

WRITER

The writer who was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write this book is commonly assumed to be Joshua, Moses' assistant (See 24:25,26). However, there has been some controversy concerning Joshua's authorship, as well as the date when the book was initially written. Though several theories have been given as to who wrote the book, no one theory has been accepted by a majority of scholarship. Regardless of whether we may not come to any conclusion concerning the human authorship of the book, one thing is true. The writer was inspired by the Holy Spirit. This fact is clearly indicated by the nature of the book and its historical accuracy in reference to archaeological discoveries and its place in Jewish history.

In reference to Jewish tradition, the Talmud assumes that Joshua wrote the book, though it is believed that Eleazar and Phinehas provided the closing words in reference to the death of Joshua. Since some parts of the book were obviously written after the death of Joshua, it is assumed that other authors participated in the final words of its content.

The name Joshua means, "the Lord will save." The Greek equivalent of the name is "Jesus" (See At 7:45; Hb 4:8). The name sometimes takes the form of the name Hoshea (Nm 13:8). Joshua was the son of Nun and from the tribe of Ephraim (Nm 13:8).

Joshua was initially chosen to be the representative of his tribe, the tribe of Ephraim (Nm 13:8,16). He was later chosen as one of twelve spies who were sent out to spy out the land of Canaan immediately after Israel received the law on Mt. Sinai (Nm 13:8,16). He manifested his military skills when he led in Israel's battle against the Amalekites (Ex 17:9). After Israel was condemned to 38 years of wandering in the wilderness, he worked as Moses' assistant (Ex 13:8; 24:13; 32:17; Ja 1:1). He was placed in charge of the tabernacle when idolatry led to God's threat to destroy the nation (Ex 33:11). He was

loyal to Moses and his command because he realized that Moses was God's authority on earth (Nm 11:24-29).

As the Spirit-led successor of Moses (Nm 27:18), he was commissioned directly by God to lead Israel in the conquest of Canaan (Ex 17:8,9; Dt 31:14,23). Throughout the years of conquest, he manifested true loyalty to God and the covenant that God had established with Israel. According to Josephus, Joshua was approximately 85 years old at the time he assumed the leadership of Israel. After successfully leading God's people in their initial and national conquest of Canaan, he died when he was 110 years old. He was buried at Timnath Serah in Ephraim, a place of burial know one knows today (Ja 24:29,30).

DATE

The traditional date of writing is somewhere around 1375 B.C. After the years of conquest of Canaan, the book was written in order to give Israel a reminder of the history of their battles in order to possess their inheritances of the land of promise. Since Israel could not have done what they did in conquering the promise land, God led them through almost two decades of military struggles against the Canaanites in order that they appreciate the land. The recording of these battles was to remind generations to come that Israel's possession of the land came with great military struggle. The book, therefore, was written after Israel had rest in the land, sometime immediately after the close of the military victories that led to the possession of the land. This period began at the time of the crossing of the Jordan around 1400 B.C. to the time when the tribes settled in their possessions. Bible students have assumed that this was a period of 20 to 25 years. They would remain in the land until the time of the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities.

Entrance Into The Promised Land

(1:1 - 5:15)

Outline: (1) God charges Joshua (1:1-9), (2) Preparations to cross the Jordan (1:10-18), (3) Sending of the spies (2:1-24), (4) Crossing the Jordan (3:1-17), (5) Erecting the Gilgal memorial (4:1-24), (6) Preparations for the Canaan conquest (5:1-15)

Chapter 1

GOD CHARGES JOSHUA

1:1-9 Go over this Jordan: This is a transition command, one that indicates a change in the history of Israel. Israel had fought defensive wars to come to this point. Now they were about to fight offensive wars to take the land. **I have given to you:** This was the promised land that had already been given to Israel (Gn 12:1-7; 13:14-17). However, God would not do for them what they could do for themselves. With His help, they had to take the land from the hands of the Canaanites. The land included everything from east of the Euphrates River to the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. It included the land of the Hittites to the north that extended into Asia Minor. It extended south into the Sinai Peninsula. Israel never occupied all this land throughout their history. However, during the reigns of David and Solomon most of the land was brought under tribute. The extent of the land that was promised manifested God's lavish gift to His people. They could grow as a nation and populate the land as long as they remained faithful to His will. **As I was with Moses:** The passing of the great leader, Moses, did not mean that God would cease working through His designated leadership of Israel. The nation of Israel was not built around a strong leader. It was built upon the leadership of God who worked through chosen men. The passing of leaders, therefore, did not mean the passing of the strength of the nation of Israel. This is an evidence that the nation of Israel was produced and sustained by God. Nations that are built on the powerful leadership of one man usually dissipate when the leader dies. **Observe ... the law:** The law was the writings of Moses that the Jews referred to as the Torah. Obedience to the law was the condition for the continued existence of the nation of Israel. As long as they were obedient to the will of God, they would remain as a nation in the land. **Meditate on it:** God's leaders make a special effort to think on God's word every day. Their minds must not be so busied with the things of the world that they do not have time to think on God's word. **Have I not commanded you:** Joshua's command to lead Israel was not based on

his personal ambitions. His leadership was sanctioned by God, for it was God who commissioned him to lead Israel in her efforts to take the land. **Be strong:** When one realizes his God-given destiny, he is strengthened to carry out that destiny. Therefore, God challenges us to discover our destiny to do His work through our lives. With this discovery comes strength and fearlessness. We live our lives according to God's will when we realize that God has given us the gifts to accomplish our destiny. We are able to focus our lives on our destiny without being deterred. One who has discovered his God-given destiny knows that God is with him as he lives according to the will of God. In our assurance that God is with us, we are able to overcome opposition by the power of God working in our lives (See Rm 8:31,37; Ph 4:13).

PREPARATIONS TO CROSS THE JORDAN

1:10-18 Prepare provisions: It was now time in the history of Israel that the manna and quail cease. When they crossed over the Jordan, God stopped the supply of the manna and quail. God had proved that He was for and with them during the wandering in the wilderness. But now it was time for them to provide for themselves. They would live off the spoils of their victories during the years of conquest, and then plant and harvest when they finished taking the land from the Canaanites. **Reubenites ... Gadites ... Manasseh:** Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh had been given land possessions east of the Jordan (Nm 32; Dt 3:12-20). It was now time for them to keep their promise to send their fighting men with the rest of the army of Israel in order to take the land. **All that you command us we will do:** Joshua called on the three tribes to be loyal to the commandment of Moses. In this context, they responded by pledging their loyalty to Joshua in order to keep their commitment to Moses.

Chapter 2

SENDING OF THE SPIES

2:1-24 Spy secretly: Contrary to the purpose of sending out the spies 40 years before when they sinned by

questioning the commandment of God to immediately take the land, the sending of the spies here was proper military strategy. God's command that Israel cross the Jordan assumed that Joshua was now to proceed with the wisdom of a military leader in order to conquer the land. **Rahab:** We must also assume that the sending of the spies gave an opportunity for Rahab and her family to be discovered and saved because of her faith (See Js 2:25). **Harlot:** We must keep in mind that the Hebrew words for a "female innkeeper" and "harlot" were the same (See 6:22-25). **We have heard:** The reputation of Israel had preceded them. What is unique about Rahab was that the work of God among the Israelites produced faith in Rahab. Her faith would be her legacy (See Hb 11:31). And because of her faith, she worked to save the spies (Js 2:25). Her faith placed her in the lineage of the Messiah to come (Mt 1:5). But did Rahab tell a lie for the sake of the lives of the spies? She knew they came from the Israelites and were returning to them. However, she did not know the immediate directions from which they came, though she knew that Israel was camped on the east side of the Jordan. We must keep in mind that she is just beginning her walk of faith, though still lingering with her life-style of the past. We must also remember that a greater law of God here superseded the possible lie. The preservation of the spies and Israel's taking the land was of greater importance than the lie. What her lie manifested was her choice to align herself with the people of God and not the people of Jericho. In doing this, she exposed herself to execution if it was discovered by the king of the city that she had lied. **A token of truth:** Rahab had demonstrated her faith by saving the spies. She was literally saved by works in that a token of truth was established that she and her family would be saved from the destruction of the Israelite army. The scarlet thread was the token of her faith and works, and the signal that the spies were good to their word. **The Lord has delivered into our hands all the land:** What a contrast to the report that was given by the spies who returned from the land almost 40 years before. These spies were men of faith. They reported what God had

said before, that when the inhabitants of the land heard of God's great work through the Israelites, the heart of the people would melt (Ex 15:15; 23:27; Dt 11:25). When the spies saw that the people of Canaan quaked before the Israelites, they knew that the land had been given to them. They gave no report on the greatness of the walls of Jericho or the strength of the army of Jericho. Such things had no significance when compared to the fact that the local inhabitants were afraid of the Israelites, as well as their trust that God was on their side.

Chapter 3

CROSSING THE JORDAN

3:1-6 *Joshua rose early:* This is a good characteristic of a great leader (See 6:12,15; 7:16; 8:10). Great leaders are full of energy and ready to launch into their tasks every day. ***Officers went throughout the camp:*** Israel was at this time ready and organized for movement. Their response to their leadership manifested their unity of spirit to cross the Jordan and engage the enemy for the conquest of the land. ***See the ark of the covenant:*** Under the command of Moses they followed a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Nm 10:33,34). But now they were to begin following the movement of the ark of the covenant, wherein lay the ten commandments of the law (Dt 10:1-6). ***Sanctify yourselves:*** God can do little with those who do not separate themselves from the affairs of the world (See Ex 19:10). He uses totally committed people to do His work.

3:7,8 *I will begin to magnify you:* God magnified Joshua for the sake of inspiring the people to follow him. Through the work of supernatural wonders, the people realized that Joshua's leadership was commissioned and sanctioned by God. God thus magnified Joshua through miraculous events in order that the people see and glorify God, not man.

3:9-13 *The living God is among you:* The miraculous events that transpired during Israel's crossing of the Jordan were to inspire Israel and reassure them that God was with them. They needed at this time this reassurance in facing the nations that dwelt within the land (See

9:1; 11:3; 24:11; Dt 7:1; compare Gn 13:18; 14:7; 23:3,19; 24:9; 34:2; Nm 13:29).

3:14-17 *The waters ... stood and rose up in one heap:* As with the crossing of the Red Sea, so here again the power of God over nature was manifested to Israel. The generation that had experienced the Red Sea event had died. This new generation of leaders needed a reaffirmation of what their fathers experienced when they came out of Egypt. The waters were possibly blocked at Adamah and were backed up 20 kilometers (about 12 miles) north to the city of Zerethan. The crossing took place directly east of Jericho.

Chapter 4

ERECTING THE GILGAL MEMORIAL

4:1-9 *Take twelve stones:* God always seeks to leave memorials with us, for we often forget His blessings (Compare Gn 28:18; 31:45-47; 35:17-20; 1 Sm 7:12). The purpose of this memorial was that God wanted them to remember that He had brought them to the brink of the Jordan, and then made it possible for them as a nation to cross the Jordan and begin their conquest of the land. The chosen representatives from each tribe were the beginning of the word-of-mouth testimony to future generations concerning the purpose of this memorial. Throughout Israel's history each generation was to tell their children about what God did in bringing the nation of Israel into the land. For this reason they set up twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan where the priests stood as the people crossed. The crossing of the Jordan signaled the conclusion of Israel's wandering in the wilderness. The stones were then set up in Gilgal (4:2) to signal the beginning of a nation in the land that God had promised to Abraham centuries before (See Gn 12:1-3).

4:10-14 **40,000:** Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh kept their promise by sending over the Jordan 40,000 armed soldiers who helped make up the army of Israel. *Magnified Joshua:* After the miraculous event of crossing over the Jordan, the people knew that the Lord was with Joshua. They fully accepted him as God's representative to lead the nation into victory over the Canaanites.

4:15-18 As the Jordan closed, the option of a retreat was also closed. The only way was forward into the task of conquering the land.

4:19-24 The time of year for the crossing of the Jordan was the Western month of April. It was a time when the river ran full in its banks. **Gilgal:** This was the wandering Israelites' first camp in the promised land. This location was different from the Gilgal of 15:7. **All the people of the earth:** In this statement is the substance of what is meant in Romans 15:4 and 1 Corinthians 10:11. Our purpose in having this Old Testament record of what God did with Israel is to build our faith in His work in the Israel of God (the church) today (See Rm 10:17). Christians are to study the Old Testament in order to understand that God also works today in their lives and among the nations. Study of the Old Testament Scriptures brings comfort in being reassured that God is still at work among His people.

Chapter 5

PREPARATION FOR THE CANAAN CONQUEST

5:1-9 **Their hearts melted:** Israel's crossing of the Jordan proved to the kings of Canaan that Israel's God was still working for Israel. They had heard rumors of the crossing of the Red Sea, but the crossing of the Jordan during the flood season of April and May struck fear in their hearts. **Circumcise again:** Those who had come out of Egypt were circumcised. However, they all died in the wilderness because they refused to enter the land immediately after receiving the law on Mt. Sinai. Throughout the 38 years of wilderness wandering, Israel did not circumcise the male children. But here there is a new beginning, and thus the need to remember God's covenant that He had made with Israel at Mt. Sinai. Circumcision was a sign of the covenant, and thus the circumcision here was to remind them that God had fulfilled His part of the covenant that He had established with them. He had brought them through the wilderness and into the land of promise. Remembering this covenant was more important at this time than proceeding on to the conquest of the land. This camp was thus named Gilgal be-

cause all those who had grown up in the wilderness were circumcised at this location.

5:10-12 Kept the Passover: From the time Israel first kept the Passover in Egypt, this is the third time it is recorded that they kept this feast (See Ex 12; Nm 9:1,2). The eating of the Passover at this time reminded them that their deliverance from Egypt had found its fulfillment in this moment in time when they first dwelt in the land of promise. The Passover, therefore, was a reminder of their bondage in Egypt out of which God had delivered them, but also assurance of that to which God was leading them. The eating of the Passover had both past and future significance. **Manna ceased:** Once they ate the Passover in the land of milk and honey, the manna and quail ceased. During the years of conquest, they could live off the spoils of the Canaanites. When they settled down in the years of peace after the conquests, they could live off their own crops.

5:13-15 Captain of the Lord's army: Others had a similar experience in meeting a divine being (See Gn 12:7; 18:2; Ex 3:5; Nm 22:31). We are not told who this was. Joshua realized immediately that the being was divine, and thus he fell to the ground in worship. Such is the natural response to anyone who is sent from God. Some have assumed that this was the eternal Angel of God, the Son of God in His preincarnate state. Since no angel of God would be so arrogant as to accept worship that is due only to God, we would assume that this conclusion is correct. The captain of the Lord's army here does not rebuke Joshua for his worship, but requires it of him (Compare Rv 22:8,9).

Conquest Of The Promised Land

(6:1 - 12:24)

Outline: (1) Conquest of Jericho (6:1-27), (2) Defeat at Ai (7:1-26), (3) Destruction of Ai (8:1-29), (4) Reading of the law (8:30-35), (5) Alliance with the Gibeonites (9:1-27), (6) Conquest of southern Canaan (10:1-43), (7) Conquest of northern Canaan (11:1-15), (8) Summary of battles and victories (11:16 - 12:24)

Chapter 6

CONQUEST OF JERICHO

6:1-5 God gave Joshua the military strategy for taking Jericho. The manner by which Israel was to take the city required faith. Once the strategy was carried out, and the victory secured, faith in God's work through the army of Israel would be strengthened in order to continue other conquests of Canaan. Since these instructions came to the army of Israel through the inspiration of Joshua, Joshua was reaffirmed to be God's leader of Israel. Joshua's affirmation to be God's designated leader was again confirmed because the taking of the city was a miraculous event.

6:6-11 *Circle the city:* We must be reminded here why this city and others in Canaan were being judged. They had digressed into sin to the point of no moral return. Their destruction was God's "in time" judgment by the proxy of Israel's army. The inhabitants of the land had given up their right to life because of the degradation of their lives. They could no longer dwell among men because they, as Sodom and Gomorrah, had digressed into sin to the point of no moral return (See comments Gn 15:16). This may be a possible explanation why Rahab was a harlot, not simply an innkeeper. As a single woman, she was forced into harlotry because of the moral degradation of the men among whom she had to survive. As the homosexual men of Sodom and Gomorrah sought to have sexual relations with the three men from God during the time of Abraham, so Rahab was forced to succumb to harlotry to survive in Jericho (See Gn 19:1-11). However, her faith survived and we are left today with the legacy of her faith (Hb 11:31; Js 2:25). But when cultures become so morally degraded that they force the innocent to conform to their moral degradation, then they are cultures that should reap the judgment of God that was poured out on Sodom and Gomorrah.

6:12-21 *Circled ... seven times:* God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. The circling of the city by the army of Israel gave the inhabitants of Jericho a warning and opportunity to repent (Ez 33:1; see Ez 18:23,32). ***Sound of the trumpet:*** This was a ram's horn. It had no musical value and was used exclusively to summon the people. The people of Jericho understood the meaning

of the blowing of the ram's horn. It was a summons to war. Thus the inhabitants of Jericho were reminded that Israel was outside their walls for the purpose of taking the city. **Consecrated to the Lord:** Other translations may read "devoted" or "accursed." When something was consecrated (devoted) to God, it belonged to God and was to be used to implement His work among men. In this case, the gold, silver, and vessels of brass and iron were to be given to the tabernacle service (vs 19). Some consecrated things were to be destroyed in order that God's work be carried out. What could not be destroyed was put in service for the work of God. What was to be destroyed, was to be taken out of the way in order that the purpose of God continue. All that was Jericho, the inhabitants, possessions and buildings, were the firstfruits of the cities of Canaan, and thus were to be consecrated to God. **Utterly destroy:** Young and old, male and female and all animals were to be killed (See also Dt 13:6-18; 17:1-7). The reason for this total annihilation was the fulfillment of Genesis 15:16. The iniquity of the Amorites (Canaanites) was now full. Even children who had grown up in such a society of total moral degradation would become lost. It would be better for them to die a physical death in their youth, than to grow up in such an immoral and hostile environment. At the time, the Israelites had only enough provisions for themselves and their children. They had no crops, for they were eating the "old corn (maize)." They could not possibly have taken on hundreds, and possibly thousands of orphaned children. If they had, even their survival would have been compromised. The higher law of God in this context was the survival of Israel to bring the Savior of the world. With this understanding, therefore, we know why it was necessary that all the inhabitants of Jericho should die. Anything that would hinder the work of God among men in this case was to be removed.

6:22-25 In the midst of such great destruction, mercy was given to the only one in the city who had shown faith in God. By faith, not only Rahab, but her entire family was spared. The point is that one's faith can lead to the salvation of others who trust in the works of the faith-

ful. Because she acted on her faith, young Rahab's legacy was one of faith (See Mt 1:5; Hb 11:31; Js 2:25). ***She dwells in Israel:*** Rahab could have fled to one of the neighboring cities. But because she recognized that Israel was the people of God, she chose to dwell among the Israelites. She was still there at the time the book of Joshua was written, identifying the fact that she was given a long life, for she lived after the death of Joshua and died after the book of Joshua was written. She apparently developed a home of believers with Salmon, of whom she gave birth to Boaz (Mt 1:5; see Rt 4:21). Ruth, from Boaz, gave birth to Obed. Through Obed came Jesse, the father of David, through whom the Messiah eventually was born into the world.

6:26,27 *Cursed is the man:* If any would seek to rebuild Jericho he would be cursed with the death of his firstborn and lastborn. This curse was fulfilled when Hiel, during the reign of Ahab, rebuilt the city (1 Kg 16:34). Several archaeological studies have been made of the site of Jericho. It has been proved that the city remained in ruins from the time of its destruction in this context until the 9th century when Hiel rebuilt it. Since the time Hiel rebuilt it, it was destroyed and rebuilt several times. ***His fame:*** As a military leader who sought to do the will of God, Joshua's fame spread rapidly throughout the land of Canaan. The destruction of Jericho was so pronounced that the news of the utter destruction of the city struck fear in the hearts of the inhabitants of Canaan. The reaction of the Canaanites explains why God destroyed the city in the manner that He did. The report of the destruction, therefore, gave the other inhabitants of the land time to flee from the land of Canaan. Unfortunately, they did not flee, and subsequently, many suffered the same fate as Jericho.

Chapter 7

THE DEFEAT AT AI

7:1-5 *Israelites acted unfaithfully:* Though only one person sinned in the camp of Israel, the entire nation had to suffer. The nation suffered a humiliating defeat before the army of Ai. Achan had taken that which was

consecrated (devoted) for destruction (See 6:17-19). **Ai ... smote their men:** Achan's sin cost the lives of about 36 soldiers of the Israelite army. Though Joshua sent 3,000 soldiers against Ai, their attack, minus God's help, meant sure defeat. **The hearts of the people melted:** Israel's defeat reaffirmed the fact that they could do nothing in their conquest of Canaan without the help of God. It also reaffirmed that they must in every way submit to the will of God as it was delivered to them through the mouth of Joshua.

7:6-9 It is obvious that Joshua did not know why his army was defeated. We thus do not know the intent of his prayer. It seems to be a prayer of complaint in ignorance of why Israel's army was punished (Compare Ex 5:22,23; 14:11,12; Nm 11:11-15; 14:2,3). Nevertheless, the prayer of Joshua and the elders indicates that they still had faith in God to work according to His promise. **Amorites:** This was a common term used to refer to all the inhabitants of the land of Canaan.

7:10-15 Get up: In this statement it seems that God was stating that they should stop whining in prayer and get about the business of rectifying the problem of sin in the camp. Good leaders do not complain to God about those things they can take care of themselves. **Israel has sinned:** Joshua and the leaders should have assumed that something was wrong before they went to the Lord in prayer. Instead of complaints in prayer, they should have reexamined themselves, assuming that any defeat of their army meant that something was wrong with them, not God. God will not bless those who live in sin. Though one would claim the name of God, there is no blessing when one persists in living contrary to the will of God. A thief who steals will not be blessed by God with the possessions he has stolen. In this case, though only one committed the transgression, the entire nation was held accountable for breaking the conditions of the covenant. The judgment meant, therefore, that the entire nation had stolen that which was consecrated to God. **Unless you destroy:** Israel's allegiance to the covenant depended on her strict obedience to that which was here commanded by God to rectify the problem. Achan had

humiliated his family and embarrassed his nation. And by doing so he violated the conditions of obedience to the law of the covenant. As an example to the rest of the nation, therefore, he and his family had to die.

7:16-21 Joshua rose up early: When godly leaders realize the will of God, they take immediate action. There is no time to sleep in when the work of God has to be done. **Give glory to the Lord:** True confession comes only when one acknowledges God as the Lord of his life. Upon the basis of his own confession, Achan pronounced his judgment. In his confession he admitted that he yielded to his own lusts. He saw, coveted and took that which was consecrated to the Lord.

7:22-26 Achan and Israel learned that possessions do not bring blessings from God. God's blessing comes only through holy living. Also in this case, Israel learned that as a nation no one citizen lived unto himself (See Rm 14:7). The sin of one man cost the lives of his family and the lives of 36 warriors of Israel. Though Achan thought his sin was hidden from God, he realized that the all-knowing God will bring judgment on those who think that they can secretly commit sin. **All Israel stoned him:** This surely was a difficult time in the lives of those Israelites who had to cast the stones. With joy they had come across the Jordan. With joy they had destroyed Jericho. But here they had to stone one of their own. This was certainly not an easy decision on the part of Joshua, or an easy thing for Israel to do. However, in all of what transpired here we see the evidence of a people who sought to do the will of the Lord in every detail. Their fear of the Lord was greater than their concern for a fellow Israelite. And such it should be when the Lord asks the church to disfellowship one who brings sin into the camp of God (See comments 2 Th 3:6-9). Keeping the command of God to disfellowship is more important than fellowshiping one who persists on living in sin. The reason for this is that the sinner will influence others to also live in sin.

Chapter 8

DESTRUCTION OF AI

8:1-8 It was now time for action. Sin had been purged from Israel. **30,000:** Instead of 3,000 soldiers as previously sent, Joshua made sure that Ai was taken. By choosing this great number of soldiers, he possibly showed some doubt, or at least he wanted his men to be reassured that what happened before in their attack of Ai did not happen again. **Spoil for yourselves:** Jericho had been consecrated to the Lord since it was the first city of the Canaanites to be destroyed. But now, Israel was to replenish her supplies by taking the spoils of Ai. **Ambush:** Though God had given Ai into the hands of Israel, this did not mean that Israel was to ignore proper military strategy, which strategy the Lord gave to Joshua. The strategy of the ambush worked because of the overconfidence of the inhabitants of Ai. They assumed that Israel would flee before them as they did during the first battle.

8:9-29 In this destruction we must assume that God wanted Ai to be a testimony to the rest of the Canaanite cities that Israel was His people. In the second attack on Ai not one of the inhabitants of the city was left alive to tell the rest of the Canaanites that the army of Ai had initially defeated the army of Israel. Only the Israelites knew of the initial defeat, which news they would surely not broadcast throughout Canaan. We know of the initial defeat only because of the book of Joshua, which book was written after Israel had taken the land. But the report of the initial defeat was never known to the rest of the Canaanites at the time unless the people of Ai were able to send out messengers immediately after the battle. But because they were totally annihilated in the second battle, no Canaanite city would become overconfident in their wars with Israel. The Canaanites were defeated morally by news of the total destruction of Ai, and then physically as the army of Israel destroyed the cities of Canaan one by one.

READING OF THE LAW

8:30-35 Altar ... on Mount Ebal: This mountain is about 45 kilometers (35 miles) north of Ai. It could be that Joshua and Israel made this journey immediately after the fall of Ai. It was a journey into enemy territory in order

to build this altar. However, it could be that the building of the altar is mentioned here from the viewpoint of the writer of the book of Joshua. It was not actually built until after Israel had secured the area around Mt. Ebal several years later (See 24:1-28). Centuries before, God had promised Abraham that He would give the land to his descendants (Gn 12:1-3). As a result of the promise, Abraham built an altar to the Lord (Gn 12:6-7). At this time in the history of Israel, Joshua built the first altar in the land, signifying that God had fulfilled His promise to Abraham.

Chapter 9

ALLIANCE WITH THE GIBEONITES

9:1,2 *All the kings ... gathered themselves together:* This was an opportunity for Israel. Instead of taking Canaan city by city, victory over a coalition of kings would make it possible to take large sections of the land at one time. This was not a time for fear (See Ps 2:4,5; 37:1,2; Is 54:17). It was a time for courage, an opportunity for God to work in the lives of the Israelites in order to prove that no coalition of kings could defeat them.

9:3-15 *The inhabitants of Gibeon:* Gibeon is located about 10 kilometers (6 miles) northwest of Jerusalem. The Gibeonites were knowledgeable of the work of God through Israel. They thus realized their desperate situation. They schemed, therefore, to make some alliance with the Israelites whom they believed would defeat them in any battle. **Gilgal:** We do not know which Gilgal is here identified. It could be the Gilgal that was recently established by the circumcision of the Israelite men (See 5:8,9). It could be the Gilgal near Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal (See Dt 11:30; 1 Sm 7:16; 10:8; 11:14; 13:1,8; 15:33). If the Mt. Ebal near Mt. Gerizim is where Joshua actually took Israel in order to build a memorial altar, then we would assume that the Gilgal near Mt. Gerizim is the correct city. This would possibly be the case since Joshua would want to move the nation of Israel into a central location in the land of Palestine in order to establish as soon as possible a dominant presence in the land. **We are your servants:** Though wise in his military dealings,

Joshua was still deceived by the Gibeonites. He was deceived into thinking that they were not inhabitants of the land of promise, but people who were only traveling through the region.

9:16-21 *Made a covenant with them:* Before discovering all the facts concerning the origins and intentions of the Gibeonites, the leaders of Israel made a covenant with them that they could not break. This incident explains how binding covenants were among the Israelites, a people who were good for their word. When considering the deception of the Gibeonites, we must keep in mind that one of the missions of Israel was to convert the nations. They were a nation of priests for God's service to the rest of the world. Though under a cloud of deception, the Gibeonites were Israel's first converts in the land of Palestine.

9:22-27 *Why have you deceived us:* The covenant that Israel made with the Gibeonites was binding. However, it was based on the false premises of one of the parties, the Gibeonites. For this reason, the covenant remained, but the party that instigated the deception was brought under the bondage of the party that was deceived. The Gibeonites became the bondservants of Israel. ***The assembly murmured against the princes:*** The responsibility of leadership is to lead through wise choices. In this case, leadership failed, and thus the people complained against their leaders for bringing them into a covenant with people of the Canaanites. Keep in mind that the leaders had acted in good faith, but were deceived. Unfortunately, they had acted alone before consulting the Lord. ***The house of my God:*** The Gibeonites' service would be centered around the tabernacle and its function among the people. They would be the bondservants of the priests who carried out their ministry for Israel (Compare 2 Sm 21:1,2). Joshua wisely turned a bad situation into something good. The princes had agreed to a bad covenant. However, the Gibeonites were consigned to a functional part of the tabernacle ministry of Israel. The lives of the Gibeonites were spared and servants were added to the administration of the tabernacle service. We assume that the Gibeonites did not have this in

mind when they initiated the deception. They wanted to live, but surely not at the price of consigning their future generations to being servants. Some want to become members of the body of Christ and live off the freewill food of the brethren. However, the cost of membership is that everyone must work (2 Th 3:10). There are those who know where to go for survival, but they must understand the price that they must give is work. There is no free ride among God's servants.

Chapter 10

CONQUEST OF SOUTHERN CANAAN

10:1-5 Since the city of the Gibeonites was one of the principal cities of Canaan, the rest of the cities were in great fear when they learned that the Gibeonites realized they could not stand against Israel. Adonizedek thus organized a coalition of kings in order that they together stand against Israel.

10:6-15 *Do not abandon your servants:* The Gibeonites had given themselves over to the God of Israel. As a result, their former friends turned against them. Their faith in the God of Israel brought an immediate threat from their former friends. However, they quickly realized that their allegiance with Israel and God had its benefits. They were to be protected by the army of Israel against those who had turned against them. *The Lord ... slew them:* Israel's army was God's proxy judgment against the morally degraded nations that dwelt within Canaan. The biblical historian must not forget that God is not only giving Israel a land in which to dwell to bring forth the Messiah, but also bringing "in time" judgment on those who had forsaken Him by going after their own religious imaginations. The Canaanites had given up their right to exist because of their moral degradation. Their wickedness had at this time in history brought forth the judgment of God (See comments Gn 13:16). *Great stones from heaven:* In this case, God used natural forces to bring calamity upon those who had given up on God and created wicked behavior after their own desires (See Jg 5:20). Great hailstones killed more of the enemies of Israel than the Israelite army. *O sun, stand still:* There

is no scientific explanation for this. True miracles have no scientific explanation simply because a miracle is a supernatural occurrence outside the realm of the scientific method of study. Lest in our weak faith we accuse the Bible of being frivolous in recording such an event, we must realize that the God who created all things could certainly bring about this event. God answered this prayer of Joshua, not only for the army of Israel in its defeat of the enemies of God, but also for the purpose of testing the faith of those who say they believe in God. A god that could not do what Joshua requested in this prayer would certainly be a god that was the invention of our imaginations. But the one true and living God who created all things could certainly perform according to His omnipotence in stopping the rotation of the earth. Keep in mind that the request was made from the viewpoint of man, not God. Since the earth rotates on its own axis, then it was the earth's rotation that was stopped. **No day like that before it or after:** God uses miracles sparingly among His people. The more miracles that would occur in the lives of believers, the weaker their faith would become (See comments Jn 20:26-31). For this reason, therefore, God has not worked such miracles as this since the days of Joshua.

10:16-27 Put your feet on the necks of these kings: This was a show of conquest. The gesture here was for the encouragement of his men. These kings had arrogantly taken up arms in a coalition against the God of Israel. With a great army of soldiers they had sought to defeat Israel. But at this moment, they were on the ground with their necks under the feet of Israel's soldiers. Joshua wanted to encourage his soldiers by illustrating that no king or coalition of kings would be able to stand against them. Any resistance on the part of the Canaanites would only lead to their destruction.

10:28-39 This is an account of Israel's conquest of the southern region of the land of Palestine. More than one conquest is here recorded. The purpose behind the conquest of these wicked nations must never be forgotten. God was cleansing the land of evil. He was purifying a land for the settlement of the Israelites, from whom

would come the Messiah into the world. The wicked nations had earned their destruction by their total deviation from the righteousness of God (See Rm 11:22). The proxy judgment of God upon these nations was thus just. They had their opportunity of obedience to the true and living God. Unfortunately, their desire to create gods after their own imaginations and religious desires that catered to the moral degradation of their hearts earned them the judgment that was meted out by the army of Israel (See Lv 18:24,25; Dt 9:5; 18:9,12).

10:40-43 Israel completely defeated those cities and peoples that are herein mentioned. However, we must also understand that the areas outside the region of their conquests, but still within the boundaries that God had given them as the promise land, were still unconquered and thus inhabited by the Canaanites. This is revealed by the fact that the Anakims remained in the Gaza area (11:22; 13:2,3). The Jebusites continued to remain in Jerusalem (15:63). At the end of his leadership in the conquest of the land, Joshua exhorted the individual tribes of Israel to continue the cleansing of the land by defeating the remaining peoples within their allotted territories (23:12). In the period of the Israelite wars against the Canaanites, we must understand that there was a period of national war and a period of tribal war. Under the leadership of Joshua, national conquests were initially realized in order that the tribal groups settle in their possessions. Once settled, they were to begin the planting and harvesting of their crops in order to sustain themselves. Once there was peace from the national wars, the individual tribes had the responsibility to continue their wars against the Canaanites in order to rid their individually allotted possessions of any Canaanite inhabitants. Joshua succeeded in bringing victory for Israel in the period of the national wars. Unfortunately, the individual tribes failed in their efforts to completely rid their tribal possessions of the Canaanites. The book of Joshua is about the success of Israel in her national wars against the Canaanites. The book of Judges is about the failure of the tribes in their wars against the Canaanites in their tribal territories. It seems that when Joshua

and his God-dependent leadership ceased, the leadership of the individual tribes forsook the success of having God direct their leadership in continuing regional victories over the Canaanites.

Chapter 11

CONQUEST OF NORTHERN CANAAN

11:1-5 The location of Meron is not certain. But it was here that another united force of kings came against Israel. In a desperate situation, these kings thought that they had an advantage over the kings of the south in that they were a united coalition greater in number than the kings of the south. It seems that they were more equipped with horses and chariots, thus were more experienced in warfare. Regardless of the fall of the kings of the south, they unfortunately arrogantly trusted in their military strength.

11:6-15 *Do not be afraid:* When we are encouraged with these words from God, nothing will stand against us (See Rm 8:31,37). In this case, the great enemy of the coalition of northern kings was easily subdued before Israel. *Hock their horses:* This was the cutting of the main tendon above the ankle of the horses. The cutting of this tendon made the horse useless, for the horse could not walk. *Suddenly:* It seems that before the northern kings could fully organize into a fighting force, Joshua attacked. *Burned their chariots:* Israel had no need for either horses or chariots in Israel's warfare. The Israelites were strictly a guerilla army of soldiers who were more mobile than horses and chariots that could not be used to launch a secret attack in either mountains or forests. The horses and chariots were limited to the plains, and thus were of no use to the army of Israel who could launch attacks from places where chariots could not go. *Hazor:* This was the king over the evil forces of the north. Joshua removed him and the other kings from society. Such kings are often unrepentant, and thus if left alive would have continually been a thorn in the flesh of Israel. *Cities built on their mounds:* These were well-fortified cities since they were built on the hilltops. In such positions they were difficult to be conquered by enemies

(See 8:28; Dt 13:16; Jr 30:18). **He left nothing undone:** Such should be the legacy of a true servant of God. When one understands his destiny for God, and performs to the best of his ability, then he leaves nothing undone that the Lord would expect of him. From this statement, therefore, we conclude that Joshua accomplished what God intended for him to do in reference to the national wars of Israel against the Canaanites. It was now time for the tribes to assume the responsibility of defeating the Canaanites within their own allotted territories. As the book of Judges will confirm, they failed in this responsibility.

SUMMARY OF BATTLES AND VICTORIES

11:16-20 The extent of Israel's national conquests was from the land of Goshen in Egypt to Mt. Hermon in the north. All the land from the Mediterranean Sea to just east of the Jordan River fell under the control of Israel. Though Israel at the time was not large enough as a nation to settle and secure all this land, Joshua conquered enough of the land in order that the Israelite tribes individually continue to cleanse their own territories. **Harden their hearts:** When men with evil hearts are confronted with the will of the Lord, they willingly harden themselves against the Lord. In this way the Lord hardens men's hearts. The Lord will take credit for presenting the occasion for one to harden his heart against His will. He takes credit by presenting the opportunity for the arrogant and rebellious to harden their hearts. In this way the justice of God stands in that it is man who brings upon himself the judgment of God by hardening his heart against God's will (See Dt 2:30; Jg 14:4; 1 Sm 2:25; 1 Kg 12:15; 2 Ch 25:16,20).

11:21-23 Anakims: These were the giants who brought fear to Israel when they were camped at Kadesh Barnea immediately after leaving Mt. Sinai (See Nm 13:33; 14:1,2,9; Dt 9:2). **The land rested from war:** This was the end of the national wars of the united tribes of Israel. All remaining efforts to cleanse the allotted homelands were left to the individual tribes. Joshua succeeded in his national leadership, but the leadership of the indi-

vidual tribes failed to completely rid their territories of the Canaanites.

Chapter 12

12:1-24 This chapter is a review of all the kings who were conquered during the years of Israel's national wars. In the list, the kings are mentioned, but not specifically the land over which they ruled. It was assumed that the land over which the kings ruled fell into the hands of Israel. But in this account the review of kings is a focus on any legacy such kings might leave in reference to their strength. The strength of a nation resides in its leadership. Israel destroyed the leadership of these nations, and thus the evidence of God working in Israel was manifested by Israel's victory over the strongest leaders that mankind could produce. No leadership of this world has any chance of victory when God has determined that that leadership should be terminated. It is God who sets up leadership, and it is God who takes it down (See comments Rm 13:1-7). This record of defeated kings, therefore, stood as a testimony to the future generations of Israel. The victories over these kings would be a testimony to later generations that God fought for Israel in order to settle the tribes of Israel in the land. He fought for them in order to fulfill the promises that He made to their forefathers centuries before (Gn 15:13-21; see Dt 32:7-9).

Allotting Of The Promised Land

(13:1 - 24:33)

Outline: (1) Future battles and inheritances (13:1-6), (2) Inheritances east of the Jordan (13:7-33), (3) Inheritances west of the Jordan (14:1 - 19:51), (4) Cities of refuge (20:1-9), (5) Cities for priests and Levites (21:1-45), (6) Return of the eastern tribes (22:1-34), (7) Joshua's farewell address (23:1 - 24:33)

Chapter 13

FUTURE BATTLES AND INHERITANCES

13:1-6 *Much land remains to be possessed:* The Philistines still possessed some territory in the southwest regions and the Phoenicians were still in the northwest. It was the responsibility of the tribes who settled in these regions to complete the dispossession of the Philistines

and Phoenicians. Joshua had led Israel all his life in cleansing the land of evil kings. But his life was coming to an end at this time. He was successful in his God-appointed mission of leading national Israel in the cleansing of the land. It was now the responsibility of the local leadership of the individual tribes to complete what he had started. **Drive them out:** In his old age, Joshua was now the administrator, not the general at the head of Israel's national army. The initial beachheads for the continued struggle to drive out the inhabitants of the land of Palestine would continue through local leadership and individual tribal armies. At this time in the life of Joshua, however, he was to allot the land in order that the tribes settle and begin their planting and harvesting to support themselves with their own crops. They could no longer live off the spoils of their victories. They had to plant and harvest for their own preservation. The allotting of the territories also assumed that the individual tribes assumed their responsibility to further cleanse the Canaanites from the territories they were allotted.

INHERITANCES EAST OF THE JORDAN

13:7-33 Reuben, Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh were given inheritances east of the Jordan (See Nm 21:24; 31:8). The settlement of the tribes began a new chapter in the history of Israel. Israel's captivity in Egypt ended at the Red Sea. Their journey in the wilderness ended at the crossing of the Jordan. And now they passed through the years of national war against the inhabitants of the land. They were at this time to settle down in the land, and then completely rid their territories of lingering Canaanite inhabitants. Their settlement in the land was to continue for several centuries, to the time God would bring the Messiah and Savior into the world. We would assume that God would immediately bring this Blessing into the world that He had promised to Abraham in fulfillment of the Genesis 3:15 prophecy. But God was not finished with the nation of Israel who would give birth to the Savior of the world. Israel needed centuries more of discipline from the Lord in order to be prepared to give birth to the Messiah. Throughout the remainder of the

history of Israel, God patiently prepared them for this coming event. God is patient. We see His patience in the fact that He was willing to work with Israel for around 1,300 years more before a star appeared over Bethlehem. When it appeared, the fullness of the times had come to the world (See comments Gl 4:4). Would the Messiah have come earlier if Israel had fully obeyed God and cleansed the land of all the Canaanites? We will not know the answer to this question in this world. Unfortunately, Israel did not obey the will of God in cleansing the land, and thus for centuries they had to go through the discipline of the Lord in order to be morally prepared to receive the Messiah. **Balaam:** See Nm 22–24 (24:9,10; Ne 13:2 Mc 6:5; 2 Pt 2:15; Jd 11; Rv 2:14). **Levi:** This tribe received no inheritance of land since the Lord was their inheritance. Their work was to minister to the spiritual needs of Israel in teaching and administering sacrifices to God on behalf of the people. They were thus relieved of dealing with things of the world in order to focus all their attention on the spiritual needs of the nation of Israel.

Chapter 14

INHERITANCES WEST OF THE JORDAN

14:1-5 *By lot their inheritance was assigned:* Moses had been given by God general instructions for the tribes west of the Jordan (See Nm 34:1-12). At the end of the national wars, the inheritance was to be given out by lots (Nm 26:55; 33:54; 34:13). We assume, therefore, that the allotments were given out by the guidance of God in the choosing of lots, and thus each tribe was assured that their inheritance was chosen by God and not man (Compare Pv 16:33). **No part to the Levites:** In order to guarantee their separation from the rest of the tribes for service to God on behalf of the tribes, the Levites were given no inheritance of land. Instead of the Levites being confined to a specific inheritance, they were to be scattered throughout the land in order to carry out their duties to minister to the spiritual needs of the people. Only cities were given to the Levites. These cities were scattered throughout the land. In this way the people

could come to the cities for the spiritual ministry of the Levites.

14:6-15 Caleb: All that Caleb said of himself in this context defines the behavior of a faithful and loyal person (See Nm 13:30; 14:6-9). **Kenezite:** Caleb came from an Edomite family that came from Eliphaz, Esau's son (Gn 36:11,15,42). He was not an Israelite by birth, but associated with Israel as a result of the Kenezite family associating themselves with Israel because of their belief in the one true God. His faith was manifested in the fact that when he came back with Joshua, after the two were sent out from Mt. Sinai as spies, he came back and said that Israel could take the land. Unfortunately, Israel did not believe this Kenezite and Joshua, and subsequently the nation was cursed with 38 years of wandering in the wilderness. **The Lord has kept me alive:** Caleb was a young man when he was sent out as a spy. He lived throughout the years of wilderness wandering. And now he has lived throughout the years of the Canaan conquest. He was at this time an old man because God had kept him alive as a result of his former faithfulness. **Give me this mountain:** Caleb did not seek a quiet valley in which to retire. He asked for the strong cities in which the Anakims still dwelt. His battles were not over. He knew that with the help of God he would prevail over the Anakims. He is at least one example of one tribal leader who continued the cleansing of the promised land. **He wholly followed the Lord:** No greater legacy could have been stated of a man. He was totally committed to obedience to the Lord (See comments Gl 2:20).

Chapter 15

15:1-63 The difficulty in establishing the tribal boundaries that are mentioned in this context is that many of the cities that are mentioned no longer exist. Archaeologists have discovered the remains of some, but many are yet to be discovered. It is not important to us to know the exact boundaries. What is important for us is that this allotment of inheritances for the tribes of Israel was carried out by the will of God and in fulfillment of God's promise to Israel. The land inheritances were

important to the people of Israel in order that they have a possession of land to pass on to their children. Israel never had ownership of land throughout their history and the history of their forefathers. From the time of the call of Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees, to the crossing of the Jordan, Israel never had a land they could call their own. In giving them the land of Canaan, God wanted Israel to settle down in order that He might work with them to bring the Messiah into the world. As a nation, they were not the priority in God's eternal plan. The nation of Israel was only a means to an eternal plan. God's plan was to use the nation of Israel to bring about redemption through the Son of God. Though at the time Israel did not understand this, the giving of the land as their possession was for an eternal purpose that would offer salvation to all men. Once the eternal purpose was fulfilled, then the land promise would be completed. Israel had possession of the land only because they dwelt in it at the time of the fulfillment of the promise of the Savior of the world. Their divine right to the land, therefore, ended when the promise was fulfilled. **As for the Jebusites:** In Joshua 3:10 God said that the Jebusites would be driven out. However, strongholds as Jerusalem, which was occupied by the Jebusites, were not dispossessed of their inhabitants until many years later (See 2 Sm 5:6,7). The Jebusites, therefore, were driven out, but not at this time in the history of Israel. At the time of initial possession, the nation of Israel was not large enough in population to take control of all the land. At the time Joshua completed the national wars for the initial possession, there was enough land for all Israel. As the population of the nation grew, the individual tribes would be able to possess all the land that God had given them. In His promise, God had given them the right to have possession of enough land until the coming of the Messiah which would happen over 1,300 years after this time of initial possession. The national army of Israel secured the initial possession. It was the responsibility of the individual tribes to secure the rest of the land that was within their individual allotments as tribes.

Chapter 16

16:1-10 *Manasseh and Ephraim:* These two tribes originated from the sons of Joseph, to whom Jacob gave a special blessing that they would be legally ranked with Jacob's sons in reference to the allotment of land (Gn 48:5-19). Their special blessing, therefore, gave them a right to an inheritance of land. Their allotment of land included some of the most fertile land of Palestine which was situated in the heartland of the region. ***They did not drive out the Canaanites:*** This was a failure in leadership on the part of the individual tribes, and thus the beginning of the end of Israel's occupation of the land. It was a beginning that would eventually lead to their temporary eradication from the land through the Assyrian (721/22 B.C.) and Babylonian (586 B.C.) captivities. Though at the initial time of occupation of the land the Canaanites serviced the tribes by paying tribute, the cultural influence of the Canaanites eventually corrupted the morals of Israel, and thus moved God to cleanse Israel once again by driving Israel into captivity (See Hs 4:17; 7:8,11; 11:12; 12:1,14; 14:4,8). In their joy to secure their inheritance at this time, the people of Ephraim failed to obey the will of God by eradicating the Canaanites from their allotted land. Their sin eventually led to their moral corruption, and their moral corruption led to the judgment of God. This scenario played itself out with every tribal group of Israel.

Chapter 17

17:1,2 *Manasseh:* Because Manasseh was the first-born of Joseph, his tribal group was able to have special blessings in the allotment of the land. This was also true because Machir, the firstborn of Manasseh, was a valiant soldier.

17:3-6 *Zelophehad:* This is the fulfillment of a promise made to the daughters of Zelophehad through Moses (See Nm 27:6-11). Because Zelophehad had no sons through whom the allotment of land could be made and inherited, in fairness, God commanded that the daughters of Zelophehad receive an allotment of land to which they had legal rights. Regardless of who these daughters

married, the inheritance of their possession would continue through their names, and not the names of their husbands.

17:7-13 *The children of Manasseh could not drive out ... the Canaanites:* Since God promised on the condition of each tribe's faithfulness, that He would fight for the tribes of Israel to drive out the remaining inhabitants (3:10), we must assume that there was some sin in the camp of Manasseh that left them on their own in their confrontation with the Canaanites. As with the sin of Achan, God would not fight with the army of Manasseh because there was sin in his camp. They became powerless with the sin among them. In time, and with the help of the other tribes, they were able to subdue the Canaanites in their territory. However, they failed to eradicate them completely from the land. As a result, the wicked Canaanite culture eventually influenced the tribe of Manasseh as it did the other tribes who also failed to cleanse their inheritances of the wicked Canaanites.

17:14-18 *The children of Joseph:* These complained about their allotment. However, Joshua wisely answered them with a question concerning their inability to drive out the Canaanites from the land they were given. Their failure indicated that there was sin in their camp. Their possession would have been large enough if they had assumed their responsibility to eradicate the Canaanites from the totality of the land that they were given. The problem was not with the amount of land that they were given, but with their failure to assume their responsibility to drive out the Canaanites from that which they had been given. And in view of the fact that God had promised that He would be with those who would keep themselves faithful and continue the task of cleansing the land of the wicked culture of the Canaanites, we must assume that the children of Joseph continued to harbor sin within their camp. As with the recorded case of Israel's initial failure to conquer Ai, the leadership of the sons of Joseph should have looked to themselves, not to Joshua, in reference to what sin was in their camp.

Chapter 18

18:1-10 Assembly: The Septuagint uses the Greek word *ekklesia* to translate the equivalent Hebrew word in this context. It is the word “assembly.” The word is normally translated “church” in the New Testament. This is the assembly of God in the Old Testament that is now gathered at the tabernacle. **Set up the tabernacle:** The tabernacle was never meant to be a place in which people assembled, but a mobile tent at which the people assembled to offer sacrifices. The tabernacle was not to be set up permanently in one location. It was to be moved among the tribal possessions in order that the people of any one tribe would never be permanently too far from the tabernacle (See 1 Ch 17:4-6). It was to be moved in order that Israel not establish any form of central government to control the affairs of all the tribes. As a nation, they were a theocracy, which meant that they were to look directly to God for direction, not to a central religious power established in one location in the country. Of course, when they rejected the direct leadership of God in the years to come, they sought for a king and a central place to locate the tabernacle, which led to the building of the temple. **How long will you wait:** The wars of the national army of Israel had ceased. The allotment of the land was to be made. It was now the responsibility of each tribe to continue cleansing their allotted lands of the Canaanite inhabitants. But seven tribes had lost their enthusiasm and were not continuing their responsibility of driving out the Canaanites from their allotted land.

18:11-28 Benjamin was always a small tribal group of Israel (See 1 Sm 9:21; Ps 68:27). They were known for being left handed (Jg 20:16). Within the allotted land for Benjamin were many famous cities that are known today. These were the cities of Jerusalem, Jericho, Bethel, Gibeon, Ramah and Mizpeh. Throughout the Old Testament there is mention of these cities in reference to major events and people.

Chapter 19

19:1-48 Simeon: We know little concerning the influ-

ence of this tribe in the history of Israel. It was prophesied that they would be scattered among the other tribes of Israel (See Gn 49:5-7). The territory for the tribe of Judah was too much for them to occupy at this time in history. Therefore, the tribe of Simeon took their inheritance within Judah's inheritance. Since it was the responsibility of each tribe to drive out the inhabitants of their allotted land, it seems that Judah needed help in doing this. They brought Simeon into the allotment of their inheritance in order to accomplish what they should have done for themselves. This point must be remembered later when studying the division of the land into the two nations of the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel after the death of Solomon. Both the tribes of Simeon and Benjamin were included in Judah, which was called the southern kingdom of Israel. **Zebulun:** The possession of Zebulun was in the northern part of Palestine. The people of Zebulun were a warrior people, but were also a people who loved peace (See 1 Ch 12:33,40). It may have been that because they were a fierce people of war that others left them in peace. **Issachar:** This tribe received one of the most fertile parts of Palestine, the plains of Jezreel. Many famous battles throughout the history of Israel were fought in this area (See Jg 4:14; 7:1; 1 Sm 30). Also because of this location, they were tempted with the influences of cultures from the East and Egypt. They subsequently became a servant to foreign powers and paid tribute that was prophesied of them (Gn 49:14,15). **Asher:** Their territory was bordered on the west by the Mediterranean Sea (See Jg 5:17). Since they were located near the Phoenicians, from which they did not remain separate, they were later influenced by this wicked culture of people that led them from God (Jg 1:32). **Naphtali:** Naphtali also failed to drive out the Canaanites from their land (Jg 1:33). Their failure to complete the conquest of the land resulted in their being influenced by the wicked culture of the people. **Dan:** It seems that the tribe of Dan was forced initially to live in the mountains because the inhabitants of their allotted land would not allow them to come down into the valleys (Jg 1:34). However, they did take the area of Leshem, which they called Dan. This

was fertile land for the growing of crops in the far northern region of Palestine. The territory is thus mentioned in the Old Testament as the northern boundary of the land of Palestine (See 2 Sm 3:10; 17:11; 24:2; 1 Kg 4:25; 2 Ch 30:5). As the other tribes, Dan was also eventually affected by the wicked cultures of the people they failed to drive out of their land (See Jg 18:30; 1 Kg 12:28-30; 2 Kg 10:29; Am 8:14).

19:49-51 Once the inheritances had been allotted to all the tribes according to the will of the Lord, the Israelites determined that Joshua would have an inheritance in the middle of Palestine. He had asked for a particular area, and according to the word of the Lord, Israel willingly gave him that for which he asked. Such was the character of Joshua. He made sure that others were first served, and then he allowed himself to be served last. After Joshua had been given his territory, then the allotments of land to all Israel had been accomplished. This was the final fulfillment of the land promise that God had made to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. God had kept His promise, and now it was time for Israel to settle down in hope of the Messiah. Their faith must be in the fact that God would keep His promises.

Chapter 20

CITIES OF REFUGE

20:1-9 *Kedesh ... Shechem ... Kirjath Arba (Hebron):* These were the refuge cities on the west side of the Jordan River. *Bezer ... Ramoth ... Golan:* These were the refuge cities on the east side of the Jordan that serviced Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh. Refuge cities were designated as places to which offenders could flee until a proper trial was conducted (See comments Ex 21:13; Nm 35:9-15; Dt 19:2-10). These cities were chosen out of the cities that were given to the Levites, and thus those who would judge the offenses, the Levites, already resided in these cities. If an offender fled to one of these cities, he first had to stand at the gate of the city in the presence of the elders and declare the reason why he should be accepted into the city for protection. In his declaration he had to prove that he did not have mur-

derous intent in the death of another person. If, however, it was judged that the offender did have murderous intent, he was to be delivered to the avenger or to the kinsmen of the one who was killed. If he were guilty of manslaughter, or the unintentional death of another, then he was to reside in the refuge city until the death of the high priest. The designation of the refuge cities indicates that God recognizes that there is a difference between premeditated murder and accidental (culpable) homicide (manslaughter). He also wants the offender protected from the revenge of the family of the person who was killed if the offender did not intentionally kill someone. Flight to the refuge cities, and the protection of the offender, gave time for tempers to settle before judgment was issued. The refuge cities in Israel assumed that God wanted Israel to take the responsibility of rendering judgment. These cities of refuge and judgment, therefore, were courts of the land in reference to the death of any person.

Chapter 21

CITIES FOR PRIESTS & LEVITES

21:1-42 *Heads of the fathers of the Levites:* The Levites were promised no land inheritance in Palestine. However, they were promised cities and the pasture lands around these cities for their flocks (See Nm 1:47-53; 3:6-13; 8:5-22). These cities were scattered among the tribes of Israel in order that the Levites be available to everyone (Nm 35:1-8). The Levitical clans of Kohath, Gershon and Merari settled in the northern region of Palestine and on the eastern side of the Jordan. The clan of Aaron resided in the territory of Benjamin, Judah and Simeon. It was the responsibility of each tribe to designate those cities within their territory that would be given to the Levites. Because these cities were chosen by lot, we assume that God made the final decision as to what cities were to be designated. Since the cities were already built by the Canaanites who once dwelt in them, God's choice of the cities by lot did not give anyone an opportunity to complain against the Levites or anyone else concerning the cities that were chosen.

21:43-45 The land had been subdued, though not all the inhabitants had been either killed or driven out of the possessions of each tribal group. Those Canaanites who remained at this time in the land had been subjected to servitude and tribute. At this time in their history Israel had all the land they could possess, but they did not possess all the land that God made available to them. As they grew in population as a nation, they would later expand into more of the land that God had promised to them. The fact that they settled in the land reaffirmed the faithfulness of God in His promise to Abraham (Gn 12:1-3). Though God took from the time of Abraham, around 2000 B.C., to the time of the occupation (around 1350 B.C.), to bring Israel into Palestine, He remained true to His promise. God is not slack concerning His promises. The fulfillment of what He states He will do is not subject to time. His promises will be fulfilled according to His time.

Chapter 22

RETURN OF THE EASTERN TRIBES

22:1-9 *Observe the commandment:* Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh had loyally served in securing territory for the other tribes of Israel. As they returned to their territory on the eastern side of the Jordan, Joshua exhorted them to remain loyal to the law of God. As with the other tribes of Israel, once they were settled in their land and were at rest from conflicts with the Canaanites, they would seek to do that which was right in their own eyes. But they were not to forget to do the commandments of the Lord in order that they remain in the land and continue to drive out the Canaanites (See Dt 6:5; 10:12; 11:13). If they would do according to the exhortation of verse 5, they would remain true to God and God would work for them in order that they prosper in the land. Spoil: See Nm 31:27; 1 Sm 30:24.

22:10-20 *Altar ... war:* Misunderstandings lead to numerous conflicts. As the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh returned home, they constructed a large altar on the west side of the Jordan as a memorial. They did so in order to remember that they were part of the tribes

that resided on the west side of the Jordan. Unfortunately, the altar was constructed without the consultation of the other tribes. As a result, the other tribes assumed that Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh had already been consumed with idol worship. If such were true, it would be rebellion against God (See Dt 13:13-15; compare Nm 25:1-9; Dt 4:3). The concern of the other tribes was that if the altar were built for idol worship as the golden calf at the foot of Mt. Sinai, then all the tribes would suffer the judgment of God. Their concern, therefore, was for their own well-being, not that Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh had gone after idol gods.

22:21-29 When Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh saw that their neighbors to the west were greatly offended with the building of the altar, they were grieved. In their grief they clearly explained that their purpose for building the altar on the western side of the Jordan was the exact opposite of what the western tribes had presumed. The altar was to remind them of their unity with all Israel. It was not built to manifest any separation from the other tribes or in honor of any of the false gods.

22:30-34 *It pleased them:* When the leaders of the western tribes heard the explanation for the building of the altar, it pleased them that Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh wanted their children to remember that they were a part of all Israel. The discussions of the meeting, therefore, prevailed in bringing a correct understanding concerning why the altar was built, and thus unity of spirit was preserved. **A witness:** Some translations read, "Ed," which means, "a witness." The altar was a witness to the fact that Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh were a part of all the tribes of Israel.

Chapter 23

JOSHUA'S FAREWELL ADDRESS

23:1-13 *Joshua called for all Israel:* This meeting took place near the end of Joshua's life. It probably occurred at the place of his inheritance (See 19:50). He knew he was close to death, and thus wanted to again exhort the people to take heed to the dangers of apostasy from the

law of God (Compare Moses' similar exhortation in Dt 12 - 26). He knew the stiffnecked nature of the Israelites. He knew that they were often rebellious and had a mind of their own. Therefore, he first reminded them how God had fought for them (See 4:21-24; 10:14,42), and how God had fulfilled His promise in giving them the land. Their victories over the Canaanites could not be claimed to have originated from their own power. They had to attribute their victories to God. **Keep and do all that is written:** Moses had written the book of the law of the covenant (See 1:7). If they were obedient to the law they would prosper (See 1:8). Because the law had been written, they had no excuse in forgetting what was written. They would have no justifiable complaint when suffering the curses of God that came as a result of neglecting His word (See comments Hs 4:6). **Not associate with:** They were to keep themselves from the culture of the Canaanites who remained in the land. Their responsibility was to drive them out, which responsibility they failed to assume. **Not ... make mention of the name of their gods:** That is, they were not in any way to worship the idol gods of the Canaanites (See Ex 23:13; Dt 10:20). Such would be spiritual adultery and rebellion against God. Since one cannot give allegiance to a god that is created after the imagination of man and the God of heaven without committing spiritual adultery, then he must choose which master he would serve (See comments Js 4:4; compare Mt 6:24). The pagan idol gods of the Canaanites were the product of their own imagination. They were gods that they had created after themselves in order to appease worship that was immoral. Idolatry is the worship of one's own desire to do as he pleases. Joshua knew that what he asked them not to do, they would eventually do. In the comfort of their prosperity they would seek to do that which was right in their own eyes, and thus leave the law of God. **Chase a thousand:** The reward for loyalty to the law of God would be their victory over the remainder of the Canaanites in the land. God would fight for them (See Dt 28:7; 32:30; Lv 26:7,8). This principle answers the question as to why they did not and could not drive out the remainder of the Canaanites from the

land. They forsook the law of God, and subsequently, God did not fight for them. Instead, as the book of Judges reveals, God fought against them in order to bring them to repentance. **Intermarry with them:** This would be the downfall of Israel. They would not maintain their separation from those who believed in idols. Their marriage with idolatrous people would eventually result in their being taken into captivity. Because Israel did not drive out the remnant of the Canaanites in the land, the Canaanites affected them instead of Israel teaching them concerning the one true and living God (See Nm 33:55).

23:14-16 Not one thing has failed: In this summation of his exhortation, Joshua reminded the people that they had no grounds for complaint against God. The original promise to Abraham in reference to physical blessings had been fulfilled (See Gn 12:1-3). They were a great nation. They were in their own land. The name of Abraham had become great. The only promise yet to be fulfilled at this time was the Blessing that would bless all men. This was the Savior of the world. **The anger of the Lord:** Except for the coming of the Messiah, the retention of the promises to Abraham were conditional. They were conditioned on the obedience of Israel. If Israel failed to keep the law of the covenant, they would lose the land and be reduced to a remnant nation that would return to the land after the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities.

Chapter 24

24:1-13 Gathered all the tribes: The city of Shechem in the central part of the land was the location for this gathering. Joshua reviewed the history of Israel from the time of Abraham to the day of his life as their leader in the conquest of the land. The purpose of this summary of historical events was to emphasize the work of God through them as a nation. As he reviewed the miracle of God to build and bring this nation to where it was in the land, they were to be reassured that God would work with them in the future. However, in order for God to work with them, they had to remain faithful to His will. It is significant to notice God's grace toward Israel to accomplish the fulfillment of His promises to Israel. They

were a rebellious and stiffnecked people. However, they were a nation that could repent, and thus reap the grace of God. **Other side of the River:** This would be a reference to the Euphrates and to the original home of the family of Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees (See vss 14,15). The call of Abraham, therefore, took place when he was still in Ur of the Chaldees. **God ... took ... led ... multiplied ... gave ... sent ... brought:** All the verbs of this exhortation place emphasis on God doing the work. Lest the Israelites be puffed up in their own strength and ingenuity, they had to be reminded that it was God, not them, who brought the nation to this point in their history (Zc 4:6). **I sent the hornet before you:** This could be a reference to the Egyptian Pharaoh Thutmose III. In 1479 B.C. he had ravaged Palestine for approximately sixty years. In these wars of Egypt against Palestine, God would thus have weakened the kings of the Canaanites in preparation for the coming of Israel around 1400 B.C. (See Dt 7:20). **Cities that you did not build:** Israel was given a ready-made country in which to dwell. They did not have to prepare the land for planting. They did not have to build the cities. Their hearts, therefore, should be filled with gratitude for the work of God in bringing them to this time in history. When one sees all that he has, he should be grateful to God. There should be no room for complaint.

24:14-28 Choose you this day whom you will serve: God did not work against their free will to bring them to this point in history. Neither would He make their choices for the future. As a nation, they had their own destiny in their hands. Their right to choose made them responsible. Because of what God had done for them in the past, it was reasonable for them to make the choice to continue in obedience to His will in the future. However, if they failed to do the will of God, they would be responsible for their own judgments from God. **Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord:** But this is exactly what they did in the generations to come. The book of Judges is a history of their repeated rejections of the Lord and the Lord's punishment of them for their apostasy. Though this generation to whom Joshua was speaking recognized the wonders of God who brought them

to this point in their history, their failure to teach their children resulted in the future apostasy of the generations to come. **If you forsake the Lord:** It was not possible to serve the Lord, and at the same time give allegiance to their own will which manifested itself in the form of idolatry. Since idolatry is man making his own religion after his own desires, then the idolater cannot be totally committed to God. One cannot serve himself, and at the same time, be completely committed to following the law of God. **Put away the foreign gods:** In other words, they were to put away their self-willed spirit that they had adopted from the self-determined Canaanites whom they allowed to dwell among them. The Canaanites survived because of their self-determination that expressed itself in their religious beliefs. But Israel survived because of her trust in the one true God. What affected Israel in her history after this time was that she allowed the self-determination of the Canaanite culture to have fertile soil in her stiffnecked attitude. Israel's hardheaded personality blended well with the self-determination of the Canaanite culture. The blend led to Israel's rejection of the will of God in order that every man do that which was right in his own eyes. **He will not forgive your transgressions:** God will not forgive any sin of which there is no repentance. In this case, He would not forgive disloyalty to His law. If they chose to serve themselves by creating gods and religions after their own lusts, then there would be no forgiveness (See comments Hs 4:6; Mt 6:24; Js 1:8). **We will serve ...:** The book of Joshua was written, not only to give the following generations of Israel a history of God working through them to conquer the land, but also to provide a written record of the oath that the people made at this time. They swore their allegiance to God. When in the future they were punished for their rebellion, the sinning generations could read the words of commitment that their forefathers made to remain faithful to God's covenant. **A great stone:** In order that their commitment to serve God be remembered, it was written on a stone monument.

24:28-33 Israel severed the Lord: This service continued throughout the life of Joshua and the elders who out-

lived Joshua. Throughout the recorded history of Israel that we have in the Old Testament, this seems to be the only period of time in their history that they totally gave themselves to the Lord. After this brief period of loyalty to the Lord, they cursed themselves with their own stiff-necked and self-willed attitudes to do their own thing by calling for a king to rule over them and their adoption of the religions around them. The problem in the generations to come was that they had forgotten the lesson that was learned at Jericho and Ai. At Jericho they obeyed the Lord in every detail. As a result, they were completely victorious over the inhabitants of Jericho. However, at Ai sin came into the camp of Israel. Because of the sin, God allowed them to be defeated by the inhabitants of Ai until they repented. Israel's history after the death of Joshua and the elders of his generation, was that they allowed sin to remain in the camp of Israel. As a result, God did not fight for them as He did at Jericho. They were thus unable to drive out the remainder of the Canaanites from Palestine. They were thus influenced by the religion of the Canaanites, which religion turned their focus from God to creating gods after their own imagination, which gods condoned their unrighteous ways. **The bones of Joseph:** See Gn 50:25; Ex 13:19; Hb 11:22. This place of burial had been bought by Jacob many years before (Gn 33:19). **Eleazar:** See Nm 3:32; 20:28.

Commentary by Roger E. Dickson

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ABREVIATIONS

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Cl**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pl**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**

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