

# **Joshua, Judges, and Ruth -- an Introduction**

## **JOSHUA, JUDGES, AND RUTH -- AN INTRODUCTION**

**by Ronnie Hayes**

**BIO:**

Ron was born in 1954 in Birmingham, Alabama. He is married to Cynthia (Reeves); and has three children: Leah, Kyle, Anna. He attended Freed-Hardeman College, the Memphis School of Preaching, and the Alabama Christian School of Religion. He preaches in several gospel meetings and teaches at various lectureships each year. He works with the Indian Creek Youth Camp and serves on their Board of Directors. He is in his tenth year of work as local evangelist with Barn Creek, Alabama church.

### **INTRODUCTION**

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). Some who are casual readers of the Bible find it difficult to understand the Old Testament and even harder to find anything of relevance. Paul to the church at Rome said it was "for our learning." Joshua, Judges, and Ruth are clearly books from which the reader can glean great truths which are just as relevant today as they were the day they were spoken. "Joshua, Judges, and Ruth form a unit of three books linking the history of the Pentateuch with history of the monarchy. The period covered by the books was transitional." <1> As we look at each of these books we will consider the authorship, date, theme, and setting or background in which the book was probably written and then at some practical lessons which we can learn.

### **JOSHUA**

#### **Authorship of Joshua**

The Book of Joshua derives its name from its principal character. Joshua has been viewed as the author by most conservative writers. Pulpit Commentary records:

"The Talmud states that it was written by Joshua himself; that Eleazar wrote the account of Joshua's death, and that Phinehas added the verses containing the narrative of the death of Eleazar ... We read in the Babylonian Talmud (Nedarim, fol. 22b), that had the Israelites not transgressed the law they would have needed no other canonical books than the Pentateuch, to which the Book of Joshua must be added, because it contains the account of the settlement of the tribes in Land of Promise. In the same Talmud (Baba Bathra, 15a), we are told that Joshua wrote the book which goes by his name, as well as the last eight verses of Deuteronomy (see note on Josh. 1:1)." <2>

Willard W. Winter gives the following evidence as proof that Joshua was the author:

"In the Talmud (Baba Bathra, 15a) the Jewish tradition ascribes the authorship of the Book to Joshua. The translators of the Greek version entitled the book with the Greek form of Joshua's name, thus indicating their belief that Joshua was the chief actor and author ... The last chapter records the death of Joshua and also the death of Eleazar. If this last paragraph were penned by a later author, there is really hardly any reason why Joshua could not have written the body of the work. Throughout the book we find statements such as 'unto this day,' indicating the passage of some time, but two or three decades are a considerable number of years. There is evidence that the book was written by one who had been an eyewitness to the events. Josh. 5:1 carries the statement, 'We crossed over.' ... Since the book was evidently written by one who was contemporary with the events, there is hardly any reason for denying that Joshua wrote the book." <3>

When one turns to the opposite view of those who might be considered conservative, almost anyone but Joshua is suggested as the author.

"Although conservative scholars sought to reconcile the difficulties (Carpzov, Jahn) and to defend the traditional view of the authorship of Joshua, by the middle of the nineteenth century even so staunch a conservative as Keil had abandoned this position, while still maintaining the book's unity and antiquity. By the last half of the nineteenth century critical scholars were assuming a long history of literary development behind the book and concentrating their efforts on tracing the steps of this prehistory in detail." <4>

Joseph S. Exell wrote that Joshua could not have been the author:

"The Jewish rabbis and early Christian writers all supposed this book to have been written by Joshua himself; but this is an impossible assumption, for besides telling of his death it alludes to a number of things that did not happen until long after that event (see, e.g., Josh. 15:63 compared with Judg. 19:10-12; and 19:47, with Judg. 18:7,27ff). In fact, like the other historical books of the Old Testament, it is an anonymous writing, and when critically examined is seen to have been originally united to the Pentateuch, and to have been composed in the same manner. It is made up of extracts from various narratives, pieced together by a later hand in the manner of Eastern historians, and in its present form cannot be much earlier than the time of Ezra."<5>

## **Date of Joshua**

When one tries to determine the date of the book he will find several possibilities suggested. One's idea concerning the time of this book is dependent to a great degree upon who one considers to be the author. Is it a document of contemporary times, one which was written some twenty-five years after the death of Joshua, or even a "composition of the Deuteronomist in the time of Manasseh"?<6> Winter wrote:

"The book continues the story of the people of Israel from the point where the Pentateuch leaves it. It begins immediately after the death of Moses. The people of Israel mourned for thirty days after Moses' death. When this period of mourning was over, God gave the command to Joshua to move the people of Israel across the Jordan River from the east side to the west side. This was their entrance into the Promised Land....The date of the exodus can be rather firmly established as 1447. Forty years were spent in wandering, meaning that the people of Israel came to Palestine about 1407. If Joshua died some thirty years later the book would cover the span between 1407 and 1377."<7>

Thompson's Chain Reference Bible cites 1451 as the beginning of Joshua.<8> The Pulpit Commentary states:

"There is the view that the book is a contemporary document. This is the early Jewish tradition. The Talmud states that it was written by Joshua himself; that Eleazar wrote the account of Joshua's death, and that Phinehas added the verses containing the narrative of the death of Eleazar ... Keil and others regard it as a treatise of somewhat later date than the time of Joshua, composed about twenty-five or thirty years after his death ... Ewald's theory is a very elaborate one. He regards the book as a composition of the Deuteronomist in the time of Manasseh. This conclusion he bases on the very slight foundation that there is an allusion in Deut. 28:68 to the condition of Judea in the time of Manasseh, or even later."<9>

## **Theme of Joshua**

The theme of this book deals with the faithfulness of God. Winter said:

"The Book of Joshua is not intended merely as a continuation of the history of Israel from the death of Moses to the death of Joshua. It does fulfill this immediate purpose. Neither should it be called only a description of the acts of Joshua. The real purpose is to show how the faithful covenant-God fulfilled His promise to Abraham (Gen. 15:18; cf. Josh. 1:2-6)."<10>

Keil makes mention of the object of the books as, "the inviolable covenant faithfulness of Jehovah in the fulfillment of His promises."<11> Indeed, Joshua tells of the faithfulness of God in relationship to His promises.

"And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that he swore unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand. There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass (Josh. 21:43-45).

## **Background of Joshua**

The Israelites had been delivered from Egypt with Moses as their deliverer. They had spent a period of forty years wandering in the wilderness. They expected Moses to be the one who took them to the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but now he was gone. Their faith must have been wavering! Could God fulfill what he had promised? Was He strong enough to defeat their enemies and to cause them to possess the land? This was a problem which they had already faced (Num. 13:26-33). Who better to stand for the faithfulness of God, than one of

the young men who did it in Num. 13? There may have been many who had grasshopper complexes, but Joshua was not one of them.

## Practical Lessons from Joshua

1. When God is with us, who can stand against us? "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Josh. 1:5). "And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that he swore unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand" (Josh. 21:44). "For the Lord hath driven out from before you great nations and strong: but as for you, no man hath been able to stand before you unto this day" (Josh. 23:9).

2. God's people are to be a people of courage! "Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swear unto their fathers to give them" (Josh. 1:6). "And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies against whom ye fight" (Josh. 10:25). "Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left" (Josh. 23:6).

3. With God all things can be accomplished (Josh. 6:1-17). Sometimes God's people forget this and when they do, then comes the grasshopper complex. Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

4. Be sure your sin will find you out (Josh. 7:1-26). There is no place one can go to sin and be hidden from God. Once one has sinned he has only two possible options: (1) To be forgiven of it or (2) to face the consequences of it. One has to pay for what he does. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezek. 18:20).

5. Mac Deaver wrote, "The book of Joshua is the book of conquest."<12> As a Christian one needs to see the victories.

"So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 15:54-57)

## JUDGES

### Authorship of Judges

There are several theories concerning the authorship of Judges. These theories will usually be divided along the lines of conservative versus liberal. John L. Kachelman, Jr. comments as follows:

"The author of the book of Judges is debated. The author is not named and several theories have been suggested. One liberal theory suggests that each Judge wrote his own account and then the accounts were compiled by a single editor. This theory is unlikely and is only given in an attempt to discredit the inspiration of the Scriptures. Others who have been suggested as likely authors include: Phinehas, Samuel, Ezra, or Hezekiah. Of these suggestions the most probable is Samuel. The following points support the Samuel authorship. The work is from a single individual. The life of Samuel fits into the historical time-frame -- the narrative was written before Jerusalem was captured and after Israel had a King (Judg. 1:21; 17:6). The author also knew that the Tabernacle had been moved from Shiloh, an event that took place in Eli's priesthood (Judg. 18:31). The book appears to have been written by a prophet because it harshly condemns the leader's wrong-doings. Hebrew tradition has historically supported Samuel's authorship.<13>

Adam Clarke favored Samuel as the author:

"Who the author of the Book of Judges was, is not known; some suppose that each judge wrote his own history, and that the book has been compiled from those separate accounts; which is very unlikely. Others ascribe it to Phinehas, to Samuel, to Hezekiah, and some to Ezra. But it is evident that it was the work of an individual, and of a person who lived posterior to the time of the judges, (see Judges 2:10ff) and most probably of Samuel."<14>

Winter also quotes Unger as an advocate of Samuel's authorship.

"Merrill F. Unger in his Introductory Guide to the Old Testament proposed that Samuel may have been the author and compiler. He lists the following reasons for this position: 1. The book exhibits the unity of a single author. 2. The author was not in a large measure a compiler. (He mentions such evidence as the fact that the author includes Deborah's song and other material which would be a part of Israel's literary heritage.) 3. The book shows evidence of coming from the age of Saul (e. g. Judg. 1:21). 4. Hebrew tradition holds that Samuel was the author. (see the Talmud, Baba Bathra 14b)."<15>

As has already been mentioned, many do not believe that Samuel was the author or that it was even possible for Samuel to have been the author. Such is the case with Joseph S. Exell: "Its authorship -- or rather, the authorship of any part of it, for it is drawn from more than one source -- is unknown, and its final redaction, as is shown by the presence of Deuteronomic and other elements, cannot have taken place until after the exile."<16>

Another who is critical of the authorship of Samuel is A. S. Geden. He speaks of the traditional narrative, the moral commentary, and the chronological framework as being separate sources but woven together by a compiler or a reviser who completed the book in the form in which it now exists.<17>

## Date of Judges

When one seeks to arrive at the date of this book it is difficult to determine what the chronological table might be, seeing there are so many differing ideas. Most commentaries agree on three hundred to three hundred and fifty years as the time span of the book.

"The duration of the government of the Israelites by judges, from the death of Joshua to the commencement of the reign of Saul, was about three hundred and thirty-nine years. But as this book does not include the government of Eli, nor that of Samuel, but ends with the death of Samson, which occurred in A.M. 2887; consequently, it includes only three hundred and seventeen years; but the manner in which these are reckoned is very different, as we have seen above; and as will be more particularly evident in the following tables by Archbishop Usher and Sir John Marsham ... The Chronological table according to Archbishop Usher starts with A. M. 2570 and ends with A. M. 2887 ... The Chronology of the Book of Judges by Sir John Marsham starts 65 years after the exodus and ends some 383 years later."<18>

Charles Pledge says:

"The period of Judges includes the time from the entrance of the people led by Joshua into the promised land, through the judgeship of Samuel, to the inauguration of Saul, the first king. The Book of Judges itself does not cover that whole period but it does include more than 300 years; from 320 to 350 years of time is probably covered in the Book of Judges."<19>

Willard W. Winter writes "The Book of Judges must have been written before David's time, for the author of Judges says Jerusalem was still in the possession of the Jebusites (Judg. 1:21)."<20>

## Theme of Judges

Various suggestions have been made as to what the theme of Judges might be. Unger says:

"The book is designed to continue the history of God's chosen people through the era intervening from the death of Joshua around 1375 B.C. to the time of Samuel about 1075 B.C., a period of approximately three centuries. Special prominence is accorded certain periods in the general or local history of the tribes, the purpose, like that of the Pentateuch and Joshua, being religious rather than strictly historical. The general aim is to show that apostasy from Jehovah is followed by servitude and punishment. Repentance brings restoration. The events illustrating this spiritual principle are selective, sometimes coeval rather than in chronological sequence, with long periods passed over in silence. Some of the Judges, for instance, are mentioned only by name without any description of their career."<21>

Winter puts it this way: "When a Christian reads the book, he is impressed with the way in which it underlines the

truth that rebellion against God brings punishment, but repentance brings restoration."<22> This writer likes to think of it in this way, "God means what he says!" If any book needs to be studied in this present age of trouble the Book of Judges does. If the world needs to see any one principle in the Bible, this would be it. God means what he says!!

## **The Background of Judges**

Since the Book of Joshua teaches us that God is faithful concerning His promises. God had given every good thing to Israel which He had promised and that is all many people ever want to see; but there is another side to God. He rewards faithfulness and punishes disobedience. The children of Israel said they would obey and Joshua warned them of God's wrath if they did not obey Him.

"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods; For the Lord our God, he it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed; And the Lord drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the Lord; for he is our God. And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good." (Josh. 24:15-20)

The children of Israel said they would be faithful, but that is not what happened.

"And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash. And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel." (Judg. 2:7-10)

Now these people were going to see that God meant what He said. They would see both the goodness and severity of God. "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off" (Rom. 11:22).

## **Practical Lessons from Judges**

1. One of the most important lessons to be learned in this book is that we are always just one generation away from apostasy (Judg. 2:7-10).

2. Never underestimate your ability to help others. "And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go; but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go" (Judg. 4:8). How many people could have been helped through the years if we had only gone with them?

3. Too many times we get lost in numbers. Some think that numbers make everything right. Some think if there are only a few, surely whatever we are doing is not working. Much can be accomplished by a few. "And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water" (Judg. 7:6). "And they stood every man in his place round about the camp; and all the host ran, and cried, and fled" (Judg. 7:21). Here was a case of three hundred against a great multitude, but with God's help the multitude ran. I might be just one, but through God's help I can accomplish much!

4. Another lesson to be learned is that if you play with fire you are going to get burned. How many times have you heard a Christian say, "I can handle it!" only to be swallowed up by some sin. Samson must have thought he could handle Delilah, but he couldn't. The Bible tells us that she was relentless against him until he gave in. "And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death" (Judg. 16:16). The next time you hear someone playing with sin and thinking he or she will not have to suffer the

consequences, remind him or her of Samson.

5. We can also learn that we are not a law unto ourselves. "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 17:6; 21:25). Just because one is doing what one thinks is right does not make it right. It is God's Word which defines sin and tells us how to live and overcome sin. Man does not have the ability to devise a plan to take away sin.

## **RUTH**

### **The Author of the Book of Ruth**

As with the study of Joshua and Judges, viewpoints on the Book of Ruth are sharply divided along conservative and liberal lines. Willard W. Winter writes:

"The fact that it has been closely associated with the Book of Judges has lent emphasis to the view that the book was probably written by the same man who wrote Judges. Ancient Jewish and Christian tradition has pointed to Samuel as the author. Some modern commentators, such as Robert Pfeiffer in his Introduction to the Old Testament (page 717), declare that this view is no longer tenable. A. S. Geden feels that a post-exilic date (about 400 B. C.) seems to be a preferable time for its being written.

"Even some very conservative Christian writers such as Merrill Unger (Introductory Guide to the Old Testament, page 384) take the position that the author of the work is unknown. They admit that the Babylonian Talmud ascribes the book to Samuel, but they hold that this is not likely.

"The Babylonian Talmud (Baba Bathra, 14b) says Samuel wrote the book. Matthew Henry in his introductory materials to his comments on the Book of Samuel wrote that it is probable that Samuel was the penman of it.

"Since history knows no other authors, Samuel should be regarded as the writer of the Book of Ruth."<23>

The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible says the author is unknown, possibly Samuel.<24> Clarke said:

"As to the author, he is as uncertain as the time. It has been attributed to Hezekiah, to Ezra, and to Samuel; and it is most likely that the author of the two Books of Samuel was also the writer of this little book, as it seems necessary to complete his plan of the history of David.<25>

W. R. Newell put it this way: "It is properly viewed as a supplement to the Book of Judges. Samuel was probably the human author of both. But it matters comparatively little which of His human pens the Holy Spirit used in writing any book of the Bible; He is the sole Author of all."<26>

### **The Date of the Book of Ruth**

Most conservative commentaries place the writing of the book from 1350-1050 B. C. Some place the date much later and others much earlier. Neale Pryor writes:

"The events in Ruth happened during the days of the judges (1350-1050 B. C.). Judges ends with two stories of events "when the judges ruled": Micah and the Danites, and the Levite and his concubine. It is interesting that these two stories and Ruth all refer to Bethlehem. Perhaps there is a connection between the three stories.

"Although the events of Ruth occurred during the days of the judges, it is likely that the book was written somewhat later, perhaps in the days of David. Customs alluded to in Ruth are explained as if they were no longer in vogue (Ruth 4:7).

"Because of its close connection with Judges, Ruth is sometimes considered a part of Judges in early Jewish writings, as in Josephus, Against Apion, I, 8. While Ruth is considered as one of the books of history in the English Bible, in the Jewish Bible it is in the writings. It occupies a place among the Five Megilloth (scrolls); the other four are Lamentations, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes and Esther."<27>

Willard W. Winter places the date at 1015 B. C.<28> Harrison takes the view that it is unlikely that Samuel was the author of Judges and Ruth.

"According to Talmudic tradition Samuel was the author of Judges and Ruth, and while it is possible, it appears unlikely, in that the concluding genealogy implied that David was well known at the time. In rejecting this tradition modern critical scholars have entertained varying periods of composition for the work. Thus, Keil ascribed the book to the time of the early monarchy, while Wright thought that it was not later than David in its extant form, a date that he subsequently modified to include the possibility of late pre-exilic composition. Other scholars to adhere to a Davidic date included Steinmueller and Young."<29>

## **Theme of Ruth**

It is the opinion of this writer that the Book of Ruth sets forth one of the greatest themes found in the Bible. This book shows that God selects a particular kind of person rather than just a race of people. Ruth was a young Moabitish woman, yet the lineage of Christ came through her. Young says this of the book: "The book also serves to show that the true religion is supranational, and not confined to the bounds of any one people."<30>

## **The Background of the Book of Ruth**

The story of the Book of Ruth took place when a young Moabite woman found herself a widow. Now she faced some of the most difficult decisions she had ever faced. What would those decisions lead to? Where would she spend her life? What would become of her? These were questions she must answer!

## **Practical Lessons from Ruth**

1. Ruth showed great wisdom in deciding to serve God. "And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (Ruth 1:16).
2. This great decision of Ruth also shows personal commitment. She said, "I will go" and "I will lodge."
3. Ruth also was willing to follow the right person. Ruth told Naomi, "Whither thou goest." Many of our problems today could be solved if one would but follow the right person.
4. Ruth was one of proper priorities which can be seen in the fact that her commitment was a life-long one. "Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me" (Ruth 1:17).
5. Ruth showed one of the greatest attitudes when she said, "... the Lord do so to me, and the more also, if ought but death part thee and me" (Ruth 1:17).

## **ENDNOTES:**

<1> Willard W. Winter, Studies in Joshua, Judges, Ruth (Joplin, Missouri: College Press, 1973), p. 15.

<2> H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell, The Pulpit Commentary, Vol. 3, Deuteronomy, Joshua, and Judges (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), p. i.

<3> Winter, p. 13.

<4> Brevard S. Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fortress Press, 1982), p. 241.

<5> Joseph S. Exell, The Biblical Illustrator, Joshua, Judges, Ruth (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House,

1958), p. vi.

<6> Spence and Exell, p. i.

<7> Winter, p. 16.

<8> Frank Charles Thompson, *The New Chain-Reference Bible* (Indianapolis, Indiana: B. B. Kirkbride Bible Company, Inc., 1964), p. 190.

<9> Spence and Exell, p. i.

<10> Winter, p. 17.

<11> C. F. Keil, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishing, 1988), I:202.

<12> William S. Cline, Editor, *Joshua* (Austin, Texas: Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1987), p. 2.

<13> John L. Kachelman, Jr., *Studies in Judges* (Abilene, Texas: Quality Publishing, 1985), p. 12.

<14> Adam Clarke, *A Commentary and Critical Notes, Volume II -- Joshua to Esther* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, n.d.), p. 99.

<15> Winter, p. 318.

<16> Exell, p. 5.

<17> Ibid.

<18> Clarke, pp. 99-101.

<19> Charles A. Pledge, *Getting Acquainted with the Old Testament* (Memphis, Tennessee: Pledge Publications, 1971), p. 34.

<20> Winter, p. 317.

<21> Merrill F. Unger, *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1968), p. 287.

<22> Winter, p. 319.

<23> Ibid., p. 579.

<24> Thompson, p. 191.

<25> Clarke, p. 190.

<26> William R. Newell, *Studies in Joshua-Job* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publishers, 1983), p. 75.

<27> Garland Elkins and Thomas B. Warren, Editors, *The Living Messages of the Books of the Old Testament* (Moore, Oklahoma: National Christian Press, Inc., 1977), p. 108.

<28> Winter, p. 580.

<29> R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing

Company, 1969), p. 1060.

<30> Edward J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), p. 340.

# **Joshua, Judges, and Ruth -- a Summary**

## **JOSHUA, JUDGES, AND RUTH -- A SUMMARY**

**by Darrell Conley**

**BIO:**

Darrell was born in Burnet, Texas, and he is the son of the late F. F. Conley, a gospel preacher for over 60 years. Darrell has done local preaching in Texas, Louisiana, and Georgia. He is married to Loretta (Crow), and they have three children. He attended the University of Texas at Austin, as well as John Marshall Law School in Atlanta, Georgia. He conducted a Bible question-and-answer program on New Orleans radio station for 10 years. He is the author of several books and Bible school literature. He has served as the evangelist at the Northern Oaks Church of Christ in San Antonio, Texas for several years. He was a speaker at the fourth through the twelfth annual Denton lectures.

## **INTRODUCTION**

I wish to thank the elders of the Pearl Street congregation and Dub McClish for the invitation to participate in this thirteenth Annual Denton Lectures. It is very gratifying to have part in this valuable contribution to the edification and confirmation of the brotherhood. Dub and Lavonne McClish have our thanks for the many hours they work in producing this book. The influence of these printed lectures will continue for many years and on into eternity.

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope" (Rom. 15:4).<sup><1></sup> These three books are rich in lessons for us. In them we read of men and women of great faith that we should imitate. In them we also read of men and women who made great failures of their lives. They still stand more than three thousand years later as a warning to us.

These books are a vital link in the history of redemption. The period they cover spans almost five hundred years, from the death of Moses to the end of the period of the Judges. During this period of Israel's history, the land promises God had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were fulfilled. Israel came into its heritage. Without these books we would know little of the great work of Joshua, the faith of Rahab, the fall of Jericho, the successes and failures of Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson, and the beautiful love story of Ruth and Boaz. This will only be a summary of some of these themes, but it will be eternally worthwhile to read and study the other lectures in this book and to re-read the great books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth.

## **JOSHUA**

### **Joshua Succeeds Moses**

What a daunting task Joshua inherited at the death of Moses! To him was left the actual conquest of Canaan. It is no wonder that the book begins by recording God's promises, reassurances, and commands to Joshua. "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee; I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Josh. 1:5). Four times in this first chapter Joshua was exhorted to be strong and courageous (Josh. 1:6-7,9,18). In view of God's promises, Joshua had every reason to be strong and courageous. Every leader needs strength and courage. It is part of the definition of leadership. A leader who is neither strong nor courageous is a contradiction in terms. Americans have largely become disgusted with elected officials because they exhibit little strength or courage. They raise a moistened finger in the air to see which way the popular wind is blowing and then "courageously" take the most popular position. They thus follow rather than lead. We need elders and preachers who will be strong and courageously stand for the right even if it is not popular.

Joshua was exhorted "to observe to do all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to

the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest have good success" (Josh. 1:7). Later, when Joshua was giving his farewell address, he repeated this as an exhortation to the people. "Therefore be ye very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left" (Josh. 23:6). Although the terms "right" and "left" had not come to mean "conservative" and "liberal," Joshua was not to veer away from the law in any direction whatsoever. Neither should we. We must neither make laws where God made none, nor loose where God has bound. One is not better than the other. In reacting to one, let us not swerve to the other extreme.

In order to "observe to do all the law," and "to not turn from it to the right hand or to the left," Joshua had to be able to understand the law. The question of whether he could understand the law or come to a knowledge of the truth was never considered. It was obviously assumed. When Joshua exhorted the people in Josh. 23:6 to "keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses," he obviously knew it was possible for them to know it and to keep it. It is only in our skeptical age that such questions arise. When God reveals through His Word what His will is, He expects us to be able to understand what He says. It is only when we do not want to believe or do what He says, that we begin to have problems in understanding. When logic and grammar give some a conclusion they do not want to reach, they invent a new hermeneutic that will allow them to conclude what they want to conclude. Let us be frank. Such is simply disguised disobedience and unbelief. We still are required to do ALL of God's will. Like Joshua and his generation, we are not allowed to pick and choose. How strange it would be if God had delivered the law of Moses in such a way that it could be understood and obeyed, but did not do that with the New Testament of His Son!

Joshua was to pay close attention to the law of Moses. "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate thereon day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein" (Josh. 1:8). Joshua was to study (meditate) upon the law day and night. This is the way understanding comes. It is hard work that many do not want to do. Many would rather spend their time and effort doing something else. The benefits of such meditation are enormous.

"But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Ps. 1:2-3).

Do you long for certitude and stability? Meditate on the law of the Lord day and night.

The law of Moses was not only to be Joshua's meditation, but was also to be his doctrine. "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth" (Josh. 1:8). He was not to teach something different from the law of Moses. Many preachers and elders need to learn this lesson. What we teach and preach must be the unchanged gospel of Christ. The anathema of God rests upon those who do otherwise (Gal. 1:7-9). In the past thirty years or so, too many sermons have been filled with the ideas of Barth, Kierkegaard, Tillich, Brunner, Freud, or Carl Rogers and too few with the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, Paul, James, and Jude. Instead of convicting men of sin and declaring the gospel, some preachers are trying to do psychotherapy from the pulpit. They are more interested in giving their listeners unearned self-esteem than in giving them the bread of life. The reason the church has in many places departed from the truth is that many preachers have allowed the gospel to depart out of their mouths.

## **The Salvation of Rahab and Her Family**

Nearly forty-five years ago, I attended a gospel meeting in my home town of Burnet, Texas. I stayed with my grandparents that week so that I could be at the meeting. Brother J. D. Boren, for whom I was named, was holding the meeting. I had never before heard him preach. Brother Boren was a great preacher and I still remember one of the sermons he preached that week. It was on the salvation of Rahab. Others will be dealing with Rahab and some of the questions her story raises. I only want to make here two of the points I heard J. D. Boren make in that meeting.

First, to be safe, Rahab and her family had to remain in her house. "And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, if any hand be upon him" (Josh. 2:19). Salvation was located in a specific place. So it was during the flood. Salvation was only in the ark. So it was during

the death of the first-born in Egypt. Safety was only in the house with the blood on the doorpost. So it is today. Salvation is found only in Christ and His church. Those who ask, "Is it necessary to be a member of the church in order to be saved?" do not understand the nature of the church. If they did, they would never ask that question. The church is made up of the saved. It is the body of the saved. "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47 KJV). The terms of salvation and the terms of entrance to the church are the same. When we obey the gospel, the Lord adds us to the church. There are no saved people outside the church.

Second, Rahab's house was identified by a line of scarlet thread in the window (Josh. 2:18). Just as the blood on the doorposts in Egypt was typical of the blood of Jesus Christ, so this scarlet thread is typical of His shed blood by which He purchased the church (Acts 20:28). Not a drop of His blood went into the purchase of any man-made church. Nor is there an ounce of saving blood in any institution except the church of Christ. When our digressive brethren lock arms with the teachers of falsehood and their man-made churches, they are helping to destroy the souls of men just as surely as if they had preached, "One house is as good as another house," in the times of Rahab or the Passover. Let us never be persuaded or intimidated into abandoning the truth of the uniqueness of the church of Jesus Christ. It has no business having fellowship with the counterfeit churches of men.

## **The Fall of Jericho**

The fall of Jericho illustrates some truths about grace and faith that are badly needed today. Some in the church are parroting the denominational nonsense that salvation is by grace alone or faith alone. If salvation is by grace plus nothing, then it is not by faith at all. Faith and grace are not the same thing. Grace is something God does and faith is something man does. If we are saved by grace alone, then salvation is universal -- all will be saved and none lost. Grace has been shown to all (Titus 2:11).

The walls of Jericho fell by the grace of God. "And Jehovah said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thy hand Jericho" (Josh. 6:2). The city was a gift from God. Without the power of God, Israel could not have knocked those walls down; but they did not fall by grace alone. Immediately after telling Joshua He was giving them Jericho, God then told them what they must do in order to receive the gift (Josh. 6:3-5). God's grace was conditioned upon the people's marching around the walls once each day for six days, seven times on the seventh day, while remaining silent the entire time. When they finished the seventh circuit of the city on the seventh day, the priests were to blow the rams' horns, and the people were to give a great shout. When they had done that, God in His grace gave them Jericho. Who would deny that He gave them Jericho? Who would deny that it was by His grace that He gave them Jericho? Who would deny that He required certain actions of them over a period of seven days?

God saves us by His grace. "By grace have ye been saved" (Eph. 2:5). But He requires us to believe, repent, confess His Son, and be baptized for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). There is no more tension between grace and baptism than there was between God's gift of Jericho and the marching around the walls. There can never be tension between God's grace and God's Will.

Neither is there a contradiction between faith and obedience. "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been compassed about for seven days" (Heb. 11:30). The walls fell down by faith after the people had obeyed God's Word. How can there be a problem between faith in God and doing what He says do? There is a real problem when we claim to have faith in God and then say, "Therefore I do not have to do what He says do."

## **Reading All the Law**

"And 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. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the sojourners that were among them." (Josh. 8:34-35)

Notice that Joshua read the law to them. He could not have done this if the law had not been written down. Modernists, in order to destroy faith in the inspiration of the Bible, claim that Moses did not write the law. J, E, P,

and D wrote it and then Ezra or some other redactor put it all together one thousand years later. But here we have confirmation that Moses did write the law. Jesus said that Moses wrote the law (Matt. 19:8; Luke 24:44).

Notice also that he read all the law, even the negative parts. By doing so he may have made those who had violated the law and therefore came under its curses feel bad. He may have hurt their feelings. He may have damaged their self-esteem. It is a wonder they did not leave and join the Canaanites. For years I have wondered exactly what people mean when they talk about negative preaching. Some of you will be surprised that I have on occasion been accused of negative preaching. At first I thought they were talking about using negatives in preaching: words such as "no," "not," "don't," and such like. But I soon realized that that could not be negative preaching, since all of us must use negatives quite often just to communicate. For example, an elder once told me as a nineteen-year-old preacher in my first full-time local work, "Never preach against anything." I knew he must not mean that, since he had done it while in the act of telling me not to do it.

I soon discovered that people would describe as "negative preaching" the preaching of positive commands, such as attend, give, go into all the world, repent, and be baptized. I have finally decided that negative preaching is any preaching that I don't like -- and preaching that I have a negative reaction to. If so, then such passages as this govern: "For am I now seeking the favor of men. or of God? or am I striving to please men? if I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ" (Gal 1:10).

Let us preach the gospel in its entirety, blessings and curses. Let us preach it to all: men, women, the little ones, and the strangers.

### **How Long?**

"How long are ye slack to go in to possess the land, which Jehovah, the God of your fathers, hath given unto you" (Josh. 18:3)?

Today we might pose this question to the church: How long are ye slack to perform the duty which Christ, the Lord of all, hath given unto you? "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15). We have greater tools than ever before to carry out the Great Commission. We have faster transportation and faster communication than ever before in the history of the world. We have fewer political barriers to the preaching of the gospel. How long will we be slack?

### **Drawing Larger Circles than God Does**

"Else if ye at all go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you; know for a certainty that Jehovah your God will no more drive these nations from out of your sight; but they shall be a snare and a trap unto you, and a scourge in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which Jehovah your God hath given you" (Josh. 23:12-13).

For years now the liberals among us who want so desperately to include the denominations in our fellowship have used a superficial illustration and poem about someone who drew a circle to keep them out, and how they outwitted them by drawing a bigger circle that included the excluder. Does it ever occur to them that it is wrong to draw bigger circles than God draws? We do not want to exclude anyone that God includes, but we do not want to include those God excludes. The Israelites failed to exclude all of the Canaanites, and throughout their history they were snares and traps, scourges in their sides, and thorns in their eyes.

In the New Testament we are told to exclude from fellowship those who cause divisions (Rom. 16:17), the immoral (1 Cor. 5:11), those who walk disorderly (2 Thess. 3:6), those who do not obey Paul's epistle (2 Thess. 3:14), the factious (Titus 3:10), those who do not bring with them the teaching of Christ (2 John 1:10). This listing is not exhaustive, but the message is clear. We cannot treat as faithful children of God those who are not faithful children of God or those who are not children of God at all. To extend Christian fellowship to them is destructive to them, for it confirms them in their sin, and it is destructive to the church because it causes it to accept that which is

not acceptable. It is past time to plainly recognize the division that has occurred in our brotherhood and refuse to have any further fellowship with digressive brethren. It is time to plainly mark those who continue to work both sides of the street. If they cannot quit straddling the fence, let them know that we have. It is time to cut the cancer out of the body of Christ. We have delayed too long.

## **Sincerity and Truth**

"Now therefore fear Jehovah, and serve him in sincerity and in truth" (Josh. 24:14). If there is one basic error that almost defines denominationalism and the liberalism that is among us, it is the belief that we are all right with God as long as we are sincere, as long as we mean well. Sincerity is certainly a necessary condition for salvation, but it is not a sufficient condition. We must not only be sincere, but we must be sincere in the truth. Being sincere and in error will cause us to die in our sins. Paul was sincere as he persecuted the church (Acts 23:1), but he was at the same time the chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:13-15).

## **JUDGES**

### **Failure and Apostasy**

The generation that Joshua led was among the most faithful of all the generations of Israel that we read about in Scripture. It was said of them, "And Israel served Jehovah all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, and had known all the work of Jehovah, that he had wrought for Israel" (Josh. 24:31). This shows the power of faithful leadership. But, although they kept their own generation faithful, they did not prepare the next generation. We have lost some valiant soldiers of the cross in recent years and others are coming to the end of their earthly struggle. What are we doing to take up the standard that has fallen from their hands? We are in a mortal struggle. We must train faithful soldiers of the cross.

They failed most in failing to keep the influence of the false religions of Canaan from the people. They failed to drive the Canaanites out (Judg. 1:27,29-31,33; 2:1-3). We have failed to keep the influence of false religions out of the church. We have sent our young scholars to the seminaries of the Canaanites to get their advanced degrees. Then we welcomed them into the faculties of our colleges and turned our children over to their tender mercies. We have virtually lost a generation and we have lost our colleges. Is there more than one or possibly two to which we would dare to send our children? It is happening to us as it happened to the Israelites: "And there arose another generation after them, that knew not Jehovah, nor yet the work which he had wrought for Israel" (Judg. 2:10).

The Christian Chronicle published in its June 1994 issue a study on youth attitudes by Abilene Christian University professors David Lewis and Carley Dodd (who is a cousin of mine).<2> They interviewed two thousand junior high, high school, and college students, as well as elders, preachers, and youth ministers about their attitudes toward truth. The results are eye-opening. More than half the youth ministers, junior high students, senior high students, and almost half the college students believe that it doesn't matter what church someone belongs to as long as he loves God. Fewer than a third of the students and just over a third of the youth ministers believe that one has to be an active member of a church to go to Heaven. Only two-thirds of the elders and three-quarters of the preachers believe it. Statements in the article by the researchers make it plain that they regard a refusal to accept and fellowship denominations as self-righteous and sectarian. Why was this study first published in the Abilene Reporter News? Will the survey be used to show how much those surveyed need to change in their attitudes toward the church or to show how much the church needs to change to accommodate those surveyed? We should spend our time discovering what God thinks, not what men think. We must change the minds of men, not scratch their itching ears.

### **Cycles of Apostasy**

One thing that strikes the student of Bible history is the repeated apostasy of the Israelites. This should be a

warning to us. We are not immune to apostasy. We are in the midst of one that has been in progress for at least thirty years. It is time that some fence-straddlers wake up and decide on which side of the fence they want to fall. This struggle is too important to continue to tolerate apostates or their fellow travelers. Some remind me of the man who decided to be neutral during the Civil War (known to some as the war of Northern aggression). He put on a Union jacket and a pair of Confederate trousers. He was found shot to death shortly thereafter with a Confederate bullet through his Union jacket and a Union bullet through his Confederate pants.

There is no neutrality in the war for truth. This war will never end this side of eternity. We need to realize that the battle over such things as instrumental music, the direct operation of the Holy Spirit, the distinctiveness of the church, premillennialism, and even such fundamentals as the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible and the virgin birth will need to be fought and won within the church again and again. The antidote to each apostasy is restoration - a return to God and His law. Each time Israel left God He allowed the nations about them to oppress them. Each time they cried out to God for deliverance and turned back to Him, He delivered them (Judg. 3:9,15; 6:6; 10:10-16).

## **Gideon**

When God called Gideon to deliver His people out of the hand of the Midianites, three times Gideon requested confirmation from God. Many of us might conclude that Gideon was a little too cautious or perhaps reluctant to take on this task. That might have been so. But it is hard to find fault with a man who was careful to determine what God's will was. Too many people exert little or no effort to do so. Most in the world could not care less. Many in the denominations search only until they find something they like. They are too easily satisfied. Many in the church do not read or study the Bible as they should. We must remember that we are not immune to religious prejudice and itching ears. "Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

Once Gideon had gathered his army God told him to let all that were afraid go home. Twenty-two thousand of his thirty-two-thousand-man army went home. God has never had a place in His army for cowards, nor does He today. Those who are afraid to speak the truth for fear they will lose their jobs or their popularity are a disgrace to the cause of Christ. Elders who are afraid to exercise church discipline will give account of their failure in the Judgment. The fearful lead the list in Rev. 21:8 of those who will have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. We must be as Joshua was exhorted to be: "Strong and of good courage" (Josh. 1:6).

Having purged Gideon's army of the fearful, God then tested them at the water. All but three hundred failed the test. God has often tested men at the water. He tested Naaman at the water (2 Kings 5:1-18). Jesus tested the blind man at the water (John 9:6-7). He tests us at the waters of baptism. It is not a test of faith to be asked to do that which reason agrees with and where the connection between the act commanded and the blessing received is obvious. Baptism is a test of faith. Because many cannot see the causal connection between baptism and salvation, they refuse to be baptized for the remission of sins, even though the teaching of the New Testament is clear. They have failed the test. They may cry at the top of their voices from now until doomsday that they believe, but they do not. What faith they have is vain (James 2:18-26). As soon as Gideon was dead, Israel left God again (Judg. 8:33). How often Israel put its trust in men instead of in God. How often men do the same today. Men die. Men will disappoint us. God does not. How absurd to quit the church over something that men have done! God has never mistreated us or abused our trust. We must be faithful to Him.

## **Jephthah**

Others will have dealt with the question of Jephthah's vow in detail. I only want to make two points.

First, Jephthah's vow was obviously foolish and needless. God required no such vow to deliver the children of Ammon into Jephthah's hand. Jephthah did what many try to do today: He tried to bargain with God. We have nothing to bargain with. How much better to pray as our Lord did, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). God does not require more than He has revealed in

the Bible. It is foolish and hurtful to vow rashly before God. A rash vow made in our youth in the enthusiasm of the moment may be more than we can do or should do. God holds us to what we promise.

Second, one has to admire the heroic statement of Jephthah's integrity when he says, "I have opened my mouth unto Jehovah, and I cannot go back" (Judg. 11:35). Jephthah was a man of his word. How many today stand before God and their friends and solemnly vow to be faithful to one another and to live with one another for better or worse until death parts them, and later decide that it was worse than they thought. Many do not take their marriage vows seriously; but God does. He is going to hold us to what we promised, and we dare not go back.

## **Samson**

Samson had some successes, especially in his death, but overall he was a colossal failure. Just think what he could have been with his background and the strength of God! He was strong enough to overcome everyone but himself. We are often our worst enemies. It brings tears to my eyes when I think of the talented men and women I have known, once faithful, who were lost to the cause of Christ. It brings tears to my eyes when I think of my own sins and weaknesses and how much more I could have done for the Lord. My mother used to read a poem to me, the name of which now escapes me, but whose moral I remember: "Of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these, 'It might have been.'" Samson learned, but too late to do much good.

## **RUTH**

### **Loyalty**

This short book is set during the time of the judges. Elimelech and Naomi left Bethlehem-judah to escape famine and emigrated to Moab with their two sons. One can question their judgment in doing so. They actually took their young sons among idolaters and allowed them to marry Moabites. When Elimelech and his two sons died, Naomi decided to go back home, having heard that the famine was over. Naomi attempted to take leave of her daughters-in-law and spoke very gently to them. She recalled their kindness to their dead husbands (her sons) and to her. She kissed them and they wept with her, and both declared that they would go with her. She discouraged them, knowing that she had nothing to offer them. Orpah returned to her people and her god, and Naomi encouraged Ruth to do the same. Ruth replied with one of the most beautiful statements of loyalty recorded anywhere:

"Entreat me not to leave thee, and to return from following after thee, for whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God, where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: Jehovah do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me" (Ruth 1:16-17).

No doubt many who have heard these words and the wedding song that is based on them would be astounded to learn that these are words from a daughter-in-law to a mother-in-law. All stand-up comics have to do to get a laugh is say the word, "mother-in-law." Who can count the jokes that have been made about mothers-in-law? I learned many years ago by observing my own wonderful mother-in-law how baseless these jokes are. Isn't it strange that the word "mother" is a sacred word in our language, but the word "mother-in-law" has such unpleasant connotations? Yet every mother-in-law is also a mother. Perhaps it is because some mothers-in-law have not behaved toward the mates of their children the same way they behave toward their own children, and the in-law children sometimes behave more like outlaws. Obviously, Ruth was an exceptional daughter-in-law, but Naomi must have been a fine mother-in-law to elicit such loyalty. She obviously had made such an impression on Ruth that Ruth was willing to leave her country, her own family, and her religion for that of Naomi. May we be such an example to our children and to their husbands and wives.

## **The Outrage of the Decade**

"Christmas at Matthew's House" by Andre Resner is surely the outrage of this decade. He goes out of his way to

cast suspicion upon Ruth's virtue. The love story of Ruth and Boaz has always been known as a tender and pure story of human love, but not in the eyes of Andre Resner. He only raises the suspicion of Ruth's impurity to get to his real victim: Mary, the virgin mother of Jesus. Surely Paul was right when he wrote:

"To the pure all things are pure: but to them that are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. They profess that they know God; but by their works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:15-16).

Is it not possible that the four women mentioned in Matthew's genealogy of Christ are there because all four were Gentiles? We know Ruth and Rahab were. Bathsheba was married to a Hittite and was likely one herself. Judah left his brethren and went to live in a Canaanite town, married a Canaanite, and was still living there when he chose Tamar as wife for his firstborn. She was likely a Canaanite. Isn't it likely this is what these four women had in common? In Matthew's record, which was addressed to Jews, he begins by emphasizing the four Gentile women in the lineage of Christ. I guess we could not expect a professor (1) who did not know that the Catholic doctrine of the immaculate conception refers to the birth of Mary, not the birth of Christ, and (2) who thought that all the children under two years of age were killed by Herod, not just the males (Matt. 2:16), to notice that these women were Gentiles.

## **CONCLUSION**

The lessons that can be drawn from these three Old Testament books are limitless. Let us resolve to spend more time with the Word of God and apply it to ourselves.

## **ENDNOTES:**

<1> All Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version of 1901 unless otherwise stated.

<2> David Lewis and Carley Dodd, The Christian Chronicle, June 1994, pp. 16-17.

# **God's Commission to Joshua and Rahab's Protection of the Spies (Josh. 1:1--2:24)**

## **GOD'S COMMISSION TO JOSHUA AND RAHAB'S PROTECTION OF THE SPIES**

### **JOSHUA 1:1--2:24**

by Gary Colley

BIO:

Gary comes from a family of gospel preachers. He himself began preaching in 1954. He is married to the former Maggie Witty; they have three children. He is a graduate of Freed Hardeman College. He holds many gospel meetings and speaks on several lectureships each year. He is an experienced radio and TV preacher, and he has taught in preacher training schools in Texas, Oklahoma, and Tennessee for 20 years. He is the evangelist with the Southwest Church of Christ in Austin, Texas. He is also the director of the annual Southwest Lectures, as well as the editor of *The Christian Worker*. He was a speaker at the fourth, sixth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth annual Denton lectures.

## **INTRODUCTION**

It is a joy once again to have a part in the Annual Denton Lectureship under the able oversight of the elders and under the directorship of a long-time friend and brother, Dub McClish. We rejoice not only in the excellent numbers that hear these lectures each year, but also in the vast host that we believe will see the videos, listen to the tapes, and read with profit the lectureship book in future generations. Commendation is due to each member of the Pearl Street Church of Christ, who labors so diligently in a myriad of ways and who so warmly welcomes their guests.

### **Joshua the Man**

To know about the life of any great man is a pleasure. But to study about the great and pious man Joshua, "full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him" (Deut. 34:9), who distinguished himself by outstanding bravery and faithfulness as a humble servant of God over a period of many years, is to love him. His background, life of service, and leadership stand head and shoulders above most if not all mere mortals who have before and since lived on the earth. Our first notice of him is found soon after the exodus from Egypt when he was highly esteemed in being chosen as one of the tribal representatives sent out by Moses to spy out the land of Canaan. Because of his unwavering faith in God, his faithful report and encouragement to take the promised land immediately almost resulted in his being stoned to death (Num. 14:6-10). Listed fourth in the list as "Hoshea," meaning "a desire of salvation," he was identified as the son of Nun of the tribe of Ephraim (Num. 13:8-16).

However, soon we also note a change being made in his name, like those of Abram and Sarai (Gen. 17:5-15). Evidently this was given prophetically by Moses. It symbolized Joshua's future work as an instrument in God's hands to lead Israel in many victories over the forces of their enemies, the Canaanite nations, as Israel fought her way to the promised land. "And Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun Joshua" (Num. 13:16). "Joshua" signifies "being Divinely appointed, he shall save, head of salvation, the salvation of Jehovah, and savior." In his approximately seventy years of public service, he seemed always to live up to his name. There is not a single stain on the name of Joshua! These are designations much like those of Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, and the Savior of the obedient world. He is clearly called "Jesus" by Stephen and by Paul in the New Testament (Acts 7:45; Heb. 4:8, KJV).

This one, born in slavery in Egypt and being in the deliverance, at first was known as "the servant of Moses." One month after the death of Moses, at about eighty-five years of age, this courageous man was appointed to be successor to Moses in leading Israel (Exo. 17:14). In one six-year period under his leadership, six nations and thirty-one kings were conquered for God and Israel! Perhaps the secret of his successful life may be most easily seen in his own statement, "But as for me, and my house, we will serve Jehovah" (Josh. 24:15). He departed this life at 110 years of

age. The fact that he was so close to the magnanimous man Moses, even accompanying him to Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments on the tables of stone (Exo. 14:13), further qualified him for the important work and leadership position he would occupy. His valiant leadership of Israel across the Jordan into the promised land can be compared to Christ's leading His people through the valley of the shadow of death into Heaven (John 14:1-6); Ps. 23:4). He was also honored by God in exceptional ways as he served faithfully in the leadership of God's people. Few leaders have deserved and received such esteem, honor, and confidence as did the great man Joshua!

## **The Book of Joshua**

The Book of Joshua is distinguished in that it follows in the canon of the Scriptures the first five books of the Bible. It continues the legislative codes of the law of Moses, and actually brings to completion the books of the Pentateuch with the conquest of Canaan. How we thrill to the rich description of the land of promise (which is a type of Heaven), the imperatives upon the people to follow God's commands (just as we must follow the New Testament today), and the cherished promise given by God to Israel (which reminds us of our rich blessings in Christ our Redeemer).

## **EXEGESIS AND EXPOSITION OF JOSH. 1:1--2:24**

### **Josh. 1:1-18, Jehovah's Great Charge and Joshua's Trust**

Josh. 1:1 -- The death of Moses was mourned "thirty days" (Deut. 34:8), though the usual practice of mourning was for seven days. Some attribute the last chapter of Deuteronomy to the authorship of Joshua. This expresses the great love and honor conferred on Moses by Israel, now numbered at about three million. With the exception of striking the rock, instead of speaking to it as Jehovah commanded (Num. 20:10-13), Moses had carried out his special mission of making known God's will and leading the people exceptionally well. He is here termed "the servant of the Lord" in both Josh. 1:1 and Josh. 1:2, an epithet which every Christian today should covet (Rom. 6:16-18). Though Joshua, "Moses' minister," had been chosen and appointed earlier to be the leader of Israel in the place of Moses (Num. 27:18-23), it was approximately one month after his death before he took the place of honored leadership and authority over Israel.

Josh. 1:2 -- The beginning of the charge to Joshua to "arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people" was enough to make the most courageous leader flinch. However, the Divine instruction to this military leader, along with the previous command given to Moses (Deut. 11:24-25; 31:6-8), was accepted by Joshua. The land of Canaan was the land of promise, which, like Heaven, was worth all of the effort necessary to obtain it (cf. Heb. 4:1).

Josh. 1:3-4 -- God's gift of the promised territory, the boundaries of which are here described (cf. Deut. 19:8-9), was conditioned upon obedience: The people must arise and go over (Josh. 6; Eph. 2:8-10). The borders were described as "the wilderness," which was the desert on the south and east, bounded by "this Lebanon," the mountain range to the north, "unto the great river" of the Euphrates on the east and "the great sea," the Mediterranean.

Josh. 1:5 -- The land of Canaan was given to the people of God by Divine decree or grant. God assured Joshua that he and Israel would have no enemies of greater strength than their own "all the days of thy life." Although the assurances of God were given for a successful conquest of Canaan, God still made the victory conditional on the faithfulness of Joshua and the people. God's rewards are conditional, a lesson which is taught clearly throughout the Bible. When Moses failed to follow the Divine instructions, God said this constituted not believing in and sanctifying Him before the people (Num. 20:10-13). God's law must be studied and obeyed completely by those who desire His blessings to attend our efforts (Matt. 28:18-20). We have only ourselves to blame if we are negligent and lost.

Josh. 1:6 -- "Be strong and of good courage" is repeated three times in the commission to Joshua and a fourth time in the close of the first chapter (Josh. 1:6-7,9,18). Like commands were given by Moses to the twelve spies (Num. 13:20) and by Hezekiah to Israel (2 Chr. 32:7-8). Courage is not the absence of fear, but the presence of faith!

# **Achan's Sin and Execution -- Defeat Followed by Victory at Ai (Josh. 7:1--8:35)**

## **ACHAN'S SIN AND EXECUTION -- DEFEAT FOLLOWED BY VICTORY AT AI**

**JOSH. 7:1--8:35**

**by Lester Kamp**

**BIO:**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In order to fully appreciate the events of Josh. 7 and Josh. 8, we need to look back at the events which immediately precede these chapters. Recall that the Israelites were coming out of a great victory, the conquering of the city of Jericho. God had given them the victory through the faithful obedience of Israel to all that God had commanded. Upon this victory God had clearly stated:

"And the city shall be accursed ("devoted," ASV), even it, and all that are therein, to the Lord ... and ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse and trouble it. But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the Lord: they shall come into the treasury of the Lord (Josh. 6:17-19)."<1>

"Accursed" ("devoted") can be understood when we recognize its meaning as "...devoted to the Lord, either in form of sacrifice or as an item of worth. So that if the people take to themselves that which has been devoted to God they will make themselves an object to be devoted or sacrificed to God. Hence the warning."<2> "This meant that everything was dedicated to the Lord -- the people, the houses, the animals, and all the spoils of war -- and He could do with it whatever He pleased."<3> So God made it clear to all of Israel that they were not to take anything from "the spoils of battle" in the victory over Jericho, for they belonged to God. It was "the first fruits" of the victories to come.

Further, we should notice the relationship of idolatry to all of this in Deut. 7:21-26 --

"Thou shalt not be affrighted at them; for the Lord thy God is among you, a mighty God and terrible. And the Lord thy God will put out those nations before thee by little and little: thou mayest not consume them at once, lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee. But the Lord thy God shall deliver them unto thee, and shall destroy them with a mighty destruction, until they be destroyed. And he shall deliver their kings into thine hand, and thou shalt destroy their name from under heaven: there shall no man be able to stand before thee, until thou have destroyed them. The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire: thou shalt not desire ("covet," ASV) the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein: for it is an abomination to the Lord thy God. Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it: but thou shalt utterly detest it and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it is a cursed thing."

## **EXEGESIS AND EXPOSITION OF JOSH. 7:1--8:35**

### **Josh. 7:1-9, The Defeat at Ai because of Achan's Sin**

Josh. 7:1 -- With this background information clearly in mind, we turn our attention to Josh. 7 and Israel's defeat at

Ai. This was Israel's first and only military defeat in Canaan! The chapter begins "But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel" (Josh. 7:1). God's covenant had been violated, God was no longer with the nation of Israel, and so they lost the battle. God's covenant was conditional. God would be with them only as long as they did what He commanded them to do.

"Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. 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." (Josh. 7:7-8).

Victory came from God. Their victories were not because of Israel's size or military abilities since these nations which Israel conquered were "greater and mightier" than Israel (Deut. 7:1). The land belonged to God in the first place (Lev. 25:23). These nations were being cast out because of their sin (Gen. 15:16), and God was doing this through Israel. Israel's victories were dependent upon the presence of God. God could not be with Israel at Ai because there was sin in the camp. "For the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee: therefore shall thy camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee" (Deut. 23:14). Notice that the sin of one would (and did) affect all those in the camp. The sin of one within their camp proved to be a stronger enemy than did the men of Ai.

God made it clear that the trespass of Achan was imputed to the whole congregation of Israel: "But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing ... Israel hath sinned. and they have also transgressed my covenant which I have commanded them ..." (Josh. 7:1,11).

"Being one body, God attributed the crime of the individual to the entire congregation until the trespass was discovered and public discipline carried out. It was not that the nation approved of the action of Achan, but that he had robbed the people of the purity and the holiness which they possessed before God. Israel had to purge itself of the iniquity, and until the sinner was separated from them and disowned by them there would be sin in the camp."<4>

Achan had committed a "trespass"; he had acted "under cover" and had breached the trust of God in Israel. Notice that in his confession he stated that he had "sinned against the Lord God of Israel" (Josh. 7:20). All sin, in fact, is against God.

Josh. 7:2-9 -- Ai geographically would give the Israelites an opening into the central part of Canaan. "The capture of Ai would put the Israelites in possession of the main road running north and south through Palestine, and enable them to reach the center immediately."<5> Joshua sent men from Jericho to "go up and view the country" in and around Ai (Josh. 7:2). The report came back saying that "they are but few" (Josh. 7:3) and, therefore, few would be needed to conquer the city. Only "about three thousand men" (Josh. 7:4) attempted to defeat Ai, but these were put to flight and "thirty and six men" (Josh. 7:5) lost their lives in the retreat. The Berkeley Version reads, "killed about 36 of them and pursuing them from their gates to the quarries, killed more on the way down." As a result of this devastating, unexpected defeat "the hearts of the people melted, and became as water" (Josh. 7:5).

Joshua and the elders of Israel were also devastated because they considered the defeat as a sign of Divine rebuke. Their sorrow was expressed in typical fashion (Lev. 10:6; Deut. 9:18; Judg. 20:23; 1 Sam. 4:12; 7:6; 2 Sam. 1:11; and many other passages) by tearing their clothes and putting "dust upon their heads" before the ark of the Lord (Josh. 7:6). Contrary to a popular attitude often displayed today, Joshua and the elders did not believe that the problem of sin was inconsequential and that it would go away, if merely left alone.

"With Pentecostalism, Materialism, Humanism, Atheism, Denominationalism, and I-Don't-Care-ism running rampant within the kingdom, there are multitudes of clowns that call themselves preachers who make pretensions of peace and optimistically prate the philosophy that love will right all existing wrongs. Such folly. Joshua was not so fooled by the father of all liars."<6>

Sin was the reason for defeat.

First, involved in this defeat was perhaps self-confidence. We notice that when Israel set out to fight against Ai there is no indication that they sought directions from the Lord, but rather they determined on their own (based solely

on the report of the spies) that they could defeat Ai with "two or three thousand men" Josh. 7:3). They had taken their enemy too lightly (there were at least 12,000 people in the city of Ai<7>) and, more importantly, they had failed to realize that military strength minus God's help always equals defeat. Second, there was the sin of Achan, a sin which had effects throughout the nation of Israel.

Joshua asked and answered a number of questions relative to this dilemma. The last of these questions is "What wilt thou do unto thy great name" (Josh. 7:9)? God's people were certainly disheartened and humiliated before their enemies, but Joshua suggested that what happens to God's people is a reflection on God (see also Ezek. 36:23). Sin and its subsequent defeat bring reproach upon the people of God and upon God Himself. In effect, Joshua said, "What are You now going to do about Your reputation, Lord?"

### **Josh. 7:10-26, the Discipline of God**

Josh. 7:10-11 -- The Lord told Joshua to get up, since it was a time for action and not complaining. He needed to find out what had caused the defeat, where the sin was, and remove it. God's people had sinned; and, therefore, God could no longer be with them. Sin separates us from God (Isa. 59:1-2). Notice that the people had "dissembled also" (Josh. 7:11).

"They had lied about the situation. They pretended that they had not taken the accursed thing. It is very probable that many people, tribes, families, and houses had been examined by proper officials as to whether they had taken any of the spoils of Jericho. Perhaps even the house of Achan had been so questioned and had answered in the negative ..."<8>

Listen to God on this matter:

"Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you ... There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you" (Josh. 7:12-13).

God cannot and will not be with His people as long as sin is present among them. Therefore sin must be confronted and removed. The hope of the Scripture above is in the word "except." "Except ye destroy the accursed from among you" God would no longer be with them.

The sin of Achan should remind us of the importance of dealing with sin within the church today and the danger of ignoring that sin for whatever reason. Sin will bring defeat to the Body of Christ. Sin must be identified and removed from among us. Look at 1 Cor. 5 using the sin of Achan for a background. The sin of one within the church will affect the church as a whole. The sin that exists within the church brings reproach upon God's people and upon the name of God. As Paul wrote, "... Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump as ye are unleavened..." (1 Cor. 5:6-7).

"Sin has a permeating influence and the failure to deal decisively and spiritually with one 'overtaken in a trespass' can have serious consequences for the body of Christ. The failure to carry out God's plan in dealing with sin leads to a tolerant attitude toward sin among the membership (1 Cor. 5:2,6). This, in turn, leads members to be less concerned about their holiness of life as they no longer hate sin (1 Pet. 1:13-16; Ps. 119:104). As standards are compromised among God's people it leads to the rejection of Christianity by some on the basis of 'hypocrites' in the church and causes the name of God to be blasphemed (Rom. 2:24). Among a membership such as this, one who opposes false doctrine and immorality is accused of being unkind, unloving, and un-Christlike! They desire preachers who are willing to speak 'smooth things' and 'prophecy deceits' (Isa. 30:10)."<9>

The sin of Achan involved more than just disobedience. "It was a violation of the Divine covenant. It was sacrilege, a robbery of God, an impious seizure, for base, selfish purposes, of that which belonged to Him."<10> "Will a man rob God" (Mal. 3:8)?

"It is very possible that Achan's solitary trespass was indicative of a spirit of insubordination, or of selfish greed among the people, very possible Achan's solitary trespass was indicative of a spirit of insubordination, or of selfish greed among the people, that would have utterly subverted the Divine purpose if it had not been thus sternly rebuked at the beginning."<11>

It is, in fact, the case that whether there was a "spirit of insubordination ... among the people" at this time or not, there would be that spirit if this sin was not dealt with immediately and decisively. Sin permeates.

Achan ultimately described his sin:

"When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment (literally, "a mantle of Shinar, one great and goodly one," sometimes made of hair or fur, L.K.), and two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it" (Josh. 7:21).

In this sin Achan made a number of identifiable mistakes. First, he made the mistake of prolonging his view of the "accursed things" which he took. He probably could not have helped seeing these things, but he looked longer than he should. It is the same problem that is described by Jesus in the sin of a man looking "on a woman to lust after her" (Matt. 5:28). A man cannot help noticing an attractive woman, but when that notice becomes a prolonged look and the imagination begins to work, it becomes lust (sin). If we keep God's Word before our eyes (Prov. 3:21-22), we should be able to keep ourselves from looking in the wrong direction and doing the wrong things.

His second mistake was in reclassifying those things as "spoils." These things were not spoils: they were part of "the treasury of the Lord" (Josh. 6:19). They belonged to God. "When God identifies something in a special way, we have no right to change it. In our world today, including the religious world, people are rewriting God's dictionary!<12> This is true even in the church. Efforts are being made to change what God has written. We are being told by some that words do not mean what they normally have meant. Therefore, they say that God does not really mean what He says. Efforts are being made to allow what God has forbidden in His Word. But be clearly advised, "If God says something is wrong, then it's wrong; and that's the end of the debate."<13>

Third, Achan made the mistake of covetousness. James warns, "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (James 1:14). Achan, instead of rejoicing over the great victory that God had given Israel over Jericho, was busy imagining what it would be like to own all of this treasure.

The fourth mistake involved in Achan's sin was thinking that he could hide the gold, silver, and garment and thereby get away with his sin. Adam and Eve made the same mistake. But sin cannot be hidden from God. The statement, "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Num. 32:23b) was made originally to the people of God, not the lost. What a clear warning! "All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (Heb. 4:13, NKJV). Achan disobeyed God just to possess treasures which he could not even enjoy. He buried them in his tent. But God chose not to reveal the sinner when he revealed the presence of sin. Rather, God gave instructions to Joshua as to how the sinner would be found. We may ask, "Why is this so?" Consider:

"The answer is, that He might still further display the hardness of Achan's heart. He did not at once come forward and confess his crime. He not only had offended against God's laws, but he persisted in his offense. His was not a tender conscience, sensitive to the least reproach. He saw what disaster he had brought upon Israel, yet he clung to his ill-gotten gains as long as he could. He was not driven either by remorse for the injury he had done his brethren, or by the clear evidence that God had found him out, to confession and restitution. He concealed his guilt till concealment was no longer possible, and thus added as much as he could to his guilt."<14>

Josh. 7:14-18 -- Think of how this process must have affected Achan. Each tribe was brought forward until God selected the exact tribe; from that tribe then each family until the exact family was determined; then from that family each household came until the household of Achan was identified. Achan had ample opportunities to come forward and confess his sin, but he did not confess his sin until it was too late.

When God described the punishment for the guilty one, He stated two reasons: "because he hath transgressed the covenant of the Lord, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel" (Josh. 7:15). Here, "folly" means stupidity as Abigail used the term in her uncomplimentary remark regarding her husband, "Nabal is his name and folly is with him" (1 Sam. 25:25). Sin is never the smart thing to do.

Josh. 7:19-21 -- When Achan was identified by God, Joshua told him, "My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; and hide it not from me" (Josh.

7:19). The meaning of "give ... glory to the Lord" in this verse is "tell the truth." We should ever remember that God is always glorified by the truth.

The sin of Achan is described in Josh. 7:1 by the "very word used by Luke in regard to the transgression of Ananias and Sapphira." <15> It would be enlightening to notice some further similarities between the sin of Achan and the sins of others in the Bible with whom we are familiar. Achan confessed, "I saw ... I coveted ... I took." Notice particularly the word "coveted" -- the same word we earlier observed in God's warning in Deut. 7:25-26. Concerning the graven images which would be found in Canaan, God said, "Thou shalt not desire (covet, ASV) the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee ... neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it ..." This is exactly what Achan did.

This word "covet" should also be noted in the context of the sin of Adam and Eve. Eve saw that the tree was "to be desired (same word as in Josh. 7:21, L.K.) to make one wise." Eve's downfall came as a result, at least in part, of an inordinate desire (covetousness) -- the same was true in the case of Achan. It is this same word that is used in the Ten Commandments, "Thou shalt not covet" (Exo. 20:17). The first sin in Canaan was the result of covetousness; the first sin after Pentecost in the church (Acts 5) involved the same sin of covetousness. In both of these cases God dealt with the sin directly, personally, and immediately. Death was the immediate consequence of these sins. In fact, sin always brings death (Rom. 6:23).

We certainly should recognize and be very careful regarding the dangers involved through appeals made to "the lust of the eyes" (1 John 2:16) because the eyes of our generation are being exposed to so much through television and other media. Recall the words of the inspired Paul: "Covetousness is idolatry" (Col. 3:5). We certainly should also recognize the need to deal faithfully with sin. Sin is always serious. Sin must be exposed and corrected as was the sin of Achan.

Josh. 7:22-26 -- Upon the confession of Achan, messengers were sent to his tent. They brought the silver, the gold, and the garment and "laid them out before the Lord" and the children of Israel (Josh. 7:23). Achan, his family, and his possessions were all brought to the valley of Achor (troubling), and they were stoned and burned. Adam Clarke and some others do not think that the language of Josh. 7:24 means that Achan's sons and daughters were also slain, but that they were present and witnessed what took place. It seems, however, contrary to reason to so believe. "It would appear that his family must have been accomplices in his sin; for the stolen spoil could hardly have been concealed in his tent without their knowing it." <16> (This question is discussed more fully elsewhere in this volume.) Afterwards a stone heap was erected over their remains as a reminder to Israel of the sin of Achan, its consequences, and how God deals with sin.

### **Joshua 8:1-29, Ai Was Finally Defeated by Faithful Obedience**

Josh. 8:1 -- In Josh. 7 we learned that God expects His people to live right and does not tolerate sin among His people. Now the people were right again with God and were ready to go forward in their conquest of Canaan in faith without fear. Faith removes fear, for faith involves trust and obedience. The answer to our discouragement and fear is in hearing, believing, and obeying God's Word. As Josh. 8 begins, God instructed Joshua, "Take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land" (Josh. 8:1). Observe well that God said that He had given the city of Ai to them, yet He also said to take all the people of war. The city was a gift from God, yet there were conditions for receiving it. This does not mean that what Israel did merited (earned) the gift (the defeat of Ai), but rather that what Israel did appropriated the gift of God by meeting His conditions, by faithfully obeying His Word.

The same is true regarding our salvation. Faithfully obeying God's Word regarding salvation appropriates that gracious gift He has offered. Faithful obedience is not a means of meriting (earning) our salvation; faithful obedience is the means of appropriating for ourselves what has been given for the salvation of man. Following God's instructions is evidence of faith. Faith always trusts, and trust is manifested by obedience. God had given Ai to Israel, but He fully expected them to obey Him by sending "all the people of war" into the battle.

"All the people of war" displays the unity among God's people which now existed. There is great strength in the unity of people working together in harmony with what God has said. Israel had learned that one man out of harmony with God's Word brings defeat. We would do well to learn this in the church.

Josh. 8:2 -- Included in God's instructions now was this directive, "only the spoil thereof, and the cattle thereof, shall ye take for a prey unto yourselves" (Josh. 8:2a). Had Achan waited, the spoils of Ai could have been his, but he had disobeyed God's instructions regarding Jericho, reaped the consequences of his sin, and now the spoils of Ai were no longer available to him. Israel had learned that no one is able to stand victorious against them except when there was "sin in the camp." So now faith makes a plan to overthrow Ai. According to God's instructions, the plan involved an ambush (Josh. 8:2b).

Josh. 8:3-13 -- Joshua sent out thirty thousand "mighty men of valor" by night (Josh. 8:3). These were to position themselves "behind the city" and hide (Josh. 8:4). This was done on the "west of the city" (Josh. 8:10,13). Then Joshua "and all the people" would approach the city from the east (Josh. 8:5). When the army of Ai came out against Joshua and his men, Joshua's army would flee as they had done earlier in their defeat. The army of Ai would thus be drawn out of the city leaving it unprotected. When this happened those lying in ambush would come out, attack the city, and burn it "according to the commandment of the Lord" (Josh. 8:8).

Josh. 8:14-23 -- The plan was a great success. The king of Ai was completely unaware of the trap, "and there was not a man left in Ai or Bethel, that went not out after Israel: and they left the city open, and pursued after Israel" (Josh. 8:17). At the appropriate time God told Joshua to stretch out his spear toward Ai to signal the men lying in ambush to attack the city. Upon seeing this signal "the ambush arose quickly out of their place, and they ran as soon as he had stretched out his hand: and they entered into the city, and took it, and hasted and set the city on fire" (Josh. 8:19). The men of Ai looked back to see their city aflame and realized that "they had no power to flee this way or that way" (Josh. 8:20). At this time the army under the direction of Joshua reversed their flight, and attacked the pursuing army of Ai. At the same time when Ai was burning, the army which had destroyed the city now attacked the army of Ai from behind.

Israel's victory was complete. Regarding the tactic of Joshua in this victory, Matthew Henry observed, "Joshua conquered by yielding. So our Lord Jesus Christ, when He bowed His head and gave up the ghost, seemed as if death had triumphed over Him; but in His resurrection He rallied again, and gave the powers of darkness a total defeat."<17>

Josh. 8:24-29 --

"And it came to pass, when Israel had made an end of slaying all the inhabitants of Ai in the field, in the wilderness wherein they chased them, and when they were all fallen on the edge of the sword, until they were consumed, that all the Israelites returned unto Ai, and smote it with the edge of the sword. And so it was, that all that fell that day, both men and women, were twelve thousand, even all the men of Ai." (Josh. 8:24-25)

All the inhabitants of Ai were killed. We should keep in mind that this was not the slaughter of the innocent, but rather God's judgment against a wicked people being carried out. "Only the cattle and the spoil of that city Israel took for a prey unto themselves, according unto the word of the Lord which he commanded Joshua" (Josh. 8:27). The king was killed with a sword and then for further humiliation his body was hanged on a tree until the close of the day. Now another heap of stones was made. The previous one in Josh. 7 became a constant reminder concerning the consequences of sin -- "sin can never win"; the one in this chapter became a constant reminder concerning the victory of faithfulness.

### **Joshua 8:30-35, War Was Interrupted by Worship**

Some have suggested that the remainder of Josh. 8 is an interpolation, or that these verses are misplaced. I agree with Ray W. Peters in his appraisal of these verses: "There are no grounds that Josh. 8:30-35 are misplaced or are an interpolation; these statements are mere speculation."<18> These verses, because of their position and content, are

profoundly placed, as we will soon notice.

Josh. 8:30 -- "Then Joshua built an altar unto the Lord God of Israel in mount Ebal" (Josh. 8:30). The waging of war and conquest now came to a halt. The children of Israel journeyed to the designated place which was a long march of about twenty miles from Ai in order to worship God and to be reminded of the law with its associated blessings and cursings. "Though they were in an enemy's country, as yet unconquered, yet in the service of God they were safe." <19> Prosperity belongs to those who put God first; the way to prosper is to begin with God. This is what we see taking place here. Jesus emphasized this same concept in Matt. 6:33, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

In the valley between mount Ebal and mount Gerizim was the city of Shechem, or Sychar (John 4:5). Historically it should be noted that Abraham had built an altar at Shechem (Gen. 12:6-7) and upon that occasion God said to him, "Unto thy seed will I give this land." Abraham's seed was now in that promised land and had begun receiving it. (Jacob had also lived in this place for a short time according to Gen. 33--34.)

Josh. 8:31-32 -- Now Joshua built an altar of stone on mount Ebal according to the instructions of Moses "as it is written." <20> Here in Josh. 8:31 is clear evidence that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament. "This statement stands as an affront to those who are proponents of the documentary hypothesis of the Pentateuch -- the theory that the Pentateuch is a patchwork of a number of authors extending over a period of time." <21>

Josh. 8:31 also emphasizes the importance of obeying "as it is written," following the revealed law, the pattern. Joshua built "an altar of whole stones, over which no man hath lift up any iron." This was "as it is written." Moses instructed, "Thou shalt set thee up great stones, and plaister them with plaister ... and there shalt thou build an altar unto the Lord thy God, an altar of stones: thou shalt not lift up any iron tool upon them" (Deut. 27:2,5). Earlier in the law Moses had recorded God's words, "And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it" (Exo. 20:25). Joshua and the children of Israel were, therefore, following very carefully what was written: they were doing exactly what God said to do in the way that God said to do it.

This emphasis on doing what is written in the way that is written here in relationship to worship should remind us again that we cannot improve God's way, God's worship. Perhaps the lesson learned from the fact that the stones were to be "whole" or unhewn is that God did not want man to alter in any way that which was involved in acceptable worship -- man was not even to change the stones that were used in the altar!

"This is now the fourth public monument of stones that has been erected. The first was at Gilgal (Josh. 4:20), commemorating Israel's passage across Jordan. The second was in the Valley of Achor, a monument to Achan's sin and God's judgment (Josh. 7:26). The third was at the entrance to Ai, a reminder of God's faithfulness to help His people (Josh. 8:29). These stones on mount Ebal reminded Israel that their success lay only in their obedience to God's Law (Josh. 1:7-8)." <22>

Joshua now wrote the law on stones (upon plaster on the stones) (Josh. 8:32).

Josh. 8:33-35 -- "All Israel" was assembled "half of them over against Mount Gerizim, and half of them over against mount Ebal" (Josh. 8:33). The assembly of "all Israel" included "the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them" (Josh. 8:35). All could hear what was said because of the natural amphitheater formed by Mount Ebal, Mount Gerizim, and the valley between. All needed to be reminded of their covenant with God and to know that the law included blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience.

Following carefully Moses' instructions on mount Gerizim, the mount of blessing, were assembled the tribes of Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin (Deut. 27:12). The tribes of Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali were assembled on mount Ebal, the mount of cursing (Deut. 27:13). According to Deut. 27:9-10, Joshua began with these words. "Take heed, and hearken, O Israel; this day thou art become the people of the Lord thy God. Thou shalt therefore obey the voice of the Lord thy God, and do his commandments and his statutes, which I command thee this day." With this admonition made, Joshua listed the curses which would follow disobedience, to which all the people said, "Amen (So be it)." Following the curses came the blessings which would pertain to

obedience. To these all the people said, "Amen (So be it)." All the people heard the law and agreed to its conditions; they recognized that obedience would bring blessings and disobedience would bring curses.

## CONCLUSION

"In the initial period of the successful prosecution of the war against the Canaanites, the Israelites took out time to assemble, to hear the law read, and to sacrifice. Often men today defer their time, their money, and their dedication to the Lord until they have had time to get ahead in the world. The way to real prosperity is to begin with a commitment to God."<23>

"There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel" (Josh. 8:35). Do we not need the same priorities today? Do we not need to be reminded of the Word of God today with the resulting blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience? Do we not need to acknowledge our willingness to abide by these conditions? Let all the people say, "Amen."

## ENDNOTES:

<1> King James Version used unless otherwise indicated.

<2> E. M. Zerr, Bible Commentary (Raytown, Missouri: Reprint Publishers, 1947), 1:321.

<3> Warren W. Wiersbe, Be Strong (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1993), p. 78.

<4> William S. Cline, "The Faltering of Faith," Joshua, a Commentary -- Exegetical, Homiletical, edited by William S. Cline (Austin, Texas: The Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1987), p. 117.

<5> Charles John Ellicott, editor, Ellicott's Commentary on the Whole Bible (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1959), p. 119.

<6> Cline, Joshua, pp. 119-120.

<7> Adam Clarke, Commentary on the Holy Bible -- One Volume Edition, ed. Ralph Earl (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1967), p. 246.

<8> Cline, Joshua, p. 122.

<9> Gary Ealy, "The Living Message of Joshua," The Living Messages of the Books of the Old Testament, edited by Garland Elkins and Thomas B. Warren (Jonesboro, Arkansas: National Christian Press, Inc., 1977), pp. 87-88.

<10> H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell, editors, The Pulpit Commentary (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, reprint 1983), 8:118.

<11> Ibid., p. 119

<12> Wiersbe, p. 85.

<13> Ibid., p. 86.

<14> Spence and Exell, 8:126.

<15> Ibid., p. 113.

<16> Cline, p. 126.

<17> Quoted in The Pulpit Commentary, 8:133.

<18> Ray Peters, "Faith's Renewal," Joshua, a Commentary -- Exegetical, Homiletical, editor, William S. Cline (Austin, Texas: Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1987), p. 148.

<19> Matthew Henry, Commentary on the Whole Bible in One Volume (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961), p. 223.

<20> Some believe that these stones were taken from the Jordan River, but there is no evidence to support this.

<21> Annual Lesson Commentary (Nashville, Tennessee: Gospel Advocate Company, 1975), p. 105.

<22> Wiersbe. p. 103.

<23> Annual Lesson Commentary, p. 106.

# **Gibeon Deceives Joshua and Israel Subdues Southern Canaan (Josh. 9:1--10:43)**

## **GIBEON DECEIVES JOSHUA AND ISRAEL SUBDUES SOUTHERN CANAAN**

**Josh. 9:1--10:43**

**by Joseph D. Meador**

**BIO:**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Book of Joshua serves as one of the great transitional texts of the Hebrew Scriptures. Joshua is the first of the twelve historical books in the Hebrew canon (Joshua through Esther). Its place in the Old Testament canon bridges the time span between the Mosaic theocracy and the theocratic monarchy of national Israel.<1> Although the Book of Joshua has (since the late nineteenth century) been an academic "thorn-in-the-side" of liberal Biblical and archaeological scholarship,<2> the textual validity and historical integrity of the Book of Joshua should not be doubted. Both the historicity and textual accuracy of the Book of Joshua remain intact despite the charges of higher textual critics and modernist historians alike.<3>

## **A Three-fold Division of Joshua**

The Book of Joshua is divided into three natural literary parts: (1) Entering Canaan (Josh. 1--5:12); (2) Conquering Canaan (Josh. 5:13-12); and (3) Possessing Canaan (Josh. 13--24).<4> The Book of Joshua reveals how God brought His chosen nation into the land which He had promised to the Sethite patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and how Israel entered, conquered and possessed the promised land. These facts are important to remember when seeking to refute premillennial eschatology, which blindly asserts that Israel never conquered the land of promise.

One of the great themes of the Book of Joshua is that victory comes through an active and obedient faith toward God and His Word rather than through human ingenuity or military prowess.<5>

Joshua, as a figure, is one of the great religious personalities of Israel's history.<6> His life is depicted as one of boundless trust in God and his child-like reliance upon the providence of the Lord blends together to make Joshua a wonderful example of faith.<7>

His name, as presented in the Masoretic Hebrew text, is [~Hoshea] or "salvation" (Num. 13:8), but it also carries the form [~Jehoshua] or "Yahweh (Jehovah) is salvation" (16). He is also called Yeshua, a shortened form of [~Yehoshua]. The Hebrew name is carried over into [ @Jesus] (also translated "Jesus"). In the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (the Septuagint) the title of the book is [ @Jesus] [ @Naus] or "Joshua the Son of Nun." The title of the book in the later Latin translations is Liber Josue, "The Book of Joshua."

## **An Overview of Josh. 9--10**

Josh. 9 and Josh. 10 must be understood in view of the threefold division of the text: Israel's entering, conquering,

and possessing the land of Canaan. Josh. 9 and Josh. 10 are included in this middle episode, that is, in the conquering of the promised land (Josh. 5:13--12:23). In this second stage of Israel's receiving of the land promise (cf. Gen. 12:7; 13:14; 15:18), there is first the revelation of the victory -- the Lord is in the camp (Josh. 5:13-15); second is the realization of the victory -- no sin in the camp (Josh. 6:1--11:23); and third, there is the record of the victory -- triumph in the camp (Josh. 12:1-23).<sup><8></sup> The Book of Joshua forms a thrilling history of Israel's fulfillment, in the primary sense, of the Abrahamic covenant land promise. The ultimate fulfillment of the land promise as contained in the Abrahamic covenant will be realized when the church (the new Israel of God -- Gal. 3:7,14,19,29; 6:16) shall inherit and enter the spiritual promised land -- Heaven our home, age without end (Rev. 21:1-4).

Contained in Josh. 9 and Josh. 10 are the political episodes of Gibeon's decent and willing submission to Israel. This, in turn, led to the forming of a confederacy by the Canaanite city-states to punish Gibeon, which act resulted in Israel's defense of the Gibeonites and their militaristic conquest of the Canaanite confederacy. Next are the miracles of hailstones and the staying of the solar and lunar lights. Josh. 9 and Josh. 10 end with the execution of the five kings and the final military advancement by Israel in the conquest of southern Canaan.

### **The Conquest Model**

Until the twentieth century, the emergence of Israel in Canaan was almost always referred to as the "conquest of Canaan," for that is how Scripture portrays the presence of the nation of Israel in Canaan.<sup><9></sup> Modernist critics of the Old Testament, adopting the views of Julius Welhausen (1844-1918), began to teach that Israel never really conquered the land of Canaan, but rather settled peacefully in the promised land over a period of time. This so-called "peaceful infiltration" model was advocated by the German scholar and archaeologist, Albrecht Alt (1883-1956). When this particular model began to fall into disfavor, a rival third model arose to explain Israel's presence in ancient Canaan. This third model became generally known as the "peasant revolt" model and was put forth in the mid-1960s by a University of Michigan "scholar" named George Mendenhall. As late as 1989 this theory has been considerably developed and expanded by Professor Norman Gottwald.<sup><10></sup> The peasant revolt model urges that the Israelites emerged not from outside Canaan, but from inside. In essence the people who became known as Israelites were really peasants who revolted against their masters in the various cities of Canaan.<sup><11></sup> The peasant revolt model argues for the development of Israel upon the grounds of a social revolution.

These are the three models advanced today by Biblical scholars and archaeologists for the emergence of Israel as a nation as well as to explain her presence in the land of Canaan. Yet, only the first model (the conquest model) bears true witness to the validity of the Biblical text. Therefore, if one accepts as axiomatic the verbal, plenary inspiration of Scripture and the providential preservation of the sacred text down to the present time, the conquest model should be readily accepted.

### **EXEGESIS AND EXPOSITION OF JOSH. 9:1--10:43**

#### **Josh. 9:1-5, Craftiness of the Gibeonites**

Josh. 9:1-2 -- Israel's successes against Jericho and Ai had two contrasting consequences. On the one hand, opposition hardened and became more highly organized by the enemies of Israel (Josh. 9:1-2; 10:1-43) and, on the other hand, some of the inhabitants of the land were prepared to make terms with the invading Israelite.<sup><12></sup>

Josh. 9:3-5 -- The people of Gibeon, northwest of Jerusalem, learned of the Israelite victories at both Jericho and Ai (Josh. 9:3). They determined among themselves to save the Gibeonite settlements of Chephirah, Beeroth, Kiriath-Jearim, and the principal city of Gibeon (cf. Josh. 9:17).<sup><13></sup>

According to Mosaic law, the Israelites might make peace with distant cities, but those nearby were to be conquered and occupied (Deut. 20:10-18). Indeed, the Gibeonites, whether knowing the Mosaic statute or not, were determined to make a treaty (covenant) with Joshua and Israel.

The craft and deceit of the Gibeonites is seen in that they pretended to be legates or ambassadors "from a very far country" (Josh. 9:4-5,9). These men coming to Joshua wore old and tattered clothing and used old physical and food provisions to give the appearance that they had, in fact, traveled from a far country (Josh. 9:4-5).

### **Josh. 9:6-15, Covenant with the Gibeonites**

Josh. 9:6-7 -- The men of Gibeon came to Gilgal in order to meet with Joshua (Josh. 9:6). He then made inquiry as to what intentions they had and what kind of treaty or covenant they desired (Josh. 9:7). It is interesting to note that in this process of political negotiation Joshua was receiving counsel from "the men (elders) of Israel" (Josh. 9:6; cf. Josh. 9:15).

Regarding the formalization of a covenant or treaty in the ancient Near East, there are two classes into which they may be divided (i.e., the parity treaty (between equals), and the suzerainty treaty (between a king and his subjects)). The treaty between Jacob and Laban, in which each agreed to honor a stated land frontier, would be classed as a parity type treaty. On the other hand the covenant between Jehovah and Israel would be classified as a suzerainty treaty.<14> These covenant divisions are also referred to as [ @Suntheke] and [ @Diatheke], respectively.<15>

Josh. 9:9-13 -- Joshua himself asked the ethnic identity of the people as well as their origin of travel. Their response in Josh. 9:9-13 was pure deceit. The Hebrew terms used in the Old Testament to describe deceit include: [~mirmoh], [~shoker], [~towkh], [~remiyoh], [~kezoveem], [~okov], [~bogad], and [~hothal].<16> The primary definition of "deceit" is: "to beguile; to mislead with wicked intent; to swindle; to use treachery," and is used throughout the Old Testament particularly of treacherous or deceitful speech (cf. Gen. 34:13; Ps. 10:7; 17:1; 24:4; et al.).<17> In essence, the Hebrew Scriptures, as well as the New Testament, are clear regarding the impropriety and consequences of deceit (cf. Ps. 10:7; 36:3; 55:23; Prov. 12:5; 20:17; 27:6; 31:30; Isa. 53:9; Jer. 14:14; 17:9; 23:26; 48:10; Hos. 11:12; Amos 8:5; Zeph. 1:9; Matt. 13:22; 24:4; 27:63; Mark 7:22; John 7:12,47; Eph. 4:14; 2 Thess. 2:3; 2 Tim. 3:13; 1 John 1:8; 3:7; et al.).

These passages (along with many others) teach in a clear way that: (1) Deceit is related to iniquity, and comes from the heart. (2) The wicked are deceitful. (3) We can be self-deceived. (4) We can be deceived by pride. (5) We are warned against being deceived, and that deceit is the method by which a lie is enacted. As Hebrew language specialist, William White, has correctly observed:

"The Old Testament makes clear that deceitful speech is one of the most heinous offenses against God. The repetition of the root ([~mirma]) in assurances that the prayer and praise of the righteous is without deceit, reinforces the importance of truth toward the Lord."<18>

The men of Israel unwisely failed to consult the Lord concerning this affair (Josh. 9:14), and being unaware of the true identity of the Gibeonites, made a treaty or covenant with them (Josh. 9:15).

### **Josh. 9:16-21, Chastening of the Gibeonites**

Josh. 9:16-17 -- Three days following the formalization of the treaty of accord, Joshua and the leadership of Israel were told that, in fact, these supposed strangers were in their Gibeonite neighbors (Josh. 9:16). Israel advanced to the Gibeonite cities of Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath-Jearim on the third day, in order to confront the inhabitants of Gibeon and seek a resolution to the matter (Josh. 9:17).

A non-military offense was urged in view of the covenant that Israel's leadership had made with them (Josh. 9:18). Again, it is interesting to note that, although Joshua and the Jewish elders ("princes," Josh. 9:18) had been deceived, they viewed the treaty as binding on the grounds that they had sworn protection to the strangers in the name of the Lord God of Israel. Although many of the congregation complained about the decision of Joshua and the leadership, the covenant was nevertheless honored (Josh. 9:18-19). It seems that the primary reason Joshua honored the treaty

was that it was made in the name of God and to annul the treaty would be to disparage and dishonor the authority of Jehovah God (Josh. 9:19).

Another insight into the meaning and use of the word "covenant" is that it is derived from the Latin "foedus" -- treaty, which, as A. H. J. Gunneweg notes, is not a wholly adequate translation of the Hebrew term, [~beriyt]. The Old Testament [~beriyt] as applied to Jehovah does not signify so much a lifeless two-sided treaty, as it does rather a testament or union with inherent mutual obligations.<19> As such, a Divine suzerainty treaty differed from a parity treaty or covenant in that it was not simply a cold, formal agreement (whether written or oral). Although there was certainly the aspect of conditions which were set forth, there was also the idea of a familiar and united relationship with God in such a covenant. This helps us to understand why David, for instance, would not take the life of King Saul in that the king was the Lord's anointed. Saul had a covenanted relationship with the Lord which no man could breach. Indeed, only God Himself could (and did) consider this form of covenant annulled based upon the disobedience of Saul (cf. 2 Sam. 2).

However, in the case of Joshua and the Gibeonites, justice would be exercised by making the Gibeonites "hewers of wood and drawers of water" (Josh. 9:20-21).

Archaeologist Hugh Blair has noted that excavations have shown that the Gibeonites were experienced in the drawing (locating, drilling, and storing) of water. In fact in the chief city, Gibeon, there is a great pool in the heart of the city with an interior circular staircase leading down some eighty feet to the source of water.<20>

### **Josh. 9:22-27, Curse upon the Gibeonites**

Josh. 9:22-27 -- Joshua questioned the Gibeonites as to why they had so deceived Israel and told them that because of their deceit they were cursed to become perpetual servants in "the house of my God" (Josh. 9:22-23). The Gibeonites responded that they feared the God of Israel whose army was conquering the land willingly accepted this sentence of service to work among the congregation and the altar of the Lord (Josh. 9:24-27). Again Blair observes:

"That was the curse that fell on the Gibeonites -- to be attached for ever to the congregation and to the altar of the Lord, in the place which he should choose. Such is the grace of God. It was for the Gibeonites that he wrought the miracle of the battle at Beth-horon (cf. Josh. 10:7-15), and it was among them afterwards that he pitched his tent (cf. 2 Chr. 1:3); and in still later days, when priests and Levites failed, he made them take their places. Since Joshua made them hewers of wood (Hebrew [~natan], literally "gave"), they came to be known as Nethinim, or "given ones," "temple servants," Ezra 2:43; 8:20.<21>

### **Josh. 10:1-5, Conspiracy toward the Gibeonites**

Josh. 10:1-5 -- The defection of the Gibeonites served as a warning to Canaanite cities to the south that they were vulnerable to Israel's military aggression. The Gibeonites had been put under the protection of Joshua and, in fact, continued as one of the non-Israelite peoples who became a part of the nation of Israel.

The growing reputation which the Israelites gained as effective fighters caused the native Canaanites to fear for their land (Josh. 10:1-2). A confederation, including Adonizedek of Jerusalem, Ho-ham of Hebron, Piram of Jarmuth, Japhia of Lachish, and Debir of Eglon, decided that they would make an example of Gibeon for making treaty with Israel, thus encouraging Israelite settlement of Canaan (Josh. 10:3-4). No doubt they feared that if Gibeon went unpunished, she would set a precedent which would be followed throughout all the land.<22>

Regarding these five kings of the Amorites that made war against Gibeon (Josh. 10:5), it should be noted that the term "Canaanite" is a general term to denote those Semitic peoples who were a southern extension or subdivision of a general Phoenician culture all along the coast.<23> Thus, although these kings were specifically Amorite in a technical ethnic-social sense, they are also referred to by the more general term Canaanite.

### **Josh. 10:6-7, Complaint from the Gibeonites**

Josh. 10:6 -- The men of Gibeon sent a message to Joshua entreating him to fulfill his covenant promise and help repel the assembled Canaanite army. Their entreaty, "Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come to us quickly, and save us, and help us," is both a cry for help as well as a cry to remember the covenant promise which Joshua and the Israelite princes had made.

Josh. 10:7 -- The Israelite army was quickly activated by Joshua. He immediately ascended from the main camp at Gilgal and marched toward Gibeon. His decisive action at this point is a demonstration of his faith in God's protection and care. It likewise showed forth his courage and overall awareness that now was the time to act. No doubt he understood the sense of this battle in that it was merely the beginning of Israel's conquest of southern Canaan.

### **Josh. 10:8-11, a Charge to Joshua**

Josh. 10:8 -- The Lord encouraged Joshua for battle. There is great similarity between this verse and the words found in Josh. 1:5-7,9,18, where God formally commissioned Joshua for Divine service.

Josh. 10:9-11 -- The army of Israel marched all night in order to arrive at Gibeon in due time (Josh. 10:9). The narrative of the battle proper begins in Josh. 10:10 and continues to Josh. 10:11. From this context it is clear that the Israelites pursued the enemy through the pass controlled by upper Beth-horon and lower Beth-horon. In essence, the enemy was chased out of the hill country to the coastal plain.<24>

Indeed, the battle seems to have been in Israel's favor from the very start. From a strategic point, Joshua had marched his army throughout the night from Gilgal and made a quite unexpected appearance at Gibeon. He then routed the enemy through the Beth-horon Pass (also known as the Valley of Ajalon) as far as Azekah and Makkedah (Josh. 10:10-11).

It was during this battle that the Lord intervened and caused a great hailstorm. This accounted for more casualties among the Amorites than resulted from the actual hand-to-hand combat in their battle with Israel.

### **Josh. 10:12-15, Communication from Joshua**

Josh. 10:12-14 -- In these verses we learn of another miracle which was wrought by God, this time by the petition of Joshua himself (Josh. 10:12,14). This miracle, in which "the sun stood still, and the moon stayed" (Josh. 10:13), is commonly referred to as "Joshua's Long Day." Apologist Norman Geisler has noted three possible interpretations for the phenomenon of Joshua's prayer.

First, he observes that Professor Totten of Yale University in his text, *Our Race*, claimed to have found one full day missing in the astronomical calendar. Others have attempted to verify this by appealing to reports of a long day in the religious and social histories of Egyptian, Chinese, and Hindu civilizations.

Second, the late Professor Robert Dick Wilson of Princeton University (along with other Hebraists) translates the verse, "Sun be silent, or cease, leave off." From this they argue that Joshua's prayer resulted in the Lord's holding back the burning midday sun so that the Israelite army could fight under more favorable conditions.<25>

Third, C. F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch argued that it would have been difficult to determine that the time was forty-eight hours rather than twenty-four if the sun could not be used for the purpose of solar time calculations. They proposed instead that the visibility of the sun might have been prolonged by an atmospheric reflection. Many years after this view was first advocated, Dr. Rendle Short in his book, *Modern Discovery and the Bible*, argued this point by observing that, because of the krypton in the atmosphere, it may at times be possible to see the sun wherever it is.<26> Charles Pfeiffer has correctly noted:

"The Biblical writers frequently describe miracles in terms of the intensification of natural phenomena. The God of Israel is the God of nature, and all natural phenomena are at His disposal. As God of Israel He brought His people from Egypt, protected them, and met their needs during the time of the wilderness wandering and, in Joshua, brought them into Canaan and gave them victory over their enemies ... as God of nature, He brought about the plagues on Egypt, hardened Pharaoh's heart, opened the waters of the Red Sea by a strong east wind, opened the Jordan, and now was giving victory to Israel ... To the biblical writer there can be no question that God performed a miracle in answer to Joshua's prayer."<27>

Josh. 10:15 -- Joshua returned to his camp at Gilgal. He had won a decisive victory over an impressive foe, yet the five confederate kings were still at large.

### **Josh. 10:16-27, the Capture of the Kings**

Josh. 10:16-17 -- Joshua was informed after their military victory that the five kings had set up camp in the cave at Makkedah (Josh. 10:16-17). No doubt they were located in this cave to hide from the Israelite army as well as to plan a strategy for escape (Josh. 10:17).

Josh. 10:18 -- Upon hearing that the five kings were located in the Makkedian cave, Joshua gave order that the entrance (or mouth) of the cave was to be sealed by rolling large rocks over the passage way. He also ordered that a company of guards be posted at the entrance to "keep them" and thus prevent their escape (Josh. 10:18).

Josh. 10:19-22 -- Next Joshua ordered the Israelite army to advance and slay those who made up the retreating army of the five kings (Josh. 10:19-21). Once this had been accomplished, the army returned to the cave of Makkedah, where the cave entrance was opened (Josh. 10:22).

Josh. 10:23-27 -- The five kings were brought out (Josh. 10:23) and the order was given that the captains of Israel's army were to put their feet upon the necks of the kings in order to symbolize the complete subjection to Joshua and Israel of these monarchs and all of Israel's other enemies (Josh. 10:24-25). Following this ceremony Joshua gave the order to slay the five kings, after which their bodies were hanged upon trees until the evening (Josh. 10:26). They were then buried in the cave of Makkedah (Josh. 10:27).

### **Josh. 10:28-39, Conquest of the South**

Josh. 10:28-30 -- As noted previously, the battle of the five kings was but a prelude to the conquest of southern Canaan. In these verses we have the record of Joshua's conquest of both the territories of Makkedah and Libnah. It is interesting to note that Libnah was located in the entrance to the vale of Elah where David later defeated Goliath.<28>

Josh. 10:31-33 -- Next Joshua and his forces assaulted the well-fortified city of Lachish (modern tell Ed-Duweir) and on the second day of the siege overthrew this stronghold (Josh. 10:31-32). During this battle, Horem the king of Gezer came with his army to help defend Lachish, but Joshua defeated his army and killed Horem in the process (Josh. 10:33).

Josh. 10:34-35 -- Joshua moved on in victory to take Eglon, which is presently identified with modern tell El-Hesi.<29>

Josh. 10:36-39 -- From Eglon the Israelite forces struck eastward into the hill country where they took Hebron (Josh. 10:36-37). Then the forces of Joshua moved southwest where they overwhelmed Debir (also known as Kirjath-sepher, Josh. 15:15) (Josh. 10:38-39).

### **Josh. 10:40-43, Conquest Summarized**

Josh. 10:40-43 -- Although the strong city-states of Gezer and Jerusalem were not yet conquered, they were

isolated by this campaign so that the whole southern area, from Gibeon to Kadesh-barnea and Gaza, was under the control of Israel when Joshua led his battle-hardened warriors back to the main camp at Gilgal.<30>

## CONCLUSION

As we view the Book of Joshua, Josh. 1--10, we are reminded of the great providence of God which He showed forth to His own nation. When Israel entered into Canaan, it came forth the second time out of water unto God's salvation. The conquest of Canaan occurred in connection with mighty miracles, namely the crossing of the Jordan, the hailstorm, and the standing still of the sun. However, at the end of God's dealings with Israel through Joshua we see a new relationship emerging between Jehovah and His people. The miraculous presence of Jehovah in the cloudy and fiery pillar had ceased. Bread had now taken the place of manna. The angel of Jehovah still appeared, but only seldom. The will of God was announced in ordinary ways through the priesthood.<31> In general, this part of redemption history provides the transition from God's care of His infant nation to the maturity of His nation as an independent youth.

Indeed, this conquest, as related to the Exodus from Egypt and the development of the young nation of Israel, forms one of the great links in the history of Old Testament redemption. Yet, it is a redemption which was never complete in itself (Gal. 3:23-25) as each occurrence was but a foreshadow of the glorious salvation which was to come in the form of God's Messiah.

## ENDNOTES:

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<3> Robert Dick Wilson, *A Scientific Investigation of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Sunday School Times Company, 1926), p. 213.

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<5> Revere F. Weidner, *Biblical Theology of the Old Testament* (New York, New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1896), p. 60.

<6> Samuel Wilberforce, *Heroes of Hebrew History* (London, England: W. H. Allen Company, 1896), p. 131.

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<12> Hugh J. Blair, "Joshua," in *The New Bible Commentary Revised*, ed. Donald Guthrie and J. A. Motyer (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), p. 243.

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<21> Ibid.

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<23> James I. Packer, Merrill C. Tenney, and William White, Jr. The World of the Old Testament (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982), p. 86.

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<26> Geisler, pp. 98-99.

<27> Pfeiffer, pp. 206-207.

<28> Samuel J. Schultz, The Old Testament Speaks (San Francisco, California: Harper and Row Publishers, 1980, 3rd edition), p. 99.

<29> Ibid.

<30> Ibid.

<31> Franz Delitzsch, Old Testament History of Redemption (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1988), p. 73.

# **Israel Subdues Northern Canaan, and a Summary of the Conquests (Josh. 11:1--12:24)**

## **ISRAEL SUBDUES NORTHERN CANAAN, AND A SUMMARY OF THE CONQUESTS**

### **JOSHUA 11:1--12:24**

**by Eddie Whitten**

**BIO:**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The military might of the children of Israel under the leadership of Moses was well known to the Canaanites long before they came to the Jordan river. The account of Rahab the harlot at Jericho reveals the people's knowledge of the power of the army of God (Josh. 2:11-12). After Moses died, the mantle of leadership of the children of Israel had passed to Joshua. He had conquered the southern part of Canaan, and was now poised to address the conquest of northern Canaan. Josh. 10 ends with the summation of the conquest of southern Canaan:

"And Joshua smote them from Kadesh-barnea even unto Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even unto Gibeon. And all these kings and their land did Joshua take at one time, because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel. And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp to Gilgal" (Josh. 10:41-43).<1>

It is not surprising to note that such power should cause much fear and concern on the part of the northern kings. They banded together to oppose the Israelites. When forces, often in conflict with each other, are threatened by yet another power, they are prone to join with each other to repel the unwelcome aggressor. This is a common practice in diplomatic circles in the realm of politics.

In the days of World War II, the nations of Germany, Italy, and Japan (unlikely partners except for their common quest for world domination) were considered worthy of nothing less than total destruction. Their atrocious aggressions and crimes against humanity were so horrible and of such magnitude that they warranted the condemnation of the civilized world. Different political conditions would have produced different alliances. The cultural, philosophical, and religious backgrounds of Germany and Japan would never have generated the cohesion necessary to join forces to conquer the world. It was only a common quest that resulted in their confederacy. At other times and under different circumstances these nations would have opposed each other rather than banding together to oppose the world.

The news of the conquests of the children of Israel, under the leadership of Joshua, produced the very same response from the kings of northern Israel.

## **EXEGESIS AND EXPOSITION OF JOSH. 11:1--12:24**

### **Josh. 11:1-5 -- the Northern Confederacy of Canaan Forms**

Josh. 11:1 -- Josh. 11 begins with the consternation of a king under duress. Jabin, king of Hazor, had heard of the

exploits of Joshua's army. Adam Clarke suggested that the name Jabin was the title given to all the kings of Hazor.<2> Jabin was distressed to the point of seeking the help of other kings whom he had undoubtedly opposed in the past. Some in the church have taken the same option of seeking the alliance of unlikely partners to conspire against faithful preachers and godly elders. Or, as the case often is today, ungodly elders seek the comfort and support of ear-tickling preachers to foster the liberal leanings of influential and moneyed members of the congregation.

Josh. 11:2-3 -- Jabin evidently had power which was respected, or feared, by the kings of the northern cities. It is apparent that a "kingdom" consisted of a city with its surrounding territory. In a country as small as Canaan, there were many kings. Hence, a kingdom could not have consisted of much more than the city and its immediate environs. He sent word to the kings of Madon, Shimron, and Achshaph, all cities west and southwest of the sea of Chinneroth (the sea of Galilee). It appears these cities were closest to Hazor, at least geographically. He also called for all of the kings of the cities south of Chinneroth. Added to all these, the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, and the Hivites were all called to bolster the forces of Jabin.

Josh. 11:4 -- They numbered "as the sand that is upon the sea shore in multitude" and they had horses and chariots "very many" (Josh. 11:4). Josephus, who, according to Clarke, "... seldom finds difficulties in such cases, and makes no scruple of often speaking without book ..." <3>, stated regarding the size of the confederacy,

"Now the number of the whole army was three hundred thousand armed footmen, and ten thousand horsemen, and twenty thousand chariots; so that the multitude of the enemies affrighted both Joshua himself and the Israelites; and they, instead of being full of hopes of good success, were superstitiously timorous, with the great terror with which they were stricken." <4>

This is significant since the children of Israel had none of the machines of war other than the power of Almighty God. It was surely an impressive display of military might that faced the foot soldiers of the Lord.

Josh. 11:5 -- It is interesting to note the singular purpose of the confederacy. They "pitched together," or "pooled their resources" to achieve an intended goal (Josh. 11:5a). There was harmony among the kings because of their purpose -- "to fight against Israel." Faithful brethren assembled together for the singular purpose of serving God and fighting "the good fight (of faith)" (2 Tim. 4:7), should strike fear in the heart of every adversary.

The "waters of Merom" was chosen as the place of assembly of the confederacy of kings (Josh. 11:5b). "Although some (e.g., Keil and Delitzsch) deny the identity of these waters with Lake Merom, a few miles north of the Sea of Galilee, most commentators make this identity, with which I agree." <5> There is a lack of documentary evidence to establish with certainty the location of the "waters of Merom" since there are only two references to this place -- Josh. 11:5 and Josh. 11:7 of this same chapter. We do know, with certainty, that this was the place chosen to wage the battle against the forces of Joshua.

In the battle at Gibeon, Joshua only had to fight against a conspiracy of five kings (Josh. 10:5). Here, at the "waters of Merom" the confederacy consisted of many kings. This army was the greatest in number the children of Israel had ever had to face before.<6> The prospects of battle with such a force was enough to strike fear in the heart of Joshua and the Israelites according to Josephus, but the Bible fails to mention any trepidation on the part of Joshua or the people.

### **Josh. 11:6 -- God's Promise of Victory**

Josh. 11:6 -- Whether or not Joshua and the children of Israel were afraid of the northern confederacy is not stated. It may be implied by the admonition and encouragement of God: "And the Lord said unto Joshua, be not afraid because of them ..." (Josh. 11:6a). What is stated, and what is most important, is that God promised to fight with Israel in the conquest of this great army! Victory for Israel in this battle was a foregone conclusion before it ever began. God promised ultimate and complete victory for Israel.

With the faith of Joshua, which he had demonstrated by his obedience in previous conflicts, he would be

victorious. The same is true for the children of God today. A complete and obedient faith, as demonstrated by faithful service and life, nets the same assurance and promises of God today. Ours is not a carnal warfare from which a physical victory may be expected. Therefore, the promise of victory is not a physical one. Rather, ours is a spiritual warfare with Satan and the promised victory we have from God is that of eternal life -- of victory over Satan.

Paul stated in Rom. 14:23 that "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." All things we do in life fit into our concept of that which is right or wrong in the sight of God. We may not always be aware that we are making such a comparison, but we are. Also, that comparison is made on the basis of our faith. If what we do conforms to what we know to be right, according to the Word of God, then we know we are right. If it does not, we either refrain from doing it, or we know we are doing wrong. It is the foundation of faith that determines our action. Many times great faith is necessary to spur us on to do that which we know is the right thing for us to do. It would be so easy to turn our backs upon what we know we should do if it were not for an active, working faith to encourage us. That encouragement comes from our belief, our faith in the Bible, God's Word.

Mere numbers are not a criterion for victory in the battle between right and wrong. Examples in the Bible often show that the balance of power lies not in numbers, but in being in favor with God. Gideon's army which was to fight against the hordes of Midian was reduced to three hundred to show the power of God: "And the Lord said unto Gideon, the people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me" (Judg. 7:2).

God's people face overwhelming numbers every day. To live in the world places faithful brethren in a great danger automatically, but because of the promises of God, we can overcome the world if we are true to Him. Jesus said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Therefore, though we be few, we can win the victory if we have God to "fight for us" (Josh. 10:42).

God instructed Joshua to "hough their horses, and burn their chariots with fire" (Josh. 11:6b). Whether or not the intention was to destroy the horses is not clear. It is clear that they were to be rendered useless for the purpose of war. God warned the Israelites about "multiplying horses" unto themselves (Deut. 17:16). This was said in relation to Israel's asking for a king to rule over them.

"They were not to make war an art, as did the idolatrous nations about them. They were to deny themselves the facilities for, and thus keep themselves from the temptations to, that offensive warfare which would be likely to result from maintaining a force of cavalry."<7>

Also, God would want the people to honor the principle stated later by David: "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God" (Ps. 20:7). Perhaps the greatest lesson the people of God today need to learn and love is our dependence upon God!

Josh. 11:7 -- The account of the war that ensued between Joshua and the confederacy of kings is short. The record states that Joshua (and his army) "came against them ... suddenly" (Josh. 11:7). The impact of this language is that Israel did not hesitate to act, nor did they sit by idly waiting for the enemy to attack them. Their action was not delayed; it was swift, indicating that the element of surprise had a profound effect. Again, we are reminded of the account of Gideon and the rout of the Midianites (Josh. 7:21-22), how the element of surprise discomfited the enemy. Likewise, Joshua and his men "fell upon them."

Josh. 11:8-9 -- Joshua routed the hordes of the enemy, but still gave God the glory for the victory. He said "And the Lord delivered them into the hand of Israel, who smote them ..." (Josh. 11:8a). Those who escaped the initial slaughter fled, some westward toward Sidon on the Mediterranean coast and some eastward toward Mizpeh. Joshua's forces pursued them and those who were captured were slain according to God's instructions (Josh. 11:8b). Joshua also complied with Jehovah's command to "hough" the horses, or to make them useless (Josh. 11:9).

### **Josh. 11:10-11 -- Consequences of Opposing God -- Jabin and Hazor Destroyed**

Josh. 11:10 -- The city of Hazor was the prominent city of the area which was to fall to the sword of Joshua. It

was here that King Jabin ruled. He was the leader of the opposition forces against the army of God. After the defeat of the confederacy at the waters of Merom, Joshua turned back to tend to the business of destroying the source of opposition. Josh. 11:10 states that Joshua took the city and smote the king with the sword. There was a reason to make an example of Hazor. Hazor (i.e., those who lived there) was the "head of all those kingdoms." Those who are responsible for error shall bear the consequences for their error (Ezek. 18:20; Matt. 5:19; James 3:1). It is always effective to take away the heart in order to render the body useless. Satan used this tactic with Eve in the Garden of Eden, and it is most effective in combating the influence of Satan (James 4:7).

Josh. 11:11 -- The conquest of Hazor had to be complete and decisive. In order to produce the desired impact upon the coalition cities and thus diminish their spirit for resistance, the principal city must be completely destroyed. Such was the case with Hazor. "And they smote all the souls that were therein with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them: there was not any left to breathe: and he burnt Hazor with fire." Hazor was in the territory given to Naphtali (Josh. 19:32-36). It was apparently abandoned as a city site by Israel and rebuilt and occupied by the Canaanites. About 130 years after Joshua's death, Deborah and Barak rallied God's people against another "Jabin, king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor" (Judg. 4:1-10). It was likely this rebuilt city that was fortified as one of Solomon's "chariot cities" on the northern frontier of his kingdom (1 Kings 9:15).<8>

### **Josh. 11:12-14 -- Joshua Conquers the Other Cities**

Josh. 11:12 -- The other kings who were involved with Jabin were also to be destroyed. After the destruction of Hazor and the death of Jabin, Joshua turned to the other cities of the confederacy. It is not known which of the kings of the other cities named in Josh. 11:1-3 were killed in the battle at the waters of Merom. It is certain that some fled, escaping the inevitable for a time. Joshua destroyed all of the inhabitants of the cities that had opposed the army of God.

Josh. 11:13 -- A distinction was made regarding the disposal of the cities other than Hazor. We noticed that the city of Hazor was "burnt with fire" (Josh. 11:11). Such is not the case with the other cities. Although the people were "utterly destroyed" (Josh. 11:12), "the cities that stood still in their strength, Israel burned none of them, save Hazor only; that did Joshua burn" (Josh. 11:13).

Two explanations have been suggested as to why Joshua did not burn the cities other than Hazor that were part of the coalition against Israel: "(1) that they were those cities which had made peace with the Israelites, when conditions of peace were offered according to the command of the law. The Hivites were part of the confederacy, yet Josh. 11:19 says they made peace with Israel and were spared. (2) The cities which were situated upon hills and mountains, which, when taken, might be retained with little difficulty."<9> The first of these suggestions seems unlikely since Josh. 11:19 also says that "There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites ..."

Josh. 11:14 -- The spoils of war belong to the victor, especially in the case of these cities. God did not command the Israelites not to take the spoils of these cities as He had done in the conquest of Jericho (Josh. 6:17-18), except for the silver, gold, vessels of brass and iron (Josh. 11:19); or as He would later do in commanding Saul to destroy the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15:3ff). According to the law of Moses, it was an abomination for anything associated with graven images and idol worship to be possessed by the people (Deut. 7:25).

### **Josh. 11:15-20 -- Moses' Command and Joshua's Obedience**

Josh. 11:15 -- A characteristic that always singled out Joshua from most other Israelites was his loyalty. He was loyal to the authority of God. He was loyal to Moses at Mount Sinai when all the others, including Moses' brother, Aaron, gave in to the will of the people. He was loyal to Moses when he went into the land of Canaan as one of the twelve spies. He was Moses' trusted captain of the fighting men in battle against the nations who opposed the march of God's people in the wilderness. He was the one selected to succeed Moses when the time came for Moses to relinquish the mantle of leadership. He understood his place in accomplishing the purpose for the people being in the

land of Canaan. There is no indication that Joshua ever failed in his quest to please God.

God's authority had been given to Moses who was a type of Christ. God had instructed Moses to issue the following command to Israel:

"Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, when you are passed over Jordan into the land of Canaan; Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places: And ye shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land, and shall dwell therein: for I have given you the land to possess it." (Num. 33:51-53)

"As the Lord commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses" (Josh. 11:15). Joshua considered the authority of God, as expressed through Moses, to be no less important than if God had spoken directly to him.

The church of Christ would be a much more effective body of believers today if her members could have the same loyalty to God's authority as that which Joshua had. Loyalty to God is shown by our loyalty to His Word.

Josh. 11:16-17 -- Joshua next began a summation of all of the activities in which he had been engaged in conquering the land of promise. The language used in describing the land taken is confusing to some. Reconciling the "valley, and the plain, and the mountain of Israel, and the valley of the same" (Josh. 11:16), is difficult. There are conjectures perhaps worthy of discussion, but the substance of the passage is that all of the land of Canaan, "from south of the Dead Sea (Mount Halak) at its southern extremity to the area of Mount Herman northward"<10> was conquered by Joshua. Josh. 11:17 specifically states, "... and all their kings he took, and smote them, and slew them." We cannot assume from this statement that all the Canaanites were slain, for in later years, they became a thorn in the side of the Israelites on many occasions.

Josh. 11:18 -- The statement that "Joshua made war a long time with all those kings" (Josh. 11:18) indicates the culmination of the disposition God intended for the inhabitants of the land. All of the conquests of Joshua did not happen at once, nor with ease. The pagan nations were formidable enemies, and the Israelites had to fight to possess the land even though it had been promised to them by the Lord. The end of Joshua's conquests was forty-five years after he and Caleb had been sent from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land (Josh. 14:7,10). Israel had wandered in the wilderness some thirty-eight years after the encampment at Kadesh-barnea. When we subtract the thirty-eight years of wandering from the forty-five years of Caleb's life since the time he served as a spy, we can calculate that it took Joshua seven years to accomplish the conquest.

Josh. 11:19 -- Only one city, of all those previously mentioned who collaborated with Jabin, made peace with Israel -- Gibeon of the Hivites (Josh. 11:19). All the other cities had to be taken through battle. God wanted the evil influence of the pagan nations removed from the presence of the children of Israel. This principle is stated over and over in the history of God's people. Hosea addressed this problem with the Israelites in the days of Jeroboam II, the son of Joash. He had a horrible condition with which to deal. God described the nation of Israel as "whoredom" because they had incorporated into their economy the heathen nations around them. Malachi, some three hundred years later, rebuked Israel for divorcing the wives of their own race and intermarrying with the heathen women around them.

Josh. 11:20 -- God therefore hardened the hearts of the heathen cities against Joshua so they would not sue for peace. This caused, of course, their own destruction. Josh. 9:9-10 indicates that the men of Gibeon knew quite well the power of God through the exploits of the children of Israel while still in Egypt, and among the other pagan nations near Canaan. Hardening the hearts of the Canaanite cities resulted in their fighting against Joshua. In so doing, the will of God was accomplished as He had given instructions to Moses to rid the land of these people.

### **Josh. 11:21-22 -- The Anakims Were Driven Out**

Josh. 11:21 -- The Anakims were defeated by Joshua and driven from the land. Special disposition was made of them. In Num. 13:28, we are reminded that the Anakims were specifically referred to as the reason the children of

Israel could not possess the land. The excuse was given that "... there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight" (Num. 13:33). Now Joshua wrote concerning the conquest of those who so long ago intimidated the whole nation of Israel. When, at the time the spies went into the land forty-five years earlier, Israel could have conquered those people, they chose instead to wander in the wilderness till they died. The victory Joshua now enjoyed could have been enjoyed then if the faith of the people had been such to carry out God's commands.

Josh. 11:22 -- This verse indicates that they fled to Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod, all cities of Philistia. It is evident they finally lost their tribal identity while in Philistia.<11>

Today, God's children must learn from the lessons of the past. The reason God's children died in the wilderness was their refusal to place their faith in Him. Joshua relied upon God. He depended upon God's power, His mercy, and His wisdom. The same trusting, active, working faith will effect our victory over the forces of our spiritual enemy, Satan, if we will only learn to depend upon the power of God.

### **Josh. 11:23 -- The Land Rests from War**

Josh. 11:23 -- The affirmation that Joshua took the whole land is a simplistic declaration characteristic of Biblical literature. Seven years of war are summed up in this one simple statement. However, the significance of this declaration is couched in the explanation that follows: "According to all that the Lord said unto Moses ..." Joshua's success was due in large measure to two factors: (1) Joshua's integrity in holding fast to the commandments God gave Moses and which Moses communicated to him, and (2) God's power in giving into Joshua's hands all the forces that opposed His people.

The very same factors govern the success of God's people today. If we demonstrate our integrity in holding fast to the commandments of God which He has given us through the Holy Spirit, God is powerful and faithful to "give into our hands" every force that opposes His word.

Joshua also gave unto Israel all the land "according to their division by their tribes." Several conjectures have been offered as to the disposition of the survivors of Joshua's conquest, but the certainty of such conjectures escapes confirmation.

In Joshua we find a noble example of humility coupled with firm resolve. Not one time do we find a presumptuous or rebellious spirit. A faithful servant all of his life, Joshua lived to the full age of one hundred and ten years (Josh. 24:29).

"And the land rested from war" -- a fitting conclusion to the long and strenuous experience of wandering in the wilderness, conquering Canaan, and settling the people of God in the new land. The land promise of Gen. 12:7; 26:3; 28:13; and Deut. 34:4 was fulfilled in the days of Joshua!

The child of God does not initiate strife or conflict. The Prince of peace (Isa. 9:6) has provided a means of achieving peace with God for every man. Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you ..." (John 14:27). It is only through the peace that man can have with God, made possible by the virgin birth, the life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and coronation of Jesus, that we can endure the "wars" of life and finally enjoy "rest from our labors."

Is there a disparity between Josh. 11:23 and Josh. 13:1? The former says, "So Joshua took the whole land ..." and the latter says, "Now Joshua was old and stricken in years; and the Lord said unto him, Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed." One passage says Joshua took the whole land, and the other says there was yet very much land to be possessed. Based on such alleged discrepancies, many take the position that the Bible contradicts itself and is therefore unreliable. The enemies of the cross of Christ dote on such disparities without giving study to the matter.

Another such example of this type of thinking is reflected in regard to "works." Eph. 2:8-9 says, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." James 2:17 says, "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." And "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2:24). One passage says that salvation is by grace, not by works. The other says that by works a man is justified, not by faith only. Which is right? Can both be right? Is there a contradiction? The answer, of course, is that both are right when the terms are properly defined. Works of men which place God in debt to man cannot save. However, when man does the works of God, he can be saved. It is a matter of defining what kind of works is under discussion.

In like manner, when one passage says Joshua took the whole land, and another passage says there was very much land yet to be taken, it is apparent that some other factor needs to be considered.

Joshua was old and stricken in years (Josh. 13:1). He had done all he could do. He had reached the time in his life when he could go no further. Yes, there was much land to be taken. The land of the Philistines, the land of the Phoenicians, and the lands on the east of Jordan still had not been taken (Josh. 13:2-12). This was going to be left to someone else to do it at the time God would determine. As one continues to read the Book of Joshua, he comes to Josh. 24:29 where the death of Joshua is recorded. As the Book of Judges opens, others take up the sword and go forth to conquer. Joshua had accomplished all he was able to accomplish. Now the rest was going to be left to others to continue.

There is no disparity in the beautiful harmony and accuracy of the Word of God. Only those who do not have the faith to properly discern God's Word fall into the pit of doubt and criticism of the validity of the Truth.

We should take note that in all of the conquest of the land of Canaan, Joshua was active. He did not seek peace with pagans. He was doing the will of God in driving the heathen out of the land. The purpose of purging the land was to protect the purity of the lineage of the Messiah that was to come. There are many among us today who seek peace with denominationalism at any cost, even the cost of the integrity of the Bible and of their own souls. Those who would do so need to take a great lesson from the faithful and trusted Joshua!

### **Josh. 12:1-6 -- The Land Conquered by Moses East of Jordan**

Josh. 12:1-6 -- The land conquered by Moses on the east side of the Jordan was divided among the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh. These were those who requested settlement before the crossing of the Jordan, but who were required to take part in the conquest of Canaan west of the Jordan before they would be permitted to return and settle into their respective locations.

### **Josh. 12:7-24 -- The Kings and Cities Conquered by Joshua in Canaan**

Josh. 12:7-24 -- In this passage is given a listing of all of the kings conquered by Joshua in the settlement of all of the land of Canaan. Each one is mentioned with the cities over which he reigned. Josh. 12:24 ends the account, saying, "all the kings thirty and one." Thirty-one kings (the entirety of the number of kings in the land) had cast themselves against the power of God and had come short of their goal. Satan can cast himself and all his temptations before the power of God today, yet cannot begin to match the great and majestic power He has given to His army.

## **CONCLUSION**

In our study of Josh 11--12 we have discussed various aspects of the conquest of the land of Canaan, with the major focus on the northern part of the land. It is comforting to note the care, wisdom, and guidance of our God in any effort that will glorify Him and promote His cause.

With the service of Joshua and the faithful dispatch of his responsibilities, he accomplished all that God expected

of him. We see his struggles, his faith, his triumphs, and his rewards. The example of faith Joshua has given should help us today to have a greater understanding of God's care for us, His provisions for our salvation, and a deeper appreciation of His great love for man. Let us pray that we can develop so great a faith as that which characterized beloved Joshua.

#### **ENDNOTES:**

<1> All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version.

<2> Adam Clarke, Commentary on the Old Testament (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1828), 2:52.

<3> Ibid., p. 53.

<4> Flavius Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews (New York, New York: Holt, Reinhart, and Winston, n.d.), Book V, chap. 1, p. 142.

<5> Dub McClish, Joshua, ed. William S. Cline (Austin, Texas: Firm Foundation Pub. House, 1987), p. 206.

<6> The Preacher's Homiletic Commentary (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1974), 5:220.

<7> Ibid., p. 223.

<8> McClish, p. 209.

<9> Clarke, p. 54.

<10> McClish, p. 212.

<11> Ibid., p. 214.

# **The Allotment of the Land by Tribes (Josh. 13:1--19:51)**

## **THE ALLOTMENT OF THE LAND BY TRIBES**

### **JOSH. 13:1--19:51**

**by David P. Brown**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

With Josh. 13 we begin the second part of the book of Joshua. It pertains to the division of the land of Canaan among the Israelites. In our study we shall give attention to harmonizing such passages as Josh. 11:23 and Josh. 13:1. Also, we will note God's instructions concerning the division of the land and the allotment of land to the two half-tribes east of Jordan. We shall then investigate the remarkable man Caleb and his allotment. Further, we shall turn our attention to the double inheritance for Joseph's descendants and the first capital of Israel, Shiloh. Finally, we will study the indifference of the seven tribes to enter their respective allotments and Joshua's special allotment.

## **EXEGESIS AND EXPOSITION OF JOSH. 13:1--19:51**

### **Josh. 13:1-33, the Division of the Land East of Jordan**

Josh. 13:1-7 -- Herein are found God's directions to divide the land. Josh. 13:1 has the initial clause directing Joshua to divide the land. The conclusion of God's directive is not found until Josh. 13:7. Separating the beginning of the directive from its ending is, as it were, a parenthetical expression set into the sentence to clarify why it was given. The division of the land was to be made at that time for the following reason: God had already decreed through Moses that Joshua (along with Eleazer) was to initiate and supervise the division of the land (Num. 34:17) and Joshua's time on earth was rapidly drawing to a close. Thus, the division of the land had to be done before all of the land of Canaan was literally in the hands of the Israelites. In fact, in Josh. 13:6 God promised to drive out the Canaanites from those areas yet controlled by them. Josh. 13:2-6 name the areas that continued under the domination of the Canaanites. Thus, the reference to Joshua's great age simply serves as an explanation for the reason God gave the command to Joshua for the division of the land before it was under the complete control of the Israelites.

When we read in Josh. 11:23 that Joshua had taken "the whole land, according to all that the Lord said unto Moses" and then read in Josh. 13:1 that "there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed," we are not to suppose that the verses contradict one another. Josh. 11:23 is simply a record of the land that Joshua had time to take or possess. Even as God had given the Israelites Jericho, but they had to literally possess it (Josh. 6:2), so God had given all the land of Canaan into the hands of the Israelites, but they had to do their part to possess it. When Josh. 13 opens Joshua had conquered as much of the land as his span of life would allow him. Normally, as indicated earlier, the land would not be divided until all of it was in the possession of the conquerors, but due to the rapidly approaching end of Joshua's life, God commanded Joshua to go ahead with the division of the land.

Josh. 13:8-14 -- These verses record the boundaries of the divided land (see also Josh. 12:2-5 and Deut. 3:8). We learn from Josh. 13:8 that the other two and a half tribes had received their inheritance on the other side of Jordan. In Josh. 13:9-13 the full extent of the possession of the two half-tribes is recorded. Josh. 13:14 reveals that God had ordained that the tribe of Levi receive no land as an inheritance.

Josh. 13:15-33 -- We learn from these verses the description of the land appointed by Moses to the two and a half tribes. In the south the tribe of Reuben received its inheritance primarily in the territory of Aroer and Ar in the Arnon valley as well as in the plain by Medeba. Heshbon became its capital. It was centered between the Arnon and the Jabbok Rivers. Heshbon was ceded to the Gadites, who gave it to the Levites (Josh. 12:2; 21:39; 1 Chr. 6:66; note Num. 32:37).

Gad received Jazer and the southern half of Gilead. This land had comprised the kingdom of Sihon. The northern half had belonged to the kingdom of Og and was given to Manasseh,

The inheritance of the half-tribe of Manasseh extended from Mahanaim, included all of Bashan, sixty towns of Jair, and the northern half of Gilead. Josh. 13:32 records the fact that what Moses had ordained regarding the inheritance of these tribes had been accomplished. Josh. 13:33 repeats the fact mentioned in Josh. 13:14 that the Levites did not receive a land inheritance.

Of special interest in this section is the announcement of the fate of Balaam (Josh. 13:22). When we are first introduced to Balaam (Num. 22) he is identified as a prophet of God. When his death is recorded he is labeled as nothing more than a run-of-the-mill soothsayer. Balaam had been given the opportunity to do great things for God. What happened to this man that his life should come to such a bitter and disappointing end? The apostle Peter cut straight to the heart of Balaam's problem -- Balaam loved the wages of unrighteousness (2 Pet. 2:15). Note, please, that he loved what unrighteousness could give him. Therefore, he was willing to engage in whatever iniquity was necessary to procure the desired wages. Over and over again Balaam tried to get permission from God to curse Israel. However, God never allowed him to do it. Forbidden by God to curse Israel and yet possessing a character full of the lust for money, Balaam finally gave his poisonous advice to Balak concerning how to corrupt Israel (Num. 31:16). He coveted the money so greatly that he did not care that his advice would corrupt, degrade, handicap, and shame Israel. His pernicious advice almost resulted in the annihilation of Midian (Num. 31). He cared for none of the horrible results of his heinous counsel as long as he had the gold in his hand. Short-lived was his happiness, but his name is forever before the world as an example of the depths to which one can sink in gratifying his lust for money. We greatly fear that the corrupted character of Balaam describes a great host of people in our nation, and sadly, in the Lord's church.

### **Josh. 14:1-15, the Beginning of the Division of the Land of Canaan and Caleb's Inheritance**

Josh. 14:1-5 -- These verses serve to introduce the division of the land among the nine and a half tribes. Joshua, the priest Eleazar, and the ten heads of the fathers' houses instructed the children of Israel in the division of the land (cf. Num. 34:2-29). The land was distributed among the tribes by lot (Num. 26:52-56). This means that lots were cast in order to determine each tribe's inheritance. However, the size of the tribes was taken into consideration in the distribution of the land. This meant that tribes with lesser land needs had land taken from them to accommodate the larger tribes. What was mentioned earlier (Josh. 13:33) is now emphasized: Levi was to receive no allotment of land (Josh. 14:3b), but rather of cities (Josh. 14:4b).

After Ephraim and the half-tribe of Manasseh (Joseph's descendants, see Gen. 48:5-6) had received their inheritance, the distribution was interrupted by the move of the camp from Gilgal to Shiloh (Josh. 18:1-9). Following the move the other tribes exhibited little interest in receiving their inheritance; thus Joshua scolded them for their lack of interest (Josh. 18:3).

Josh. 14:6-15 -- Before the casting of lots began again, Caleb came to Joshua and the sons of Judah. He requested the mountains of Hebron for his inheritance. In doing so he reminded Joshua and the others that Moses had promised him these lands because of his faithfulness when he and Joshua stood alone against the faithless other ten spies as

well as unfaithful Israel (Num. 14:6-10,24; Deut. 1:36).

The exceptional faithfulness of Caleb deserved and received a special reward. He was so outstanding as to warrant our special attention. Note the following admirable traits of this great man:

1. Caleb's faith in God produced independence of character. He and Joshua stood alone against the ten faithless spies as well as their weak-kneed brethren, The majority did not sway them from their determination to take Canaan. Often truth and right are very much in the minority (Matt. 7:13-14).

2. Caleb's character reflected his love for the Truth. He declared, "I brought him word again as it was in mine heart" (Josh. 14:7). When our beliefs are unpopular we are tempted to keep them secret. Godly persons, however, always speak from the heart what must be said (Acts 4:19-20).

3. From the human perspective Caleb chose what appeared to be the most dangerous course of action. Why did he do so? Because Caleb was a man of courage. More than forty years before, he and Joshua had declared that with God's help the Israelites were fully capable of taking the land of Canaan. That same courage radiated from him again as he requested lands yet unconquered. Seldom do we think of this wholesome character trait as indicative of unselfishness, but nothing evidences unselfishness more than one's devotion to duty.

4. In fact, unselfishness is the next positive quality of Caleb's character. Since the time of his and Joshua's courageous stand against the unfaithful spies, he had sought no particular or special treatment. Now, he requested a region that was permeated with giants who were extremely ferocious,

5. From whence came Caleb's strong spiritual and moral fiber? Josh. 14:8 chronicles the answer -- whole-hearted devotion to God. This one character trait is the basis and root of all others. From it flow independence, love for the Truth, courage, and unselfishness. Without it there is nothing but abject poverty of spirit. Sadly, such was lacking in Balaam and all others who think that they can serve God and mammon (Matt. 6:24). Caleb declared, "I wholly followed the Lord my God." Would to God that all could honestly and truly make that statement.

This is the kind of character that God rewards. Of those Jews seventy years old and upward who left Egypt, Caleb and Joshua were the only ones who entered the promised land. We should learn from these two stalwarts of the faith that God blesses the brave and punishes cowards. For Christians we may not necessarily have an extra-long life in the flesh, but we will be rewarded with eternal life when we experience the reality of Heaven.

It is highly important to note that Caleb never "retired." As his strength remained so did his responsibility to serve God. Furthermore, he entertained no intention to quit serving God while so much work remained to be done and he had the strength to accomplish it. Our responsibility to serve is proportionate to our mental and physical abilities, as well as our opportunities. With so many Christians retiring from secular jobs at earlier ages, it is a shame that more of these retirees are not availing themselves of the abundant opportunities to more fully involve themselves in fuller service to God.

Many retirees could attend faithful preacher training schools, go on trips overseas to preach the Gospel, become more knowledgeable of the Bible and current events in the church by attending faithful Bible lectureships, not to mention the multiplicity of jobs in the local congregation. Instead, too many retire from everything but pleasure pursuits. Besides jeopardizing their own souls' salvation, a great resource is lost to the cause of Christ.

The "rest" that Caleb received came after the work was done. Time will slow any and all of us down. If the Lord does not return first, death will most surely take us from these earthly environs (Heb. 9:27). However, as long as we live, and to the best of our ability, we are to work for the Lord, knowing that our complete rest is in the next world, wherein dwells righteousness (2 Pet. 3:13).

### **Josh. 15:1-63, the Inheritance of the Tribe of Judah**

Introductory notes: Within this chapter there are several important points to be noted. We see the fulfillment of the prophecy that Judah would be greater than the other tribes (Gen. 49:8-12). The exemplary courage of Othniel exhorts all servants of God to walk by faith. In Caleb and Achsah is revealed the proper attitudes between children and their parents and vice versa. However, we also notice that the children of Israel lacked faith in the complete removal of the Gentiles from the land. Hence, the Philistines in particular became a thorn in their flesh of the Israelites.

Josh. 15:1-12 -- In these verses we learn of the boundaries of the inheritance of the tribe of Judah. The border of Judah extended to Edom and the desert of Zin (Num. 13:21). Kadesh-barnea was situated therein. The southern boundary of Judah (and all Israel) extended from the southern point of the Dead Sea to about eight miles below it. It passed across to Zin and up to the south of Kadesh-barnea. The boundary then extended to Hezron up to Adar and turned to Karkaa. From there it extended to Azmon and unto the river of Egypt.

The northern boundary began from the point where the Jordan entered the Dead Sea. This information is repeated in Josh. 18:15-19. Beth-hogla (the house of the partridge) was a border town between Judah and Benjamin. Later it was allotted to Benjamin (Josh. 18:19-21). The border continued over the north side of Beth-arabah (house of Arabah), From there it went up to the stone of Bohan, the son of Reuben. We know nothing of Bohan. We should remember that "son of" many times means "descendant of." The boundary continued on the north side of Beth-arabah and Beth-hogla. The boundary then went up to Debir from the valley of Achor. From here the boundary passed on north toward Gilgal before going up to Adummim on the south side of the river. From here it passed to the waters of En Shemesh below Bethany on the road to Jericho. The boundary then passed up to the valley of the sons of Hinnom.

Let us pause to examine this significant valley located on the south side of Mount Zion. It is a deep valley running west to east, connecting with the valley of Jehoshaphat on its eastern end. Sometimes it is called "Tophet" and in corrupted Hebrew, "Gehenna." Notorious to the extreme is the valley of Hinnom. Solomon built high places to Moloch in its recesses (1 Kings 11:7). Children were the sacrificial offerings to this devil-god (2 Kings 16:3; 2 Chr. 28:3; Jer. 7:31-32; 19:2,4). Good king Josiah defiled it and it became an abomination (2 Kings 23:10,13-14; Jer. 19:13). It became a garbage dump where the bodies of animals were burned. Jesus and James used it as indicative of Hell, the final eternal abode of the wicked (Matt. 5:22; James 3:6).

Continuing the description of the borders of Judah, we see that the border went on from the valley of Hinnom to the south side of Jerusalem. From the plain of Rephaim on the west of Jerusalem the border ran to the waters of Nephtoah. It continued northwest to the towns of Mount Ephron. The boundary then ran to Baala (Kirjath-jearim). From this point it turned west to the northern side of Mount Seir; going on across the northern side of Chesalon, then down to Beth-Shemesh and to Timnah. Going north the boundary went through the Philistine city of Ekron and so on to the Mediterranean Sea.

Josh. 15:13-19 -- These verses record Caleb's conquest of the land promised him by Moses (Num. 14:24; Deut. 1:36) and already given him by Joshua (Josh. 14:6-15). The city of Hebron was a part of this inheritance. In the process of taking his land he offered Achsah, his daughter, in marriage to the man who would take Kirjathsepher (Debir). Othniel, Caleb's nephew, conquered the city and Caleb gave Achsah to Othniel for his wife.

Achsah desired a field from her father. She first consulted with Othniel, then with proper respect approached Caleb with her request. She manifested her request for a the field by asking for a blessing. This was a reasonable request. It is a wholesome character trait for one to seek to better oneself. Such becomes wrong only when we seek our betterment at the expense of others, or let it hinder our service to God. Having received the field she realized that the land was practically worthless unless water was available. Hence, she requested water from her father. He gladly granted her requests.

We may learn several things from Achsah that are sadly lacking in today's world.

1. There is the mutual concern that spouses should have for one another in supplying the necessary information that each may know what the other is doing. Such confidence should exist in all marriages (Prov. 31:11-12).

2. In and of itself alone, the desire for proper earthly things is not wrong.

3. Children, even married children, should have the proper attitude toward their parents in their conduct with them.

Josh. 15:21-62 -- These verses comprise a list of all the cities of Judah. It should be noted that Josh. 15:32 states that there are twenty-nine cities. Actually there are thirty-two. The error dates back to the LXX (3rd century Greek version of the O.T.). No doubt this is a scribal error, not that uncommon in the copying of numbers. As is typical of such mistakes, it changes nothing that is obligatory regarding man's salvation.

Josh. 15:63 -- It is a sad to read that they could not take Jerusalem. Why? Courage springs from faith in God. If we lack faith, we lack courage; hence, the reason the children of Israel could not take Jerusalem as well as the rest of the cities that remained in Gentile hands. This was the beginning all of Israel's problems, eventually leading to the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities.

Lack of faith had been the reason that, except for Joshua and Caleb, all the Jews twenty years old and upward who came out of Egyptian bondage were not allowed to enter Canaan (Heb. 3:19; 4:1-14). It is the primary reason that we fail in God's work today -- or for that matter, any time (Matt. 14:31).

### **Josh. 16:1-10, the Inheritance of Ephraim**

Josh. 16:1-4 -- From the part of Jordan that is opposite to Jericho is found the beginning of the inheritance of Manasseh. It continues up from Jericho to the mountains to Bethel. From Bethel the boundary continues on to Luz then to the territory of the Archites to Ataroth, The boundary then goes down westward to the land of the Japhletites and from there to lower Beth-horon, then to Gezer and on to the sea.

Josh. 16:5-10 -- The border of Ephraim was from Ataroth-addar to Upper Beth-horon. The eastern half of the northern boundary went to the north side of Michmethath. It turned east-ward to Taanath-Shiloh. From there it went on to the east to Janoah, Ataroth, and Naarath. The western portion of the northern boundary went from Tappuah westward ending at the sea. Ephraim also received some towns in the territory of Manasseh.

Another sad comment on Israel's lack of faith is in Josh. 16:10. Unlike Judah, Ephraim was glad to let the Canaanites live in Gezer as long as they paid tribute to the tribe. This was much easier, safer, and more profitable when compared to utterly destroying them from the land. Nevertheless, God's will was not obeyed. As noted earlier, these along with other Canaanites would serve to trouble Israel from that point forward.

### **Josh. 17:1-18, the Inheritance of Manasseh West of Jordan**

Josh. 17:1-6 -- North of Ephraim was the inheritance of Manasseh. Being the first born of Joseph, Manasseh received a double portion of land. The first-born of Manasseh, Machir, was given Gilead and Bashan. As the lot fell, the rest of the descendants of Manasseh (6 families) received their inheritance (Josh. 17:2). Josh. 17:3 reveals that Zelophehad had no sons, only five daughters, whose names are given within this verse. His daughters had requested of Moses a separate portion of the promised land and it was granted (Num. 27:2). In all, Manasseh received portions by the side of Ephraim (Josh. 17:5).

It is interesting to note the justice of the Mosaic law regarding women. In pagan nations women are usually required to do the most menial and hard work. In slightly more civilized nations women are kept in ignorance and idleness. In more highly civilized nations they are burdened by all sorts of social restrictions.

While we do not uphold the "Feminist Movement" of our times, in or out of the church, we are concerned that women be dealt with according to the teaching of God's Word. It is obvious that both the law of Moses and especially the Gospel of Christ demand that women be treated justly (Num. 27:8; Matt. 26:13; Phil. 4:3).

Regardless of what men and women think, say, or do, the authority of God, Christ, man, and woman is clearly set out in 1 Cor. 11:3. God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of man, and man is the head of woman. Any doctrine that alters this Divine order (whether explicitly or implicitly) is sin (Col. 3:17; 1 John 3:4). As man must not usurp the authority of Christ, so woman must not usurp or exercise dominion over man (1 Tim. 2:11-15). On the other hand man must help woman in her sphere of activity (and vice versa), especially in husband-wife relations. (Eph. 5:22-29; 1 Pet. 3:7; Prov. 31).

Josh. 17:7-13 -- The southern boundary of Manasseh went from Asher to Michmethath before Shechem. From there it went to the south side to Tappuah. From Tappuah, the line continued down to the south side of the brook. The south side of the brook belonged to Ephraim and the north side to Manasseh. Manasseh bordered Asher toward the north, and Issachar toward the east. Again it is sadly noted that Manasseh could not drive out the Canaanites from the cities of their territory (Josh. 17:12).

Josh. 17:14-18 -- Ephraim and Manasseh approached Joshua about more land (Josh. 17:14). They claimed that they had received too little land for the number of people that made up their tribes. True, at the time of the census under Moses, both tribes combined (making up the "children of Joseph") did outnumber any other single tribe. They numbered 85,200, while the next-largest tribes were Judah (76,500), Dan (64,400), and Issachar (64,300) (Num. 26). However, Ephraim and Manasseh had already been given a full portion west of the Jordan, not counting the portion claimed by half the tribe of Manasseh east of the Jordan (Josh. 13:7-8). The portion west of the Jordan they had been given was good and fertile land. In reality they had no grounds for their complaint whatsoever.

Joshua revealed his wisdom when he reminded them that, if they were as great a people as they claimed to be, they would have no problem taking the land they needed in the great forest of central Palestine. Joshua said, "Since you are so strong, you cut down the trees, drive out the Perizzites and the giants, and make that your home." Even though their enemies had iron chariots they could not stand against such mighty and great people as the descendants of Joseph! This is one of those portions of Scripture where sarcasm practically drips from the lips of Joshua. All of their complaining got them nowhere with faithful and wise Joshua.

### **Josh. 18:1-28, the Tabernacle at Shiloh; the Remaining Land Surveyed; Benjamin's Inheritance**

Josh. 18:1 -- After Ephraim and Manasseh had received their inheritance, Joshua brought the whole nation together at Shiloh. There the tabernacle was set up. This was the place that God had chosen for the tabernacle (Deut. 12:11). "Shiloh" means rest. It typified the rest Christ has brought us (Gen. 49:10).

The tabernacle remained in Shiloh throughout the time of the judges. It was at some time moved to Nob (1 Sam. 21:1-6), then to Gibeon (1 Kings 3:4; 1 Chr. 1:3-6; 16:39). Shiloh was rejected by God Himself (Ps. 78:60,67-69). By the time of Jeremiah it had become a by-word (Jer. 7:12,14; 26:6,9). We must not forget that the rest that God provides for His people is available only through full obedience to His will (1 Sam. 15:22-23; Eccl. 12:13-14).

We may only conclude that the phrase, "And the land was subdued before them" had reference to the land where the tabernacle was set up. The very next verse makes it clear that such was not true of the whole land.

Josh. 18:2-10 -- Following the setting up of the tabernacle the other seven tribes began to receive their inheritance by lot. For the reasons noted in the exegesis of Josh. 15:63 the tribes were "slack" in their possession of the land. Joshua rebuked them and gave instructions toward how the remaining land was to be divided.

The attitude of indolence that manifested itself at this stage of the possession of the land was indicative of the low level of Israel's spiritual development. Paul told the fickle Galatians "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9). If the Israelites had kept in mind that in taking the land they were discharging their duty to God, they would have possessed sufficient motivation to complete the task (1 Cor. 15:58). But, alas, lacking in this necessary spiritual quality, Israel lost their resolve. So it is with many members of the church in any generation, especially in a materialistic society.

By becoming indolent they lost their sensibility toward what should come first in life (Matt. 6:33). Thereby, Israel forgot that their chief purpose for existing was to serve God (Rev. 4:11). "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). Sins of omission have always plagued God's children. The five foolish virgins, the one-talent man, and those condemned at the judgment were lost because of what they omitted that should have been done (Matt. 25). In fact, every judgment parable pictures men condemned for their having left undone what God demands!

Following his rebuke of Israel, Joshua directed each tribe to select three men for the purpose of surveying the land. This was to be a written report composed of seven parts. The report would contain a fair and equal division of the land among the remaining seven tribes. It was divided by cities. Again, the Levites were excluded. Joshua then cast lots to determine which tribe received what land.

Josh. 18:11-28 -- The northern boundary of the territory inherited by the Benjamites coincided with the southern boundary of Ephraim down to Beth-horon. The western boundary is described in Josh. 18:14. From Beth-horon the line curved round and went south in front of the mountains at Beth-horon. This is at the city Kirjath-jearim. From Kirjath-jearim the boundary started from the west and ended at the water of Nephtoah. Thus, it coincided with Judah's northern boundary. The eastern boundary was the Jordan. In Josh. 18:21-28 we see the towns of Benjamin were divided into two groups.

### **Josh. 19:1-51, the Inheritance of the Remaining Tribes**

Josh. 19:1-9 -- Simeon's lot fell within Judah's land; thus, the fulfillment of Jacob's prophecy (curse) pertaining to Simeon (Gen. 49:5-7). Josh. 18:2-9 record the division of the cities into two groups. We have already noticed this in Josh. 15:26-32,42. They are mentioned again in 1 Chr. 4:28-32.

Josh. 19:10-16 -- The inheritance of Zebulun was above the plain of Jezreel and the mountains of Naphtali. It, therefore, was bounded by Asher on the west and northwest, Naphtali on the north and northeast, and by Issachar on the southeast and south.

Josh. 19:17-23 -- Except for the eastern portion of the northern boundary and the boundary lines of the inheritance of Issachar, only towns are cited. For the most part the tribe received most of the fertile valley of Jezreel (later known by its Greek name of Esdraelon).

Josh. 19:24-31 -- Asher received its inheritance along the Mediterranean Sea. The territory was from Carmel to the northern boundary of Canaan itself.

Josh. 19:32-39 -- Between Asher and the upper Jordan the tribe of Naphtali received its land. The western boundary was toward Asher, with the northern and eastern boundaries also specified. The southern boundary is noted in Josh. 19:34. Josh. 19:35-39 list the cities involved in the inheritance.

Josh. 19:40-48 -- Dan's inheritance fell to the west of Benjamin. This is between Judah and Ephraim. It was formed by Judah ceding some of its northern towns and Ephraim doing the same with some of its southern towns. The boundaries are not given.

Josh. 19:49-51 -- At the conclusion of the division of the land among the tribes, the tribes gave Joshua an inheritance in the middle of them. He received Timnath-serah, in the mountains of Ephraim. There he lived until his death (Josh. 24:29-30; Judg. 2:8-9).

### **CONCLUSION**

Joshua was the last to receive his inheritance. No one could charge him with selfishness. He waited until last to

make his request known. He requested Timnath-serah, a lonely place on the north side of the mountain of Gaash. What a noble character! Here is a man who would not take the best of the land. He did not seek preeminence. His desire was to serve God in the place God put him. He characterizes the principle Paul presented to Timothy, "godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6). This great man of God continues to exemplify what true service to God from the heart actually is.

Joshua knew full well that his eternal home was not Canaan. Canaan only typified Heaven. Joshua knew that Timnath-serah was as close to Heaven as Jerusalem or Shiloh, or for that matter, any other place on earth. Hence, he was content to end his days of service in a humble mountain dwelling. Surely this man "took upon himself the form of a servant" and enjoyed the reward that awaits only those who do likewise (Phil. 2:5-12).

**ENDNOTE:**

<1> All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version.

# **The Special Cities; the Trans-Jordan Tribes Return Home (Josh. 20:1--22:34)**

## **THE SPECIAL CITIES; THE TRANS-JORDAN TRIBES RETURN HOME**

**JOSH. 20:1--22:34**

**by James Meadows**

BIO:

James was born in Cuba, Kentucky. He attended Freed-Hardeman College, Union University, and Harding Graduate School. In his lifetime, he has preached in hundreds of gospel meetings and lectureships. Also, he has conducted numerous congregational workshops on church discipline and church growth. James is a prolific author; he has written 36 books for Bible classes and personal study, besides being the author of the Gospel Advocate Senior Quarterly from 1980 to 1982. He has served as the local evangelist in Spartanburg, South Carolina. To date, he has only missed being a speaker at the thirteenth annual Denton lectures.

## **INTRODUCTION**

(NOTE: All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.)

Adam Clarke wrote: "The Book of Joshua is one of the most important writings in the Old Covenant, and should never be separated from the Pentateuch, of which it is at once both the continuation and completion."<1> In many ways the Book of Joshua occupies the same position as the Book of Acts in the New Testament. The first five Books of the Bible contain a record of God's dealings with man, the work of Moses, and the laws on which the Jewish nation would be built. The Book of Joshua is a record of that establishment. The Four Gospel accounts give a record of the life of Jesus Christ and laws by which the church would be established and governed. The Book of Acts gives an account of the actual establishment of the church according to the promises and predictions that Christ gave.

The Book of Joshua can easily be divided into two sections. The events leading up to, and the actual conquest of the land are pictured in Josh. 1--12. Josh. 13--24 detail the dividing of the land, Joshua's farewell address, and his death.

The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh had received their inheritance east of the Jordan. Josh. 17 gives details of Judah, Ephraim, and the other half-tribe of Manasseh receiving their inheritance on the west side. This left seven tribes without an inheritance, and they seem to have been very slack and indifferent in the matter of dividing and possessing the land. Joshua rebuked them for their slackness and instructed them to select three men from each of the seven remaining tribes (Josh. 18:1-5) to survey and divide the land. "These were to make the division according to the number of people to inherit it and according to the richness of the land. When the division was made, they were to cast lots to see which tribe would inherit which division."<2> All of these matters establish a background for the appointment of the cities of refuge and the Levitical cities, which Moses had commanded.

## **EXEGESIS AND EXPOSITION OF JOSH. 20:1--22:34**

### **Josh. 20:1-9, The Cities of Refuge**

Josh. 20:1-2 -- "Among many ancient people of antiquity (e.g., Phoenicians, Syrians, Greeks, Romans) certain shrines or sacred precincts were regarded as providing absolute security to fugitives. Innocent and guilty, criminals, runaway slaves, debtors, and political fugitives passed beyond the reach of revenge and justice alike upon attaining sacred ground and claiming the protection of the deity (Tacitus, Annals III 60-63). In Israel as well, the altar of Yahweh afforded asylum to fugitives (1 Kings 1:50-53; 2:28-34). But Biblical law restricted the right of asylum to the accidental homicide alone (Exo. 21:12-14; Num. 35:9-34; Deut. 19:1-13; Josh. 20)."<3>

The cities of refuge were appointed by a command of God. "Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses" (Josh. 20:2). "And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee" (Exo. 21:13). Moses had appointed three cities on the east side of Jordan before his death (Deut. 4:41-43).

Josh. 20:3-9 -- The cities were appointed for manslayers. Every slayer could flee there (Deut. 19:3). Every slayer that "killeth any person unawares ..." (Num. 35:11); "whosoever killeth his neighbor ignorantly" (Deut. 19:4); "... unwittingly" (Josh. 20:3). They were cities of refuge from the avenger of blood (Deut. 19:4; Num. 35:12; Josh. 20:3). The manslayer was to state his case at the gate of the city to the elders of that city (Josh. 20:4). They were to "take him into the city" and give him refuge from "the avenger of blood" until he stood "before the congregation for judgment" (Josh. 20:4-6). After the trial, the one found guilty of murder was to be turned over to the avenger of blood to be killed. The innocent was to be restored "... to the city of his refuge, whither he was fled: and he shall abide in it unto the death of the high priest ..." (Num. 35:25; Josh. 20:6). After the death of the high priest, "... then shall the slayer return, and come unto his own city, and unto his own house, unto the city from which he fled. (Josh. 20:6b).

"And they appointed Kedesh in Galilee in mount Naphtali, and Shechem in mount Ephraim, and Kirjath-arba, which is Hebron, in the mountain of Judah. And on the other side Jordan by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness upon the plain out of the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh." (Josh. 20:7-8)

### **Lessons Learned from the Cities of Refuge**

First, God never intended for the cities of refuge to protect the one who had deliberately committed murder. The motivation behind any act of homicide was subject to three points of inquiry (Num. 35; Deut. 19):

1. Was the weapon lethal in nature or not?
2. Had there been enmity between the two in the past? (Witnesses could establish this.)
3. What about the circumstances? Had the murder been planned? Did the slayer "lie in wait for him" (Deut. 19:11)?

"Motive, weapon, and occasion then, were the prime factors to be reviewed in any charge of murder."<4>

Second, the laws that God gave regarding the cities of refuge were different from the primitive cultures of the time. God's laws insisted:

1. That life be forfeited only in the case of willful murder.
2. That the life of the murderer must be taken -- no one could take his place or share the punishment (Num. 35:31).
3. That only the blood of the murderer would suffice to cleanse the land of the blood shed (Num. 35:33).
4. God's law clearly stated that no money ("no satisfaction") could be taken (Num. 35:32).

Third, even though there has been much discussion about the law regarding "the avenger of blood," its emphasis is on the value of human life.

"The emerging value of the law is its emphasis upon the value of human life -- even a careless act which results in the death of another is no light matter, and preventable homicide imposes a punishment upon that one who is careless, negligent or unconcerned about another human being. The law was to be enforced not upon the Israelites only, but upon any strangers and even sojourners in their land. By this method all people who came within the scope of the law's force came under the instruction of those who saw its value and the rationale for the law itself. The basic concept was a gigantic stride forward from any law to be found in pagan contemporary society. The inherent value

of each individual's life, and the awesome nature of divine justice are well established."<5>

1. Public justice intervening between the slayer and the avenger of blood accomplished the aim of controlling blood revenge.

2. The vital interest of the whole community was served by assuring the safety of the one who accidentally killed. Deut 19:10 says, "that innocent blood be not shed in thy land" and so "be upon thee."

Fourth, there are many likenesses between the cities of refuge and our refuge in Christ and His church.

1. Benson states, "the cities of refuge were designed to typify the relief which the gospel provides for poor penitent sinners, and their protection from the curse of the law and the wrath of God, in our Lord Jesus, to whom believers flee for refuge."<6> The Hebrews writer alluded to this when he stated that we "have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Heb. 6:18).

2. The cities were for those in danger. The one who had killed a man was in danger of the avenger of blood (Josh. 20:9). The sinner is in danger of the wrath of God (2 Cor. 5:9-11; Rev. 20:14-15; 21:8).

3. The cities were for all. Both Israel and strangers could enjoy the refuge (Josh. 20:9; Num. 35:15). All are invited to enter Christ (John 3:16; Acts 10:34-35). Both Jew and Gentile are reconciled to God in Christ (Eph. 2:14-16).

4. A road was plainly marked to each of the cities (Deut. 19:3). The way into Christ is clearly set forth in the Word of God (Isa. 35:8; Matt. 7:13-14; Acts 2:38,41,47; Heb. 10:19-20).

5. One had to abide in the city to remain safe, otherwise he was in the same danger as before (Num. 35:26-28). After becoming a Christian one must continue to abide in Christ (John 15:1-8; 2 Pet. 1:5-11; cf. 2 Pet. 2:20-22).

6. One had to abide in the city until the death of the high priest (Num. 35:24-25). Our high priest liveth forever "to make intercession for us" (Heb. 7:25). We must remain faithful even to the point of dying for our Lord (Rev. 2:10).

7. The city of refuge was a place of protection (Josh. 20:3), a place of peace (Josh. 20:5), a place of provisions (Josh. 20:6). We enjoy all of these in Christ.

### **Josh. 21:1-45, the Levitical Cities**

Josh. 21:1-3 -- The Levitical cities were distributed according to the command that God gave Moses:

"And the Lord spake unto Moses in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho, saying, Command the children of Israel, that they give unto the Levites of the inheritance of their possession cities to dwell in ... And among the cities which ye shall give unto the Levites there shall be six cities for refuge, which ye shall appoint for the manslayer, that he may flee thither: and to them ye shall add forty and two cities ... from them that have many ye shall give many; but from them that have few ye shall give few ..." (Num. 35:1-8).

The distribution of the cities and their arrangement served several grand purposes:

1. The Levites were no longer totally dependent on the tithes of the people. This provision "was itself precarious, depending as it did upon the piety and good feelings of the people (which must often have been found wanting; cf. Neh. 13:10; Mal. 3:8-9)."<7>

2. The priests were readily available to serve the congregation since they were dispersed among the people. This may well represent the principle of God's people living in the world and serving all mankind (cf. John 17:15; Matt. 5:13-16).

3. They would be able to participate in the day-by-day activities of the community. "The mixing of the Levites

thus with the other tribes would be an obligation upon them to walk circumspectly, as became their sacred function, and to avoid everything that might disgrace it."<8>

4. They would have regular duties to perform in caring for their animals -- "a responsibility not without the practical values."<9>

The Levites were composed of three large families: Gershonites, Kohathites, and Merarites. The family of Aaron might be considered a fourth family.

Josh. 21:4-5,9,13-26 -- The Cities of the Kohathites: The Kohathites received thirteen cities out of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin. Adam Clarke noted:

"It is worthy of remark, that the principal part of this tribe, whose business was to minister at the sanctuary, which sanctuary, was afterwards to be established in Jerusalem, had their appointment nearest to that city; so that they were always within reach of the sacred work which God had appointed them."<10>

"And the rest of the children of Kohath ..." (Josh. 21:5a) refers to those that were simply Levites, but were not priests. They had their cities "by lot out of the families of the tribe of Ephraim, and out of the tribe of Dan, and out of the half tribe of Manasseh, ten cities" (Josh. 21:5b). Hebron and Shechem were their two cities of refuge (Josh. 21:13,21).

Josh. 21:6,27-33 -- The Cities of the Gershonites: The children of Gershon had their cities out of the tribes of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and the half tribe of Manasseh. They received thirteen cities. Golan and Kedesh, cities of refuge, were two of their cities (Josh. 21:27,32).

Josh. 21:7,34-42 -- The Cities of the Merarites: The Merarites received twelve cities out of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun. Bezer and Ramoth were their two cities of refuge (Josh. 21:36,38).

Josh. 21:43-45 -- God's Promises Fulfilled:

"And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that he swore unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand. There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass." (Josh. 21:43-45).

First, God promised that Abraham's descendants would constitute a great nation (Gen. 12:1-2a; 13:16a; 17:5-6; 22:17). They became a great nation.

Second, God promised that Abraham's descendants would inherit the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:1-7; 13:14-15; 15:18). Gen. 15:18 shows the extent of the land to be "from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." Moses told them to go in and possess the land "which the Lord swore unto your fathers" (Deut. 1:7-8). Just before his death Joshua told Israel that "not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you" (Josh. 23:14). Solomon reigned over all the land (1 Kings 4:21; cf. 2 Chr. 9:26).

Third, those who hold the theory that Christ will one day return to this earth, set up His kingdom, and rule on the literal throne of David in Jerusalem for a thousand years, argue that God's promise to Abraham has not yet been fulfilled. They assert three basic things in their argument concerning God's promise: (1) Acts 7:5 states that Abraham had no inheritance in the land, therefore the promise has not yet been fulfilled; (2) Israel must return to the land and be exalted above the nations because God's promise was an "everlasting" promise; and (3) God's promise to Abraham was unconditional.

What shall we say to these assertions?

First, Joshua clearly said:

"So Jehovah gave unto Israel all the land which he sware unto their fathers; and they possessed it and dwelt therein. And Jehovah gave them rest round about according to all that he sware unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; Jehovah delivered all their enemies into their hand. There failed not aught of any good thing which Jehovah has spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass." (Josh. 21:43-45, ASV)

Furthermore, Stephen correctly stated: "yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child" (Acts 7:5). The promise was made to Abraham, as the head or father of the nation, and the land was to be possessed by his posterity (cf. Gen. 28:13; 1 Sam. 15:28). At the time of the promise Abraham had no child, but Abraham's seed would sojourn in a strange land four hundred years, and afterwards they would come forth and serve God in Canaan (Acts 7:6-7,17).

Second, the word "everlasting" or "forever" often referred to a definite period of time (Deut. 15:17; Gen. 17:13; Rom. 2:28-29; Jer. 33:17-22; Heb. 7:1-28). Furthermore, if Israel is to possess Palestine as an everlasting possession, then a thousand years won't fulfill it.

Third, the argument that God's promise to Abraham was unconditional is false. The Book of Joshua, along with many other Scriptures, shows that the land would be theirs as long as they served God faithfully (Josh. 23:6-8,11-16; 24:19-20; Gen. 18:19; Exo. 19:5-6; Deut. 28:1,15; Jer. 18:1-10; 19:1-12). When they were later led into captivity, due to their sins, they were promised that they would return (Jer. 29:10-14; 30:18; 31:17). They did return (Ezra and Nehemiah).

Fourth, it is often objected, "but how could Israel have the land when the Canaanites were still in the land?" It should be noted "that territorial occupation must be distinguished carefully from the subjugation of the native inhabitants."<11>

Fifth, God's promises rest on four pillars, which means they cannot fail:

1. God's justice which will not suffer Him to deceive (Rom. 3:25-26).
2. God's goodness and grace which will not suffer Him to forget (Rom. 2:4; Titus 2:11).
3. God's Truth which will not suffer Him to change (John 14:6; 17:17).
4. God's power which enables Him to accomplish (Eph. 3:20-21).

### **Josh. 22:1-34, the Trans-Jordan Tribes Return Home**

Josh. 22:1-6 -- When the children of Israel arrived at the east side of Jordan the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh made a request of Moses. "Wherefore, said they, if we have found grace in thy sight, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan" (Num. 32:5). Moses misunderstood their motive and said: "Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here? And wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the Lord hath given them" (Num. 32:6-7)? They assured Moses that they would build sheepfolds for their cattle, cities for their little ones, go to battle with the other tribes, and not return to their inheritance until the children of Israel had "inherited every man his inheritance" (Num. 32:16-19). They renewed this promise to Joshua at the beginning of the conquest of Canaan (Josh. 1:10-18).

This war was now ended and Joshua disbanded his army. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh had performed their part of the bargain and Joshua gracefully dismissed them to return to the land of their possession (Josh. 22:4). Though they were the first to receive their possessions, they were the last to enjoy them.

Joshua dismissed them with the greatest of commendations (Josh. 22:2-3). First, they had kept all that Moses commanded them. Second, they had obeyed Joshua. Third, they had not left their brethren. Fourth, they had "kept the charge of the commandment of the Lord" (Josh. 22:3c).

Joshua dismissed them by giving them some great counsel. First, they were to "take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law" (Josh. 22:5a). Second, they were "to love the Lord your God" (Josh. 22:5b). Jesus taught that the first and greatest commandment is to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt. 22:37). Third, they were "to walk in all his ways" (Josh. 22:5c). Fourth, they were to "keep his commandments" (Josh. 22:5d). Fifth, they were "to cleave unto him" (Josh. 22:5e). Sixth, they were "to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul" (Josh. 22:5f). The wonderful advice that Joshua gave to them is given to us all. May God give us the strength and willingness to heed it.

Josh. 22:7-8 -- Joshua sent them away by blessing them (Josh. 22:7) and by giving them their pay. "Return with much riches unto your tents, and with very much cattle, with silver, and with gold, and with brass, and with iron, and with much raiment; divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren" (Josh. 22:8). Paul said, "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges ..." (1 Cor. 9:7a)? Jesus taught that "the workman is worthy of his meat" (Matt. 10:10c). They were to divide "the spoil" with their brethren who had remained behind. Moses had given a similar command concerning the dividing of the spoil of the Midianites (Num. 31:27). David stated the same principle: "But as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff; they shall part alike" (1 Sam. 30:24). Likewise, in the church all cannot do the same work, but each must labor faithfully and diligently with what one has, and in the place where God appoints.

Josh. 22:9-20 -- Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh departed to go to their land, but when they came to Jordan they decided to build an altar, "a great altar to see to" (Josh. 22:9-10). The children of Israel "heard say" (about the altar), and "gathered themselves together at Shiloh, to go up to war against them" (Josh. 22:11-12). But, before going to war, they decided to send Phinehas and the princes of Israel to investigate the matter (Josh. 22:12-13).

When they arrived they immediately made accusations against the tribes. First, they accused them of building the altar "that ye might rebel this day against the Lord" (Josh. 22:15-16). Second, they charged that what they were doing would bring God's wrath upon the whole congregation, just as the "iniquity of Peor" (Josh. 22:17-18) and the sin of Achan (Josh. 22:20). Third, they suggested that if they were building the altar on the west side of the Jordan because their own land was unclean, they should instead go to the land where the "Lord's tabernacle" dwelt. They urged: "rebel not against the Lord, nor rebel against us, in building you an altar beside the altar of the Lord our God" (Josh. 22:19-20).

Josh. 22:21-29 -- Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh listened patiently (to the false charges), just as they had done when Moses misunderstood their motive (cf. Num. 32:6-7). Then they made their defense! First, the form of their appeal to God shows a profound awe and reverence for God (Josh. 22:22). Those who "make their appeal to heaven with a slight careless 'God knows', have reason to fear lest they take his name in vain, for it is unlike this appeal."<12> Second, they pointed out that the motive that actuated them was the exact opposite of that with which they were charged. We did not build this altar "to offer thereon burnt offering or meat offering" but we have "rather done it for fear of this thing" (Josh. 22:23-24). Building it to worship would have been in direct opposition to the law (Lev. 17:8-9; Deut. 12:4-6,10-11). Third, "the altar built by the Reubenites and the others was for no religious purpose, but merely to serve as a testimony that they were one people with those on the west side of Jordan ..."<13>

"Therefore we said, Let us now prepare to build an altar, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice: But that it may be a witness between us, and you, and our generations after us, that we might do the service of the Lord before him with our burnt offerings, and with our sacrifices, and with our peace offerings; that your children may not say to our children in time to come, ye have no part in the Lord ... God forbid that we should rebel against the Lord..." (Josh. 22:26-29).

Josh. 22:30-34 -- Phinehas and the princes with him were "pleased" (Josh. 22:30) and said: "This day we perceive that the Lord is among us, because ye have not committed this trespass against the Lord: now ye have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the Lord" (Josh. 22:31). Phinehas' report pleased the children of Israel and they resolved not to go to battle against the tribes (Josh. 22:32-34).

Was this altar presumptuous, and was it necessary? This altar was, in my judgment, in the realm of those things that are neither right nor wrong within themselves. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh may not have used the best judgment, but one could not say they committed sin. Matthew Henry observed:

"This altar was innocently and honestly designed, but it would have been well if, since it had in it an appearance of evil, and might be an occasion of offense to their brethren, they had consulted the oracle of God about it before they did it, or at least acquainted their brethren with their purpose and given them the same explication of their altar before, to prevent their jealousy which they did afterwards, to remove it. Their zeal was commendable, but it ought to have been guided with discretion ... yet, when their sincerity was made to appear, we do not find that they were blamed for their rashness."<14>

## **Lessons Learned from the Building of the Altar**

First, the altar was misunderstood. The altar was built as an act of patriotism, but it was understood as an act of apostasy.

"How often it happens that the best intentions are willfully or unwittingly misunderstood! We often read into the actions of others motives which do not exist. Because people do things which we either do not like or do not understand, it is easy to misjudge their motivation."<15>

How tragic and sad the consequences of misunderstanding. Men rush to make war, rather than attempting to find the truth. Man calls for revenge, but God says, "Come now, and let us reason together" (Isa. 1:18).

Second, we also learn the peril of rumor. The children of Israel "heard say" (Josh. 22:11) and made a decision without the facts. How many lives have been destroyed and how many churches have been divided because of rumor and gossip! But the story also shows how to resolve rumors. Get the facts before passing final judgment (Josh. 22:14-20).

Third, we learn that what hurts one hurts all. The "iniquity of Peor" (Josh. 22:17) and the sin of Achan (Josh. 22:20) had hurt the whole nation (Josh. 7:1-11). The members of the body of Christ are so closely related to the head and to one another that what hurts or helps one affects all (1 Cor. 12:13-26). "For none of us liveth to himself ..." (Rom. 14:7). Christians today need to learn this principle. Paul told the Corinthians: "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (1 Cor. 5:6)? Failure to deal decisively and spiritually with sin in the church can have serious consequences for the whole body of Christ (1 Cor. 5:2,6).

## **CONCLUSION**

Joshua faithfully fulfilled the charge that God and Moses had given to him. He led the children of Israel to take the land of Canaan. He appointed the cities of refuge as God directed. He gave the Levites their portion of cities among the tribes. He dealt fairly with the trans-Jordan tribes. God was truly glorified when His promises were fulfilled.

## **ENDNOTES:**

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<3> M. Greenberg, The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, edited by George Buttrick (New York, New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), I:638-639.

<4> Lee Doty, Numbers (Joplin, Missouri: The College Press, 1973), p. 375.

<5> Doty, p. 371.

<6> Joseph Benson, Benson's Commentary -- Genesis to the Second Book of Samuel (New York, New York: George Lane and Levi Scott, 1850), I:646.

<7> R. Winterbotham, Pulpit Commentary -- Leviticus and Numbers (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), p. 445.

<8> Matthew Henry, Matthew Henry's Commentary -- Joshua to Esther (New York, New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, n.d.), 2:99.

<9> Doty, p. 371.

<10> Clarke, p. 82.

<11> Gary Ealy, The Living Messages of the Books of the Old Testament, edited by Garland Elkins and Thomas B. Warren (Jonesboro, Arkansas: National Christian Press, 1977), p. 94.

<12> Henry, p. 106,.

<13> Clarke, p. 88.

<14> Henry, p. 104.

<15> Joseph R. Sizoo, The Interpreter's Bible -- Leviticus Through 2 Samuel (New York, New York: Abingdon Press, 1953), 2:658.

# **Joshua's Farewell Addresses and Death (Josh. 23:1--24:33)**

## **JOSHUA'S FAREWELL ADDRESSES AND DEATH**

### **JOSH. 23:1--24:33**

**by Howard R. Horton**

BIO:

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## **INTRODUCTION**

"Joshua!" His very name envisions battles, wars, and a gallant soldier of the Lord, facing, braving and bearing the heat of the battle in the heat of the day, and rightly so. After all, this man and Caleb alone were the only two spies who manifested real faith in their God (Num. 14:6-9). While others were saying, "Forget the grapes, the land, the milk and honey; we're going back to Egypt!" Joshua and Caleb manifested faith, trust, and hope in the unseen God of Israel.

However, Joshua was much more than a man of valor, a man of war. He was also an exhorter who, in his later years, would take the time and put forth the effort to make sure that those he was leaving behind were encouraged and exhorted to "... fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth" (Josh. 24:14).<1>

## **EXEGESIS AND EXPOSITION OF JOSH. 23:1--24:33**

### **Josh. 23:1-16 -- Israel Must Be Faithful, or Else**

Josh. 23:1-2 -- The wars, the fighting, and Joshua's youth as well were now things in the past; he "waxed old and stricken in age" (Josh. 23:1). One commentator said concerning these verses:

"After the division of the Land among the tribes, Joshua had withdrawn to Timnath-serah, on the mountains of Ephraim (Josh. 19:50), to spend the last days of his life in the quiet enjoyment of his own inheritance ... But when the time of his departure from the earth was drawing near ... he felt constrained to gather the people together once more in the persons of their representatives, to warn them most earnestly of the danger of apostasy from the Lord..."<2>

Josh. 23:3 -- There is much "piety and modesty"<3> in this address, for, after all, Joshua had been the commander-in-chief of the armies of Israel. How easy would it have been for this man to step forward (in his later years) and take credit for all of the achievements which Israel had accomplished. However, he was not that kind of man. He knew where the credit lay for any and all achievements -- in the Lord God. Thus, Joshua said, "And ye have seen all that the Lord your God hath done unto all these nations because of you; for the Lord your God is he that hath fought for you."

Josh. 23:4-5 -- Joshua had seen to it that all of the portions of land had been parceled out and that the land of Canaan was actually possessed by the Israelites, except for some areas where there were still some Canaanites left.<4>

There is an interesting translation of a few words in Josh. 23:5. Consider this quote: "...The same Hebrew word ... [~yarash] is used here to signify to expel from an inheritance, and to succeed those thus expelled. Ye shall disinherit them from your sight, and ye shall inherit their land..."<5>

Josh. 23:6 -- Adam Clarke has a good statement concerning one of the statements of this good man: "It requires no small courage to keep a sound creed in the midst of scoffers, and not less to maintain a godly practice among the profane and profligate."<6>

It is readily noticeable that the children of Israel were obligated to keep all of the "book of the law of Moses." Just because God gave them the land of Canaan, this in no way meant that He was a God who could be taken for granted simply because He is a God of good gifts and benevolence. These people were to be "exceedingly courageous"<7> as they lived and fought in the land of their inheritance.

Josh. 23:7 -- In this verse God, through Joshua, informed the people as to just how they could avoid turning aside to the right hand or to the left hand. God said: (1) "...come not among these nations." (In other words, do not make any contracts or such like with them.)<8> (2) "...neither make mention of the name of their gods," (3) "...nor cause to swear by them..." (4) "...neither serve them..." (5) "...nor bow yourselves unto them."

Josh. 23:8 -- Joshua admonished the people to continue to cleave unto Jehovah their God; there should be a close union between Jehovah and man -- an intimate union.

Josh. 23:9-10 -- The word "for" at the beginning of Josh. 23:9 gives us the reason why there should be a close union between Jehovah and man, especially the children of Israel. God had fought for them! "For it is the Lord that shall drive out nations great and strong; and under his direction and influence one of you shall chase a thousand."<9> The Pulpit Commentary points out that this is "a quotation from the song of Moses (Deut. 32:30)."<10>

When God promised to be with the people in their battles, in their wars, and their troubles, He meant it and stood by it. However, this also depended on the willingness of the people to stand by and to stand for God, by remaining faithful to Him.

Josh. 23:11 -- Joshua wanted the people to pay close attention to their relationship with God; he wanted them to "take heed" to "persevere in religion."<11> In fact, the phrase "Take good heed therefore unto yourselves" means "...take heed to your souls, literally."<12>

If these people and their posterity would "... love the Lord," they would have a God who would love them back (for He already loved them) and would fight for them and with them. However, this was going to take loving Him with all their very being; the inward man and the outward man must be involved. After all, it is written, "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment" (Mark 12:30; cf. Deut. 6:5).

Josh. 23:12-13 -- The scholars, Keil and Delitzsch, wrote concerning this verse:

"For if they turned, i.e. gave up the faithfulness they had hitherto displayed towards Jehovah, and attached themselves to the remnant of these nations, made marriages with them, and entered into fellowship with them, which the Lord had expressly forbidden (Exo. 24:12-16; Deut. 7:3), let them know that the Lord their God would not cut off these nations before them any more, but that they would be a snare and destruction to them. This threat is founded upon such passages of the law as Exo. 23:33, Deut. 7:16, and especially Num. 33:55."<13>

Josh. 23:14-16 -- Joshua realized, as all men must realize, that there is a time to die. Joshua knew that his time was near; and just one more time he wanted to encourage, admonish, and urge the people to be faithful because God had been faithful to them. Keil and Delitzsch stated:

"The Israelites knew with all the heart and all the soul, i.e., were fully convinced, that of all the good words (gracious promises) of God not one had failed, but all had come to pass ... But it was just as certain that the Lord would bring upon them every evil word that He spake through Moses (Lev. 26:14-33; Deut. 28:16-68, and Deut. 29:14-28) if they transgressed His covenant ... If they went after other gods and

served them, the wrath of the Lord would burn against them, and they would be quickly destroyed from the good land which He had given them ..."<14>

## **Josh. 24:1-28 -- Joshua's Final Challenge to Israel**

Josh. 24:1 -- God, because of the people's faithfulness, had allowed them to rest from war. It was during this time that Joshua grew old and was on the threshold of death. He thus called in all the representatives of the tribes<15> in order to admonish and warn them concerning their faithfulness to God.

There is some discussion as to whether or not the word "Shechem" should be "Shiloh" since there is the phrase, "presented themselves before God." Concerning this controversy Clarke stated: "Many suppose that this (Shiloh, H.R.H.) is the original reading, and that Shechem has crept into the text instead of Shiloh. Perhaps there is more of imaginary than real difficulty in the text."<16> There is really no need to demand that "Shiloh" be the original rendering simply because of the phrase, "before God." Keil and Delitzsch stated:

"Before God" simply denotes in a general sense the religious character of an act, or shows that the act was undertaken with a distinct reference to the omnipresent God; and in the case before us it may be attributed to the fact that Joshua delivered his exhortation to the people in the name of Jehovah, and commenced his address with the words, "Thus saith Jehovah."<17>

Shechem was a place which was honored and known well by the Hebrews. After all, Shechem was the place between the two mountains, Ebal and Gerizim,

"...which had already been the scene of a solemn rehearsal of the covenant soon after the first entry of the people into the Promised Land ... It was, too, the spot where Jacob, their great ancestor, had solemnly sanctified his house unto the service of God. ... It was here, too, that the first recorded promise of the land was made by God to the seed of Abraham ... and here that the bones of Joseph and his brethren were to be laid."<18>

Josh. 24:2-13 -- These verses are just a rehearsal of all that God had done for them in order that they might occupy the Promised Land. Keil and Delitzsch broke these verses into four "great acts" of God on behalf of the Hebrews:

"The first practical proof of the grace of God towards Israel, was the calling of Abraham from his idolatrous associations, and his introduction to the land of Canaan, where the Lord so multiplied his seed ... Joshua took for granted that his hearers were well acquainted with the history of the patriarchs ... that he might pass at once to the second great practical proof of the mercy of God in the guidance of Israel, the miraculous deliverance of Israel out of the bondage and oppression of Egypt ... The third great act of God for Israel was his giving up the Amorites into the hands of the Israelites, so that they were able to conquer their land (Num. 21:21-35), and the frustration of the attack made by Balak king of the Moabites ... The last and greatest benefit which the Lord conferred upon the Israelites, was His leading them by miracles of His omnipotence across Jordan into Canaan..."<19>

Josh. 24:13 differs from the rest in this section in that Joshua bluntly reminded the people in it that they were not living in cities which they built. Rather, they were partaking of the fruits of vineyards and oliveyards which they did not prepare and plant. "Labor" in this verse is closely associated with the word "toil."<20> "These overwhelming manifestations of grace on the part of the Lord (Josh. 24:12-13) laid Israel under obligations to serve the Lord with gratitude and sincerity."<21>

Josh. 24:14-15 -- In these two verses, Joshua laid two choices before the representatives of all the tribes of Israel, and, at the same time, informed them in no uncertain terms on which side he and his family stood! Joshua placed these choices before them because God does not want "robots" which have no choice as to whether or not they will serve Him. He wants children who willingly love Him and serve Him and Him alone!

Josh. 24:16-18 -- Here is the response of those leaders who represented the whole nation of Israel. They wholeheartedly agreed with everything of which Joshua had reminded them and all that he had said. In fact, their terminology ("... God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods," Josh. 24:16) shows that they, too, were horrified at the thought of going back into idolatry. They, by their own words, made their choice: "... therefore will we also serve the Lord; for he is our God" (Josh. 24:18).

Josh. 24:19 -- Even though the leaders of the people made the strong proclamation that they would not serve idols

and leave the Lord, Joshua still pressed home the point that they could not serve the Lord if they forsook Him and started serving other gods. God is a Holy God and "will not have his people defiled with the impure worship of the Gentiles."<22>

The God of Israel was (and still is) a jealous God, as well as being a Holy God. In fact, "God will not permit others to share the affections or rights which are His due alone."<23> If some would venture off and share their affections with the pagan gods of the surrounding Gentiles, then God would not forgive their transgressions, for this would constitute a breach of the covenant.<24>

Josh. 24:20 -- Joshua did not mince any words in this passage; in fact, since "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1:21), God was telling the people of Israel just where He stood and where they would stand if they left Him and served other gods. He would not sanction it nor tolerate it, but would, in fact, fight against them just as He fought against the pagans who had the Promised Land before they possessed it. If they were going to act as Gentiles, then He would treat them as Gentiles. We can only think of the verse in Jude which clearly and saliently points to this very fact: "I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not" (Jude 1:5).

Josh. 24:21 -- Here, in this short verse, the people committed themselves, realizing full well the serious ramifications if they did not serve the Lord.

Josh. 24:22 -- This verse says that the people themselves would be responsible for whatever befell them. They would be "witness, judge and executioner."<25>

Josh. 24:23 -- The people before God and before Joshua had mouthed their commitment to serving the Lord and not worshiping pagan gods. Now it was time to act; time to put into action that which had been verbalized. It was time to put away the idols, the "strange gods," and serve the Lord with all their heart.

Josh. 24:24 -- Once again the people voiced their commitment concerning serving and obeying the Lord. However, once again, history will show that these people served the Lord with their mouths, but their hearts were far from Him.

Josh. 24:25-26 -- These verses should be studied together, for they show that Joshua received their promises and, as well, recorded them! These leaders would be held accountable for their words. The God of Heaven considers it no light thing when people say they will do something and then fail to keep their word. Just in case they forgot, Joshua recorded the proceedings in the book of the "law of God" and set up a stone for a marker which would remind the people of what had transpired there that day.

Josh. 24:27 -- Joshua, just in case the people missed it, reminded them of the stone and of the fact that it had "heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us." Thus, if the people went astray, they would know that it would be their own doing and not the Lord's.

Josh. 24:28 -- Joshua had done all he could; he had said all he knew how to say. It was now up to the people to live up to what had been said there that day. As Keil and Delitzsch put it, "Joshua then dismissed the people, each one to his inheritance. He had done all that was in his power to establish the people in fidelity to the Lord."<26>

### **Josh. 24:29-33 -- The Death and Burial of Joshua**

Josh. 24:29-30 -- There are no more important words in these verses than these: "... the servant of the Lord." Joshua's burial place is insignificant, and his lineage does not matter. However, what is important is that he served the Lord with all of heart, mind, strength, and soul. It is, however, interesting to note that "Timnath-serah is still in existence ... Mount Gaash, however, has not been discovered."<27>

Josh. 24:31 -- It is good to know that, for a while, Joshua's admonitions and exhortations were not wasted. Israel,

as she promised on that day when Joshua called her together, remained faithful to God through the lifetime of Joshua and of her elders who outlived him.

Josh. 24:32 -- Joseph, who died about two hundred years before in Egypt,<28>

"...was buried in a piece of field which Jacob had purchased at Shechem (see Gen. 33:19) and it had no doubt taken place immediately after the division of the land, when Joseph's descendants received Shechem and the field there for an inheritance ... It could not have been introduced before without interrupting the connected account of the labours of Joshua; and it would not do to pass it over without notice altogether..."<29>

Josh. 24:33 -- Eleazar, the son of Aaron died -- Aaron, Moses, Joshua, and now Eleazar. Truly it is appointed unto man once to die (Heb. 9:27), be he a great man or a peasant, faithful or un-faithful, death is there waiting. With the death of Eleazar the high priest, the contemporary of Joshua, the days and times of Joshua came to a close.<30>

Adam Clarke wrote a great paragraph concerning this verse and the history of Israel:

"Thus nearly all the persons who had witnessed the miracles of God in the wilderness were gathered to their fathers; and their descendants left in possession of the great inheritance, with the Law of God in their hands, and the bright example of their illustrious ancestors before their eyes. It must be added that they possessed every advantage necessary to make them a great, a wise, and a holy people. How they used, or rather how they abused, these advantages, their subsequent history, given in the sacred books, amply testifies."<31>

## LESSONS FOR SPIRITUAL ISRAEL

The last two chapters of Joshua are pregnant with lessons for those who exist in the kingdom of which the Old Testament prophets testified. Interestingly enough, there is a great similarity between what God demanded of those Old Testament worthies and what he expects of us today. Consider the following lessons that should be clear for all to see:

1. In a brief statement (Josh. 24:2-13) Joshua tried to impress upon the hearts of the leaders of Israel all of the good and great things which the Lord God, by His power, had done for them. Surely, such a God as this was worthy of their service and adoration! Israel could see all that God had done for them, and likewise we can see all that God, through Christ and His Gospel, has done for us. It is good and right to be mindful of the mighty works of God which have brought us to our current place. We who are Christians would do well to frequently reflect on the greatness of the Christ and what He has done for us. When we remember and meditate upon the fact that He pre-existed eternally in heaven with the Father, but that He was willing to come to earth in the form of a man by a humble birth, live a life subject to temptation and trial of every kind, finally to die, be buried and resurrected, and to ascend to the Father, all for our salvation, it can only produce deep gratitude and spiritual maturity.

2. It would take courage, stamina, and resolve to stand for God when all the other countries around Israel were pagans; but, is this not true also with us in the kingdom of God, especially during these times? Wherever we turn there is liberalism. All sorts of denominational tactics are being implemented and contended for instead of being opposed!

3. Israel was not even to mention the names of pagan gods, much less bow down to and serve them. How about some in the church today who are preaching and teaching the doctrines of "other gods," as well as mentioning their names? Where are the old-time Gospel preachers of yesteryear, those who would stand and refute the preachers and teachers of error instead of running from them or with them? Sermons about the one church, Heaven and Hell, one doctrine, and such like need to ring out from the pulpits of the kingdom of God once again.

4. Joshua wanted the people to know that if God was on their side, then "one man shall chase a thousand" (Josh. 23:10). In like manner, we have a Book which will "chase off" Baptist doctrine, Methodist doctrine, the Catholic catechism, the New Hermeneutics (so called), and any other manmade doctrine. The Book in the hands of a Christ-like man or woman of God will work -- gently, firmly, and lovingly.

5. There is no future "land promise" for the Jews. Why? Because "...not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof" (Josh. 23:14). Thus, the premillennialists are waiting in vain for the Jews to yet obtain their "land promise" as if they never received it.

6. Joshua, even though he was a highly respected leader of Israel, knew Who was the One behind the victories of Israel. He knew very well that without God, there would have been no victories (cf. Josh. 23:3). We must never forget that the power is not in us to win spiritual victories, but in the Lord (Phil. 4:13) and in the Gospel (Rom. 1:16).

7. God is a God who will quickly (if He so desires) bring wrath on people, even if that same group of people have just experienced His favor. Joshua warned that if Israel transgressed the covenant of the Lord, the Lord would bring wrath upon those who left the Him to serve other gods. But is this not also true with us? The fact that God has forgiven us of sins passed does not mean He will overlook our current or future transgressions (cf. Acts 8:20-22).

8. Joshua called upon the people to make a choice between the true and living God and false gods (Josh. 24:15). Men must still make this choice. Everyone is standing in one of two places -- either in Christ or out of Christ -- and this position will determine the eternal destiny of each one.

9. The people clearly understood the words of Joshua. If they did not understand Joshua, then why did they say, "God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods"? And, why did they say, "... Nay; but we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:16,21)? We are living in very perilous times (spiritually speaking), because men and women are accepting the "bald-faced lie" that not all can understand the Bible alike. This doctrine of the Devil flies right in the face of Eph. 5:17 -- "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." The apostle Paul (inspired of God) did not lie when he wrote this passage.

10. Joshua died a faithful "servant of the Lord" (Josh. 24:29). There is no greater epitaph anyone can have. This is an epitaph that any person can have, but only if one is willing to make the courageous choice Joshua made (Josh. 24:15).

## CONCLUSION

Let us remember the stone which was set up by Joshua (Josh. 24:27). Why did he set it up? Because it bore witness to all that had been said, promised, and committed on that day so many centuries ago. Does not that stone remind us of a person, place, or object which "heard" us make some commitments when we first became New Testament Christians?

## ENDNOTES:

<1> All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

<2> C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 2:222.

<3> Adam Clarke, Clarke's Commentary (New York, New York: Abingdon Press, n.d.), 2:90.

<4> Ibid.

<5> Ibid.

<6> Ibid.

<7> H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell, editors, The Pulpit Commentary (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B.

Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), 3:335.

<8> Matthew Henry, Matthew Henry's Commentary (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell, n.d.) 2:111.

<9> Clarke, p. 91.

<10> Spence and Exell, p. 336.

<11> Henry, p. 112.

<12> Clarke, p. 91.

<13> Keil and Delitzsch, p. 225.

<14> Ibid., p. 227.

<15> F. C. Cook, The Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1981 Reprint), 2:111).

<16> Clarke, p. 92.

<17> Keil and Delitzsch, p. 227.

<18> Cook, p. 111.

<19> Keil and Delitzsch, pp. 229-230.

<20> Spence and Exell, p. 350.

<21> Keil and Delitzsch, p. 230.

<22> Clarke, p. 94.

<23> Spence and Exell, p. 352.

<24> Ibid.

<25> Clarke, p. 94.

<26> Keil and Delitzsch, p. 234.

<27> Ibid., p. 235.

<28> Henry, p. 119.

<29> Keil and Delitzsch, p. 234.

<30> Ibid., p. 236.

<31> Clarke, p. 95.1