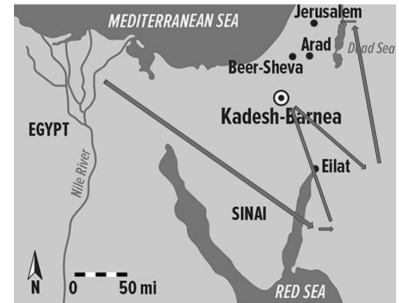


Joshua

Comments: by Dave DeWitt

Author: Mostly Joshua (24:1-26), with a few sections (15:13-17; 24:29-31) written by an unknown author, probably Phinehas the son of Eleazar the high priest.



Dates covered by the book: 1406-1376, Joshua led Israel for 30 years.

Date of the conquest of the land: 1406-1399 B.C. The conquest took seven years.

[The Exodus under Moses was in 1446 B.C. The Israelites had been out of Egypt for 40 years (Deuteronomy 1:3) when Joshua took command after the death of Moses in 1406. The conquest of Canaan took seven years. Joshua 14:7 and 10-11, tell us Caleb was 40 years old when Moses sent him from Kadesh-barnea to explore the land of Canaan, and 45 years had passed since that time. Since the mission of the spies took place on the second year of the Exodus (Deuteronomy 2:14) and the sojourning in the wilderness lasted 38 years, the conquest lasted seven years ($45 - 38 = 7$). So, the conquest was completed in the year 1399. Joshua was about 80 years old when he took over from Moses, and he died at 110, so he led Israel for 30 years (Joshua 14:7; 24:29).]

Background Information

1. Joshua was *the attendant of Moses from his youth* (Numbers 11:28). But *youth* here has to be about age 40, since he is about 40 years younger than Moses. He was just born, or an infant, when Moses left Egypt for Midian.
2. The first we hear about Joshua is in 1446 B.C. after the Israelites crossed the Red Sea on dry land and before they arrived at Mt. Sinai. Between the Red Sea and Mt. Sinai, Joshua led Israel in a defeat of the Amalekites. He was victorious as long as Moses held up his hands, assisted by Aaron and Hur (Exodus 17:8-13). Since Joshua was the clear choice to lead the battle, he seems to be already known as a military leader, so he may have been drafted into Pharaoh's army in Egypt.

Exodus 17:13, *Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.*

3. Joshua was the servant of Moses during the year Israel was at Mt. Sinai.

Exodus 24:13, *So Moses arose with Joshua his servant, and Moses went up to the mountain of God.*

4. At Kadesh-barnea, Joshua, represented the tribe of Ephraim (Numbers 13:8, which meant he was a descendant of Joseph). He was one of the 12 spies sent to evaluate the Land. Along with Caleb, he opposed the majority report saying,

Numbers 14:6-9, *If the Lord is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us.*

5. Before Moses died, God told him to commission Joshua as the one to lead Israel into the Land.

Deuteronomy 31:14, *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, the time for you to die is near; call Joshua, and present yourselves at the tent of meeting, that I may commission him."*

Purpose

Joshua is a history book, written to record for future generations the historical facts of the conquest of the Land by Joshua and the Israelites.

- This is not a religious book, but following the God of Israel is the central focus.
- This is not a theology book, but knowing the will of God is essential.

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Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is quoted from the *New American Standard Bible* (The Lockman Foundation: LaHabra, California)

- This is not a mystical book, but three significant miracles (at the Jordan, at Jericho, and at Gibeon) launch the account.

Sin is anything contrary to the character of God and the purpose of God. And in Joshua, **The purpose is God bringing His people into His land.**

Theme

The thing that hits you in the face, as you read the book of Joshua, is the massive slaughter of the Canaanites. Thousands of people living in Canaan were killed. The word *destroyed* occurs 21 times in the book. For example, in Jericho,

They utterly destroyed everything in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword (6:21).

In Hazor,

They struck every person who was in it with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them; there was no one left who breathed. And he burned Hazor with fire (11:11).

Although there are many applications of any Scripture, the mega application of the book of Joshua is that the Canaanites represent what God is eliminating and wants us to eliminate in our lives, sin and the temptation to sin (Romans 8:13-14).

Observation: *They utterly destroyed everything in the city ... with the edge of the sword (6:21).*

Interpretation: The Israelites under Joshua killed all the Canaanites in every city they captured.

Application: The Canaanites are like our personal sin, the sins of those around us, and the evils of our increasingly godless global society.

The theme of the book is:

Subject: Sin

Complement: must be eliminated not rehabilitated

Commentary

Chapter 1

1:1-2, The revelation from God to Joshua was, as it always was in the Bible, in words.

An Application: There is no revelation from God in the Bible which came by mental messaging, such as the inclination: “God led me,” “God told me,” “Or “God called me.” As Justin Peters said, “If you want to hear God, read the Bible. If you want to hear Him audibly, read it out loud.” [justinpeters.org]

1:3-6, God told Joshua, *Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses (1:3).* What is interesting here is that Joshua would have to fight very hard conquering this Land which God gave him.

An Application: The leading of God (as with the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles) is not usually into something that is comfortable, agreeable, and pleasant but uncomfortable, disagreeable, and sacrificial.

1:7-9, Receiving the Land God gave Joshua required him to (1) *be strong and very courageous* [both words mean to be strong] and (2) *be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you.* Joshua is the first leader of Israel to have a Bible, the written Word of God. And now that he has it, he is to meditate on it and be careful to obey it. And obeying it will require Joshua to *be strong and very courageous.*

An Application: Since we have written revelation from God, we are to read it, meditate on it and obey it (observation, interpretation, and application). But doing that will set us against the world, requiring us *to be strong and very courageous.*

1:10-18, Joshua told the officers of the people, *prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you are to cross this Jordan* (1:11). The officers responded, *just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you; only may the LORD your God be with you as He was with Moses* (1:17). The officers were willing to follow Joshua in whatever he said but with the qualification that he was walking with God.

An Application: We should follow our leaders with the qualification that they are not telling us to do things contrary to the Word of God (Acts 5:27-29; Revelation 19:20; 20:4).

Chapter 2

2:1, Although God did not command him to do so, Joshua sent two men out as spies, and *they went and came into the house of a harlot whose name was Rahab and lodged there*. The question is, “Why did they go to a harlot?” Speculation:

1. The spies may have had some previous information about Rahab.
2. They may have thought that the city officials would not question two foreigners going to visit a harlot and spending the night with her.
3. A harlot would know a lot about what was going on in the city.

An Application: It is a good idea to do reconnaissance, to research and get all the information you can get before you proceed with a major endeavor, even when you know your mission is within the will of God.

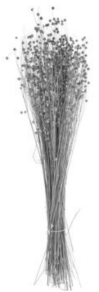
2:2-7, The king of Jericho was informed about the Hebrew spies going to Rahab, so he sent officials to retrieve them. Rahab said that the men had come to her but left when it was dark. *Actually, she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them in the stalks of flax which she had laid in order on the roof* (2:6). The question is, “Did Rahab, who was later rewarded for her action, lie to the king of Jericho?” Here is what we know about the truth and lying.

- Truth is the way things actually are (which is what God says they are, because He created them to be what they are).
- Lying is an intent to deceive others (about the way things actually are).
- Truth is an attribute of God. God always tells the truth. God sometimes uses metaphors, allegories, parables and stories, not to deceive but to reveal the truth with an impact. For example Nathan told David an allegorical story to manipulate him into admitting his sin (2 Samuel 12).
- Satan is the father of lies, *there is no truth in him* (John 8:44). Satan will always pervert the way things actually are.
- God’s response to good people who lie, like Rahab and the Hebrew midwives in Egypt (Exodus 1:15 ff) cannot be analyzed because it involves knowing more about the mind of God than we are told.

An Application: Never lie. We get our directives from what God commanded us to do in His Word. And we have direct commandments to not lie. Sometimes it might be legitimate, even appropriate, to withhold information. For example, it may be true, but unwise, to say “I told you so.” But withholding information is only legitimate when it is not an attempt to deceive.

2:8-11, After the king’s men left, Rahab went up to the roof to talk with the Hebrew spies. [Notice, either she spoke Hebrew (unlikely) or the spies knew the Canaanite language (more likely).] Rahab made four statements which, taken together, indicate she was a true believer in the true God.

- (1) *I know that the LORD has given you the land*. She used the word “Yahweh” for God, the name given to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3).
- (2) *The terror of you has fallen on us*. This told the spies the mood inside the city.
- (3) *We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt*. This tells us that an event which took place 40 years earlier was known among the



Canaanites, and it was part of Rahab's faith. Notice, her faith was (as all biblical faith is) defined as an understanding of the truth to be true.

(4) *The LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.* Rahab proclaimed her personal faith in the Lord God. Here, she used the name "Yahweh Elohim," a name for God used by Moses throughout the Pentateuch and used 423 times throughout the Old Testament.

An Application: Salvation is by grace through faith in what God has revealed at the time (Ephesians 2:8-9). Grace is a selective favor. Faith is what we understand to be true. Notice that faith is not something beyond or outside of rational evidence. Faith is always for everybody what that person understands to be true. It is impossible to believe anything you do not understand to be true. Faith in the Bible is understanding the truth to be true.

2:12-24, Rahab made a deal with the Hebrew spies that she would keep their presence a secret if they would preserve her and her father, mother, brothers and sisters when they captured Jericho (2:13). Then, after spending three days in the hills of the Judean Wilderness [about 3000 ft. (1000 meters) above sea level] the spies returned and told Joshua, "*Surely the LORD has given all the land into our hands; moreover, all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before us.*"

An Application: Take a stand for what God is doing (for them, it was conquering Canaan, for us, it includes making disciples of all nations—Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8), but be sure you are going to the Word of God to determine what God is doing.

Chapter 3

3:1-4, Approximately two million Israelites gathered east of the Jordan, and for three days, the officers went through the camp telling them to prepare to follow the ark of the covenant when they saw the priests carrying it. They were to stay 3,000 feet (900 m) from the ark, apparently, so everyone could see it and follow it. Then the officers added the phrase *for you have not passed this way before.*

An Application: An adventure is when you go somewhere you may or may not have been before and you expect to return. A quest is where you go somewhere you have not gone before, and you do not expect to return. The spiritual life of the believer is more like a quest. For example, it is not just keeping a tradition or a liturgy. Be prepared to go where you have *not passed this way before.*

3:5-17, *Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves" (verse 5). Consecrate is the word for sanctification which is cleansing, separation from contamination. Moses used this same word (for sanctification), defining it as washing in Exodus 19:10. The LORD also said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments."*

The Israelites crossed the Jordan River on dry land. We do not have all the conversation, but God spoke to Joshua (again, in words, not feelings, inclinations, or mental telepathy), and Joshua spoke to the people. *Then Joshua said to the sons of Israel, "Come here, and hear the words of the LORD your God ... By this you shall know that the living God is among you" (3:9-10).* The miracle of crossing the Jordan River on dry land would be one of the foundations of their faith.

Jesus said something similar, "*Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves*" (John 14:11).

An Application: God only rarely did miracles, but He expects us to remember the ones He has done. The Bible is a record of the intervention of God in history, which sometimes included miracles. We *know that the living God is among us,* by the logical, historical, archeological credibility of the Word of God, including the record of the miracles God preformed, recorded in the Word of God.

Chapter 4

4:1-11, Two stacks of 12 large stones were piled up. The sequence was:

- (1) The Jordan River dried up and the priests carried the ark to the middle of the riverbed.
- (2) The people crossed over to the other side.
- (3) Twelve men, who were previously chosen (3:12), returned to where the priests were standing in the middle of the riverbed, each to get a large stone *on his shoulder* to erect a memorial at Gilgal (4:20).
- (4) Joshua returned with the men to the dried up Jordan riverbed, where the priest stood with the ark, and piled up 12 stones in the middle of the riverbed.
- (5) They all returned to Gilgal (about 1.5 miles, or 2 km from Jericho), and the waters of the Jordan returned to their place.

Joshua carried out God's instructions. It seems that Joshua added some things, but they were consistent with God's directives.

An Application: It is okay to do things God did not command us to do (like forming church denominations, parachurch, missionary, and charitable organizations, orphanages, or hospitals), as long as they are consistent with what God did command us to do (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 2 Timothy 2:2; 4:2).

4:12-18, When *the waters of the Jordan returned to their place, and went over all its banks as before*, the people knew there was no turning back. We are reminded of Hernan Cortes who after landing in America in 1519 with 600 men, burned his ships so his men could only fight or die, there was no turning back. For the Israelites, the past was over, and they were dependent on God's direction through Joshua to lead them forward. Unlike the time in the wilderness, now there was nowhere to go but into a Canaanite occupied land.

An Application: When we accept Christ, we cross a line, leaving the world behind, making Satan our enemy, and facing a spiritual war. And there is no way to fight that war without moving forward in the leading of the Spirit, Who gives us a victory whenever we kill one of the deeds of the flesh.

Romans 8:13-14 *...for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all that are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.*

4:19-24, There were two reasons given for the 12 stones piled up at Gilgal:

- (1) *When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, "What are these stones?" then you shall inform your children, saying, "Israel crossed this Jordan on dry ground" (4:21-22).*
- (2) *... that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, so that you may fear the LORD your God forever.*

An Application: Remember what God has done in such a way that your children will ask about it. Make a case for the work of God in history so the world cannot logically deny it.

Chapter 5

5:1-12, Three additional events preceded the conquest of Jericho:

- (1) The circumcision of all males, which was a sign of the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 17:9-14). God commanded it be done here for those young men under 38 who were born during the wandering years, *for all the people who came out were circumcised, but all the people who were born in the wilderness along the way as they came out of Egypt had not been circumcised (5:5).*
- (2) The celebration of the Passover.
- (3) The manna ceased when the Israelites ate some of the produce of the Land. Apparently, the manna continued to appear all the way through Moses' conquest of the Transjordan and up through the crossing of the Jordan until they ate the Passover in Gilgal. *On the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. The manna*

ceased on the day after they had eaten some of the produce of the land, so that the sons of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate some of the yield of the land of Canaan during that year.

An Application: Being in God's kingdom does not mean we can be irresponsible. God does for us a multitude of things we cannot do for ourselves (Luke 12:27). But being part of the body of Christ does not mean we should expect God to do for us what we should do for ourselves and our dependents. For example, thinking "I don't need to get professional medical help for my sick child because God will heal them," would be like Israel continuing to expect God to provide them with manna after they entered the Land.

5:13-15, Joshua saw a Being who had the form of a man standing with a sword drawn, claiming to be *the captain of the host of the Lord*. Joshua *fell on his face* as an act of acknowledgment and worship Him (possibly because the *man* used the word "Yahweh" for God). Unlike the angel in Revelation 19:10 and 22:9, who told the Apostle John, "*Do not do that,*" this One encouraged the worship by telling Joshua what He told Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3:5, "*Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.*" And Joshua *did so*. This *captain of the host of the Lord* was undoubtedly the One we know, from New Testament revelation, as Jesus, since only He would legitimately receive worship. So, this passage affirms the deity of Christ and that He should be worshiped. Of course, Joshua did not know about the trinity. What he knew was, the God of Israel (Yahweh) should be worshiped, and He, not Joshua, was the *captain of the host of the Lord*.

An Application: Whatever ministry you have, never get the idea that you are leading it. The Lord is the captain of what He is doing. You might be a director, president, priest, or pastor of your organization, but you are not in charge of anything God is doing. Do not present your ministry as a focus on yourself or what you are doing. Present the Word of God and get out of the way.

Chapter 6

6:1-9, *The captain of the host of the Lord* gave Joshua the plan for conquering Jericho. It was not only a strategy no army would think of, but it was also something God never commanded before, or since.

God's command was that three groups march around Jericho, once a day, for six days and seven times on the seventh day:

- (1) The men of war
- (2) The priests carrying the ark of the covenant
- (3) Seven priests carrying trumpets

Then on the seventh day, they were to do it seven times (obviously, they were not to keep a sabbath that week). Then they were to blow the trumpets and the people were to shout. The reason for the procedure is unknown, but the impact would clearly test Israel's faith, defined as understanding that what God said was true. For example, what would stop the army of Jericho from raining down arrows on the Israelites or charging their line at the gate? [Old Testament Jericho was about 8.5 acres (3.4 hectares), so it could easily be circled seven times in a day.]

An Application: God is creative, expect Him to do creative things in your life as you remain faithful to His commands. Again, notice:

Faith is whatever you understand to be true.

Faith described in the Bible is understanding the truth to be true.

Faithfulness in the Bible is consistently understanding the truth to be true.

6:10-19, Joshua gave four instructions which were not included in the Captain's commands, although it is possible they were included but not recorded in 6:2-5.

- (1) Joshua told the people to keep silent until he gave the command to shout.
- (2) On the second day, and presumably days 2-6, the priest carrying the trumpets blew the trumpets as they circled the city.

- (3) Rahab the harlot and her household were to be kept alive.
- (4) The city was under a ban, in that no one was to take any of the goods from Jericho. [The Hebrew word for *ban* is חֵרֶם (*cherem*), which means “devoted things.”] The wealth of Jericho was to be devoted to the Lord.

An Application: The first things in our life belong to God: our family, our money, our health, our hobbies, all belong to God—first.

6:20-21, God knocked down the walls of Jericho, but the army had to kill everyone and everything in the city, *both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword* (6:21). God’s commands gave Israel dependence on Him rather than dependence on the resources of Jericho.

An Application: Jesus paid for our sin on the cross. God gave us the victory. Salvation is completely a work of the grace of God (Ephesians 2:8-9). But here we see the most basic application of the book, we still need to kill all our sinful practices, habits, and motives (1 John 1:8-10).

6:22-25, Joshua ordered the city to be burned with fire, except the articles taken into the treasury of the house of the Lord. This would probably indicate that the tabernacle had been set up at Gilgal, including the Ark of the Covenant in its holy of holies. The silver and gold was taken into the treasury of the tabernacle, but we are not told what they did with that treasure.

However, Rahab the harlot and her father’s household and all she had, Joshua spared; and she has lived in the midst of Israel to this day. This is the last time Rahab is mentioned in Joshua. But from Matthew 1:5, we learn that she married a Jew named Salmon and became the mother of Boaz. Boaz married Ruth, and their descendent was King David. David and Bathsheba had Solomon, who was the forefather of Joseph (Matthew 1), and Nathan, who was forefather of Mary (Luke 3). So, Rahab’s Savior would be her own great, great, plus a whole bunch of greats, grandson. Rahab is also mentioned in James 2:25 and Hebrews 11:31 among the list of the Old Testament faithful.

An Application: God remembers and rewards those who are faithful to Him. [A chronological note. The statement that Rahab *has lived in the midst of Israel to this day* means she was alive when the book of Joshua was written. This confirms the likelihood that Joshua wrote the book, probably with the help of Eleazar the priest and his son Phinehas.]

6:26-27, Joshua cursed anyone who rebuilt Jericho with a loss of their firstborn. Although some people lived on the site (Joshua 18:21; Judges 3:13; 2 Samuel 10:5), the city was never rebuilt until about 600 years later. Hiel the Bethelite attempted to rebuild Jericho (around 870 B.C.). But it resulted in the death of his two sons Abiram and Segub (1 Kings 16:34). God honored the prediction of Joshua, hundreds of years later.

An Application: God remembers, everything.

Chapter 7

7:1, Chapter 7 is dedicated to the consequences of one sin of one man. The result being Joshua’s army was humiliated at Ai and 36 men died. The interesting thing here is that one man violated the ban, and all of Israel was held accountable. The sin of one man is introduced by the phrase, *the sons of Israel acted unfaithfully*. God had a national (corporate) connection with Israel, as well as with individual Israelites.

An Application: In this (church/grace) age, God has a commitment to the individual believer. God has no national commitments today, even to Israel (except to preserve the race for a future millennial kingdom). We should care for our country. We should not kill off all the animals or cut down all the trees without replacing them. We should not pollute the air, or throw our garbage everywhere. But we should not think that doing those things will have a long-term effect on our planet or that we can do

something to save our nation (Zephaniah 1:2; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 21:1-3). The long-term impact is in spreading the gospel to the world and discipleship of individual believers under our care.

7:2-5, The scouts that went to Ai gave Joshua a misleading report. There were 12,000 people in Ai (8:25). But the initial defeat at Ai was not because they did not bring enough men of war. It was because there was disobedience to God which had not been dealt with. Israel was punished for the sin of Achan, not because they knew about it, but because God knew about it. From what we are told, it seems that nobody knew about it except Achan and God. It is a testimony to the omniscience of God. But it is also interesting that Israel was punished for a sin they knew nothing about.

An Application: All disobedience to the Word of God is sin, whether we know it or not. Ignorance of the Word of God does not make disobedience permissible. Sin is not about disobedience to what we know. It is about disobedience to what God says.

7:6-9, Joshua assumed the defeat at Ai was because of God's unfaithfulness to His promise, when, in reality, it was because of Israel's unfaithfulness to God's command. But because Joshua did not know that, his prayer had 3 parts:

- (1) They should have stayed *beyond the Jordan*, in the territory conquered by Moses.
- (2) The Canaanites (also called Amorites) *will hear of it and they will surround us and cut off our name from the earth*—Notice the assumption that information travels fast and efficiently.
- (3) God's great name will be cut off from the earth.

An Application: When we experience difficulties, the tendency is to worry (like, unable to sleep at 3:00 in the morning). Probably, we do not know all the facts. One of my seminary professors years ago gave the class this advice. "If you have a significant decision to make, wait three days. Things will look different after three days." I have found that advice very helpful, especially in conflict situations.

7:10-15, God told Joshua, "*I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy the things under the ban from your midst*" (7:12).

An Application: We cannot live in unrepentant disobedience and expect God to be with us. Sin needs to be confessed and dealt with in a responsible way. Once it is dealt with, we should move on. Some mega-examples of disobedience in the New Testament would be Peter's denial of Christ and Paul's killing Christians. We all sin all the time (Romans 7:15-25). All we can do is depend on the blood of Christ for cleansing, confess our sin, and move on (Colossians 1:20; 1 John 1:8-10; Revelation 7:14). But sin should be confessed, not ignored.

7:16-21, Early the next morning, Joshua called for an assembly of Israel to identify the offender. We are not told exactly how this was done, probably by casting lots. At any rate, it was supernatural, something not repeatable today. The selection process first exposed the guilty tribe, then the extended family, then the more immediate family, and finally the individual. After being identified, Achan confessed his sin. But notice that, through the whole selection process, he remained silent.

An Application: Getting caught and being forced to admit your guilt is not the same as confessing your sin.

7:22-23, Notice the crime was verified with physical evidence, even though Achan confessed his guilt.

An Application: Truth (the way things actually are) can only be determined by applying reason to real evidence. What someone says must be verified with real observable evidence.

7:24-26, ...*they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones.*

God's wrath against Israel was satisfied when Achan and all his family were killed and burned. Notice two things. God's wrath was not satisfied until somebody died. That is why Jesus had to die, to satisfy the wrath of God against our sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). We should also notice, Achan's sin was not taking

goods from the city. Abraham did that when he rescued Lot (Genesis 14). David did that when he captured the Amalekites who had raided Ziklag (1 Samuel 30). Joshua and the Israelites also did that after the victory at Ai (Joshua 8:2). What was not wrong for Abraham, David, or Joshua at Ai, was wrong for Achan at Jericho. The problem was not taking captured goods, the problem was disobeying the Word of God.

An Application: There were things wrong for Israel (such as eating certain foods) that are not wrong for the church. There are things wrong for the church (such as killing our enemies) that was not wrong for Israel. There were also things right for Israel that are wrong for the church (such as animal sacrifices for sin.) We are to keep the commandments for our age.

Chapter 8

8:1-2, After Achan’s crime was judged, God again came to Joshua to assure him He had not abandoned His plan or rejected Joshua. These words were an encouragement to Joshua. But the specific plans for conquering Ai changed. First, ...*you shall take only its spoil and its cattle as plunder for yourselves*, and second, ...*set an ambush for the city behind it*.

An Application: God does not always tell us how to do things. But when He does tell us how to do something, we need to follow those directives. For example, God tells us how to treat our spouse and children (Ephesians 5:22-6:4), how to act when we gather together as a church (1 Corinthians 11:18ff; Hebrews 10:24-25), how to witness to unbelievers (1 Peter 3:15) and how to love one another (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

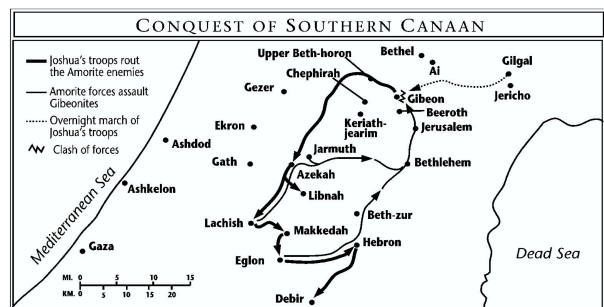
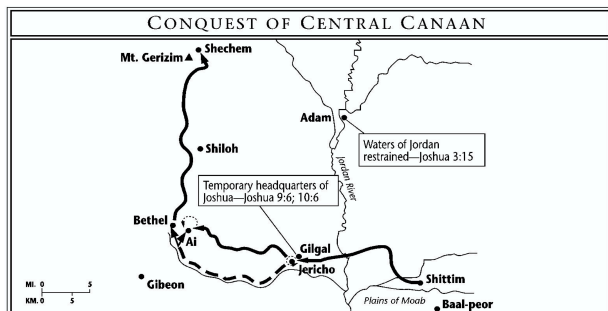
8:3-8, Joshua explained to 30,000 Hebrew warriors exactly the plan for capturing Ai.

An Application: If you expect people to participate or support what you are doing, explain your plan and your strategy in enough detail that they are confident about your objectives.

8:9-29, focus on 24-27, In obedience to God, Joshua killed all the Canaanites in Ai. *All who fell that day, both men and women, were 12,000—all the people of Ai...until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai* (8:24-26).

An Application: Either you believe we should be killing Canaanites today or you are a dispensationalist. Jesus commanded the apostles to make disciples of the Gentiles (Matthew 28:18-20). This was just the opposite of God’s command to Joshua about killing Gentiles. Either you believe God Himself changed, and is therefore not immutable, or that God does not change (Hebrews 13:8; James 1:17), but His directives changed because we are in a different dispensation, in which case you are a dispensationalist.

8:30-35, After the victory at Ai, Joshua took the ark of the covenant to the center of the country between Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal, biblical Shechem near the modern city of Nablus. There he: (1) built an altar, (2) sacrificed burnt offerings, (3) wrote a copy of the Mosaic Law on stones [which assumes many of the people were literate in Hebrew], and (4) read all the Law to the people. [Notice this assumes the written Pentateuch was carried all through the wilderness (and probably copied by the Levites) then



[Conquest maps from the Ryrie Study Bible.]

across the Jordan and into Canaan.] After this ceremony, Joshua apparently returned the ark to the headquarters they established at Gilgal, near Jericho (10:15), where it remained until the seven-year conquest was over and the tabernacle was set up at Shiloh (18:1).

An Application: We should focus on the Bible, not human leaders—even good ones. Writing the Law on stones was the closest Joshua could do to printing Bibles and putting them in the hands of the people. Now everyone could read the Law, which put the focus on the God of the Law, not human leadership, even Moses or Joshua. In a similar way, the printing press of the 1400s put the Bible in the hands of the people. That brought about the Reformation of the 1500s, a biblical theology not tied to the clergy in the 1600s, the Great Awakening of the 1700s, and the Dispensational emphasis on Bible study, missions, and evangelism of the 1800s and 1900s.

Chapter 9

9:1-2, The southern Canaanite tribes (six are listed) came together to fight against Israel. Although many sources say the Canaanites did not get along with one another, they put aside their difference and *gathered themselves together with one accord to fight against Joshua and Israel*. The Gibeonites differed from the other Canaanites in one significant way. All the Canaanites were aware of the previous victories and miracles that accompanied the Israelites. All of them feared Joshua and the Israeli army. But the Gibeonites believed Israel would win. The others believed Israel could be defeated.

An Application: The difference between the defiant unbeliever and the repentant unbeliever is that the repentant unbeliever realizes he has no hope by himself before God, so he comes in humility to God. The unrepentant unbeliever thinks he can be victorious, he can lead his own life, with pride, independent from God.

9:3-15, The rest of chapter 9 is about the Gibeonites who tricked Joshua into making them servants of the Israelites. Israel was not allowed to make peace with any of the tribes of the Land. God told Moses, *you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them* (Deuteronomy 7:2). But cities *that are very far from you, which are not of the cities of these nations nearby* they were permitted to make peace with them or make slaves of them (Deuteronomy 20:11-15).

The Hivites of Gibeon lived only about 6.5 mi (10.5 km) SW of Ai, about 10 miles (16 km) north and west of Jerusalem. Their territory included the city of Gibeon, the Valley of Aijalon where the sun would soon stand still in the sky (10:12), and Kiriath-jearim (9:17), where the Ark of the Covenant would later stay after being returned from the Philistines (1 Samuel 7:1). These Hivites of Gibeon deceived Joshua, and Joshua did not seek the Word of God, which apparently was available to Joshua verbally and audibly. Their lies were never commended, and Joshua should have sought the word of the Lord. But God did not condemn these people or criticize Joshua for letting them live.

Notice, these people were clever and creative, but they were also willing to humble themselves as slaves of the Israelites. Like Rahab, they heard and believed what God had done through Moses in Egypt and in the Transjordan (9:9-10), and that *the LORD your God had commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land* (9:24). The story is a mixed bag of good and bad, like the story of our lives. Their lying was sinful and Joshua was wrong to not consult God. But whatever else the Gibeonites did, their faith was described as understanding the truth to be true (9:24-25).

An Application: The people of the world today are mostly like the people of Canaan when *they gathered themselves together with one accord to fight against Joshua and Israel*. But one group was an exception. Because they believed in the God of the Hebrews, they made a creative appeal to Joshua. They lied. That is sinful. But do we expect unbelievers to be sinless? Evangelism and discipleship responds to people who are willing to believe, among people who are defying God and joining together to go against Him. Expect unbelievers to be sinful, and we should go to the Word of God for direction. But do not expect unbelievers to understand sin before they become believers. Sometimes unbelievers

become believers for totally selfish reasons, say to avoid hell and go to heaven. That does not mean their faith should be ignored.

9:16-27, Joshua and the leaders of the congregation of Israel swore an oath to let them live. The Word of God to Moses said, *“If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or takes an oath to bind himself with a binding obligation, he shall not violate his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth”* (Numbers 30:2). In order to not violate the Word of God, the leaders of Israel were obligated to keep their oath to the Gibeonites. *But Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation and for the altar of the LORD* (9:27). That meant the Gibeonites would also be exposed to the worship of the true God.

An Application: There are two interesting questions here.

First, why was Israel judged severely for the sin of Achan (stealing) that they did not know about, but were not judged for the sin of the Gibeonites (lying), that they also did not know about?

Second, why were Joshua and the elders more afraid of breaking their oath to the Gibeonites, than following the directive of God to kill all of the Canaanites? It seems the best answer is that both, the case of Achan and the oath to the Gibeonites, involved a specific command of God, given in words from God. God did not specifically address the situation with the Gibeonites as he did with Jericho and Ai. So, an application would be, if we sin or act foolishly, that does not give us the right to disobey the Word of God in order to escape from the consequences of our sin and foolishness.



Chapter 10

10:1-11, Joshua 10 describes the southern campaign. Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem, heard that Joshua had captured Jericho and Ai, and made a treaty with the Gibeonites. Here (10:2) we have our best description of Gibeon. *Gibeon was a great city, like one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all its men were mighty.* [Charts in chapter 10 from pastoratjoyfulheart.com]

But unlike the Gibeonites who believed the God of Israel would be victorious, Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem organized five Amorite kings to attack Gibeon. The Gibeonites then appealed to Joshua for help. Joshua marched his army all night, uphill for 25 miles (40 km), and defeated the coalition of southern kings, while God rained down large hailstones on the Canaanite army, which did not hit the Israelites. From the Canaanite perspective they had a right to the land since they were there first. But the Bible does not look at things from the world’s perspective. What mattered was that God was taking His chosen people into His chosen land (Deuteronomy 11:8-12). This fulfilled two previous predictions:

(1) The Canaanites were a people cursed from the time of Noah (Genesis 9:25).

(2) God promised Abraham, *Then in the fourth generation they [Abraham’s descendants] will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete* (Genesis 15:16). Apparently, they were already evil at the time of Abraham but now their evil was *complete*.

An Application: One comparison today is this. As the Canaanites organized themselves against the Word of God which came to Joshua, so also the efforts of today’s liberal progressive movement, are to organize people against the Word of God recorded in the Bible. I have heard conservatives explain the liberal progressive movement as against tradition, against the constitution, against republicans, or against the rule of law. All of that is wrong. Liberal (postmodern, neo-Marxist) progressives are opposing the Bible. [We shall see the same thing with the uniting of the northern Canaanites in chapter 11.]

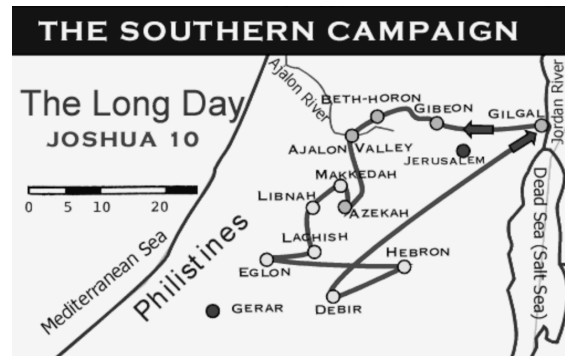
10:12-15, Joshua prayed, and God caused the sun and moon to stand still *until the nation avenged themselves of their enemies*. Saying *the sun stood still and the moon stopped* is obviously a metaphor, like the common expression of “sunrise” and “sunset.” But the metaphor represents a miracle that actually happened. This could represent the earth stopping its rotation around the sun. Also, the Ryrie’s Study Bible offers a second possibility. Ryrie says,

The Hebrew for ‘stood still’ (v. 13) is a verb of motion, indicating a slowing or stopping of the rotation of the earth on its axis (which would not affect the earth’s movement around the sun).

Whatever it was, the miracle would also assume God controlled the consequences of it, such as global storms and title waves. The author points out this event is *written in the Book of Jashar*. Don Campbell writes,

The Book of Jashar is a Heb. literary collection of songs written in poetic style to honor the accomplishments of Israel’s leaders” [Bible Knowledge Commentary].

An Application: The miracles recorded in the Bible are supernatural events that affirm God’s control over His natural creation (Luke 8:24). Never apologize for, or accept some natural ways of explaining, the supernatural miracles recorded in the Bible (John 14:11).



10:16-19, Joshua told his men to secure the five kings in a cave but not to stay there. Their priority was to finish the battle. He said, “*pursue your enemies... do not allow them to enter their cities.*” Then, pursuing the Canaanites, Joshua *finished slaying them with a very great slaughter, until they were destroyed* (10:20), except for a few who *had entered the fortified cities*.

An Application: Whatever battle you are fighting, finish the battle. For example, if it is a battle against some sin, do not stop until you have set yourself in a position where the sin, whose temptation will always be there, can no longer defeat you.

10:20-27, Then Joshua killed the five kings and hung their bodies on trees, then buried them in the cave, but not before he performed a small ceremony. He ordered his officers to come and put their feet on the necks of the kings, to indicate that the officers should *not fear or be dismayed! Be strong and courageous, for thus the LORD will do to all your enemies with whom you fight*.

An Application: We should not hesitate to destroy the moral and theological positions of the enemies of the Word of God. Stand on their religious necks, with strong and courageous arguments because the Word of God is truth (John 17:17).

10:28-43, focus on verse 40, This paragraph describes the final conquest of southern Canaan all the way down to Goshen in Egypt. The conquest is summarized by the statement in verse 40.

Thus Joshua struck all the land, the hill country and the Negev and the lowland and the slopes and all their kings. He left no survivor, but he utterly destroyed all who breathed, just as the LORD, the God of Israel, had commanded (10:40).

Understand (believe) that God’s values are not man’s values. Imagine being in Joshua’s army where you have been killing people for seven years—men, women, elderly people, children, and babies. And you are doing it *just as the LORD, the God of Israel, had commanded*. What would that do to your mind. If you took God out of that process and saw human life as the ultimate value, then your moral values, your conscience, would be devastated. The only way you could do this as a soldier and remain sane is to understand God’s values are different than man’s values.

An Application: If your conscience tells you something different than the Word of God commands, ignore your conscience. Our conscience will generally point to what is right. But our conscience can also be warped and twisted. For example, feminism has warped many of our churches and Christian

organizations into putting women in leadership positions. So, after while the conscience of many Christians is okay with that. But the Word of God is not (1 Timothy 2:11-14).

Chapter 11

11:1-5, Then it came about, when Jabin king of Hazor [the leading city of Northern Galilee] heard of Joshua's victories in the south, he sent a message to all the kings of the northern city-states to form a coalition against Joshua's army. As with the southern kings, whatever their differences with each other, the northern kings agreed to come together against Israel.

An Application: The lesson to understand is the same as with the gathering of the southern kings. Expect the world's leaders to come together to oppose the Word of God. Unlike what we hear about the world being divided, the world is coming together, united against the Bible. Expect the post-modern, progressive, neo-Marxist liberals to ignore their differences and come together in mass against the Bible. For example, the feminists and the Muslims disagree on nearly everything, but the progressives embrace both of them. Why? Because they both oppose the Bible. Why do they "celebrate" the violation of male and female sexual identity? Because the Bible says it is wrong. Why go to extremes to preserve the planet? Because God says He will destroy it. Why do they promote evolution and look for it on other planets? Because the Bible says we were created by God, and every creature reproduces after its kind.

11:6-9, In obedience to God, Joshua did three things *as the LORD had told him*:

- (1) He *struck them until no survivor was left to them*
- (2) He *hamstrung their horses*
- (3) He *burned their chariots with fire*

It is interesting that God told Joshua to hamstring the horses, making them pack animals who could walk but not run, and he burned the chariots. One would think God would tell Joshua to take the horses and chariots, train Israel's soldiers to operate them, and use them in battle, or at least use them to defend the cities he had conquered, as Solomon did 500 years later (1 Kings 10:26). It seems that the reason for this (Israel foot soldiers fighting against Canaanite chariots) is because that way there is no doubt it is God who delivered *all of them slain before Israel* (11:6).

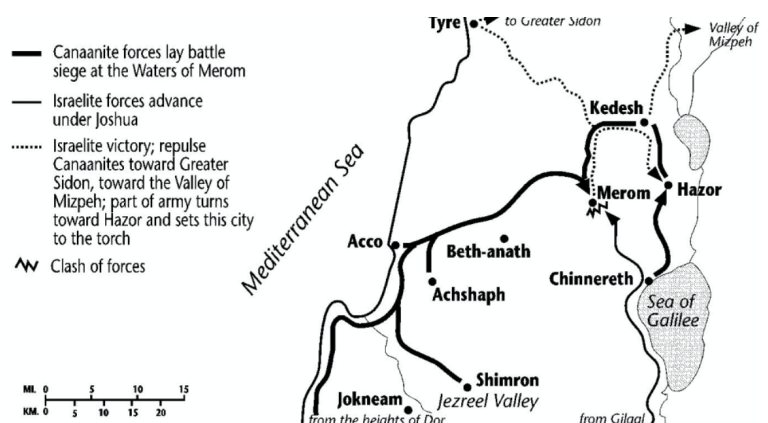
An Application: Follow the commands of God in the Word of God, even if worldly wisdom suggests what they consider a better way such as: encouraging fornication, gender changes, replacing the family with a "village," justifying abortion and lying.

11:10-18, Joshua also only burned Hazor with fire. This was probably because Hazor was the largest city in the Land, being 200 acres (80 hectares), compared to Megiddo which was 14 acres (5.6 hectares), and Jericho which was only 8 acres (3.2 hectares) Also, Hazor controlled all trade moving between Babylon and Egypt. [Information from the Bible Knowledge Commentary.]

Verse 18 tells us *Joshua waged war a long time with all these kings.*

An Application: Victory over our battle against sin will probably (usually) take a long time.

11:19-20, The second phase of the northern conquest was to turn back and kill all the civilians living in the cities (11:11). This was all to fulfill the command God gave Moses who passed it along to Joshua.



[Map from Ryrie Study Bible]

To make sure the Canaanites died, *it was of the LORD to harden their [Canaanite] hearts, to meet Israel in battle in order that he [Joshua] might utterly destroy them, that they might receive no mercy, but that he might destroy them, just as the LORD had commanded Moses (11:20)*. God hardened the hearts of the Canaanites, so Joshua would completely destroy them. God took away any mercy that Joshua might have for the Canaanites.

An Application: In our battle against our personal sin, we must get to the point where we hate it enough to utterly destroy it. Our sin nature will continue to win until we get to the point where we hate our sin and determine to destroy it without mercy. *Putting to death the deeds of the body*, where we hate those deeds enough to put them to death, is the leading of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:13-14).

11:21-23, The final phase of victory was to *cut off* the Anakim, people living in the south-central part of the country. These were the giants who terrified the spies sent out by Moses 47 years earlier (Numbers 13:33). But, for some unstated reason, Joshua left some of them in Gaza, Ashdod, and Gath. 400 years later, David killed one of them from Gath, named Goliath. The conclusion to the conquest is:

So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD had spoken to Moses, and Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. Thus the land had rest from war (11:23).

An Application: Rest from our spiritual war with the enemies of God in the world does not come from compromise, or counseling, or training, or rehabilitation of the unrepentant. Rest from war comes from complete total victory over sin. This is only accomplished by the cross of Jesus Christ and only applied by receiving Him as Savior (John 1:12). Our message to the world should be the gospel, not rehabilitation.

Chapter 12

Focus on verses 1 and 24, Chapter 12 reviews the victories of Moses over the Transjordan kings (verses 2-6), then lists Joshua's victories over the kings of the Land, *in all thirty-one kings*. The chapter is about the geography Moses and Joshua conquered.

An Application: The Bible is not a fairy-tale of religious superstition. The Bible describes real events in real places. Many can be excavated and visited today. Biblical geography should be a huge part of making a defense of our hope (1 Peter 3:15).

Chapter 13

13:1 & 6, Joshua was an old man at the time this chapter was written. We know he died at the age of 110 (24:29), so he was probably about 100 years old at the time of the statement in 13:1. The army removed all the major military presence of the Canaanites, but Israel did not possess all the land. Major portions remained in the hands of the Canaanites.

An Application: Just because you are *old and advanced in years*, does not mean you are ready to retire or that all you need to accomplish is finished. Your specific tasks may change but if you are still alive, you are still responsible for being responsible. That includes applying the Word of God (2 Timothy 2:2), carrying out the great commission (Matthew 28:18-20), and being prepared to make a defense for the hope that is within you (1 Peter 3:15).

13:13 & 33, The one group who did not receive an inheritance was the tribe of Levi, because *the offerings by fire to the LORD, the God of Israel, are their inheritance*. We will focus on the Levites in chapter 21, but here we will only observe that God chose to have a tribe where He alone was their inheritance.

An Application: We, the church, are like the Levites in that we have no earthly inheritance. *The LORD, the God of Israel, is our inheritance*.

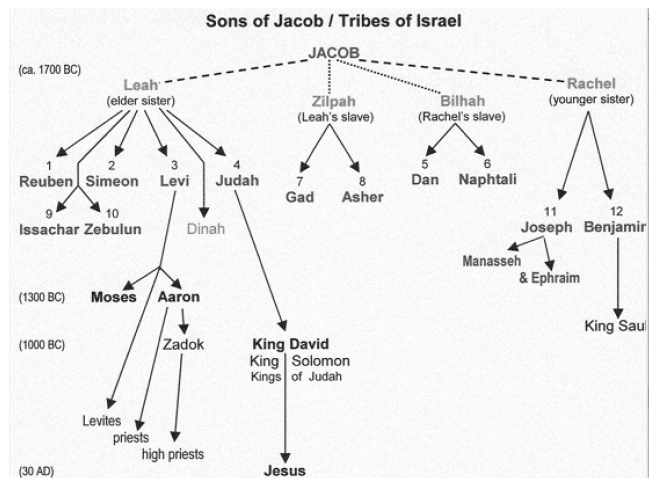
Chapter 14

14:1-5, After the boundaries of the land were determined, then which tribe received which portion was assigned to the tribes by lot (14:2; 18:8; 19:51) according to the instruction of Moses (Num. 26:54-56).

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says,

According to Jewish tradition, the name of a tribe was drawn from one urn and simultaneously the boundary lines of a territory from another. This method designated each tribal inheritance.

An Application: Most decisions should be made looking at facts, weighing the options and deciding what is best using biblical morality and rational thought. Do not ask God to make decisions that God is asking you to make. But occasionally a decision cannot be made weighing all the options. In that case, flip a coin, but do not put any mystical/superstitious meaning in the result of the coin flip.



14:6-15, Moses promised an inheritance to Caleb because he followed God *fully* (Deuteronomy 1:34-36). That promise was fulfilled even though it was delayed nearly 45 years. But Caleb did not follow God for a reward, he followed God because He is God. Other than Joshua, Caleb was the only one of the Israelites who we are told, followed God *fully*. Caleb defined that in contrast to, *my brethren who went up with me* [into the land of Canaan 45 years earlier and] *made the heart of the people melt with fear*.

An Application: Following the Word of God fully, when others are not willing to do that, will be rewarded by God fully, eventually.

Chapter 15

15:1&12, Judah was the first tribe to be allotted an inheritance in the Land, which was also the largest portion. It was mainly a big square from the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean and south far enough to include Kadesh-barnea (15:3), the oasis where Moses sent out the 12 spies. Judah's territory included the very fertile valley of Eshcol, from which the spies brought back to Moses a large cluster of grapes (Numbers 13:23-24). But Judah was also surrounded by Israel's enemies, the Moabites on the east, the Edomites on the south, the Amalekites on the southwest, and the Philistines on the west. Judah is also the tribe of David and Jesus (Genesis 49:10; Matthew 1:1, 3; Luke 3:23, 33).

An Application: When God gives us a large gift, we have a large responsibility. All of us in the western world of the 21st century have been given (born into) a culture that provides us with more disposable wealth and prosperity than all previous generations. We also have been given many opportunities, talents and abilities. We have a lot to be responsible for.

15:13-19, As previously recorded, Joshua gave the city of Hebron, in the territory of Judah, to Caleb. Within that territory was a Canaanite hold-out city called Debir. Caleb said, *The one who attacks Kiriath-sepher [i.e. Debir] and captures it, I will give him Achsah my daughter as a wife*. Either Achsah was very beautiful or Othniel, Caleb's nephew already had a relationship with her (or both). Anyway, Othniel immediately captured the city and Caleb gave him Achsah as a wife. So, Caleb's nephew Othniel, became his son-in-law (Judges 1:1, 10-15, 20) and went on to become a judge in Israel (Judges 3:9-11). The account of Achsah ends with her also asking and receiving a spring of water from her father (Judges 1:12-15). Notice, although Caleb was now old, and it was probably not reasonable for him to personally lead an army into battle, he still made sure the city of Debir was conquered so they would not continue to influence his family. [Historical note. Caleb is buried in the same city as Joshua

and his tomb is visited along with Joshua's by an annual pilgrimage of Jews (see pictures at the end of this study).]

An Application: As we get older, we cannot fight all the battles we could when we were younger. But we can prepare, motivate, and utilize other younger believers to continue the battle for the Bible and the spread of the gospel. Do not retire. Do not stop fighting for the truth of the Word of God. Do not leave the battle until God takes you out of the battle.

15:63, The territory of Judah included over 100 cities which they successfully occupied. Except they could not get the Jebusites out of Jerusalem [the early name for Jerusalem, the city of the Jebusites, was Jebus (Judges 9:10)]. The reason is not given, but the city, which David later called Zion, was a natural fortress bordered by steep cliffs on three sides. The men of Judah were able to capture the lower city at the time of the Judges (Judges 1:8, 21). But the Jebusites remained a tough, determined, well-fortified people. They were eventually dislodged at the time of David (2 Samuel 5:6-7).

An Application: Even long-term sins, that have dominated our lives for years, should not be ignored but routed out and eliminated.

Chapter 16

16:1, 4 & 10, Chapter 16 is about the territory given to Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. This included the central hill country, most of which is in the Palestinian West Bank today. It also included the city of Shiloh, where the tabernacle with the Ark of the Covenant stood for over 300 years. *But they* [the descendants of Joseph's son, Ephraim] *did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer*, instead *they* [the Canaanites living in Gezer] *became forced laborers* to the tribe of Ephraim. This was a big mistake because later, during the time of the Judges, the Canaanites rose up and enslaved the Israelites.

An Application: It is all too easy for a believer to tolerate and excuse some pet sin only to wake up some day to the grim realization that it has risen up to drive him to spiritual defeat. The same is true with tolerating feminism, the woke mentality, or LGBTQ+ lifestyles in our local churches or missionary organizations. It's important to deal with sin decisively. [Application statement is quoted from the Bible Knowledge Commentary]

Chapter 17

17:1-6, The chapter begins announcing the allotment to the tribe of Manasseh. But the announcement is immediately interrupted with a request from the daughters of Zelophehad a great, great, grandson of Manasseh who had no sons, only daughters. The request came to Joshua and Eleazar the priest, who without debate gave the daughters a portion of the land. This was previously decided by Moses, so they were simply following the directives of Moses (Deuteronomy 27:7-11).

An Application: Women should not be denied the same teaching as men. Although Paul directed that women should not speak when they come together as a church (a meeting focusing on the Lord's Supper) they should be given the same biblical education as the men (Titus 2:3-5).

17:12-13, Chapter 17 is about the tribe of Joseph's son Manasseh and specifically the descendants of Manasseh's first-born son, Machir. They *were allotted Gilead* [in the hill country of the Transjordan] *and Bashan* [which is today's Golan Heights]. But (in verse 12) we are told that *the sons of Manasseh could not take possession of these cities, because the Canaanites persisted in living in that land*. Then we have what seems to be a more general statement about the whole country, when the *sons of Israel became strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor* instead of driving them out. This became a source of suffering, internal conflict, and war for the Israelites during the times of the judges and the kings.

An Application: When we try to use sin by putting parameters around it, possibly thinking it will serve us, it will likely become something we cannot drive out. Examples might include areas of sexual

gratification, the tendency to gossip, lying, cheating in business deals or using vulgar language to express ourselves.

17:14-18, The *sons of Joseph* from the tribe of Ephraim (verse 15), complained to Joshua that their land was too small. But if you trace out their territory on a map, except for Judah, they receive the largest allotment of land. Joshua told them to, *go up to the forest and clear a place for yourself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the Rephaim*. [It is interesting that there are no forests in that land today.] The response of *the sons of Joseph* revealed that the real problem was the Canaanites still living in the land who had *iron chariots*. Joshua reminded them they were capable of clearing the hill country and driving out the Canaanites.

An Application: Do not complain that you cannot do the job God has given you (say, as spouse, parent, grandparent, neighbor, elder, a role in a local church or missionary organization) because it is difficult.

Chapter 18

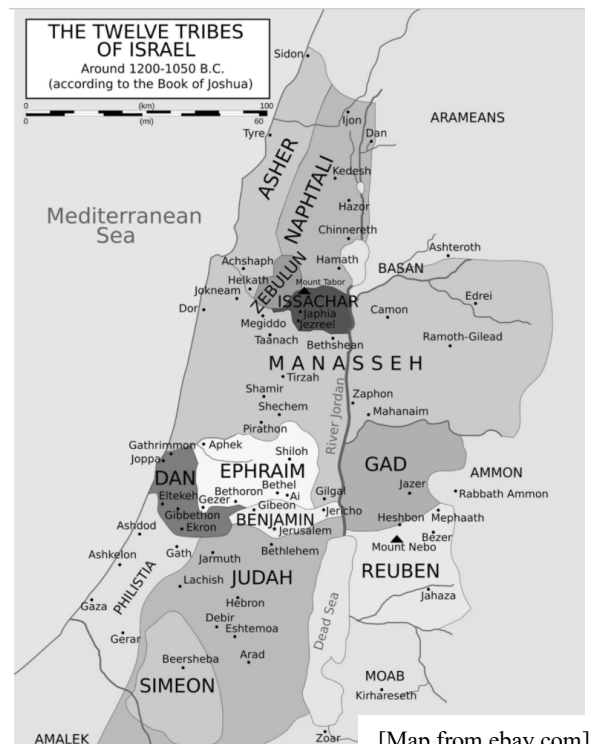
18:1-10, Before the final division of the Land, *the whole congregation of the sons of Israel*, under Joshua's direction set up the tabernacle with the Ark of the Covenant, at Shiloh in the center of the country [about 20 miles (32 km) north of Jerusalem]. During that time, Joshua used the occasion to remind seven tribes that they had not yet entered *to take possession of the Land*. Apparently, they were willing to continue to live like Bedouins, as they had done in the wilderness. But Joshua's commands were not without preparation. He sent 21 messengers (three from each of the seven tribes who had not possessed their territory) to make a geographic survey of the remaining land. We do not know how long that survey took, but these were probably men trained for this purpose. The "Bible Knowledge Commentary" reports,

Josephus wrote that these men were experts in geometry. Probably their parents had mastered the science of land surveying in Egypt.

Joshua's commission was originally to conquer the Land militarily. But that was not his only job. He was also to settle the land, which meant dealing with the Hebrew people, which can be more difficult. It reminds us of the Apostle Paul who brought the gospel to the Gentiles, but as the Gentile converts became the church, Paul found himself using most of his time dealing with problems in the church.

An Application: If money will solve the problem, it is not a very big problem. The biggest problems are usually people problems.

18:11 & 28, The second half of chapter 18 is about the allotment to the Benjamites. The tribe of Benjamin receive a very small area of land, but it contained most of the significant cities in the Land. It included Bethel, the original worship center, where Abraham and Jacob each built an altar and Jacob had the dream of angels ascending and descending from heaven. Benjamin also received Gibeon, that very large city where Joshua asked for the sun to stand still in the sky. Benjamin also received Mizep where Saul was later anointed king (near today's Ramallah) and Jerusalem. They received a total of 14 cities and their villages. Since Joshua put the Gibeonite cities to slavery, the territory of Benjamin also included many slaves. Whereas most of the tribes had the major task of establishing an agricultural living from the land, Benjamin's major challenge was managing populated cities.



[Map from ebay.com]

An Application: God gives different challenges to His people. We should take the responsibility for managing the situation we have been given, using the different gifts, talents, desires, roles, and life situations we are given.

Chapter 19

Joshua 19:1 & 9, Simeon was given a territory in the midst of the territory of Judah, apparently because Judah was given more area than it needed. Simeon received 17 towns, the most significant of which is Beersheba. But what happened to Simeon is unclear. It seems that they lost their territorial identity. Some were eventually incorporated into the tribe of Judah, others moved north to Ephraim and Manasseh (2 Chronicles 15:9; 34:6). When the kingdom was divided after Solomon, the tribes of the south were only Judah and Benjamin. Simeon is not mentioned as a southern tribe. Nonetheless, the tribe of Simeon will endure through the upcoming tribulation (Revelation 7:7) into the Millennial Kingdom (Ezekiel 48:24-26).

19:10 & 16, Zebulun was given a small territory in southern Galilee, which appears to be landlocked. Jacob's prophecy (in Genesis 49:13) said Zebulun would be a *haven for ships*. Because of this, some trace their territory with a finger of land extending out to the Mediterranean Sea. Their allotment included Nazareth, but it is not mentioned here. The Bethlehem mentioned in verse 15 is not the one where Jesus was born.

19:7 & 23, Issachar was given territory that included Jezreel, the future home of Ahab and Jezebel. Their allotment also included Mount Tabor, where the judge Deborah later instructed Barak *Go and march to Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand men from the sons of Naphtali and from the sons of Zebulun* (Judges 4:6).

19:24 & 31, Asher was given territory which included the Mediterranean coast from the Carmel Ridge (where Elijah defeated the prophets of Baal) all the way up to Sidon. This included Tyre, where Jesus cast a demon out of a Syrophenician woman's daughter. The tribal identity survived into the New Testament since we are told the prophetess Anna, who gave thanks for the birth of Jesus, was from the tribe of Asher (Luke 2:36-38).

19:32 & 39, Naphtali had a territory to the east of Asher which had little Old Testament significance but was the center of Christ's ministry in the north. It included Galilee and the Upper Jordan River valley all the way up to Mount Hermon. It also included the city later named Dan.

19:40 & 46-48, Dan received a small territory in the middle of the Land. It included Zorah, Eshtaol and Timna, where Samson later lived and fought the Philistines. It also included a portion of the Mediterranean seacoast, including Joppa (today's Tel Aviv) where Jonah tried to flee from the presence of the Lord (Jonah 1:3). In the New Testament, this is where Peter raised the woman Tabitha from the dead (Acts 9:36ff) and received the vision of the food (Acts 10). But Dan is like the black sheep of the family. Instead of possessing the territory they were given, they left and moved up near Mount Hermon, killed the peaceful people of Laish, and renamed the city Dan. It is probably for this reason their tribe does not seem to continue on into the future, since they are not mentioned in the 12 tribes preserved through the upcoming tribulation (Revelation 7).

An Application #1: As mentioned in chapter 12, one big thing that hits us as we read the last half of the book, especially chapter 19, is geography. The Bible talks about real places, on the real earth. They can be archeologically excavated to demonstrate what the Bible says is accurate. Another big thing that hit us is history. These are real places where real things really happened. This is not the Greek gods on Mount Olympus, a mystical Hindu story about the god Krishna driving a chariot, or Mohammed

climbing a magic ladder into heaven. We should proclaim the Bible, not as a mystical religion, but as real, true, and accurate, historically, geographically and archeologically.

Application #2: Some of the territory seemed small and insignificant when it was allotted by Joshua, but later turned out to be very significant in God’s plan. For example, we saw that Naphtali seemed very insignificant in the Old Testament, yet it became the primary place of Jesus’ ministry in Galilee. Just because your ministry is small, does not mean its future impact will be insignificant.

Application #3: The biggest dent in the unity of the 12 tribes is Dan being eliminated in the future. The most likely reason is that they left their territory for a physically better place with an improved climate and easier lifestyle. Do not do that. Do not leave where God has placed you for something that looks physically better—new house, new job, new spouse.

19:49-51, After all the tribes of Israel received their land, the last one to receive an inheritance was Joshua.

An Application: Leaders are givers. The greatest leader in any situation is the greatest giver in that situation. Godly leaders are servants, the last to receive material benefits.

Chapter 20

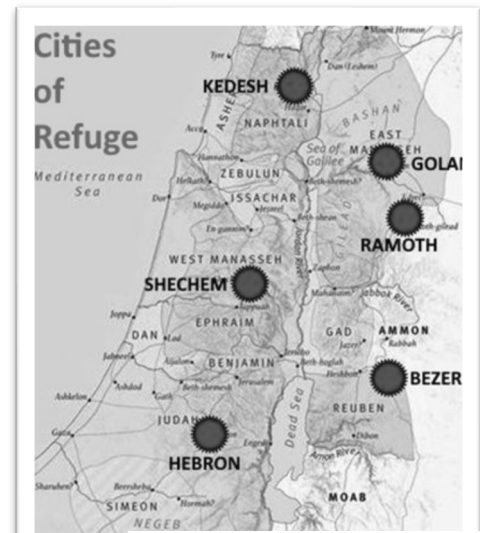
20:1-9, As designated by Moses (Numbers 35:11-12), someone guilty of involuntary manslaughter could flee to one of six designated cities of refuge where those, who wanted to avenge the death he caused, could not pursue him. The qualifications to be protected were:

1. He kills any person unintentionally, without premeditation.
2. He shall stand at the entrance of the gate of the city and state his case in the hearing of the elders of that city. The elders of the city were the initial court of law (Job 29:7; Deuteronomy 21:19; 22:15).
3. He shall dwell in that city until he stands before the congregation for judgment. The initial judgment of the elders was later taken to the congregation for judgment. [As we shall see in the next chapter these were Levites]

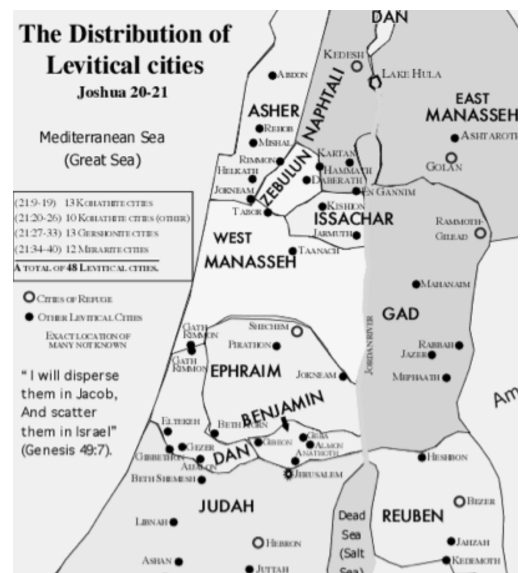
The results were:

1. If the judgment of the elders was not overturned by the congregation, the manslayer would live in the city until the death of the one who is high priest in those days.
2. Eventually, the manslayer shall return to his own city and to his own house, to the city from which he fled.

An Application: Sometimes unbelievers are living in sin unknowingly. They are committing sin unintentionally (such as having several marriages or using blasphemy). When they come to Christ, they should repent (Acts 2:38) and confess their sin (1 John 1:8-10). But they should also be given refuge in the church, the body of Christ.



[Map from jesusplusnothing.com]

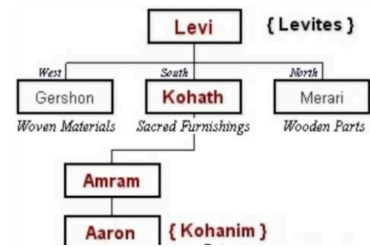


Chapter 21

21:1-3 & 41-42

Identifying The Levites

The last act of distribution was appointing towns for the Levites. The *heads of households of the Levites approached Eleazar the priest, and Joshua...at Shiloh* to request (or claim) the towns that Moses had promised (recorded in Numbers 35:1-8). They received 48 towns (Joshua 21:41) with pastureland which included all six cities of refuge. The distribution is described according to the three main lines of the Levites: Kohath, Gershon, and Merari. The distribution was such that everyone lived within 10 miles (16km) from a Levite. Not all Levites were priests, only those of the family of Aaron, the brother of Moses, from the family of Kohath through Amram.



[Map and chart from foundationsforfreedom.net]

The Levites did not have a tribal territory. *For the Levites have no portion among you, because the priesthood of the LORD is their inheritance ... they shall eat the Lord's offerings by fire and His portion.* The Levites did not have an inheritance in the Land. They were given cities to live in and fields to farm, but they did not own them. The Land was owned by one of the other tribes. *The Lord is their inheritance* (Joshua 18:7; Deuteronomy 18:1; Numbers 2:23).

Information about the Levites

- Levi was the third son of Leah and Jacob (Genesis 29:34).
- When Jacob and his family were returning to the Land, Levi and his brother Simeon killed the men in Shechem because the prince of Shechem kidnapped and raped their sister Dinah (Genesis 34:25). Jacob was angry about their violent solution and when he was about to die, he cursed Simeon and Levi for their violence (Genesis 49:5-7). So God chose a tribe cursed by Jacob to serve as His priesthood.
- God promised to multiply the descendants of the Levites (Jeremiah 33:22).
- The Levites were caretakers of the tabernacle and its furnishings (Numbers 1:50-51).
- The Levite cities included the cities of refuge, so the Levite elders made the decisions about a manslayer (Joshua 21).
- Some of the Levites were responsible for music (2 Chronicles 5:12).
- The Levites were obedient to God after the sinful building of the golden calf while Moses was on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 32:26-29). *So the sons of Levi did as Moses instructed, and about three thousand men of the people fell that day* (Exodus 32:28).
- A wandering Levite from Bethlehem became the priest of the tribe of Dan when they left their inheritance, killed the people of Laish and took over their city, calling the city Dan (Judges 17-18).
- When the Israelites were having relations with Midianite women, one Israelite boldly took a Midianite woman into his tent in front of everybody. *When Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he arose from the midst of the congregation and took a spear in his hand, and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and pierced both of them through, the man of Israel and the woman, through the body. So the plague on the sons of Israel was checked* (Numbers 25:7-8).



Information about the Levite Priests

- The Levite priests carried the Ark of the Covenant (Joshua 3:8; 1 Chronicles 15:2).
- A Levite priest began an apprenticeship at age 25, and between the ages of 30 and 50 were to *perform service in the tent of meeting* (Numbers 3:21-26; 4:3; 8:21-24).
- The Levitical priests served as judges of the people (Deuteronomy 17:8-13).

- The Levitical priests examined people for leprosy, quarantined or released them (Deuteronomy 24:8).
- The Levitical priests were responsible for maintaining the purity of Scripture, learning the Scripture, and teaching the Scripture to the people (Deuteronomy 17:18; 33:10; Nehemiah 8:13).
- The high priest was a Levite priest of the family of Aaron who was to guide the nation spiritually (Numbers 27:21). He was to enter the Most Holy Place once a year on the Day of Atonement to offer a sacrifice for the nation, and himself (1 Chronicles 6:49; Leviticus 24:9; Hebrews 9:27). There was only one high priest at a time.
- The Levitical priestly line is to continue into the Millennial Kingdom from the family of Zadok (Ezekiel 48:11).

Some Applications:

Both Apostles Peter and John compare the church to the priesthood:

- **Revelation 1:6**, ... *and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father.*
- **1 Peter 2:5**, *you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*
- **1 Peter 2:9**, *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.*

The Levitical priesthood ended with Christ's death on the cross (Hebrews 9: 11-15). The church is not, nor is it to develop, something like an Old Testament Levitical priesthood. But there are some applications.

1. The Levitical priests were chosen by God, in the sense that a priest had to be born into a priestly family. We are also chosen by God in the sense that our salvation, although it comes by a free will choice of faith (John 1:12; Romans 5:1), is also in the sovereign plan of God (Acts 2:39; Romans 9:18).
2. As a priesthood, we are to defend, proclaim, and be ready to teach the Bible.
3. As a priesthood, we are to take a stand for holiness in the midst of a people tolerating sin.
4. As a priesthood, we have no earthly inheritance. We are *a people for God's own possession*.

21:43-45, This is the end of the long list of territory allocations. The point is that God was faithful to His promise both to Abraham (Genesis 17:8) and Moses (Deuteronomy 7:22). But this passage does not fulfill the extent of the Abrahamic Covenant because God also said they would conquer the land gradually (Exodus 23:29), and the extent of God's promised territory would wait for the Millennial Kingdom (Amos 9:14-15). Future from this point, they would experience the cyclical period of the judges, the unfaithfulness of the bad kings, exile to Assyria and Babylon and a dispersion after A.D. 70. But even though Israel would be unfaithful, God would remain faithful to His promise. *If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself* (2 Timothy 2:13).

An Application: When we come to Christ we usually come to the place where we have rest from our sins. But that does not mean we have conquered our sin. We still have a sin nature which will not be conquered this side of the grave.

Chapter 22

22:1-9, The Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, kept their word and fought alongside their fellow Israelites for seven long years of hard combat. Some suggest these tribes were not in God's will since they wanted to stay east of the Jordan, but God had given Israel that land (24:8). Joshua gave them four exhortations:

1. To *observe the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you*
2. To *love* [it is the word for "affection"] *the LORD your God*
3. To *walk in all His ways*

4. To *hold fast to Him and serve* [“work for”] *Him with all your heart and with all your soul.*

An Application: This is a good outline for believers of all ages:

1. Observe, interpret, and apply all the commands of the Bible
2. Have an affection for the God revealed in the Bible
3. Walk in the *ways* of God, which imply knowing God beyond His commandments
4. Work to serve God *with all your heart and with all your soul.*

22:10-12, The remainder of chapter 22 is about a major misunderstanding and how it was wisely resolved. The 2 ½ tribes living in the Transjordan built *a large altar* on their side of the Jordan River. What they did was unwise, but not sinful. They were innocent of what they would be accused of, but they were guilty of not thinking through how their actions would be perceived.

An Application: Think about how your actions and your words are likely to be perceived. It is not always possible to prevent misunderstanding (of course), but always take that into consideration. For example, if a Christian unmarried couple decides to live together, they might say that they are not sleeping together. But they should consider how that is being perceived. Another example. If, in your writing or speaking, you illustrate your point with a culturally hotly contested issue, you will probably be misunderstood as only talking about that issue.

22:13-14, Instead of immediately going to war, the 10 tribes west of the Jordan decided to send a delegation to search out the matter. Depending on where they met, it probably took the better part of a week to walk there from Shiloh. They organized themselves under *Phinehas the son of Eleazar the [high] priest*. But we then learn that they had a fairly sophisticated organized leadership including *one chief for each father’s household from each of the tribes of Israel.*

An Application: Although Christians should consider how their actions are perceived, we should also not jump to conclusions about the actions, and especially the motives, of fellow believers. When we suppose some believer is living in unrepentant sin or teaching what is false, the first step is to have a thorough discussion with that person. If further action is required, we need to investigate the situation in an organized manner involving a plurality of mature men (as directed in Matthew 18 and 1 Corinthians 5).

22:15-20, The ten representatives of the western tribes made their case clearly, using historic references to the judgment of God.

An Application: If you are in a conflict with other believers, do not be vague. Make your case clearly, logically, and with information that allows all the facts to be made clear. For example, if you understand a believer is promoting a theological error, give him or her an adequate opportunity to make their case before rushing to judgment. The first step in any theological conflict is to make sure you can state your opponent’s case accurately.

22:21-29, The 2 ½ eastern tribes repeated three names for God (two times) as a basis of the sincerity of their claim that they had no intention of building an altar as an alternative place for sacrifice. They only built it as a memorial for future generations to realize they feared the same God as the western tribes. They concluded, *Far be it from us that we should rebel against the Lord.*

An Application: If you are being falsely accused of sin, false teaching, or rebellion against God, make your defense calmly and clearly so your commitment to the Word of God and the God of the Word cannot reasonably be denied.

22:30-34, Phinehas and the leaders of the Israelite families reported the encouraging testimony of the Transjordan tribes.

An Application: When a conflict has been resolved, however it has been resolved, make sure all those involved are aware of the resolution. Never leave people in a place where they are guessing about the outcome.

Chapter 23

23:1-5, In chapter 24 we have Joshua's final address to all the people at Shechem, but here in chapter 23, Joshua first speaks to the leaders, probably at Shiloh where the tabernacle stood with the Ark of the Covenant. Joshua said, "*I am old and advanced in years.*" He was 110 (24:29). He reminded them of three things: what God did, what he (Joshua) did, and what God would do:

1. *The Lord your God is He who has been fighting for you.*
2. *I have apportioned to you these nations which remain as an inheritance for your tribes...*
3. *The Lord your God, He will thrust them out before you.*

An Application: Christian leadership reminds people of what God has done, what they have been able to do as a result of what God has done, and what God has promised to do.

23:6-11, Joshua passed on to the leaders of Israel the command he had received from the Lord when he was commissioned to succeed Moses (1:6-9). The basic command is their foundation.

Be very firm, then, to keep and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, so that you may not turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left (verse 6).

Joshua then applied that foundational principle to their relationship with the Canaanite nations:

1. *You will not associate with these nations.*
2. *You will not mention the name of their gods, or make anyone swear by them, or serve them, or bow down to them.*
3. *But you are to cling* ["cleave (fast together), follow close (hard after), be joined together" (Strong's Hebrew Dictionary)], *to the LORD your God.*
4. *You are to love* [have affection for] *the Lord your God.*

An Application: Our basic command is to *keep and do* all that is written in the Bible. If we do that, we will not follow the gods of our world, such as evolution and progressivism. Jesus repeated the command, given by Moses (six times in Deuteronomy) and here by Joshua, *to love the Lord your God.* Jesus called this *the great and foremost* [or *first*] commandment. So, which is the foremost commandment to love God or to keep (do or apply) all that is written in the Bible? Answer, the foremost commandment is to love the Lord your God (Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Matthew 22:37-38). But the only way you know that you are loving the true God is to love the God revealed in the Bible.

23:12-16, This paragraph reflects the conditional nature of the Mosaic Covenant. Unconditional covenants, like the one to Abraham, were promises of God, not dependent upon the condition of the people. But the Mosaic Covenant was a conditional (if-then) covenant that required the obedience of the people. The next threat they faced was not the external threat of war which they had dealt with to conquer the land. This upcoming threat was internal, coming from a desire to associate with the Canaanite people and with that to blend worship with their gods.

An Application: What destroys a Christian is not just outward sins: like excessive alcohol, drug use and abusive behavior, but internal temptations like: lust, pride, gossip, and coveting. Note Jesus' comparison of murder to anger and adultery to lust (Matthew 5:27-28).

Chapter 24

Ryrie says,

The chapter takes the customary form of a suzerainty treaty (between a king and his vassals). See notes on Ex. 19:3 and Deut. 31:9-14. The form includes a preamble (vv. 1-2), historical prologue (vv. 2-13), stipulations of the covenant (vv. 14-24), and the writing and depositing of the agreement (vv. 25-28).

24:1-13, Here Joshua, proclaiming *Thus says the Lord the God of Israel*, reviewed their history from Abraham to their present time. God through Joshua referred to many events along the way, but the main point is that God led them out of Mesopotamia, out of Egypt, and into this Land.

An Application: Our God is not just a subjective religious experience. He is the real living God of history whose intervention is verified objectively by documented events in the lives of His people.

24:14, Joshua instructed the people with three precepts for serving God:

1. *Fear the LORD* – fear is “to revere [and] to frighten be (make) afraid, dread(ful)”
2. *Serve Him in sincerity* – sincerity is “without spot, undefiled upright whole”
3. *Serve Him in truth* – truth is the way things actually are. The word can also mean “faithful”

Then he contrasted this with worshiping the gods of their father in Mesopotamia and Egypt.

[Quotes from Strong’s “Hebrew Dictionary”]

An Application: Serving God must be done on His terms. And that includes, fear (both reverence for His character and being afraid of His judgment), sincerity (having confessed our sins), and truth (being faithful to the way things actually are).

24:15, This statement of Joshua is probably displayed in more Christian homes than any other from the Bible. If it isn’t it should be:

As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

In verse 15, Joshua makes following God a free-will choice, without taming it with predestination. He told them, *If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve.*

An Application: Serving God through salvation and obedience to His Word is a free-will choice. Whatever you understand about predestination and the sovereignty of God, it should not eliminate unhindered free-will choice. And every Christian father, or family patriarch, must decide if he will lead his family and extended family to choose to serve the Lord.

24:16-28, In this paragraph Joshua argues with the people, probably a group of elders representing the people.

Then Joshua said to the people, “You will not be able to serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgression or your sins” (verse 19).

Then,

The people said to Joshua, “No, but we will serve the LORD” (verse 21).

But apparently, they were still holding on to some idols, probably as superstitious good-luck charms because Joshua responded,

Now therefore, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel (verse 23)

Then,

The people said to Joshua, “We will serve the LORD our God and we will obey His voice” (verse 24).

Therefore, Joshua did three things as his final work:

- (1) He *made a covenant with the people.*
- (2) He *wrote these words in the book of the law of God.*
- (3) He set up a large stone by the tabernacle, apparently to mark their commitment.

In a sense, Joshua’s prediction and the claim of the people were both right. Someone, probably Phinehas the son of Eleazar the high priest, wrote this as part of Joshua’s obituary.

Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua and had known all the deeds of the LORD which He had done for Israel (verse 31).

But the next generation was the age of the judges.

In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes (Judges 17:6 and 21:25).

An Application: Strive to be a godly matriarch or patriarch because it is the right thing to do. Godly parents and grandparents can have an impact on this and the next generation. But, in most cases, not much beyond that. The sin nature of the descendants will eventually overcome the influence of godly parents and grandparents. Some other matriarch or patriarch will have to come forward to say, “As for me and my house we will serve the Lord.”

24:29-33, This final paragraph (as mentioned above) was probably written by Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the high priest. He discussed three funerals: that of Joshua, Joseph, and Eleazar, the emphasis being on the death of Joshua. Joshua was buried in his own town (19:50), his burial site is still marked and visited today. He is given the greatest title a person can have, *the servant of the Lord*. They also buried the bones of Joseph, probably a mummified remains which they had taken with them from Egypt. They had carried his remains across the parted-portion of the Red Sea to Mount Sinai, through 40 years in the wilderness, across the parted-portion of the Jordan, to Gilgal during the seven-year conquest and now finally to be buried at Shechem. The third funeral was for the high priest Eleazar, the son of Aaron and father of Phinehas.

An Application: The greatest epitaph anyone could have is that he or she was *the servant of the Lord*.

The Jerusalem Post reported about an American Jew who,

... delayed his flight back to the United States so that he could join some 10,000 pilgrims from across the country who hiked late Tuesday night into the Palestinian village of Kifl Haris to visit the tomb of the biblical leader Joshua Bin Nun.

A small stone-and-stucco mausoleum covered by a dome marks Joshua’s grave in the center of the village. It sits on the edge of an open square surrounded by apartment buildings and stores. Nearby are the graves of Joshua’s father, Nun Ben Elishama, and Calev [Caleb] Ben Yefuna – who together with Joshua were the only two of the 12 spies sent out by Moses who trusted that



(Photo taken by: Tovah Lazaroff - outside Joshua's Tomb)



Lazaroff -outside Calev's Tomb)



Joseph's Tomb in Nablus

God would bring the Jews safely out of the desert and into the Land of Israel. [May 5, 2016, (article and photos from jpost.com)]