

# Commentary & Notes on Joshua

The commentary and notes below are adapted from the teaching materials of Annie Kartoizian (1906-1989). In 1934 Annie became a missionary in China with OMS. During World War II she spent 21 months in a Japanese concentration camp as a prisoner. She was repatriated in 1943 and sailed on the famous vessel Gripsholm. In 1949 she made a miraculous last-minute escape from Beijing before it fell to Mao's Communists. When she could no longer enter China, Annie went to Taiwan. Annie and her family have been life-long friends of our family. In 1989, while pastoring with the United Armenian Congregational Church of Hollywood I had the honor of participating in her funeral. It was during those years in Los Angeles that Annie gave me her teaching notes (the commentary below) - laboriously typed on what is now yellowed paper with hand written marginal notes, many of which are in Chinese. - Pastor Steve

## INTRODUCTION

### I. Author Of The Book

Authorship of the book is uncertain, but is generally believed to be Joshua. The Jewish writers and the Christian fathers usually named him as the author; but no temporary assertion or sufficient historical proof of that fact exists. The last verses (24:29-33) were obviously added at a later date. Some events probably did not occur until after Joshua's death: the capture of Hebron and Debir (Joshua 15:13-19; Judges 1:1-15); the capture of Leshem (Joshua 19:47; Judges 18:27); the joint occupation of Jerusalem (Joshua 15:63; Judges 1:21). Whether the author is Joshua or one of the priests or elders who outlived Joshua, the book is probably the work of a single writer with slight revision at an after time as a writing might receive without essential interference with its substance. Perhaps revisers inserted explanatory remarks as to places or as to practices that had prevailed "*to this day.*"

#### A. Joshua's early life and preparation for leadership

1. He was born in Egypt.

Joshua was born in the land of captivity and knew what it meant to be a bondman. Although there is no Biblical proof of his age, it is supposed that he was probably forty years old when he left Egypt.

2. He belonged to the tribe of Ephraim (Numbers 13:8,16).

The tribe of Ephraim sprang from the younger son of Joseph whom Jacob placed before the older son as the heir of the richer blessing (Genesis 48:15-20; 1 Chronicles 7:20-27).

3. Joshua was the grandson of Elishama and the son of Nun (Numbers 13:8,16).

Joshua appears to have come from the principal family of the tribe for his grandfather, Elishama (1 Chronicles 7:27), was captain and head of his tribe (Numbers 1:4-10; 2:18), and in the order of the march through the wilderness marched at the head of the forty thousand five hundred men that constituted the great tribe of Ephraim. Not only was Elishama at the head of the tribe but apparently also of the whole camp of Ephraim which, besides his own tribe, embraced Manasseh and Benjamin, being the whole descendants of Rachel (Numbers 2:24). Under their charge in all likelihood was a remarkable relic that had been brought carefully from Egypt - the bones of Joseph (Exodus 13:19). These were finally deposited at Shechem (Joshua 24:32).

4. He was commander in the battle with Amalek (Exodus 17:9-16).

This is the first mention of Joshua in the Bible. He led the forces of Israel in a successful battle with the Amalekites.

5. He was a servant of Moses through all the wilderness wanderings.

He went part way up Mt. Sinai with Moses when the Ten Commandments were given (Exodus 24:12,13). He also tended upon Moses at the tent of meeting (Exodus 33:11).

6. He was one of the twelve spies.

The spies were sent from Kadesh to spy the land of Canaan (Numbers 13:8,16).

7. He was permitted to enter Canaan because he believed in God.

He and Caleb gave a good report of the land they had spied out. Because the people followed the evil report of the ten faithless spies, only Joshua and Caleb were permitted to enter the land of Canaan. All the other adults of their generation perished in the wilderness (Numbers 14:6-30).

#### B. Joshua's career as leader of Israel

1. He was appointed by God to succeed Moses.

Joshua was not a prophet. He succeeded Moses only as a military leader (Numbers 27:18-23).

2. Moses declared Joshua as leader before the people.

He gave him a solemn charge and encouraged him to obey God (Deuteronomy 31:1-8).

3. After the death of Moses, God encouraged and instructed him.

Since his leader is gone, Joshua is divinely installed as the new leader. God encouraged him to believe and instructed him as to the conditions of success (Joshua 1:1-9).

4. Joshua began his conquest of Canaan at once.

He started immediately upon his work of conquest (Joshua 1:10,11). He began his work at eighty years of age (Josephus records that he was 85).

5. God indicated His presence with Joshua by three miracles.

At the very beginning of his campaign three supernatural events occurred:

- a. The River Jordan divided at flood tide for the passage of the host of Israel (Joshua 3:14-17). In this God's presence was shown to Israel.
- b. The angel of Jehovah appeared to Joshua outside the walls of Jericho and gave

directions as to the plan of attack upon the doomed city (Joshua 5;13-15; 6:2-5). In this God's presence was shown to Joshua.

c. The walls of the city fell flat as the people carried out the divinely-revealed plan (Joshua 6:12-21; 9:3). In this God's presence was shown to the Canaanites.

6. Joshua was defeated only once - at Ai.

This defeat taught him the lesson of the necessity of absolute obedience to God's commands (Joshua 7).

7. The conquest of Canaan.

From this time forward Joshua went steadily on until he had dethroned thirty-one kings and the greater portion of the land was subdued (Joshua 11:23; 12:24). This took about seven years.

8. He divided the land to the twelve tribes.

During the last twenty-three years of his life he helped to settle the tribes and establish them in their places (Joshua 23:4).

#### C. Joshua's last days

1. He encouraged them to keep their covenant with God.

Joshua began his work by making the people solemnly covenant that they would not serve idols - he closed his work by renewing the covenant. He counseled the people to be loyal to God and to remain a separate nation (Joshua 23, 24).

2. He died but his influence lived on after him.

He was one hundred and ten when he died. He was buried in Timnathserah in his inheritance in Ephraim (Joshua 24:29-31).

#### D. Characteristics of Joshua

1. Faith - Numbers 14:6-8

2. Entire consecration - Numbers 32:12

3. Spiritual mindedness - Joshua 3:5; 8:30

4. Godly reverence - Joshua 5:14

5. Courage - Joshua 10:25

6. Obedience - Joshua 11:15

7. Decision - Joshua 24:15

## E. Joshua's name

Hoshea and Joshua (Numbers 13:8,16). The first ("Hoshea") means "salvation;" the second ("Joshua") means "Jehovah's salvation" or "Jehovah, the Savior." The names Joshua and Jesus have the same meaning, the former in the Hebrew and the latter in the Greek.

## II. General Subject

The conquest of Canaan and the division of the land to the children of Israel.

## III. The Most Emphasized Word

The emphasis of the book is on the fact that God used Joshua to give the people "rest" (to cease, settle down, quiet down):

*"The Lord your God is providing you a place of rest..."* - Joshua 1:13

*"Until the Lord gives rest to your brothers..."* - Joshua 1:15

*"And the land had rest from war."* - Joshua 11:23

*"And the land had rest from war."* - Joshua 14:15

*"And the Lord gave them rest on every side..."* - Joshua 21:44

*"And now the Lord your God has given rest to your brothers..."* - Joshua 22:4

*"The Lord had given rest to Israel from all their surrounding enemies..."* - Joshua 23:1

## IV. Brief Outline Of The Book

### A. The conquest of Canaan - chapters 1-12

1. Preparation for and entrance into the land of Canaan - chapters 1-5
2. The capture of Jericho - chapter 6
3. The conquest of the south - chapters 7-10
4. The conquest of the north - chapter 11
5. The list of kings conquered - chapter 12

### B. The division of the land of Canaan - chapters 13-22

1. The territory assigned to Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh - chapter 13
2. The lot of Caleb and the tribe of Judah - chapters 14,15
3. Ephraim and the half tribe of Manasseh - chapters 16,17
4. Benjamin - chapter 18

5. Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Asher Naphtali, and Dan - chapter 19
  6. The appointment of six cities of refuge - chapter 20
  7. The assignment of forty-eight cities to Levi - chapter 21
  8. Ruben, Gad, and half Manasseh return to their homes east of the Jordan - chapter 22
- C. Joshua's farewell - chapters 23,24
1. The assembly of the people and Joshua's first exhortation - chapter 23
  2. Joshua's second exhortation at Shechem and his death - chapter 24

## V. Spiritual Lessons Emphasized

How to conquer and find rest in the battle of our spiritual lives - Joshua 1:8,9

## VI. Typical Teaching

- A. Joshua is a type of our New Testament Commander Jesus Christ.

Jesus comes after Moses (John 1:17; Romans 8:3,4; Galatians 3:23-25). He leads to victory (Romans 8:37; 2 Corinthians 2:14). He is our advocate when we suffer defeat (Joshua 7:5-9; 1 John 2:1). He allots our portion (Ephesians 1:11).

In Jesus Christ there is rest for the Christian. Jesus said, "*Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*" (Matthew 11:28). This rest is the rest of faith which may be ours now. There is rest in the hereafter too - the rest which was proclaimed by the voice from heaven, "*Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. 'Blessed indeed,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!'*" (Revelation 14:13).

- B. Crossing the Jordan River is a type of our death with Christ (Ephesians 2:5,6; Colossians 3:1-3).
- C. Canaan is a type of the higher Christian life to be won by warfare (Romans 7:23). It is a type of what the "heavenlies" is to the Christian as Canaan was to the Israelites (see relationship of the book of Joshua to the book of Ephesians - below VII.C).
- D. The warfare of Israel is a type of the fight of faith (Ephesians 6:10-18; 1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 2:3,4).
- E. Israel's rest after the conquest (Joshua 11:23) is the type of the rest of the soul (Hebrews 4:8,9). Joshua is a book full of geographic names - each place became a home for men who had been wandering for long years in the wilderness.
- F. The Canaanites only partly conquered are a type of sin and spiritual enemies only partly subdued (Hebrews 12:1).

## VII. Relationship Of The Book Of Joshua To Other Books In The Bible

### A. To the Pentateuch

The book of Joshua stands in somewhat the same relation to the Pentateuch as the Acts of the Apostles to the Gospels. The Pentateuch gives the origin and the principles of Judaism and the Gospels give the origin and principles of Christianity. In the book of Joshua and the Acts of the Apostles we see these principles in action. Joshua is the first historical book of Judaism and the Acts is the first historical book of the Christian Church. Neither the Pentateuch nor the Gospels are primarily historical. They are the textbooks of the Old and New Covenants. The books of Joshua and the Acts are primarily historical. The historical elements in the Pentateuch and the Gospels is given in order to explain the origin and illustrate the meaning of the two covenants.

### B. The book of Hebrews

In the book of Joshua the account of the extermination of the Canaanites, the partition and settlement of Canaan, and the military exploits of Joshua are recorded. Much space is devoted to these. Just as the description of the Old Testament sacrifices related at length in Leviticus are full of deep spiritual truths required for the growth of the holy soul, so the long accounts in Joshua are given to us "as an example" (1 Corinthians 10:11). The clue to this inner meaning is given by the writer of the book of Hebrews in chapters 3 and 4 (Hebrews 3:18,19; 4:1-11). There is a great spiritual significance in the account related in the book of Joshua - it tells of that satisfaction of rest, wealth, and victory which may be enjoyed by those who have come to know the secret things which God hath prepared for them which love Him and which are revealed by His Spirit.

### C. The book of Ephesians

The book of Joshua is to the Old Testament what the epistle to the Ephesians is to the New Testament. The characteristic word of the Ephesians is "the heavenlies" (Ephesians 1:3,20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12). This expression stands for that spiritual experience of oneness with the risen Savior in His resurrection exaltation which is the privilege of all the saints. The analogy between the "heavenly places" and the land of Canaan may be traced in the following particulars:

1. Each was the goal to which God's purpose led His people.
2. Each was impossible by means of the law.
3. Each was entrusted to a representative.
4. Each was missed by many.
5. Each was infested by many adversaries (Ephesians 6;12).

## COMMENTARY AND NOTES

### I. The Conquest Of Canaan - chapters 1-12

#### A. Preparation for and entrance into the land of Canaan - chapters 1-5

##### Chapter 1

Verse 2: *“Moses My servant is dead”* - God’s work does not depend upon any one worker. It goes on uninterrupted by death. Moses died but God’s work did not. Both Moses and Joshua were only instruments which were used, broken and laid aside; but He who used them is never stopped in His work.

Verse 3: *“Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon...”* - These words are a quotation, almost word for word, from Deuteronomy 11:24 but the original promise is to be found in Genesis 12:1-7 (cf. Genesis 13:14-17; 15:18; 17:8). It was God’s purpose that the whole land should belong to the children of Israel. Not a foot’s breadth was to be left to the former owners.

Verse 4: The desert of Arabia on the south and the range of Lebanon on the north to the River Euphrates on the one hand and the Mediterranean Sea on the other, including the land of the Hittites (1 Kings 4:24; 2 Chronicles 9:26).

Verses 6,7,9: When the call came to assume the office that Moses was vacating, his heart failed him and he needed every kind of encouragement and stimulus - *“Be strong”* meant that he felt weak; *“Be...courageous”* meant that he was frightened; *“Do not be dismayed”* meant that he seriously considered whether he would not have to give up the task. Most of us are too strong for God to use; we are too full of our own schemes, plans and ways of doing things. He must empty us and humble us so low that we need every straw of encouragement God gives. Then God can raise us up and make us a rod of strength (Isaiah 40:29; 1 Corinthians 1:27,28; 2 Corinthians 12:9).

Verse 8: The law must have been in a written document at this time. *“Meditate”* - God spoke to Joshua directly and yet he was also to study the written word. It was not enough to hear God’s voice through other sources - he was to hear it through the word too. *“Day and night”* - this meditation was to be constant. *“Not depart from your mouth”* - constant reading meant constant speaking of the subject matter read. *“That you may be careful to do”* - not only speak but do.

##### Verses 1-9 - The source of Joshua’s strength

1. His past years of training - the life in Egypt, his life in the home of the leader of Ephraim, his years in the wilderness. Through it all he had been educated by God.
2. A distinct call - *“Arise, go over this Jordan, you and all the people”* (1:2). When a man knows that he is called of God to do a certain work he is invincible. He is conscious of his own deficiencies and the difficulties of the way but he looks steadily to the purpose of God, and yields himself to be the channel through which it may operate.
3. A sense of the presence of God - *“Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you”* (1:5b). God did not speak face to face to Joshua

as He did to Moses but Joshua had the personal companionship of God as much as his predecessor.

4. The indwelling of the word of God - The words that live in our hearts live through us. It is through the word of God that the Spirit of God fills us and strengthens us (Jeremiah 15:16; John 5:39; 6:36).

Verses 10,11: "*Prepare your provisions*" - Literally "game" the term being applied to meat obtained by hunting. Thus it is applied by Isaac to Esau's venison (Genesis 27:3). It may mean food of any kind but especially animal food. Manna was still supplied but was soon to cease (5:12). "*Within three days*" - much difficulty has been created here by the fact that another three days are mentioned in 3:2 as elapsing after the return of the spies. Three days were spent by the spies in hiding from the men of Jericho (2:22). It is generally held that the spies were sent off before Joshua issued this order to the people. He probably would not have committed himself to a particular day before he got the information which he expected them to bring.

Verses 12-18: These tribes had already occupied their land as given in Deuteronomy 3:18-20 (Numbers 32:33). They were true to their promise made to Moses. Their answer shows the loyalty of the people to Joshua. There were no rebellions against him as against Moses and Aaron in the persons of Dathan, Abiram, and Korah (Numbers 16). The number of the transjordanic men that passed over was 40,000 (4:12,13). Probably the entire number of men capable of bearing arms (only one-half of Manasseh included) was 110,000 (Numbers 26:7,18,34). The others were left behind to guard women, children, and flocks.

## Chapter 2

Verse 1: "*Sent two men secretly*" - Joshua was under God's special protection. God had promised him (1:5) that he would not leave him or forsake him. He had seen many great miracles; but he did not rely on these where his own prudence and diligence are sufficient. Joshua did not despise the use of means. Means are subordinate in importance but they are put at our disposal by God. By sending the spies Joshua found that the land was ready to enter.

*"Into the house of a prostitute"* - It does not appear that the spies entered Rahab's house with any evil intent. To enter the house of a woman of that kind would have attracted far less attention than if they had entered any other. Even there it did not escape the notice of the king who had been thoroughly alarmed by the successes of Israel east of Jordan.

Verses 4,5: Much has been said about Rahab's falsehood which is little to the point. The Bible historian simply narrates the fact and makes no comment whatever upon it. In regard to her departure from the truth it must be remembered that her views of the Divine law must have been exceedingly dim, but she did in fact tell an untruth. Now in the dispensation of the Spirit we could not act as she did. She acted on the truth which she knew - that God had delivered His people from Pharaoh, that He had promised to give the children of Israel the land. She believed this truth and it was accounted to her for righteousness (Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25). Her faith was small, but it was real and the two effects of it are not to be despised: 1) she protected the Lord's people; and 2) she was concerned for those of her own household. At the risk of her life she cast her lot with the people of Jehovah. Later she married an Israelite named Salmon and became the ancestress of David (Matthew 1:5) and thereby of Christ.



Verse 6: “*Up to the roof*” - The flat roofs of the Oriental houses are used for all kinds of purposes, especially for drying flax and other things for domestic use (1 Samuel 9;25,26; 2 Samuel 11:2; 16:22; 2 Kings 23;12; Acts 10:9).

Verses 9-11: This is the declaration of Rahab’s faith. Bearing in mind the circumstances of the person who uttered it, it is very remarkable. We do not know how this knowledge of God’s name and attributes had been given to Rahab. Her knowledge and spiritual insight are as surprising as any recorded in Scripture.

Verse 16: “*God into the hills*” - Within five miles of Jericho lay the remarkable range called Quarantania or Kuruntul which is literally honeycombed with caves, to that a man might be concealed for months in the immediate neighborhood of Jericho with very slight risk of discovery. The Abyssinian Christians make a yearly pilgrimage there even now. The reason of the reverence in which the place is held is the tradition (not generally accepted) that the forty days’ fast of our Lord took place there.

Verse 24: This information concerning the feelings of the Canaanites was the one great thing they had been sent out to discover. The spies were persuaded that God’s time had come.

### **Chapter 3**

Verse 1: The children of Israel had been in Shittim before (Numbers 25:1). It was during the lifetime of Moses that they were seduced by the Moabites to join in the idolatrous revels of Baal-peor and punished with the plague. The acacia groves facilitated the unhallowed reveling. Shittim was in the Jordan Valley opposite Jericho. At the close of the three days’ preparation there was a movement of the camp from Shittim to a spot within a mile of the rush of the swollen floods. There Israel spent the last night of pilgrimage and wandering.

Verses 3,4: When the host was assembled in orderly array on the east bank of the Jordan, the officers passed through the group and gave three instructions: The first (3:3) was that they were to follow the ark. The ark contained the law of God and the manna. Over it was the mercy-seat, the sign of the presence of Christ in whom sin and pardon meet. Whenever the people saw it being moved by the priests they were to move from their places and follow it. There was no longer the pillar of fire to guide them. That had been the wilderness-symbol of God’s presence; now they had a permanent symbol of God’s presences - the ark. Both symbols represented the same truth. The second instruction (3:4) was that a span of two thousand cubits was to be left between them and the ark. It is possible that this was commanded as a token of reverence. It was more probably in order that they might keep it in view. They had not passed this way before and the new path had to be entered in entire dependence upon Him. There is one who has gone before and we must keep Him in view if we would walk aright (John 10:4; 1 Corinthians 15:23; Colossians 1:18).

Verse 5: Here the third instruction was given - “*Consecrate yourselves...*” This is something they were to do, but only those whose hearts had been renewed by divine grace could do that. We are free agents and while we are dependent upon Him, this is the step for us to take. The wonder-working power is dependent upon the consecration of His people. God does not work these wonders without us, by us and with us, calling us to be fellow-workers with Him. Israel must prepare itself for victory by consecrating itself. To consecrate ourselves is to put away all that is alien to God; to consecrate ourselves unreservedly to God; to give ourselves to Him for His work. It

is to yield ourselves to Him as willing instruments in His hand. We are never better workers with Him than when we allow Him to work in us. To let Him work through us, this is the best way of serving Him.

Verse 7: *“Today I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel...”* - On the day that Joshua called for a consecrated people did God begin to honor Joshua. Honor from God is never bestowed upon one who seeks it for his own glory. *“As I was with Moses, so I will be with you.”* - At the dividing of the Red Sea the leadership of Moses began (Exodus 14); in like manner the leadership of Joshua began at the dividing of the river.

Verse 10: The driving out of the seven nations was to be proof that the “living God” was among them. The seven nations that are to be destroyed and why.

#### The seven nations

1. Canaanites - These were the descendants of Canaan, the son of Ham (Genesis 9:18). They are supposed to have inhabited the less mountainous portions of Palestine by the sea (Numbers 13:29; Joshua 5:1) and by the side of the Jordan (Numbers 13:29).
2. Hittites - They were the descendants of Heth or Chet (Genesis 10:15) who dwelt in the neighborhood of Hebron in the days of Abraham (Genesis 23:19; 25:9). At the time of Joshua they were probably the principal tribe in Palestine (1:4).
3. Hivites - They were the descendants of Canaan (Genesis 10:17; 1 Chronicles 1:15). The prince of Shechem, having the same name as the city, was a Hivite (Genesis 34:2). They seem to have become a peaceful, commercial race. They were not successful in military enterprises as Judges 9 shows.
4. Perizzites - The name signifies “countryman” as distinguished from dwellers in houses. It is possible that they were of no particular tribe but a collection of men from every tribe engaged in agricultural pursuits.
5. Girgashites - They were not doubt a small tribe inhabiting the country of Gergesa or Gerasa upon the lake of Gennesareth (Genesis 10:16; Matthew 8:28).
6. Amorites - They were the most powerful of the Canaanitish people (Genesis 10:16; Amos 2:9). They not only inhabited the mountains (Numbers 13:29; Joshua 11:3) but they crossed the Jordan and wrested the country out of the hands of the Moabites (Numbers 21;13,24,26).
7. Jebusites - They were in possession of the central highlands around Jerusalem, their stronghold (Genesis 10:16). They retained possession of this until David dislodged them (2 Samuel 5:6-8).

#### Why they are to be destroyed

1. Their iniquity was full (Genesis 15:13-16). God has His times and when the limit has been reached, He uses means of His own choice to bring punishments.
2. They had been warned. They had the warning of the fate of the cities of the plain even if they tradition of the flood had perished among them.

3. Their destruction at the hand of Israel was to be a warning to Israel. Nothing could impress the peril of sin so strongly upon the Israelites as to be made the instruments of God's punishment (verses God using some natural cause such as pestilence or famine). They were not to treat their enemies as objects of their own hatred or vengeance. They were God's instruments.

Verse 12: (cf. 4:2,3). Joshua commanded the election of the twelve men previous to the passage of the Jordan. The reason for which they were to be chosen was probably not communicated to the Israelites till after the passage had taken place.

Verses 13,16: The site of Adam is quite unknown. It may have been up the river about a distance of thirty miles. There the flow of the river was suddenly stayed and the waters gathered into a heap and probably formed a vast lake that spread itself for miles. From that point and downwards the waters began to fail until they "*were completely cut off.*" As no more water followed, the river bed was dry for miles and the people hastened and passed over. This was the promised sign (3:10) as He who drove out the waters would surely drive out the foe.

At a point 16 miles north of Jericho the Jordan flows through clay banks forty feet high, which are subject to landslides. In 1927 an earthquake caused these banks to collapse and so dammed up the river that no water flowed past them for 21 hours. God may have used the same means to make the water "stand" for Joshua.

Verse 15: "*Now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest.*" - This was time when it was least likely that the river could be crossed. The greater the difficulty the more evident it is that God did the work. "*The time of harvest*" - This was the time of barley harvest which took place about the 10th Nisan, or Abib; the wheat harvest was about Pentecost or seven weeks later (Joshua 4:19; Exodus 12:1,2; 13:4; 34:22; Deuteronomy 16:1; 1 Chronicles 12:15). An important argument for the genuineness of the narrative is the fact that barley and flax are said to have ripened together (Exodus 9:31-33); Rahab therefore was still in possession of undried stalks of flax three days before (2:6). Crossing at harvest time showed that God had made provision for this large group of people that were to seek food in Canaan.

Verse 17: "*All the nation finished passing over the Jordan.*" - The host that crossed Jordan included nearly 2,000,000 people, none over sixty years of age except Joshua and Caleb - among them were nearly 600,000 men ready for war.

The order of march: The priests bearing the ark of the covenant - 3,000 feet ahead; Joshua and the officers of Israel; armed men of the two and a half transjordanic tribes - 40,000 (4:12). Three tribes - Judah, Isaacher, Zebulun - 200,000; Levites bearing the tabernacle building; tribe of Simeon - 22,000; Levites bearing the tabernacle furniture; Five tribes - Ephraim, Benjamin, Dan, Asher, Napthali - 250,000.

## Chapter 4

Verse 2: "*Twelve men*" - Each tribe had a representative, even those who did not have an inheritance on the west side of the river. This memorial was to be connected with Israel as a whole.

Verse 3: "*Twelve stones*" - Since each man carried a stone, each one was probably about the same size - just what an average man could carry. These stones were taken from the place where the priests' feet stood firm in the Jordan. It may be that they

were the very stones which the priests had selected as providing a safe and secure footing; or perhaps they were stones that lay within a short distance of the spot where they had stood holding the ark. The commemoration of events by the setting up of huge stones was common among the Jews (Genesis 28:18; 35:14; 1 Samuel 7:12). Other nations also set up memorials of stone.

Verses 6-8: *“This may be a sign among you...When your children ask”* - Life is intended to be a school of instruction. In the instructions given by God to Joshua, posterity was not forgotten. Provision was made for handing down to following ages a record of God’s dealings with His people. The wonderful works of God are for all time. It is important to study Bible history (1 Corinthians 10:11). God expects men to propagate His fame (Psalm 145:4).

Verses 9 and 20: There were two memorials, both made of stone. Note that only twelve plain stones were used in each. They were the only memorial of the great deliverance. There was no likeness on them of Jehovah by Whom the miracle had been performed (8:31). There was nothing to encourage acts of reverence of worship directed toward the memorial itself. They were there for only one purpose (4:23,24) - to point to the living God (see Exodus 20:4).

First memorial (verse 9) - This stood on the spot where the ark had indicated the presence of God; the stones were placed as a memorial in Jordan itself where the priests had stood which at that time had overflowed its banks (3:15). That is why they are spoken of as being *“there to this day.”* In the very middle of the river they would have been washed away by the swift current. At times, however, this was an invisible memorial, seen only by God and known to those who had erected it.

Second memorial (verse 20) - This stood where Israel had encamped the first night after entering the land. This place later became the base of operations in the war against the people of Canaan (4:19). There the camp remained with the women and children (9:6; 10:6; also 5:10). This was the visible memorial which was to lead others to ask about this great miracle of God.

The two memorials - The first was set in the river of separation and division; the second was taken out of the river but set in the place of living and blessing. The first spoke of deliverance; the second indicated rest and possession.

#### Lessons for us:

1. We should take special measure to remember all our mercies (Psalm 103:2). Our memories are sometimes very short, especially in regard to certain types of experiences. The slights we receive, the injuries we endure, the disappointments we meet are all easily remembered. The mercies of God, the kindness of man, quiet delights and satisfactions are apt to be drowned out of our memories by the former. We owe it to ourselves to remember all God’s benefits for the recollection of them is inspiring when one is depressed. They give one the sense of “belonging.” There is one great stone of memory which, in obedience to the Savior, the church has raised. The rite of the Lord’s Supper was meant to proclaim to those ignorant of it and to recall to those acquainted with it, the great deliverance wrought on Calvary. It was ordained on the one hand to jog our memories and to keep the heart constantly warm. Of all our mercies we should take special care to remember the infinite mercy of redemption.

2. It is a duty to report to others the mercies of God. These stones were a publication of God's dealings to all who passed that way. Experience may belong to us individually, but the lessons of that experience belong to all who need them. The children of Israel were not to hide God's dealings with them; they were to be told to the following generations. If we had been led over Jordan we are to tell of it. Membership in the Church of Christ is the simplest form of testimony and is the duty of every saved person, for the sake of others as well as for our own sake.
3. The lessons of a memorial should specially reach the children. No man can complain that there is no open door set before him when he is in contact with a child; and no one should despair of the future of a land in which parents can engage the ears of their children with the account of God's dealings in previous years. Tell the children "so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever" (4;24).

Verse 14: "On that day the Lord exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel" - This had been promised in 3:7. Confidence in a leader from the human point of view is one of the most essential requisites in war. From this point on we see no hesitation on the part of the Israelites. They seemed to have unwavering confidence in the God-given mission as well as confidence in the position and ability of their leader.

## Chapter 5

Verses 1,2: "The kings of the Amorites" - A large portion of the territory of the Amorites had been captured already (2:10). The remaining tribes on the other side of Jordan were apprehensive of the same fate. As Rahab had stated (2:11), so did the kings on the west side of the Jordan fear.

The first two facts recorded in this chapter are closely connected with each other. Verse one is introduced in order to explain why Joshua ventured upon the circumcision of the children of Israel at so critical a time. But for the fact recorded in the first verse it would have been the most unsuitable time that could be conceived for administering circumcision. The whole male population would have been rendered helpless for the time and an invitation would have been given for the men of Jericho to commit such a massacre as in the like circumstances the sons of Jacob inflicted on the men of Shechem (Genesis 34:25). The people of Jericho were paralyzed with fear and did not raise a finger against the children of Israel while they were helpless.

Verses 5-7: Why were the children of Israel not circumcised in the wilderness?

1. Owing to the circumstances in which the people were, it would not have been convenient, perhaps hardly possible, to administer the rite on the eighth day. Moving as they were from place to place the administration of circumcision would often have caused so much pain and peril to the child that it is no wonder it was delayed. But his explanation is not sufficient as there were long periods of rest during which there could have been no difficulty.
2. The suspension of circumcision was connected with the punishment of the Israelites, and with the sentence that doomed them to wander forty years in the wilderness. When the worship of the golden calf took place, the nation was rejected and the breaking of the two tables of stone by Moses seemed an appropriate sequel to the rupture of the covenant which their idolatry had caused.

(Exodus 32:4,19). They were soon restored (Numbers 14). Afterwards, at the great outburst of unbelief in connection with the report of the spies, the adult generation that had come out of Egypt was doomed to perish in the wilderness and, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua, not one of them was permitted to enter the land of promise. Though not expressly stated, it seems probable that the suspension of circumcision was included in the punishment of their sins. They were not allowed to place on their children the sign and seal of a covenant which in spirit and reality they had broken.

Why did this circumcision not take place as soon as they entered the eastern part of Canaan? Until the Jordan was crossed they had not taken formal possession of their land. As soon as they had crossed the Jordan God's covenant with Abraham was accomplished and they, the believing people of God, had to place themselves once more in the position of God's covenant people, bound to serve Him with the whole heart (Genesis 17:9-11). After circumcision each man and boy bore a visible proof of his being one of God's children. They were now heirs of the covenant made with their fathers. The promise was theirs - *"I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed"* (Genesis 12:3).

Verse 9: *"The reproach of Egypt"* - 1) The reproach cast upon the Israelites by the Egyptians that they were never to enter the land which they said God had promised them and that they were rejected of God. 2) The reproach that they were a nation of slaves. This reproach was rolled away by the fact of their standing as freemen on the soil which had been promised their fathers. They were free in the wilderness but had not reached their own land.

Verse 10: The Passover - Circumcision and the Passover were the two sacraments of the old covenant. Some have supposed that the Passover as well as circumcision was suspended after the sentence of forty years' wandering, especially since no uncircumcised person could eat of the Passover (Exodus 12:48). The feast of Passover had been held at Sinai (Numbers 9:5), the second year after they left Egypt but no other reference to it occurs in the history. During this period the nation was untrue to the covenant through unbelief and disobedience.

This Passover was memorable. The celebration in Egypt must have come back to the minds of the older ones. They must have remembered how their fathers had sprinkled the blood on the door posts the night the first-born were slain in Egypt (those that were under twenty at the exodus were not under the sentence of exclusion from Canaan - Numbers 14:29). The time of year was right for the celebration - the lamb was taken on the tenth day and killed on the fourteenth (Exodus 12:3-6).

Note: We see the Living Bread under three aspects: 1) The Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7); 2) The bread of the land (John 6:48); 3) The manna (John 6:49-51; Revelation 2:17).

Verses 11,12: There was no break between the two. The bread began before the manna ceased (see 3:15). The one overlapped the other. The manna ceased only after the Israelites entered a cultivated region. The eastern portion of their inheritance, though well suited for pastoral purposes (1:12-14) was not a land of agricultural produce. Therefore the manna did not cease until the Israelites had crossed Jordan. God does not wish that there should be intervals or apparent desertion and the failure of supplies.

Verse 13: “Joshua was by Jericho” - Joshua must have been walking alone near Jericho - as near as it was safe for him to be. Probably he was wondering how this great walled city was to fall as there had been no divine communication as yet.

Verse 14: “Commander of the army of the Lord” - On entering on his mission Moses was favored with a divine manifestation (Exodus 3:1-6). Joshua has a similar experience. Who did Joshua see?

1. The Archangel Michael (Daniel 10:21; 12:1)? He was a created being, a messenger of Jehovah and thus does not fit to the description (see below).
2. The Son of God.
  - a. The messenger of the covenant (Malachi 3:1). He was the angel of the old covenant as well as the new. He appeared to Abraham (Genesis 18:1). He wrestled with Jacob (Genesis 32:24,30). He appeared to Moses (Exodus 3;2,4)
  - b. No created being may have worship paid to him; the Son of God commanded it (Revelation 19:10; 22:8,9). He appeared as a soldier with the drawn sword (Revelation 1:16; 19:15,21). The Angel of the Lord always appears in the character most adapted to the circumstances of His people. This was the assurance Joshua needed - One to fight with them and for them.
  - c. He is called Jehovah (6:2).

## B. The capture of Jericho - chapter 6

### Chapter 6

The city of Jericho lay in the pathway of the conquest. It had to be taken first. If it had remained unconquered it would have been a dangerous stronghold to have in the rear. It was an old city but is mentioned first in the Bible as the city to which the two spies were sent by Joshua from Shittim. The city had a king. It was surrounded by a wall. Before artillery was invented, a walled city was almost unconquerable except through starvation. The wall enclosed about seven acres. This was the inner city for the thick population roundabout; a fortress for refuge in case of attack. The walls which fell down flat have been located by archaeologists. The outer wall was six feet thick; the inner wall twelve feet thick. The two walls were fifteen feet apart and both about thirty feet high. They were built on faulty uneven foundations of brick four inches thick and one to two feet long, the spaces between filled with mud mortar which was not very substantial. The two walls were linked together by houses built across the top (2:15). The outer walls fell outward and down the hillside, dragging the inner wall and houses with it. Thus it was possible for the invaders to enter “*every man straight before him*” (6:20). It has been suggested that there are indications that the walls fell by an earthquake. The east and west walls were affected much more than the north and south walls. This would be the case if the tremors were east and west (which was the case in an earthquake in 1927 - see notes 3:13,16). Archeologists have dug up great layers of charcoal and ashes. Pottery and scarab evidence indicate that the conflagration had occurred in the 14th century B.C. Signs of the conflagration and destruction are very marked. The outer walls suffered most. Houses alongside the wall were burned to the ground.

Three miles beyond the mound, to the east, halfway to the Jordan is the site of Gilgal.

This was Joshua's headquarters for attack and the place to which the ark returned each day after compassing Jericho.

Jericho of the New Testament was about two miles to the south (Matthew 20:30; Mark 10:46; Luke 18:35). This city was destroyed by Vespasian.

The modern village of Jericho is about a mile to the southeast.

After Joshua's destruction of it, there is no indication of habitation again till about 900 B.C., the ruins of which are small (2 Kings 16:34).

Verse 1: This verse is parenthetical. It explains why the captain of the Lord's host appeared to Joshua. The inhabitants of Jericho, though in a state of alarm, were nevertheless fully on their guard against the children of Israel.

Verse 2: *"I have given Jericho into your hand."* - The sentence of death had been passed upon it forty years ago (Exodus 23:27,28), although they were then glorying in their strength. From God's viewpoint, the fact was already an established one. Note the wording "given." The city was not to be taken by might but received as a gift.

Verse 3: *"Thus shall you do for six days"* - We know that the city was provided with gates like other fortified cities. What was there to prevent the men of Jericho from sallying out at each of the gates, breaking up the line of Israel into separate sections, separating them from each other, and killing them? Who would have thought it strange if Joshua had been somewhat staggered by such directions and if, like Moses at the bush, had suggested all manner of objections and shown the greatest unwillingness to undertake the operation? The noble quality of his faith is shown in his raising no objection at all. He still had the attitude of 5:14, *"What does my Lord say to His servant?"*

Verses 6,7: Neither do the priests or the people appear to have made any objection on their part. The plan no doubt exposed them to two things which men do not like, ridicule and danger. God would protect them from the danger but who would shield them from the ridicule? Even if at the end of the seven days the promised result should take place, would it not be hard to make themselves for a whole week the sport of the men of Jericho (1 Corinthians 4:10)?

Verse 10: The procession was a silent one. Only the sound of the priests' horns were heard. This silence was one point of their obedience to the divine command.

Verse 11: *"So he caused the ark of the Lord to circle the city"* - It was actually the ark encompassing the city. The men of war accompanied it. The whole proceedings were under the direction of God and the results were the working of His hands.

Verse 15: It is probable that the last and longest walk was on the Sabbath. Not long before an Israelite had been stoned to death for gathering a few sticks on that day (Numbers 15:32-36). Now all the host of Israel walked around the walls of Jericho but did not violate the day. God's precept is the rule of the rightness of our actions.

Verse 18: They were clearly instructed not to take any of the things under the curse of God for themselves. With the cursed thing in their possession, they became accursed.

Verse 19: Since God was their fortress, Israel needed none; hence the city was



destroyed as a fortress. Only silver, gold, brass, and iron were spared; 1) to reveal whether there was a covetous spirit among them, and 2) because Jericho was the first fruits of their conquest and therefore belonged to God.

Verse 20: “*Every man straight before him*” - There was no need to surround the city nor to try to enter it through the greatest breach. The walls gave way entirely and the warriors were able to advance at once in the order of battle from the place in which they were at the moment when they raised the shout of triumph.

Verse 21: “*Devoted all in the city to destruction*” - Only two other cities were destroyed in this way - Ai and Hazor (8:28; 11:13). Jericho and Ai were the first two cities taken and it may have been necessary to set an example of severity in their case. It was also necessary to prevent the possibility of a fortress being again erected at Jericho because Gilgal was nearby. Gilgal was Joshua’s headquarters and the place where the ark and tabernacle, the women and children, and a great part of the flocks and herds were left.

We shall see that the policy of sparing the towns even when the inhabitants were destroyed proved to be a mistake. Joshua’s conquest was not a complete subjugation, and much remained to be done by each tribe in its own portion in order to get rid of the old inhabitants.

Verse 22: The preservation of Rahab’s house must have been a part of the miracle since it was upon the city wall.

Verse 23: The case of Rahab was one of those where whole families were saved on account of the faith of one member. Such was the case of Noah also. On the other hand there were cases like that of Korah in the wilderness and Achan near Jericho where the sin of the father involved the death of the whole family. “*Outside the camp*” - As Gentiles they were as yet unclean (Numbers 5:2; 31:19).

Verse 24: See note at beginning of this chapter.

Verse 25: “*To this day*” - There is no mention of Rahab’s marriage in the Old Testament. Noting Matthew 1:5 it is interesting to note that Salmon’s age at the time makes it highly probable that she married him. Some suppose that Salmon was one of the spies.

Verse 26: As the stones set up in the channel and on the banks of the river witnessed to future generation of God’s care for His own people, so the stones of Jericho cast down and lying in ruined heaps were designed to testify to the dread retribution that overtook the guilty (cf. 1 Kings 16:34).

#### Lessons to be learned from chapter 6:

1. When we have clear indications of the divine mind as to any course of action, we are to advance to it promptly and without fear, even though the means at our disposal appear insufficient and inadequate.
2. In many of God’s enterprises all that is done for a long time may appear to be labor lost and not to advance us by one step nearer the object in view.
3. The land was a gift to be received and not won by effort. God required of Israel

only to obey, wait and trust.

## C. The conquest of the south - chapters 7-10

### Chapter 7

The conquest of Canaan occupied seven years and during that whole time Israel lost but one battle. The 36 men lost at the first encounter with the men of Ai seem to be the only loss which their hosts sustained. The story of this defeat is told with great minuteness because it involved the lesson of the greatest value to Israel and to us. The fall of Jericho was followed by the fall of Israel.

Verse 1: *“Broke faith”* (committed a trespass) - Only two precepts had been issued at the taking of Jericho - one to spare Rahab and her family and the other to “keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction” (6:17,18). The command was distinct and understandable; but the latter precept was broken.

*“Achan the son of...”* (cf. Numbers 32:23; Ecclesiastes 12:14; Psalm 90:8; Amos 9:3; Hebrews 4:13). No one can hide from God in a crowd. We are before him “man by man” (7:14). He singles us out either as sinners or as recipients of His grace.

Verse 2: *“From Jericho to Ai”* - In recent years the remains of Ai have finally been located. It was an insignificant place but necessary to be taken in order to give Joshua command of the pass and enable him to reach the plateau above. While its inhabitants were few its location was formidable (8:25).

Verse 3: *“For they are few”* - Speaking from the human viewpoint there was considerable reason in what the spies said of Ai. The place was much smaller than Jericho and therefore would not be as difficult to capture. Jericho may have needed the entire host but it was thought that three thousand men would be enough for Ai. But this suggestion was based on the supposition that Jericho had been overthrown by the attack of the host of Israel. Actually the forces of Israel had nothing to do with it. They had walked around it and shouted - that was all. It had been taken by their Captain and given into their hands. They spoke as if the fact that they had conquered Jericho insured victory at Ai.

Verse 4: The report of the spies seems to have been acted upon at once. There seems to have been no waiting upon God. The same seems to have been the case when the Gibeonite embassy arrived (Joshua 9). The siege of Ai seems to have been undertaken relying upon human means alone. The Israelites were to discover how dependent they were upon divine help.

Verses 5,6: *“And the hearts of the people melted and became as water”* - The people had relied upon the hand of the Lord. Now, from Joshua downwards, every one felt that for some reason that support had been withdrawn (7:12).

Verse 7: Joshua seems to be speaking the language of unbelief here. Without faith, Joshua is but flesh and blood.

Verse 9: *“For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it”* - This was also the argument of Moses (Numbers 14:13-16; Deuteronomy 9:28; 32:26,27). The disgrace which the sin of man brings upon the cause of the Lord is real and terrible (2 Samuel 12:14; Ezekiel 36:23).

Verse 10: *“Get up!”* - Action was necessary. If defeat comes either to the individual or the cause, there is reason for it and this must be promptly searched out and with God’s aid discovered. The combat may be renewed only after error has been found and put away.

Verse 11: *“Israel”* - How could Achan’s sin extend to the whole people? This points out the organic unity of the Israelitish nation. If one member of the community violated the laws which God imposed on them, the whole body was liable for his sin until purged by a public act of restitution (Deuteronomy 21:1-8).

No one of us stands alone. Men cannot sin alone any more than perish alone (22:20). It is impossible to act without producing effects upon others. If Israel had realized how much the safety of the whole depended upon the obedience of each person, every individual would have watched his brethren as he watched himself, not for their sakes alone but for his own (Romans 14:7; 1 Corinthians 12:26; Hebrews 12:15).

*“Transgressed My covenant”* (also in 7:15) - Jericho, as the first city taken was to be made an example of, and therefore none of the spoil was to accrue to the Israelites, but the plunder of other cities was allowed to enrich them. Achan disregarded this understood agreement. He acted faithlessly. Israel stood in a peculiar relationship to Jehovah who promised to bless them if they adhered to the terms of the covenant, which required them to be obedient.

The accusation against Achan is cumulative: 1) broke a solemn vow, 2) had stolen what was not theirs, 3) had acted deceitfully, 4) had appropriated to themselves what belonged to God.

Verse 12: *“I will be with you no more, unless...”* - The Captain (5:14) was no longer with them because they had left Him.

Verse 19: *“My son”* - Joshua is grief stricken and deals gently with the young man. This brings to us the Joshua of the New Testament who is tender to sinners. It reminds us of the great High Priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities (Hebrews 4:15).

*“Give glory to the Lord God of Israel”* - No man as yet knew what Achan had done unless he had accomplices in hiding the loot. Joshua calls on him to confess and clear God of the charge of having forgotten His promise to His people. Achan’s confession was to show that God had dealt justly in permitting Israel to suffer defeat at the hands of the men of Ai. God was to be honored at this solemn time as the all-seeing God, the revealer of secrets.

Verses 20,21: Achan’s confession was complete although we do not know how sincere it was. *“I saw”* - Achan saw, coveted and took. The seeing was innocent; the dwelling on the object of sight with desire was sinful. *“Coveted”* is the same word as used in Genesis 3:6 - *“the tree was to be desired.”* Sin often begins with a look. Eve saw the fruit (Genesis 3:6). Lot saw the well watered plains (Genesis 13:10). Ahaz saw the altar and copied it (2 Kings 16:10).

*“A beautiful cloak from Shinar”* - Of all Asiatic nations the Babylonians were the most noted for weaving of cloth of divers colors. Gold threads were introduced into the woof of many hues.

Verse 23: *“Laid them down before the Lord”* - This shows the religious nature of the proceeding. God had directed the lot, the offender was discovered and now the things were solemnly laid out one by one before Him whose they are. This was done as an act of confession as well as an act of restitution.

Verse 24: *“His sons and daughters”* - It is probable that some of the members of his family were party to the crime. Probably with their help he dug a hole in the sand and hid the spoil. Both Achan and those who knew of the deed were silent until the finger of God pointed him out.

Verse 25: *“And all Israel stoned him with stones”* - What a contrast between Rahab’s house and Achan’s; the one saved and the other lost. The faith of the one and the disobedience of the other made the difference.

Verse 26: *“The Lord turned”* - It is not God, but we who turn. Our confession and restitution, by uniting our will with His, of necessity turn His wrath away. However confession and restitution are only possible through Christ.

Note: Consider what hinders the progress of God’s people most in any age, sinful outsiders or sinful insiders? Compare Joshua 1:5-7 with 7:5,11-13. Compare Exodus 3:8 with Numbers 12:1,15. Compare 1 Corinthians 5:9,10 with 5:11-13. Compare 1 Corinthians 5:10 with 2 Timothy 2:20,21.

## Chapter 8

Verse 1: *“Do not fear”* - Joshua was downcast at the former failure and needed this word of encouragement.

*“Take all the fighting men with you”* - Not because it was necessary for them all to go to take the city but because it was necessary to reassure the people whose hearts had “melted and became as water” (7:5). In days of despondency the compassionate God permits His people to rely on visible means of support.

Verse 2: *“Its spoil and its livestock you shall take as plunder for yourselves”* (also 8:27) - The rigid law prescribed at Jericho was not repeated. The people got the spoil of the city for themselves. Jericho had been an exception case; it was the first-fruits of the conquest and therefore holy to the Lord. So in the very place where Israel had met with such a defeat, the people took great spoil - especially of cattle, which they drove down to the camp at Gilgal. If Achan had but waited a little, he would have had his share of the spoil or Ai or some other place. He would have gotten legitimately what he had taken unlawfully.

Verse 3: *“So Joshua and all the fighting men arose”* - The activity of Joshua shows the way a commander should enter into the activities of his men: *“Joshua spent that night among the people”* (8:9); *“Joshua rose early in the morning”* (8:10); *“Joshua spent that night in the valley”* (8:13); *“Joshua did not draw back his hand with which he stretched out the javelin until he had devoted all the inhabitants of Ai to destruction”* (8:26). He was unsparing of himself and vigilant.

*“30,000 mighty men of valor”* - In verses 9 and 12 there is reference to the men that went to lie in ambush. Apparently there were only 5,000 of them. Thirty thousand men could hardly have been hidden without detection in the ravines back of Ai. This larger number is either an error or refers to the ambush plus the men who went up with the

group to fight the people of Ai.

Verses 4-29: The ambush was concealed behind the city while the main body of the troops attacked Ai from the east as before. When the men of Ai came out to attack, the Israelites seemed to be defeated as before (8:17-19). Joshua probably stood on some height and gave the signal when the men of Ai had been drawn far enough away from their city. Then the ambush rushed into the city and set it on fire. On seeing the flames, the men of Ai naturally turned back to see what could be done. It was then that the main body of Israel turned on them and they were trapped.

*“Not a man was left in Ai or Bethel”* (8:17) - On the capture of Ai the Bethelites rushed with all speed back to their own city. We read in 12:16 that Bethel was taken.

A terrible slaughter of the men of Ai took place. The people took the spoil for themselves. The king, instead of being slain with the sword, was hanged on a tree. What remained of the city was burned and it became a heap of ruins with a great heap of stones at its gate over the body of the dead king.

The effects of this victory on other nations? It terrorized them. It also brought two new dangers before Israel: 1) Of making a league with the inhabitants; and 2) Of having to meet a consolidation of forces.

Verse 30: There is a question as to whether or not this passage is in its proper chronological place.

1. The most natural place for this passage would be at the end of chapter 11 or chapter 12, after the conquest of the whole country and before its division among the tribes. How could Joshua have ventured to trust himself so far into the heart of a hostile country? Did he go through an unsubdued central Canaan to his desired place? Perhaps there is a campaign in which Joshua subdued the central part of the land - a campaign of which no record has been preserved. Aphek, Taanach, and Megiddo were all situated in the central part of the country; the fact that they were defeated is recorded, but there is no mention of any expedition against them.
2. Gerizim was not more than twenty miles from Ai. The Canaanites were terror-stricken at Joshua's successes. The Gibeonites were not disposed to offer any resistance or hinderance to his progress; on the contrary they hastened to form an alliance with him. The performance of these solemn rites by a people so clearly under the protection of the great Jehovah, was more likely to increase than lessen the awe felt by the surrounding tribes. The only difficulty is that the women and children are said to have gone thither (8:35) and it seems improbable that they would have been brought so far in an unsubdued country.

We can only leave the difficulty unsolved as one which a fuller knowledge of the facts would clear up at once.

*“Mount Ebal”* - The altar on Mount. Ebal is the fulfillment of God's command in Deuteronomy 27:2-8. Mount Ebal was right in the center of the land and here they were commanded to put the curse (Deuteronomy 11:29). Between it and Mount Gerizim stood the city of Shechem. “Ebal” means “stony” or “heap of barrenness.”

Joshua lost no time in obeying the injunctions (Deuteronomy 11:26-32; 27:2) and within two or three days after the fall of Ai - perhaps three weeks after the passage of

the Jordan the people were assembled in the valley of Shechem. This valley is one of the most beautiful in Palestine.

Verse 31: "*An altar*" - Joshua built not a fortress, but an altar. It would not have been surprising if he had taken Shechem and fortified it, thus raising a central fortress in the land. But he did not raise a monument of his victories but a register of God's law.

*"An altar of uncut stones"* - The altar, as commanded in Exodus 20:25 was of whole stones. The stones were undressed - no cutting or carving on them - they had been prepared and finished by God. Its simple structure showed that the Most High dwelt not in temples made with hands (Acts 7:48) - to show that all should be natural and spontaneous in the worship of God - to show that as little as possible should be introduced of human planning and devising - to set it in contrast to the ornamented altars and temples of the heathen about them. The altar, in its open position, demonstrated that the most fitting place for God's worship was not the secret places in the woods but the open air and full light of heaven, seeing that He is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

*"Burnt offerings...and sacrificed peace offerings"* - In the burnt offering, the whole victim was burned. This indicated the duty of God's people to present themselves without reserve. The peace offering was consumed only in part; a part was eaten by the offerers to testify that in it they had fellowship and communion with God.

Verse 32: "*Wrote on the stones*" - The law of the Lord and the altar of the Lord are not unrelated. The altar declares atonement for the sin of a broken law. The writing was upon the plaster of the stones as we read in Deuteronomy 27:2,4. Some say that the Ten Commandments were written on the plaster of the stones. Others say that the curses and blessings mentioned in Deuteronomy 27 and 28 were meant. The formal setting up of this memorial was intended to remind the Israelites of the conditions on which they held the land of Canaan.

Verses 34,35: "*He read all the words*" - The public reading of the law was a feature of Jewish gatherings when their faith had waxed cold and it needed revival (2 Kings 23:2,3; 2 Chronicles 24:20,31; Nehemiah 8:1-8). As Joshua solemnly read, whether the blessing or the curse, each item was responded to by the amens that came from the thousands of throats of the people.

## Chapter 9

They had gone back to the camp at Gilgal where the events of this chapter take place (9:6). Many commentators think that the Gilgal mentioned here is not the Gilgal referred to in Joshua 4:19. A second Gilgal is known to Jewish history (Deuteronomy 11:30) - the situation of which is clearly pointed out as being more central than the first camp on the west side of the Jordan. The Gilgal in 1 Samuel 13:4-12 seems to require a central position rather than a place near the fords of Jordan. The only argument against a second Gilgal is the improbability of there having been a removal of the camp without any mention by the historian. It is possible however that the second great place of encampment received the memorable name of the first because the Israelites were keenly aware of the fact that the "*reproach of Egypt*" (5:9) was forever rolled away.

Verse 1: "*In the hill country and in the lowland*" - The distance at which these Canaanites lived from the scene of the events had prevented them from

comprehending their astounding character so clearly as those who lived in the immediate neighborhood.

Verse 3: (see 9:24 - *“so we feared greatly for our lives”*) - They were greatly afraid because they believed that they were all under the condemnation of God and that the sentence of death was passed upon them. Sinners who believe, tremble. Even the devil believes and trembles (James 2:19).

*“Inhabitants of Gibeon”* - The Gibeonites were a branch of the Hivite race, inhabiting the town of Gibeon and some other towns in the great central plateau of the country. The word “inhabitants” here refers to a confederation of these towns and cities of which Gibeon was the head. Gibeon was a city of some importance (10:2) but we hear nothing of a king there.

Verse 7: *“Perhaps you live among us”* - The leaders of Israel seem at first to have been a little suspicious of their visitors. But their suspicions were allayed as they listened to their story, and saw the apparent evidence of their long journey.

*“How can we make a covenant with you?”* - This was strictly forbidden in Exodus 23:31-33; 34:12; Deuteronomy 7:2), in reference to neighboring nations on account of the polluting influence their example had exercised (Numbers 25:1-3) and was sure to exercise in the future (Judges 2 and following).

Verses 8-10: It is worthy of the craft of the Gibeonites that they evade the first question, and as it is of vital importance to the success of their mission, they throw their whole force upon the second. They took care to say nothing of the more recent successes of the Israelites. They confined themselves to the success *“beyond the Jordan.”*

Verse 14: *“The men took some of their provisions”* - The natural explanation would seem to be that the Israelites relied on the evidence of their senses instead of upon the counsel of God. They could see the condition of the garments, sacks, and wineskins of the Gibeonites. They tasted of their victuals to convince themselves of the truth of those statements of which the sight was insufficient.

*“But did not ask counsel from the Lord”* - All appeared so natural that the Israelites did not consult the Lord. They judged according to their own wisdom instead of asking God. Their path seemed clearly indicated; so they rushed into it without deliberation and prayer. God expects us to use the wisdom He has bestowed upon us, but not to rely upon it wholly. It must form only one element in the judgment reached (Jeremiah 10:23).

Verse 16: *“At the end of three days”* - The men were soon detected. Fear is a poor adviser. All it can do is plan for the next moment. The need of the moment seems so great to the fearful, that they do not consider the consequences. Faith, resting on eternal truth, acts for eternity.

Verse 18: *“Sworn to them by the Lord, God of Israel”* - The Israelites had sworn by the sacred name of Jehovah to spare the Gibeonites. It would have degraded the sacred name to disregard the oath. If they had been deceived, the fault was their own. The Jehovah by whom they had sworn had provided them with a way of detecting deceit had they chosen to use it. It was a good sign of their spirit that they were so jealous of the honor of their God and of the sanctity of their oath. They were constrained to abide

by their transaction.

Verse 19: “*We may not touch them*” - Because of the oath, the Gibeonites were not cut off like the rest of the Canaanites; but the greater danger was guarded against by their reduction to servitude. This position they retained; and in after years heavy disasters befell Israel because Saul, in his mad zeal, broke the solemn league and covenant into which Joshua and the princes had entered with them (2 Kings 21:2).

Verse 21: “*Cutters of wood and drawers of water*” - The Gibeonites had escaped death by a fraud. For that fraud they deserved punishment. Their lives were spared because of a solemn oath. They escaped destruction but they were condemned to occupy a place of servitude permanently (Deuteronomy 20:11). They appear to have assisted at the tabernacle worship since they were condemned to serve the congregation, not individual Israelites.

Verse 27: “*For the altar of the Lord*” - This shows that Solomon’s temple was not yet built. The ark of God and the tabernacle which contained it had several resting places before its final deposition in the temple. This gives us an idea of the time of writing.

## Chapter 10

Verse 1: “*Gibeon had made peace with Israel*” - Adoni-zedek and a small number with him undertook to chastise the Gibeonites who had refused to join the confederacy of the Canaanites and had basely surrendered to Joshua. No doubt they thought that by making a treaty with Joshua, the Gibeonites had strengthened his hands and weakened those of the other Canaanites. They had made resistance for the confederacy more difficult and therefore they needed to be chastised.

Verse 3: Kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon - The five little kingdoms embraced most of the territory afterwards known as the tribe of Judah, and they must have been far more than a match for Gibeon.

1. Adoni-zekek, king of Jerusalem - The king’s name means “Lord of Righteousness” and recalls the ancient glory of Melchizedek, the friend of Abraham (Genesis 14:18ff; John 3:23; Hebrews 5:6). Melchizedek means “King of Righteousness.” In substance the names are the same. It was a striking name for a ruler and it was remarkable that it should have been kept up so long although in the time of Adoni-zedek its significance may have been forgotten. Jerusalem was but five or six miles south of Gibeon. The other four capitals were farther off. The king of Jerusalem stood at the head of the confederacy. Jerusalem stood at the head of the league because of its central position and its almost impregnable location (15:63).
2. Hebron - Next in importance came Hebron. It was about eighteen miles south of Jerusalem and about 3,000 feet above the level of the Mediterranean. Hebron was memorable in Jewish history - Abraham pitched his tent here near the “*oaks of Mamre*” (Genesis 13:18; 18:1); this was the burying place of Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 23:19; 35:27); it was the inheritance of Caleb (15:13); David fixed his first capital here (2 Samuel 5:3,5). Its inhabitants were of gigantic stature (Numbers 13:33; Deuteronomy 1:28; 2:10,11; 9:2).
3. Jarmuth - This city is mentioned in 15:35 and Nehemiah 11:29. It was probably about six miles from Jerusalem. Nothing is known of its size and importance in the



time of Joshua.

4. Lachish - It was probably about fifteen miles south-west of Jerusalem. It is frequently mentioned in later history (2 Kings 14:19; 18:14,17; 19:8; 2 Chronicles 11:9).
5. Eglon - A little farther west from Jerusalem than Lachish. We have not means of ascertaining the size and importance of the town in the days of Joshua.

Verse 6: *“The men of Gibeon sent to Joshua”* - There is no reason to believe that the agreement between Joshua and the Gibeonites included an understanding of mutual assistance. However, the Gibeonites hoped for help from the Israelites.

Verse 8: *“Do not fear them”* - This was the key-note of Joshua’s career.

Verse 9: *“Having marched up all night”* - The night march covered about fifteen difficult miles. They came upon the sleeping host of the enemy suddenly before they had had time to prepare themselves for the fight.

Verse 11: *“The ascent of Beth-horon”* - They retreated by the way that goes up to Beth-horon and then fled down through a well-known pass to the bottom of the hills. The ascent was about ten miles. The descent was steep, dropping about seven hundred feet in two miles. Down this descent they fled, trying to reach their cities at the bottom of the hills. It was at this point that the storm burst upon them.

*“Large stones from heaven”* - No doubt the Israelites were exhausted with their night march. They seem to have been outstripped by the fleeing army. Thus they escaped the strategically aimed shower of hailstones (Exodus 9:18; Job 38:23,24). Probably as Joshua reached the head of the valley he saw the clouds below him - clouds from which God was punishing the fleeing army. This was proof both to the Israelites and their enemies that God was working - that victory was not owing to the power of man but the favor of God.

Verse 13: *“And the sun stood still”* - “Stood still” is a rendering of the original which carries the sense of how the verb “amad” is used elsewhere in the Old Testament. The passage cannot be proved or disproved as describing the sun remaining motionless but the day was prolonged to meet the need of the hour. What can be assumed is that the sun did not set until the people were avenged of their enemies. God was able to prolong the daylight until Israel had made an end of slaying their foes.

*“For about a whole day”* - This has been interpreted to mean that the sun remained in the heavens twelve hours longer than usual. The passage cannot be proved to have this meaning exact; but the day was prolonged to meet the need of the hour. Miracles in nature are special manifestations of the divine power which is equally present in the regular course of nature. God is as much working in the natural as in the miraculous event, though the miraculous impresses us more.

*“The Book of Jashar”* - From its name “Jashar” (“the upright”) we may believe it to have been a record of the memorable deeds of righteous men. It may have been poetical in form and this extract from it has the rhythmical structure which was the mark of Hebrew poetry. It is mentioned also in 2 Samuel 1:18. The origin and nature of this book can only be guessed at. It may have been a public record contributed to from time to time by various writers.

Verse 14: *“There has been no day like it”* - Such may be our testimony. Our day will be “light” as long as there is need. The Lord is our Light (Psalm 27:1,11).

Verses 15-27: Death of the enemy and the five kings.

Verses 31-39: No indication of time is given in the rest of this chapter. The campaign was probably an affair of some weeks, though none of the cities could have made a prolonged resistance. Joshua attacked the chief cities of the confederates and took them in succession. Nothing is said of his taking Jerusalem; in fact it appears from later history that the stronghold of Jerusalem on Mount Zion remained in Jebusite hands up to the time of David.

Verse 40: Many of the inhabitants were able to escape destruction but substantially Joshua was now in possession of the whole southern division of the land, from the Jordan on the east to the borders of the Philistines on the west, and from Gibeon on the north to the wilderness on the south. He did not, however, retain full possession; while he was occupied in other parts of the country the people returned and occupied their cities. The leniency of Joshua in not destroying the inhabitants proved the source of much future trouble.

#### D. The conquest of the north - chapter 11

### Chapter 11

Central and southern Palestine had already been conquered. Joshua had driven a wedge across the center of the land first. His strategy was good.

Verse 1: *“Jabin”* - The Hebrew meaning of the word is “intelligent.” Like the name Pharaoh in Egypt, it was the usual name for the king that reigned in Hazor (Judges 4:2,23,24). He was a powerful monarch and after the Israelitish invasion became the acknowledged head of the league that formed among the Canaanites against the Israelites. This Hazor was in Northern Palestine but two cities by that name are mentioned in the south too (15:23,25).

Verse 4: *“All their troops”* - The muster must have been a large one. Josephus says there were 300,000 footmen, 10,000 horsemen, and 20,000 chariots. It is doubtful whether these numbers can be relied upon. However, they give some perspective to the “all” indicated by the text.

Verse 5: *“Joined their forces and came and encamped together at the waters of Merom”* - Mermon, now called Huleh, is the little lake where the three streamlets that form the Jordan unite. Its name means “waters of height” - it is the highest of the inland lakes of Palestine. The Jordan runs through it. It varies in size in summer and winter. At times it is about seven miles long and at its greatest width six miles broad. To the north a large plain spreads itself out sufficient for the encampment of a great army.

Verse 6: *“Do not be afraid”* - The encouragement was necessary. The task before Joshua was harder than any that had yet befallen him. The enemy was far more numerous and better equipped.

*“Tomorrow at this time”* - As a rule the mills of God grind slowly but there are times when their speed is amazing. This promise was not made while Joshua was still at

Gilgal. We are not told how long Joshua had been on the march, but he was now near the enemy and it was the eve of the encounter.

*"You shall hamstring their horses"* - Why should Joshua have hamstrung the horses? By this method their usefulness to the enemy ceased; they would also not have been useful to the Israelites. Perhaps God ordered this so that they might not put their trust in chariots or in horses (Psalm 20:7; 147:10) - but in God alone (Deuteronomy 17:16).

Verse 7: *"Suddenly"* - While the enemy thought him to be miles away, he suddenly appeared at the head of his army and before they could set themselves in battle array the Israelites began the attack.

Verse 8: *"Chased them"* - The fleeing men sought their homes in three great streams. One stream went southwest (Misrephoth-main); another went in a northeasterly direction (Mizpeh); the third made for great Sidon in the distant north.

*"Great Sidon"* - This was an important city, the capital of Phoenicia (19:28). Joshua seems to have pursued this column of fugitives, passing over a path of forty miles until they took refuge within the walls of Sidon. He did not destroy the city but turned back and took Hazor (11:10).

Verse 12: *"Devoting them to destruction"* - It is true that Joshua destroyed the cities and those he found in them; but it would seem that many of them had previously retired for safety to the rocky fastnesses or caves in the vicinity of their homes, so that as soon as the conquest was over they emerged from their hiding places and reoccupied what was left of their houses and lands. This was according to the word of Moses (Deuteronomy 7:22).

Verse 18: *"A long time"* - The campaign in southern Israel lasted for weeks, perhaps even months; but the campaign in northern Palestine must have lasted longer. The host which gathered at the waters of Merom was destroyed but the task of capturing the many cities which dotted that region must have been a long one.

Verse 20: *"It was the Lord's doing to harden their hearts"* - We must realize that God loved these people as He loved the world. They were included in the propitiation of Christ. They might have been saved as Rahab was. It must be understood that their hearts became hardened by sinning against their light; in accordance with the great principle which God has established, that if a man resists his convictions of right he becomes more inveterate in his sinful ways. God is thus said to be doing what is done by the working out of the laws of the moral universe which He has constituted. It is clear that the Canaanites knew that God was with Israel. Rahab knew it (2:9-11; 9:9,10). There is no doubt but that the fame of God had gone forth throughout the land, and when the kings arrayed themselves against Israel they set themselves together against Jehovah.

Verse 21: *"Anakim"* - These Anakim were the men who had so terrified the ten spies (Numbers 13:33). It is worthy to remark that to the two fearless men whose faith did not fail them at the sight of the walled cities and of the giant inhabitants, was given the privilege of overcoming them and inheriting their land.

Verse 23: *"Took the whole land"* - Joshua broke down all resistance but before he completed the full conquest he had to provide for the settlement of the tribes in the territory he had seized. The complete extermination of the Canaanites formed no part

of his commission or his plan (Exodus 23:29,30; Deuteronomy 7:22). To have effected it would have been to throw the land out of cultivation and to expose its possessors to the usual inconveniences of depopulated districts. Their complete extermination was left to the tribes who took possession of their inheritances.

*“And the land had rest from war”* - The Canaanites were so thoroughly cowed in the spirit that they dared offer no further resistance to the Israelites in their task of portioning out the land.

E. The list of the kings conquered - chapter 12

### **Chapter 12**

Verse 1: *“Now these are the kings”* - There is now a complete description of the whole territory which had fallen into the hands of the Israelites. The border of the Israelitish possessions is more accurately defined in the succeeding chapters but in brief it was slip of territory not more than 180 miles in length by about 100 in breadth. Palestine has derived her title to fame from her indestructible national life. It was indestructible because it was built alone upon the foundations of the unity and fatherhood of God and because it alone came by revelation from God.

Verse 6: *“Moses the servant of the Lord”* - Moses gave the inheritance to the two and a half tribes who settled east of the Jordan. Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh were the first-born of their respective mothers.

Verse 7: *“The kings of the land”* - Here is a list of the kings whom Joshua had overcome on the western side of the Jordan. There was a large number of them (12:24). The territory was indeed small to be ruled over by such a large number of kings; such a divided territory could hardly have maintained itself in the face of the powerful monarchs on the east side of the Jordan. Probably the smaller kings were tributary to the more powerful who were the heads of confederacies.

Verse 9: The following list is that of cities that had kings - royal cities. The other cities must have been daughter cities or dependent cities. Gibeon, for instance, did not have a regal government.

## **II. The Division Of The Land Of Canaan - chapters 13-22**

This is usually regarded as the second part of the Book of Joshua; the first being devoted to the history of the conquest of Palestine while the second is engaged with the history of its division among the conquerors.

A. Territory assigned to Ruben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh - chapter 13

### **Chapter 13**

Verse 1: *“Now Joshua was old”* - Joshua was about ninety years of age when the conquest of Canaan was complete, but a very important part of his work had yet to be performed. He was bearing fruit even in old age.

*“There remains yet very much land to possess”* - There were two kinds of territory to be divided - conquered and unconquered.

Verse 2,3: “This is the land that yet remains” - A survey is given of the land not yet possessed.

*“The Philistines”* - The first section of land still unconquered was the land of the Philistines - the five lords of the Philistines dwelt in Gaza, Ashdod, Ascalon, Gath, and Ekron. The Philistines (Genesis 10:14; Deuteronomy 2:23; 1 Chronicles 1:12) are supposed to be of Egyptian origin. Their land and Geshuri and that of the Avites consisted mainly of a plain. It had rich soil. Its corn, vineyards, and oliveyards are mentioned in Scripture (Judges 15:5). In the time of famine the land of the Philistines was the hope of Palestine (2 Kings 8:2). It was a commercial country; a thoroughfare between Phoenicia and Syria on the north and Egypt and Arabia on the south. Geshuri lay between Philistia and the desert and the Avites were probably the remainder of the Avims from whom the Philistines conquered the land (Deuteronomy 2:23). These peoples troubled Israel for a long time. What Joshua had left undone Saul began but failed to achieve, and at last David accomplished it. The Geshurites were subdued with the Amalekites while he was dwelling in Ziklag as an ally of the Philistines (1 Samuel 27:8) and the Philistines themselves were brought into subjection and had to yield to Israel many of their cities (1 Samuel 7:14; 2 Samuel 8:1,12).

Verses 4-6: *“Sidonians”* - Another important section of the country unsubdued was the Phoenician territory - the land of the Sidonians. No doubt much of this district was recovered in the time of the Judges and still more in the time of David; but David made peace with the king of Tyre who still retained the strip of land which was to important commercially.

*“Allot the land to Israel”* - This was the method used to determine the inheritance of each tribe. The family to which the lot pointed as it came out of the urn to be given that parcel. The land was God’s to give. The manner of distribution assured that it would not be unequally distributed by human favoritism or by random chance, but by the disposition of the Lord. Consideration would be given for the size of the clans of Israel. Possession would be determined by the will of God. The instructions for distribution by lot were given to Moses (Numbers 26:52-56; 33:50-54; 34:1-15). The method was never used after the Holy Spirit came. The last recorded time is in Acts 1:26.

Verses 7,8: *“Which Moses gave them”* - Joshua was instructed to divide the whole land among his people. In this division he was called first to recognize what had already been done by Moses with the part of the country east of the Jordan. The allotment made there to Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh was still to hold good.

Verses 9-12: Here are given the general boundaries of the land given to these two and a half tribes. With regard to the district as a whole, the conquest under Moses was manifestly complete from the river Arnon on the south to the borders of the Geshurites and Maachathites on the north. The only part not subdued were the territories of these Geshurites and Maachathites. The Geshurites of verse 2 were in the southeast instead of the northeast. David subjugated these two groups in his great Syrian war (2 Samuel 8:3); but instead of expelling them David seems to have allowed them to remain in a tributary condition for Geshur had its king in the days of Absalom (2 Samuel 13:37). David had a family connection with the Maachathites (2 Samuel 3:3).

Verses 15-33: The individual allotment of the two and a half tribes. Reuben was the farthest south. Gad settled north of Reuben. The Moabites were on the south and east of him and greatly annoyed him. The Ammonites were to the east of them and

troubled them as Moab did Reuben. The half tribe of Manasseh had the kingdom of Og and the northern half of Gilead.

*“The tribe of Levi”* - No territory was allotted to the Levites corresponding to the other tribes (13:14,33). The arrangement for the Levites are fully detailed in chapters 20 and 21. It was not by oversight but deliberately that the country was divided without any section being reserved for them.

*“Balaam”* - In the book of Numbers, Balaam appears as a prophet inspired by God. In the book of Joshua he is only named as a common soothsayer (13:22). All spiritual gifts are worth only so long as they are well used. As they become degraded by evil they lose their divine character and become mere talents of cleverness and ability. It seems that Balaam, instead of returning to his own land, went to visit the Midianites whose elders had joined in the invitation given by Moab (Numbers 22:7) and persuaded them to entice the Israelites into idolatry and licentiousness (Numbers 25). Apparently the killing of Balaam took place in the days of Moses by the hands of the expedition sent by him to chastise the Midianites for drawing the Israelites into idolatry. The fact is probably noticed here because his death occurred at the place which had just been noted - the boundary line between Reuben and Gad. It was a fact ever to be remembered by Israel that the man who had been sent to curse was constrained to bless.

#### B. Territory assigned to Caleb and the tribe of Judah - chapters 14,15

### Chapter 14

Verses 1,2: It was in Gilgal (14:6) that the apportionment of Canaan took place. This was the place where the reproach of Egypt had been rolled away (5:9) and there the main camp stood (5:10). This was the place where the rewards of victory were meted out.

Verse 6: *“The people of Judah...and Caleb”* - The tribe of Judah came with Caleb when he preferred his request. The statement in 15:13 seems to imply that Caleb was not one of the tribe of Judah by birth but one of the mixed multitude that went up with the Israelites (Exodus 12:38) and acquired the rights of an Israelite later by circumcision. He is designated as *“Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kennizzite.”* It was not customary to distinguish Israelites in this way, but only those who had come among them from other tribes: *“Heber the Kenite”* (Judges 4;11,17); *“Uriah the Hittite”* (2 Samuel 11:6). Moreover Othniel, Caleb’s younger brother is called the son of Kenaz (15:17). The preponderance of opinion and evidence is in favor of the thought that Caleb’s family were originally outside the covenant but had become proselytes like Rahab, Ruth, and Heber. He was probably a descendant of Kenaz, a grandson of Esau (Genesis 36:11,15).

The name Caleb means “wholehearted.” In his character he was true to his name.

It is beautiful to see that there was no rivalry between Joshua and Caleb. As far as is known, he made no remonstrance when Joshua was called to succeed Moses, but he seems all through the wars to have yielded to him the most loyal and hearty submission. At this time he came to Joshua as the leader of the people, the one who was to decide the question which concerned him and his house.

There is some difficulty in adjusting the three passages in which the settlement of

Caleb is referred to. From this first passage we are led to think that it was before the tribe of Judah obtained its portion. Again, from 15:13 we might suppose that it was simultaneous with the rest of the tribe. From Judges 1:10 it might be thought that the subduing of the natives of Hebron took place not by Caleb alone but by the tribe of Judah and that it took place *“after the death of Joshua”* (Judges 1:1). Putting all these together, it would appear that Hebron was assigned to Caleb before the tribe of Judah was settled; that this allocation was ratified at the general settlement; that, as Caleb was a member of the tribe, his services against the Canaanites, and especially the Anakim, were ascribed to his tribe; and that the process of dispossessing the Canaanites went on for some time after the death of Joshua.

Verse 7: *“As it was in my heart”* - This was not a boast. Caleb had the courage of his convictions. He had both an honest heart and an honest tongue. The ten men who had been his companions for six weeks had spoken; but Caleb had the courage to speak out against their lack of faith *“as it was in his heart.”* We cannot know how strongly tempted he was not to speak what *“was in his heart.”*

Verse 10: *“Forty-five years”* - Caleb believed and therefore he was patient. Forty-five years was a long time to live on a promise, but he derived strength from unseen sources. *“Whoever believes will not be in haste”* (Isaiah 28:16).

## Chapter 15

We come now in earnest to the distribution of the land. The land assigned to each group was not the same in size and not of the same type. Among God's people there has always been a distribution of talents and gifts. We are separate and yet we are bound together. We are to minister mutually and be mutually interdependent. When people are not God-controlled, differences and variations breed rivalry and enmity. This is not God's plan for His people. Israel failed in maintaining this separate but interdependent life in Canaan.

It is difficult to tell what extent of land fell to each family. The portion of the land divided by Joshua has been computed at twenty-five million acres. Dividing this by 600,000, the probable number of families at the time of the settlement, we get forty-two acres as the average size of each property. Even allowing for unproductive portions, this was an ample provision.

Verses 1-12: Judah - Judah was first in war and march and was now the first to draw nigh. Here was a fulfillment of the prophecy of the pre-eminence of Judah uttered by Jacob (Genesis 49:8-12). It was originally due, no doubt, to the gentleness and justice of Judah above all his brethren except Joseph.

These verses record the boundaries of Judah (cf. Numbers 34:3-5). Judah was not planted in the heart of the country. That position was gained by Ephraim and Manasseh, the children of Joseph, while Judah obtained the southern section. This portion had belonged to the first batch of kings that Joshua subdued - the kings that came up to take vengeance on the Gibeonites (chapter 10). The territory of Judah was not pre-eminently fruitful; it was not equal in that respect of that of Ephraim and Manasseh. It has some fertile tracts but a considerable part of it was mountainous and barren. The cultivation of the vine was the feature of the tribe. Here more than elsewhere in Palestine are to be seen on the sides of the hills are the vineyards marked by their watchtowers and walls.

The position of Judah was peculiar in respect of the enemies by whom he was surrounded. On his east, close to the Dead Sea he was in contact with Moab, and on the south with Edom, the descendants of Esau. On the southwest were the Amalakitcs of the desert and on the west the Philistines. In the northern part was the great fortress of the Jebusites (15:8). Jerusalem was formerly called Jebus from the Jebusites who dwelt there (Judges 19:11; 1 Chronicles 11:4). The city lay on the borders of Judah and Benjamin.

Verses 16,17: Caleb promised that whoever captured Kiriath-sepher should be given his daughter in marriage (Judges 1:12,13). Othniel, who was either his brother or his brother's son, took the place and got Achsah in marriage. Othniel was a valiant and capable man as we learn from Judges 3:9.

#### Verses 20-62 - The inheritance of Judah

We find a list of no fewer than one hundred and fifteen cities which lay within the confines of the tribe of Judah. They fall into four divisions, four descriptions: 1) the south (verses 21-32); 2) the valley (verses 33-47); 3) the mountains (verses 48-60); and 4) the wilderness (verses 61,62).

1. The South (verses 21-32): Many of these places are called cities, but few of them were more than villages and hardly any of them were important enough to leave their mark in history. Beersheba (15:28) is associated with the name of Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 21:31-33). Keriath (15:25) we connect with Judas Iscariot, the Is-cariot of the New Testament being the equivalent of Ish-Keriath (a man of Keriath) of the Old.
2. The Valley (verses 33-47): Many of the places in this list became famous in history. Adullam and Keilah figured afterwards in David's outlaw history (15:35-44 - cf. 1 Samuel 22:1; 23:1). Ashdod and Ekron were two of the Philistine cities to which the ark was taken after the battle of Ebenezer and Aphek (1 Samuel 4;1; 5:1,10).
3. The Mountains (verses 48-60): These were mostly in the central part of the territory. This group included Hebron (15:54) of which we hear so much. Part of David's outlaw life was also spent here. It is remarkable that there is not mention of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). It probably had not yet attained to the rank of town. But its very omission may be regarded as a proof of the contemporaneous date of the book; for soon after Bethlehem was a well-known place (Ruth 1-4).
4. The Wilderness (verses 61,62): Only six cities are enumerated in the wilderness, so that its population must have been very small. Of those mentioned some are wholly unknown. The most interesting of the six is Engedi (15:62). It is noted as one of the hiding places of David; Saul pursued him to it and it was there that David spared his life when he found him in the cave (1 Samuel 24). This region extended between the Dead Sea and the mountains of Hebron. It is the scene of the preaching of John the Baptist at least at the beginning (Matthew 3:1); he removed to a better watered region when it became necessary to administer baptism. There is some reason to believe also that this was the scene of our Lord's temptation (Matthew 4:1) more especially because Mark records, "The Spirit immediately drove Him out into the wilderness" (Mark 1:12).

Verse 63: "*The people of Judah could not drive out*" - The Jebusite fortress was on the very edge of the northern boundary of Judah. Joshua omitted to take possession of



this stronghold after the battle of Bethhoron. The stream of pursuit had gone westward and the opportunity of taking Jerusalem has been lost. The Jebusites recovered their spirits after the defeat and were able to stronghold. For many a long year thereafter they defied the tribe of Judah. While the fortress was held by the Jebusite, Jew and Jebusite dwelt together in the city. The Jebusites were not completely subdued till the days of David (2 Samuel 5:6,7).

### C. Territory assigned to Ephraim and the half tribe of Manasseh - chapters 16,17

#### **Chapter 16**

Next to Judah, the most important tribe was Joseph; that is, the double tribe to which his two sons gave names, Ephraim and Manasseh. In acknowledgment of the service rendered by Joseph to the family, by keeping them alive in the famine, it was ordained by Jacob that his two sons should rank with their uncles as founders of the tribes (Genesis 48:5). It was also prophetically ordained by Jacob that Ephraim, the younger son, should take rank before Manasseh (Genesis 48:19). The privilege of the double portion, however, remained to Manasseh as the elder son. Hence he had a portion in the western section as well as in the eastern section. But Ephraim was otherwise the more important tribe; and when the separation of the two kingdoms took place, Ephraim often gave his name to the larger division.

Verse 1: *"The allotment of the people of Joseph"* - The lot of Joseph in western Palestine was in many respects the most desirable of any. It was a fertile and beautiful district. It included the valley of Shechem, the first place of Abraham's sojourn and is considered by some to be the most beautiful spot in Palestine. Samaria, which was made the capital of the northern kingdom later, was at the head of another beautiful valley (Isaiah 28:1) and was famous for its beauty.

Verse 10: *"They did not drive out the Canaanites"* - On the other hand this portion of the country labored under the disadvantage of not having been well cleared of its original inhabitants. The men of Ephraim did not exert themselves as much as the men of Judah. This is apparent from the present verse and also from the answer of Joshua to the request of Ephraim for more land (17:13-18). In regard to what is said of Judah in 15:63, it seems that they were unable to drive out the Jebusites from their stronghold and no mention is made of tribute. Here the Ephraimites seem deliberately to have preferred the easier task of reducing the Canaanites to tribute to the sterner and more difficult task of destroying them utterly.

#### **Chapter 17**

In the definition of boundaries we have first a notice applicable to Joseph as a whole, then specifications applicable to Ephraim and Manasseh respectively. We have no list of towns for Ephraim and Manasseh such as we have for the tribe of Judah.

Verse 3: A petition was presented by the five daughters of Zelophehad, a member of the tribe of Manasseh, for an inheritance in their tribe. Their father had no son, so that the family was represented wholly by daughters. No fewer than four times is this incident referred to and the names of the five daughters given in full (Numbers 26:33; 27:1-11; 36:11,12; Joshua 17:3). The inheritance here described as given to them was so given on condition of their marrying within the limits of their own tribe. The five sisters had met this condition and married their cousins. Thus the name of Zelophehad, and the portion of land belonging to him, was not blotted out from the

memory of his descendants.

Verse 14: *“Then the people of Joseph spoke to Joshua, saying...”* - Undoubtedly these sons of Joseph occupied a position which gave them opportunities of benefiting their country; but with the exception of the splendid exploit of Gideon, a man of Manasseh, and his little band, we hear little in the history that redounded to the credit of Joseph’s descendants. The attitude of the children of Joseph throughout the history of the twelve tribes is in precise accordance with the hint given here. They were proud of their numerical preponderance over the remaining tribes. At the census described in Numbers 1:19, the tribe of Joseph outnumbered every tribe but Judah. At the census in the plains of Moab (Numbers 26:2) the tribe of Joseph outnumbered them all, though the relative proportions of Ephraim and Manasseh were altered, the latter being now considerably the larger of the two tribes.

Part of their complaint was no doubt caused by the fact that Joshua as one of them ought to have taken more care of the interests of his own tribe. But actually, Joseph had two lots and Manasseh had two portions. Joshua, the true servant of God was above such petty considerations. It may be, too, that Ephraim was grumbling because his brother Manasseh had two portions to his one.

Verses 15-18: Joshua dealt very wisely and fearlessly with the tribe of Ephraim though it was his own tribe. He replied that if they were as large as they boasted they were, they could do two things: go to the vast forest of central Palestine to clear them and make room for settlements; and attack and drive out the Canaanites which were in possession of a large portion of their lot. His reply was, *“Don’t complain, but act.”*

#### D. Territory assigned to Benjamin - chapter 18

### **Chapter 18**

Three of the four tribes that used to surround the tabernacle in the wilderness were now broken and diminished by the removal of those tribes to their respective possessions - Judah (East: Numbers 2:3,5,7,9); Reuben (South: Numbers 2:10,12,14,16); and Ephraim (West: Numbers 2:18,20,22,24). Only Dan (North: Numbers 2:25,27,29,31) remained entire; it was therefore time to remove the tabernacle itself into a city.

Before the land was distributed to the other seven tribes two things took place. First a place had to be found as the center of religious life; next, the tabernacle had to be erected in that place.

Verse 1: *“Then the whole congregation”* - This does not necessarily mean the whole community, but only selected representatives not only of the part that had been engaged in warfare but also of the rest of the nation.

Shiloh - In Deuteronomy 12:5,11,14 we find God prescribing that only in a place chosen by Himself shall the public worship of the congregation be paid to Him. The males were to go there three times a year. Such a regulation tended to keep alive national feeling among the Israelites. A feeling of unity was fostered by this observance (Hebrews 10:25). Why Shechem which had already been consecrated to God was not chosen, we do not know; but certainly Joshua sought divine guidance in this choice. Its locality is carefully noted in Judges 21:19. It was in a central location, five hours south of Shechem and eight hours north of Jerusalem. The name appears

to signify “rest” - and was an appropriate name to be given to the visible symbol from warfare which Joshua had obtained for Israel.

From the days of Joshua, all through the period of the Judges, and on to the last days of Eli the high priest, Shiloh continued to be the abode of the tabernacle and the great national sanctuary of Israel. It was situated half-way between Bethel and Shechem in the tribe of Ephraim. It was not difficult of access for the eastern tribes. Here for many generations the annual assemblies of the nation took place (I Samuel 1;1,3; 4:4,12,13,17). Here came Hannah from her home in Mount Ephraim to pray for a son; and here little Samuel was lent to the Lord. Through that opening in the mountains, Eli saw the ark carried by the rash hands of his sons into the battle with the Philistines, and there he sat on his stool watching for the messenger that was to bring tidings of the battle. After the ark was taken by the Philistines, the city that had grown up around the tabernacle appears to have been taken and sacked and the inhabitants massacred (Psalm 78:60-64). We hear of it in later history as the abode of Ahijah the prophet (1 Kings 11:29). It then fell into utter neglect and even in the days of Jeremiah it seems to have been a byword (Jeremiah 7:12,14; 26:6,9).

Verse 3: *“How long will you put off going in to take possession of the land?”* - It seems that many of the people would have been content to go on carelessly as they had been doing in the desert, in a sort of a confused jumble, foraging here and there. Their listlessness was provoking to Joshua. They knew that the divine plan was quite different and that each tribe was to have a territory of its own. But there were no steps being taken toward that end. They were content as they were.

Verse 4: *“Three men from each tribe”* - Three men were chosen from each of the seven tribes that had not as yet settled. They were to go through and make a survey of the land. The Israelites had inspired quite sufficient awe into the inhabitants of the land to make such a general survey by no means a difficult task.

Verses 5,6: Judah and Joseph were not to be disturbed in the settlements that had already been given them; but the men were to divide the rest of the country into seven parts and it was to be determined by lot to which tribe each part belonged.

When portions were allotted to Judah and Ephraim, a space was allowed between them, so that the northern border of Judah was at some distance from the southern border of Ephraim. As Judah and Ephraim were the two leading tribes, and in some respect rivals, the benefit of this intervening space between them is apparent. It was this intervening space that constituted the inheritance of the tribe of Benjamin.

Verse 9: *“By towns”* - It was evidently not a land survey but a division made by towns. These towns had been taken and destroyed by Joshua and now it was the intention of the Israelites to be guided by the ancient political system of the country to occupy those towns and to cultivate the adjacent land. Each town had a certain portion of land connected with it and the land always went with the town. Thus it was not so much the area of the land as the size and importance of its towns that was to be the leading principle of division.

*“Then they came to Joshua”* - The unsubdued territory was found to be too small for the wants of seven tribes, while that apportioned to Judah was seen to be too large (in proportion). To remedy this difficulty a place was found for Benjamin between Judah and Ephraim and the portion of Simeon was taken out of the southern portion of Judah; both Judah and Ephraim had to give up some towns to Dan.

Verses 11-28: “*The lot of the tribe of the people of Benjamin*” - Lying as their inheritance did between that of Ephraim and Judah, the chief places of note on their border have been already mentioned either in chapters 15 or 16. For the most part this territory consisted of deep ravines running from west to east, from the central table-land down to the valley of the Jordan, with mountains between. Only by narrow passes along deep torrent beds could access be obtained to this mountainous region. Many of its cities were perched high in the mountains as is shown by the commonness of the names Geba or Gaba (18:24); Gibeon (18:25); Gibeah (18:28) all of which signify “hill” while Ramah (18:25) is a “high place,” and Mizpeh (18:26) a “tower.”

Benjamin was counted the least of the tribes (1 Samuel 9:21) and it was sometimes known as “*Benjamin, the least of them*” (Psalm 68:27). Yet it was strong enough on one occasion to set at defiance for a time the combined forces of the other tribes (Judges 20:12-14). It was distinguished for the singular skill of its slingers; seven hundred who were left-handed (Judges 3:15; 20:16). The character of this territory, abounding in rocky mountains and probably in game for the capture of which the sling was adapted, might in some degree account for this peculiarity. Many famous battles were fought on the soil of Benjamin; Ai, Gibeon - both under Joshua; Jonathan’s battle with the Philistines (1 Samuel 14); and the duel at Gibeon between twelve men of Saul and twelve of David (2 Samuel 2:15,16). Even in New Testament times the influence of Benjamin remained for the name Saul, the king whom Benjamin gave to the nation, was preserved in Hebrew families (Acts 13:21; Philippians 3:5).

The cities of Benjamin included several of the most famous. Jericho (18:21) - The rebuilding of this city (6:26) as a fortified place was forbidden, but the district was inhabited to a degree. Bethel (18:22) - This was already a famous city in history, but after the separation of the kingdom, it was taken by Jeroboam and made the shrine of calf worship (Genesis 28:18,19; 35:14,15; 1 Samuel 7:16; 1 Kings 12:28,29; 2 Kings 17:27,28). Gibeon (18:25) - This was the capital of the Gibeonites and afterwards a shrine frequented by Solomon (1 Kings 3:5). Ramah (18:25) - This later became the dwelling place of Samuel (1 Samuel 7:17). Mizpeh (18:26) - This was one of the three places where Samuel judged Israel (1 Samuel 7:16). The tribes also gathered here because it seems that the tabernacle had been moved here (Judges 20:1,3; 21:1-8). This was also the seat of Gedaliah’s administration and of the tragedy of his assassination (2 Kings 25:23-25; Jeremiah 40:10-13; 51). Jerusalem (18:28) - It was locally within the inheritance of Benjamin but it was practically occupied by the men of Judah (15:63). Gilbeath or Gibeah (18:28) - This was where Saul had his palace (1 Samuel 10:26).

E. Territory assigned to Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali and Dan - chapter 19

## **Chapter 19**

Verses 1-9: Simeon was the second of the seven to draw a lot. At the last census (Numbers 26:14) Simeon was the smallest of the tribes of Israel. This was a fulfillment of the prophecy of Jacob (Genesis 49:7) and possibly a result of the command given in Numbers 25:5 since the Simeonites were the chief offenders on that occasion (Numbers 25:14; 1 Chronicles 4:27). According to verse 9 the first allotment to Judah was found to be too large - that is, larger than that tribe required - so Simeon’s portion was taken out of it. Many of Simeon’s cities are contained in Judah’s list. Judah apparently willingly gave up a portion of his territory. Of the later history of the children of Simeon we find a little (Judges 1:3; 1 Chronicles 4:39-42). While the tribe seems to have been scattered, the name of its founder survived and both as Simeon and Simon

it was crowned with honor.

Verses 10-16: The boundaries of the tribe of Zebulun are given with much precision; but most of the names are now unknown. Bethlehem in verse 15 is a very small village and is not to be confused with the Bethlehem of Judah. It is strange that there is no mention here of in any other part of the Old Testament of the most important place in the tribe - Nazareth, the early residence of our Lord. There is every indication to believe that it was a very ancient place.

Verses 17-23: Issachar occupied an interesting and important site. Jezreel (19:18) the first name in the definition of its boundaries, is also the most famous. It was located on a lofty height and gave name to the whole valley around. Here Ahab had his palace in the days of Elijah. By its association with the worship of Baal, Jezreel got a bad reputation. Shumen (19:18) was the residence of the woman whose son Elisha restored to life (2 Kings 4:8).

Verses 24-31: The territory of Asher embraced the whole Phoenician strip. This long but narrow strip was between Naphtali and the sea. It was described prophetically both by Jacob and Moses (Genesis 49:20; Deuteronomy 33:24,25). Ebron (19:28) is not the same as the Hebron in Judah. Sidon the Great (19:28) as well as Tyre remained unsubdued although assigned by Joshua to Asher.

Verses 32-39: Naphtali was adjacent to Asher. There was a large mountain district known as the mountain district known as the mountain region of Naphtali (20:7). Some of the mountains rose to the height of more than three thousand feet. From this tribe came the leader Barak (Judges 4:6). Naphtali sent a goodly number of warriors to welcome David as the king over Israel (1 Chronicles 12:34). The Jordan and lakes of Merom and Galilee were its eastern border. It is in the New Testament that this tribe enjoyed its greatest distinction, the lake of Galilee and the towns on its banks being conspicuous in Gospel history. The scene of the greater part of our Lord's teaching and miracles was divided among these four northern tribes: Issachar, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali. The majority of places mentioned in the Gospels were within the borders of Zebulun, but our Lord penetrated as far as the coast to Caesarea Philippi (Matthew 16:13) in the extreme north of Palestine, so He must have preached also in the cities of Naphtali. The contrast between their early significance and later glory is well brought out in Isaiah 9:1,2.

Verses 40-48: Dan was the last tribe whose lot was drawn. This portion was hemmed in between Judah on the one hand and the Philistines on the other; and the Philistines were anything but comfortable neighbors. The best part of the level land was no doubt in their hands, and Dan was limited to what lay at the base of the mountains (Judges 1:34,35). Very early, therefore, in the history a colony of Dan went out in search of further possessions and having dispossessed some Sidonians at Laish in the extreme north, gave their name to that city (Judges 18:1,2,27-29). Proverbially this city denoted the most northerly point in the country as Beersheba, in like manner, denoted the most southerly. We read little of Dan in the after history of Israel. Samson is the only hero that this tribe ever produced and his exploits were limited to a very narrow area, and his influence apparently to his own tribe.

Verses 49,50: The division of the country was now completed, save that one individual was still unprovided for. And that was Joshua himself. He did not receive his inheritance until after all the other people had received their possessions. He was first in service, last in reward. He who is rightly devoted to duty will not seek for his reward

before his task is completed. He was the ruler of his people, yet he took no special honors. He had led them to victory yet he received no exceptional reward. He asked for a city but within the scope of the law of the inheritance; he asked for a city within the limits of his own tribe. This place was so obscure that no trace of it can be found today; but it is described in Judges 2:9. He showed himself the worthy successor of Moses, who had never hinted at any distinction for his family or any possession in the country beyond what might be given to the ordinary Levite.

Verse 51: The lots were drawn under divine sanction. We hear of no murmurings or disputings afterwards. However much the Israelites may have quarreled among themselves, there is not a hint of dissatisfaction with the final distribution of territory.

#### F. The appointment of six cities of refuge - chapter 20

### **Chapter 20**

There were six Levitical cities specially chosen for refuge to the manslayer who had killed any person unwittingly and unawares. A prominent place was assigned to them in the Mosaic legislation (Exodus 20-23; Numbers 35:9-34; Deuteronomy 4:41-43; 19:1-13; Joshua 20:2,7,9). The cities were conveniently dispersed over the country so as to be accessible to the people in all sections. There were three on each side of the Jordan. On the west of the Jordan were Kedesh in Galilee (Naphtali) in the northern part (1 Chronicles 6:76); Shechem in Mt. Ephraim in the central part (Joshua 21:21; 1 Chronicles 6:67; 2 Chronicles 10:1); Hebron in Judah in the south (Joshua 21:13; 2 Samuel 5:5; 1 Chronicles 6:55; 29:27; 2 Chronicles 11:10). On the east side of the Jordan there were Bezer in Reuben in the south (Deuteronomy 4:43; Joshua 20:8; 21:36); Ramoth-Gilead in Gad in the central part (Deuteronomy 4:43; Joshua 21:38; 1 Kings 22:3); Golan in the half tribe of Manasseh in the north (Deuteronomy 4:43; Joshua 21:27; 1 Chronicles 6:71).

They were all Levites' cities, which put an honor on God's tribe making them judges in those cases wherein divine providence was concerned. To any of these cities the manslayer might flee from the next of kin. A man might in one half day reach some one of these cities from any corner of the country (Deuteronomy 19:6). The roads were kept in good repair, clearly written directions at the crossways indicated the route; and according to Jewish tradition, runners learned in the law were stationed at various stages to direct and help the fugitive. The cities were on hills, to be seen afar off, thus both to direct and encourage the distressed man making the journey.

It was for the interest of the land that the blood of an innocent person, whose hand only was guilty, but not his heart, should not be shed even by the avenger of blood. No man could be sure but that some time it might be his own case. Once inside the city walls, the manslayer waited at the entering of the gate of the city till he had stated his case to the elders who had the right of admitting him provisionally into the city. On the appearance of the avenger of blood, the cause seems to have finally decided and if it were clearly shown in front of the assembled people that there was not animosity in the blow which caused death the manslayer was permitted to remain there until the death of the high priest then in office (20:6). During this time he was free from the avenger of blood as long as he stayed within the city; if he wandered out, he was at the mercy of the avenger.

The stranger as well as the Israelite had the same right to the benefits of these cities of refuge.

Besides all these, the horns of the altar, wherever it was, were a refuge to those who took hold on them, if the crime were such as the sanctuary allowed. A willful murderer could be taken from God's altar and put to death (Exodus 21:14). The altar was used for this purpose (1 Kings 1:50-53; 2:28,31,34).

The first thing to note in reference to these cities is that God considers human life precious. God wished to impress on His people that to put an end to a man's life under any circumstances was a serious thing. Man is something higher than the beasts that perish (Genesis 9:6).

Second, the feeling was deeply rooted in the Hebrew mind that the nearest of kin was the guardian of his brother's life. While this kinsman might be hasty and unjust, still he had a responsibility toward his brother. The object of this law was to put a check upon a hasty spirit of vengeance which would inflict injustice upon a supposed criminal. When poverty forced a man to dispose of his property it was the nearest of kin that was bound to intervene and redeem the property. The law served as a check to the cold spirit that is ready to ask, "*Am I my brother's keeper?*" (Genesis 4:9). The avenging of blood was regarded as one of the duties that devolved upon members of a family (Exodus 21:12,23-25; Leviticus 24:19,20; Deuteronomy 19:21).

In the New Testament times committing the avenging blood to the nearest of kin seems to have fallen into abeyance. However, our Lord gave a higher law to govern those in the church age (Matthew 5:38,39; Romans 12:19,20).

The typical teaching here is worth pointing out although it is not as full as is supposed by some. The safety that was found in the refuge corresponds to the safety found in Christ (Hebrews 6:18-20); but it cannot be pressed too far. The benefit of the refuge was only for unintentional offences; the salvation of Christ is for all. What Christ saves from is not our misfortune, but our guilt. The protection of the city was needed only until the death of the high priest; the protection of Christ is permanent and is needed continually. Jesus was so named because He saves His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21) not merely from the penalty but from the sins themselves. The final benefit of Christ is the blessing of transformation - it is the acquisition of the Christlike spirit. All types of this salvation are at best weak and incomplete in portraying it.

#### G. The assignment of forty-eight cities to Levi - chapter 21

### **Chapter 21**

It is suitable to briefly note the history of the Levites and the relation they stood in to the rest of the tribes. In the days of the patriarchs and during the years in Egypt there were no official priests. Each head of the house discharged the duties of the priesthood in patriarchal times, and a similar arrangement prevailed during the residence in Egypt. Later it pleased God to select a portion of the nation specially for His service. The first intimation of this was given when the firstborn of the Egyptians was slain (Exodus 13:2,12-15). In token of His mercy in sparing Israel on that night, all the firstborn of Israel, both man and beast, were specially consecrated to the Lord. The animals were to be offered in sacrifice except when not suited for sacrifice; the latter were to be redeemed by the sacrifice of another animal. Afterwards a similar arrangement was made with reference to the firstborn of men, the tribe of Levi being substituted for them (Numbers 3:12,13,43,44-51).

The first honor conferred on Levi in connection with religious service was the

appointment of Aaron and his sons to the special service of the priesthood (Exodus 28:1,2; Numbers 18:1,2). This did not necessarily involve any special spiritual distinction for the whole tribe of which Aaron was a member nor was that distinction conferred at that time. It was after the affair of the golden calf that the tribe of Levi received this honor. When Moses called for all who were on the Lord's side to come to him "*And all the sons of Levi gathered around him*" (Exodus 32:26). This seems to imply that that tribe alone held itself aloof from the idolatry into which Aaron had been drawn. It was in connection with this high act of service that Levi was selected as the sacred tribe and in due time formally substituted for the firstborn in every family (Numbers 3:12; 8:6; 18:2). From this time the tribe of Levi stood to God in a relation of peculiar honor and sacredness and had duties assigned to them in keeping with this position and calling.

The tribe of Levi consisted of three main branches corresponding to Levi's three sons - Kohath, Gershon, and Merari. The Kohathites were not the oldest (Numbers 3:17) but were the most distinguished. Moses and Aaron were of that branch. As Levites the Kohathites had charge of the ark and its sacred furniture guarding it and carrying it from place to place during the journeys of the wilderness. The Gershonites had charge of the tabernacle with its cords, curtains, and coverings. The sons of Merari had charge of the more solid parts of the tabernacle. Korah, the leader of the rebellion against Moses and Aaron was, like them, of the family of Kohath and the object of his rebellion was to punish what he considered the presumption of the two brothers in giving Aaron the special honors of the priesthood which in former days had belonged alike to all the congregation (Numbers 16:3).

Many of the duties of the Levites as detailed in the Pentateuch were duties for the wilderness. After the settlement in Canaan, and the establishment of the tabernacle at Shiloh these duties would undergo a change. The Levites were not all needed to be about the tabernacle. The Gibeonites had been retained to do the more laborious part of the work at Shiloh. So it was desirable that the Levites be dispersed over the whole country. Since their cities were to be assigned them within the limits of the other tribes, it was impossible to apportion them until the other tribes had been provided for. And so at this time the heads of the Levites came to Eleazer (21:1) the priest and to Joshua. Warned by his neglect in the case of the Gibeonites, Joshua never again appears to have neglected to have recourse high priest that he might ask counsel to God for him as had been prescribed in Numbers 27:21. As in the distribution of the land among the tribes, so in the division of the cities (21:4) among the tribe of Levi the whole matter as referred to the judgment of God.

At the divine command (Numbers 35:1-4), forty-eight cities were given to the Levites (21:41) with one thousand cubits of pasture land measured outwards from the city walls. There they dwelt when not required for temple service or when they were incapacitated by age (Numbers 8:23-26) from attending on their sacred office. The teaching of the law was one of the special tasks of the Levites and they appear to have traveled through their apportioned districts in this work (Deuteronomy 33:10). There is a question as to how many of these forty-eight cities were actually occupied by the Levites. Few of the cities allotted to them were free of Canaanites at the time. Because of this it seems that in the early period of the Judges there were Levites wandering here and there seeking for a settlement and glad of any occupation they could find (Judges 17:9; 19:1). The cities given to the Levites even when cleared of Canaanites were not possessed by Levites alone. Take Hebron for instance. Hebron was a Levitical city, a city of priests, a city of refuge; they gave to the Kohathites the city with the suburbs roundabout but "*the fields of the city and its villages had been*



*given to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as his possession” (21:11,12).* Apparently the Levites had the pasture land where cattle were kept to supply them with food. But beyond this the Levites were not entangled with the business of farming. They were left free for more spiritual service.

The Kohathites had no fewer than thirteen cities in the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Simeon and ten more in Ephraim, Dan, and Manasseh. The Gershonites were placed in cities in eastern Manasseh, Issachar, Asher, and Naphtali. The Merarites were in Zebulun and the transjordanic tribes of Gad and Reuben.

Verses 43-45: Three gifts are specified which God bestowed on Israel: 1) He gave them the land which He had sworn to give unto their fathers, and they possessed it; 2) He gave them rest round about, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers; and 3) He gave them victory over all their enemies.

It has been objected that Israel did not really obtain these three gifts. This is stated because of the fact that their enemies were never driven out, etc. In answer to this objection it is to be remarked that God had never promised to give the people full possession of the land save through their own exertions made in dependence on Him. Their possessions were not to fall into their hands as the manna fell in the wilderness. The seven nations were not to rush from them the moment they crossed the Jordan. Under Joshua the confederacies of the Canaanites were broken and to a certain extent their lands set free. But beyond this there was to be a further clearing out. To each tribe was given the task of clearing out Canaanites who still lived within the borders of their inheritance. The fact that Canaanites remained to be a thorn in the side of the Israelites was Israel's fault, not God's. Though you were to give a lazy farmer the finest farm in the country, you could not make him prosperous if he neglected his fields and idled away the time that should be spent in labor. Certainly God had furnished His people the materials for a happy and prosperous life if only they had used them aright.

God is faithful and Joshua testified to the fact after the distribution of the land (Joshua 23:14; Mark 13:31). Whenever the promises of God seem to fail the fault is not His but ours (Psalm 77:7-11).

H. Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh return to their homes east of the Jordan - chapter 22

## **Chapter 22**

Verses 1,2: Their three-fold fidelity is commended to Moses, to Joshua, and to God. The forty-thousand warriors (4:12,13) had fulfilled their promise and now received public thanks for it.

Verses 3-6: They are dismissed from their military service with honor. Joshua's first counsel to them was loyalty to God. The sanctuary had been placed west of the Jordan and the great center of national worship would be there. Joshua was anxious as to the effect which their separation from their brethren would have on their religious condition. The nation was not as yet completely weaned from idolatry (24:14).

Verse 8: They received as their reward a substantial share of the spoil that had been taken. With the taking of this spoil came the second advice that Joshua gave them - they were to divide their spoil with those of their brethren who had stayed at home. Those who had stayed behind had taken care of the women and children and the

flocks and herds. Those at home had been doing their duty as well as those who had crossed the Jordan. David made a decision of this kind later too (1 Samuel 30:22-25).

Verses 10-29: When they reached the fords of Jordan and thought that the stream would presently divide them from the rest of the people, a sudden fear seemed to take hold of them, lest in the coming days, the seven and a half tribes might say to their children, *“What have you to do with the Lord, the God of Israel? For the Lord has made the Jordan a boundary between us and you, you people of Reuben and people of Gad. You have no portion in the Lord.”* (22:24b-25). To do away with such a possibility and to make clear for all coming time their identity with the rest of the people, they built an altar on the western bank of the Jordan. It was a great altar to see and was not intended for burnt-offering or meal-offering, or for religious rites. It was built as a perpetual witness that its builders were loyal Israelites.

We cannot tell how much time passed before word was brought to the tribes on the western side of the Jordan that such an altar had been built on the west bank of the Jordan. The congregation immediately gathered at Shiloh with the intention of preparing for war (22:11,12). No mention is made of Joshua so it is possible that he may have retired from active life.

We do not know how they came to this decision (22:13,14) but instead of rushing into war they decided to send a representation to deal with the two and half tribes. Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, represented the priesthood and the ten princes represented the ten tribes.

While the ten tribes had misinterpreted the motive of their brethren, still they offered a generous proposal, asking them to move to the west side of the Jordan where they would be nearer the presence of the Lord in His ark and tabernacle (22:15-20). They rebuked their brethren for setting up any worship in place of that at Shiloh. They referred to the two examples when sin had been severely dealt with in the past: at Peor (Numbers 25:3,4; Deuteronomy 4:3) and in the case of Achan (7:1,5).

Verses 30,31: The explanation offered proved satisfactory to Phinehas and the princes of the congregation and later to the people as well. Phinehas and his brethren feared that God had departed from them; but he found that God was still working in the hearts of his brethren. They desired His glory, though they may have been unwise in the way in which they sought to glorify Him.

There were faults on both sides: 1) The ten tribes were wrong in interpreting the motives of their brothers' hearts and in preparing for war so hastily (1 Samuel 25:13,21,22,33,34); and 2) The two and a half tribes erected the altar without getting a pattern from the Lord or even consulting with the priests in regard to it (Exodus 25:9,40; 1 Chronicles 28:11,12).

Verses 32-34: So, at the end of the period of Joshua's leadership there was still found a desire on both sides of the Jordan to glorify and worship the God who had led them out of Egypt.

### **III. Joshua's Farewell - chapters 23,24**

#### **A. The assembly of the rulers and leaders and Joshua's first exhortation - chapter 23**

## Chapter 23

Perhaps 19 to 20 years have passed since the events recorded in chapter 22. No place of meeting is specified in this chapter. Shechem is given as the place in chapter 24. The address in this chapter is somewhat more general than that given in the next. Some feel that these chapters give two reports of the same occasion.

Joshua followed Moses in calling the people to hear his closing words. The starting point of his address is *"the Lord your God has fought for you"* (23:3). It was God who brought them to the land and led them into it. He had announced Himself in Joshua 5:14. Then Joshua reminded them that getting possession of Canaan was a three-fold process: 1) God fighting for them had subdued their enemies (23:3); 2) Joshua had divided the land (23:4); and 3) God was preparing to expel the remaining people through their instrumentality (23:5). Emphasis is laid on expelling and driving out, from which we gather that further massacre was not to take place but that the remainder of the Canaanites must seek settlement elsewhere. A retribution had already fallen on them for their sins, in the virtual destruction of their people and the loss of their country. The remnant might have a chance to escape but they would never rise to influence again.

Verses 7,8: Again they were exhorted to cleave to God, not so much as mentioning the names of the false gods about them.

Verses 12,13: Joshua was very emphatic in forbidding intermarriage and friendly intercourse with Canaanites. The greatest encouragement to fellowship with God is fellowship with others of His children; the greatest danger to fellowship with God is fellowship with His enemies. Joshua told them what comprise with their enemies would mean. The history of the future showed that Joshua was right. The Canaanites remaining in the land were thorns to the people of Israel; and comprise led first to invasion and oppression, then to captivity and exile, and finally to dispersion over the face of the earth. A New Testament warning is given against friendship with the world too (James 4:4).

Verses 14-16: The warning is repeated.

### B. Joshua's second exhortation at Shechem and his death - chapter 24

## Chapter 24

Verse 1: It was at Shechem that Joshua's last meeting with the people took place. Possibly it was delivered close to the well of Jacob and the tomb of Joseph where many centuries later the New Testament Joshua talked to the woman of Samaria (John 4:5,6 - Sychar was probably a name applied to Shechem; this is almost universally accepted now. Sychar is mentioned only in John 4:5).

Verses 2-13: The history of the nation is rehearsed. This rehearsal is given in the words of God to remind them that the whole history of Israel had been planned and ordered by Him: *"I took"* (24:3); *"I gave"* (24:4); *"I sent"* (24:5); *"I brought"* (24:6); *"I destroyed"* (24:8); *"I delivered"* (24:10,11); *"I sent"* (24:12); *"I gave"* (24:13). No mention is made of Israel's mighty men. All is attributed to God.

Verses 14,15: It appears from Joshua's appeal that some of the people still maintained the worship of household gods like those which Rachel stole from Laban

(Genesis 31:19). This was probably done by stealth. Joshua referred to four claimants to be considered: 1) Jehovah; 2) the Chaldean gods worshipped by their ancestors; 3) the gods of the Egyptians; and 4) the gods of the Amorites among whom they dwelt. Joshua adds example to precept. Regardless of the course the people took, he and his house were to serve the Lord. This was the same Joshua who years before had stood with Caleb amid the treachery of the spies. No descendants of Joshua are mentioned in the Bible (1 Chronicles 7:27). His name is lost.

Verses 16-18: The people professed that they had no desire to forsake Jehovah and serve other gods. They acknowledged that they owed everything to Him from the exodus to the possession of Canaan. They also expressed their determination to serve the Lord.

Verses 19,20: Joshua must have detected some trace of insincerity in their voice. Perhaps he felt they were not sincere because they gave no sign of abandoning their strange gods. Joshua told them there could be no half-hearted service of Jehovah for He is holy and jealous. He is not content with lip service but searches out hearts, knowing their innermost sins as well as their sincerity.

Verse 21: The people were full of self-confidence and vowed that they would serve the Lord. The commentary on these proud words is found in Judges 2:11-13. The incident there took place after the record of Joshua's death.

Verse 22a: Joshua reminded them that their own words would witness against them.

Verse 22b: The people took upon themselves the punishment for any future declension from God.

Verse 23: Joshua appealed to them to put away their gods.

Verse 24: Again the people pledged themselves to serve Jehovah alone.

Verses 25-28: No more words could be spoken. Joshua set up a memorial of their pledge. He wrote their words in the book of the law of the Lord and then he set up a great stone under and oak that was the sanctuary of the Lord (8:30-32). The stone was to be the witness of the covenant they had made with Jehovah.

Verses 29-31: Joshua had one supreme virtue - he honored God. For his absolute and supreme loyalty to God he should be greatly respected. After a life of one hundred and ten years Joshua died. He was one of the greatest heroes of the Israelitish nation. Moses led them out of the house of bondage; Joshua led them into the house of rest. Joshua had retired to his inheritance before his death but the influence of his life and character was felt as long as he lived and afterwards.

Verse 33: Here is given a record of the death and burial of Eleazar, the son of Aaron. Joshua was the successor of Moses and Eleazar the successor of Aaron. The generation to which they belonged had now passed away. This was the second generation since the departure from Egypt. A new generation had arisen to follow Jehovah; the responsibility of the future rested with them.

Verse 32: When Joseph was dying he took an oath of his brethren that they would carry up his bones to the land of promise (Genesis 50:24,25); thus showing his faith in this last act of his life (Hebrews 11:22). He was embalmed and put in a coffin in Egypt

(Genesis 50:26). Moses kept his trust and later Joshua and the children of Israel laid his bones in his inheritance in Shechem, in the territory of Ephraim, his son.