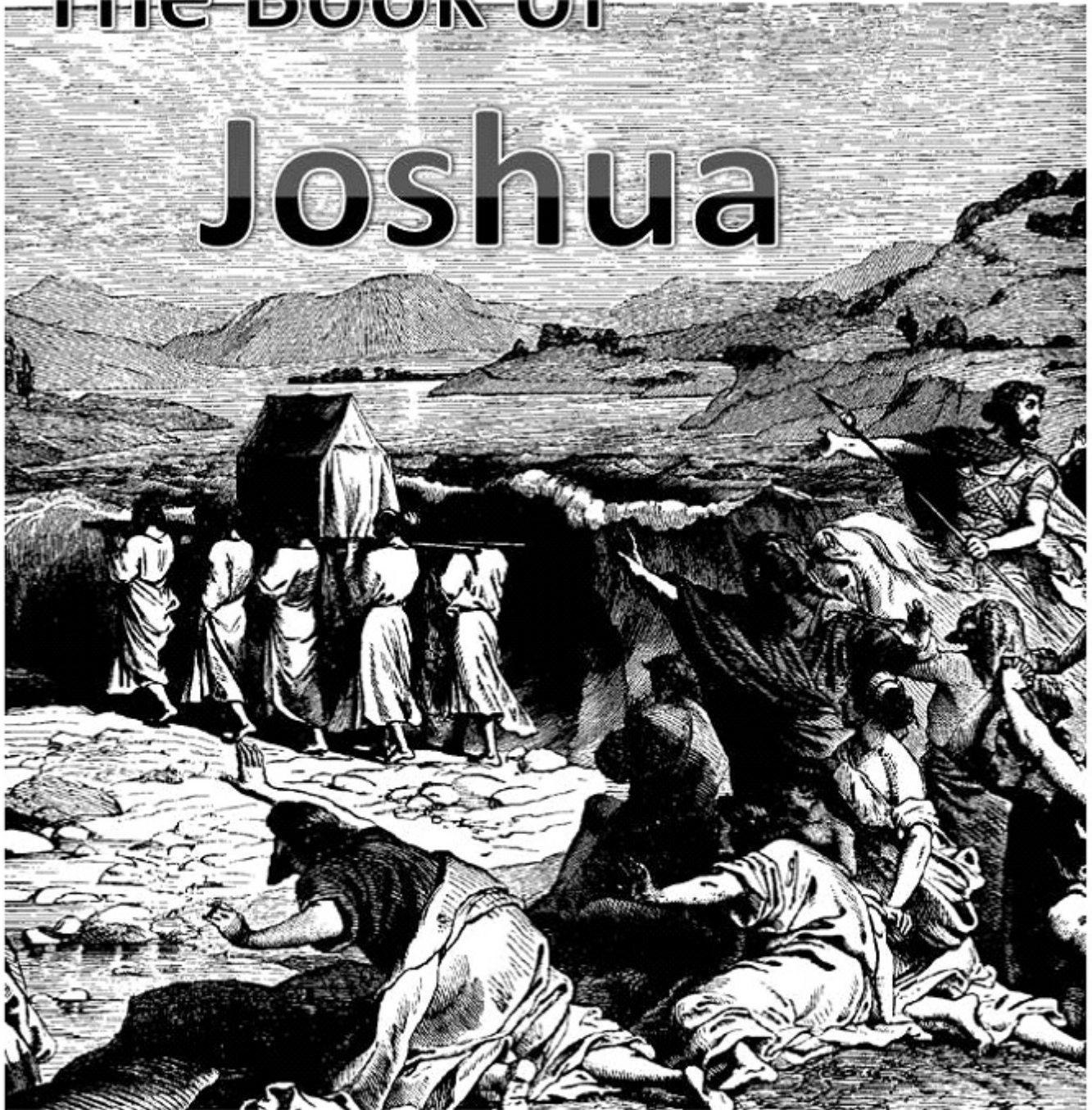


The Book of Joshua



Adult Workbook - Wednesday Evening – Summer Quarter 2019
Forum Terrace Church of Christ, Grand Prairie, Texas

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Commissioning of Joshua

Joshua 1

Authorship

The Jewish Talmud has long accepted Joshua as the author. It says simply “Joshua wrote his own book.” Joshua is mentioned as writing a couple of times in this book. *“And there, in the presence of the children of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written”* (Josh. 8:32). *“Then Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone, and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord”* (24:26). Joshua was clearly used as an inspired prophet of God. When in Solomon’s day the Bible references Joshua’s prophecy concerning the curse upon anyone rebuilding Jericho: *“according to the word of the Lord, which He had spoken through Joshua the son of Nun”* (1 Kings 16:34).

Some argued correctly that Joshua could not have written all of the book. After all he did not write about his death and burial. However, some want to date the writing of this book for the Persian period. However, as seen above the writer of Kings already knew of Joshua’s curse on the rebuilders of Jericho. Furthermore, the phrase *“to this day”* (4:9; 5:9; 7:26; 8:28-29; 9:27; 10:27; 13:13; 15:63; 16:10) calls for an early writing and Joshua. In fact, the writer of Joshua claims that Rahab was still alive when this book was written. *“And Joshua spared Rahab the harlot, her father’s household, and all that she had. So she dwells in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho”* (Josh. 6:25).

Before the Bible student comes to the book of Joshua, he has had little association with the man, Joshua. He was born a slave in Egypt. His name was Hoshea meaning “salvation” but changed to Joshua meaning “Jehovah is salvation.” His father was Nun of the tribe of Ephraim. He steps on the stage of history for the first time as a commander of the army defeating the Amalekites (17:8–16). He is called an aide or servant of Moses (Ex. 24:13; 33:11). Joshua reported the Israelites’ worship of the golden calf to Moses who was coming down the mountain. Joshua thought it was the noise of war in the camp (32:17). Joshua along with Caleb was one of the twelve spies sent into Canaan to check it out for forty days (Num. 13). These two spies were the only ones to give a good and faithful report.

At the time of his death Moses asked God to appoint Joshua as his replacement. Moses inaugurated him at the Tent of Meeting before Israel (Deut. 31:14; Num. 27:18-23). Joshua had some very big shoes to fill by taking on the leadership of Israel from Moses. Would Joshua be accepted by Israel? Would he be faithful to God in his leadership role? Joshua seems to seamlessly move into the position vacated by Moses and is followed across the Jordan river and into battle by Israel. He has few sins recorded and is shown to be a man who followed precisely the Lord’s instructions (4:3-9; 15:17; 5:2-3; 6:3-20; 7:13-25; 8:1-8,18,27; 10:24,40; 11:6,9). *“As the Lord had commanded Moses His servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did. He left nothing undone of all that the Lord had commanded Moses”* (Josh. 11:15). Joshua accomplished his mission for God and Israel and died at the age of 110 in the Promise Land and was buried on his inheritance.

Historical Setting and Date

In the fourth year of King Solomon’s reign it states *“and it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt...”* (1 Kings 6:1). If Solomon’s fourth year was 966 BC than 480 years later would put the Exodus at 1446 BC and thus Joshua’s conquest of Canaan at about 1400 BC. However, some scholars list the date as late as 1045 BC. This is clearly refuted by the “Victory stele (1209 BC) of the Egyptian pharaoh Merneptah found at Thebes. Commemorates the Pharaoh’s victories during his campaign into Canaan and lists “Israel”

among the conquests... 'Israel is laid Waste and His seed is not' (Hubbard 41). Still others will argue for a date of around 1250 BC. The Amarna tablets (1400 and 1367 BC) tell of the Habiru who were invading Canaan and the Canaanite kings were asking for help from their Egyptian overlords. "The Amarna tablets show that the Book of Joshua accurately portrays the political situation in Canaan - a country divided into numerous small feudal city-states prone to war with one another. It is perhaps significant that none of the extant Amarna letters come from or mention Jericho, Ai, Bethel, or Gibeon, cities destroyed or controlled by Joshua and the Israelites. Cities not captured or not permanently occupied by Israel are those from which letters were sent to Egypt requesting help..." (702). Therefore this study will accept the year 1400 BC as the time Joshua was leading the conquest of Canaan.

Structure

Part of the problem with the structure of any Old Testament book is the idea that it must flow chronologically. However, chronology does not appear to be the primary goal of Joshua when he records these events. Furthermore, some events like the taking of Jericho and Ai and the treaty with the Gibeonites are given more space among the twenty-four chapters than other events like the northern campaign which are covered with little detail and attention. Both the brevity and ordering of the book gives the impression that the conquest took only a few months instead of several years.

The book of Joshua can be divided into four sections. First, chapters one through five deal with the preparation to enter the Land of Canaan. Then comes the conquest of Canaan as one city-state and king fall one after another to Joshua's army in chapter six through twelve. The third section is a tedious and long list of cities detailing the dividing up of the land among the tribes of Israel in chapter thirteen through twenty-one. The inheritance of Caleb at the beginning of the section and the inheritance of Joshua toward the end acts like the literary device called an inclusio. The final section is covered in chapter twenty-two through most of chapter twenty-four. This final division of Joshua includes speeches by the aged leader of Israel. An epilogue closes out the book detailing the burials of Joshua, the patriarch Joseph, and Eleazer the High Priest.

Canonicity & Place in the Canon

A canon is a group of books considered Divinely inspired. Joshua is considered to be part of the Old Testament Canon of thirty-nine books. Its canonicity has not been determined by a group of men who simply voted it into the Bible as some claim. "Canonicity is not dependent on external proof of a book's veracity, or on the dictum of the Church. The Church can only recognize as Canonical that which is inherently canonical" (Woudstra 40). Joshua 1:5 is quoted in the New Testament as being the words of Jehovah. "*Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'*" (Hebrews 13:5).

According to our English Bible the book of Joshua is considered the first of the historical books. However, the ancient Jewish scholarship considered it a prophetic book. They had two divisions of prophetic books: the "Former Prophets" and the "Latter Prophets". Joshua is considered the first of the Former Prophets.

Joshua is considered a bridge between the book of Deuteronomy and the book of Judges. It is like the Book of Acts in the New Testament which stands between the Gospels and the Epistles to the churches. Joshua is the fulfillment of the land promises of the Pentateuch and the background to the struggles of Israel to remain faithful to God in the Land. "In the wilderness, the Jews were a complaining people, but in Canaan, they were a conquering people. In the wilderness, Israel kept looking back, yearning for what they had in Egypt, but in the Promised Land, they looked forward to conquering the enemy and claiming their rest and their riches" (Wiersbe 381).

Themes

◆ The Land Promise is Fulfilled

The book of Joshua tells the story of how a landless, nomadic group of slaves of Egypt obtained a land with vineyards and walled cities. When they conquered the land of Canaan only three cities

(Jericho, Ai and Hazor) were destroyed with fire. This was in keeping with the promise of God to give them not just a land but a place to live and eat. *“So it shall be, when the Lord your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build, houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant”* (Deut. 6:10,11).

God had promised Abraham to give his descendants the land of Canaan. A promise repeated to Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants. In Deuteronomy the word *“land”* is found a couple of hundred times along with a couple of dozen references to the term *“possess.”* *“Land”* is found eighty-seven times in Joshua. In one of his final speeches to Israel Joshua claims that God has fulfilled the land promise to them. *“You have seen all that the Lord your God has done to all these nations because of you, for the Lord your God is He who has fought for you. See, I have divided to you by lot these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from the Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, as far as the Great Sea westward. And the Lord your God will expel them from before you and drive them out of your sight. So you shall possess their land, as the Lord your God promised you”* (Josh. 23:3-5). Since the land promise has been fulfilled in Joshua there is no need for us to look for it to be fulfilled in the future. This promise was conditioned upon the faithfulness of Israel. The promise was voided and the land lost due to their continued idolatry.

◆ **Israel Given Rest**

Closely associated with this land promise is the provision of a rest in *“a land flowing with milk and honey”* for a wandering and warring people. Joshua mentions this *“rest”* several times (1:13,15; 11:23; 14:15; 21:44; 22:4; 23:1). In Hebrews 3:7-4:11 the New Testament writer points out that Jesus has been our Joshua in providing us a rest.

◆ **Continued Obedience to the Covenant**

The gift of the Promise Land as a place of rest was not without conditions. Joshua and the people of Israel had to remain faithful to the covenant God made with them in the Law of Moses. Total obedience was required. There would be zero tolerance against marrying among the remaining Canaanites and in turn worshiping their idols. In his final speech Joshua challenges them to *“choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”* (Joshua 24:15).

◆ **Holy War**

The extermination of the Canaanites by military force and the singling out of seven tribes for genocide or ethnic cleansing has been a point of no small concern for the average Bible student (Deut. 7:1-2; 20:16-18). Several theories have been posited to explain the barbaric nature of this book. Some argue that the God of the Old Testament has morphed into the loving God of the New. In other words the God of Joshua is not the same God of Jesus. However, God does not change in character or nature.

Perhaps, those reading the book of Joshua need to keep in mind that this brutal warfare was not the idea of Joshua and the children of Israel. God is the main character of this book. He is the *“Commander of the army of the Lord”* (Joshua 5:14b). God is the one who gave the commands to destroy the seven wicked nations (6:2; 8:1-2; 10:8; 40,42). It is the Lord who fights for Israel and who gives them the complete victory over these seven nations He has marked out for annihilation. As they hardened their hearts against the will of God, He was just in punishing them. Joshua and Israel were is tools or weapons used by God for their removal from the land. *“For it was of the Lord who harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that He might utterly destroy them, and that they might receive no mercy, but that He might destroy them, as the Lord had commanded Moses”* (Joshua 11:20). These Canaanites had become so perverse in their religious practices it is as if the land itself was so disgusted that it vomited them out. They engage in all forms of fertility rites and sex deviance with prostitution and child sacrifice (Gen. 15:16; Lev. 15:24-28; Dt. 7:2-5; 25,26; Josh. 23;7; Judg. 2:11). They became as wicked as Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18-19) and therefore suffered the same fate. Keep in mind that several times it was the Canaanites that attack the Israelites (9:1-2; 11:1-5).

◆ **Be Brave and Fear Not**

When Moses chose Joshua as his successor, he commanded him not be afraid but to be brave or strong (Deut. 31:6–7, 23; 34:9). God told Joshua to be strong as he took over the leadership. *“Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go”* (Josh. 1:7). Joshua in turn told this to the people more than once. *“Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; be strong and of good courage, for thus the Lord will do to all your enemies against whom you fight”* (Josh. 10:25).

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Questions:

1. True False It is possible that Joshua wrote the entire book.
2. The phrase *“to this day”* occurs several times in the book of Joshua. How does this prove an early date for the writing of this book?
3. What was Joshua's background and character which made him a suitable successor of Moses' leadership of Israel?
4. What is the date of the events of the book of Joshua?

Fill in the outline of the Book of Joshua.

5. Chapters 1-5 _____
6. Chapters 6-12 _____
7. Chapters 13-21 _____

8. Chapter 22-24 _____
9. True False Joshua is considered a historical book by the ancient Jews but is the last of the Former Prophets in today's English Bibles.
10. What does the reader of Joshua need to keep in mind when reading about the Holy War against the seven nations in Canaan?
11. What was Joshua's relation to Moses?
12. What did God promise Joshua in verses 3,4?
13. What did God promise Joshua in verse 5?
14. What did God promise Joshua in verse 6?
15. Which promise was fulfilled in chapters 13-22?
16. How obedient was Joshua to be to God's will according to verse 7?
17. What was the "*Book of the Law*"? What was Joshua to do with it?

- 18. What did Joshua have the officers of the people do in verses 10 and 11?
- 19. What command had Moses given the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh?
- 20. How did the officers of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh respond to Joshua's request?

Application and Discussion:

- 1. How many times does the phrase "*be strong and of good courage*" occur in Joshua chapter one? Why was this so important for Joshua to hear at this time?
- 2. God has promised us an inheritance? What must we do before we can expect to inherit our rest?

Homework: Be encouraged by the fact that God is with us as we faithfully serve Him today. God has promised us, "*I will never leave you nor forsake you*" (Hebrews 13:5b).

Canvassing Jericho & Crossing the Jordan

Joshua 2 & 3

1. How many spies did Joshua send and what were they to do?
2. What lie did Rahab tell the officials of Jericho who were seeking the two spies?
3. Why did the people of Canaan fear the Israelites?
4. What did Rahab believe about God?
5. What promise did Rahab have the two spies make with her?
6. What would make the two spies free from the oath?
7. What was Rahab to keep in her window as a token of the oath between her and the spies?
8. How did the spies escape back to Joshua?
9. What report did they give to Joshua?
10. What did the officers of Israel tell the people to do?

11. What did Joshua have the people do in verse 5?
12. What did Joshua command the priests?
13. According to the Lord what would the crossing of the Jordan do for Joshua?
14. What would the crossing of the Jordan River prove to the people of Israel about God?
15. What happened when the feet of the priests touched the waters of the Jordan?
16. How long did the priests stand in the Jordan River bed?

Application and Discussion:

1. Did God approve of Rahab's lying? Explain.
2. Compare and contrast the crossing of the Jordan River with the crossing of the Red Sea.

Homework: Have enough faith to follow the Lord and His leaders.

Commemorating with Stones and Circumcising the Flesh

Joshua 4 & 5:12

1. What were the twelve men from each tribe to take from the river? Where were they to carry them?
2. What place did Joshua set up twelve stones? What did this pile of stones represent?
3. When did the priests finish crossing the Jordan?
4. True False The people took their time in crossing the Jordan river.
5. How many fighting men of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh crossed the Jordan River?
6. What did God do for the reputation and leadership of Joshua on that day?
7. When did the waters of the Jordan River return to their place?
8. On what day did Israel cross the Jordan?
9. What did the heap of twelve stones at Gilgal represent to each subsequent generation of Israelite children?

10. How did the Amorites and Canaanites react to the drying up of the Jordan River?
11. Why had this generation of men of war not been circumcised until Gilgal?
12. Why did Joshua name the place where they were circumcised: "Gilgal"?
13. When did they observe the Passover? When was the last time it was observed?
14. When did the manna from heaven cease?
15. Who did Joshua meet? What did Joshua do when he found out who he was addressing?

Application and Discussion

1. What is the difference between the stone idols set up by pagans in Canaan and the stones set up by Israel in the Promise Land?
2. Could the "*Commander of the army of the Lord*" have been an angel? Explain.

Homework: When your children see you eat the emblems of the Lord's Supper, tell them what they mean and what the Lord has done for you.

Conquering of Jericho

Joshua 6

1. Why was the city of Jericho shut up securely?

2. List in order those who were to march around the city of Jericho.
____ seven priests with trumpets
____ Ark of the Lord
____ Men of war
____ Rear guard

3. Did the people of Israel march around the city of Jericho?

4. List the number of times seven is used in this chapter?

5. In total how many times did they march around Jericho?

6. What did the people shout? What happened then?

7. Who was spared and why?

8. What section of the wall of Jericho did not collapse?

9. What was destroyed of the city?
10. What was given to the Lord?
11. What was allowed to be taken as spoils of war by the people?
12. What curse did Joshua put upon the city?
13. What happened to Joshua's reputation after the fall of Jericho?

Application and Discussion:

1. List other times God used unconventional strategy to win a victory? Why does He do this?
2. Whatever became of Rahab (Matthew 1:5; Heb. 11:31; James 2:25; Josh. 6:25)?

Homework: Remember on the first day of the week that the firstfruits of your prospering goes to the Lord who has given us the victory in Christ.

Coveting of Achan

Joshua 7

1. What did the spies suggest to Joshua concerning the taking of Ai and why?
2. How many Israelites died in the defeat at Ai?
3. How did Israel react to this defeat?
4. What did Joshua and the elders of Israel do in response?
5. Why was Joshua concerned about what God's enemies would think about this defeat?
6. What are the accursed things God is speaking of in this chapter?
7. What two things will not happen until the accursed things are destroyed?
8. Why were the people to sanctify themselves? What might this involve?
9. How did God narrow-down or zero in on the guilty party?

10. Should Achan have viewed the items he took as spoils? Explain.
11. What did he take? What was it worth?
12. What did they do with the items, Achan, his family, and his animals?
13. How did the Lord react to the destruction of Achan and the accursed things?
14. What does Achor and Achan mean?

Application and Discussion:

1. How is it that Achan's sin is said to be a trespass committed by "*the children of Israel*"?
2. The Law of Moses condemned the killing of innocent family members with the guilty relative in Deuteronomy 24:16. So why does it happen here?

Homework: Be careful this week realizing that your single sin could cause great trouble to your family and nation.

Crushing Ai

Joshua 8:1-29

1. Why was Joshua not be to afraid of Ai?
2. Were they allowed to take spoil of Ai?
3. Whose idea was it to lay an ambush at Ai?
4. Where did Joshua send 30,000 soldiers and why?
5. Where did Joshua send 5,000 troops and why?
6. From where did Joshua and the rest of the army approach Ai?
7. What did the King of Ai do when he saw Joshua's army flee?
8. What happened when Joshua stretched out his spear?
9. When did the soldiers of Ai know they were trapped?
10. Why did Joshua have the fleeing Israelite army turn back?

11. What became of the King of Ai?
12. How many were killed that day?
13. How long had Joshua stretched out his spear that day?

Application and Discussion:

1. Is God just in destroying all the inhabitants of Ai? Explain.

2. Did God use good logical military strategy in the defeat of Ai? Why didn't He use the same miraculous plan that worked in defeating Jericho? Explain.

Homework: Remember to work with God everyday to turn your defeats into victories.

Cursings and Blessings & Contracting a Treaty

Joshua 8:30 - 9

1. Where did Joshua build an altar and how did he make it?
2. Which mountain was of blessing and which of cursing?
3. Who heard the reading of the Law by Joshua?
4. List the things the Gibeonites brought to deceive the Israelites.
5. What did they know about the Lord God of Israel?
6. What did Joshua and the leaders fail to do before making this treaty?
7. What did the treaty involve?
8. How long did it take for Israel to discover the deception? How did the congregation react?

9. Why did Joshua and Israel honor this treaty?

10. What punishment did they give the Gibeonites for their deception?

11. Why did they deceive Israel?

12. What cities were spared from Israelite attack because of this treaty?

Application and Discussion:

1. List other men and women of God who made mistakes/sins because they failed to consult God's will while making their plan of action?

2. Why was it so important that the Israelites keep this treaty?

Homework: Always consult the will of God before giving your word or making your plans.

Campaigning in the South

Joshua 10

1. Why did the King of Jerusalem form a coalition to attack Gibeon?

Matching the five Amorite Kings.

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 2. ____ Adoni-Zedek | a. King of Eglon |
| 3. ____ Hoham | b. King of Lachish |
| 4. ____ Piram | c. King of Jarmuth |
| 5. ____ Japhia | d. King of Jerusalem |
| 6. ____ Debir | e. King of Hebron |
7. Why did Gideon send to Joshua for help?

8. Why is Joshua not to fear the five King coalition?

9. What did God send upon Amorites that killed more than the sword?

10. What did God do to help Joshua have enough time to complete the destruction of the Amorites?

11. What happened to Horam king of Gezer?

12. What happened to the five kings of the Amorites?

13. List the cities Joshua conquered in the order in which they were destroyed.

_____ Debir

_____ Eglon

_____ Hebron

_____ Lachish

_____ Libnah

_____ Makkedah

Application and Discussion:

1. List the miracles found in the book of Joshua. Why did God perform miracles at some places and not at others.

2. What is the *Book of Jasher* and why is it mentioned in the book of Joshua?

Homework: Some days are extra long and very hard, Just remember God is with us all day long.

Campaigning in the North

Joshua 11 & 12

1. Who did Jabin King of Hazor form a coalition with against Israel?
2. How great in number was this northern coalition?
3. What weapons of war did they possess which the Israelites did not?
4. Why was Joshua not to be afraid?
5. What was he to do with the horses and chariots of the enemy?
6. What became of Hazor? What other cities shared this fate in the conquest of the Promise Land?
7. What became of the spoil of these northern cities?
8. According to 11:20 why did the northern kings of Canaan attack Joshua?
9. Who were the Anakim? What became of them? Where did the last Anakim live? What famous Anakim was from Gath?

10. What two Kings did Moses conquer?
11. How many kings in all were conquered?
12. Name the seven pagan tribes Israel was to destroy? Which one was not eventually destroyed?

Application and Discussion:

1. What is significant about the defeat of the Anakim in relation to the forty years Israel wandered in the wilderness?
2. God showed no mercy to the seven pagan tribes in Canaan. Does this mean that God in the Old Testament is not like God in the New Testament? Explain.

Homework: Keep fighting the enemies of God until the war ends with our rest with God in Heaven.

Claiming the Inheritance

Joshua 13 - 19

1. What three powerful pagan enemies remained in the Promise Land?
2. Why was the tribe of Levi not given an inheritance?
3. How old was Caleb when he spied out the land? How old was he when the land was divided?
4. What city did Caleb ask for as an inheritance? What two obstacles stood between him and his inheritance?
5. Why was he blessed with an inheritance in the land?
6. Who was Othniel?
7. Why did Judah not possess Jerusalem?
8. What dispute arose between Ephraim and Manasseh with Joshua? What did Joshua propose?
9. To where was the tabernacle moved?

Matching: Tribes with possession

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 10. ____ Reuben | a. Beth Peor |
| 11. ____ Gad | b. border ended at the north by at the Salt Sea |
| 12. ____ Manaseh (east) | c. Chinnereth |
| 13. ____ Judah | d. border reached to Mount Carmel |
| 14. ____ Ephraim | e. did not drive out the Canaanites in Gezer |
| 15. ____ Manasseh (west) | f. shared part of Judah's inheritance |
| 16. ____ Benjamin | g. southern border began at the shore of the Salt Sea |
| 17. ____ Simeon | h. the rest of the king of Sihon King of Heshbon land |
| 18. ____ Issachar | i. the kingdom of Og king of Bashan |
| 19. ____ Asher | j. Timnath Serah |
| 20. ____ Joshua | k. took the city of Leshem |
| 21. ____ Naphtali | l. Zelophehad's five daughters given land |
| 22. ____ Dan | M. Shunem |

Application and Discussion:

1. Are these chapters related to the land promise originally given to Abraham? Explain. Does Israel still have the same claim of inheritance of this land? Explain.

2. When was Jerusalem finally taken by Israel?

Homework: Remember you are never too old to fight for your inheritance promised by the Lord.

Consigning the Cities of Refuge and Levitical Cities

Joshua 20 & 21

Cities of Refuge

The destruction of the World Trade Center has taught us many things. One reality it reminds us of is that there is no place on earth where we are guaranteed security. The most security conscious nation in the world, Israel is one of the last places you would want to visit and feel safe. Where can we find a safe refuge: not sporting events, not federal buildings, not skyscrapers, not schools, and not even churches. God is conscious of our need for refuge.

During the division of the land of Israel God set up six cities of refuge for these guilty of manslaughter. *“Kedesh in Galilee, in the mountains of Naphtali, Shechem in the mountains of Ephraim, and Kirjath Arba (which is Hebron) in the mountains of Judah. And on the other side of the Jordan, by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness on the plain, from the tribe of Reuben, Ramoth in Gilead, from the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan, from the tribe of Manasseh” (20:7-8).*

In Israelite society there was no police force to investigate crimes. It was the moral responsibility of the family member who was closest to the victim to investigate and avenge the murder. In our text, he is called the avenger of blood. In Genesis 9:6, God laid down a basic rule to Noah that anyone who murderously shed blood should pay for their crime with their own blood. God explained very carefully in Exodus 21, Numbers 35, and Deuteronomy 19 that there was to be a distinction made between premeditated murder, and what today we call manslaughter or a crime of passion, the unpremeditated killing of another person. It's apparent when we read these passages that a person guilty of premeditated murder was subject to capital punishment. However, if the death wasn't premeditated and if a person killed someone by accident, the slayer could seek refuge in one of these six cities.

The avenger's own emotional subjectivity, passion, and anger at the loss of their family member would cloud their judgment, and they might not want to go to the trouble to figure out whether it was an accidental killing or whether in fact it was premeditated murder. They might end up avenging the death by indiscriminately killing someone who wasn't guilty of a capital crime. For example, someone is working in his field, and his ax head flies off the handle and kills his neighbor. Somebody in a fit of passion fights with a neighbor, who accidentally falls and hits his head on a rock, and dies from that. In each case, there was no desire for the death of the individual, but death did result. Time had to be given to determine whether or not murder or accidental death has occurred.

Before the Israelites entered and conquered Canaan. The manslayer could flee to the altar of the tabernacle. If he was guilty of premeditated, violent murder, hanging onto the altar wouldn't be of any help whatsoever. This worked well during the forty years that the nation of Israel wandered in the wilderness, and during the seven years of military conquest in Canaan, because the tabernacle was physically at the center of that nation. Once the tribes were settled throughout the land of Canaan in their respective tribal inheritances, they needed places of refuge that were scattered out among them. They were appointed before Israel ever reached the land of promise. Now, one who had killed somebody by accident - must flee to one of the appointed cities.

These cities were strategically located so that there would be easy access to them Verse seven lists the three cities west of the Jordan from north to south, and verse eight lists the three cities east of the Jordan from south to north. It was an average day's run to get to the nearest city of refuge. In Deuteronomy 19:3 God commanded that the nation build highways-not just foot paths-to the cities of refuge. The highways were supposed to be rebuilt every spring after the heavy winter rains so that the

road surface would be smooth and easy to run on. At every crossroads or intersection on these highways, there were to be big, bold signs pointing the way with the word REFUGE in large letters. The gates of the cities of refuge were never to be locked. They were cities set on hills so that all could see them. The cities of refuge were open to everybody, Jew and Gentile.

Once the manslayer had reached a city of refuge he would be protected from the avenger of blood until the elders could investigate the circumstances in a preliminary hearing. The cities of refuge didn't repudiate capital punishment; rather, it was God's way of allowing both justice and mercy to prevail. Only the innocent were to be protected, not the guilty. God's intention, obviously, is for us to live in peace. The Numbers passage spoke of the land becoming poisoned or polluted when terror reigned. If the fugitive was found guilty of premeditated murder, then the elders would see to the execution of the person who had come to them for protection. Our western legal system finds its roots in this kind of Biblical teaching that declares that a person is innocent until proven guilty. Until everything was investigated by the elders and justice was handed down in a full hearing before the entire congregation, the manslayer enjoyed the security of presumed innocence.

If it could be established that this person had committed the crime by accident, then he would be given the right of asylum in the city. He was required to stay there even though he had been declared innocent of premeditated murder, because he was still guilty of manslaughter, as long as the high priest who ministered in the temple at that time lived. The city was to be well stocked to provide for any fugitives who came to stay, possibly for a period of years. The cities of refuge provided the physical resources of food and a place to live in case the fugitive had to spend months or years there. Only when that high priest died was the fugitive free to go back home and resume a normal life in his community and his family.

Spiritually speaking it is God who is the avenger of our crime against Him (Heb. 10:31). The wages of our sin against God is death. One major distinction is that our crime is not accidental. We sin because we chose not to heed God's commands. Whereas the cities existed to protect people who were innocent of a capital crime, Christ died for those who are worthy of death by their choice to sin. Maybe you haven't killed anybody in cold blood, but you've probably wished someone out of existence. And Jesus said that if we've done it in our heart or in our thought life, we're as guilty as if we had committed the act of murder.

In ancient Israel it wouldn't have done much good to move up close to the city of refuge and set up camp outside the wall or the tabernacle. If you were not in the city you would not be safe or saved from the avenger. Likewise, just hanging around with God's people doesn't make you a Christian. Only in Christ is there a refuge from the judgment of God against our sins. No other place exist for guaranteed safety (Acts 4:12; John 14:6). Whereas there were six cities of refuge, God only appoint Christ from eternity to be our refuge from sin (1 Pet.1:20; Rev.13:8).

Everybody was welcomed in the cities of refuge, even non-Jews. The same justice, the same protection and provision, the same atoning grace were free to all. In the same way Christ is the Savior available for every man. He is totally accessible. Accessible from all parts of the world. Our refuge is for "every creature" in "all the world" (Mk. 16:15). The gate to eternal life is always left ajar. We don't have to worry about finding some weird combination of religious locks and keys, as if it were by a secret, mysterious way that we would get into relationship with Jesus. God still wants it to be easy for fugitives to find their way to salvation and safety in Jesus Christ. He Himself said, "...*Him who comes to me I will not cast out*" (John 6:37). We can always come to Him anyplace, anytime (Matthew 11:28).

Perhaps there were mistakes made by the elders in the city of refuge. Maybe a couple of innocent men were put to death. However, God is our Perfect merciful Judge. He will never make such a mistake as condemning the innocent. As Christians we are granted asylum into His family as sons and daughters.

The manslayer according to the Old Law had to stay in the city of refuge for the duration of the life and ministry of the High Priest. In contrast, our High Priest ever lives to make intercession for us to God (Josh. 20:5,6; John 10:28; Heb. 7:2). We are safe forever because our High Priest, the Lord Jesus, will never face Death again (Rev.1:18).

One place for perfect security exists. God has provided Christ as our refuge who is completely

accessible to all who come to Him. As Christians we have the conviction that God is our protector, our hiding place, our refuge, a strong tower in the midst of a frightening, dangerous world.

Questions:

1. What was the cities of refuge intended to provide the Israelites?
2. Who was the "*avenger of blood*"?
3. How long did the manslayer have to stay in the city before returning home?
4. What if the slayer proved to have intentionally killed his neighbor?
5. List the six cities of refuge by tribe.
6. Could a gentile use a city of refuge even though he could not receive an inheritance in the land?
7. List the three families of the Levites?
8. What are the "*common lands*" attached to the cities of the Levites?
9. What two things do Hebron, Shechem, Golan, Kedesh, Ramoth and Bezer have in common?
10. How many cities were given to the Levites?

11. With what three affirmations does Joshua chapter twenty-one close?

Application and Discussion:

1. Locate the six cities of refuge on a map. What do you notice about their distribution in the land of Israel?

Homework: When guilty of sin against God remember He has a Refuge for you to flee to.

Circumventing a Civil War

Joshua 22

1. For what had Joshua commended the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh?
2. What two commands did Joshua give the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh?
3. What did Joshua send with these two and a half tribes?
4. What did the two and a half tribes build when they returned?
5. How did the other tribes react?
6. Who did Israel send to check out what was going on with the two and a half tribes east of the Jordan?
7. What did they accuse these two and a half tribes of doing?
8. What happened at Peor and why?

9. Why did they invite these two and a half tribes to cross over the Jordan?
10. Who did they also use as a warning to these two and a half tribes?
11. If they are guilty of rebellion what do the two and a half tribes suggest should be done to them?
12. Why did they build this altar?
13. How did Phinehas respond to this? How did Israel respond to it?
14. What did they call the altar and why?

Application and Discussion:

1. How was it wise for Israel to send Phinehas and the delegation to the two and a half tribes? What application can we make to your day?
2. What does this altar compare to the stone heaps set upon on the other side of the Jordan? Can Christians today make a memorial in addition to the memorial meal Christ has already instituted for us?

Homework: After you have done your work return home this week obeying and loving God with all your heart and soul.

Choosing to Serve God

Joshua 23 & 24

1. Who did Joshua call to address and why at this time?
2. What will happen to the nations that remain among them, if they are faithful?
3. Why must they keep and do all the Law of Moses?
4. What four things are they to avoid in relation to the pagan idols of the nations among them?
5. Why will one man be able to chase a thousand?
6. What if they cling to the nations and marry with them?
7. What will provoke the anger of the Lord?
8. What does it mean that Israel did not defeat their enemies with sword or with their bows?

9. How shall they serve the Lord?
10. Who will Joshua serve?
11. Why did the people of Israel choose to serve the Lord?
12. Why did Joshua say they cannot serve the Lord in verse 19?
13. To what was the stone at Shechem a witness?
14. How long did Joshua live?

Application and Discussion:

1. Joshua reminded Israel of their history. Why was this important to their remaining faith? Should we remember the past history of God's dealings with His people to be encouraged to remain faithful?
2. Who was buried at Shechem? Why is this significant?

Homework: Choose this day whom you will serve!