gordon Matties: Celebration of Passover signifies **identification** with the people who came out of Egypt. But more, it marks this newly formed "people" as having been shaped by a particular memory. This people knows its identity by remembering and enacting the story it tells. And it knows its God in the same way. In other words, this God has a story and is known by that story. To participate in Passover, in memory of

the exodus experience, is to learn from that story, to identify with it, and above all to embody **commitment** to the God celebrated in that story.

III. (:13-15) THE VISION OF THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF REINFORCES THE PRIORITY OF WORSHIP AND HOLINESS

A. (:13-14a) The Surprising Visitor – Vision of the Commander in Chief

> "*Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, 'Are you for us or for our adversaries*?' *And he said, 'No, rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the Lord.*'"

This will not ultimately be a conflict between the Israelites and the Canaanites … it is the Lord Himself who is in charge and who will win the conflict as we submit to His leadership.

Name "*captain of the host of the Lord*" is a reference to the invisible realm of angels that were present there to fight the realms of darkness and achieve victory for the people of God.

David Guzik: The question really wasn't if the LORD was on Joshua's side. The proper question was if Joshua was on the LORD's side.

Kenneth Gangel: What a fascinating scene! Surely by this point Joshua thought he had done everything possible to get ready for the conquest of Canaan. But he still didn't have a **battle plan** from God. He had worked through his fears, crossed the Jordan River, consecrated the people, celebrated the Passover, eaten from the land, and now he was ready to take up the sword and charge ahead into battle. But God had **one more hurdle** for Joshua to clear before he could fight, even before he dared hear about God's battle plan. . .

The commander put everything in perspective. This was not Joshua's war; it was **God's war**. God assumed sovereign control of this operation from the beginning. The commander would not help but take over, and Joshua would become his servant. We will soon read the account of the conquest (**Josh. 6-11**) and discover that all the military strategy was **divinely directed**. God sent them against the center of the land, first capturing Jericho and Ai, thereby securing the passes to the central ridge and driving a wedge between the northern and southern sections of Canaan. They then moved south to conquer the Amorite coalition and finally wipe out the northern confederacy.

B. (:14b) Reinforcing the Priority of Worship

> "*And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, 'What has my lord to say to his servant*?'"

Thomas Constable: quoting Alva McClain: "The conquest of Canaan is too often treated as an enterprise of the Israelites, carried out with great cruelties, for which they claimed divine sanction. The Old Testament presents the matter in an entirely different light. The war is a Divine enterprise, in which human instruments are employed, but so as to be entirely subordinate to the Divine will."

C. (:15) Reinforcing the Priority of Holiness

"*And the captain of the Lord's host said to Joshua, 'Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.' And Joshua did so*."

Goins: What Joshua experienced alone on the plain of Jericho can be true for us as well. No matter what we're facing, no matter how complicated or difficult the problem in our life is, it just provides more opportunity for God to demonstrate his power. He is King Jesus, the Captain, the Commander-in-Chief. He is the one who gives us orders, asks us to listen and take him seriously, and then he gives us his strength to live one day at a time.

Helene Dallaire: "*Holy ground*" always indicates that Yahweh is present, and that a major event is about to unfold. In this case, Israel is about to conquer Canaan, and Jericho is on the verge of being destroyed.

Gordon Matties: The passage prepares readers for Jericho, which we will discover is paradigmatic for the entire narrative of Joshua, and which the Lord summarizes in retrospect at the end of the book: *It was not by your sword or by your bow* (**24:12**). The sword in the commander's hand and the bared feet on holy ground, therefore, represent the kind of war that readers should anticipate. They "become signs of the kind of muster, the kind of arms to be employed in this war. Human weapons, like human instrumentality, will play a minor role, if any, in the battles to follow" (Hauch: 124). This episode suggests that not even Joshua will be the military leader, but Yahweh. The human role will be obedience and trust (Hauch: 125). Richard Nelson puts it nicely: "The narrative ends with a barefoot Joshua—like Moses at the burning bush (**Exod 3:1-6**)—who has been given nothing to do" (2003: 60).

To this point nothing has gone wrong. Readers have noticed only reversals of earlier stories: of the Transjordan tribes and of the episode at Baal Peor. *The Israelites did as Joshua commanded* is the keynote of obedience in **4:8**. Joshua does as the stranger has commanded (**5:15**). But a subplot remains. Will the Transjordan tribes be authentic paradigms of all-Israelite faithfulness, as Rahab is a paradigm of the acknowledgment of *all the peoples of the earth* (**4:24**)? Or will obedience and trust be compromised? It all depends on how Israel models itself after Joshua's response to the divine messenger. Will all Israel, like Joshua and Moses, take off their shoes? Or will they, like the impatient people at the foot of Sinai, make gods for themselves?

Robert Hubbard: **Chapter 5** lays out Israel's transition to the land and preparations for doing Yahweh's war. It ends with the surprising, climactic arrival on scene of Yahweh and his invisible army. Jericho senses the severe threat, seals itself off, and trusts its fate

to its walled defenses. So, an ancient combat scene once again repeats itself—an invading army poised at the gates and a city sealed for a siege. In Boling's words, "All is at last in readiness for the warfare."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How have we made **Holiness** a top priority in our lives? How careful are we to keep short accounts with the Lord and confess our sins? How sensitive are we to the voice of our conscience?

2) How have we made **Worship** a top priority in our lives? How consistent are we in our personal devotions, our family worship and gathering together with our church family?

3) Do we have an expectation of **spiritual victory**? Do we understand that our enemies have already been defeated and are demoralized?

4) Do we understand that while Satan is the "*accuser of the brethren*" we should never put ourselves down because God has already rolled back whatever **reproach** we might have deserved?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

David Roper: It seems very significant to me that the conquest of Canaan should have begun with pain. Before Israel could draw the sword on their enemies, they had to draw the knife on themselves in the reinstitution of circumcision. The nation that came out of Egypt had observed this rite; the entire male population had been circumcised. But during the years they wandered in the wilderness the practice was forsaken. We know from the prophetic books that they worshipped the stars, and became idolatrous, and forgot the covenant they had with the Lord. The rite of circumcision, which was the sign, or seal, of that covenant, was neglected. Now they are enjoined to reinstitute it. . .

We know from the New Testament that circumcision also signifies the putting off of the flesh, the cutting off of the old life, with its power of condemnation over us. The guilt and shame and disgrace and embarrassment of our past are gone; they have been cut off. The past no longer can affect us, it cannot control us, its power is broken. The passage through the Jordan signifies the fact of our identification with Christ--our being placed into his death, burial, and resurrection. Circumcision symbolizes the effects of that identification the cutting off of the old life, and the placement into a new kind of relationship.

Doug Goins: The logic of the narrative in verse one would seem to lead to an immediate attack on Jericho after the crossing of the Jordan River. The spies had told Joshua when they came back from reconnaissance that the people were demoralized. Joshua had extensive military experience, and his army was united behind him. But instead of allowing the people to attack, God asks them to stop for a period of spiritual preparation before the battle. They must focus on two important acknowledgments of their covenant relationship with Him: the covenant sign of circumcision and the covenant meal of Passover. So in **verses 2-10** both of those things are reinstated in the life of the people. This is a section that focuses on the necessity of spiritual preparation or conditioning before we're ready to serve the Lord.

Steven Simala Grant: We only learn what it means to trust when we are vulnerable. I see an incredible act of faith in the obedience of Joshua and the Israelite army. They made themselves completely dependent on God for protection, they opened themselves up to attack from their enemies which could have been fatal. The whole conquest could have been squashed right then if the men of Jericho had come out and attacked right after the Israelites had been circumcised. They learned what it meant to trust God through their obedience to His command.

I see the same principle in our lives as well. We only learn what it means to trust when we are vulnerable, when we feel like life is out of our control, when things start to go bad, when we face things that are beyond our ability to heal and to manage. Those are the times we cry out to God for help, we cry to Him because we know we can't handle the situation on our own, when we are powerless to change something. And I believe that is sometimes why God allows us to experience those difficult times, to teach us to trust Him.

And yet the truth is that we are never in control, we are always vulnerable. It is true that we make decisions every day, and those decisions have consequences, but ultimately we need to recognize that God is the one in control. He is the one in charge of the universe. Faith and trust are about that recognition – that we are in God's hands, that He is sovereign over all. And that is ok, because we know He is good.

So the point is that we need to recognize our need for God, our dependence on Him, and trust Him as we walk with Him daily.

Mike Hullah: Remembering the past became an excellent preparation of faith for the tests of the future. The partaking of the Passover brought change; they ate of the food of the land, the manna ceased. The manna was to sustain them in their wilderness wanderings; the fruit of the land speaks of an actual participation in the promises of God. Passover not only looks back to what was accomplished but also looks forward to those things to come! For God's covenant people, deliverance from Egypt included the promise they would inherit the land, a land of abundance, a land of wheat, barley, fig trees, olive oil and honey (**Deut. 8:8-9**). It spoke of their new beginning, of their new life as the people of God delivered from judgment and rock solid in the place of blessing. The principle: the Passover not only looked back, but it looked forward to

their new life in the land enjoying its abundant blessings by the power of God. Thus, eating of the produce was an act of confirmation of God's abundant blessing. Enjoyment of the Produce (**vs. 11**).

F. B. Meyer: The battle is not to the strong, nor the race to the swift; but each to those who are living lives separate from the world, and dedicated to God. The vessels which are meet for the Master's use are pure ones. Cleanness, rather than cleverness, is the prime condition of successful service. And then it is only out of such a heart that the faith can spring which is able to wield the forces of the unseen and spiritual and divine.

Richard Hess: **The pre-capture instructions (5:13 – 6:5**).
The strange confrontation of **5:13–15** resembles that between Jacob and the man of God at Peniel (**Gen. 32:22–32**) and that between Moses and the burning bush (**Exod. 3:1 – 4:17**). In each case, the human protagonist encounters a divine messenger before facing a life-and-death conflict, but there is a significant difference with Joshua. Unlike the other two figures, Joshua does not wrestle or argue with the messenger. He questions him and responds as he is told. There are three reasons for this difference.

- Firstly, Joshua is never doubting or accused of wrong by God, as contrasted with Jacob and Moses, who appear fallible. Further, neither Jacob nor Moses wishes the coming conflict. Joshua accepts it, perhaps looks forward to it.
- A second reason for Joshua's passive acceptance of the messenger occurs in the description *with a drawn sword*. This expression appears in two other places in the Bible, with reference to the angel who stops Balaam and his donkey (**Num. 22:23**) and to the angel who stands ready to execute punishment for David's census (**1 Chr. 21:16**). A figure *with a drawn sword* is one not to be toyed with. He is one who threatens divine judgment.
- The third reason recalls the figure's self-identification as *commander of the army of the LORD*. Elsewhere, the commander of an army is the general in charge (**Gen. 21:22, 32; 26:26; Judg. 4:2, 7; 1 Sam. 12:9; 14:50**; etc.). The figure assumes a role of authority. Joshua, as leader of the Israelites, is in a comparable position, but he recognizes the superior rank of the stranger. However, the concern is not which leader is more important but Joshua's willingness to accept the figure's authority and to respect this as a divine sign.

Gordon Matties: This transformation from a nation (*goy*) to a people (*'am*) is the concern of the story. Butler notices the wordplay between the two words "*nation*," referring to the disobedient generation (**vv. 6, 8**), and "*people*," identifying the faithful first (**vv. 4, 5a**) and, in hope, the second (**v. 5b**) generations. But Israel's tendency was to become like the nations (**Deut 17:14-20; 1 Sam 8:5**; Butler 1983: 59). Thus the word *nation* may be deliberately used in Joshua (e.g., also **4:1**) to refer to the *people* who are in process of becoming the Lord's people. As Deuteronomy states concerning the covenant ceremony upon entry to the land, Abraham became a great "*nation*" (**Deut 26:5**), but those who enter the land and obey the Lord will be "*his treasured people*," and "*a holy people*" (**Deut 26:16-19**; Boling 1982: 172; cf. **Exod 19:6**). But the implicit question that remains here is whether this newly circumcised people will not also

become like the first generation, which perished in the wilderness. That question will be answered only in the final text unit of the book.

Van Parunak: **Big lesson**: God prepares the enemy for defeat; we must prepare ourselves before him for victory. Three steps in the spiritual preparation of the people:

Event	Significance	NT Analog
Circumcision, 2-9	Position under the covenant	*Salvation*
Passover, 10-12	Practice in generalities	General biblical *disciplines* (church fellowship, personal devotional exercises, godly family and work life)
Encounter w/Capt. of the Lord's Host, 5:13-6:5	Submission in specifics	*Submission:* Approaching specific challenges in the spirit rather than in the flesh

David Howard: This ends the first section of the Book of Joshua. Some scholars maintain that this episode is incomplete and that some of it has been lost or else that the commander's instructions are found in **6:2–5**. However, **5:13–15** easily stands alone as God's final encouragement—through his emissary—to Joshua. The enigmatic nature of his reply to Joshua and the seemingly incomplete reply only heighten the mystery and focus our attention on the divine nature of this emissary and on the holiness of the occasion. Just as the earlier episodes of the chapter focus on proper preparation in the spiritual realm before doing battle at Jericho, this episode does as well. Joshua was reminded here of the important lesson that God—the holy God, to whom Joshua owed all allegiance—would fight for him. In this case, the more important lesson was about **God's holiness**, not about the coming conflicts. . .

The book's **central message**—that of **Israel's possession of the promised land in fulfillment of God's promises**—is found in every one of its aspects in the early chapters of the book. The land was God's gift to his people; he was its legal owner and could give it to whom he willed. He was in process of giving it to the Israelites now (**1:2**), and yet he had already given it to them (**1:3**). The already-accomplished nature of the act emphasizes the connections with earlier times and that God had already given Israel legal title to the land (**Gen 12:7; 15:18–20; Deut 1:8,21**; etc.). Despite the fact that the Israelites were receiving the land as God's gift, however, they still had to enter into the land and take possession of it as their inheritance. The battles ahead are deemphasized—after all, the Lord would be giving Israel its victories—but Israel's taking possession and inheriting the land is foreshadowed in the early chapters.

TEXT: Joshua 6: 1-27

TITLE: FAITH CELEBRATES VICTORY BEFORE THE WALLS EVEN FALL / ONWARD CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS

BIG IDEA:
WHEN PROPERLY PREPPED FOR BATTLE, GOD'S ARMY VANQUISHES ITS FOES BY A SIMPLE VICTORY SHOUT THAT UNLEASHES SUPERNATURAL POWER AND LAYS CLAIM TO GOD'S PROMISES

INTRODUCTION:

REVIEW:
Don't forget the **preparation** for battle in **Chapters 1-5** – that is where the victory was won;

- by being strong and courageous and obeying God's Word;
- by having a vision for victory and avoiding the **Grasshopper mentality**;
- by stepping out in faith to cross the Jordan River and avoiding the **Victim mentality**;
- by giving all the glory to God and avoiding the **Big Shot mentality**;
- by putting a priority on Holiness and Worship and submitting to circumcision as the sign of the covenant

David Howard: The detail with which the account is told emphasizes the importance of this city and its destruction. It was the first city captured by the Israelites, and, as such, its capture represented the entire takeover of the land. The Israelites' taking of other cities and their kings is compared several times to what happened to Jericho (**8:1–2; 10:28,30**). And at the end of Joshua's life, when he summarized the taking of the land, Jericho was the only city he mentioned by name, even though he mentioned seven nations and several kings who fought against Israel (**24:8–13**).

Helene Dallaire: Deuteronomy provides one scenario for the treatment of inhabitants of towns in the Promised Land—**complete annihilation** (*ḥērem*)—and another scenario for the treatment of cities outside of the Promised Land, where **peace treaties** were permitted. In Jericho, all living things are to be put to death, except for Rahab and her family. Their lives are spared, and thereafter they are allowed to live among the Israelites.

J. Sidlow Baxter: This remarkable chapter sets forth in graphic type the principles by which faith works and wars and waits and wins. Faith's first rule of action is to ascertain the will and word of God. Faith's second rule of action is to obey that will and word implicitly. Faith's final rule of action is to reckon on that word, and count the thing as good as done, giving glory to God in anticipation—as the Israelites gave their mighty shout of victory before the walls of Jericho had actually fallen. Faith's principles of action, therefore, cut right across those of natural reason.

David Guzik: This completes the story of Israel's victory at Jericho. We can learn from the things that marked their victory.

- **Faith**: Joshua and Israel believed the battle plan.
- **Obedience**: Joshua and Israel followed the battle plan exactly.
- **Courage**: Israel followed the battle plan despite danger.
- **Endurance**: Israel followed the battle plan over a period of time, even when it seemed that nothing was happening.
- **Trust**: Israel did not rely on carnal scheming and worldly methods; their trust was in the LORD, not in human ingenuity.

I. (:1-5) UNORTHODOX BATTLE PLAN

God's ways are not man's ways – no surprise here

A. (:1) The Enemy: Secure and Impenetrable (but Fearful)

"*Now Jericho was tightly shut because of the sons of Israel; no one went out and no one came in*."

a heavily fortified, secured city

This was a closed system; no one could go out or in; no Trojan Horse was going to be the undoing of Jericho; imagine the scouts from Jericho checking out the Israelites crossing the Jordan … that should have been the strategic moment to attack … but when they saw the Jordan River heaped up … they all ran back inside their fortress and locked the doors; what terror must have filled their hearts; they had been dreading this day for 40 years; maybe the Israelites will just bypass them and move on??

Helene Dallaire: As a rule, **walled cities** opened their gates every day to allow the inhabitants to plow the surrounding fields, to permit foreign merchants to come in for business purposes, and to enable travelers to enter the city. Gates were closed at night for protection against intruders and during the day when the city was under siege or under attack.

Richard Hess: The reference to Jericho's defences as tightly **shut** makes sense in the context of the one earlier text in Joshua which uses the verbal root '*shut*' (Heb. *sgr*). It occurs in **Joshua 2:5** and **7**, where it is also used of Jericho, shut up so that the spies cannot escape. If the mission of these spies had been, at least in part, to seek out those who believed in Israel's God, then the act of shutting the gates in **Joshua 2** signified the official rejection of this opportunity. The shut gates in **6:1** serve the same purpose. Jericho has refused to hear the message of Israel, proclaimed in the great deeds of the exodus, in the crossing of the Red Sea and of the Jordan, and in the military victories that had already occurred. The act of shutting forms a physical barrier to Israel's divinely ordained movement to take possession of the land. As with the natural barrier of the Jordan, it must be overcome. If Israel is to realize the promises of God, Jericho's gates must be opened. In this sense, the exception of Rahab is symbolically paralleled

by her window, the one opening to Jericho which is not '*shut*' against the Israelites.

B. (:2) The Promise: the Gift of Victory and Conquest over Powerful Foes

"*And the Lord said to Joshua, 'See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and the valiant warriors*.'"

It was evident to all that Jericho did not have the stomach to come out and fight; confirmation of the report of the spies from **chap. 2** that the people in the land were living in fear of the God of Israel

Van Parunak: **After the preparation comes the battle**.

- It is a mistake to think that we can succeed in battle without the threefold preparation of salvation, discipline, and submission.
- It is equally a mistake to expect that faithfulness in these three areas will yield a life free from conflict and opposition. Just the opposite: the purpose of these is to equip us as the Lord's Host to fight his battles under his direction.

C. (:3-5) The Game Plan

1. (:3) Six Days of Obedient Repetition – Victory Parade

"*And you shall march around the city, all the men of war circling the city once. You shall do so for six days*."

John Schultz: We may ask the question why God wanted this campaign to stretch out for seven days. If it was a matter of light conquering darkness, why did the walls of Jericho not come down when the parade of the priests with their trumpets and the ark and the people encircled the city the first time? One of the reasons must have been that God gave the inhabitants of Jericho a whole week to repent. One wonders what the people of Jericho must have thought about the sight of Israel's army marching around the city. The first day they may have reacted with fright, which diminished as the days went on. By the seventh day when nothing had happened, fear must have subsided and made place for mockery. On the last day of grace they must have thought it was all a joke. Their reaction was probably like Lot's sons-in-law in Sodom about whom we read: "*Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were pledge to marry his daughters. He said, 'Hurry and get out of this place, because the Lord is about to destroy the city!' but his sons-in-law thought he was joking*." But God mocks those who mock Him.

2. (:4) Seventh Day of Intensified Activity

"*Also seven priests shall carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark; then on the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets*."

Gordon Matties: The **number seven** indicates the ancient notion of **completeness**. Thus, just as the seven days of the Passover celebration indicated the complete

preparation of the people, here the seven days of walking around the city gives the sense that this task too will be completed.

3. (:5) Climactic Conquest

"*And it shall be that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people will go up every man straight ahead.*"

Did the wall fall inward or outward??

David Howard: God's instructions to Joshua about the taking of Jericho contain no reference to military strategy but rather indicate that it is essentially to be a ritual ceremony. God's words consist of an encouraging assurance to Joshua (**v. 2**), instructions for Israel's part in the episode (**vv. 3–5a**), and a statement about the amazing results (**v. 5b**).

Robert Hubbard: The connection between the people's cry and the fall of Jericho seems fitting in two respects. It represents the people's participation, however limited, in Yahweh's war; the victory is their victory, too. It also symbolizes that the land—here personified by the city of Jericho—will, indeed, become theirs.

II. (:6-14) SIX DAYS OF OBEDIENT REPETITION – THE VICTORY PARADE OF THE ARMY OF GOD

A. (:6) Ark of the Covenant Remains the Focus

"*So Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, 'Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the Lord.*'"

David Guzik: The ark would be prominent in this victory, even as it was in the crossing of the Jordan River. Israel had to keep their hearts and minds on the LORD who was present with them, instead of putting their hearts and minds on the difficulty of the task in front of them.

B. (:7-9) Armed Men Leading the Procession and Guarding the Rear

C. (:10) Restrained Silence Leading Up to Climactic Shout of Victory

"*But Joshua commanded the people saying, 'You shall not shout nor let your voice be heard, nor let a word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I tell you, 'Shout!' Then you shall shout.*'"

Palau: **Don't Talk So Much**

Can you imagine asking a million and a half Israelites to keep quiet? Can you imagine that? They were simply supposed to keep their mouths shut and walk around the city. Silence before God! What a rare commodity! How difficult this is to achieve. If we're

not speaking verbally, then there are a thousand mental voices inside our thoughts, each vying for the last word. Listen to God? How can He possibly get a word in edgewise?

Gordon Matties: In this impressionistic picture of the activities, why does Joshua command that the people be completely silent (*nor shall you utter a word*) until he calls for a shout (**v. 10**)? The silence certainly emphasizes the **solemnity** of the ritual event, with only the sound of seven trumpets punctuating the march. The word used for shout is mentioned in other biblical texts as a **victory shout** (in relation to God's kingship, in **Pss 47:1-3; 60:8; 95:1, 2; 98:4, 6**; or victory over enemies, in **Pss 60:8; 108:9**; cf. **Jer 50:15**). Whereas a military attack might include a similar shout, here the shout is not accompanied by an attack. The only human activity involved in bringing down the walls is a *word* (Heb. *dabar*), prohibited in **verse 10**, and articulated only in the shout of victory.

D. (:11-14) Six Days of Repetition Recounted

1. (:11) First Day Recounted

"*So he had the ark of the Lord taken around the city, circling it once; then they came into the camp and spent the night in the camp.*"

2. (:12-14) Days 2-6 Repeat the Identical Process of One Circuit Around Jericho

III. (:15-21) SEVENTH DAY OF INTENSIFIED ACTIVITY AND CLIMACTIC CONQUEST

A. (:15) Seven Circuits on the Seventh Day

"*Then it came about on the seventh day that they rose early at the dawning of the day and marched around the city in the same manner seven times; only on that day they marched around the city seven times.*"

Israelites should have been tired out by now …
City encompassed about 9 acres – you could walk around it in half an hour

Schaeffer: Since Jericho was a small city, as was normal for the walled cities of that time, the Israelite army was large enough to completely encircle it. So by the time the first troops had marched around the walls, the last troops would just be starting. On the seventh day when the army cried out and the walls fell, all that the soldiers would have to do is march straight ahead to the center of the city and thus capture it from all sides at once.

B. (:16) Climactic Shout Expressing Confidence in Victory from the Lord

"*And it came about at the seventh time, when the priests blew the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, 'Shout! For the Lord has given you the city.*'"

C. (:17-19) Valuable Loot Devoted to the Lord – Warning about the Ban

1. (:17) Rahab and family the only exception

"*And the city shall be under the ban, it and all that is in it belongs to the Lord; only Rahab the harlot and all who are with her in the house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent*."

2. (:18) Prophetic Warning Against Covetousness and its Consequences

"*But as for you, only keep yourselves from the things under the ban, lest you covet them and take some of the things under the ban, so you would make the camp of Israel accursed and bring trouble on it*."

3. (:19) Valuables Devoted to the Lord

"*But all the silver and gold and articles of bronze and iron are holy to the Lord; they shall go into the treasury of the Lord*."

Helene Dallaire: As per the narrator, *ḥērem* is instituted at Jericho to prevent the Israelites from being **contaminated** by the belongings of the Canaanites. The consequences for disobeying the orders related to the "*ban*" were serious, not only for the individual who committed the offense but also for the family of the sinner and for the whole camp of Israel. As we will see in the next chapter, Achan mishandled the "*devoted things*," and as a result, he and his family were stoned and burned to ashes. After the conquest of Jericho, the "*devoted things*" were to go into the treasury of the Lord, out of reach of the members of the Israelite community.

D. (:20-21) Climactic Conquest: Flattening the Walls

1. (:20) Miraculous Victory – by Grace through Faith

"*So the people shouted, and priests blew the trumpets; and it came about, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, that the people shouted with a great shout and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight ahead, and they took the city*."

Doug Goins: Now, it wasn't sound waves that knocked those walls down. The writer of Hebrews gives very clear commentary on the story: *"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been encircled for seven days*" (**11:30**). The apostle John expands the principle: "*...And this is the victory that overcomes the world-our faith*" (**1 John 5:4**). They walked around the walls by faith day after day. They had been given one demonstration after another that God's word and his power could be trusted. The Lord had opened the Red Sea, defeated the Egyptian army, kept them in the wilderness, opened the Jordan River, and brought his people safely into the promised land. How could they do anything else but believe him? Even though the plans didn't make a lot of sense to them, they could ultimately trust God. They expressed their faith by obeying the instructions that God had given to Joshua and to them. The priests, the people, and the army followed them completely.

David Howard: the great miracle of the walls collapsing is told here in **one terse statement** at the end of **v. 20**. However, this fits the general outlook of the book, that military matters belonged to God and that he would effortlessly fight Israel's battles. Protracted attention to battle details would undermine this sense of the effortless taking

of the land of Canaan. What is emphasized in this account are the ritual preparations for the battle (**vv. 2–19**) and the follow-up to the taking of the city, in which faithfulness to earlier commands and agreements is highlighted (**vv. 22–26**). The Book of Hebrews adds to this perspective: it was "*by faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days*" (**Heb 11:30**).

2. (:21) Judgmental Destruction

> "*And they utterly destroyed everything in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword*."

Doug Goins: This is very stark, and it is disturbing. God commanded every living thing in Jericho to be killed. But isn't our God a God of mercy? It's one thing to kill enemy soldiers, but why kill women and children, and even animals? In terms of historical context, it's important to know that this commandment was not a new one. God had given this word to Moses years earlier. Deuteronomy 7 and 20 spell out God's law for the nation of Israel regarding holy warfare on God's behalf. That law made a clear distinction between attacking cities that were outside the land and attacking cities that were inside the land of Canaan where Israel was to dwell. Before they would besiege a city that was outside the land of Canaan, they were to offer a truce to the people. If the people responded to the offer of peace and surrendered, they were to spare the lives of the people. But the people of the land of Canaan were to be destroyed completely, their cities burned. Why this horrible demand?

There were two reasons, in summary. First of all, the civilization in Canaan was completely wicked and debased. . .

The second reason that the Canaanites were to be destroyed was that they had been given plenty of opportunity to repent and turn to the Lord, as Rahab and her family did.

IV. (:22-25) SAVING FAITHFUL RAHAB (AND FAMILY)

A. (:22-23) Rescuing Rahab's Family

B. (:24) Burning the City (with the exception of the valuable metals)

> "*And they burned the city with fire, and all that was in it. Only the silver and gold and articles of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the Lord*."

C. (:25) Perpetual Testimony of Rahab

> "*However, Rahab the harlot and her father's household and all she had, Joshua spared; and she has lived in the midst of Israel to this day, for she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho*."

Van Parunak: **Fourfold distribution** of the conquest, showing how completely the Lord claims dominion over the conquest. Though in later cases the people sometimes

are given access to the spoil, this first battle sets the expectation and the baseline. The land is the Lord's; they are simply his instruments in conquering it.

- Rahab and her family spared, because she hid the messengers.
- All other living things put to death.
- All inanimate wealth taken into the tabernacle treasury.
- Even the real estate excluded from future use. Joshua curses anyone who would rebuild the city. **1 Kings 16:34** reports that in the days of Ahab, a particularly wicked king, someone ignored this curse and did try to rebuild, with disastrous results

(:26-27) CONCLUSION: LONG TERM CONSEQUENCES OF VICTORY

A. (:26) Curse on Resurrection of our Foes

"*Then Joshua made them take an oath at that time, saying, 'Cursed before the Lord is the man who rises up and builds this city Jericho; with the loss of his first-born he shall lay its foundation, and with the loss of his youngest son he shall set up its gates*.'"

When our spiritual enemies have been defeated, don't ever backslide and give them another foothold in our lives.

Rea: The curse was a prohibition against refortifying Jericho, not against inhabiting the site (cf. **Josh. 18:21; Jud 3:13; II Sam 10:5**). It was fulfilled during the reign of Ahab, when Hiel rebuilt the walls at the cost of his two sons (**I Kgs 16:34**).

B. (:27) Exaltation of the Captain of our Salvation

"*So the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame was in all the land*."

Gordon Matties: **Verse 27** is both the **capstone verse** of **chapter 6** and a **hinge verse** that provides the **transition** between this narrative and the next. It highlights the presence of the Lord in the events surrounding the taking of Jericho and celebrates the fact that the Lord is with Joshua (cf. **3:7; 4:14**). The only ambiguous aspect of the verse concerns the pronoun referent in the phrase his fame (lit., the report of *him*). In Joshua *9:9* the report of *him* (same noun and pronoun suffix), meaning the Lord, has reached the Gibeonites. It seems likely, therefore, that the fame is first of all of Joshua, which becomes in the story of the Gibeonites the fame of the Lord. The cumulative witness of both texts underlines that the Lord was with Joshua (**6:27a**). Thus the theocentric focus of the Jericho story is punctuated at the end by this interpretive comment by the narrator. And it leads us into the story of **Joshua 7**, which focuses on the **human failure** in the face of divine action.

Robert Hubbard: Finally, Yahweh's stunning victory further enhances Joshua's public stature. It confirms convincingly that "*the LORD was with Joshua*" just as he promised (**v. 27a;** cf. **1:5**). An Israelite leader can have no better reputation. It also secures Joshua's stature among the land's inhabitants (**v. 27b;** cf. **4:14**). All in all, Joshua is "on a roll"—apparently, a leader so blessed and brilliant as to be unstoppable. Under

Joshua, the reader expects a relentless juggernaut soon to sweep all of Canaan clean of resistance. Sadly, **chapter 7** will soon show that leaders who presume upon the divine presence do so to their shame. Joshua's triumphal moment as king of the world will soon prove to be surprisingly short-lived.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do we think we can wall off certain areas of our life and not allow God admission? Do we try to create little Jerichos in our own heart where we don't want God to penetrate?

2) What was the purpose of the repeated walking around the walls for this seven day span? Why the intensified activity on the seventh day? What was God trying to accomplish?

3) What walls has the Lord knocked down for you to give you victory in certain areas? What methodology did the Lord use to accomplish this?

4) Why is the deliverance of Rahab and her family such a significant event?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Lewis G. Scharpf, Jr.:

"Joshua Fit de Battle of Jericho"
(Traditional American Tune)

"...and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city."
Joshua 6:20

INTRODUCTION

And the soldiers did march, and the trumpets did blow,
and the people did SHOUT, do you know who
tore the wall down, down, down, down.

REFRAIN

Joshua fit de battle of Jericho, Jericho, Jericho,
Joshua fit de battle of Jericho,
and the walls came a tumbalin' down, down, down, down.

VERSE 1

You may talk about your men of Gideon,
you may talk about your men of Saul,
but there's none like good old Josh-a-ua,
at the battle of Jericho, that morning;

VERSE 2

Joshua rose early in the morning,
that is when the trumpets blew,
they marched around the city,
at the battle of Jericho.

VERSE 3

Right up to the walls of Jericho,
he marched with spear in hand,
Joshua commanded the children to SHOUT,
and the walls came a tumbalin' down, down, down, down;

LAST REFRAIN

Joshua fit de battle of Jericho, Jericho, Jericho,
Joshua fit de battle of Jericho, the trumpets they did blow, so,
Joshua fit de battle of Jericho, and the walls came a tumbalin' down.

ENDING

Joshua fit de battle of Jericho, now you know, Jericho,
Joshua fit de battle of Jericho, and the walls came a tumbalin' down.
Now you know who tore the wall down,
now you know who tore the wall down, down, down,
Joshua!(in a whisper)

http://www.ajoyfulnoise.net/joshuak.htm

Alan Redpath: Why had they walked thirteen times around that place in silence? I suggest it took that long for every one of them to realize that it was utterly impossible for them to capture Jericho if God were not with them – thirteen big long looks at the enemy, until they become convinced that they were no match for those behind the walls. God made the Israelites walk around the great fortification until within themselves they died to every hope of conquest unless God should intervene.

Is there a counterpart in our experience? You are conscious that God has brought you along in the Christian life and manifested Himself in blessing to you, but there is still the Jericho that haunts you: the Jericho within your human personality, or the Jericho outside.

The greatest difficulty in the Christian life is to get to the place where one is prepared to admit that the whole thing is too big for him, and that the power of the enemy is too great for him, and if his Jericho is to fall, then, somehow, God must bring it about. I believe that before God entrusts any of His people with a real measure of spiritual power, victory, and blessing, He brings them to a place from where they have surveyed Jericho so long that they have come to see that its conquest is absolutely hopeless. God expects nothing more from us than failure, yet we spend years trying to make ourselves something other than a failure. So long as we think we can do it alone, the omnipotent resources of God in Jesus Christ our Risen Lord cannot help us.

John Rea (*Wycliffe*) – **Re "*ram's horn*"**
It seems to have a religio-ceremonial significance, announcing the arrival of Jehovah as King, whether to his people to complete his covenant or proclaim release and liberty, or to his enemies to judge and smite them. The "*trump of God*" (**I Thess 4:16**) will have this dual purpose in announcing Christ's second advent. Seven priests bearing seven trumpets for seven days signified that the judgment would be complete.

Richard Hess: For the Christian, the story of Rahab is the story of the shepherd's search for the one lost sheep (**Matt. 18:12–14; Luke 15:4–7**). It is the concern of Jesus for the despised of the world (**Matt. 15:21–28; John 8:1–11**). It is the transformation of values to which Christianity calls disciples. Those rejected by the world are precious to God (**1 Cor. 1:18–31; Jas 2:5**).

Doug Goins: In **chapter 6** we're starting a new section of the history of Israel. Remember, in **chapter 1** God called and commissioned Joshua to leadership in the nation, and promised him three things:

- First of all, he promised that Israel would enter the land of Canaan. Our studies in **chapters 1-5** have examined the wonderful fulfillment of that promise; **chapters 3** and **4** covered the crossing of the Jordan River and **chapter 5** the period of spiritual preparation at Gilgal.

- Second, God promised Israel that they would have victory over all of their enemies in the land. In **1:5** God said, "*No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you*." Beginning in **chapter 6** and continuing through **chapter 12** will be the record of battle after battle that God fights on behalf of his people and wins, beginning with Jericho.

- Third, God promised Joshua that he would be able to divide the land as an inheritance for the conquering tribes. In the last section of the book, **chapters 13-22**, the land is divided up, the tribes are settled, and there is peace in the land.

Israel's victory in Jericho here in **chapter 6** is going to illustrate <u>four principles</u> for spiritual conflict and victory that are very important for us today, no matter what

spiritual battle we're called to fight, no matter what "Jericho" may loom before us in terms of personal challenge.

(1) Before the spiritual conflict, remember that we fight from victory, not just for victory.
(2) During the spiritual conflict, remember that we overcome the enemy by faith.
(3) After the spiritual victory, remember to continue to obey the Lord's direction.
(4) After the spiritual victory, remember to give the Lord all the glory.

David Holwick: **Everybody's got a Jericho.**

A. What is the **biggest problem** you face right now?
1) Maybe not as big as the President's problems, but you have some.
2) Your marriage...job...kids...finances...some habit...

B. **Can God handle it?**

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Tearing Down the Strongholds of Your Life (5:13 and Chap. 6)**
Introduction: What is a stronghold? According to Webster's dictionary, it is a strong defense, it is a fortress, a military citadel. Now in the ancient days, Whenever the king would build a city, they always built a wall around that city. And on that wall, they would also put towers. And these were very strong walls and strong towers. And sometimes these cities were so strong because they were located in such a strategic place that they were known as strongholds. They were very, very, very difficult to attack. Rarely, when an army came against a stronghold, did they win. And so it took a lot of strength, it took a lot of skill, it took a lot of wisdom to overcome a military stronghold. You say, what does this have to do with me? Well, spiritually speaking, did you know that we all face strongholds? We all have spiritual strongholds in our life. **2 Cor. 10**

A stronghold could represent something in your heart and in your life that is hindering you from having all the victory that God wants you to have. There is no victory, however, without struggle or without conflict.

What was the stronghold for Joshua and Israel? Well, it was the city of Jericho. They had just crossed the Jordan River, but what stood before them was this incredibly strong, large military fortress called Jericho, and this city had to fall if they were going to have victory, or if they were going to claim their Canaan. Jericho was a sinful city. I don't want to give you all the facts, but there's a history and archaeology reveals how grossly immoral this city was. They were incredibly evil in the sight of God.

Before you can have victory in other areas of your life, there's a stronghold in your life that has to come down first. It is a strategic thing. In order for you to have total victory, this has to fall.

Big Idea: **Three principles to follow to tear down the stronghold that you may have in your life.**

I. Consider Your Stronghold with Christ – 5:13

Joshua goes out one night on a reconnaissance mission. He wants to see this city himself. And so there he is in verse 13. We see him. He goes out before the city. He looks at the city. He sees this massive, massive fortress. And despite his long military experience, he knows that he doesn't have the knowledge to overcome this city. Joshua had never led a siege against a well-fortified fortress with a defense army on the inside ready for a long siege. He had never had that kind of warfare. And besides, if you're going to tear down a stronghold, what it's going to require are military engines and weapons.

They had no battering rams. They had no catapults. They had no moving towers. They had none of the equipment that was necessary, humanly speaking, to overcome a stronghold. The only weapons they had were slings and arrows and spears, which were no match for the walls of Jericho. Furthermore, Joshua knew that they had to defeat this city. You see, they had already crossed the Jordan. The Jordan was at its swelling. There was no turning back. They were at the point where they literally could not retreat. They were backed up against the river. If they didn't defeat Jericho, they were done. And they couldn't bypass Jericho, because to do that would open them up for destruction. It would leave the enemy behind them, which you should never do. And so Joshua's looking at this city. He doesn't know what to do.

Suddenly, Joshua sees someone, and it comes into his sphere of vision. And the Bible says in verse 13, there's a man, 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?* Now, ladies and gentlemen, this was a divine visitation. This was a pre-incarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, the captain of the army. The Lord Jesus had come Himself.

A. <u>His Presence in the Battle -- God doesn't leave us alone in the battle</u>

He comes to fight for us and he comes to be our aid. *Whose side are you on?* And the response in verse 14, nay, and he said*, nay, but as captain of the hosts of the Lord am I now come*. That is, I didn't come here to take sides, Joshua. I came here to take over.

The sword drawn is a symbol of judgment that is about to come. The iniquity of the Amorites was full. Now it was time for judgment, and Joshua and Israel would be the instruments by whom judicial punishment would fall. But however, what we see here is that Joshua is greatly encouraged by the presence of the Lord. And the Lord is affirming to Joshua again the promise he had already made, that *as I was with Moses, so shall I be with you.*

B. <u>His Promise for the Battle – 6:1</u>

In the Lord Jesus Christ, you already have victory. You already have been assured of victory. And you have to grasp that, you have to understand that. The Christian soldier who stands in Christ has been assured of victory. Do you know that Satan has already been defeated? He's already defeated. There's no reason to allow a stronghold in your

life when you know that Satan is already defeated.

C. His Plan for the Battle – 6:3
Hudson Taylor one time was speaking to missionaries, and he said, there are three ways to do God's work. He said, first of all, you can make your best plans and hope they succeed. where he said, number two, we can make our own plans and then give them to God and ask God to bless them. Or number three, we can ask God for His plan and then let God tell us what to do. And then Hudson Taylor said, I recommend number three is the best way, and it is.

God's way is not man's way. We think we know the best way, but we don't. The foolishness of God is wiser than men. The weakness of God is stronger than men. God told them what to do, but didn't tell them why. And you know what? You know the response that God wanted? God, I don't understand, but I trust you. I don't understand these orders, but I trust that you know what you're doing.

This city was not captured by human reasoning or wisdom. How was it done? It was done by faith. The Bible says in Hebrews 11:30, by faith, the walls of Jericho came down. So God's orders sometimes are designed to test our faith. God's orders are designed sometimes to test our patience. Then sometimes God's orders are designed to test our self-control. They couldn't say a word during that whole time. Then sometimes God's orders are designed to test our obedience.

II. Circle It with Prayer – 6:6
God makes them march around silently. It just didn't make any sense. And then it dawned on me, this is not a military strategy. This is a dedication service. That's what finally I came to, and this is exactly, I think, what's going on. God's instructions to Joshua about this, taking this city, is not a military strategy. This is not a battle strategy. If any military tries to take a city like this, they'll get creamed. This is not what the Lord is doing. This is not a military maneuver. This is a solemn dedication. This is a worship service. This is a religious ritual. And what were they doing by encircling the city the way they were in such a manner? They were actually saying, Lord, this city belongs to you. And this whole ritual that we're doing is a dedication service where we're dedicating this city over to you. We're giving it into your hands. That's why the silence. Why the silence? Because it was a solemn dedication. They weren't to say anything. They were to be still before the Lord. They weren't to speak.

In biblical numerology, the number seven represents completeness. And then he goes on to talk about it represents the completion of God's work. And so the emphasis here is that this is going to be the work of the Lord. "Lord, would you please tear down this wall?" You circle [your insurmountable stronghold] with prayer and you say, "Lord, here, you tear this down because I can't do it. I don't have the strength."

III. Claim it by Faith – 6:20
The reason they shouted was this was the shout of faith. This was this was a claim of faith. This was them claiming the promise of God. In fact, the word for shout here

is a commonly used word in the Old Testament. It's often used as a vocabulary in the vocabulary of praise in the psalm. It literally means raise a glad shout to the Lord. **Ezra 3:11; Ps. 95:1, 2**

Conclusion: Do you apply the victory that Christ has already won in the strongholds in your life? Friend, that's the key to victory. That's what the Lord wants you to do.

TEXT: Joshua 7: 1-26

TITLE: SIN SNATCHES DEFEAT FROM THE JAWS OF VICTORY

BIG IDEA:
THE MOMENTUM OF DEFEAT SNOWBALLS UNTIL RENEWED CONSECRATION DEALS WITH THE SIN IN OUR MIDST

INTRODUCTION:

Richard Hess: There are three parts to the defeat: the sin of Achan, the anger of God, and the judgment against Israel. This is followed by the identification of the cause and the resolution in the death of the perpetrator. The chapter demonstrates the problem of sin in Israel's mission. It follows the account of Jericho because the sin occurred in the context of the capture of that town. It occupies so much space because the first breach of Israel's purity as a holy nation before God brings the harshest judgment and punishment. This also serves as a warning against yielding to future temptations.

David Howard: Several parallels exist between the accounts in **Joshua 2** and **7**. In Joshua 2, Rahab, a believing Canaanite, acted faithfully and, as a result, was promised deliverance from destruction. In effect, she became an Israelite. In **Joshua 7**, Achan, a disbelieving Israelite, acted faithlessly and, as a result, was not delivered but destroyed. In effect, he became a Canaanite. Achan thus stands as a foil to Rahab, and the two characters embody striking contrasts.

Robert Hubbard: Achan's simple greed has pushed Israel to the brink of disaster, sullying their holiness and souring their relationship with Yahweh. Its secrecy makes it particularly fiendish: There is no protection against a secret crime whose existence only comes to light through unexpected disaster. Thus, the stones also remind Israel that they are by nature not a collection of individuals but a community—a fragile, carefully woven fabric in which disobedience by one thread strains or tears at the integrity of the whole.

Helene Dallaire: The account at Ai reveals a number of similarities with the earlier aborted invasion of Kadesh Barnea (**Dt 1:9–3:11**). In both accounts, we find:

(1) the sending of spies (**Dt 1:22–26; Jos 7:2–3**);
(2) the interruption of the campaign because of sin in the camp (**Dt 1:26–36; Jos 7:11–12**);
(3) Yahweh's angry reaction (**Dt 1:37; Jos 7:1**);
(4) Yahweh's refusal to accompany his unrepentant people in battle (**Dt 1:41–42; Jos 7:12**);
(5) Israel's defeat and outcries to Yahweh (**Dt 1:43–46; Jos 7:5–9**);
(6) melting hearts (**Dt 1:28; Jos 7:5**); and
(7) guilty parties who confess their sin (**Dt 1:41; Jos 7:20**).

Trent Butler: **Divine anger** dominates the opening narrative (cf. **v 26**). It represents the divine reaction to the human breach of trust and threatens the very existence of the nation. A basic Deuteronomic theme is taken up (cf. **Deut 6:15; 7:4; 11:17; 29:26; 31:17; Josh 23:16**; compare **Judg 2:14, 20; 3:8; 10:7; 2 Sam 6:7; 24:1; 2 Kgs 13:3: 23:26**). Israel cannot take its position as the people of God or its possession of the land of God for granted. They are constantly under obligation to God, and when they disregard that, **his anger burns**, and Israel's position and possessions are threatened.

Thomas Constable: Israel's defeat at Ai graphically illustrates the far-reaching impact of sin. The private sin of one or a few individuals can affect the welfare of many other people who do not personally commit that sin. There were really three causes of Israel's defeat:

(1) the Israelites were self-sufficient because Ai was small,
(2) they failed to wait on God, and
(3) they committed a trespass in the things devoted to the LORD.

Chuck Swindoll drew four lessons from **chapter 7**:
(1) Surprising defeats can often be traced back to secret sins.
(2) Very private sins can lead to very public consequences.
(3) Temptation's lies can blind us to reality and deafen us to consequences.
(4) Sweeping acts of disobedience call for severe responses of discipline.

Kenneth Gangel: Sin, even when hidden from everyone but the sinner, corrupts the life of God's people. Joshua and Israel had to learn the hard way that the behavior of Achan and people like him could not be tolerated.

(:1) SETTING – SIN STIRS UP GOD'S ANGER – SPOILER ALERT

"*But the sons of Israel acted unfaithfully in regard to the things under the ban, for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, from the tribe of Judah, took some of the things under the ban, therefore the anger of the Lord burned against the sons of Israel*."

Make no mistake … God takes sin very seriously.

Richard Hess: This part also divides into three sections: the mission and report of the spies, the attack and defeat of Israel, and the reaction of the people.

Robert Hubbard: Without preface or fanfare, the narrator reveals a shocking, deadly secret (**v. 1**): "*Israel acted unfaithfully in regard to the devoted things [ḥerem*]" (**v. 1**). At Jericho, someone apparently kept them as spoils of war rather than hand them over to Yahweh as he commanded. The language is blunt, emphatic, and fraught with terrible consequences; it casts an "atmosphere of foreboding" over the chapter. The priestly theological term *maʿal* ("*to act faithlessly*") describes a highly serious, treacherous breach of trust between Yahweh and Israel (cf. **22:16, 22**). In this case,

maʿal ("*disloyalty, infidelity*") amounts to stealing Yahweh's money right out of the offering plate.

The culprit, the one who took items from Jericho, is a man named Achan with an impressive, prestigious pedigree ("*son of Carmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah*"; cf. **v. 18**). His tribe will soon produce Israel's royal dynasty, so he is "as Israelite as Rahab is Canaanite, which makes his violation … even more egregious."

I. (:2-5) WITHOUT GOD NOTHING IS POSSIBLE – UNEXPECTED DEFEAT AT AI

A. (:2-3) Natural Reconnaissance is No Substitute for Seeking the Lord's Guidance -- 3 Signs of Confidence in the Flesh:

1) Self-Willed -- Not seeking the Lord's will up front

2) (:2) Natural Perspective -- Evaluating the situation from the perspective of the externals alone

> "*Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Bethaven, east of Bethel, and said to them, 'Go up and spy out the land.' So the men went up and spied out Ai*."

Ron Roper: Ai was a little town about twelve miles west of Jericho, up in the central highlands--a very important strategic objective, from the standpoint of the conquest of the Land. Ai, along with its sister-city, Bethel, straddled the north-south caravan route through Canaan. This was the only way armies could travel north and south in Canaan at the time, so it was very important that the Israelites take this place. This was also Abraham's second campsite when he came into the Land from Haran. Thus this particular location was not only strategic from a military standpoint; it also held rich historical associations. So the Israelites were eagerly anticipating victory as they marched toward the city from Jericho.

3) (:3) Overconfident -- Imagining that superior numbers equates to a favorable outcome

> "*And they returned to Joshua and said to him, 'Do not let all the people go up; only about two or three thousand men need go up to Ai; do not make all the people toil up there, for they are few*.'"

Doug Goins: The march from Jericho to Ai is over very difficult terrain. The elevation gain in fifteen miles is about twenty-five hundred feet, because Jericho is eight hundred feet below sea level, and Ai is about seventeen hundred feet above sea level. That's why in verse 3 the spies say, "Don't make the whole army toil up there." It's really a hard march.

Richard Hess: If those in Numbers lacked faith because they did not believe they were strong enough, these lack faith because they believe that Israel is too strong to worry

about such a small fortress. The form of the verbal root '*to weary*' (Heb. *yg*') occurs only in **Ecclesiastes 10:15**, where its description of the fool who does not know the way to town could serve as a commentary on this passage in Joshua.

Gordon Matties: The advice of the spies in **verse 3** is based on their evaluation of the situation. The irony here is that this word for *toil* (or *weary*, NIV), used in historical and narrative literature only once outside of Joshua (**2 Sam 23:10**), is also used in **Joshua 24:13**, in God's speech to the people, *I gave you a land on which you had not* ***labored*** (emph. added). Reading the book of Joshua from beginning to end allows us to catch the irony at the end. But it is worth noticing here that the spies wish not to labor or weary the people, which is exactly the point of God's speech at the end of the book. Yet here their toil is wearisome because it confounds the entire mission.

Trent Butler: The spies demonstrate that "poor reconnaissance is worse than no reconnaissance."

B. (:4) The Failure of the Flesh Can Be Just as Dramatic as the Victory of the Spirit

"*So about three thousand men from the people went up there, but they fled from the men of Ai*."

We think something is a snap because we have experienced success earlier in a similar realm. God will surprise us if we are not depending on Him.

C. (:5) Defeat Can be Costly and Deflating

"*And the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six of their men, and pursued them from the gate as far as Shebarim, and struck them down on the descent, so the hearts of the people melted and became as water*."

Richard Hess: A decision reached apart from explicit divine directions and carried out without the explicit leadership of Joshua has all the ingredients of a defeat. When the defeat does come, the description provides details of the number of deaths as well as the extent to which the attack became a humiliating rout.

David Howard: As a result of the defeat, the Israelites feared greatly: their hearts "*melted*" (*mwg*), and they became like water. The wordplay involving "*melting*" here—recalling Rahab's and the spies' statements in **2:9, 11, 24**— is obvious: because of Achan's sin, Israel had now become like the Canaanites, alone, without any true god to protect them, and melting away with fear.

II. (:6-9) SPIRITUAL LEADERS CANNOT LET DEFEAT SNOWBALL INTO A DEFEATIST ATTITUDE

Joshua responds to the defeat with the wrong diagnosis and starts to question the plan of God. He immediately falls into the trap of the 3 obstacles to faith which we studied earlier:

- Grasshopper Mentality
- Victim Mentality
- Big Shot Mentality

Helene Dallaire: **Joshua's response** is reminiscent of the **reaction of Moses** and the Israelites at Kadesh Barnea, after the spies had returned from Canaan with a negative report (**Nu 14:1–5**). Echoing the complaint of the Israelites in the desert, Joshua questions Yahweh's plan and expresses regret for crossing the Jordan (**Nu 14:1–5; 20:2–6; 21:4–5**). Joshua desperately addresses Yahweh with three questions: "*Why did you ever bring this people across the Jordan . . .* ?"; "*What can I say now . . .* ?"; "*What then will you do for your own great name?*". Imitating Moses the intercessor, Joshua falls face down on the ground in despair over the tragic situation and laments to Yahweh regarding his plight as the leader of a vanquished people (**Nu 11:1–2; 21:7**). Joshua blames Yahweh for leading them across the Jordan and for giving them into the hands of the Amorites. Afraid of a Canaanite offensive, Joshua dramatizes before Yahweh the threat that Israel will become the laughingstock of the surrounding nations and that Yahweh's great name will be wiped out from the earth and thus he will lose his good reputation. At this point, **Joshua is still unaware of the reason for the defeat**.

A. (:6) Misdirected Mourning – should have been directed towards the cause (the sin of the people) rather than the effect (the defeat itself)

> "*Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the Lord until the evening; both he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads*."

Trent Butler: The "*elders of Israel*" have not appeared earlier in the book. They are included here to show what was taking place was **national lamentation** rather than individual lament. The elders represented tribal, then city and political leaders at different periods of Israel's development with fairly wide-ranging functions (cf. **Judg 8:14, 16; 11:5–11; Ruth 4:1–12; 1 Sam 11:3; 16:4; 2 Sam 3:17; 5:3; 17:4; 19:12–13**).

B. (:7a) Blaming God is Never the Right Approach

> "*And Joshua said, 'Alas, O Lord God, why didst Thou ever bring this people over the Jordan, only to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us?"*

Kenneth Gangel: Failure brings such humiliation and despair that even a leader like Joshua can be driven to blaming God for what happened. Madvig says, "In self-piety Joshua charged God with capriciousness. Though Joshua could not be expected to know about Achan's sin, confidence in God's faithfulness should have made him look elsewhere for the reason for Israel's defeat" (Madvig, 285).

C. (:7b) Lowering Expectations is Never the Right Approach

> *"If only we had been willing to dwell beyond the Jordan*!'"

D. (:8-9a) A Defeatist Attitude Can Never be Tolerated

"*O Lord, what can I say since Israel has turned their back before their enemies? For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it, and they will surround us and cut off our name from the earth*."

D. (:9b) Selfish Appeals to God's Glory Lack the Power of Faith

"*And what wilt Thou do for Thy great name*?"

Richard Hess: In **Joshua 7**, both Joshua and Israel thought they were obeying God. The problem was not willful disobedience but ignorance of a **hidden transgression**. For these reasons, God did not seek to destroy the nation, but to warn it of the problem that rendered it impotent.

III. (:10-15) REPENTANCE AND RENEWED CONSECRATION ARE THE ONLY REMEDY

A. (:10) Rebuke of Response that demonstrated a lack of faith

"*So the Lord said to Joshua, 'Rise up! Why is it that you have fallen on your face*?"

Kenneth Gangel: God wasted no time in responding to Joshua, and his language was less than gentle. The problem was not God's abandoning Israel as Joshua presumed but sin in the camp. How often we try to blame God for our own problems and then realize they have arisen from our own failures and sins.

B. (:11-12) Simple Diagnosis: Sin Leads to Failure

1. (:11) Diagnosis of Sin – Don't mix the holy and the profane

"*Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. And they have even taken some of the things under the ban and have both stolen and deceived. Moreover, they have also put them among their own things*."

Charles Ryrie: Note how the sin of one family was imputed to the entire nation so that it can be said that "*Israel has sinned*".

Gordon Matties: "*Transgression of the covenant*" forms an **inclusio** around God's speech (*my covenant* in **v. 11**; *covenant of the Lord* in **v. 15**). The verb *transgressed* could be translated *violated (*NIV) or *broken* (NJPS). It means, literally, "*to cross a boundary*." In other words, Israel has overstepped the boundary, or the terms of the agreement (covenant). The expression occurs again in **chapter 23**, where Joshua sounds an ominous note, warning that, *if Israel does transgress the covenant, they will perish quickly from the good land that he has given you* (**23:16**).

2. (:12) Expectation of Failure – Presence and Favor of God Removed

"*Therefore the sons of Israel cannot stand before their enemies; they turn their backs before their enemies, for they have become accursed. I*

will not be with you anymore unless you destroy the things under the ban from your midst."

Gordon Matties: The language of accusation and accountability continues to be **plural** (the three *you* pronouns of **v. 12b** are all pl.). The action of Israel has jeopardized the divine presence (in a way that the presence of Rahab does not). *I will be with you no more* is a terrifying prospect. The only way out is to destroy the proscribed objects (cf. **Num 33:52-56**).

Trent Butler: The key promise to Joshua in the book is the **presence of God** (**Josh 1:5, 9; 3:7**). Divine presence is the prayer of the people for Joshua (**1:17**), the basis of Joshua's exaltation (**3:7**), and the hope of possessing the land (**3:10**). Transgressing the covenant has let all this pass away. But all is not totally hopeless. There is a big "if." If the obedient people will destroy the banned goods in their midst, they can again experience divine presence. Israel must choose between the presence of God (**v 12**) and the presence of *ḥērem* (**v 13**).

C. (:13) Call for Renewed Consecration

"*Rise up! Consecrate the people and say, 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, for thus the Lord, the God of Israel, has said, There are things under the ban in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you have removed the things under the ban from your midst.*'"

D. (:14-15) Accountability for Transgression

1. (:14) No Escaping the Eye of the Lord

"*In the morning then you shall come near by your tribes. And it shall be that the tribe which the Lord takes by lot shall come near by families, and the family which the Lord takes shall come near by households, and the household which the Lord takes shall come near man by man.*"

John Hamby: There is no such thing as a secret sin.

Robert Hubbard: An interesting ancient Near Eastern parallel suggests what the process may have been like. The lots would have been two stones, one white and one black, respectively signifying a "yes" or "no" answer to the question, "Is this tribe/clan/family/individual the one?" As Joshua presided, someone (perhaps a priest) would draw out one stone hidden in his clothing to evaluate each candidate. A "no" would exclude the party from further consideration, while a "yes" would lead to further winnowing until the individual was "taken." Theologically, the procedure assumes that Yahweh's hand invisibly guides the lot drawing to flush out the secret crook. The officiant might even repeat the process three times with each candidate to verify that divine guidance rather than mere chance lay behind the result.

2. (:15) God's Discipline Demonstrates How Seriously He Takes Sin

"*And it shall be that the one who is taken with the things under the ban shall be burned with fire, he and all that belongs to him, because he has*

transgressed the covenant of the Lord, and because he has committed a disgraceful thing in Israel."

Kenneth Gangel: Why didn't God just tell Joshua who was guilty so he could take care of Achan and get on with the war? Why this whole process involving tribes and clans and families? Part of the answer lies in the fact of the **collective sin** of the group. Just as God's blessing could be removed from a church in which one or two people are sinning, so God's blessing was removed from an entire nation in which one man was guilty. All Israel needed to search their hearts and learn from this tragedy. Not a person was allowed to stand by without feeling the fear of God's pointing figure—tribe by tribe, clan by clan, family by family. And the word takes could be rendered "catches." This was a manhunt pure and simple, and the whole nation watched the process.

Joshua also realized that perhaps God was giving the guilty an opportunity to repent. As the people consecrated themselves, or even as lots were being cast, the guilty could confess and plead for forgiveness. But no one knocked on Joshua's door that night or the next day.

IV. (:16-21) CONFESSION OF COVETOUSNESS VINDICATES THE GLORY OF GOD

A. (:16-18) Process of Pinpointing the Sinner

B. (:19) Exhortation to Repent to Vindicate the Glory of God

"*Then Joshua said to Achan, 'My son, I implore you, give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, and give praise to Him; and tell me now what you have done. Do not hide it from me*.'"

Trent Butler: The command to confess is a call to self-condemnation. The culprit discovered in the sacral process is called upon to confess his guilt, which gives praise and glory to God by showing that the divine judgment has been just.

C. (:20-21) Confession of Covetousness

"*So Achan answered Joshua and said, 'Truly, I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel, and this is what I did: when I saw among the spoil a beautiful mantle from Shinar and two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold fifty shekels in weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and behold, they are concealed in the earth inside my tent with the silver underneath it*.'"

Richard Hess: The verb '*to covet*' (Heb. *ḥmd*) is identical to that found in the tenth commandment of the Decalogue (**Exod. 20:17; Deut. 5:21**). It describes the desire for that which one has no right to possess.

Francis Schaeffer: What Achan took is also instructive. He took <u>two kinds of things</u>. First, he took two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight. We can understand easily why he took something which had monetary value. But he

also took a "*goodly Babylonish garment*." Why did he bother with this? The Hebrew literally calls it "*a mantle of Shinar*." Because Shinar is Babylonia the Authorized Version translates it "*Babylonian garment*." Babylon was one of the great cities of the world. Babylon became the cultural leader of Mesopotamia. It was the mark of success and power. Anything from Babylon was chic. . . So this mantle of Shinar was not just an old shepherd's cloak, but a very stylish garment. It marked somebody as being "in," as really being "a man of the world." Achan wanted to be marked with success, to be chic. Achan's sin, then, had two parts: **simple theft** and **prideful desire** deep in his heart.

V. (:22-26) THE HARSH REALITY OF JUDGMENT STANDS AS A SOBER MEMORIAL TO THE HOLINESS OF GOD

A. (:22-23) Urgency of Exposing the Sin

"*So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and behold, it was concealed in his tent with the silver underneath it. And they took them from inside the tent and brought them to Joshua and to all the sons of Israel, and they poured them out before the Lord*."

Helene Dallaire: Achan's deception was clearly premeditated. He has chosen a safe location for the stolen plunder—so he thought—and executed his plan in secret. God saw Achan's scheming heart; he watched him hide what belonged to him. Achan could not conceal his sin forever. . .

Achan showed ignorance of an important truth, namely, that "*the secret things belong to the LORD*" (**Dt 29:29**). The prophet Jeremiah testifies, "*Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?' . . . Do I not fill heaven and earth*?" (**Jer 23:24**). As stated by the author of Hebrews, "*nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we give account*" (**Heb 4:13**).

B. (:24-26) Sad Execution of Discipline

1. (:24) Staging the Discipline – make sure you get all of the cancer

"*Then Joshua and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the mantle, the bar of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent and all that belonged to him; and they brought them up to the valley of Achor*."

2. (:25) Reaping What You Sow

a. Sin Hurts the Entire Body

"*And Joshua said, 'Why have you troubled us?'*"

b. Discipline Derives from the Lord

"*The Lord will trouble you this day*."

Play on name of location = Achor

c. Stoning to Death – corporate participation
"And all Israel stoned them with stones;"

d. Burning with Fire – removing all traces of the sin
"and they burned them with fire after they had stoned the with stones."

3. (:26) Sad Memorial – another monument of stones
"*And they raised over him a great heap of stones that stands to this day, and the Lord turned from the fierceness of His anger. Therefore the name of that place has been called the valley of Achor to this day*."

"*Achor*" means "*trouble*"

David Howard: The connection between this pile of stones and the earlier set of twelve memorial stones that Joshua erected on the banks of the Jordan River is hard to ignore. The reason for each one was different, but both piles of stones remained in their place "*until this day*" (**4:9; 7:26**; see also **10:27**). The first set was specifically to be a reminder to Israel of God's presence with them (see **4:7**). The pile of stones over Achan is not infused with the same meaning, but the very fact that it remained "*until this day*" shows us that it was a reminder to Israel of the story of Achan and the **consequences of sin**.

David Holwick: Come clean before it is too late.
1) Achan was remembered by a pile of rocks.
2) What will your life be remembered for?

* * * * * * * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Why do believers think they can get away with sin and not suffer painful consequences?

2) When have we experienced surprising defeats in our Christian life due to complacency and failure to seek the Lord's guidance?

3) Do we have a tendency to blame God when things go in the tank? What is our first blush train of thought?

4) Why was Achan's family included in the judgment?

* * * * * * * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Ron Roper: Now Achan is found out. I really believe that had he repented earlier, he would have been forgiven. The Scriptures say that if we judge sin in our lives, then we will not have to be judged. But if we do not put to death sin in our life, then sooner or later God, in his mercy, will have to "find us out" in that area. Sin must be brought out into the light. God is committed to bringing us into the fullness of our inheritance in Christ. Anything which impedes that program must be dealt with. So if we do not judge it, he will have to judge it in some other way--not in any eternally condemning way, because that sort of condemnation was paid for when Christ died and rose for us. But he will have to find out the sin. It is interesting to me that throughout this entire process, even through the loss of life, Achan does not respond. This indicates something of the hardness of his heart. He was committed to rebellion. And now these few trinkets are brought out. They are certainly insignificant when compared with the loss of thirty-six of Israel's fine young men. I am certain that Achan now saw the paltriness of those articles.

Doug Goins: Let me say this in conclusion about the story. The temptation to sin is an ever-present danger in the life of every Christian. At the heart of the story of Achan and Ai is this crucial spiritual issue: **Sin will either master us, or we will master sin**. The Lord himself first said this in **Genesis 4** in the story of Cain and Abel. God accepted Abel's sacrifice, but he did not accept Cain's, because Cain's heart was not right. Cain grew to hate his brother. So God showed up and confronted Cain: *"...Sin is crouching at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it*" (**4:7**). In essence, sin is like a lion waiting to devour you. It will control you and destroy you unless you gain mastery over it. God also promised Cain in that passage that if he did master the sin, he would be lifted up; he would have God's resources. In **Romans 6:15-23** Paul says that we were created to be slaves, to be mastered by something, either sin, which leads to death, or obedience to Christ, which leads to righteousness. We gain mastery over sin by obeying Jesus.

There cannot be any ground of neutrality toward sin for us. Our problem is that we don't believe that. We think that we can play with sin just a little, with just certain sins-nice, agreeable, likable, pleasurable sins that won't really hurt anybody. We think that we can keep sin under control, limit its influence or our involvement. But we don't realize that in reality we will fall under its control little by little, and it will master us. . .

The Valley of Achor in the memory of the nation Israel became a proverbial expression for the good results of discipline in the life of the people.

Israel went on from the Valley of Achor to conquer Ai. We'll see that in **chapter 8**. And then it took only seven short years to complete the conquest of Canaan. Continuing victory grew out of the difficult experience they had at Ai and then at Achor. What appeared to be a great disaster was a learning experience for the whole nation. In Hosea's words, it became a door of hope, a door of expectation. They entered into a renewed relationship with God.

David Holwick: **III. Five principles on sin.**

A. A holy God cannot tolerate sin.

1) One sin can make all the difference in the world.
   a) It made a difference for Israel. (defeat)
   b) It made a difference for Achan. (death)
   c) It can make a difference for you. (damnation)
2) God does not "grade on curve," but on absolutes.

B. Sin is never purely private.

1) ISRAEL has sinned, THEY have stolen, THEY have lied. **7:11**
   a) Yet Achan is only one to be revealed.
2) One bad apple ruins the barrel.
   a) Reason - toxic gas is given off, encouraging rot.
   b) Same in churches.
   c) Unchecked sin by one person can pull everyone down.
3) Private sin off-limits? Not to God. **22:20** . . .
4) Danger of Clinton scandal.
   a) Many commentators have said his behavior is not an issue.
      1> Only abuse of power or perjury really matter.
      2> Effect could be that adultery becomes acceptable.
   b) James Dobson - the problem is all of us.
      1> Our standards have slipped, we are unshockable.

C. Secret sin is still sin.

1) What are you hiding from others?
2) What are you hiding from God?

D. Sin will be found out.

1) God can reveal it. **Num 32:23**
   a) Gordon MacDonald and fling in hotel room.
   b) Ananias and Sapphira in book of Acts.
2) Christians should expose sin. **Eph 5:11**
   a) Pastors harp on sin too much?
      1> Maybe we harp on petty sins.
      2> Sign of genuine church is concern for sin.
      3> Becomes more harmful if allowed to go on.
   b) Duty of genuine prophets. **Lam 2:14**
   c) Be careful: Final judgment rests with God. **1 Cor 4:5**

E. Pain of exposure is better than pain of concealment.

1) Should pain be avoided?
   a) Clinton - rip apart nation? Hurt economy?
   b) Some argue church leaders should be exempt.
      1> Bible says leaders set an example.
2) Punishment is not most painful part of sin.

a) It eats away at our soul.
b) Even when hidden, it corrupts us and our relationships.
c) A little yeast works through whole dough. **1 Cor 5:1-6**

3) Pain is inevitable, but healing can come.

John Hamby: The seventh chapter of Joshua opens with the ominous word "but." The use of the little conjunction of contrast is designed to drive home the reality that victory is often followed by the threat of defeat. Suddenly we are presented with a series of failures that stand in striking contrast to the victories of the past six chapters. Israel had just experienced a miraculous victory over Jericho, "but" now they are going to experience defeat. The gladness of victory was soon replaced by the gloom of defeat, all this because of the disobedience of one man. This story has much to teach about the devastating effects of sin.

Maurice Brown: **A concise outline of this magnificent book**

1. Crossing the River Jordan - **Chs.1-5**
2. Conquering the Enemy in the Land - **6-12**
3. Claiming the Promised Inheritance - **13-24** . . .

1. We can become so self-confident in ourselves and our ability
2. We can reach the point when we no longer need God, except for the big challenges.
3. Most times we can manage by ourselves.
4. That's what happened here. Not once did Joshua ask for God's help! . . .

<u>God always gives us more than enough time to repent.</u>

1. In order to find the culprit, the tribes present themselves, then the clans.
2. This was followed by the families, and finally individuals.
3. God was giving Achan opportunities to repent before he was personally confronted. He did not avail himself of any of these.
4. Only when there was no way out, he confessed – "I HAVE SINNED."

David Howard: The name used of God in **v. 7**— "*Sovereign LORD*" in the NIV and the NLT—is *adondy yhwh adondy*, which is rendered in many versions as "*the Lord GOD*" (e.g., NASB, NKJV, NJPSV, NRSV). God is called most commonly by one of <u>three names</u> in the Old Testament:

(1) *elohim* translated as "*God*";
(2) *yhwh*, "*Yahweh*," rendered as "*the LORD*" (or, in ASV, "*Jehovah*"); and
(3) *adondy* translated as "*the Lord*."

As we noted at **1:1**, "*Yahweh*" was God's personal name, and it was the subject of the Third Commandment: "*You shall not misuse the name of the LORD [Yahweh] your God"* (**Exod 20:7**). The reason that most modern versions render "*Yahweh*" as "*the LORD*" is that the Jews, fearful of violating the Third Commandment even by mispronouncing the holy Name of God, began substituting *adondy*, "*Lord*," in oral reading—although not in writing—when they came to the name "*Yahweh*." In time, this convention was taken into written translations into other languages. In most English versions, the convention has continued, but these versions (including the NIV) make

distinctions by rendering the names differently. The Hebrew in the present passage in oral reading would have created a redundant-sounding *adondy adondy*. In these special cases, the Jews substituted *elohîm* for "*Yahweh*" in their oral reading, yielding the phrase *adondy elohîm*. This term is used almost three hundred times of God in the Old Testament, and it expresses a special attitude of worship and respect for him, acknowledging the covenant-keeping, personal God of Israel (*yhwh*) as the Lord (*adondy*) who is sovereign over all. . .

The meaning of God's name, the way in which it revealed aspects of his character, the importance of people's bowing at the sound of his name and praising it, and its connection with God's reputation—these are all components of a great "name" theology in the Old Testament.

Van Parunak: cf. **Acts 5:1-11**, **Ananias and Sapphira** --
Similar on several points to the Achan story:

- The sin relates to the abuse of God's property.
- A secret sin is publicly rebuked by the leader of the community.
- The family dies for its sin.
- (Less well recognized:) the sin blocks God's blessing to the community as a whole.

Cf. Parallels in Gen. 3 and in James 1

Achan, Jos 7	Eve, Gen 3:6	Jas 1:15	
21, Saw	Saw		We may not be able to help what we see (but on the other hand, we should avoid situations that will fuel our lust)
21, Coveted	Desired	Lust	Now the sinner consciously directs his thought to the forbidden object.
21, Took	Took	Sin	Here is the action itself, yet it can only spring up in ground prepared by lust.
25, stoned		Death	Be sure of the result; it isn't worth it.

Why is Achan treated so harshly, when many others later in Israel's history are guilty of worse crimes but get off much more lightly? Why isn't the harsh judgment on Ananias and Sapphira duplicated in later eras of corrupt Christianity? These individuals may be singled out precisely because of the freshness of the spiritual institutions in each case. Two reasons may be involved.

1. Israel was in "*the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals*," when the Lord himself declared her to be "*holiness unto the Lord, … the firstfruits of his increase*" (**Jer. 2:2,3**); the early church had not yet "*left [its] first love*" (**Rev. 2:4**). In such conditions one has only to purge out the occasional offender to keep the whole pure; cf. the judgment commanded in **1 Cor. 5.** When the body as a whole is corrupt, such signal judgment would leave none behind, and it is the righteous who must withdraw in reform. One can "*put out*" an occasional heretic (**Titus 3:10**), but must "*withdraw [one]self*" from a corrupt church (**1 Tim. 6:5**).

2. The severity of the judgment may be didactic, necessary at the beginning of an institution to make clear the Lord's expectations, but lessened later because of the **longsuffering** of God.

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Turning Your Troubles into Triumph – Chap. 7**
Introduction: Henry Ford said, failure is an opportunity to begin again more intelligently. And I think that's so very true. Now, the story in Joshua that we're going to look at tonight is a story of failure, but this failure isn't final. You see, when you're defeated, God wants you to get up and he wants you to begin again more intelligently. The key word in the whole chapter is the word *trouble*.

Big Idea: **Three lessons about turning your troubles into triumph.**

I. The Underlying Cause of Their Trouble
A. The Problem of Sin
God saw Israel as one man, one body, and one sin by one of them meant all of them had sinned. And this is the principle that many scholars call the principle of **corporate solidarity.** Don't get the idea that your sin only affects you. You don't live in a bubble. You don't live in isolation. The things that we do have an impact on the lives of others.

B. The Pitfall of Success – 6:27
The most vulnerable time in your Christian walk might be right after a victory. Right after you're on the mountaintop.

C. The Peril of Self-Reliance – 7:2
When we stop relying upon the Lord and we start relying upon ourselves when we become self-sufficient. And in this passage, we don't see anywhere where Joshua prays. We don't see anywhere where they wait to get orders from the Lord.

II. The Unexpected Curse of Their Trouble
A. Defeat
They go up to this hill country, and by the way, Ai was 1,700 feet above sea level, so they had to march upward into the hill country. They march up into the hill, and they turn around and start running back down just as fast, because they were defeated. They were defeated in a very, very humble way.

B. Death – **7:5**
This is what happens when you leave the Ark of the Covenant home and you go into battle without it. And this is a **total reversal** of Jericho. At Jericho, they had the ark. Here at Ai, they left it home. At Jericho, they followed God's orders. Here at Ai, they followed their own orders. At Jericho, they were dependent upon God's strength. At Ai, they depended upon their own military strength. At Jericho, Jericho was afraid of Israel. And now here at Ai, Israel is afraid of Ai. At Jericho, they had victory. Here, they have defeat. At Jericho, there were no deaths. Here there are 36 men that died.

C. Dismay – **7:5**
"*wherefore the hearts of the people melted and became as water*"
Not only does sin bring death, but sin will cause you to live in perpetual fear.

D. Despondency – **7:6**
Now to tear their clothes is an overwhelming dramatic gesture of sorrow and grief and dust on the heads is an expression of bitter anguish. And they fall on their faces before the Ark of the Lord, which is a symbol of the presence of God. And now here they are in the dust of depression, in the slew of despondence.

E. Doubt – **7:7**

F. Dishonor – **7:8**
Joshua really gets to the heart of the matter when he said, Lord, our defeat is going to dishonor your name. You know why? Did you notice in **verse 9** how Israel's name and God's name are inseparable? Because they're so one and related to God. And the worst thing about this whole defeat is it dishonors God.

III. The Unfailing Cure for Their Trouble
God is about to give Joshua some practical steps for removing the trouble in his life and returning to triumph.

A. Investigation – **7:10**
God says, get off your face, examine yourself. It was not time to stay there in prayer. Now it's time to do something.

B. Revelation – **7:16**

C. Extermination – **7:22**

D. Rededication – **Chap. 8**
Where you're defeated, God wants you to go back and have victory. And they go back to Ai, this time more intelligently. They pray, they get their orders from God, and God gives them a battle plan.

8:30 -- This is a rededication service.

TEXT: Joshua 8: 1-35

TITLE: REGAINING LOST GROUND -- SUCCESSFUL CONQUEST OF AI – THE SPIRIT SUCCEEDS WHERE THE FLESH FAILED

BIG IDEA:
OUR MERCIFUL GOD STANDS READY TO LEAD US INTO VICTORY (WHERE PREVIOUSLY WE HAVE FAILED) BY ENCOURAGING US TO COURAGE AND FAITH IN OBEYING HIS BATTLE PLAN AND ALLOWING HIM TO BLESS INSTEAD OF CURSE

INTRODUCTION:

Jensen: Achan's sin shattered the momentum which Israel had attained in its miraculous marches across a river and around a city. Israel's courage was gone, its hope all but faded. But God, having now turned from the fierceness of His wrath, set about to accomplish another work of grace and thereby restore the people's courage.

David Howard: Thus, the **sequence of events** would be as follows. Joshua commissioned a group of men to lie in ambush west of Ai, as the Lord had instructed (**vv. 3b– 4, 12–13**). He sent them out (**v. 9a**), then he went with the main fighting force to be stationed north of the city (**vv. 3a, 11**) and spent the night with this group (**vv. 9b, 13b**). He and the people went up to Ai the next morning (**v. 10**), which was seen by the king of Ai (**v. 14**), who mustered his people to meet Israel in battle. The Israelites put their ruse into effect, pretending to flee, drawing out of the city its entire population (**vv. 15–17**).

At the same time, the ambush force was arising (**v. 19**), and when Joshua stretched out his javelin toward Ai, they entered the city and set it ablaze (**vv. 18–19**). When the Aiites saw this, they realized that they were surrounded before and behind, and they succumbed to a slaughter that left none alive except their king (**vv. 20–26**). The Israelites took the cattle and booty as spoil (**v. 27**)—which had been authorized this time by God (**v. 2**)—and burned the city, exposing the body of its king in an act of humiliation before burying it under a great pile of stones (**vv. 28–29**).

Robert Hubbard: Some readers may view this as unfair (the punishment does not fit the crime) and mystifying. The problem is that in **Joshua 7** our modern, **individualistic** worldview bumps into the more **corporate worldview** of the Bible. The former says that individuals benefit from or suffer for what they themselves do (or do not do). Usually, they are exempt from the benefits or deficits of what others do (or do not do). For it to be otherwise, individualism says, would be unjust. (American culture particularly prizes a strong variety of this worldview called "rugged individualism.") In the Bible's world, however, **whole groups benefit or suffer because of the actions of an individual, and no one reckons this unjust.**

Kenneth Gangel: **Outline**

1. The Careful Plan (**8:1-9**)
2. The Clever Diversion (**8:10-19**)
3. The Complete Victory (**8:20-29**)
4. The Covenantal Worship (**8:30-35**)

I. (:1-9) FOLLOWING GOD'S BATTLE PLAN GRANTS VICTORY WHERE PREVIOUSLY THERE HAD BEEN DEFEAT

A. (:1-2) Lord's Instructions to Joshua

1. Courage to step out in faith remains the starting point

"*Now the Lord said to Joshua, 'Do not fear or be dismayed.*'"

Courage and faith especially needed when you are attempting to recover from backslidden condition of defeat and discipline.

Doug Goins: In my own life, I've had two reactions when I experience sinful failure: I'm discouraged about the past, and I'm apprehensive about the future. I look back and remember the sinful mistakes I made. I look ahead and wonder whether there's any future for someone like me who has failed so foolishly. The answer to our discouragement and our fear is in hearing and believing the word God spoke to Joshua: "*Do not fear or be dismayed*."

Richard Hess: The LORD's exhortation to Joshua begins with the command, *Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged*. The first part, *Do not be afraid*, occurs **thirty-nine times** in the MT. Sometimes, God reassures in the midst of a terrifying situation, for example by a divine visitation (**Gen. 15:1; 26:24**) or as part of a charge to venture forth into an unknown land (**46:3**). He also forbids fear when he commands battle (**Num. 21:34; Deut. 3:2**). Examples of this are found later in the book (**Josh. 10:8; 11:6**). Normally, these occasions include a reference to the enemy and a promise of divine presence and support. But the addition of *do not be discouraged* in **8:1** has only **three parallels** in the Hebrew Bible: **Deuteronomy 1:21; 1 Chronicles 22:13; 28:20**. The texts in **1 Chronicles** form part of David's charge to Solomon to build the temple of the LORD. **Deuteronomy 1:21** remembers God's exhortation to take the Promised Land and is addressed to Israel. This resembles **Joshua 8:1** which forms one step in the fulfilment of that charge. **All these passages share the common concern of accomplishing a great task commanded by God, the task being the fulfilment of a divinely ordained covenant**, either in the promise of the land to Abram (**Gen. 17**) or in the promise of a dynasty for David (**2 Sam. 7**). Although the promise of the land is prominent in **Joshua 8**, another covenantal concern prompts the use of this phrase. The guilt of Achan's sin and of the devoted things has been removed. Once again Israel can progress in its occupation of the land.

2. Corporate Participation still key – Victory required all to join arms

"*Take all the people of war with you and arise*"

3. City to Conquer is the very place you experienced defeat previously

"*go up to Ai*"

Warren Wiersbe: Henry Ford defined a mistake as an opportunity to begin again, more intelligently.

4. Conquest is a gift from God and includes 4 key components

a. The King

"*see, I have given into your hand the king of Ai*"

b. "*his people*"

c. "*his city*"

d. "*and his land*"

5. (:2a) Change of Rules: Spoil is Allowed this time

"*And you shall do to Ai and its king just as you did to Jericho and its king; you shall take only its spoil and its cattle as plunder for yourselves*."

Charles Ryrie: This time the Israelites could keep the spoil. Achan should have been more patient!

Doug Goins: Why does God propose a whole new strategy for Joshua? There is an important implication here for us as well. Because he is a God of infinite variety, I think he changes his strategies on purpose so that we don't relax into depending on habit patterns, on history, on our own personal experience. He wants us to always be looking at him, depending on him, relying on his promises.

Richard Hess: The king of Ai (**6:2**) was to be delivered to God, as was the town itself, but nothing else is mentioned as devoted things. *Plunder and livestock* of the defeated town (fort?) will belong to the Israelites. Although this was the custom for most battles, its specification signifies a break with the practice regarding the plunder of Jericho. There everything became devoted. This divine instruction signifies a flexibility on the meaning of the ban, which could be interpreted by God according to the particular needs of the people. Since everything captured belonged to God, he could also choose to give some of it back to Israel.

6. (:2b) Concealed Troops = Key Tactic

"*Set an ambush for the city behind it*."

B. (:3-8) Joshua Relays Battle Instructions to the People – Setting the Ambush

"*So Joshua rose with all the people of war to go up to Ai; and Joshua chose 30,000 men, valiant warriors, and sent them out at night. 4 And he commanded them, saying, 'See, you are going to ambush the city from behind it. Do not go*

very far from the city, but all of you be ready. 5 Then I and all the people who are with me will approach the city. And it will come about when they come out to meet us as at the first, that we will flee before them. 6 And they will come out after us until we have drawn them away from the city, for they will say, 'They are fleeing before us as at the first.' So we will flee before them. 7 And you shall rise from your ambush and take possession of the city, for the LORD your God will deliver it into your hand. 8 Then it will be when you have seized the city, that you shall set the city on fire. You shall do it according to the word of the LORD. See, I have commanded you."

This would be the commando squad that would enter the city and set it on fire

C. (:9) Night of Preparation – Rallying the Troops

"*So Joshua sent them away, and they went to the place of ambush and remained between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of Ai; but Joshua spent that night among the people*."

II. (:10-17) BAITING THE ENEMY CAN MAKE HIM VULNERABLE TO A SNEAK ATTACK

A. (:10-11) Setting Up Camp in the face of the Enemy

1. (:10) Leadership of Joshua and the elders

"*Now Joshua rose early in the morning and mustered the people, and he went up with the elders of Israel before the people to Ai*."

2. (:11) Valiant Warriors committed to engaging the enemy

"*Then all the people of war who were with him went up and drew near and arrived in front of the city, and camped on the north side of Ai. Now there was a valley between him and Ai*."

B. (:12-13) Setting the Trap

"*And he took about 5,000 men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of the city. 13 So they stationed the people, all the army that was on the north side of the city, and its rear guard on the west side of the city, and Joshua spent that night in the midst of the valley.*"

5,000 warriors clearly involved here; this is a second group distinct from **verses 8-9** that would offer protection against any help from Bethel and would aid in surrounding and cutting off any escape opportunities for the men from Ai

C. (:14-17) Taking the Bait

"*And it came about when the king of Ai saw it, that the men of the city hurried and rose up early and went out to meet Israel in battle, he and all his people at the appointed place before the desert plain. But he did not know that there was an ambush against him behind the city. 15 And Joshua and all Israel pretended to be beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness. 16 And all the*

people who were in the city were called together to pursue them, and they pursued Joshua, and were drawn away from the city. 17 So not a man was left in Ai or Bethel who had not gone out after Israel, and they left the city unguarded and pursued Israel."

III. (:18-23) TRAPPING THE ENEMY ELIMINATES ALL POSSIBILITY OF ESCAPE WHEN THE LORD IS DIRECTING THE CAMPAIGN

A. (:18) Sign that the Lord is Running the Show

"*Then the Lord said to Joshua, 'Stretch out the javelin that is in your hand toward Ai, for I will give it into your hand.' So Joshua stretched out the javelin that was in his hand toward the city*."

Charles Ryrie: Joshua's javelin signaled the ambushing party by reflecting the sun from its flat blade."

B. (:19) Executing the Ambush

"*And the men in ambush rose quickly from their place, and when he had stretched out his hand, they ran and entered the city and captured it; and they quickly set the city on fire*."

C. (:20-22) Complete Slaughter of the Trapped Enemy – No way of escape

"*When the men of Ai turned back and looked, behold, the smoke of the city ascended to the sky, and they had no place to flee this way or that, for the people who had been fleeing to the wilderness turned against the pursuers. 21 When Joshua and all Israel saw that the men in ambush had captured the city and that the smoke of the city ascended, they turned back and slew the men of Ai. 22 And the others came out from the city to encounter them, so that they were trapped in the midst of Israel, some on this side and some on that side; and they slew them until no one was left of those who survived or escaped.*"

D. (:23) Capture of King of Ai

"*But they took alive the king of Ai and brought him to Joshua*."

IV. (:24-29) ANNIHILATING THE ENEMY CREATES A PERPETUAL MEMORIAL TO THE POWER AND SOVEREIGNTY OF ALMIGHTY GOD

A. (:24) Complete Slaughter of rest of population of Ai

"*Now it came about when Israel had finished killing all the inhabitants of Ai in the field in the wilderness where they pursued them, and all of them were fallen by the edge of the sword until they were destroyed, then all Israel returned to Ai and struck it with the edge of the sword*."

B. (:25) Impressive Total Body Count – Nobody Escaped

"*And all who fell that day, both men and women, were 12,000 – all the people of Ai*."

C. (:26) Significance of the Sign of the Javelin

"*For Joshua did not withdraw his hand with which he stretched out the javelin until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai*."

Richard Hess: There are <u>three points</u>:

(1) the word of God, and thus the LORD himself, is responsible for the Israelite victory;

(2) Joshua's success is due to his faith in that word and his obedience to it; and

(3) although the battle and its victory can be described in human terms and understood as the result of successful strategy, Israel's victory is no less a miracle than its earlier success at Jericho or the previous generation's defeat of Egypt at the Red Sea.

Robert Hubbard: As for Joshua, the narrator adds, he does not lower the symbolic scimitar until "*he*" has "*utterly destroyed*" (*ḥaram hi*.) all Ai's inhabitants (**v. 26**). The comment implies that, as Israel's leader, ultimate responsibility for the execution of *ḥerem* falls on his shoulders. The crescent-shaped sword represents "both human signal and medium of divinely assisted victory." It symbolizes a key theological theme in Joshua: **divine promise and empowerment working in concert with human planning and execution.**

D. (:27-29) Taking Care of Business

<u>1. (:27) Legitimate Spoil</u>

"*Israel took only the cattle and the spoil of that city as plunder for themselves, according to the word of the Lord which He had commanded Joshua*."

Richard Hess: The Israelites acquired booty. Why here but not at Jericho? Perhaps the attack on Jericho, as the initial assault in Canaan, symbolized the dedication of all the land to God. Once this had taken place, booty was permitted. A second reason recalls Achan's sin. The first destruction and its plunder formed a divine test to determine whether or not Israel would obey God. The attackers of Ai passed this test. Therefore, it was not necessary to forbid them the spoils of battle. Furthermore, the mention of livestock recalls the precarious situation in which Israel now found itself. God no longer provided manna as he had done in the wilderness. Instead, Israel had to find its own food. Even here God provided: he gave his people the livestock, and so provided for their needs.

<u>2. (:28) End of Ai (Amen!)</u>

"*So Joshua burned Ai and made it a heap forever, a desolation until this day*."

<u>3. (:29a) Humiliation of the King (Deut. 21: 22, 23)</u>

"*And he hanged the king of Ai on a tree until evening; and at sunset*

Joshua gave command and they took his body down from the tree, and threw it at the entrance of the city gate"

4. (:29b) Another Monument of Stones

"*and raised over it a great heap of stones that stands to this day*."

V. (:30-35) CELEBRATING COVENANT VICTORY SHOULD INVOLVE WORSHIP, SACRIFICE, AND RECOMMITMENT TO THE LAW OF OUR MERCIFUL GOD

A. (:30-31) Worship and Sacrifice on the Altar (Deut. 27:1-26)

"*Then Joshua built an altar to the Lord, the God of Israel, in Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded the sons of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of uncut stones, on which no man had wielded an iron tool and they offered burnt offerings on it to the Lord, and sacrificed peace offerings*."

This required a pilgrimage into the heart of enemy territory . . . but the occasion warranted the risk.

Jensen: The instruction called for the building of two stone structures: one, a *stele* made of very large whitewashed stones, on which the words of the law were written (**Deut. 27:2-4, 8**); the other, a stone altar for burnt offerings and peace offerings (**Deut. 27:6-7**).

Woudstra: The story of the building of an altar on Mount Ebal and of the solemn reading of the blessings and curses of the covenant at that site is strategically important for understanding the message of the Book of Joshua. … In unmistakably clear symbolism the reader is told that the right of possessing the promised land is tied to the proclamation of, and subjection to, God's covenant claims upon his people (and upon the world).

Kenneth Gangel: Israel had just conquered Jericho and Ai. It seemed like a good military strategy to press ahead and hit the enemy while they were still surprised and fearful. But instead, Joshua took the Israelites on a thirty-mile side trip. On a journey that would have taken the people several days to cover, the Israelites marched north on a road that ran over the top of the mountains, arriving in Shechem between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. They apparently encountered no resistance along the way.

This place was significant for the Jews. Here Abraham had built his first altar to God. Here Jacob had dug a well. Here Joseph had searched for his brothers. And many years later Jesus would speak to a Samaritan woman at this well near Shechem. The two mountains are really one and one-half miles apart at the top but only about five hundred yards apart at the bottom. The valley between them formed a natural amphitheater for this historical gathering of the Israelites.

The initial loss and then subsequent victory at Ai had been a wake-up call for Joshua and the Israelites. They now realized that taking the promised land would be a spiritual journey, not just a military campaign. So they took time once again to be reminded of something we must never forget—heeding God's word is more important than fighting God's battles. They made this side trip because **the covenant was more important than the conquest.**

Van Parunak: **The particular offerings rendered: burnt and peace.**
Recall the meaning of the four main classes of sacrifice:

1. Sin: need for forgiveness to become God's people. Not in focus here; the nation is seen as victorious and in fellowship with the Lord.
2. Burnt: the entire commitment of the worshipper to the Lord. This is in focus. As he requires them to devote the conquered peoples to him, so they are to dedicate themselves to him.
3. Peace: voluntary worship and praise. Also in focus here. They are grateful for the victory he has given them.
4. Trespass: dealing with particular acts of sin in the believer's life. Not in focus here.

B. (:32-35) Recommitment to the Law of God – Blessing vs. Cursing

> "*And he wrote there on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written, in the presence of the sons of Israel. 33 And all Israel with their elders and officers and their judges were standing on both sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, the stranger as well as the native. Half of them stood in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had given command at first to bless the people of Israel. 34 Then afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the book of the law. 35 There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel with the women and the little ones and the strangers who were living among them.*"

Alan Redpath: The Christian has not finished with the law of God. He has finished with its sentence, but he cannot avoid its standards. And, in plain language, that means that holiness is not optional. "*Without holiness no man can see the Lord*." . . .
The Christian is no longer facing the law as an obligation; he is facing it as a sheer delight to do the will of God, and from within him the love of God is shed abroad by the Holy Spirit.

Gordon Matties: The larger history regards **the book** as that which constitutes Israel as a people. Its narrative and instruction shapes the identity and life of this mixed community, including the alien (*ger*). This book itself does not enforce; it is read, heard, and taught (Balentine: 186). Especially when it has been recognized that a grave wrong has been done, or when the people have gone astray by worshiping other gods and failing to heed the instructions of the Lord, the book is understood as that instrumental means of setting things right. It offers a reorientation by identifying a new direction or

by setting the parameters of faithfulness. It teaches both how to live with undivided loyalty to God and how to live in the world and in the community according to God's intentions. In other words, the book is a narration in how "to love God, and to live as people who love God" (Balentine: 186). With its paradigmatic characters and events, the book of Joshua begins Israel's journey toward that goal, which we find embodied in the early communities of Jesus followers [Torah, p. 462].

Helene Dallaire: At Mount Ebal, Joshua reads the entire law of Moses before the whole community—young and old, men and women, Israelite and foreigner, official and commoner, child and adult. Special emphasis is placed on the blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. The law of Moses covered all aspects of life—cultic, civil, social, and personal. Israel was now ready to occupy the land, to transition from the nomadic to the sedentary life, and to serve Yahweh in the Promised Land.

David Howard: The overarching theme in this section **is obedience to God through observance of the Mosaic law**. Four different times, the text states that an action was taken in accordance with Moses' commands (**vv. 31[2x], 33, 35**). Also, the actions themselves were rooted in the instructions in the law. Almost every statement in this passage has roots in the Pentateuch. The most important passages are **Deut 27:2–13** and **31:9–12**, but many others also figure here. The passage shows the importance to Israel of the Pentateuchal legislation, and it shows Israel's concern to obey.

Furthermore, **Joshua's role as a leader** also emerges in this account, in that he built the altar (**v. 30–31**), he copied the law onto stones from a copy he had written (**v. 32**), and he read the law in the people's hearing (**vv. 34–35**). He is once again portrayed as a worthy successor to Moses and one who prefigured the kings to come, who were to write in a book a (personal) copy of the law (**Deut 17:18–19**).

At least five separate activities were involved here:

(1) Joshua built an altar (**v. 30**);
(2) the people offered burnt offerings (**v. 31**);
(3) the people sacrificed fellowship offerings (**v. 31**);
(4) Joshua wrote the words of the law on stones (**v. 32**); and
(5) Joshua read the words of the law in public, before all the people (**vv. 34–35**).

Francis Schaeffer: We see in the reading of the blessings and curses not only a continuity of the authority of the written, propositional Scriptures but also an emphasis on the fact that bare knowledge is not enough. It was not that the Pentateuch gave these people knowledge, and that was the end of it. This knowledge demanded action.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do we presume against the sovereignty of the Lord in being lazy or sloppy in making shrewd tactical plans for victory and carrying out those plans with courage and discipline and perseverance?

2) Do we attribute all of our success to the hand of the Lord and His grace at work in our lives?

3) Does spiritual success intensify our passion to worship the Lord and offer Him the sacrifices that are pleasing in His sight?

4) Does spiritual success renew our commitment to following the Lord's instructions in His Word?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Alan Redpath: Much of **Chapter 8** of the book of Joshua is a record of the ultimate victory at Ai after the humiliating experience of defeat. I could not pass over this particular portion without recommending that you read the story of the strategy which Joshua had to adopt in order to recover the ground that had been lost. . . Ai was much less formidable than Jericho, but after the experience of defeat it was much more difficult to overcome. If you were to sit down alone with your Bible and reflect on that record, I believe you would find yourself indelibly impressed with the fact that the recovery of lost ground in Christian experience is the most difficult problem of all. Thirty minutes of willful disobedience in the life of a child of God has often resulted in thirty years of being out of blessing. . . Lost ground is mighty hard to regain, and if that lesson could be seared with a hot iron on your conscience, you would find it more difficult than at present you do to slip into willful sin.

Blair: The text gives us some difficulty here, for there seems to be a discrepancy between **verses 3-9**, which speak of 30,000 men being set in ambush on the west side of the city, and **verse 12**, which gives the number in the same position as 5,000. Numbers are notoriously subject to copyists' errors, and it may be that such a mistake has been made here. Another more attractive explanation, however, is that there were two ambuscades, one of 30,000 in the hills nearer to Bethel, and the other of 5,000 close to Ai. **Verse 17** tells that the men of Bethel – a city two miles from Ai but hidden by intervening heights – joined in the pursuit after Israel; and it seems reasonable to assume that Joshua would make preparations to guard against such an attack from Bethel.

J. Sidlow Baxter: In this chapter we see faith re-empowered and going forth in renewed triumph. Sin confessed and judged and put away restores the cord of communion, and the Divine power begins to flow again.

Trent Butler: If the people were cultically obedient, the blessing would again ring out loud and clear, drowning out the cursing. The fight for the land could be taken up anew in the assurance that the identity of the people of God had been restored and so the oracle of salvation would again come to their armies. Israel would be once again the people of the covenant. Yahweh would be in her midst to bless rather than to express anger. All of this was possible because God had given to Israel two gifts. The first was the Torah of Moses showing the proper lifestyle with God. The second was a new leader, one who was certainly no Moses, speaking face to face with God, but one who followed the law for leaders by reading the Torah of Moses, teaching it to his people, and embodying it in his own life as an example to all the people. With the **law of Moses** and the **leadership of Joshua**, Israel could again pass over into the covenant, be the people of God, and enjoy the blessings of God. This was gospel for a people who had lost their land and temple, the symbol of God's presence with them. Having experienced the curse, they needed desperately to hear the directions to blessing. After the ceremony Israel is a new people of God.

Doug Goins: Once the nation of Israel judged the sin that had defiled their camp, then God was free to speak forgiveness, to extend mercy, and to once again direct them in the conquest of the land. That is how the Lord cares for us in our failure. **Psalm 37:23-24** is wonderfully encouraging: "*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, and He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the LORD upholds him with His hand*." I hope you have a sense of how much God delights in you and in the path that you're following. We will fall, but the Lord is right there to pick us up. He delights in us even when we fail, if we turn to him and ask him to pick us up. That is the good news, no matter what mistakes we may have made. In a sense, the worst mistake we can make is to give up and not try again. . .

This tells us that immediately after the battle, Joshua and the army go back to Gilgal, collect two million men, women, and children, as well as all their animals, and go back fifteen miles up to the summit of the spine of the Judean hills. Then they travel thirty miles straight north to the valley of Shechem, between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. This would have been an opportune time to push the conquest and attack more cities, with momentum on their side. But Joshua, at least from a human standpoint, stops it dead, and they spend a number of days in this valley before the Lord as a community at worship. What Israel is doing here is fulfilling the commands of Moses that he gave on the plains of Moab before his death. Yet it is amazing that in the middle of conquest, they would take this time. It doesn't seem very productive in terms of taking the land that God had called them to. But what this provides for the nation Israel is an opportunity to worship the Lord, to focus on his presence and his power; we're going to see that the ark of the covenant is central to everything that happens in this valley. It also gives them a chance to reflect on their identity as God's people, as people of the covenant. And it gives them a chance to express their hearts and their wills verbally in a renewal of their commitment to be submissive to the law, the revealed word of God.

Jeffries: Israel's total annihilation of Jericho and Ai had the strategic military effect of cutting Canaan in two. There would be a northern campaign and a southern campaign but, as we shall see in our study this morning, there would be yet another "pause" in the conquest of the Promised Land. This time the entire nation -- not just the "*mighty men of valor*" -- would travel some twenty miles north to the city of Shechem, situated between the "twin peaks" of Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. God had given His people great victory and, in the midst of this good success, it was important that they keep them-selves spiritually focused.

Jensen: The measure of courage is in the test. God assured Joshua that he would take Ai, but there would not be the ease of watching its walls fall as at Jericho. Instead, the manner assigned was by military ambush, which meant danger, suspense, precaution, and alertness. This was Israel's test of courage, and Joshua and the warriors rose to the challenge.

Armerding: Then in the altar, the ark, and the Book, we see three fundamental things, which if rightly apprehended will save, sanctify, and strengthen the people of God. Moreover, the ark, which has the central place here, was really God's throne, for *He dwelt between the cherubim* (**Ps. 80:1**). *Thus did He walk in the midst of them* (**Deut. 23:14**), and therefore they could say with the psalmist, "*The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah*."

John Davis: Joshua was commanded to select 30,000 men, and send them away by night to make the thirteen-mile journey to Ai, and then to lie in wait on the west side of the city (**vv. 3-4**). The next day, Joshua took the main army of Israel up to the north side of the city of Ai (**v. 11**). In addition to that move, another 5,000 were sent to lie in ambush between Bethel and Ai (**v. 12**).

TEXT: Joshua 9:1-27

TITLE: RASH COMMITMENTS – DECEPTION TAKES ADVANTAGE OF OUR LIMITED PERCEPTION

BIG IDEA:
SPIRITUAL VICTORY IS COMPROMISED WHEN WE MAKE RASH COMMITMENTS APART FROM SEEKING THE GUIDANCE OF THE LORD

INTRODUCTION:

Richard Hess: In the first eight chapters, Israel had chosen its military objectives and targets. At this point the situation changes. Others will define these objectives. . .

Earlier the Canaanites refused to attack Israel for fear of what would happen to them. They defended themselves only when attacked. Now they gather together, united for war against Israel. **What has changed?**

The answer lies in Israel's defeat at their first assault on Ai. Joshua predicted this consequence (**Josh. 7:9**). Until this point, Israel had been undefeated in battle. At Ai, Canaan learned that Israel could be defeated. Thus any belief in Israelite invincibility (always understood as based upon God's deliverance) evaporated with the sin of Achan. This is what the kings hear in **9:1**. Although Bethel and Ai are ultimately defeated, the possibility now exists that Israel can lose battles. This is also the reason for the detailed list of peoples in the armies who gather against Israel. The stress is placed upon the numbers and the totality of the peoples represented. The armies will be large and the hostility of the land will be complete.

Thus the passage underlines the awful effects of sin (see **Rom. 3:9–20; 5:11–14**). Because of one person's transgression, the occupation of the Promised Land is delayed indefinitely and many lives are lost in the process. Who can say what would have happened had Achan not sinned? Perhaps the battle at Ai could have been Israel's last.

Van Parunak: **Deut. 20:10-18, Israel's Foreign Policy**

- Distant nations may enter into treaty with Israel and become servants to them.
- Nearby nations must be completely destroyed, to avoid spiritual contamination. Cf. **Deut. 7:1-5**

Where did Israel go wrong? She certainly tried to obey the Scriptures. But the narrator in **v.14** tells us she should have done something else in addition: she should have asked counsel of the Lord. She still does not understand the lesson of the Captain of the Lord's Host, that God's people must seek his face in every decision. In modern terms, they consulted Scripture (**Deut. 20**) but not the Spirit! The passage is an eloquent example of the inadequacy of Scripture without the direct personal direction of the Lord in our lives.

(:1-2) CONTEXT – ENEMIES UNITE TO ATTACK GOD'S PEOPLE AND HIS KINGDOM AGENDA

A. (:1) Enemies Fear the Inevitable

"*Now it came about when all the kings who were beyond the Jordan,*
in the hill country and in the lowland and on all the coast of the Great Sea
toward Lebanon, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite,
the Hivite and the Jebusite, heard of it"

Van Parunak: **Geographically**: a useful passage to review three main regions of the country. The only one not mentioned is "**the plain**," **the Arabah**, which is the Jordan valley, considered as being now firmly in Israel's control.

- "*the hills*," lit. "*the mountain*," the backbone of the country.
- "*the valleys*," lit. "*the Shephelah*." A region of chalky hills extending south from the Valley of Ayalon to the bottom of the top sheet, and the geology continues to Beersheba. Forms a buffer zone between the other two regions mentioned. Not very fertile. Philistines pushing up into it; Israel pushing down.
- "*all the coasts of the great sea*," the coastal plain.

David Howard: The geographical description laid out shows that the kings opposing Israel came from all parts of the land of Canaan: they were from (1) the hill country, that is, the central highlands, (2) the western foothills, that is, the foothills between the central highlands and the coastal plain, and (3) the entire coast of the Mediterranean Sea, as far as the "*front*" of Lebanon. Just as the land that Israel was entering to possess is painted in terms as broad as possible in **1:4**, so here, the adversaries Israel was to face are also portrayed as coming from as broad an area as possible. The summary statement in **10:40–42** about Joshua's all-encompassing conquests recalls the territories mentioned here (specifically, the references to the hill country and the western foothills).

B. (:2) Enemies Rally Together to Make Last Ditch Stand

"*that they gathered themselves together with one accord*
to fight with Joshua and with Israel."

God's enemies unite around the common goal of trying to thwart God's purposes and His kingdom agenda. They fight against God's people but remain under God's sovereign control.

Robert Massey: When the enemy realizes that he is defeated, he does one of two things, he surrenders, or he throws everything he has into the battle. The devil is throwing everything he has into the battle. He is gathering every demon and every principality and they are throwing everything they have into the battle for your soul. He is a powerful foe and without Christ you cannot stand against him.

I. (:3-15) DECEPTION OF THE GIBEONITES LEADS TO UNWISE, COMPROMISING PEACE TREATY

A. (:3-5) Concocting the Crafty Scheme – Example of Strategic Planning

1. (:3) Motivated by Desperation = Their Mission (save their lives)

"*When the inhabitants of Gibeon heard*
what Joshua had done to Jericho and to Ai"

2. (:4a) Relying on Deceit = Their Strategy

"*they also acted craftily*"

3. (:4b-5) Pretending to be Innocuous = Their Tactics

"*and set out as envoys, and took worn-out sacks on their donkeys, and wineskins, worn-out and torn and mended, 5 and worn-out and patched sandals on their feet, and worn-out clothes on themselves; and all the bread of their provision was dry and had become crumbled.*"

Looking like they had traveled from a long distance away

B. (:6-13) Convincing the Skeptical Israelite Invaders

1. (:6) Pleading their Case

"*And they went to Joshua to the camp at Gilgal,*
and said to him and to the men of Israel,
'We have come from a far country;
now therefore, make a covenant with us.'"

Gene Getz: Joshua had just reviewed the law of God for all the children of Israel. Everything seemed to be in order to move forward victoriously. And then it happened. Joshua was caught off guard, failed to seek God's counsel, and fell prey to the Gibeonite deception. Satan at times camouflages his roar with gentle, sweet, and subtle words—a ploy that worked on Joshua. The Gibeonites knew God had instructed the children of Israel to be merciful to those people who lived beyond the borders of Canaan (**Dt 20:10–12**). This is why they feigned having come "*from a far away land*" (**Jos 9:9**). In this sense, they used God's words to deceive Joshua. We must all realize that Satan is a subtle enemy, and lying is one of his common tactics. One of his most deceptive schemes is to use God's Word to achieve his insidious goals. This is exactly the way he tempted Jesus in the wilderness (**Mt 4:1–11**).

2. (:7-11) Politicking for their Story

a. (:7) Confronted with the Relevant Question

"*And the men of Israel said to the Hivites,*
'Perhaps you are living within our land;
how then shall we make a covenant with you?'"

Robert Hubbard: But Israelite suspicions remain: Why is this bedraggled group so evasive? Why the unexpected revelation about Yahweh's fame? Why did that not come out when they first arrived? Why should Israel deal with a delegation (not actual authorities) whose only accreditation is their spoken word and shabby condition?

b. (:8) Interrogated as to their True Identity

"*But they said to Joshua, 'We are your servants.'*
Then Joshua said to them,
'Who are you, and where do you come from?'"

c. (:9-10) Programmed to Base Appeal on Flattery … or Faith??

"*And they said to him, 'Your servants have come from a very far country because of the fame of the LORD your God; for we have heard the report of Him and all that He did in Egypt, 10 and all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon and to Og king of Bashan who was at Ashtaroth.* "

Bob Utley: The confession of the Gibeonite representatives (which reflected the discussions of all of the leadership) is similar to Rahab's confession (cf. **2:9–11**). It involves

(1) an affirmation of YHWH's greatness and power
(2) knowledge of Israel's supernatural victories with YHWH's presence and help
(3) an element of fear and self preservation.

d. (:11) Charged with Securing This Peace Treaty

"*So our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spoke to us, saying, 'Take provisions in your hand for the journey, and go to meet them and say to them, 'We are your servants; now then, make a covenant with us*.'"

3. (:12-13) Proving their Identity

a. (:12) Stale Bread

"*This our bread was warm when we took it for our provisions out of our houses on the day that we left to come to you; but now behold, it is dry and has become crumbled*."

b. (:13a) Worn out Wineskins

"*And these wineskins which we filled were new, and behold, they are torn*"

c. (:13b) Worn out Clothing

"*and these our clothes and our sandals are worn out because of the very long journey*."

Dan Morrison: They appeared harmless; honorable; and honest; the leaders, and Joshua would not have fallen for this deception had this not been the case; they knew how to deceive; Satan used these techniques through them to stop the progress of the taking of the land

C. (:14) Crucial Mistake on the Part of the Israelites

1. Taking the Bait

"*So the men of Israel took some of their provisions*,"

Must have been pretty hard up for provisions if this stuff looked appetizing

2. Failing to Seek the Lord's Counsel

"*and did not ask for the counsel of the Lord*."

Acting rashly and presumptuously rather than performing due diligence.
This is the key phrase to the chapter.

Darby: The Israelites had failed at Ai because they had **confidence in their own strength**. They failed here because they had **confidence is their own wisdom**.

Warren Wiersbe: The leaders of Israel took the "scientific approach" instead of the "spiritual approach." They depended on their own senses, examined the "facts," discussed the matter, and agreed in their conclusion. It was all very logical and convincing, but it was all wrong. They had made the same mistake at Ai (**chap. 7**) and hadn't yet learned to wait on the Lord and seek His direction....Like Joshua and the nation of Israel, God's people today are living in enemy territory and must constantly exercise caution. When you believe the enemy instead of seeking the mind of the Lord, you can expect to get into trouble.

D. (:15) Closing the Deal – Affirming the Peace Treaty with a Binding Oath

"*And Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant with them,*
to let them live; and the leaders of the congregation swore an oath to them."

II. (:16-21) EXPOSING THE SCAM BUT STILL MAINTAINING THE OATH

A. (:16) Discovering the Painful Truth

"*And it came about at the end of three days after they had made a covenant with them, that they heard that they were neighbors and that they were living within \ their land*."

B. (:17) Checking out the Situation

"*Then the sons of Israel set out and came to their cities on the third day.*
Now their cities were Gibeon and Chephirah and Beeroth and Kiriath-jearim."

C. (:18) Paying the Price for Foolish Decision-making

"*then the sons of Israel did not strike them because the leaders of the congregation had sworn to them by the Lord the God of Israel.*
And the whole congregation grumbled against the leaders."

David Howard: The Gibeonites were safe from harm at the hands of Israel because of the oath that had been taken (**v. 15**). Oath taking and swearing are solemn affairs in the Old Testament. To take an oath—the Hebrew words for "swear" and "oath" are from the same root = to give one's sacred and unbreakable word that he would follow through on

what was promised. God often swore by himself, his holiness, or his great name to take certain actions (e.g., **Gen 22:16–18; Ps 89:35 [Hb. 36]; Jer 44:26**). Swearing falsely was a grave sin (**Ezek 17:16–21; Zech 5:3–4; Mal 3:5**). Because of the sacred, unbreakable nature of an oath, this treaty that the Israelites made with the Gibeonites, even though it was obtained under false pretenses, could not be revoked. A similar situation is visible in **Genesis 27**, where Jacob tricked Isaac into blessing him, and the rightful recipient of the blessing, Esau, could not then receive it.

D. (:19-21) Trying to Make Lemonade out of Lemons

"*But all the leaders said to the whole congregation, 'We have sworn to them by the LORD, the God of Israel, and now we cannot touch them. 20 This we will do to them, even let them live, lest wrath be upon us for the oath which we swore to them.' 21 And the leaders said to them, 'Let them live.' So they became hewers of wood and drawers of water for the whole congregation, just as the leaders had spoken to them.*"

III. (:22-27) MAKING THE BEST OF A COMPROMISING SITUATION

A. (:22-23) Holding the Deceivers Accountable

1. (:22) Indictment by way of Rhetorical Question – Seeking Their Motive

"*Then Joshua called for them and spoke to them, saying, 'Why have you deceived us, saying, 'We are very far from you.' When you are living within our land*?'"

2. (:23) Curse of Slavery

"*Now therefore, you are cursed, and you shall never cease being slaves, both hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God*."

Robert Hubbard: But Joshua's curse adds an important detail to the leader's earlier community-service theme (cf. **v. 21**). He decrees that the Gibeonites' woodcutting and water-carrying will always serve "*the house of my God*" (**v. 23**). Now, in effect, the curse demotes the Gibeonites from treaty partners to menial slaves (Heb. *ʿebed*) serving the whole congregation. They will do the dirty work in support of the sanctuary on behalf of the congregation. In a sense, poetic justice prevails: A ruse wins the Gibeonites continued life but at a price—reduction to permanent slavery at menial tasks. Finally, Joshua's handling of the matter—his response to their complaints with open dialogue—regains the community's confidence in his leadership.

B. (:24-25) Resignation to Their Fate

1. (:24) Motive of Desperation and Fear of God

"*So they answered Joshua and said, 'Because it was certainly told your servants that the Lord your God had commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land before you; therefore we feared greatly for our lives because of you, and have done this thing*.'"

2. (:25) Surrender to Their Prescribed Punishment

"*And now behold, we are in your hands;*
do as it seems good and right in your sight to do to us."

C. (:26-27) Maintaining the Oath but Making Them Slaves

1. (:26) Sparing Their Lives

"*Thus he did to them, and delivered them from the hands of the sons of Israel, and they did not kill them*."

2. (:27) Making Them Slaves

"*But Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation and for the altar of the Lord, to this day, in the place which He would choose*."

* * * * * * * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Why do Satan and his cohorts continue to fight if they know they are ultimately defeated? What are the implications of knowing that deception will always be found out?

2) What are some of the rash decisions and commitments we have made? What were the consequences for not spending time waiting upon the Lord?

3) Do we put a supreme value on keeping our word and commitments … even at great cost to ourselves? What does this story teach about the importance of keeping our promises?

4) How should leaders respond when their people start grumbling about specific issues?

* * * * * * * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Richard Hess: From a literary perspective, this account focuses on the weaknesses of Israel's leadership and on the complaining attitude of the Israelite community toward that leadership. As with Achan and at Ai, Israel learned not to violate its covenants. It contrasts with the covenant at Mount Ebal by describing a covenant with an enemy. However, it connects both covenants and both peoples with the same place of worship. The text anticipates Gibeon's role in drawing Israel into conflict with the southern coalition. In the end, it serves Israelite purposes by advancing their divinely ordained task. For the Christian, the inclusion of the Gibeonites in God's covenant community (like Rahab) challenges any attitude of self-righteousness. Instead, it teaches the importance of valuing all peoples and of representing to them the life of Christ (see **Gal. 3:28**).

Thomas Constable: If God's people make covenants with unbelievers, we may end up disobeying God, as the Israelites did (cf. **2 Cor. 6:14-18**). We need to seek the will of God before we make these commitments, and we should look for it in prayer (**James 1:5; 4:2-3, 15**) and in Scripture (**2 Tim. 3:16-17**; cf. **Num. 27:21**). We should also consult other godly people who understand God's ways, who can help us avoid overlooking important scriptural revelations that are pertinent (**Prov. 11:14**). If we do make an unwise commitment, we should **make the best of the situation**, if breaking the covenant would be contrary to God's will (e.g., marriage to an unbeliever, et al.).

David Holwick: **Human wisdom has its limits.**
1) The Jews are suspicious.

a) They suspect the Gibeonites might live nearby. **9:7**
b) They ask for more details. **9:8**
c) They check out the moldy provisions. **9:14**

2) Our wisdom is superficial.

a) We tend to look on outward appearances.
b) Do you look at life that way?
"*There is a way that seems right to a man,*
but in the end it leads to death." **Prov 14:12**

3) They should have sought God. **9:14**

Jeffries: Remember, Canaan was not a "nation," as we know it. It was a land dotted with "kingdoms," each of which comprised little more than a city and surrounding lands. Some of these city-states were relatively large and powerful, like Jericho; others were quite small. Each was ruled by a "king" who provided protection for his surrounding "subjects" who, in turn, provided the economic base for the region. In this way the land of Canaan was much like Europe in the Middle Ages. . .

So the Gibeonites are spared. Reduced to the permanent status of "*woodcutters and water carriers*," they are nonetheless brought within the veil by the grace of God. Their history in Israel is a long one.

a. The city of Gibeon itself was assigned to the priestly family of Aaron (**Joshua 21:17**), so it became a center for training in God's Word and worship. Later, during the reign of Solomon, the tabernacle was at Gibeon (**2 Chronicles 1:3, 5**).

b. "When David was King in Israel, he learned that the cause of a three-year famine was that Saul had killed many Gibeonites in his misplaced zeal for the Lord. The famine was the Lord's punishment for breaking the oath made centuries before by Israel's leaders. (**2 Samuel 21:1-9**)."
(NavPress "Life Change" Series: Joshua)

c. "When the Jews returned from exile in Babylon, the list of those who could prove Jewish heritage included the Gibeonites (**Nehemiah 7:25**). Gibeonites helped rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (**Nehemiah 3:7**). Thus, it seems that the Gibeonites were eventually absorbed into the covenant people because, like Rahab, they transferred their allegiance to the Lord."
(NavPress "Life Change" Series, Ibid)

Robert Robb: As a result of this impetuous decision that was based solely on carnal reasoning they in effect not only allowed an enemy battalion that should have been destroyed of the hook but also allowed the enemy into their camp. It was a mistake, a foolish mistake, and Joshua and the people had to live with the consequences of their mistake and all because they didn't seek guidance from God on the matter. They took a hasty decision about an important matter, based solely upon their own powers of human reasoning and without seeking clear guidance from God, and they got it wrong. If only they had taken the time to bring the matter before God. . .

Robert Massey: Here is a little story that shows how dangerous compromise is. Winter was coming on and a hunter went out into the forest to shoot a bear out of which he planned to make a warm coat. By and by he saw a bear coming toward him and raised his gun and took aim.

"Wait," said the bear, "why do you want to shoot me?" "Because I am cold," said the hunter. "But I am hungry," the bear replied, "so maybe we can reach an agreement, or a compromise." In the end, the hunter was well enveloped with the bear's fur and the bear had eaten his dinner. We always lose out when we try to compromise with the devil and sin. It will consume us in the end.

Ray Scott: **LESSONS:**

1. Your Enemy Will Surprise You

- Satan is a master of disguise – **2 Corinthians 11:14; 2:11**

2. Don't Jump To Conclusions

- That's how rumors get started – **John 8:44**
- Don't assume everything you hear is the truth.

3. Don't Be Flattered Into Sin Or Disobedience

- Flattery is used to manipulate or control you …
to get you to let your guard down.

4. Seek Counsel From God – **9:14**

- Appearances are deceiving – **John 7:24**
- What is obvious isn't always best – **Proverbs 14:12**

5. Bad Decisions Have Consequences – **9:16-21**

- God expected them to honor an oath made in His Name.
- They had to live with the consequences of a bad decision.

6. Deception Will Ultimately Be Exposed – **9:16**

- Lies will find their way back home – **Proverbs 12:19**

7. Bad Actions Have Consequences

- For the Gibeonites – **9:22-23, 25-27**
- For Joshua – **9:18**
    - Take your problem with someone to that someone first – **Matthew 18:15**
    - When someone admits their mistake & repents, forgive them and go on.

Bob Marcaurelle: **Make the most out of your mistakes** --
A young Navy pilot was part of a squadron engaged in maneuvers. The admiral in charge put them under orders for absolute radio silence. The young pilot forgot, pressed his button, cleared his throat to say something, remembered the order and was heard muttering, "Oh, no! Man, am I stupid!" Not knowing which pilot did it, the irate admiral grabbed his mike, ordered all channels opened and growled fiercely, "Will the idiot who broke radio silence identify himself immediately!" There was a time of silence. A radio clicked on and a small voice was heard on the airways, "I may be stupid but I AM NOT THAT STUPID." And all was silence again. That fellow knew what to do with a mistake.

We are all going to make mistakes. That's why they put erasers on pencils. Someone said, "The person who brags about never making mistakes married someone who did." Architects cover their mistakes with ivy, dentists pull theirs out, lawyers' are put in prison, doctors' in the ground, electricians' are shocking, and brides cover theirs with mayonnaise. Mistakes are going to be made by anyone who tackles any worth-while task, and success in life and in Christianity depends on what we do with them. We must be big enough to admit our mistakes, smart enough to learn from them and strong enough to correct them. The main difference between a wise man and a fool is that a fool's mistakes don't teach him anything. In 1849 the famous English preacher, F. W. Robertson, said, "Life, like war, is a series of mistakes and he is not the best Christian nor the best general who makes the fewest mistakes … he is the best who wins the most splendid victories by the retrieval of mistakes." (Frederick W. Robertson, SERMONS PREACHED AT BRIGHTON, FIRST SERIES (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1898, p. 66).

Make mistakes? Yes! But **make the most out of them**. And that's exactly what we see in **Joshua 9–10**, the campaign which conquered the South of Canaan.

Phil Winfield: **How The Promised Land Was Won -- Devilish Deceptions**
The Devil attacks in several ways:

- Like a roaring Lion (**1 Peter 5:8**)
- Like an angel of light (**2 Corinthians 11:14**)
- Like a slithering serpent (**Genesis 3, Revelation 12:9**)

The Devil will be devilish:

1. Expect the Devil to use tricks.
   - Deceptive wiles (**vs. 3-5**)
   - Deceptive words

2. Expect the devil to demand a treaty.
   - The Devil can't take you back to Egypt (salvation)
   - The Devil can't expel you from the promised land (victory)
   - The Devil can link you up with a Gibeonite (unhealthy alliances)

3. Expect to have to live with the consequences (**v. 16**)

4. Expect the Devil to try to dictate.
   - Don't proceed without prayer (**v. 14**)
     Isaiah 48:17b "*I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go*."
   - Don't proceed without counsel (**v. 18**)
   - Don't provide him (the devil) a place.
   - Don't proceed because of pressure – watch out for rush decisions. (**vs. 6, 9, 11**)
   - Do perceive the Spirit's promptings (**vs. 7-8**). Until you clear up doubts, don't!
   - Do plan to employ your problems (**vs. 23, 27**)

Your biggest mistake in life may turn out to be your biggest door of opportunity in the future.
https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/11606173638.pdf

Robert Rohlin: **Problem with Partnerships**

[Paul Apple: I had the opportunity to go into a business partnership with two friends who were not Christians. The Lord protected me and I chose an alternative career path which seemed less promising but provided more stability and opportunity for ministry.]

Pride allows us to form **wrong partnerships**. And I can tell you already, this is going to be our last point because I want to go into this principle a little bit. And I've been asked this question a few times: "**What does the Bible say about partnerships? Why is this such a big deal?**"

Pride can make us become **unequally yoked** in a lot of different ways; in our friendships, in marriage… And I'm not just talking about unequally yoked together with unbelievers. Sometimes you can get unequally yoked together with other people who claim to be believers, as well. But they don't share your same convictions about things. So let's look at a few things about **why partnerships can be a dangerous thing**.

Number one is, it can jeopardize your reputation.
When we get in a partnership and we're yoked together with someone, there's the potential that our good name that we should seek to be keeping for our integrity so we can honor God could become damaged.

It can hinder your freedom to obey God.
God wants every man, in terms of business, to be free to follow his direction. We ought to be free to follow his direction in terms of what job he wants us to take, what career he has for us, what business he wants us to start, how we run that business. He wants us to do it his way. There's a way that the world has of building up a business. You go out and get in debt, buy all the stuff you need up front and then, you know, you try to work your way out for several years from under the burden.

That's not God's way. He's a pay as you go God. He gives you what you need when you need it, and you don't have to pay back for it. And then he has ways of managing his principles, and he wants you to tithe faithfully off of all your income to support the ministry of your local church. And he wants you to remember that every dollar you make in that business is his. He wants you to always pay your bills on time, so it doesn't detract from your reputation.

The problem is, is when you get into partnership and delegate part of the authority of the business to the other person. And they may not have the same understanding or appreciation for God's ways that you do, even though very frequently they'll tell you they do at the beginning of the partnership.

Partnerships ignore God-given limitations.
There's some things that we can't do, and maybe the reason that we can't do those things is because God didn't want us to do them to begin with. He didn't give us an adequate supply because it wasn't his will for us to do it. A lot of people, you know, they want to go in and they want to borrow big amounts of money and instead of saying, "God, if this is your will, will you provide?" And they go out and do things their own way. They ignore his limitations.

Partnerships can also end in bitterness.
Because you have different expectations. And when those expectations aren't met, it's easy to get bitter about those things.

And then they have **different ideas about what success is**.
One person's success is to have, you know, no liabilities and a lot of assets. It means all equity. And another person's is that they want things to look good even if it means

they're in debt because they want to put on the appearance of that. So there's potential conflicts and when there's conflicts the words of a talebearer go in our body as deep wounds. So one person says something hurtful and it wounds us deeply. Or "*a whisperer separateth chief friends.*" There's the murmuring that goes on as a result of that.

Matthew Black: **Double Crossed –**
Human Logic is Not Enough to Make Godly Decisions

Introducing the Gibeonites Spiritual Warfare

1. THE CRAFTINESS OF THE ENEMY (**9:3-13**)
   - The Gibeonites' Attack
   - The Flesh's Attack
   - The Spirit's Guidance

2. THE POWER OF PRAYER (**9:14-16**)
   - Take Time to Pray
   - Consult the Word of God
   - Be Sure to Obey

3. THE REDEMPTION OF FAILURE (**9:17-27**)
   - God Blessed the Gibeonites
   - God Blessed Joshua
   - God Blesses Us

Applications:
   - Always Be Ready for Satanic Attack
   - Seek the Mind of God Continually
   - Persevere to the End

https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/913201447135420.pdf

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **The Devil's Moldy Bread**
Introduction: There's an old saying that all that glitters is not gold. And so really, that's what we're going to learn about here in this passage tonight. This is a story here about **Deception.**

I. The Deception of the Enemy
When faith is weak, deception grows strong. Perhaps Joshua and Israel, basking in the last victory they had, had not fully relied upon the Lord the way they should. And you remember one of the themes throughout Joshua is the Lord will fight the battle. If they obey the Lord and rely upon the Lord, God will fight the battle. And perhaps after the glow of that victory, they were not relying upon the Lord the way they should, because they are about to be deceived.

A. Their Deceitful Lure – **9:1-2**
All these Canaanites come together in total unity. They learn to set aside their petty little

differences and come together to fight. The Gibeonites knew that Joshua and Israel would be preoccupied or distracted with this big confederacy, and they knew this stipulation in the law of Moses and Deuteronomy 20, and so they knew it was just the right time to pull off their little ruse.

B. Their Deceitful Look – **9:3**

C. Their Deceitful Lies – **9:6**
What we see here in this story is not just one lie, but several lies. You know why? Because a lie has no legs. It can't stand on its own. It has to have other lies to support it. And so when a person tells a lie, they have to tell a bunch of lies to cover up for the first lie. And so we see a bunch of lies.

D. Their Deceitful Logic – **9:11**
We're not saying throw out reason, throw out thinking, throw out common sense. No. Use all those things, but friend, we need to use them under the control and the leading of the Spirit of Almighty God.

II. The Decision of the Elders
We're going to see here the anatomy of a foolish decision. How did they make it?

A. Prompt Decision
Ex. 34:12; Is. 28:16

B. Presumptuous Decision – **9:14**

C. Prayerless Decision – **9:14**

D. Permanent Decision – unalterable – **9:15**

III. The Discovery of the Error – 9:16
A. The Contention it brought immediately

B. The Curse it brought eventually

C. The Comfort it brought providentially – **9:22**

Applications:
1) Always be slow in making big decisions
2) Don’t depend solely upon the counsel of man
3) Always keep your word, even if it costs you
4) Don’t depend on your own reasoning alone. Use common sense, but look to the Lord. Always pray.
5) If you have made a bad decision, Repent. Ask God’s forgiveness

TEXT: Joshua 10:1-15

TITLE: UNLIMITED DIVINE WEAPONS AND RESOURCES -- DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME ON STEROIDS!

BIG IDEA:
WE CAN ROUT OUR ENEMIES BY RELYING ON THE LORD'S UNLIMITED WEAPONS AND RESOURCES
- DEADLY TARGETED HAIL
- MIRACULOUS EXTENDED DAYLIGHT

INTRODUCTION:

Richard Hess: The attack of the Amorite leaders (**vv. 1–5**) stimulates the Gibeonite request for assistance (**v. 6**). The Israelite victory is first summarized (**vv. 7–10**) and then developed in three 'panels': God's assistance (**vv. 11–15**), Joshua and Israel's defeat of the enemy (**vv. 16–27**), and the systematic destruction of southern towns (**vv. 28–39**). A summary of the activities of the campaign concludes the account as Israel returns to where it began, at the worship centre of Gilgal (**vv. 40–43**).

David Howard: This section (**vv. 1–27**) tells of the Israelites' victory over a southern coalition of Canaanite kings who attacked Gibeon as a result of that city's treaty with Israel. Thus, the account here is a test of the validity of the treaty and Israel's commitment to its oath. The question was, Would Israel be true to its word and defend this people with whom it had made a binding treaty? The battle took place near Gibeon (**vv. 1–15**), but its aftermath unfolded elsewhere, at a cave near Makkedah (**vv. 16–27**).

Trent Butler: If the book of Joshua is, in its final form, addressed to the exilic community, it does not encourage the people to retrace the steps of Joshua by totally destroying all their enemies, but by trusting Yahweh to fulfill his promises to his people and to do the necessary fighting for them, even against overwhelming odds. The people of Israel are not to waste their time planning battle strategy and gathering armies. They are to spend their energy finding and doing the will of God.

Hamby: How big is your God?

Mel Svendsen: We serve and awesome God that calls us to trust Him and His power to accomplish great things in us and through us.

I. (:1-5) DESPERATE ALLIANCE FOR THE SAKE OF SURVIVAL

A. (:1-2) Greatness of Desperation

1. (:1a) Due to the Impressive Report -- Devastation of Ai and Jericho

"*Now it came about when Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem heard that*

Joshua had captured Ai, and had utterly destroyed it (just as he had done to Jericho and its king, so he had done to Ai and its king)"

Robert Robb: The opening verses of chapter 9, 10 and 11 make interesting reading. In each case the writer puts on record the fact that with each success Israel enjoyed there was a corresponding intensification of enemy opposition against her.

2. (:1b) Due to the Inhabitants of Gibeon Now Aligned with Israel – Buffer Zone Eliminated

"*and that the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were within their land*"

Richard Hess: Either Adoni-Zedek opposes Israel's divinely appointed advance and thereby faces the same judgment as Jericho and Ai, or he makes peace with Israel, joining Israel and Israel's God, and thereby finds a means of living in the midst of Israel, even if in a position of servitude. . .

Gibeon, apparently a former ally, had deserted to the enemy. Four clauses describe Gibeon's strength.

(1) *Gibeon was an important city*. . . It was a great city like Nineveh (**Jon. 3:3**).
(2) It was *like one of the royal cities* . . . The term *royal city* describes Gath as the residence of the Philistine leader, Achish (**1 Sam. 27:5**). Thus it defines a centre secure against royal enemies.
(3) *It was larger than Ai* . . . The security of Gibeon was greater than Ai, whose walls Israel did not breach.
(4) *All its men were good fighters*. The term for males of age for military service appears here with the same meaning as in **Joshua 7:14–18**.

The phrases magnify the value of this town for Israel even as they increase the extent of the threat present for Adoni-Zedek. Adoni-Zedek must regain control of the area of Gibeon for his own security.

3. (:2) Due to the Intimidation Factor -- Reaction of Desperate Fear

"*that he feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city, like one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all its men were mighty*."

David Guzik: The enemies of Israel feared greatly, but like our spiritual enemies, they do not retreat when they are afraid, but launch attacks that are even more bold, as a wild animal might fight when it feels attacked. Though they are afraid, they are still clever. Afraid to attack Israel directly, they attack their vassals the Gibeonites.

B. (:3-4) Gibeon Targeted by Alliance Formed by the King of Jerusalem

"*Therefore Adoni-zedek of Jerusalem sent word to Hoham king of Hebron and to Piram king of Jarmuth and to Japhia king of Lachish and to Debir king of Eglon, saying, 'Come up to me and help me, and let us attack Gibeon, for it has made peace with Joshua and with the sons of Israel*.'"

C. (:5) Goal = Trying to Gain a Foothold for Defense

"*So the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon, gathered together and went up, they with all their armies, and camped by Gibeon and fought against it*."

Richard Hess: These four sites formed a strategic choice for the king of Jerusalem. Cut off from possible allies to the north, Adoni-Zedek chose Jarmuth, a site that straddled the Sorek and Elah valleys and thus provided a key defence for incursions to Jerusalem from the west. That is to say, Jarmuth was a western neighbour of Jerusalem. Lachish, Eglon, and Hebron formed a line of sites across the southern Shephelah and hill country. The road from Lachish to Hebron has been described as 'the most important ascent into the highlands in the entire region'. Eglon linked Hebron with Gaza and Egypt. It also connected Lachish and the Mediterranean seaports with Arad and the Arabian trade routes. All these centres benefited by trade with Jerusalem and its roads to the north. If Egypt still dominated the coastal plain, the Benjaminite plateau may have provided these towns with their primary access to all northern markets. With these cut off and with the survival of Jerusalem threatened, the rumours of Israel's successes would have brought the leaders of the southern towns to the aid of their ally. As the story goes on to relate, the 'domino theory' operated. If they could not stop Israel at Jerusalem, the leaders knew that their own towns faced destruction.

David Howard: The term "*Amorite*" is likely used here in its narrow sense of inhabitants of the central mountain region of Palestine, not its broader sense of any Canaanite. Only Jerusalem and Hebron were actually in the hill country, but the designation of the entire coalition as an Amorite one may signify the importance of Jerusalem—an "*Amorite*" city—and its king at the head of the coalition. The four kings joined Adoni-Zedek and attacked Gibeon (**v. 5**). The four kings were from Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon, all cities southwest of Jerusalem.

II. (:6-8) DIVINE ASSURANCE OF VICTORY OVER THE AMORITES

A. (:6-7) Appeal to the Integrity of Treaty Commitment – Joshua Answering the Cry for Help from Gibeon

"*Then the men of Gibeon sent word to Joshua to the camp at Gilgal, saying, 'Do not abandon your servants; come up to us quickly and save us and help us, for all the kings of the Amorites that live in the hill country have assembled against us.' So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him and all the valiant warriors*."

Keathley: Humanly speaking, this was the perfect opportunity for Joshua to get rid of the Gibeonites. Why shouldn't Joshua just ignore the very people who had deceived them? Why not let the coalition destroy them and rid him of the embarrassment? There were at least two reasons he could not do that: First, as a man of integrity who honored his word, Joshua did not consider that an option. They had given their word and were duty bound to

honor it. Second, this now provided a unique military opportunity. Rather than a long, drawn out campaign against one city at a time, this gave them the opportunity to defeat and destroy several armies at once.

B. (:8) Affirmation of Certain and Complete Victory

"*And the Lord said to Joshua, 'Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands; not one of them shall stand before you*.'"

Kenneth Gangel: If most of us had been in Joshua's shoes, we would have been tempted to let the Canaanites fight it out among themselves; that would save a lot of trouble. Furthermore, the Gibeonites had deceived us and deserved it. But Joshua had made a commitment and given a promise. Keeping that promise was part of his walking correctly before God.

Alan Carr **- He Gave His Promise**
The Lord didn't stop with just a word of encouragement, He also gave them the **promise of absolute victory**! I would like to say that I still believe the Lord never saved you for you to be defeated! When He saved you, He did so with the promise that you could walk in His victory—**1 Cor. 15:57; Rom. 8:37**. That doesn't mean that every situation in life will work out the way you want it to, but it does mean that God will enable you to live above your circumstances and share in His victory over the world, the flesh and the devil!

III. (:9-11) DEVASTATION ACCOMPLISHED BY STEPPING OUT IN FAITH WHILE THE LORD FOUGHT THE BATTLE

A. (:9) Action Required by Joshua and His Army – Stepping Out in Faith

"*So Joshua came upon them suddenly by marching all night from Gilgal*."

Richard Hess: The strategy of an all-night march responded to the Gibeonite request for haste and facilitated the divinely ordained confusion of the enemy when they saw Israel appear out of the morning mists.

Trent Butler: Divine assurance does not exclude human wit and action. Joshua stages a surprise dawn attack after an all-night march. Hall states: "Divine and human agency are inseparable." From Gilgal to Gibeon would entail a march of about eighteen miles (thirty kilometers). Soggin claims it could be carried out in eight to ten hours. The Hebrew text of **Josh 9:17** claims that it took **three days** for Joshua to reach Gibeon the first time. The notice there may intentionally point to the present verse to underline the **remarkable achievement** of Joshua and his men here.

B. (:10) Action Performed Relentlessly by the Lord to Secure Victory

"*And the Lord confounded them before Israel,*
and He slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon,
and pursued them by the way of the ascent of Beth-horon,
and struck them as far as Azekah and Makkedah."

David Howard: While Joshua and his force marched all night and took the Amorites by surprise (**v. 9**), it was Yahweh—and Yahweh alone—who took the decisive actions against the enemies (**v. 10**). Every verb in this verse is **singular**, indicating that he alone confused, struck, pursued, and struck them. It may have been that the fighting force with Joshua (**v. 7**) was actually involved in this—indeed, this probably was the case, in light of the reference in **v. 11** to the Israelites' swords killing people. But, here, the author has chosen to ignore this fact and to focus instead on **Yahweh's direct involvement** as Israel's warrior. The land and its people were Yahweh's to give, and he did so here.

C. (:11) Accuracy of Divine Stoning -- Nothing Wrong with the Lord's Aim

"*And it came about as they fled from before Israel, while they were at the descent of Beth-horon, that the Lord threw large stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died; there were more who died from the hailstones than those whom the sons of Israel killed with the sword*."

David Howard: Whereas **v. 10** summarizes the victory over the Amorites in general terms, with Yahweh receiving the credit, **v. 11** gives more details, and Yahweh is again credited with the victory. The verse wraps up the first section describing the battle, and it is set off from its surroundings syntactically.

Henry Morris: That this unique event was of the Lord, inexplicable by either human might or natural phenomena, is evident from the entire account. The justification for God's miraculous intervention here was both the importance of this key battle in the entire plan of God for Israel and the world, as well as the testimonial value implicit in demonstrating to the sun-worshipping, moon-worshipping, nature-worshipping Canaanites--as well as the Israelites themselves--that the God of Israel controlled the sun and moon and forces of nature.

IV. (:12-15) DAYTIME ARRESTED TO FINISH THE CONQUEST – LORD'S POWER NOT LIMITED BY DIMENSIONS OF TIME AND SPACE

A. (:12) Asking for the Impossible

"*Then Joshua spoke to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, 'O sun, stand still at Gibeon, And O moon in the valley of Aijalon*.'"

B. (:13) Accomplishing the Impossible

"*So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation avenged themselves of their enemies. Is it not written in the book of Jashar? And the sun stopped in the middle of the sky, and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day*."

Richard Hess: For the Christian, the repeated mention of God's miraculous intervention in Israel's wars recalls the **spiritual warfare** with sin that forms a daily struggle. This too involves spiritual forces. Although they may not always manifest themselves in the overtly miraculous, they are no less real (**Eph. 6:12**).

Kenneth Gangel: Ironically, the Canaanites worshiped sun and moon deities, so once again God proved his supreme power and authority and answered Joshua's bold prayer with an awesome miracle.

Andrew Webb: The whole time they were fleeing, the defeated army though, is probably thinking if we can just stay alive till dark, we can slip away in the night. The night will cover us from the eyes of Joshua and his army and we can hole up in the valleys and the caves, or take different routes back to our own fortified cities. Joshua knew what nightfall meant as well, and that darkness would indeed mean the end of his pursuit. So he prays before all Israel for the sun to stand still that they might complete the destruction of the enemy army. And that is what happened.

"The exact mechanics of how an omnipotent God could accomplish this deed are best left to God's miraculous power. God is capable of physically lengthening the time between sunrise and sunset, and 3 of doing it in such a way that other potential cataclysmic consequences of such a drastic change could be negated. Or God could have merely manipulated the path of the sun's light so that daylight was extended and nighttime shortened during an otherwise ordinary day."
https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/92805144723.pdf

C. (:14) Answering with Unimaginable Intervention

"*And there was no day like that before it or after it, when the Lord listened to the voice of a man; for the Lord fought for Israel*."

David Howard: The author's emphasis in the section comes in **v. 14**. He marvels, not so much at the miracle or sign of **v. 13**, but rather at the fact that God heard and responded to the voice of a man (**v. 14**), interceding dramatically for Israel because of Joshua's petition (**v. 12**)! There had never been such a day, nor would there be ever again. The two previous miracles on Israel's behalf—the stopping of the waters of the Jordan and the victory over Jericho—had been at God's initiative; this time, it was in response to one man's petition. This fact again highlights Joshua's importance in the book, and it also underscores God's faithfulness to his people.

Jerome Creach: [The author's] main concern was that God could and did **intervene** within history for Israel. Herein lies the main issue for modern Christians. This author, like all biblical writers, thought of history and nature as parts of the created order that God controlled. He conceived humans as part of nature and therefore subject to the movements of history over which God was master. The modern view of things has radically changed these relationships so that humans are separate from nature, and humans shape history. This worldview encourages an understanding of God as one who allows the world to run by natural law and of humans as those who move and shape history. **Joshua 10:1–14** calls the church to wrestle with this arrogant understanding of humanity. For indeed the church claims that there was a day like no other, namely the day of the resurrection of the Lord (**Acts 2:29–36**). That day was not brought about by human will or plan but by the act of God on behalf of broken humanity.

D. (:15) Arriving back at Camp

"*Then Joshua and all Israel with him returned to the camp to Gilgal*."

Van Parunak: Much more happened before the return to Gilgal, but from the perspective of the power behind the victory, the point has been made. The Lord fought for Israel, and so they were able to finish the job and return home.

* * * * * * * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Why did they choose to attack Gibeon if their real target was the Israelites?

2) What are some other verses that would speak to this issue of effectual prayer? What made this incident so unique in God's eyes?

3) Do you view God's resources as available to you in your spiritual warfare?

4) How would Joshua's audience be encouraged by this account of the Lord's powerful intervention on behalf of His people?

* * * * * * * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Jerome Creach: **Joshua 10–12** is a collection of varied material, held together by the common theme of **Joshua consolidating Israel's control over the land**. The section begins with a report of Israel coming to Gibeon's aid when a group of southern kings form a coalition against it (**10:1–14**). At the center of this section are accounts of Joshua capturing southern (**10:16–42**) and northern territories (**11:6–20**) and executing the kings of the cities that rise against him there. Both of these subsections end with broad conclusions of how Joshua "*took the whole land*" (**10:40–42; 11:16–23**). Two prominent structural features tie **chapters 10** and **11** together:

- First, **Joshua 10:1–5** and **11:1–5** both report the Canaanite reaction to Israel, using very similar conventions of speech ("*When king* _____ *heard … , he sent* …"); these introductory segments are important because they cast the conquest of a majority of territory (save Jericho and Ai) as a result of Israel defending Gibeon out of covenant obligation.
- Second, at the end of both the Gibeonite story (**10:14–15**) and the report of Joshua's southern sweep (**10:42–43**), there is a two-part conclusion, stating that "*the LORD fought for Israel*" (**10:14–15, 42–43**) and that Joshua returned to Gilgal (**10:15; 11:43**). **Chapter 12** then serves as a larger summary of the whole conquest, including the exploits of Moses east of the Jordan (**12:1–6**) and the actions of Joshua west of the river (**12:7–24**).

John Hamby: **Illustration**
“About twelve years after he graduated from Princeton , Donald Grey Barnhouse was invited to preach in chapel, and when he arrived, he noticed [his old Hebrew professor Robert Dick Wilson] had taken a place near the front to hear him. When the service was over, his old Hebrew professor came up to Barnhouse and said, ‘If you come back again. I will not come to hear you preach. I only come once. I am glad that you are a big-godder. When my boys come back, I come to see if they are big-godders or little-godders, and then I know what their ministry will be.’

Barnhouse asked Wilson to explain. He said, ‘Well, some men have a little god, and they are always in trouble with him. He can’t do any miracles. He can’t take care of the inspiration of the Scriptures and their preservation and transmission to us. They have a little god, and I call them little-godders. Then there are those who have a great God. He speaks, and it is done. He commands, and it stands fast. He knows how to show himself strong on behalf of those who fear him. You have a great God and he will bless your ministry.’ ”
[James Montgomery Boice. Joshua: We Will Serve The Lord. (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Revell, 1989) pp 114-115]

Goins: These are the last recorded **miraculous interventions** that God makes in the history of the conquest in this book.

God's provision goes beyond the physical material resources of our natural existence. He is willing to use supernatural resources to achieve His sovereign purposes. I'm not talking about miracles on demand. I'm talking about sovereign decisions on God's part to reverse the natural order for his honor and glory, to further the work of his kingdom on earth.

In the **miracle of the hailstones**, the Lord is assisting an army that is weary. Remember, they have hiked all night, twenty-five miles uphill; engaged in hand-to-hand combat through most of the day; then pursued the Amorite army, which was in flight, down through this narrow mountain pass. So God providentially sends in reinforcements of heavenly artillery, machine-gun fire of hailstones. These hailstones are sort of like the "smart" bombs we saw in the Gulf War, which could identify the targets to hit. The hailstones hit only Amorite soldiers, never Israelite soldiers. The text says that there are more Amorites killed by hail than by the conventional military weaponry of the Israelite army.

But that miracle of hailstones is nothing compared to the **miracle of extending the daylight hours** so Israel can secure a complete victory over the enemy. If nightfall came, it would be easy for the enemy to escape. So Joshua says, "Lord, I want them where I can see them. Keep the daylight hours here. My men are tired, we want to finish the battle." And God hears Joshua's cry to reverse the natural order. He extends the hours of the day long enough so that Israel can finish the battle.

Helene Dallaire: The narrator states at the outset that the hearer and initiator of the events to follow is **Adoni-zedek**, king of Jerusalem. His name (*My lord is righteous*) reminds us of **Melchizedek** (*My king is righteous*), who is called "*king of Salem*" (**Gen 14:18**). These are the only two names in the Bible that end with *zedek* (*sedeq*, righteousness), and both are non-Israelites (cf. Zedekiah). Moreover, this is the first time that **Jerusalem** is mentioned by name in the Bible. Interestingly, the place that the Lord will choose occurs only in **Joshua 9:27**, but twenty-one times in Deuteronomy. It is significant, therefore, that Jerusalem is mentioned here, especially since this king was captured and killed (**10:23-27**; cf. **12:10**) even though Jerusalem is not mentioned in the list of cities conquered by Joshua later in **chapter 10**. Jerusalem does not actually become part of Israel until David conquers the city several centuries later (**2 Sam 5**). Thus the note at the end of **Joshua 10:1** carries two connotations. First, *making peace* resonates with the name of Jerusalem, which also includes the same Hebrew root (*šlm*). Second, that the Gibeonites *were among them* not only reiterates what was said about the Gibeonites earlier (**9:7, 16, 22**) but also about Rahab (**6:25**) and aliens (**8:35**). The danger *among* Israel for Israel are devoted things (**7:13**) and foreign gods (**24:23**). Although the Gibeonites do not pose a threat to Israel, the treaty of peace seems to have posed a threat to Adoni-zedek. Perhaps the narrator wants to show, by juxtaposing the place that *he [the Lord] should choose* (**9:27**) with Jerusalem (**10:1**), that Jerusalem would be preserved for David and for the purposes of God in establishing that city.

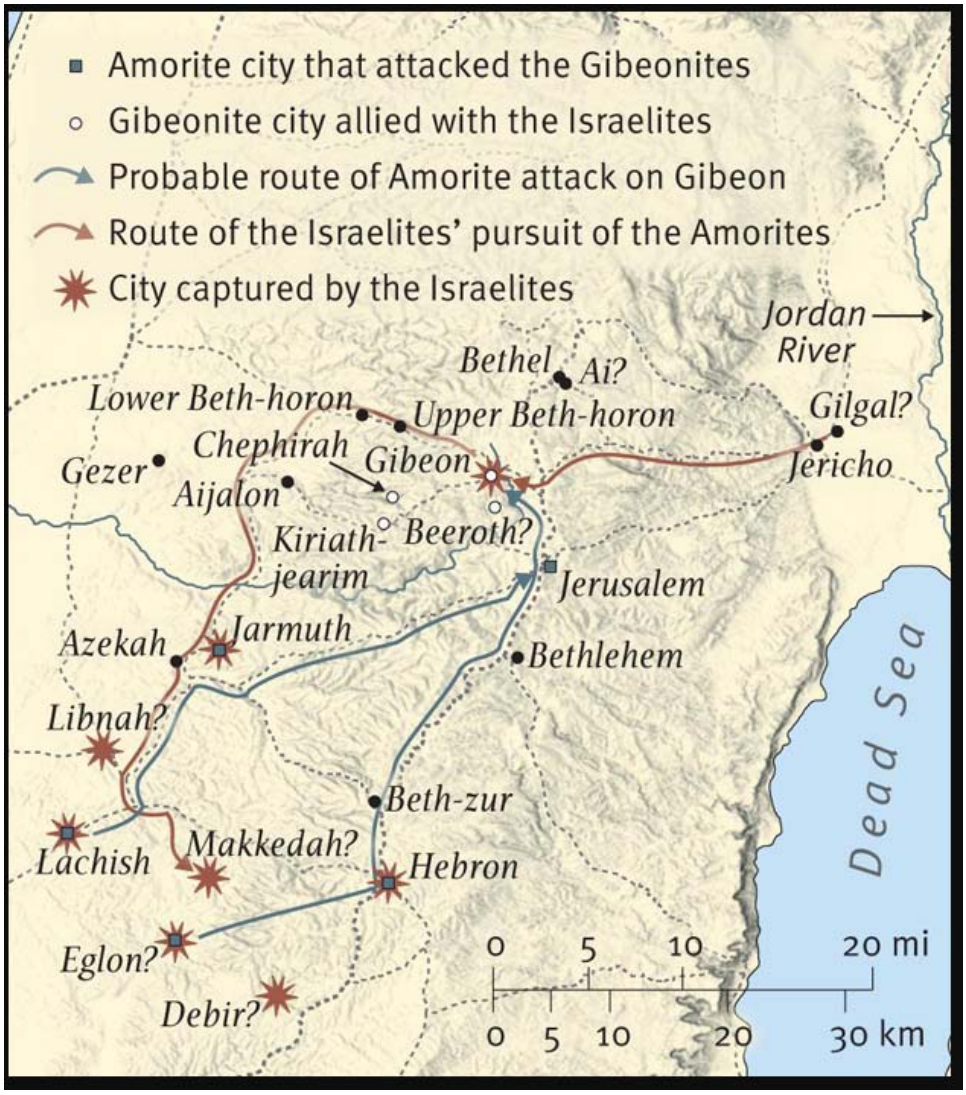
John Currid: A central aspect of the episode before us in this chapter is the **power of prayer**, and how God cares for his people by answering their prayers in the most mysterious ways. In his old age, George Müller was asked by a reporter how he had kept his orphanages financially afloat during all the many years of his ministry. Müller responded:

> *No man on earth can say that I ever asked him for a penny. We have no committees, no collectors, no voting and no endowments. All has come in answer to believing prayer. My trust has been in God alone; He has many ways of moving the hearts of men to help us all over the world. While I am praying He speaks to this one and another, on this continent and on that, to send us help. Only the other evening, while I was preaching, a gentleman wrote me a cheque for a large amount for the orphans, and handed it to me when the service was over.*

Dale Ralph Davis: It is too bad much of the church has lost this vision of God or Christ as **the warrior who fights for his people**. Too many of us regard this conception as substandard, by which we mean it does not fit our sentimental twentieth-century graven images of what God ought to be like. The imagery seems too violent. And we do the same for the Lord Jesus, with perhaps not a little help from church school materials. The popular image of Jesus is that he is not only kind and tender but also soft and prissy, as though Jesus comes to us reeking of hand cream. Such a Jesus can hardly steel the soul that is daily assaulted by the enemy. We need to learn the catechism of **Psalm 24**. Question: *Who is the King of glory*? Answer: *Yahweh, strong and mighty*! *Yahweh—mighty in battle*! (**Ps. 24:8**). We must catch the vision of the Faithful and True sitting on the white horse, the One who '*judges and makes war*' in righteousness (**Rev.**

19:11–16). No mild God or soft Jesus can give his people hope. It is only as we know the warrior of Israel who fights for us (and sometimes without us) that we have hope of triumphing in the muck of life. (*Joshua: No Falling Words*)

ESV Global Study Bible Map:



Dr. Jerry Harmon: **The Longest Day**

Introduction: When we say it's been a long day, we mean that it seems like it was a lot longer than 24 hours, maybe because of some problem that you've had or some difficulty in the day. But I want to show you a passage of scripture that teaches us that there really was a day in history that was longer than 24 hours. It literally was a long day.

> C.S. Lewis: "the mind which asks for a non-miraculous Christianity is a mind in process of relapsing from Christianity into mere religion. I don't want mere religion, I want real Christianity. And real Christianity includes a God who can do

miracles. There is nothing too hard for God. There is nothing impossible with God.

Robert Dick Wilson: [a former professor of Hebrew at Princeton Seminary] and he came to chapel one day to hear one of his students. This student had graduated and was in ministry for 12 years, and he had been invited back to the chapel service to speak. This student's name was Donald Gray Barnhouse. Perhaps you know that name. And as Donald Gray Barnhouse was speaking in chapel, Dr. Wilson, his Hebrew professor, was sitting up front listening to him preach. And when it was over, Dr. Wilson came up to Dr. Barnhouse and said, I always come to hear my boys preach in chapel. He said, I want to find out if they believe in a big God or they believe in a little God.

Big Idea: **3 Perspectives on Joshua's Long Day**

I. The Miracle of the Long Day

A. A Fearful Problem – **10:1**

B. A Fulfilled Promise – **10:6**

C. The Fierce Plan – **10:7**

D. The Furious Pursuit – **10:10**

E. The Faith-Filled Prayer – **10:12**

II. The Mystery of the Long Day

Joshua was using the language of observation. Just because a writer of Scripture uses the language of observation, it does not mean that the Bible is scientifically inaccurate. This passage has been fiercely debated. It's been debated by scholars. It's been debated by theologians. It's been debated by preachers. And the question is, what happened here? Is this literally a long day or is this figurative?

- Philosophical debate
- Theological debate
- Astronomical debate

Is. 28:21 -- the word for strange is something that is unique, something that is unheard of, that has never happened before. It doesn't sound like a mirage. That's the power of God. You can't use the laws of nature to try to explain a miracle.

III. The Message of the Long Day

God fights for His people. God gives victory to His people. God is the source of our victory. All of our victories come from Him. Like I said before, victory is our responsibility, but it's our response to His ability. Remember I told you I like to give you one big idea in a sermon. I like to give the sermon in a sentence. So here's the sermon in a sentence. And it's this, **the Lord gives victory showing that He alone is almighty God.** That's what this whole story tells us.

TEXT: Joshua 10:16-28

TITLE: CONQUEST ISN'T OVER UNTIL IT'S OVER

BIG IDEA:
WHEN GOD CALLS US TO VICTORY WE MUST FINISH OFF THE ENEMY

INTRODUCTION:

Nothing aggravates me more in movies than when the good guys fail to finish off the bad guys … who end up rearing their evil heads and renewing the conflict. We want to make sure that we completely defeat our enemies so they don't pop back up and continue to cause us problems in the future.

Trent Butler: God has given the enemy into their hands, but Israel must take the enemies. Israel cannot celebrate victory when total victory and total obedience are not yet realities.

Kenneth Gangel: **Engage – Even When You Are Afraid**
Joshua and his troops had learned an important lesson that appears again in these verses: press the battle according to God's plan and leave the miracles to him.

David Guzik: We have another striking similarity with the Book of Revelation. Not only does a false "*Lord of Righteousness*" (Adoni-Zedek) lead a group of nations against Joshua, who has come to possess the land; but also, in the midst of their defeat, the kings hide in caves in fear of the conquering Joshua (**Revelation 6:15–16**).

I. (:16-21) GOD'S ENEMIES WILL TRY TO AVOID EXTINCTION – YOU CAN RUN BUT YOU CAN'T HIDE

A. (:16) Crawling into a Hole

"*Now these five kings had fled and hidden themselves in the cave at Makkedah*."

Remember the sorry hole that Saddam Hussein crawled into and was hauled out of.

Richard Hess: The rock-sealed cave becomes the prison and then the tomb of the leaders.

J. Parker: The **names** of the places may help us to consider the nature of their respective kings.
1. "*The king of Jerusalem*." That such a king should have been slain works violently in our memory and whole thought, for "*Jerusalem*" means peace--the city of peace, the restful city, the sabbatic metropolis, the home of rest. But is there not a false peace? The king of **false peace** must be slain. He has ruled over some of us too long.

2. "*Hebron*" means conjunction, joining, alliance. Is not the king of **false fellowship** to be killed? What concord hath Christ with Belial? God has always been against unholy

alliances. Many a man He has, so to say, arrested with the words, Why this conjunction? What right have you to be here, pledging your character to sustain a known dishonesty?

3. And the king of *Jarmuth*. The word means high, that which is lifted up. And is not the king of **false ambition** to be slain and then hanged--to have contempt added to murder? Contempt is never so well expended as upon false ambition.

4. Then the king of *Lachish*. The word means hard to be captured, almost out of reach, or so defended that it will be almost impossible to get at the king. Is not the king of **fancied security** to be slain and hanged?

5. King of *Eglon*. The Word "*Eglon*" means pertaining to a calf, and may be taken as representing the whole system of **false worship**.

B. (:17-19) Capturing them for Future Execution

> "*And it was told Joshua, saying, 'The five kings have been found hidden in the cave at Makkedah.' And it was told Joshua, saying, 'The five kings have been found hidden in the cave at Makkedah.' And Joshua said, 'Roll large stones against the mouth of the cave, and assign men by it to guard them, but do not stay there yourselves; pursue your enemies and attack them in the rear. Do not allow them to enter their cities, for the Lord your God has delivered them into your hand*.'"

Don't be distracted from the task at hand.

David Guzik: Joshua would not allow anything – even the personal capture of the kings – to keep him from completing Israel's victory. The kings could be imprisoned and dealt with later.

David Howard: Joshua's instructions in **v. 18** were to **seal them up**, so that the battle could be pursued to its conclusion, which was to destroy all of the people (**vv. 19–20**). After this, he would deal with the kings (**vv. 22 –27**).

C. (:20-21) Calming any Voice of Opposition

> "*And it came about when Joshua and the sons of Israel had finished slaying them with a very great slaughter, until they were destroyed, and the survivors who remained of them had entered the fortified cities, that all the people returned to the camp to Joshua at Makkedah in peace. No one uttered a word against any of the sons of Israel.*"

David Howard: "*no one sharpened his tongue*" -- That is, so safe would the Israelites be that not even a dog would bark against them. Dogs were despised, accursed animals in the ancient Near East (in the Bible, see **1 Sam 17:43; 2 Sam 9:8; 2 Kgs 8:13**), and the use of almost the exact expression here in Joshua may be the author's way of reminding the Israelites how God miraculously delivered them at an earlier time in Egypt, and subtly

equating the accursed Canaanites with dogs (i.e., no Canaanite spoke against the Israelites now, just as no dog had "*spoken*" against them in Egypt).

Bruce Hurt: "*Then the whole army safely returned to Joshua at the camp in Makkedah*." All the soldiers returned safe. This is truly miraculous! Don't miss this statement - **obedience to the commands of the LORD brings peace**!

II. (:22-27) GOD'S ENEMIES MUST BE SNUFFED OUT COMPLETELY -- STEPPING ON THE NECK OF THE DEFEATED ENEMY

A. (:22-23) Cowering in Defeat –
The Frightened Five Amorite Kings who had Opposed Israel

> "*Then Joshua said, 'Open the mouth of the cave and bring these five kings out to me from the cave.' And they did so, and brought these five kings out to him from the cave: the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon*."

B. (:24-25) Conquest Symbolized by Stepping on Their Necks –
The Reinforced Courage of the Leaders of Israel –

Not a Neck Massage – a Neck Message! [Bruce Hurt]

> "*And it came about when they brought these kings out to Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said to the chiefs of the men of war who had gone with him, 'Come near, put your feet on the necks of these kings.' So they came near and put their feet on their necks. Joshua then said to them, 'Do not fear or be dismayed! Be strong and courageous, for thus the Lord will do to all your enemies with whom you fight.*'"

How bold is our confidence in the Lord?

David Howard: When the commanders put their feet on their enemies' necks (**v. 24**), this was clearly a gesture of victory. In the Bible, we see similar imagery in several texts, including **Ps 18:39 (Hb. 40) // 2 Sam 22:40**, which says, "*You made my adversaries bow under me*," and **Ps 110:1**, where the Lord says to the Messiah, "*Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet*." In the New Testament, this imagery is again applied to Jesus, the Messiah, in **1 Cor 15:25–27**, where God places Jesus' enemies "*under his feet*" (quoting from **Ps 8:6**).

Robert Hubbard: In the Old Testament, the foot symbolizes the sovereignty of the imposer and the subjection of the one under it (**1 Kings 5:3[17]; Ps. 8:6[7]; 47:4[3]**). In connection with battles, it marks a key metaphor for resounding victory (foot imposed) or crushing defeat (underfoot; **2 Sam. 22:39 = Ps. 18:38[39]**), and that is the symbolism here. . .

Joshua again sounds the key theme of Yahweh's fighting Israel's enemies, the key factor that assures victory and inspires Israel to show strength and courage (**vv. 14, 42**; cf. **Ex. 14:25**).

Dale Ralph Davis: Now this act was not simple barbarism nor a mere macho move. It was, if one might speak loosely, a sacrament. Joshua's words in **verse 25** explain the action: '*Don't be afraid and don't lose your nerve; be strong and bold, for this is what Yahweh will do to all your enemies with whom you are fighting*.' The leaders' feet upon the necks of these prostrate kings was an **acted parable**, an assuring sign, of how Yahweh would certainly place all their enemies beneath them. The symbolic action is intended as a **visible encouragement** to the people of God.

C. (:26-27) Completing the Public Execution and Burial Humiliation

> "*So afterward Joshua struck them and put them to death, and he hanged them on five trees; and they hung on the trees until evening. And it came about at sunset that Joshua commanded, and they took them down from the trees and threw them into the cave where they had hidden themselves, and put large stones over the mouth of the cave, to this very day*."

The rest of the chapter recounts the defeat of each of the five cities in turn … now that their king had been executed.

David Howard: The sun's setting in **v. 27** brings to a close the sun's involvement on this momentous day. Regardless of the precise nature of its involvement in **vv. 12– 14**, it now marked the completion of this historic day. . .

In whatever circumstances—whether facing an enemy in an insignificant town that had defeated them once or a coalition of determined enemies who would initiate the attack—the result was the same: God gave the victory, and the enemies' fate was the same, now that Israel was taking pains to obey its God.

Richard Hess: The obedience of Joshua towards God is demonstrated by his execution of the leaders of the Canaanites, which is witnessed by the Israelite leaders and by the army. It is performed by Joshua although the leaders place their feet upon the necks of each of the captives. The ceremony does not end with the execution. It also entails the hanging of the corpses on wooden poles. Hanging upon a wooden pole or tree was also the treatment given to the corpse of the ruler of Ai. In both accounts, the corpses are buried later. This public spectacle of Israelite victory also served to frighten Canaanite onlookers, perhaps in the nearby town of Makkedah.

Gordon Matties: The episode draws to a close, ironically, with Joshua's command, at sunset, to bury the kings in their own hiding place (**v. 27**). The cave is marked by large stones, which remain to this very day. As in previous stories, a physical memorial has been transformed into a narrative (**4:9; 7:26; 8:28, 29**; cf. **5:9; 9:27**). The site's location has been forgotten, but the memory and the tragedy linger.

Trent Butler: The place of refuge is important for Israel as a reminder of what God has done for them and of the significance of that act for the present day. The people who

experience divine victory are all too prone to forget even though Israel has constant reminders to remember and to obey.

(:28) EPILOGUE – SUMMARY OF CONQUEST OF MAKKEDAH

> "*Now Joshua captured Makkedah on that day, and struck it and its king with the edge of the sword; he utterly destroyed it and every person who was in it. He left no survivor. Thus he did to the king of Makkedah just as he had done to the king of Jericho.*"

Helene Dallaire: The city of Makkedah is conquered as a *ḥērem*—a city devoted to Yahweh where everything is to be completely destroyed. The treatment administered to the king of Makkedah reflects that previously inflicted on the king of Jericho (**6:20–21, 24; 8:2**). We presume that the king of Jericho was hung on a tree based on information given in **chapter 8**. In **8:2**, Yahweh instructed Joshua to do to the king of Ai what he did to the king of Jericho, and in **8:29** we are told that the king of Ai was hung on a tree. We can, therefore, conclude that the king of Makkedah was also hung on trees or poles outside of the city.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Why does God want us to completely vanquish our spiritual enemies?

2) How could the subjugation of these prominent enemy kings have distracted Joshua from his ultimate goal?

3) Why was it important for the leaders to step on the necks of their conquered enemies?

4) Why was it appropriate for Joshua to humiliate and desecrate the bodies of these defeated Amorite kings?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

William Morris: **Re vv. 16-27**

A. We Must Control Our Enemy (16-18)

When Joshua discovered that the 5 kings were in a cave, he had it sealed up so they couldn't escape.

B. We Must Confront Our Enemy (22-25)

He brought them out and publicly declared victory once the battle was won.

C. We Must Conquer Our Enemy (26-27)

Once again we see that the only way victory can be assured is to put our enemy to death. There can be peace between God's people and the enemies of God. No peace treaty, only death.

Thomas Constable: As believers experience increasing success in their spiritual warfare, they normally experience increasing opposition from spiritual enemies, as Israel did. Still, the LORD fights alongside His people no matter how fierce the opposition may be (**2 Cor. 12:9**). Yet we have spiritual responsibilities to fulfill as well that make victory possible (e.g., trust, obedience, using our resources, etc.; cf. **Eph. 6:14-18**).

The LORD Himself provides "assistance," both naturally and supernaturally. He enables us to use the strength, wisdom, and endurance that He has given us. He also does miracles, things we cannot possibly do for ourselves: like when He gave the Israelite army extra light, and sent stones from the sky. He gives us material gifts, He changes the hearts of people, and He opens up new opportunities for us, to name a few of His mighty acts.

Wil Pounds: *What do you have hidden in your cave?*
Do you have some kings in your life that need to be killed? Can't I just humiliate the kings or make a public symbol out of them and let well alone? Evil kings have to be exterminated. Victory means putting to death the enemy. These kings were all under ban. They were devoted to God's judgment. The evil kings that reign in your heart are under ban! If they are not destroyed they will rise up to try to destroy you again and again. You can't leave your kings sulking in a nice comfortable cave. You have to take them out, put your foot on their necks and kill them. All of them. That is your responsibility and mine in the spiritual warfare. The only behavior that ever changes is observed behavior. You have to make a commitment and you have to follow through.

Go back over that list we first looked at in **Galatians 5:19-21**. King lust bow down: immorality, impurity, and sensuality. What are you doing with old king lust? If you are having an affair don't call it love; call it what it is—lust. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." In other words, kill it! Put your foot on its head. Kill it! King of the evil spiritual world bow down: idolatry, sorcery. Put your foot on its head. Kill it! King hatred bow down: enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing. Put your foot on its head. Kill it!

Let's quit playing with it. Let's kill it! What is in your cave today? William Law wrote,

> "The heresy of all heresies is a worldly spirit."

How about your thought life? Our "*weapons of warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete*" (**2 Corinthians 10:4-6**).

Confession of sin implies rejection of sin. The power of sin is broken only as we are in harmony with the cross of Jesus. The cross is an ugly thing. It is the place of execution. It is the place where we pull out the kings and nail them to the cross. The cross is no place for concealment, of hiding, or covering sin. It is the place of execution. It is the place where be break with sin, the place of exposure, where we drag out the kings and reckon them dead. God says, "cut off," "pluck out," kill it. It is mine and your responsibility to break with sin—"let no sin therefore reign." God's way of victory is through crucifixion. Deliverance is only through death. "*Reckon yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus*" (**Romans 6:11**).

A. B. MacKay: Here also we behold the utter **degradation** of these kings. It was far deeper than that of their subjects. As they were ringleaders in this revolt, their end was more terrible. They had to bow their necks under the feet of the children of Israel. This was a most significant act. It was a picture of the absolute subjection of all to the yoke of Israel. It was a pledge of the perfect conquest of the land, of the glorious ending of that work which had been so well begun. This also was written for our encouragement and instruction. All things must be brought into subjection to the true Joshua. They who follow Him are not overcome of evil, they are conquerors in the struggle against sin. However weak we may feel in ourselves, yet in His name we dare deal with the proudest and strongest sin that lurks in our hearts, as Joshua's captains did with these kings. That man cannot be following Christ who is not putting all spiritual foes under his feet from day to day. And we have here not only a picture of this daily and oft-repeated triumph over sin which Jesus gives His followers, but also a picture of that ultimate and complete victory over sin and Satan that shall be granted. There were other kings in Canaan besides these five kings, and they gave Joshua and his captains much trouble. Though the victory so far was real and glorious, it was by no means complete. They have faced and overcome these particular foes; but many more remain. Even so the Christian, though he should and must obtain the victory over all known sin, and keep it ever under foot, learns the longer that he lives that there are other sins which he had not dreamt of lurking in the recesses of his heart. Therefore he lays count for a protracted war. Yet he does not go forward with a faint heart to face these new foes. Rather, encouraged by the victories already granted, he goes on with assurance of like triumph.

Doug Goins: That certainty of who the winner is going to be and what part we play in the process of victory is really important. It answers the deepest question of our hearts, which Paul asks in **Romans 8:35**: "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword*?" That list of struggles defines life as it really is. We are never told that we won't have difficulty. We are engaged in a spiritual battle to the death. But the answer to Paul's question says that Jesus Christ is the ultimate Victor: "*But in all these things [all these terrible, limiting circumstances] we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (**8:37-39**). He won't just preserve us. Victorious Christian living is possible through Jesus, who

demonstrated the victory through his act of love and sacrifice on the cross. The kings are executed. **Victory means putting to death the enemy**. There is something in me that resists that necessity. I want to ask, "Wouldn't it be better to just humiliate the kings or make a public symbol out of them, perhaps make them spend the rest of their lives in the cave, or just parole them to Gilgal? Why do they have to execute them?" But Joshua does execute them, and he hangs them on a tree for a day to show that they are under God's curse. Then he has their bodies put back in the cave, and he has a monument built to stand for all generations. In our earlier studies we've seen God's clear mandate to Israel, his call to holy war against sin. As with everything in Canaan, these kings are under the ban, devoted to God's judgment. They were in violent opposition to God's work in that land, and if they weren't destroyed they would come back to try to conquer the nation again. Remember, the iniquity of the Amorites is full (see **Genesis 15:16**). The time for mercy and grace is past for these men and their followers. It isn't enough to leave them skulking in a cave. They had to be slain. We shouldn't pity these kings at all.

J. Hampton Keathley III: Dr. Don Campbell, in his conclusion to this chapter which he titled, *People Who Know Their God*, has a focus that really provides a fitting conclusion to this study on the book of Joshua. He writes:

Most of us learn, early in our Christian experience, that we do not just face one enemy. We face a **coalition of evil forces** that have banded together in an attempt to destroy us. Those enemies are commonly called "*the world*," "*the flesh*," and "*the devil*." The world pressures us and hammers us and tries to conform us to its mold. The flesh is the sinfulness within us which betrays us and undermines us and sabotages us, even though we want to serve God with our minds and our bodies. The devil is master strategist of the assault against us and sometimes attacks us openly, sometimes craftily, but always with an unerring sense of where our weaknesses lie.

Together, the world, the flesh, and the devil make an unbeatable combination—or they would be unbeatable, if not for the saving intervention of God. Without God, victory against such an alliance is impossible. **With God, victory is assured** …

Joshua was a man who knew God above all else. The results are impressively recorded here. As Daniel later wrote, "*The people who know their God will display strength and take action*" (**Dan. 11:32**). For Joshua, for Daniel, and for you and me, the key to victory is knowing God personally and trusting Him completely.

David Guzik: The Bible tells us of a coming false messiah (**Revelation 13:3**), who will rule over Jerusalem (**2 Thessalonians 2:3-4**), who will lead a confederation of kings (**Revelation 17:12-13**), fighting against Yeshua (**Revelation 17:14**), resisting His occupation of the land (**Revelation 19:19**), and hiding in caves (**Revelation 6:15-17**). All in all, **Adoni-Zedek** is a fascinating picture of the coming **Antichrist**.

TEXT: Joshua 10:29-43

TITLE: CONQUEST OF SOUTHERN CANAAN – JOSHUA AND ALL ISRAEL WITH HIM

BIG IDEA:
GOD GIVES THE VICTORY WHEN HIS PEOPLE UNITE TO ENGAGE THE ENEMY BEHIND THE LEADERSHIP OF HIS ANOINTED COMMANDER

INTRODUCTION:

Jeff Oliver: **Joshua 10** tells the story of Israel's southern campaign in Canaan, the dominant theme of which is "*the LORD fought for Israel*"; **vv. 1-15** give a **summary** of the day's events with a focus on the miracle of the sun and moon standing still, whilst **vv. 16-43** give an **expanded version** of the story that fills in more of the details.

Richard Hess: There is a **geographical sequence** to the towns, beginning with Makkedah, located in the midst of the others. The armies sweep in an arc from Libnah (Tell Bornât = Tel Burna) at the north-west corner, south through Lachish and Eglon, and then north to Hebron which lies in the north-east corner of the arc. From this point, the army turned south along the watershed of the hill country and reached Debir, identified with Khirbet Rabûd, the **most** important Late Bronze Age site in the hill country south of Hebron.

Thomas Constable: According to Carl von Clausewitz (1780-1831), a philosopher of war, there are three principle military objectives in any war:

- First, the aggressor must destroy the military power of the enemy, so that he cannot continue or resume war.
- Second, he must conquer the land of the enemy so thoroughly that a new military force cannot arise from it.
- Third, he must subdue the will of the enemy.

Joshua accomplished all three of these basic objectives.

David Howard: In this section, the kings and people of seven cities are mentioned in a series of formulaic accounts as having engaged Israel in battle and having been completely destroyed. The cities are Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, Gezer, Eglon, Hebron, and Debir. They were all in the southern portion of the land; the Israelites had entered Canaan in the middle (on a north-south axis), and their campaigns went through the middle first, then turned south (**chap. 10**), and then north (**chap. 11**). The fact that there are exactly seven cities here—no more and no less—suggests that this may be a summarizing account, showing the destructions of **representative cities** and not intended to be comprehensive, detailing every city captured. Furthermore, we read later of four additional cities in the south that Joshua and the Israelites took, which argues in the same direction. The cities were Geder, Hormah, Arad, and Adullam (**12:13–15**).

Robert Hubbard: The narrator adopts a style with **repeated formulae** (but not slavishly or in lock-step order) and occasional **hyperbole** (e.g., "*everyone in it*"). The following comprise its core items (in general order of occurrence):

1. The city's capture (**vv. 28, 32, 35, 37, 39**)
2. The siege and attack (**vv. 29, 31, 34, 36, 38**)
3. The city, everyone put to the sword (**vv. 28, 30, 32, 35, 37, 39**)
4. No survivors remain (**vv. 28, 30, 33, 35, 37, 39**)
5. Israel implements the "*ban*" (**vv. 28, 35, 37, 39**)
6. The king suffers the same fate as the king of city-X (**vv. 28, 30, 32, 35, 37, 39**)

Obviously, the stress falls on the capture of each of the six cities and the annihilation of its inhabitants.

Peter Wallace: We saw at the beginning of the book of Joshua that God promised that **Joshua** would cause Israel to inherit. Israel does not inherit the land based on their own faithfulness. No, Israel inherits the land because of **Joshua's faithfulness**! The lesson is plain: God will destroy his enemies through the hand of **his anointed conqueror**! If you want to live in the promised land – the eternal inheritance – then you must line up behind the anointed conqueror and follow him. "*If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me*."

Gordon Matties: This episode is a long **flashback report** and fits into the chronological sequence that ends before the sunset of **verse 27**. This makes the overall battle report proper into a series of three episodes, a main episode (**vv. 7-15**) followed by two flashbacks: **verses 16-27** take the reader back to **verses 10b-11**, and **verses 28-39** to some time before **v. 27** (Winther-Nielsen: 247).

I. (:29-30) CONQUEST OF LIBNAH

"*Then Joshua and all Israel with him passed on from Makkedah to Libnah,*
and fought against Libnah. 30 And the LORD gave it also with its king into the hands of Israel, and he struck it and every person who was in it with the edge of the sword. He left no survivor in it.
Thus he did to its king just as he had done to the king of Jericho."

II. (:31-33) CONQUEST OF LACHISH AND GEZER

A. (:31-32) Conquest of Lachish

"*And Joshua and all Israel with him passed on from Libnah to Lachish,*
and they camped by it and fought against it.
32 And the LORD gave Lachish into the hands of Israel;
and he captured it on the second day, and struck it and every person who was in it with the edge of the sword, according to all that he had done to Libnah."

B. (:33) Defeat of Horam King of Gezer

"*Then Horam king of Gezer came up to help Lachish,*
and Joshua defeated him and his people until he had left him no survivor."

Center of chiastic structure so this is the point of emphasis

David Thompson: When we are truly waging war for God, enemies may come from other places to join in the war against us.

Richard Hess: The mention of the leader of Gezer in the centre of the conquests emphasizes his **importance**. Although the town was not conquered by Israel (**Josh. 16:10**), the defeat of its leader and his army was considered a major event. Gezer is **Tell Jezer**, a site that guards the western entrance to the Aijalon Valley that leads to Jerusalem. Perhaps Israel bypassed the site in its chase. It is mentioned in the Amarna letters and in the Merneptah stele. The stele records the conquest by Pharaoh Merneptah of Ashkelon, Gezer and Yenoam (c. 1207 BC). Thus it was considered a **strategic site** and was one with its own Late Bronze Age fortification wall. The name of its king, **Horam**, is West Semitic, just as is the name of the king of Gezer in the Amarna letters. Perhaps, under Egyptian control, a town such as Gezer would not have had any responsibility to defend Jerusalem. However, it was not in the interest of the Egyptian garrison to allow an army such as that of Israel to wander through the region at will. For Joshua, this army's defeat constituted a **high point** in the southern military successes.

III. (:34-35) CONQUEST OF EGLON

"*And Joshua and all Israel with him passed on from Lachish to Eglon,*
and they camped by it and fought against it.
35 And they captured it on that day and struck it with the edge of the sword;
and he utterly destroyed that day every person who was in it,
according to all that he had done to Lachish."

IV. (:36-37) CONQUEST OF HEBRON

"*Then Joshua and all Israel with him went up from Eglon to Hebron,*
and they fought against it. 37 And they captured it and struck it and its king and all its cities and all the persons who were in it with the edge of the sword.
He left no survivor, according to all that he had done to Eglon.
And he utterly destroyed it and every person who was in it."

V. (:38-39) CONQUEST OF DEBIR

"*Then Joshua and all Israel with him returned to Debir, and they fought against it. 39 And he captured it and its king and all its cities, and they struck them with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed every person who was in it. He left no survivor. Just as he had done to Hebron, so he did to Debir and its king,*
as he had also done to Libnah and its king."

VI. (:40-43) SUMMARY OF CONQUESTS IN SOUTHERN CANAAN

A. (:40) Summary by Region

"*Thus Joshua struck all the land, the hill country and the Negev and the lowland and the slopes and all their kings. He left no survivor, but he utterly destroyed all who breathed, just as the LORD, the God of Israel, had commanded.*"

Jerome Creach: The section echoes the common themes of the chapter: "battle success, elimination of survivors, defeated kings, and Yahweh's combat for Israel." The compiler has a different geographical span in view—that of the Davidic empire. Here is the land that belongs to Israel. Israel's persistent pursuit has reaped rewards. Nelson makes an important differentiation at this point: "Both Joshua and these [ancient Near Eastern] campaign reports seek to increase the wonder of the accomplishments they report and to promote a certain religious and political ideology. For Israel the ideology being advanced was not the power of the king as in the texts from Assyria or Egypt, but **their own national identity as the people of a powerful God and as the legitimate masters of Canaan**."

B. (:41) Summary by Boundaries

"*And Joshua struck them from Kadesh-barnea even as far as Gaza, and all the country of Goshen even as far as Gibeon.*"

C. (:42) Key to the Rapid Conquest of the Region = Role of the Lord

"*And Joshua captured all these kings and their lands at one time, because the LORD, the God of Israel, fought for Israel.*"

Richard Hess: The syntax of the first half of the verse and its structure resembles the description of Joshua's capture of Makkedah (**v. 28**). There, the conquest takes place that day; here it occurs in **one campaign**. This emphasizes how **quickly** it was completed because **God fought on behalf of Israel**. The same phrase in **verse 14** comments on the miracle of the sun and moon. Thus **verse 42** ties in the defeat of all the towns in the south with the miraculous work of God, demonstrated by the overt wonders in the heavens as well as by the aid given in capturing each town.

David Howard: The picture painted in this section is unequivocally one of complete and swift annihilation of people throughout the entire region. This is the implication of the statements that Joshua and the Israelites left no survivors in the various cities in **vv. 28, 30, 33, 37, 39** (cf. also **vv. 32, 35**). This is also the explicit testimony of **vv. 40** and **42a**, as well (see also the similar summaries in **11:16–23; 21:43–45**). The southern campaign is seen as having been accomplished in one fell swoop (**v. 42**) because **God fought for Israel. . .**

The author was being **hyperbolic** here in order to reiterate the theological point made many times in the book that God was indeed giving Israel the entire land. However, the details of the conquest of every last city were not included (see above, on **vv. 28–39**), and

the author acknowledged elsewhere that the conquest was indeed not complete. Thus, from another, more detailed perspective, there was still much work to be done.

Gordon Matties: **Verse 42** presents the most significant statement in the entire chapter, where all these kings and their land are said to have been taken at one time because **the Lord the God of Israel fought for Israel**. In **chapter 11**, after a report about the northern campaign, the narrator summarizes the sequence of encounters that begin in **9:1-2** by framing the last subunit with the notice that Joshua took all the land (**11:16, 23**), the exact phrase as in **10:40**. Yet amid that final episode of **chapter 11**, the narrator also adds, Joshua made war a long time with all those kings (**11:18**). These statements are not so much contradictory as they are indicators of a narrative strategy that combines a hint of realism with an ideological or theological emphasis that everything the Lord has commanded has now been accomplished (**10:40; 11:9, 15, 23**). After all, **it is the Lord God of Israel who has fought for Israel** (**10:42**).

D. (:43) Completion of the Campaign

"*So Joshua and all Israel with him returned to the camp at Gilgal.*"

Richard Hess: As Israel set out from Gilgal (**v. 6**), so it now returns to the sanctuary site. This completes the tour of the south and seals the victory with the appearance of the nation and its leader before God at the sanctuary.

Helene Dallaire: The repetition of the identical statement in **verses 15** and **43** is highly dubious. Joshua and his men could not have accomplished all the events of that day twice. There was not sufficient time for Joshua and his men to return to Gilgal between the killing of the Amorite kings and the subduing of Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, Hebron, and the region from Kadesh Barnea to Gaza. The LXX omits **verse 15**, leaving only one return to the camp at Gilgal after the conquest of the southern region (**v.43**).

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do you pursue Christian life and ministry with the expectation of the gift of victory from a God who is bigger than any of your foes?

2) How important is it for God's people to be **united** in pursuing God's objectives?

3) When God is on our side, how confident should we be in all of our different spiritual battles?

4) What does this passage teach us about how much God hates sin?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

David Thompson: As we come to this section of Scripture, we cannot help but observe that there is a phrase that is repeated six times–"*all Israel with him*" (**10:29, 31, 34, 36, 38, 43**). What this phrase tells us is at this point in time, Israel, as a group, was finally **united**. They were all after the same goals. They all wanted to take the land. They were all focused on the same objective and were unified in going after it and, as a result, God was blessing them.

Because of this unity, they were experiencing one victory after another. Without any interruption or setbacks, God's people experienced victory after victory. This was a rare moment in the history of Israel.

This is a lesson we need to learn. When God's people in a nation or in the church function as a united group, they will get a job done for God. They will be victorious. They will tackle one problem after another and will have victory and more victory.

That point is clear from this text: WHEN ALL OF GOD'S PEOPLE ARE UNITED AND FOCUSED ON OBEYING GOD'S WORD AND DOING GOD'S WORK, THEY WILL EXPERIENCE ONE VICTORY AFTER ANOTHER.

It is not the size of the group that gives victory; **it is God who gives victory**. When His people unite with a focus of **doing what God wants them to do**, God will give one victory after another.

Now there is a great deal to be learned about warfare in these verses. There are seven battles that are fought and won. What this shows us is that the enemy does not stop after one defeat. The enemy keeps coming but Israel keeps winning.

GREAT LESSONS TO LEARN:
1. We will have great victory when our whole being is devoted to obeying God.
2. We will have great victory in church when we are united in knowing God's Word and obeying it.
3. Some of our battles will not be won instantly and may take a while; others may be won instantly.
4. When we are fighting a good fight, other attacks from unsuspecting places may come against us.
5. We will not have complete rest until all our enemies are defeated.
6. Our job in the warfare is obedience to God and obedience is always the key to victory.
7. God's job in the warfare is to determine whether we have victory or defeat.

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Jerome Creach: The law of **holy war** is spelled out in Deuteronomy. The law placed particular emphasis on the total annihilation of the enemy. While this requirement bring shivers to the modern conscience, the editor of Joshua knew that such a program had not been carried out consistently. Too many people remained in the land. **Chap. 10** is careful

to avoid any mention that Jerusalem was destroyed. The motif has aims far beyond pure historical description. It shows the great lengths to which Joshua and his people went to obey God. It underlines the total victory God gave them, thereby spelling **hope** that an exiled Israel might win back their land that is once again occupied by foreigners. An Israel punished because they trusted covenants with foreign powers more than they did covenant with Yahweh could receive another chance if they could find leadership like that of Joshua and obedience like that of the nation in the period of conquest. The message succintly put says, "**When Israel is faithful, God is faithful, allowing Israel to triumph regardless of the odds**." Would the exiled nation pursue God as steadfastly as Joshua pursued his opponents and God's law? Or would they continue their pursuit of the enemy's gods? Would Israel again allow Yahweh to fight for Israel? Would the day come again when Israel returned to camp in safety with no one threatening?

Thomas Constable: God's people do not have to immediately engage every spiritual enemy that exists, any more than the Israelites had to immediately kill every individual Canaanite or attack every city. At this stage in their national life, God's will was that they attack only certain selected targets. Sometimes we can experience discouragement when we look at the host of wicked people that surrounds us, or the many sins that plague us. We may think: What can one individual do to stem such a tide of wickedness? We may even think it is useless to do anything, in view of the huge task that we face (**Matt. 28:19-20**). In those situations, we need to do what God puts before us to do— day by day—rather than taking on more responsibility than God wants us to assume at that moment (cf. **Matt. 6:25-34**). The Israelites fought **one battle at a time**, and so must we.

George Bush: Though now taken, the city of Hebron seems afterwards to have fallen back into the hands of the Canaanites, which made it necessary for Caleb to take it a second time as related, **ch. 15:14**; **Judges 1:10**. The case appears to have been the same in regard to some other of the places captured on this occasion. **Judges 1:11–13**. The reason of it was, that Joshua, in his rapid conquests, contented himself with taking, demolishing, and burning those cities, but did not garrison any of them for fear of weakening his army. The scattered Canaanites in several instances no doubt took advantage of this, returned, repeopled, and put in a state of defence, the cities from which they had been expelled. Hence the Israelites were obliged to conquer them a second time. So the Christian in his spiritual warfare finds it as much as he can do to keep possession of the ground which he has once gained. His old enemies are incessantly returning upon him. His battles must be fought and his victories achieved anew. The lusts which appeared to be slain, are ever and anon giving signs that they still live; and are intent upon regaining their former ascendency. This makes it dangerous to remit our activity for a single hour. Constant vigilance is the grand condition of final triumph.

Kenneth Gangel: **Pursue – Even When You Are Tired**
This section shows us that any serious opposition to Israel and the southern part of Canaan has now been eliminated. All the major cities have been defeated and any effective coalitions broken up.

Apparently this series of **lightning-like raids** against key Canaanite cities served the purpose of destroying the fighting ability of the inhabitants, not necessarily occupying the cities attacked. It was the task of the tribes to occupy the land; here we only deal with **the conquest**. Joshua broke the back of the resistance, but the text says nothing about burning the cities such as we read in Jericho and Ai. Consequently, most of these cities could quickly be resettled by Canaanites, perhaps even by some who fled from the cities in the wake of the advancing Israelite armies.

Complete victory is the message that arises from the text of **Joshua 10**, at least in the southern campaign—the north was still ahead. When we march on God's side, we also can expect spiritual victory. We serve **a very big God**—and he is not just big when the hailstones fall and the sun stands still. He is big every day we need him.

MAIN IDEA REVIEW: The central lesson of Joshua's southern campaign centers in **persistence against bitter enemies** and a willingness to keep commitments even to people who don't deserve integrity and faithfulness.

TEXT: Joshua 11:1-15

TITLE: VICTORY OVER THE NORTHERN COALITION IN OBEDIENCE TO THE LORD'S COMMANDS

BIG IDEA:
WE CAN BE CONFIDENT OF VICTORY WHEN WE OBEY GOD'S COMMANDS AND EXECUTE HIS GAMEPLAN

INTRODUCTION:

Richard Hess: This passage is connected with **chapter 10** and the conquest of the south. Similar verbs and expressions occur, as well as larger blocks of material whose organization resembles that of **chapter 10**. There is another coalition of town leaders led by a single named ruler. They are defeated; their armies are destroyed; and their towns and territories are captured by Israel. Finally, there is a similar theological pattern: God promises Joshua victory and instructs him; Joshua obeys and leads Israel; and they also obey and are victorious.

There are also **distinctive features**. This account is shorter than that in **chapter 10**. Only one town is described in detail and there are no lengthy descriptions of a chase or of miracles. This suggests an acceleration in the narrative. Moving ever more quickly, the text completes the description of the conquest. Although the information must be noted, there is no lingering over gory details of destruction.

David Howard: The account of the battle against the northern coalition, however, follows the pattern of that of the battle in **chap. 10**, in which

- the coalition gathered (**10:1–5; 11:1–5**),
- the battle was fought (**10:6–15; 11:6–9**), and
- the Israelites followed it up by finishing the task (**10:16–27; 11:10–15**).

The message here is the same as in **chap. 10**: God was working on his people's behalf to give them the land of Canaan, no matter the odds or the coalition arrayed against them (cf. **Deut 20:1**). In this case, the coalition is much more impressive, seeming to come from all parts of the north (and even from the south), with a carefully designed strategy against Israel. There is no dramatic miracle of hailstones or a sign involving sun and moon here, but nevertheless it is clear that **the battle was the Lord's** (see **vv. 6, 8**).

Kenneth Gangel: What seems like a bloody merciless war to us was really God's way of providing the environment most conducive for righteous living on the part of his people.

We must understand that all these Canaanites had the same opportunity as Rahab and the Gibeonites to respond to their knowledge of Israel and God with faith, repentance,

and a plea for mercy. Instead they resisted God, and God hardened their hearts so they came out to make war against Israel. They chose battle rather than belief, fighting rather than faith. So the Israelites wiped them out, not because this was their idea or plan; it was God's.

Van Parunak: This section shows several patterns to which we have become accustomed:

- regional opposition to Israel
- direct divine guidance in addition to the general instructions of Scripture
- turning a battle in the open field into a campaign against the cities

I. (:1-5) MASSIVE THREAT OF THE NORTHERN COALITION

A. (:1-3) Impressive Geographic Coalition

"*Then it came about, when Jabin king of Hazor heard of it, that he sent to Jobab king of Madon and to the king of Shimron and to the king of Achshaph, 2 and to the kings who were of the north in the hill country, and in the Arabah-- south of Chinneroth and in the lowland and on the heights of Dor on the west-- 3 to the Canaanite on the east and on the west, and the Amorite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Jebusite in the hill country, and the Hivite at the foot of Hermon in the land of Mizpeh.*"

Robert Hubbard: In the late Bronze Age, Hazor undoubtedly was the largest, most influential city in all of Canaan. Its size was huge—200 acres, an estimated population of 30,000—and ideally situated for economic and political dominance. At the time Hazor controlled the entire northern Jordan Valley as far southeast as the Yarmuk River. Its strategic location and hegemony over a wide swath of northern Canaan made Hazor an unavoidable Israelite target.

David Howard: The coalition described in **vv. 1–3** is not as neat and tidy as the five-king group in **chap. 10**. It was a broader coalition appears here as a force much more threatening to the Israelites, gathered as it was from such a widely scattered area. Only two kings are named (Jabin and Jobab), but four cities are specified (Hazor, Madon, Shimron, and Acshaph, **v. 1**), several regions are mentioned (the northern mountains, the Arabah south of Kinnereth, the western foothills, Naphoth Dor, **v. 2**, and the region of Mount Hermon near Mizpah, **v. 3**), and six peoples are listed (Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Hivites, **v. 3**). The overall effect of the listing of such widely scattered cities, regions, and peoples is to cast a dark cloud of impending doom over the Israelites. This makes the deliverance that is accomplished that much more impressive.

Here again, the enemy brought the attack to Israel. As we have noted earlier, only in the cases of Jericho and Ai did the Israelites initiate the conflicts. The Israelites were not to put their trust in military power: God again is given the credit for Israel's victory. The reference here to horses is the first time these are mentioned in the book, and it certainly shows a contrast between the Canaanite conduct of war and the model of leadership that

Joshua exemplified and that Israel's kings were to exemplify: they were not to multiply horses for themselves (**Deut 17:16**), that is, not depend on their military might, but rather on God.

Gordon Matties: Neither description of coalition partners (**ch. 10** or **11**) implies the existence of "nations" in the modern sense. These are **people groups** linked to cities and their outlying villages and lands.

Van Parunak: The opposition is described from three different perspectives: **political, topographic, and ethnic**.

1) Political.—The cities they occupied:

- Hazor, at the head of the pass opening onto the Huleh valley north of the Sea of Galilee
- Madon, in Galilee, SW of the sea
- Shimron, in plain of Esdraelon due N of Megiddo
- Achshaph, at the NW opening of the Kishon pass Again, the opposition is a coalition of city-states.

Application: Notice how often coalitions form against God and his people.

- **Ps 2:2**, "*the rulers take counsel together*"
- **Acts 4:27**, "*For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together*"

The whole world lieth in the evil one (**1 John 5:19**), and we should not be surprised to find popular opinion ranged against us.

2) Topographic.—As in **9:1**, highlighting the different geographic features, this time of the northern part of the country. Translate, "*and to the kings that were of the north: in the mountains, and …*

- the mountains: of Galilee; especially upper Galilee, where the Waters of Merom are;
- the plains south of Chinnereth; *arabah*, the rift valley through which the Jordan flows;
- the valley: *shephelah*, probably referring to the central region of the Carmel range, topographically similar to the southern Shephelah; would include Megiddo and Jokneam;
- the borders of Dor on the west: the seacoast just south of Carmel.

Thus encompasses the entire northern section of the country. The writer's interest is because this is the land that God has promised to Israel, and in surveying it in this way he is anticipating Israel's possession of it.

3) Ethnic.—Israel's justification in conquering these people is neither political nor territorial, but ethnic; they are of the races whose religious practices are abhorrent to the

Lord, and who are called out for destruction in **Deut 7:1-2; 20:17**; per the verdict of **Gen 15:16**.

B. (:4-5) Impressive Number of Forces and Sophistication of Weaponry

> "*And they came out, they and all their armies with them, as many people as the sand that is on the seashore, with very many horses and chariots. 5 So all of these kings having agreed to meet, came and encamped together at the waters of Merom, to fight against Israel.*"

David Howard: The impressive, even overwhelming, nature of the coalition arrayed against Israel—which is hinted at by the wide geographical spread in **vv. 1–3**—is made explicit now. The language in **v. 4** is repetitive, emphasizing the vast numbers of the forces that came against Israel: the term *rab/rob*, "*many, much*," occurs three times in this verse, and the forces are compared with the number of sands on the seashore. The fighting forces were strengthened by their horses and chariotry. Such a vast force surely would have appeared irresistible!

Robert Hubbard: The reader rightly imagines a **dramatic scene** around the Merom spring: a huge military force determined to stop Israel's advance into Galilee. **Verses 1–5** create the impression that everyone has come from everywhere—and with frightening firepower. The reader knows that this scene is no mere "show-of-force" to intimidate Israel. The biggest battle—the dramatic denouement of the entire conquest—is about to begin. The result could be Canaan's last stand or Israel's final triumph.

Gordon Matties: the effect of the description is **hyperbolic**: they are like the *sand on the seashore* (cf. **Gen 22:17; 1 Sam 13:5; 1 Kings 4:29**). The allusion to Abraham is not to be missed, since in **Gen 22:17** the divine promise is that "*your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies.*" The irony here, however, is in the size the enemy's army, which underlines Israel's relative weakness.

Trent Butler: The **holy-war narrative** emphasizes the impossible task facing the people of God. Israel had to face an innumerable army that had the best modern equipment. Horses and chariots were well-known and widely used in the ancient Near East, but Israel did not gain the wealth or necessary institutional control to manufacture and use such weaponry until the days of Solomon. "*A multitude as numerous as the sands on the seashore*" is traditional hyperbolic language pointing to overwhelming numbers (**Judg 7:2; 1 Sam 13:5; 2 Sam 17:11; 1 Kgs 4:20**). The **odds were insurmountable**. Such hyperbole "not only heightens the suspense but also presents the coming conflict in climactic terms, as though all the kings and peoples of the land are gathering for a final attack against Israel." Yet, for Israel, God by himself was a force so great in number that no army was large enough to defeat him.

Helene Dallaire: The hyperbole "*as numerous as the sand on the seashore*" appears in several passages with reference to people, supplies, and wisdom. For example:

- God promises to bless Abraham and make his descendants so numerous that they will be "*as the sand on the seashore*" (**Ge 22:17**).
- Jacob fears his encounter with Esau and reminds God of his promise to "*make his descendants like the sand of the seashore*" (**32:12**).
- Joseph stores such a huge quantity of grain ("*like the sand of the seashore*") that it is impossible to keep count (**41:49**).
- Gideon and his three hundred men face the Midianites, the Amalekites, and a multitude of people from the east who had settled in the valley with their camels that were as countless "*as the sand of the seashore*" (**Jdg 7:12**).
- The Philistine soldiers who set up camp against Israel are "*as numerous as the sand on the seashore*" (**1Sa 13:5**).
- Hushai instructs Absalom to gather a band of men from Dan to Beersheba "*as numerous as the sand on the seashore*" to come against David and his men (**2Sa 17:11**).
- The people of Judah and Israel grow to be "*as numerous as the sand on the seashore*" during Solomon's reign (the mention of "*Judah and Israel*" is curious since during Solomon's reign, the kingdom was not yet divided [**1Ki 4:20**]).
- Solomon's wisdom, insight, and breadth of understanding was so great that it is described as "*measureless as the sand on the seashore*" (**1Ki 4:29**).

(For additional examples, see **Isa 10:22; 48:19; Jer 33:22; Hos 1:10; Heb 11:12 (Israel); Job 29:18; Ps 78:27; Rev 20:8**.)

II. (:6-9) MAJOR VICTORY IN ACCORDANCE WITH GOD'S PROMISE

A. (:6) Divine Initiative in Promising Victory

"*Then the LORD said to Joshua, 'Do not be afraid because of them,*
for tomorrow at this time I will deliver all of them slain before Israel;
you shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire.'"

Richard Hess: The victory will occur within a single day. The divine instructions are clear about every element of the threat. Hamstringing the horses ensured that nothing survived that would be usable in a future war.

B. (:7) Direct Engagement in Battle Led by Joshua

"*So Joshua and all the people of war with him came upon them suddenly by the waters of Merom, and attacked them.*"

C. (:8-9) Deliverance Orchestrated by the Lord and Executed by Joshua

"*And the LORD delivered them into the hand of Israel,*
so that they defeated them, and pursued them as far as Great Sidon and
Misrephoth-maim and the valley of Mizpeh to the east;
and they struck them until no survivor was left to them.
9 And Joshua did to them as the LORD had told him;
he hamstrung their horses, and burned their chariots with fire."

Richard Hess: The pursuit appears to have taken the Israelite army on a tour clockwise around the borders of Galilee. Assuming that Greater Sidon (= Sidon) forms the north-western border of the tribal allotments and Misrephoth Maim the north-eastern border (located along the Litani River), it is possible to see a pursuit that moved westward initially into the Jezreel Valley and then through the pass (perhaps at Tel Hannathon) north along the Acco plain and around the 'Ladder of Tyre' past Tyre and north to Sidon. Then, turning south-eastward, the army crossed over to the Marj 'Ayyun Valley passing Misrephoth Maim, and southward along the Litani River (= Valley of Mizpah) until it was able to enter the Huleh Valley and continue south to Hazor. All the kingdoms of the coalition were invaded and the territory that would become Israel's northern allotment was toured.

David Howard: Joshua obeyed the Lord's instructions of **v. 6** to the letter; the wording in both verses is identical. Such exact **repetition** is common in Hebrew narrative and shows the careful execution of commands or fulfillment of promises. Joshua was being an exemplary leader and an obedient servant. Such behavior ultimately won for him the label of "*servant of the LORD*" (**24:29**). Joshua's actions would have prevented any meaningful pursuit by Israel's enemies.

Robert Hubbard: To close the scene, the author stresses that Joshua does to them precisely what Yahweh commanded (**v. 9**), thereby sounding a theme heard earlier—Joshua's unwavering obedience to Yahweh. The object-first word order makes the point emphatically: "*Their horses he hamstrung and their chariots he burned with fire*" (my translation). The reader imagines a scene of fire, rising smoke, hobbled warhorses, and no enemy in sight. Israel owns the battlefield—a great victory, indeed!

III. (:10-11) MANDATED DESTRUCTION OF HAZOR'S KING AND CITY

A. (:10) Destruction of the King

"*Then Joshua turned back at that time, and captured Hazor and struck its king with the sword; for Hazor formerly was the head of all these kingdoms.*"

Robert Hubbard: Given the gigantic importance of Hazor in antiquity, the short chiastic headline—(lit.) "*[he] captured Hazor" // its king [he] killed*"—smacks of stunning understatement!

The writer quickly explains that Hazor fell not because of an Israelite preemptive strike but because of its long-standing, regional dominance ("*head of all these kingdoms*"). The remark implies that Hazor sustained its lengthy, regional hegemony (see **vv. 1–3**) by violent oppression of its underlings—and that here Hazor finally receives its just desserts for the bloodshed. Its demise ends the last bastion of Canaanite rule—a very, very big deal for Israel—and **inaugurates the Israelite period**.

B. (:11) Destruction of the City

"*And they struck every person who was in it with the edge of the sword,*

utterly destroying them; there was no one left who breathed.
And he burned Hazor with fire."

IV. (:12-15) SUMMARY OF VICTORIOUS NORTHERN CAMPAIGN

A. (:12) Common Fate of the Canaanite Cities and Kings

"*And Joshua captured all the cities of these kings, and all their kings,*
and he struck them with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed them;
just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded."

B. (:13) Unique Treatment of Hazor

"*However, Israel did not burn any cities that stood on their mounds,*
except Hazor alone, which Joshua burned."

David Howard: The prominence of the city and its king explains why its destruction was singled out for special treatment: Hazor had the dubious distinction of being only one of three cities that were actually burned by the Israelites (the others were Jericho and Ai: **6:24; 8:19,28**). The rest of the cities were left intact, so that the Israelites would be able to inherit "*large, flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant*," just as the Lord through Moses had promised (**Deut 6:10–11**).

C. (:14) Contrast between Saving the Spoils and Livestock and Destroying the People

"*And all the spoil of these cities and the cattle, the sons of Israel took as their plunder; but they struck every man with the edge of the sword,*
until they had destroyed them. They left no one who breathed."

Plunder = food, clothes, pottery, valuables, etc.

D. (:15) Commands of the Lord and Moses Faithfully Executed

"*Just as the LORD had commanded Moses his servant,*
so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did;
he left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses."

Andrew Webb: Now Why is Joshua **commended**, what thing that he was commanded to do, might another leader who was less scrupulous about following the commandments of God not done?

Hamstrung the Horses and burned the chariots

The temptation would be to fire back - "No God, you don't understand. We can take those chariots and horses and we can use them against the Canaanites we need them to finish the conquest!"

But you see in doing that, he would have switched to the **worldview** of the Canaanites. Trusting in horses, and chariots, and above all their own wisdom. Joshua, instead of doing what the Lord commanded would have been doing what was right in his own eyes.

The refrain of Judges - *everyone did what was right in his own eyes*.

Why was Joshua commended, because he was so smart? No he was commended because he had the **essential quality of a good servant**, "*He obeyed the commands of God*" -- That is what makes a good servant.
https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/102106232525.pdf

Helene Dallaire: The events end with a confirmation that all was **ordained by God**. The instructions to conquer the entire region had originally come from Yahweh through Moses to Joshua, who left nothing undone of what had been commanded. Since the military conflict was conducted under **divine mandate**, one could only anticipate victory for Israel. Although not explicitly stated, Yahweh acts as the military commander of the entire campaign. Under his leadership, victory is guaranteed. Israelite history shows that when Israel takes military matters into her own hands, the battle is often lost; but when Yahweh ordains the maneuvers, victory is guaranteed.

Gordon Matties: The polarity in the text is not "divine initiative—human participation in warfare," but rather "divine initiative—human obedience." The narrator cannot imagine Israel's historical origins as anything other: God commands; Israel obeys.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Given that the essential quality of being a good servant of the Lord is **Obedience** – how can you become a better servant today?

2) Are you content and confident in allowing the Lord to fight your battles and give you the victory as you exercise your responsibilities in dependence upon Him?

3) What type of **formidable enemies** have you faced in your Christian walk?

4) What application can you derive from God allowing the Israelites to enjoy the spoils of victory (the plunder which they captured)?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Helene Dallaire: Since its entry into Canaan, Israel has seen a **substantial increase in opposition** to its presence in the land. At Jericho (**ch. 6**), no army was present during

the destruction and conquest of the town. In the second battle for Ai (**ch. 8**), the opposition increased as the men of Ai and Bethel joined forces against Israel, only to be defeated through an ambush. At Gibeon (**ch. 10**), Joshua is not only battling against a band of fighting men but against the Amorite kings and the armies of five southern cities.

Now when Jabin the king of Hazor in the north hears of the great defeat of the Amorite cities in the south, he forms a coalition with the kings of Madon, Shimron, Acshaph, and rulers of northern cities (of cities in the Arabah, in the western foothills, and in Naphoth-Dor [**ch. 11**]). He also calls on Canaanite, Amorite, Hittite, Perizzite, Jebusite, and Hivite rulers and their troops to join his coalition against Israel at the Waters of Merom. The opposition against Israel has swelled significantly since she entered into Canaan; nevertheless, through divine intervention, Israel subdues its enemies and conquers the land promised to her centuries earlier.

The chapter is replete with hyperbolic language. The repetition of *all, every, entirely, completely, totally, large numbers of, everyone*, and other such expressions is significant. These terms contribute to the tension of the story and add to the tone of urgency in the narrative. Essentially, this chapter ends the initial description of Israel's military conquest of the land.

David Thompson: WHEN GOD'S PEOPLE UNITE IN OBEYING GOD'S WORD AND DOING HIS WILL, THEY WILL HAVE ENEMIES WHO WILL SEEK TO DESTROY THEM; BUT THEY WILL EXPERIENCE ONE VICTORY AFTER ANOTHER NO MATTER HOW INTIMIDATING THE ENEMY

God permits enemies to come against us so we can learn that He is the One who is giving us victory. He does not want us depending on ourselves for any victory; He wants us totally and completely depending on Him. We sometimes forget that our security and our key to victory is our relationship with God. We can begin to think that our security lies in our job or investments or in ourselves. We may begin to think that we are smart, successful and strong. Truth is we are nothing. Our key to success and victory is our relationship with God.
https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/261617241610.pdf

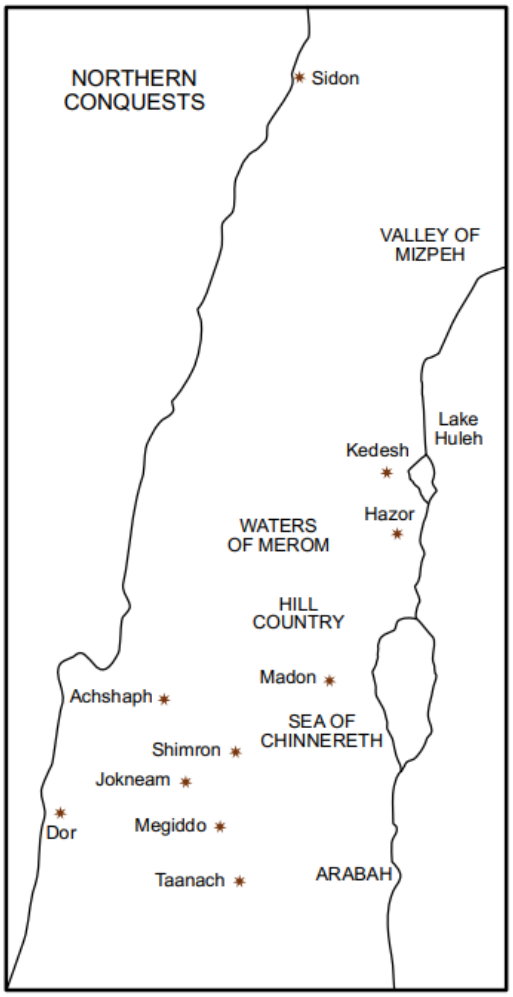
Thomas Constable:
The clause "*They left no one breathing*" (**v. 14**) has sounded to some readers like **excessive brutality**. However, God had clearly commanded Moses and Joshua to completely annihilate the Canaanites (**v. 15**). The Bible **justified** this severe treatment on several counts:

First, the gross sins of the Canaanites—including incest, adultery, child sacrifice, homosexuality, and bestiality— resulted in a thoroughly debased society in Canaan (cf. **Lev. 18; Deut. 9:4-5**). God had waited to execute judgment, allowing the Canaanites time to turn from their wicked ways, but they had not changed (cf. **Gen. 15:16**). By Joshua's time, their sins, which had permeated their whole culture, deserved judgment.

Second, by wiping out the Canaanites, God was protecting His people, the Israelites, from those sins.

Third, God had promised to bless those nations that blessed Israel, and to curse those nations that cursed Israel (**Gen. 12:3**). The Canaanites had sought to destroy the Israelites on at least two occasions already (**9:1-2; 11:1-5**), and God would not permit that.

Fourth, God's command to annihilate the Canaanites was very **focused**; the Israelites did not ever have a mandate to kill every single individual who lived in Canaan. It was only the pagan Canaanites, at this time in history, who were the objects of God's special judgment, and the Israelites were His instrument to bring about that judgment. As we have already seen, the Israelites spared Rahab and her whole family because they feared the LORD, and they spared the Gibeonites—even though they were Canaanites.



H A Ironside: Joshua's victories illustrate the **Christian's triumph over the unseen hosts of evil** who, acting under the leadership of Satan, the god and prince of this world, would seek to hinder believers from possessing practically that which God has given them in Christ Jesus. Many of us are defeated, when we ought to be victors, because of unjudged sin in our lives, or because of sloth and lethargy which hinder our laying hold of that for which God has laid hold of us. Blessed it is, if, like the Apostle Paul, we recognize the importance of *pressing on toward the mark for the prize of the calling of God on high in Christ Jesus* (**Phil. 3:14**, literal rendering). When God has promised to lead us on from victory to victory if we but cleave to Him with purpose of heart, it is the greatest folly to hold back and to fear lest we may not be able to overcome in the day of adversity.

Bruce Hurt: **Jehovah to the Rescue!**
Had it been written in his day, Joshua would have sung this hymn after hearing these encouraging words....

Just When I Need Him Most

Just when I need Him, Jesus is near,
Just when I falter, just when I fear;
Ready to help me, ready to cheer,
Just when I need Him most.

Refrain:
Just when I need Him most,
Just when I need Him most,
Jesus is near to comfort and cheer,
Just when I need Him most.

Just when I need Him, Jesus is true,
Never forsaking, all the way through;
Giving for burdens pleasures anew,
Just when I need Him most.

Just when I need Him, Jesus is strong,
Bearing my burdens all the day long;
For all my sorrow giving a song,
Just when I need Him most.

Just when I need Him, He is my all,
Answering when upon Him I call;
Tenderly watching lest I should fall,
Just when I need Him most.

TEXT: Joshua 11:16 – 12:24

TITLE: SUMMARY OF THE VICTORIOUS CAMPAIGNS

BIG IDEA:
FAITHFUL OBEDIENCE IN EXECUTING MILITARY CAMPAIGNS DEFEATED CANAANITE KINGS AND GAINED ISRAEL THE LAND WHICH GOD HAD PROMISED

INTRODUCTION:

Robert Hubbard: If **Joshua 11** (**vv. 16–20, 23**) wraps up the conquest in geographical and theological terms, **Joshua 12** highlights the royal leadership and capital cities that fell to Israel in **chapters 1–11**. For good reason the book portrays Israel's victories as responses to regional royal military alliances (see **5:1–2; 9:1–2; 10:1–5; 11:1–5**).

Gordon Matties: In literary terms, it might be said that **chapter 12** is a **hinge** that binds the main parts of the book together. It **looks backward** by presenting a list of kings who governed the various regions taken by Israel, both east and west of the Jordan. In doing so, it says more than the previous chapters tell. Many more kings are listed here than are included in the previous conquest accounts. And it **looks ahead** by providing the rationale for the distribution or the allotment of the land in **chapters 13-21**. **Chapter 12** is at the **heart of the book** since it gives notice that these "kings" no longer govern. Rather, it is Moses, the servant of the Lord whose instructions shape a different kind of political entity. The chapter makes explicit that what Moses began east of the Jordan, Joshua has completed west of the Jordan. The chapter also reminds readers of the promises made in **Joshua 1** and recalls the stories of the Transjordan tribes in the book of Numbers. . .

The chapter highlights an ironic meditation on the **tension** between completeness (**11:16-24**) and incompleteness (**13:1**). In a figural reading we might suggest a similarly analogous way of being for the church that lives, as it were, in the meantime. In his death on the cross, Christ has conquered the powers and all that is antagonistic to the divine rule in the world. Yet the church awaits the time when God will transform Christ's resurrection, which is yet only a harbinger of the life to come, into a transformation of all things.

Kenneth Gangel: What seems like a bloody merciless war to us was really God's way of providing the environment most conducive for righteous living on the part of his people.

Thomas Constable: Joshua's conquest of the land anticipated the work of Jesus Christ. Both men defeated the enemies of their people. Both men had names that mean "*God saves*." Both victories were long in coming, and were preceded by Israel's apostasy. Both victories were God's work through human instruments. Both victories only

occurred because of trust and obedience. And both victories made possible an inheritance and rest for God's people.

I. (11:16-23) SUMMARY CONCERNING THE CONQUERED LAND AREAS

David Howard: In this section, **Joshua** is highlighted as Israel's leader. He alone is identified as the agent in almost all the activities here: he took the entire land (**v. 16**), captured and killed the kings (**v. 17**), waged war a long time (**v. 18**), destroyed the Anakites (**v. 21**), and took the entire land and distributed it (**v. 23**). Obviously, the nation was involved in these (**v. 19** acknowledges this: "*they took them all in battle*"), but the emphasis on Joshua is striking. Also, the references to Moses in **vv. 15** and **23** show Joshua fulfilling the leadership mandate given to him.

The chapter draws together the book's central thematic threads and motifs:

- the unity of Moses and Joshua (**1:1–2, 5, 17; 3:7; 4:10, 14; 8:32, 35; 11:12, 15, 23; 22:7**),
- resistance by Canaan's kings (**2:10; 5:1, 9:1–2; 10:1–5, 42; 11:1–2, 17–18**),
- lists of enemy peoples (**3:10; 9:1; 11:3; 24:11**),
- echoes of Yahweh war,
- special provisions for the eastern tribes (**1:12–17; 4:12; 22:1–34**), and
- land distribution (**1:6; 11:23; chs. 13–19**).

It underscores the astounding result of their faithful leadership—in essence, a kind of "golden age" for Israel spanning Moses' triumphant last years and Joshua's heyday.4

Clearly, the prior political order of petty kingships ruling city-states is gone, replaced by a **united Israel in full possession of all the land on both sides of the Jordan**. Within the book, **chapter 12** marks a **decisive literary turning point**. Battle reports give way to tedious (at least, to moderns!) lists of tribal boundaries and towns (**chs. 14–19**). The literary change signals the **dawn of a new day** for Israel; the days of war (i.e., the Conquest) give way to the days of land distribution (i.e., the settlement). **Chapter 22** may imply the dominance of Cisjordan as true Israel, but here one celebrates greater Israel proudly settled astride both Jordan banks.

A. (:16-18) The Comprehensive Scope of Joshua's Conquests

1. (:16-17) Overall Summary of Joshua's Success

a. (:16-17a) Capture of the Promised Land

> "*Thus Joshua took all that land: the hill country and all the Negev, all that land of Goshen, the lowland, the Arabah, the hill country of Israel and its lowland 17 from Mount Halak, that rises toward Seir, even as far as Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon at the foot of Mount Hermon.*"

David Howard: This summary of territory conquered serves both as a summary of the northern campaign and a general summary to tie off the entire section (**chaps. 9–11**).

Richard Hess: The **completeness** of Joshua's obedience is illustrated by the totality of regions conquered in the south (see **Josh. 10:40–41**) and north (see **Josh. 11:2–3**). Joshua then turns to the **boundaries**, from Mount Halak in the south to Baal Gad in the north. Mount Halak appears in **Joshua 12:7**, where it divides Israel and Edom. It may be identified with Jebel Halaq, midway between Kadesh Barnea and the southern tip of the Dead Sea. Baal Gad is the northern boundary. Located in the Valley of Lebanon and also below Mount Hermon (**Josh. 12:7; 13:5**), no certain identification has been made. The Valley of Lebanon is usually equated with the Beqa Valley, but it may also include the valley of the Litani River to the south. This is the Valley of Mizpeh of **verses 3** and **8**. In this region, Baal Gad is to be sought. As with **Joshua 10:40–41**, the **regions are described** and **then the boundaries** (**Josh. 11:21–22**). This style anticipates the tribal allotments of **chapters 13 – 19**, where for many tribes specific places (towns rather than regions) within the tribal territory will be described as well as the boundaries of that tribe.

b. (:17b) Capture and Execution of the Opposing Kings

"*And he captured all their kings*
and struck them down and put them to death."

Richard Hess: the threefold verb sequence stresses the aggressive and destructive nature of the action.

2. (:18) Ongoing Warfare Requiring Perseverance

"*Joshua waged war a long time with all these kings.*"

Richard Hess: The emphasis is on the long and comprehensive nature of the struggle that Israel and Joshua experienced in their attempt to gain control of the land that was given to them by God.

Robert Hubbard: In the narrative, it is Israel who does everything, but as Joshua's unique, memorable act the author singles out his capture and execution of enemy kings (**v. 17b**). Those moments befit his role as commander-in-chief, but they also serve further to enhance his stature in Israel's eyes (cf. **3:7; 6:27**) and to encourage the people that Yahweh truly is on their side (cf. **10:25**). That Joshua battled all these kings "*for a long time*" attests his **persistence** and **perseverance** in pursuit of Yahweh's plan (**v. 18**).

B. (:19-20) Obstinance Ordained by the Lord Destined These Cities for Destruction

1. (:19) Exception = the Hivites in Gibeon

"*There was not a city which made peace with the sons of Israel*
except the Hivites living in Gibeon;
they took them all in battle."

2. (:20) Extermination Commanded by the Lord to Moses

"*For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts,*

to meet Israel in battle in order that he might utterly destroy them, that they might receive no mercy, but that he might destroy them, just as the LORD had commanded Moses."

Richard Hess: For Israel, this was all a process of **obedience** to the word of God given by Moses. Thus the obedience of Israel is contrasted with the rebellion and disobedience of the Canaanites. This text demonstrates how for Joshua the reason for the destruction of the Canaanites was neither their wickedness nor their cursed origins (**Gen. 9**). Instead, it was their rebellion against the will of God for Israel, a rebellion that led to armed resistance.

C. (:21-22) Obliteration of the Anakites

"*Then Joshua came at that time and cut off the Anakim from the hill country, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab and from all the hill country of Judah and from all the hill country of Israel. Joshua utterly destroyed them with their cities. 22 There were no Anakim left in the land of the sons of Israel; only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod some remained.*"

Richard Hess: One of the battles not previously recorded was that with the Anakites. The promise of **Deuteronomy 9:1–3**, which specifically predicts the defeat of the fearsome Anakites, is fulfilled. The association of the sons of Anak with the Nephilim (**Num. 13:33**), who elsewhere are themselves associated with the Rephaim (**Deut. 2:11**), suggests that they were mighty warriors slain by Israel.

David Howard: The Anakites were warriors of great renown, and they had figured prominently at a critical juncture in Israel's history. Their fearsome presence had been the primary cause of the Israelites' rebellion in the wilderness (**Num 13:22, 28, 32–33**). The Israelite spies had returned with a report that compared them to the Nephilim, who were descended from the Anakites' ancestor Anak: "*we seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them*" (**Num 13:33**). As a result the Israelites feared going into the land and rebelled against Moses and Aaron (**Numbers 14**). **Deuteronomy 1:28** states that the Canaanites, including the Anakites, were stronger and taller than the Israelites and that their cities were large, with towering walls. **Deuteronomy 9:2** quotes a saying about the Anakites: "*Who can stand up against the Anakites?*" Thus, Israel had absorbed a consuming fear of these people.

It is fitting, then, that the chronicle of Israel's conquests should end with this account of a triumph over perhaps Canaan's most feared inhabitants. The language used is picturesque: Joshua "*cut off* [or, *"cut out*"] *the Anakites from the hill country*." This expression—"*to cut off/out*"—is commonly used to describe totally uprooting and exterminating something or someone (twenty-two times; e.g., **Lev 20:6** [one who follows mediums or spiritists]; **Deut 12:29** [the nations]; **Josh 7:9** [the Israelites' name]; etc.). Following this statement, the **completeness of the extermination** is reinforced in <u>two ways</u>:

- first, by the naming of the cities and regions from which the Anakites were cut out and
- second, by the verb *rm*, "*to exterminate, destroy completely*."

D. (:23) Summary and Transition

David Howard: This verse brings the entire first section of the book to a close. It is remarkable in its simplicity and its comprehensiveness: in its short compass, it captures almost every important element of the book's theology --

- Joshua's leadership,
- the taking and giving of the land in fulfillment of God's promises, and
- the tribes' peaceful settlement of the land in their allotted territories.

1. Complete Conquest of the Promised Land

"*So Joshua took the whole land,*
according to all that the LORD had spoken to Moses,"

2. Distribution of the Inheritance

"*and Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel*
according to their divisions by their tribes."

Richard Hess: The effect of this is to anticipate the **distribution** of the land. Along with the word for an *inheritance* (Heb. *naḥălâ*), it provides a transition to the following chapters. Inheritance is first used here in Joshua, but it will recur forty-two times. It describes that which has been divinely given to the families of Israel for their possession. This could not become an inheritance until God gave it to Israel in the conquest. Now that the conquest has occurred, it will form the concrete expression of the promised blessings of God's covenant with Abram and his descendants.

3. Rest from War

"*Thus the land had rest from war.*"

Gordon Matties: Warfare and inheritance are incompatible realities, according to the book of Joshua. Although the *rest* of the opening and closing of the book is contingent on the rest that is a quietness without war (**11:23; 14:15**), it is juxtaposed with obedience (**22:4; 23:1**; cf. **22:2, 5; 23:6**), as we find it in Joshua's commissioning of the Transjordan tribes (**1:13, 15**). **True rest** is characterized by life lived in obedience to God.

Richard Hess: Land remained to be possessed, but there were to be no more wars from this point. This phrase recurs in **Joshua 14:15**, where it concludes Caleb's campaign to conquer Hebron. There too it signals that the wars are ended. The prophetic promise of a **land at peace** is here realized, however briefly, while the Israelites receive their allotments and reaffirm their covenant. For the Christian, the 'battle' against the powers of darkness has been won by Christ. At best the 'rest' for the Israelites of Joshua was temporary (**Heb. 4:8**). In Christ, eternal rest is promised. This rest comes

through justification (**Heb. 4:10**). It is described as the Sabbath rest of God's people (**Heb. 4:9**), who will enjoy their inheritance forever (**1 Pet. 1.4–5**).

David Howard: The land's rest in Joshua is a positive thing, and the intense mood of the confrontations and battles of **chaps. 6–11** is dramatically changed with this final statement about rest. A much more peaceful and sedentary mood is found in **chaps. 13–24**, and this statement sets the stage for those chapters. All the loose ends are being tied up. Joshua is emerging strongly as Israel's leader, the entire land is now pacified, and there is no more war. All that remains before the important and much-anticipated task of the distribution of Israel's inheritance is the list of Canaanite kings who were subjugated (**chap. 12**).

Van Parunak: This "*rest*" is a recurring theme throughout Scripture. It consists of Israel in the land and at peace from their enemies, **Deut. 12:10**.

- Israel enjoys it only occasionally and for brief periods during the OT history (cf. Judges, kings)
- The Lord Jesus offers it to the nation in **Matt. 11:28**, but they refuse it (**Matt 12** gathers together the rejection stories, and the rest of the book builds to the crucifixion).
- Peter offers it in **Acts 3:20-21**.
- It will finally be established during the coming millennial kingdom.

II. (12:1-24) SUMMARY CONCERNING THE CONQUERED KINGS

David Howard: This chapter forms an **appendix** of sorts to the first major section of the book (**chaps. 1–12**). A narrative wrap-up is found at **11:16–23**, but this chapter recapitulates with a list of kings and territories that the Israelites conquered. It is appropriate to have this list here—even if a sense of closure has already been achieved at the end of **chap. 11**—because of the great importance placed in the book on Israel's inheritance of the land. Now that the major battles were over and the land subjugated for all practical purposes, the author appends this list, specifying in detail the cities and regions Israel subjugated. After the narrative conclusion in **11:16–23**, it is as though the author were saying, "Here is the supporting evidence—the raw data—of what I have written about in the previous chapters." Even though the list is primarily a geographical one, it is couched in terms of the kings of the geographical areas. However, the kings' names are not important, so none are recorded (except for those of Sihon and Og), which contrasts to the practice of listing kings' names elsewhere (esp. **10:1–5; 11:1**). The **conquest of lands is of paramount importance** in the Book of Joshua.

A. (:1-6) Kings East of the Jordan (under Moses' leadership)

1. (:1) Introduction to the Campaigns East of the Jordan

> "*Now these are the kings of the land whom the sons of Israel defeated, and whose land they possessed beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise, from the valley of the Arnon as far as Mount Hermon, and all the Arabah to the east:*"

Richard Hess: In contrast to those west of the Jordan, these leaders controlled regions rather than only towns. These areas are outlined in the sequence of Israel's victory over them.

David Howard: The down payment on the inheritance of the land had been the Israelites' earlier conquests east of the Jordan, their victories over Sihon, king of Heshbon, and Og, king of Bashan. They were defeated under Moses, and their lands were possessed at that time (**v. 6**; the fuller story is told in **Num 21:21– 35** and **Deut 2:26 – 3:11**. These lands were the inheritance of the two and one-half tribes that settled there. This list (**vv. 2–5**) is similar to the one found in **13:9–12**.

2. (:2-5) Focus on Victories over the Most Powerful Foes

a. (:2-3) Defeat of Sihon King of the Amorites

"*Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon, and ruled from Aroer, which is on the edge of the valley of the Arnon, both the middle of the valley and half of Gilead, even as far as the brook Jabbok, the border of the sons of Ammon; and the Arabah as far as the Sea of Chinneroth toward the east, and as far as the sea of the Arabah, even the Salt Sea, eastward toward Beth-jeshimoth, and on the south, at the foot of the slopes of Pisgah;*"

David Thompson: Sihon was a **power-crazed ruler**. When Israel wanted to pass through his land, he would not permit it and gather his military force to march out against Israel (**Num. 21:21-23**). That was his end. Israel took all his land, including Heshbon, his own city. Sihon represents the big and powerful enemy who blatantly tries to prevent God's people from getting to where God wants them to be. Sihon-types will be defeated, no matter how impressive they may appear to be.

When we find we are threatened by some dominant leader who seems to have targeted us, this is a good story to remember. God can destroy them and give us victory.

b. (:4-5) Defeat of Og King of Bashan

"*and the territory of Og king of Bashan, one of the remnant of Rephaim, who lived at Ashtaroth and at Edrei, 5 and ruled over Mount Hermon and Salecah and all Bashan, as far as the border of the Geshurites and the Maacathites, and half of Gilead, as far as the border of Sihon king of Heshbon.*"

David Thompson: Og was a king who literally had a bed of iron that was 6 feet wide and 13 ½ feet long. This was truly a "king size" bed (**Deut. 3:11**). Og ruled about 60 miles north of the northern boundary of Sihon, east of the Jordan. His territory featured some Rephaim, who were giants who were mighty warriors.

3. (:6) Leadership of Moses

"*Moses the servant of the LORD and the sons of Israel defeated them;*

and Moses the servant of the LORD gave it to the Reubenites and the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh as a possession.

B. (:7-24) Kings West of the Jordan (under Joshua's leadership)

1. (:7a) Introduction to the Campaigns West of the Jordan

"*Now these are the kings of the land whom Joshua and the sons of Israel defeated beyond the Jordan toward the west, from Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon even as far as Mount Halak, which rises toward Seir;*"

2. (:7b-8) Leadership of Joshua and Scope of Success

"*and Joshua gave it to the tribes of Israel as a possession according to their divisions, 8 in the hill country, in the lowland, in the Arabah, on the slopes, and in the wilderness, and in the Negev; the Hittite, the Amorite and the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite:*"

David Howard: **Verse 8** presents an overall, sweeping view of the lands taken, mentioning six areas and six peoples. The six areas have all been mentioned previously in the book, in the summarizing statements of **10:40** and **11:16**, or elsewhere in the book: the hill country, western foothills, and the Negev in **10:40** and **11:16**, the Arabah in **11:16**, the mountain slopes in **10:40**, and the desert in **1:4**. The six peoples also have been mentioned in **3:10**. The references both to territories and to peoples emphasize the **completeness of the conquest** to this point.

3. (:9-24) Detailed Listing of Conquered Cities

a. (:9) First 2 Cities Conquered – Jericho and Ai

"*the king of Jericho, one;*
the king of Ai, which is beside Bethel, one;"

David Guzik: These descriptions are also important because they make it clear that these things happened at a real time, and in real places. These are not fairy tales that begin with "once upon a time," this is history that begins with specific places and people and rulers.

b. (:10-16a) Kings and Cities in the South (south-to-north orientation)

"*the king of Jerusalem, one; the king of Hebron, one; 11 the king of Jarmuth, one; the king of Lachish, one; 12 the king of Eglon, one; the king of Gezer, one; 13 the king of Debir, one; the king of Geder, one; 14 the king of Hormah, one; the king of Arad, one; 15 the king of Libnah, one; the king of Adullam, one; 16 the king of Makkedah, one;*"

c. (:16b-18) Kings and Cities in the Center

"*the king of Bethel, one; 17 the king of Tappuah, one; the king of Hepher, one; 18 the king of Aphek, one; the king of Lasharon, one;*"

David Howard: This shows that Jericho and Ai were not the only cities conquered in the central portion of the land.

d. (:19-23) Kings and Cities in the North

"*the king of Madon, one; the king of Hazor, one; 20 the king of Shimron-meron, one; the king of Achshaph, one; 21 the king of Taanach, one; the king of Megiddo, one; 22 the king of Kedesh, one; the king of Jokneam in Carmel, one; 23 the king of Dor in the heights of Dor, one; the king of Goiim in Gilgal, one;*"

David Howard: This portion of the list begins with the four cities of the coalition mentioned in **11:1** (although in a slightly different order): Madon, Hazor, Shimron-Meron, and Acshaph (**vv. 19–20**).

This is the Bible's first mention of Taanach and Megiddo (**v. 21**), and they are most commonly mentioned together (**17:11; Judg 1:27; 5:19; 1 Kgs 4:12**). They were strategic cities in the Jezreel Valley, about five miles apart, and they controlled a heavily traveled pass going southwest into the Plain of Sharon. They were both part of Manasseh's inheritance (**17:11**), and Taanach became a Levitical city (**21:25**), but the tribe of Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of either city (**Judg 1:27**).

e. (:24a) Tirzah in North-Central Hill Country

"*the king of Tirzah, one:*"

f. (:24b) Overall Summary

"*in all, thirty-one kings.*"

David Thompson: What I think is so interesting is that these political leaders seemed to sail along in life for quite a while. They had their power and they had their prosperity and they thought they were on top of the world. That is until God decided it was time for judgment. God knew each one by name and He destroyed every one of these God-mocking politicians. **One by one God tracked them down and destroyed them**.

Political leaders would be very wise to take a serious look at this chapter. They may sail along for a while; but there will come a day when God will track them all down. So one day the script will read God defeated and destroyed the Presidents of the United States who mocked Him and His Word. God defeated and destroyed the governors who made mockery of Him and His Word. God defeated and destroyed those mayors of cities that promoted things that were not Biblically right.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What spiritual enemies still need to be purged from your life?

2) Given the bloody nature of the warfare described in these chapters, what do you learn about God's resolve to conquer sin for us so that we might enjoy rest with Him?

3) What were God's major purposes in commanding the Israelites to completely annihilate the Canaanites?

4) Under what circumstances does God harden people's hearts today?

* * * * * * * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Trent Butler: Succinctly, for the book, conquering lands is of upmost meaning. The writer brings together threads from the whole book: Moses and Joshua, divine war, east and west together, land distribution, and victory over enemy kings, and compiles a list that will impress readers with the greatness of the feat of God in working for Israel and of the greatness of the leadership of Joshua in following the example of Moses and completing the task given to him. As Hess concludes: "The covenanted blessings of inheritance become Israel's (**chaps. 13–19**) because of their faithfulness to God through all the battles and because of the faithfulness of Moses and Joshua." This is a much stronger conclusion than Merlin's direction toward the presence of God and Israel's lack of need to act.

The writer is aware, however, that much remains to be done. Israel has not achieved rest and accomplishment. The people bask in the glory of victory and obedience, but they face a new task ahead. They have won the territory; now they must drive out the remaining inhabitants and settle the land. They have not been called to a life of constant warfare and celebration of victory. They have been called to a life in the land that God has given them, a life to be lived in accordance with the lifestyle prescribed by God. The first step in fulfillment of that calling is the division of the land. That follows immediately. When that is complete, the people will have their identity set before them, an identity of life in the land obeying Yahweh, the giver of the land and of the law.

Still suspended over the list of kings, the hanging of kings at Makkedah, and the fear spread across all of Canaan is the threat of violence, war, and killing. One cannot concentrate on possession and neglect the result of possession for those deposed. Thus Hawk warns: "God's election of Israel meant that God would be involved in the mess, broken systems, and violence that entangle nations in a world gone bad. God's participation in, and even initiation of, the evil of war seems to fly in the face of God's goodness, righteousness, and love." The problem of such a conclusion lies in its limitation of God to One who does what we call righteous. We cancel God's anger, wrath, and fight for justice. We must live with this tension between God's creative goodness and God's re-creating a just society for his kingdom. The life of the believer will remain caught in this tension.

Gordon Matties: A further irony occurs in the hardening-of-the-heart motif, which in the DtrH concerns divine sovereignty in both process and outcome. The verb traditionally translated "*to harden*" (*hzq*), when used in a military context, means "*to strengthen*." Used with the word "*heart*," which is primarily the seat of the will (the **intellectual** rather than emotional center), the full expression means something like "*to strengthen the resolve.*" It is as though God is the director who guides all the components of making a film such that he takes responsibility for the whole even though he does not, and cannot, participate in or control every aspect of the process. It is telling, therefore, that in this pivotal passage in **Joshua 11**, the narrative interprets the events as analogous to the liberation from Egypt. But here the Lord does not engage in battle alone, as in the exodus story. Israel under Joshua obeys a modified or reinterpreted Deuteronomic code to exterminate with no mercy. Moreover, in the opening and closing speeches in the book of Joshua, the same verb also has a slightly different meaning. Although in **Joshua 1** the word is used in the context of impending warfare, it also means a strengthening to obey God's instructions (**Josh 1:7; 23:6**). . .

The phrase *in order that* (twice in the Hebrew text of **v. 20**) makes it clear that **God intends a specific outcome**. Whereas earlier theological summaries emphasize that *the Lord fought for Israel* (**10:14, 42**), they also make it clear that Joshua and his forces have participated in both disabling and exterminating the enemy (throughout **chs. 10-11**). Now in the final summary, the Lord's participation moves beyond throwing hailstones down from heaven and instructing Joshua to hamstring horses and burn chariots. The Lord also empowers *all the kings* to make war on Israel so that the Deuteronomic instruction of extermination might be fulfilled. The will of *all the kings*, like the Pharaoh of the exodus, was directed by God so that God's intentions would be carried out. The mysterious governance of God is at the heart of this unit, just as the outcome is in God's "*hand*" in the exodus narrative. **Joshua 11:20** therefore brings together the notion of divine direction of the historical process and the human action that makes that outcome tangible.

Andrew Webb: **The Promise Keeper**
1) First as John Calvin pointed out, these verses place "before our eyes as it were a living picture of the goodness of God, proving that there had been a complete ratification and performance of the covenant made with Abraham as given in the words, '*Unto thy seed will I give this land.*'"

We forget that this chapter is the vindication of the truth of a great promise made literally hundreds of years before. God had promised Abraham that He would take this man from Ur of the Chaldees and make of him a nation – that promise was fulfilled, and then in turn that he would deliver that nation out of bondage – and that promise was fulfilled and then **that he would give to them a good land** – and now in these verses we are seeing that **God has once again delivered on his promises**.

Now at this point there just remained one promise God had made to Abraham that was yet to be fulfilled and that was: And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. That great blessing was fulfilled over a thousand years later. But all of these things had

to happen first before a man named Jesus, who was that promised blessing, could be born over a thousand years later in Bethlehem.

God is the promise keeper and that is of tremendous importance, because of course trust in God's promises is that third and absolutely vital element in living faith. The true Christian not only believes in God, as James reminds us even Devils do that, the true Christian BELIEVES GOD. . .

2) As a final application, consider the way that the bible records God's works in **detail** and rejoices over them. How different that is from the way we often pray, always in generalities. One of the reasons the Day of Congregational Thanksgiving last week was a blessing to me was that we were able to pray prayers of thanksgiving specifically for the providential mercies God has given **instead of just general prayers**.

I think one of the reasons we've lost touch with the idea that God works in his peoples lives is that **we pray only in generalities**: "We thank you God for your many blessings" that speaks of a God who is out there, generally affecting things positively but not actually working out his will bit by bit in everything that happens in our lives. **The God on the other hand who is thanked for conquering kings and cities one by one is a God who is sovereignly bringing about his will in every event of his people's lives**. I don't know about you, but I want to serve not the vague good vibes God of popular culture but the living God who oversees everything that happens, and who is actually casting down "every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God."
https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/111805142835.pdf

David Thompson: There are some people who think that the Christian life is a life of peaceful tranquility without any conflict or confrontation. Frankly such a notion is not possible, nor is it Biblical. Certainly we all desire a life that is peaceful; but to reach that desire there are hard fought battles against real enemies. The road to peace is a road filled with **conflicts** and **confrontations** and when God's people purpose to obey God, they will experience the victory and peace they long for.

As we have been going through this book of Joshua, we have seen some important things:

1) Getting to the place where God wanted Israel to be was not easy or quick; it was a process and at times it was difficult.
2) Getting to the place where God wanted Israel to be meant she had to fight many different battles against many different kinds of enemies.
3) Getting to the place where God wanted Israel to be meant persistent obedience over a process of time.
4) Getting to the place where God wanted Israel to be meant all enemies were destroyed.

As we come to **Joshua 12**, what we learn is that Israel had tremendous victory over every enemy who stood against her. Specific enemies were targeted and defeated. The victory was very precise according to the leading of God. But no victory was easy. Jericho was probably the easiest, but even Jericho required that when the walls came down they had to go in and take the city.

Along the way, Israel was learning a lesson of obedience and she learned the lesson of fighting a good faithful fight. There is a great lesson to be learned from this chapter:

REGARDLESS OF WHO THE ENEMY IS AND REGARDLESS OF HOW MANY ENEMIES WE FACE, OUR RESPONSIBILITY IS TO OBEY GOD AND WAGE A GOOD WAR AND ONE BY ONE THOSE ENEMIES WILL BE DEFEATED AND WE WILL EXPERIENCE VICTORY AND PEACE.
https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/228161252451.pdf

John Schultz: These names and places contain very little that is of interest to us or that sounds stimulating for our spiritual life. The author of this book simply compiled a list of defeated foes, an inventory of victory. As such it has some value for us in that it may prompt us to look back and see how far we have come in our life of spiritual victory or the lack of it. From the two major battles recorded in the previous chapters it is obvious that the victory belonged to God. Israel had not defeated the enemy because of its own strength. The standing still of the sun during the battle in the valley of Aijalon proves that our whole galaxy was involved in this victory of light over darkness. It was obviously not Joshua who cause the sun to stand still although it occurred in answer to his prayer. It is the Lord who answer prayer who intervenes supernaturally when we ask him to do so.

TEXT: Joshua 13:1-7

TITLE: REMAINING LAND TO BE CONQUERED

BIG IDEA:
JOSHUA'S FINAL INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE LORD IN HIS OLD AGE – PAST CONQUESTS NO EXCUSE FOR NEGLECTING FUTURE GOALS -- SPECIFIC AREAS OF CANAAN STILL NEEDED TO BE CONQUERED AND POSSESSED

INTRODUCTION:

Kenneth Gangel: Just as God took control over the battles, God also takes control over the rest and communicates specific plans for how he wants the land of Canaan divided.

As this staggering array of geographical locations unfolds for the rest of Joshua, some readers will find the change in story line a bit boring, but it was the most exciting time for Israelites. If we put ourselves in their sandals, we notice this was the first time in their history as a nation that they had their own land, their own cities, their own fields, and their own homes. **Verses 2-5** describe the portion of land that had not yet been conquered. Essentially it consisted of Philistia, Phoenicia, and Lebanon (reading south to north), the southwest coastal region, and the far north territory.

Thomas Constable: At the end of the seven-year period of conquest, Israel occupied very little of the Promised Land; very much of it remained for them to possess (**v. 1**). Consequently, dividing all the land among the tribes required great faith, that God would eventually give His people all of it. Joshua had removed the significant military threats to Israel's existence. From now on, each tribe was responsible to conquer and colonize its own designated territory.

David Howard: A major emphasis in this section [**13:1 – 21:45**] is that God was the great landowner and landgiver. Just as in **chaps. 1–12**, he is presented as the one who guided and fought for Israel, giving its enemies into its hands, so now he appears as the one who gave Israel the land. The detailed boundary descriptions and lists of cities serve to emphasize the fact that God had been in control of this land all along, and he had the authority to parcel it out as he saw fit. . .

the very inclusion of the great detail in these lists shows the importance of documenting each tribes' inheritance and of demonstrating God's faithfulness to his promises.

Robert Hubbard: Structurally, **Joshua 13–19** has two main sections: Yahweh's commission of Joshua to distribute land west of the Jordan among nine-and-a-half tribes (**ch. 13**) and the detailed report that he does so (**chs. 14–19**).

Richard Hess: For the Christian, Israel's failure to conquer the land fully anticipates the inability to enjoy the full favour of God's blessing in this life (**1 Cor. 10:1–13**). Christians are not perfect, though they are called to perfect holiness. They live in a tension between the rewards of a life lived fully in the Holy Spirit, which are available here and now, and their own failure, which prevents the appropriation of those gifts. This paradox has no resolution in this life but it does have the promise of God's continual presence with believers to enable them to receive forgiveness and to live a life of obedience (**1 John 1:5–10**).

Trent Butler: The **divine speech** (**vv 2–7**) contains four major parts:

- A description of the present situation (**v 1**)
- A description of the land that remains (**vv 2–5**)
- A promise to complete the conquest eventually (**vv 6a**)
- A description of Joshua's present task and a command to begin immediately (**vv 6b–7**)

I. (:1) OLD AGE MARKS A TRANSITION BUT NOT A CESSATION OF SERVICE

> "*Now Joshua was old and advanced in years when the LORD said to him,*
> *'You are old and advanced in years,*
> *and very much of the land remains to be possessed.'*"

Richard Hess: The note signals the end of Joshua's participation in wars of conquest at an age approaching his death at 110 (**Josh. 24:29**). It introduces a new section of the book.

Trent Butler: Joshua cannot complete the task of conquering the land. He is old: he has fought a long time (**Josh 11:18**); he has been entirely faithful (**11:15**). Now he must trust others to complete the conquest.

Robert Hubbard: Joshua's advanced age leads Yahweh to raise an important matter. What is to be done about the "*very large areas of land [still] to be taken over*" (**v. 1**)? Before Yahweh commissions Joshua to distribute Canaan among the tribes (**vv. 6b–7**), Yahweh surveys the land that remains to be conquered (**vv. 2–6a**). His concern is twofold (**v. 6**): Because of Joshua's old age, someone else will have to liberate the above lands later from possession by non-Israelites, and yet Joshua is to include those unconquered lands in the distribution.

Gordon Matties: The second main section of the book begins with a double reference to Joshua's old age, once by the narrator and once by God (**v. 1**). The same emphasis is repeated in **23:1**, reminding the reader of the importance of what lies in between. The point of **13:1** is not simply Joshua's age, but also that God speaks about the fact that very much of the land still remains to be possessed (**v. 1b**) and then maps out the territory. **Verses 2-6b** chart that territory by listing the outlying areas (not the central

hill country of Ephraim and Judah). **Verses 1b-7** are a divine speech, which marks the words as having special significance.

David Thompson: This chapter opens with a description of Joshua. Joshua was old and advanced in years. We know that when Joshua died, he was 110-years-old (**Joshua 24:29**). It is guessed at this point in time that here he is about 100.

God has some special things He says about faithful older people:

> **Psalm 92:14** - "*They will still yield fruit in old age: they shall be full of sap and very green*."
> **Isaiah 46:4** - "*Even to your old age, I shall be the same and even to your graying years I shall bear you. I have done it and I shall carry you and I shall bear you and I shall deliver you.*"

Joshua was old; but he was not done serving God. Arthur Pink said it is not the revealed will of God that His people should spend their elderly years in idleness. He doesn't preserve them, protect them and mature them so they can spend their life in a chair in front of a TV. There are jobs for elderly people to do. Perhaps not as strenuous, but still important work. Praying, giving, attending, helping, ministering are all jobs we all can do regardless of age.

II. (:2-5) OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND FOR CONSOLIDATING POSSESSION OF THE PROMISED LAND

> "*This is the land that remains:*"

Richard Hess: The remaining land describes those towns and regions that lie within the borders of Canaan (**Num. 34:1–12**) but are not possessed by Israel. Its appearance in **verses 2–7** serves as an introduction to what follows (cf. **Judg. 1**), in the case of **Joshua 13 – 21** the allotments of the land.

A. (:2b-3) The Southern Region

> "*all the regions of the Philistines and all those of the Geshurites; 3 from the Shihor which is east of Egypt, even as far as the border of Ekron to the north (it is counted as Canaanite); the five lords of the Philistines: the Gazite, the Ashdodite, the Ashkelonite, the Gittite, the Ekronite; and the Avvite*"

Richard Hess: For lands of the Philistines and Geshurites, see **Joshua 11:22; 12:5**. The former dwelt along the sea-coast and the latter were found east of the sea of Galilee.

David Howard: The **Philistines** are mentioned now for the first time in the book. They were a mixed group of peoples who settled in Canaan in large numbers ca. 1200 B.C., but forebears of whom had been in the land since the time of Abraham (see **Gen 21:32–24; 26:1;** etc.). The reference here is either to these forebears or else the term "*Philistine*" is used to label the territory that later would become identified by its occupants. The Philistines had five major cities, named here, ruled over by five

"*lords*." The word for "*lord*" here—*seren*—is the only clearly Philistine word known, and it is used consistently in the Bible to refer to the Philistine rulers of their five-city political organization.

B. (:4) The Canaanite Region

"*to the south, all the land of the Canaanite,*
and Mearah that belongs to the Sidonians,
as far as Aphek, to the border of the Amorite;"

Richard Hess: The **Sidonians** include the entire coastal region that borders Philistia at Aphek in the south and extends north to the border of the Gebalites. . .

The region of the **Amorites** represents a unique use of the term '*Amorite*' in the Bible. Elsewhere it is a general term for the people of Canaan, perhaps especially those of the hill country. Here it represents the kingdom of **Amurru**, known to have existed only in the Late Bronze Age (1550–1200 BC) when it formed a state situated between the region controlled by Egypt to the south and that controlled by the Hittites to the north. This region is north of the Nahr el-Kalb River.

C. (:5) The Northern Region

"*and the land of the Gebalite,*
and all of Lebanon, toward the east,
from Baal-gad below Mount Hermon as far as Lebo-hamath."

Richard Hess: **Gebal** is the city-state of Byblos, whose control included the coastal region from the border of the Sidonians north to the northern border of Canaan along the coast.

III. (:6-7) OBEDIENCE MUST MESH WITH GOD'S SOVEREIGN ACTIVITY

A. (:6a) Divine Promise of Sovereign Activity

"*All the inhabitants of the hill country from Lebanon as far as Misrephoth-maim, all the Sidonians, I will drive them out from before the sons of Israel;*"

David Howard: The emphasis in **v. 6a**, however, shifts from a simple catalogue of territories (or peoples) to the activity that God promised he would undertake, namely, to drive out these peoples before the Israelites. The objects of God's activity are emphasized syntactically by appearing in the beginning of the verse. Furthermore, God emphasizes his own activity and his own fearsome attributes: "*I myself will drive them out before the Israelites*."

Trent Butler: The theological point of the whole section comes in **v 6aβ**, the **divine promise**. God will do that which Joshua is too old to do. The people of Israel may lose their perfectly obedient leader, but they will not lose the leadership of God. He has given his promise (**Exod 34:24; Num 32:21; 33:52–53; Deut 9:3–5; 11:23; 18:12; Josh 3:10**)

B. (:6b-7) Delegated Responsibility for Distribution of God-Given Inheritance

"*only allot it to Israel for an inheritance as I have commanded you.* 7 *Now therefore, apportion this land for an inheritance to the nine tribes, and the half-tribe of Manasseh.*"

David Howard: **Verses 6b–7** shift the focus away from the unconquered territories and people to Joshua's obligations to divide the land as an inheritance to the tribes west of the Jordan, just as God had commanded him.

Robert Hubbard: In **verse 7**, Yahweh formally (lit., "*And now* …") commissions Joshua to "*apportion*" (*halaq pi*.) the entire land—that just described and the parts already within Israelite control—among the nine-and-a-half tribes. This command governs all the activity through **19:51**. As we will see, the means of dividing them is to cast lots (lit., "*throw it down*"; NIV "*allocate this land*"). Theologically, Israel presumes that Yahweh invisibly guides the process of lot-casting that decides who gets what (e.g., **14:2; 18:11; 19:1**). So, Israel accepts the results as Yahweh's will. But the question is, what about land for the other two-and-one-half tribes? That question occasions a glance backward.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How can you develop a balanced perspective that both looks back at accomplishments and forward to those areas where God wants you to strive for progress?

2) How can a successful spiritual leader graciously transition into a different type of role in his twilight years?

3) What type of synergy do you see in your life between what God has promised to accomplish for you and what He requires of you in terms of personal responsibility?

4) What type of service for the Lord do we anticipate in our older years?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

David Howard: The lists in **chaps. 13–21** follow a **logical order**. After an introductory section (**13:1–7**), the two and one-half Transjordan tribes' inheritance is detailed, lands that already had been assigned and, essentially, taken (**13:8–33**). Previews of the Levites' different inheritance are given in **vv. 14,33**; the cities of their inheritance were scattered throughout the other Israelite lands (see **chap. 21**).

In **chaps. 14–19**, the lands west of the Jordan are distributed. Following an introductory section (**14:1–5**), Caleb's inheritance is described (**14:6–15**). This singling out of an individual is appropriate, of course, because he and Joshua were the only two surviving adults from the wilderness generation and the two spies who had given a positive report about entering the land many years earlier (**Numbers 14**).

After the preliminaries in **chaps. 13–14**, the inheritance of the most important tribe, Judah, is given (**chap. 15**). Another version of Caleb's inheritance is told (**15:13–19**), and the boundary descriptions and lists of cities are extensive. Then the inheritance of the tribes of Joseph—those descended from his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh—is given (**chaps. 16–17**). Joseph had been Jacob's favorite son (**Gen 37:3**), and the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh were the most important in the Northern Kingdom of Israel many years later.

Following the distribution of the lands to the most important tribes, the inheritances belonging to the remaining seven tribes are given (**chaps. 17– 18)**. At the end, Joshua is also singled out (as Caleb had been initially), and his inheritance is given (**19:49–50)**.

The lists conclude with the designation of the cities of refuge (**chap. 20**) and the cities allotted to the Levites (**chap. 21**). The concerns here show God's interest in more than just land per se. The land had many sacred functions, of which two were to provide for justice (**the cities of refuge**) and for God's special ministers (**the Levitical cities**).

Robert Hubbard: Why include all this dull administrative material? Certainly, one purpose is to sound the narrative's main theme, **the fulfillment of Yahweh's promise of land**. That is what makes this section the very heart of Joshua: the goal of the conquest of Canaan is to enable Israel to settle and possess the land and to pass it on as its "*inheritance.*" But repeated statements also sound <u>two minor themes</u> that anticipate the book's later parts:

- the inability of some tribes to destroy non-Israelite peoples within their allotments (**13:13; 17:13**); and
- the fact that the tribe of Levi receives no territorial inheritance (**13:14, 33; 14:3, 4; 18:7**). This latter theme anticipates the distribution of towns among the Levites (**ch. 21**; cf. **14:4**).

Gordon Matties: The book of Joshua reflects a **tension** between the Lord's and Israel's actions. Even more important is the repetition of the verb throughout the following chapters in contexts where the narrator makes a point of saying that Israel did not or could not *drive out* the indigenous inhabitants (e.g., **13:13; 15:63; 16:10; 17:13**). And then in **Joshua 23:12-13** we read the ominous note that if Israel should *turn back and join* the people remaining, then *the Lord your God will not continue to <u>drive out</u> these nations before you* (emph. added). These nations that remain will become *a snare and a trap for you, a scourge on your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land that the Lord your God has given you.* Thus the driving out is not a simple matter. First, it is the Lord who says he will do it. Then Israel is not able to do it. And

finally, should certain conditions prevail, the Lord will cease doing it (as **Judg 2:21** confirms).

But for now, according to **Joshua 13:6**, the matter is in God's hands. Joshua is to do next only what God commands him to do: *Allot the land to Israel for an inheritance*. The instruction is punctuated with *as I have commanded you*. Moses seems no longer to be the mediator of the divine word. Joshua is to *divide this land*, or apportion or allot it, to nine and a half tribes (including half the tribe of Manasseh) west of the Jordan.

Helene Dallaire: **Description of the Land Remaining to be Conquered**
Shihor River—("*black river*") **Jos 13:3; 1Ch 13:5; Isa 23:3; Jer 2:18**
Northeast Egypt; NE portion of the Pelusaic branch of the Nile in the E delta of Egypt or the frontier canal in the far E delta

Gaza—Ghazzeh/Azza **Jos 13:3; 15:47; Jdg 16:1; Am 1:6; Acts 8:26**
3.5 mi. inland from the Mediterranean Sea Judah (**15:47**)

Ashdod—Esdud/Tel Ashdod **Jos 11:22; Ne 13:23; Zec 9:6; Acts 8:40**
3 mi. inland from the Mediterranean Sea Judah (**15:46, 47**)

Ashkelon—Asqalan/Ashqelon **Jdg 14:19; Jer 47:5; Zep 2:7**
On the Mediterranean Sea Judah (**Jdg 1:18**)

Gath—Tel es-Safi/Tel Zafit **Jos 13:3; 1Sa 17:4; Ps 56:0; Mic 1:10**
25 mi. SSE of Joppa

Ekron -- Kh. el-Muqennaʿ/Tell Miqne **Jos 13:3; 2Ki 1:6; Zep 2:4; Zec 9:5**
South of the Sorek River; 20 mi. SE of Joppa Judah (**15:11**) and Dan (**19:43**)

Arah—Unknown **Jos 13:4**
In Sidonian territory

Aphek—Afqa; Afeq **Jos 13:4; Ju 1:31; 1Ki 20:30**
23 miles north of Beirut Asher (**Jos 19:30**)

Area of Gebalites (Gebal = Byblos)—Jebeil **Jos 13:5; 1Ki 5:18; Eze 27:9**
18 mi. NNE of Beirut; on the Med coast

Lebanon Dt 1:7; Jos 13:5; 2Ch 25:18; SS 4:15; Hos 14:5–7
The area of modern Lebanon, excluding the narrow coastal plain (= Phoenicia), but possibly including a portion of W Syria

Baal Gad—Unknown **Jos 11:17; 12:7; 13:5**
In Valley of Lebanon at W foot of Mt. Hermon

Lebo Hamath—Lebweh **Nu 13:21; Jos 13:5; Jdg 3:3**

In Lebanese Beqa, 45 mi. N of Damascus

Misrephoth Maim—Kh. el-Mushrefeh? **Jos 11:8; 13:6**
N of Galilee in the vicinity of Sidon; possibly in the area of Litani River (Lebanon)

Jerome Creach: This section has a very important but seldom appreciated **theological role** in the book and in the Old Testament. Indeed, **Joshua 13–22** has profound implications for Israel's establishment of a **just society**, according the ideals of the Mosaic *torah*. The distribution of land emphasizes that Canaan is apportioned for the good of all Israel, not just for a privileged few. In turn, this portrait of land distribution is formative for Israel's self-understanding as a **covenant community**. Prophets like Isaiah and Micah express a concern for the maintenance of this self-understanding. They denounce capitalist-style profiteers who "*covet fields, and seize them*," (**Micah 2:2**), joining "*house to house*" (**Isa. 5:8**). What they rail against is precisely the practice of some wealthy citizens who seize property that, for the poor, represents membership in the covenant community. **Joshua 13–22** is guided by a theology of land possession that was supposed to structure Israel's common life in Canaan. The land allotments were to be an *inheritance* (Hebrew *naḥalah*)**, land kept within families and passed on to future generations as a sign of relationship to the covenant-making God**.

Andrew Webb: A brief summary of what we read in these texts. The war against the Canaanites has gone on for at least seven years, God has enabled Israel to destroy both of the major confederations that were raised up against them, and now Joshua is coming near the end of his own life – he is probably around 90 years old at this point - and it is time for him to divide up the land to give it to the tribes. There are still many areas of the promised land that have yet to be subdued.

In particular we read about the land of the Philistines and their main cities, Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron. **Who were the Philistines?** Well unlike most of the other inhabitants of the land they were not descendents of Canaan they not even Semitic people. They were originally a trading people form the Aegean, they were probably originally from the Island of Crete. This makes them more Greek, than Middle Eastern. But they were going to be a real thorn in the side of the Israelites, especially because they controlled some of the best land in the Coastal plains between the mountains and the sea. Being a seafaring people they worshipped Dagon a fish God.

There were other people groups yet to be subdued, cities to be conquered, and people to be driven out, but the idea was with the major armies destroyed, the tribes themselves could do that. They could secure the lands that were being given to them. And of course that was critically important, not only so that they could take over their inheritance, but because if they did not drive those peoples out their culture and their false worship would be a snare to Israel and all the things that Moses had warned of would come about. God had assured them that HE would drive out those people in **verse 6**, so in a very real sense all they had to do was to command of the Lord back in **Joshua 1:9** *Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go* (**Joshua 1:9**) You be faithful, and steadfast, and God will

do the rest. What is critical is that they must believe the promises of God. https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/11300512478.pdf

David Thompson: Our goal in this Christian life is to be completely conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. The goal we have is to be so transformed by the renewing of our minds on the Scriptures that we become Christ-like in our thinking and behavior. What that means is we will have work to do for the rest of our lives. **There will always be things on which we will need to work.**

It doesn't matter how much we accomplish in our Christian lives or how much we have seen God do, there will always be more to accomplish and more to do. We have been learning in this book of Joshua that as God's people obey God's Word, they experience many victories in life. But no matter how much victory we experience, we have not had total victory over everything. We have not won every battle. Truth is we have lost a few. We always have things to work on and that point is clear from this passage in Joshua.

Joshua is a true Biblical hero. He led Israel into her Promised Land and led her to one victory after another. He was a true leader for God and God used him to accomplish many things. He was personally used by God to lead Israel to tremendous blessings. He took them into the land and led them to peace in the land. One by one he fought enemies and won. He was a remarkable leader.

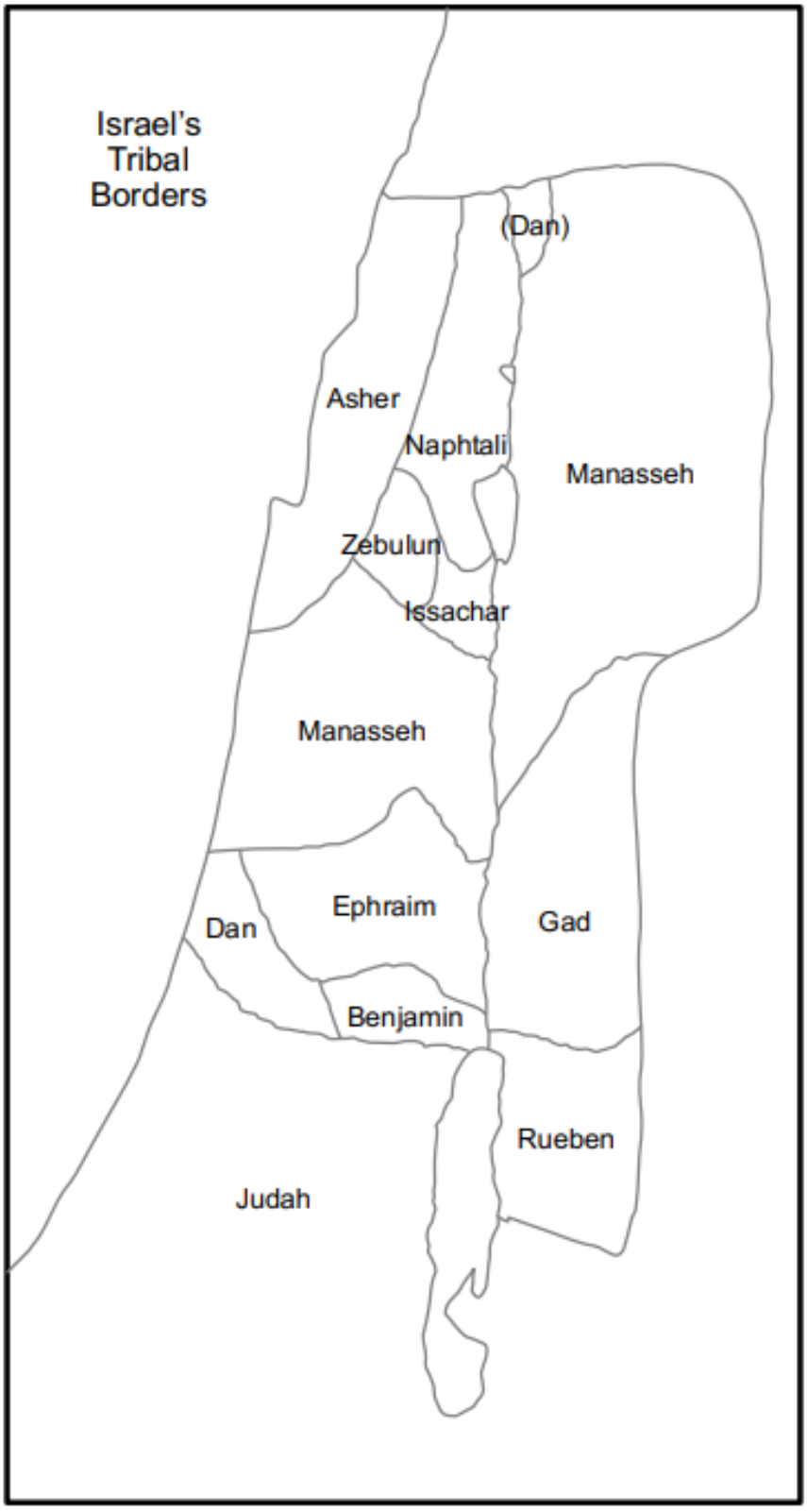
But as great a leader as Joshua had been, **he wasn't able to do it all**. There were still some untouched areas, there was still more to do. The point to see here is this:

WHEN WE OBEY GOD WE WILL EXPERIENCE GREAT VICTORY AND BLESSING, BUT THAT DOES NOT MEAN WE HAVE TOTAL VICTORY OVER EVERYTHING.

We are in a war and we will not get away from the war until we are out of this world. I trust that we are being stimulated to live our lives for the Lord and fight a good fight of faith by this book of Joshua. But we must be realistic with ourselves. We will not have total and complete victory over everything until we are out of this world with the Lord.

Donald Campbell: Someone has said, "Most of this long section reads like a real estate deed." And that is precisely what is found in these lengthy narrations—legal descriptions (after the manner of that ancient day) of the areas allocated to the 12 tribes. Title deeds are important documents so these should not be regarded as insignificant or superfluous....This was a climactic moment in the life of the young nation. After centuries in Egyptian bondage, decades in the barren wilderness, years of hard fighting in Canaan, the hour had arrived when the Israelites could at last settle down to build homes, cultivate the soil, raise families, and live in peace in their own land. The days of land allotment were a happy time for Israel. (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary Old Testament)*

Thomas Constable: **Israel's Tribal Borders**:



TEXT: Joshua 13:8-33

TITLE: TRANSJORDANIAN LAND DISTRIBUTION REVIEWED

BIG IDEA:
GOD WAS FAITHFUL TO GRANT THE TRANSJORDANIAN LAND TO REUBEN, GAD AND MANASSEH WHILE UNIQUELY BLESSING THE LEVITES

INTRODUCTION:

David Howard: Before Joshua's distribution of the lands west of the Jordan, the previous land distribution is reviewed. It had been done under Moses and was to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Eastern Manasseh. This review performs several functions.

- First, it details the boundaries of the inheritances of the Transjordan tribes, which had not been so detailed before (only general summaries are given in **Numbers 32** and **Deut 2:26–3:17**).
- Second, it emphasizes the unity of Israel—on both sides of the Jordan—that is important in **1:12–18** and **12:1–6**, and that will be seen again in **chap. 22**.
- Third, it again emphasizes Joshua's leadership position as Moses' successor: in the same way that Moses had apportioned the Transjordan territories, so now Joshua was to do with the land west of the Jordan.
- Fourth, it anticipates the "landless" state of the Levites (**vv. 14, 33**) and the Levitical cities to be mentioned later (**chap. 21**), reminding us of the Levites' importance.
- Fifth, it serves as a subtle warning that not all is entirely well at this juncture, because some peoples of the land still lived in Israel's territory (see **v. 13**).

Robert Hubbard: This section reviews Moses' prior land allocations east of the Jordan to two-and-a-half tribes (cf. **Num. 32:33–42**). He did so on one condition—that they fight to win inheritances for the other tribes on the west side of the Jordan. As Israel prepared to cross the river, Joshua reminded them of their acceptance of that stipulation (**Josh. 1:12–18**; cf. **4:12**). Now, for Joshua to launch his long land distribution report with the Transjordanian tribes makes chronological sense since they had received their land first. But it also makes the important point that every tribe—the entire nation—received its inheritance from either Moses or Joshua—and on both sides of the Jordan. .

In sum, **chapter 13** affirms that Moses gave Israel's Transjordanian tribes their inheritances—and, thereby, the basis for their land claims—and reasserts that, despite the barrier of the Jordan, they help comprise larger Israel.

Dale Ralph Davis: We must not miss the repeated allusions to Israel's victories over our old friends Sihon and Og (**Josh 13:10, 12, 21, 27, 30–31**), not to mention Balaam (**Josh 13:22**; see **Nu 22–25; 31:8**). What does this mean? It means that throughout all this geography and topography there are constant allusions to the victories Yahweh had previously given Israel under Moses. The allusions jog Israel's memory and fortify their

faith in face of any contemporary enemies; for it is in remembering how Yahweh handled Sihon and Og (**Ps 135:10–12; Ps 136:17–22**) that Israel finds assurance that Yahweh will still have compassion on his servants and that his covenant love persists into present prime time as well (**Ps 135:14; 136:19b, 20b**). This is the biblical prescription for faith; faith finds both steadfastness and expectancy by rehearsing and revelling in Yahweh's past acts of faithfulness. (*Joshua: No Falling Words*)

I. (:8-14) GENERAL SURVEY OF TRANSJORDANIAN LANDS

Kenneth Gangel: These verses describe the tribes east of the Jordan River who obeyed in helping conquer the land in Canaan but failed to finish the job in their own backyard. This is the first of many such statements in the Book of Joshua. No immediate crisis took place, but the Israelites paid for this later as God said they would.

Why didn't they complete the job? Laziness? Complacency? Dissatisfaction with where they were? Whatever the reason, they did not receive all that God had for them—a historical reminder of a spiritual condition in which many Christians live today. We should learn from these verses that God gives as we receive, he drives out as we stand up and fight, and he provides as we appropriate.

A. (:8) Receiving Their Inheritance

> "*With the other half-tribe, the Reubenites and the Gadites received their inheritance which Moses gave them beyond the Jordan to the east, just as Moses the servant of the LORD gave to them;*"

David Howard: Not once is it said that any of the tribes west of the Jordan took (*lq*) their lands. The focus in the later chapters is on God's and Joshua's **giving** of the land and their possessing it—and, sometimes, on the fact that the tribes did not dispossess the land's inhabitants.

B. (:9-12) Reviewing Past Conquests

> "*from Aroer, which is on the edge of the valley of the Arnon, with the city which is in the middle of the valley, and all the plain of Medeba, as far as Dibon; 10 and all the cities of Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, as far as the border of the sons of Ammon; 11 and Gilead, and the territory of the Geshurites and Maacathites, and all Mount Hermon, and all Bashan as far as Salecah; 12 all the kingdom of Og in Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth and in Edrei (he alone was left of the remnant of the Rephaim); for Moses struck them and dispossessed them.*"

David Howard: It included **Gilead** (cf. **12:2, 5**), which stretched northward from the Arnon River in the south to Bashan in the north. Gilead was an important area for Israel and is mentioned well over one hundred times in the Old Testament, in most periods of its history. Gilead was a fertile region at high elevation, with abundant forests (**Jer 22:6; 50:19**) and olives, grains, and vines flourishing on the western slopes. It was

especially known for a healing balm used for medicinal purposes (**Jer 8:22; 46:11**); and spices, balm, and myrrh came from there (Gen 37:25).

C. (:13) Recognizing Remaining Challenges

"*But the sons of Israel did not dispossess the Geshurites or the Maacathites; for Geshur and Maacath live among Israel until this day.*"

Trent Butler: This verse introduces a series of statements in Joshua and in **Judg 1:19–36** describing territories not conquered by Israel, thus reflecting a task still before the people (cf. **v 6**) and providing a basis for the theological judgments of **Judg 2-3**. Theological judgment is only implied in the present context. Historically, the territories in the extreme north were controlled by Israel only under David (**2 Sam 3:3; 10:6–14**).

Rod Mattoon: **Verse thirteen** records the failure of God's people to defeat their enemies. Failure to conquer these enemies led to future problems. When we fail to conquer sinful habits in our life, it will lead to future problems for us. Why do God's people fail in the first place?

- Indolence or laziness.
- Indifference … a contentment in being saved but the prize of God's high calling is not attractive.
- Influence of others.
- Satisfaction or complacent … some are satisfied with achievements.
- Unbelief
- Lack of courage. Fear immobilizes faith.
- Lack of spiritual power and persistence. (*Treasures From Joshua*)

D. (:14) Respecting the Uniqueness of the Tribe of Levi

"*Only to the tribe of Levi he did not give an inheritance;*
the offerings by fire to the LORD, the God of Israel, are their inheritance,
as He spoke to him."

David Howard: These passages show the important nature of the ministry of the Lord's work. While these, his ministers, did not have land, they did have rights to the choicest of the offerings. It was a great privilege to serve the Lord, and he himself would be their inheritance (**v. 33**). It was to Israel's great shame that, many years later, the Levites and temple singers were having to work in the fields in order to survive because God's people were not bringing their tithes, the portions assigned to the Levites (**Neh 13:10–13**).

David Guzik: In this sense, if there is any tribe that Christians are spiritually connected to, it is the tribe of Levi. We also are called priests (**1 Peter 2:5**) and have a special inheritance in God (**Ephesians 1:11, Colossians 1:12**, and **1 Peter 1:4**). Many of us are dissatisfied with our place before God. We wish He would have given us something different, and we can even get bitter towards God about this. The primary answer to this is to **see ourselves as priests**, and to understand that **our real inheritance is God Himself.**

II. (:15-23) TOWNS ALLOTTED TO REUBEN

A. (:15) Statement of Distribution

"*So Moses gave an inheritance to the tribe of the sons of Reuben according to their families.*"

Kenneth Gangel: the bulk of the passage that describes the territory given to **Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh**. Once again the order reads **south to north** with Reuben occupying the territory immediately east of the northern half of the Dead Sea, dangerously bordered by Moab and Edom to the south and Ammon to the northeast. A simple glance at a settlement map shows Reuben in a most precarious spot. Just north of Reuben was the territory of Gad, west of Ammon and located right in the area where the Israelites gathered to cross the Jordan River. Towns like Adam and Zarethan that we have encountered earlier in Joshua fall into Gad's territory. Finally, the territory east of the Sea of Kinnereth (Galilee) belonged to the half tribe of Manasseh stretching from Ramoth Gilead in the southeast and reaching up toward Mount Hermon in the north. The famous Golan Heights so significant in modern Israelite military history are located immediately in the center of the ancient allocation to Manasseh.

B. (:16-21) Description of the Territory

"*And their territory was from Aroer, which is on the edge of the valley of the Arnon, with the city which is in the middle of the valley and all the plain by Medeba; 17 Heshbon, and all its cities which are on the plain: Dibon and Bamoth-baal and Beth-baal-meon, 18 and Jahaz and Kedemoth and Mephaath, 19 and Kiriathaim and Sibmah and Zereth-shahar on the hill of the valley, 20 and Beth-peor and the slopes of Pisgah and Beth-jeshimoth, 21 even all the cities of the plain and all the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites who reigned in Heshbon, whom Moses struck with the chiefs of Midian, Evi and Rekem and Zur and Hur and Reba, the princes of Sihon, who lived in the land.*"

David Howard: The reference to the **Midianites** is the only one in the Book of Joshua. These were a people well known to the Israelites, beginning with Joseph's being sold to Midianite traders by his brothers (**Gen 37:28, 36**). Moses spent his wilderness years in the land of Midian (**Exod 2:15**), and he married Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro, a priest of Midian (**Exod 2:16–21**). Later, the Midianites appeared as enemies of Israel (**Numbers 22–24**), and the Israelites fought and defeated them in the battle referred to here in **Joshua 13** (**Numbers 31**). The Midianites were enemies of Israel in Gideon's day, as well, and he led Israel when the Lord defeated Midian on Israel's behalf (**Judges 6–8**).

C. (:22) Disposition of Balaam

"*The sons of Israel also killed Balaam the son of Beor, the diviner, with the sword among the rest of their slain.*"

David Howard: **Balaam** is singled out in **v. 22** for special mention. He was the Mesopotamian soothsayer hired by Balak, king of Moab, to curse the Israelites in the wilderness (**Numbers 22–24**). He only spoke what God told him to, yet he later sinned by inciting the Moabite women to seduce the Israelite men (**Num 25:1–9; 31:16**). This record of Balaam's death echoes the notice found at **Num 31:8**. The story of God's turning Balaam's desire to curse Israel into a blessing was significant in Israel's history, and it is told several times (see **Josh 24:9–10; Deut 23:4–5; Neh 13:2; Mic 6:5**).

Gordon Matties: Balaam is an ambiguous figure who represents the Lord's instrument (in Numbers), but who is also perceived as representing the threat of pagan divination. Hence the book of Joshua notes Balaam's death to suggest that with the removal of such divination, Israel might be prevented from being unfaithful in its allegiance to God. Yet even the book of Joshua (esp. in **chs. 23-24**) offers hints that such unstinting obedience will not (or cannot) last.

D. (:23) Summary Statement

"*And the border of the sons of Reuben was the Jordan.*
This was the inheritance of the sons of Reuben according to their families,
the cities and their villages."

III. (:24-28) TOWNS ALLOTTED TO GAD

A. (:24) Statement of Distribution

"*Moses also gave an inheritance to the tribe of Gad, to the sons of Gad,*
according to their families."

B. (:25-27) Description of the Territory

"*And their territory was Jazer, and all the cities of Gilead, and half the*
land of the sons of Ammon, as far as Aroer which is before Rabbah;
and from Heshbon as far as Ramath-mizpeh and Betonim,
and from Mahanaim as far as the border of Debir;
and in the valley, Beth-haram and Beth-nimrah and Succoth and
Zaphon, the rest of the kingdom of Sihon king of Heshbon, with the
Jordan as a border, as far as the lower end of the Sea of Chinnereth
beyond the Jordan to the east."

David Howard: The description in **v. 26** outlines the land in a south-to-north orientation. The first part goes from Heshbon in the south to two cities in the middle of Gad's territory (Ramath Mizpah and Betonim), and the second part goes from Mahanaim in the central part northward to the territory of Debir in the far north. Mahanaim later became a Levitical city (**21:38**).

David Howard: In **v. 27**, four cities in the Jordan Valley are mentioned (i.e., on the western border), and then an expansive claim to "*the rest of the realm of Sihon*" concludes the list, delineating the western border more specifically by mentioning the

Jordan River as the western boundary, extending northward all the way to the Sea of Kinnereth.

C. (:28) Summary Statement

"*This is the inheritance of the sons of Gad according to their families, the cities and their villages.*"

IV. (:29-31) TOWNS ALLOTTED TO THE HALF TRIBE OF MANASSEH

A. (:29) Statement of Distribution

"*Moses also gave an inheritance to the half-tribe of Manasseh; and it was for the half-tribe of the sons of Manasseh according to their families.*"

B. (:30-31) Description of the Territory

"*And their territory was from Mahanaim, all Bashan, all the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, and all the towns of Jair, which are in Bashan, sixty cities; also half of Gilead, with Ashtaroth and Edrei, the cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan, were for the sons of Machir the son of Manasseh, for half of the sons of Machir according to their families.*"

David Howard: Bashan was a fertile region on a rugged, high plateau north of Gilead, east and northeast of the Sea of Kinnereth (Galilee). It was surrounded by mountains (**Ps 68:15[Hb. 16**]), well-forested (**Isa 2:13; Ezek 27:6**), but its smooth plateau was ideal for the pasturelands that produced fatted cattle (**Jer 50:19; Ezek 39:18; Mic 7:14**).

(:32-33) EPILOGUE -- SUMMARY

David Howard: The concluding summary reiterates Moses' place as the giver of the land (cf. **vv. 8, 12, 15, 24, 29**) and the Levites' status as a "landless" tribe (cf. **v. 14**).

Here, however, we have a slightly different view of what constituted Levi's inheritance. In **v. 14**, it was the Lord's sacrifices; here, it is the Lord himself. These two perspectives show how closely bound up with each other were God and the sacrifices offered to him.

A. (:32) Transjordanian Territory Distribution

"*These are the territories which Moses apportioned for an inheritance in the plains of Moab, beyond the Jordan at Jericho to the east.*"

B. (:33) Unique Situation for Tribe of Levi

"*But to the tribe of Levi, Moses did not give an inheritance; the LORD, the God of Israel, is their inheritance, as He had promised to them.*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) As a kingdom of priests, how can NT believers take encouragement from the special blessing accorded to the Levites?

2) Why is the role of Moses emphasized in this account?

3) What was the ongoing significance of prior victories over Sihon and Og?

4) Why was God so concerned that the Israelites respect the land inheritance that each family was able to pass down from generation to generation?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Richard Hess: The reference to the **inheritance of the Levites** in **verse 33** resembles that in **verse 14**. It concludes the allotments east of the Jordan, i.e. the general description of the land east of the Jordan River, **verses 8–13**, and the specific divisions by tribe, **verses 14–33**. It introduces the allotments west of the Jordan in **14:3–4**, where it is repeated. The Levites were chosen as a tribe dedicated to the service of the LORD (**Exod. 32:26–29**). They were a replacement for the first-born of Israel, which God claimed from every family (**Num. 8:15–22; Deut. 10:8–9**). Several points are significant.

- Firstly, the mention of the Levites in connection with the allotments east of the Jordan River recalls that both groups were given their inheritance under the leadership of Moses. Neither owed it to Joshua.
- Secondly, their mention in connection with allotments on both sides of the Jordan recalls their role as representatives of the first-born of all families from all tribes. Thus they are the tribe that links all the inheritances together.
- Thirdly, their service to the LORD provides a theological theme for the inheritances on both sides of the Jordan. All tribes worship God with the help of the Levites, who assist in the sacrifices and blessings. This point anticipates the allotment of the towns of the Levites in **chapter 21**, already mentioned in **14:4**. By scattering throughout the land, they would also represent the unity of the people who worshipped the God of Israel.

Trent Butler: **Israel must not wait until they conquer all the land to distribute it**. The whole history of Israel showed that land constantly remained to be conquered. The writer explained this fact in **Judg 2**. Here the emphasis is on proper action for a people in possession of less than all the land. **At different stages the story had different audiences.** The oral tradition spoke to tribes and then to royal aspirants fighting for divided unconquered land. The collected traditions spoke to a recently divided

monarchy seeking to unite all Israel to renew possession of the land. The message of Joshua is particularly applicable for an Israel ready to return from Babylonian exile.

The people of Israel have suffered punishment because of the action of their kings. Now they are called to reflect upon their history and learn from the past. When God gives Israel the land once more, they must distribute it equally as God has commanded. No one ruler nor any ruling class may slice up the land for themselves. **The land belongs to Yahweh. He gave it to his people, just as he conquered it for his people**. As Howard explains: "The very fact that each tribe's inheritance is described in language that is almost identical to the others' in its general contours guaranteed that each tribe would be able to take its inheritance confidently knowing that it was of a piece with that of its fellow tribes." So God effectively tells Israel, "Divide up what you have now and wait in faith for what remains." . . .

The chapter has much to say about God and **divine faithfulness**. It illustrates "the magnitude of his momentous capacity to make land grants at will in the territories he does not control." Land remaining represents no problem for Yahweh, the God of Israel. God can gift it to whoever is chosen at whatever time pleases the donor, for God owns all the land.

Land is what Israel desires more than anything else. "The importance of this God-given land to the ancient Israelites can hardly be overstated. Land represents a means of livelihood, a place of safety, a source of national identity. The ideal life is 'rest' in the land. Land is freedom and salvation."

Kenneth Gangel: In earlier chapters we have discussed whether the decision of the two and one-half tribes showed good judgment while at the same time acknowledging their faithfulness and integrity in marching across the Jordan River and into the land to assist their brothers. However, we cannot ignore the historical and even spiritual implications of this kind of a decision. Campbell raises the point well:

> Was the request of the two and one-half tribes to settle in Transjordan a wise one? History would seem to answer no. Their territories had no natural boundaries to the east and were therefore constantly exposed to invasion by the Moabites, Canaanites, Arameans, Midianites, Amalekites, and others. And when the king of Assyria looked covetously toward Canaan, Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh were the first to be carried into captivity by the Assyrian armies (**1 Chr. 5:26**) (Campbell, BKC, 356).

It would appear that the Transjordanian tribes had exchanged safety, security, and togetherness as a nation for vast amounts of land in known territory. They had exercised a well-known cliché: "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush."

David Thompson: We come now to a section in the book of Joshua which features the division of the land. It may appear to be dry and uninteresting, but the truth is it is

inspired by God and important to us. Certain points can help us see the value of a passage like this:

> 1) Whatever is in a Biblical text, whether easy or difficult, is divinely inspired and intended for our edification. We can be built up and strengthened in the faith by everything in the Bible. Paul said "*all Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable*" (**II Tim.3:16**)
>
> 2) These chapters demonstrate that God is faithful to fulfill His Word precisely. This is an important point for God's people to know about God. What God promised years before was precisely and literally fulfilled.
>
> 3) There are always great lessons to learn by carefully examining any passage.

Now the wonderful point of this section is:

WHEN GOD'S PEOPLE HAVE FAITHFULLY OBEYED GOD'S WORD AND HAVE FOUGHT A GOOD WAR OVER A PERIOD OF TIME, GOD WILL GIVE MANY WONDERFUL BLESSINGS AND WILL LET HIS PEOPLE ENJOY THEM.

God does not ever forget His Word. God does not ever forget any of His promises. God's Word is not like that of a fickle human. When God makes a promise, even if the fulfillment takes time, He does fulfill it precisely and that is clear from this text.

Now in these verses there are <u>two major historical observations</u> to see:

<u>HISTORICAL OBSERVATION #1</u> – Joshua was instructed by God to distribute the land. **13:7**

<u>HISTORICAL OBSERVATION #2</u> – Joshua distributes land beyond the Jordan. **13:8-33**

<u>Practical Lessons:</u>
1. No servant of God can do it all or accomplish it all.
2. God does give His people blessings even when they have not had total victory over everything.
3. People who follow through on their commitments will be rewarded.
4. You don't have to have an impressive pedigree to receive an impressive inheritance.
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Peter Wallace: So when you look at your map, you can see that the coastal area in the south and west of Judah was not yet in Judah's hands. Likewise, Joshua did not take the territory of the Sidonians – later called the Phoenicians – in the north of the land, from the coast to Mt. Hermon. In other words, **Joshua captured the hill country** – or at least, a lot of the hill country! in between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. The coastal plain was still under Egyptian rule.

Now, this is where the **marvelous providence of God** needs to be understood. At any other time in ancient history, the Egyptians would not have tolerated this sort of disruption! But the beginning of the 12th century saw what is sometimes called the "Bronze Age Collapse" where every major power in the Ancient world suddenly collapsed!

- The Assyrians and Babylonians fell apart.
- The Hittites spectacularly imploded.
- Mycenaean Greece disappeared.
- The city of Troy fell.
- The great city of Ugarit collapsed – never to rise again (which is why you probably haven't heard of it!).
- Even Egypt withdrew its power to the Nile (but with lots of internal troubles).

And that just "happened" to be the moment that God brought his people up out of Egypt and into the Promised Land! There is a two hundred year gap when the mighty powers of Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt are all in a weakened state. God orchestrated all of this to be precisely the time when he would raise up his people – when he would use the weak and foolish things of the world to shame the wise and powerful! – so that the blessing of Abraham might come to all the nations of the earth!
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Mark Gervais: **Significance of the Levites by way of Analogy** –
1. we cannot apply this passage directly, but we can do so by **analogy**:
the Spirit has conquered the "enemy" of our sinful, rebellious hearts (in our justification), and now we must "take the land" (in our sanctification) – we must "occupy"

2. but … what has God given us to help us to "take this land?" – analogy: he has sprinkled "Levites" into our lives to help us both overcome the remaining enemies and to worship the Lord

    a. the original Levites were set aside by God to help all the other Israelites to remain faithful to the God who had called them out of Egypt and into this Promised Land

        1. they would help the people worship (at the tabernacle), teach the people the law (i.e. the very nature of God himself), and hold them accountable in allegiance to Yahweh
        2. thus, the "Levites" given to the believer include: the Spirit himself, the Scriptures, the church and its leadership, worship gatherings, preaching and teaching, other believers, koinonia fellowship (for iron to sharpen iron), ministry service, and even discipline (when needed!)

3. the Levites were the honored provision of God, sprinkled throughout the nation, to keep the people faithful – Christ has sent His Spirit and his Word into the church to do the same for us.
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David Howard: **Tribal Inheritance Lists in Joshua**

Tribes	Inheritance	Boundary Lists	City Lists
1. Reuben	13:15–23	13:16–21a,23	13:16b–20a
2. Gad	13:24–28	13:25–27	----------
3. E. Manasseh	13:29–31	13:30--31	----------
4. Judah	14:6–15:63	15:1–12	15:21–62
5. Ephraim	16:5–10	16:5–9	----------
6. W. Manasseh	17:1–13	17:7–10	----------
7. Benjamin	18:11–28	18:12–20	18:21–28
8. Simeon	19:1–9	----------	19:2–8
9. Zebulun	19:10–16	19:10–14	19:15
10. Issachar	19:17–23	19:22	19:18–21
11. Asher	19:24–31	19:26–29	19:25–30b
12. Naphtali	19:32–39	19:33–34	19:35–38
13. Dan	19:40–48	----------	19:41–46
14. Levi	21:1–42	----------	21:9–42

TEXT: Joshua 14:1-15

TITLE: DISTRIBUTION OF CANAAN BEGINS WITH REWARDING CALEB WITH THE HILL COUNTRY OF HEBRON

BIG IDEA:
YOU CAN COUNT ON PROMISED REWARDS FOR FAITHFUL SERVICE

INTRODUCTION:

Robert Hubbard: From Transjordan the focus quickly shifts west of the Jordan to the land of Canaan. Comparable opening and closing formulae ("*Now these are the areas/territories* …") bracket the lengthy summary (**chs. 14–19**) of what lands the Israelites "*received*" as their inheritances (*naḥal qal*) in Cisjordan (**v. 1**; cf. **19:51**). Indeed, the formulae stamp the summary as primarily **retrospective**—a backward look at the results of the process, not necessarily a report of how it was done.

Trent Butler: **Josh 14:1** introduces the major unit of **14:1—17:18**, which describes inheritances west of the Jordan just as **chap. 13** describes the inheritances east of the Jordan. **Chap. 18** then changes geographical location and in so doing creates a clear transfer to a new major literary unit. The subunits first set the scene for distributing territory to the two major tribes, Judah with Caleb and Joseph divided into Ephraim and Manasseh. A reference to the Canaanites closes each subunit (**15:63; 16:10; 17:12–13; 17:18**).

Donald H. Madvig: The amount of space devoted to the description of the territory of each of the tribes and the order of presentation correspond to the importance of each particular tribe in Israel's history. Accordingly, Judah – the tribe of David, Solomon, and their successors – is treated most thoroughly. Then the tribes of Joseph are considered, who so predominated the northern kingdom that Ephraim became one of its names. The third and last tribe to be given special treatment is Benjamin, the tribe of Saul, Israel's first king.

Wayne Barber: Today as we get into **chapter 14**, God is working in mighty power, all of His almighty power in the lives of the Israelites. Why? Because they've returned to obeying Him. Now that they are yielded to Him and His will, their enemy is completely helpless; helpless before them as they possess the land that God has given to them. God has just absolutely crippled the enemy. The enemy has no power. God told them in **chapter 1**, very clearly, "*No man will be able to stand before you. No man can take from you what I have given to you, if you'll consider every step holy unto Me*." Remember that in **chapter 1**? And what a beautiful picture this is to you and me. **As we possess the life that Christ has given to us, as we learn to say yes to Him, and we take every step and make it holy unto Him—when we're yielded to Christ, and when we're saying yes to Him—we experience His power. Our enemy is not flesh and blood. Our enemy is the world, the flesh, and the devil. And all of our enemies, the spiritual enemy that we come up against, is immediately defeated**

when we say yes to Christ. We saw this last time. It is confused. It is crushed. It is consumed in an instant. **When we say yes to God, sin has no power in our lives. Victory is never us trying to overcome sin; victory is Jesus who has overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil.** It's Him living in us, overcoming us. Once Israel listened to God, the last part of **chapter 10, chapter 11, and chapter 12** is simply a blow-by-blow account of them possessing the land God said was theirs. It's history. **When a believer gets into a yielded position, when a believer says yes to God, the rest of his life is history—it's victory, after victory, after victory and this begins to be our testimony to other**s.

A. W. Pink: The land of Canaan had already been conquered, so far as its standing armies had been completely routed, its principal strongholds destroyed, and its kings slain. Yet much of its actual territory was still in the hands of its original inhabitants, who remained to be dispossessed. It is important to distinguish between the work which had been done by Joshua and that which still remained for Israel to do. He had overthrown the ruling powers, captured their forts, and subdued the Canaanites to such an extent as had given Israel firm foothold in the country. But he had not exterminated the population in every portion of it, yea, powerful nations still dwelt in parts thereof, as is clear from **Judges 2:20–23**, and **3:1–4**; so that much was still demanded from Israel. (*Gleanings in Joshua*)

I. (:1-5) LOGISTICS OF DISTRIBUTION OF THE LAND OF CANAAN

Jerome Creach: **Joshua 14:1–5** introduces the allotments west of the river with three pieces of information that are essential for understanding the apportionment of the land:

- First, the priest, Eleazar, who helped commission Joshua in **Numbers 27:21** (and there is named as keeper of the sacred lots), shares the duty of assigning the land, as do the "*heads of the families of the tribes*" as well. Therefore, the process is democratic, as far as human involvement goes, and reflects the radical concern for inclusion and equality.

- Second, the land is apportioned by lot, as **Joshua 14:2** indicates. Although the Hebrew term for this object, *goral*, recurs throughout the rest of the report of the allotment west of the river (**15:1; 16:1; 17:1, 21:8**), the Greek version has a term meaning "boundary" in these subsequent references. This may indicate that the original reading in Hebrew actually had the similar term, *gĕbûl* (the difference in Hebrew being only one letter), meaning "boundary" or "border," which would make sense in each case. Regardless of which reading is correct, the mention of the lot in **Joshua 14:2** still makes clear that Joshua and Eleazar meted out the land according to divine instructions.

- Third, the text explains that Joseph was divided into two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim, but that the Levites did not receive an inheritance of land; thus the

number of tribal groups receiving allotments remained at twelve, the perfect number.

A. (:1) Logistics Administered by Eleazar, Joshua and the Tribal Leaders

"*Now these are the territories which the sons of Israel inherited in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the households of the tribes of the sons of Israel apportioned to them for an inheritance,*"

Richard Hess: *The land of Canaan* recalls the designation of Canaan as the land west of the Jordan. Eleazar the priest appears here for the first time in the book of Joshua. He is both a son and successor of Aaron and also the leader of the Levites. Involved in the commissioning of Joshua, he was to determine God's will from the Urim in order to guide Joshua (**Num. 27:19–22**). With Aaron, Eleazar is commanded to allot the land in **Numbers 34:17**. As already noted, *the son of Nun* is applied to Joshua to identify him with his earlier appearances in the Pentateuch and in Joshua. Thus the same Joshua who led Israel in the conquest of the land here prepares to apportion that land.

Trent Butler: The people of God are not called to act on their own initiative and desire, nor to set their own goals. God has set the goals and issues the commands which lead to their achievement.

B. (:2-4) Logistics Determined by Lot as Moses Commanded with No Land for the Levites

"*by the lot of their inheritance, as the LORD commanded through Moses, for the nine tribes and the half-tribe. 3 For Moses had given the inheritance of the two tribes and the half-tribe beyond the Jordan; but he did not give an inheritance to the Levites among them. 4 For the sons of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim, and they did not give a portion to the Levites in the land, except cities to live in, with their pasture lands for their livestock and for their property.*"

Robert Hubbard: Lots (goral) were probably small stones or pieces of wood with markings keyed to the decision sought, which an authority placed in a receptacle, shook, and cast out on the ground to render it. Whatever the matter at hand, Israel understood the lot to deliver "the final decision of Yahweh, against which there was no appeal." Though humanly carried out, the distribution of land by lot marked the process and its results as Yahweh's own doing. In this case, land ownership by Israel as a whole is already a given; the process simply decides which Israelite gets which land as his inheritance.

David Howard: The **casting of lots** to determine Israel's inheritance had been commanded by God (**Num 26:52–56; 33:54**); thus, far from being a matter of chance, God himself was in control of the lot (cf. **18:6, 8, 10; Prov 16:33**). This is the first reference in the book to the lot, but it is mentioned again in **15:1; 16:1; 17:1; 18:6, 8, 10**.

The arithmetic of the number of tribes is explained: Jacob had twelve sons, but the descendants of one of these (Joseph) became two tribes (Ephraim and Manasseh), both receiving inheritances. The Levites' "landless" condition kept the number of tribal territories fixed at **twelve**.

Kenneth Gangel: Quoting Campbell -- According to Jewish tradition the name of a tribe was drawn from one urn and simultaneously the boundary lines of a territory from another. This method designated each tribal inheritance. But blind chance did not decide the tribal location, for God was superintending the whole procedure (cp. **Prov. 16:33**). The inequities of assignments that existed and that caused some tensions and jealousies among the tribes should have been accepted as a part of God's purpose, not as something that was arbitrary and unfair (Campbell, BKC, 356).

C. (:5) Logistics Governed by God's Instructions

"*Thus the sons of Israel did just as the LORD had commanded Moses, and they divided the land.*"

Bruce Hurt: This is a good start for the sons of Israel. The first step to blessing and victory is always the step of **obedience**! There are simply no short-cuts to "spiritual success." You can go to all the Christian seminars you want, read all the books on the deeper life you want, etc., etc., but they are all "wood, hay and stubble," if they are not undergirded by the firm foundation of unhesitating, Spirit enabled obedience to the Word of the LORD.

II. (:6-12) LOYAL SERVICE OF CALEB = BASIS FOR HIS REWARD REQUEST

A. (:6) Appeal of Caleb to His Faith Partner Joshua for Promised Reward

"*Then the sons of Judah drew near to Joshua in Gilgal, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, 'You know the word which the LORD spoke to Moses the man of God concerning you and me in Kadesh-barnea.'*"

David Howard: Though Caleb is called a "*Kenizzite*" (**14:6, 14**; cf. **Num 32:12**), he was also from the tribe of Judah (**Num 13:6; 1 Chr 2:9; 4:15**). Since we know that a non-Israelite group called Kenizzites lived in Canaan like the Kenites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, et cetera (**Gen 15:19**), scholars have puzzled over Caleb's exact lineage. The simplest solution is to remember that the term "*Kenizzite*" means "*son of Kenaz*." Caleb's brother Othniel is called "*son of Kenaz*" in **Josh 15:17**, so Caleb may have been a "*Kenizzite*" by virtue of being associated with a relative or ancestor named Kenaz. Thus the Kenizzites of Caleb's line were one of the family groups within the tribe of Judah and were not related at all to the non-Israelite Kenizzites of **Gen 15:19**. This is made more plausible by the fact that Caleb himself had a descendant named Kenaz (**1 Chr 4:15**).

Jerome Creach: Hence, Caleb appears as a man of faith and courage, zealously committed to the Lord's cause. That makes quite interesting the way he is introduced: his lineage indicates he is the son of a foreigner, a **Kenizzite**. With this introduction, Caleb, like Rahab, professes faith in an ideal way, even though his heritage is not pure. It increases the sense that the "**outsiders**" in Israel's midst often are ironically more insightful and more zealous for the Lord than are the pedigreed Israelites.

Van Parunak: **Josh. 14:6, 14**; cf. **Num. 32:12**, he is called a "*Kenezite*." The same term in Hebrew (though transliterated differently in English) appears in **Gen 15:19** as one of the tribes of Canaan, and the base name reappears as the name of one of Esau's grandsons in **Gen 36:15, 42**. Apparently some of Abraham's peers threw in their lot with his clan and made their way into the family of Jacob, perhaps through intermarriage, before the time of Moses and thus the laws against intermingling.

B. (:7-8) Account of His Wholehearted Commitment to Following the Lord

1. (:7) Mission Integrity

"*I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land, and I brought word back to him as it was in my heart.*"

2. (:8) Motivational Faith

"*Nevertheless my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt with fear; but I followed the LORD my God fully.*"

Richard Hess: In contrast, Caleb *followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly*. This expression, '*follow after the LORD*', is used of Caleb and Joshua (**Num. 32:12; Deut. 1:36**) in contrast with the rest of Israel who refused to follow after the LORD (**Num. 14:43**). Elsewhere, the term refers to serving the covenant of the God of Israel alone and not following other deities.

F B Meyer: Caleb followed the Lord wholly through the weary years in the wilderness. Amid the marchings and counter-marchings, the innumerable deaths, the murmurings and rebellions of the people, he retained a **steadfast purpose** to do only God's will, to please Him, to know no other leader, and to heed no other voice. It was of no use to try and involve that stout lion's whelp, for that is the underlying thought in his name, in any movement against Moses and Aaron. He would be no party to Miriam's spite. He would not be allured by the wiles of the girls of Moab. Always strong, and true, and pure, and noble; like a rock in a changeful sea; like a snowcapped peak amid the change of cloud, and storm and sun. A man in whose strong nature weaker natures could hide; and who must have been a **tower of strength** to that new and young generation which grew up to fill the vacant places in the van of Israel.

C. (:9) Anticipation of Promised Reward

"*So Moses swore on that day, saying, 'Surely the land on which your foot has trodden shall be an inheritance to you and to your children forever, because you have followed the LORD my God fully.'*"

Richard Hess: Caleb refers to Moses' promise and the faithfulness of God in maintaining him alive for forty-five years. This temporal reference bridges the gap between the past promise and its present fulfilment. Joshua, as Moses' successor, is the appropriate representative for fulfilling the promise. The mention of the strength and vigour of Caleb emphasizes both that

(1) he is the same person who received earlier promises, and that
(2) he is physically capable of acquiring the allotment that was promised to him.

Indeed, the confession that God has kept Caleb alive (**v. 10**) suggests that Caleb's present certainty of his prowess is divinely guaranteed.

Robert Hubbard: The promise rewards Caleb's one sterling trait: He "*followed the LORD … God wholeheartedly*," a trait the context recalls verbatim three times (**v. 9**; cf. **vv. 8, 14**). In my view, the Hebrew phrase (lit., "*to fill behind*") is a short form of a longer idiom (lit. "*to fill [one's] heart to walk behind*"). As Snijders writes of the phrase, "The heart contains nothing against Yahweh: it is fully, completely for or [my addition: following] behind the Lord." In other words, what Caleb did was **wholeheartedly**—i.e., resolutely, unswervingly, unhesitatingly—to obey God's will rather than his own or that of someone else. Therein lies what Yahweh himself calls the "*different spirit*" of Caleb that set him apart from his unfaithful comrades (**Num. 14:24**).

D. (:10-11) Advocating for the Reward

1. (:10) Divine Sustaining of Life

"*And now behold, the LORD has let me live, just as He spoke,*
these forty-five years, from the time that the LORD spoke this word to
Moses, when Israel walked in the wilderness;
and now behold, I am eighty-five years old today."

2. (:11) Divine Sustaining of Strength

"*I am still as strong today as I was in the day Moses sent me;*
as my strength was then, so my strength is now,
for war and for going out and coming in."

David Howard: In **vv. 10–11**, Caleb's focus shifts from the past to the present, specifically, on his own condition and readiness to claim his inheritance. Despite the fact that he was now eighty-five years old (adding the forty years of **v. 7** to the forty-five years of **v. 10**), he still claimed physical vigor and a readiness and willingness to do battle. His words were insistent and animated, revealing the vigor and eagerness of a man far younger. For example, he used the expression "*and now*" three times (**vv. 10[2x], 12**), which shows him carefully, but insistently, building a logical case for himself; it can be translated as "*now then*," as the NIV does at the beginning of **v. 10**. The reference to God's promise is to **Num 14:24**.

Trent Butler: The forty-five years here in opposition to the forty years in **v 7** appear to allow five years for the conquest between the forty years in the wilderness and the present day. Caleb is now forty-five years older, but he reports that he is strong as ever, a condition credited to a God determined to keep the promise to Caleb.

Van Parunak: Application: Why did the Lord leave Caleb strong to conquer Hebron, while taking Joshua's health? It is up to him to dispose of his servants as he sees fit.

E. (:12) Appropriation of the Reward = Hill Country of Hebron

1. Reward Is Deserved

"*Now then, give me this hill country*
about which the LORD spoke on that day,"

2. Reward Will Reap Dividends

"*for you heard on that day that Anakim were there, with great fortified cities; perhaps the LORD will be with me, and I shall drive them out as the LORD has spoken.*"

III. (:13-15) LOYAL SERVICE OF CALEB REWARDED WITH GIFT OF HEBRON

A. (:13) Response of Joshua

1. Blessed Caleb

"*So Joshua blessed him,*"

2. Bequeathed Inheritance of Hebron to Caleb

"*and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for an inheritance.*"

Donald Campbell: Joshua's response to Caleb's request was twofold:

(a) he **blessed Caleb**, that is, he set him apart for God's enablement so he would be enriched and successful in his task, and

(b) Joshua **gave him Hebron**, a statement which emphasizes that this land grant was a legal transaction.

David Howard: This verse records only the second instance in the book of a **blessing** (*brk*). The concept of a blessing is a rich one in biblical thought. God's blessing upon his people bestowed abundant and effective life upon them (e.g., **Gen 27:27–29; 49:1–28**). It involved bestowing material abundance upon them, such as children (e.g., **Gen 1:28; 28:3**), land (**Gen 26:3; 28:4**), or wealth (**Gen 28:12–14**), as well as upon others (**Gen 12:3; 22:18**). When people blessed God, they were worshiping him, ascribing worth to him and his great name (e.g., **Ps 103:1–2; 104:1**). When people blessed each other, it conveyed a desire for God's best to befall them (e.g., **Gen 47:10; Judg 5:24; Neh 11:2; Prov 30:11**). Blessing someone was more than wishful thinking, however, since blessing in the name of the Lord tapped into the power and resources of God himself.

In the Book of Joshua blessings are bestowed by both God and men. God's blessings through the reading of the blessings in the law were given to the people at Mount Ebal (**Josh 8:33–34**). Joshua blessed Caleb (**14:13**) and the Transjordan tribes (**22:6–7**), and Caleb's daughter Achsah asked her father for a blessing of a land grant (**15:19**). And the Israelites blessed God (i.e., they praised him: see NIV) when the misunderstanding about the Transjordan tribes' building of an altar was resolved (**22:33**).

Trent Butler: For Caleb, this [blessing] signified the promise of success, fertility, and military achievement. The blessing represents a promise for steady continued success over a long period of time, not just in one particular moment or event. In this case, the blessing is for the work of Caleb and his descendants in Hebron.

B. (:14) Reason for This Valuable Reward

"*Therefore, Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite until this day, because he followed the LORD God of Israel fully.*"

Richard Hess: The gift of Hebron is reaffirmed, suggesting that this text serves the theological purpose of demonstrating the blessing of God for those who, like Caleb, remain committed to God in spite of unpopularity.

C. (:15a) Reputation of the Inhabitants

"*Now the name of Hebron was formerly Kiriath-arba; for Arba was the greatest man among the Anakim.*"

Robert Hubbard: A brief parenthesis notes that the ancient name for Hebron was Kiriath Arba ("*city of Arba*," named for the greatest Anakite hero, **v. 15**). If, as I suggest elsewhere, Caleb "represents a non-Israelite clan incorporated into the tribe of Judah and larger Israel," his settlement in southern Judah may have meant a return to his ancient, pre-Israelite ancestral land. Literarily, the comment pits the clans of two great heroes, the Anakite Arba and the Kenizzite Caleb, against each other for possession of a prized city and its surroundings, a battle whose outcome is soon to be told (cf. **15:13–19**).

D. (:15b) Rest from War

"*Then the land had rest from war.*"

Robert Hubbard: Finally, the narrator notes that "*the land had rest from war*," a verbatim echo of the conclusion of the conquest narrative (**11:23**). At first glance, the remark seems strange since **chs. 13–14** neither report nor allude to any battles involving anyone, including Caleb. Probably, the writer repeats the line here as a literary cross reference to the prior, successful conquest that made possible the lengthy land distribution now to follow. Thus, the scene is set: Peace prevails, and the long-anticipated settlement can proceed.

Trent Butler: With the words "*and the land had rest from war*," the editor reminds readers of the words in **Josh 11:23**, thereby taking up the story of the settlement and

carrying it a step further. The editor does this by underlining the conditions that make the next step possible. After all the battles of conquest, God has brought peace to the land so that Joshua and his cohorts can distribute the land to the various tribes of Israel. God is the giver of victory in battle. He is also the provider of peace for normal existence.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Are we always faithful to keep our promises to others? How faithful are we in our service to the Lord when we are not receiving much recognition?

2) How had the anticipation of Caleb been building over these many years and how should the anticipation of believers be building as eternity draws nearer?

3) What did it mean to Caleb to have the approval of leaders like Moses and Joshua?

4) Why don't we resort to the casting of lots today to determine the will of the Lord?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Trent Butler: **Josh 14** sets forth <u>two major points</u> which continue to have value for the people of God.

- Life in all its dimensions is to be lived according to the plans set forth by God, not by the greedy, selfish plans designed by humans.
- Blessing comes ultimately to the one who totally follows God.

Kenneth Gangel: This word *wholeheartedly*, so uniquely related to Caleb's life and ministry, is a **nautical term** that refers to a **ship pushing straight ahead**, no matter what.

1. He was **dedicated under pressure**. Even when ten spies spoke against him, Caleb stuck to his convictions. Even when the Israelites were ready to stone both Caleb and Joshua, they remained steadfast in their faith.

2. He was **dedicated under difficulties**. Caleb endured thirty-eight years in the wilderness for a sin he did not commit. He watched family members and friends die in the desert, and yet he remained true to God.

3. He was **dedicated under the shadow of another leader**. Though Caleb had impeccable character, he was not chosen to be the leader after Moses and "retire" as the head of his tribe but not as the leader of Israel. Nevertheless, Caleb followed and served faithfully in whatever position God called him to hold.

PRINCIPLES:

- We have an inheritance and ownership in heaven. This assurance should motivate us to serve and sacrifice here and now.
- We dare not allow the promise of heaven and the assurance of our inheritance to lull us into sleeping through our Christian responsibility on earth.
- Israel only possessed as much of the land as they occupied; as they obeyed, God gave them more.

Helene Dallaire: **Joshua 14:15** cites **11:21-23** not only in its reference to the Anakim, but also in its comments about the land as *having rest from war*. The difference is that in **14:6-16** the main character is Caleb, whereas in **11:21-23** the main character is Joshua. The reader is to understand, based on their positive participation in the spy episode reported in Numbers, that Joshua and Caleb are **partners** in the enterprise of the book of Joshua. That partnership is literally represented in the parallels between these two passages, as well as in the framing device of placing Caleb and Joshua at opposite ends of the distribution of land to the Transjordan tribes (**13:6-15**; **19:49-51**).

David Thompson: **The Request of a Faithful Older Saint (:6-12)**

THOSE PEOPLE WHO HAVE GROWN OLDER AS A FAITHFUL SERVANT OF GOD STAND TO RECEIVE EVEN GREATER BLESSINGS IN THEIR OLDER YEARS OF LIFE IF THEY REMAIN FAITHFUL TO GOD AND CONTINUE TO WAGE A GOOD WAR FOR GOD.

Older believers can learn more, grow more and even be used more in their older years of life. They are critical to the program of God. This passage concerning Caleb certainly proves this.

There are five facts we want to observe about his request:

#1 - Caleb makes his request in view of his pedigree. **14:6a**
#2 - Caleb made this request in full conformity to God's Word. **14:6b**
#3 - Caleb made this request in total honesty of his life's history in Kadesh-barnea. **14:7-9**
#4 - Caleb made his request in view of what God had done. **14:10-11**
#5 - Caleb makes a request for specific land. **14:12**

PRACTICAL LESSONS:

1) Obedience in the past is the key to blessings in the present and future.
2) Age should never be an excuse for a lack of intensity in understanding God or His Word.
3) As long as God grants us life, we need to be faithful warriors for Him and do our best to follow God and His Word fully.

https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/32016165428.pdf

Ted Groves: **Caleb – Claiming God's Promises**

1. Caleb's Commitment – seeking God wholeheartedly

2. Caleb's Consistency – followed God for many years through hard times
3. Caleb's Confidence – in God's Word
4. Caleb's Courage – Enabled him to:
    - overcome fear and a sense of inadequacy!
    - overcome giants!
    - overcome the uncertainty and fearfulness of old age!
5. Caleb's Conquest

See: John Cawood, "The Godly Features of Caleb," Confident Living 44:10 (November 1986):53-55.
https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/51807165810.pdf

Vincent Sawyer: **Caleb – A Man Committed to God**
I. When you wholly follow the Lord, You will develop deep CONVICTIONS (**v. 7-8**)
II. When you wholly follow the Lord, You will overcome difficult CHALLENGES (**v. 12-13**)
III. When you wholly follow the Lord, You will reap desired BLESSINGS (**v. 9-11, 14**)
https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/427082241366.pdf

James Smith: **Caleb** -- *Handfuls of Purpose*
I. His Character. He was—

1. HONEST. He says, "*When Moses sent me to espy out the land, I brought him word again as it was in my heart*" (**Josh 14:7**). His heart was right with God, so he spoke out what was in it. Solomon saith, "*The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth*" (**Prov. 16:23**). The man with his heart so fixed, trusting in the Lord, is not afraid of evil tidings (**Psa. 112. 7, 8**). The hypocrite is a man without heart. "*The pure in heart shall see God*."

2. CHARITABLE. "*Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt*" (**v. 8**). Although his companions in the search brought back an evil report, which discouraged the people, dishonoured God, and belied his own testimony, still he speaks of them as "*my brethren*." Charity suffereth long, and is kind; is not easily provoked. Moses cried, "*Ye rebels*!" and so his tongue hindered his feet from entering the land.

3. DEVOTED. "*I followed the Lord my God*" (**v. 8**). Caleb had another spirit within him (**Num. 14:24**). He followed the Lord his God exactly in the way in which we should follow Him. By accepting His will, trusting His Word, casting himself into His revealed purpose, and fearlessly standing in the strength of it. As Luther said, "I cannot do otherwise, so help me God." And God did help.

II. His Faith. He—

1. RECALLS THE PROMISE. "*Moses sware on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance*" (**v. 9**). "*Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*" (**Heb. 11:1**). Unbelief has a very short memory, but faith remembers the Word of the Lord.

2. BELIEVES THE WORD. The promise of God (**Num. 14:24**) is not only remembered, but trusted. All along he had been making it the rod and staff of his comfort. Let it be ours also through faith to look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. "*We walk by faith, not by sight*" (**2 Cor. 5:7**).

3. CLAIMS THE BLESSING. "*Now therefore give me this mountain whereof the Lord spake in that day*" (**v. 12**). The conditions had been fulfilled, and he would enter "now therefore" right into the possession of it. This is not presumption, it is the courage of an honest faith in God that wins His smile, that secures His favour, and gains that crowning benediction—a satisfied soul. Put in your claim. "*Now therefore give me this blessing whereof the Lord hath spoken.*" Remember His promise, believe it, claim the fulfilment of it. "*Be it unto me according to Thy Word.*"

III. His Testimony. "I am going to preach Jesus," said one man to another on his way to a meeting. "I trust the Lord will be with you," replied his friend. "Well, if He is not I shall speak well of Him behind His back," was his happy answer. Caleb speaks well of God. He testifies to—

1. GOD'S FAITHFULNESS. "*Behold, the Lord hath kept me these forty and five years*" (**v. 10**). Kept through these terrible forty years in the wilderness. Kept by the power of God, while the whole multitude melted away through unbelief. Kept by the power of God through faith unto this salvation now revealed and enjoyed. He is faithful. Testify according to the proportion of your faith.

2. GOD'S GOODNESS. "*I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me*" (**v. 11**). If the joy of the Lord is our strength there is no reason why the lapse of time should weaken it. Those who lose their first love will also lose their first strength. The trees of the Lord's planting and nurturing are always full of sap. Healthy, fruit bearing trees are a good testimony to the wisdom and carefulness of the gardener. A strong, healthy Christian is a continual witness to the riches and goodness of his Lord and Saviour.

3. GOD'S POWER. "*If so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out*" (**v. 12**). This testimony is true. Our ability to gain the victory over our enemies lies not in our wisdom or strength, but in His presence with us. Caleb knew that God alone could gird him with strength sufficient to break the bow of steel (**Psa. 18:32-34**). "*Through God we shall do valiantly, for He it is that shall tread down our enemies*" (**Psa. 60:12**). "*Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (**1 Cor. 15:57**). It is not surprising to find that after such a testimony as this Joshua blessed Caleb and gave him the inheritance (**v. 13**). "*Blessed are all they that trust in Him*."

https://www.preceptaustin.org/joshua-14-commentary#14:1

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **I Want that Mountain**

Introduction: There are some 60,000 serious mountain men or what they would call mountain men, but they're climbers in the United States. But the article goes on to say, but in the upper echelons of serious climbers, there's a small elite group known as hard men. For them conquering mountains, it says, is a way of life. Here in Joshua chapter 14, I want to introduce to you one of God's hard men, one of God's men who is not afraid to conquer mountains.

Joshua is giving out land and a familiar face shows up. His name is Caleb. And you know Caleb. Caleb was one of the first generation of Jews. He was one of the twelve spies that originally went into the land. And he and Joshua were the only ones that said, hey, by faith we can do this. You remember the ten spies, they had a bad report. But Joshua and Caleb said, we can do it. He saw the miracles of God. He believed in the power of God. And yet because of the unbelieving Jews, he had to wait. And so, now here, he comes to Joshua. And he reminds Joshua of something that perhaps Joshua may have overlooked as he was giving out lots.

A. Mountain represents Fellowship

What is the mountain that the Lord has given you? You know what this mountain here stands for? Fellowship. Look in chapter 14, look in verse 15. In the name of Hebron, before was Kerjeth Arba, which Arba was a great man among the Anakins. and the land had rest from war." Kirjeth Arba simply means the city of Arba. Arba was obviously a very great man among the Canaanites. And when Caleb takes that city, I admire Caleb because, you know what, he didn't name the city Kirjeth Caleb, city of Caleb. What does he name the city? **Hebron**. You know what Hebron means? **Fellowship**. That tells me a lot about the heart of Caleb. What did he desire from God? Fellowship. That mountain to Him represented fellowship.

B. Mountain represents Fullness

Hebron, that area that Caleb conquered was the most lush. It was the most beautiful area in that land. And you know what? Caleb, he didn't conquer half of it. He conquered all of it. And that's a picture of the Christian getting all that God has for us. Friend, I don't want half a Hebron. I want it all. I want all the fullness that God has for us. **Eph. 3:19**

C. Mountain represents Fruitfulness

Big Idea: **3 qualities of Caleb's life that we need to have in our life if we would have that mountain.**

I. Great Commitment
Num. 14:24; 32:12; Deut. 1:36; Josh. 14:9, 14

If you want to be a Canaanite conqueror, and not a wilderness wanderer, then you have to wholly follow the Lord. What does it mean to wholly follow the Lord? You know what the phrase actually means? It means to **close the gap**. This was a phrase that was used of hunters who was referring to them closing the gap between themselves and their

prey. And it refers to the fact that Caleb was committed to keeping the distance between himself and the Lord at a minimum. Deut. 6:5

II. Great Confidence – 14:6, 10, 12

When God said something, Caleb knew that you could depend upon it. So in **verse 12**, he says, now give me this mountain, because he was confident in the promises of God and he had faith.

III. Great Courage

Caleb had challenges. Look at three of the obstacles he had to deal with.

A. Problem of Grasshoppers – **14:8**

By magnifying the problems and obstacles before them, they minimize God. In fact, I want to tell you that you're always going to have grasshoppers around you telling you that you can't, you can't, you can't, when God says you can, if you just trust Me.

B. Problem of Giants – **14:12**

And Caleb drove thence the three sons of Anak, Shishai, and Ahimon, and Talmai, the children of Anak. You know what's interesting? The names, what they mean. The Shishai, the name means, who am I? Ahimon means, what am I? And Talmai means, what I can do. You know what these represent? These are the giants of ego, who am I, or who I am. Pride, what I am. And self-reliance, what I can do. All these are giants. Really, you know what they are? They deal with self. And I want to tell you one of the biggest problems I face every day is the giant that I look at in the mirror in the morning.

C. Problem of Gray Hair

Caleb did not let age keep him from doing the will of God.

Conclusion: Now, in closing, let me just tell you something very interesting about Caleb. You know what? He shouldn't have really even been considered in the inheritance. You know why? Caleb wasn't even a Jew. The Bible tells us in verse number 8 that he was a Kenizzite, which means he was a Gentile. So he was born outside the covenant of God. Gentile and Yet somewhere along the line Caleb had to come to faith in God just like Rahab.

TEXT: Joshua 15:1-63

TITLE: TERRITORY OF JUDAH

BIG IDEA:
THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TRIBE OF JUDAH IS REFLECTED IN THE PROMINENCE GIVEN TO THE ALLOTMENT OF HER TERRITORY

INTRODUCTION

Robert Hubbard: Now, many readers will find the Judah section—hands down, the largest in **chs. 14–19**—tediously detailed. But that is the point: Its **sheer quantity** underscores **Judah's importance** within Israel. Canonically, this continues the biblical theme of **Judah's destiny** for leadership that first sounds subtly in the Joseph story (**Gen. 43:3–10; 44:14–34**), develops in Jacob's last words (**Gen. 49:8–12**), echoes in the book of Ruth (**Ruth 4:17–22**), finds full voice in David's emergence (**1-2 Samuel**), and reaches its climax in Jesus Christ (**Matt. 1**). It also firmly establishes Judah's tribal footprint in the land and founds Judah's claim to its land, whether centuries before the exile to Babylon (587 B.C.) or after its return (538 B.C.). Later history will confirm the importance of Judah's foothold in the land for it constituted the remnant of the twelve tribes that enabled Israel to continue its mission to the world.

Trent Butler: Judah is the first to receive its inheritance, the last to fall, and the only remaining hope for restoring the lot of the people of God.

Kenneth Gangel: The settling of the promised land should have been an easy task after the seven-year conquest, but we find that the tribes lacked the initiative and courage to drive out the Canaanite inhabitants completely. This problem repeats itself throughout the second half of the Book of Joshua.

During the conquest and the division of the land, Joshua and the Israelites had to learn that no matter how big their group or how strong their leaders, it was essential to follow God's commands down to the smallest detail.

I. (:1-12) DEFINITION OF JUDAH'S BORDERS

David Howard: Judah's boundary list is painstaking and true to life in its presentation, describing, it seems, every twist and turn, every dip and rise, every right angle of the lines that marked off this tribe. It is a dynamic, vibrant boundary (not static), almost lifelike in its movement.

Robert Hubbard: Its northeast and northwest sections—between the Jordan's mouth and Jerusalem, and from Jerusalem to the sea—may in fact have corresponded to ancient roads.

A. (:1-4) Southern Border

"*Now the lot for the tribe of the sons of Judah according to their families reached the border of Edom, southward to the wilderness of Zin at the extreme south. 2 And their south border was from the lower end of the Salt Sea, from the bay that turns to the south. 3 Then it proceeded southward to the ascent of Akrabbim and continued to Zin, then went up by the south of Kadesh-barnea and continued to Hezron, and went up to Addar and turned about to Karka. 4 And it continued to Azmon and proceeded to the brook of Egypt; and the border ended at the sea. This shall be your south border.*"

David Howard: The southern boundary is first. It pulsates with life, as it wends its way westward from the southern end of the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. Attention to the verbs here highlights this, describing the "movement" of the boundary as it travels east to west.

B. (:5a) Eastern Border

"*And the east border was the Salt Sea, as far as the mouth of the Jordan.*"

David Howard: Judah's eastern boundary was simple enough: the western shores of the Dead Sea.

C. (:5b-11) Northern Border

"*And the border of the north side was from the bay of the sea at the mouth of the Jordan. 6 Then the border went up to Beth-hoglah, and continued on the north of Beth-arabah, and the border went up to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben. 7 And the border went up to Debir from the valley of Achor, and turned northward toward Gilgal which is opposite the ascent of Adummim, which is on the south of the valley; and the border continued to the waters of En-shemesh, and it ended at En-rogel. 8 Then the border went up the valley of Ben-hinnom to the slope of the Jebusite on the south (that is, Jerusalem); and the border went up to the top of the mountain which is before the valley of Hinnom to the west, which is at the end of the valley of Rephaim toward the north. 9 And from the top of the mountain the border curved to the spring of the waters of Nephtoah and proceeded to the cities of Mount Ephron, then the border curved to Baalah (that is, Kiriath-jearim). 10 And the border turned about from Baalah westward to Mount Seir, and continued to the slope of Mount Jearim on the north (that is, Chesalon), and went down to Beth-shemesh and continued through Timnah. 11 And the border proceeded to the side of Ekron northward. Then the border curved to Shikkeron and continued to Mount Baalah and proceeded to Jabneel, and the border ended at the sea.*"

David Howard: The northern boundary is described in the most detail. This boundary corresponds closely to the southern boundary of Judah's neighbor, Benjamin, which is described in **18:15–19**. This was a boundary with which people would have been very familiar, since people from Judah and Benjamin lived and traveled along it and across it, and they knew the cities and geographical markers listed for it. This undoubtedly

explains the great detail here, especially when the boundary reaches Jerusalem, where the greatest detail is given (**vv. 7b–8**).

D. (:12a) Western Border

"*And the west border was at the Great Sea, even its coastline.*"

(:12b) Summary Statement

"*This is the border around the sons of Judah according to their families.*"

David Howard: In this concluding statement, a sense of **security** is conveyed, in that the tribe had well-defined borders that surrounded them, protecting them, in a sense, from that which was outside the borders.

II. (:13-19) CALEB'S SPECIAL ALLOTMENT REVISITED – IN HEBRON, DEBIR AND THE NEGEV

A. (:13) Distributing the Inheritance to Caleb

"*Now he gave to Caleb the son of Jephunneh a portion among the sons of Judah, according to the command of the LORD to Joshua, namely, Kiriath-arba, Arba being the father of Anak (that is, Hebron).*"

B. (:14) Dispossessing the Inhabitants = 3 Sons of Anak

"*And Caleb drove out from there the three sons of Anak: Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmai, the children of Anak.*"

Helene Dallaire: Ready to settle in his own land, Caleb dispossesses the dreaded and colossal Anakites (Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai) from their land and settles his family in the area bequeathed to him by Joshua (cf. **Jdg 1:14**). Terrified by their reputation and by their sheer size, Israel had previously avoided the Anakites in southern Canaan. The spies had described them as giants in whose eyes the Israelites appeared like mere grasshoppers (**Nu 13:31–33**). Undeterred by their stature and frightful demeanor, Caleb proceeds to expunge them from his newly acquired land.

C. (:15-19) Designating the Incentive for Capturing Debir = Achsah

1. (:15) Pursuit of Acquiring Debir

"*Then he went up from there against the inhabitants of Debir; now the name of Debir formerly was Kiriath-sepher.*"

David Howard: The second passage about Caleb's inheritance (see **14:6–15** for the first such passage) explains his further acquisition of **Debir**, another city that originally had been taken by Joshua (**10:38–39**). Here, again, the assumption must be that it had fallen back into foreign hands.

Helene Dallaire: **Debir**, a city previously conquered by Joshua (**10:36–39**), was originally called **Kiriath Sefer** ("*book city*" or "*scribal city*"). Its original name may

indicate that at one time, the city was a repository for official records. The phenomenon of secondary names for towns is not unique to Debir (**Jdg 1:11**).

2. (:16-17) Prize for Capturing the City = Achsah

> "*And Caleb said, 'The one who attacks Kiriath-sepher and captures it, I will give him Achsah my daughter as a wife.' 17 And Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, captured it; so he gave him Achsah his daughter as a wife.*"

3. (:18-19) Persuasion to Acquire Land and Springs of Water

> "*And it came about that when she came to him, she persuaded him to ask her father for a field. So she alighted from the donkey, and Caleb said to her, 'What do you want?' 19 Then she said, 'Give me a blessing; since you have given me the land of the Negev, give me also springs of water.' So he gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.*"

Helene Dallaire: Her use of a **donkey** for the trip indicates that her property in the Negev was not next to her father's property, but was at a significant distance from Hebron.

Gordon Matties: Achsah takes initiative to ask Othniel to ask Caleb for a field. In the end she is the one who asks Caleb for the field that has springs of water as well (**15:19**). She is unhappy because the allotment has placed her in the semiarid south (Negeb). Since that is unacceptable, she asks for a field with springs of water. **The syntax is awkward in verse 18**. The verse begins with *When she came* but does not stipulate an indirect object (**to whom**). The next verb is *she incited/urged*, followed by an object pronoun *him* and an infinitive *to ask*. The NIV translates that *she asks Othniel*.

Three observations suggest it is Caleb:

- first, Caleb is the main actor in verse 17 as well as verse 18b.
- Second, he is the one to whom she speaks in verse 19.
- And third, the syntax of verse 18 allows us to read *She urged him to ask*, with the infinitive *to ask* being read as a gerund, and as an explanation of the urging: *she incited him by asking her father for a field* (cf. Winther-Nielsen: 255).

The text alludes to an argument in which she bargains with her father as a kind of compensation for his having given her away to Othniel (an arrangement prohibited by **Lev 18:6-18**). This is confirmed by the NJPS translation of Caleb's question, which is not *What can I do for you*? (NIV) or *What do you wish*? (NRSV), but *What is the matter*? What is the matter is at least the matter of her family's inadequate land in the Negeb. It may also be his unilateral action to give her to Othniel. This initiative on Achsah's part finds a parallel, or analogy, in the request of the daughters of Zelophehad in the section on Manasseh's distribution (**17:3-6**).

Kenneth Gangel: It is not impossible that Acsah's first request for a field resulted in the land in the Negev and the second special favor (blessing) was the water to make the desert livable.

III. (:20-63) JUDAH'S TOWN LIST

(:20) Introduction

"*This is the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Judah according to their families.*"

David Howard: The larger units are (1) the southland (*negeb*), composed of one group (**vv. 21–32**), (2) the western foothills , with three groups (**vv. 33–44**), (3) three Philistine cities, listed in one group (**vv. 45–47**), (4) the hill country (*har*), with five or six groups (**vv. 48–60**), and (5) the desert (*midbar*), with one group (**vv. 61–62**).

Trent Butler: The list of cities according to their political and military subdivisions is incorporated to show from still another perspective the greatness of God's gift to Judah. Judah controlled the borders and all the cities inside the borders. While not every city of Judah is named in these verses, the implication is that Judah received title to all the cities and land within her borders.

A. (:21-32) Southland – 29 Cities

"*Now the cities at the extremity of the tribe of the sons of Judah toward the border of Edom in the south were Kabzeel and Eder and Jagur, 22 and Kinah and Dimonah and Adadah, 23 and Kedesh and Hazor and Ithnan, 24 Ziph and Telem and Bealoth, 25 and Hazor-hadattah and Kerioth-hezron (that is, Hazor), 26 Amam and Shema and Moladah, 27 and Hazar-gaddah and Heshmon and Beth-pelet, 28 and Hazar-shual and Beersheba and Biziothiah, 29 Baalah and Iim and Ezem, 30 and Eltolad and Chesil and Hormah, 31 and Ziklag and Madmannah and Sansannah, 32 and Lebaoth and Shilhim and Ain and Rimmon; in all, twenty-nine cities with their villages.*"

David Howard: The cities here are at the **southernmost extreme** of Judah's territory, and they occupy the single largest area of the groupings in this chapter. Thirty-six cities are listed, although the running total given in **v. 32** is only "twenty-nine." Possibly some locales listed were not considered to be substantial enough settlements to have merited inclusion in the running total, or an early copying error may account for the discrepancy. After this, all city listings and running totals in the chapter agree with each other. As we have noted above, several cities in this section of Judah's list are also found in Simeon's list in **19:1–9**. We should also note that the three cities named "*Hazor*" in **vv. 23, 25** are to be distinguished from the northern Hazor mentioned in **chap. 11**.

B. (:33-44) Western Foothills

"*In the lowland:*"

David Howard: This unit is composed of **three groups of cities**, located at least twenty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem. The first is the northernmost of the three (**vv. 33–**

36), with fourteen cities; the second is to the southwest (**vv. 37–41**), with sixteen cities, and the third is to the southeast (**vv. 42–44**), with nine cities.

1. (:33b-36) Northern Group – 14 Cities

"*Eshtaol and Zorah and Ashnah, 34 and Zanoah and En-gannim, Tappuah and Enam, 35 Jarmuth and Adullam, Socoh and Azekah, 36 and Shaaraim and Adithaim and Gederah and Gederothaim; fourteen cities with their villages.*"

2. (:37-41) Southwest Group – 16 Cities

"*Zenan and Hadashah and Migdal-gad, 38 and Dilean and Mizpeh and Joktheel, 39 Lachish and Bozkath and Eglon, 40 and Cabbon and Lahmas and Chitlish, 41 and Gederoth, Beth-dagon and Naamah and Makkedah; sixteen cities with their villages.*"

3. (:42-44) Southeast Group – 9 Cities

"*Libnah and Ether and Ashan, 43 and Iphtah and Ashnah and Nezib, 44 and Keilah and Achzib and Mareshah; nine cities with their villages.*"

C. (:45-47) 3 Philistine Cities

"*Ekron, with its towns and its villages; 46 from Ekron even to the sea, all that were by the side of Ashdod, with their villages. 47 Ashdod, its towns and its villages; Gaza, its towns and its villages; as far as the brook of Egypt and the Great Sea, even its coastline.*"

David Howard: The format of this short list is distinctly different from the rest of the city list: it is much fuller, with directional markers and mention of surrounding villages, and it has no running total at the end, as do all the other city groups in the chapter. Ekron, the northernmost of the three cities, was later assigned to the tribe of Dan (**19:43**). The irregularities in this section are no doubt because the entire area covered by these cities remained unconquered by Judah. Yet this section is included because, according to the boundary listings, Judah's territory included even these cities (see **15:4, 11–12**).

D. (:48-60) Hill Country

"*And in the hill country:*"

1. (:48b-51) Southern Group – 11 Cities

"*Shamir and Jattir and Socoh, 49 and Dannah and Kiriath-sannah (that is, Debir), 50 and Anab and Eshtemoh and Anim, 51 and Goshen and Holon and Giloh; eleven cities with their villages.*"

2. (:52-54) North Group (West side) – 9 Cities

"*Arab and Dumah and Eshan, 53 and Janum and Beth-tappuah and Aphekah, 54 and Humtah and Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), and Zior; nine cities with their villages.*"

3. (:55-57) North Group – 10 Cities

"*Maon, Carmel and Ziph and Juttah, 56 and Jezreel and Jokdeam and Zanoah, 57 Kain, Gibeah and Timnah; ten cities with their villages.*"

4. (:58-59) Far North Group – 6 Cities

"*Halhul, Beth-zur and Gedor, 59 and Maarath and Beth-anoth and Eltekon; six cities with their villages.*"

5. (:60) 20 Miles West of Jerusalem – 2 Cities

"*Kiriath-baal (that is, Kiriath-jearim), and Rabbah; two cities with their villages.*

David Howard: The Old Greek versions preserve a fifth group in **v. 59** that is not found in the MT. It consists of **eleven additional cities** and reads: "*Tekoa, Ephrathah, that is, Bethlehem, Peor, Etam, Culon, Tatam, Sores, Carem, Gallim, Baither, and Manach: eleven towns in all with their hamlets*" (REB). This group is north of the fourth, centering around Bethlehem, south of Jerusalem. It is plausible that this group dropped out early in the copying process because the word "*and their villages*," occurs at the end of the fourth group and at the end of this one; and a scribe's eye easily could have jumped from the one to the other, causing him to omit an entire section.

E. (:61-62) Desert (Northwester half of the Dead Sea) – 6 Cities

"*In the wilderness:*
Beth-arabah, Middin and Secacah, 62 and Nibshan and the City of Salt and Engedi; six cities with their villages."

David Howard: The major city in the list is **En Gedi**, an oasis halfway down the Dead Sea.

(:63) EPILOGUE – THE JEBUSITES IN JERUSALEM WITH JUDAH

"*Now as for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem,*
the sons of Judah could not drive them out;
so the Jebusites live with the sons of Judah at Jerusalem until this day."

Trent Butler: The Davidic government in Jerusalem was impaired by the fact that it had not accomplished the first command of God. It had not driven the Jebusites out of the capital city. Judah thus lived its life in the shadow of temptation from Jebusite gods and Jebusite practices. All of this stood in opposition to the command of **Deut 7:1–26**; **20:16–18**. Solomon might make the remaining nations slaves (**1 Kgs 9:20–21**), but this still was not what Yahweh had commanded (cf. **Josh 9**).

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How would you describe Caleb's relationship with Joshua (both past and present)?

2) What is the significance of the account of the story of Achsah?

3) What can you learn here about our attempts to possess the blessings God has promised us?

4) In what way were the Jebusites a thorn in the side of the tribe of Judah in Jerusalem?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Trent Butler: What is remarkable here is the fact that **Jerusalem is not given Judah**. This may be explained

> (1) as arising from the continued Jebusite occupation prior to David's conquest of the city;
> (2) as reflecting the Judean administrative procedure whereby Jerusalem is mentioned separately from Judah and is the "*city of David*," that is, under the king's personal control;
> (3) or as representing a Benjaminite claim to the city, perhaps based on the tradition of the war with the king of Jerusalem (cf. **chap. 10; Judg 1:21**). The third alternative would join it to the other elements of tradition within the book of Joshua, which reflect an early polemic between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

Kenneth Gangel: Matthew Henry once said of this part of Joshua, "We are not to skip over these chapters of hard names as useless and not to be regarded; for where God has a mouth to speak and a hand to write we should find an ear to hear and an eye to read; and God will give us a heart to profit." Furthermore, there is a hermeneutical principle at stake here, the principle of proportion. Simply stated, it means that God gives greater space to those things he considers more important. In **chapter 14** we thrilled to the record of eighty-five-year-old Caleb wanting to march again into the hill country of the Anakites. But the Caleb portion of that chapter is only nine verses long. Now we face a sixty-three-verse chapter that lists towns one after the other.

But as I have said numerous times in the study of Joshua, there are **direct parallels** between **Israel's conquest of the promised land** and **our spiritual conquest in the Christian life**. Like the Israelites, God wants us to defeat an enemy with his help and to receive a blessing from his hand. In both cases God offers something that must be received or taken in some way. The Israelites had to fight battles and take ground to receive the blessings of the promised land. We fight spiritual battles and gain spiritual ground to realize the blessings of spiritual growth and maturity.

Bruce Hurt: https://www.preceptaustin.org/joshua-15-commentary#15:1

David Thompson:
When it comes time for rewards to be given, it is a pure Biblical fact that some will be more honored than others. Some children of God will be great winners and some will be losers. Some will end up being vessels of honor and some vessels of dishonor. There will be some with crowns and some without crowns.

The principle of giving high honor to some and not such high honor to others can certainly be seen in the distribution of the land to the tribes of Israel. **All were in the land, but not all received the same kind of land**. One of the sons of Israel, who receives high honor and receives some wonderful land is Judah. Joshua does not divide the land into equal parts and if you look at a map that point is obvious.

Now Judah was no sinless saint. He was the fourth son of Leah (**Gen. 29:31-35**), Jacob's first wife. Judah had been somewhat of a womanizer. He had been sexually promiscuous with women who were not Israelites (**Gen. 38:2, 15-18**). However, Judah had certain qualities that made him an award-winner:

1) He was a brother who looked out for the welfare of other brothers (**Gen. 37:26-27**).
2) He was a brother who would admit sin and turn from sin (**Gen. 38:26**).
3) He was a brother who was willing to sacrifice his own life for another brother (**43:8-11; 44:33**).

When we get into eternity, it will be Judah-types who will be honored at the highest levels. They will have been willing to deal with sin, not try to cover it, not be content in it, but will confront it. Judah-types also look out for the needs of others in the family of God.

In **Genesis 49:8-12**, Jacob made some remarkable predictions concerning Judah:

1) His brothers would praise him.
2) He would defeat his enemies (**49:8b**).
3) He would be esteemed by the other sons (**49:8c**).
4) He would be a mighty son (**49:9**).
5) He would be a ruling and judging son (**49:10**).
6) He would be a blessed son (**49:11-12**).
7) He would inherit plush land, overflowing with grapes, wine and milk (**49:11-12**).

Now we do not know how much Joshua remembered about **Genesis 49**; but God remembered every bit of it and when it came time to cast lots for the land Judah was to receive, God made certain this was the land they got. The point so see here is that:

GOD IS ALWAYS FAITHFUL TO HONOR THOSE WHO ARE FAITHFUL TO HIM AND EVEN THOUGH THOSE BLESSINGS MAY NOT COME IMMEDIATELY, THEY WILL COME EVENTUALLY.

There are three specific prophecies of Jacob that were fulfilled in this distribution of land:

1) Judah had land **bordered by enemies** which meant they needed to defeat them and that meant they need great leaders and great warriors to surface, like David, to arise in Judah (**Gen. 49:8-9**).

2) Judah received land that was **rich in vineyard property** (**49:11-12**). When Moses' spies first went into this land; they came back with a report that it was rich in grape production (**Num. 13:23-24**). Some get plush places to minister. Some get lean places to minister. God is sovereign in all of it.

3) Judah received the **land of the scepter** (**Gen. 49:10**). The ultimate power would come from Judah. This text is clear to point out that Judah received land that included Jerusalem (**15:8**). This is the place where David ruled and this is the place where ultimately Christ will rule.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

1) One does not need to be sinless to inherit a great inheritance. Judah proves that.
2) One does need to be faithful and honest to inherit a great inheritance.
3) God is always faithful to fulfill His promise of reward.
4) We need to drive out all of our enemies. We need to keep going and keep fighting a good fight.
5) Inheritances vary according to the numbers. Amount of faithfulness will determine it.

https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/327161159467.pdf

TEXT: Joshua 16:1 – 17:18

TITLE: TERRITORY OF JOSEPH: EPHRAIM AND MANASSEH

BIG IDEA:
COMPROMISE AND COMPLAINING NEVER ADVANCE GOD'S KINGDOM AGENDA – STRIVE TO APPROPRIATE YOUR INHERITANCE IN CHRIST

INTRODUCTION:

David Howard: The descendants of Joseph—Ephraim and Manasseh—received two large portions west of the Jordan, in the center of the land, plus a portion in Transjordan for half of the tribe of Manasseh. This reflects the favor that was to be shown Joseph, mentioned years earlier in Jacob's blessing on his sons (**Gen 49:22–26**). However, the author of the book clearly considers the tribes of Joseph to be one with each other, giving us several lines of evidence that point to this.

- First, they received one lot (**16:1**).
- Second, the southern boundary of Ephraim, the southernmost tribe of the two, is in some sense considered the southern extremity for both tribes. It is given in detail in **16:1–3**, then **16:5** gives Ephraim's southern border in an abbreviated form.
- Third, the story about the tribes' demanding two portions underscores this even further (**17:14–18**).

Robert Hubbard: The two tribes of Joseph now receive their inheritance (**16:1–17:13**), but Joshua turns down their request for a supplemental allotment (17:14–18). The Josephite southern border runs from east of Jericho to Bethel then southwesterly near Lower Beth Horon to Gezer and on to the Mediterranean. Interestingly, their southern boundary (**16:1–4**) does not directly abut Judah's northern border but instead leaves room for Benjamin in between them (**18:11–28**). The details of each tribe's inheritance now follow (**16:5–17:13**).

Helene Dallaire: The two sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, each receive a portion of land in the central hill country, north of Benjamin and south of Asher and Issachar. Both tribal allotments are **bordered on the east by the Jordan River**. The western border of Manasseh's allotment is the Great Sea (**Mediterranean Sea**), while the western border of Ephraim is the **territory of the Danites**. The biblical text presents the tribe of Joseph both as a single unit—the people of Joseph (**Jos 16:1–3; 17:14–18; 18:5, 11; Jdg 1:22, 35; 2Sa 19:20**)—and as two separate tribes (**Jos 16:4; 17:9–10; 1Ch 9:3**).

Kenneth Gangel: Jacob gave his longest and most favorable blessing to his son Joseph. We cannot understand the allocation of rich, fertile land in central Canaan to Ephraim and Manasseh unless we review and understand that blessing (**Gen. 49:22-26**). . .

The settling of the promised land should have been an easy task after the seven-year conquest, but we find that the tribes lacked the **initiative** and **courage** to drive out the Canaanite inhabitants completely. This problem repeats itself throughout the second half of the Book of Joshua.

Philippians 4:8: "*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things*." Those attitudes largely marked the conquering Israelites for seven years. Then the entitlement programs began, and **complacency**, **compromise**, and **complaint** began to get the better of the day. In our spiritual warfare we might try combating those three negative C-words with some positive T-words—**think**, **try**, and **trust**.

I. (16:1-4) JOSEPH'S SOUTHERN BOUNDARY

A. (:1-3) Defining Joseph's Southern Boundary

1. (:1) From Jordan to Jericho to Bethel

"*Then the lot for the sons of Joseph went from the Jordan at Jericho to the waters of Jericho on the east into the wilderness, going up from Jericho through the hill country to Bethel.*"

2. (:2) From Bethel to Luz to Ataroth

"*And it went from Bethel to Luz, and continued to the border of the Archites at Ataroth.*"

Richard Hess: Two population groups appear for the first time in the book of Joshua, the **Arkites** and the **Japhletites**. Both groups are in the hill country on the southern border of Ephraim. Like other groups in this region, they may represent northerners who migrated south. Except for Hushai, David's diplomat who was an Arkite, the two groups are not otherwise attested.

3. (:3) Westward to Gezer -- Ending at the Mediterranean Sea

"*And it went down westward to the territory of the Japhletites, as far as the territory of lower Beth-horon even to Gezer, and it ended at the sea.*"

David Howard: The southern boundary of the Joseph tribes—Ephraim and Manasseh—is given in some detail in **vv. 1–3**, moving from the Dead Sea in the east to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. It corresponds to the northern boundary of Benjamin (**18:12–13**), although there are elements in each description not found in the other. The common elements in both lists, however, show that the line was drawn and understood fairly precisely.

B. (:4) Summary Statement

"*And the sons of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, received their inheritance.*"

David Howard: The unified treatment of the two Joseph tribes now ends, completing the common southern boundary that separated them from the southern tribes of Benjamin and Judah. From this point on, the boundaries are given for each tribe individually.

F. B. Meyer: What a wonderful **wealth of blessing** these children of Joseph came into! There were the precious things of heaven, the dew, and the deep that couched beneath; the precious fruits of the sun and of the growth of the moons; the metals of the ancient mountains and the everlasting hills; the precious things of the earth, and the fulness thereof, and, above all, the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush (**Deuteronomy 33:13–16**). Surely they were blessed with all manner of blessings — more than they had asked or thought! The rich gifts of God's grace! An inheritance which could not have been won by their prowess or arms, but was the free gift of God's love — to be taken and enjoyed!

These things happened to them as types; the spiritual counterparts of all are ours in Christ. He is precious — nay, priceless: his promises are exceeding great and precious. The blood by which we were redeemed is precious, has meanings not yet explored; the very trial of our faith is precious as the gold taken from the everlasting hills. How much preciousness there is for us who believe! (**1 Peter 2:7**, R.V.). But we are poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked, because we have not taken our inheritance.

We need to do more than ask for it. He that asketh should not rest satisfied till he receiveth. We must take by a faith which claims, appropriates, employs. Open your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, that He may cause you to receive and enjoy all his precious gifts. In Christ all things are yours: go in and possess; take your inheritance; believe that you do receive; thank Him, and go on your way rejoicing.

II. (16:5-10) TERRITORY OF EPHRAIM

A. (:5a) Summary Introduction

"*Now this was the territory of the sons of Ephraim according to their families:*"

David Howard: The focus is now on Ephraim as a tribe by itself rather than on both Ephraim and Manasseh as the Joseph tribes. However, since the southern boundary was the same from both perspectives, its description is abbreviated here.

Van Parunak: Ephraim loses its position of numerical superiority to Manasseh! It is the larger tribe at the beginning of the wanderings (10th compared with Manasseh's 12th), but the lesser afterward (11th to Manasseh's 6th).

Where then are we to find the fulfillment of Jacob's promise? Answer: The tribe was **much more prominent in Israel's later history**.

B. (:5b-8a) Geographic Description of Ephraim's Territory

"*the border of their inheritance eastward was Ataroth-addar, as far as upper Beth-horon. 6 Then the border went westward at Michmethath on the north, and the border turned about eastward to Taanath-shiloh, and continued beyond it to the east of Janoah. 7 And it went down from Janoah to Ataroth and to Naarah, then reached Jericho and came out at the Jordan. 8 From Tappuah the border continued westward to the brook of Kanah, and it ended at the sea.*"

C. (:8b-9) Some Cities Shared with Manasseh

"*This is the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Ephraim according to their families, 9 together with the cities which were set apart for the sons of Ephraim in the midst of the inheritance of the sons of Manasseh, all the cities with their villages.*"

David Howard: According to **v. 9** some of Ephraim's cities were actually part of Manasseh's inheritance. The reason for this is not clear, but it may have its basis in the greater blessing extended to Ephraim by Jacob (**Genesis 48**). Manasseh also inherited cities from other tribes' territory: from Issachar and Asher (**17:11**) and even from Ephraim (**17:9**).

D. (:10) Ephraim's Compromise Concerning Gezer

"*But they did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer,*
so the Canaanites live in the midst of Ephraim to this day,
and they became forced laborers."

David Howard: Joshua had earlier conquered Gezer to some degree (**Josh 10:33**), but evidently it was not a complete conquest, or else it had been repopulated in the interim. Gezer remained outside of Israelite control until the time of Solomon, when the Egyptian pharaoh captured it and gave it as a dowry for his daughter, Solomon's bride (**1 Kgs 9:16**). . .

In these contexts the subjugation of the Canaanites was not a positive accomplishment for the Israelites, however, because they did this without making any peace with them. According to **Deut 20:16–18**, they should have completely annihilated the peoples, not spared them and subjected them to the **forced labor**. Thus, the Ephraimites and the rest failed in their duties, even though the lasting result was their subjugation of native peoples. The status of the inhabitants of Gezer with respect to the Ephraimites was somewhat similar to that of the Gibeonites (see **9:27**), except that there was no treaty involved here, so the status of these Canaanites was somewhat lower than that of the Gibeonites.

Kenneth Gangel: [quoting Campbell] Motivated by a materialistic attitude, they chose to put the Canaanites in Gezer under tribute to gain additional wealth. That proved to be a fatal mistake for in later centuries, in the time of the Judges, the arrangement was reversed as the Canaanites rose up and enslaved the Israelites. In addition to the historical lesson there is a spiritual principle here. It is all too easy for a believer to

tolerate and excuse some pet sin only to wake up some day to the grim realization that it has risen up to possess and drive him to spiritual defeat. It pays to deal with sin decisively and harshly (Campbell, BKC, 360).

One question remains in **chapter 16**. We know Manasseh was the firstborn followed by Ephraim, and yet Ephraim's territory is mentioned first. Perhaps that order reflects the ascendancy of Ephraim (**Gen. 48:12-20**) and the fact that in later years it would be the more important tribe. We might also note that the inheritances of these two tribes look different in the text because they contain no list of towns.

David Guzik: If they had the power to make the people of Gezer forced laborers, they certainly had the power to defeat them completely, especially because Gezer was a city that Joshua had already conquered (**Joshua 10:33** and **Joshua 12:12**). This sort of compromise seems innocent, but it became the way that much idolatry and immoral worship was adopted by the people of Israel. This is one reason why we see so many struggles in the days of the Judges.

III. (17:1-13) TERRITORY OF MANASSEH

Richard Hess: There are <u>two reasons</u> for the absence of town lists within the territories of the Joseph tribes:

(1) it emphasizes the difficulty of settlement beyond the major towns due to the forested land described in **Joshua 17:12–18**; and
(2) they do occur for Manasseh in the male and female descendants as described in **Joshua 17:2–6**.

Kenneth Gangel: Throughout its long and tumultuous history, Israel learned over and over again that **complacency**, **compromise**, and **complaint** always lead to failure.

A. (:1-6) Transjordan Territory Revisited

1. (:1-2) Sons of Manasseh Recounted

"*Now this was the lot for the tribe of Manasseh, for he was the first-born of Joseph. To Machir the first-born of Manasseh, the father of Gilead, was allotted Gilead and Bashan, because he was a man of war. 2 So the lot was made for the rest of the sons of Manasseh according to their families: for the sons of Abiezer and for the sons of Helek and for the sons of Asriel and for the sons of Shechem and for the sons of Hepher and for the sons of Shemida; these were the male descendants of Manasseh the son of Joseph according to their families.*"

Helene Dallaire: The introduction to **chapter 17** revisits Transjordan. The narrative highlights the descendants of **Makir**, the Gileadites, who are great men of war and inhabitants of the land of Gilead and Bashan. The names Makir and Gilead serve to identify both people (**Nu 26:1, 29–30; 36:1; Jdg 5:17**) and geographical locations (**Ge 31:21; Nu 32:29, 39; Dt 2:36; 3:12; 34:1; 2Sa 24:6**). The focus on Transjordan

provides the background for the narrative about Zelophehad's daughters' request for a portion of land among Manasseh (eastern tribe) (**vv.3–6**). This pericope has the main characteristics of a "land grant," in which (1) an individual petitions a leader for land, (2) Moses had already promised land to the petitioner, and (3) the request is granted.

David Howard: Makir, Manasseh's firstborn, was his only son (**Gen 50:23; Num 26:29**). His descendants represented the half-tribe of Manasseh that had already received a separate portion east of the Jordan, in Gilead and Bashan (13:29–31). The rest of Manasseh's portion was west of the Jordan (**17:2, 7– 11**). . . **Verse 1** thus explains why a portion of Manasseh's descendants inherited the lands east of the Jordan, and it forms the backdrop for understanding why the rest of Manasseh's descendants received their inheritance west of the Jordan (**v. 2**).

Trent Butler: The present text underlines the **unusual order** of the allotment. Manasseh, the firstborn, received his allotment after his younger brother Ephraim (cf. **Deut 21:15–17**). This follows the pattern set in **Gen 48**. It also represents the leadership exercised by Ephraim during the period of the Judges.

2. (:3-6) Exceptional Circumstances of Daughters of Zelophehad

> "*However, Zelophehad, the son of Hepher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons, only daughters; and these are the names of his daughters: Mahlah and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah. 4 And they came near before Eleazar the priest and before Joshua the son of Nun and before the leaders, saying, "The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brothers." So according to the command of the LORD he gave them an inheritance among their father's brothers. 5 Thus there fell ten portions to Manasseh, besides the land of Gilead and Bashan, which is beyond the Jordan, 6 because the daughters of Manasseh received an inheritance among his sons. And the land of Gilead belonged to the rest of the sons of Manasseh.*"

Trent Butler: The verses are included here to stress again that Joshua carried out all the commands of Moses and Yahweh (**Num 27:1–11**; cf. **36:1–13**). As with Achsah (**Josh 15:18–19**), so here we find women rewarded for their assertiveness.

David Howard: One of the six sons of Gilead named in **v. 2**, Hepher, had a son Zelophehad who had five daughters, but no sons. Because the inheritance of land normally passed through the male descendants, Zelophehad's family was at risk of losing its inheritance, and his daughters knew this. They had approached Moses about the problem many years earlier, and he had inquired of the Lord about it. The Lord's answer was that these women's claim was legitimate and that they should receive their father's portion. He went further and made it a general principle that the inheritance of a man dying without sons was to go to his daughters, or, lacking daughters, to his brothers, or, lacking brothers, to his uncles, or, lacking uncles, to his next nearest relatives. This story is told in some detail in **Num 27:1–11**. In the account in Joshua,

Zelophehad's daughters reminded Eleazar and Joshua of the Lord's ruling and command, and Joshua gave them their rightful inheritance.

Several features of this account bear mentioning.

- First, the daughters' names and Zelophehad's genealogy are carefully recorded in v. 3. This is to show the legal legitimacy of their claim, to prevent any misunderstandings or misinterpretations arising from confused identities. The case is introduced clearly, and the precedent in **Numbers 27** can be easily checked. The care with which the tribes' boundaries and cities are recorded extends down to the inheritance for individuals, even these daughters.

- Second, "*Eleazar the priest*" and "*Joshua son of Nun*" were the officials to whom the daughters presented their case. This too shows that everything was being done carefully and in order. Eleazar's role in the land distribution lists is always linked with Joshua's as one who gave the tribes their rightful inheritance. In each case he is identified as "*Eleazar the priest*," and Joshua is called by his full name, "*Joshua son of Nun*" (**14:1; 17:4; 19:51; 21:1**).

- Third, the account (esp. **v. 4b**) shows once again Joshua's concern to obey the word of the Lord down to the very letter.

- Fourth, it reinforces the principle enunciated in **Numbers 27** that daughters could indeed—and did indeed—inherit land, under the conditions mentioned there. Indeed, they received a total of five portions, not one to divide between all five. The entire account makes this point, but **v. 6** explicitly states, lest the point be missed, that "*the daughters of Manasseh received an inheritance among the sons.*"

- Fifth, this story accounts for the number of land tracts inherited by the tribe of Manasseh (see **v. 5**). East of the Jordan, the descendants of Gilead had received two tracts: Gilead and Manasseh. West of the Jordan, the total was ten. This was accounted for as follows: five tracts for the descendants of the five sons in **v. 2**—Abiezer, Helek, Asriel, Shechem, and Shemida. The lineage of Hepher, the sixth son, went through Zelophehad to his five daughters, and they each received one portion. In this way, Hepher's inheritance was multiplied fivefold. Thus, the grand total of portions in Manasseh's inheritance was twelve, two east of the Jordan and ten to the west.

B. (:7-13) Cisjordan Territory

1. (:7-11) Description of Geographic Borders

> "*And the border of Manasseh ran from Asher to Michmethath which was east of Shechem; then the border went southward to the inhabitants of En-tappuah. 8 The land of Tappuah belonged to Manasseh, but Tappuah on the border of Manasseh belonged to the sons of Ephraim. 9 And the border went down to the brook of Kanah, southward of the brook (these cities belonged to Ephraim among the cities of Manasseh), and the*

border of Manasseh was on the north side of the brook, and it ended at the sea. 10 The south side belonged to Ephraim and the north side to Manasseh, and the sea was their border; and they reached to Asher on the north and to Issachar on the east. 11 And in Issachar and in Asher, Manasseh had Beth-shean and its towns and Ibleam and its towns, and the inhabitants of Dor and its towns, and the inhabitants of En-dor and its towns, and the inhabitants of Taanach and its towns, and the inhabitants of Megiddo and its towns, the third is Napheth."

Helene Dallaire: At this point, the digression into Transjordan ends and the reader returns to **Cisjordan**, to the territory given to the western half-tribe of Manasseh. The southern boundaries overlap slightly with Ephraim, whose towns lie among those of Manasseh. The northern boundaries of Manasseh overlap with those of Issachar and Asher.

David Howard: Manasseh's actual inheritance is outlined now, primarily in the form of a **boundary list**, although it is abbreviated and contains some significant gaps. A few cities are mentioned in **vv. 7–10** (the boundary list proper), and several more are given in **v. 11**, which delineates Manassite sovereignty within other tribes' territories, but there is no city list proper. Two cities in its boundary description became Levitical cities: **Shechem** (**vv. 2, 7**; see **21:21**) and **Taanach** (**v. 11**; see **21:25**).

2. (:12-13) Manasseh's Compromise with the Canaanites

"*But the sons of Manasseh could not take possession of these cities, because the Canaanites persisted in living in that land. 13 And it came about when the sons of Israel became strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but they did not drive them out completely.*"

David Howard: The notice here is somewhat different from those in **15:63** and **16:10** in that it emphasizes the Canaanites' **stubborn determination** in **v. 12**, whereas no such statement is made in the earlier notices. This is reinforced by **v. 13**, which states that when the Israelites were able to grow strong enough, they did put the Canaanites to forced labor. Nevertheless, the result was the same as earlier: they were not able to drive out the inhabitants of these cities completely. Ironically, the three most important tribes, highlighted by their place and prominence in the lists, all were not able to drive out the Canaanites from portions of their lands. As E. R. Clendenen notes, they had the power to remove the Canaanites from the land and so to be God's instruments of judgment to remove wickedness, but they chose to tolerate wickedness and to use for their own purposes that which God had devoted to destruction. And so they sowed the seeds of their own destruction. Just like Achan. Peace with wickedness is preferred to war for righteousness.

IV. (17:14-18) COMPLAINT OF THE JOSEPHITES

A. (:14) Complaint: Not Enough Land for Too Many People

"*Then the sons of Joseph spoke to Joshua, saying, 'Why have you given me only*

one lot and one portion for an inheritance, since I am a numerous people whom the LORD has thus far blessed?"

David Howard: The two-chapter account of the Joseph tribes' inheritance comes to an end as it began, with the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh being considered together, as one unit (cf. **16:1–4**). They are called "*the sons of Joseph*" in both **16:4** and **17:14**, and they speak as one, using first-person singular address— "*me*" and "*I*"—and Joshua addresses them in the second-person singular ("*you*" [singular]). These two tribes are depicted as being **dissatisfied** with their allotted territory, challenging Joshua, and being challenged by him in return. . .

The Joseph tribes exhibited a degree of **arrogance** and **greed** in their confrontation with Joshua. The tone here sharply contrasts with the far more humble requests presented by Caleb (**14:6–12**) and the daughters of Zelophehad (**17:4**), both of whom appealed to the Lord's promises as the basis for their requests. Here these tribes cited no such precedent, only their subjective evaluation that their great numbers justified the request. Furthermore, they challenged the outcome of the lot, which was controlled by God. Thus, in their request they were challenging the very workings of God himself.

B. (:15) Challenge of Joshua: Make it Work

"*And Joshua said to them, 'If you are a numerous people, go up to the forest and clear a place for yourself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the Rephaim, since the hill country of Ephraim is too narrow for you.*"

Robert Hubbard: "I" demand to know, united Joseph asks, why "you" (Joshua) assigned "me" only "one lousy portion" (my paraphrase), despite the fact that, by Yahweh's abundant blessing, "I" am a very large people. The implication is that Yahweh's blessing entitles "me" to land commensurate with "my" population size.

Joshua's reply turns the petitioner's premise ("*I am a very large people*") around. If the hill country of Ephraim (or, more narrowly, Mount Ephraim) lacks room (lit., "*be too narrow*"), he challenges Joseph to wield his large population as a powerful saw against the forest where the Perizzites and Rephaites live (**v. 15**). It, too, comprises part of the basic territory assigned him—it merely needs development. So, Joshua orders, add more useable land within your allotment by clearing out the forest and its current inhabitants. In short, **behind the difficulty lurks an opportunity**.

C. (:16) Complaint Extended: Task is Too Dangerous

"*And the sons of Joseph said, 'The hill country is not enough for us, and all the Canaanites who live in the valley land have chariots of iron, both those who are in Beth-shean and its towns, and those who are in the valley of Jezreel.*"

Kenneth Gangel: They thought that because of their size they deserved more land. Joshua told them to clear some forest land and settle there. But they complained that the forest lands wouldn't work because this would put them too close to Canaanites with iron chariots. And we thought **entitlement programs** were an invention of the late

twentieth century! These tribes didn't want to work or fight for their land. They wanted something given to them. Their complaining and fear got in the way of their blessing.

D. (:17-18) Challenge of Joshua Expanded: You Have Sufficient People and Power to Prevail

> "*And Joshua spoke to the house of Joseph, to Ephraim and Manasseh, saying, 'You are a numerous people and have great power; you shall not have one lot only, 18 but the hill country shall be yours. For though it is a forest, you shall clear it, and to its farthest borders it shall be yours; for you shall drive out the Canaanites, even though they have chariots of iron and though they are strong.*'"

Trent Butler: Joshua replies with an answer that is at the same time **conciliatory** and **challenging**. He accepts the fact that they are a great and thus blessed people. He emphasizes their great power and their great potential. He concedes the necessity to grant their request, that is, that they have more than one lot. This explains how the house of Joseph came to be viewed as comprising two tribes—Manasseh and Ephraim.

Helene Dallaire: Unyielding to the demands of the people of Joseph, Joshua repeats his original response. In a hortatory tone, he reassures them that they are well able to subdue the Canaanites and to settle safely in the area. His reply to the people of Joseph is a clear, "Go for it! You can do it! Clear the forest and settle there! There is no other solution!"

David Howard: A further aspect of the Joseph tribes' greed is visible in the second exchange. Whereas Joshua had challenged them to clear the forests of "*Mount Ephraim*," they retorted that the (entire) hill country was not enough for them (v. 16). They also revealed a fear of the Canaanites living in the plain, who had iron chariots. These were not effective in the hills, especially in forested areas. However, the Joseph tribes felt hemmed in by the Canaanites' dominance in and around Beth Shan and the Jezreel Valley, which were in the northern portions of Manasseh's territory. Their complaints here about the Canaanites is reminiscent of similar complaints by the ten spies who came back from the land in Moses' day (**Num 13:26–33**); they too were cowed by the Canaanites' seeming superiority.

Joshua once again turned the Joseph tribes' challenge back on them in **vv. 17–18**: because they were numerous and powerful, they would not be limited to only one allotment (**v. 17**). They would take the forested hill country out to its extreme edges and, by extension, project their power into the plains, driving out the Canaanites in their iron chariots (**v. 18**).

Robert Hubbard: Joshua's final ruling (**vv. 17–18**) parries both prongs of the Josephite argument.

> (1) He encourages them not to sell themselves short. "*You [sing.] are numerous and very powerful*" means that they already have the personnel and means to

succeed. As in the wilderness (**Num. 14:6–9**), Joshua seeks to counter the growing Canaanite-ophobia before him with a positive word.

(2) He turns their "one lousy portion" against them and reiterates his earlier challenge concerning the opportunities that the forest offers. If they expand in that direction, there is no limit to how far beyond that one allotment they can extend their holdings through the larger hill country. Above all, they will destroy the Canaanites and even expand into the problematic plain, Canaanite iron chariots notwithstanding.

David Guzik: How different is their attitude from Caleb's attitude (**Joshua 14:11-12**)! They want "easy land" given to them, instead of taking God's promises and going out and taking what God has given them. The principle applies just as strongly for us today; if we desire more of something, the first thing to do is to be as faithful as we can where we are.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do we have a tendency to complain and a problem with contentment regarding the blessings God has bestowed on us?

2) What are the spiritual applications to the accounts in the book of Joshua of the distribution of the land as God's intended inheritance for His elect people?

3) How have God's instructions elevated the place of women in society – despite cultural efforts at suppression?

4) When things look difficult and we see hurdles that must be overcome, do we turn in confidence to the Lord and step out in faith to confront the challenges?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Kenneth Gangel: Joseph was responsible for the survival of his family during the famine in Egypt and even prior to that was Jacob's favorite son. So rather than a specific and single blessing on Joseph, Jacob ordained that his sons Ephraim and Manasseh should be the heads and founders of tribes along with their eleven uncles. Side by side they occupied what later became Samaria with Ephraim on the south and Manasseh on the north. **Ephraim's** land included Shiloh, where the tabernacle would be located. **Manasseh** included both Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim at the famous and sacred site of Shechem as well as Mount Carmel sticking like a knob out into the Mediterranean Sea.

Gordon Matties: The fact that these daughters [of Zelophehad] appear in Joshua and are not "left behind" in the ancient memory suggests their importance. Even the genealogy of Chronicles does not bypass them, but it does omit their names (**1 Chron 7:15**). These daughters are **paradigms of faithfulness** in two ways. They have a long memory of the promises and decrees of the Lord. And they are bold both in their youth and in their old age to bring about that which was promised. They are able to live within the strictures of a developing tradition concerning marriage, but they do not allow that tradition to hinder their appropriation of what is theirs by gift, by lot, by decree, and therefore also by inheritance.

Van Parunak: Application: Contrast the attitudes both of Zelophehad's daughters and of Gilead's other sons with that of Esau in Gen 25:29-34, who despised his birthright. We have an inheritance as well:

- **Rom 8:16-17**, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ
- **Gal 3:29**, Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise; cf. **4:7**
- **Tit 3:7**, heirs according to the hope of eternal life; cf. **Heb. 1:14** heirs of salvation
- **Heb 6:17**, heirs of promise
- **Heb 11:7**, heir of the righteousness which is by faith
- **1 Pet 3:7**, husband and wife are heirs together of the grace of life.

Thus the admonition of **Heb 12:16** to us not to despise our birthright as Esau did. The descendants of Manasseh offer us just the opposite example, of a people who treasured God's gift to them and took steps to preserve it.

Peter Wallace: So how should you respond when your complaint has been denied? I like the way that Benedict of Nursia handles this in the Rule of St. Benedict. Benedict says that if your superior commands an impossible task, you should receive the order with all meekness and obedience – and try to do it. If however, you see that the task is altogether beyond your strength, "quietly and seasonably submit the reasons for your inability to your Superior, without pride, protest, or dissent." In other words, bring a respectful complaint!

What do you do if he denies your complaint? "If the Superior still insists on his command, let the Brother be convinced that so it is good for him; and let him obey from love, relying on the help of God." (Rule, 68)

Benedict is essentially expounding what Joshua says here to the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. You may think that it is impossible. But this is what God calls you to do! We need to have the humility to submit in the Lord to those whom he has placed over us.
https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/3822029317322.pdf

David Thompson: **Now why didn't they drive out all of the people?**
(Reason #1) - Perhaps it was convenient to not be in another hassle. Most of the land was conquered so what difference does it make if a few obscure Canaanites exist in part of the land?

> We will always end up suffering in some way when we neglect to do God's will for convenience sake.

(Reason #2) - Perhaps there motives were for gain–the Israelites could profit from these people.

> Worldly gain is never a good motive for disobeying God.

(Reason #3) - Perhaps they felt they were no longer a real threat.

> Governing our actions by our feelings that are contrary to God's Word will ultimately lead to disaster.

(Reason #4) - Perhaps they felt they could win the people over to their side. Associating with God-mocking people is dangerous and disastrous.

> We typically do not influence them; they influence us.

Whatever the reason, they did not obey God fully. In **Deuteronomy 7:1-5**, God specifically warned against a failure to eradicate these people. God warned that these Canaanites would have their greatest effect on their children. Ladies and Gentlemen, I agree with Dr. H.A. Ironside, compromise with evil never pays. In the end, disobedience to God will cost you.

We who know the Lord and who have experienced many blessings from God need to stay on top of our lives. There is still more work to do. Keep alert. Keep active. Keep working.

Spurgeon: It is not an easy task to divide land amongst different claimants. Joshua divided Canaan with strict impartiality. He was a man of God, and he was also shrewdly wise, as you may gather from many of his speeches. But, for all that, he could not satisfy everybody. He who would please all attempts the impossible. God himself is quarrelled with. If it be the design of providence to please men, it is a melancholy failure. Do we not find men everywhere dissatisfied with their portions? This man would like his lot if it were not where it is, and that man would be perfectly satisfied if he had a little more. One would be contented with what he has if he could keep it always, while another would be more pleased if life could be shortened. There is no pleasing men. We are like the sons of Joseph in the chapter before us, ready to complain of our inheritance. It should not be so. We who have pined in the wilderness of sin should rejoice that we have entered the land of promise, and we ought to be glad to have a portion among the people of the Lord. Contentment should be natural to those

who are born of the Spirit of God; yea, we ought to go beyond contentment, and cry, "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits."

Brethren, the best advice that I can give to each man among you is, that he should endeavour to make the best of the portion which God has given him: for, after all, Joshua had not arbitrarily appointed Ephraim and Manasseh their lots, but they had fallen to them by the decree of God. Their portions had been marked out by a higher hand than Joshua's long before. You and I ought to believe that—

"*There's a divinity that shapes our ends,*
Rough-hew them how we will."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Living Up to Your Potential**
Introduction: Now, tonight, as you sit there and you listen to me, I want you to know that there are <u>three people</u> sitting where you are right now.

- the person you are this very moment, what you are before God.
- secondly, there is the person that you can be for evil if you get your eyes off the Lord and you begin to walk in the flesh. do bad things.
- Thirdly there is the person that you can be for good and for God. If you walk in the Spirit and you yield yourself to God, you don't realize the potential you have for God. when you yield to the Lord. What great things you can do for God, the love that you can show, the faith that you can manifest, the great works that you can do, the goals that you can achieve. **John 14:12**

Jesus did His part. Now it's up to us to do our part and to drive out the remaining Canaanites that are in our life that hinder us from reaching our full potential for God.

<u>Big Idea</u>: Why didn't they fully drive out the Canaanites? Let me give you <u>four problems</u> they face, and these are problems that we face as we try to reach our full potential.

I. Problem of Partial Possession – 17:12-13

A. <u>The Canaanites that they Favored</u>

Some Christians are keeping company with Canaanites. Rather than claiming the full victory that God wants you to have, there are some Christians who have lost their drive and they have decided just to live just as they are and accept the Canaanites that are around them. They live with less than the victory that God has given them. Are there pet sins that you refuse to drive out? Things that you perhaps don't want to get rid of?

B. <u>The Canaanites that they Feared – **17:16**</u>

There may be in the life of some Christian a sin that perhaps maybe you might think, or some other Christian might think, man, this sin is too hard for me to drive out. I'll never be able to get victory over this sin in my life. It's like a chariot of iron. that I just can't get victory over. And so, a Christian may decide, I'm just going to have to live with this thing. And you might say, well, I've tried, I've confessed, I've asked for forgiveness, I've admitted my wrong. But friend, there's a difference between admitting a sin and quitting a sin.

The Holy Spirit is not a reward for our faithfulness. The Holy Spirit is a gift for our weakness. And so the Bible says, if you walk in the Spirit, you'll not fulfill the lust of the flesh. And also, stop blaming the devil for your sins.

II. Problem of Paralyzing Pride – 17:14

III. Problem of Perverted Priorities – 17:17

Before asking for more land, take care of what you already have been given. In essence, he's saying, get your priorities right. Do what Caleb did. Worship has to come first. We need to remove from our lives anything, any of the clutter that keeps us from spending time with God the way we should. We need to remove from our life anything that keeps us from a faithful walk with God. Anything that keeps us from reading the Word of God and spending time in prayer. Those little things, we need to get them out of our life. And we need to worship God and walk with God.

IV. Problem of Pathetic Procrastination – 18:1

They had not yet gone out and face the Canaanites to drive them out to fully receive their inheritance. And so Joshua looks at them and he says, why are you waiting? Why are you hesitating? How long is it going to be before you go to take possession of what God has given you? You say, what's the problem? They were just procrastinating. They just didn't do what they were supposed to do.

Why do people procrastinate?

- Fear
- Laziness
- Disobedience
- Lack of Organization

TEXT: Joshua 18:1 – 19:51

TITLE: TERRITORY OF REMAINING 7 TRIBES

BIG IDEA:
GOD PUTS HIS PEOPLE EXACTLY WHERE HE INTENDS FOR THEM TO PROSPER AND TO SERVE HIM EFFECTIVELY

INTRODUCTION:

David Howard: After the most important tribes have been dealt with in previous chapters, the land distribution is rapidly concluded now in two chapters that detail the **remaining seven allotments**. The allotment descriptions for each tribe are much shorter and much more uniform than those of Judah and the two Joseph tribes. The unity of the two chapters is indicated by the regularly patterned allotments for all the remaining tribes, by the accounting for every tribe— including those mentioned previously, and Levi, to be mentioned later—and even by the opening and closing verses (**18:1; 19:51**), which both mention **Shiloh** and the **tent of meeting**. The literary unity reflects the historical unity that was to be the standard for the entire nation (see **1:12–18**; cf. **chap. 22**).

Until now, Israel's central encampment in the land appears to have been at Gilgal, but now the entire congregation moved to **Shiloh** (**18:1**), and the **tent of meeting** was set up there. At this assembly at Shiloh Joshua charged Israel with the task of mapping out and possessing the land for the remaining seven tribes (**18:2–10**). After the surveying was done, lots were cast, and the land was apportioned out accordingly. The seven tribes were Benjamin, Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan. The lists for each of these are similar and straightforward, for the most part, listing **boundaries** and/or **cities** belonging to each tribe. . .

God's presence throughout these two chapters, but especially in **18:1–10**, is indicated in at least three ways:

(1) the presence of the tent of meeting (**18:1; 19:51**);
(2) the presence of the Lord (**18:6, 8, 10; 19:51**); and
(3) the actual casting of the lots, since God controlled even the lot (**18:6, 10–11; 19:1, 10, 17, 24, 32, 40, 51**).

Trent Butler: First, the writer sets seven lazy tribes who lack courage over against the two most powerful tribes, whose representatives demand their territory and more—immediately. In so doing the biblical writer has seemed to promise success to the powerful ones in their fight against the strong Canaanites (**Josh 17:18**).

Richard Hess: The scene shifts from Gilgal to **Shiloh**. The tribes meet with Joshua. The speaker changes from the third person to the second person as Joshua addresses the whole assembly (**vv. 3–7**) and then the map-makers themselves (**v. 8**). There is a return to the third person in the final two verses as these 'scouts' carry out their work and

Joshua begins the allotment procedure. Thus this section changes from the allotments of the earlier tribes, which had already been approved by Moses, to those of the remaining seven tribes. In so doing, there is a change of place, of mapmaking method, and of the persons involved. Its literary location is at the centre of the tribal allotments, and therefore it is **theologically significant** for understanding the allotments.

Kenneth Gangel: Three major things happen in these chapters:

(1) the focus changes from Gilgal to Shiloh;
(2) seven remaining tribes get their allocation of land; and
(3) Joshua receives his city.

(18:1-10) PROCESS FOR DISTRIBUTION OF LAND TO THE REMAINING SEVEN TRIBES

A. (:1-2) Final Steps in the Distribution of the Inheritance Land

1. (:1) Requisite Staging for Final Distribution

a. Assembly at Shiloh

"*Then the whole congregation of the sons of Israel assembled themselves at Shiloh,*"

Gordon Matties: In the book of Joshua, then, **Shiloh** stands for a moment of clarity, a place of intimacy with God as though it is Israel's Eden (**Gen 2**). It stands for communion with God who, according to the Deuteronomic tradition, made the divine name dwell "*in that place*" (cf. **Deut 12:5**). Exodus understands the tabernacle to be the place of instruction and discernment in the presence of God. But that presence is not limited to one place; it is "*every place*" (**Exod 20:24**). In Leviticus the tent of meeting is the **relational center** where Israel's God not only dwells, but also promises to "*walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people*" (**Lev 26:11-12**). If Joshua's meeting at Shiloh belongs to this tradition of divine presence, then **Joshua 18:1** represents a significant moment in the Joshua story, which all readers would recognize as a fulfillment of the divine promise (cf. Koorevaar: 290).

David Howard: Up to this point, Israel's central encampment in the land appears to have been at **Gilgal**, near Jericho, where the nation had observed several religious ceremonies (**4:19–20; 5:2–12**). This was where Caleb had approached Joshua to ask for his inheritance (**14:6**). Now the entire congregation moved to Shiloh (**18:1**), about fifteen miles northwest of Jericho, and the tent of meeting was set up there. Shiloh was in the territory of Ephraim (see **16:6**), and it would remain an important Israelite religious center for several hundred years, until the taking of Jerusalem in David's day (see **19:51; 21:2; Judg 18:31; 21:12; 1 Sam 1:9**). The ark was kept there (**1 Sam 3:3**), and it was brought into battle against the Philistines, who captured it in Samuel's day (**1 Samuel 4**). Soon after that event, Shiloh was destroyed (**Ps 78:60; Jer 7:14**).

Richard Hess: For the Christian, the establishment of a sanctuary and centre at Shiloh testifies to how God fulfils his promises. God has given his people **the blessing of his presence among them**. They must respond in obedience by occupying the land and

living according to the divine covenant. The fundamental importance of the sanctuary is illustrated by its central position among the tribes (in the central hill country) and by its position in the midst of the allotments of **Joshua 13 – 21**. Christians are also called upon to see the worship of God as central to their lives. As with the gatherings at the Shiloh sanctuary so regular meetings for worship are a chief means to provide unity and common encouragement for faithful living (**Heb. 10:25**).

b. Erection of the Tent of Meeting

"*and set up the tent of meeting there;*"

Trent Butler: In this passage the use of the tent of meeting is explicitly theological. The tradition itself may have been used to explain how the tent came to be in Shiloh. In the present literary context of the Bible, the tent shows that Israel completely obeyed the will of God and that the division of the land to the seven tribes took place in the divine presence. It is also striking that the setting up of the symbol of access to Yahweh is done only when the land had rest from war. Joining tent and Shiloh "focuses attention on the name of Israel as a worshipping community in covenantal relationship with Yahweh. . . . The assembly at Shiloh . . . affirms that the presence of God with Israel in covenant relationship has now been realized in the land.

c. Control of the Land

"*and the land was subdued before them.*"

Robert Hubbard: Several features give the scene an especially solemn, momentous aura. (1) There the tribes have erected the **Tent of Meeting**, the portable place where Yahweh and Israel may meet (**18:1**; cf. **Ex. 33:7; 1 Sam. 2:22; Ps. 78:60**). The tent symbolically implies Yahweh's presence (cf. **vv. 6, 10** ["*in the presence of the LORD*"]), participation, and approval of the proceedings.

(2) Further, the narrator comments that the land now is **fully subdued** "*under their control*" (**v. 1b**). The latter echoes the phrase that Moses invokes as one condition for Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh to receive their inheritances in Transjordan (**Num. 32:22, 29**). If the echo is intentional, the author signals that that condition has been met—that Israel now enters a decisively new phase. The previous legal barrier to the proper allocation of inheritances—the presence of squatters—is gone. The "*take possession*" part of Joshua's invasion order now begins for the seven tribes (**Josh. 1:11**), with the "subdued" land ripe for the taking.

(3) Finally, by detailing the inheritances of the last seven tribes, the narrative affirms Israel's national identity as a unified people living on divinely given land. This theme recurs in **chapter 22** and, many centuries later, in the ideal, future land distribution of **Ezekiel 47**.

2. (:2) Remaining Task

"*And there remained among the sons of Israel*
seven tribes who had not divided their inheritance."

B. (:3-7) Fair Distribution Based on Investigative Survey of the Land

1. (:3) Urgency of the Task

"*So Joshua said to the sons of Israel,*
'How long will you put off entering to take possession of the land
which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you?'"

Helene Dallaire: Joshua reprimands Israel impatiently, "*How long will you wait before you begin to take possession of the land*?" His **accusatory tone** seems to imply that the Israelites have become idle in their effort to inhabit the land. According to Joshua, there is still much work to be done; there is no time for apathy. Undeniably, conquest must be followed by occupation.

Joshua's question to Israel echoes a query made by Jacob to his sons. During a time of famine in Canaan, Jacob turned to his sons and said: "*Why do you just keep looking at each other?' . . . I heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us*" (**Ge 42:1–2**). Akin to Joshua's frustration with Israel, Jacob projects a tone of **impatience** and implies that his sons were complacent in the face of potential peril.

Van Parunak: Joshua's question in **v.3** makes it clear that they are standing by idly, waiting for someone else to take action, when they should have been moving ahead themselves.

David Thompson: Apparently there were seven tribes who did not yet have their inheritance and they didn't seem to care. They did not ask for the inheritance, they were not searching out what part of the land might be theirs, they were apathetic; in fact, they were pathetic. To take land meant self-denial, sacrifice, a love of God more than a love of ease, a love of God's property more than the worlds.

SOME OF GOD'S PEOPLE WERE AGGRESSIVELY MOVING FORWARD FOR GOD, BUT THE MAJORITY NEEDED TO BE CHALLENGED TO KEEP MOVING FORWARD FOR THE GLORY OF GOD.

2. (:4) Undertaking the Survey of the Land

"*Provide for yourselves three men from each tribe that I may send them,*
and that they may arise and walk through the land
and write a description of it according to their inheritance;
then they shall return to me."

Kenneth Gangel: **Verse 3** almost sounds like a bit of scolding on Joshua's part—and perhaps it was. The seven tribes just could not get **organized**, so Joshua stepped in to make things happen. Sometimes we need people like this in our lives. We need to recognize that **organization is not anti-spiritual**. Sometimes we need help in organizing our time, our resources, our finances, and our family lives so we can serve God better and live for him. Furthermore, if you are good at organization, teach or help someone else.

David Howard: In order to accomplish the equitable dividing, taking, and settlement of the remaining lands, Joshua instructed that three men from each of the seven remaining tribes be appointed as surveyors who would travel throughout the land and record its description (**v. 4**). The seriousness of the task is emphasized by the repeated references to writing in this passage. Three times the text specifies that the men were to write down what they found (**vv. 4, 6, 8**). Then, in **v. 9**, the execution of the command to do this is mentioned: they carefully wrote down on a scroll the land's contours by its cities and by its seven divisions. These things show the **importance of the task** as well as the fact that later generations were to know of it because it was to be written down.

3. (:5-7) Ultimate Division into 7 Portions – Recognizing Prior Special Dispositions

"*And they shall divide it into seven portions;*"

David Howard: In **vv. 5–7**, the unity of the nation and the equitable distribution of the land are the primary focus. . . Three items bear mentioning here.

- First, Joshua's leadership is visible because he was actively involved in parceling out the lands. The twenty-one surveyors were to bring their findings to him, and he would cast lots before the Lord (**v. 6**).
- Second, the Lord's presence was with the people, and he oversaw the lots (**v. 6**).
- Third, the Levites' special inheritance is again singled out for attention and augmented. . . it was "*the priestly service of the LORD*" (**v. 7**).

a. (:5b) Disposition for Judah (south) and Joseph (north)

"*Judah shall stay in its territory on the south,*
and the house of Joseph shall stay in their territory on the north."

b. (:6) Description of the 7 Divisions Leading to Casting of Lots

"*And you shall describe the land in seven divisions,*
and bring the description here to me.
And I will cast lots for you here before the LORD our God."

c. (:7a) Disposition of the Levites

"*For the Levites have no portion among you,*
because the priesthood of the LORD is their inheritance."

d. (:7b) Disposition of the Transjordanian Tribes

"*Gad and Reuben and the half-tribe of Manasseh also have*
received their inheritance eastward beyond the Jordan,
which Moses the servant of the LORD gave them."

C. (:8-9) Faithful Completion of the Survey Mission

"*Then the men arose and went, and Joshua commanded those who went to describe the land, saying, 'Go and walk through the land and describe it, and return to me; then I will cast lots for you here before the LORD in Shiloh.' 9 So*

the men went and passed through the land, and described it by cities in seven divisions in a book; and they came to Joshua to the camp at Shiloh."

Richard Hess: Just as the **law** guides the people in their life, the **map book** will guide the people in their possession of God's blessing of the land. The towns form the basis for the tribal boundaries and town lists that comprise the allotments.

Trent Butler: The commission has a different function from that of the "military" spies in **Num 13** and **Josh 2**. The commission does not scout the opposition. Rather they seek information about the land and the cities to be allotted and settled. In this, the commission obeys their instructions.

Van Parunak: This process forces them to exercise to character strengths:

- Consensus: they must agree on the division.
- Commitment: they must make a written record of what they find, which means that after they submit their report, none of them can come back and say, "That's not the agreement I remember."

D. (:10) Finishing the Distribution by Casting Lots before the Lord

"*And Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD, and there Joshua divided the land to the sons of Israel according to their divisions.*"

David Howard: This key passage ends, then, with the assurance that each tribe did indeed receive its allotted territory. The previous allotments were a matter of record, the Levites' inheritance was the Lord's service, and the remaining tribes did receive their lands equitably and in order. The unity of the nation was still holding firm. The rest of **chaps. 18–19** are devoted to detailing the allotments, but by **18:10** the allotments were complete, an accomplished fact.

Robert Hubbard: The text itself offers no explanation of the lot-casting procedure, but one plausible scenario commends itself. One may imagine two containers, each with seven stones. The seven in one container somehow identify each of the seven land portions, while the seven in the other bear the name of a tribe eligible for land. Joshua then "cast" one stone on the ground from each container, either in sequence or simultaneously, to match a land portion with a tribe. The next step—the subdivision of the seven tribal portions among the clans of each tribe—would require one vessel with land descriptors equal to the number of clans and a second vessel with the names of each clan. The final step would apply the procedure to divide the clan portions among its families.

Trent Butler: Here Joshua and Israel showed their obedience to God. They divided the land according to his plans and will, not human pride and selfishness. We hear no complaints as we did among the Joseph tribes.

II. (18:11 – 19:48) PLACES OF DISTRIBUTION OF LAND TO THE SEVEN TRIBES (BORDERS AND CITIES)

A. (18:11-28) Territory of Benjamin

1. (:11) Summary Introduction

"*Now the lot of the tribe of the sons of Benjamin came up according to their families, and the territory of their lot lay between the sons of Judah and the sons of Joseph.*"

2. (:12-21) Borders

a. (:12-13) Northern Border

"*And their border on the north side was from the Jordan, then the border went up to the side of Jericho on the north, and went up through the hill country westward; and it ended at the wilderness of Beth-aven. 13 And from there the border continued to Luz, to the side of Luz (that is, Bethel) southward; and the border went down to Ataroth-addar, near the hill which lies on the south of lower Beth-horon.*"

David Howard: Benjamin's northern boundary was the same as the Joseph tribes' southern boundary, described in **16:1–4**, or Ephraim's, described briefly in **16:5**. Every place mentioned here is found already in **16:1–5**, except for the desert of Beth Aven.

b. (:14) Western Border

"*And the border extended from there, and turned round on the west side southward, from the hill which lies before Beth-horon southward; and it ended at Kiriath-baal (that is, Kiriath-jearim), a city of the sons of Judah. This was the west side.*"

c. (:15-19) Southern Border

"*Then the south side was from the edge of Kiriath-jearim, and the border went westward and went to the fountain of the waters of Nephtoah. 16 And the border went down to the edge of the hill which is in the valley of Ben-hinnom, which is in the valley of Rephaim northward; and it went down to the valley of Hinnom, to the slope of the Jebusite southward, and went down to En-rogel. 17 And it extended northward and went to En-shemesh and went to Geliloth, which is opposite the ascent of Adummim, and it went down to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben. 18 And it continued to the side in front of the Arabah northward, and went down to the Arabah. 19 And the border continued to the side of Beth-hoglah northward; and the border ended at the north bay of the Salt Sea, at the south end of the Jordan. This was the south border.*"

d. (:20a) Eastern Border = Jordan River

"*Moreover, the Jordan was its border on the east side.*"

e. (:20b) Border Summary

"*This was the inheritance of the sons of Benjamin, according to their families and according to its borders all around.*"

3. (:21-28) Cities and Villages

a. (:21-24) Eastern Cities -- 12

"*Now the cities of the tribe of the sons of Benjamin according to their families were Jericho and Beth-hoglah and Emek-keziz, 22 and Beth-arabah and Zemaraim and Bethel, 23 and Avvim and Parah and Ophrah, 24 and Chephar-ammoni and Ophni and Geba; twelve cities with their villages.*"

b. (:25-28a) Western Cities -- 14

"*Gibeon and Ramah and Beeroth, 26 and Mizpeh and Chephirah and Mozah, 27 and Rekem and Irpeel and Taralah, 28 and Zelah, Haeleph and the Jebusite (that is, Jerusalem), Gibeah, Kiriath; fourteen cities with their villages.*"

David Howard: Ten of the cities here never occur elsewhere in the Bible: Emek Keziz, Avvim, Parah, Kephar Ammoni, Ophni, Mozah, Irpeel, Taralah, Zelah, and Haeleph.

4. (:28b) Summary Closing

"*This is the inheritance of the sons of Benjamin according to their families.*"

B. (19:1-9) Territory of Simeon

1. (:1) Summary Introduction

"*Then the second lot fell to Simeon, to the tribe of the sons of Simeon according to their families,*
and their inheritance was in the midst of the inheritance of the sons of Judah."

David Howard: Simeon was not given an independent allotment, but rather, it inherited scattered cities (and their surrounding villages) within Judah's allotment. . .

many centuries earlier, Simeon and Levi already had been condemned to be scattered among their fellow tribes (**Gen. 49:5-7**). The land inheritance lists show the fulfillment of this because neither Simeon nor Levi received independent territory; both tribes received cities scattered throughout the others' lands.

What was behind **Jacob's harsh prophecy** concerning these two tribes? The text does not specifically give a reason, but Jacob's words about his two sons' violence hark back to the violence they had perpetrated against the inhabitants of Shechem, when they annihilated every man in the city while these men were recuperating from having been circumcised (**Gen 34:24–30**). In **v. 30**, Jacob had foreshadowed his later prophecy by rebuking his sons for their violence. Thus, Simeon's and Levi's "landless" status was a punishment for their taking violent, personal vengeance.

2. (:2-8) Cities and Villages

a. (:2-6) Southern Cities (Negev) -- 13

"*So they had as their inheritance Beersheba or Sheba and Moladah, 3 and Hazar-shual and Balah and Ezem, 4 and Eltolad and Bethul and Hormah, 5 and Ziklag and Beth-marcaboth and Hazar-susah, 6 and Beth-lebaoth and Sharuhen, thirteen cities with their villages;*"

b. (:7) Negev (2 Cities) and Western Foothills = Shephelah (2 Cities)

"*Ain, Rimmon and Ether and Ashan, four cities with their villages;*"

c. (:8a) Special Significance of Baalath-beer

"*and all the villages which were around these cities as far as Baalath-beer, Ramah of the Negev.*"

David Howard: The reference to the last city functions to define the extent of the Simeonite cities to the south, since it is not part of the two lists preceding it.

3. (:8b) Summary Closing

"*This was the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Simeon according to their families.*"

4. (:9) Explanation for Simeon's Inheritance Being in the Midst of Judah

"*The inheritance of the sons of Simeon was taken from the portion of the sons of Judah, for the share of the sons of Judah was too large for them; so the sons of Simeon received an inheritance in the midst of Judah's inheritance.*"

C. (19:10-16) Territory of Zebulin

1. (:10) Summary Introduction

"*Now the third lot came up for the sons of Zebulun according to their families. And the territory of their inheritance was as far as Sarid.*"

2. (:11-14) Borders

"*Then their border went up to the west and to Maralah, it then touched Dabbesheth, and reached to the brook that is before Jokneam. 12 Then it turned from Sarid to the east toward the sunrise as far as the border of*

Chisloth-tabor, and it proceeded to Daberath and up to Japhia. 13 And from there it continued eastward toward the sunrise to Gath-hepher, to Eth-kazin, and it proceeded to Rimmon which stretches to Neah. 14 And the border circled around it on the north to Hannathon, and it ended at the valley of Iphtahel."

David Howard: Zebulun was a small tribe nestled between Issachar, western Manasseh, Asher, and Naphtali, although its boundary description is sufficiently vague that it cannot easily be correlated with the others. . . The boundary description is different from the preceding ones in that it appears to consist primarily of border cities near which the boundaries ran rather than fixed boundary points through which the boundary went.

Thomas Constable: Zebulun's territory lay north of the plain of Jezreel, that marked Manasseh's northern border, and southwest of the hills of Naphtali. On the northwest, its neighbor was Asher, and on the southeast, Issachar. Zebulun's land was very fertile. Zebulun received 12 towns, though the writer identified only five here (**v. 15**). Probably some of the towns in **verses 10** through **14** were the other seven towns belonging to Zebulun, but which ones is not known.

3. (:15) Cities and Villages

"*Included also were Kattah and Nahalal and Shimron and Idalah and Bethlehem; twelve cities with their villages.*"

4. (:16) Summary Closing

"*This was the inheritance of the sons of Zebulun according to their families, these cities with their villages.*"

D. (19:17-23) Territory of Issachar

1. (:17) Summary Introduction

"*The fourth lot fell to Issachar, to the sons of Issachar according to their families.*"

2. (:18-22) Cities and Borders

a. (:18-21) Cities

"*And their territory was to Jezreel and included Chesulloth and Shunem, 19 and Hapharaim and Shion and Anaharath, 20 and Rabbith and Kishion and Ebez, 21 and Remeth and En-gannim and En-haddah and Beth-pazzez.*"

b. (:22a) Borders

"*And the border reached to Tabor and Shahazumah and Beth-shemesh, and their border ended at the Jordan;*"

David Howard: Issachar's general location is clear: it was north of western Manasseh, east and south of Zebulun, west of the Jordan, and south of Naphtali. However, the

details of its boundaries are not so clear.

c. (:22b) Total Number of Cities

"*sixteen cities with their villages.*"

David Howard: The thirteen cities appear to be arranged in four groups, based on the Masoretic accents (i.e., verse divisions).

- The first group—Jezreel, Kesulloth, Shunem (**v. 18**)—were on a north-south line in the western portion of Issachar.
- The second group—Hapharaim, Shion, Anaharath (**v. 19**)—also represents a north-south line, just east of the first group. The Old Greek text adds a fourth city to this group: "Reeroth."
- The third group—Rabbith, Kishion, Ebez (**v. 20**)—appears to have been concentrated in the north, near Mount Tabor.
- The fourth group—Remeth, En Gannim, En Haddah, Beth Pazzez (**v. 21**)—was in the eastern portion of the tribal lands.

3. (:23) Summary Closing

"*This was the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Issachar according to their families, the cities with their villages.*"

E. (19:24-31) Territory of Asher

1. (:24) Summary Introduction

"*Now the fifth lot fell to the tribe of the sons of Asher according to their families.*"

2. (:25-30) Borders and Cities

"*And their territory was Helkath and Hali and Beten and Achshaph, 26 and Allammelech and Amad and Mishal; and it reached to Carmel on the west and to Shihor-libnath. 27 And it turned toward the east to Beth-dagon, and reached to Zebulun, and to the valley of Iphtahel northward to Beth-emek and Neiel; then it proceeded on north to Cabul, 28 and Ebron and Rehob and Hammon and Kanah, as far as Great Sidon. 29 And the border turned to Ramah, and to the fortified city of Tyre; then the border turned to Hosah, and it ended at the sea by the region of Achzib. 30 Included also were Ummah, and Aphek and Rehob; twenty-two cities with their villages.*"

David Howard: its territory lay in a long, narrow strip in the far northwest of the tribal inheritances, with the Mediterranean Sea as its western boundary and the tribes of Zebulun and western Manasseh at its eastern edge. Its territorial description is not neatly separated into boundary and city lists, as are the others. Rather, small groups of cities are included at different points along the boundary descriptions.

Robert Hubbard: The text's unique combination of borders and town lists serves to support Israel's ancient territorial claim, based on God's will spoken through lots, and

to keep hope alive for reclaiming it during periods when it falls into alien hands.

3. (:31) Summary Closing

"*This was the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Asher according to their families, these cities with their villages.*"

F. (19:32-39) Territory of Naphtali

1. (:32) Summary Introduction

"*The sixth lot fell to the sons of Naphtali; to the sons of Naphtali according to their families.*"

David Howard: it received the rich, forested land in the heart of the Galilee region. Asher was to the west, Zebulun and Asher to the south, and the Jordan River and eastern Manasseh to the east. Its territory is described by means of a sketchy boundary description (**vv. 33–34**) and a separate city list (**vv. 35–38**).

2. (:33-34) Borders

"*And their border was from Heleph, from the oak in Zaanannim and Adami-nekeb and Jabneel, as far as Lakkum; and it ended at the Jordan. 34 Then the border turned westward to Aznoth-tabor, and proceeded from there to Hukkok; and it reached to Zebulun on the south and touched Asher on the west, and to Judah at the Jordan toward the east.*"

David Howard: Only Naphtali's **southern boundary** is given in any detail (**vv. 33–34a**). It began at Heleph and ran eastward to the Jordan River. Then it returned (*wb*) to its starting point and ran westward to Hukkok. Hukkok was presumably at the western edge, near the eastern boundary of Asher.

3. (:35-38) Cities and Villages

"*And the fortified cities were Ziddim, Zer and Hammath, Rakkath and Chinnereth, 36 and Adamah and Ramah and Hazor, 37 and Kedesh and Edrei and En-hazor, 38 and Yiron and Migdal-el, Horem and Beth-anath and Beth-shemesh; nineteen cities with their villages.*"

4. (:39) Summary Closing

"*This was the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Naphtali according to their families, the cities with their villages.*"

G. (19:40-48) Territory of Dan

1. (:40) Summary Introduction

"*The seventh lot fell to the tribe of the sons of Dan according to their families.*"

David Howard: The Danites' territorial interests were overshadowed by their inability to take their own land and their subsequent migration to a region far to the north, which was where they settled. Thus, the detailed description found in **vv. 41–46** is primarily

for historical interest because the Danites settled in the north, at Leshem, which they renamed "*Dan*" (**v. 47**). Their territorial allotment was in the south, abutting Judah and other tribes. However, they are listed here with the northern tribes in Galilee undoubtedly because that is where they eventually settled.

2. (:41-46) Cities

"*And the territory of their inheritance was Zorah and Eshtaol and Ir-shemesh, 42 and Shaalabbin and Aijalon and Ithlah, 43 and Elon and Timnah and Ekron, 44 and Eltekeh and Gibbethon and Baalath, 45 and Jehud and Bene-berak and Gath-rimmon, 46 and Me-jarkon and Rakkon, with the territory over against Joppa.*"

3. (:47) Migration of Dan to the Northern City of Leshem

"*And the territory of the sons of Dan proceeded beyond them; for the sons of Dan went up and fought with Leshem and captured it. Then they struck it with the edge of the sword and possessed it and settled in it; and they called Leshem Dan after the name of Dan their father.*"

David Howard: The defining characteristic for Dan was not just that they were unable to drive out the Canaanites from their territories. After all, several other tribes had the same problem. However, the Danites were unique in that they **abandoned their allotted territory and migrated elsewhere**. They traveled to the far north of Canaan and took a city called Leshem, renaming it Dan. This became an important city as a marker of the northern extreme of the land, included in the phrase "*from Dan to Beersheba*" (e.g., **Judg 20:1; 1 Sam 3:20; 1 Kgs 4:25**). It was one of the cities where Jeroboam I erected a golden calf (**1 Kgs 12:29–30**).

The Book of Judges gives us further perspectives on Dan's migration. **Judges 1:34** states that the tribe migrated because of pressure from the Canaanites, who confined them in the hill country. **Judges 18** tells the entire story about their migration, the details of which are mostly sordid, showing the Danites' apostasy (see esp. **18:27–31**).

4. (:48) Summary Closing

"*This was the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Dan according to their families, these cities with their villages.*"

Robert Hubbard: In short, the report strikingly combines the **ideal** (i.e., Dan's assigned location) and the **real** (Dan's actual settlement at Leshem) without apparent criticism or embarrassment. In my view, the roots of that balance lie in the author's intention through the long allotment narrative (**chs. 13–19**) to present the ideal of a united Israel as a hopeful antidote to despairing readers who may have experienced their own Danite-like historical displacements. At the same time, as Kitz suggests, the process also has important legal ramifications. It gives the tribes the right to occupy their assigned territory, including the subjugation of any remaining "squatters," and denies them the right to contest the boundaries of another tribe's territory.

III. (19:49-50) -- PRIZE OF DISTRIBUTION OF LAND TO JOSHUA

A. (:49) Joshua Waited to Receive His Distribution Until after All the Tribes

"*When they finished apportioning the land for inheritance by its borders, the sons of Israel gave an inheritance in their midst to Joshua the son of Nun.*"

Madvig: Caleb and Joshua were the two faithful spies who believed God was able to give Israel the land (**Num 14:6-9, 30**). The receiving of their inheritances frames the story of the dividing of the land among the nine and a half tribes, with Caleb's at the beginning [**14:6-15**] and Joshua's at the end. Caleb and Joshua are living examples of **God's faithfulness** in fulfilling his promises made more than forty years earlier

B. (:50) Joshua Received the City He Requested

"*In accordance with the command of the LORD they gave him the city for which he asked, Timnath-serah in the hill country of Ephraim. So he built the city and settled in it.*"

David Howard: Joshua, who was usually the agent distributing the land, now received it from the Israelites (**v. 49**). He could not give himself his own portion. . . It would seem that **Timnath Serah** was Joshua's own **personal possession** because it does not appear in Ephraim's tribal list (nor in any other list, for that matter). No other Israelite received any inheritance in this manner, that is, as a personal possession; even Caleb's city, Hebron, belonged to the tribe of Judah (**15:13, 54**), and it was both a city of refuge (**20:7**) and a Levitical city (**21:11, 13**). This certainly contributes to the picture of Joshua as an **extraordinary individual**, one who demonstrated extraordinary faithfulness to God and who was the leader par excellence.

Richard Hess: Joshua waits until all the other inheritances are assigned before taking any for himself. Thus he preserves his right to a share of the land without any suggestion of an abuse of his leadership responsibilities. The allotment was done according to God's will, with Eleazar the priest presiding 'before the Lord' at Shiloh's sanctuary. The land is God's blessing upon Israel and forms a testimony of the divine presence among them.

Helene Dallaire: Joshua receives Timnath Serah (Timnath Heres, **Jdg 2:9**) in the hill country of Ephraim, where he was later buried. Joshua receives his inheritance in the presence of Eleazar the priest and the tribal leaders at the sanctuary in Shiloh and not by lot. Joshua's courteous and humble spirit prompts him to wait until everyone else has received an inheritance before requesting his own. This approach to leadership is the antithesis of abuse of power and exhibits a model that should be imitated by Christian leaders. While establishing roots in Timnath Serah, Joshua completes renovations to the town and stays there with his family, accessible to all Israel while living in security, until his death.

(:51) EPILOGUE – OVERALL SUMMARY

"*These are the inheritances which Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun and the heads of the households of the tribes of the sons of Israel distributed by lot in Shiloh before the LORD, at the doorway of the tent of meeting. So they finished dividing the land.)*"

David Howard: The summary statement here is a conclusion to the immediate section (**chaps. 18–19**), given the references to Shiloh and the tent of meeting (see **18:1**). However, the statement also serves as a fitting conclusion to the entire section of **chaps. 14–19**, in which the land distributions west of the Jordan were accomplished. The major characters involved in the distributions are mentioned, identified by their full names: Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the heads of the tribal clans. The same cast of characters opens the section in **14:1**. This concluding reference to them brings the entire arduous, and at times tedious, process full circle, assuring us that throughout the entire proceedings, these God-appointed representatives were involved. . .

Now all the tribes except for Levi had received their inheritances. All that remained was to delineate the Levites' inheritance and to designate the special **cities of refuge**. The greatest portion of the task, however, was completed.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Why do you think it took so long for these seven tribes to claim their inheritance?

2) What applications do you draw from the tribe of Dan being pressured out of their allotted territory?

3) Have you made the worship of God the central focus of your life?

4) Do you have confidence that you are right where God wants you and can use you?

* * * * * * * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Kenneth Gangel: **PRINCIPLES:**

- The centrality of a place of worship is always important for God's people in any age and any place.
- Divided people can come together around a central place of worship like the Tent of Meeting at Shiloh.
- Sometimes people do not move ahead with their responsibilities unless a leader steps forward to show them what to do and how to do it.

THE TABERNACLE:
The tabernacle was a part of the law that God gave Moses providing for this beautiful dwelling place for the ark of the covenant and serving as God's house in the wilderness and in the promised land for many years. Fourteen raw materials were used to complete the tent of worship, including a variety of animal skins, acacia wood, and precious metals. Around the tabernacle was an outer court and inside the tent itself two rooms, the Holy Place where the priest entered each morning and the Holy of Holies which he entered only once a year. During the wilderness wandering, the court of the tabernacle was always the center of the camp with the tribes arranged around it, three on each side.

> Beers describes the interior:
> The table of shew-bread was on the north side of the Holy Place. Twelve loaves of bread were kept here at all times. The golden candlestick or menorah was in the south wall of the Holy Place. It lighted the room. The altar of incense was in the center of the Holy Place, just in front of the veil which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. Each morning Aaron burned incense on the altar. Inside the Holy of Holies was the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the Ten Commandments (Beers, 118).

So these few verses at the beginning of **chapter 18**, though seemingly unimportant in the greater flow of geography in this part of the book, are very meaningful in the history of Israel. The only other reference to the tabernacle in Joshua occurs in **19:51**.

Van Parunak: **Faith**
vv. 6, 8, 10 emphasize that the final allocation will be made by lot, directed sovereignly by the Lord. Each of the surveyors may have set his heart on one or another special parcel, but they must submit the final decision to the Lord and **trust in him** to know what is best for them.

Application: How often we try to tell the Lord what blessings we need, instead of trusting his allocation. This problem surfaced in Corinth with the excitement over showy gifts; like them, we need sometimes to be reminded that "*all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will*" (**1 Cor. 12:11**). He will bless us, greatly, but we need to trust him to know what the best blessing will be for each of us, rather than trying to overrule his decisions and complain about the outcome he grants us.

David Thompson: As we have been going through Joshua, we have been seeing and learning many things:

> 1) God wants us to have victory. He wants us to experience His blessings. He does not want us just crossing the Jordan; He wants us experiencing His great blessings.
> 2) No matter what one's background or personality, God can still use and bless.
> 3) God demands obedience if we are to experience His rich and full blessings.
> 4) God demands that we fight a good war if we are to experience His full

blessings. It is our responsibility to spot enemies, fight enemies and defeat them.
5) God does not want us living on old past victories. He wants us to go on to new present and future victories.

These are just some of the great lessons we see in this book of Joshua. We are now in the time of distribution of the land. Each tribe who went into the Promised Land was given a specific land to live in, to develop and to enjoy.

God took a Personal interest in every one of the Tribes of Israel and He saw to it that they were placed exactly where He wanted them to be placed. They were rough people who were being molded by Him and He put each of them where they needed to be. As we come to this text, we come to the distribution of the land to Simeon. There is a profound lesson to be learned:

GOD PUTS HIS PEOPLE EXACTLY WHERE HE WANTS THEM TO BE AND GIVES TO HIS PEOPLE EXACTLY WHAT THEY NEED IN COMPLETE CONFORMITY TO HIS WORD, AND HIS PEOPLE CAN EXPERIENCE GREAT VICTORY AND BLESSINGS RIGHT WHERE GOD HAS PUT THEM.

God is sovereign in our world. He has us exactly where He wants us and He wants us to be faithful to Him. He does not esteem quitters. His people do not need to go somewhere else to experience victory. His people do not need big numbers to experience victory. That is a lesson we need to learn.

God is sovereign and He has us where He wants us right now. God expects us to fight a good fight and have victory right where He has us. We are not who we are or where we are by chance. We are who we are and where we are by the sovereignty of God.
https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/51161358145.pdf

TEXT: Joshua 20:1-9

TITLE: DESIGNATION AND PROPER UTILIZATION OF THE 6 CITIES OF REFUGE

BIG IDEA:
GOD IN HIS MERCY ESTABLISHED 6 CITIES OF REFUGE FOR THOSE WHO COMMITTED UNINTENTIONAL MANSLAUGHTER

INTRODUCTION:

Jerome Creach: At the core of **Joshua 20** is the notion that the spilling of blood (which was understood in an almost magical sense as representative of life) by murder brought an imbalance (as well as an injustice) to the created order. It effected a kind of curse on the land (**Deut. 19:10**). As **Numbers 35:33** states, "*blood pollutes the land*." Bloodguilt could be averted, it was believed, by the action of an "*avenger of blood*," an individual designated by the family of the dead person to seek "revenge" in the case of homicide (the avenger was probably the nearest relative to the deceased).

David Howard: In the Pentateuch, the Israelites were first instructed that six cities of refuge should be designated as safe havens where a man could flee if he accidentally killed someone. In **Exod 21:12–14**, the provision for this is placed at the beginning of the laws dealing with capital offenses: premeditated murder was to be punished by death (**vv. 12, 14**), but accidental killing was not (**v. 13**). In **Num 35:9–29**, provisions for this are spelled out in much more detail, including the Lord's instructions that the Israelites should select six cities, three on each side of the Jordan (**Num 35:9–15**). **Deuteronomy 4:41–43** reports that Moses did precisely that for the tribes east of the Jordan (three cities). In **Deut 19:1–10**, Moses gave instructions that the same should be done with three cities west of the Jordan. And we are told in **Num 35:6** that these six cities were to be designated from among the cities to be allotted to the Levites.

The legislation concerning the cities of refuge shows, on the one hand, **God's mercy**, in that those who killed accidentally could find a place of refuge. And yet, on the other hand, it also affirms the **sanctity of human life**, in that even an accidental death caused blood guilt that could be avenged if the killer did not go to a city of refuge. Furthermore, the killer who escaped to such a city was not free to return home until another death had taken place, that of the high priest (**Num 35:25, 28**).

Robert Hubbard: The ancient custom of **blood revenge**—retaliation in kind against a killer by the victim's kin—stands in the background of **Joshua 20**. In Israel one duty of close male relatives was to avenge such deaths by killing the person thought responsible. But a pattern of unrestrained retaliation poses a threat to the continuation of stable social order. Potentially, it may unleash an unending and possibly escalating cycle of tit-for-tat killings (see Lamech's boast in **Gen. 4:23–24**). The provision of cities of refuge seeks to break that cycle of blood revenge. It protects someone who has

killed a fellow Israelite from the "*restorer of blood*" (*goʾel haddam*), a male relative of the victim (e.g., his son, brother, etc.) out to avenge the death.

But **verse 3** clarifies that it only applies to **accidental** and **unintentional** killings, ones done "*by mistake*" or "*inadvertently*" (**Num. 35:11–15**) and "*without [prior] knowledge or forethought*" (**Deut. 4:42; 19:4**). **Deuteronomy 19:5–6** offers an illuminating example of what constitutes an accidental killing: when two Israelites are felling trees in a forest and one man's axhead suddenly flies off, striking and killing his companion. In modern terms, the crime would equate to **negligent homicide** or **manslaughter**, not **premeditated murder**.

The act of killing nevertheless incurs **blood-guilt** and legitimates retaliation by the aggrieved family. Thus, Yahweh outlines the procedure to be followed to obviate the latter (**vv. 4–6**).\

Campbell: **Why cities of refuge were so important** –
The fact that these cities are discussed in four books of the Old Testament marks them as being of great importance. It is apparent that God wished to impress on Israel the sanctity of human life. To put an end to a person's life, even if done unintentionally, is a serious thing, and the cities of refuge underscored this emphatically. In the ancient world blood revenge was widely practiced. The moment a person was killed, his nearest relative took responsibility for vengeance. This ancient rite of vendetta was often handed down from one generation to another so that increasingly larger numbers of innocent people died violently. The need in ancient Israel for the refuge that these special cities provided is evident. (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary Old Testament*)

Kenneth Gangel: The cities of refuge provided a demonstration of God's grace without detracting from his law. Everywhere these cities appeared across the land they showed that God provided for people who made big mistakes and needed mercy in their lives. These cities were needed throughout Israel to ensure that justice, not personal vengeance, was carried out.

I. (:1-6) DESCRIPTION OF THE INSTITUTION OF CITIES OF REFUGE

(:1-2a) Divine Initiative

"*Then the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying,*
2 'Speak to the sons of Israel, saying,'"

A. (:2b-3) Demonstration of God's Mercy in Instances of Manslaughter

1. (:2b) Institution of the Cities of Refuge

"*Designate the cities of refuge, of which I spoke to you through Moses,*"

Definition of "*Refuge*" -- "the condition of being safe or sheltered from pursuit, danger, or trouble."

2. (:3) Intention Explained

"that the manslayer who kills any person unintentionally,
without premeditation, may flee there,
and they shall become your refuge from the avenger of blood."

David Howard: Even though there is an **exception to the laws of capital punishment** here, the deed itself is not condoned: the guilty one simply was to be spared death at the hands of an "*avenger of blood*." He was still guilty, but the law treated him more leniently. This shows that the biblical legislation did make **distinctions in degrees of guilt** and that God's law was sensitive to motives and intent of the heart, in providing more lenient treatment for what modern criminal codes call "manslaughter" (as opposed to premeditated murder).

Gordon Matties: The *avenger of blood* is the nearest relative who takes on responsibility for assuring that the process of justice prevails. Although avenger seems to imply a practice of retributive justice, the concern here is to **limit inappropriate retribution**. Terms related to the Hebrew word *go'el*, translated here as *avenger*, are used elsewhere in the OT to refer to God's and others' redeeming activity (**Exod 6:6; 15:13; Pss 69:18; 72:14; 74:2**; throughout **Isa 40-66; Jer 31:11; Ruth 2:20; 3:9, 12; Lev 25:25-54**). The *go'el* is also the next of kin responsible for "redeeming" the assets of the relative who has found himself in economic trouble (**Lev 25:24, 25, 29, 48**). In the case of murder, the person, now described as a *redeemer of blood* (AT), becomes responsible for assuring that justice is done. The implication is that the *avenger of blood* could exact retribution if the killer were to leave the city.

B. (:4-6) Detailing of the Proper Utilization of the Cities of Refuge

1. (:4) Procedure Explained

"*And he shall flee to one of these cities,*
and shall stand at the entrance of the gate of the city and state his case
in the hearing of the elders of that city;
and they shall take him into the city to them and give him a place,
so that he may dwell among them."

Robert Hubbard: Since a **full trial** follows (**v. 6**), this process amounts to a **preliminary hearing** to determine whether his case qualifies for **asylum**—that his actions might have been, in fact, accidental and unintentional. Once satisfied, the elders may admit (lit., "*gather*") him to the city and provide him a place to live during his long stay. . . the city truly is his refuge against revenge. He may remain there, provided that a trial by a legal assembly in the city verifies his claim. Presumably, an unverified claim would lead to his expulsion from the city and eventually land him in the hands of the restorer. If verified, the requirement to remain there rather than go free—in Koopmans' words, "house arrest in the city of refuge"—probably constitutes just punishment for his life-taking act.

David Guzik: According to custom, the elders of the city spent much time at the gates of the city. When someone fleeing from an avenger of blood came to a city of refuge, he stated his case to the elders at the city gates.

2. (:5) Procedure Justified

"*Now if the avenger of blood pursues him,*
then they shall not deliver the manslayer into his hand,
because he struck his neighbor without premeditation
and did not hate him beforehand."

David Guzik: Israel had a sophisticated legal system, with judgments often based on intent and premeditation.

3. (:6) Procedure Completed

a. End Point Defined

"*And he shall dwell in that city until he stands before the congregation for judgment,*
until the death of the one who is high priest in those days."

Peter Wallace: God is teaching his people the principle of **substitutionary atonement**. The high priest dies in your place. The high priest's death is counted as your own!

b. End of Exile Experienced

"*Then the manslayer shall return to his own city*
and to his own house, to the city from which he fled."

David Howard: The one who fled was to state his case before the elders of the city who, according to **Deut 19:12**, had the power to return him to his original city and into the hands of the blood avenger. However, here the presumption is that he was **innocent**, and he was to be given a place to live. . . since the high priest represented the sacrificial system, his death atoned for the sins of the manslayer.

Trent Butler: The **court procedure** is then spelled out (**Num**. **35:24–28**). The assembly shall judge between the killer and the avenger of blood, rescuing the killer from the avenger of blood and returning him to the city of refuge to which he fled. This seems to imply that the jurisdiction lies not with the assembly in the city of refuge but with the **assembly in the killer's hometown or in the town where the crime was committed**.

This assembly returns the killer to the city of refuge. There the killer remains "*until the death of the high priest who anointed him with holy oil*" (**Num 35:25**). The killer is not permitted to leave the territory of the city of refuge. Should he do so, the avenger of blood may kill him without guilt. When the priest dies, the killer may return to his land and his possessions.

Van Parunak: **v.6** anticipates two circumstances under which he may leave the city:

- when he comes before the congregation for judgment. Apparently, subsequent to his initial arrival, there might be a more formal trial, at which the elders of his city (**Deut 19:12**) would bring the required multiple witnesses. If this trial found

him guilty, he would be put back out of the protection of the city, delivered to the avenger of blood.

- Otherwise, after the death of the High Priest the avenger's claims no longer have any hold, and he is free to return home.

II. (:7-8) DESIGNATION OF 6 CITIES OF REFUGE

Adrian Rogers: As you look and see where the Lord put the cities of refuge, if you know anything of the map of Israel, you know that they were strategically placed: some were in the east; some were in the west; some were in the north; some were in the south, and some in the center. Why? Because if they're a city of refuge, **they have got to be close**. If a person is in danger, he needs a hiding place. That hiding place—he must be very near. So, they have laws in ancient Israel concerning the cities of refuge. The road to the city of refuge had to be wide. If there were rivers, the rivers had to have bridges. Those bridges were carefully inspected and regularly inspected. If there were obstacles on those roads, those obstacles had to be removed. And, the priests and the Levites would go out and inspect the roads to the city of refuge. And, every time there was a crossroad where there might be any confusion, they would write a sign in big Hebrew letters, "***MIKLOT***," (*miqlat*) which means "refuge" and "a signpost." A wayfaring man, nor a fool, could not miss his way on to the city of refuge (**Isaiah 35:8**). It had to be wide open. It had to be near. It had to be clear and always open. (Excerpt from *When Great Men Die Like Fools*)

A. (:7) Three Cities West of the Jordan

1. Kedesh

"*So they set apart Kedesh in Galilee in the hill country of Naphtali*"

2. Shechem

"*and Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim,*"

3. Kiriath-arba (Hebron)

"*and Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the hill country of Judah.*"

David Thompson: Only three cities were designated cities of refuge on the west side of the Jordan:

1) Kedesh - **Holiness**
2) Shechem - **Strength**
3) Kiriath-arba (Hebron) - **Communion**

B. (:8) Three Cities East of the Jordan

Robert Hubbard: the Israelites also officially recognize the three east-bank cities authorized by Moses.

1. Bezer

"*And beyond the Jordan east of Jericho, they designated Bezer in the wilderness on the plain from the tribe of Reuben,*"

2. Ramoth

"*and Ramoth in Gilead from the tribe of Gad,*"

3. Golan

"*and Golan in Bashan from the tribe of Manasseh.*"

David Thompson: Three cities were designated on the east side of the Jordan:

1) Bezer - **Fortification**
2) Ramoth - **Exaltation**
3) Golan - **Joy**

David Howard: The list here is **south to north**:

(1) Bezer was on the desert plateau east of the Dead Sea, in Reubenite territory;
(2) Ramoth in Gilead, east of the Jordan, in Gad's territory; and
(3) Golan in Bashan, east of the Sea of Kinnereth (Galilee), in eastern Manasseh's territory.

No place in the land was more than a day's journey from one of these cities. All six of these cities are mentioned again in the next chapter, since they also were Levitical cities. Despite their importance here and in the Pentateuch, however, they do not appear again in the Old Testament.

(:9) EPILOGUE -- SUMMARY

A. Places Designated as Cities of Refuge

"*These were the appointed cities*
for all the sons of Israel and for the stranger who sojourns among them,"

B. Purpose of the Institution

"*that whoever kills any person unintentionally may flee there,*
and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood
until he stands before the congregation."

Robert Hubbard: **Verse 9** reiterates the purpose of the institution—to provide one who has inadvertently taken a life a fair trial (i.e., mercy) rather than to abandon him (unjustly) to blood revenge. As does **Numbers 35:15**, the instruction extends the merciful protection also to aliens living permanently among the Israelites. This reflects the "inclusive vision" of the book, a vision that reckons aliens as part of Israel's covenant community (**Josh. 8:33, 35**) and also grants Rahab and the Gibeonites special status (**chs. 2; 9**).

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What does the Bible teach about the distinction between killing and murder and the implications of whether the act was intentional or not?

2) Why does shedding the blood of man pollute the land?

3) In what way is Jesus your ultimate refuge?

4) What can we learn from this entire process that might be applicable to our justice system?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Gordon Matties: The ordering of space that began in **13:1** also includes a designation of cities as refuge for involuntary manslaughter and identification of cities that belong to the Levites. These form a **geographic pair**. The first establishes geographic centers for maintaining justice, and the second establishes centers for those who would later become teachers of the Torah and representatives of the covenant tradition. These two are necessary for **maintenance of right order and right living** in the land. Thus the distribution-of-land sequence finds its moral focus here after they finished dividing the land (**19:51**). Dividing the land, the creation story of Israelite identity in the land, requires structures that give order (justice) and people to instruct in the practices of Torah [Torah, p. 462].

Kenneth Gangel: This was not an escape from justice because the refugees still had to stand trial before the assembly and be proven innocent of intentional murder. Twice in verse 3 we find the emphasis—*accidentally* and *unintentionally*. And it appears again in **verse 5**, adding *without malice aforethought*. Discussion of the cities of refuge appears in **Exodus 21, Numbers 35, Deuteronomy 19**, and again here in Joshua. "According to Jewish tradition the roads leading to these cities were kept in excellent condition and the crossroads were well marked with sign posts reading, 'Refuge! Refuge!' Runners were also stationed along the way to guide the fugitives" (Campbell, BKC, 363). . .

The accused had to live in the city of refuge until the **death of the high priest**, at which time they could return to their hometowns. There was only one high priest, so when he died all refugees in all of these six cities would be freed at once. All across the country people would stream back to their homes.

What a day of freedom! But why when the high priest died? What was God's point? In human terms the high priest's death served as something of a statute of limitations ending the exile and giving an opportunity for freedom. Obviously two people who

committed the same crime could spend significantly different times in exile in a city of refuge, possibly as great as twenty or more years to a few months.

But this must also be another one of God's dramatic pictures of **redemption** and **atonement**. In a sense, in God's eyes, the death of the high priest paid the debt for the freedom of those who were guilty of manslaughter. An accused person could not buy his own freedom; it could only be purchased with the life of a high priest. And forgiveness was forgiveness despite the intensity of the crime or the amount of time served in a city of refuge. Murderers and liars both go to hell if they do not trust Christ's salvation. But murderers and liars can also be saved in the same instant under the same conditions with no lingering spiritual consequences of the severity of their crimes.

Richard Hess: For the Christian, the relation of the high priest to the practice of asylum, as much as any of the high priest's roles, anticipates the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. His death is explicitly tied with the removal of sin and guilt once for all (**Heb. 9:11 – 10:18**). **Joshua 20:9** allows anyone, Israelite or alien, the right to take advantage of these havens. The forgiveness of Christianity is also open to anyone, without regard to their background (**Gal. 5:6**).

David Thompson:
ONCE ISRAEL WAS IN THE LAND, GOD ESTABLISHED CITIES OF REFUGE AS A HAVEN FOR THOSE WHO COMMITTED UNINTENTIONAL MANSLAUGHTER.

OBSERVATION #1 – The cities of refuge are established by a direct decree of God. **20:1-2**

OBSERVATION #2- The purpose of the cities of refuge is stated by God. **20:3**

OBSERVATION #3 – The process of getting to and entering into a city of refuge was established by God. **20:4-6**

OBSERVATION #4 – The actual places that were designated to be cities of refuge. **20:7-8**

OBSERVATION #5 – The application for the people who need the cities of refuge. **20:9**

1) Sons of Israel.
2) Strangers who lived in the land.
3) Anyone who killed someone unintentionally.

Trent Butler: The Christian community is called to examine the text of the Old Testament and seek new insights for current sociological conditions. Such insights must begin where the text does, with the call to obedience to the lifestyle God demands and teaches. Beyond that, the community is called to reflect upon its understanding of crime and punishment and the centuries of traditions that have resulted in our present penal

codes and practices. We should not take for granted that such practices have somehow been given us by divine revelation and need never to be altered. The Christian community must take seriously its responsibility to **examine penal institutions and practices** and seek to find the ways God would lead us to reform them. The innocent person should not suffer unduly, and the guilty person should be given sufficient protection and hope for new opportunities as well as sufficient punishment.

John Kuvakas: What do we learn about God? – **He is merciful**

a. His mercy is shown in the purpose of the cities of refuge
b. His mercy is shown in the geography of the cities
c. His mercy is shown in the death of the high priest (**v6**)

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David Guzik: Points of similarity between the cities of refuge and our refuge in Jesus.

- Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are within easy reach of the needy person; they are of no use unless someone could get to the place of refuge.
- Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are open to all, not just the Israelite; no one needs to fear that they would be turned away from their place of refuge in their time of need.
- Both Jesus and the cities of refuge become a place where the one in need can live; you didn't come to a city of refuge in time of need just to look around.
- Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are the only alternative for the one in need; without this specific protection, they will be destroyed.
- Both Jesus and the cities of refuge provide protection only within their boundaries; to go outside means death.
- With both Jesus and the cities of refuge, full freedom comes with the death of the High Priest.

A crucial distinction between the cities of refuge and our refuge in Jesus.

- The cities of refuge only helped the innocent, but the guilty can come to Jesus and find refuge.

John Barnett: **Christ: Our Life-long Refuge**

In looking over the **meaning of the names of these cities of refuge**, we are struck with the distinctive characteristic of each. They are individually showing forth some particular feature of the character of Christ; and when taken as a whole, they illustrate the **sufficiency of Christ as a Refuge** to meet all of our need, and the need of all. To see the adequacy of Jesus Christ to meet our every need, consider the names of the cities. These six cities of refuge all point to Him, and enable us to sing with a restful, joyful heart, "*God is our refuge and our strength*."

1. *KEDESH* means a "holy place" or "righteousness," and this is our first need. When we come to Christ, He gives us His righteousness and forgives all our sins (**2 Cor 5:21, Col. 2:13**). Here was the refuge for the unclean. The holiness of the Lord Jesus Christ is the only hope of the sinful. Only that which is clean can cleanse. The unrighteous can

only find refuge in the righteousness of God. The finished work on the accursed tree affords a holy hiding-place, for only there are the unclean made holy.

> *To that blest fountain of Thy blood,*
> *Incarnate God, I fly.*
> *There let me wash my spotted soul,*
> *From crimes of deepest dye.*
> *In wonder lost, with trembling joy*
> *We take the pardon of our God;*
> *Pardon for crimes of deepest dye,*
> *A pardon bought with Jesus' blood:*
> *Who is a pardoning God like thee?*
> *Or who has grace so rich and free?*

So Jesus is the **refuge for the unclean**. There is no sin He can't forgive; there is no stain He can't remove; there is no failure He can't forget. Remember this week these words from Christ's lips:

> **Mark 1:40-41** *Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." 41 Then Jesus, moved with*
> *compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed*."

2. *SHECHEM* means "shoulder," and suggests that we find in Christ a resting place, a friend on whom we can lay our burdens. "Can I hold out?" is always the question a new believer asks. The answer is, "He will hold you!" Here was the refuge for the weary. (**Matt. 11:28; Luke 15:5**) The Lord Jesus is the strong Savior. Most believers have found that they can find no rest in ruling themselves. But when faith comes, we lean not only on His merit, but also on His almightiness. A tired child finds refuge on the shoulder of its loving father. And the Lord Jesus has borne our burden upon His shoulder, even as the lost sheep found both safety and rest upon the shepherd's shoulders.

So Jesus is the **refuge for the weary**. There is no sheep of His pasture that He doesn't invite to find rest in Him. He seeks us, finds us, and offers to us His perfect rest. Remember this week these words from Christ's lips:

> **Matthew 11:28-30** *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*

3. *HEBRON* means "fellowship," suggesting our fellowship with God in Christ, and also our fellowship with other believers. You can have a house and not a home. But if you have a home you can be at home anywhere even if you have no house. Home is

where you relax in the company of those you love and trust. So the Lord Jesus is the refuge for those who are alone and feel homeless. Like Noah's dove, man is spiritually a homeless wanderer. There was no rest, no safety, and no fellowship outside of that ark. The repentant homeless prodigal found a refuge in his father's house and in his father's fellowship. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only real Hebron for the soul. There is no fellowship with the Father except through Him, *...truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*" (**I John 1:3**)

So Jesus is the **refuge for the homeless**. Jesus promised to always be with us. He leads us through life, meets us at death, carries us to our eternal home, and is with us (Emmanuel) forever. Remember this week these words from Christ's lips:

> **Matthew 28:20b** "*… and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age*."

4. *BEZER* means "stronghold" or "fortress," suggesting the protection and victory we have in Christ. The safest place in the world is in the will of God. Jesus Christ is the refuge for the helpless. We are not only sinners, but we are also helplessly sinful. In the case of the one guilty of second-degree murder, there was to be no such thing as self-protection. And so it is with us sinners. We are "without strength." "*The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe*." (**Prov. 18: 10**) When we flee from the justice of God into the mercy of God, we will find a stronghold that can never give way. No matter how helpless, here you are eternally safe. The Lord Jesus is the only Bezer. Any other hiding places will fail us, and fall like the walls of Jericho.

So Jesus is the **refuge for the helpless**. When we are weak He is strong; when we reach the end of all we are—He has just begun. Remember this week these words from Christ's lips:

> **Matthew 14:27-33** *But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." 28 And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." 29 So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. 30 But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" 31 And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" 32 And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33 Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God."*

5. *RAMOTH* means "exalted" or "heights" and reminds us that believers are seated "*together in heavenly places in Christ*" (**Eph. 2:4-10**). Sin always leads a person down, but Christ lifts us up; and one day we shall be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air! And so our Lord is the refuge for the hopeless. By nature we are not only without strength, but also *without hope in the world*. (**Eph. 2:12**) Those who hope in this world system of politics and religion have no hope. The Lord Jesus is our hope,

exalted at the Father's right hand, with a name which is above every name, high and lifted up. He is our Ramoth. When you are downcast, and feeling yourself hopeless in this world, look up. During Noah's flood, there was no mountain that could save. Only those who were lifted up by the ark were saved. Jesus Christ is the Ark of our hope and eternal security.

So Jesus is the **refuge for the hopeless**. When life is dark, no hope is in sight, and we don't know where to turn Jesus reminds us—when there is no answer to all our problems, there is still Jesus. Remember this week these words from Christ's lips:

> **Mark 2:3-5** *Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men. 4 And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you."*

6. *GOLAN* means "separated." God has appointed His Son to be the refuge for those who are tempted. We are usually tempted much by the world when we tamper much with the world. We have not fled to the Lord Jesus as our city of separation. He separated Himself for our sakes-for He was separate from sinners-that He might aid those who are tempted. Golan is the last of the six cities which are mentioned. Most of us would have to confess that separation from worldly ambition, worldly pleasures, and worldly fame is just about the last refuge which we seek. **1 John 2:15-17**
Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

So Jesus is the **refuge for those who are tempted**. Jesus knows our frame that we are dust. He is acquainted with all of our struggles and weaknesses. Remember this week these words from Christ's lips:

> **John 8:10-11** *When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" 11 She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."*

(**Romans 7; Psalm 32** and David; **James 1:13-14**)

Is Christ your city of Refuge? Is He easy for you to reach to? Are His arms open to you? Do you see His entrance as never locked, and that He is a completely sufficient refuge? Do you see that there is no other hope but Him? Then He is YOUR city of refuge.

Do you see--Christ is better because He is nearer than any city of refuge. Christ is better because He offers only Permanent Refuge. And, Christ is better because He died

only for the guilty.

Have you fled for life-long refuge to the One who is:
- the refuge for the unclean,
- the refuge for the weary,
- the refuge for the homeless,
- the refuge for the helpless,
- the refuge for the hopeless, and
- the refuge for those who are tempted.

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Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Christ Our Refuge (Father's Day Message)**
Introduction: Every father, our greatest job is to provide refuge for our family. And I want to tell you that the best thing we could ever do is point to Christ as the refuge.

I. Nature of the Cities of Refuge
If a person accidentally killed someone, they needed a place to go to, they needed a refuge. In the ancient world, blood revenge was widely practiced. When a person was killed, his nearest relative took responsible for vengeance." And this was called a vendetta. This whole passage here, this whole principle, is where we get our principle today, innocent until proven guilty.

All these cities speak prophetically and typically of Christ. In fact, the writer of the book of Hebrews had these cities in mind when he wrote this verse right down, Hebrews 6.18, *that by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, We might have a strong consolation*, listen to this, *who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hopes that before us*. In other words, when he says to flee for refuge, the writer is alluding to these cities of refuge.

You may not have realized it, friend, but your sins and my sins put Jesus on the cross. That's the nature of the cities.

II. Names of the Cities of Refuge
Kadesh, you know the Hebrew word is, means holiness. **Holiness**. And it speaks to me about Christ my Savior. The Bible says *without holiness no man shall see God.*

Shechem in Mount Ephraim. The word Shechem means shoulder. And this speaks to me about Christ my **strength**. A shoulder is where you carry your burdens. Christ is the one who carries my burdens. He's my strength.

Hebron, which is in the mountain of Judah. Hebron means **fellowship** or fullness. And this speaks to me about Christ my satisfaction. One of the greatest blessings of salvation is fellowship with Jesus Christ. Did you know that you were created to have fellowship with God? Man was created to have fellowship with God. And there's a void in every heart that does not know Christ because you were created to have fellowship with God.

And people try to fill that void with the world and earthly things. And you know what? The world and the earth, the things of this earth do not satisfy. That's why people have all these things and yet they're still miserable. You know why? Because you're only going to be satisfied until you come. You won't be satisfied until you find or come to Jesus Christ.

In the wilderness, Bezer means stronghold or fortification, and this speaks about Christ my **security**. The Bible says the name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous run into it and is safe. I don't need to fear anything if Christ is my security.

Rameth, in verse number 8. And in the wilderness upon the plain out of the tribe of Reuben and Rameth and Gilead out of the tribe of Gad. Rameth simply means high place. Exalted. That speaks to me of Christ, my **sovereign**.

Golan means separation. This speaks to me of Christ my **sanctification**. Sanctification is the process whereby God is making me more like Christ and less like the world. And that's what happens when you come to Christ. You become less sinful.

III. Nearness of the Cities of Refuge

I noticed in verses seven and eight is that these cities were so located and so designated by Almighty God that no matter where you were in the Holy Land, the Promised Land, you were always close to a city of refuge. That's the way they're located here in these verses. There were three on the east side and three on the west side. So on the northeast you had Kadesh, And the central east, or I should say west, on the northwest you had Kadish, and the central west you had Shechem, and the southwest you had Hebron. And then on the northeast you had Golan, and the central east you had Ramoth, and the southeast you had Bezer. And dividing them was the Sea of Galilee here, the River of Jordan, the Dead Sea. On either side were these cities, spaced apart and so located and designated, so that no matter where you were in the land of Israel, you were close to a city of refuge. Did you know that the Holy Land is really about the size of the state of Maryland? So it's really not that big. And so there was always a city of refuge close by.

And by the way, the roads were never clogged. The roads to these cities. The priests had the duty of making sure that the roads leading to these cities were clear of any obstruction. Deuteronomy 19.3, Thou shalt prepare thee a way. In other words, make it clear. One day a year, therefore, the priests and people were sent to repair these roads and keep the way clear to these cities. And also, the gates were never closed. Roads were never clogged, gates were never closed. You know, in these ancient days, every city had a gate around it, or excuse me, a wall around it, and in the front there was a gate, and at nighttime, they would close the gate and lock the gate, and that was obvious for protection. But not so with the city of refuge. Those gates were always open, no matter what time of the day. 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, every year. The gates to the city of refuge were always open. They were never closed. And so the roads were never clogged. The gates were never closed. The direction was never confused. You know why? Because they had signs all along the way, all throughout the

Holy Land, pointing the direction to these cities. One of the signs was the Hebrew word amiklet, which is simply refuge. Refuge. This is the way. Doesn't all that picture Christ to us? Let me tell you, the way to Jesus should never be clogged.

TEXT: Joshua 21:1-42

TITLE: DESIGNATION OF THE 48 LEVITICAL CITIES = CROWNING ACT OF DISTRIBUTION

BIG IDEA:
GOD FULFILS HIS PROMISE OF SUPPORT FOR THE MINISTERING LEVITES WITH DESIGNATED CITIES FROM EACH OF THE TRIBES

INTRODUCTION:

Helene Dallaire: After the introductory summary comes a description of the land allotment to the Levites. The following tribes distribute towns and pasturelands to the Kohathites: Judah and Simeon (**vv.9–16**), Benjamin (**vv.17–19**), Ephraim (**vv.20–22**), Dan (**vv.23–24**), the half-tribe of Manasseh (western) (**v.25**). Second, the Gershonites receive towns and pasturelands from the half-tribe of Manasseh (eastern) (**v.27**), Issachar (**vv.28–29**), Asher (**vv.30–31**), and Naphtali (**v.32**). Finally, Zebulun (**vv.34b–35**), Reuben (**vv.36–37**), and Gad (**vv.38–39**) give towns and pasturelands to the Merarites.

Andrew Webb: The Levites were scattered throughout the land specifically because into their hands was committed the worship and religious teaching of Israel. They were the ones who attended to the tabernacle – the tent of meeting, the Priests were drawn from their tribe, they were the ones who led the sacrifices and the singing, and they were also the teachers of the Law. And thus by distributing his Priests and Teachers throughout the tribe, the Lord ensured that none of the 12 tribes would be without religious instruction and oversight. As Calvin put it: "they were everywhere to keep watch, and preserve the purity of sacred rites unimpaired."
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Robert Hubbard: **Duties Performed by Levites:**

- conscripting soldiers and laborers for royal building projects,
- collecting taxes and tithes,
- serving as judges,
- serving as priests for people living a distance from the temple,
- teaching the Mosaic tradition, and
- helping to maintain national unity and loyalty to Yahweh.

Matthew Black: "*By the command of the Lord*" (**21:3**), the Levites were to scatter around Israel in 48 cities and minister to the people of Israel. The point we are going to see is that we desperately need God's help and encouragement. Priests are there to give encouragement and compassion to God's people. In **Joshua 21:4-42**, we have a list of **48 cities** where the Levites were to live. They were scattered among all the people for a purpose. They were to pray for the people, teach them the practice of the Word and to fear and worship the Lord in all things. They are to carefully apply the Word of God to their lives, like Ezra.

The priests live in these cities. So the tribe of Levi get no inheritance of land, but they get cities throughout Israel. Some notable Levites in the Bible include: Moses, Aaron the high priest, Eli (the priest who raised the prophet Samuel), Ezra (the scribe who partnered with Nehemiah to resettle Jerusalem), and of course, John the Baptist.

Here's something important about the priests: they were never more than ten miles away from anybody living anywhere. They were to proclaim the excellencies of God to all the people. And that's what we are to be doing as well!
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Donald Madvig: Though Levitical towns were selected from every tribe, they were not evenly distributed throughout the land. They seem to have been clustered on the frontiers and in other endangered areas.

David Howard: The Levites were to be "salt and light" among their fellow Israelites, scattered as they were throughout the tribes. One important function of the Levites was that they were to be teachers of the law (**Deut 33:10**; cf. **2 Chr 17:7–9; 35:3; Mal 2:6–9**), and they could more easily do this if they lived scattered throughout the land. Levi's status as a landless tribe originated in a curse Jacob pronounced on Simeon and Levi (**Gen 49:5–7**), but the Levites did vindicate themselves during the time of Moses. . .

The list of forty-eight cities is **well organized** and remarkably consistent structurally. The tribes averaged **four cities apiece** as their contributions to the Levites. The true number was four for every tribe except for Naphtali, which contributed only three cities (**v. 32**), but this was offset by Judah's and Simeon's combined contribution of nine cities (instead of the "expected" eight) (**vv. 13–16**). Western and eastern Manasseh functioned as one tribe for purposes of contributing to the Levites, contrary to their more usual functioning as two separate tribes: each contributed two cities, totaling four from the tribe as a whole. All the cities are named, the totals for each tribe are given, and, in every case, the numbers of cities listed and the running totals agree with each other. . .

All six of the **cities of refuge** in **chap. 20** were also Levitical cities, and five out of the six are identified as such in **chap. 21**: Hebron (**v. 13**), Shechem (**v. 21**), Golan in Bashan (**v. 27**), Kedesh in Galilee (**v. 32**), and Ramoth in Gilead (**v. 38**). The exception is Bezer, which is listed but not mentioned as having been a city of refuge (**v. 36**). . .

Several overall observations should be taken from this chapter.

(1) The nation obeyed the Lord.
(2) The nation looked after God's servants.
(3) The nation functioned as a unity. Every tribe contributed something, in almost equal proportions.

I. (:1-3) APPROACHING THE LEADERS TO REQUEST LEVITICAL CITIES

A. (:1-2) Request Initiated by the Levites

"*Then the heads of households of the Levites approached Eleazar the priest and*

Joshua the son of Nun and the heads of households of the tribes of the sons of Israel. 2 And they spoke to them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, saying, 'The LORD commanded through Moses to give us cities to live in, with their pasture lands for our cattle.'"

David Thompson: Actually the first two verses are sad because the Levites had to ask for what should have been theirs. They were the last to be thought about. Everyone else had their inheritance. Everyone else was snuggled nicely in their land, but the Levites had kind of been lost in the shuffle. What they did was right. They went to Eleazer the priest and to Joshua and to the heads of the households of the tribes and they reminded them of the fact that God had commanded by His Word through Moses that they were to have their own compensation and inheritance package. God had commanded that His ministers were to be paid.

Jeff Oliver: In this simple act lies a profound lesson for prayer: ask for what God has promised.

B. (:3) Response of Obedience by the Nation

"*So the sons of Israel gave the Levites from their inheritance these cities with their pasture lands, according to the command of the LORD.*"

Helene Dallaire: The tribe of Levi includes three clans: Kohath (**Ex 6:18–25a; Nu 3:19; 1Ch 6:2–15, 22–28; 23:12–20**), Gershon (**Ex 6:17; Nu 3:18; 1Ch 6:17; 23:12–20**), and Merari (**Ex 6:19a; Nu 3:20a; 1Ch 6:19a; 23:21–23**). In previous chapters, we read that no territory was given to the tribe of Levi (**13:14, 33; 14:3; 18:7**). Rather, their inheritance was "*the offerings made by fire to the LORD*" (**13:14**), "*the LORD, the God of Israel*" (*13:33*), and "*the priestly service of the LORD*" (**18:7**). But, as promised by Yahweh through Moses, each tribe is to give towns with their surrounding pasturelands to the clans of the Levites.

The family heads of the Levites appear before Eleazar, Joshua, and the tribal leaders in order to request their respective inheritance or "land grant." The petitioners meet the criteria that identify a "land grant."

- First, they approach the leadership;
- second, they remind the leaders of a divine promise made through Moses;
- third, portions of land are granted to the petitioners through a "lot" system in the presence of the Lord at Shiloh.

II. (:4-8) ALLOTMENTS TO THE LEVITICAL FAMILIES

A. (:4-5) To the Sons of Kohath

1. (:4) To the Sons of Aaron the Priest – 13 Cities

"*Then the lot came out for the families of the Kohathites. And the sons of Aaron the priest, who were of the Levites, received thirteen cities by lot from the tribe of Judah and from the tribe of the Simeonites and from the tribe of Benjamin.*"

2. (:5) To the Other Sons of Kohath – 10 Cities

"*And the rest of the sons of Kohath received ten cities by lot from the families of the tribe of Ephraim and from the tribe of Dan and from the half-tribe of Manasseh.*"

Richard Hess: The Kohathites claimed descent from the second son of Levi (**Gen. 46:11**). They transported the ark and other tabernacle furniture through the wilderness (**Num. 3:1; 4:15–20; 7:9**). They received Levitical towns from the central hill country, the heartland of early Israel and the first centre of its worship (**18:1–10**).

B. (:6) To the Sons of Gershon – 13 Cities

"*And the sons of Gershon received thirteen cities by lot from the families of the tribe of Issachar and from the tribe of Asher and from the tribe of Naphtali and from the half-tribe of Manasseh in Bashan.*"

Richard Hess: The Gershonites claimed descent from Levi's first son. They transported the tabernacle's textiles and coverings through the wilderness (**Num. 3:25–26; 4:24–26**). They received Levitical towns in the Galilee and Bashan areas.

C. (:7) To the Sons of Merari – 12 Cities

"*The sons of Merari according to their families received twelve cities from the tribe of Reuben and from the tribe of Gad and from the tribe of Zebulun.*"

Richard Hess: The Merarites claimed descent from Levi's third son. They guarded the tabernacle and transported its structural components through the wilderness (**Num. 1:47–53; 3:33–37; 4:29–33**). They received Levitical towns in the Transjordanian and Zebulun areas.

D. (:8) Summary

"*Now the sons of Israel gave by lot to the Levites these cities with their pasture lands, as the LORD had commanded through Moses.*"

III. (:9-40) ASSIGNMENT OF SPECIFIC CITIES

A. (:9-19) Cities Assigned to the Aaronites

1. (:9-16) From Judah and Simeon – 9 Cities

"*And they gave these cities which are here mentioned by name from the tribe of the sons of Judah and from the tribe of the sons of Simeon; 10 and they were for the sons of Aaron, one of the families of the Kohathites, of the sons of Levi, for the lot was theirs first. 11 Thus they gave them Kiriath-arba, Arba being the father of Anak (that is, Hebron), in the hill country of Judah, with its surrounding pasture lands. 12 But the fields of the city and its villages, they gave to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as his possession. 13 So to the sons of Aaron the priest they gave Hebron, the city of refuge for the manslayer, with its pasture lands,*

and Libnah with its pasture lands, 14 and Jattir with its pasture lands and Eshtemoa with its pasture lands, 15 and Holon with its pasture lands and Debir with its pasture lands, 16 and Ain with its pasture lands and Juttah with its pasture lands and Beth-shemesh with its pasture lands; nine cities from these two tribes."

2. (:17-18) From Benjamin – 4 Cities

"*And from the tribe of Benjamin, Gibeon with its pasture lands, Geba with its pasture lands, 18 Anathoth with its pasture lands and Almon with its pasture lands; four cities.*"

3. (:19) Summary – 13 Cities

"*All the cities of the sons of Aaron, the priests, were thirteen cities with their pasture lands.*"

B. (:20-26) Cities Assigned to the Remaining Kohathites

1. (:20-22) From the Tribe of Ephraim – 4 Cities

"*Then the cities from the tribe of Ephraim were allotted to the families of the sons of Kohath, the Levites, even to the rest of the sons of Kohath. 21 And they gave them Shechem, the city of refuge for the manslayer, with its pasture lands, in the hill country of Ephraim, and Gezer with its pasture lands, 22 and Kibzaim with its pasture lands and Beth-horon with its pasture lands; four cities.*"

2. (:23-24) From the Tribe of Dan

"*And from the tribe of Dan, Elteke with its pasture lands,*
Gibbethon with its pasture lands,
24 Aijalon with its pasture lands,
Gath-rimmon with its pasture lands; four cities."

3. (:25) From the Half-Tribe of Manasseh

"*And from the half-tribe of Manasseh, they allotted Taanach with its pasture lands and Gath-rimmon with its pasture lands; two cities.*"

4. (:26) Summary

"*All the cities with their pasture lands for the families of the rest of the sons of Kohath were ten.*"

Donald Campbell: The priestly cities fell ultimately within the Southern Kingdom of Judah where the temple would be built in its capital city, Jerusalem.

C. (:27-33) Cities Assigned to the Gershonites

1. (:27) To the Sons of Gershon

"*And to the sons of Gershon, one of the families of the Levites, from the half-tribe of Manasseh, they gave Golan in Bashan, the city of refuge for*

the manslayer, with its pasture lands, and Be-eshterah with its pasture lands; two cities."

2. (:28-29) From the Tribe of Issachar

"*And from the tribe of Issachar, they gave Kishion with its pasture lands, Daberath with its pasture lands, 29 Jarmuth with its pasture lands, En-gannim with its pasture lands; four cities.*"

3. (:30-31) From the Tribe of Asher

"*And from the tribe of Asher, they gave Mishal with its pasture lands, Abdon with its pasture lands, 31 Helkath with its pasture lands and Rehob with its pasture lands; four cities.*"

4. (:32) From the Tribe of Naphtali

"*And from the tribe of Naphtali, they gave Kedesh in Galilee, the city of refuge for the manslayer, with its pasture lands and Hammoth-dor with its pasture lands and Kartan with its pasture lands; three cities.*"

5. (:33) Summary

"*All the cities of the Gershonites according to their families were thirteen cities with their pasture lands.*"

D. (:34-40) Cities Assigned to Merarites

1. (:34-35) To the Sons of Merari

"*And to the families of the sons of Merari, the rest of the Levites, they gave from the tribe of Zebulun, Jokneam with its pasture lands and Kartah with its pasture lands. 35 Dimnah with its pasture lands, Nahalal with its pasture lands; four cities.*"

2. (:36-37) From the Tribe of Reuben

"*And from the tribe of Reuben, they gave Bezer with its pasture lands and Jahaz with its pasture lands, 37 Kedemoth with its pasture lands and Mephaath with its pasture lands; four cities.*"

3. (:38-39) From the Tribe of Gad

"*And from the tribe of Gad, they gave Ramoth in Gilead, the city of refuge for the manslayer, with its pasture lands and Mahanaim with its pasture lands, 39 Heshbon with its pasture lands, Jazer with its pasture lands; four cities in all.*"

4. (:40) Summary

"*All these were the cities of the sons of Merari according to their families, the rest of the families of the Levites; and their lot was twelve cities.*"

Trent Butler: The clan of Merari received cities in two widely separated geographical areas: Zebulun in the northwestern part of Palestine and the wide-ranging areas of Reuben and Gad east of the Jordan and below the Sea of Galilee.

(:41-42) EPILOGUE – SUMMARY REPORT

A. (:41) Final Count = 48 Cities

"*All the cities of the Levites in the midst of the possession of the sons of Israel were forty-eight cities with their pasture lands.*"

David Guzik: Perhaps it is also significant that the priests received their cities last of all the tribes. Priests are appointed to serve, not to be served, and there is something priestly about letting others go first.

Donald Campbell: At the time of the assignment many of the Levites' towns were under Canaanite control and had to be conquered. Apparently the Levites did not always succeed and the other tribes did not offer to help. This would appear to be the simplest explanation for the lack of complete correlation between the list of Levitical cities here and the list in **1 Chronicles 6:54-81**.

B. (:42) Surrounding Pasture Lands Included

"*These cities each had its surrounding pasture lands; thus it was with all these cities.*"

* * * * * * * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Why were the Levites the last to receive their allotment?

2) Are we generous in our support of those who labor full time in gospel ministry?

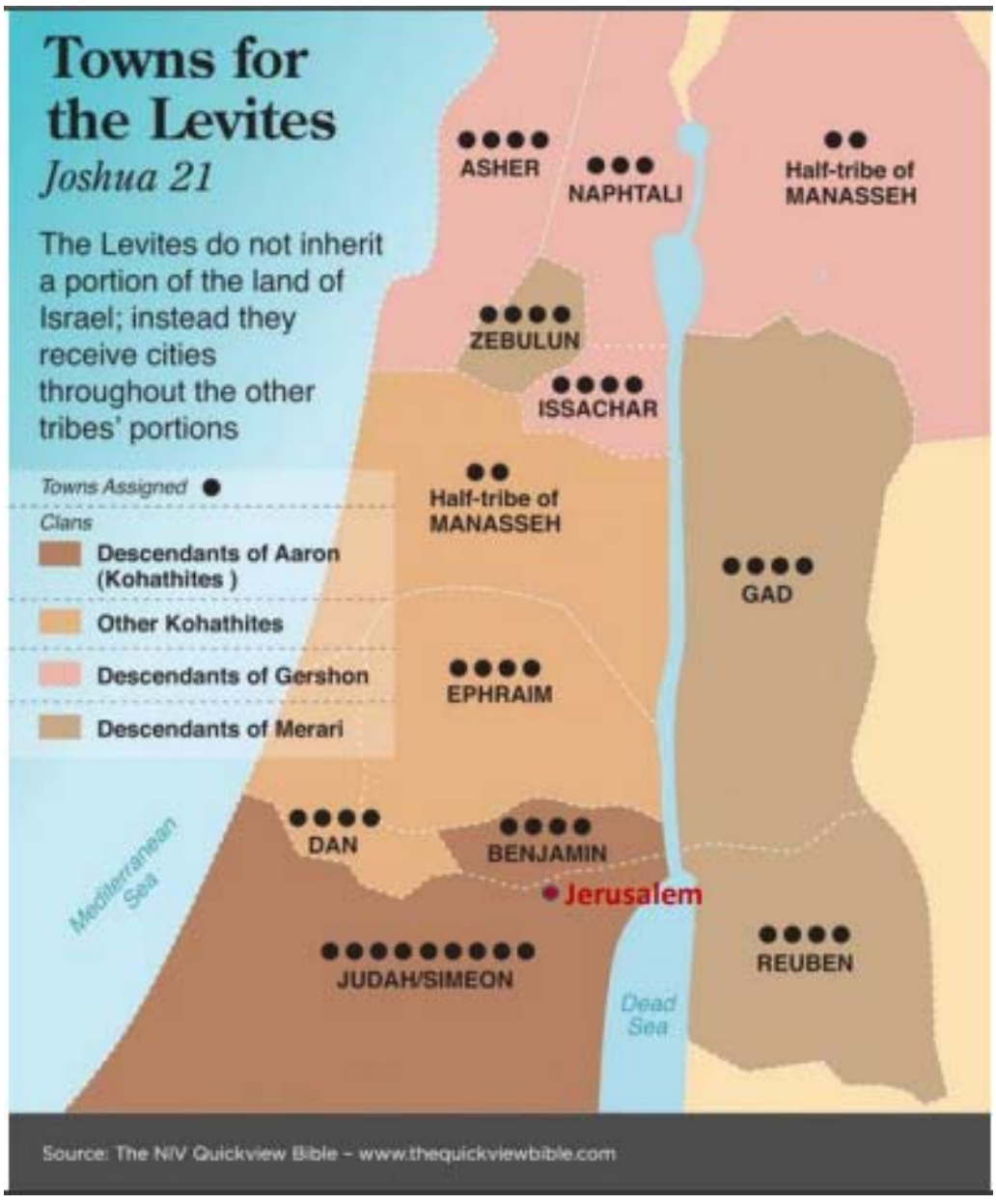
3) Why were many of these designated cities in the more outlying and vulnerable territories?

4) Why the emphasis on the Levites receiving the pasture lands surrounding each of their designated cities?

* * * * * * * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

NIV Quickview Bible: **Towns for the Levites**



David Thompson:
WHEN THE LAND WAS DISTRIBUTED, GOD DEMANDED THAT 48 CITIES BE GIVEN TO THE LEVITES SO THEY COULD MOVE TO VARIOUS LOCATIONS AND MINISTER IN THOSE LOCATIONS FOR HIM.

Perhaps the greatest chapter in the O.T. that spells out the responsibilities of the Levites and the congregation is **Numbers 18:1-32**. From this chapter we would like to make

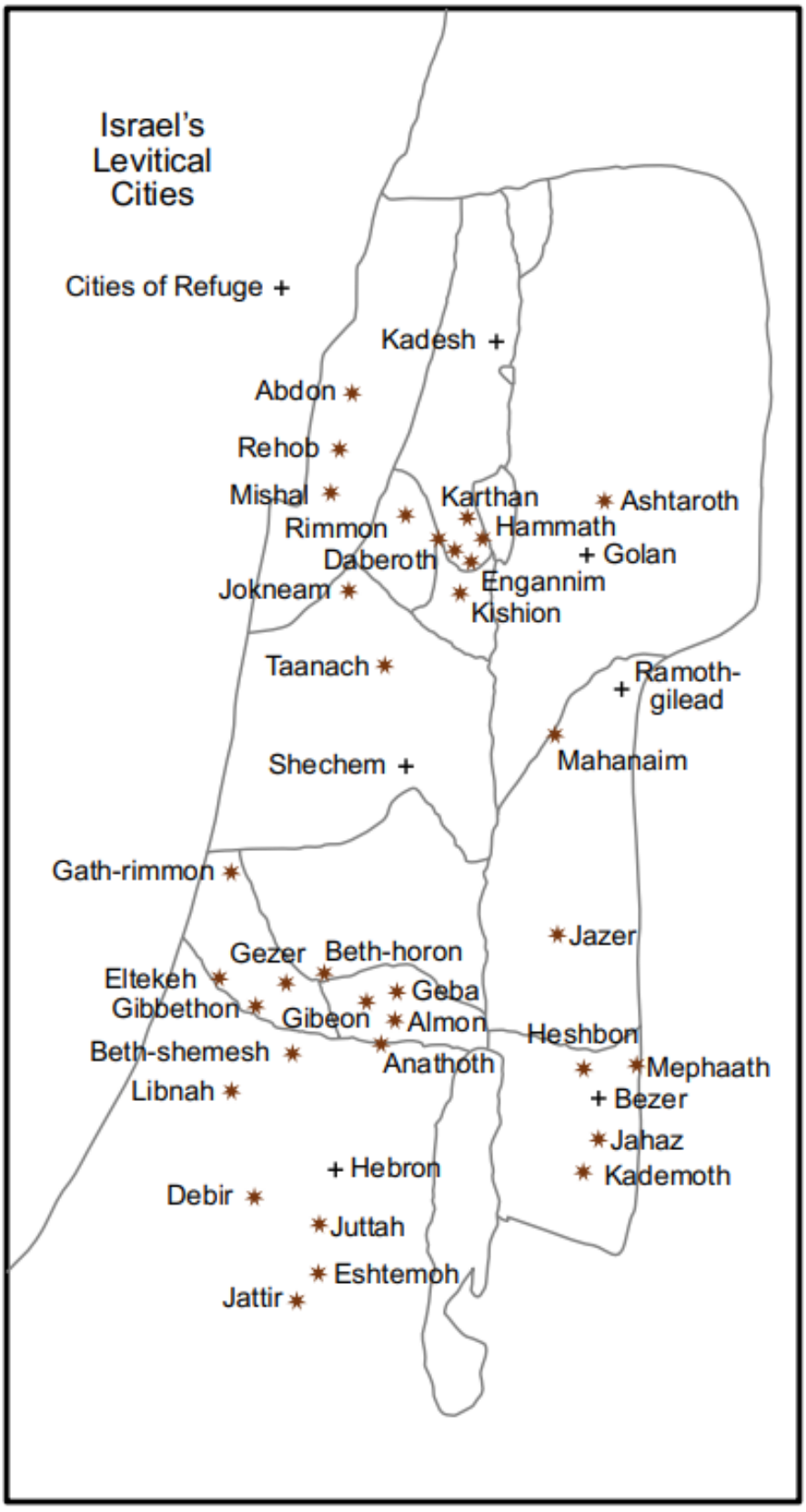
nine key observations, which were clearly established from what God expected for and from His people:

1) The Levites were to be joined with the people. **18:2** - not some travelling circuit ministry.
2) The Levites were responsible for all worship. **18:3** - they were to oversee everything. Worship was not to be a free-for-all with everyone doing anything they want.
3) The Levites were God's gift to His people. **18:6a** - exactly what Paul says about a minister- **Eph. 4:11-16**. Not all are gifted in this way. God gives a minister a gift and sends him to a specific place to use it.
4) The Levites were dedicated to the Lord for His service. **18:6b** - like an ordination
5) The Levites formed a special priesthood that performed special service for God. **18:7**
6) The Levites were to be given the best offerings. **18:8-19** (**v. 12**). They were to be well-paid. They were not to be given stuff no one else wanted.
7) The Levites were not to be given a specific land inheritance. **18:20** - they were given cities
8) The Levites were to be given all tithes. **18:24** - Giving to God meant giving to the Levites.
9) The Levites were to give tithes from that given to them - **18:26-29** - minister is to give his own offering.

It is quite obvious that God intended that these Levites be cared for and He intended that they carry out His ministry. As we shall see that happens in **Joshua 21**. The similarities between O.T. ministry and N.T. ministry are very similar (**I Cor. 9:14**). Arthur Pink said when it comes to this subject this is a Divine command, which demands obedience. It is not optional; it is obligatory. . .

We would like to draw seven New Testament ministry applications from this very text: [from **Joshua 21**]
1) The minister is not to make money the love of his life. **I Tim. 6:10-11; Heb. 13:5**
2) The minister is to be prepared to endure financial stress for the sake of ministry. **II Cor. 6:3-4**
3) The minister is to be compensated for his ministerial work. **I Cor. 9:13-14**
4) The minister is to be compensated by those in the church who are being taught under his ministry. **Gal. 6:6-9**
5) The minister is to be compensated, if possible, at a level that is expense free. **I Cor. 9:7**
6) Any fruit of the ministry is shared by those who financially support that ministry. **Phil. 4:17**
7) The gracious blessings of God will be poured out on those who generously support the ministry. **II Cor. 9:6-12**
https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/52216152721.pdf

Thomas Constable: **Israel's Levitical Cities**



TEXT: Joshua 21:43-45

TITLE: CONCLUDING SUMMARY OF GOD KEEPING HIS LAND PROMISE TO ISRAEL [THEME VERSES FOR JOSHUA]

BIG IDEA:
GOD'S FAITHFULNESS TO HIS LAND PROMISE TO ISRAEL IS TO BE CELEBRATED (IN ITS IMMEDIATE CONTEXT ALTHOUGH NOT IN TERMS OF ESCHATOLOGICAL FULFILLMENT)

INTRODUCTION:

David Howard: A glorious spiritual summary concludes the entire section devoted to the land distributions (**chaps. 13–21**). Davis calls it "the theological heart of the Book of Joshua." Several significant themes from earlier in the book are reiterated here (esp. from **chap. 1**). It is a fittingly triumphant ending to the third major section of the book, the heart of the book in terms of the real-world lands, borders, allotments, cities, et cetera, that the Israelites inherited. Everything God had promised his people for centuries had now been meticulously delineated and allotted, with scrupulous attention to detail and fairness.

Structurally, it has been noted that this short passage summarizes everything that precedes. **Verse 43** (which speaks of the land in which Israel settled) summarizes **chaps. 13–21**. **Verse 44** (which speaks of the conflicts with Israel's enemies) summarizes **chaps. 1–12**. **Verse 45** summarizes everything that precedes. In terms of its content, Davis has well noted that this short section consists of **praise to God**. It is not just dispassionate reporting; rather, it praises him for his complete **fidelity to his promises.** Our awesome and reliable God is described in these verses.

These verses emphasize the **totality of Israel's success**, the overarching picture of complete victory, and the all-encompassing nature of God's faithfulness to his promises and his people. It is of a piece with similar passages, such as **10:40–42; 11:16–23**; and **23:1**. It does not echo the passages that stand in tension with it, which speaks of unfinished business, of lands that remained to be captured. Yet on its own terms, it does present an accurate picture of the prevailing situation at the time.

Kenneth Gangel: Let's be careful to distinguish between the allotments of land promised in **Numbers 34** to ancient Israel and the **ultimate messianic kingdom** described in **Genesis 15** to Abraham. Obviously any newspaper on any given day would indicate that Israel does not possess the land promised to Abraham nor for that matter even the land promised in **Numbers 34**. The Jews have gone through a long period of dispossession. But the promises of God prevail, and the Abrahamic land allotment of **Genesis 15** will eventually be Israel's forever.

Trent Butler: The theme in **Josh 21:43–45** is the **faithfulness of God** in fulfilling his promises. God has done his part. No matter what the political situation of Israel in a

later generation, be it the divided monarchy, the fall of the northern kingdom, or the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile, Israel could not blame God. God had faithfully done for Israel what he promised.

Helene Dallaire: As seen earlier, hyperbolic summaries are not unusual (**11:16–23**). The conclusion to **chapter 21** provides an overstated synopsis of the events related to the conquest:

(1) **all** the land is in Israel's possession;
(2) **all** her enemies have been given into her hands; and
(3) **all** of Yahweh's promises have been fulfilled.

Israel has gloriously received what was promised to her forefathers centuries earlier (**Ge 12:1–3; 15:18–21; 22:17–18; 24:7; 26:3; 50:24; Nu 11:12; 14:16, 23; Dt 1:8, 35; 6:10**). The Lord gave rest to his people from their enemies round about (e.g., **Dt 12:9–10; Jos 1:13, 15; 22:4; 23:1**). Not one word from all of Yahweh's good promises have failed.

But in reality, much work remained to be done, since the Canaanites could not be dislodged from the land (e.g., **13:1–7; 15:63; 16:10; 17:12–13**). So, why do we find a discrepancy between the final summary and historical reality? Perhaps the author wishes to contrast Yahweh's faithfulness in accomplishing all he had promised and the unfaithfulness of Israel in failing to accomplish the entire mission.

I. (:43) GRACIOUS GIFT OF THE LAND TO ISRAEL

"*So the LORD gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it.*"

Gordon Matties: The first words underscore that the Lord is the main actor in this narrative of distribution (**v. 43**). The motif of divine gift of land echoes the divine speech at the beginning of the book, which also includes the motif of rest (**v. 44**; cf. **1:15**). Joshua's speech in Shiloh includes reference both to the divine gift and to the oath to the ancestors (**18:3**). The giving of rest provides a link to **chapters 21-22** (**21:44; 22:4**). All the land (**v. 43**) reiterates the emphasis on the full conquest of the land, beginning with the command to spy out the whole land (**2:3**) and the report of the spies (**2:24**), the extent of Joshua's fame (**6:27**), the confession of the Gibeonites (**9:24**), and the summaries of Joshua's complete conquest (**11:16, 23; 23:14**). The overlap of those motifs along with the motif of rest on every side (**v. 44**) echoes the earlier statements on rest (**1:13, 15; 11:23; 14:15**).

Donald Campbell: Some theologians have insisted that the statement in **Joshua 21:43** means that the land promise of the Abrahamic Covenant was fulfilled then. But this cannot be true because later the Bible gives additional predictions about Israel possessing the land after the time of Joshua (e.g., **Amos 9:14–15**+). **Joshua 21:43**, therefore, refers to the extent of the land as outlined in Numbers 34 and not to the ultimate extent as it will be in the messianic kingdom (**Ge 15:18–21**+). Also though

Israel possessed the land at this time it was later dispossessed, whereas the Abrahamic Covenant promised Israel that she would possess the land **forever** (**Ge 17:8**).

Application: God graciously gives us everything that we need so that we can fully **trust** in our Lord Jesus Christ.

> **Ephesians 2:8** "*For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God*"

II. (:44) SECURE REST IN THE LAND FROM ALL ENEMIES

> "*And the LORD gave them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them; the LORD gave all their enemies into their hand.*"

Trent Butler: This affirmation of victory and control, however, did not erase the other facts of life. Enemies abounded, and war was a constant threat. The book of Joshua stands as an example of how to act and gain similar victories in that future threat of war and defeat. War, just as peace, is to be conducted in accordance with divine command. The message of the book of Joshua is that obedient people must let God defeat their enemies and find God's gift of peace. The book must not be misread as a call to universal war. It is a call to face all aspects of life in faith in the faithful God.

Application: God protects us from all our enemies so that we can **rest** in our Lord Jesus Christ.

> **Matthew 11:28-30** "*Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*"

III. (:45) FULFILLED PROMISES TO ISRAEL

> "*Not one of the good promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass.*"

Trent Butler: Here is the major emphasis of the section. God's word can be trusted, and God fulfills his promises. The faithful community of God reads history as the story of God's directing promises.

F B Meyer: Such will be the summary of our lives, as we review them from the land of the sunset. We shall see plenty of our own failures, shortcomings, and sins, and sadly acknowledge them. We shall see that our unbelief and disobedience have deprived us of the enjoyment of much that God intended for us. We shall see that whatever was lacking was in no wise due to Him, but to ourselves. The land of our inheritance had

been all given us in Jesus; but we suffered the lack of much, because of our failure to enter in.

There may be long delays in the fulfillment of promise. — But delays are not denials; and it is better to let the fruit ripen before you pluck it. Wait till God drops it into your hand; it will be ever so much sweeter.

There may be enemies and obstacles. — But they will give back, before the will of God, as the gates of night roll back before the touch of the dawn. Do not scheme, or fret, or be impatient; God is doing all to make thy life full of favour and blessing. Wait on Him, and keep his way; He will exalt thee to inherit the earth. Thou art as safe as if the gate of pearl were behind thee; thy joy cannot rust or be stolen; every wind is a south wind; every shore thy native land; every circumstance a rough packing-case containing the gifts of thy Fathers love.

There may be ignorance and weakness. — But God can dear with this also. Take to Him thine imperfect apprehension, thy faltering faith, He can make right what is wrong, and adjust thee to receive all He waits to give. Heaven will be full of wonder at the way in which God has kept his word, and done all that He had promised, and more.

Application: God always keeps His promises so we should fully **obey** our Lord Jesus Christ.

> **2 Cor. 1:20** "*For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us*."
>
> **Hebrews 13:7-8** "*Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever*."

* * * * * * * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How can we increase our dependence on God's blessed promises for us?

2) Do we see spiritual victory as a gift of God's grace and yet one appropriated by faith?

3) What type of enemies has God protected you from in your spiritual journey?

4) How can we be anxious or fearful when Jesus commands us to come to Him for rest and the peace that only He can give?

* * * * * * * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

David Howard: These chapters show us that Yahweh was a **promise-keeping God**. In general, the detailed listings fulfill his land promises to give the land that he had repeated so many times previously. More specifically, **chap. 13** reviews the lands that the Transjordan tribes inherited. They had already been given to these tribes (**Numbers 32**), but chap. 13 shows that what God had promised, he would deliver. Also, the setting aside of the cities of refuge and the Levitical cities fulfilled God's instructions in the Pentateuch concerning these (**Exod 21:12–14; Numbers 35**). Furthermore, the individual inheritances of Caleb (**14:6–15; 15:13–19**) and the daughters of Zelophehad (**17:3–6**) fulfilled specific promises to each of them (**Num 14:24** and **Deut 1:36** for Caleb; **Num 27:1–11** for the daughters of Zelophehad). In addition, the statements about the people and the land having rest (**14:15; 21:44**) fulfilled promises about this also (see **Deut 12:10; 25:19**). Likewise, none of Israel's enemies was able to withstand them (**Josh 21:44**), just as God had promised (**1:5**). In sum, "*Not one of all the LORD's good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled*" (**21:45**).

Robert Hubbard: **A Final Word about Rest**
The Old Testament understands "*rest*" as the gracious gift of God to his people. Against the background of a long journey and intense warfare (so **ch. 21**), it connotes a sense of relief from frightening threats, of safe, happy arrival, of realizing long-held dreams, of coming into unexpected wealth, of finally being "home." That is what Yahweh's faithfulness in settling Israel in its Promised Land means to Israel. But, rather than inactivity, "rest" also opens the door to unhindered creative activity—to making towns livable, to earning a livelihood, to raising a family, to savoring the good life.

A part of Israel's "rest" is its duty properly to maintain its relationship with the God of Israel. They connect to him at his own "resting place," the place where he himself settled in Canaan—the temple in Jerusalem (**2 Sam. 7:1, 11; 1 Kings 5:3–5; 8:56; Ps. 132:14; 2 Chron. 6:41**). Solomon's prayer of dedication (**1 Kings 8**) highlights the significance of Yahweh's "resting place" for each Israelite. To be near the temple, Yahweh's home, offers Israelites the spot of maximum intimacy with him. His eyes perpetually keep it in view, so it marks the one place on earth where one may surface on God's radar screen (**8:29**). Wherever an Israelite might be, to "*pray toward this place*" and confess sin would always secure a hearing and forgiveness (**8:30**). This is true after national defeats (**8:33–34**), droughts (**8:35–36**), and famines (**8:37–39**).

At the same time, **Psalm 95** warns Israel not to squander their promised "rest." It recalls a famous episode when newly freed Israel, en route to Mount Sinai, loudly griped at Yahweh for providing no water (**Ex. 17:1–7**). Their thirst, they complained, proved Yahweh's absence from them. But God surprised them, producing water from an invisible source, from behind a desert rock. Over the centuries, Israel remembered the incident as a paradigm of faithlessness (see **Deut. 6:16; 9:22; 33:8; Ps. 95:8**). To hear the names of the site—Meribah ("*quarreling*") and Massah ("*testing*"; **Ex. 17:7; Ps. 95:8**)—evoked shame and sadness. The names recall the place where their ancestors,

shamefully shortsighted and self-centered, made God angry, angry enough to decree, "*They shall never enter my rest*" (**Ps. 95:11**). The psalmist recalls the event to show how to avoid losing "my rest," the rest whose only source is Yahweh himself: "*Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts*" as Israel did that day (**95:7b–8**). To enjoy and keep the "rest" requires a soft heart—an eager, responsive, willingness to obey the Lord's voice whenever he calls.

Jerry Thrower: **Promises Fulfilled**
Introduction:
Earlier, we sang the favorite old hymn, "*STANDING ON THE PROMISES*." We who KNOW the LORD have come to KNOW as we GROW in the LORD that the BIBLE is full of GOD'S PROMISES that we can stand on!

Throughout the SCRIPTURE, the LORD has given mankind many, many PROMISES! PROMISES concerning HIS LOVE, FORGIVENESS, SALVATION, THE HOLY SPIRIT, EVERLASTING LIFE, PEACE, JOY, FREEDOM, GROWTH, ENCOURAGEMENT, STRENGTH, CARE, COMING AGAIN, ETC. ETC.

We have an ALMIGHTY GOD that CARES for us and DESIRES that we would HEED HIS LEADERSHIP for our lives! And so HE CHALLENGES us in the TESTING of our HEARTS and our FAITH!

HE does that so that we will GROW in our understanding of HIS WAYS, learning to STAND upon the SOLID ROCK of HIS UNCHANGING and POWERFUL PROMISES!

This Chapter speaks specifically of the cities of the LEVITES and how these cities and the common-lands were distributed to them. Then to close off the Chapter, we are given a reflective moment that magnifies the FAITHFULNESS OF GOD shown by HIS FULFILLING the PROMISES HE made to the nation of ISRAEL!

This evening I want us to look at five aspects of PROMISES FULFILLED that are found here in these verses!

I. THE LORD MADE PROMISES TO HIS PEOPLE!

II. THE LORD KEPT HIS PROMISES TO HIS PEOPLE!

III. THE LORD'S PEOPLE TOOK POSSESSION OF THE PROMISES! (AT LEAST SOME OF THEM)

IV. THE LORD'S PEOPLE DWELT IN WHAT HE PROMISED!

V. THE LORD GAVE HIS PEOPLE REST!

Conclusion:
GOD has given us many PROMISES and GOD will KEEP ALL HIS PROMISES!

The question is this: Will we TRUST GOD by taking POSSESSION of GOD'S PROMISES and DWELLING in GOD'S PROMISES so that GOD can give us REST?
https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/102722132415836.pdf

Gregory Harris: **Did God Fulfill Every Good Promise? [27 page treatise]**
In a recent article on **Replacement Theology**, Mike Vlach summarizes what many who study Scripture know to be the case:

> *Few theological issues are as hotly debated as the Israel/church issue. It is a constant topic of debate between covenant theologians and dispensationalists . . . At issue is whether the New Testament church replaces, fulfills, and/or displaces national Israel as the people of God. And if so, to what extent does this affect national Israel?*

Narrowing down the primary divisive issue between the two theological camps ultimately comes down to one key issue:

> *The land-promise aspect of God's promise to Abraham, a promise repeated frequently throughout the OT, is the crux of the issue for both critics: to whom does the land of Israel belong? Covenant theologians, in line with their view that the church has replaced Israel in the ongoing program of God, deny that the land-promise to Israel is still valid.* [Robert L. Thomas]

The interpretational significance of this land debate must be dealt with carefully, if for no other reason, based on the high frequency of the land passages that occurs in Scripture. Kaiser observes:

> *In the Old Testament few issues are as important as that of the promise of the land to the patriarchs and the nation of Israel. In fact, "land" is the fourth most frequent substantive in the Hebrew Bible. Were it not for the larger and more comprehensive theme of the total promise with all its multifaceted provisions, the theme of Israel and her land could well serve as the central idea or the organizing rubric for the entire canon. . .*

Many readers of the Bible who hold the fulfillment of the land promises position consider **Joshua 21:43-45** to be their proof text clearly showing that God has already fulfilled the land promises given the Jewish people in the Abrahamic Covenant, and consequently one should expect no future fulfillment for either the land or the nation of Israel. . .

> Cf. Steven Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology*:
> *The book of Joshua tells us that when the Israelites had finally taken most of the land, all of the promises given to Abraham had been fulfilled (**Joshua 21:43-***

> ***45**). Nothing else needed to happen for God to make good on His word to Abraham. His promises of rest and possession of the land had been fulfilled, just like his promises of many descendants and a special relationship with God. It was all fulfilled by the time of the conquest of the Land of Canaan under Joshua.*

The purpose of this paper is to examine the validity of the claims that **Joshua 21:43-45** inarguably proves that all the land promises given by God to Israel have already been fulfilled and consequently have no future eschatological significance. This will be done by

(1) a brief overview of the covenants of God up to **Joshua 21**,
(2) an examination of the original geographic boundaries of the Abrahamic Covenant, with special note of the importance of the Euphrates River,
(3) a survey of the eschatological significance of **Leviticus 26:40-45**,
(4) examining strategic passages from the Book of Joshua,
(5) critiquing a popular proponent who argues for the complete fulfillment of the **Joshua 21:43-45**, and finally
(6) a proposed interpretation . . .

Again, whether one includes or dismisses **Leviticus 26** in one's eschatology has extremely far-reaching interpretational implications in later biblical passages. Barrick summarizes the **eschatological significance** of **Leviticus 26**:

> ***Leviticus 26** contains revelation referring to Israel's future repentance and restoration, which are confirmed by both OT and NT. Since their repentance and restoration have not yet occurred, their fulfillment is eschatological. **Leviticus 26**'s relationship to the Abrahamic Covenant ties fulfillment to the land God promised to give to the descendants of Abraham. The fulfillment of the land promises awaits Israel's repentance. When Israel turns to God and confesses her sins, God will restore her to the promised land. Chronologically, **Leviticus 26** is the first detailed description of Israel's eschatological repentance and restoration. It provides significant evidence that disobedience to the Mosaic Covenant results in the removal of the blessings promised in the Abrahamic Covenant. The chapter is at the heart of the OT prophets' announcements concerning the future messianic kingdom. A proper understanding of the prophetic program of the OT fully integrates the revelation of **Leviticus 26**. . .*

Specifically in regard to the Book of Joshua, not one of the items of **Deuteronomy 30:1-8** had transpired by the time of **Joshua 21**. As was true **for Leviticus 26**, **Deuteronomy 30:1** specifically requires that Israel be banished "*in all the nations where the LORD your God has banished you.*" The banishment of Israel had not occurred in **Joshua 21**; obviously the nation had not repented by that time (**30:2**), and Yahweh had not yet restored them from captivity (**30:3**). Collective Israel was not yet "*outcasts to the ends of the earth*" (**30:4**); consequently Yahweh had not yet brought them again "*into the land which your fathers possessed*" (**30:5**). Even beyond these, another good promise of Yahweh was that He would indeed circumcise the hearts of the

nation so they could obey Him (**30:6**). In like manner, by **Joshua 21:43-45**, Yahweh had not yet "*inflicted all these curses*" on their enemies (**30:7**). Nor had God again "*prospered them abundantly*" after first cursing them, as the nation would receive the promised benefits of covenant obedience to Yahweh (**30:9-10**). Simply put, by no means can it be shown that all the good promises of Yahweh had been fulfilled by **Joshua 21:43-45**; nor can it be shown even at the present time that this has yet transpired. . .

It seems better to understand **Joshua 21:43-45** in a much more restricted manner: Yahweh did indeed fulfill all His good promises up to that time, but **Joshua 21:45** is just a historical marker in God's faithfulness and not the pinnacle nor completion of His covenant faithfulness:

> *These verses emphasize the totality of Israel's success, the overarching picture of complete victory, and the all-encompassing nature of God's faithfulness to his promises and his people. It is of a piece with similar passages, such as **10:40-42; 11:16-23; and 23:1**. It does not echo the passages that stand in tension with it, which speaks of unfinished business, of land that remained to be captured. Yet on its own terms, it does present an accurate picture of the prevailing situation at the time.* [David Howard]

Such an understanding is found elsewhere in Scripture. For instance, Paul's benediction in **Romans 16:25-27** makes a far-reaching statement regarding how far the Gospel had gone forth by the time of its composition:

> *Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.*

Likewise in **Colossians 1:23** Paul wrote regarding that Gospel that the Colossians should not be "*moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven*." One would be hard pressed to argue that the LORD intended that the Gospel had indeed "*has been made to all the nations*" (**Rom. 16:26**) or **Colossians 1:23** "*proclaimed under all creation under heaven*" had been fulfilled by the time Paul wrote these verses, or even almost two thousand years later at the time of this writing that no unreached people groups remain. One day all nations under heaven will be reached, as Jesus Himself declared, "*And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come*" (**Matt. 24:14**), as God will one day fulfill every good promise He has made down to the last jot and title, culminating with the Messiah, whose first advent had not arrived by **Joshua 21** and whose Second Advent yet awaits us.
https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/112910153495.pdf

Christopher Cone: **Future Land Fulfillment for Israel?**
Q: Doesn't this passage indicate that God fulfilled the promises he made about Israel possessing the land, and that we should not expect any future fulfillment?

A: First we must realize that there were several different promises made to different parties pertaining to the land:

In **Genesis 15:18**, God promised Abraham that the descendants of Abraham would possess the land "*from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates*."

In **Genesis 17:8** God promised Abraham that He would "*give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.*"

In **Exodus 23:30** God fixes Israel's future boundaries: "*from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the river…*" But this promise was **conditioned** on Israel's obedience (**Ex. 23:24-25, 32-33**). If Israel was faithful, they would possess the boundaries. If not, they would be stopped short and have to deal with the consequences (**23:33**) that would shorten Israel's tenure in the land (also see **Deut. 28**) – they would be removed from the land and scattered. That judgment would not be eternal, though, as God is very specific that Israel would one day be restored to the land (**Deut. 30:3-10**). That restoration would be **unconditional**, physical and spiritual, and would be accomplished by God, Himself.

Importantly, the promises made to Abraham were unconditional, while the promises to Israel regarding their initial tenure in the land were conditional.

The comments of **Joshua 21:43-45** indicate that God had kept His promises to bring Israel into the land – none of His promises to them failed – they all came to pass (lit., "*came in*"). As Joshua indicates in **Joshua 23:5-6**, Israel still had much work to receive the continuation and completion of God's conditional promises. Clearly, Joshua recognizes that Israel's borders are not yet complete, but only that God has kept His promises to that point.

The statement that God had kept His promises to "*the house of Israel*" is clearly limited to that early stage of land possession and dominance over enemies (there were many promises God had made pertaining to other aspects that had not yet been fulfilled, e.g., **Gen. 49:10**) as Joshua understands. At that point he did not consider that there were no more promises yet to be fulfilled, rather he simply communicates that God had been faithful to that point.

Further, the promises that "*came in*" at the point of **Joshua 21:45** were made to the house of Israel. God's promises of boundaries to Abraham preceded the house of Israel, and measured far beyond what Israel has ever historically possessed. Hence, either the record is not reliable, or we await a future fulfillment (as discussed in **Deut. 30**).

Interestingly, a key element of the fulfillment of the New Covenant (incidentally made with Israel, see **Jeremiah 31**) was that Israel would be restored to the land and would have physical and spiritual restoration – this is consistent with the language of **Deuteronomy 30**.
https://drcone.com/2012/01/06/q-a-does-joshua-2143-45-indicate-there-is-no-future-expectation-of-land-for-israel/

TEXT: Joshua 22:1-34

TITLE: DISMISSAL OF EASTERN TRIBES BACK TO THEIR HOMES WHILE RESOLVING POTENTIAL CRISIS OF UNITY

BIG IDEA:
CORPORATE UNITY CAN EASILY BE THREATENED BY MISUNDERSTANDINGS DESPITE SIGNIFICANT MISSION SUCCESSES

INTRODUCTION:

David Howard: After all that had transpired and all that the nation had gone through together, the time had now come for the tribes to return to their inheritances and begin their settled lives in the land. The tribes whose inheritances were east of the Jordan had been faithful in their commitment to God and to their word, in that they had helped their brothers take their lands, even while their own lands had been, in effect, waiting for them. The episode here echoes and fulfills Joshua's earlier exhortation to these tribes to be faithful to God and to their fellow Israelites. It also echoes these tribes' response to Joshua's exhortation (**1:16–18**).

Robert Hubbard: The chapter sounds a new, important theme—the absolute demand that geographical distance never shake exclusive devotion to Yahweh alone (**vv. 22, 34**). The chapter also consummates the outsider theme heard earlier in the stories of Rahab, the Gibeonites, and Caleb. In the end, the tribal conflict that the chapter narrates ends amicably, with the tribes rejoicing that all have been spared Yahweh's wrath (**v. 31**). The problematic action proves to be not apostasy but a witness to loyalty to Yahweh and to his worship at the tabernacle.

Helene Dallaire: Joshua is pleased with the accomplishments of the Reubenites, Gadites, and half-tribe of Manasseh, who obeyed Moses' instructions faithfully by aiding their brothers in carrying out Yahweh's assignment and remaining with them until Joshua releases them to return home. The mission is only fully accomplished when the eastern tribes return to Transjordan. They leave Shiloh with a warning to remain faithful to Yahweh, a special blessing from their leader, and great riches to be shared with their people in Transjordan.

Davis: The unifying factor in ancient Israel was not her culture, architecture, economy, or even military objectives. The long-range unifying factor was her **worship of Jehovah**. When the central sanctuary was abandoned as the true place of worship, the tribes then developed independent sanctuaries, thus alienating themselves from other tribes and weakening their military potential. The effects of this trend are fully seen in the period of Judges.

Gordon Matties: Here is a classic case for **conflict resolution studies**, although it may illustrate how **not** to practice such efforts. The actions of one party have consequences

that affect a second party. The second party infers the intentions of the first party and prepares immediately for out-and-out war. As it turns out, the intentions are honorable (or so they seem), and the second party must revise its presupposed assumptions about the first party.

I. (:1-9) CONTEXT OF COMMENDATION FOR MISSION SUCCESSES – AS JOSHUA DISMISSES THE TRANSJORDAN TRIBES

A. (:1-6) Transjordan Tribes Summoned, Commended, Charged, Blessed and Dismissed

1. (:1-2a) Summoned

"*Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, 2 and said to them,*"

2. (:2b-3) Commended

"*You have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have listened to my voice in all that I commanded you. 3 You have not forsaken your brothers these many days to this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God.*"

Trent Butler: The command of **Josh 1:13–15** and the pledge of **1:16–18** have been realized. No reasons can be given to condemn those tribes dwelling outside the Promised Land. They have been faithful to the two great commanders of Israel, Moses and Joshua. The reference to commands of both Moses and Joshua "puts Joshua on a footing almost equal to Moses. . . . **Joshua 22:1–6** depicts Joshua as a fully endowed successor to Moses." The repeated note of obedience "underscores the positive portrayal of the Transjordanian tribes as obedient."

3. (:4-5) Charged

a. (:4) Setting for the Charge

"*And now the LORD your God has given rest to your brothers, as He spoke to them; therefore turn now and go to your tents, to the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you beyond the Jordan.*"

Trent Butler: The result of faithfulness is **rest**, the precise reward promised in **Josh 1:15** (cf. **21:43–44**). The reward, however, is for the kindred, since the East Jordan tribes already have their rest (**1:13**). The easterners now simply receive the command to return and enjoy that rest. This has particular significance in light of the following narrative in which the brothers bring accusation of unfaithfulness against the East Jordan tribes. The accusing West Jordan tribes can enjoy their "rest" only because of the faithfulness of their East Jordan kindred. It appears at this point that rest has been achieved, and so the end of the story has come. But the story continues, for Israel must test its unity and look toward its future identity.

b. (:5) Substance of the Charge

"*Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God and walk in all His ways and keep His commandments and hold fast to Him and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul.*"

David Howard: Joshua's words in **v. 5** are passionate, and they capture the heart of the chapter's message about **faithfulness** and **loyalty**. The words echo similar exhortations in Deuteronomy (**Deut 4:29; 6:5–6; 10:12, 13; 11:13**) and in Joshua (**1:7- 8**) that the Israelites should be faithful to God. What God had urged Joshua himself to do in **chap. 1**, Joshua now urged the people to do. This exhortation is the essence of the "*first and greatest commandment*," to love God passionately, with every fiber of one's being (**Deut 6:5; Matt 22:37- 38**). The verbs in **v. 5** give a comprehensive picture of what a proper relationship to God was to include: to love God, to walk in all his ways, to obey his commands, to hold fast (or cling) to him, and to serve him. These were to be done not as a matter of external conformity but "*with all your heart and all your soul*."

Trent Butler: Return to rest does not mean return to forget or neglect obligation. God demands faithfulness in peace and prosperity as well as in war and danger. The command echoes that given to Joshua in **1:7**. It is a summary of the charge of Deuteronomy (cf. **Deut 10:12–13, 20; 11:1; 6:4–15; 13:4–5 [3–4]; 30:15–20**). It is the definition of the people of God.

David Guzik: We should not miss the order here. First, we should take care to *hear* God. Then we give Him our *love*. Next comes a walk of *obedience*. To mix this order up is to drift into **heresy** (loving without hearing) or **legalism** (obeying before loving).

4. (:6) Blessed and Dismissed

"*So Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their tents.*"

B. (:7-8) Dismissal of Eastern Manasseh Half-tribe

1. (:7a) Historical Explanation of Division

a. Moses Granted Land East of the Jordan

"*Now to the one half-tribe of Manasseh*
Moses had given a possession in Bashan,"

b. Joshua Granted Land West of the Jordan

"*but to the other half Joshua gave a possession*
among their brothers westward beyond the Jordan."

David Howard: The **farewell blessing** is interrupted in **v. 7** by the author's parenthetical explanation of the unique situation of the tribe of Manasseh, which had two land portions, one on each side of the Jordan (cf. **13:29–31; 17:1–13**). Both Moses and

Joshua are acknowledged as distributors of the land here. The insertion undoubtedly was for the purpose of stressing the unity of this tribe, which symbolized within its own tribal context the larger unity that was to characterize the entire nation. This unity was strained by the events narrated in the following verses, but ultimately the unity was preserved, and the Transjordan tribes' loyalty to their brethren and their God was established beyond any doubt.

2. (:7b-8) Blessing and Dismissal

a. (:7b) Blessing

"*So when Joshua sent them away to their tents, he blessed them,*"

b. (:8) Dismissal with Spoils of War

"*and said to them, 'Return to your tents with great riches and with very much livestock, with silver, gold, bronze, iron, and with very many clothes; divide the spoil of your enemies with your brothers.'*"

Robert Hubbard: In sum, Joshua offers a grateful military commander's final, "job-welldone" farewell speech to some of his loyal, departing troops. They have finished a unique, tough assignment of shared hardships with their western brothers. But his charge warns them not to let distance from the Israelite heartland create distance between them and God. And so an era ends, as the two-and-a half tribes break camp at Shiloh and head east for a happy reunion with their families, who have awaited their safe return for so long. Before long, however, events will transpire that will lead some Israelite quarters to call into question the picture of them here as obedient and loyal.

C. (:9) Departure of Transjordan Tribes

"*And the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh returned home and departed from the sons of Israel at Shiloh which is in the land of Canaan, to go to the land of Gilead, to the land of their possession which they had possessed, according to the command of the LORD through Moses.*"

Gordon Matties: That the conflict emerges in the next episode illustrates the **fragility**, not of the Transjordan tribes' covenant loyalty, but of the bonds formed within the community called "Israel" as a whole. If the conflict had not emerged, we would assume that the Transjordan tribes would naturally be part of the congregation gathered to hear Joshua's farewell address and to participate in the covenant renewal event (**chs. 23-24**). But the events to follow turn our expectations around and highlight the fragility of the communal bond. Not only is covenant with the Lord called into question, but the very constitution and identity of "*Israel*" are also threatened.

II. (:10-34) CRISIS OF MISUNDERSTANDING REQUIRING RESOLUTION TO PROTECT ISRAEL'S UNITY

A. (:10-12) The Crisis Threatening Israel's Unity

1. (:10) Point of Contention = Large Altar Built on West Bank of the Jordan

"*And when they came to the region of the Jordan which is in the land of Canaan, the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an altar there by the Jordan, a large altar in appearance.*"

David Howard: Its imposing size, visible from afar, explains the significance of this altar west of the Jordan. In the first place, its erection west of the Jordan by the tribes living east of the Jordan emphasized something the Transjordan tribes wanted to affirm: the nation's unity and their own loyalty to the God who gave Canaan to his people. However, for a people living east of the Jordan, its position across the river could potentially have caused it to have been forgotten. Thus, its imposing size would have allowed it to be seen from vantage points across the river and thus remembered.

Trent Butler: The complication (**vv 10b–12**) comes as the easterners head to their God-given possessions but are described as going away from the sanctuary at Shiloh, away from the sons of Israel, away from the land of Canaan, that is, away from the land of promise. They decide to build an altar but give no reason for doing so. The sons of Israel come back to Shiloh, where they had just parted from the easterners, and declare war on the easterners.

2. (:11-12) Potential for Rash Civil War

a. (:11) Improperly Judging Motives

"*And the sons of Israel heard it said, 'Behold, the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh have built an altar at the frontier of the land of Canaan, in the region of the Jordan, on the side belonging to the sons of Israel.'*"

b. (:12) Initiative to Go to War

"*And when the sons of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the sons of Israel gathered themselves at Shiloh, to go up against them in war.*"

David Howard: The basis for the Cisjordan tribes' reaction is found in the law against offering a burnt offering or sacrifice at any location other than the tabernacle (**Lev 17:8– 9**) and in the more general law in **Deut 13:12–15** against worshiping other gods. In both instances, the Israelites were authorized to kill the offenders, and this was why they now prepared to go to war against their fellow Israelites. . .

The author, by carefully **labeling the tribes** in this chapter, preserves a distinction between the tribes until the altar's true nature and intent has been made clear: the Cisjordan tribes were "true" Israelites, living in the land promised to Abraham, whereas the Transjordan tribes, living outside the land, were not yet to be included with "*all Israel*" until the nature of their commitment to the Lord was clarified. After the clarification, however (i.e., after **v. 29**), all twelve tribes are treated as part of the one

nation, Israel. Thus, the issues of the unity of the nation and the tribes' loyalties are reflected even in the way in which the narrator labels the tribes.

Robert Hubbard: The report about the unsettling discovery conveys **shocked urgency**, as if the altar were scandalous and posed a serious threat to west-bank well-being. Apparently, no one bothers to ask why the returning troops have placed the altar there on the west bank—an inconvenient spot for Transjordanian access!—rather than (more conveniently) on their side of the river. Instead, the news sparks a rush of the "*whole community of Israel*" to an emergency pow-wow at Shiloh (**v. 12**). The same words ("*the whole assembly … gathered*") open the earlier scene where the last tribal allotments are made (**Josh. 18:1**), but here Israel meets to prepare for war against the two-and-a-half tribes.

B. (:13-20) The Accusation of Apostasy

1. (:13-15) Investigative Delegation Led by Phinehas

> "*Then the sons of Israel sent to the sons of Reuben and to the sons of Gad and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead, Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, 14 and with him ten chiefs, one chief for each father's household from each of the tribes of Israel; and each one of them was the head of his father's household among the thousands of Israel. 15 And they came to the sons of Reuben and to the sons of Gad and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, to the land of Gilead, and they spoke with them saying,*"

Robert Hubbard: The Bible knows **Phinehas** above all as a heroic "defender of the faith," especially of the proper way to worship Yahweh. He is best known for his decisive, violent action at Baal Peor that ended a devastating plague in Israel's camp and won him special praise from Yahweh (**Num. 25**; cf. **Ex. 6:25; Num. 31:6; Judg. 20:27–28**). If the situation demands a ruling on altars or bold, daring initiative, Phinehas is certainly the right man for the job.

But the rest of the delegates are no slouches, either. They clearly comprise the highest level of leadership in Israel, the Israelite equivalent of a presidential cabinet.

Kenneth Gangel: Consider the three characteristics of this appeal by the Phinehas delegation:

1. It was **personal**. Instead of marching on the tribes, the Israelites chose a delegation headed by a priest. They delivered a sincere message before they picked a fight. That's a good approach.

2. It was **passionate**. The Israelites made the trip because they were concerned about faithfulness to God. They guarded God's reputation and holiness and his command about the central altar. By appealing to Peor and Achan, they recalled the time when Moabite worship brought a plague on the whole nation and twenty-four thousand Israelites died. They also remembered the time when the first battle for Ai was

hopelessly lost. This delegation pled, begged, and tried to turn the eastern tribes from what they considered to be sin. Their motive was pure, even if their reasoning was faulty.

3. It was **purposeful**. The option of land grants west of the Jordan River shows a desire to restore these tribes and bring them back to a place where they could keep their commitment to God. Though wrongheaded, this whole process was right hearted.

2. (:16) Imputing Motives of Unfaithfulness

> "*Thus says the whole congregation of the LORD, 'What is this unfaithful act which you have committed against the God of Israel, turning away from following the LORD this day, by building yourselves an altar, to rebel against the LORD this day?* "'

3. (:17-18) Fear of Corporate Judgment -- Based on the Historical Example of Sin at Peor

> "*Is not the iniquity of Peor enough for us, from which we have not cleansed ourselves to this day, although a plague came on the congregation of the LORD, 18 that you must turn away this day from following the LORD? And it will come about if you rebel against the LORD today, that He will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel tomorrow.*"

David Howard: The sin at Peor had occurred many years earlier in the wilderness. It had involved the Israelites' prostituting themselves by bowing to the Moabite gods—specifically, the Baal of Peor—seduced by the women of Moab to do so. A plague had broken out in the Israelite camp as an expression of the Lord's displeasure, and twenty-four thousand people had died before Phinehas had intervened and caused the Lord's anger to abate (**Num 25:6–9**). . .

The implication is that Israel had never truly rid itself of this sin, that it always flirted with—if not participated in—idolatry and the allure of pagan religious systems. Achan's case was proof positive of this, and the Cisjordan tribes feared that this altar represented another such case.

Trent Butler: The prosecution predicts the results of the crime—divine anger on the entire community (cf. **Josh 9:20; Deut 29:27 [28]**). "*wrath, anger*," in verbal form is used for divine anger in a majority of the cases, particularly in Deuteronomistic and Priestly circles. Human sin and rebellion rouse the divine wrath. The responsibility of the community for its members and the sense of unity within the community mean that the sin by a part brings punishment on the whole. At this point, the prosecution appears to testify that east and west are both part of the Yahweh community.

4. (:19) Consider Other Options

> "*If, however, the land of your possession is unclean, then cross into the land of the possession of the LORD, where the LORD's tabernacle*

stands, and take possession among us. Only do not rebel against the LORD, or rebel against us by building an altar for yourselves, besides the altar of the LORD our God."

David Howard: From their perspective, it was better that the Transjordan tribes abandon their possession and pursue true worship than to keep their land and engage in apostasy.

5. (:20) Fear of Corporate Judgment –
Based on the Historical Example of Sin of Achan

"*Did not Achan the son of Zerah act unfaithfully in the things under the ban, and wrath fall on all the congregation of Israel? And that man did not perish alone in his iniquity.*"

Robert Hubbard: If the scandal at Peor marks the classic case of **apostasy**, Achan denotes the classic case of "**treachery**." He secretly kept for himself goods captured at Jericho (*ḥerem*) that, in fact, belonged to Yahweh. But the delegation's concern is not with the act of altar-building itself but with its consequences. Their climactic (perhaps even melodramatic!) cry that "[*Achan] was not the only one who died for his sin*" (**v. 20**) powerfully drives home their message. The dignitaries remind their audience that, while Achan acted alone, divine wrath struck the entire community. That pattern, they argue, now seems likely to recur: The altar-building by a few tribes now threatens to bring down God's wrath on all twelve tribes of Israel, not just on the Transjordanians. With that, the message of the west-bank tribes ends.

C. (:21-29) The Defense of Loyalty to the God of Israel

1. (:21-25) Theological Defense

a. (:21) High Level Response

"*Then the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh answered, and spoke to the heads of the families of Israel.*"

David Howard: The Transjordan tribes responded passionately that they were innocent of any rebellion or breach of faith. The entire paragraph shows them to have been innocent of anything malicious: they never intended to use this altar for sacrifices to God himself, let alone to other gods. Rather, they intended it only as a memorial or witness for their children (**vv. 26–27**). Their concern was the same as that of the tribes west of the Jordan: that the unity of Israel be maintained and that their loyalty be to the Lord alone (**vv. 25, 27**). This echoes their response, along with that of the other tribes, in **1:16–18**.

b. (:22-23) Appeal to God's Comprehensive Knowledge

1) (:22) God Knows Our Motives

"*The Mighty One, God, the LORD, the Mighty One, God, the LORD! He knows, and may Israel itself know. If it was in rebellion, or if in an unfaithful act against the LORD do not Thou save us this day!*"

Robert Hubbard: The opening rhetorical flourish, a string of orthodox names for Israel's God ("*Mighty One, God, the LORD* …") aims immediately to dispel the visitors' doubts about their orthodoxy (**v. 22**). There is, they claim, **another side to this story**. They strongly affirm that Israel's God understands the real situation ("*He knows*!") and voice the passionate wish that Israel (and especially the present delegation!) might, too. To prove their innocence, they make their visitors a bold offer phrased as a kind of self-curse. If the accusations of "*rebellion*" (*mered*) and "*disobedience*" (*maʿal*) against Yahweh be true, they ask Phinehas not to hold back proper punishment. If their altar announces rejection of Yahweh (and, by implication, his altar in Canaan) and pledges loyalty to another god through sacrifices, they ask Yahweh himself to "*call us to account*" (**v. 23**). Thus, they deny the accusations; they claim to have nothing to hide. They share the visitors' conviction that Israel performs sacrifices to Yahweh only at Shiloh.

2) (:23) God Knows Our Intentions

"*If we have built us an altar to turn away from following the LORD, or if to offer a burnt offering or grain offering on it, or if to offer sacrifices of peace offerings on it, may the LORD Himself require it.*"

c. (:24) Defending the Purpose of the Altar

"*But truly we have done this out of concern, for a reason, saying, 'In time to come your sons may say to our sons, What have you to do with the LORD, the God of Israel?'*"

Robert Hubbard: But now comes a surprising revelation. The Cisjordanians assume that an altar serves only one purpose, as a place for sacrificing. But the Transjordanians reveal something new—that **fear, not rebellion**, drove them to act as they did. They fear that future descendants of the present accusers will deny their own descendants to have access to Yahweh (**v. 24a**). They worry that descendants of the delegation will invoke the Jordan as a God-given boundary—an ancient Rio Grande—to bar east-bank descendants from the community worship (**vv. 24, 28**). They also quote a possible objection that future Cisjordanians might raise to exclude their descendants (**vv. 24b–25a**).

d. (:25) Addressing the Fear of Being Rejected Due to Physical Separation Caused by the Jordan River

"*For the LORD has made the Jordan a border between us and you, you sons of Reuben and sons of Gad; you have no portion in the LORD. So your sons may make our sons stop fearing the LORD.*"

David Howard: Turning the argument away from asserting their innocence, the Transjordan tribes now gave the reason for what they did: it was rooted in their fear of being cut off from their fellow Israelites sometime in the future. The Jordan River

formed a natural boundary between them and their brethren, and they feared that their descendants might be rejected by their brothers' descendants. Worse than that, however, they feared that the Cisjordanian's descendants might cause the Transjordanian's descendants to cease their worship of God (**v. 25**). They would do this by referring to the obvious boundary between them—the Jordan River—and then claiming, by extension, that only those living west of the Jordan, in "*the LORD's land*," had a legitimate portion in the Lord (cf. **v. 19**). In this way, their descendants might be completely cut off from the blessings promised to all Israel.

2. (:26-29) Pragmatic Defense

a. (:26-28) Needed for a Physical Reminder of Loyalty

> "*Therefore we said, 'Let us build an altar, not for burnt offering or for sacrifice; 27 rather it shall be a witness between us and you and between our generations after us, that we are to perform the service of the LORD before Him with our burnt offerings, and with our sacrifices and with our peace offerings, that your sons may not say to our sons in time to come, You have no portion in the LORD. Therefore we said, 'It shall also come about if they say this to us or to our generations in time to come, then we shall say, See the copy of the altar of the LORD which our fathers made, not for burnt offering or for sacrifice; rather it is a witness between us and you.'*"

Jerome Creach: The eastern tribes respond to Phinehas that the altar was not for sacrifice; rather it was a "*copy*" of an altar (**v. 28**). The word rendered "*copy*" might better be translated "**pattern**" or "**model**." **Second Kings 16:10** uses the same word to refer to the model of an altar king Ahaz sent to the priest Uriah to be used as a construction guide. The model altar in **Joshua 22** was to serve future generations as a **reminder** that those dwelling east of the Jordan were not ritually impure and had the right to come to the central sanctuary to make sacrifices. The response of the eastern tribes reflects the **varied purposes** of altars in ancient Israel: they were not only mounds for making sacrifices, but also signs of God's presence and identifying marks of a community devoted to God. Therefore, altars could be places of asylum (**1 Kgs. 2:28**) and could provide testimony of a certain identity. The latter purpose of the altar is reflected in **Joshua 22**. Sacrifice would be reserved for the central sanctuary, but the altar was a testimony of inclusion in the community that worshiped at the central site. The eastern tribes express concern that future generations on their land might say they have no "*portion*" in Israel (**vv. 25, 27**); the term "*portion*" (Hebrew *ḥeleq*) is often synonymous with "*inheritance*" (*naḥalah*; **Josh. 15:13; 19:9; Ezek. 45:7**). This shows again that the root problem was whether or not ownership of the land east of the Jordan was a sign of **membership in the covenant community**.

b. (:29) Never Intended for Offering Sacrifices in Spirit of Rebellion

> "*Far be it from us that we should rebel against the LORD and turn away from following the LORD this day, by building an altar for burnt offering, for grain offering or for sacrifice,*

besides the altar of the LORD our God which is before His tabernacle."

D. (:30-34) The Resolution of the Crisis – Preserving Unity

1. (:30-31) Investigative Delegation Satisfied

a. (:30) Pleased with the Common Understanding

"*So when Phinehas the priest and the leaders of the congregation, even the heads of the families of Israel who were with him, heard the words which the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the sons of Manasseh spoke, it pleased them.*"

Trent Butler: The commission is satisfied with the defense testimony. "*It was good in the eyes of*" is a formula accepting proposals or testimonies (**Gen 41:37; Lev 10:20; Deut 1:23; 1 Sam 18:5; 2 Sam 3:36; 18:4; 1 Kgs 3:10; Esth 1:21; 2:4; cf. Gen 45:16; Lev 10:19; Esth 2:9**). Phinehas "emerges as a thread weaving its way through the story of Israel. . . . Each time he appears there is a question of cultic purity and national survival."

b. (:31) Praise for the Lord Preserving the Unity of his People

"*And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said to the sons of Reuben and to the sons of Gad and to the sons of Manasseh, 'Today we know that the LORD is in our midst, because you have not committed this unfaithful act against the LORD; now you have delivered the sons of Israel from the hand of the LORD.'*"

Robert Hubbard: It is important, however, to underscore the implications of the decision his delegation made. It both acquits the Transjordanian tribes of the charge of violating the Instruction of Moses (e.g., **Josh. 22:29**) and asserts their right "to be considered full-fledged members of the community of Israel." At least for the time being.

2. (:32-34) Corporate Israel Satisfied

a. (:32) Presentation of Report Back to the People

"*Then Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest and the leaders returned from the sons of Reuben and from the sons of Gad, from the land of Gilead, to the land of Canaan, to the sons of Israel, and brought back word to them.*"

Trent Butler: The commission did not have the final word. They had to make their report to the children of Israel as a whole. The report was accepted with thanksgiving to God. Notice that when humans bless God, it simply means to give thanks for his blessings (**Gen 24:27, 48**). A situation that threatened war and total destruction resulted in worship and a new relationship of trust.

b. (:33) Pleased with the Common Understanding

"*And the word pleased the sons of Israel, and the sons of Israel blessed God; and they did not speak of going up against them in*

war, to destroy the land in which the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad were living."

Van Parunak: We should **respond to misunderstanding** in the same manner, according to these same principles.

- Respond with a concern for God's holiness.
- Respond with the courage to confront in love.
- Respond with an attempt to reconcile before you fight.
- Determine that you are willing to sacrifice to help them; don't confront unless you are willing to help.
- Determine that you will see the situation from the perspective of the other person.
- Determine that you will believe the best of one another.

c. (:34) Purpose of the Altar Ratified

"*And the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad called the altar Witness; 'For,' they said, 'it is a witness between us that the LORD is God.'*"

David Howard: The climax of the chapter reveals the full meaning of the altar: it was to testify to God himself. Previously, the account had revealed that it was to be a witness (**vv. 27, 28**), but the earlier verses do not reveal the precise nature or function of the "witness." Now we see that it was to affirm that Yahweh was God. It was a symbol of Israel's national unity, and this symbol was to testify to Israel's God. In a similar vein, Jesus told his disciples that people would know they were his disciples by seeing their love for each other, that is, their love would point people to Christ (**John 13:35**).

Robert Hubbard: Silently, that imposing structure reminds every Israelite who passes, whether traveling east or west, that "*the LORD is God*" over all Israelites, wherever located. Set on the west bank but built by east-bank hands, it symbolizes the bond that unites settlers along both banks as one people—their devotion to Yahweh as their only God. That is a bond that even the mighty Jordan cannot sever.

* * * * * * * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How can we avoid jumping to false assumptions and wrongly judging the motives of others?

2) Do we appreciate the fragile nature of our Christian unity and how quickly things can fall apart if proper communication is neglected?

3) What are some of the ways that the Transjordan tribes had demonstrated their loyalty to both the God of Israel and the covenant community?

4) What lessons do we take away from this passage about conflict resolution within the local church?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Kenneth Gangel: Sometimes messages can get mixed up. In this chapter the Israelites argue over an altar. This argument arises from a misunderstanding that almost caused a war. Fortunately, cooler heads prevailed, and the tribes remained united.

The nation of Israel, now divided by the Jordan River, had to learn there would be no variation in the singularity of their worship. They also had to learn not to criticize the worship of their brothers and sisters.

Though not a familiar story—hardly the parting of the Jordan River or the capture of Jericho—this obscure event provides some valuable lessons for us about faithfulness to God and confrontation and conflict with others. How do we challenge one another to be committed to Christ? How do we confront when it seems that commitment has been compromised? How do we respond when someone questions our commitment?

David Howard: The altar's **location** should have been a clue from the beginning as to its **purpose**. Significantly the Transjordan tribes did not build it on their side of the Jordan, but across the river from where they would live. It served little useful purpose to them there; for it to have been used regularly to offer sacrifices, it would need to have been east of the river. Here, its imposing size comes into play.… There it would stand, west of the Jordan, out of practical reach for regular offerings, yet functioning as a silent reminder of the true altar at the Lord's sanctuary. It beckoned the Transjordan tribes to cross the Jordan to offer their sacrifices at the altar at which it was only a copy.

Campbell: There are four major lessons we can learn from this chapter. All are relevant and applicable to today's church:

(1) It is commendable for believers to be zealous for the purity of the faith; compromise of truth is always costly.

(2) It is wrong to judge people's motives on the basis of circumstantial evidence. It is important to get all the facts, remembering that there are always two sides to every dispute.

(3) Frank and open discussion will often clear the air and lead to reconciliation. But such a confrontation should be approached in a spirit of gentleness, not arrogance (**Gal. 6:1**).

(4) A person who is wrongly accused does well to remember the wise counsel of Solomon, "*A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger*" (**Prov. 15:1**) (Campbell, 367).

Helene Dallaire: Actions can often be misunderstood, and miscommunication often creates chaos. Such was the case with Israel when the deeds of the eastern tribes were misinterpreted by the western tribes, who quickly concluded that war with their brothers was necessary. There is no evidence that the Israelites at Shiloh ever consulted with Yahweh before deciding on their course of action. Had they prayed, sought divine counsel, and waited for a brief moment, they would surely have discovered the truth of the matter. Consequently, the confrontation in Gilead would have been avoided.

Without clear communication between individuals, the innocent actions of one are often considered inappropriate by another. In hindsight, more communication between parties is often the key to avoiding confrontations and misunderstandings. Had the men of the eastern tribes shared their plan with Joshua before forging ahead with their brilliant idea, the confrontation could have been avoided. But it is possible that their spontaneous spirits led them to build the stone structure without even considering the possibility of negative consequences. As Christians, how quickly we are to diagnose problems and to propose solutions for what we think are crises, before ever taking the time to consult God, who is omniscient and has the solution to every problem of life.

Van Parunak: **The <u>five amplifications</u> (vs. 5b)**, marked as such by the lack of a conjunction before the first. Note the mixture of love and obedience throughout these, corresponding to the dual character of his revelation as commandment and teaching.

1. *to love the LORD your God*.–This is the first duty of Israel, according to the shema of **Deut 6:4**.

2. *and to walk in all his ways*–<u>two senses</u>.

> • **Deut 5:33**, "*walk in the ways which the Lord hath commanded you*." They are his ways because they come from him; genitive of source. But this is more than just "obey his commandments."
>
> • Cf. **1 Sam. 8:5**, "*thy sons walk not in thy ways*." They are his ways because they describe how he walks. Subjective genitive. This is the fundamental idea of "godliness," living a God-like life.
>
> • The 1 Sam passage suggests that it is unnatural that Samuel's sons not follow his example. Children naturally want to live as their parents do. So if we begin with the love of God, we should naturally want to live lives like his.

3. *and to keep his commandments*–Here we finally come to explicit obedience, but note that it is build on the foundation of love and childlike imitation.

4. *and to cleave unto him*–The verb is used elsewhere

• of a husband cleaving to his wife, **Gen 2:24** (first use in the Bible);

• of Ruth sticking close by Naomi (**1:14**) and the workers of Boaz (**2:8, 21, 23**).

The verb means literally "to stick, as with glue." Our responsibility is to hug the Lord and stay glued to him. We do this through regularity in spiritual disciplines such as prayer, meditation, Bible study, and public worship. Notice how foreign this is from the idea of God on Sunday and the rest of the week for ourselves. When we recognize our weakness and his strength, our sinfulness and his purity, our ugliness and his beauty, we want to be with him, as close to him as we can be. We are called to be God's Groupies, like the ardent fans who surround a rock star. If we do stick to him this way, the final command will not be burdensome.

5. *and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul*–The Hebrew accentuation sets this off, almost as a concluding summary. The verb: "*serve him*." Obedience again, as in clause 3. But not grudgingly–note the qualifiers:

• "*with all your heart*"–in Hebrew thought, embraces not only the emotions and feelings, but thought and intelligence as well. Cf. "*wise-hearted*," **Exod 31:6**. No half-way commitment here; our obedience is to be willing and joyful.

• "*with all your soul*"–"soul" is literally "life." Our entire being is to be at his disposal. Cf. **Rom. 12:1, 2**. The Bible knows nothing of the distinction Christians sometimes make between lay people and those in "full-time Christian service." From Joshua's point of view, every member of RGM/2 is to be in "full-time service" to the Lord, serving him with their entire life.

• **1 Cor 10:31**, "*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God*."

• **Colo 3:17**, "*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, [do] all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him*."

https://www.cyber-chapel.org/sermons/joshua/notes/Joshua%2022%20An%20Altar%20named%20Ed.pdf

TEXT: Joshua 23:1-16

TITLE: JOSHUA'S FAREWELL CHARGE: STAY FAITHFUL TO THE LORD

BIG IDEA:
STAY FAITHFUL IF YOU WANT TO ENJOY GOD'S PROMISED BLESSINGS

INTRODUCTION:

David Howard: The final two chapters of the book contain Joshua's two farewell speeches to the entire nation, delivered at the end of his life. Both were given in the pastoral, hortatory style found in Moses' speeches in Deuteronomy, also delivered at the end of his life. The fact that Joshua gave such speeches to the nation places him on a level with Moses as God's anointed leader over the nation, and it reinforces again the picture presented many times in the book: Joshua was the worthy successor to Moses.

Significant differences exist between the two that must be taken into account.

(1) The first speech is very pastoral, urging Israel to keep the law and to follow the Lord and warning it against turning away from him; as such, it is oriented to the future in significant ways. The second speech, while doing much of the same thing, reviews the past record of God's faithfulness to Israel in a much more systematic way.

(2) The first speech was apparently delivered to the leaders of Israel (see **v. 2**), while the second appears to have been to all the nation (**24:1–2**).

(3) The first speech apparently was delivered at Shiloh, which had been the Israelites' religious center for some time (see **18:1,8–10; 19:51; 21:1**), while the next was delivered at Shechem (**24:1**).

(4) The first is less formal than the second, since it consists entirely of Joshua's words of exhortation and admonition to his audience, while the second is followed by the people's response and by a covenant renewal ceremony.

Robert Hubbard: Indeed, the inclusion of similar farewell speeches at key junctures is a unique literary feature of the DH (e.g., **Deuteronomy; 1 Sam. 12; 1 Kings 2:1–9; cf. 1 Kings 8:1–2, 12–53**). Like those speeches, Joshua's oration reviews the "*good things*" Yahweh has done in the past and urges Israel to firm, unswerving loyalty to him in the future. He warns Israel that if they fail to do so, they run the risk of losing the land so long awaited. The speech marks one of those dramatic moments when a landmark biblical narrative pauses at crucial turning points in history to voice major biblical themes and to connect them to Israel's larger story. . .

Within the text there certainly is "a clear escalation in the severity of the rhetoric," as Nelson observes. The first exhortation simply urges Israel to stay away from the

nations and their gods (**vv. 6–8**), while the second actually warns of potential disaster (**vv. 12–13**). The final warning (**vv. 14–16**) turns up the rhetorical heat even higher: If Israel disobeys, Joshua stresses, their future will be as "bad" as the past was "good." In short, Joshua's message prepares Israel for a future without a designated successor, an era fraught with new possibilities or new disasters, all contingent on Israel's fateful choice. . .

The genre of **farewell speech** implies two important things.

(1) It assumes that older people have crucial things to teach younger ones.

(2) The genre of farewell speech reminds readers that God's plan outlives all of us. It was in full swing long before we were born and will remain so long after we are gone.

Five characteristics of such farewell speeches:

1. Speaker is responsible leader of God's people
2. Occasion of speech is approaching death of leader
3. Speeches prepare people for life without the leader
4. Except in **Joshua 23**, the speeches serve to legitimize a new leader
5. Speeches use past history to give authority to **new calls for obedience** in present and in future.

Kenneth Gangel: One of the most important concepts in this book is reiterated by Joshua in this speech: godly living is not accomplished by winning a single skirmish but by enlisting for lifelong service. For Joshua and Israel, the clashing of swords had stopped, but the need for a faithful, diligent commitment was greater than ever.

(:1-5) Joshua realized when he came to the end of his years that all the victories he had won belonged to the God who had fought those battles for him.

(:6-11) Israel faced a great threat in Canaan. All the forces of pagan culture around them tried to force their attention away from God, who had delivered them from Egypt and given them this land.

(:12-16) Everything that happened to Israel and Canaan demonstrated that God's blessing falls on people who are willing to devote themselves to his cause. God's judgment awaits people who participate in the pagan behavior around them.

Gordon Matties: The book of Joshua closes with three covenant-related episodes (**23:1-16; 24:1-24; 24:25-28**), followed by a final summary recounting Joshua's death, Israel's faithfulness, and the burial of Joseph's bones (**24:29-33**). The last two chapters, and especially **chapter 23**, are full of Deuteronomic themes and language that emphasize promise and fulfillment, obedient faithfulness, other gods, and the dangers of covenant disloyalty. The most significant word in the section is the verb "*to serve*," which occurs eighteen times in **chapters 23-24** (and before this only in **22:5** and **27** in the sending of the Transjordan tribes; a non-theological use only in **16:10**). Much is

said about what God has done for Israel. Above all, as God has been faithful to Israel, so Israel does well to be faithful to God.

Van Parunak: **General principles**

- Pervasiveness of the curse; even servants of the Lord must die.

- Value of experience, cf. role of elders. You have the most to say worth hearing right at the end. Contrast the emphasis in our society on inaugural lectures and speeches, to reassure people that they chose the right leader!

- The sense of responsibility that these men have for their people; desire to enable the people to carry on after their departure.

The nation stands at a **crossroads**. Will they continue to serve the Lord and battle effectively against sin? Or will they yield, and suffer his judgment? There is no third option, no way of ease. This life is one either of battle, or of defeat. May God give us courage to choose the way of struggle and blessing, not the way of defeat and death.

I. (:1-13) VICTORY AND POSSESSION OF THE LAND TIED TO FAITHFUL OBEDIENCE

(:1-2) Last Words of a Godly Leader

"*Now it came about after many days, when the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their enemies on every side, and Joshua was old, advanced in years, 2 that Joshua called for all Israel, for their elders and their heads and their judges and their officers, and said to them, 'I am old, advanced in years.*'"

- Think of all of God's goodness and faithfulness that Joshua had experienced
- Think of what it had cost Joshua to walk by faith and set an example for others
- Think of all the wisdom that Joshua wanted to impart in this leadership transition

David Howard: Because of this passage of time, because the land now had rest, and because Joshua was old and his end was near, it was now appropriate for him to look back to remind the people of God's faithfulness and to look ahead, exhorting and warning them about the future. . .

The farewell speeches, as they are presented in **chaps. 23** and **24**, appear to have come at the end of Joshua's life. Indeed, in **23:14**, Joshua stated that he was about to go "*the way of all the earth today*," indicating that his death was fairly close at hand. He was 110 years old when he died (**24:29**), and, if he was anywhere near Caleb's age of eighty-five when the land was distributed (see **14:10**), then his farewell speeches would have come about twenty-five years after the main events in the book.

Helene Dallaire: While some scholars envision the entire community of Israel gathered before Joshua, others see only the **leaders** standing in his presence. The latter scenario

seems more likely for logistical reasons. It would have been practically impossible to have all the Israelites from every region of the land come before the leader, presumably in his home town of Timnath Serah or at Shiloh.

Peter Wallace: He speaks to a generation of elders that has seen with their eyes the great works of the LORD:

- They were born in Egypt or the wilderness – and now they are old.
- They grew up in the wilderness – watching the rebellion of their fathers.
- They spent their manhood following Joshua – seeing God's faithfulness to Joshua – watching Joshua be strong and courageous, so that Joshua might cause Israel to inherit the land.

Joshua here speaks to the **elders** and **judges**. Why the elders and judges? Because now they are the ones who must lead. There is something of a **leadership transition** here. As Moses had appointed Joshua, now Joshua is handing over the mantle, but this time **not to one man**, but to the ordinary rulers of the people. In a similar manner, Jesus will appoint the apostles, who will hand over their mantle, not to one, but to **all the elders of the church**. And Joshua reminds the elders of their motivation for faithful leadership: The basic motivation for faithful leadership is to remember that the LORD will do what he has promised (**v5**).

A. (:3-8) First Cycle of Remembrance and Exhortation

1. (:3-5) Remembrance of All God Has Done and Promises to Do

a. (:3) Remember God's Victories in Warfare

"*And you have seen all that the LORD your God has done to all these nations because of you, for the LORD your God is He who has been fighting for you.*"

Helene Dallaire: With this declaration, Joshua places the burden on Israel for continuing to serve Yahweh faithfully, since their success in acquiring the land is due solely to his work and not to their own human efforts. The mention of God's great and mighty deeds serves to deepen Israel's identity as the people of God. "*These nations*" have failed to thwart the plans of Yahweh for Israel.

b. (:4) Remember God's Blessings – the Apportioning of the Land

"*See, I have apportioned to you these nations which remain as an inheritance for your tribes, with all the nations which I have cut off, from the Jordan even to the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun.*"

Trent Butler: Israel serves a God who can give them all God has promised. Israel also lives in a historical condition in which Israel has not taken the initiative to drive out the enemies and possess the whole land. Joshua can no longer fight for the people of Israel and help them gain power over all the Promised Land. He has allotted the various enemies to the various tribes. Now it is time for Israelite action without Joshua. They must trust God and follow the Divine Warrior to complete their mission.

Helene Dallaire: The expression "*Look!*" (NIV "*Remember*") is a wordplay with "*you have seen*" (**v.3**). Joshua addresses only the leaders of the western tribes in his statement regarding Israel's inheritance—between the Jordan and the Great Sea—seemingly ignoring the leaders of the eastern tribes. His focus is on the occupation of Canaan by Israel.

Van Parunak: **vv. 3-4 – What They Have Seen**
Note his emphasis on their own experience of **God's goodness**; cf. the reprise of this same theme in **v.14**, "*ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls*." This exhortation is not misplaced, for it is the natural character of the sinful heart to forget God's blessings and focus on our disappointments. Compare the murmurings in the wilderness. He emphasizes to them

1) the goodness of God, and
2) the fact that they themselves have witnessed it.

He calls out <u>two details</u> in particular, which ought to guard them against two errors to which the sinful heart is prone:

v.3 -- What God has done.–Note the emphasis on **God's agency**: "*for the LORD your God [is] he that hath fought for you*." They have seen the result of supernatural work in the battles they have fought. Thus they must not yield to the sin of unbelief, asking, "*Is God really among us*?" This is how Israel tempted God, **Exod 17:7**; cf. **1 Cor. 10:9**. If you will bow before the Lord, his spirit will show you that he has not forsaken you, but his victories are evident in your life. "*You have seen*."

v.4 -- What man has done.–Now we have just the opposite emphasis, on **human agency**. Joshua's concern is not to steal glory from God; the previous verse shows that. Rather, he wants to emphasize to them that **God is able to work through people, in spite of their natural weakness**. Thus they must not yield to the sin of despair, being so overwhelmed with the sense of their own weakness that they give up. This was Moses' sin in **Exod 3:11; 4:1,10**. We are earthen vessels, yet for all that, God is pleased to place his treasure in us, and we must not doubt what he can do through us. Again, "*You have seen*." If you will just stop and consider, you will realize that God has worked through you.

This **twofold theme** is so important that Joshua will repeat it in **v.9**. Satan would have us believe that God has forsaken us and we are so sinful that we can do nothing. The result will be paralysis. But the truth of the matter is that God is with us, he has worked through us, and if we will just pause and think about things, we will realize ourselves that this is the case. "*You have seen*." **Don't forget it**.

c. (:5) Remember God's Promises -- Anticipation of Future Conquests
"*And the LORD your God, He shall thrust them out from before you and drive them from before you; and you shall possess their land, just as the LORD your God promised you.*"

Robert Hubbard: Playing two senses of the same root, Joshua avers that their destruction (*yaraš hi*.) will enable Israel to "*possess*" (*yaraš hi*.) their abandoned property just as he promised (**Deut. 31:3**).

Van Parunak: Application.–The reminder of the past guards against the sin of **despair**. The reminder of the future guards against the sin of **carelessness**. Knowledge that "*we are labourers together with God*" (**1 Cor. 3:9**) guards us against both worrying over the size of the obstacles we face (God will take care of those) and "leaving it all up to God" (he expects us to exert ourselves mightily for his cause). Compare **Phil 2:12-13**.

2. (:6-8) Exhortation to Faithful Obedience

Van Parunak: Start from the end and work backward:

- The big objective (**7b, 8**) is **faithfulness to the Lord**. This is the first of the ten commandments, "*Thou shalt have no other gods before me*."

- The greatest threat to our faithfulness to the Lord is "*coming among these nations*" that "*remain*" (**7a**). The friendship of the world is enmity with God (**James 4:4**), "*He who walks in the counsel of the ungodly, will soon stand in the way of sinners, and sit in the seat of scorners*")TSK). Cf. **Deut. 7:1-5**.

- Keeping the law of Moses (**6**) is God's way of making them **distinct** from the people around them. Personal holiness can contribute to our spiritual health, as a kind of prophylaxis. If you speak differently, dress differently, act differently from the world, you are less likely to get sucked into their errors and idolatry.

a. (:6) Live by Biblical Convictions

"*Be very firm, then, to keep and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, so that you may not turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left,*"

Helene Dallaire: This exhortation is crucial for the future of Israel. Joshua has witnessed on several occasions the vulnerability and failings of the Israelites. Thus far, his resolve has kept them proceeding forward, but what would transpire after his death without his steadfastness and tenacity to remain faithful to Yahweh?

b. (:7) Avoid Corruption and Idolatry

"*in order that you may not associate with these nations, these which remain among you, or mention the name of their gods, or make anyone swear by them, or serve them, or bow down to them.*"

Robert Hubbard: Specifically, Joshua cites things to avoid: to associate or intermingle with (lit., "*come with*") the remaining nations and to take an oath on the name of their gods or swear by them (**v. 7**). The former probably refers to day-to-day contacts that might tempt the Israelites to become like the Canaanites just to get along and, thus, to

lose their unique identity. The latter specifies one common, ordinary transaction, the agreements two parties seal with an oath. To "*take an oath*" with a non-Israelite could require the Israelite party to speak the name of a god other than Yahweh aloud in public, tacitly accepting its power and authority. From that tacit recognition, it then becomes a small step to "*worship*" (NIV "*serve*") other gods and "*bow down*" prostate before their images, a violation of the third commandment (**Ex. 20:5; Deut. 5:9**). To lie face down—to be completely prostrate on the ground—dramatically acts out a symbolic total surrender to and trust in the other god(s) rather than in Yahweh alone.

Kenneth Gangel: So the standard of godly living in the land was God's Word, and the form was **separation** from sin and sinners. These verses do not indicate racial prejudice on God's part. There is no attempt here to keep the purity of the race for other than spiritual reasons. In fact, God allowed for intermarriage when aliens chose to worship him. Again, Rahab is our best example. **Spiritual intermingling** was the problem and the danger. The people dared not mix their worship of Jehovah with the worship of other gods. They could not serve both. So Joshua warned the leaders of this danger.

Madvig: For the first time in Joshua, we find an explicit warning against intermingling with the native population whose immorality and degradation were closely tied to their religious practices. Because Israel replaced a people whose culture was far more advanced than their own, the temptation to worship the gods of the Canaanites must have been overwhelming. Yet if the Israelites were to adopt their wicked practices they too would be subject to punishment (**Deut. 8:19-20**). God does not show any partiality. Israel was to remain separate from the nations living in the land of Canaan.… "*Invoke the names*," "*swear*," "*serve*" and "*bow down*" are **four expressions of worship** that are specified here to show that no form of worship whatsoever must be accorded to these pagan deities.

Trent Butler: The major concern of Deuteronomy's law is summarized. Israel's identity hangs on her **uniqueness**. Whereas the nations serve many gods, she serves only one. To avoid all temptation from the nations' gods, Israel must avoid all contact with the nations. Specifically, Israel is not to call to remembrance the names of their gods (**Exod 23:13; Isa 26:13**), that is, to praise them and to acknowledge their divine power. If the MT is correct, Israel is not to take oaths in the name of other gods (cf. **Deut 6:13; 10:20**), that is, to call upon other gods to guarantee the fulfillment of promises, for this is at the same time a recognition of the power of the god. . . Here is Yahweh's claim to the **absolute allegiance** of the people, a claim totally unique in Israel's environment, where all of the surrounding peoples worshiped many gods, even though the national god was seen as the chief god or the king of the gods.

c. (:8) Cling to the Lord
"*But you are to cling to the LORD your God,*
as you have done to this day."

David Howard: Instead of following the Canaanites' gods, the Israelites were to cling to their own God (**v. 8**). The word translated "*hold fast*" (*dbq*: also used in **v. 12** and in

22:5) means "*to cling tightly*." The root refers to the soldering process in **Isa 41:7** (i.e., a process in which things are joined together inseparably). This word has a rich theological content, showing the extreme closeness that people were to have with their God. For example, Hezekiah, a good king par excellence in Judah, is commended in terms of his trusting and "*holding fast*" (*dbq*) to God (**2 Kgs 18:5–6**).

B. (:9-13) Second Cycle of Remembrance and Exhortation

1. (:9-10) Remembrance of God's Sufficiency in Granting Surprising Victories

a. (:9) Defeats Your Powerful Enemies

"*For the LORD has driven out great and strong nations from before you; and as for you, no man has stood before you to this day.*"

Helene Dallaire: To Yahweh only belongs the glory for driving out the great and powerful nations from before Israel (cf. **Ex 23:28–31; 33:2; 34:11, 24; Lev 18:24; 20:23; Nu 32:21; 33:52, 55; Dt 4:38; 7:1, 22; 9:3–5; 11:23; 12:29; 18:12; 19:1; 33:27**). Since God had initiated the conquest and participated in its fulfillment, how could Israel now attempt to become self-sufficient? Joshua's message is clear: "There is no victory without Yahweh's intervention."

b. (:10) Fights for You

"*One of your men puts to flight a thousand, for the LORD your God is He who fights for you, just as He promised you.*"

2. (:11-13) Exhortation to Exclusive Allegiance to the God of Israel

a. (:11) Love the Lord Your God

"*So take diligent heed to yourselves to love the LORD your God.*"

David Howard: At the heart of his speech (almost exactly midway through it), Joshua challenged the people to **love the Lord their God**, which was the heart of their duties as his people. Everything else—including the important exhortations to obey everything in the law (**v. 6**) and to avoid pagan entanglements— was a means to an end, which was that Israel should have a close and loving relationship with its God. This exhortation is rooted in Moses' words in **Deut 6:5**: "*Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength*." It is the substance of what Jesus called **the first and greatest commandment** (**Matt 22:37** and parallels). The constant exhortations to Israel to be faithful to God were not given in a sterile or harshly demanding environment. Rather, they were issued in service of the larger principle that God wanted a loving relationship with his people: he promised to be with them (**Josh 1:9**), and in return he desired their **loyalty** and their **love**.

Robert Hubbard: But Joshua repeats a phrase heard earlier in the book to highlight what Israel saw because Yahweh fought for them. Just as he promised, they were so unstoppable (see **10:8; 21:44**; **Est. 9:2**) that one solitary Israelite could rout a thousand Canaanites (**vv. 9b–10**)! That was Israel's experience "*to this day*," but for that invincibility under Yahweh to continue, Israel must "*be very careful* [*šamar ni.*] *to love*

the LORD your God" (**v. 11**). The imperative is strong language—lit., "*Protect yourselves!*"—as if Joshua were sounding an urgent alarm concerning a terrible, imminent disaster.

Trent Butler: Such **love** is more than emotion, more than robotic obedience. It is total devotion and total desire and willingness to please the God you love by serving, not demanding.

b. (:12-13) Maintain Your Distinctiveness as God's People

> "*For if you ever go back and cling to the rest of these nations, these which remain among you, and intermarry with them, so that you associate with them and they with you, know with certainty that the LORD your God will not continue to drive these nations out from before you; but they shall be a snare and a trap to you, and a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good land which the LORD your God has given you.*"

Peter Wallace: God's justice is a poetic justice. If you want to live with the surrounding nations, then God will let you live with the surrounding nations! They are under his wrath and curse – so if you join them – then you will fall under his wrath and curse as well.

David Howard: If Israel chose to reject the Lord and cling instead to the nations remaining among them, then what God had already done and what he promised to continue to do for the Israelites—to drive out the nations before them (cf. **vv. 5, 9**)—he would no longer do (**v. 13**). Instead, the nations would become obstacles of the worst kind for the Israelites: they would be snares and traps to them (for earlier passages stating the same idea, see **Exod 23:33; Deut 7:16**; and especially **Num 33:55**). This prediction came true with a vengeance during the period of the judges (see **Judg 2:14–15, 21–23; 3:1–6**). The nations would become such obstacles to the Israelites that they would even cause them to lose the land itself, a land that was good, a land that had been God's gift to his people. Rejecting God was such a serious offense that it would yield even such a drastic result. God's standards would not be relaxed even for his own people.

A wordplay in **vv. 8** and **12** involves a contrast. In **v. 8**, Israel was to *cling* (*dbq*) to the Lord himself, and in **v. 12**, if Israel *clung* (*dbq*) instead to the nations, God would bring punishment.

Van Parunak: Application.–Note that the pain he promises will come from the Canaanites: "*THEY shall be snares … traps … scourges … thorns*." Sometimes you are tempted into a mixed marriage by what you feel is overwhelming love. "We love each other so very, very much, this just has to be right. I'm not willing to give up my future happiness for an old-fashioned rule about not marrying unbelievers." But the very

person without whom you feel you can't live, will become a source of deep pain and destruction to you. **Don't do it!**

II. (:14-16) FAITHFULNESS OF GOD TO BOTH HIS BLESSINGS AND CURSINGS – WARNING AGAINST SPIRITUAL APOSTASY

A. (:14) Final Testimony: Faithfulness of God to His Blessings

1. You Can Trust My Testimony

"*Now behold, today I am going the way of all the earth,*"

Robert Hubbard: To close, Joshua sounds almost like a prophet voicing a dire warning of imminent danger (cf. **Deut. 32**). He returns to where he began—with his age (**v. 14a**). The syntax of **verse 14** (lit., "*Look, today I am going* …") and language ("*way of all the earth*") betray an awareness that he could die any day now (so also David [**1 Kings 2:2**]). Rhetorically, he plays on their sympathy and appeals to their affection to persuade them to act on his words now. He also appeals to what they "*know with all [their] heart and soul*," the same prepositional phrase Joshua invoked in exhorting the departing Transjordanian tribes (**v. 14b**; cf. **22:5; Deut. 11:13; 13:4**). In other words, they know without a shadow of doubt from personal experience that what he is about to say is true. For emphasis, he sandwiches a positive claim between two parallel negative ones. . . Clearly, the point is that Yahweh has kept every promise made to Israel.

2. You Can Trust God's Promises

"*and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one word of all the good words which the LORD your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed."*

B. (:15-16) Final Warning: Faithfulness of God to His Cursings

1. (:15) God Executes His Threatened Judgments – Don't Presume against God's Goodness

"*And it shall come about that just as all the good words which the LORD your God spoke to you have come upon you, so the LORD will bring upon you all the threats, until He has destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your God has given you.*"

2. (:16) God Takes Apostasy Seriously – Don't Stir Up God's Anger

"*When you transgress the covenant of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, and go and serve other gods, and bow down to them, then the anger of the LORD will burn against you, and you shall perish quickly from off the good land which He has given you.*"

David Howard: Joshua's logic as he concluded his speech was that, just as surely as the Lord's promises had come true for Israel's good, so also his swift and devastating punishment would come upon the Israelites if they violated the covenant. God's anger would *burn* (*rh*) against his people, and, indeed, this did happen many times in Israel's

history. Whenever the Lord's anger burned against his people, they suffered, usually at the hands of a foreign enemy. . .

Joshua promised Israel that they would perish from the good land in which they lived if they forsook the Lord (cf. also **v. 13**). The land belonged to God, and it was his to give and his to take away. This promise saw its dramatic fulfillment when Judah was carried into Babylonian captivity because of its repeated transgression of the covenant (**2 Kings 25**). In this way, too, God's promises came to pass: if his people obeyed him, they enjoyed great blessing; but if they disobeyed him, they would suffer great calamity. God displayed remarkable patience, suffering through centuries of his people's covenant violations and disobedience. He repeatedly sent foreign oppressors to punish and prophets to warn, until the time came when his patience reached an end, and he sent them into exile.

Helene Dallaire: Compromise and unfaithfulness will not go unpunished. They will provoke God to anger and jealousy; consequently, great disasters will come on Israel.

Trent Butler: Again, the cause of divine wrath centers on broken loyalties, serving other gods, worshiping them (cf. **v 7**). The warning of **Deut 6:15; 7:4; 11:17; 29:24–27 (29:25–28)** is pictured as historical reality in terms similar to **Deut 31:16–18**. Warning has become almost certain. The gods of the nations appear as an almost irresistable temptation for Israel. "The peoples of the land no longer threaten Israel by their military power but by their mere presence." Hawk points out three marks of Israelite identity that rest in these brief verses: "ethnic separation, possession of land, and devotion to God through obedience to the Torah of Moses. They appear in such a way, however, as to highlight the tension between Yahweh's faithfulness and Israel's fickleness."

* * * * * * * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How can we maintain our distinctiveness as the people of God so that we are in the world (seeking to testify to Christ) and yet not compromised by the world?

2) Why is marriage to an unbeliever such a potentially devastating sin?

3) Should the church be more proactive in seeking to provide a platform for aged leaders to share their final life lessons and exhortations?

4) Why does **loving the Lord** lie at the heart of Joshua's final message to the nation of Israel and how does this mesh with the focus on keeping God's law?

* * * * * * * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Trent Butler: **Structure**

1. Community and leaders assembled for old man (**v 2**)
2. Israel's reported witness to salvation history (**v 3**)
3. Mission described (**v 4**)
4. Future as promise (**v 5**)
5. Future as imperative to obey with illustrations (**vv 6–7**)
6. Encouragement to stick to Yahweh (**v 8**)
7. Testimony to Yahweh's acts and power (**vv 9–10**)
8. Central imperative (**v 11**)
9. Future as disobedience and threat (**v 13**)
10. Closure repeating opening statement (**v 14**)
11. Closure showing logic of divine punishment (**v 15**)
12. Summary threat for covenant violation (**v 16**)

The **temporal changes** may also be used as structural markers in this creative use of literary structure.

1. Past rest (**v 1**)
2. Present aged leader (**v 2**)
3. Past testimony (**v 3**)
4. Present allotment of nations to tribes (**v 4**)
5. Future painted with optimism (**v 5**)
6. Present ongoing call to obedience in positive action and negative avoidance (**vv 6–7**)
7. Present call to continue past obedience in future (**v 8**)
8. Past testimony to divine faithfulness and victory (**vv 9–10**)
9. Present call to central positive imperative (**v 11**)
10. Present warning of consequences of future turning away (**vv 12–13**)
11. Present crisis reiterated: Joshua's departure and Israel's testimony about the past (**v 14**)
12. Future logical consequences—destruction—for God's people (**v 15**)
13. Present summary: transgress covenant, lose land for future (**v 16**)

Robert Hubbard: In short, Joshua's concluding warning brings his farewell speech to a rhetorical climax. He dispels any illusions Israel might have about "getting along" with both Canaanites and Yahweh. Such attempts at accommodation are foolhardy and futile, the risks grave. Joshua has lived long enough to know that such well-intended experiments are doomed to failure; he knows where in the wilderness the bodies of Israel's ancestors are buried. For a people to "*perish*" is to vanish from history—and, in Israel's case, to trash centuries of postponed hope endured by their patient, longsuffering ancestors. Joshua's point is that for Israel idolatry is nothing but stupid. Alas, notwithstanding Joshua's warnings, a disastrous period of Canaanization—Israel's defection from Yahweh and adoption of Canaanite culture—will characterize the early post-Joshua period (see **Judg. 2:11–13**). . .

Why is Joshua so concerned about the Canaanites? Modern readers might be tempted to adopt a live-and-let-live stance toward them. One must remember that, unlike Israel, the Canaanites worshiped a **pantheon of gods**. The head of the pantheon was the elderly patriarch **El**, the "father of humanity" and "creator of the earth," whose consort was **Athirat**, "creatress of the gods" and mother of **Baal**. The seventy gods that comprise the heavenly council are all called "sons" of El.

Canaanite religion also featured two other goddesses, **Ashtarte**, consort of the sea god, **Yam**, and ʿ**Anat**, a childless young maiden, sister of Baal and patroness of kings. At Ugarit and in the Bible, the most prominent Canaanite god was the storm god, Baal, who shows a variety of forms tied to local places (e.g., Baal Peor, Baal Zaphon, Baal Shamen, etc.). The **kingship of Baal** is the main subject of the Baal Cycle from Ugarit (fourteenth cent. B.C.). This, then, is the **general religious landscape** in which Israel settled in Canaan. . .

The presence of **Canaanite worship sites** near the Israelites also would pose a threat to their religious integrity. This would be particularly true in towns where no Levite was present to teach and encourage faithfulness. According to the Old Testament, Canaanite worship included fertility rites involving sexual relations between a worshiper and a cult prostitute (**Deut. 23:17–18; Hos. 4:12–14**). The theory was that intercourse symbolically encouraged the god(s) to inseminate the land with abundant fertility. Thus, Canaanite worship may have had <u>two attractions</u> for Israelites.

> (1) As a fertility religion with the storm god Baal at its center, it would have immediate relevance to Israelites since they were farmers. Probably, the temptation would be to worship both Yahweh and Baal—to avail oneself of the strengths of each, so to speak.
>
> (2) The very sensuality of Canaanite fertility rituals also probably attracted Israelites.

The twin appeals to relevance and to sexual pleasure tempted them to participate even if they never formally renounced loyalty to Yahweh.

Kenneth Gangel: **Conditional Blessing (23:15-16)**
Joshua 23 and **24** emphasize more strongly than any other part of the book the conditionality of the promise of the land. In one sense the covenant with Abraham is non-conditional. Ultimately, Israel will possess all the land that was promised to that great patriarch. But contentment, peace, and rest in the land depend upon the behavior of the nation. Divine sovereignty and human responsibility are complementary truths rather than contradictory positions. Furthermore, if the conquest of the land and the settling of the allotment of the tribes is the promised rest, what do we do with **2 Samuel 7:1, 11**? How could we find passages like **1 Chronicles 22:9** and **1 Kings 8:56** suggesting Solomon brought rest to the land? What is the relationship in this conditional covenant between the spiritual and the material aspects of rest and ownership?

Kaiser helps us out:

> The resolution of these matters can be found in the Old Testament view of **fulfillment**. Specifically named generations received their share of the completion of the single plan of God. This had once served as a partial confirmation of God's long-standing word and a contemporaneous installment on the fulfillment. This, in turn, simultaneously functioned as a means of connecting that word to its **ultimate or climactic fulfillment** since these periodic installment type of fulfillments were general part and parcel with that ultimate event. Thus there was a single meaning in the mind of the author even though he might know of or experience multiple fulfillments of that single meaning! The promise was not to be thought of as having been given its final effect even in the aspect of the land. Hence rest was more than entry and division of the land to all the tribes; it also was to be a final condition which pervaded the land. Thus after Israel entered the land, she was warned that she would only enjoy the quality of life God had intended for her if she continually obeyed his commandments (**Deut. 4:10; 12:1; 31:13**). The extent of Israel's possession of the land was likewise important before the promise could be said to have been completely fulfilled (Kaiser, 129).

Don Green: **Remember and Respond – <u>4 Anchoring Principles</u>**
He is admonishing them to **remember the faithfulness of God and to respond in obedience.** . . he along with Caleb is the oldest man in Israel. He has led them to great victories and has overseen the beginning of the division of the land and so he is an esteemed leader as he is speaking with them, and yet as he speaks with them, he is mindful of the fact that the people are still prone to wander even though they have seen these great victories from the Lord. There are still other foreign nations that are in the land that need to be driven out, and Joshua is not going to be the man to do that deliverance. It's time for him to exit the stage and so he's passing this responsibility off to the leadership and he is calling them and he is reminding them of what God has done so that they will finish the task. One of the things about a godly man and about a godly leader, one of the things that you as parents want to start to cultivate in your approach to your families and the way that you're dealing with your children, is that you want to be consciously mindful of the fact that you want the spiritual work that has begun in your life to outlive you. . .

<u>The first principle</u>, the first anchoring principle for us that Joshua taught the elders as well **To respect the word of God. . .**

He tells them to cling tightly to God's word, to have it in their minds, to read it, to meditate upon it, so that it would help them remain faithful. . .

Cf. Paul's last words to Timothy – **2 Tim. 4:1ff. . .**

<u>The second point</u> that Joshua calls them to is: to **remember the power of God.**

Remember the power of God. This nation, this generation, had seen displays of God's power that should motivate them to obedience and make them fearful of sinning. . .

So, Joshua reminds them, "You walked through a river on dry ground. Do you remember how that great city with the great wall fell at the sound of human voices? This is contrary to human expectation. This is contrary to the normal course of human life, and you saw that, you experienced it. You have been recipients of the power of God exercised on your behalf." He says, "Remember that." He's telling them at the end of the book, "Remember these things and therefore be faithful going forward. Don't sin against your past. Don't sin against what God has formerly done for you by drifting away now that you're on the receiving end of so much blessing from God."

So here you have three examples of God's miraculous work: at the Jordan River, at Jericho, and at Gibeon where the sun stood still, all displays of the power of God, Joshua reminding them of these things so that they would be motivated to be faithful. So what happens here, what happens for us now as we read it, you know, thousands of years later, what Israel was supposed to do when they read the book of Joshua was you're supposed to look at this and read this and say, "We serve a powerful God. We serve a God of deliverances. We serve a God who exercises his might on behalf of his people." And he's the same God today as he was back then in the days of Joshua. So we have confidence and we trust him and we obey him, trusting him ultimately to exercise his power for our benefit and that keeps us faithful to the word of God.

Thirdly, **remember the faithfulness of God**. . .
He lays out the faithfulness of God to them in the past as a motivation for them to be faithful to God in the future, and for the same for us tonight, the same for us as Christians going about our daily walk. . .

Point 4 tonight: he calls them to **respond to the call of God.**
Joshua calls them to a decision. The word of God and the works of God always place a demand on the will of those who hear. This is meant to influence our volition and our affections. You see, this is meant to shape us in our inner man. This is not about simply making life a little bit better for today or tomorrow, it's not about that at all. These things that we're talking about here go to the very fundamental convictions that frame the way that you live the Christian life. To love the word of God. To respect the power of God. To honor the faithfulness of God. Now in our situation on the other side of the cross, to remember the cross and the resurrection of Christ just like we did Sunday at communion. Remember. Remember. Remember. And then **act upon it** is the idea.
https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/128151316116.pdf

Luis Acosta: **Resisting the Drift: Faithful Living in an Unfaithful World**

Big Idea: We can resist the lure of the world (the drifting away from God-centered living) by grounding our lives in God's faithfulness towards us, clinging to Him with faithful devotion and heeding the warning of the consequences of unfaithful rebellion.

I. (:1-5) Give God Credit; Ground Yourself in the Word of God.
II. (:6-11) Cling to the Lord with Faithful Devotion.
III. (:12-16) Count the Cost of Unfaithful Rebellion.

In other words, heed the warning of the consequences of unfaithful rebellion. Do you see what he's saying? God will always keep His word, and God's word is both positive and negative. Joshua was telling the people to count the cost. They needed to realize that there are consequences to their choices and their actions. If they chose to follow the Lord by esteeming Him, obeying Him, loving Him, and honoring Him by living lives that are different than that of the world around them; they would continue to know God's blessing. If they chose not to do those things, they would experience God's judgment.

Joshua repeatedly insists on the integrity and authority and infallibility and indestructibility of the Word of God. Obey the Word—results in victory and blessing! Disobey the Word—sorrow, misery, trial, defeat. Choose to sin, choose to suffer. Joshua warned them. About 800 years later due to the constant transgressions of the covenant, the worship of pagan gods, and the wholesale abandonment of the Law of Moses would result in first the destruction of the Northern tribes by Assyria (722 B.C.), and the Southern tribes by Babylon (c.605-586 B.C.).
https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=62622349242143

Ted Groves: **The Human Side of Covenant Living**
Four Steps of Faithful Covenant Living:
1. Give the Lord credit for all you have and all you are.
2. Bold obedience to the Word of God.
3. Live a life of separation from the world.
4. Have nothing to do with the idols of the pagans
https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/53007234411.pdf

Ben Reaoch: **Be Careful to Love Your Savior**
Joshua is near the end of his life, and he gives this weighty admonition to them, exhorting them to cling to the Lord and not to stray from Him. This is a powerful moment in the history of Israel. It is a powerful speech from a great leader. . .

2 Applications:
- Leave a Legacy
- Learn from Others

There are two important pieces to **Cultivating Love for God**. One way to think of it would be offense and defense. There is an offensive, proactive pursuit of God (cultivating love for God). And then the defensive piece, which is to resist idolatrous loves. Positively we need to nurture a growing passion for God and satisfaction in Him. At the same time, stating it negatively, we must cut off the temptations to be satisfied in idols.

Offense: Cultivating Love for God
- Cling to the Lord
- Relationship Involved
- Remembrance

"*Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days*." **(Psalm 90:14**, ESV)

Defense: Resisting Idolatrous Loves
- Don't marry an unbeliever
- Close friendships with believers instead of unbelievers

"*Do not let my heart incline to any evil . . .*" **(Psalm 141:4)**
https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/817151551246.pdf

Stephen Felker: **How to Stay True to the Lord – 5 Ways**
At the end of such a long and full life, Joshua's greatest concern wasn't for himself. His greatest concern was his people and their relationship to the Lord. He was concerned about what would happen to his nation after he died. Would they remain faithful to the Lord, or would they turn from the Lord and follow after other gods?

Having assembled the leaders, Joshua presented them with two scenarios: Obey the Lord, and He will bless you, expand your territory and keep you in the land; or disobey Him, and He will judge you and remove you from the land. These were the terms of the covenant God had made with Israel at Mt. Sinai, which Moses had repeated on the Plains of Moab. Now, the challenge was for Israel to keep the covenant after Joshua passed on and avoid apostasy. . .

I. ALWAYS REMEMBER THE GOODNESS OF GOD
II. KEEP CLAIMING THE PROMISES OF GOD
III. HAVE THE COURAGE TO LIVE BY GOD'S WORD
IV. KEEP LOVING THE LORD
V. PRACTICE BIBLICAL SEPARATION
https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/612212245437842.pdf

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **The Last Words of a Faithful Old Soldier**
Introduction: Having been relieved of his duties by President Truman, General Douglas MacArthur appeared before Congress.

> "the world has turned over many times since I took the oath on the plain of West Point, and the hopes and dreams have long since vanished. But I still remember the refrain of one of the most popular barrack ballads of that day, which proclaimed most proudly that old soldiers never die, they just fade away. And like that old soldier in that ballad, I now close my military career and just fade away. He said, an old soldier who tried to do his duty as God gave him the sight to see that duty."

Before Joshua steps off the scene, he has something to say about serving the Lord. In order to communicate in his heart fully what he wants to say, he's going to have two

meetings. And as I said before, in chapter 23, he's going to meet with all the leaders of Israel. And then in chapter 24, he's going to meet with all the people of Israel. And here this faithful old soldier, before he kind of breaks camp and goes to heaven, he wants to encourage Israel to stay the course for God.

The next generation needs to be reminded of God's power. They need to be reminded of God's glory. Our children need to be exposed to the power of God. They need to be exposed to his gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit. So what we're going to see in these verses is what we need to know about keeping God's work alive.

Big Idea: **3 ways that Joshua will express these thoughts to the children of Israel.**

I. Joshua's Concerns
He sees some changes that he does not like. So like any good leader, he's going to address these things. First he reminds them of the faithfulness of God. Then he shares his concerns.

A. He Fears Their Complacency – **23:6**
As we read later on in the book of Judges, they do get complacent about the law. And because they do get complacent about that law, they do disobey God. And instead of having blessings on their life, there's curses that come.

B. He Fears Their Compromise – **23:7**
Joshua gives a warning, don't hold on to any other gods. Get rid of all the idols. Don't allow yourself to compromise your Christian life in any way.

C. He Fears Their Commitment – **23:8**

II. Joshua's Challenges – 23:9-16 (issued to the elders)
He challenges them to look at what the Lord has done and what the Lord is doing. And if they will look at that and consider the Lord, then they will more likely serve the Lord the way they should.

A. Challenge Concerning the Wrath of God – **23:11**

B. Challenge Concerning the Works of God – **Chap. 24**
Remember the mighty works of God. Remember what the Lord did, because again, if you remember what God has done and what God is doing, it'll motivate you to serve the Lord the way you're supposed to serve the Lord.

C. Challenge Concerning the Will of God – **24:14**

D. Challenge Concerning the Witness of God – **24:19**
You can't be half-hearted. You can't have one foot in the world and one foot in Christ. You can't have one foot serving God and one foot serving the gods of the land of

Canaan. You've got to fully be committed. If you take the name of Christ, you call yourself a Christian, and you live like the world, that's taking the Lord's name in vain.

Joshua takes a great stone and he sets it up there in Shechem. And Joshua says, this stone here, this great stone, will be a monument. It'll be a witness of a covenant that you have just made and renewed with Almighty God.

TEXT: Joshua 24:1-33

TITLE: *DECISION TIME – AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE . . .*

BIG IDEA:
CONSIDERATION OF COVENANT HISTORY SHOULD PROMPT RENEWAL OF COVENANT COMMITMENT

INTRODUCTION:

Trent Butler: **Josh 24** completes the book by giving the **theological definition of the people of God**. "The preceding account of God's saving acts and election of Israel has made devotion to other gods absurd." Here we suddenly find highly loaded theological language, defining God and the God-human relationship. Here we find "what is arguably the central idea about God in the Old Testament." "Joshua powerfully establishes Israel's identity as a people defined by the decisions it freely makes in response to God's initiative." . . .

Joshua forces Israel to understand the difference between their concept of god(s) and the **true nature of Yahweh**. He is the **holy, jealous God** who expects his people to be satisfied with nothing less than perfection. He is not a God whom men can bribe. He is not a God who waits around patiently while Israel flirts with other gods. He is not a God who governs one small part of the world while others take care of their shares. He is the only God, the one who has all power and all responsibility. More than anything else, he is the God who loves so much that he seeks the same whole-hearted love and devotion in return. People are incapable of such total devotion, but this is no excuse. God's people are called to demand such devotion from themselves, to be satisfied with nothing less.

Kenneth Gangel: Joshua reviews Israel's covenant history, their covenant commitment, and their covenant action. The chapter presents a vivid and dramatic picture of what it means to be in a covenant relationship with God.

> **(:1-13) Review of Covenant History** -- The nation of Israel had a history with God—a record of how God had provided and remained faithful to them through the years. In the years ahead they would find it necessary to review that history periodically.
>
> **(:14-24) Renewal of Covenant Commitment** -- Having reviewed the history of Israel in brief form, Joshua calls upon the nation to "*fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness*" and offers himself and his household as the model.
>
> **(:25-33) Recording of Covenant Action** -- Israel needs more stones with ears to record their private prayers and public promises to God about their national affirmation of faithfulness and purity.

I. (:1-13) REVIEW OF SIGNIFICANT MILESTONES IN COVENANT HISTORY

Gordon Matties: God's purpose and direction are confirmed. In spite of their worship of other gods, Yahweh has called them into a relationship and acted on their behalf against Egypt, Balak, Balaam, and the Canaanites. Here at the end of Joshua's story, we have the result of **God's initiative**: God has given the land to Israel.

James Smith: **Blessings Reviewed**
I. Deliverance.
"*I brought you out*" (**Josh 24:5**). They were emancipated through blood (**Exod. 12:13**). So are we (**1 Peter 1:18, 19**). Once the slaves of sin, now the children of God. Delivered to serve (**Luke 1:74**).

II. Separation.
"*The Lord put darkness between you and the Egyptians*" (Josh 24:7). The darkness of death still lies between the saved and the unsaved (**John 5:24**). The Lord doth put a difference (**Exod. 11:7**). No human power will ever be able to bridge the great gulf fixed between death and life.

III. Victory.
"*I gave them (enemies) into your hand*" (**Josh 24:8**). All the enemies of the believer are conquered foes. They need not have dominion over you (**Rom. 6:14; Micah 7:9**). He giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (**Rom. 7:25**).

IV. Protection.
"*When Balak called Balaam to curse you he blessed you still*" (**Josh 24:9, 10**). He can turn the counsel of the wicked to naught (**Neh. 4:15**). "*The Lord is thy keeper; He shall preserve thee from all evil*" (**Ps. 121:5, 7**).

V. Possession.
"*I have given you a land for which you did not labour*," etc. (**Josh 24:13**). "*Not of works, lest any man should boast.*" What did the prodigal do for the benefits he received? (**Luke 15:22, 23**) What have we that we have not received (**Eph. 2:7**). "*Now, therefore, fear the Lord, and serve Him.*"

(:1-2a) Preparation for Divine Address to the Nation's Leaders

> "*Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel and for their heads and their judges and their officers; and they presented themselves before God. 2 And Joshua said to all the people, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel,'*"

Kenneth Gangel: Joshua had selected the perfect place for this gathering—**Shechem**—just a few miles northwest of Shiloh where Abraham first received the promise that God

would give his seed the land of Canaan. Perhaps he even stood by Abraham's altar (**Gen. 12:6-7**). Jacob also stopped at Shechem, and Joshua had built an altar there (**Josh. 8:30-35**). This was an excellent place for this speech, since the stones on which the law had been written were probably still standing—a vivid visual aid of that significant event.

Robert Hubbard: Joshua launches the proceedings by addressing the assembled crowd. His first words are the so-called **messenger formula** ("*Thus says X*"), the standard phrase invoked to introduce a verbatim message from a third party (e.g., **Gen. 32:5; 45:9; Num. 20:14; Judg. 11:15; Isa 36:4**). In this case, the formula is (lit.) "*Thus says the LORD*," the typical preface to oracles by prophets (e.g., **Judg. 6:8; 2 Sam. 12:7; Isa. 29:22; Jer. 2:5**). It clearly signals that the sound the assembly hears may be Joshua's but the voice speaking is in fact that of Yahweh. Indeed, this marks Yahweh's lone, personal, direct address to assembled Israel in the book.

Literarily, the effect is to portray God not as an aloof commander-in-chief speaking from offsite through his field commander, but as a personal participant in the proceedings. On this occasion, God himself personally engages his people "*on the ground*" and in their midst, a party to the relationship at stake in the present proceedings. He speaks as the "*God of Israel*"—the God with a long-standing, unique relationship with the people he is addressing. He speaks as someone who wants that long history of relationship to continue and to thrive. . .

The driving theme of the speech concerns Israel's exclusive devotion to Yahweh alone.

Jerome Creach: The first portion of the covenant ceremony is a recollection of the Lord's gracious acts towards Israel, told in order to evoke Israel's response of obedience and complete devotion. This section resembles **Deuteronomy 26:5–9; Psalms 78; 105–106**; and **136**. . .

This section is unique among the historical summaries in the Old Testament in the way it focuses on the choice between the Lord and other gods. . . This emphasis on the Lord's initiative in forming Israel provides the foundation for the larger argument that it would be foolish to worship other gods, since this God is completely responsible for Israel's existence. **Verses 2–13** provide a powerful prelude to the charge that follows, "[*C]hoose this day whom you will serve*" (**v. 15**).

Van Parunak: His title emphasizes

- his eternity ("*LORD*," YHWH, the great "*I Am*")
- his authority ("*God*")
- his personality ("*of Israel*," the one who has chosen Israel above all the other nations of the earth to be his own peculiar people)

A. (:2b-4) History of God's Gracious Dealings with the Patriarchs

1. (:2b) Background of Idolatry

"*From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, namely, Terah,*

the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods."

Kenneth Gangel: Joshua goes all the way back to Terah and Abraham to remind them that just as God provided for the patriarchs he provides for Israel out of their sin and into his grace.

2. (:3a) Calling of Abraham

"*Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River, and led him through all the land of Canaan,*"

Jerome Creach: The implication is that Abraham would have continued to worship the gods of his father if God had not urged him towards a singular devotion. Hence Israel could not boast even of Abraham's piety; that also was due to God's graciousness.

3. (:3b) Multiplication of Descendants Beginning with Isaac

"*and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac.*"

4. (:4) History of Jacob and Esau

"*And to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau, and to Esau I gave Mount Seir, to possess it; but Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt.*"

B. (:5-7) History of God's Deliverance in the Exodus from Egypt

1. (:5) Deliverance Via Miraculous Plagues

"*Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt by what I did in its midst; and afterward I brought you out.*"

Trent Butler: Moses and Aaron are introduced as representatives of the two sources of authority for the Israelite community, **the priesthood** and **the Torah of Moses**. The emphasis of the historical review is not on human authority but on **divine action**. Any authority derived from Moses and Aaron is secondary. God himself is the sole source of primary authority. He sent out the humans from whom authority is secondarily derived.

2. (:6-7a) Deliverance Via Crossing of the Red Sea

"*And I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea; and Egypt pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. 7 But when they cried out to the LORD, He put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them and covered them; and your own eyes saw what I did in Egypt.*"

Robert Hubbard: In Israelite memory, these kinds of events epitomized Yahweh's awesome and overwhelming miraculous power. Here they rhetorically display Yahweh's unquestioned superiority over both mighty earthly kings and would-be rival deities, all in support of the central appeal to Israel that soon follows.

Helene Dallaire: After 430 years in Egypt, the Israelites cried out to the Lord, who then raised Moses and Aaron up to deliver them from slavery in Egypt. God afflicted the Egyptians, destroyed their chariots and horses in the sea, and brought Israel out on dry ground (**Ex 12:31–39**) to a desert region, where they lived for the next forty years.

3. (:7b) Deliverance Via Sustenance in the Wilderness for a Long Time

"*And you lived in the wilderness for a long time.*"

David Howard: A great number of people in **this generation** had actually witnessed and experienced many of the mighty deeds God had done for his people. They would have been the people who were under the age of twenty when the nation had left Egypt (see **Num 14:29–33**). Indeed, the major part of the review of the past in **vv. 2–13** focuses on what God had done for those now alive and present with Joshua at Shechem. This shows that God did not just make himself known in ages past; he also worked mightily and graciously for the people being addressed. The impact of God's words was greater because of this focus on them. Christians today are still part of that great spiritual heritage (see, e.g., **Rom 11:11–24; Hebrews 11**).

Trent Butler: The Pentateuch pictures the wilderness as the period of Israel's murmuring and God's punishment, even while depicting miraculous acts of God that preserve Israel's life. Our writer suffices with a brief mention, letting the audience fill in the details and interpretation. His focus is on **God's guidance** and **victories**.

C. (:8-10) History of Victory in Transjordan Territory

1. (:8) Victory over the Amorites (Og and Sihon)

"*Then I brought you into the land of the Amorites who lived beyond the Jordan, and they fought with you; and I gave them into your hand, and you took possession of their land when I destroyed them before you.*"

2. (:9-10) Victory over Balak and Balaam

"*Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel, and he sent and summoned Balaam the son of Beor to curse you. 10 But I was not willing to listen to Balaam. So he had to bless you, and I delivered you from his hand.*"

Kenneth Gangel: Instead of cursing Israel, Balaam was forced by God to bless them. Once again God took what someone intended as evil and turned it into something good for his people.

Robert Hubbard: The theme of **divine rescue** marks one of the speech's key themes, another of a string of divine deliverances from hostile enemies over the centuries (**Ex. 18:8–10; Judg. 8:34; 1 Sam. 17:37**). The implication is that had Yahweh not intervened, there would be no Israel for him to address on this or any other occasion. Enemies would have overwhelmed them long ago.

D. (:11-13) History of Conquest of Canaan

1. (:11a) Crossing the Jordan

"*And you crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho;* "

2. (:11b) Conquering Jericho and the Formidable Adversaries

"*and the citizens of Jericho fought against you, and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Girgashite, the Hivite and the Jebusite. Thus I gave them into your hand.*"

3. (:12) Conquering the Two Renowned Amorite Kings

"*Then I sent the hornet before you and it drove out the two kings of the Amorites from before you, but not by your sword or your bow.*"

Van Parunak: We can recognize this as a summary because it returns to the "*two kings of the Amorites*," Sihon and Og, in Transjordan.

"*the hornet*" -- Perhaps best is Garstang's observation that the Hieroglyphic sign for lower Egypt (from Cairo north, including the delta region; staging area for any foray into Canaan) is best recognized as a hornet, and that regular Egyptian campaigns into Canaan, notably from the time of Thutmose III (15th century) would have weakened the area and facilitated Israelite conquest. TIII is the best candidate for the Pharaoh of Exodus 1, who slew the Israelite babies and from whom Moses fled. He led at least 16 campaigns into Canaan and further north over a 20-year period, beginning with one that led to the fall of Megiddo and the subjugation of over 100 cities. For the next 200 years and more, campaigning through Canaan was de rigeur for Egyptian Pharaohs; Merneptah about 1229 mentions Israel among the people he finds in Canaan. Thus in the providence of God the same Egyptian dominance that thrust Israel out of Egypt to send them back to Canaan also softened up the nations of Canaan in preparation for their invasion.

David Howard: It is usually understood as a **metaphor** representing the terror or panic that an encounter with Israel's God would engender. Passages such **as 2:9–11, 24; 5:1; 6:27; Exod 15:14–16; 23:27** all show this terror, speaking of it using different terminology (cf. also **Gen 35:5**). . .

Therefore, God's statement that it was not "*with your sword or your bow*" must be understood as saying that it was not by their own power, by the might or ferocity of their own weapons, that they had success. Only by **God's power** did they accomplish what they did, something the book affirms over and over again.

Trent Butler: God, not man, has acted. Israel's blessings, Israel's entire identity, is a result of divine choice and action, not human power. The point is made in the language of **Deut 6:10–11**, another context centering on the service of other gods.

4. (:13) Crowning the Conquest with the Gift of Undeserved Productive Land

"*And I gave you a land on which you had not labored, and cities which*

you had not built, and you have lived in them; you are eating of vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant."

Helene Dallaire: God has been generous with his gifts to Israel. But with gifts come responsibilities.

David Guzik: There is a sense in which every blessing is undeserved, but some are more obviously so. When Israel enjoyed vineyards and olive orchards in Canaan, it should have made them *especially* grateful for undeserved blessings.

They should also have remembered that those who planted the vineyards and orchards were removed by God's righteous judgment, and if they disobeyed and rejected God, they might also be so judged.

II. (:14-24) RENEWAL OF COVENANT COMMITMENT

Van Parunak: Application.—The **query-answer form** reminds us that God's covenant is something that we must either accept or reject. It is not imposed unilaterally. There is a natural tension between this reality and the equal reality of God's sovereign election, and perhaps in glory we will understand how the two fit together. Our responsibility now is not to diminish either, and this passage reminds us of the importance of making a decision and committing ourselves

A. (:14-15) Call for Decision

1. (:14) Demonstrate Covenant Allegiance

a. Positive: **Fear the Lord** – Demonstrated by Service

"*Now, therefore, fear the LORD*
and serve Him in sincerity and truth;"

Robert Hubbard: A subtle, seamless shift from the divine "*I*" to the third person signals that Joshua speaks from here on. Syntactically, "*now*" shows that Joshua will draw out the **logical implications** of Yahweh's historical review. A shift from indicative to imperative mood also occurs: Two pairs of imperatives confront Israel with a decision to make in response (**v. 14**).

Van Parunak: The common requirement, "*serve the Lord*," is modified the first time with two phrases that emphasize this need for consistency, "*in sincerity and in truth*." This is an amplification of **Deut 6:5-8**.

- "*in sincerity*," lit. "completeness," "integrity," internal consistency. Focuses on the matter of internal divided allegiance. They are not to let part of their personality follow the pagan gods, while yielding another part to the Lord. All must belong to him, according to **Deut. 6:5**.

- "*in truth*," consistency between inward commitment and outward expression. Their inward service to him and their outward expression must coincide, according to the mechanisms recommended in **Deut 6:6-8**. This condition precludes two errors: not only public worship in spite of a pagan heart (hypocrisy), but also a private love for the Lord that is restrained in its outward expression ("undercover Christian").

b. Negative: **Reject Idolatry** – Demonstrated by Public Repudiation
"*and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt,*"

Robert Hubbard: **Verse 14** mentions two places where Israel or their ancestors had lived long enough to put down roots, Mesopotamia ("*beyond the River*" [the Euphrates]) and "*in Egypt*." Since polytheism (the worship of many gods) dominates both, Israel's ancestors were polytheists, adding gods to their worship roster wherever they went. But with Yahweh, Joshua says, the logic of **exclusivity** applies: Israel may serve Yahweh or their ancestors' gods, but not both; polytheism is no longer an option.

Jerome Creach: **Joshua 24:14** suggests that devotion can be more meaningful if it is made concrete in ritual; the act of burying idols not only enacts faith, it also gives **public proclamation** to one's commitment.

c. Summary: **Serve the Lord** – Demonstrated by Exclusive Allegiance
"*and serve the LORD.*"

Gordon Matties: Similar to **23:7-8**, Joshua's requirement includes <u>three responses</u>: **revere the Lord** (often translated *fear the Lord* (NIV; cf. **Josh 4:24; Deut 6:2, 24; 10:12, 20; 31:12-13**), **put away the gods**, and **serve the Lord** (**v. 14**). These three motifs are hallmarks of Deuteronomic theology and of the book of Joshua (cf. **Deut 6:13-14**). In **chapter 23** the motif of service to Yahweh or to the gods stands out as central (**23:7, 16**), just as it stands out in Deuteronomy (cf. **4:28; 7:4, 16; 8:19; 13:2; 17:3; 28:14, 36, 64; 29:18; 30:17; 31:20**). Reverence for and serving the Lord is first and foremost expressed in an **exclusive loyalty** that says no to the gods and yes to Yahweh. "*Service*" is the response that is required as an act of loyalty because of what God has done for Israel. Therefore Joshua's invitation includes both a <u>negative</u> (*put away the gods*) and a <u>positive</u> (*serve the Lord*).

<u>2. (:15) Decision Time</u>

a. Only One Choice Makes Sense
"*And if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD,*"

b. Only You Can Make the Choice for Yourself
"*choose for yourselves today whom you will serve:*"

George Bush: Not implying that it was previously a matter of indifference, whether they served God or no, or that they were really at liberty to refuse his service if they saw fit.

He adopts this rhetorical mode of speech, in order to impress upon them more forcibly a sense of their duty, and the utter absurdity, as well as impiety, of devoting themselves to any other than the true God. It is a striking way of bringing the matter to an issue. His aim is to bring them to a decided stand; to a free, intelligent, firm, and lasting choice of God as their portion. In effecting this he makes use of a style of address which evidently implies that the service of idols compared with the service of God is so irrational, absurd, and brutish, that no man in the calm exercise of his understanding could hesitate which to choose. If reason and conscience could but be allowed to speak, they would not fail to speak on the side of God. A similar course, having the same object in view, was pursued by Elijah, **1 Kings 18:21**, who '*came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.*' The grand inference to be drawn from this mode of address is,—that the service of God is matter of voluntary choice, and that it is his will that we should all seriously and solemnly make this choice. He would have us weigh the matter well, compare the respective claims of his service and the service of sin and the world, and if our candid judgment, as it surely will, pronounces on the side of that which is good, and true, and right, and saving, to resolve at once to embrace it, and adhere to it with a constancy stronger than death. As the evidences in favor of religion are so clear and indisputable, and its infinite advantages so obvious, the man who declines making the choice here enjoined must be considered as deliberately preferring Satan to Christ, death to life, hell to heaven. He who acknowledges the paramount claims of God and his Gospel, and yet does not act accordingly, does not sincerely and solemnly choose his service, as that better part which cannot be taken from him, must stand self-condemned both here and hereafter.

c. Options of Idolatry Abound

"*whether the gods which your fathers served*
which were beyond the River,
or the gods of the Amorites
in whose land you are living;"

Robert Hubbard: Given Joshua's expected death (cf. **23:1, 2, 14**), at stake is whether the exclusive devotion to Yahweh—the kind typified by Joshua and Moses—will continue into the **next generation**. In demanding a choice, Joshua mirrors the pattern of Moses, who made a similar passionate plea before Israel entered Canaan (e.g., **Deut. 30:19–20**; cf. **Josh. 23**). Here Joshua asks for commitment from the present generation, the first one in Israel's history to occupy the Promised Land. But his words also confront readers today with a similar choice: Is Jesus your Lord or not?

d. Only Option for Me = Serving the Lord

"*but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*"

B. (:16-18) Commitment Affirmed

"*And the people answered and said,*"

1. (:16b) Apostasy and Idolatry Rejected

"*Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods;*"

2. (:17-18a) Allegiance to the Lord Has Yielded Historic Blessings

a. (:17a) Deliverance from Bondage in Egypt

"*for the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage,*"

b. (:17b) Preservation along Our Journey

"*and who did these great signs in our sight and preserved us through all the way in which we went and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed.*"

c. (:18a) Conquest of the Promised Land

"*And the LORD drove out from before us all the peoples, even the Amorites who lived in the land.*"

3. (:18b) Affirmation of Loyalty

"*We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God.*"

C. (:19-24) Commitment Dialogue – Pledging Allegiance to the Lord

"*Then Joshua said to the people,*"

Kenneth Gangel: But the verses which follow seem to suggest that they were unable to convince Joshua by this great acclamation. What they said should have pleased him. But it seems as if Joshua were stopping them as they rushed to the altar to make their commitment and sending them back to rethink it. He appears to say, "You don't know what you're committing to. You're not serious enough about this. You don't realize how holy God is and that he won't just ignore your sin and idolatry. You haven't yet counted the cost of serving God." He actually told them that this jealous God… will not forgive your rebellion and your sins." But they persisted and repeatedly said, "We will serve the LORD." They were willing to be witnesses against themselves to this covenant commitment.

1. (:19b-20) Consequences of Apostasy

a. (:19b) Demand for Exclusive Allegiance

"*You will not be able to serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgression or your sins.*"

Ben Reaoch: The key lesson for us is to acknowledge that we cannot serve the Lord in our own strength. We are incapable of doing what God commands of us. We can only do so by His power. So we need to ask for His help. Don't be overconfident in your own abilities. It seems like Joshua detected a bit of **overconfidence** in the Israelites' response. So he had to remind them of their true condition.

Robert Hubbard: At first glance, Joshua's reply ("*You cannot serve the LORD*") sounds like an irritated rebuttal (**v. 19**; in modern terms, "In your dreams!"). But his seeming rejoinder in fact dispenses to theologically naive Israel a strong dose of divine reality in order to dispel a dangerous delusion. Probably Joshua senses in Israel's response (**vv. 16–18**) a mistakenly narrow preoccupation with Yahweh's ability to protect. **The danger is that they fail to reckon fully with Yahweh's unique character compared to the gods they have known.** His audience viewed the latter as so easy to please that they could serve several of them at the same time. They would, thus, assume they could easily get along with Yahweh in a mutual back-scratching relationship: They protect Yahweh and he protects them. Rhetorically, Joshua's reply underscores that two unique character traits of Yahweh—his **holiness** and his **jealousy**—make serving him all-demanding. Those traits also make the present moment a deadly serious transaction, not a simple, casual formality to be endured and then ignored.

b. (:20) Danger of Incurring Divine Judgment

"*If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you after He has done good to you.*"

Trent Butler: The issue at stake in the entire chapter is **the service of other gods, presented as a present reality for Israel.** Their experience is that of the service of gods who make **fewer demands** than does Yahweh. Israel has been able to serve such gods. She could build images for them, dress them, perfume them, build a house for them, bring sacrifices to feed them, carry them in processions, even bury them in appropriate moments (**Gen 35:4**; cf. **31:34**). The scholarly theology of the priesthood of these gods might have denied the possibility; but for the common worshipers, it was certainly within their possibilities to serve the gods they knew, indeed, to serve several of them simultaneously.

Joshua has detected this in the response of the people. They see God as the one who is bound to protect them along their way, so they can protect him by serving him. Joshua **demands a service with deeper motivation**. He wants service **based on the nature of God himself**. Joshua has described this nature in the acts of gracious election, creating a people through salvation history. Now he defines this nature with <u>two theologically loaded terms</u>, terms that explain why Israel cannot serve Yahweh.

First, God is holy. This is, aptly enough, language taken over from the Canaanite tradition itself. It is in a category all by itself in describing an attribute belonging to deity, namely, the numinous, mysterious element that separates him from all creation and creatures. In its earliest tradition Israel understands this holiness both as a saving and as a destructive power. The demonstration of the destructive power of holiness is not simply an impersonal, automatic entity in itself, however. It must be understood as the power of a God who feels himself personally insulted by the unimpressed. The holiness of God impresses the worshiper to imitate the purity of God, acting in accordance with the demands of God (**Exod 22:30 [22:31]; Lev 19:2**). The true

worshipers of Yahweh are impressed by the numinous holiness of God, so impressed that they know they cannot meet the demands of such a god. We cannot serve such a god. As Creach phrases this situation, "Israel cannot fulfill its covenant obligation to God by simple adherence to a legal code. Rather particular stipulations were illustrative examples of Israel's larger obligation to express God's holiness in every word and deed."

Similarly, God is jealous and zealous. Here again, terminology is taken from Israel's environment, where the gods are jealous among themselves. Yahweh's uniqueness lies precisely in his jealousy over against his worshipers. He loves them so much that he wants their undivided love in return. He will not share them with any other god. God turns his jealous indignation against the unfaithful worshiper, not against the rival lover. He punishes the people who try to serve him along with some other god. God's jealousy cannot tolerate this. He has given undivided love and wants the same from them (cf. **Exod 20:5; 34:14–16**). Thus Eichrodt can call the jealousy of God "the basic element in the whole Old Testament idea of God."

The nature of God himself prevents Israel from serving him. His holy purity and jealous love both tie him in total devotion to his people and tie them off from fulfilling his demands. This has drastic consequences. God will not forgive Israel's sins (cf. **Exod 23:21**). His expectations of them are too high. His love for them is too great. He cannot easily ignore their wrongdoings, their casual flirtations with other gods. The gods of the neighbors would simply wait for the worshiper to come back. Yahweh goes out to discipline the errant lover until she returns.

As Nelson summarizes the situation,

> "To be Yahweh's people is to be caught in the vortex of Yahweh's holiness and jealousy, intolerant divine qualities which demand that they serve Yahweh and Yahweh alone 'honestly and faithfully,' a demand impossible to accomplish. Yet impossible or not, they are the people who have obligated themselves by solemn covenant to serve and obey, and they are responsible for doing so.

2. (:21-24) Reaffirmation of Allegiance
    a. (:21-22) Interchange of Reaffirmation
        1) (:21) Pledge
            "*And the people said to Joshua,*
            '*No, but we will serve the LORD.*"'

Gordon Matties: Whatever Joshua means by his rhetorical challenge, the people deny his hypothetical option and affirm that they *will serve the Lord* (**v. 21**). Joshua has accomplished what he has set out to do. So he seals their commitment with his response: *You have chosen the Lord, to serve him*. The verb "*to choose*" in Deuteronomy is found mostly in phrases depicting the Lord's "*choosing*" of Israel on account of love, or a place for God's name to dwell. Almost all uses of the verb "*choose*" have God as the subject. Here, however, Joshua assumes that the divine choice also requires a corresponding human choice. And in that assumption he echoes

the rare Deuteronomic call to "*choose life*" (**Deut 30:19**). The people respond by affirming that they are both testifiers and witnesses (**Josh 24:22**). They will vouch for their own word. "*Let your yes be yes*" (cf. **Matt 5:37**).

2) (:22a) Warning

"*And Joshua said to the people, 'You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen for yourselves the LORD, to serve Him.'*"

3) (:22b) Witnesses

"*And they said, 'We are witnesses.'*"

b. (:23-24) Interchange of Reaffirmation

1) (:23) Two Essential Components of Allegiance

a) Turn Away from Foreign Gods

"*Now therefore, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst,*"

b) Incline Your Hearts to the Lord

"*and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel.*"

Jerome Creach: God's zealousness requires people of faith to "*love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might*" (**Deut. 6:5**). This message is at the heart of the book of Joshua, and at the heart of the gospel.

2) (:24) Pledge of Allegiance

"*And the people said to Joshua, 'We will serve the LORD our God and we will obey His voice.'*"

III. (:25-28) RATIFICATION OF COVENANT AFFIRMATION

A. (:25) Summary Statement of Covenant Ratification

"*So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.*"

B. (:26-27) Two Actions of Ratifying the Covenant

1. (:26a) Recording the Words of Commitment

"*And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God;*"

David Howard: What is clear is that the people were binding themselves to serve and obey him. The writing down of the decrees and laws and the calling of the great stone as a witness against them both served to seal their solemn commitment to this.

2. (:26b-27) Raising a Stone Pillar to Memorialize the Commitment

"*and he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak that was by*

the sanctuary of the LORD. And Joshua said to all the people, 'Behold, this stone shall be for a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD which He spoke to us; thus it shall be for a witness against you, lest you deny your God.'"

David Howard: The stone itself was now a witness of the covenant (as were the people in **v. 22**). It had "*heard*" everything that the Lord had said to Israel. The text only claims that the stone had heard what God had said (i.e., **vv. 2–13**), not the rest of the ceremony (**vv. 14–24**). So its presence would serve as a testimony to God's faithfulness to his people, just as the twelve stones that Joshua erected on the bank of the Jordan were to serve as testimonies to what he had done at the Jordan (**4:9, 20–24**). Such a reference to the stone's "*hearing*" is obviously a literary metaphor, in the same way that references to rivers clapping their hands and mountains singing for joy (**Ps 98:8**) or to the trees of the field singing for joy (**Ps 96:12**) are metaphors.

C. (:28) Dismissal of the People to Possess Their Inheritance

"*Then Joshua dismissed the people, each to his inheritance.*"

Robert Hubbard: With no designated human leader, Israel must now directly follow the guidance of God himself. As with any leadership change, the issue for Israel concerns their unswerving loyalty to him—whether or not they will "*serve*" him.

Thomas Constable: Each tribe was to proceed now to exterminate the Canaanites in its own inheritance territory, trusting in Yahweh and obeying His covenant. God would raise up local tribal leaders (called judges), as He saw the particular need for these, to provide special leadership in difficult situations. Committed as the Israelites were to their God, at this time, there was no reason they should fail to possess and experience all that God had promised them in the years ahead.

(:29-33) EPILOGUE – ASSOCIATION OF JOSHUA'S BURIAL WITH THOSE OF JOSEPH AND ELEAZAR – ALL IN THE PROMISED LAND AS A TESTIMONY TO THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

David Howard: The Book of Joshua ends on a satisfying, **peaceful note**, giving the accounts of Joshua's death and burial (**vv. 29–31**) and of the burial of Joseph (**v. 32**) and of Eleazar the priest (v. 33). Fittingly, the **motif of land inheritance** is the common thread in the three burial notices: the bodies of all three men were buried in land that belonged to the inheritance of their families. The burials of these three men signified the **ends of eras**: Joshua the leader and Eleazar the priest were the last recent links with Egypt, whereas Joseph represented a more distant link with Egypt and with the promises to the patriarchs. God's promises to give his people the land were now indeed fulfilled: every tribe had received its inheritance, and Israel's leaders died peaceful deaths and were buried in land that was finally their own. This peaceful ending to the book gives little hint of the troubles in that land that were to come shortly, in the Book

of Judges. However, the Book of Joshua has already given hints of these troubles. The point here is that Joshua's and the people's obedience was rewarded and especially that **Yahweh is a God who keeps his promises**.

Donald Campbell**:** Recording **three burials** is a strange way to end a book like Joshua! But these three peaceful graves testify to the **faithfulness of God**, for Joshua, Joseph, and Eleazar once lived in a foreign nation where they received God's promise to take His people back to Canaan. Now all three were at rest within the Promised Land. God kept His word to Joshua, Joseph, and Eleazar—and to all Israel. And this encourages God's children today to count on God's unfailing faithfulness. (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*)

A. (:29-31) Land Inheritance for Joshua Finalized

1. (:29-30) Death and Burial of Joshua

a. (:29) Death

"*And it came about after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being one hundred and ten years old.*"

Gordon Matties: Deuteronomy ends with the death of Moses, and Joshua begins with After the death of Moses. Similarly Joshua ends with the death of Joshua, and Judges begins with "*After the death of Joshua*." Joshua's ending, therefore, makes an explicit link forward to the book of Judges and rounds out the narrative by referring back to the transition between the books of Deuteronomy and Joshua.

Helene Dallaire: For the first time, Joshua is called "*the servant of the LORD*." Until now, only Moses had carried this epithet (**Dt 34:5; Jos 1:1, 13, 15; 8:31, 33; 11:12; 12:6; 13:8; 14:7; 18:7; 22:2, 3, 5**). Joshua's faithfulness and dedication to the mission of Yahweh has won him the honor.

b. (:30) Burial

"*And they buried him in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-serah, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, on the north of Mount Gaash.*"

2. (:31) Testimony of Effective Leadership

"*And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, and had known all the deeds of the LORD which He had done for Israel.*"

David Howard: This verse forms a fitting epitaph for Joshua: the people under his leadership served the Lord for many years during his lifetime and after his death. They evidently followed his example when he challenged them to choose whom they would serve and when he asserted that he and his household would serve the Lord (**vv. 14–15**).

B. (:32-33) Land Inheritance for Joseph and Eleazar Finalized

1. (:32) Transfer of Bones of Joseph to Canaan from Egypt

"*Now they buried the bones of Joseph, which the sons of Israel brought up from Egypt, at Shechem, in the piece of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of money; and they became the inheritance of Joseph's sons.*"

Helene Dallaire: Years earlier, Joseph had asked his brothers to swear that they would bring his bones to the Promised Land (**Ge 50:25–26**). The promise is fulfilled here when those bones are buried at Shechem, in the tract of land Jacob had purchased for his family during the time of the patriarchs.

2. (:33) Death and Burial of Eleazar

"*And Eleazar the son of Aaron died; and they buried him at Gibeah of Phinehas his son, which was given him in the hill country of Ephraim.*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What has been God's history with displaying His grace and mercy and power and faithfulness to your family? How should that impact your future decisions?

2) How do we demonstrate our allegiance to the Lord? What threatens to divert our loyalty and exclusive devotion"

3) How can we incline our hearts toward God?

4) Do you feel awkward pressing somebody to make a decision regarding allegiance to Christ?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

David Howard: The book ends in a very satisfying way, with the nation at peace with itself, occupying the land it had looked forward to for centuries in covenant relationship with its God and with its leaders buried properly on lands that were their own. A period of harmony, stability, and peace followed for a number of years (**24:31**). Yet, it was only a temporary state of affairs, the calm before a great storm. That storm is recounted in the next book.

F. B. Meyer: Throughout the story, the entire stress is laid on the **grace of God**: *I took ; I gave; I sent; I brought; I destroyed; I gave ; I delivered*. Not a mention is made of Israel's mighty men. All is attributed to the ultimate source of nature, history, and grace

-- **the supreme will of God**. We cannot get beyond that. However many links we interpose between ourselves and the causes of things, ultimately we are shut up to acknowledge the determining counsel and foreknowledge of God.

Robert Hubbard: In essence, to serve Jesus is to "*listen to His voice*"—to shut out the voices of the other gods once and for all and to tune only to his. It means to obey what he taught and to pattern our lives after his model. It means daily to affirm "*we will serve the LORD*." It means to take to heart words often spoken in some congregations as a benediction at the end of morning worship: "So, reader, go from this place (or text) to love and serve the Lord."

Helene Dallaire: The mission of God for Israel was demanding and grueling, but also inspiring and rewarding. Yahweh called his people to a special place, reserved only for them. The leaders—Moses and Joshua—remained faithful during the conquest. The people of Israel could now continue their tradition of faithfulness as their journey progressed in the land Yahweh had given into their hands. In the same manner, the Christian life is a journey that is both challenging and rewarding. There are battles to be won and enemies to be defeated. There are also moments made precious by the awareness that Yahweh is forever present and at work in the life of the believer. As the narrative reveals so clearly, "God's faithfulness to his people shines brightly" throughout the entire book of Joshua" (Howard, 445).

David Thompson: Joshua was a man who had walked with God for many years and he had seen God do many things. He faced one enemy after another and fought battle after battle. Yet when we come to the end of his life, we find him thinking about all God had done over the years and he wanted the people to remember all God had done. He is an old soldier for God with a final message:

(:**1-15**) GOD'S PEOPLE NEED TO THINK CAREFULLY ABOUT ALL GOD HAS DONE IN PAST HISTORY AND THEY NEED TO FEAR HIM AND SERVE HIM IN THE PRESENT BECAUSE THAT IS WHAT CONTINUES GOD'S BLESSINGS.

There were <u>four challenges</u> that Joshua gave to Israel:

<u>Challenge #1</u> - **God's people need to fear God. 24:14a**
God's people need to reverence God and fear God. God's people need to stand in awe of God. Somehow this point is being lost today among people who claim they are the people of God. There is no reverence for God.

<u>Challenge #2</u> - **God's people need to serve God. 24:14b**
Do not overlook what is said here. We do not serve God any way we think; we must serve Him in *sincerity* and *truth*. In order for service to be acceptable to God, it is exclusive to Him and it must be done in truth. No one can serve God and live a lie.

<u>Challenge #3</u> - **God's people need to put away false gods. 24:14c**
God had brought Abraham out of idolatry and he did not want Israel back in it. God

challenges His people to always keep their focus and worship on Him and to Him.

Challenge #4 - **God's people need to make a concrete individual choice. 24:15**
Joshua ended this by saying they needed to make a choice as to whether they wanted to serve God or idols. Joshua says for him and his house he chose to serve the LORD, who had done so many wonderful things for him and the nation.

It is interesting to me that Joshua does not beg people or try to emotionally manipulate people. He simply says **make a choice**.

(:**16-28**) WHEN GOD'S PEOPLE HAVE SEEN GOD DO WONDERFUL THINGS AND HAVE EXPERIENCED WONDERFUL BLESSINGS AND HAVE PROMISED TO BE FAITHFUL TO GOD AND SERVE HIM AND THEN THEY GO BACK ON THEIR WORD, GOD WILL TURN FROM BLESSING HIS PEOPLE TO HARMING HIS PEOPLE.

Here is the warning that comes straight from this text. If you have seen God do great things for you and you choose to turn back to your old lifestyles, you will anger God and your world will come crumbling down. God will not bless rebellious people. He will judge them.

Spurgeon: [Closed his sermon on **Joshua 24** with this passionate call for a decision:]

> When you get home write this down if you can, "As for me, I will serve the Lord." Put your name to it in earnest. Or, if this is not to your mind, write "As for me, I will serve the world," and put your name to it. I long to drive you to decision. If God be God, serve him; if Baal be God, serve him. Oh, may the Spirit of God lead you to decide for God and his Christ this very moment, and he shall have the praise for ever. Amen.

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