

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH (UK MISSION AREA)

Charity Number: 1169890



**STUDY GUIDE TO THE BOOK
OF JOSHUA provided by
Connectional Ministries 2019**

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BOOK OF JOSHUA

Author: The Book of Joshua does not explicitly name its author. More than likely Joshua the son of Nun, the successor of Moses as leader over Israel, penned much of this book. The latter part of the book was written by at least one other person after the death of Joshua. It is also possible that several sections were edited / compiled following Joshua's death.

Date of Writing: The Book of Joshua was likely written between 1400 and 1370 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The Book of Joshua provides an overview of the military campaigns to conquer the land area that God had promised. Following the exodus from Egypt and the subsequent forty years of the wilderness wanderings, the newly-formed nation is now poised to enter the Promised Land, conquer the inhabitants, and occupy the territory. The overview that we have here gives abbreviated and selective details of many of the battles and the manner in which the land was not only conquered, but how it was divided into tribal areas.

Key Verses:

[Joshua 1:6-9](#), "Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

[Joshua 24:14-15](#), "Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

Brief Summary: The Book of Joshua continues the story of the Israelites after the exodus from Egypt. The book chronicles the approximately 20 years of Joshua's leadership of the people after Moses anointed him at the end of Deuteronomy. The twenty-four chapter divisions of the Book of Joshua can be summarized as follows:

Chapters 1-12: Entering and conquering the Promised Land.

Chapters 13-22: Instructions for distributing the portions of the Promised Land.

Chapters 23-24: Joshua's farewell address

Foreshadowing: The story of Rahab the harlot and her great faith in the God of the Israelites gives her a place with those honoured for their faith in [Hebrews 11:31](#). Hers is a story of God's grace to sinners and salvation by faith alone. Most importantly, by God's grace she was in the Messianic line ([Matthew 1:5](#)).

One of the ceremonial rituals of [Joshua 5](#) finds its perfect fulfilment in the New Testament. Verses 1-

9 describe God's commandment that those who were born in the wilderness were to be circumcised when they came into the Promised Land. By so doing, God "rolled away the reproach of Egypt" from them, meaning that He cleansed them from the sins of their former life. [Colossians 2:10-12](#) describes believers as having been circumcised in their hearts by Christ Himself, by whom we have put off the sinful nature of our former lives without Christ.

God established cities of refuge so that those who accidentally killed someone could live there without fear of retribution. Christ is our refuge to whom we "have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us" ([Hebrews 6:18](#)).

The Book of Joshua has an overriding theological theme of rest. The Israelites, after wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, finally entered the rest God had prepared for them in the land of Canaan. The writer of Hebrews uses this incident as a warning to us not to let unbelief keep us from entering into God's rest in Christ ([Hebrews 3:7-12](#)).

Practical Application: One of the key verses of the Book of Joshua is 1:8 "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it." The Old Testament is replete with stories of how the people "forgot" God and His Word and suffered terrible consequences. For the Christian, the Word of God is our lifeblood. If we neglect it, our lives will suffer accordingly. But if we take to heart the principle of verse 1:8, we will be complete and able to be of use in God's kingdom ([2 Timothy 3:16-17](#)), and we will find that God's promises in [Joshua 1:8-9](#) will be ours as well.

Joshua is a prime example of the benefits of a worthy mentor. For years he remained close to Moses. He watched Moses as he followed God in an almost flawless manner. He learned to pray in a personal way from Moses. He learned how to obey through the example of Moses. Joshua apparently also learned from the negative example that cost Moses the joy of actually entering the Promised Land. If you are alive, you are a mentor. Someone, somewhere, is watching you. Some younger person or someone that you are influencing is seeing how you live and how you react. Someone is learning from you. Someone will follow your example. Mentoring is far more than the words that are spoken by the mentor. His or her entire life is on display.

JOSHUA – GOD'S COMMISSION TO JOSHUA

A. Introduction: A survey of the history of Israel from Egypt to Canaan.

1. Israel was delivered from Egypt's degrading bondage.

a. These were historical events, but they were not *only* historical. God speaks through history to give an example of our deliverance from the degrading bondage of sin.

b. The central act of redemption in the New Testament is the work of Jesus on the cross. The central act of redemption in the Old Testament is the deliverance of Israel from Egypt.

2. Israel, led by Moses, wandered in the Sinai wilderness.

a. During that time, Israel experienced supernatural providence such as the supply of manna, water from rocks, the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night, and so forth.

b. During that time, they also received Divine revelation – the Mosaic Law. God communicated to them His holy standard.

3. The land of Canaan represents the *destination* of God's people after they have been set free from degrading bondage.

a. Not our *ultimate* destination, as the famous hymns would have it. Those hymns suggest that Canaan represents *heaven*.

- Hymn 279 in Shona.

- Choruses:

As the lines to *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* go:

I looked over Jordan, and what did I see

Comin' for to carry me home?

A band of angels, coming after me

Comin' for to carry me home.

b. Biblically, the land over the Jordan – the Promised Land – does not speak of heaven. Hebrews 3-4 shows Canaan as a picture of the rest and victory that can be enjoyed by every believer.

c. This also shows that the deliverance from Egypt was only in preparation for the enjoyment of Canaan. In our Christian life, we are *brought out* of sin so that we might be *brought in* to abundant life. The wilderness is never God's permanent destination for us.

d. Even as an entire generation of Israel died in the wilderness, so many Christians die in the desert dryness of spiritual experience, never walking in the fullness of what God has for them.

4. The leader: Joshua as a type of Jesus.

a. Remember that the Greek name *Jesus* simply translates the Hebrew name *Joshua*. Their names are identical. Whatever Israel received in the Promised Land, they received through the hand of Joshua; whatever we receive from God we receive through Jesus Christ, our Joshua.

JOSHUA 1

B. God commissions Joshua's work.

1. (Verse 1) Moses is dead, and God speaks to Joshua.

- A. **After the death of Moses:** Moses (who exemplified the law of God) could not lead Israel into the land of promise and rest. This all happens **after the death of Moses**.

- B. **The LORD spoke to Joshua:** Joshua – who was not a young man at this time – had spent his entire career previously as the **assistant** of Moses, now finds that it is his own time to lead, but only after God prepared him.

- C. **Moses' assistant:** Joshua was prepared by faithful service in small things, in being Moses' assistant. Redpath tells of a motto over a kitchen sink: "Divine service is conducted here three times daily." The motto is true, and great men and women are prepared by faithfulness to the small things.

2. (2-3) Am giving and have given.

- a. **Your foot... I have given you:** Entrance into the land of Canaan was entrusted to a representative. Joshua was the trustee of the land for the people. In the same way, our representative Jesus goes before us and what we have in God we possess in Him.
- b. **I have given you:** The whole land was given, but they could only possess that which they claimed (**every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you**). What they took must be fought for against a determined opposition, where ever they stepped in fighting and not sleeping God will give them.
 - i. God certainly could have simply eliminated all their enemies with a mere thought; but He calls Israel into partnership with Himself to see His will done.
 - ii. Because taking the land took *effort*, the challenge ahead was not for those content with Egypt, but for those who would press ahead for what God had called them to.

3. (4-5) The promise: victory is assured because Joshua is called by God.

The precise territory of the land is described. This was no "pie in the sky" promise. It described real land with real boundaries. **The promises of God have Boundaries, do you agree?**

- b. **I will be with you:** Victory is assured not because Joshua is a great leader, or because Israel is a great nation, but because God is a great God, and He says to Joshua, **I will be with you**. This is enough for any man seeking to do God's will.

4. (6-9) The conditions of the promise of victory.

- a. **Be strong and very courageous:** Joshua is called to boldness in God. This exposes Joshua's weakness; there was a *need* for such a command, because even a great leader like Joshua needed such encouragement.

i. This bold courage would not be in Joshua himself, but in God. We can be full of self-confidence that will take us to ruin, but we should instead be full of a genuine God-confidence.

b. **That you may observe to do according to all the law:** Joshua must take great care to observe the law. God's word and Joshua's commitment to it would be the pillars supporting his success.

c. **To all the law:** Joshua did not only need to read God's word. It had to be on his *lips* (**shall not depart from your mouth**), in his *mind* (**meditate in it day and night**), and he had to *do* it (**observe to do according to all that is written**).

d. **For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success:** God's Word so lived is a guarantee of Christian success. Not that it promises a life without problems, but it does insure a life able to deal with anything, because it takes full advantage of God's presence and promises.

i. And *Christian* success is not measured by the same standards as the world's success. Even if the world accounts us as *sheep for the slaughter*, we are actually *more than conquerors through Him who loved us* ([Romans 8:36-37](#)^L).

e. **For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go:** The final encouragement, repeated from [Joshua 1:5](#)^L, reminds us that Joshua's success did not depend solely on his ability to keep God's Word. It depended even more on God's presence with him.

C. Preparations to cross the Jordan.

1. (10-11) Command to the officers.

a. **For within three days:** The waiting for God is often the most difficult part for us, but days of waiting are always days of preparation in God's work. There is no *wasted* time with God.

2. (12-15) Reminder to the eastern tribes.

a. **And to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh Joshua spoke:** These tribes which decided to settle on the east side of the Jordan river (land that Israel had already conquered) had promised to cross over and help the rest of the nation take the land on the west side of the Jordan river ([Numbers 32:16-32](#)^L).

b. **But you shall pass before your brethren armed, all your mighty men of valour, and help them:** This same principle operates in the Body of Christ. When one member has a need, it is the common need of the body ([1 Corinthians 12:25-26](#)^L). We should never refuse to help a brother in need because *our* own state is settled.

3. (16-18) The eastern tribes promise their allegiance to Joshua.

a. **All you command us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go:** Here we see Israel in the kind of unity as a nation that was essential to fulfill God's calling and promise for them. They overcame the temptation to see the eastern tribes as separate from the rest of Israel.

b. **Just as we heeded Moses in all things, so we will heed you:** The willingness of the people to receive Joshua as their leader, replacing Moses, was a confirmation of the LORD's words to Joshua previously in the chapter.

c. **Only be strong and of good courage:** The representatives from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh say the same thing to Joshua that he heard from the Lord in [Joshua 1:6](#)^L. This must have been a confirmation of God’s word to Joshua when they said it. God loves to *confirm* His word to us.

JOSHUA 2

THE SALVATION OF RAHAB

A. Spies sent to the city of Jericho.

1. (1a) Joshua sends forth spies.

a. **Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from Acacia Grove to spy secretly:** This kind of careful preparation shows faithfulness, not a lack of faith. God’s promises of success to us should never lull us into inaction. They should spur us on to a step out in godly activity.

i. We aren’t told who the two spies are, but Jewish tradition – speculation, really – says they were faithful Caleb and the High Priest Eliezer.

ii. Remember that all this takes place during the three days Joshua has commanded the nation to wait on the banks of the Jordan ([Joshua 1:11](#)^L). God has a special purpose for these three days.

b. **To spy secretly:** Joshua also shows wisdom by sending them **secretly**. The last spies that went out publicly turned out badly for Israel, when a majority of the spies came back with a discouraging report (Numbers 13).

c. **Go, view the land, especially Jericho:** God has greater things in mind for this spy mission; it will fail as a mission of military reconnaissance, but it will succeed in God’s purpose.

2. (1b) The spies at Rahab’s house.

a. **Came to the house of a harlot named Rahab:** Through the history of Christianity, it has embarrassed some Bible interpreters that these two spies went to the house of a prostitute. Some have tried to say that Rahab was simply an “innkeeper,” but the language is clear enough. She was a **harlot**.

i. In the second century Origen wrote: “As the first Joshua sent his spies before him and they were received into the harlot’s house, so the second Joshua sent his forerunners, whom the publicans and harlots gladly received”.

ii. It is great when sinners receive Jesus; not those who deny their sinfulness or don’t know what they are capable of apart from Jesus – the gospel is for those who know they are sinners.

b. **And lodged there:** Why did they go to the harlot’s house? Though it was an awkward place, it must be admitted that it was a perfect place to hide out and remain anonymous, and this was necessary because the city was on strict guard.

i. There isn't even the hint of immorality with Rahab. Anyone who assumes that there was immoral conduct forces their own bias on the text.

3. (2-7) Rahab hides and protects the spies.

a. **Then the woman took the two men and hid them:** In the culture of that day, there was a strong tradition of hospitality. If someone was a guest in your house, you had a strong duty to protect them and care for them. Even considering this, Rahab went much further than the respect of cultural traditions regarding hospitality. She put her own life on the line for these men.

b. **Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from:** The Bible simply *reports* Rahab's lie; it does not praise it or excuse it. Perhaps if she had beforehand determined in her heart to not lie in obedience to God, He would have made a way for her to preserve the life of the spies *without* lying.

c. **The men went out:** Rahab's lie is not justified, but it does show courage. Consider that she was a pagan sinner in a city and culture wholly given over to the worship of false gods and immorality, with no previous contact with the word of God or the things of God. What is your excuse?

B. Salvation for Rahab.

1. (8-14) Rahab's confession of faith.

a. **I know that the LORD has given you the land:** This surprising outburst of faith shows how God had a plan in bringing Rahab and the spies together. It is the same kind of thing we see when God supernaturally brings us to people who are believers or open to the gospel.

b. **He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath:** Rahab's declaration was proof of her faith. It was not strong faith and it was not perfect faith, but her faith was commendable nonetheless ([Hebrews 11:31](#)^L and [James 2:25](#)^L).

i. We may be appalled at the fact that Rahab was a prostitute, or that she was a liar. But the fact is that she was not saved by her works, but by her faith. She knew who God was, she knew who she was, and she trusted God for her very life.

c. **That you also will show kindness to my father's house:** Rahab's desire to see her family saved, and the length she goes to in order to save their lives shows that her love should be noticed, as well as her faith.

d. **Swear to me by the LORD:** This shows that Rahab longed for assurance by asked for an oath. She *wanted* to leave her sinful life and culture and come with God's people.

2. (15-21) The means of Rahab's salvation: the scarlet cord.

a. **Bind this scarlet cord in the window:** This was the signal to the army of Israel that the people in this home were to be spared. Despite Rahab's desire, despite her faith, despite the promises of these spies, she would have perished unless she put her trust in a blood red cord cast down from her window. Without the scarlet cord, she could not have been saved.

i. As early as the first century, commentators such as Clement of Rome, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Origen and more saw **this scarlet cord** as a symbol of the blood of Jesus.

b. **And she bound the scarlet cord in the window:** Rahab *immediately* put her faith into both the identification and safety of the scarlet cord. She also trusted in the ones who made the promise about the scarlet cord (**according to your words, so be it**).

i. Joshua would be a savior for Rahab, but a judge of the rest of Jericho. In the same way Jesus is a savior for those who trust Him, but a judge for those who reject Him.

c. **According to your words, so be it:** Rahab's destiny was to marry one of the princes of Judah and be found in the lineage of King and David and Jesus Himself.

3. (22-24) Mission accomplished.

a. **And told him all that had befallen them:** Considering how God will have them conquer the city of Jericho, how did the information from these spies help in the battle for Jericho? Jericho was one of the strongest and most heavily fortified cities of Canaan; if Israel could conquer it, the whole land would be before them – but how did this reconnaissance help them with the eventual battle? It didn't help them at all!

b. **Truly the LORD has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us:** The reconnaissance mission didn't help with military strategy, but it did help in encouraging the faith of these spies and the whole nation. This was far more important than a good battle plan.

i. There was another purpose at work in sending the spies: to save Rahab. In this, we see the extent God goes to in bringing one woman and her father's house to salvation – Someone seemingly "impossible" to save.

ii. You may know some that seem "impossible" to save, but God's hand is not short to save people like Rahab, and He can work in amazing ways to bring salvation.

JOSHUA 3

CROSSING THE JORDAN

A. Instructions for crossing the Jordan River.

1. (1-2) **Camping by the Jordan: Israel faces up to their own utter helplessness to accomplish what it set before them.**

a. **Came to the Jordan... and lodged there before they crossed over:** God told the people of Israel to wait three days at shores of the Jordan River ([Joshua 1:11](#)). All that time, the

people of Israel saw a rushing river, swollen with spring rains laying in front of them. They must have asked, “How can we ever cross this river?”

i. It was one thing for a few spies to make their way across (as happened in Joshua 2), but here we are talking about a nation of *millions*, with all their possessions – how will they make it?

b. **After three days that the officers went through the camp:** At a moment like this, all the wonderful talk about living in the Promised Land can sound pretty hollow. There is a seemingly impossible obstacle blocking the way – how will God do this one?

2. (3-5) The ark of God will lead the way.

a. **When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it:** Joshua didn't send his Army Corps of Engineers first. Instead, he sent the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant, which was the visible representation of God's presence with the people. Joshua knew this was a *spiritual* problem, not a feat of human engineering.

b. **Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure:** God required that they keep some 1,000 yards behind the ark. This was for two reasons. First, to respect the holy nature of the Ark of the Covenant. But also, it was to make sure that everyone a clear view of the ark. **That you may know the way by which you must go** shows that the Ark of the Covenant led the way. Israel would accomplish this impossible task as they set their eyes upon God's presence and followed only after His presence.

c. **Sanctify yourselves:** Because this would be a spiritual battle, Joshua requires that the people have a spiritual preparation. **Sanctify yourselves** means they were to separate themselves from common things to focus in on the LORD, and to see that **the LORD will do wonders among you.**

3. (6) Joshua's step of faith: he sends the priests to walk across a swollen river Jordan.

a. **Take up the Ark of the Covenant and cross over before the people:** We should assume that God *told* Joshua to do this, and that he wasn't working out of foolish presumption. We can also assume that God spoke to Joshua about this as Joshua was in God's word, reading and remembering the crossing of the Red Sea.

i. We see Joshua's success depending on and growing out of the promise of [Joshua 1:8](#)^L : *This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.* Joshua obviously had the word of God on his lips, on his mind, and in his actions.

b. **So they took up the Ark of the Covenant and went before the people:** Even with God's specific guidance, and with specific guidance from His word, this is still an impressive step of faith for Joshua. Living and walking in the Promised Land comes from this kind of faith, not a slavish reliance on a “law” relationship with God.

i. Faith leads us into greater victories than law ever could.

4. (7-8) God's encouragement to Joshua.

- a. **This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel:** As Joshua takes a step of faith, God encourages him all the way. God always wants to encourage and help along our faith, but we may have our ears closed to His encouragement.
- b. **That they may know that as I was with Moses, so I will be with you:** God will make Joshua a leader like Moses in the eyes of the people, and He will do it by using Joshua to miraculously lead the people across an impossible body of water.
- c. **When you have come to the edge of the water... you shall stand in the Jordan:** After Joshua had obeyed the previous guidance, based on faith and his understanding of God's word, now God gave him more specific instructions.

5. (9-13) Joshua encourages and instructs Israel.

- a. **By this you shall know that the living God is among you:** Joshua understands the way God connects events in our lives. The fact that He will move on behalf of Israel here is taken as a promise of His future blessing and movement for them.
- B. **Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over before you into the Jordan:** Joshua knows that the ark will lead the way – again, this is a spiritual battle to be won.
- c. **The waters of the Jordan shall be cut off, the waters that come down from upstream, and they shall stand as a heap:** Joshua's general outlook, as communicated to the people, is refreshing. The impossible problems in their way are not seen as an oppressive trial, but as a glorious opportunity to see God work.

B. Crossing the Jordan River.

1. (14-15) The faith of the priests and of Joshua.

- a. **The feet of the priests who bore the ark dipped in the edge of the water:** The priests begin the procession, with the Ark of the Covenant some 1,000 yards in front of the people, and the priests came and walked right into a river that looked like it wasn't going anywhere.
 - i. Who knows how long the priests stood there in the river? It might have been a moment; but it may have been a long time – but in a situation like that, a moment *seems* like a long time!
- b. **Dipped in the edge of the water:** We usually want the river to be dry before we even make a step; but God was truly calling Israel to step out in faith.
- c. **For the Jordan overflows all its banks during the whole time of harvest:** Joshua reminds us that this was not a time when the Jordan was reduced to a trickle. Because of the spring rains, at this time of early harvest, the river was swollen and overflowing its banks.

2. (16-17) The Jordan is stopped, and the people cross over on dry ground.

- a. **The waters which came down from upstream stood still:** In some miraculous manner, God stopped the flow of the Jordan River. He may have used a natural occurrence (an earthquake has often been suggested), but the *timing* of it was at the hand of God.
- b. **On dry ground in the midst of the Jordan:** As well, even with the flow of the river stopped, it was miraculous that the people could cross over on **dry ground in the midst of the Jordan**. God miraculously dried the riverbed so that they didn't slog through marshy mud.

i. This miracle obviously connects with the miracle the nation knew some 40 years earlier: the passing through the Red Sea. God brought them *out* of Egypt's bondage with a miracle, and He brought them *in* to the Promised Land with a miracle.

c. **The priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan:** How did it happen? What was the key to this amazing miracle? Notice the centrality of the **ark of the covenant of the LORD**. The ark is referred to 14 times in these 17 verses. This was all about the trust of Joshua, the priests, and Israel had in the God they knew was present with them.

i. The Ark of the Covenant cleared the way for Israel. This was spiritual work, not work for Israel's "Army Corps of Engineers."

3. To face such impossible challenges in our lives, we must look unto Jesus, our Joshua. He always leads us.

a. Jesus is the fulfilment of the ark; He is *Immanuel*, which is translated, "God with us" ([Matthew 1:23](#)^L).

b. Jesus has cleared the way to victory over all things: *Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in the cross* ([Colossians 2:15](#)^L).

c. As we keep our eyes on, and follow behind our victorious Jesus, the river of impossibility will dry up.

d. To the cynic, who wonders if they haven't tried that and been disappointed, we must ask them: "Have you really tried this? Have you truly walked according to God's word, trusted in Jesus and been disappointed?" Perhaps your disappointment is actually in your flesh.

JOSHUA 4

MEMORIAL STONES

A. Crossing the Jordan River is finished, and the Ark of the Covenant comes from the midst of the river.

1. (1-9) After the nation crosses over, God commands Joshua to set up a memorial of the crossing.

a. **When all the people had completely crossed over the Jordan:** Israel was now on the other side of the Jordan – in the Promised Land. But what is life in the Promised Land like? Is it one glorious vacation time after another? No; for Israel it was a place of battle, but most of all, it was a place of *trust* – they knew they had to trust God with everything they had, because the challenges only got *bigger* in the Promised Land – but so did the blessings.

i. Most of us would have wanted to rush on through and take care of Jericho – why not take advantage of the time when they are all afraid of you? But God is never in a hurry; and He knows that beyond us *doing* something, we must *be* something for Him – so He takes time out to conquer Israel spiritually before they can conquer Jericho under His guidance.

b. **Take for yourselves twelve stones from here, out of the midst of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet stood firm** Each tribe was to send a representative to take a stone – undoubtedly a large one – from the dry river bed where Israel had crossed over, so the stones could be set up as a memorial.

c. **That this may be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come:** The purpose of this memorial was so that the people of Israel could teach their children about the great things God had done, so that the work of God would not be forgotten among the generations.

i. We often fail in our trust of God because we forget the great things He has done, and often the faith of our children is weak because they have never been told how great God is and how real His working is in our lives.

d. **Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan:** Joshua also set up a pile of memorial stones in the very bed of the river Jordan, so that when it was lowered in a season of drought, those stones could be seen and would testify of the time that God had completely dried up the Jordan.

i. Especially in a time of drought, we need to remember the great things God has done.

2. (10-18) The nation passes over, the priests come through, and the Jordan returns to its normal flow.

a. **So the priests who bore the ark stood in the midst of the Jordan until everything was finished:** The priests stood with the Ark of the Covenant for the entire time it took the nation to cross over. The visible token of the presence of God had to remain in the river through the entire crossing.

b. **And the men of Reuben, the men of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh crossed over armed before the children of Israel:** The people content to settle on the east side of the Jordan stayed on their side of the Jordan but sent their armies over to fight on behalf of the rest of the nation, just as they had promised ([Joshua 1:12-16^L](#)).

c. **On that day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel:** God fulfilled His promise to Joshua ([Joshua 3:7^L](#)), raising him up as a great leader for Israel, even as He had done for Moses.

d. **The waters of the Jordan returned to their place and overflowed all its banks as before:** The manner and timing with which the Jordan returned to its natural flow shows that this event was supernaturally arranged by God.

B. The first work at Gilgal: memorial stones set up.

1. (19-20) The stones are set up as a memorial in Gilgal.

a. **They camped in Gilgal:** **Gilgal** will become their base of operations for the conquest of the entire Promised Land. Therefore, it was appropriate that the first work at Gilgal was to set up a memorial to God's great works.

2. (21-24) The purpose of the memorial stones.

a. **What are these stones:** There was obviously a purpose in the memorial stones for the people of Israel themselves. It is so easy for us to forget the great miracles God has performed on our behalf.

i. We don't remember the past great works of God so that we can live in a dreamland of the past, thinking that the best days of our Christian experience are behind us. We remember them as a point of faith, so we can trust God for greater and greater works in the future, because we have seen and experienced His past faithfulness.

b. **Then you shall let your children know:** There was an important purpose for their **children**, so they would have a point of contact with God's work in the past, and remember that God's work did not begin with them and their time.

c. **That all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD:** There was also a purpose for the world, so they would know that there is a God in heaven who can work miracles, a God they should seek with all their heart.

JOSHUA 5

CIRCUMCISION AND PASSOVER AT

GILGAL

A. The second work at Gilgal: A radical obedience.

1. (1) The fear of Israel's enemies at the faith and obedience of Israel.

a. **Their heart melted; and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the children**

of Israel: Melting hearts are a great thing if they melt unto repentance. But sometimes hearts melt before God, and then solidify again into an even harder state.

b. **Heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan from before the children of**

Israel: When our spiritual enemies see that we are trusting in God and are willing to step out in obedient faith – even when it seems crazy – they instantly lose confidence in their battle against us.

i. We may forget, but our spiritual enemies always remember that *If God is for us, who can be against us?* ([Romans 8:31](#)) They know that when we are really trusting in God, their defeat is assured.

2. (2-8) The circumcision of Israel at Gilgal.

a. **Make flint knives for yourself, and circumcise the sons of Israel again the second**

time: Apparently, all during the forty years of waiting in the wilderness, none of the sons born during that time had been circumcised. Now God commanded that this be done.

i. Joshua makes clear the reason why there was a new generation born in the wilderness: because the old generation **did not obey the voice of the LORD** and take the promise of a **land flowing with milk and honey** by faith.

ii. This new generation was **raised up in... place** of the generation of unbelief. God's work *would* go on, but the people of God who had unbelief would not share in it.

b. **Then Joshua circumcised their sons:** Circumcision was always a powerful act of consecration to God. In it, an Israelite said "I'm not like the other nations. I listen to God and do what He says I should do." It was stepping out in faithful obedience and identifying yourself as one of the LORD's people. It was renouncing the flesh and the world. It was dying to self and living to God.

c. **They stayed in their places in the camp till they were healed:** Obviously, this was suicidal from a military standpoint. All the men of fighting age were made completely vulnerable and unable to fight for a period of several days, **till they were healed**.

i. [Genesis 34:24-25](#) describes how Simeon and Levi killed all the men in a city after tricking them into having them all circumcised. While the men were unable to fight properly, they were slaughtered in retaliation, because the prince of that city had raped Dinah, the sister of Simeon and Levi. This could have been the fate of Israel here in [Joshua 5](#).

d. **Till they were healed:** So, not only did Israel cross over the Jordan at a militarily undesirable place (right in front of Jericho, the strongest military outpost of the Canaanites), they also incapacitated their army for several days. They did this because they trusted God, and His directions, instead of their own wisdom.

i. They were put in the place where they could trust in nothing but God alone – a hard place, but a good place.

ii. God only asked this of them after He showed His greatness by the Jordan River crossing. When we remember all the things the power of God has done in our lives, we are willing to trust Him with a radical obedience.

3. (9) The effect: God rolls away their reproach.

a. **This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you:** This **reproach** was their shame from **Egypt**, the shame of their degrading slavery.

i. The reproach was rolled away by their radical trust and obedience to God, by taking the specific action He told them to.

b. **Therefore the name of the place is called Gilgal:** God called Israel to a place where they saw themselves as they were in Him. By faith, they could see themselves as an obedient, trusting people, and to stop seeing themselves as they were in their slavery and bondage.

i. Of course, this is the same work God wants to do in us, taking away the dishonor and shame of our previous sin and rebellion, and seeing ourselves as who we are in Jesus.

B. The third work at Gilgal: A redemption remembered.

1. (10-11) The Passover is celebrated: looking back to their redemption from Egypt.

a. **And kept the Passover:** The original Passover itself could never be repeated, but there was power in its remembrance. They were to always live remembering that they were a people delivered and remembering God's work of deliverance.

b. **After the Passover:** In the same way, we are to be in constant remembrance of our redemption at Calvary and live our lives in the shadow of the cross.

2. (12) A new source of provision: God stops the manna.

a. **Then the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land:** When the people were able to provide for themselves from the rich produce of Canaan, God stopped the manna. He didn't want them to get lazy, but to enter into a new partnership of trust with Him.

i. You had to trust God to bring the manna every day; but you also had to trust Him to provide for you through other means.

b. **They ate the food of the land of Canaan that year:** God always provides; but He is perfectly free to change the source of His provision from time to time. We need to trust in Him, not in His manner of provision, or we will stumble when that changes.

i. The city of Gilgal became a beachhead and camp for Israel in their conquest of Canaan. They returned there after battle and remembered, finding strength in the remembrance of the memorial, their obedience, and their redemption.

ii. It is good to have a place like Gilgal in our life. This is a place where we first come into God's promises, a place of memorial, a place of obedience and redemption.

3. (13-15) Joshua meets with the Commander of the army of the LORD.

a. **Behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand:** Joshua boldly approaches this mysterious Man with a drawn sword. As a shepherd over God's people, he has a responsibility to see if this man is a friend or a foe.

b. **Are you for us or for our adversaries:** This was a logical question to this impressive Man. The response of the Man was curious, almost elusive. **"No"** was not a proper answer for Joshua's question.

i. In a sense, the Man refuses to answer Joshua's question because it is not the right question, and it is not the most important question to be asked at the time.

ii. The question really wasn't if the LORD was on Joshua's side. The proper question was if Joshua was on the LORD's side.

c. **Commander of the army of the LORD:** This was God Himself pulling rank on Joshua, who himself was a great military leader – but he was not **Commander** in Chief.

i. We know that this Being, standing before Joshua, was God. Though the title **Commander of the army of the LORD** could perhaps apply to an angel (such as Michael, based on a passage like [Revelation 12:7](#)), Joshua's falling down, and worshipping is inconsistent with angels, who never receive worship ([Revelation 22:8](#)).

ii. **Army of the LORD** here is used in a way that implies that the armies commanded are *angelic* armies. This is a Being who commands angels.

iii. As well, Joshua refers to the angel as **my LORD**; but most of all, the command to remove his sandals (a picture of our humanity and contact with a "dirty" world), was to Joshua (who read and knew [Exodus 3:4-6](#) because he was in God's word) clear proof that the Man standing before him was the voice from the burning bush.

iv. The idea of Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity, appearing as a man before Bethlehem is provocative, but logical. We know that He *existed* before Bethlehem ([Micah 5:2](#)); why should He *not*, on isolated but important occasions, appear in bodily form? This idea is also evident in passages like [Genesis 18:16-33](#), [32:24-30](#), and [Judges 13:1-23](#).

c. **And Joshua did so:** Joshua's total submission to Jesus Christ shows that he knows who is really in charge. It also is a virtual guarantee of victory for Israel. When we follow after the **Commander of the army of the LORD**, how can we lose?

i. Why did Jesus come to Israel at this strategic time?

· He had come to instruct Joshua in the plan to capture Jericho. Joshua will carry out a plan in the following chapter that is so improbable it could *only* have been initiated at the direct command of God.

· Most of all, He had come to conquer Israel – before Israel could conquer anything else in the promised land, they had to be conquered by God – and Joshua's total submission shows that they are conquered by Him. This is the missing element in a life of victory for many Christians; they have not been, and are not continually being, conquered by God.

JOSHUA 6

THE FALL OF JERICHO

A. Obedience before the fall of the city of Jericho.

1. (1-5) Instructions for the battle.

a. **Now Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel:** Jericho itself was on full alert; from a human perspective, this would be a hard, if not impossible, battle. Yet from God's perspective, the battle was already over, because He can say to Joshua **I have** (in the past tense) **given Jericho into your hand**.

i. Up to this point everything had been more or less preliminary and preparatory. Now the real task before them must be faced and tackled. The Canaanites must be dispossessed if Israel is to occupy what God has promised them.

ii. Jericho was not an exceptionally large city; but it was an important, formidable fortress city. If Israel could defeat Jericho, they could defeat anything else that would face them in Canaan. Again, we see the wisdom of God as opposed to human wisdom, in that Israel faces their most difficult opponent first.

b. **You shall march around the city:** The method of warfare was one that made absolutely no sense according to military intelligence. It required total dependence on God.

i. It required great faith from Joshua because he had to explain and lead the nation in this plan.

ii. It required great faith from the elders and the nation, because they had to follow Joshua in this plan.

c. **The wall of the city will fall down flat. And the people shall go up every man straight before him:** It was a plan for victory whereby it would clearly be the work of the LORD. Yet God gave them something to do, so that Israel could work in partnership with God.

i. Obviously, it was something that God could have done without Israel's help at all, but He wanted them to be a part of His work – as He wants us to be a part of His work today.

2. (6-7) Joshua tells the priests and the people.

a. **Then Joshua the son of Nun called the priests:** Joshua had to tell the priests, because what they were asked to do was unusual. Normally, priests and the Ark of the Covenant did not go with Israel to battle.

b. **Take up the Ark of the Covenant:** The ark would be prominent in this victory, even as it was in the crossing of the Jordan River. Israel had to keep their hearts and minds on the LORD who was present with them, instead of putting their hearts and minds on the difficulty of the task in front of them.

c. **And he said to the people:** Joshua had to tell the people, because what they were asked to do was unusual. This was no customary way to conquer a walled, fortified city.

3. (8-14) The march of the first six days.

a. **When Joshua had spoken to the people:** Joshua does not hesitate to do what the LORD has told him to do. Often, our delays to obey God show that we really don't believe Him.

b. **So he had the ark of the LORD circle the city, going around it once:** Jericho was not a large city; they could easily march around it in a day's time. As the people of Jericho saw the Israelites marching around their city, they probably had a sense of both awe and horror.

c. **So they did six days:** It took *courage* for Israel to do this; Israel was wide open to attack during this time, and it would have been easy for the people of Jericho to attack them from the high position of the walls.

d. **So they did six days:** It took *endurance* for Israel to do this; the march was for six days, and they had to persist in something that didn't seem to make much sense.

e. **So they did six days:** In this, the *helplessness* of Israel was revealed; through six days of silent marching, they had a good look at the walls that seemed to be impenetrable – they knew that this was a battle bigger than they were.

4. (15-16) The march of the seventh day.

a. **On the seventh day:** This march took place over a period of seven days, meaning that Israel had to have marched on a Sabbath; but this would be a work of God’s sovereign grace and power, not of human works.

b. **Shout, for the LORD has given you the city:** The command was given for the people to **shout**. After the days of silence, this comes as a recognition that God would now give them what He had promised. **The LORD has given you the city!**

5. (17-19) The command to destroy the city and to save Rahab is given.

a. **Only Rahab the harlot shall live:** Joshua is careful to take care of Rahab. Her faith in the living God would find support by God’s people.

b. **By all means abstain from the accursed things:** Joshua had to command the people of Israel to stay away from **the accursed things**. By this he means the idols and things associated with the demonic and depraved worship of the people of Canaan.

i. The severe judgment that is brought against Jericho, and all of Canaan didn’t come because they were in the “way” of God’s people. It came because this was a people who were in total rebellion against God and in league with the occult, as the artifacts recovered from this period demonstrate.

c. **But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are consecrated to the LORD:** All the valuables belong to God; Jericho is the “first fruits” city of Canaan, and so the valuables are set apart to **the treasury of the LORD**.

B. The taking of the city of Jericho.

1. (20-21) The walls come down and the city is destroyed.

a. **The wall fell down flat:** This miracle was beyond normal expectation; no other city had been conquered this way. Israel couldn’t depend on their prior experience or what had happened for others in battle. All they had was God’s promise ([Joshua 6:5](#)), but they believed that promise and acted according to that belief.

i. We shouldn’t be surprised when God fulfills His promise, but we often are. We wonder if the Israelites were surprised when **the wall fell down flat**. The people of Jericho were no doubt surprised.

b. **They utterly destroyed all that was in the city:** Why was Israel commanded to practice such complete destruction? Because the greatest sins of the Canaanites were spiritual: *When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spirits, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are*

an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you. You shall be blameless before the LORD your God. For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the LORD your God has not appointed such for you. ([Deuteronomy 18:9-14](#))

i. Such judgment seems harsh to us because it *is* harsh – and we must recognize, that at unique times, God has commanded that such judgment come to pass. I may happen either through an army that He has used (as is the case here), or through judgment that He directly brings (such as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, [Genesis 19:24-25](#)).

c. **They took the city:** Israel **took**, after God had *given* ([Joshua 6:2](#)). It was clear that God gave, but that Israel had to *take* by obedient, persistent faith.

i. So it is with all victory in the Christian life – God gives it to us in Jesus Christ; but we must take it from Him by obedient, persistent faith.

2. (22-25) Finishing up the battle.

a. **Bring out the woman and all that she has, as you swore to her:** Rahab and her household were saved. They coupled their faith in the God of Israel with a willingness to follow through on what God’s messengers told them to do: stay at the house with the scarlet cord hanging from the window ([Joshua 2:17-19](#)).

b. **They burned the city and all that was in it with fire... Joshua spared Rahab the harlot:** In this, we see a contrast between judgment and salvation. All of Jericho heard about the God of Israel ([Joshua 2:8-11](#)), but only Rahab responded positively in faith towards God with that knowledge.

c. **So she dwells in Israel to this day:** This shows that Joshua was written at the time of Joshua; this was not the fanciful re-construction of an imaginative writer working centuries after the fact.

3. (26-27) Joshua curses the man who would re-fortify Jericho.

a. **Cursed be the man before the LORD who rises up and builds this city Jericho:** This was fulfilled in [1 Kings 16:34](#), which says *In his days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho. He laid its foundation with Abiram his firstborn, and with his youngest son Segub he set up its gates, according to the word of the LORD, which He had spoken through Joshua the son of Nun.*

b. This completes the story of Israel’s victory at Jericho. We can learn from the things that marked their victory.

- *Faith:* Joshua and Israel believed the battle plan.
- *Obedience:* Joshua and Israel followed the battle plan exactly.
- *Courage:* Israel followed the battle plan despite danger.
- *Endurance:* Israel followed the battle plan over a period of time, even when it seemed that nothing was happening.
- Israel *did not* rely on carnal scheming and worldly methods; their trust was in the *LORD*, not in human ingenuity.

JOSHUA 7

DEFEAT AT AI AND ACHAN'S SIN

A. Defeat at Ai.

1. (1) Not all of Israel obeyed the law of the devoted things.

a. **The children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things:** Joshua commanded the nation in [Joshua 6:18](#) that they should not take of any of the accursed things, those things that were associated with the demonic and debasing worship and practices of the Canaanites.

b. **The accursed things:** The wars fought by Israel in Canaan were not to be plundering wars of personal gain; they were an unusual, sacred instrument in God's hand, used for judgment against a society ripe for judgment.

c. **So the anger of the LORD burned against the children of Israel:** Israel could not be defeated by the Canaanites, but they could defeat themselves by alienating themselves from God's plan and power.

2. (2-3) Spies report from the city of Ai.

a. **So the men went up and spied out Ai:** The recommendation to send only **two or three thousand men** was either a response of faith or self-confidence. In the end it did not matter; in their disobedience, they could have sent 100,000 troops and it would have made no difference.

b. **Do not weary the people there, for the people of Ai are few:** Israel's success depended on their own state of being conquered by God; Achan's rebellion showed that in that respect, they were not conquered by Him – and therefore open to defeat.

3. (4-5) Israel is defeated at Ai.

a. **So about three thousand men went up there from the people:** Joshua, a wise military leader, commanded the larger number recommended by his military intelligence to be sent – but it made no difference. **They fled before the men of Ai.**

b. **And the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men:** The thirty-six men killed were thirty-six more than were killed at Jericho, which was thought to be a much more difficult city to conquer. Though this number was small from a military standpoint, what it meant was staggering to Israel. It meant that Israel *could* be defeated in the Promised Land.

i. The defeat at Ai showed that what mattered was not the strength of the opponent, but the help of God. Without God's help, all would be lost.

c. **Therefore the hearts of the people melted and became like water:** The people of Israel had good reason to be afraid. Their panic was completely logical, because if God did not fight for them, they had nothing to expect but defeat.

B. Joshua goes before the LORD in time of crisis.

1. (6-9) Joshua fears that it was unfaithfulness on God's part that had caused the defeat.

- a. **Then Joshua tore his clothes:** To tear your clothes and to put dust on your head both displayed *mourning*. Joshua is not only mourning the death of thirty-six men, but more so, **he and the elders of Israel** mourn the loss of the blessing and guidance of God.
- b. **Alas, Lord GOD, why have you brought this people over the Jordan at all:** For Joshua and the elders of Israel, this defeat was a national calamity. They do not take this defeat in stride; there is no “win a few, lose a few” mentality at work. They know that every battle matters, and there is always a *reason* for defeat, it doesn’t “just happen.”
- c. **Oh, that we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan:** Joshua knew that if God’s hand of blessing and guidance were not with them, it would be better if they had not come to the Promised Land at all. If God did not deliver them, all would be lost.
 - i. How different from so much of Christianity today! We are often so filled with *man’s* programs and power, that if God withdrew His blessing and guidance, it wouldn’t be missed for a long time.
- d. **Then what will you do for your great name:** This shows that Joshua’s over-riding concern was for the glory of God. Our greatest disappointment when we stumble should be that we have possibly caused reproach on the **great name** of God.

2. (10-11) The real reason for defeat: Israel has sinned.

- a. **Israel has sinned:** The good news was that God had not failed the nation. The bad news was that this defeat was due to the sin of Israel. Joshua doesn’t need to fear that the problem is with God – it is almost comforting to find that the problem is with us!
 - i. This is why God told Joshua to **get up**. He didn’t need to beg God to change *His* heart towards Israel. Joshua had to change Israel’s heart before God.
 - ii. God’s provision is for us to live a life of increasing victory. But He will not make defeat *impossible*, taking away our ability to choose good or evil. He always makes it possible for us *not* to sin; here, Israel sinned, but they didn’t have to.
- b. **Israel has sinned... they... they... they also:** God says that **Israel** had sinned, not only one man. It is staggering to think that the whole nation was found guilty, and thirty-six men were dead, all for the sin of one man and his family.
 - i. Paul speaks in similar terms concerning sin in the church; regarding sin among the Corinthian church, he says *Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?* ([1 Corinthians 5:6](#)) A small amount of sin accepted and tolerated among believers can infect the whole group.
 - ii. In this sense, the acceptance and toleration of the sin is worse than the sin itself, so it must be dealt with strictly.
- c. **For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived:** We should understand exactly what the sin was. Someone in Israel took things that were devoted to God, devoted either by their giving to His tabernacle, or by their complete destruction. One man stole from God, in the same way we steal from Him when we do not give Him what he directs us to give.
 - i. [Leviticus 22:14](#), [27:15](#), [27:19](#), and [27:31](#) each demonstrate that in Israel, if you wanted to keep something that belonged to God, you had to pay a 20% (one-fifth) penalty. This was the same amount required for restitution in theft ([Leviticus 6:4-5](#)).

ii. The New Testament teaches us that giving should be regular and proportional ([1 Corinthians 16:1-2](#)), that it should be generous, purposeful, and cheerful ([2 Corinthians 9:6-8](#)). When we don't give as God directs us, we must regard it as sin and repent of it.

3. (12-13) The effect of the sin: they now have no power before their enemies.

a. **Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies:** Israel could not fight in God's power and presence unless they walked in obedience to God. Israel was under a covenant with God that promised blessing on their obedience, and also promised curses upon their disobedience.

i. We are not under that kind of covenant. Our position with God is made by the work of Jesus on our behalf, not our own works. Yet if we want God's power and presence in our own battles, we must walk in fellowship with Him, and this fellowship is hindered by our own sin and rebellion.

ii. Our position before God is secure in Jesus; but our fellowship with Him is hindered by our own sin ([1 John 1:6](#)). This fellowship with God is our wellspring of power to live in the Spirit.

b. **They have become doomed to destruction:** It is sobering to realize that a body in sin has no power before their enemies. It is wonderful to realize that once the sin has been dealt with, God's power can again flow in our Christian life.

c. **You cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you:** When God deals with a particular area of sin, and when we resist His work, His *mercy* makes us to fail in battle. We are most dangerous when we think we are "winning" battles with our own self-reliance.

4. (14-15) Instructions for judgment of the sin.

a. **The tribe which the LORD takes:** Though the identity of the sinning family was unknown to Joshua, it was known to God. Secret sin on earth is an open scandal before God.

Therefore, we should therefore live our lives with "one set of books," with one kind of life that can be seen by anybody, anywhere.

b. **Then it shall be that he who is taken with the accursed thing shall be burned with fire:** Once God dealt with the one sinning individual, blessing could come again on the whole nation.

C. Achan's sin publicly judged.

1. (16-18) God exposes the identity of the head of the family that had sinned.

a. **Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken:** This must have been an excruciating experience for Achan. How much better to simply walk in obedience to God!

b. **Achan the son of Carmi:** All this time, Achan certainly remembered exactly what he had taken, and how he wished he had not taken it. But he – and we – should remember the regret of sin *before* we sin, not after.

i. Sin does have its pleasures. Taking those things gave Achan a good feeling. But the penalty of sin, both within us and upon us, outweighs any of the fleeting pleasures of sin.

2. (19-21) Joshua confronts Achan, and he confesses.

a. **My son, I beg you, give glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession to Him:** Even when we sin and try to cover our sin, we can still **give glory to the LORD** by openly and honestly confessing our sin. Hidden sin always has a special power over us.

b. **A beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels:** Measured against the lives of thirty-six men and the welfare of the entire nation, what Achan gained was pretty insignificant. Truly, *the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows* ([1 Timothy 6:10](#)).

c. **I coveted them and took them:** Think of how Achan could have rationalized his sin: “No one will know.” “These things won’t be missed.” “Think of how I’ll be admired in this beautiful Babylonian garment.” “I’m not hurting anyone.” “I deserve this.” The excuses can go on and on, but they all fall short.

i. When we are at the terrible place Achan is, we all feel terrible about our sin, wishing we had never done it – may God help us to feel terrible about our sin *before* we do it!

2. (22-26) The confession confirmed, and judgment executed.

a. **His sons, his daughters:** Achan’s sons and daughters had specific knowledge of the sin because it is unlikely that he could bury so much under their tent without their knowledge. At the same time, they were not necessarily stoned with Achan. Instead of being killed with their father, Achan’s children were probably called forth to witness the judgment against their father.

i. We notice the use of the singular in [Joshua 7:25](#) and [7:26](#) (**you... you... him... him**), in reference to a person being stoned. The use of the plural in [Joshua 7:24](#) and [7:25](#) (**them... them... them**) probably has reference to Achan’s possessions, not his children.

b. **The name of that place has been called the Valley of Achor to this day:** The Israelites aptly named this place *Valley of Trouble* (or, *disaster*, as it is in the NIV).

c. **So the LORD turned from the fierceness of His anger:** Even this kind of sin, when it is dealt with, can be a spring board to victory again. Now Israel was again in position to walk in the power and guidance of God, after they had been conquered by God again.

i. This kind of victory only comes after a *death*. We need to die to such besetting sins, know that *those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires* ([Galatians 5:24](#)) – the power and victory of Jesus’ resurrection are ours as we crucify our flesh with Him every day.

Joshua 8

VICTORY OVER AI

A. Plans for victory.

1. (1-2) God encourages Joshua and gives him instructions.

a. **Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed:** This was the first key to regaining victory. They had to *receive encouragement from God*. Though Israel stumbled through Achan's sin as shown in [Joshua 7](#), they dealt with the failure and now had to move on.

i. It is often the most difficult to regain lost ground such as Ai. When we have failed at some point in our Christian lives, we need to know how to get back on track.

ii. What is past is past. We must deal with it before God in repentance and dying to self, and then look forward to what He has for us right now.

iii. God wants us to use our failures in a good way, to use them as a foundation for great victory in the LORD.

b. **Take all the people of war with you, and arise, go up to Ai:** God wasn't despondent or depressed, and He didn't want Joshua or the nation of Israel to be either. Now it was time to get busy and set about being victorious for the LORD, because He has not abandoned them.

c. **Only its spoil and its cattle you shall take as booty for yourselves:** God allows them to keep the spoil from the city of Ai. How foolish the sin of Achan seems now! He could have had all his heart desired if he only waited on the LORD for it.

d. **Lay an ambush for the city behind it:** God gives Joshua a plan for conquering the city of Ai, and now he must follow it. When we need to regain the victory, *we must follow God's plan*.

2. (3-8) Plans made for an ambush upon Ai.

a. **Joshua chose thirty thousand mighty men of valour:** This time Joshua did not send 3,000 men as before ([Joshua 7:4](#)). Now he sent 30,000 **mighty men of valour**. When we need to regain victory, we must *use every resource, and the best resources for victory*.

b. **And he commanded them, saying: "Behold, you shall lie in ambush against the city, behind the city":** Though God had given Joshua the general plan [Joshua 8:2](#), He left it up to Joshua's experience and sanctified common sense to lay out the specific plan of battle.

3. (9-10) Joshua stays with the people.

a. **But Joshua lodged that night among the people:** Joshua was especially near his people during this crucial time of trying to regain victory. The people needed to know he was near, and they needed to follow his leadership.

b. **Among the people:** If we will regain victory, we must *live with and follow Jesus*, who is our Joshua. He is always near to us at these crucial times in our Christian life, and always goes first to lead us into battle.

B. Victory at Ai.

1. (11-13) Preparations for battle: Joshua and the people do exactly what the LORD commanded them.

a. **All the people of war who were with him went up and drew near:** If Israel will regain victory, they must *take the offensive*. They don't wait for Ai to bring the battle to them, bring the battle to Ai.

b. **Joshua went that night into the midst:** We often see the battle against sin in mainly negative terms, about what *not* to do. But we must take the offensive against the powers of darkness and temptation and be busy about doing what the LORD would have us to do.

2. (14-17) The ambush works; the fighting men of Ai leave the city.

a. **When the king of Ai saw it, that the men of the city hurried and rose early and went out against Israel to battle:** The men of Ai tried the exact same strategy against Israel as before. Generally, Satan will stick with a strategy against us until it doesn't work anymore.

b. **And Joshua and all Israel made as if they were beaten before them:** God directed Joshua to use a completely different strategy against Ai. When we see the diversity of God's methods, we remember it is because He is a personal God.

3. (18-29) Ai is totally defeated and burnt to the ground.

a. **And they struck them down, so that they let none of them remain or escape:** The victory and God's judgment is complete. Because of God's faithfulness to Israel and Israel's faithfulness to God, this is not a halfway victory.

b. **Joshua did not draw back his hand, with which he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai:** If Israel will regain victory, they must *show no mercy to their enemy*, but crush the enemy completely at every opportunity.

i. We can summarize the keys for victory from this chapter:

- Be encouraged.
- Follow the LORD's plan.
- Use every resource, and the best resources.
- Live with and look to Jesus.
- Go on the offensive.
- Show no mercy to your enemy.
- c. **According to the word of the LORD which He had commanded Joshua:** So far, Israel's experience is an illustration of their whole history, and the spiritual history of many Christians.
 - Obedience followed by victory.
 - Victory followed by blessing.
 - Blessing followed by pride and disobedience.
 - Disobedience followed by defeat.

- Defeat followed by judgment.
- Judgment followed by repentance.
- Repentance followed by obedience.
- Obedience followed by victory, and the cycle continues.

C. Blessing and cursing on Ebal and Gerizim.

1. (30-31) An altar built at Mount Ebal.

a. **Now Joshua built an altar to the LORD God of Israel in Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses:** This is in fulfillment of [Deuteronomy 27-28](#). There, the LORD told Israel, when they came to the Promised Land, to come to these mountains, build an altar, sacrifice to the LORD, and read the law.

b. **And they offered on it burnt offerings to the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings:** We see an appropriate act of worship, and consecration unto God, following a great victory. God always should get the glory. Even when men looked at the altar, they would not see elaborate carvings – though beautiful – drawing attention to man’s work (**whole stones over which no man has wielded an iron tool**).

2. (32-35) Blessings read from Mount Gerizim, curses from Mount Ebal.

a. **He wrote on the stones a copy of the Law of Moses, which he had written:** In this act of obedience we see Joshua as a *man of the Book*, obeying the command of [Joshua 1:8](#). We also see Israel as a *people of the Book* ordering their lives after God’s Word.

i. This was even at a cost or inconvenience. The distance from Ai to Ebal and Gerizim was a long way to move all the tribes of Israel, from 20 to 25 miles.

b. **Half of them were in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal:** This was a beautiful place to do this, and the whole nation could hear this reading of the Law. The area has a natural amphitheatre effect because of the contour of the hills.

i. According to [Deuteronomy 27-28](#), the altar was built on the mountain of cursing, mount Ebal. We need the covering sacrifice exactly at the point where our sin and failures are revealed, and God’s curse is pronounced on our sin.

ii. This event, at this place, shows that Israel controls the middle of Canaan and the highlands. The rest is a matter of taking advantage of this strategic position.

JOSHUA 9

THE GIBEONITE DECEPTION

A. Two different strategies of attack against Israel.

1. (1-2) The southern kings gather together against Israel.

- a. **When all the kings who were on this side of the Jordan... heard about it:** When the Canaanite kings heard how the LORD delivered Jericho to Israel, they had reason to be afraid. When they heard how the LORD gave them victory over Ai, they had reason to be afraid.
- b. **They gathered together to fight with Joshua and Israel with one accord:** This is a classic, frontal attack – they will try to defeat Israel on the field of battle, in head-to-head competition.

2. (3-6) The Gibeonites approach Joshua and Israel in another way.

- a. **They worked craftily, and went and pretended to be ambassadors:** The Gibeonites will try to deceive Israel into making a peace treaty with them, though Israel was forbidden to make peace with any of the tribes of Canaan ([Exodus 23:23-24](#)).
- b. **They worked craftily:** Notice the methods of deception used by the Gibeonites. They were clever (**craftily**), they misrepresented themselves (**pretended**), and they even gave false “evidence” of their deception (**old sacks, old wineskins, old and patched sandals, dry and moldy** bread).
- c. **From a far country:** Beyond their deceptive appearance, the Gibeonites simply *lied*. They said, **“We have come from a far country”** when of course they had not. All their other devices simply lead to strengthen the deception offered.

B. How Joshua and the leaders of Israel were deceived.

1. (7-13) The Gibeonites explain their story to Joshua and the leaders of Israel.

- a. **From a very far country your servants have come:** Plainly, the Gibeonites lied to Israel. But despite their lies, they have a proper admiration and honour for the God of Israel. **Because of the name of the LORD your God; for we have heard of His fame** shows that it is *because* God fights for Israel, they know it would be useless to oppose the nation.

2. (14-15) Joshua and the leaders of Israel accept the deception of the Gibeonites.

- a. **They did not ask counsel of the LORD:** The Gibeonite deception was clever, and therefore powerful. But the real problem was that Joshua and the leaders of Israel never sought the LORD.
- b. **Then the men of Israel took some of their provisions:** This shows that they trusted their senses instead of the LORD. “Look at this bread. Feel and taste how stale it is. Surely, they must have come a long way.” They walked by sight, not by faith.
 - i. How much trouble do we find ourselves in for this very reason: **they did not ask counsel of the LORD?**
 - c. **So Joshua made peace with them:** Because they believed that the Gibeonites were from a distant land, they made the treaty with them. God allowed Israel to make treaties with distant nations, but not with the Canaanites.

C. The deception of the Gibeonites uncovered and dealt with.

1. (16-20) Joshua and the leaders of Israel discover they have been deceived, yet they abide by their sworn oath to the Gibeonites.

a. **All the congregation murmured against the rulers:** Even though they **murmured** against them, the rulers still knew they had to do what was right and honourable before God: keep their oath, even if it was a bad oath.

i. The rulers of Israel were wise in not allowing one sin (wiping out the Gibeonites) follow another sin (making the oath without seeking the LORD), especially in light of public pressure to do otherwise.

b. **Then all the rulers said to all the congregation, “We have sworn to them by the LORD God of Israel; now therefore, we may not touch them”:** It is a mark of godliness to hold to an oath, even when it is difficult. *But he honours those who fear the LORD; he who swears to his own hurt and does not change.* ([Psalm 15:4](#))

i. It is refreshing to see that going back on their word was not even really a possibility for the rulers of Israel. This was a simple matter, not even up for debate: **we may not touch them.**

c. **Because of the oath which we swore to them:** Later, King Saul broke this vow to the Gibeonites and his sin brought famine upon Israel in the days of David ([2 Samuel 21:1-9](#)).

i. *Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David inquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, “It is because of Saul and his bloodthirsty house, because he killed the Gibeonites.”* ([2 Samuel 21:1](#))

2. (21-27) A glorious punishment for the Gibeonites: Joshua makes them slaves to the LORD.

a. **Let them live, but let them be woodcutters and water carriers for all the congregation:** Joshua could not kill the Gibeonites, but he could control them by making them perpetual workmen for the tabernacle service. They would serve in menial ways such as cutting wood for the sacrificial fires of the tabernacle and carrying water used in its service.

b. **So they answered Joshua and said:** Significantly, there seems to be no complaint from the Gibeonites. They simply say, **“Here we are, in your hands; do with us as it seems good and right to do to us.”** Essentially, they were happy with the prospect of being incorporated into Israel, and by being made servants of the LORD, even if it was in menial service.

i. In this, the Gibeonites express the same heart David did in [Psalm 84:10](#): *For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.*

ii. It is essential to see that they did this out of a love for the God of Israel, not out of weakness. Indeed, it was said of Gibeon that *all its men were mighty* ([Joshua 10:2](#)).

c. **Because your servants were clearly told that the LORD your God commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land... we were very much afraid for our lives because of you, and have done this thing:** The Gibeonites were not thrilled so much at being wood cutters and water carriers, but in knowing they could be those things for the LORD – and in knowing where they would be if they were *not* serving the LORD.

ii. Do we have the same heart? Can we rejoice in any kind of service, if we see we are in the presence of the LORD as we do it?

ii. The Gibeonites found salvation in the God of Israel much like Rahab did in [Joshua 2](#).

· Both Rahab and the Gibeonites came to the God of Israel as sinners, Rahab as a harlot, and the Gibeonites as liars.

· Both Rahab and the Gibeonites were willing at risk to forsake their former associations and be counted among God's people. The risk of Gibeon was explained in [Joshua 10:4](#), where they were a target of attack for their dealings with Israel.

· Both Rahab and the Gibeonites, after they found salvation through the God of Israel, had a rich history.

iii. The Gibeonites after [Joshua 9](#).

· The Gibeonites became servants at the tabernacle, just as Joshua had commanded.

· Gibeon becomes a priestly city; the Ark of the Covenant stayed at Gibeon often in the days of David and Solomon ([1 Chronicles 16:39-40](#) and [21:29](#)).

· At least one of David's *mighty men* was a Gibeonite ([1 Chronicles 12:4](#)).

· God spoke to Solomon at Gibeon ([1 Kings 3:4](#)).

· Gibeonites were among those who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem with Nehemiah ([Nehemiah 3:7](#) and [7:25](#)).

· Prophets such as Hananiah the son of Azur came from Gibeon ([Jeremiah 28:1](#)).

· These are examples of the great things God can do with people who are sinners but come to Him in humility and love.

JOSHUA 10

THE SOUTHERN KINGS CONQUERED

A. A miraculous victory for Israel.

1. (1-5) Adoni-Zedek and his fear of Israel.

a. **When Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem heard how Joshua had taken Ai and had utterly destroyed it:** The king of Jerusalem (**Adoni-Zedek**) was rightly alarmed when he heard of the conquests of Jericho and Ai. He understood that the armies of Israel would soon come against all the cities of Canaan.

i. Especially troubling was the news that they **had utterly destroyed** both Jericho and Ai – that is, that they had brought the unique judgment of God against the Canaanites and did not take any plunder or profit from the cities. An Israelite army fighting for the glory of God and as a unique instrument of God's judgment rightly made them afraid.

ii. Adoni-Zedek also had reason to be concerned from a strategic perspective. The previous victories across the middle of Canaan effectively separated Canaan between north and south. "Israel controlled the Benjaminite plateau, the crossroads between the hill country and the Judean wilderness. It provided access to the coastal plain and lowlands to the west via the Beth Horon pass."

iii. “It has been conjectured that the Canaanites kings assumed this name in imitation of that of the ancient patriarchal king of this city, Melchizedek, whose name signifies *king of righteousness, or my righteous king*: a supposition that is not improbable.” (Clarke)

b. **And how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel:** In addition, the surrender and subordination of the Gibeonites caused Adoni-Zedek to be afraid. Gibeon was a **great city** and its **men were mighty** – if *they* surrendered to Israel, things were bad for Canaanites.

i. The Gibeonites did not submit to Israel out of a position of weakness; indeed, **all its men were mighty**. Yet it was because of their love and honour of the God of Israel that they submitted to perpetual service in His tabernacle.

c. **They feared greatly:** Fear did not make the Canaanites surrender. It made them organize and fight, and **Adoni-Zedek** became the leader of the southern Canaanite kings.

i. The enemies of Israel **feared greatly**; but like our spiritual enemies, they did not retreat but launched even more bold attacks, as a wild animal might fight when it feels attacked.

2. (3-5) The southern kings of Canaan assemble for an attack on Gibeon.

a. **Therefore Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem sent to Hoham king of Hebron:** Acting on his fear, Adoni-Zedek began to organize the kings of southern Canaan. Since Israel occupied the land to their north, he could not get help from the kings of northern Canaan.

i. What Adoni-Zedek did was not unusual. In this same approximate time, “Jerusalem’s leader wrote at least five letters to the Pharaoh regarding his town and its security. These letters, part of the collection known as the Armana letters, are longer and more literate than the contemporary missives of other Palestinian town leaders.”

b. **King of Jerusalem... king of Hebron... king of Jarmuth... king of Lachish... king of Eglon:** This again displays that the Canaanites were organized as city-states instead of one unified nation. It took the leadership of Adoni-Zedek to bring them together.

i. Each one of these cities – Jerusalem, Jarmuth, Lachish, Eglon, and Hebron were important cities either for their location or for the trade routes associated with them.

ii. “Like Adoni-Zedek, the names of the four leaders can be identified with similar names from texts and peoples in and around Palestine during the same period of time that the account in Joshua purports to describe.”

c. **That we may attack Gibeon:** Though they were afraid, they were still clever. Afraid to attack Israel directly, they attacked their subjects, the Gibeonites.

3. (6) The plea for help from Gibeon.

a. **Sent to Joshua at the camp at Gilgal:** Joshua and the armies of Israel were still at **Gilgal**. This was an important place for Israel’s conquest of Canaan.

· Gilgal was the place of memorial ([Joshua 4:20](#)).

· Gilgal was the place of radical obedience ([Joshua 5:2-3](#)).

· Gilgal was the place where reproach was removed ([Joshua 5:9](#)).

· Gilgal was the place of obedience and the remembrance of salvation ([Joshua 5:10](#)).

· Gilgal was the place where the manna stopped, and they began to live of what the Promised Land provided ([Joshua 5:11-12](#)).

· Gilgal was the place where they met Jesus Christ in a dramatic way, as commander of the LORD's armies – and took off their sandals in reverence to holy ground ([Joshua 5:13-15](#)).

b. **Do not forsake your servants; come up to us quickly, save us and help us:** The Gibeonites rightly looked to the people of Israel as their helpers and protectors. They were not too proud to call for help.

i. Just like the Gibeonites claimed protection on the basis of covenant, so do we because of our participation in the New Covenant. In light of our covenant with God, “*Do not forsake Your servant...save us and help us*” is a good prayer to pray.

B. The defeat of the Southern kings of Canaan.

1. (7) Joshua and the people of Israel are faithful to their vow to the Gibeonites.

a. **So Joshua ascended from Gilgal:** We saw that in [Joshua 9](#), Joshua, the leaders of Israel, and all the people of Israel knew they made a bad vow to the Gibeonites, yet they did not turn their backs on that vow.

i. This is the first example in Joshua of *counterattack* – the enemy initiating a battle against Israel. “Here for the first time Israel does not initiate the aggression but responds to an ally’s appeal.” (Hess)

b. **He and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valour:** Joshua not only kept the vow made to the Gibeonites, but he kept it with great energy and dedication. He sent his best into this battle to defend Gibeon.

i. Allowing these Canaanite kings to wipe out the Gibeonites would have been a convenient way to get out of a vow that should not have been made, but they will have none of it.

ii. We should have the same sense of honour. Though Joshua was only bound to not kill the Gibeonites himself ([Joshua 9:15](#)), he also felt obliged to fulfil the *spirit* of the vow he made to the Gibeonites.

2. (8) God’s command and promise to Joshua.

a. **Do not fear them:** This was a *command*. Though Joshua had reason to fear because Israel faced a confederation of **five** kings, God commanded Joshua to not fear his enemies.

b. **I have delivered them into your hand; not a man of them shall stand before you:** The command was joined to a *promise*. Joshua could obey God’s *command* to not fear because he had God’s *promise* of victory.

i. Fear takes away our ability to fight God’s battles. Even in the face of strong enemies, Joshua was commanded to not fear. For Joshua, fear was unbelief – being unwilling to believe what God promised. So it is with us today.

3. (9) Joshua’s response of faith.

a. **Joshua therefore came upon them suddenly:** With the assurance of God’s promise ([Joshua 10:8](#)), Joshua did not sit back to passively watch God work without his participation. He went to great effort to participate with the work and will of God.

b. **Having marched all night from Gilgal:** This took hard work and initiative on Joshua’s part. The march from Gilgal to Gibeon involved a climb of 3,300 feet (1,000 meters), over a

distance of about 20 miles (32 kilometres). This was eight to ten hours of hard marching, all through the night.

i. God does His work, but He draws us into working with Him. Often God waits to see our initiative, our willingness to be a partner with Him, before He does what only He can do.

ii. This is *not* the idea that “God helps those who help themselves.” The idea is “God wants to draw His people into partnership with Him in seeing His work done.”

4. (10-11) God sends giant hailstones to fight for Israel.

a. **So the LORD routed them before Israel:** God’s work, and the partnership of Joshua’s work with the LORD, accomplished something great. The enemies of God were **routed**.

b. **The LORD cast down large hailstones from heaven:** The **hailstones** that killed the retreating armies of the Canaanites were obviously miraculous. The hail itself could have been a phenomenon of nature, but their aim and timing were evidence of the hand of God.

i. “The Canaanites, who worshipped nature deities, must have thought that their own gods were aiding the Israelites.”

c. **There were more who died from the hailstones than the children of Israel killed with the sword:** God’s miraculous work was much greater than Israel’s work. Yet we notice that Joshua didn’t wait around for the hail to come. He did what he *could* do in partnership with God, and God did what only *God* could do.

5. (12-15) God extends the day to maximize Israel’s victory.

a. **“Sun, stand still over Gibeon; and Moon, in the Valley of Aijalon.” So the sun stood still:** Seeing God’s miraculous hand in action gave Joshua the boldness to ask for an even more remarkable miracle – to keep the day going, to keep the sun from setting, so that Israel had time to accomplish a complete victory before darkness fell.

i. The sun and the moon had long stood as silent witnesses to the sin, wickedness, and demonic religion of these Canaanites. Now, under the command of God, they helped Joshua to complete this victory over the Canaanites.

b. **So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day. And there has been no day like that, before it or after it:** In a completely unique miracle, God answered Joshua’s bold prayer and **the LORD fought for Israel** in a unique way during Israel’s conquest of Canaan.

i. Some wonder *how* the length of the day was extended. It could have been a slowing of the earth’s rotation; it could have been a tilting of the earth’s axis; it could have been a miracle of reflection of light; it could have been simply the presence of God manifested in light.

ii. However it was done, the result was clear. The sun seemed to stay still in the sky, and Israel was able to complete the victory.

iii. In *Worlds in Collision*, Immanuel Velikovsky suggested that the long day was caused by the near pass of a comet, which was powerful enough to tilt the axis of the earth. “The tilting of the axis could produce the visual effect of a retrogressing or arrested sun; a greater

tilting, a multiple day or night.” [385] He also noted that there are records among the ancient Americans that speak of an extraordinarily long *night* in the same approximate time. iv. Some criticize this account, saying that obviously, since the sun *is* still, and the earth rotates around the sun, that Joshua is wrong when he says **the sun stood still**. This kind of criticism doesn’t account for our normal way of speaking. We use the terms *sunrise* and *sunset* without a second thought. In addition, more modern astronomy tells us that the sun *is* in motion; perhaps the sun did literally stand still.

v. Hundreds of years later, God used the prophet Isaiah to bring a heavy word of coming judgment to His people. In that word, God remembered Gibeon, where He had won a great victory for Israel in Joshua’s day ([Isaiah 28:20-22](#)). Isaiah warned the people that this miraculous strength of God would be turned *against* His people if they did not repent. As Isaiah put it, this use of God’s strength against His people is surely *His awesome work*, or as the King James Version puts it, *His strange work*.

c. **Till the people had revenge upon their enemies:** Joshua did not ask God to do the fighting for him, even though God did do some of that. Joshua simply asked that God miraculously give him the *opportunity* to fight for Him.

i. Like Joshua, we often wish that time stayed still. We would do well to imitate Joshua’s *reasons* for extended time. Joshua wanted time to stay still so that:

- God would be glorified.
- God would be obeyed.
- God’s work would be continued without hindrance.
- God’s people would triumph.

6. (16-21) The completion of the battle.

a. **Roll large stones against the mouth of the cave, and set men by it to guard them. And do not stay there yourselves, but pursue your enemies, and attack their rear guard:** Joshua would not allow anything – even the personal capture of the kings – to keep him from completing Israel’s victory. The kings could be imprisoned and dealt with later.

b. **Made an end of slaying them with a very great slaughter:** This repeats a significant theme throughout the Book of Joshua; that they were to conduct a unique war of judgment against the Canaanites.

c. **No one moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel:** The people of Canaan knew – beyond any doubt – that God was with Joshua and the nation of Israel.

i. By analogy and application, the church – just like Israel – should be feared in the sense that it should be a place where people know God will conquer them. They should have the idea “If I keep coming here, God is going to conquer me. I’ll have to submit my life to Him.” Too many churches present a harmless sort of God who demands no surrender from His people.

7. (22-27) The execution of the Canaanite kings.

a. **Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out those five kings:** Joshua *delayed* dealing with the kings so he could finish the battle. Yet in time, he dealt with them. Joshua did not sin in the way Saul later would in failing to carry out God's judgment against Agag ([1 Samuel 15](#)). I. The **king of Jerusalem**, Adoni-Zedek, was among these five kings. This would be the end of his reign and his life. Taken together, he is a fascinating picture or type.

- His name means, "Lord of Righteousness."

- The Pagan King of Jerusalem.

- Led a confederation of Kings.

- Fought against Joshua.

- Resisted God's occupation of the land.

- Kept with other kings in caves.

ii. The Bible tells us of a coming false messiah ([Revelation 13:3](#)), who will rule over Jerusalem ([2 Thessalonians 2:3-4](#)), who will lead a confederation of kings ([Revelation 17:12-13](#)), fighting against Yeshua ([Revelation 17:14](#)), resisting His occupation of the land ([Revelation 19:19](#)), and hiding in caves ([Revelation 6:15-17](#)). All in all, Adoni-Zedek is a fascinating picture of the coming Antichrist.

b. **Come near, put your feet on the necks of these kings:** This was dramatic and undeniably brutal. Joshua, directed by God, wanted to give these **captains of the men of war** courage and the sense of victory in obedience to God. This said, "God has allowed you to conquer kings."

I. The idea of partnership with God in the pursuit of victory is again repeated in [Joshua 10:25](#). God promised victory over all **your enemies against whom you fight**.

c. **And afterward Joshua struck them and killed them, and hanged them on five trees:** By this dramatic execution, Joshua made it clear that there could be absolutely no accommodation with these Canaanite kings. By performing the execution himself, he accepted great risk. Often rulers will spare other rulers, thinking they might be on the losing side in the future. In doing this, Joshua knew that if Israel's armies were ever defeated, he would be killed.

I. After this pattern, we can allow no place in our lives to our spiritual enemies. All the ground belongs to Jesus and must be taken for Him.

ii. "Hanging *alive* seems a barbarous custom: among the Hebrews, criminals were first deprived of life; this was the debt required by *justice*: then they were hanged up, perhaps generally by the *hands*, not by the *neck*; this was done by way of *example*, to deter others from committing the crimes for which those had suffered." (Clarke)

C. Conquest of the South completed.

"The annalistic form corresponds as closely as any Ancient Near Eastern conquest account can to the recitation of what we know of as history." (Hess)

1. (28) The fall of the Canaanite city of Makkedah.

2. (29-30) The fall of the Canaanite city of Libnah.

3. (31-32) The fall of the Canaanite city of Lachish.

4. (33) The fall of the Canaanite city of Gezer.

5. (34-35) The fall of the Canaanite city of Eglon.

6. (36-37) The fall of the Canaanite city of Hebron.

7. (38-39) The fall of the Canaanite city of Debir.

8. (40-43) Summary of the conquest of the Southern Canaanite Kingdoms.

a. **So Joshua conquered all the land:** In a period of weeks (perhaps months) these six cities were defeated, without a single lost battle for Israel. Each battle was a test. None of them were easy, but under the leadership of Joshua, they all were victorious.

i. *This was a lot of war.* "It is eternally true that the land of full blessing is a land of intensive warfare." (Redpath)

i. God's desire is that we should enjoy the same life of victory. *But we all... are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.* ([2 Corinthians 3:18](#))

b. **All these kings and their land Joshua took at one time, because the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel:** The victory was won **one at a time**. We often want to do everything and win every battle for God all at once. This can be Satan's strategy to set us up for a strong attack of discouragement.

i. God told Israel in [Exodus 23:30](#) (and [Deuteronomy 7:22](#)) that He would drive out the Canaanites *little by little*. Israel wasn't ready to take the land all at once, and God gave it to them in portions they *could* take, as long as they trusted and obeyed Him.

ii. As well, God knew *which* battles to fight and *when* to fight them. These were not the only Canaanite cities in the region, but they were the military strongholds. God knew what He was doing in selecting which particular battles to fight, and when they needed to be fought.

c. **The Lord GOD of Israel fought for Israel:** This was obviously the most important factor. This illustrates the key factor in our battle against our own spiritual enemies. We can only win as we see the LORD fighting on our behalf. He provides the victory and we walk in it.

i. We come to realize that the victory was won at the cross, and now we need to live in light of that victory. [Colossians 2:15](#) speaks to this idea: *Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it* [the cross]. It is in this sense that we are *more than conquerors through Him who loved us.* ([Romans 8:37](#))

ii. To be disappointed in yourself is to have trusted in yourself. It shows that we tried to fight the battle in our own resources, not the LORD's victory.

d. **Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal:** Israel's victories always came from Gilgal. This was the place of total faith, commitment and fellowship with God, and the place where Israel had been conquered by God.

JOSHUA 11

THE NORTHERN CANAANITE ARMIES DEFEATED

A. The defeat of the northern kings.

1. (1-5) The northern kings of Canaan gather against Israel.

a. **And it came to pass, when Jabin king of Hazor heard these things:** After hearing of Israel's total conquest of the south, the northern kings came together to defeat Israel. The huge army assembled together reflects an attitude that they believe they must stop Israel now or never.

i. All this was prompted by what the northern kings **heard** regarding Israel's success and victory. Walking in victory means that we become targets – when we are revired, so is the devil.

b. **They went out, they and all their armies with them:** Two things indicate that now Israel faced challenges they had never faced before. First, the size of the enemy army: **as many people as the sand that is on the seashore in multitude**. Second, the technological superiority of the Canaanites: **with very many horses and chariots**.

i. The challenges brought to Israel seem to increase at each step, from Jericho, to Ai, to the battle with the southern kings, now to this battle.

ii. We often find that the challenges facing us in our Christian life increase at each step. God uses each previous victory as a springboard for what we face in the future.

2. (6) God's encouragement to Joshua.

a. **Tomorrow about this time I will deliver all of them slain before Israel:** This attack was new, and more severe than previous challenges. Joshua needed a fresh confirmation of God's promise for his life, and the LORD was faithful to bring it.

b. **Do not be afraid because of them:** This means that fear was an issue for Joshua and the people of Israel. God has a reason for everything He does, and He would not have assured them *do not be afraid* unless there was a reason for the encouragement.

3. (7-9) Joshua attacks the northern armies, and they are defeated.

a. **So Joshua and all the people of war with him came against them suddenly:** Joshua fought with *boldness* and *strategy*, he surprised them with an unexpected ambush.

b. **So Joshua did to them as the LORD had told him:** Joshua fought with *obedience*, doing exactly what the LORD told them to do, even destroying the Canaanite “weapons” (the horses and the chariots) instead of taking them for his own army.

i. Here is a lesson in the matter of “taking the devil’s tools.” Many Christians do not hesitate to use the “horses and chariots” of their spiritual enemy. Perhaps they should believe that God may want them to fight the battle on a different level – a level of complete trust in Him.

c. **They attacked them until they left none of them remaining:** Joshua fought with *passion* and *commitment*; he not let up until he had accomplished as much as he could.

4. (10-15) The defeat of Hazor, the head of the northern Canaanite kingdoms.

a. **They struck all the people who were in it with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them. There was none left breathing:** The staggering completeness of the destruction (especially in human terms) shows us the *completeness* of God’s judgment, Israel’s obedience, and the depravity of the Canaanites.

B. Israel is secure in Canaan.

1. (16-20) complete victory over Canaan, over north and south.

a. **For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that He might utterly destroy them:** We are told that in part, this judgment on the Canaanites was accomplished when God did **harden their hearts** against Israel. The hardening of men’s hearts is when God gives man up to the sin that is in his heart ([Romans 1:24-28](#)).

b. **Just as the LORD had commanded Moses:** We need not think that God poured out some particular judgment upon the Canaanites. He dealt with their hearts the same way He deals with all men’s hearts, but God’s grace either hardens the heart or it softens it.

2. (21-22) The Anakim are defeated.

a. **At that time Joshua came and cut off the Anakim from the mountains:** It was a fear of the **Anakim** – this tribe of exceptionally large and strong people – that had made Israel too afraid to enter the land some forty years ago ([Numbers 13:27-33](#)).

b. **None of the Anakim were left in the land of the children of Israel:** Here, the foes of 40 years ago fall. They were no match for an army that was blessed and directed by God.

i. Significantly, Israel faced the Anakim *last*, only after God had trained them in battle and in working with Him through the months of conquest.

ii. When Israel refused to enter Canaan out of a fear of the Anakim, they did not realize that God would so guide events that they would face this most difficult challenge *last*. God knows how to manage the battles in our life.

iii. And we must *allow* God to manage those battles. All too often we are convinced that we must go out and fight the Anakim *first*, when God would have us face them *last*.

c. **They remained only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod:** The Anakim remained only in these coastal cities occupied by the Philistines. The giant Goliath comes from the city of Gath some five hundred years later ([1 Samuel 17:4](#)).

3. (23) Complete victory, and the land rests from war.

a. **So Joshua took the whole land:** This brings us to another section of the book of Joshua. The power of the Canaanite kings within the land has been crushed, and in this sense, **Joshua took the whole land.** Yet, not every small town and village had been conquered and occupied. That was up to each individual tribe to do in the land that was apportioned to them.

b. **Then the land rested from war:** The end of this phase of conquest was a *greater* invitation to the cooperation of the tribes with God.

i. "Much territory was yet to be possessed, but it was left to each tribe to possess what potentially it had received through the conquest of the whole people in which it had taken part. Each tribe was to apply individually the lessons it had learned in united war if it was to possess its inheritance. That the tribes failed to do so was not a reflection on the power of God, but on the failure to take for themselves what Joshua had given and allotted to each one of them."

ii. In the same sense, Jesus has already defeated the enemy and conquered the land, but He also calls us into battle to gain what is ours.

JOSHUA 12

LIST OF THE CONQUERED KINGS

A. Kings defeated by Moses.

1. (1) Introduction: kings conquered by Israel under the leadership of Moses.

a. **These are the kings of the land whom the children of Israel defeated:** The land of these kings comprised Israel's land on the eastern side of the Jordan river, **on the other side of the Jordan toward the rising of the sun.**

b. **These are the kings:** This list only seems tedious to us because we do not live in the land. For those who received their inheritance there, these were essential matters that touched everyday life, answering the question: "What land belongs to Israel?"

2. (2-3) The defeat of Sihon, king of the Amorites and his land that Israel possessed.

3. (4-5) The defeat of Og, king of Bashan, and his land that Israel possessed.

4. (6) The eastern lands are deeded to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh.

a. **Half the tribe of Manasseh:** Half of the tribe of Manasseh lived east of the Jordan River, and half of the tribe lived west of the Jordan River.

B. Kings defeated by Joshua.

1. (7-8) A broad description of the lands and Canaanite nations conquered by Israel under the leadership of Joshua.

a. **These are the kings of the country which Joshua and the children of Israel conquered on this side of the Jordan:** Again, this only seems tedious to us because it is not our land. If it were our land, we would read each line with great interest.

2. (9-24) A specific recounting of the 31 kings conquered by Joshua.

a. **The king of Jericho:** These descriptions are also important because they make it clear that these things happened in real time, and in real space. These are not fairy tales that begin with “once upon a time,” this is history that begins with specific places and people and rulers.

b. **All the kings, thirty-one:** As well, it was a way that Israel could forever remember the great things God had done for them. “Sometimes in the course of human experience it is good to sit down and reflect on what has been conquered by the grace of God.”

c. **All the kings:** With all these kings conquered – with every one of these “principalities and powers” over the land defeated – there is no doubt that the land belongs to Israel, but the individual tribes still have much to possess for their own

JOSHUA 13

THE REMAINING LAND; ALLOTMENTS EAST OF THE JORDAN

A. God’s command to Joshua regarding the land remaining to be conquered.

1. (1) God speaks to an old Joshua about the land remaining to be possessed.

a. **You are old:** Even while acknowledging Joshua’s advanced years, God still tells him about a job that needs to be done. No matter how much we have done in our Christian lives, there still remains much to do.

b. **There remains very much land yet to be possessed:** While there is still much to do, there can be no satisfaction with a partial inheritance – God wants us to keep pressing on.

c. **Yet to be possessed:** What the land was to Israel, Jesus is to us. We are to possess all of Him, and to keep pressing on to have all of Jesus.

i. How much of Jesus do you have? How much of the Bible do you possess as yours? Do you walk in the blessing of leading others to Jesus Christ? Of answered prayer? Of meeting the needs of others in God's family?

2. (2-6a) The land that remains to be occupied is described.

3. (6b-7) God's method for possessing the land is described.

a. **Them I will drive out from before the children of Israel:** God promised **I will drive** [them] **out from before the children of Israel**, but He intended that each tribe trust God for this in the portion of land divided to them by lot.

b. **Divide this land as an inheritance to the nine tribes and half the tribe of Manasseh:** Each tribe was responsible to possess their own land completely. God is high on the concept of personal responsibility and initiative.

i. Not only because that is how things get done, but also because that is how people are blessed in service. We are blessed by personally taking responsibility and initiative in trusting God to do what He has called them to do.

B. Land allotments east of the Jordan.

1. (8-13) The land to be divided on the east side of the Jordan river.

a. **With the other half tribe the Reubenites and the Gadites received their inheritance:** This passage describes the portion of land divided among Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh. It was the land of king Sihon of the Amorites and king Og of Bashan.

b. **Nevertheless the children of Israel did not drive out the Geshurites or the Maachathites:** Only two small tribes of peoples were not replaced by the Jewish tribes settling on the east side of the Jordan: the **Geshurites** and the **Maachathites**.

i. David later married a princess from Geshur, and his son Absalom was born of her ([2 Samuel 3:3](#)). Absalom returned to Geshur and used it as a place to plot against his father David ([2 Samuel 13:37-38](#), [14:23](#), and [14:32](#)).

ii. The Maachathites may have come from the Maachah mentioned in [Genesis 22:24](#), who was a nephew of Abraham. Later, when Sheba rebelled against David, he fled and may have taken refuge in one of the cities of the Maachathites ([2 Samuel 20:14-15](#)).

2. (14) The unique situation of the tribe of Levi.

a. **Only to the tribe of Levi he had given no inheritance:** Levi, the priestly tribe, was to receive no "province" such as the other tribes received; they would be given certain cities ([Joshua 20-21](#)).

b. **The sacrifices of the LORD God of Israel made by fire are their inheritance:** Instead, the Levites had as their inheritance the offerings that Israel would bring to the LORD. These were their “financial security” in Israel.

3. (15-23) The portion of Reuben’s land.

4. (24-28) The portion of Gad’s land.

5. (29-32) The portion of half the tribe of Manasseh’s land.

6. (33) More on the inheritance of the Levites.

a. **The LORD God of Israel was their inheritance, as He had said to them:** In [Joshua 13:14](#), we are told that the Levites had no land for an inheritance, but instead had the sacrifices Israel brought to God. They also received a greater inheritance than that: God Himself.

b. **The LORD God of Israel was their inheritance:** In this sense, if there is any tribe that Christians are spiritually connected to, it is the tribe of Levi. We also are called priests ([1 Peter 2:5](#)) and have a special inheritance in God ([Ephesians 1:11](#), [Colossians 1:12](#), and [1 Peter 1:4](#)).

c. **As He said to them:** Many of us are dissatisfied with our place before God. We wish He would have given us something different, and we can even get bitter towards God about this. The primary answer to this is to see ourselves as priests, and to understand that our real inheritance is God Himself

JOSHUA 14

THE WESTERN LAND TO BE DIVIDED

A. Preparation for the division of the land.

1. (1-2) The distribution of the land on the western side of the Jordan river.

a. **Eleazar the priest, Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel distributed as an inheritance to them:** In this process, Joshua, Eleazar and representatives from each tribe came together to supervise the casting of lots, which was directed by the LORD.

2. (3-5) An explanation of the nine and one-half tribes who received their inheritance on the west side of the Jordan.

a. **For the children of Joseph were two tribes:** We commonly think and speak of the “twelve tribes of Israel” but actually there were thirteen, because although there were twelve sons of Jacob (Israel), the descendants of one of his sons, Joseph, divided into **two tribes (Manasseh and Ephraim)**.

b. **They divided the land:** This explains why you can have two and one-half tribes on the east side of the Jordan river, nine and one-half tribes on the west side of the Jordan river, and one tribe with no province as their inheritance.

B. Caleb’s inheritance.

1. (6-9) Caleb remembers Moses’ promise.

a. **Caleb the son of Jephunneh:** Caleb, from the tribe of Judah, was one of the twelve spies who scouted out the land of Canaan some forty-five years before when Israel first was on the threshold of the Promised Land ([Numbers 13:1-25](#)).

b. **But I wholly followed the LORD my God:** Caleb was one of the only two spies to come back with a good report, a report of faith, believing that God had given Israel the land and would enable them to conquer it ([Numbers 13:26-14:9](#)). The other ten spies believed that Israel would be destroyed in the attempt to take Canaan, and Israel believed the ten doubting spies.

i. The other faithful spy was none other than Joshua. The ten faithless spies measured the giants against their own strength, but Joshua and Caleb measured the giants against God’s strength.

ii. This was the cause of Israel’s forty years of wandering in the wilderness; God would not allow that generation of unbelief to enter in, so He waited for them to die in the desert ([Numbers 14:26-38](#)). The only ones of age at the time of the rejection who actually entered the Promised Land were be Joshua and Caleb, the two faithful spies.

iii. So, it is fitting as Judah is the first tribe to receive its allotment on the west side of the Jordan, that Caleb be the first among the people of Judah to receive his inheritance.

c. **So Moses swore on that day, saying, ‘Surely the land where your foot has trodden shall be your inheritance and your children’s forever:** Caleb calls Joshua back to the promise Moses made in [Deuteronomy 1:35-36](#). When Caleb says **I wholly followed the LORD my God**, he isn’t being proud – he is just quoting what Moses had said about him.

i. We should imitate Caleb’s boldness in asking for what God promised him. We may find it hard to believe, but God appreciates this kind of boldness.

d. **Because you have wholly followed the LORD my God:** Because Caleb repeats this phrase twice, we can assume it made a significant impression on him – and fittingly so, because it is a great and important thing to **wholly** follow the LORD.

i. We recognize that most successful people are those who have wholly given themselves over to something. Will we **wholly** give ourselves over to following the LORD?

2. (10-15) Caleb seizes God’s promise.

a. **Here I am this day, eighty-five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me:** Though he is advanced in age, his strength is undiminished. At eighty-five he was out leading the fight, and not against just any foe, but against the **Anakim**.

i. This is how God wants us to be in our spiritual life as we advance in years: growing older, but never weaker in Jesus.

b. **Now therefore, give me this mountain of which the LORD spoke in that day; for you heard in that day how the Anakim were there:** In fact, Caleb *wants* the fight. He could have asked for an easy place, but he knows that these foes must be faced and figures that he may as well be the one to do it. He doesn't leave the work to someone else, though he could have, especially at his age.

c. **Because he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel:** What if *all* of Israel had the heart of Caleb? What if *no one* in Israel had the heart of Caleb? Again, Caleb's secret is clear: **he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel**. There was a total commitment in Caleb's life.

JOSHUA 15, 16, 17

THE INHERITANCE OF JUDAH, EPHRAIM AND WESTERN MANASSEH

A. The inheritance of Judah.

1. (15:1-12) The borders of the province of Judah.

a. **So this was the lot of the tribe of the children of Judah:** All this may seem tedious to us, but it certainly was not tedious to those who would possess this land.

2. (13-19) The land allotted the Caleb and his family.

a. **He who attacks Kirjath Sepher and takes it, to him I will give Achsah my daughter as wife:** Caleb was not only a man of great and bold deeds (the driving out of **the children of Anak**), but also a man who encouraged others to great and bold deeds. He did this by offering his daughter in marriage to the man who was bold enough to conquer a city to have her.

b. **Give me a blessing; since you have given me land in the South, give me also springs of water:** As well, Caleb's daughter imitated her father's boldness in asking for blessing. She did not hesitate to ask her father for some choice **springs**.

3. (20-62) The cities, villages, and regions occupied by the tribe of Judah.

4. (63) An incomplete occupation: Jerusalem remains in Canaanite hands.

a. **The inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out:** We can understand why Jerusalem was a city hard to conquer. The fact that it was set on a hill made it easy to defend.

b. **The Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem to this day:** Yet, no matter how hard the struggle, with God's promise, and God's help, we can triumph – there is really no good excuse for why this city must stay in Canaanite hands until the time of David ([2 Samuel 5:6-10](#)).

B. The inheritance of the sons of Joseph.

1. (16:1-4) The borders of the province belonging to the sons of Joseph, Ephraim and the half-tribe of Manasseh settling on the west side of the Jordan.

2. (5-10) The borders of the province of Ephraim.

a. **And they did not drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer:** Their failure to completely drive out the Canaanites is typical of all the tribes. Even within the Promised Land there remains important work to do and battles to fight.

b. **The Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites to this day and have become forced laborers:** Perhaps the people of Ephraim were guilty of this compromise because they wanted **forced laborers** among them. Even this convenience does not justify their disobedience to God's command.

i. If they had the power to make the people of Gezer forced laborers, they certainly had the power to defeat them completely, especially because Gezer was a city that Joshua had already conquered ([Joshua 10:33](#) and [Joshua 12:12](#)).

ii. This sort of compromise seems innocent, but it became the way that much idolatry and immoral worship came into the people of Israel. This is one reason why we see so many struggles in the days of the Judges.

c. **They did not drive out the Canaanites:** The Israelites did not fully conquer for two reasons. First, they wanted peace at any cost. Second, they wanted wealth. For the sake of *ease* and *money*, they disobeyed God and fell short of what He had for them – as we do today also.

3. (17:1-2) Distribution of the land among the remaining families of the tribe of Manasseh.

4. (3-6) The inheritance of Zelophehad's daughters.

a. **Zelophehad... had no sons, but only daughters:** This is noted in the text because it was unusual for women to receive an inheritance. It was more important that the land remain in the ancestral families than it was to follow this custom. Therefore, the daughters of Zelophehad could inherit their father's land.

b. **The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brothers:** This is actually merely the implementation of a decision arrived at by Moses in [Numbers 27:1-11](#).

5. (7-13) The boundaries of the western half-tribe of Manasseh and their incomplete occupation of that land.

a. **Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities:** Their failure here is after the same pattern as the failure of the tribe of Ephraim in [Joshua 16:10](#).

b. **But the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land:** Of course, the Canaanites would be **determined to dwell in that land**. What was lacking was complete determination from the people of Israel. They were satisfied to **put the Canaanites to forced labor**.

6. (14-18) Joshua answers the complaint of the sons of Joseph.

a. **Why have you given us only one lot and one share to inherit, since we are a great people:** Manasseh and Ephraim were somewhat large tribes. Their combined number was greater than any other single tribe. Here, they complain that they have not been allotted adequate land.

b. **If you are a great people:** Joshua's reply is both wise and wonderful. He tells them, "**if you are a great people**, then go and get the land for yourself; fully occupy what the LORD has given you." These tribes had not completely taken the mountain country in their midst, because it would be hard and dangerous work.

i. How different is their attitude than Caleb's attitude ([Joshua 14:11-12](#))! They want "easy land" given to them, instead of taking God's promises and going out and taking what God has given them. The principle applies just as strongly for us today; if we desire more of something, the first thing to do is to be a faithful as we can where we are.

ii. Perhaps they appealed to Joshua as a fellow Ephraimite, because he was a descendent of Joseph himself.

JOSHUA 18, 19

INHERITANCE OF THE REMAINING TRIBES

A. The survey of the land for the seven remaining tribes.

1. (18:1-3) At Shiloh, Joshua exhorts the remaining tribes to possess their land.

a. **But there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes which had not yet received their inheritance:** Why would they not want to possess their land? Why would Joshua need to prod them? Probably because these are people who had not lived in

permanent dwellings for more than a generation, and they were afraid of something new, even if it was good.

b. **How long will you neglect to go and possess the land:** Whatever the exact reason, the bottom line was **neglect**. They did not fulfill what God had called them to do.

2. (4-8) Joshua instructs a survey party to go out and assess the land that it may be divided among the seven remaining tribes.

3. (9-10) The successful survey party returns and Joshua casts lots to determine which tribes will receive which land.

B. The final division of the land.

1. (11-28) The boundaries and cities for the tribe of Benjamin.

2. (19:1-9) The boundaries and cities for the tribe of Simeon.

3. (10-16) The boundaries and cities for the tribe of Zebulun.

4. (17-23) The boundaries and cities for the tribe of Issachar.

5. (24-31) The boundaries and cities for the tribe of Asher.

6. (32-39) The boundaries and cities for the tribe of Naphtali.

7. (40-48) The boundaries and cities for the tribe of Dan.

8. (49-51) Joshua's inheritance.

a. **When they had made an end of dividing the land:** Joshua received what was promised to him by God, but in remarkable humility, he receives his portion last. This is the kind of humble service and concern for others that makes Joshua such a wonderful picture of Jesus Christ.

JOSHUA 20

THE CITIES OF REFUGE

A. God commands the appointment of six cities of refuge.

1. (1-3) A place of refuge from the avenger of blood.

a. **Appoint for yourselves cities of refuge:** God now tells Joshua to fulfil what the LORD had commanded through Moses in [Numbers 35](#) – the appointment of six cities of refuge.

b. **That the slayer who kills a person accidentally or unintentionally may flee there:** The purpose of the cities of refuge was to protect **the slayer who kills any person accidentally or unintentionally**. They were to protect someone in the case of *manslaughter* as opposed to *murder*.

c. **And they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood:** Such a person needed protection against the **avenger of blood**. The Hebrew word for this phrase is *goel*, and in this context means the representative from the victim's family charged with making sure justice is carried out against the murderer of the family member.

i. God had a passion to make sure that murderers were punished in ancient Israel, and in that culture, the final responsibility for justice rested with the designated *goel* (**avenger of blood**) in the family.

ii. The principle for capital punishment goes back to [Genesis 9:6](#): *Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man*. The state's right to use the sword of execution is also stated in the New Testament ([Romans 13:3-4](#)).

iii. God said also that unpunished murderers defiled the land: *Moreover you shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death... So you shall not pollute the land where you are; for blood defiles the land, and no atonement can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it. Therefore do not defile the land which you inhabit, in the midst of which I dwell; for I the LORD dwell among the children of Israel.* ([Numbers 35:31](#), [35:33-34](#)).

iv. How long will our nation be polluted by the stain of unpunished murders? Not too many years ago, over one year in Los Angeles County, they averaged *more than five murders a day*. The blood of the slain cries out before God.

d. **Refuge from the avenger of blood:** The **avenger of blood** tracked down the murderer, and if necessary, delivered him over to the authorities for execution. This was providing the testimony of two or three eyewitnesses could confirm the guilt of the murderer according to [Deuteronomy 17:6-7](#).

e. **Refuge from the avenger of blood:** Since the **avenger of blood** might set himself against a person really guilty of manslaughter (accidental or unintentional killing) instead of murder, the cities of refuge were established to protect the person innocent of murder.

2. (4) Entrance into the city of refuge.

a. **And declares his case in the hearing of the elders of that city:** According to custom, the elders of the city spent much time at the gates of the city. When someone fleeing from an avenger of blood came to a city of refuge, he stated his case to the elders at the city gates.

b. **They shall take him into the city as one of them:** After explaining the case, the fleeing person could expect to find protection within the walls of the city of refuge, though he would have to stay there, and live in the city, to enjoy that protection.

3. (5) Protection against the avenger of blood.

- a. **They shall not deliver the slayer into his hand:** The leaders of a city of refuge were obliged to protect the one who had fled to the city. The **avenger of blood** had no legal standing to deliver the slayer over to execution.
- b. **Because he struck his neighbour unintentionally, but did not hate him beforehand:** Israel had a sophisticated legal system, with judgments often based on intent and premeditation.

4. (6) Freedom for the slayer.

- a. **He shall dwell in that city until he stands before the congregation for judgment, and until the death of the one who is high priest in those days:** To be protected against the avenger of blood, the slayer had to stay within the walls of the city of refuge until his case was fully heard by the proper authorities, and until the death of the standing high priest.
- b. **Then the slayer may return and come to his own city:** After being declared innocent of murder by the proper authorities, and after the death of the standing high priest, the slayer could go back to his home and be protected against the wrath of the avenger of blood.

B. Six cities selected for cities of refuge.

1. (7-8) The appointment of six cities.

- a. **So they appointed:** On a map, we see that the cities of refuge were well spaced throughout the country. No matter where you were in Israel, you were not very far from a city of refuge.
- b. **They assigned:** [Deuteronomy 19:2](#) tells us that proper roads were to be built and maintained to these cities of refuge. The city was not much good to the slayer if they could not get to it quickly.

2. (9) The purpose for the cities of refuge is again stated.

- a. **For all the children of Israel and for the stranger who dwelt among them:** The cities of refuge were not only for the benefit of the Israelite, but also for the **stranger who sojourned among them**. God's justice applied to all without partiality.

3. The cities of refuge as a picture of Jesus.

- a. The Bible applies this picture of the city of refuge to the believer finding refuge in God on more than one occasion:
- i. [Psalm 46:1](#): *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.* More than 15 other times, the Psalms speak of God as our refuge.
 - ii. [Hebrews 6:18](#): *That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.*
- b. Points of similarity between the cities of refuge and our refuge in Jesus.
- Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are *within easy reach* of the needy person; they were of no use unless someone could get to the place of refuge.

- Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are *open to all*, not just the Israelite; no one needs to fear that they would be turned away from their place of refuge in their time of need.
- Both Jesus and the cities of refuge became a place where the one in need would *live*; you didn't come to a city of refuge in time of need just to look around.
- Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are the *only alternative* for the one in need; without this specific protection, they will be destroyed.
- Both Jesus and the cities of refuge provide protection *only within their boundaries*; to go outside means death.
- With both Jesus and the cities of refuge, full freedom comes with the *death of the High Priest*.

c. A crucial distinction between the cities of refuge and our refuge in Jesus.

- The cities of refuge only helped the *innocent*, but the *guilty* can come to Jesus and find refuge

JOSHUA 21

CITIES APPOINTED FOR THE LEVITES

A. The people of the tribe of Levi receive their cities with their common lands.

1. (1-3) The leaders of the tribe of Levi ask for what was promised to them.

a. **The LORD commanded through Moses to give us cities to dwell in:** The Levites received no “province” of land such as the other tribes did; however, they had to live somewhere. So, each tribe gave certain **cities** and **common-lands** (land immediately surrounding the cities) to the tribe of Levi.

b. **So the children of Israel gave to the Levites from their inheritance:** The tribe of Levi had no “province” of land because God had declared that He would be their inheritance ([Joshua 13:14](#), and [13:33](#)).

2. (4-42) Cities are appointed to the Levites, according to their three main family divisions.

a. **Now the lot came out:** The striking thing about this list is that God wanted the Levites “sprinkled” all throughout the land of Israel. He never intended there to be one “state” of Levi, but every tribe was to have the priestly influence and presence in their midst.

i. In the same manner, Christians (being priests, [1 Peter 2:5](#) and [2:9](#)) are to be “sprinkled” all throughout the world and society, instead of heading off to make a “Christian country” somewhere.

b. **All the cities of the Levites:** Perhaps it is also significant that the priests received their cities last of all the tribes. Priests are appointed to serve, not to be served, and there is something priestly about letting others go first.

B. Israel takes full possession of the land.

1. (43) The land is Israel's, given to them by God.

a. **So the LORD gave to Israel all the land:** All the tribes had their land. They must go into every corner of what God has given, and take full possession, but God had provided everything necessary for them to do so.

2. (44) The rest in the land is Israel's, given to them by God.

a. **The LORD gave them rest all around:** This is the point where Israel stopped commemorating Passover as if equipped to travel as described in [Exodus 12:11](#)). Now they will eat the Passover reclining at rest (as described in [John 13:23](#)), because the LORD had given them rest in the land.

3. (45) Not a word of God fails.

a. **Not a word failed of any good thing which the LORD had spoken:** God was completely faithful in regard to the land; but Israel was not. Any failure to fully possess was not because God had not made adequate provision, but because Israel had failed to fully follow the LORD.

b. **All came to pass:** God has been completely faithful to you and made provision for continual victory. He has given greatly unto you, but what do you possess?

i. "In the light of the Cross, is it not true that the enemy has no right to dwell in the land? Is it not true that Satan's claim to your life was taken from him at Calvary? Is it not true that sin has no right to a foothold in the life of the child of God? Is it not true that Satan has no power in the presence of Omnipotence? Is it not true that by virtue of His blood and His resurrection, Jesus Christ is pledged to destroy the enemy utterly? Is it not true that in the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit there is strength for every temptation, grace for every trial, power to overcome every difficulty?" (Alan Redpath)

JOSHUA 22

A MISUNDERSTANDING RECONCILED

A. The armies from the tribes east of the Jordan are sent home.

1. (1-4) Joshua thanks them for a job well done.

- a. **You have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you:** In the seven years they had been with Joshua, helping the tribes west of the Jordan to conquer their enemies, they had been completely obedient and helpful to Joshua.
- b. **You have not left your brethren these many days:** They had gone out and fought on behalf of their brethren, even though they already had their own inheritance – even as God commanded them to do.
- c. **Now therefore, return and go to your tents and to the land of your possession:** Now that the land was conquered and fully distributed to the tribes, they could go back to their families and lands on the eastern side of the Jordan.

2. (5-6) Before they leave, Joshua gives them an exhortation and a blessing.

- a. **But take careful heed to do the commandment:** He tells them to **take diligent heed** to the word of God, probably here mostly in the sense of carefully hearing it and knowing it.
- b. **To love the LORD your God:** He tells them to **love** the *LORD*. This is a matter of the heart, but it can still be commanded.
- c. **To walk in all His ways, to keep His commandments:** He tells them to obey God with all they have, to **keep His commandments, to hold fast to Him** in a personal sense, and to **serve Him** with all your heart and soul.
 - i. We should not miss the order here. First, we should take care to *hear* God. Then we give Him our *love*. Next comes a walk of *obedience*. To mix this order up is to get off into heresy (loving without hearing) or legalism (obeying before loving).
- d. **So Joshua blessed them and sent them away:** Joshua will not send them away without a blessing; he knew that they could not do or be what God wanted them to be without His blessing among them.
 - i. Perhaps he used the blessing from [Numbers 6:23-27](#): *Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: "The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace."' So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them.*

3. (7-9) The armies of the two and a half tribes depart, with much spoil.

- a. **Return with much riches to your tents:** Their obedience to God and faithfulness to their brethren has been rewarded. God has allowed them to gain much plunder that they can take back home with them.
 - i. We believe that when we obey God, we will be gainers, not losers. Perhaps not always in this obvious material sense, but in real, wonderful gains none the less.
- b. **So the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh returned, and departed from the children of Israel at Shiloh:** We might imagine that this was a somewhat emotional departure of brothers who had known the closeness of fighting side-by-side. These were true veterans of the army of Israel.

B. The incident of the altar by the Jordan.

1. (10) The eastern tribes make an impressive altar.

- a. **When they came to the region of the Jordan:** Before crossing over the Jordan, the soldiers from the two and a half tribes build a **great, impressive altar** near the Jordan River.
- b. **A great, impressive altar:** This was significant not only because of its size, but because of the *meaning* of an altar. An altar was a place of sacrifice, and both the Israelites and pagans had altars they used for sacrifice.

2. (11-12) The tribes west of the Jordan river learn of the great altar.

- a. **Behold, the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh have built an altar:** When the news comes to the rest of Israel, there was no discussion, there was a simple reaction. They gathered to make war against their own brothers who built this altar.

- i. Notice that Joshua does not need to gather them, they gather of own accord. It was an automatic reaction.

- b. **The children of Israel gathered together at Shiloh:** Why did they do this? Because they feared that this altar was a sign of allegiance to the pagan gods of the region.

- c. **To go to war against them:** Their readiness to fight this battle shows great courage to confront on behalf of God's truth and holiness. This was a healthy "body," able to purge itself of poisons.

- i. Their later actions show that they are not *happy* about taking this action, nor will they do it *rashly* – *but they will do it!*

3. (13-15) Before action is taken, Phinehas the High Priest, and representatives from each tribe west of the Jordan personally confront the leaders of the tribes east of the Jordan.

- a. **Then the children of Israel sent Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest:** Phinehas led the group, because he had the authority. He was High Priest over the whole nation, including the two and one-half tribes on the east side of the Jordan. He not only had the authority, he also had the heart of a wise shepherd. He wanted to correct the erring, to protect the nation, and to drive out the dangerous.

- b. **And they spoke with them:** Israel reacted according to God's character. Their assembling for war demonstrated God's holiness, but their personal confrontation demonstrated God's love.

4. (16-18) Phinehas brings the accusation against the eastern tribes.

- a. **What treachery is this:** Clearly, they thought that the altar at the Jordan represented a *rival* place of sacrifice and worship, to compete with God's tabernacle, presently at Shiloh.
 - i. God had clearly commanded that there was one place of sacrifice and burnt offerings for Israel: *Also you shall say to them: Whatever man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell among you, who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice, and does not bring it to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, to offer it to the LORD, that man shall be cut off from among his people.* ([Leviticus 17:8-9](#))

ii. We understand from this that we cannot worship God any way we please, or justify a manner of worship just because we like it. First and always, our worship must be pleasing to God. We must worship Him in *spirit* and in *truth*. ([John 4:24](#))

b. **Is the iniquity of Peor not enough for us:** Phinehas reminds the eastern tribes that Israel has been punished for rebellion against God before, using the rebellion at **Peor** as an example.

i. At Peor, Israel's men had sex with Moabite women, and they gave themselves over to the worship of the Moabite gods. In judgment, God sent a plague that killed 24,000 people.

ii. This incident would be especially meaningful to Phinehas, because he was the one who stopped the plague by making a dramatic stand for righteousness in the midst of gross sin.

c. **He will be angry with the whole congregation:** Phinehas also knew that the sin of these tribes would reflect on the whole nation. He knew that no one really sins unto himself.

5. (19) A willingness to sacrifice to keep a brother from sin.

a. **Take possession among us:** To Phinehas, *anything* was better than seeing these tribes go off in rebellion against God. If there was something **unclean** in their land, he invited them to come and live with the tribes on the western side of the Jordan.

b. **Do not rebel against the LORD, nor rebel against us, by building yourselves an altar:** This was an invitation made at great cost. It would have meant a much smaller area of land for the western tribes. But it didn't matter, because they were willing to *sacrifice* to see their brothers free from this sin.

i. Too many of us lack this willingness; we tell people to stop sinning, but are not willing to help them if it costs us something.

6. (20) A second example of the price of sin: the sin of Achan and its affect on all of Israel is remembered.

Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? And that man did not perish alone in his iniquity.

7. (21-23) The eastern tribes respond.

a. **The LORD God of gods, the LORD God of gods, He knows:** They first appeal to God, because He knows for certain their hearts, and they believe that their brothers in the western tribes have misunderstood them.

i. When we are misunderstood, our first refuge is God. He knows our heart, and we must be satisfied with being right before God even if it means we are wrong in the eyes of some others.

b. **If it is in rebellion, or if in treachery against the LORD, do not save us this day:** They also recognized the rightness of what the others were doing in coming against them.

i. The eastern tribes do what we should all do when we are misunderstood: put ourselves in the shoes of the other person and try to see what they see. If we saw what they saw, we might respond in the same way.

8. (24-29) The eastern tribes explain their true reason for building the altar: it was built as a memorial, not as a place of sacrifice.

a. **An altar, not for burnt offering nor for sacrifice, but that it may be a witness:** The eastern tribes recognized their distance from the center of worship in Israel, and that there was a natural barrier (the Jordan River) between them and the rest of the nation. So they built the altar a memorial to link the two segments of the nation.

b. **That your descendants may not say to our descendants in time to come:** They built it so big and impressive so that it would last. They wanted it to stand as a memorial to future generations that the tribes on both sides of the Jordan worshipped the same God.

c. **Here is the replica of the altar of the LORD which our fathers made, though not for burnt offerings nor for sacrifices:** The eastern tribes again *agree with the concern* of the western tribes; but they explain that the western tribes have misunderstood the meaning of the great, impressive altar.

9. (30-31) The explanation of the eastern tribes is accepted by the western tribes.

a. **Now when Phinehas the priest... heard the words... it pleased them:** Obviously, Phinehas is pleased by this explanation; yet he deserves credit for being willing to believe his brothers. Phinehas puts himself in the shoes of the eastern tribes now, and so the explanation makes sense.

b. **This day we perceive that the LORD is among us, because you have not committed this treachery against the LORD:** Phinehas could see that the **LORD was among us**, because unity had been restored among the people of Israel. This fulfilled the passage from [Psalm 133:1](#): *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*

10. (32-34) Epilogue: the matter is resolved.

a. **So the thing pleased the children of Israel, and the children of Israel blessed God:** Everyone is glad, and everyone enjoys the blessing of having peace among the people of God.

b. **The children of Reuben and the children of Gad called the altar, Witness:** The altar is given the name **Witness**, because it was a witness to the tribes on both the eastern side and the western side of the Jordan **that the LORD is God**.

i. We should respond to misunderstanding in the same manner, according to these same principles.

- Respond with a concern for God's holiness.
- Respond with the courage to confront in love.
- Respond with an attempt to reconcile before you fight.
- Determine that you are willing to sacrifice to help them; don't confront unless you are willing to help.
- Determine that you will see the situation from the perspective of the other person.

- Determine that you will believe the best of one another.

JOSHUA 23

JOSHUA'S FAREWELL ADDRESS

A. The first exhortation: total obedience to the Word of God.

1. (1-3) Joshua declares what the LORD has done.

a. **Joshua called for all Israel:** Joshua, in his old age, gathers the leadership of Israel together to give them a farewell address, to communicate to them the things that are, to his heart, the most important for them to hear.

i. Joshua *can't*, as a practical matter, speak to the whole nation, so he speaks to the leaders: **elders, heads, judges,** and **officers**. He can reach the entire nation by communicating well to the leaders.

b. **You have seen all that the LORD your God has done to all these nations because of you, for the LORD your God is He who has fought for you:** Joshua begins his address by giving glory to God. It would have been easy for Joshua to focus on what *he* had done as a military leader, especially because it was impressive. But he is far more interested in glorifying God than talking about himself.

2. (4-5) Joshua describes the challenges that remain.

a. **I have divided to you by lot these nations that remain:** Under Joshua's leadership, the army of Israel broke the back of the Canaanite military occupation. Now it remains for each individual tribe to fully possess what God has given them.

b. **So you shall possess their land, as the LORD your God promised you:** In the same way, God gives every believer an inheritance. We have been *blessed... with every spiritual blessing... in Christ* ([Ephesians 1:3](#)), and God has a definite part for us to play in coming to possess that inheritance.

3. (6) How Israel will succeed: by total obedience to the word of God.

- a. **Therefore be very courageous:** They need to be **courageous**, so they can be obedient. Following God and His word isn't something for the faint of heart.
- b. **To keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses:** They must do **all that is written in the Book**. We tend to focus on the aspects of obedience that we like and skip over the parts that attract us less.
- c. **Lest you turn aside from it:** They must not **turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left**, because Satan doesn't care which extreme he gets us off to. Either legalism or licentiousness please him.

B. The second exhortation: don't make peace with the enemy.

1. (7-8) Hold fast to the LORD.

- a. **You shall not make mention of the name of their gods:** Joshua tells Israel to not even make mention of these false gods of the Canaanites. Instead of learning about them, they should **hold fast to the LORD** their God.
- b. **You shall hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day:** An old saying concerning criminal enterprises says something to the effect of, "Keep your friends close, but your enemies even closer" but this is exactly what Christians *are not* to do. The normal Christian, by and large, is not called to become an expert in the cults or in heresy, but to become an expert in Jesus Christ – to hold fast to Him.

2. (9-13) Their abiding had been blessed, so if they fail to abide in the LORD, they will also depart from God's blessing.

- a. **For the LORD has driven out from before you great and strong nations:** As Israel abided in the LORD, they saw God do great things through them. As they continued to abide, they would continue to see great things as God fights on their behalf.
- b. **Love the LORD your God:** This is what they must be careful to do. They must, as Jude puts it, *keep yourselves in the love of God* (Jude 21).
 - i. Continually loving the LORD takes diligence. There are many things both within us and outside of us to draw us away from that love.
 - ii. This call to love God is an appeal to the *will*. We first *decide* to love God, even if the feelings don't come first.
- c. **If indeed you do go back, and cling to the remnant of these nations:** Continuing in God's love will mean that they keep themselves separate from the ungodly influences around them; they must keep themselves *unspotted from the world* ([James 1:27](#)).
- d. **They shall be snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish:** If they do not separate themselves from the ungodly influences around them, those influences will become to them instruments of torture, leading to their destruction.
 - i. What today is only an "innocent Canaanite" in our lives may become a torture and a snare tomorrow.
 - ii. "How often we see that the temptation we have pampered and encouraged and indulged in has become a scourge and a thorn in our side. The compromising Christian is not a happy

man. Let the enemy remain in a Christian life, let him have one foothold, and he soon becomes a scourge.” (Redpath)

iii. These ungodly influences never advertise themselves as instruments of torture; they present themselves as wonderful things – but we must see past all this.

C. The warning: God’s faithfulness works both ways.

1. (14) Joshua asks each man to prove God’s faithfulness in his own heart.

a. **You know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed:** Joshua requires that every man probe deep within, and see if there is ever a time in his life when he could rightly accuse God of unfaithfulness to us.

b. **All have come to pass for you; not one word of them has failed:** If we *think* there could be such a legitimate accusation, it shows we know little of the God we claim to know.

2. (15-16) As surely as God has been faithful to bless their obedience under Joshua, He will be faithful to curse their later disobedience.

a. **As all the good things have come upon you which the LORD your God promised you, so the LORD will bring upon you all harmful things:** Joshua merely repeats the principle of blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience that was a specific part of Israel’s covenant with God ([Leviticus 26](#) and [Deuteronomy 28](#)). He emphasizes that God will be just as faithful to judge as He had been to bless.

b. **So the LORD will bring upon you all harmful things:** We relate to God under a different covenant, a new and better covenant ([Hebrews 8:6-7](#)), by which Jesus has *redeemed us from the curse of the law* ([Galatians 3:10-14](#)).

i. Therefore, in Jesus we no longer can experience God’s “faithfulness to curse us” as Israel knew it. Yet we do experience God’s faithfulness to correct us as a loving Father ([Hebrews 12:7](#)), and we do experience a lack of appropriated blessing if we do not abide in Jesus.

JOSHUA 24

THE COVENANT RENEWED

A. Joshua remembers God’s great works on Israel’s behalf.

1. (1) Joshua speaks to the nation again, through its leaders.

a. **Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem:** This was a dramatic last gathering of Israel before the passing of Joshua. It may or may not be part of the same farewell described in [Joshua 23](#). No specific place of gathering is mentioned in [Joshua 23](#), so it could have been part of this same meeting at Shechem.

i. **Shechem** is modern Tel Balata. "This ancient city was situated on the floor of a valley near its entrance, Mount Gerazim and Mount Ebal forming the respective walls. The contour of the land resulted in a natural amphitheater, the acoustics of which were so good that the human voice carried to exceptional distances." (Pink)

b. **To Shechem:** Shechem was a place of rich history for Israel. There were at least four notable events there in lives of the patriarchs. In the first two instances we see *Shechem was a place of calling and commitment*. In the second two we see *Shechem was a place of shame*.

i. Abraham came into the Promised Land and first camped at Shechem. There God appeared to Abraham and confirmed His promise; Abraham built an altar to the Lord there ([Genesis 12:6-7](#)).

ii. When Jacob came back into the Promised Land, he first camped at Shechem. He purchased land at Shechem and built an altar there, calling the place, *El Elohe Israel* (God, the God of Israel, [Genesis 33:16-20](#)).

iii. Jacob's sons Simeon and Levi deceptively lured the men of Shechem into a massacre, murdering all the men of the city ([Genesis 34](#)).

iv. In a season of recommitment to God in Jacob's life, God told him to go to Bethel. Jacob did so and commanded all in his household to put away their idols. Jacob took those idols and buried them at the terebinth tree near Shechem ([Genesis 35:1-5](#)).

c. **Called for the elders of Israel... their heads... their judges... their officers; and they presented themselves before God:** This was an impressive gathering. The leaders of the nation met together at this significant place, meeting in the conscious presence of **God**.

i. There are some who believe that **they presented themselves before God** means that they did this before the tabernacle, which seems at this time to have been at Shiloh ([Joshua 18:1](#)). Either they **presented themselves before God** without the tabernacle, or it was moved to Shechem for this occasion.

ii. The people also presented themselves to God for the making of the covenant in [Exodus 19:17](#).

2. (2-4) God's faithfulness to the patriarchs.

a. **Thus says the Lord GOD of Israel:** We don't often think of Joshua as a prophet, but here he spoke as an inspired messenger of God. Prophecy is not necessarily a prediction of the future. It can simply be a uniquely direct and spontaneous word from God.

b. **Your fathers... dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods:** Through Joshua, the Lord reminded Israel that their forefathers came from the other side of the Euphrates (**the River**) and worshipped pagan gods there.

i. There are ancient legends (*only legends*) that say Abraham served the LORD God among the idol worshippers that he was raised among. One legend says that Abraham's father Terah was an idol maker and seller with his own shop. One day Terah had some business to do, so he left Abram in charge of the idol shop. While his father was gone, Abram took the biggest idol and set him in the middle of the shop floor. Then he put all the other idols in a circle around the biggest idol. Then Abram took a hammer, smashed all the smaller idols and put the hammer in front of the one big idol that was still standing. When his father

came home, Terah was angry and asked Abram why he smashed all his idols. Abram explained that it wasn't he who did it; it was the one large idol with the hammer in front of it. Terah became even more angry and said, "Abram you know that that idol is nothing but a statue and can't do anything like that." Abram answered, "Yes father, which is true. If they cannot do anything, why do we make and sell them for people to worship as gods?"

ii. It's worth noting the truth – that Abraham, the father of the Jewish people and the first Jew, *was not born a Jew*. He grew up in a pagan, idolatrous home.

iii. "We know that Ur and Haran were centres of moon worship. Joshua was telling the people, 'Your past heritage is a people that were not God's people.'" (Schaeffer)

iv. *Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem: "Your birth and your nativity are from the land of Canaan; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite."* ([Ezekiel 16:3](#))

c. **Then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the River:** Before God challenged Israel, He reminded them of His faithfulness. His goodness was shown at the very beginning of His dealings with Abraham and Abraham's descendants.

3. (5-7a) God's faithfulness in the escape from Egypt.

a. **Also I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt:** God did not leave Israel in slavery in Egypt forever. When the time was right, He **sent** a deliverer to His people.

b. **Your eyes saw what I did in Egypt:** There were still many among the leaders and elders of Israel who were children when Israel came out of Egypt, and who saw God destroy the Egyptian army at the Red Sea.

4. (7b-10) God's faithfulness in the wilderness.

a. **Then you dwelt in the wilderness a long time:** Through Joshua, the LORD summarized most of the Exodus journey with this one sentence.

i. Notably missing from this review of Israel's history is any mention of Israel's sin, rebellion, and failure. Though God recorded those things at their time (in Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), when He reviewed their history through Joshua He made no mention. Later, God said *their sin I will remember no more* ([Jeremiah 31:34](#)). Here, it was as if He had "forgotten" Israel's past sin.

b. **Arose to make war against Israel:** [Numbers 21-24](#) makes it clear that the war Balak made against Israel was *spiritual* in nature. He wanted to destroy them either through Balaam's curse (which did not work) or through the seduction and idolatry of the Moabite women (which worked somewhat). Though it wasn't a **war** fought with swords and spears, it was a **war** nonetheless.

5. (11-13) God's faithfulness in the Land of Canaan.

a. **You went over the Jordan and came to Jericho... But I delivered them into your hand:** Speaking through Joshua, God linked the *ancient* history of Israel (all the way back to Abraham) to their *current* history. This is what God had done among them in their own lifetime.

b. **Not with your sword or bow. I have given you a land for which you did not labour... vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant:** There is a sense in which every blessing is undeserved, but some are more obviously so. When Israel enjoyed vineyards and olive orchards in Canaan, it should have made them *especially* grateful for undeserved blessings.

i. They should also have remembered that those who planted the vineyards and orchards were removed by God's righteous judgment, and if they disobeyed and rejected God, they might also be so judged.

B. Choosing to covenant with the LORD.

1. (14) The challenge: serve God exclusively.

a. **Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth:** This was not a blind leap of faith. They saw God's works and experienced His blessings, so it made *sense* for them to exclusively serve a God who had done so much for them.

i. "Joshua gave a promise for the future which was rooted in a space-time past. He did not ask the people to make a Kierkegaardian leap of faith. This stress on God's action in history recurs throughout his farewell."

b. **Serve the LORD:** In the review of Israel's history, we might say that God contrasted His great work with three sets of gods, associated with three waters.

· [Joshua 24:2-4](#) shows that on the other side of the Euphrates were the gods of Sumerian and Babylonian culture – *gods of heritage*.

· [Joshua 24:5-7a](#) shows that on the other side of the Red Sea were the gods of ancient Egypt – *gods of upbringing*.

· [Joshua 24:7b-13](#) and [24:15](#) shows that as they crossed the Jordan there were the gods of the Amorites – *gods of your culture*

i. Joshua applied the principle. The Lord God of Israel is greater than all these idols; therefore, **serve the LORD!**

c. **Serve Him in sincerity and truth:** Joshua boldly called for a *deep* commitment and a *true* commitment.

i. "The best test of sincerity is not always the open hostility of foes, for this often braces up the energies of combat, while at the same time it makes the path of duty clear. Still less is it at the hour of triumph over our foes, then there is no temptation to rebel. The real test of our faithfulness to God is in most cases is our power to continue steadfastly in one course of conduct when the excitement of conflict is removed, and the enemies with which we have to contend are the insidious allurements of ease or custom amid the common place duties of life." (Redpath)

2. (15) Choose God or choose your alternative.

a. **If it seems evil to you to serve the LORD:** Joshua just gave a strong exhortation to *serve the LORD!* ([Joshua 24:14](#)) Perhaps some among them *did not want to serve the LORD*. What of them?

b. **Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve:** If they chose *not* to serve the LORD, they were then responsible to choose which God they **will serve**. They might choose to serve the gods of their heritage (**the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River**) or they might choose to serve the gods of Canaan (**the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell**). Yet they had to make a choice. Everyone serves some kind of god (or, God).

i. Our choice for God is made in clear mind of the *alternatives*. Some feel a life lived for God is a bad choice; but to what do they compare it? The other choices are *far worse*. As Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." ([John 6:68](#))

c. **But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD:** Joshua offered an alternative for those who did not want to **serve the LORD** as he encouraged in [Joshua 24:14](#). Yet his course was clear and sensible – *he chose to serve the LORD*.

i. “The English uses a future tense here, but the Hebrew tense has a fuller meaning. It expresses continuous action. It involves the future, but it can also point to the past. Joshua was undoubtedly affirming, ‘I have chosen, and I will choose.’” (Schaeffer)

ii. Joshua could make this statement because he had lived a life that continuously chose to **serve the LORD**.

- Joshua *chose* to fight against the Amalekites – choosing when it might cost everything.
- Joshua *chose* to reject the golden calf – choosing when the flesh might be satisfied.
- Joshua *chose* to serve the Lord by serving Moses – choosing a humble place.
- Joshua *chose* to believe God’s promise about the Promised Land – choosing against the majority.
- Joshua *chose* to recognize the leadership of the Captain of the LORD’s army – choosing surrender to God.
- Joshua *chose* to take leadership of Israel and lead them into the land – choosing faith instead of unbelief.

iii. *God gives us choice*. God is a choosing God; we are made in His image. He wants us to also choose.

d. **But as for me and my house**: This shows that Joshua also understood that he, as the priest of his family, was charged with the responsibility to see that his whole **house** served **the LORD**. He had the job of representing his whole house before God.

i. The sense is that Joshua would do whatever was right and godly to make sure that his household did **serve the LORD**. They would serve Him together; it was **we will serve the LORD**.

e. **But as for me and my house**: The contrasting word “**but**” gives the sense that Joshua was determined on this course no matter what anyone else thought. His relationship with God was not based on any man, but on the LORD alone, and he would serve God no matter what anyone else did.

- Joshua’s decision meant *hesitation was gone*.
- Joshua’s decision meant *he lived above the evil influence of others*.
- Joshua’s decision was *deep, calm, clear, fixed, well-grounded, and solemnly made*.
- Joshua’s decision was *openly made*.
- Joshua’s decision was *earnestly carried out*.
- Joshua’s decision was *kept through his whole life*.

f. **We will serve the LORD**: Inherent in Joshua’s declaration is that he would **serve the LORD only**; he would not **serve the LORD** and someone or something else. There was one God in his life, and that God was the LORD.

3. (16-18) Israel responds: they also will serve the LORD.

a. **For the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt**: Significantly, their declaration is based on God’s past dealings with them. How could they *not* serve such a great God?

b. **We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God**: This is essentially the same attitude reflected by Jesus’ disciples in [John 6:66-69](#): *Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life*. If serving God sometimes seems hard, think of the alternatives.

4. (19-21) Joshua cautions against a lightly made commitment.

a. **You cannot serve the LORD, for He is a holy God:** Joshua is not trying to discourage their faith but trying to discourage a light commitment to following the LORD. They need to be reminded that they are serving God under a covenant that *promised* they would be cursed for disobedience.

i. Jesus expressed the same kind of warning, explaining that following Him took total commitment ([Luke 14:25-33](#)). It wasn't that Jesus didn't want followers, but He did not want lightly made and easily broken commitments.

ii. "So it becomes us to speak very reverently and leniently of our ability to obey. We are probably overestimating our powers." (Meyer)

b. **No, but we will serve the LORD:** This was the response Joshua wanted: a commitment but made with full understanding of the consequences.

5. (22-28) A covenant renewed.

a. **You are witnesses... this stone shall be a witness:** Joshua required that the covenant be confirmed by the testimony of two witnesses, the people and the stone. Therefore, this was a binding covenant before God ([Deuteronomy 19:15](#)).

i. As Hess notes, there are some points of similarity between this covenant and the normal practice of making covenants in the ancient world between a king or ruler and his people, especially among the Hittites.

b. **Now therefore... put away the foreign gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the LORD God of Israel:** They *said* they were willing enter into and obey God's covenant. Joshua immediately called them into action on their words.

"As you have promised to reform, begin instantly the work of reformation. A man's promise to serve God soon loses its moral hold of his conscience if he do not instantaneously begin to put it in practice. The grace that enables him to promise is that by the strength of which he is to begin the performance." (Clarke)

c. **So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day:** "Literally, *Joshua cut the covenant*, alluding to the *sacrifice* offered on the occasion." (Clarke)

C. The death of Joshua and Eleazar.

1. (29-31) A beautiful epitaph for Joshua.

a. **Being one hundred and ten years old:** Joshua died at a ripe old age and was buried in the land of his own inheritance. There seemed to have been no great funeral or mourning for him, as was surely his wish – to simply be known as **the servant of the LORD**.

b. **Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua:** This was the greatest legacy of Joshua. His godly influence was effectively communicated to and through the whole nation.

2. (32) The burial of Joseph's bones.

a. **The bones of Joseph:** This may seem like an inconsequential point, but it fulfills [Genesis 50:25](#). God likes to tie up loose ends. This is also mentioned in [Hebrews 11:22](#) as an example of Joseph's faith.

3. (33) The death and burial of Eleazar.

a. **And Eleazar the son of Aaron died:** Eleazar's death meant that another link with the wilderness generation had passed. Now Phinehas was High Priest.

b. **They buried him:** As the generations pass, they are each challenged to conquer the land of blessing and promise that God has for them – and we will do it, as they pay close heed to our Joshua, to Jesus Christ.

Recommended Resource:

A guide to Old Testament Theology and Exegesis by W VanGemeren

Encountering the Old Testament by B T Arnold and B E Beyer.

[Joshua, New International Commentary on the Old Testament by Martin Woudstra.](#)

[Joshua: Holman Old Testament Commentary by Kenneth Gangel](#)

Introducing Old Testament Commentary by John Drane