

RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH



Survey Studies In The Old Testament

J O S H U A

THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN

by Steven Harper

SURVEY STUDIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

JOSHUA



Steven Harper

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Table of Contents

Preface	1
Lesson One: Overview	2
Lesson Two: God's Charge To Joshua (1:1-18).....	4
Lesson Three: Spying Out Jericho (2:1-24)	7
Lesson Four: Crossing Jordan Into Canaan (3:1-4:24)	9
Lesson Five: The New Beginning (5:1-12).....	11
Lesson Six: Jericho Conquered (5:13-7:1)	13
Lesson Seven: Failure, Then Victory, At Ai (7:2-8:35)	15
Lesson Eight: The Deception of the Gibeonites (9:1-27)	17
Lesson Nine: The Southern and Northern Campaigns (10:1-12:24)	19
Lesson Ten: The Land Divided Among the Tribes (13:1-19:51)	21
Lesson Eleven: The Cities of the Levites; The Cities of Refuge (20:1-21:45)	23
Lesson Twelve: The Eastern Tribes Return (22:1-34)	25
Lesson Thirteen: The Final Charges to Israel; Death of Joshua (23:1-24:33)	27
Lesson Fourteen: Review	29

Preface

As we begin this portion of God's word, the Israelites are once again standing at the edge of the Promised Land. [Remember they were there once before, in Kadesh-Barnea, where they listened to the 10 spies who told them the people of Canaan were too strong and that they would not be able to take the land; because they lacked faith in God's promise, they were made to wander for 40 years.] What will they do this time?

Before we get to the book, though, we would do well to back up and ask the question: *"Why are they even here?"* We saw at the beginning of the book of Exodus that the descendants of Jacob — known as the Israelites — were in Egypt, eventually living in bondage under a king who did not know of the great deeds of Joseph and how he had saved their nation. We saw how God heard the cry of the Israelites, and we learned that He heard them [specifically them, and not another people] because He had made a promise to one of their forefathers that He would make of him [Abraham] a great nation and would give to his descendants the land of Canaan — someday. We understand the *exodus* was part of His plan to bring those descendants to that Promised Land. We also saw that, as they were moving out of Egyptian bondage and towards that land, they lost faith in God and His promises and, as a result, almost all the adults died before they got to enter that Promised Land. The Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 40 years when it should have been a two-week journey.

Which brings us to this point. They have once again come to the edge of the land promised to their forefather Abraham, now with Joshua leading them instead of Moses. Now, the children of those who left Egypt are poised to see the land they would not; now, their children are about to fight battles and defeat the people they said they could not defeat; now, their children would inherit a land they had hoped would be theirs; now begins **The Conquest of Canaan**.

This series of events that brought the Israelites into Canaan and simultaneously expelled those who were then living there leads us to another question: *"Why were the people driven out and the land given to the Israelites?"* Some skeptics, looking for an excuse to criticize, claim unjust actions and treatment by an unjust God, and denounce the imperialistic motives and arrogance of a people who drive out and/or slaughter the innocent ones for no other reason than to take their land. Such simplistic views of this point in history must necessarily ignore the context of the time, the people, and the long-term plan of our Creator in order to make such charges, but it is often done. When one does not want to believe in God, it become much easier to deny Him altogether and, when that fails, depict Him as cruel, capricious, bloodthirsty, and unjust. He is none of those things, but a hardened heart will never accept the truth when it is not truth that is sought.

The truth is, those who then lived in Canaan were a sexually perverse and abominable people. God told Moses, long before they would enter the land, that the people of Canaan were guilty of all kinds of sexual perversion and immorality (**Lev. 18**), and warned, *"Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you. For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants"* (**vv. 24, 25**). Among the things they did that were so abominable was the disgusting and unthinkable practice of offering their own children as burnt sacrifices for their false gods. One particular rite included a ceremony where the priests would build up an intense fire beneath the outstretched arms of the idol representing their god, and once the arms turned red with heat, these parents would lay their child — alive — on the searing-hot arms where they must have suffered unspeakable pain and torture until the fire consumed them. He would state plainly to Moses, and Moses repeated to the children of Israel, *"all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you"* (**Deut. 18:10-12**). The people of Canaan were not the peaceful, quiet, guiltless, model citizens who were merely victims of the Israelites' injustices, as some would have you believe.

But Moses had reminded them of all they had done and suffered while wandering, and as they prepared to enter the Promised Land, warned them, *"But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall be that those whom you let remain shall be irritants in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall harass you in the land where you dwell. Moreover it shall be that I will do to you as I thought to do to them"* (**Num. 33:55, 56**). As we will see as we enter into this study of the book of Joshua, they failed to do that. Later books [Judges, Kings, Chronicles, and the prophets] will reveal to us that God meant exactly what He said, and He kept His word.

Because of the length of this book, the text of Joshua will not be provided in the workbook, but use a notebook [or this workbook] to make your notes about the text or any questions you may have, and get as much out of it as you can. Remember: *"He who gets wisdom loves his own soul"* (**Prov. 19:8**).

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JOSHUA

THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN

1-5

JOSHUA LEADS ISRAEL INTO CANAAN

①

②

③

④

⑤

6-12

ISRAEL'S BATTLES WITH THE CANAANITES

⑥

⑦-8

⑨

⑩-11

⑫

13-22

THE LAND DIVIDED

23-24

JOSHUA'S FINAL WORDS

Lesson One: Overview

Overview. Using the chart on the facing page, briefly summarize the book of Joshua and outline what may be seen as the main points in each section. At the bottom of this page, note the ‘theme verse(s)’ and key words and/or phrases — those which are significant in the overall message of the book.

Background. As was noted in the *Preface*, this book picks up where the last four books left off, with the Israelites having been delivered by God from Egyptian captivity and, after their rebellion, wandering in the wilderness for forty years. Considering we accepted the date of 1441 B.C. as the date of the beginning of the *exodus*, then the end of the wanderings would be right around 1401 B.C. Given that Joshua was probably about the same age as Caleb — who was 85 at the end of the fighting in Canaan (**Josh. 14:10** — and 40 when they spied out the land (**v. 7**), that means the fighting in Canaan lasted about 5-7 years. [Consider that the Israelites had been at Sinai for just over a year, plus the travel time from Sinai to Kadesh-Barnea.] Since he died at 110, this means he spent about 30 years in Canaan, and this book covers those years. The author is unknown

but, from the wording in some places (cf. **5:6**), he seems to have been a contemporary and an eyewitness to at least some of the events recorded.

In the Jewish Bible, this book is a part of a series of books that follow the *Pentateuch* and are titled *Neviim Rishonim*, or “the earlier Prophets”; that itself is interesting, since Joshua is nowhere called a prophet. This book and those that follow might be better labeled as *history* as they do record the history of the fledgling nation from its initiation through its captivity to Assyria and Babylon. At least in this book, we see little of the failures of the Israelites [Ai, and the Canaanites they did not drive out (**13:13; 16:10**)], but a story of how God worked with His people to fulfill the promise He had made to their forefather Abraham.

As to the person and character of Joshua, it is clear that he was a man of courage, conviction, and faith. He is often seen as the military leader, having established himself worthy of the task while in the wilderness (**Exod. 17:8-13**); and he resolved to follow the Lord, and admonished the people to do the same (**Josh. 24:14, 15**). It is fitting then that this man would lead the people into the Promised Land. They would not have as good a leader for a long time afterwards.

Key Verse(s):

Key Words/Phrases:

The Conquest Of Canaan



CENTRAL CAMPAIGN

(Joshua 6-9):

Jericho

Ai

Gibeon

SOUTHERN CAMPAIGN

(Joshua 10):

Makkedah

Libnah

Lachish

Eglon

Hebron

Debir

Kadesh-Barnea to

Gaza

NORTHERN CAMPAIGN

(Joshua 11):

Hazor

All other cities

PREPARATION AND ENTRY INTO CANAAN

Lesson Two: God's Charge To Joshua

(Joshua 1)

Up until this point, it has been Moses who was the leader of God's people, but now it comes to Joshua to take over and lead these people who have wandered for now 40 years into the Promised Land. As he was the assistant of Moses (1:1), he was well familiar with these people and their habits, their weaknesses, and their unfaithfulness. God knew them well, too, and it is with this in mind that God speaks to Joshua as he takes over the leadership position, giving him the charge to "*Be strong and of good courage*" (1:6, 9). Somewhat ironically, when Joshua first speaks to the people, they tell him they will heed him as they did Moses and those who rebel will be put to death, concluding with the same admonition: "*Only be strong and of good courage*" (1:18).

As we shift from the years of wandering to the period where the Israelites actually move into Canaan and begin driving out the Canaanites, we will also see the fulfillment of one of the promises God made to Abraham some 470 years after it was made [430 from then to the *exodus* + 40 years wandering]. Just as God fulfilled that promise, He would also fulfill His promise to give them victories over their enemies and to bless them in all they did — as long as they remained faithful to Him and His commandments.

Preparation

Briefly note the significant points that preceded this time when the Israelites are about to enter into Canaan: Start with the promise of God to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-7); note the repetition of particular promises about the land (Gen. 13:14-17); the prophecy of their time in Egypt (Gen. 15:12-16); the events that led Joseph to Egypt and how that affected the lineage of Abraham (Gen. 37-50); the oppression and deliverance of the Israelites (Exod. 1-15); the rebellion at Kadesh-Barnea that led to God's rejection of them and caused them to wander for 40 years (Num. 13-14). Be ready to discuss their history and how it would affect the generation who first entered into the Promised Land.

Observation

1. **Assurance.** (1:1-5) It must surely have been overwhelming to think that you are now responsible for bringing God's people into a land, driving out the current people, and settling the land, but God begins with the assurance to Joshua that is a source of comfort for God's people even today: "*I will not leave you nor forsake you.*"
2. **Be Strong And Courageous.** (1:6, 7, 9, 18) Stated three times by God and once by the people, Joshua was encouraged and admonished as he takes over the leadership of the people. The repetition of this should make us take note, for its emphasis reveals its importance. Consider the various aspects of life and the various situations Joshua would face where this admonition would be needed.
3. **Observe To Do.** (1:7, 8) Another admonition repeated was the necessity of strict obedience to the commandments, where he was to "*observe to do according to all*" the commandments, to "*not turn from it to the right hand or to the left,*" and to "*meditate in it day and night.*" If he did so, he would then prosper wherever he went and have good success. This has always been the case!
4. **The Eastern Tribes Reminded.** (1:12-18) Joshua made a special effort to speak to the tribes that had decided to settle on the eastern bank of the Jordan River, reminding them of the promise they had made to leave their lands and families to come and fight with the rest of the tribes who would be settling in Canaan. They gladly spoke up, saying they would keep their word.

5. **Your Observations:** _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Interpretation

From the text of **chapter 1**, complete the following:

Paragraph Divisions: at 1:1, 10, 12, and 16.

Note the paragraph divisions and give a short title for each main thought. [Note: Some paragraphs may be grouped together.] Note the various exhortations given to Joshua as he prepares to take over the leadership.

1. Why was it necessary that God exhort Joshua to “*Be strong and of good courage*” when God promised that He would be with them and no one could stand against them? _____

2. What may we necessarily imply from the exhortation to Joshua to “*do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you*” and to not let the “*Book of the Law*” depart from his mouth? [In other words, can we say there were any more laws to be given by God, or was the Law now complete?] _____

3. Why did Joshua speak to the Reubenites, Gadites, and half tribe of Manasseh, and what did he tell them, or remind them? _____

4. What did the tribes of the eastern side of Jordan say in response to Joshua’s reminder? _____

Application

1. Where is the promise God made to Joshua (**1:5**) repeated in the New Testament, and to whom? How is the promise *there* different? _____

2. Why is it necessary that disciples today also “*Be strong and of good courage*”? _____

3. Why is it necessary for disciples today to “*meditate in [the word of God] day and night*”? _____

For Consideration

“*Be strong and of good courage, ...*” (**1:6**)

PREPARATION AND ENTRY INTO CANAAN

Lesson Three: Spying Out Jericho

(Joshua 2)

As with the time when the Israelites sent spies into Canaan when they came to Kadesh-Barnea, some might wonder again why the need for spies when God has promised the land to them. But it is on this occasion we find an interesting person and an interesting bit of fact that is relevant to what is about to happen, and what will happen many generations later.

It is when the Israelite spies chance upon Rahab, a harlot in the city of Jericho, that she tells them that her people know of what God did in drying up the waters of the Red Sea, and what they had done to the Amorite kings on the other side of Jordan, and they were greatly afraid because of it. But she also tells them that she knows their God is *“God in heaven above and on earth beneath.”* Even forty years after the fact of the Red Sea crossing, and not long after the victories over the Amorite kings, the works of God are well known among those in and around Canaan!

And, finally, consider that this Gentile prostitute will be highly favored not just in the preservation of her household when the rest of the city was destroyed, but by the fact of the lineage of which she will now be a part — all because of her faith in the true and living God (cf. **Matt. 1:5**).

Preparation

Before beginning this portion of the study, think about those who will soon be entering Canaan and fighting the battles against its residents. With the exception of Joshua and Caleb, no one will be over 60 years old, so youth is generally on their side. The people have been ‘battle tested,’ having met adversaries at various times during the wilderness wandering and, by now, have seen the proof that God would be always with them as long as they were obedient to His commands.

Familiarize yourself with the map of Canaan found on page 4 of this book, and be ready to identify locations that will be mentioned in the coming lessons, and the general strategy used when Conquering the land.

Observation

1. **Rahab.** (2:1) We are introduced to Rahab at the beginning of this story, as the two spies enter

into Canaan and, particularly, Jericho to spy out the land. Some commentators have tried to redefine her profession as merely an innkeeper, but the text does not say that, nor is it a term sometimes translated as such. **How** she was found by them and **when** is not detailed, but it is certainly possible Divine Providence had a hand in the spies meeting her and staying with her.

2. **What The Canaanites Knew.** (2:9-11) Rahab told the spies that her fellow Canaanites had heard of what God did at the Red Sea, and how they had conquered the Amorite kings Sihon and Og. News apparently traveled around even in the age long before the Internet or cell phones, and the news causes those of Canaan to be *“fainthearted”* and their *“hearts melted”* and they had no more courage. They knew they were in trouble.

3. **What Rahab Knew.** (2:11) There is no record of what anyone else of Canaan believed about God, but Rahab was clear in stating her beliefs: *“the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.”*

4. **The Salvation of Rahab and Her Family.** (2:12-14, 17-21) Rahab pleaded for her and her family’s salvation from the coming destruction, based on her kindness to them. The spies gave her strict instructions to follow and a strong warning if she did not heed those instructions. She believed in God and, because she believed, she obeyed. Later (6:17, 22-25), it is revealed that she had obeyed and was saved from destruction, as promised.

5. **The Spies’ Report.** (2:23 ,24) Unlike the spies sent out from Kadesh-Barnea, these spies came back convinced the Lord had given them the land.

6. **Your Observations:** _____

Interpretation

From the text of **chapter 2**, complete the following:

Paragraph Divisions: at 2:1, 8, 15, and 22.

Note the paragraph divisions and give a short title for each main thought. [Note: Some paragraphs may be grouped together.] Note the strategy of the spies and the actions of Rahab that led to their successful mission.

1. What did Rahab tell the Israelite spies the people of the land had heard about them, and their reaction to what they had heard? _____

2. From this text, and from other Bible passages, what do we know about Rahab? [Be as thorough as possible!] _____

3. What was the promise of the Israelite spies to Rahab, and what were the conditions? [Again, be thorough!] _____

4. How did this trip into the land to spy it out differ from the first one? Why the differences? _____

Application

1. What should the fact of the land being “spied out” tell us about how we are to prepare for conquering our spiritual enemies? _____

2. What should this story, particularly the part about Rahab, tell us about pre-judging others and any thoughts of certain individuals being “beyond saving”? _____

3. Today, what might the world say that they have “heard” about God’s people, and how does this differ from this story? What can we do to overcome any negative prejudices and preconceived ideas about Christians? _____

For Consideration

“... the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.” (2:11)

PREPARATION AND ENTRY INTO CANAAN

Lesson Four: Crossing Jordan Into Canaan

(Joshua 3, 4)

This point in the history of the Israelites is one that must have been bittersweet for those who crossed the Jordan River into Canaan. On the positive side, it is finally the realization of the promise made long ago to their forefather, Abraham, and the very reason for their long, winding journey through the wilderness [at least the beginning of that fulfillment; they still have to conquer the land]. On the bitter side, this is something that could have happened almost 40 years earlier, and many others could have enjoyed seeing the day come, too, but they had died in the wilderness because of their unbelief.

As we consider this portion of the Israelites' journey into Canaan, it would be good for us to remember the words of the writer of Hebrews, as he wrote to the Jewish Christians of the first century who were ready to turn their backs on Christ because of persecutions: *"For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief"* (Heb. 3:16-19); and, *"Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience"* (Heb. 4:11). Unbelief will keep a Christian out of heaven just as surely as unbelief kept many Israelites from the Promised Land. Let us keep our eyes on the eternal goal, and not lose heart.

Preparation

Jump forward in the history of Israel, to the time when the remnant returned from Babylonian captivity [consider both **Ezra** and **Nehemiah**]. Note the attitudes and actions of the people as they returned to the land, and compare and contrast them with the attitudes and actions of the people as they entered the land for the first time. Be prepared to discuss the similarities and the differences, especially considering the reasons *why* the two points in history were different and the attitudes and actions different.

Observation

1. **Another Significant Crossing.** (3-4) Though the Red Sea crossing is most remembered, it is not the only crossing of a body of water the Israelites will experience; here, it is the Jordan River and, as with the Red Sea, they crossed on dry ground.
2. **The People Who Will Be Driven Out.** (3:10) God had told the Israelites multiple times that He was giving the land to them, and that no nation would be able to stand against them. Here, Joshua names the nations that will be driven out from the land that they might possess it: *"the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Hivites and the Perizzites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Jebusites."*
3. **The Priests and the Ark.** (3:14-4:18) By God's command and power, when the priests carrying the Ark stepped into the waters of the Jordan [at a time of year when it would be overflowing its banks], the waters stood still and backed up to a point about 10-15 miles upstream! As soon as everyone had crossed over, and as soon as the priests moved onto dry land [the western bank of the Jordan], the waters were released and returned to overflowing their banks. It is no wonder Joshua would tell them, *"By this you shall know that the living God is among you"* (3:10).
4. **Two Memorials.** (4:1-9, 20-24) After the people crossed over, God commanded that the Israelites take 12 stones [one for each tribe] from the midst of the Jordan and set them up as a memorial where they first lodged in Canaan [Gilgal, 4:20], and Joshua also set up 12 stones in *the midst of the Jordan River* where the priests stood (4:9). The one on dry land would be a memorial for the generations to come so they would know of this great demonstration of God's power in bringing them into the land.
5. **Your Observations:**

Interpretation

From the text of **chapters 3 and 4**, complete the following:

Paragraph Divisions: at 3:1, 5, 7, and 14; 4:1, 8, 15, and 19.

Note the paragraph divisions and give a short title for each main thought. [Note: Some paragraphs may be grouped together.] Note the order of the crossing and the importance of the priests carrying the Ark being first to enter the water and last to leave.

1. For what possible reason were the Israelites commanded to “*Sanctify yourselves*” (3:5) before the crossing of the Jordan? How did this differ from their crossing of the Red Sea, and what might be the reasoning for the difference? _____

2. When Joshua told the people, “*By this you shall know that the living God is among you*” (3:9), to what was he referring, and how would that demonstrate such? _____

3. What memorial was established, and why? _____

4. Briefly describe the events of the crossing, from the initial step of the priest bearing the Ark into the waters, until they stepped out of the river bed. _____

Application

1. In this country, “crossing Jordan” is a figure of speech representing the passing from this life into eternity; how important is it that we do so with God, as He literally did the Israelites? _____

2. How important is it that God’s people today [Christians] remember God’s work in their deliverance, and how can we do that? _____

3. Are the leaders of God’s people today ‘exalted’ before the others? Why, or why not? _____

For Consideration

“...as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.”
(3:7)

PREPARATION AND ENTRY INTO CANAAN

Lesson Five: The New Beginning

(Joshua 5:1-12)

This time must have been an emotionally overwhelming one, for it is the beginning of the fulfillment of everything the Israelites have lived for up to this point in their journey out of Egyptian bondage and their wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. As with the scene in Ezra when the returning remnant laid the Temple's foundation, there would be joy and sadness at the same time (**Ezra 3:10-13**); joy for finally entering into the Promised Land, and sadness over those lost in the wilderness due to unbelief.

As a preview of what is to come, we are also told of the reaction by some of the Canaanites upon hearing of what the Lord had done. Apparently, the work of God had the desired effect (**Josh. 4:23, 24**)! This won't be the last time Canaanites have such a reaction.

Preparation

Consider the significant times when Israel was told, as a people, to prepare to *go*. Read each passage and note the preparation instructions in each, and be ready to discuss those compared to this point in their history: **Exod. 11:1-2; 12:1-36; Ezra 1:1-11; 7:1-8:32**.

Also, consider **Deuteronomy 27** and **28** and the things God outlined as the blessings for their obedience and the punishment for their disobedience when they entered into the Promised Land, and prophetically told them what they would do and what would happen.

Observation

1. **The Fear of God.** (5:1) As was noted by Rahab when she spoke to the two Israelites spies (**2:9-11**), the rest of those in Canaan also became greatly afraid when they heard of yet another instance of God's powerful work in bringing His people through the waters, this time crossing the Jordan River. Just as was said immediately before this (**4:24**), the people of the land would "*know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty*," and just as the spies had noted upon their return report from Jericho, "*all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us*" (**2:24**).

What a contrast to the first time the Israelites came to the edge of the Promised Land! Then, 10

of the 12 spies came back and told the people, "*the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there... We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we*" (**Num. 13:28, 31**). Then, they were afraid of the people of the land, and did not believe God would be able to give them victory, but now, the people of the land are the ones who fear!

2. **Progress Halted For A Necessary Task.** (5:2-8) Before the Israelites do anything else or go any further, the Lord commands the men to be circumcised — a command that was given to them while in the wilderness (**Lev. 12:3**), but one that had not been done all the time they were wandering. Albert Barnes, in his commentary on this, speculates that God did not hold them to circumcision or the observance of the Passover during the years of wandering, as a sort of "token" of the ban He had made on those above 20 years old from entering Canaan.

It seems that the better explanation for why it is being done [rather than why it was not done in the wilderness] is the more important point. Remember, first of all, that God had promised this land to the descendants of Abraham (**Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 17:8**), but He had also made a covenant with him, and the sign of that covenant was circumcision (**Gen. 17:10-15**). This pause in the advancement of the nation of Israel, for this particular purpose, was a solemn reminder that God was keeping that promise, and they needed to do their part in keeping that same covenant.

3. **The Passover Celebrated.** (5:10) Very little is said about this, but it is significant that within days of their entrance into the Promised Land, they stop to remember the events that were instrumental in their *exodus* from Egypt. The last time this is recorded as having been observed was while they were still at Sinai (**Num. 9:1-5**).

4. **Two Memorials.** (5:11, 12) After eating manna every day for all the years of their wandering — a demonstration of God's Providence — the manna cease once they eat of the produce of the land of

Canaan for the first time, just one day after the Passover. Let us not overlook God’s point here: He provided when they could not and when the land could not, but now that they have food available, there is no longer a need for His intervention.

5. **Your Observations:**

Interpretation

From the text of **5:1-12**, complete the following:

Paragraph Divisions: at 5:1 and 2.

Note the paragraph divisions and give a short title for each main thought. Note the significant events that transpire after their crossing and be ready to discuss the weight these things should have had in the spiritual lives of the Israelites.

- 1. What was the reaction of the inhabitants of Canaan when they heard of what God had done for the Israelites in bringing them through the Jordan River into Canaan? Where else do we see such reactions? _____

- 2. What was the first command God gave to Joshua upon their entrance into the land? Why was this necessary? [Be thorough!] _____

- 3. What did God mean when He told Joshua that He had “*rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you*” (**5:9**)? _____

- 4. What was the cause for the manna ceasing? _____

Application

- 1. How does the reaction of the Canaanites to the powerful work of God teach us about not fearing those who oppose God today when we go out to do the work of the Kingdom? _____

- 2. What does the reinstatement of the circumcision teach us about what we must do when we have failed to keep the Lord’s commands — even after many years? _____

- 3. What does the end of God’s provision of manna for the Israelites teach us about how God provides for our needs? _____

For Consideration

“...their heart melted; and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the children of Israel.” (5:1)

THE LAND CONQUERED

Lesson Six: Jericho Conquered

(Joshua 5:13-7:1)

Who hasn't heard of the Bible story of Jericho? This is certainly one of the most well-known Bible stories, if only for the means of its fall. But this was just another demonstration to teach the Israelites to trust God completely — even when it doesn't seem to us that His way is the best way. The fact is, God sometimes asks of us things that might not seem the best or even *right* way to do something, but it is then that we need to learn to trust Him most of all. Though man quite often wants an explanation for everything, and thinks everything has to make sense or at least be logical, we must remember that such thinking and such demands come from human wisdom, which is far lesser than the wisdom and knowledge of God.

When the 12 spies went into Canaan, 10 of the 12 came back and reported, "*the cities are fortified and very large,*" and concluded, "*We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we*" (**Num. 13:28, 31**). It may have been that Jericho was one of those fortified cities, but it did not matter when God was on their side.

As we consider this familiar story, don't approach this thinking you already know all there is to know about it; look for details and lessons you may have never considered before and, above all else, look for lessons that are directly applicable to you and to all disciples today. Remember, this was written for our learning (**Rom. 15:4**) and for our admonition (**1st Cor. 10:11**). Let us learn, and let us be admonished!

Preparation

Consider the various unusual ways in which God gave the Israelites victory over their enemies. [**Josh. 10:10-14; Exod. 17:8-13; 2nd Kings 6:14-20**] Be prepared to discuss God's means of achieving victory compared to man's plans.

Observation

1. **A Strange Meeting.** (5:13-15) The text says that Joshua saw "*a man*" with his sword drawn; but who is this? Joshua asked, "*Are You for us or for our adversaries?*" The answer was not one or the other, but "*No, but as Commander of the army of the Lord.*" So, who was this? Some might be

tempted to say it was an angel or angelic being, but the fact Joshua fell down and worshiped him without being told to stop would lead me to believe it was the Lord Himself.

2. **The Plan of Attack Outlined.** (6:1-5) The Lord told Joshua the city of Jericho was theirs, but that did not mean they did nothing. The plan of attack was — to not attack. The strategy was to march around the city once a day for six days, and seven times on the seventh day and, at the end, the priests were to make a long blast with the trumpets and the people were to shout, and "*the wall of the city will fall down flat.*" This was not the usual strategy for taking a walled city, but Joshua believed.

3. **The Plan Communicated and Executed.** (6:6-20) Joshua passed on the order of conquest to the Israelites, adding that they were to not make any vocal noise until he commanded them, and another command regarding the prohibition of the people taking any spoil from the city — a command that will play a part in their attack on the next city. But the people obeyed the commands of the Lord in everything, and the walls fell, just as God said. According to the writer of Hebrews, "*By faith the walls of Jericho fell down*" (**Heb. 11:30**). "*Faith*" must, of necessity, include obedience and trust in Him, but it also is demonstrated by His actions that are beyond the power of man to do.

4. **Survivors of Jericho.** (6:20-25) The only people in Jericho who were spared were the family of Rahab, who had hidden the Israelites spies when they first came into the city. Just as was promised by the spies (**Josh. 2:17-20**) and just as Joshua had commanded (**6:17**), Rahab and her family were spared — because they kept their promise and because Rahab and her family did what they were told they must do. Here, too, "*By faith*" she and her family were saved. Faith is *trust*, but it is also the actions that demonstrate that trust.

5. **Survivors of Jericho.** (7:1) Despite the victory proving God's promises and power to be trustworthy, one of the Israelites disobeyed and took of the spoil. There will be consequences!

6. Your Observations:

Interpretation

From the text of **5:13-7:1**, complete the following:

Paragraph Divisions: at 5:13; 6:1, 6, 12, 15, 22 and 26.

Note the paragraph divisions and give a short title for each main thought. Note the strategy for taking the city and why such a strategy might have been commanded by God.

1. The Lord told Joshua, *"I have given Jericho into your hand"* (**6:2**); did this mean the Israelites had nothing to do? Explain. _____

2. Who all were commanded to march around the city, and what were the commands given to each group involved? _____

3. Who, and what, was spared from the city, and why? _____

4. What is later written in Scripture about Rahab, and how significant is she in the historical record? _____

Application

1. According to what the writers of Hebrews and James tell us about this story and those involved (**Heb. 11:30, 31; Jas. 2:25**), how does faith and action/works play a part in spiritual successes? _____

2. What does this story teach us about trusting in God's ways — especially when they may not seem to be the 'right' or even the 'best' way? _____

3. What can we learn from the fact God stated He had given [past tense] the city of Jericho to the Israelites, but that they still had a part to do? _____

For Consideration

"Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy." (**5:15**)

Lesson Seven: Failure, Then Victory, At Ai (Joshua 7:2-8:35)

After an amazing and unusual victory at Jericho, the next city in line for conquest was believed to be an easy victory, and a relatively-small army went out to take the city. It was not to be. Not yet, anyway.

But because of the disobedience and sin of just *one* Israelite in the conquest of Jericho, God would not be with the camp of Israel, and a certain victory became a stunning and unexpected defeat. From this example, let us not ever think that our disobedience will affect only ourselves; Achan stands as reason enough to realize God knows and sees all, and that He will not simply ‘overlook’ one small act of disobedience simply because nobody else knows about it. Achan faced judgment and condemnation while still living, but ours will come when we all stand before the Lord in the Final Judgment, where *“God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil”* (Eccl. 12:14).

Preparation

Consider other times when God stated the conditions for blessings and the consequences of disobedience: **Deut. 11:26-28; 28:1-14/28:15-68; 30:15-18;** and **1st Kings 9:4-9**. Be prepared to discuss these promises of blessing or cursing and how they have already been demonstrated with the cities of Jericho and Ai, and how this would be a preview of the years to come for Israel.

Observation

1. The Spies’ Report And the Result. (7:2-5) Joshua sent men to spy out Ai, as had been done with Jericho, but they reported that the people of Ai were few, and that only two or three thousand men should go instead of the entire army. Of course we know that, in this case, the Israelites were defeated and 36 men died. What should have been an easy victory turned into a stunning defeat, and all because the spies could not see the one factor that would prevent their victory: the sin of Achan.

2. Joshua’s Reaction And God’s Answer. (7:6-15) When Joshua saw the result of their attack of Ai, he *“tore his clothes, and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until evening.”*

His reaction was equal to one who mourned greatly, and he and the elders did so with what they believed justified grief. But Joshua didn’t know what God knew!

God then revealed to Joshua there was *“an accursed thing in your midst,”* and as long as there was, they could not stand before their enemies. With the reason for their failure now revealed, it was up to Joshua and the people to root out the sin and rid themselves of the *“accursed thing”* before they were defeated again on the next attempt, and God’s punishment was that he and all he had would be burned with fire.

3. Process of Elimination. (7:14-21) With the punishment of the guilty determined, God also declared that the one would be found by bringing before Joshua each tribe, then each family, then each household, then each individual of that family, until it was revealed who the transgressor was. Judah was the tribe, the Zarahites were the family, and then Achan’s household. Achan was, as we know, the guilty one, but he would not be the only one who would suffer punishment.

4. A Successful Conquest — This Time. (8:1-25) This time, the Israelites would succeed in taking Ai. This time, God would conceive the plan of drawing out the men of the city by having the Israelites retreat as if fleeing, then ambush the city while they were away. It worked, of course.

5. A Commandment Fulfilled. (8:30-35) Moses had commanded that when the Israelites had passed over Jordan into Canaan, they should take stones untouched by tools and write on them the words of the Law, and set up an altar to make sacrifices (**Deut. 27:2-8**); Joshua and the people do just that, but when? The location of Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim [30 miles NNW of Ai], and a consideration of the cities conquered after Ai [all in the central and southern portion of Canaan] would cause doubt as to it being done *immediately* after the conquest of Jericho and Ai, especially since that portion of Canaan had not yet been conquered. Again, since there are no time markers in the context, we really have no way of knowing.

6. Your Observations:

Interpretation

From the text of **7:2-8:35**, complete the following:

Paragraph Divisions: at 7:2, 6, 10, 16, and 22; 8:1, 3, 10, 18, 24 and 30.

Note the paragraph divisions and give a short title for each main thought. Note the diligence of the Israelites to heed the Lord's directives in eliminating the sin from among them and achieving victory over their enemies.

1. How do his reactions to the initial defeat at Ai (**7:6-9**), and then to the revelation of sin in the camp (**7:16-25**) reveal Joshua's character? _

2. What did God say was the cause of their initial failure at Ai, and what would be the result until that was corrected? _

3. How many people suffered because of the sin of Achan? _

4. Briefly describe the strategy for the taking of the city of Ai. How did the conquest of Ai differ than that of Jericho? _

Application

1. From the story of Achan, what might we learn about the consequences and the effects of our sins? _

2. What does the story of Achan tell us about 'secret sins'? [Consider them in light of God's view, and from the viewpoint of other men.]

3. How does the story of Achan illustrate the truths stated by God to the Israelites late in the history of the kingdom (**Isa. 59:1, 2**)? _

For Consideration

"Why have you troubled us? The LORD will trouble you this day." (7:25)

Lesson Eight: The Deception of the Gibeonites

(Joshua 9:1-27)

The Israelites had been warned regarding those in Canaan, long before they entered the land, “*You shall make no covenant with them*” (**Exod. 23:32; Deut. 7:2**), and, “*Take heed to yourself, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land where you are going, lest it be a snare in your midst*” (**Exod. 34:12**). As we see in this lesson’s base text, they did make a covenant with some people of the land, but because they were deceived.

It is only logical that we might ask why they kept their covenant with the Gibeonite people since (1) they were deceived and (2) they had transgressed an explicit command of God when they made that covenant. The only answer we have from Scripture is seen in the statement, “*But the children of Israel did not attack them, because the rulers of the congregation had sworn to them by the LORD God of Israel*” (**Josh 9:18**), and the response from the rulers of the Israelites when facing complaints from the people, when they said, “*We have sworn to them by the LORD God of Israel; now therefore, we may not touch them*” (**v. 19**). That answer should be sufficient, and anything beyond this would be mere speculation.

Preparation

Consider the following passages that give commands regarding their duties toward cities and people of Canaan: **Deut. 20:16-18; 7:1-4, 16**; and **Num. 33:51-53**. Then consider the following passages regarding the prohibition of covenants with anyone of Canaan: **Exod. 23:32, 33**; and **34:12-16**. Then, consider **Deut. 20:10, 11** and be prepared to discuss our common perception of the commands to destroy the Canaanites and what exceptions were made by God, and how this story fits within those commands.

Observation

1. The Canaanites Unite Against Israel. (9:1, 2) When the people of Canaan heard about the victory of Israel over Jericho and Ai, “*they gathered together to fight with Joshua and Israel with one accord.*” It appears they believed they needed to do this in order to defeat Israel, but not everyone saw this as the only option.

2. The Gibeonites’ Strategy. (9:3-5, 12-13) The Gibeonites took a different view of the defeat of Jericho and Ai, and then decided on a different tactic to face the invading Israelites. Later (cf. **v. 23**), they reveal that they had heard about the command of the Lord to destroy those of the land, so they feared for their lives and saw their deception as the only way to survive.

The deception included taking old sacks, old wineskins, old clothing and sandals, and bread that was dry and moldy — all to give the appearance that they had traveled a great distance and over a long period of time just to get to where the Israelites were. It was convincing enough.

3. The Error of the Israelites. (9:14) There is not necessarily error on the part of one being deceived — unless the deceived one does not take due diligence in checking the facts before making a commitment, or in this case, a covenant. The error of the Israelites was “*they did not ask counsel of the LORD.*” That is the error of the whole history of mankind, is it not?

4. The Truth is Discovered. (9:16, 17) As with any lie or deception, the truth will eventually be discovered. It took three days, but the truth was revealed that these “ambassadors” from some far way land were not whom they appeared to be.

5. The Gibeonites Are Spared. (9:18-27) We might be tempted to think that the deception of the Gibeonites, once discovered, meant death or at least exile from the land, but that was not the case. They were not attacked because Israel “*had sworn to them by the LORD God of Israel.*” While it was unwise to have done so, the promise was made, nonetheless. They kept their word, but it did not mean the Gibeonites would not face consequences.

6. Your Observations:

Interpretation

From the text of **9:1-27**, complete the following:

Paragraph Divisions: at 9:3, 16, and 22.

Note the paragraph divisions and give a short title for each main thought. Note the efforts of the Gibeonites to deceive the Israelites, and why they did so. Then, note the failure of the Israelites to verify the information given to them, and then their response when the truth was discovered. Be prepared to discuss any parallels applicable to the disciple's interaction with those of the world.

1. Who within Canaan gathered together against Israel (**9:1, 2**), and what is the significance, if any (cf. **Deut. 7:1; 20:17**)? _____

2. Briefly describe the deception of the Gibeonites and its effectiveness. _____

3. How much truth was in the words of the Gibeonites in what they told the Israelites, both before and after the deception was discovered? _____

4. What was the punishment for the Gibeonites after the deception was discovered, and why was it not more severe? _____

5. How did the fear of the Gibeonites [and others], and the victories over Jericho and Ai verify what God had already told them about how He

would give them the land, and that they should not have ever feared the people of Canaan or been intimidated by their fortified cities? ____

Application

1. When we consider this story, what does this teach us about being careful, as Christians, before we make any agreements with those of the world, or with those who may not be whom they appear to be? How do the words of Paul (**2nd Cor. 6:14-16**) apply in such cases? ____

2. This covenant with the Gibeonites was honored by not only the Israelites at that time, but in the years following. God was even displeased when Saul killed some of the Gibeonites (**2nd Sam. 21:1, 2**). What does this teach us about the expectation of God when we make vows, covenants, and promises? Cite any relevant Scripture that would justify your answer. ____

For Consideration

"...but they did not ask counsel of the LORD."
(**9:14**)

Lesson Nine: The Southern and Northern Campaigns

(Joshua 10:1-12:24)

There is an old military adage: “Divide and conquer.” It is not just a saying that sounds good; it is a tried-and-proven military strategy that will likely never disappear from use. It comes as no surprise that this is the very strategy used by the Israelites as they enter into Canaan to drive out and/or conquer the inhabitants. They began with Jericho and Ai in the central portion, then moved south and fought against the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon at Gibeon, then defeated Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, Hebron, and Debir. After returning to Gilgal, it is said that the kings of the northern cities gathered together “*at the waters of Merom to fight against Israel*” (11:5) — an area just north of the Sea of Galilee — and it is there the Israelites defeated them.

The summary statement at the end of **chapter 11** says it all: “*So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD had said to Moses*” (v. 23). The victories are summed up in **chapter 12**.

Preparation

Read over the descriptions of the land the Israelites were to possess, including the lands mentioned by God to Abraham (**Gen. 12:7; 13:14, 15; 15:18-21**), to Moses (**Num. 34:1-12**), and as described in the days of Solomon (**1st Kings 4:21**). Be prepared to discuss the successes of the Israelites and how God’s word was fulfilled, with a remembrance of what the Israelites believed about their chances against those of Canaan when the spies were sent into the land at Kadesh-Barnea, and they listened to the 10 who gave a bad report.

Observation

1. **An Alliance Against Israel.** (10:1-5) When the people of the southern part of Canaan heard about the covenant Gibeon made with Israel, “*they feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city, like one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all its men were mighty.*” Their reasoning seems to be, “If **Gibeon** — as strong and mighty as they are — was afraid to fight Israel, what chance do **we** have alone?” So, they decided an alliance of the southern cities and an attack on Gibeon was the answer.

2. **The Benefit of the Covenant.** (10:6-10) The Gibeonites appealed to the Israelites for help when the southern cities and their kings attacked them. Joshua took the “*people of war...and all the mighty men of valor*” and with the Lord’s blessing, and intervened for Gibeon and routed the attackers. Don’t overlook the fact this happened because of that covenant they had made with Israel.

3. **A Strange ‘Day’ for Battle.** (10:11-14) God does not always bring victories by traditional or even conventional means. In this battle, God rained hailstones down on the enemy, and more were killed by the hailstones than were killed with the sword! To add to the oddity of such an occasion, God also heeded the request of Joshua and the sun did not go down of about a whole day, not until the enemies were defeated.

4. **The Northern Kings Rise Up.** (11:1-5) As had happened among other Canaanites cities and people heard about the Israelites’ successes and they believed an alliance with their fellow Canaanites was the only answer. They met the same end as all others before them who tried.

5. **The Source of Victory.** As we consider these battles and the ultimate victories over all the Canaanites, we cannot forget that this was not just a case of superior military strength on the part of Israel, but the backing of an all-powerful God. We read “*the LORD routed*” the southern armies (10:10); “*the LORD fought for Israel*” (10:14); “*the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel*” (10:42); and in several occasions it is said “*the LORD delivered*” the city into the hands of Joshua and the Israelites.

6. Your Observations:

Interpretation

From the text of **10:1-11:23**, complete the following:

Paragraph Divisions: at 10:1, 6, 12, 16, 22, 28, 29, 31, 33, 34, 36, 38, and 40; then 11:1, 6, 10, 16, and 21.

Note the paragraph divisions and give a short title for each main thought. [Some paragraphs may be combined.] Try to trace the advancement of the Israelites throughout Canaan, and take note of the means of victory in each battle and how thoroughly the Canaanites were defeated.

1. Which cities joined together to attack Gibeon, and why? To whom did Gibeon appeal, and why? _____

2. In what way(s) did God intervene to assure victory for the Israelites over the southern armies? _____

3. Why did Joshua have the captains of his army put their feet on the necks of the defeated kings? What was the point he was making to them? _____

4. What is the importance of it being said that Joshua did *“as the LORD God of Israel had commanded”* (**10:40**), that he *“did to them as the LORD had told him”* (**11:9**), that he *“left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses”* (**11:15**), and that he destroyed the cities *“as the LORD had commanded Moses”* (**11:20**)? _____

Application

1. How important is it that Christians consider stories like these to know and be convicted that the Lord fights for them, too? _____

2. How does this thorough defeat of the Canaanites parallel how our victories must be total and complete over our spiritual adversaries? _____

For Consideration

“So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD had said to Moses.” (**11:23**)

Lesson Ten: The Land Divided Among the Tribes

(Joshua 13:1-19:51)

Long before this day, God told Moses He would bring the Israelites out of Egypt and to “*a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites*” (Exod. 3:8, 17), and repeated this promise to the Israelites several times, but that did not mean the Israelites did nothing. As we have just seen, there was a lot of fighting to do to possess the land.

While there was still land to be possessed (13:1-6), it was time to assign portions to the tribes of Israel. The text under consideration for this lesson is a detailed description of the land as it was divided among the tribes of Israel, including the sons of Joseph — Ephraim and Manasseh. Notably absent from an allotment are the Levites, but that will be addressed in the next lesson.

Preparation

Go over the warnings about not driving out the people of Canaan as given to the Israelites, and the consequences, should they fail to do so: (Exod. 23:30-33; Num. 33:51-55; Deut. 7:16). Be prepared to discuss the successes of the Israelites, but also the failures: *why* they drove out some, and not others, and what the results would be.

Observation

1. **The Transition.** (13:1ff) Up to this point, their efforts were all about driving out or conquering the people of the land; with that mostly done, now it is time to “*divide this land as an inheritance*” to the 9½ tribes within Canaan [west of Jordan] and the 2½ tribes east of Jordan (13:7, 8). They now transition from conquerors to settlers of Canaan.

2. **The Eastern Tribes First.** (13:8-33) When the allotments begin, God starts with the eastern tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh. If we remember, they had chosen that land before crossing Jordan, but with the promise they would fight with their brethren in Canaan until it was completed (cf. Num. 32; Josh. 1:12-18). This land was also promised to the Israelites, though not within what we know as Canaan.

3. **The Inheritance of Joshua and Caleb.** (14:6-15; 19:49, 50) When it is time for the land west

of the Jordan to be divided, Caleb steps up first to remind Joshua of a promise that had apparently been made to him by Moses, because he had “*wholly followed the LORD*,” while the 10 spies and the majority of the Israelites had doubted and disbelieved. The city of Hebron became his inheritance. It is not until all the lands had been divided that Joshua received his allotment, the city of Timnath Sera in the mountains of Ephraim. We should not wonder why these two men are the only ones named as having received such a special inheritance!

4. **Canaan Divided By Lots.** (15:1-19:51) Beginning with Judah, the land is then divided between the tribes, and each tribe receives its land by lot, as had been told to Moses previously (cf. Num. 34:13-29). [NOTE: The *lot* was a common way of making certain determinations, believed to be directed by God’s will in many cases, such as this.] Judah is then followed by Ephraim and the other ½ tribe of Manasseh, then [in order, by lot] Benjamin, Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan.

5. **An Incomplete Conquest.** As was noted by God to Joshua at the beginning of this stage in their foray into Canaan, “*there remains very much land yet to be possessed*” (13:1). We might be tempted to say, “Not *yet*,”; unfortunately, they would not do it later, either for we find the Jebusites could not be driven out of Jerusalem (15:63), and the Ephraimites “*did not drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer*,” but allowed them to live amongst them as forced laborers (16:10), as happened to the Gibeonites. We also find the same situation for the Canaanites who lived within the territory of Manasseh (17:12, 13). Joshua would chastise both tribes later, exhorting them and encouraging them to follow through (17:18).

6. Your Observations:

Interpretation

From the text of **13:1-19:51**, complete the following:

Paragraph Divisions: The paragraph divisions are too numerous to note here, but attempt to group the text according to the various tribes' land allotments as they are described.

Note these divisions and try to locate these cities and regions [if you have a map of the tribes' lands, use it to your benefit], and be ready to discuss how these lands were allotted and why they were allotted in this way.

1. In the midst of the listing of the allotted lands given to the various tribes as their inheritance, it is said four times (**13:14, 33; 14:3, 4; 18:7**) that the tribe of Levi was not given an inheritance; why is this noted so often, and what is noted as the inheritance given them? _____

2. Though the land was divided by lot (**14:1, 2**), what other factor was involved (cf. **Num. 26:52-55**)? _____

3. Why is the story of **17:3-6** recorded? [See also **Num. 36** for more information.] _____

4. What was done differently for the seven remaining tribes who had not yet received their allotment (**18:1-10**)? _____

Application

1. The fulfillment of God's promise to bring the Israelites into this land was fulfilled; how is that any assurance for us today? _____

2. What lessons can be learned from the manner in which the land was allotted, regarding how we deal with one another in making important decisions? _____

For Consideration

"Now therefore, divide this land as an inheritance..." (13:7)

Lesson Eleven: The Cities for Levites; The Cities of Refuge

(Joshua 20:1-21:45)

As was noted in the previous lesson, each of the tribes received an allotment of land as their inheritance in Canaan — with the notable exception of the Levites. And, as stated, the inheritance of the Levites was the sacrifices made to God (13:14), and the Lord Himself was their inheritance (13:33; 18:7). That is not to say they had nowhere to live, however. In the section we will consider in this lesson, they are allotted 48 cities, dispersed throughout the lands of the 12 tribes of Israel.

In a related allotment, there were six cities of refuge designated — three on the west side of Jordan and three on the east side of Jordan — and they were also dispersed throughout the lands; purposefully so, those cities were also cities that had been designated for the Levites.

Preparation

Read over the following passages for further information on the allotment of the Levites and the cities of refuge: (Exod. 21:12-14; Num. 35; Deut. 4:41-43; 19:2-13). Be prepared to discuss the commandments regarding the cities of refuge, how they were to be used, and who could and could not use those cities as refuge.

Observation

- 1. The Cities of Refuge.** (20:1-6) God's law regarding murder was clear (cf. Exod. 20:13; Gen. 9:5, 6; Lev. 24:17), but God was not without mercy and understanding in cases where one was killed by accident. These cities of refuge were established so one might escape the vengeance of one who might seek a quick recompense. Even then, the one who had accidentally killed another had to face judgment (Num. 35:12), and one found guilty of murder was to be punished with death.
- 2. The Locations of the Cities of Refuge.** (20:7, 8) Since one who had accidentally killed another had to flee to one of these cities of refuge, it is only logical that these cities be within a reasonable distance from any point within the territory of Israel, so the cities are spread throughout the lands, three on one side of Jordan and three on the other, and a northern, central, and southern city of refuge for the same reason.

- 3. The Inheritance of the Levites.** (21:1-42) Before Moses died, he had received a command from God regarding the Levites and "*cities to dwell in from the inheritance of their possession*" (Num. 35:2), and now is the time for that allotment. According to God's specification, they were to be given the cities and the "*common-land*" of those cities, which extended "*from the wall of the city outward a thousand cubits all around*" and a minimum length of 2000 cubits on the north, south, east, and west sides (vv. 4, 5). This land was for the keeping of their flocks and herds, indicating they were to have some measure of self-support. It should be noted that when the cities are named, each one's "*common land*" is also noted, ensuring there was no question that it should be theirs in each city.

- 4. The Priests.** (21:4-5, 9-19) Since only those who were of the family of Aaron would serve as priests, it is only logical that they would be allotted cities relatively close to where the religious service would take place. For now, the tabernacle is set up at Shiloh (18:1), and during the time of the kings, the temple would be at Jerusalem, so their allotted cities are all within about a 30- mile radius.

- 5. A Significant Fact.** (21:43-45) For critics of the Bible, it is often stated that it is contradictory, filled with errors, and — when all else fails — just a collection of fairy tales, myths, and traditions passed down through the years, and all from the minds of men. If they are unconvincing in their complaints and arguments against Scripture, they will simply dismiss the supernatural — miracles and prophecies, especially — in an effort to show it is not trustworthy. But when the record shows "*Not a word failed of any good thing which the LORD had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass,*" then stubborn disbelief is really the only explanation for not accepting the truth.

6. Your Observations:

Interpretation

From the text of **20:1-21:45**, complete the following:

Paragraph Divisions: at 20:1 and 7; then 21:1, 9, 13, 20, 27, 34, 41, and 43.

Note the paragraph divisions and give a short title for each main thought. [Some paragraphs may be combined.] Be ready to discuss the locations of the cities of refuge and their purpose, and the locations of the other cities for the Levites.

1. For what purpose were the cities of refuge established? What were the general regulations for their use? _____

2. Is there any strategic reason why the cities of refuge were located as they were? If so, what is that reason? _____

3. Why might the Levites have been situated throughout the lands as God had so determined the locations of their cities? _____

4. How important are the statements of **21:43-45** to the Israelites who settled the land? _____

Application

1. What does the establishment of these cities of refuge teach us about the justice and mercy of God? _____

2. What do the statements of **21:43-45** mean to us today, and how may we use these statements to argue for the credibility of God's word? _____

For Consideration

"Not a word failed of any good thing which the LORD had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass." (21:45)

Lesson Twelve: The Eastern Tribes Return

(Joshua 22)

As was noted in the previous lessons, we have come to the point where the land is conquered [mostly] and each of the tribes has received an allotment of land as their inheritance in Canaan, with the Levites being given the 48 cities dispersed throughout the land of all the tribes. Up to this point, the tribes that chose land on the east side of Jordan have fought alongside their brethren, as they had promised, and stood by while the allotments were described and bestowed. Now, it is time to go home.

But because they were on the other side of the Jordan, some of those in the eastern tribes decided it would be wise to erect an altar — not for sacrifices, but as a reminder they were also a part of Israel. As well-intentioned as it might have been, it was almost the cause for a civil war!

Preparation

Read over the following passages that tell the story of the choice of the tribes who settled on the east of Jordan, and Joshua's charge to them before they entered Canaan: (**Num. 32**; **Josh. 1:12-18**). Be prepared to discuss the wisdom of the decision to erect the altar, and the subsequent anxiety it caused in the western tribes, and how the issue was settled.

Observation

1. **Returned With A Blessing.** (22:1-6) With the land mostly conquered, Joshua sees fit to give his blessing on the eastern tribes to return to their land, noting they had stood by their brethren as they fought for the land on the western side, and kept the Lord's commandments. He leaves them with a charge to continue keeping the Lord's commandments and to "*serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul.*"

2. **The Altar.** (22:10, 24-27) When the eastern tribes reached the edge of Canaan and before crossing over to their land, they decided to set up an altar as a reminder to the others that they, too, were a part of the Israelites. They were afraid some would, at some point in the future, see the border of the Jordan River and think it was a dividing line between Israel and some other people, and that they had no part with Israel.

3. **Wait...What?** (22:11, 12) Someone heard about what the eastern tribes had done and immediately assumed the worst, and they gathered together "*to go to war against them.*" I find it very interesting that the ones who reported the altar's construction stated it was done "*on the children of Israel's side*"; it seems some were **already** making a distinction between Israel and those on the eastern side — the very thing the eastern tribes said they feared would happen!

4. **Assuming the Worst.** (22:12-20) When the news of the altar spread, those on the western side assumed the worst, thinking it was an altar to Baal (**v. 17**). Phinehas, the one speaking for the western tribes, reminded everyone that just because of the sin of one man, [Achan] God had punished the whole congregation of Israel, implying the same would happen to the whole of Israel if the eastern tribes had rebelled.

5. **An Explanation.** (22:21-29) When the accusation was heard by those on the eastern side, they simply and clearly explained the purpose for the altar, and stated with all honesty, "*if it is in rebellion, ...let the LORD Himself require an account*" (**vv. 22, 23**). They were willing to accept the Lord's punishment, if they had indeed rebelled. But they had not.

6. **Resolving Potential Conflict.** This situation gives us a pattern for resolving conflicts, real or even just **perceived**. Note what happened: Both sides had a zeal for what was right; one side confronted the other to ascertain the facts; the accused presents their case; the facts are accepted; unity is maintained.

7. **Your Observations:**

Interpretation

From the text of **22:1-34**, complete the following:

Paragraph Divisions: at 22:1, 7, 10, 13, 21, 26, and 30.

Note the paragraph divisions and give a short title for each main thought. [Some paragraphs may be combined.] Be ready to discuss the event, how it affected the relationship between those of the eastern and western sides of Jordan, and how the potential conflict was resolved.

1. What was the reason given originally for choosing to settle on the eastern side of Jordan? What did they promise to Moses and the rest of their Israelite brethren? _____

2. What did the eastern tribes do before crossing back over Jordan into their land, and why? What did the other tribes assume was the reason? _____

3. Why did Phinehas mention “*the iniquity of Peor*” and Achan when trying to settle the matter of what the eastern tribes had done? _____

4. What was the response of Phinehas and the other rulers, when they heard the explanation? The rest of the Israelites? _____

Application

1. How does the agreement of the eastern tribes to fight with the rest until all the land was conquered an example for brethren within local churches? _____

2. How is this situation an example for how potential conflicts can be addressed and resolved? Note the individual steps taken. _____

For Consideration

“For it is a witness between us that the LORD is God.” (22:34)

Lesson Thirteen: The Final Charges to Israel; Death of Joshua

(Joshua 23, 24)

As we come to the close of the story of the entrance into, and conquest of, Canaan, we also come to the end of the life of Joshua, though it is, as the text says, “*a long time after the Lord had given rest to Israel from all their enemies round about*” (23:1). He was 110 when he died, so that means he spent close to thirty years in Canaan, and got to enjoy the blessings of being in the Promised Land for which he and the rest of Israel — by the power of the Lord — had fought and won.

As he nears the end of his earthly life, Joshua speaks to the leadership of Israel and the congregation, as a whole, and charges them to make a choice of whom they would serve, reminding them of all the Lord — the one, true and living God — had done for them in bringing them into the Land of Promise. They heartily vowed to serve the Lord, and that is a good thing, but we know “the rest of the story.” Let us learn (Rom. 15:4), and let us be admonished (1st Cor. 10:11).

Preparation

Re-read the following passages that record some of the last words of Moses to the Israelites, before he died: (Deut. 29-31). Be prepared to compare the words of Moses to those of Joshua found in this context. Consider also the blessings and cursing pronounced on them (Deut. 27-28) as an expansion on Joshua’s warning here.

Observation

1. **Joshua’s Reminders.** (23:3, 5, 9; 24:8-13) As Joshua nears the end of his life, he calls together the leaders of the Israelites to remind them of all God had done for them in bringing them into the Promised Land. He fought for them, drove out the inhabitants, and made it so none could stand against them. They would be brought into a land for which they did not labor, live in cities they did not build, and eat of crops they did not plant. Joshua likely recalled that Moses had warned them that once they entered the land, they should be careful not to forget the Lord and what He had done for them, lest they become arrogant and start thinking they had obtained it all by their own power and might (Num. 8:11-20).

2. **Further Warnings.** (23:6-8, 11) Joshua also reminded — and warned — the Israelites to hold to the Lord, and to not turn away to the false gods of the people of Canaan, admonishing them to not turn to the left or to the right, as he himself had been admonished by God when he took over the leadership of Israel (cf. Josh. 1:6-9).

3. **Consequences, If They Fail.** (23:12-16) As with all admonitions to follow the Lord and keep His commandments faithfully, there is also a warning of what would happen if they failed to do that: He would no longer drive out the nations, He would destroy them from the land, and His anger would burn against them and they would perish from the land. Just as certain as the good things He promised for their obedience were the punishments for their unfaithfulness.

4. **Not One Thing, Not One Word.** (23:14) As had been stated after the land had been divided amongst the tribes (cf. 21:43-45), Joshua reiterates the fact “*not one thing has failed*” of all the good things God had promised, and “*not one word of them has failed.*” That is a point we should remember, too.

5. **Now, A Challenge.** (24:14, 15) After summing up all the Lord had done and His faithfulness to His promises, Joshua then lay before them a challenge to choose whom they would serve: the gods of their fathers and those of Egypt, or the true and living God who brought them out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. Joshua chose God.

6. **The Covenant.** (24:16-27) In response to the challenge of Joshua, the people vowed to serve and obey the Lord — three times (vv. 16, 21, 24). But would they, really?

7. **Your Observations:**

Interpretation

From the text of **23:1-24:33**, complete the following:

Paragraph Divisions: at 23:1, and 14; then 24:1, 14, 16, 19, 29, and 32.

Note the paragraph divisions and give a short title for each main thought. [Some paragraphs may be combined.] Be ready to discuss the final words of Joshua to the leaders of Israel and how he had influenced Israel during his leadership.

1. What was the point in reminding the Israelite leaders of all God had done for them? ____

2. Why was it necessary that He remind them to love the Lord (**23:11**), to keep His commandments (**23:6**), and to not be drawn away to the false gods (**23:7**)? ____

3. Beyond just making a point of fulfilled promises, why did Joshua remind them that God had fulfilled every word in doing *good* for them? [In other words, what other promises of God could they expect to be fulfilled?] ____

4. What was the challenge of Joshua made to the leaders of Israel, and how did they respond? What was his response to their first answer, and why? ____

Application

1. How is Joshua's challenge to the leaders of Israel, along with his personal choice (**24:15**), an example for us today? ____

2. How are the words of **23:14** an argument for the reliability of God's word and the surety of the numerous prophecies within Scripture? _

For Consideration

"Serve the Lord!" (**24:14**)

THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN

Lesson Fourteen: Review

(Joshua)

1. What words of assurance did God give to Joshua as he began leading the Israelites? _

2. What do we know about what the people of Canaan had heard about Israel before they arrived, and how did this affect them? _____

3. How was their entry into Canaan similar to their departure from Egypt, and what effect should both have had on the people? _____

4. What do the various failures and the numerous victories tell us about how we may have a successful life of faith even today? _____

5. What does the deception of the Gibeonites teach us about being careful to not simply accept the word of someone we do not know, especially on spiritual matters? _____

6. What does the establishment of the cities of refuge teach us about the justice and mercy of God? _____

7. How does the misunderstanding and resolution with the eastern tribes (**22:1-34**) demonstrate how problems should be handled? _____

8. How does Joshua's challenge to the people (**24:15**) still a valid challenge to anyone today, but especially to God's people? [Or is it?] _

9. Briefly describe the man Joshua as: (1) a leader, (2) a follower of God, and (3) an example. _

10. Compare the leadership of Joshua with that of Moses; list the similarities and the differences. _____

11. What have we learned from this study about God? _____

12. What spiritual lessons have you gained from the study of the book of Joshua? _____

13. What have you learned from this study that will help you in your personal spiritual life?

THE END