



## Bible Reading Program

A free educational service provided by the United Church of God, *an International Association*

### — August 2002 —

DATE	READING TOPIC	SCRIPTURES
1 Aug	Law to be inscribed on stone walls; Curses from Mount Ebal	Deuteronomy 27
2-3 Aug	Blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience	Deuteronomy 28
4 Aug	God's covenant with Israel in Moab	Deuteronomy 29
5 Aug	Restoration of Israel; Choice of life or death	Deuteronomy 30
6 Aug	Joshua now leader; Law to be read every seven years; Writing the Song of Moses and placement of the Book of the Law	Deuteronomy 31:1-29
7 Aug	The Song of Moses	Deuteronomy 31:30-32:47
8 Aug	Moses ordered to Mount Nebo; Prophetic blessings on the tribes	Deuteronomy 32:48-33:29
9 Aug	The death of Moses	Deuteronomy 34
10 Aug	Preparations for the conquest of Canaan	Joshua 1
11 Aug	Spies sent to Jericho and hidden by Rahab	Joshua 2
12 Aug	Israel crosses the Jordan	Joshua 3
13 Aug	Stones to memorialize the crossing	Joshua 4:1-5:1
14 Aug	Second generation circumcised and Passover kept at Gilgal	Joshua 5:2-15
15 Aug	The Fall of Jericho	Joshua 6
16 Aug	Defeat at Ai because of the sin of Achan	Joshua 7
17 Aug	Fall of Ai; Law inscribed on stone walls; Renewal of the covenant relationship between God and Israel	Joshua 8
18 Aug	Treaty with the Gibeonites	Joshua 9
19 Aug	The Defeat of the Amorites during Joshua's "long day"	Joshua 10
20 Aug	Northern conquest	Joshua 11
21 Aug	The kings defeated by Moses and Joshua	Joshua 12
22 Aug	The unconquered land and eastern inheritances	Joshua 13
23 Aug	Caleb asks for his inheritance	Joshua 14
24 Aug	Judah receives its inheritance; Caleb conquers Hebron	Joshua 15
25 Aug	Territory of Ephraim and Manasseh	Joshua 16-17
26 Aug	Benjamin's territory	Joshua 18
27 Aug	Territory of the rest of the tribes	Joshua 19
28 Aug	Cities of Refuge; Levitical cities	Joshua 20-21
29 Aug	The altar by the Jordan	Joshua 22
30 Aug	Joshua's charge to the people	Joshua 23
31 Aug	Joshua's farewell address	Joshua 24

### Highlights to Think About from This Month's Reading

#### **Law Inscribed on Massive Stones; Curses From Mount Ebal (Deuteronomy 27) August 1**

God commands Israel to set up an altar and write all the words of the Book of the Law on large plastered stones, virtual *walls* of stone, when they cross over the Jordan River to occupy the land (verses 1-10). Joshua 8:30-35 records that Joshua obeyed this command. Paul later refers to what was written on the massive stones as the “ministry of death, written and engraved on stones” (2 Corinthians 3:7). This “ministry” or, in more current terminology, “administration” of death refers to the civil law code which *administered* the penalties, including the death penalty, for certain violations, as spelled out in the statutes and judgments. The Church today is not to carry out the death penalty. This is the job of civil authorities (Romans 13:1-4). Rather, the ministry of the Church is to preach reconciliation and eternal life (compare 2 Corinthians 3:1-18; 5:18-21).

God commanded Israel to proclaim the blessings for obedience on Mount Gerizim, and the curses for disobedience on Mount Ebal (verses 11-13). *The Nelson Study Bible* notes: “Mount Ebal was north of Mount Gerizim (vv. 12, 13). Between the two mountains was the city of Shechem (Gen. 12:6, 7; 33:18-20). Shechem and its two mountains are roughly in the center of the land of Canaan” (note on 27:4). Adding more detail: “Ebal and Gerizim are two important peaks in central Canaan flanking an east-west pass through the north-central hill country. Almost the entire Promised Land is visible from the top of Mount Ebal” (note on Joshua 8:30). Revealing more: “The Lord used the topography of the land for dramatic, visual effect. Mount Ebal, because of topographical and climatic conditions, is normally a barren peak while Mount Gerizim is usually covered with vegetation. Consequently, Mount Ebal was an ideal place for the curses to be recited, and Mount Gerizim was suitable for the blessings. The association of the place and the word would have been unforgettable. Furthermore, the two mountains are quite close [rising up on opposite sides of Shechem], so they would serve as a natural amphitheater for the recitation of the curses and blessings by the Levites” (note on Deuteronomy 24:11-14).

This is also where the massive engraved stones and accompanying altar would be set up (Joshua 8:30-35). Disobedience would bring “curses” or punishment from God. Twelve curses were proclaimed to which the people were to respond. Disobedient conduct included: idolatry (verse 15); disrespectful conduct towards parents (verse 16; compare verses 20, 22); dishonest, deceitful and violent conduct toward one’s neighbor (verses 17, 24-25); improper conduct towards the handicapped or the poor (verses 18-19); and sexual perversions (verses 20-23). The people were to confirm that these actions were in fact worthy of punishment—not just in responding with “Amen” but, more importantly, by living in accordance with the law that forbade them (verse 26).

#### **Blessings and Curses Revisited (Deuteronomy 28) August 2-3**

In this lengthy chapter (which parallels Leviticus 26), God describes in great detail what would happen to the nation of Israel if they obeyed His words, and what would happen if they *disobeyed* Him. Verses 2-14 point out the *specific* blessings for obedience. They would include food in abundance (verses 3-6, 8), safety from enemies (verse 7), healthy children and abundant livestock and produce (verses 11-12). These blessings would also enable Israel to give to many other nations, without having to borrow from them (verse 12). All in all, Israel would become a “holy” people (verse 9), “the head and not the tail” (verse 13).

On the other hand, disobedience would bring about severe punishment. And that is just what happened. We know from history that ancient Israel and Judah later suffered some of the specific curses listed, including military attacks, when the Assyrians and the Babylonians besieged and conquered Samaria and Jerusalem and enslaved the two nations. But we know, too, that an even greater period of devastating punishment is still ahead of us. The Great Tribulation of the end time will be worse than any calamity or holocaust of the past (see Matthew 24:21; Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 12:1; Deuteronomy 31:29). It will afflict modern Judah, i.e., the Jewish people, and the modern descendants of ancient Israel, especially the United States (Manasseh) and Great Britain along with other Commonwealth nations, such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand (Ephraim). (See our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.) God will use for this punishment the dreadful curses spelled out in Deuteronomy 28 as well as military attacks and enslavement at the

hands of a new global superpower, the resurrected Roman Empire, called “Babylon” in the book of Revelation.

In particular, there will be famine due to food shortages and destruction through locusts, worms and other natural disasters, unhealthy livestock, and droughts (verses 17-18, 23-24, 38-40, 42). The people of the land will become incurably sick, both physically and mentally (verses 21-22, 27-28, 34-35, 59-62). They will be conquered by a foreign power and become slaves—some of them will be brought as captives of war to distant lands, including Egypt, never to see their country again (verses 32-33, 36, 41, 49 ff., 68; compare Isaiah 11:11). During the siege of their cities, some will even resort to cannibalism (Deuteronomy 28:52-57). This actually occurred during the siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 as it did at other times (compare 2 Kings 6:24-30), and it *will* occur again—only this time, it will be much more severe and widespread. Finally, the peoples of Israel and Judah will be scattered “among all peoples.... and there you shall serve other gods.... And among those nations you will find no rest.... You shall fear day and night, and have no assurance of life” (verses 64-66).

God will bring such terrible punishment on modern Israel and Judah to teach them a much-needed lesson. Of those to whom much is given, much is required—and punishment is worse for those who fail to do right when they ought to know better (compare Luke 12:47-48). Israel and Judah, blessed with divine aid and unparalleled wide access to Scripture, should have been “holy” nations—an example to the rest of the world. But they will end up actually sinking lower than the gentiles in their rebellion against God (see 2 Chronicles 33:9). That is why God will use the “worst of the Gentiles” to punish them (Ezekiel 7:24). But some, while in captivity, will come to their senses and repent, and God will accept them, free them and bring them back to the land which their fathers possessed, to prosper there (Deuteronomy 30:1-5, 9), while placing “all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you” (verse 7).

### **The Land Covenant (Deuteronomy 29)**

**August 4**

Here, on the verge of crossing into the Promised Land, an additional covenant is made between God and “the children of Israel in the land of Moab, *besides the covenant* which He made with them in Horeb”—i.e., Mount Sinai (verses 1, 14). Many refer to this as the Land Covenant. (Some call it the Palestinian Covenant but the name *Palestine* was not used until Roman times—and that to spite the Jews.) As pointed out before, a covenant is simply a contract or an agreement between two or more parties. It is not identical to the law on which a covenant is based. Since a covenant is merely a contract, it should not surprise us that when Israel broke a covenant by violating the law on which the covenant was based, God would make a new covenant with Israel based on the same or similar laws. In fact, God made at least three covenants with the entire nation of Israel in the book of Exodus, not just one, as some have erroneously concluded (compare Exodus 24:1-8; 31:12-18; 34:10, 27).

Here, in Deuteronomy 29, God made still *another* covenant. It was to apply to future generations as well as the people of that day (verses 15, 25). But God had not yet given the people “a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear” (verse 4). He therefore knew that they would not obey Him, and He warns them that the “curses of the covenant written in this Book of the Law” would come on them for their disobedience (verses 20-21, 27; compare 31:15-29). Still, despite their lack of spiritual conversion, the laws God had revealed to them would have enabled the nation of Israel to build a just and equitable society and be richly blessed even if they would have kept only the *letter* of the law, which they *could* have followed (29:29). Yet, more often than not, they failed in that also.

### **Returning to God—A Choice We All Must Make (Deuteronomy 30)**

**August 5**

As previously mentioned in the highlights on chapter 28, Israel, when in captivity and distress, would ultimately repent. It is interesting how God describes their future repentance: “And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, *to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul*” (30:6). And how would the circumcision of the heart, leading to the love toward God, be manifested? Verse 8 gives the answer: “And you will again [in your future repentance] obey the voice of the LORD and do all His commandments which I command you *today*.” Read that again! Memorize this verse! Many try to say that God’s law is done away. But this passage shows that Israel, at the time of their repentance—which is *still* yet future even today—will at that time return to obeying the *same commandments* that Moses gave them. And so, far from being done away, God’s law still stands (compare Malachi 4:4-6; Matthew 5:17-20). God also points out in Deuteronomy 30:11-14 that there are no good excuses for pleading ignorance. Moses made

the point that God's commandments are completely accessible to Israel. And in the New Testament, the apostle Paul applies this concept of accessibility to the access we have to Christ (Romans 10:5-8).

God reminds Israel (and us today) that He has revealed to us the way of death and the way of life—but we are required to *choose*. God will not make this decision for us. However, if we choose the wrong way, it will only bring misery, pain and, eventually, death. On the other hand, choosing the right way means being blessed with prosperity, happiness and life—not just for us, but *also* for our children (Deuteronomy 30:11-20; compare Exodus 20:5-6). If we've chosen the wrong path in the past, it's not too late to turn around—at least, not *yet*. As the first part of this chapter shows, we can choose to return to God and His way. And, when we do, He will forgive us and lead us to life. May all of us make the right choice.

### **The Law to Be Read in the Year of Release (Deuteronomy 31:1-29)**

**August 6**

Here we read of the inauguration, commissioning or ordination of Joshua to take the place of Moses as the chief human judge over Israel. We also read God's wonderful words of encouragement: "Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you" (Deuteronomy 31:6). God will repeat this to Joshua in Joshua 1:5. And the apostle Paul quotes part of this phrase as a message from God to Christians today (see Hebrews 13:5).

Moses instructs that the law be read "at the end of every seven years," that is, the "year of release" from slavery and debts. This reading was to be done "at the Feast of Tabernacles." All Israel was to listen, including the children "who have not known it" (verse 13), so that they all could learn to fear God and keep His commandments (verses 12-13; compare Ecclesiastes 12:13). At a time when there were no mass communications and when books, including personal copies of the Scriptures, were almost nonexistent among the common people, this practice would have been invaluable. Nehemiah 8 recounts the revival of the spirit of this command following the Babylonian captivity of the Jews.

Deuteronomy 31 ends with the placement of the Book of the Law beside the Ark of the Covenant and Moses teaching the people a special song, the words of which appear in the next chapter.

### **The Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 31:30–32:47)**

**August 7**

As we read in Deuteronomy 31, God told Moses to record a song that would foretell the Israelites' future rebellion and thus serve "as a witness" against them—as they were to be taught it so as not to forget it (verses 19, 21-22). The lyrics of this "Song of Moses," which was to be a national anthem of sorts for ancient Israel, are recorded in Deuteronomy 32. By including them in the pages of the Bible, God made certain that they would indeed not be forgotten. (This Song of Moses should not be confused with the *other* "Song of Moses" recorded in Exodus 15.)

Verse 4 is the first place in Scripture where God is called the "Rock." This name is repeated four more times in this chapter.

In the song in Deuteronomy, Israel is called Jeshurun, a pet name for Israel meaning "Uprightness." However, God foretells, through Moses, that the Israelites would corrupt themselves so much that they would cease, temporarily, to be His children (Deuteronomy 32:5). They had already sacrificed to demons and would do so again (verse 17; compare Amos 5:25-26; 1 Corinthians 10:20). But God was still their Father by virtue of creating them both as human beings and as a nation (Deuteronomy 32:6), so they should behave in a way worthy of being the offspring of God. Indeed, at the time of Adam, God actually predetermined the inheritances of all nations and set their boundaries "according to the number of the children of Israel" (verse 8). This shows that God had foreordained not only the existence of Israel but even its population size at least as far back as man's creation.

Verses 11-12 contain some interesting imagery: "As an eagle...hovers over its young, spreading out its wings, taking them up, carrying them on its wings..." Here, God's protection of His people is compared to that of an eagle caring for its young. Those who have studied the behavioral patterns of eagles have confirmed the description given in these verses. The golden eagle makes its nest high up in the massive rocks of the mountains of Sinai. When the young eagles think they are ready to fly, they jump out of the nest and spread their wings. But many times, during these first attempts, the young birds are not yet able to fly—they are too excited and don't spread their wings correctly or not at all. And so they hurl down, like a person jumping out of an airplane with a parachute that does not open. But the parents are on the alert. The mother, which is bigger than the father, glides under

the child, catches it and carries it to a place of safety. This scenario repeats itself two or three times, until the young bird has learned how to stretch its wings and fly. In light of scriptures like verses 11-12 and Exodus 19:3-4, the passage in Revelation 12:14 (“the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place...”) might simply be describing God’s supernatural intervention in directing His people to a place of refuge rather than referring to any specific physical means of getting them there, such as, as some have theorized, modern aircraft. God certainly did not use aircraft to transport ancient Israel.

Verse 15 is one of several statements in Deuteronomy that when Israel becomes well off materially, they will forsake God. This corresponds to an observation attributed to Martin Luther: “A full stomach does not promote piety, for it stands secure and neglects God.” This is certainly true of ancient Israel’s descendants today, as we see them living at a higher standard of living than any nation has ever experienced—yet increasingly smug, self-satisfied and unthankful.

### **Moses’ Prophetic Blessings on Israel (Deuteronomy 32:48–33:29)**

**August 8**

Just before his death, Moses proclaims prophetic blessings for the tribes of Israel. Similar prophecies for all the tribes were given by Jacob, which Moses recorded earlier in Genesis 49. In one of Moses’ blessings here, he actually quotes Jacob, in using the words, “on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers” (Deuteronomy 33:16; Genesis 49:26).

In attempting to locate the various tribes today, such prophecies are invaluable. The easiest tribe for most people to identify is, of course, Judah—almost universally believed to be the ancestor of the modern Jews. Considering the history of the Jewish people, including the modern state of Israel, the prophecy that the Jews would have many enemies has certainly proven to be valid (Deuteronomy 33:7). But what about the other tribes?

Though still not commonly recognized or believed, many have come to the realization that most of the tribes of Israel later migrated to Northwest Europe following their Assyrian captivity (compare 2 Kings 17; *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*).

The primary peoples of all the tribes of Israel would be those of Joseph. The father of Ephraim and Manasseh (Deuteronomy 33:17), Joseph was given the birthright, after Reuben, Jacob’s firstborn, disqualified himself (Genesis 49:3-4; 1 Chronicles 5:1). Among those who accept the truth of the Israelite migrations to Northwest Europe, Joseph is commonly understood to be the forefather of the English-speaking peoples of the United States and the former British Commonwealth. Identifying the other tribes is more difficult, as there are not nearly as many biblical and historical clues to go on. Nevertheless, they apparently may be found among such nations as France, Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Ireland, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway and Iceland. Simeon (not mentioned in Deuteronomy 33) and Levi were to be scattered throughout the other tribes (Genesis 49:5-7)—though Levi was given the job of teaching God’s truth to His people (Deuteronomy 33:8-10).

Verse 27 contains a wonderful promise to Israel that certainly applies to the spiritual people of God today and always: “The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” This reminds us that God will be there to “catch” us when we fall, if we devote our lives to serving Him.

### **The Death of Moses (Deuteronomy 34)**

**August 9**

As mentioned in the introductory highlights of Deuteronomy, though it was possible for Moses to have written this final chapter himself under God’s inspiration, it seems much more likely that God used someone else to bring the book to its completion. An obvious candidate is Moses’ successor, Joshua. However, the wording of verse 10 makes it appear that more time had passed than just Joshua. Perhaps someone else wrote the final three verses of the book.

Here we see that Moses dies at 120 years of age, but not because of ill health or the normal physical deterioration associated with aging (verse 7). In this way, God made it clear that He was *taking* Moses’ life, not allowing him to enter the Promised Land, because of Moses’ error in striking the rock at Kadesh. Still, this great man of God is given a glimpse of the Promised Land and full assurance that his people would enter it. More importantly, he one day *will* enter that land and a far greater Promised Land—when He is resurrected from the dead into the Kingdom of God, which will be ruled from Jerusalem (compare Matthew 16:28; 17:1-9).

Remarkably, God Himself buried Moses’ body in a secret place (Deuteronomy 34:5-6). This was apparently to prevent his gravesite from becoming an idolatrous shrine, as it surely would have. In

fact, we are told in the book of Jude that Satan and Michael fought over Moses' body (verse 9)—as perhaps Satan wished to make the location of the burial known for just this reason.

Although Joshua became a powerful leader, he did not reach the stature of Moses. “But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, in all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to do..., and by all that mighty power and all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of the people” (verses 10-12). Indeed, no one like him would follow in the remainder of the Old Testament.

However, Moses foretold that a prophet like himself *would* appear, whom the people should follow. That Prophet, appearing in the *New Testament*, was Jesus Christ. As the law came through Moses, grace and truth came through Christ (John 1:17). Jesus Himself attested to the credibility of Moses, when He said, “If you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me” (5:45-47). But as people really have *not* believed Moses' writings, so they don't really believe Christ's words either.

Finally, then, with the obituary of its author, we come to the conclusion of the first major division of the Old Testament—the five books of the Law, or Torah. We are left hopeful and excited, with the conquest of the Promised Land before us. May all of us have this same hope and excitement as we stand on the brink of entering *our* Promised Land—the Kingdom of God. Therein, we will join with all the faithful we've read about—such as Abel, Enoch, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Joshua and Caleb—under Jesus Christ, in reforming this world to make it the kind of place it's supposed to be. What a wonderful time awaits us!

### **Introduction to Joshua; Preparations for the Conquest (Joshua 1)**

**August 10**

Jewish tradition attributes authorship of this book to Joshua, whose name it bears—a view accepted almost universally by Bible commentators. Later editors evidently made a few additions, such as the description of Joshua's death.

Traditionally, the Old Testament is divided into three sections: the Law, Prophets and Writings (or Psalms, so named from the first book of that section). In fact, Jesus Himself confirmed this three-part division (compare Luke 24:44). According to the Jews, who have preserved the Hebrew Scriptures (Romans 3:1-2), the book of Joshua is the first book of the section called the Prophets. It deals with Joshua's tenure as Israel's leader and the Israelites' conquest of the land of Canaan. Joshua first appeared in Exodus 17:9 as the man Moses chose to lead the battle against Amalek. He was Moses' assistant and accompanied him part of the way up Mount Sinai when Moses met with God (Exodus 24:13; 32:15-17). He had a special relationship with both Moses and God (33:11; Numbers 11:28). He was Ephraim's representative sent to spy out the land of Canaan, and, along with Caleb, brought back a favorable, though unpopular, report about the land (Numbers 13-14). God specifically chose him to succeed Moses as Israel's leader, who would lead them into the Promised Land (27:12-23). In Deuteronomy 31:7, he is told by Moses to “be strong and of good courage,” and God states it Himself in Deuteronomy 31:23. Now, as Joshua takes over as leader of the tribes of Israel, God repeats the exhortation several more times (Joshua 1:6, 7, 9, 18).

The Hebrew name Joshua or *Yehoshua* (meaning “The Eternal Is Salvation” occurs in the Greek New Testament as *Iesous*—transliterated into Latin as *Iesus* or Jesus. Interestingly, many symbols and types in the book of Joshua correspond to the New Testament picture of Jesus *Christ* leading *His* people into a *spiritual* Promised Land, inheriting the Kingdom, and overcoming evil along the way. Hebrews 3-4 specifically compares the entry and settling of the physical Promised Land with resting on God's weekly Sabbath and with entry into God's Kingdom, calling all three things God's rest (compare Joshua 1:13, 15; 11:23; 14:15; 21:44; 22:4; 23:1). As you read the book, see what other parallels you can discover.

In verses 12-15, Joshua reminds the tribes who settled on the east of the Jordan of their promise to accompany the rest of the Israelites in their conquest of the Promised Land (compare Numbers 32; Deuteronomy 3:12-22). They willingly carry out their responsibility, for which Joshua commends them when he gives them leave to return to their homes several years later (Joshua 22:1-4). Nevertheless, they did not leave their wives and children undefended while they were away. From Numbers 26, we can estimate the number of those who were able to go to war from Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh as somewhere around 110,000. Joshua 4:12-13 says only about 40,000 accompanied their brethren over the Jordan, leaving nearly two thirds of the men behind to take care

of the families. Very likely, only those with the fewest family ties and those most eager to participate (1:16-18) crossed the Jordan, following the principles given in Deuteronomy 20:5-8.

### Rahab and the Spies (Joshua 2)

August 11

Verse 1 of this chapter should apparently say “had sent” rather than “sent,” as the events from 2:1 through 3:1 evidently transpire before the “three days” mentioned in 1:11. Indeed, putting events together, we apparently have the following timeline:

Abib 1	Spies sent to Jericho (2:1)
Abib 2	Spies in Jericho (2:1-21)
Abib 3-5	Spies in hiding outside Jericho (2:16, 22)
Abib 6	Spies return and report to Joshua (2:23-24)
Abib 7	Israel moves from Acacia Grove to the Jordan (3:1)
Abib 7-9	Israel camped at the Jordan (3:3)
Abib 8	Joshua commands officers to tell the people to prepare provisions (1:11)
Abib 9	Officers instruct the people about following the ark (3:2-5)
Abib 10	Israel crosses the Jordan; Memorial set up; Males circumcised (3:6-5:9)
Abib 10-14	Israel encamped at Gilgal (4:20-5:10)
Abib 14	Israel keeps the Passover (5:10)
Abib 15	Israel eats produce of the land; Last day of manna; Joshua meets Christ (5:11-15)
Abib 15-20	Israelite procession once around Jericho each day (6:1-14)
Abib 21	Israelite procession seven times around Jericho and it falls (6:15-27)

When the spies enter the land, the Israelites have been in Acacia Grove since their defeat of Sihon and Og (Numbers 22:1; 25:1). Rahab and the Canaanites had heard the stories of the Red Sea crossing, now 40 years ago. Within the past few months the Israelites had completely destroyed the Amorites just east of the Jordan (verse 10). And now they were camped on Jericho’s doorstep. But while most of the people of Jericho were faint with fear, Rahab recognized who was behind the Israelites’ successes (verses 9, 11). She had developed faith in the true God and His power, and now she demonstrated her faith by protecting the spies and then asking them for protection in return (Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25).

The spies evidently did not know the manner in which Jericho would be destroyed. Otherwise, they probably would have expected Rahab’s house, which was built into the city wall, to be destroyed. Instead, the spies clearly assumed the house would still be there since they told Rahab to gather her family therein and remain inside—and to bind the scarlet cord in the window from which the spies were let down. Taking an oath that Rahab’s family would be protected, the scarlet cord was undoubtedly intended to make it easy for Israelite warriors to identify those to spare. As it turned out, however, the cord was apparently unnecessary for that purpose. God Himself backed up the oath, and Rahab’s faith, by miraculously keeping her portion of the wall from falling flat, making identification quite simple. (This is obvious from the fact that her house, which, again, was built into the city wall, still stood after the wall as a whole fell, according to 6:22.) Moreover, rather than just any Israelite soldiers being the ones to spare Rahab and her family, Joshua sent in the spies themselves—who would actually recognize Rahab—to retrieve them (verses 22-23). Nevertheless, the scarlet cord, the instructions to remain inside the house and the family’s subsequent deliverance from death, do seem to carry with it some remarkable symbolic parallels with the events of the Passover the Israelites had kept in Egypt exactly 40 years earlier.

Rahab eventually married Salmon, a very prominent member of the tribe of Judah (Matthew 1:5). He was the son of the tribal leader at the time of the Exodus, Nahshon (compare Numbers 2:3), and first cousin of Eleazar the high priest (compare Exodus 6:23). Their son or perhaps later descendant Boaz would marry Ruth (of the *book* of Ruth), and from them would come David and eventually Jesus Christ (Ruth 4:20-21). In spite of her questionable history in the town of Jericho, Rahab evidently became converted (Hebrews 11:31, 39-40), and her important role in the history of Judah and Israel is unquestioned.

It should be pointed out, however, that some view the Bible’s praise of Rahab as an endorsement of her lying to the men looking for the spies. Based on this, they argue that it is okay to lie when it is “for a good cause.” However, that is simply not the case—ever (Leviticus 19:11; Proverbs 12:22). *The Nelson Study Bible*, in laying out the possible explanations with regard to Rahab’s lying, ends

with the one it clearly favors: “A lie is a lie, and...Rahab’s action was wrong.... Rahab sinned no matter how noble her intentions. Of course, in her case, her sin is understandable because she lacked complete knowledge of the living God. That is, what she did was wrong, but she did not know any better. We must be careful to make a distinction between Rahab’s faith and the way Rahab expressed it. The Bible praises Rahab because of her faith in God, not because of her lying. That is, her actions would have been more noble had she protected the spies in some other fashion; as it is, she did the best she could. The Bible calls Rahab a prostitute, but we are not meant to take that as an endorsement for immorality. Rahab, like the rest of us, had a mixed character, but she believed in God and strove to honor Him and His people. That is what draws her praise. We should honor Rahab the way the Bible does. She was a great heroine of faith, who came from a most surprising place. In time, her name would be honored not only for what she did for Israel, but for what she became—a mother in the line of Jesus” (“In Depth: Lying”).

Of course, over time, with the help of God’s laws and His Spirit, Rahab surely came to repudiate her former lifestyle. Indeed, she *must* have to have married a prominent Israelite. Thus, it is likely that she herself came to view her lie as wrong—and repented of it, as we all must of our own sins.

**Supplementary Reading:** “Rahab: From Harlot to Heroine,” *The Good News*, March–April 2002, pp. 26-28.

### **Israel Crosses the Jordan (Joshua 3)**

**August 12**

Joshua 3:7 is significant. The people would naturally feel a big letdown after losing their great leader Moses. That feeling could easily have turned into chronic disappointment and contempt for Joshua if they never saw any more miracles. The crossing of the Jordan on dry ground coming so soon after the inauguration of Joshua provided the people with quick evidence that as God was with Moses, so He would be with Joshua. Truly God “exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel” (4:14). The parallel with the most impressive miracle under Moses’ leadership, the crossing of the Red Sea, was unmistakable.

When the Israelites crossed the Red Sea in leaving Egypt, the waters were parted and formed a wall on both sides of them (Exodus 14:21-22). With the crossing of the Jordan River, the waters upstream halted and piled up, while the remaining water continued to drain downstream into the Dead Sea, leaving an empty streambed (Joshua 3:13, 16). Indeed, as in the Red Sea, the Israelites crossed on “dry ground” (verse 17)—not shallow water or even mud. And this didn’t happen at some time of drought when the Jordan River was low. Rather, it happened in the spring, at a time when the Jordan overflowed its banks (verse 15). The people were to cross at a rather distant 2,000 cubits (more than a half mile) from the Ark of the Covenant (verse 4).

When journeying, it was normally the responsibility of the Levites who were sons of Kohath to transport the ark once the priests had prepared it (Numbers 4:1-15). For this, and other special occasions, the priests themselves (fellow Kohathites, Aaron having been a grandson of Kohath, see Exodus 6:18, 20) carried the ark (compare Joshua 6:6; 2 Samuel 15:29; 1 Kings 8:6).

### **Stones for a Memorial (Joshua 4:1–5:1)**

**August 13**

Before the priests exited the riverbed, God had Joshua send the 12 men he had chosen (3:12) over to the area around the ark to collect one large stone per man (4:5). They also set up 12 stones in the midst of the river, probably as a visible disturbance of the current, if not actually extending above the surface, to commemorate the spot where the priests stood (verse 9).

The stones removed from the Jordan were taken to Gilgal, where they made camp (verses 19-20). Gilgal is about five miles from the river, but only about one mile from Jericho. The stones were to serve as a reminder of the miracle God performed that day (verses 21-24). Such monuments were often set up as “witnesses” of events (Genesis 31:45-52; Joshua 22:26-28; 24:26-27).

News of this great miracle quickly spread throughout the land, the inhabitants of which were gripped with terror. Indeed, imagine how the people of Jericho felt, with the Israelites camped only a mile away.

### **Circumcision at Gilgal (Joshua 5:2-15)**

**August 14**

Upon their arrival at the camp in Gilgal, God instructs Joshua to prepare the Israelites to observe the first Passover that a sizeable percentage of them have ever been allowed to participate in. Apparently, as part of Israel’s rejection, the people in the wilderness did not circumcise their sons (verses 2-7). And keeping the Passover in the wilderness would have required the exclusion of these uncircumcised sons (Exodus 12:43-49). Still, it seems likely that the Passover would have been kept

by the nation of Israel all through the wilderness wanderings—by all those who came out of Egypt and then, after the older generation died out, by Joshua, Caleb, all the males of the first generation who were under 20 at the time of the Exodus and, presumably, the women. (It should be noted that even the uncircumcised males would have observed God’s festivals in general—along with the rest of Israel.)

Now, on the 10th day of the month on which Israel came up from the Jordan (Joshua 4:19), the day the Passover lambs were chosen in Egypt (Exodus 12:3), God confirms that He has chosen the Israelites as His people. The Bible elsewhere explains that physical circumcision is a type of spiritual circumcision “of the heart” (Deuteronomy 30:6; Romans 2:29), which entails repentance from past sin and obedience to God. In literal circumcision, there is a rending of a veil of flesh and a shedding of blood that is reminiscent of sacrifices. Egypt is a type in Scripture of the sinful life we have left behind.

All of this is most interesting when we consider the words of Joshua 5:9: “Then the LORD said to Joshua, ‘This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.’ Therefore the name of the place is called Gilgal to this day.” As *The King James Study Bible* notes: “A play on words occurs here. Gilgal (‘Rolling Away’) marks the place where God rolled away the reproach of Egypt. Israel’s era of shameful captivity [and rejection] now came officially to an end. The inheritance of Canaan lay ahead (compare 1:6; 21:43-45). The same verbal root marks the New Testament site of Golgotha, the place where mankind’s captivity by sin [and resultant rejection] was ended [that is, for those who have repented and obtained forgiveness]. There man’s sins were rolled away and rolled onto the person of Jesus Christ, so believers might enter God’s spiritual inheritance” (note on 5:9). And this, of course, requires our spiritual circumcision. Indeed, it is only through being spiritually circumcised that we are allowed to partake of the bread and wine of the *New Testament* Passover.

The Israelites take a few days to heal (compare 5:8), and undoubtedly many of them are still sore when they keep the Passover a few days later, on the 14th of Abib (verse 10), and when they start their processions around Jericho, which apparently begin the next day.

This next day, Abib 15, was the First Day of Unleavened Bread. It was on this Holy Day that Joshua encountered the “Commander of the army of the LORD” (verse 14), who proved to be none other than God Himself, since Joshua was permitted to worship Him (compare Revelation 19:10; 22:8-9) and since Joshua was commanded to remove his sandals in this Being’s presence, just as Moses was commanded to do before God at the burning bush (verse 15; compare Exodus 3:5-6). In both cases, it should be noted, this was the preincarnate Jesus Christ and not God the Father (compare John 1:18; 6:46; 1 Corinthians 10:4; see our free booklet *Who Is God?*).

God—that is, the preincarnate Christ—made His appearance to Joshua on this occasion to provide encouragement for the task ahead, of taking the land. Christ’s instructions to Joshua immediately follow in the next verses (6:2-5).

### **And the Walls Came Tumblin’ Down (Joshua 6)**

**August 15**

It is apparently on the First Day of Unleavened Bread that Joshua receives instructions from the preincarnate Christ—“the Commander of the LORD’s army” (5:15)—about how Jericho is to be taken (6:2-5). Their first march around the city seems to have occurred later that day. The city being only a mile away and their march around it measuring about another mile, this would not have taken long. The subsequent marches begin early in the morning (verses 12, 14). The seventh day, the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, though a Holy Day, was not especially restful for them that year. God had His work for them to do. They rose at dawn and marched around the city seven times before giving a great shout with the trumpet blasts. So far, this was about eight miles of marching, but God’s work was not yet done. At the sound of the trumpets and shout, the walls of the city “fell down flat,” or, literally, “fell under itself,” and permitted the Israelite soldiers to scramble up and over the debris, entering the city from all directions (verse 20).

Many archaeologists have pointed to Jericho as an instance in which the biblical account is unsupported from evidence found at the site. However, this is based primarily on a misdating of a particular destruction layer by British archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon in the 1950s. According to archaeologist Bryant Wood: “She concluded that the Bronze Age city of Jericho was destroyed about 1550 BC by the Egyptians. An in-depth analysis of the evidence, however, reveals that the destruction took place around 1400 BC (end of the Late Bronze I period), exactly when the Bible says the Conquest occurred” (“The Walls of Jericho,” *Creation*, March–May 1999, p. 37).

Indeed, findings from this destruction layer are remarkable. For instance, there was an upper (inner) and lower (outer) mudbrick city wall, the lower one resting on a retaining wall that held the earthen embankment beneath the city in place. Along with many buildings, the city wall did collapse and fell “beneath itself” to the base of the retaining wall, the debris creating a virtual ramp up into the city from all directions—all except one, that is. A short stretch of the lower city wall on the north side did not fall—and there were houses built against that wall, as Rahab’s house is described! Moreover, this area, on the outer embankment, would have been a poorer area, just where a prostitute at the time would be living. There is also clear evidence of the city being burned, but only after the “earthquake” did its damage, again confirming the biblical account.

More remarkable still, “both Garstang [a 1930s excavator] and Kenyon found many storage jars full of grain that had been caught in the fiery destruction. This is a unique find in the annals of archaeology. Grain was valuable, not only as a source of food, but also as a commodity which could be bartered. Under normal circumstances, valuables such as grain would have been plundered by the conquerors. Why was the grain left at Jericho? The Bible provides the answer. Joshua commanded the Israelites that the city and all that is in it were to be dedicated to the Lord (Joshua 6:17, lit. Heb.).... [Also] such a large quantity of grain left untouched gives silent testimony to the truth of yet another aspect of the biblical account. A heavily fortified city with an abundant supply of food and water [as Jericho had, having a spring within it] would normally take many months, even years, to subdue. The Bible says that Jericho fell after only seven days. The jars found in the ruins of Jericho were full, showing that the siege was short since the people inside the walls consumed very little of the grain” (p. 39). The Bible tells us that “by faith the walls of Jericho fell down” (Hebrews 11:30). And the amazing evidence that this event really did happen can strengthen *our* faith that God will crumble any “walls” that stand in *our* way as we strive to live Christian lives before Him.

As with Egypt and Sodom, Jericho was a symbol of sin that God was destroying (verses 17-18). And, as already noted, Jericho was apparently destroyed on the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, a fitting symbol of the ultimate victory over sin. Forty years earlier, the Israelites had crossed the Red Sea, and God brought the waters of the sea down on Pharaoh’s army, granting the Israelites victory and escape from the bondage of Egypt, symbolizing the final release from bondage to spiritual Egypt and death. The Red Sea crossing appears to also have been on the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, as Jewish tradition attests. Additionally, there is reason to believe that the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah may well have been during the Days of Unleavened Bread, too (compare Genesis 19:3). This gives us three great victories over sin to remind and encourage us in our attempts to replace sin with God’s way of life during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

In verse 26, Joshua pronounced a curse on anyone who would rebuild the city of Jericho. The site was sporadically occupied after this (Joshua 18:21; Judges 3:13; 2 Samuel 10:5), but never to any real extent. Joshua’s curse, however, actually would be fulfilled in 1 Kings 16:34, when a man named Hiel actually laid new foundations and rebuilt the city gates. Many centuries later another city was built nearby and also named Jericho. This later city is the Jericho mentioned in the New Testament.

**Supplementary Reading:** “Archaeology and the Book of Joshua: The Conquest,” *The Good News*, July–Aug. 1997, pp. 22-23, 29; “Jericho: Does the Evidence Disprove or Prove the Bible?,” *The Good News*, March–April 2002, pp. 10-11.

### Defeat at Ai Because of Achan’s Sin (Joshua 7)

August 16

The Israelites had been forbidden to claim any of the spoils of the city (6:17-19). But one man thought he could be an exception. The Hebrew word translated “a disgraceful thing” in verse 15 “denotes a blatant and senseless disregard for God’s will” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on 7:15-16). Sometimes one man’s sin can adversely affect others who apparently had nothing to do with it. Thankfully, only 36 out of a few thousand men were lost (verses 3-5). Though tragic, the repercussions could have been much worse—as God declared the nation as a whole “doomed to destruction” (verse 12) until the sin was removed from its midst.

*The King James Study Bible* notes: “Achan is referred to as ‘Achar, the troubler of Israel, who transgressed in the accursed thing’ (1 Chr. 2:7). He was stoned to death for violating the ‘ban’ during the conquest of Jericho (v. 1). Achan stole 200 shekels of silver, a Babylonian garment, and a wedge of gold weighing 50 shekels and hid them in the earthen floor of his tent (v. 21). The sin of Achan was imputed to the whole nation (vv. 11, 12), and thus they were soundly defeated in the battle of Ai (vv. 4, 5). Israel learned the hard way that what one person does could affect the well-being of the whole nation. He was buried in the valley of Achor (‘trouble,’ v. 26). Achor is used in a figurative

sense in Isaiah 65:10 and Hosea 2:15 to describe the messianic age or the time of restoration that would result for the nation of Israel only *after* they passed through trouble.” Indeed, like in this example, the Great Tribulation will come upon Israel in the end time not because every single individual is in complete and total rebellion against God. Rather, because of the terrible sins of some—in fact, of many—that are not rooted out of Israel, suffering will come on all.

Ironically, if Achan had only waited until the very next battle with Ai, he would have been allowed to take spoil for himself (8:2). But his greed got the better of him—and brought about his downfall.

**Supplementary Reading:** “Jericho: The Lesson of Not Coming Into Sin,” *The Good News* expanded edition, March–April 1997, pp. E1-E3.

### **Destruction of Ai (Joshua 8)**

**August 17**

God commands Joshua to stretch out his spear toward the city of Ai (verse 18). Not only was this a signal to begin the attack (verse 19), but it was also a symbol of God’s presence and help to His people in the battle (compare verses 1, 18)—displayed in the fact that Joshua did not lower his spear until the victory was won (verse 26). This is powerfully reminiscent of Israel’s first battle upon leaving Egypt against the Amalekites, where Moses held aloft the rod of God, which was also a symbol of God’s participation in the battle (Exodus 17:8-16). Remarkably, Joshua had been the military commander in that former battle, looking to Moses with the rod. Now here he was with raised spear, standing as the one others were looking to. Of course, it was recognized in both instances that God was the one directing the outcome.

Along with the defeat of Ai, the city of Bethel is also mentioned (verse 17). “Bethel was near Ai to the west (7:2), although its exact site is disputed. The inhabitants of Bethel came out of their city to help the men of Ai. Since the Israelite ambush was stationed between Bethel and Ai [8:12], they may have felt threatened by the Israelites. Or it may be that Ai was a small outpost for the larger city of Bethel (7:3) and an attack on Ai was understood to be an attack on Bethel. The text does not record Bethel’s defeat, although its king is listed among those conquered by Joshua (12:16). It may be that in the defeat of Ai, Bethel was also defeated and no further reference was needed” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on 8:17).

Following the Israelites’ defeat of Ai, Joshua led them to Shechem, which is between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, near modern-day Nablus. There he carried out the commands of God and Moses to build an altar, erect massive stones engraved with the Book of the Law, review the law, and rehearse the blessings and curses (verses 30-35; compare Deuteronomy 11:29-32; 27:1-26). Afterward, they apparently returned to Gilgal, where they first camped after crossing the Jordan (compare 9:6).

**Supplementary Reading:** “A Good News Interview With Bryant Wood, Ph.D.: The Bible vs. Modern Scholarship,” *The Good News*, March–April 2002, pp. 12-13.

### **Treaty With the Gibeonites (Joshua 9)**

**August 18**

Gibeon was a powerful city in the region (10:2), possibly due in part to the shrewdness of its people (9:4). While their scheme for saving themselves involved deceit, it is amazing to see the extraordinary measures they were willing to take for peace and survival. Their deceit resulted in perpetual servitude for their people (verses 22-27), and perhaps there would have been better ways to escape death by submitting to God or agreeing to peacefully leave the territory. But once the agreement was made, they seem to have held to their part of it. And when Saul later broke the agreement, God Himself punished the Israelites on their behalf (2 Samuel 21:1-14).

This whole situation would have gone differently for Israel if its leaders had done what they should have in the first place. Even though they were initially suspicious of the Gibeonite ambassadors (Joshua 9:7), the Israelites relied on their own intellect to determine whether or not they were being truthful. This was a big mistake. Joshua, the most likely author of this book bearing his name, had evidently learned his lesson by the time he wrote down the words in verse 14: “But they did not ask counsel of the LORD.” Indeed, this is the crux of the whole chapter. The omnipotent God was there to provide answers, if Joshua had only sought them as he had been instructed (Numbers 27:21).

We can make the same mistake. Many times, we rush to a major decision without seeking counsel from God. No, we cannot seek His answers in the Urim and Thummim anymore. But there

are other means available to us when it comes to discerning God's will. We can pray, with fasting if need be, asking for direct inspiration from Him through His Holy Spirit. We can seek His answers in the laws and principles found in His Word. And we can counsel with other brethren in whom His Spirit dwells, particularly the ministry that He has specially ordained. Indeed, we should avail ourselves of all of these means. For no major decision in our lives should be made without seeking God's will. As Proverbs 3:5-6 states so eloquently, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."

### Joshua's Long Day (Joshua 10)

August 19

Adonizedek, the king of Jerusalem, is not happy with the treaty the Gibeonites made with the Israelites. His name (meaning "Lord of Righteousness") is probably a title (like Pharaoh), perhaps passed down from the days of the Priest-King Melchizedek ("King of Righteousness," Hebrews 7:1-4), who appears to have been king of the same city in the days of Abraham (Genesis 14:18-20). The similarity ends there, as Melchizedek was actually the preincarnate Jesus Christ while Adonizedek, Israel's enemy, was certainly not a true servant of God. If the Jebusites did have Christ among them in the days of Abraham, they had long since rejected Him and His ways (compare Deuteronomy 7:1-5; 8:20; 12:29-31).

Adonizedek gets four neighboring kings to join him in an attack against Gibeon. The Gibeonites send messengers to the Israelite encampment at Gilgal, asking them to return to Gibeon and honor the covenant of peace they had made (compare 9:15-17) by helping them against the Amorite kings. God lets Joshua know that He will give them the victory, and uses a hailstorm to kill more than the Israelites did during this first battle (Joshua 10:11).

Desperate for more time to deal with Israel's enemies, Joshua makes his request of God that the sun and moon stop moving. Some try to use this as proof that the Bible is not inspired, since the author, they argue, implies that the sun and moon actually travel across the sky each day, while we know today that this is only *apparent* because of the earth's rotation. But it is clear from the context that the author is speaking from the reference point of one standing on the earth. Even if Joshua himself falsely believed in a geocentric universe with a fixed earth, that does not negate the inspiration of the verses here. For the language used is quite valid. Indeed, if the same phenomenon occurred today, many would still use the same terminology to describe it—describing what they *perceive* even though they understand the truth of the earth's rotation.

It is amazing to consider the enormity of this miracle. Its complexities, which Joshua himself may not have been able to contemplate, are staggering. The rotation of the earth, with a surface velocity of more than 1,000 miles per hour at the equator, had to somehow come to a screeching halt, and start up again later, without inertial forces then creating tremendous geologic and tidal upheaval, destroying the earth's inhabitants. It is difficult to imagine the multiple cataclysmic consequences that would have occurred if God had not performed many other miracles to accompany the halting of the rotation. As it was, everyone in the world must have been in utter confusion over what was happening. While half the world wondered why the sun wasn't setting, the other half was wondering if they would ever see it again! And indeed, there are obscure myths from several ancient cultures that seem to reflect this very confusion.

As amazing as this event was, the account focuses not so much on the magnitude of the miracle, but on the fact that God listened to the voice of one man and fought so grandly for His people (verse 14). Here is proof that "the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:17). Much indeed.

Following the initial victory, the Israelites move from one city to another in the southern part of Canaan, destroying the inhabitants and conquering the land—which will eventually be given to Judah, Simeon and Benjamin—before returning to the encampment at Gilgal.

### Northern Conquest (Joshua 11)

August 20

Following the Israelite victory in the south, Jabin, the king of Hazor, north of the Sea of Galilee, forms an even larger alliance and attempts to take on Israel.

It is easy to assume that since God had commanded that Jericho be burned, and Ai too had been burned, that this was to be done to all of the cities of the land. But the instructions in Deuteronomy 20 did not include a command to burn down all of the cities. In fact, God promised to give the Israelites "large and beautiful cities which you did not build, [and] houses full of all good things, which you did not fill . . ." (Deuteronomy 6:10-11). As the inhabitants were driven out, in many cases the Israelites simply moved into their cities and houses.

In this campaign, only Hazor was burned. And as usual (Jericho excepted), the Israelites kept the spoil as God turned over the wealth of the Canaanites to Israel (verses 13-15). As we saw in Deuteronomy 20:16-18, Joshua “left none breathing” (Joshua 11:11, 14) of the inhabitants of these cities that were near to them. But it is also clear from these passages that letting “nothing that breathes remain alive” (Deuteronomy 20:16), which was done to avoid being taught “their abominations which they have done for their gods” (verse 18), applied only to human beings, not to the livestock, which Israel was permitted to keep as part of the spoils (Joshua 11:14-15).

During the process of conquering the land, the giants that had been such a terror to the Israelites 40 years earlier were killed or driven off (verses 21-22; 15:14). A few remained in the area occupied by the Philistines, the descendants of whom David and his men encountered several hundred years later (1 Samuel 17; 2 Samuel 21:15-22).

### **Summary of Defeated Kings (Joshua 12)**

**August 21**

Chapter 12 is a summary of all of the kings defeated by Moses and Joshua in the conquering of the Promised Land. Most of the cities mentioned were described in the original accounts in Numbers 21:21-35 (Joshua 12:1-6), Joshua 6–8 (12:9), Joshua 10 (12:10-16) and Joshua 11 (12:17-24).

The latter portion, on Joshua’s conquests, appears to be an itemized list of what we previously read in Joshua 11:16-20. Baal Gad (12:7) is in the northern extremity of the land, north of the city that eventually became known as Dan. Mount Halak is in the southern extremity, south of Beersheba. Hormah and Arad (verse 14) are not described in Joshua 10. They are south of the other cities in that chapter. These names do appear in Numbers 21:1-3 as people defeated by the Israelites under Moses. The area is again described in Judges 1:16-17. Geder (Joshua 12:13) and Adullam (verse 15) were not mentioned in Joshua 10 either, but are in the same general area as the others in chapter 10.

Bethel (12:16) was a town adjacent to Ai. Its inhabitants unsuccessfully aided Ai against the Israelites (Joshua 8:17), and some defeat of the city may have occurred at that time. But a later destruction is recorded in Judges 1:22-26, complete with spies and a secret entrance into the city.

Tappuah (verse 17) is not mentioned elsewhere as being conquered, but in Joshua 16:8 and 17:7-8 it is described as a border city between Ephraim and Manasseh. The northern towns listed in Joshua 12:17-24 were probably part Jabin’s alliance described in chapter 11, the kings and cities of which were merely summarized in 11:2-3.

### **The Unconquered Land and Eastern Inheritances (Joshua 13)**

**August 22**

Not all of the land was conquered in the previously described wars. There were still sections, such as the land of the Philistines in what is now known as the Gaza Strip, which the Israelites did not yet possess.

The land was divided among the tribes, but not all of the Canaanites were driven out. More details are given in the book of Judges (see Judges 1). So, too, are some of the reasons for God not driving them out (compare Judges 2; 3:1-6). The Israelites lacked the diligence, zeal and spirit to obey God, and God used the Canaanites to test them. In fact, the entire book of Judges is a chronicle of Israel’s failures in this regard. Many victories (e.g., Jerusalem, 2 Samuel 5:6-10) waited 400 years until the days of David.

### **Caleb Asks for His Inheritance (Joshua 14)**

**August 23**

The initial division of the land occurs while the Israelites still have their headquarters at Gilgal (verse 6). Whether Caleb had been given more specific promises than were recorded in Numbers 14:24 and Deuteronomy 1:36 (verses 9, 12), or whether he was now deciding which land he wanted, he now steps forward to claim those promises—Hebron, the burial place of Abraham, and the very land inhabited by the giants who had disturbed the other spies so much (Numbers 13:30-33). Caleb was 40 years old one year after the Exodus (Joshua 14:7). So six years have elapsed since the entry into the Promised Land (verse 10). Adding the 40 years wandering in the wilderness, this means that Caleb was 86 years old at this time. Even though elderly, he is no more afraid of the Anakim now than he was at age 40.

### **Judah Receives Its Inheritance, and Caleb Conquers Hebron (Joshua 15)**

**August 24**

Partly as a result of the land Caleb chose for himself (verse 13), the inheritance of the tribe of Judah is assigned to be the southern part of the Canaanite territory. This was essentially the territory south of Jericho and Jerusalem, which had been the land conquered primarily in chapter 10. It is the

land Judah continued to hold following the division of the monarchy in the days of Rehoboam nearly 500 years later.

Caleb finishes conquering his territory and ridding it of the giants (verse 14). In the process, he takes Debir, a city that had originally been taken by Joshua (10:38-39) but had evidently fallen back into the hands of the Canaanites. He receives some assistance from his nephew Othniel (verse 17), who will later serve as the first judge following the death of Joshua (Judges 3:7-11). Much of this story is repeated in Judges 1:10-15. While the city of Hebron itself is given to the priests (Joshua 21:9-13), and serves as a city of refuge, the fields and suburbs are given to Caleb.

### **Territory of Ephraim and Manasseh (Joshua 16–17)**

**August 25**

Ephraim was given the next allotment of land, north of Jerusalem in the southern part of what will later be the Kingdom of Israel. Cities in their territory included Bethel in the south, Shiloh in the middle, and Shechem in the north.

Manasseh received the land just north of Ephraim, which together formed the lot for Joseph. It was actually adjacent to the other half of their territory east of the Jordan, which effectively put the river in the midst of their land instead of on the border. Cities included Tirzah (used as a capital city of the northern kingdom, see 1 Kings 15:33), Megiddo (see 2 Kings 23:29; Revelation 16:16), Endor (1 Samuel 28:7), and Shunem (2 Kings 4:8).

When the tribe of Joseph complained that they thought they should have more land, Joshua had a simple solution—conquer the northern parts still occupied by the Canaanites. They fell back into their more fearful attitudes, but Joshua reminded them that since they were such a great people in need of more land, they should have no trouble (Joshua 17:14-18).

It is interesting to note the amount of land occupied by Ephraim and Manasseh in the Promised Land. Manasseh had much more than Ephraim, particularly when we consider the area east of the Jordan. Yet the greater national blessings had been prophesied to fall upon Ephraim (see Genesis 48). How do we reconcile this? Simple. The prophecies regarding Ephraim and Manasseh were not fulfilled in the land of Canaan. They would be fulfilled much later, following Israelite migrations to future settlements in Northwest Europe and beyond (see our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*). In later world history, while Manasseh, as the United States of America, will occupy a much larger country, Ephraim, as the British Empire, will rule more territory than any other people ever has.

### **Benjamin's Territory (Joshua 18)**

**August 26**

Now that Ephraim's territory has been assigned, Joshua (an Ephraimite) and the children of Israel relocate the tabernacle and central gathering point from Gilgal to Shiloh, some 15-20 miles to the northwest, in the midst of the new land of Ephraim. In verse 5, Joshua points out that Judah has the territory in the south, conquered in chapter 10, and Joseph the northern territory, conquered in chapter 11. While we think of this territory and these tribes as being divided when the monarchy splits, in fact, the Bible records they always maintained a sort of independence from one another. Even during the united monarchy, Saul and David had to deal with the two factions (compare 1 Samuel 11:8; 17:52; 18:16; 2 Samuel 2:10; 3:9-10; 5:5; 19:9-43; 20:1-22).

The remainder of the land is apportioned out at Shiloh to the remaining seven tribes based on the results of a land survey conducted by three members of each tribe. Seven parcels are described, and the lots cast to determine where God wanted each tribe located. The first parcel went to Benjamin. A narrow strip of land sandwiched between Ephraim and Judah, it became a very significant piece of real estate. Jerusalem was on the south, right next to the border with Judah. North of there was Gibeah, where Saul would have his home, and Ramah where Samuel would live, and Mizpeh and Gibeon. Even Jericho was part of Benjamin's territory. Bethel is also listed, and was at least a border town with the territory of the Ephraimites, who conquered it in Judges 1:22-26 and kept it when the land was divided.

### **Territory of the Rest of the Tribes (Joshua 19)**

**August 27**

Unlike those of Joseph, who protested at not having enough land, the people of Judah had too much (verse 9). So the southern part of their territory was given to Simeon via the second lot. This included Beersheba, an area associated with Abraham and Isaac.

Next came Zebulun, who received a parcel bordering Manasseh to the north. The Bethlehem listed (verse 15) is not Bethlehem-Judah, which was south of Jerusalem in Judah's territory (compare 1 Samuel 17:12). Gath-hepher, the city Jonah came from, was in Zebulun (2 Kings 14:25). And by

the time of the New Testament, the city of Nazareth had been established in this area. As was the case with Ephraim and Manasseh, mentioned earlier, this was not all Zebulun had been promised either. Genesis 49:13 had stated, “Zebulun shall dwell by the haven of the sea; he shall become a haven for ships.” Yet Zebulun’s inheritance in the Promised Land did not border any sea—neither the Mediterranean nor even the inland Sea of Galilee. The fulfillment of this promise, then, would also come in later centuries with the migrations to Northwest Europe.

The fourth lot went to Issachar, who got land north of Manasseh and east of Zebulun, bordering the Jordan. Asher received a coastal strip north of Manasseh and west of Zebulun. It extended all the way to Tyre in southern Lebanon. East of Asher, and north of Zebulun and Issachar, was Naphtali. It stretched from the entire western shore of the Sea of Galilee north to Lebanon. Along with Zebulun, it was known as Galilee (compare 20:7; Matthew 4:15).

Finally, Dan received a portion of land along the coast west of Benjamin and just north of the Philistine territory. This is where the Danite Samson carried out his exploits. But the tribe of Dan wanted more land, so some of its people conquered an additional area north of Naphtali (verse 47; compare Judges 18).

When all the tribes received their inheritances, Joshua himself, an Ephraimite, chose a location within the land assigned to Ephraim to live out his last days.

### **Cities of Refuge; Levitical Cities (Joshua 20–21)**

**August 28**

As instructed, three cities were chosen as cities of refuge: Kedesh in the northern part of Naphtali, Shechem in the land of Ephraim, and Hebron in the land of Judah.

In addition to the cities of refuge, the Levites were given other cities to live in. They were grouped geographically by sub-tribe. The priests received the cities in the southern tribes of Simeon, Judah and Benjamin. The non-priest Kohathites had cities in the next three tribes moving north: Dan, Ephraim and western Manasseh. Gershon had cities in the far northern tribes. And Merari’s cities were split—in the southern part of the eastern tribes, and in Zebulun.

In its note on the end of chapter 21, verses 43-45, *The Nelson Study Bible* states: “This glorious conclusion to these two chapters and to the entire section (chs. 13–21) celebrates the fact that *all came to pass* exactly as God promised. [That is, it should be clarified, while there was still more to come, all had so far gone exactly as God had said it would.] What has been visible all along is now said plainly—the God of Israel is a promise-keeping God, who gave Israel the land in accordance with the promises He had made with its ancestors, including Moses and the patriarchs. And in addition to giving them the land, He also granted them *rest*.”

### **The Altar by the Jordan (Joshua 22)**

**August 29**

The land has been apportioned, and the eastern tribes have fulfilled their responsibilities. Joshua now dismisses them to return home. The time and sacrifice has not been without its rewards, as they return with much wealth from the spoils of Canaan, which Joshua urges them to share with those who remained to take care of their land and families (verse 8). Before they go, Joshua exhorts them to follow God’s law wholeheartedly (verse 5). So it comes as a great shock when word comes back that they have built a large altar beside the Jordan River apparently contrary to God’s explicit commands (compare Deuteronomy 12). In their zeal, a war party forms at Shiloh to deal with this brazen transgression. Before heading off to battle, a delegation of tribal leaders, headed by Phinehas, the son of the high priest, is sent to find out just why they have done this. The delegation reminds them of some of Israel’s past transgressions, and suggests that perhaps it would be better if they came over to the western lands after all.

The tribes explain, however, that things are not how they look to the western delegation. They say they built it as a “*replica* of the altar of the LORD which our fathers made” (Joshua 22:28), i.e., apparently a copy of the stone one that had been set up at Mount Ebal (compare Joshua 8:30-31). And, most importantly, this altar, they maintain, was not to be used for sacrifices as the original was, but rather to serve as a witness and reminder in years to come to Israelites on both sides of the Jordan that they too are a part of Israel, who also worship the true God (Joshua 22:27-28). The explanation is quite acceptable to Phinehas and the tribal leaders. They return to Shiloh, and a civil war is averted (verses 30-34).



**Joshua's Charge to the People (Joshua 23)****August 30**

Near the end of his life, Joshua summons Israel, especially the leaders, and admonishes them to remain faithful to God. In verse 8, he specifically exhorts them to “hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day.” And in verses 12-13, he warns them of the consequences of “clinging” to the remnant of the Canaanites. *The Nelson Study Bible* notes on verse 12: “The word translated *cling* is the same word translated *hold fast* in v. 8, bringing the different instances of clinging into sharp contrast. God wanted His people to cling to Him, not to the Canaanites they were driving out. This required, among other things, that they not make marriages with unbelieving foreigners under any circumstances (Ex. 34:11-16; Deut. 7:1-4). Years later Solomon ignored this command and proved how destructive the sin of intermarriage could be (1 Kin. 3:1; 11:1-8; 2 Cor. 6:14).”

Joshua concludes by telling the elders that rejection of God will exact a dire penalty: “You shall perish quickly from the good land which He has given you” (verse 16). This, of course, happened in later years, when Israel was taken into captivity and deported by Assyria and Judah was carried away by Babylon. Yet rebellion was not long away, as it would dominate the period of the judges immediately following. Still, Joshua’s warning may have done some good, as the elders seem to have remained faithful (24:31).

**Joshua's Farewell Address (Joshua 24)****August 31**

One last time, Joshua summons the elders, this time at Shechem, about 10-15 miles north of Shiloh. This was the place the blessings and curses had been pronounced more than two decades earlier (Joshua 8:30-35)—and perhaps Joshua chose it now for that reason. He rehearses Israel’s history, much of which occurred within the last two generations. The Exodus had occurred less than 70 years earlier, and Moses had died less than 30 years earlier. God had said He would send the hornet to drive out the inhabitants (Deuteronomy 7:20-23), and here it is related that this did indeed happen. The Israelites were able to take over the cities and orchards without having to start over.

We should notice here Joshua’s words in verse 14: “Now, therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River [Euphrates, i.e., in Mesopotamia] and in Egypt.” This closely parallels the apostle Paul’s admonition in 1 Corinthians 5: “Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (verse 8)—that is, the same “sincerity and truth” mentioned by Joshua. The Feast of Unleavened Bread pictures the putting out of sin and coming out of the sinful ways of this world—coming out of Babylon and Egypt, as Joshua essentially put it, forsaking the following of all affections rivaling the true God—and replacing that with godly purity. And this is, of course, something we should always do throughout our Christian lives.

Then comes Joshua’s declaration of his own direction despite what the people’s might be: “But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (verse 15). “With his famous words, Joshua clearly and unambiguously took his stand on the side of the living God. Joshua modeled a perfect leader’s actions. A leader must be willing to move ahead and commit himself to the truth regardless of the people’s inclinations. Joshua’s bold example undoubtedly encouraged many to follow with the affirmations of vv. 16-18” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verses 14-15).

Indeed, even after telling the people that they could not fulfill God’s requirements on their own and the seriousness of the obligation they were entering into, Joshua still manages to extract from them strong assurances that they would never forsake God, after which he follows the common practice of setting up a “large stone” as a witness (verse 26; compare Genesis 31:44-52; Joshua 4). He also records these words in “the Book of the Law of God” at the tabernacle.

The book of Joshua concludes with the deaths and burials of Joshua and Eleazar the high priest, both in the land of Ephraim. While God could have inspired Joshua to write this, it is likely that He inspired someone else to add this ending. This last section also records the final burial of Joseph, also in the land of Ephraim, whose bones had been carried out of Egypt at his request (compare Genesis 50:24-25; Exodus 13:19).

The book of Joshua began with the words: “After the death of *Moses the servant of the LORD*, it came to pass that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, *Moses’ assistant*” (1:1). Now notice how the book ends: “Now it came to pass after these things that *Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD* died” (verse 29). “This first reference to Joshua as the servant of the LORD shows clearly how Joshua had ‘grown into the job’ that Moses had vacated. Now the book comes full circle, recalling the references in 1:1 to Moses as the servant of the Lord and to Joshua as merely Moses’ assistant”

(*Nelson*, note on verse 29). Joshua was more than just Moses' successor. He was himself a type of Christ, a hero of faith leading the people to conquer the Promised Land and thereby give them a home.

**Supplementary Reading:** "Joshua: God Is Salvation," *The Good News*, July–Aug. 1997, pp. 24-27.

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