

Krapf Commentary Series

Joshua

1:1-9

After the Israelites had been brought out of Egypt, one whole generation refused to enter into the promised inheritance, the land of Canaan (see Hebrews 3:10-19). Moses also was not allowed to enter (Numbers 20). But now Moses is dead (vs. 2), and that whole generation. In the book of Joshua, the Lord will fulfil his promise to the nation and give them the land. There will be a period of preparation (Chs. 1-5) before the conquest begins, but it is certain that the land is theirs, for the Lord has given it to them. Three times the Lord says be "*strong and courageous*" (vss. 6,7,9), for the fight will be hard, the opposition will be forceful, and there will be many doubts and fears, as it had been for the previous generation.

The word "inherit" (vs. 6) was later used in the New Testament for the enjoyment of our spiritual

blessing in Christ (1 Peter 1:4 "to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you..."). That is a certainty so let us enjoy it, but we must also fight for it, against doubts and fears, against the world without, the flesh within and the devil around us. We must "*fight the good fight...lay hold of eternal life*" (1 Timothy 6:11-12). Our fight, our courage, and victory will be proof that the Lord has given it to us. Our faithlessness, weakness, and defeat will be proof that it was never ours.

1:10-18

In this paragraph, the Israelites are about to enter into the conquest for the inheritance of the Lord. There are three things necessary for the Israelites in this conquest, and for us today as we fight the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12). First, the importance of a good leader, and those under him who would share the burden with him (vs. 10; Ephesians 4:11-12). Second, unity among God's people. The Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half the tribe of Manasseh must fight also, although they had already been given their inheritance (Vss. 12-13; see also references to "all Israel" 3:1; 3:7; 3:17; 4:14; 7:24, 25; 10:29, 31, 34, 36, 38, 43; 23:2; 24:1). Third, resolve and commitment to the fight (vs. 16). God is asking us to commit to what he has

committed himself (vs. 5 "*I will never leave you*") ... Moses had died, but the work continued, and God had given them another leader. Let us commit ourselves to the Lord's battle and enjoy the victories he has won.

2:1-24

The story of Rahab is a remarkable insight into the extravagant and unspeakable grace of God. The first act in the conquest of wicked Canaan was not destruction, but the conquest of a soul in redemption. God will one day destroy this world and create a new earth and a new heaven, but before that, he is in the process of saving out of it a people unto himself (Titus 2:14). How could the spies promise salvation to Rahab when the Israelites were commanded to destroy everything, men, women, and children (Deuteronomy 7:1-5; 20:16-18)? In his wrath, God remembers mercy (Habakkuk 3:2). God knew Rahab, and had begun to work on her heart forty years before her interaction with the two spies. (vs. 10). What remarkable grace—Christ is not just in the types and figures, or in the prophecies of the Old Testament, he is embedded in the text, in the storyline, in the way the story is told, in the words that the author uses, etc.

3:1-17

The children of Israel crossed the Jordan in spectacular fashion. It was a repetition of the previous event at the Red Sea. The two events are closely linked. The Red Sea represented an exit, the Jordan represented an entry. With the Red Sea the enemy was behind them, at the Jordan the enemy was before them. The Red Sea represented deliverance accomplished, the Jordan represented deliverance anticipated. The Red Sea shows us the power of God in delivering us from the old life, the grip of Satan, and the hold of hell. The parting of the Jordan teaches us to look forward and anticipate the new life with complete confidence.

In short, by separating the waters a second time, the Lord was teaching the Israelites, and us, that we need to be often reminded of his promises. He is teaching us to remember that when the Lord begins a good work, he will accomplish it (Philippians 1:6). God was building their faith, affirming that he is the God of creation (vss. 11,13), that the living God is among his people (vs. 10), and that he does wonders (vs. 5).

4:1-24

One of the greatest difficulties that the Church has faced through the ages is conveying the living message of the gospel to succeeding generations. We see this throughout the Bible. One generation returns to the Lord and the next generation rejects him (consider the book of Judges). As Christians, we need to make this a particular focus in our homes and in our churches. We need to ask, how can we effectively convey the power of the gospel to the next generation, so that they will carry on faithfully and vigorously in the Church? This is what God intended by setting up the memorial stones. The stones were not just a mark of sincere thankfulness to the Lord, as with Joshua's personal memorial set up in the riverbed (vs. 9), the stones also had a message to tell to the succeeding generations (vss. 6-7; 21-22).

5:1-15

For forty years Israel had wandered in the wilderness. Their deliverance from Egypt had been in vain and they had become the laughingstock of the world (the "*reproach of Egypt*" vs. 9), because of their unbelief and disobedience. A whole generation of Israel had been cut off from the covenant relationship with the Lord, and died in shame in the wilderness (Hebrews 3:19).

Before Israel could move forward with the Lord and enjoy their inheritance, three things needed to happen. For us to move forward in victory, putting the failures of the past behind us, we need to do these same things. First, they must remember their covenant relationship by restoring the sign of the covenant (vss. 3-9). For New Testament believers, the sign of the covenant is our baptism. Baptism means something, let's remember it and restore its significance in our minds and hearts (Romans 6:4, 11). Second, they must celebrate the Passover, the blood of the covenant (vss. 10-12), as we, by continuance, must celebrate the Lord's Table with sincere hearts in fellowship with him (1 Corinthians 5:7-8). Lastly, they must hear the Lord speak, the mediator of the new covenant (vss. 13-15). And we must inquire with Joshua, "what does my Lord say to his servant?" (vs. 14).

5:13-6:27

In this first battle in the conquest for Israel's inheritance the Lord shows us that the fight is his. Israel has certain responsibilities, but God will have the victory. Joshua must stand in awe and worship (5:15) and the people must trust and obey, even if the tactics seem silly (vs. 3-5). Jericho will fall by faith (Hebrews 11:30).

There are three reasons why God ordered the battle plans like this. First, this was God's fight for justice. God must punish the sins of the Canaanites. Second, God had a special interest of grace in the city, which must be preserved—it was Rahab and her family (vss. 17, 22-25). Third, God is teaching the Israelites to trust him for the battle. Not just this battle, but the following battles also. He will preserve them, for he has already given them the land (vs. 2). They must offer up the first fruits of this conquest to him, in faith that the remaining harvest will be brought in (vss. 17-19). Are they willing to trust him in this? Are we?

7:1-9

The people of God are not content without pursuing their inheritance in the gospel (vs. 7). But even in victory, sin and unfaithfulness are never far away. Sin is never isolated. It affects our families, our churches, and our communities. It weakens our fight and compromises the people of God (vss. 4-5, see also Judges 16:20). The contrast between Joshua (6:27) and Achan is striking (7:1). God does not change. He is at war with sin whether it is in the Canaanites or in his own people. While the people could not identify where the sin took place and must trace the sin from the tribe (vss. 17-18), God

knew exactly where it was—He traced it back the other way, and found his anger burning against the "people of Israel" (vs. 1).

7:10-26

Dealing with the sin of Achan was swift and definite, there was no forgiveness, although the law allowed for restitution (Leviticus 5:14-6:7). Achan, however, had sinned wilfully, and after warning. The property of Jericho was devoted to destruction, and some of it now lies under Achan's tent. The Lord explained the situation to Joshua (vss. 1-15), Joshua rose early to confront Achan (vss. 16-21), and the people removed the offender (vss. 22-26).

Achan was a greedy man. He had sheep and oxen, and donkeys (vs. 24), but he wanted more. Achan was also a foolish man, he did not appreciate the severity of the warning that God had given and the seriousness of lusting after the world (1 John 2:15-17). It seemed such a small thing, just a cloak, a few shekels, and a piece of gold, but this event teaches us the seriousness of sin, and its effects on those around us. Only after the sin had been removed and the wrath of God appeased, could the people hear again the words "*fear not,*" (8:1).

8:1-29

So often we are defeated by our own folly and faithlessness, like Achan at the battle of Jericho. Fea, and the lingering baggage of previous failure, also play their part in bringing us into defeat. The battle of Ai begins with the gracious words of the Lord, "*fear not*" (vs. 1) and ends with another memorial heap of stones, commemorating God's victory (vs. 29, see Ch. 4). God was still with his people, and as Moses had his staff to lead them through the wilderness, Joshua had his javelin to lead them into war (vs. 18). The absolute defeat of Ai by the strategy of ambush (vss. 3-7), is contrasted with the defeat of Jericho by a miracle of God. The two must go together, for they show what God can do through us when we trust and obey.

8:30-35

The Israelites had entered into their inheritance. Jericho had been taken, Ai, and quite possibly other cities not recorded in scripture, for Mt. Ebal is in the centre of the land. This location could be viewed as representing the whole land. There is much more fighting to be done, but Israel is beginning to enjoy the inheritance of the Lord.

Joshua recognised the importance of the law of Moses in the life of the nation, and there at Ebal he recreated, in part, the giving of the law at Sinai—the uncut stones with the law written on them. Clearly, Joshua recognised that covenant privileges carry with them covenant responsibilities. Saving grace comes with obligation, and the enjoyment of the gospel comes through heart devotion to the living God and obedience to the law.

9:1-7

Having renewed their vows and devotion to the Lord (Ch. 8), the Israelites were about to start the conquest of the south (Ch. 10) and then of the north (Ch. 11), on good footing. But the enemy was cunning (vs. 4), and Joshua failed to recognise the tactics of the enemy or the various methods of warfare he would need to employ for a successful conquest. Unable to muster a confederacy of armies against the Israelites, the Gibeonites came with a very plausible story of devotion to the Lord, asking to make a covenant with the Israelites. They came with all the right words and sentiments (vs. 9), but it was without heart and or repentance, no love for the Lord, and no desire to live according to the law of God.

The only motivation for these Gibeonites was the fear of destruction (vs. 24). The ingenuity and energy of the Gibeonites (vss. 4-5) was impressive, and it shows how much men and women will do to escape judgement, but the Gibeonite's fear did not lead to faith in God or repentance towards him. Contrast their actions and attitudes with the faith of Rahab (Ch. 2; Romans 2:4).

9:8-17

The Gibeonite deception reveals the cunning work of Satan in infiltrating the people of God by deception (Numbers 31:16; Revelation 2:14). But it also brings to light a weakness in the defences of Joshua. Although so conscientious in renewing the covenant (Joshua 8:30ff), Joshua and the Israelites were caught off guard. They questioned the Gibeonites (vs. 7), they looked at their worn clothing and equipment (vs. 13), and having been convinced by their lies, the Israelites ate with them, their stale provisions, in an act of friendship (vs. 14). Satan's fingerprints are all over this situation. Remember that it was by eating that Adam and Eve confirmed their allegiance to Satan in the garden (Genesis 3:6). The ways of Satan are cunning, but they are not mysterious, or beyond our understanding, as God's ways are (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Where Joshua failed, however, was that he did not ask counsel of the Lord (vs. 14). He had come to rely on his own wisdom. In a moment of self-reliance, and forgetting the wiles of the devil, Joshua failed to factor God into his circumstances (James 4:13-15). At this point he was not living by faith but by sight.

9:18-21

It was not long before the Israelites discovered they had been deceived (vs. 17). The question now is how will Joshua and the leaders react? Well, there was some opposition (vs. 18), but the leaders of Israel displayed remarkable honesty and integrity. Although they had sworn to their own hurt, and would have to live with the consequences, yet they would not go back or change their word (Psalm 15:4). This is how God acts toward us (Ezekiel 16:59-60) when we break covenant, and how he expects us to act towards others.

God hates lies (Proverbs 6:17) and being truthful demands faith to live with the consequences. Joshua and the leaders in Israel were prepared to live by faith—and God honoured it.

9:18-27

No doubt Joshua was angry not only at the Gibeonites, but at himself for falling into the trap and deception of the Gibeonites. His first response was to curse them (vs. 23), but God intended to bless them. Joshua could not kill them (vs. 19), and as Gentiles, he could not incorporate them into the nation, so he made them hewers of wood and drawers of water (vs. 23).

Watch how God brought good out of the deception of Satan, the folly of Israel (vs. 8-17), and the "curse" of Joshua. First, the relationship with Gibeon opened up the way for conquest in the southern region (Ch. 10), and God defended Gibeon by a miracle (10:10-14). Second, in his sovereign purposes and divine will, God brought the Gibeonites into the house of God (vs. 23), serving at the altar (vs. 27), where they could learn the good news of the true and living God (Psalm 84:10). They were brought later into the life of the nation, as Rahab was. During Solomon's reign the temple was pitched at Gibeon (2 Chronicles 1:3). Also, the Gibeonites helped rebuild the walls of Jerusalem after Israel's captivity (Nehemiah 3:7). This is God, not only bringing good out of evil, but honouring the honesty and integrity of the Israelites in keeping their word.

10:1-5

This chapter presents us with the enemy of the Israelites, as well as our souls, in a different form. There were the impregnable walls (Jericho, 6:1-21), lust of the eyes (Achan, 7:21), the wiles of the devil (Gibeon, 9:1-7), and now the confederacy of enemies, coming as a unit against the Lord's people. The cities in the south heard of the destruction of Jericho and Ai and they were fearful (Joshua 5:1).

But they were also angry that Gibeon had made peace with Israel. The only way, they thought, to defend their cities was to form a confederacy—five kings came together to form one army (vss. 3-5). Gibeon was discovering what it cost to be in association with Israel, for they became the first target of the five-king confederacy. The Gibeonites could have surrendered to the five kings and formed a larger army against Israel, but they thought that it was better to be servants of Israel and dwell in safety than be confederate with the enemy (i.e. Satan and the world) and face destruction. They made the right choice, for God fought for them (vs. 8).

10:6-15

The armies of the south formed a confederacy and came up against Gibeon, because of Gibeon's association with Israel (vs. 1). Gibeon sent an urgent message to Joshua, begging for help (vs. 6). The question is, what will Joshua do? This was an opportunity for Joshua to let the Amorites deal with the Gibeonites and destroy them for their deception. Joshua did not do this, but instead he stood by the Gibeonites, and the Lord confirmed this decision by repeating his original commission to Joshua (vs. 8, see Joshua 1:5).

God answered Joshua's prayer (vs. 14). The Lord threw the Amorites into a panic (vs. 10), the Lord threw hailstone at them from heaven with a remarkable precision (vs. 11). The Lord also caused the sun to stand still in the sky (vs. 12). When you are on the Lord's side, and the Lord fights for you, you stand in awe at his methods and effectiveness. The Lord did more with hailstones than the Israelites did with the sword (vs. 11). Let us trust him with the fight and stand in awe of his methods, rather than struggling in our own strength and with our own inadequacies.

10:16-28

This was a glorious day for the Israelites. The five kings who had formed a confederacy against Israel fled and hid in the caves while their people fled to their own cities. Victory was given to Israel, as the Lord had promised, and the armies of Israel pursued and destroyed the enemy and took the cities (vss. 19-20). For the victory to be complete, Joshua returned to get the kings, who had hidden in a cave. He had an important lesson to teach the Israelites (vss. 24-25). Perhaps it was these verses that Paul had in mind when he wrote to the Corinthians about the Lord putting all his enemies under his feet (1 Corinthians 15:25), or the tramping on the head of the serpent in Genesis 3:15. Paul's use of this imagery in the New Testament makes a direct link between the conquest of Joshua and New Testament spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:10ff). At any rate, we learn that the Lord has the final victory. The battle is the Lord's (1 Samuel 17:47), and we are fighting for his victory.

10:29-43

This paragraph records the southern campaign of the conquest and the defeat of six cities: Libnah (vs. 30), Lachish (vs. 32), Gezer (vs. 33), Eglon (vs. 34), Hebron (vs. 37), Debir (vs. 39). Much can be

accomplished in a short time when we focus on the task and get to work. The emphasis of this paragraph is on the determination, finality, and completeness with which Joshua executes the task (vss. 28, 30, 32, 35), just as "*the Lord God of Israel had commanded*" (vs. 40).

The iniquity of the Canaanites was full (Genesis 15:16), and God's mercy was exhausted. God's judgement must be brought to bear on this sinful nation, a reminder that God will one day judge this earth with a final and complete destruction, and all nations that forget God will be cast into hell (Psalm 9:17).

11:1-15

Joshua and the Israelite armies moved into the northern region. The armies of the north had combined against him and he was faced with multitudes on every side, probably the biggest army of the conquest—"as the sand of the sea," (vs. 4). After the crushing victories in the south one might think that Joshua engaged with the north in complete confidence and faith in the Lord. But for Joshua (as with us today) every battle called for fresh faith, and the Lord repeated the promise of victory and the "*fear not*" message he spoke at the

beginning of their conquest (Joshua 11:6 see also 1:9; 8:1; 10:8, 25).

The promise of victory was clear as was the command—Joshua was to burn the chariots and cripple the horses (vs. 6). This was probably for two reasons. First, the Cannanites used horses in worship and Israel was not to do this (see 2 Kings 23:11). Also, God was preserving Israel from faithlessness. Israel's faith for the battle must be placed firmly in the Lord. They were not to trust in horses (Psalm 20:7).

11:16-23

Victory is sweet, and it is good to pause and review our previous victories as Joshua did here (see also Ebenezer, 1 Samuel 7:12). Victory for the Israelites meant the taking of geographical areas (vss. 16-23) and the defeat of their kings (Joshua 12). But victory for Joshua, and for us today does not come easily and often comes after a "long time" of battle (vs. 18).

Later Joshua will tell the Israelites that there is still "*much land to possess*" (13:1), but here we read that Joshua took "*the entire land*" (vs. 23). As far as geographical spread is concerned, north, south, east and west; the hill country, the Jordan valley,

the coastlands, and "The Negev" desert in the south—Joshua captured the key cities across the entire land, as the Lord had commanded Moses. In other words, the land was subdued and Israel had "*rest from war,*" (vs. 23). Other battles would follow.

Notice the emphasis on Joshua, as ours should be, on Christ, the Captain of our salvation—"Joshua took all that land" (vs. 16), and "*Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel,*" (vs. 23). Joshua was exalted in the eyes of the Israelites, they looked to him (Joshua 4:14), and his fame spread throughout all the land (Joshua 6:27).

12:1-24

Before the author gets into the allotment for the land, he takes us back to review the conquest of Moses (vss. 1-6), and of Joshua (vss. 7-24). The victories and heroes of the past must not be forgotten. We build on their successes. What stands out in this chapter, however, is that such a small country had so many kings and each of them had to be removed, one by one. The parallel with our spiritual warfare is clear. So many things; temptations, lusts, plans, hopes, and aspirations rise up and take the throne in our hearts and distract us from the worship of the King of kings (Revelation 19:16).

13:1-7

Chapter 13 begins the third major division of the book (the entry, Chs. 1-4:12, the conquest, Chs. 5:13-11). This section brings us to the division of the land. The main cities had been taken, their kings defeated, and it was time for the land to be divided among the tribes. Although they had been given their inheritance and their families could settle down and begin to farm the land, the Lord reminded Joshua that there was "*still much land to possess*," (vs. 1). The heart, the central region had been secured, but there were areas to the extreme north and south where the Philistines lived that still needed to be conquered.

In later chapters we will see if Israel will be happy to settle down, secure in the central region, and not possess all that the Lord had for them. Will they be willing to claim more victories for the glory of the Lord? The question remains for us today as well, are there areas of life that we need to possess for the gospel to enjoy the fullness of our inheritance in Christ, or are we content where we are with the Lord?

13:8-33

There was still much land to possess (vs. 13:1), but God told Joshua to divide the land that he had conquered (vs. 13:7). They, as we should do, must take comfort in what they have, although the fight continues. Moses had faith that Israel would take the land and before they had crossed the Jordan, he promised these allotments to the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and the half tribe of Manasseh. Although they had fought for this land and conquered it, this land was their "*inheritance*" (vs. 8)—gifted to them by a divine grant, and no one could take it away (Romans 8:35-39).

The tribe of Levi is not given an inheritance as the other tribes were (mentioned twice, vss. 14, 33). They would be provided for in another way. God himself would be their portion and provision, as they must live among all the tribes and serve them (Deuteronomy 10:9, 18:2).

14:1-5

In the following chapters we will read of the allotment of the land on the west side of Jordan. We are reminded that God had ordered this allotment (vss. 2, 5), and previously organised it (vs. 1), so that there would be representatives from each of the tribes (see Numbers 34:16-29). The

Israelites were not to greedily grab land and settle at random. God had ordered it so that the Israelites could inhabit (Isaiah 45:18) and cultivate the land "*flowing with milk and honey*." Israel will teach us how to fulfil the "creation mandate" according to Genesis 1:28. Still today, in the Church, God is a God of order (Ephesians 4:11-12; Acts 6:1-7), for the good of the Church.

Also, God's instruction for the Levites was not only for their good, but also for the good of the entire nation. The Levites would not be given an inheritance as the other tribes were (vs. 4), so that they would not be entangled with the stuff of life (2 Timothy 2:4). They would live among the tribes to serve the nation. But they should not be lazy either, for God assigned them forty-eight cities with pasture land for their livestock (vs. 4, 21:41).

14:6-15

Caleb was a man of strong with enduring faith. He stood firm—"*wholly followed the Lord*"—when his colleagues failed to stand (vs. 8). While the whole nation of Israel turned from God at Kadesh-Barnia and refused to enter, Caleb "*wholly followed the Lord*," despite national apostasy (vs. 9). For forty-five years he had lived with the promise of better days and of entering the land, and despite the

prevailing death over a period of forty-five years, the Lord kept Caleb alive (vs. 10). Caleb's desire for the Lord endured, and was still strong at eighty-five years old, and was willing to fight the Anakim for the hill country to receive the blessing of the Lord. But notice that Caleb's request for this mountain was not a private, selfish ambition. Caleb had the respect of the men of Judah (vs. 6), and with them there, he made the request to Joshua. Caleb's inheritance was within the allotment of Judah.

15:1-12

Judah is the first to be allotted his portion (vss. 15:1-63). He was the elder brother. We are to learn from Judah's portion how generous the Lord is in giving us his blessing, how sure that blessing is, and how much God pays attention to the details of the blessing, as he identifies the boundaries of the cities and towns. But Judah's portion was also to protect the other tribes, who would later be given a portion from within Judah. Judah protected the southern borders of the land and those ancient enemies of Moab, Edom, and Egypt. Our portion, our eternal inheritance is out of the portion given to the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5), who defends and protects us, and who graciously and generously lavishes us with his kindness.

15:13-19

Back in chapter 11:21-22 there was a general statement about the capture of Hebron, Debir, and Anakim. This passage (vss. 15:13-19) gives us more detail. Caleb and his younger brother, Othniel, (and Achsah, Caleb's daughter) are among those spoken of in Hebrews 11:33 who through faith "*conquered kingdoms...obtained promises.*" These were men and women of exceptionally strong faith. Caleb had waited forty-five years for this conquest of the giants (Numbers 13:22-23), and was prepared for the fight. He took on the three sons of Anak; Shesai, Ahiman, and Talmi and their clans (vs. 14).

Caleb was concerned that his daughter would marry someone with a similar character, someone who had faith to fight, who could take Kiriath-sephar (vs. 16). It was Othniel, his younger brother, who demonstrated his faith and took the city and so Othniel was given Achsah. But Achsah in turn demonstrated her faith and asked for a blessing as part of the marriage package. These were people who valued the blessing of God and were prepared to fight for it, to pursue it, and plead for it.

15:20-63

Israel's inheritance was real, tangible, and sure, as this passage makes abundantly clear. The tedious list of seemingly unimportant cities, villages, lowlands (vss. 32-33, 57, 60, etc.), of brooks, coastlands (vs. 47), and hill country (vs. 48) show us the extent of the blessing that God has lavished on us, and the attention that the Lord gives to detail. These lists are not for nothing, that have a purpose in the record of Scripture.

The last verse (vs. 63) holds particular interest in stating that the Israelites could not defeat the city of the Jebusites. Joshua had killed the king (vss. 10:23-26), but the Jebusites, it appears, had held the city and it would not be until David's reign that Israel took the city of the Jebusites (Jerusalem), 2 Samuel 5:6. The conquering of those strongholds that are most difficult to take, and with which we struggle most, may become our crowning victory, as Jerusalem did in Israel—our trophy of God's grace.

16:1-10

Judah was the first to receive his inheritance. From the tribe of Judah came the valiant men of faith, like Caleb and Othniel. But Judah was also the ruling tribe, the tribe of government. King David

would come from the tribe of Judah and eventually the King of kings (Revelation 19:16). But the birth right went to Joseph (1 Chronicles 5:2), and so Ephraim and Manasseh received their inheritance next.

As with the tribe of Judah, these tribes did not completely drive out the Canaanites (vs. 10). The reason for this is not clearly given, perhaps a lack of faith, laziness, a rush to settle down in peace, or the attraction of income (taxes) and forced labour they received from them (vs. 10). Whatever the reasons, the Israelites would have to live with the Canaanites as a thorn in their flesh (Numbers 33:55). Refusing to deal decisively with sin in our walk with God is like walking with a stone in our shoes.

17:1-6

This paragraph tells us about the allotment for the tribe of Manasseh in general (including those on the east side of the Jordan). Although Manasseh had a son called Gilead (Numbers 26:29, 27:1), the word Gilead in this verse (vs. 1) is a reference to the place called after him (See Judges 5:14, 17). The connection between the person, and then the place called Gilead (which happens often in the Old Testament) shows us that the "inheritance" had a future. The inheritance promised to Abraham and

conquered by Joshua did not stop with the tribes but continued on into the clans and into the families.

This becomes clearer when Zelophehad appealed to Eleazar and Joshua, because he had only daughters and no sons (vs. 3). This is not an appeal for women's rights, but a provision that Moses made for the continuance of the inheritance within the tribe. If a couple had no sons, only daughters, then they could appeal to the elders and the inheritance could pass on to the daughters, if she married within the tribe (Numbers 27:8-11; 32:2-9). When God promises an inheritance, he makes provision for it and insures it. Nothing can separate us from that inheritance (Romans 8:38-39). Paul says "*there is neither slave nor free. there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus*" (Galatians 3:28).

17:7-13

Like the other tribes, the Manassites were unable to drive out the Canaanites (vss. 12-13). There was always more land to possess, more fights, and more future victories. The inheritance pictured in this incompleteness is like our own as Christians—it is "already but not yet." In one sense, we already have our inheritance, yet in another sense we do

not, we are still waiting for the consummation (Romans 8:23). But while we continue to possess and wait, we are sharing with other believers. Our inheritance is bound up in the borders of other believers and theirs within our borders, just as Ephraim had towns within the boundaries of Manasseh (vs. 8) and Manasseh had villages in the boundaries of Issachar and Asher.

17:14-18

The demand for more inheritance is a recurring theme in the book of Joshua. We have already met Caleb (Joshua 14:6-15) and Achsah (Joshua 15:18-19), and now we meet the people of Joseph (vs. 14). For Caleb and his daughter, this was no selfish or worldly ambition, but rather a strong faith in the pursuit of God and his blessing (according to Genesis 1:22). However, with the people of Joseph the demand for more land appears to have a sense of entitlement and laziness—"*since all along the Lord has blessed me*" (vs. 14).

The territory already allotted to them was large enough, but they did not have the faith or interest to fight for it. There were difficulties in the way; the hill country was forested (vs. 15) and the enemy on the plains had "*chariots of iron*" (vs. 16). Joshua did not negotiate for more land, but told them, "*if you*

are a numerous people, go up by yourselves to the forest, and there clear ground for yourselves in the land of the Perizzites and the Rephaim" (vs. 15) and clear the forest in the hill country. We cannot take the fight out of the conquest. If we are going to settle in the land, we must conquer the enemy and subdue the land.

18:1

Joshua chapter eighteen verse one is a key verse and a high point in the history of the conquest. Three words in this verse serve to emphasize the fact that Israel had arrived. The whole "congregation" of Israel "gathered" and "set up" the tabernacle. This is the first time the tabernacle has been mentioned in the book of Joshua. Up to this point Joshua had been camped at Gilgal (Joshua 10:43, 14:6, etc.) while they looked for a suitable place for the tabernacle (Deuteronomy 12:5, 11). Now the land had been subdued, and Israel had found a place where God could dwell among his people and where they could worship him.

This is also the first time that Shiloh has been identified as the location of the tabernacle, and the whole congregation was there to witness this solemn and significant occasion. Although they

had still much work to do, as they dispossessed the inhabitants and claimed their inheritance, (vs. 3ff), yet under God, Israel had officially laid claim to the land and set up a place for rulership. It is from here (Shiloh) that the remainder of the land was allocated to the remaining seven tribes (Joshua 19:51). We learn here that if we are going to possess the land (vs. 3), it must first be "subdued" (vs. 1) and God must have his dwelling place established.

18:2-10

Judah has been given his land, and the people of Joseph also, Ephraim and Manasseh. Reuben and Gad and the other half of the Manassites had their portion on the east of Jordan. Although Joshua had fulfilled his duties, subdued the land and set up the tent of meeting (vs.1), the seven remaining tribes had not finished the fight to possess it. Perhaps, as we do today, they had become weary in the fight (Galatians 6:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:13) and were "putting off" (were slack) possessing the land (vs. 3). Joshua rebuked them and put in place a plan to see the conquest through to the end. Careful to not interfere with the inheritance given to the other tribes (vs. 5), Joshua introduced two new elements—surveying the land (vss. 4, 6, 8), and the casting of lots (vss. 6, 8, 10). The seven tribes

must not rest on the work of others. Joshua had laid the foundation, but they must be diligent to build on it. Our foundation is in Christ, it is a sure foundation, but we must be diligent to build on it and to make our calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10). This is what Joshua was asking the Israelites to do.

18:11-28

The remainder of chapter 18 and all of chapter 19 give us the inheritance of the other seven tribes— Benjamin (Joshua 18:11-28), Simeon (Joshua 19:1-9), Zebulun (Joshua 19:10-16), Issachar (Joshua 19:17-23), Asher (Joshua 19:24-31), Naphtali (Joshua 19:32-48) and Dan (Joshua 19:40-48). This information seems to be unnecessary and without any spiritual or devotional benefit. But God does not waste words, and there are lessons in these chapters that we need to learn as we fight the good fight of faith and enter into our inheritance in the gospel. First, although it was such a long time after God promised the land, God had kept his word, and they were being settled in the land. God reminds us here to be patient and trust him through dark days of waiting. Although it seems slow in coming, wait for it, for it will come (Habakkuk 2:3-4).

Also, God told Benjamin that he would be safe, and God would surround him (Deuteronomy 32:12). It is not a coincidence that the tribe of Benjamin was placed between Judah (the leading tribe) and Joseph, his only brother (their mother was Rachel). God has placed us where we are, and that place is a very gracious provision. Let us trust God in it.

19:1-9

The next allotment to be given was to Simeon (vss. 1-9). Simeon's allotment was within the borders of Judah because the portion given to Judah was too large for the people (vs. 9). There was also overlap in the cities allotted to Judah and Simeon (see Joshua 15:26-29). But there was another reason why Simeon's allotment was undefined and insecure. Back in Genesis 34:25-31 we read how Simeon and Levi had taken revenge on the Shechemites and brought trouble on Jacob. As a result of this massacre, Jacob prophesied that Simeon (and Levi) would be scattered in Israel. Simeon learned (and we learn also), that although he was given an inheritance, he still had to bear the consequence of sin.

19:10-39

The allotment of the tribes of Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, and Naphtali was at the most northerly part of the land. The boundaries are not at all clear, Issachar's inheritance is simply a list of towns (vs. 17-23). According to Jacob's prophecy, Zebulun would dwell by the sea (vss. 10-16, Genesis 49:13), Issachar would dwell in a fertile place (vss. 17-23, Genesis 49:14-15), and Asher would find a place of rich food (vss. 24-31, Genesis 49:20, Deuteronomy 33:24-25). Prophecy and providence work beautifully together and meet here in the placement of the tribes—what God has said would happen is brought to pass in the course of time. We can depend on God. His word is true and faithful (Revelation 3:14).

These tribes were part of the land allotments that faded in the life of the nation. Judah became the main tribe and the place of importance. But Naphtali and Zebulun would become important during the time of Jesus (see Matthew 4:13-15).

19:40-48

The inheritance assigned to the tribe of Dan was to the west of Benjamin, between Ephraim and Judah. The cities are listed (vss. 41-46). But Dan's case is unusual. It seems that they could not hold out

against the Amorites (vs. 47, see also Judges 1:34), and were forced to migrate north, where they settled. Judges 18 gives a full account of the summary in vs. 47, of how the Danites finally found an inheritance among the people of God.

There are similarities in this conquest of Dan with the conquest of Joshua, but it was an illegitimate conquest; they slaughtered a "quiet and unsuspecting people," and then raised false gods there (Judge 18:27, 30). The Danites remind us of those who reject or forfeit their inheritance in the gospel and seek instead to carve out something that looks like the inheritance of the Lord and among the Lord's people—they have all the right words and appearances, but they are false, they have "*climbed up some other way*" (John 10:1).

19:49-51

As the oldest in Israel, and the most important and the chosen of God, Joshua could have demanded his inheritance first. No one would have questioned his right. Yet he waited until all Israel had been given their inheritance before he took his (vs. 49). Four virtues of Joshua's character as a leader come to light here. First, his patience. Although an old man, Joshua waited for his inheritance, until his people had received theirs. Second, his humility.

Joshua had previously identified the city he wanted (vs. 50), but he did not demand it against the will of the people. He did not grab selfishly or in a self-serving manner but waited until the people gave it to him. Humble submission is often more powerful than authoritarian demands (Ephesians 5:21).

Third, his loyalty to his own people, the Ephraimites. Joshua was elevated in the nation and could have taken part of Judah's inheritance, as the leading tribe, or perhaps a place close to Shiloh where the tabernacle was, but Joshua did not forget his roots and chose a place among his own people. Fourth, Joshua's faith in God's promise. Joshua was not concerned that there would be no inheritance for him. He trusted God for it, and although it might have appeared that land was becoming scarce, yet Joshua waited in faith and received his inheritance in faith.

20:1-9

After the allotment of the land, three items regarding the land distribution needed to be addressed; cities of refuge (Ch. 20), the place of the Levites in the land (Ch. 21), and an address to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh for their help in the conquest and clarification over the central place of worship (Ch. 22:1-34). We'll get to that later.

Choosing cities of refuge followed the instructions given by Moses (Numbers 35:9-34; Deuteronomy 4:41-43, 19:1-10), so that a man who killed unintentionally could find asylum and get a fair trial with due process. The fugitive must present himself at the gate of the chosen city and wait to be heard there first (vs. 4). If admitted, he would have the opportunity to a trial within the city (vs. 6) and if finally found innocent, he must stay in that city until the death of the High Priest (vs. 6). Six cities were chosen: Kedesh, Shechem, Hebron, Bezer, Ramoth, and Golan (vss. 7-8). A look at the map will show that these cities were placed in locations all around the territory which would provide easy access to a fugitive.

Two aspects of the cities of refuge point us to Jesus Christ as our refuge. First, the city itself as a refuge (see Proverbs 18:10; Hebrews 6:18). Also, the fact that at the death of the high priest the offender would be released and go to his home (vs. 6). By faith in the death of Christ, our High Priest, we are freed from the penalty of sin, and the threat of punishment has been removed.

21:1-3

The cities allotted to the Levites is the last and crowning act of distribution of the land. This again was by the command of the Lord through Moses (vss. 2-3, 13:14; 14:4; Numbers 35:1-8. See also Deuteronomy 10:8-9; 18:1-2). There is a threefold significance to the Levites living among the Israelites. First, the Levites were to be dedicated to the ministry of the Lord—the Lord would be their inheritance (Deuteronomy 18:2). There would be blessing, and provision built into the service of the Lord, for they would receive some of the animals offered to the Lord (Deuteronomy 18:3-5; Numbers 18:8-24).

Secondly, there would be a blessing for the Israelites themselves as they gave the Levites their portion "*out of their inheritance*" (vs. 3). The Levites were scattered among the people of Israel so that they would have a continual reminder that they were a people dedicated to the Lord. They would serve the Lord by serving the Levites among them. This is what Paul reminded Timothy (1 Timothy 5:18).

Thirdly, the Levites were to teach the Israelites that while they had been given rest, yet they were still only sojourners on the earth.

21:4-42

Forty-eight cities, from among the people of Israel were given to the Levites (vs. 41). The fact that the Lord would be their portion did not mean that the Levites had no land or farming interests for themselves. Neither did it mean they could sit back and milk the people of Israel. The Levites were given "*pastureland for their livestock*" (vs. 2).

There are some interesting aspects of the distribution of the Levites among the people of Israel. First, they were divided generally by the three main family groups, the sons of Levi; Gershon, Kohath, and Merari (Genesis 46:11, vss. 4-8). Second, in more detail, the division focused on Aaron the first priest of Israel. Aaron's descendants received their inheritance from the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin, thirteen cities (vs. 4, vss. 9-19). The interesting thing here is that Jerusalem had not yet been taken, yet in the plan of God, the main Levitical family, the Aaronic Priesthood, is settled around Jerusalem—in anticipation of the Holy City.

21:43-45

The Israelites were settled in the land, the enemy had been subdued, and the land allotted to each tribe. The cities of refuge had been assigned and

the Levites dispersed among the people. In the next chapter we will read of the Reubenites, Gadites and the half tribe of Manasseh returning to the Eastern side of the Jordan river.

In these verses the Holy Spirit makes it very clear that the Lord fulfilled all his promises. It is important for Israel to hear this—and to have no doubt that God was faithful. There were still many Canaanite inhabitants living among them, which they needed to deal with, but God had fulfilled his word. The Lord had told them that the land would be taken "*little by little*" (Exodus 23:30), so that it would not be wasted and barren (read Exodus 23:20-33).

God has given us our inheritance in Christ, let us by faith conquer the enemies of our soul and claim the fullness of joy in Christ.... that no corner of our lives is left barren or wasted.

22:1-9

The Gadites, Reubenites, and half of the tribe of Manasseh had requested to settle east of the Jordan river after the defeat of Sihon and Og (Numbers 32:1-5). Although he granted the request, Moses was not at all content with it. He feared that it would discourage and divide the

people of Israel and eventually destroy them (Numbers 32:6-15). The language here in Joshua also implies a division between the land of Canaan and the land of Gilead (vs. 9). Moses granted the request, however, on the condition that these tribes would play their part in the conquest of the land for the other tribes. It was one united nation, Israel against the Canaanites (Joshua 1:12-18, Deuteronomy 3:18-20).

As Joshua sat at Shiloh (vs. 9), the place where the tabernacle had been set up, he looked back on the conquest as he was about to dismiss the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and he recognised how faithful these tribes had been to the conditions of the promise. They had kept their word. But Joshua still had a word of caution to them, separated by the river Jordan—remain faithful to the Lord (vs. 5). Notice the list of commands incorporated in this idea of being faithful to God; *"be careful" ... "observe" ... "love the Lord" ... "walk in his ways" ... "keep his commandments" ... "cling to him" ... "serve him" ...* (vs. 5).

22:10-34

The choice of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh to settle east of the Jordan was received with caution by Moses (Numbers 32:6-15). It was

irregular, it put a natural boundary between the tribes (vs. 25) and it marked a spirit of independence that was not going to work out well. To maintain their independence across the river, and at the same time does not drift away from the other tribes, the two and a half tribes built an altar on the west banks of the Jordan river (v. 11). There was a problem with this, however. To maintain purity of worship, Israel was told to build an altar only at the place where the Lord commanded (Deuteronomy 12:5, 13-14). If there were multiple altars spread across the country, the Israelites would become like the Canaanites (Deuteronomy 12:2-3).

The people of Israel were genuinely concerned that this "*breach of faith*" (vs. 16), would bring the wrath of God down on the whole nation as it did at Baal-peor (vs. 17, Numbers 25:1-9) and Ai (vs. 20, Joshua Ch. 7). Israel gathered at Shiloh to make war (vs. 12) and sent representatives to speak to the two and a half tribes (vss. 13-14). They presented a simple solution; if the land to the east of Jordan is unclean then "*come over to the Lord's land,*" and get a possession among your people, as the Lord commanded (vs. 19).

The reply of the eastern tribes was strong and solemn. Swearing by the three names of God (vs.

22), they defended their "altar" by arguing that it was not intended for sacrifice (and it had not been used for sacrifice, vss. 26-27), but as a replica, or a copy of the altar at Shiloh (vs. 28), as a witness to stand between the tribes. The response is accepted by Israel and the confession that "Yahweh is God" satisfies the representatives from Shiloh (vs. 34).

For us today, the lesson stands, that irregular activity in the Church, and deviation from the direct commands of God, even with good intention, only causes problems, division, and misunderstanding.

23:1-16

As we come to the close of Joshua's life (and the end of the book), Joshua brought a closing address (Ch. 23) and led in the covenant renewal at Shechem (Ch. 24). There is a rich legacy of farewell addresses in the Bible. Moses' Song of Witness (Deuteronomy 32), and his Blessing (Deuteronomy 33). David also in 1 Kings 2:2-4. In the New Testament also we find the Lord Jesus (John 13-15), Paul addressing the elders at Ephesus, (Acts 20:29) and Peter (2 Peter 1:13-15).

The Israelites had completed the conquest, and they knew in their hearts that the Lord had fulfilled

his promises and given them rest (vss. 1, 14; see also Joshua 11:23). Yet, Joshua speaks here of a continued conquest and of victories still ahead of them and maintains the theme of God's faithfulness to his people. First, be courageous—Joshua encouraged the people that the Lord fights for them (vss. 1-10). There was still much more to do, to "*push back*" the enemy and "*drive them out*" (vs. 5), and they need to be strong (vs. 6) and continue to cling to the Lord (vs. 8). They will no doubt fail in this, and so renewal is always important (Joshua Ch. 24 see also Joshua 8:30-35). Secondly, be careful—Joshua warned the people not to turn back (vs. 12). If they turned back from clinging to the Lord, then they would quickly lose the land (vs. 16), and the anger of the Lord would be against them.

24:1-13

Joshua finished his public ministry by addressing his people (Joshua Ch. 23) and leading them in covenant renewal at Shechem (vs. 1). The purpose of Joshua's farewell message was to ground the people of Israel in a solid foundation, not by emotional soundbites, psychological manipulation, or feel-good quotes from the previous celebrity preacher, Moses, but by presenting the God of real-time history—not just the immediate past, but "*long ago*" ... "*beyond the river*" (vs. 2).

There were two things Israel, and we today, must keep in mind. First, what Joshua's message says about God—he is working in history. God covenanted with his people, from Abraham down through the generations, to be with them and to bring them home. He was faithful and did that (See Philippians 1:6). Secondly, what assurances Israel can take from this for the future? Success and fidelity, hope and confidence in the future was not based on a leap of faith into the dark and unknown, but on God's action in the past (vss. 1-13, see also Joshua 23:14). Christianity is faith based, yes, but it is a reasonable faith (Acts 17:2; 18:4, 19; 24:25). The proofs of God's working in history are throughout all of Scripture—the story of the Bible—and were written for our learning and encouragement (John 20:30-31, see also Romans 15:4).

24:14-28

After cataloguing Israel's history from Abraham, Joshua said "*Now, therefore...*" (vs. 14). God's work in the history of the Israelites (and in our lives) laid a huge responsibility on them. Four realities lay before them. First, a challenge to distinguish between the gods of the nations, or the true God. They had been around a few corners and had seen

a lot of the world in their day. From the days of Abraham "*beyond the river* [Euphrates]," through their experience in Egypt (vs. 14), and the Amorites among whom they passed (vs. 15), they had seen all the gods of the nations. The second reality was that the Israelites had to make a choice between those gods and the true God (vs. 15). Joshua was clear in his mind that he was going to serve the Lord. He had a long history of choosing the Lord (Exodus 33:11, Numbers 14:6-9, etc.).

Thirdly, Joshua cautioned the people with a surprising caution, "*you are not able to serve the Lord*" (vs. 19). This was intended to remove any thought in their head that they could serve the Lord in their own strength (Psalm 105:4). The people had affirmed their choice to put away the other gods and serve the Lord (vss. 16-17), but Joshua wanted to make sure they were not choosing lightly. It all rests on the word "If"—if they choose the Lord there is no room for self-satisfaction or ease, for they must cling to him (23:8). "If" (vs. 20) they forsake the Lord, he will turn from them and consume them. The fourth reality here is the covenant that Joshua made "on behalf of the people" (vs. 25). The covenant is sealed by the writing of the words in a book, and the setting up of a stone of testimony. The Israelites must

remember who they are and what their calling is, as we do today.

24:29-33

The death of Joshua is an echo of past deaths, teaching us that not only is it an appointment that we all must keep (Hebrews 9:27), but that in death we can die in hope of a better land, as Joseph did (vs. 32). The mention of Joseph's bones in connection with Joshua's death concludes the story of the exodus and highlights the fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God has shown himself faithful. The death of Joshua not only ends one chapter but looks to the future to open up another chapter in the life of the nation (vs. 31).

The great question that hangs over these last verses of the book is this; has Israel learned to live in dependence on the Lord, as Joshua exhorted them in his address (Joshua Ch. 23) and in his book (vs. 26)? Does the nation need a great leader (like Moses and Joshua), or has it learned to become a people devoted to the Lord? These questions are answered in the next phase of Israel's history—the times of the judges.