



A Bible Reading Plan for the Book of Joshua

January 22-February 18, 2018

Mountain Brook Baptist Church
www.mbbc.org



Joshua

ABOUT PROJECT 119

Project 119 is a Bible reading initiative of Mountain Brook Baptist Church. Our hope is that every member of our church family would be encouraged in his or her relationship with Jesus Christ through the regular reading of God's Word.

This reading plan will guide you through book of Joshua. The plan provides you a devotional thought and Scripture reading for each day of the week. On the weekends, we suggest that you re-read the Scripture passages that you have been working through during the past week.

To receive email updates when devotionals are added to the blog, go to www.mbbc.org/blog, click on "Subscribe to Mountain Brook Blog by Email" and follow the instructions. To learn more about Project 119 and to access previous plans, visit www.mbbc.org/project119.

INTRODUCTION

Here at the beginning of the year, it seems appropriate that we study Joshua. Joshua wraps up the old—this book completes the story which began in Exodus as we waited with hope for God's people to be freed from their bondage, to receive the land and home promised to their forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Joshua is the realization of that hope fulfilled. The book begins on the brink of the land, as the Israelites look out on this promised possession. And in that sense, the book of Joshua is also the beginning of something new. No longer are God's people slaves in a foreign land or nomads wandering around the desert; His promises to give Abraham a people, a name, and a place have been fulfilled (Genesis 12:1-3). Under the leadership of Joshua, Moses' servant and successor, the Israelites gain access to this promised place and must learn what it means to live faithfully in the land as God's people.

The book of Joshua may be named after the successor of Moses, but Joshua isn't the hero of the book: the text emphasizes over and over again the might and authority of the LORD of hosts. Israel doesn't succeed because of the strength of their army. They aren't able to overtake Canaan and call this promised land home because of their own prowess. Rather, over and over our eyes are turned away from the Israelites, who are weak and helpless in many respects, and turned toward the God who has given them victory and fulfilled the promises He made to Abraham. And why has He given them this land? His purpose is to make Himself known to all of the earth—"so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, that you may fear Him" (Joshua 4:24).

The book of Joshua isn't without controversy, of course. As you read through this narrative, perhaps you will be reminded that the Old Testament certainly isn't G-rated! We see lots of battle scenes and wars which might make us shake our heads in concern. The Israelites come in and seem to take over Canaan, with God's blessing. Isn't God a God of love and peace? Yes, of course—but He is also a God who seeks justice. He has waited for many years for the Canaanites, who inhabit this land, to repent (Deuteronomy 9:5, Leviticus 20:22-26). We are reminded that the earth is the Lord's alone, and He can choose to give portions



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of His land to whomever He wills. God used the Israelites to punish Canaan, but He also warned them that He could remove them from the land in the same way if they refused to walk in His ways and worship Him alone.

Unfortunately, the story doesn't end in Joshua. Although the covenant first made in Exodus is renewed at the end of the book, we have enough foreshadowings throughout the story that remind us of the Israelites' fallenness. The people declare that, as for their house, they will serve the Lord (Joshua 24:14-18), but these words eventually become bitter as they tempted by the idolatry of foreign nations. Eventually Assyria and Babylon will come to wage war against God's people, punishing them in the same way that God used the Israelites to enact His judgment on Canaan. But the hope is that the promise of a land for God's people has not been lost. In Christ, every promise God has made is fulfilled—and one day, the saints of old and new will gather together in the new heaven and the new earth, in a place where sin will be no more, and we will all live in peace in the presence of the Lord Almighty.



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WEEK ONE: JOSHUA 1-4 JANUARY 15-21

Monday, January 15 | Joshua 1:1-9 | Doug Dortch

“Be Strong and Courageous”

The book of Joshua presents the history of Israel’s conquest of Canaan through the eyes of a God who fights on behalf of His people. Left to their own devices, God’s people would never have been able to cross the Jordan and enter the land of milk and honey, because the challenges were too great and the Canaanite nations too mighty. But as the Bible often reminds us, “with God, nothing is impossible.” Therefore, we do well to be strong and courageous, knowing that our strength and courage come from the God who goes before us.

One of the important themes in the book of Joshua is how the nation’s leader becomes “a new Moses.” Moses has died and now Joshua is their leader. Thus the book begins by calling Joshua to follow God’s lead in the same way as did Moses. As Moses was “the servant of the LORD,” (Joshua 1:1) so will be Joshua. If Joshua follows God in similar fashion to Moses, then he will guide the people to claim the land with the help of a God who promises never to “leave you nor forsake you” (Joshua 1:5). There is every reason for the Joshua to be hopeful, but he must choose hope through his obedience to God as God’s servant.

Notice how Joshua chooses the pathway of hope. In the first place, he is to focus on the possibilities that are before him. The strength and courage to which Joshua calls are grounded in his willingness to be an example of obedience to God’s people (Joshua 1:6a). By choosing that way, Joshua will be guaranteed prosperity and success (Joshua 1:8b).

If Joshua has any reservations about the good future God has in store for him, he needs only to look back to the past and how God had already worked on behalf of His people. As the covenant God who is faithful to His promises, God had delivered the nation from the bondage of Israel, and will show similar faithfulness in leading them to inherit the promised land He had sworn to give to the children of Abraham (Joshua 1:6b).

Most importantly, Joshua could count on God’s abiding presence (Joshua 1:9). There would never be a time when God would leave His people without help. In the face of every challenge God would be present to lift Joshua’s spirits and embolden his sagging heart.

As we think about the days ahead, we would do well to understand the connection between obedience and blessing. Success is not promised without a willingness on our part to do what God gives us to do. Instead, as we heed God’s commands we can be certain that divine favor will follow. And the best news of



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all is that the strength we need to do what God commands is provided through our openness to His abiding Presence.

What then do we have to fear? We can be strong and courageous knowing that our God goes before us. All that is required of us is that we faithfully follow.

Tuesday, January 16 | Joshua 1:10-18 | Doug Dortch

“Whatever and Wherever”

God’s command to Joshua to be strong and courageous spurred him to begin obeying God’s instruction by inviting the nation to follow his faithful example. Whereas some would-be leaders talk a good game, Joshua lived one.

However, faith doesn’t always launch out in total blindness. Most times it calculates what’s at stake and makes plans accordingly. In this case Joshua gave orders to the officers of the people to “get your supplies ready” (Joshua 1:11) and prepare to take possession of the Promised Land.

Not only did Joshua consider the material resources that would be necessary in the conquest of Canaan, he also asked them to be prepared to help one another in winning the battles that would have to be fought. For example, in Numbers 21:21-25 and 32:1-27, the two tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh who asked to remain on the east side of the Jordan had been ordered by Moses to send fighting forces across the river to help the rest of Israel in times of battle—an expectation that Joshua obediently would not let those two and a half tribes forget.

To their credit, these tribes agreed to live up to their commitments. “Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go” (Joshua 1:16). Their only concern was that Joshua not forget his dependence on God as they move forward toward Canaan. They echo God’s word for Joshua to be strong and courageous by living in obedience to the instructions God provides.

How good it is when we have people around us who remind us of the importance of following through on commitments we have made. While it may be easy to think that whatever success we experience in life happens because of what we make possible, we do much better to remind one another that our only hope for tomorrow lies in devotion to God. Those are instructions we cannot hear enough.



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Wednesday, January 17 | Joshua 2 | Doug Dortch

“Spying Out the Land”

As Joshua prepares the people for the conquest of Canaan, he follows the practice of reconnaissance, which is as old as war itself. Joshua sends two spies and instructs them to “look over the land...especially Jericho” (Joshua 2:1). It was a stroke of genius for Joshua to send them to seek shelter in the house of Rahab, whose profession would not have caused anyone to think it curious that strange men had entered. It was a stroke of grace that God would have chosen Rahab to play a central role in fulfilling His promises to His people, given how Rahab was hardly a paragon of virtue.

However, Rahab’s faithfulness in showing kindness to the Hebrew spies reminds us that it is never too late to do the right thing in a given situation. While too many think that their pasts prevent them from serving God, Rahab’s obedience tells us otherwise. Her personal confession in verses 8-11 gives the spies the strength and courage they and their fellow countrymen will need to tackle the seemingly insurmountable city, knowing that God had already decreed that it would fall before them. Her only request was that when successful, they would show her family favor (Joshua 2:12).

Rahab had no assurances that these two spies she had hidden would be true to their word. But when you look at the story carefully, you see that it wasn’t the two spies in whom she had placed her trust. It was the God whose hand was upon the people from whom these two spies had come. “I know that the LORD has given this land to you” (Joshua 2:9). How did Rahab know that? She knew it by faith, and she obeyed accordingly.

No wonder Rahab shows up as a model of faith in two places in the New Testament. In Hebrews 11, Rahab is listed with those who are a part of what is called “the roll call of faith.” There it says of Rahab that by faith she was saved from those who disobeyed God because she “welcomed the spies” (Hebrews 11:31). In the book of James, a book that emphasizes obedience as a sign of faith, it says of Rahab that she was “put right with God” by welcoming the Israelites and helping them to escape by a different road (James 2:25).

Rahab’s story reminds us that good people are all around us, even in places we never thought goodness could be found. In spite of their failures we can believe that God has placed them into our life that through their goodness we might know God’s love and experience His deliverance. So, be careful not to criticize too quickly. It may be that what they do for us is God-ordained and worth emulating as a witness to what God’s power can do for all who are open to it.



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Thursday, January 18 | Joshua 3 | Doug Dortch

“Tomorrow the LORD Will Do Amazing Things for You”

Anticipation is an emotion that adds immense meaning to our everyday experience. When we have something to look forward to, we can put up with a lot of heartache in the meantime because we know that the present challenge will soon give way to joyful favor. Such is the spirit that permeates this part of the Joshua narrative.

Imagine the anticipation that must have come over the community when they came to the Jordan and set up camp before crossing over the Jordan River into Canaan. They were on the verge of realizing the promise that God had made to their forefathers. It was so close they could literally touch it. But notice as well that realizing the promise wasn't anything to be rushed into. For three days (a significant number throughout the Bible) leaders made their way through the camp giving orders to how the people were to make their entry into Canaan. Their major instruction was for the people to be certain that they followed the Ark of the Covenant and not get ahead of it (Joshua 3:3). It would be a temptation for the people to get to the other side as quickly as possible without any consideration whatsoever to what the priests were doing with the Ark. But as we all have seen at one time or another, getting ahead of God, whose presence the Ark represented, never works out, even when we think we know the path as well as God does.

A second instruction was for the people to “consecrate themselves” (Joshua 3:5). Consecration has to do with making preparations of the heart. Too many times people think outwardly when the inside is not ready for what God is about to do. Joshua understood that while the visible often occupies the bulk of our attention, it's what's on the inside that enables us to experience the fullness of God's favor.

Lastly, Joshua impressed upon the people the reality of God's abiding presence. Even though the children of Israel had spent 40 years getting from Egypt to this site on the verge of the Jordan and had seen God work on countless occasions to guide and protect them, the people needed the confidence that “on the other side” God would be present to provide the same help. In ancient days, the prevailing view was that each nation had a god and those gods were limited by geographical boundaries. Joshua wanted his people to be assured that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob knew no such boundaries and was not constrained in any way. Rather than lean upon their own power once they crossed over the Jordan, they would be wise to trust God in the same ways they had previously trusted Him so that they would continue to benefit from His support.

Two matters are emphasized in this part of the story. First, God is to be seen as the True and Mighty God. When the Israelites cross over into Canaan, they will be introduced to Baal, the Canaanite god, and will be tempted to turn to him. But by opening the way through the flooded Jordan (much in the same way that God opened the Nile in Egypt), God would show both Israel and Canaan that there was no god greater



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than He. Secondly, God's action in helping Israel to broach the Jordan River is proof that that the Promised Land will be Israel's possession. A flooded stream was a powerful barrier that was thought only to be overcome by a mighty deity. God's enabling Israel to cross over was all the evidence anyone should need that He was doing something that no one could stop.

As we begin a New Year, think of how these same concerns assure us that the days ahead hold great promise. If we prepare our hearts and make sure that follow God's lead, there is every reason for us to live with anticipation that as good as things may have been, with God's help the best is yet to come!

Friday, January 19 | Joshua 4 | Doug Dortch

"What Do These Stones Mean?"

We are a people prone to forget. Regardless of how important some event or activity may have been, it's easy for us to get so preoccupied with what lies ahead that we let yesterday slip away into the past. But as many could attest, there are some things in life and faith that we simply can't afford to forget.

One such memory is the goodness of God. When people forget the goodness of God, that goodness disappears, but not because God quits being good. When people forget the goodness of God, the goodness disappears because people quit looking to Him.

No one has ever understood that truth better than Joshua. It could be argued that Joshua was able to lead Israel into the Promised Land because of his ability to remember. For example, consider his first act in Canaan, which was the establishment of a memorial. As soon as all the people had crossed over, Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed to pick up a stone to set them up as a "sign" so that in future generations their offspring would know the mighty work God had done on their behalf. "In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD ... these stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever" (Joshua 4:7).

The stones were to tell a wonderful story of God's past activity. The stones were a permanent reminder of how God had intervened on the people's behalf to do what only God could make possible. We need our memories of God's gracious provisions to be grounded in a lasting way so that we might not soon easily forget His actions for our best interests.

The stones were also a powerful witness to how God was still at work in the life of the people. No doubt Israel was in constant need of assurance that God's work was not a past work but that His help was something they could count on in the face of whatever challenges might come their way. They needed to know that God had His mighty hand on them and that He would do anything necessary to sustain them in their conquest of Canaan.



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Lastly, the stones pointed to God's future and the purposes He still had to bring to reality for those who placed their trust in Him. This memorial was to spark lasting reverence among the people "so that all the peoples of the earth (not just Israel) might know that the hand of the LORD is powerful and so that you might always fear (reverence) the LORD your God" (Joshua 4:24). Only this level of reverence will move us into the future with hope and assurance.

I don't know that we need to be piling up any stones today. But because everyday life too easily causes us to lose sight of God's activity on our behalf we would do well to think of ways to keep His gracious works first and foremost in our hearts and minds. Perhaps a spirit of reverence is a good way to make sure that while we go about our daily activities we can be confident that God is ever with us and that we can pass on that confidence to others so that they too can live in the joy of His salvation and know the good future He desires for all people to know.

Saturday, January 20-Sunday, January 21 | Joshua 1-4

Reread Joshua 1-4 over the weekend. Reflect on all that God has been saying to you through His word this week.



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WEEK TWO: JOSHUA 5-9 JANUARY 22-28

Monday, January 22 | Joshua 5 | Tim Sanderlin

Here, we have followed the Israelites through the wilderness and they now eagerly await the Lord to lead them into the Promised Land. They have waited for 40-plus years to see this land flowing with “milk and honey,” and have recently discovered it is inhabited by human-giants. They are uneasy and their faith, per usual, is starting to diminish.

In this passage, the ones prior, and the ones to come for the rest of the Bible, we see that God’s chosen people have been set free, yet they revert to living in shackles. When the great Exodus of Egypt happens, the Israelites are all-too-quick to ask to go back. They want bondage. Why do God’s children keep going back to this idea even after The Lord declares freedom over them? We know that we run from Him, in large part, because of shame. In the garden, Adam and Eve gained knowledge of their nakedness, were ashamed, and hid. Shame sends us into hiding, faithlessness, and testing the Lord our God.

The Israelites, although freed from the slavery of the Egyptians, still were cloaked in shame from the detrimental years in captivity. We see in the first handful of verses in Joshua 5 a new generation of young men that have come of age, are circumcised, and are ready to lead. Although this renewal of promise occurs, the Israelites still need the Lord to speak something over them. The Lord must say something to His children before they can be liberated from this looming shame.

The Lord spoke, and light came into existence. God breathed and we were formed. In 1 John 3, it says that God said we are His children, “and so we are.” When God says something to His children, it carries the same weight as it did when He said to the waves, “Be still.” In Joshua 5:9, God professes that the Israelites are free from shame of their former lives. We are a new creation. The past does not keep us chained. There is power in the name of Jesus to break every chain.

Lord, we pray in thankfulness that You have set us free. Bless us and keep us from returning to the sin that so easily entangles. Lord, we pray that we would know the truth of our identity in Jesus—that when You say that You count us as children, when You say that we are friends of Christ, and when You say “it is finished,” we would believe it.

Tuesday, January 23 | Joshua 6 | Sam Beary

Joshua 6 is the account of God’s victory over the Canaanites at Jericho. God has brought Israel across the Jordan and into the Promised Land. Now, Israel has arrived outside Jericho, the first city they are to conquer. The people of Jericho have shut themselves inside the walls, fearful and waiting. The Lord tells Joshua, “See, I have given Jericho into your hand.” Victory for God’s people is certain.



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The Lord then gives Joshua instructions for how to capture the city. The Israelites are to march around the city walls once a day for six days, carrying the ark and blowing trumpets. Then, on the seventh day, they are to march around the city seven times. At the end of this procession the people of Israel will shout, and the walls will fall down. The city will then be captured and destroyed.

The Israelites do as the Lord instructs. The walls collapse, and Jericho is captured. All the inhabitants are killed except for Rahab and her family. Joshua sees to it that her family is rescued from the destruction, as was promised in Joshua 2.

Many of us wrestle with this chapter of Joshua. “How could God use His people to kill an entire city of men, women, and children?” we may ask. What about love and mercy? Where are they in this passage? We must remember that God is both a loving father and a divine judge. The Canaanites were known for their idolatrous lifestyle, and they were unrepentant. Therefore, God could not allow their sin to dwell among His holy people in the land He was giving them.

However, grace and mercy are given to Rahab who, back in Joshua 2, acknowledges God as the true God and protects the Israelite spies. While the unrepentant people of Jericho are destroyed, the repentant convert Rahab is rescued.

We too are the repentant ones rescued by the Lord. In Christ He has rescued us from our sin and impending destruction. Consider now your walk with Christ. Are there sins in your life that need to be repented of? Joshua 6 is firm that God does not look kindly on sin, but He does rescue us from judgment when we repent. Take time today to repent and receive God’s forgiveness, love, and mercy.

Wednesday, January 24 | Joshua 7 | Allison McSwain

How do you view your sin? It is too easy for us to have an apathetic view toward disobeying God. In our misunderstanding of grace, we choose sin over and over knowing that we will be forgiven. Sinning is okay then, right? I’m under grace. My sin can’t be that bad.

In Joshua 7, the Israelites have just come off a wonderful victory at Jericho. It’s often the times when we have a personal victory that we are most prone to pride. We sin by believing that we are great—that we can handle things by ourselves. We don’t need God’s help. Israel falls into this trap. The spies report that Ai is a small foe. In their confidence, they neglect to consult God and send only a portion of their available army. The sin of Achan involves keeping some of the post-battle spoils, the “devoted things,” for himself. He blatantly defies God’s instructions to turn over all things and persons to Him after beating the Canaanites. As a result, the Israelite men are defeated by Ai.

Here we are reminded that, like Achan, our sins don’t affect just us. I often forget that sin committed in private can have negative effects on my family and friends. The sin of just one man caused all of Israel to



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fail in battle. Achan's act also reminds us of just how offensive sin is to a perfect God—it makes Him burn with anger, and it must be atoned for.

Romans 6:1-2 says "Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" Believers should not use grace as a license to sin. But when we do sin, we must bring it before God. Did you notice in Joshua 7:19 that confessing sin is equated to giving praise and glory to Him? Hallelujah that because of Christ's atoning sacrifice, my sin no longer leads to me being "destroyed by fire" (Joshua 7:15). May God's grace drive us to confession and repentance. May we come to truly abhor our sin.

Thursday, January 25 | Joshua 8 | Matt Arnwine

"Grace Upon Grace"

What is one of the most shocking things Jesus does during His ministry? In Mark 2:13-17, Jesus eats with sinners and tax collectors. Jesus meets sinners where they are. When He hears the Pharisees questioning this, He tells them He has "not come to call the righteous, but sinners." God sent Jesus to be with sinners and to reveal His grace to them.

In Joshua 1-6, the Lord had been giving Joshua divine instruction leading up to the success in overtaking Jericho. When God's commands are obeyed, Israel sees success. But a shift from obedience begins in Joshua 7. The Lord instructs His people to destroy all of Jericho, but Achan takes some of the devoted things. We know from Scripture that God burned with anger against His people for violating His command. Then Joshua, without instruction from God, sends men to take Ai. While Joshua was oblivious to Achan's disobedience to God, maybe Joshua's own greed leads him to make the decision to go against Ai without instruction from the Lord first. This disregard for God's commands ultimately leads to their defeat against Ai.

Greed has been revealed in their hearts. How will God respond to this? To us, it would make sense for Him to now be reserved in what He would give to disobedient Israel. We might expect God to react like we would. If a child took a cookie from the cookie jar without asking, a parent might punish him by taking the cookie away from him and putting the jar away, as to not tempt the child to take from it again. But this isn't exactly how God works—rather, He meets the sinful Israelites where they are.

Once His people have repented, God commands them to go against Ai again because it has been given into their hands. Not only that, but He gives them permission to take of the spoils and livestock. The Lord doesn't put away the cookie jar—rather, He grabs it and hands it to them. God continues to show His people grace. One thing that we have in common with the Israelites is that we too are sinners. We all take from the cookie jar. We all need God's grace. And this is why Jesus came for us sinners. So "do not fear or be dismayed," for we have been shown grace upon grace.



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Friday, January 26 | Joshua 9 | Tim Sanderlin

It is boiling down to battle time. God had promised Moses and the Israelites all the land they could find, and He also promised that those who opposed the Lord and His people would be destroyed. People in the area catch wind of this—they hear about the plagues of Egypt, and the fall of Jericho and shudder (and rightly so). Specifically, the neighboring country of Gibeon decides to be proactive in their approach to stopping the Israelites from wiping them out. This passage is known as “The Gibeonite Deception.”

Essentially, a handful of Gibeonites disguise themselves as weary travelers who will offer what little they have in exchange for the Israelites to make a covenant with them for their safety. The Israelite leaders do not consult with the Lord; rather, they accept this exchange and enter into covenant with the Gibeonites. After three days, the covenant is validated, and it comes out that the Gibeonites are from their rivaling country. Although the trust of the Israelites has been bridged, the people of the Lord stay true to their covenant with these traders. They spare the lives of the deceivers and give them small jobs amongst their tribe.

We see two things about the Lord in this story: God’s reputation precedes Him, and God upholds His covenants, even when the world would say break them.

Before the Israelites even introduce themselves, people know who they are and Whose they are. When the enemy hears the God is on the move, darkness is forced to use deception because it does not stand a chance in the fight.

Secondly, a covenant of the Lord is more than a contract, dependent on the two parties involved upholding their end of the deal; it is a promise that is sealed and sustained by the Lord. The people of Israel told their leaders that the covenant must be broken and an example must be made out of these liars. God would not have it that way. The Lord has promised good and His word, our hope secures.

Christ came and made a new covenant with God’s people—one that is received by faith, given by grace, and is founded on His saving work on the cross. He carries the fulfillment of this, and all His covenants, with us.

Saturday, January 27-Sunday, January 28 | Joshua 5-9

Reread Joshua 5-9 over the weekend. Reflect on all that God has been saying to you through His word this week.

(Note: Tim Sanderlin serves as our Associate Minister to Students. Matt Arnwine, Sam Beary, and Allison McSwain serve as Student Ministry Interns.)



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WEEK THREE: JOSHUA 10-14 JANUARY 29-FEBRUARY 4

Monday, January 29 | Joshua 10 | Amy Jackson

This chapter of Joshua details the Israelites' conquest of southern Canaan. Notice, first of all, that this campaign is brought on by Canaanite aggression; an alliance of five Canaanite kings, led by Adoni-zedek, the king of Jerusalem, attacks the Gibeonites after they swore allegiance to Israel. Israel, led by the Lord, responds and retaliates.

The events of this chapter are a bit fantastic, aren't they? A massive hailstorm impales the enemy army, killing more "than the stone of Israel killed with the sword" (Joshua 10:11). The sun and moon stood still as a result of Joshua's petition to the Lord (Joshua 10:12-13). The kings who waged war on Gibeon were executed (Joshua 10:26-28). In just one campaign, all of southern Canaan was overtaken and given into the hands of Israel (Joshua 10:42). We could easily get distracted by the successful military campaign and might that we see in Joshua 10; we could even spend a lot of time pondering the miracle of Joshua 10:12-13 (after all, biblical scholars haven't come to a consensus on what really happened here—if time literally stopped, if the Lord allowed an eclipse to happen, or if these words are more figurative). But I think that, if we focus our energy on those things, we have missed the point. Rather, we must allow the theology of verses 40-43 to direct how we view this passage.

The story of Joshua 10 is not a story of military victory or Joshua's ingenuity. It is a story of the Lord's might and His faithfulness to His people, and a story of Joshua's obedience to follow His commands. The Lord is the one who threw Israel's enemies into a panic (Joshua 10:10); He is the One who hurled hailstones down from heaven (Joshua 10:11) and who stopped the sun and moon in their places (Joshua 10:12-13). More than that, we are reminded over and over again that the Israelites were only successful because the Lord fought for them (Joshua 10:14, 42). Without His help, they would have been hopeless.

While you may not be fighting for land today like the Israelites, as believers, we are all engaged in spiritual warfare and fighting against the enemy. I hope these words from Joshua encourage you today as you are reminded that you are not alone in whatever battle you are fighting, and that ultimately, the battle is the Lord's. Some days, this battle against sin may not seem quite as victorious as the Israelite campaign against southern Canaan, but we are reminded that evil has been dealt a deadly blow through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, and when He comes again, His victory will be finally and fully realized.

Tuesday, January 30 | Joshua 11 | Amy Jackson

My great uncle once owned horses. When I was younger, I remember walking out to the stables with my grandmother, where we would visit the horses and I would timidly sometimes reach out to stroke their heads. Now, I don't ever remember riding one of these horses because I was quite apprehensive as a child (and little has changed now). But I've always loved watching horses and have been fascinated by their majesty and might.



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Horses were incredibly valuable to any army, especially during Joshua's time. Yet in Joshua 11, during the conquest of the northern region of Canaan, we see Joshua do something odd with the horses. Rather than capturing the captured Canaanite horses and chariots for the Israelite army, Joshua "hamstrings" their horses (Joshua 11:9). I read a little about the process of "hamstringing" - it basically means that you cut the tendon of the horse, which would inhibit it from running any longer.

Why did he waste these valuable resources rather than seizing them for his own army? I think the best answer we can find in Joshua 11 comes in verse 15: "Just as the LORD commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did. He left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses" (Joshua 11:15). Joshua was careful to obey the Lord's instructions to Moses. God had warned the people not to amass many horses for themselves (Deuteronomy 17:16). Joshua's obedience to the Lord's command in verse 6 shows that he trusted in God's words more than Israel's military might.

As we read a book like Joshua, we want to be careful not to fall into character worship. Joshua was a fallen, sinful man. The rest that he brought to the land was only temporary (Joshua 11:23). He was not Israel's savior. But the Lord used Joshua and his faithful obedience to remind us that God alone is savior. The Israelites could have used those horses and chariots in their army, I'm sure. But the point that the Lord was proving was that their success didn't hinge on the size of their military or on the number of horses they have—rather, their success rested in God alone and they were called to faithful obedience to the God who had delivered them from Egypt and who was giving them this land.

As I think about Joshua's obedience, even as he looked out on armies "in number like the sand that is on the seashore" (Joshua 11:4), I am challenged and wonder if I would have obeyed in that situation. Would I have been tempted to take just a few horses, under the radar, to prop up our small army? Would I have looked longingly at those chariots, wishing I could ride in one? The answers to these questions determine where my trust lies.

While we may not be tempted to gather up physical horses for ourselves, we too are tempted to put our trust in so many worldly things. Where do we find our security and power? As David would later sing, "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God" (Psalm 20:7). *Oh Lord, let this be true of our hearts—that rather than trusting in our resources, or skills, or background, or education, or job, or relationships—that we trust in You and You alone!*

Wednesday, January 31 | Joshua 12 | Amy Jackson

Have you ever fixated on an object so intently that you lost focus of what was really around you? Sometimes it's helpful to take a step back and see the bigger picture. In Joshua 10 and 11, we've been in the weeds for a bit, hearing details about specific battles. But now in Joshua 12, the camera lens zooms out and we see the larger picture at hand: the story of God's faithfulness to the Israelites. As they prepare to settle in the land, Joshua 12 gives a summary of what it took to get this point. Notice that the battles mentioned at the beginning of Joshua 12 didn't happen under Joshua at all - rather, we journey back even



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further to Numbers and to Moses' conquests east of the Jordan River (Joshua 12:1-6)—and the rest of Joshua 12 lists out all of the kings defeated by Joshua west of the Jordan River—31 in all (Joshua 12:7-23)!

Certainly there are issues of interpretation in Joshua. There's so much destruction, and sometimes I think we can focus in on the brutality so much that we miss the bigger picture—the picture of God's faithfulness in giving His people the land He had promised to their ancestors. God had been waiting for the people of Canaan to repent and turn to Him; because they had not repented, He hardened their hearts and allowed them to be destroyed. God used Israel to judge a nation for their sins, and even as He judged Canaan, He warned Israel that this too could be true for them. Sadly, hundreds of years later, Israel will lose the land they were once promised and faces judgment by exile—and God will use Assyria and Babylon to punish Israel for her idolatry and waywardness.

We also see the bigger picture of God's mercy and grace—even the grace He shows to outsiders. He did command that certain cities should be devoted to destruction—these were cities where the Israelites would directly settle. God's decree was meant as a safeguard for their hearts, to ensure that they would have no temptation to fall into the idolatrous ways of their neighbors. But other cities on the periphery are spared—in fact, later the Lord reminds the Israelites that they have moved into cities that they did not build, with vineyards that they did not plant. Only specific cities are destroyed for a specific purpose. And we see how God shows mercy to Canaanites who acknowledge Him; the Gibeonites and Rahab are both examples of His lovingkindness and care for the stranger, for the Gentile who trusts in Him.

I think about the Israelite children who would have been read these words from the book of Joshua. While these names and people are fairly meaningless to us, can you see the wonder in the eyes of the Israelite boy who grew up in one of these towns, as he imagined his ancestors, who were once slaves in Egypt and wanderers in the wilderness, conquering these lands? Lest we get too caught up in the forest to see the majesty of the trees, we are reminded that first and foremost, the book of Joshua isn't just about conquest and war—it's about a God who keeps His promises to His children.

Thursday, February 1 | Joshua 13 | Amy Jackson

As an English nerd, I love thinking about the different parts of stories. I especially enjoy trying to pick out the climax happening in a story. Whether it's in a book or on screen, I love trying to guess if the conflict we are seeing played out is what will bring about the climax of the tale with its final resolution. And, a really good story can keep you guessing when it comes to discovering the climax quickly! Sometimes looks can be deceiving.

When we arrive at Joshua 13, we could imagine that things are wrapping up. After all, Joshua is "old and advanced in years" (Joshua 13:1). We've heard about all of the kingdoms they have conquered. Won't the Israelites be able to just easily move into the land and live in peace and happily ever after? If this was your first thought, it must have been refuted by the end of verse 1 when the Lord tells Joshua that, though he is old, "there remains yet very much land to possess" (Joshua 13:1). In fact, if we keep on reading the Old



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Testament, we'll discover that some of these unconquered lands will not come into complete Israelite possession until the reigns of David and Solomon. We aren't quite to the resolution of the problem yet.

One of the things that I love about Scripture is that it really isn't a story about one human figure. You might think our story is wrapping up because Joshua is old. But the story of Israel didn't end with the death of Moses, and it won't end with the death of Joshua, because the story of Israel isn't really about any one biblical character. Rather, it's about the steadfast love of God who has made a covenant with His people, Israel, and will see to it that the promises He made to Abraham are fulfilled. So while we don't have a resolution here, we do see Israel moving into lands they had been promised by Moses. We see the hand of God and His faithfulness. And we see that the story continues on!

Sometimes I try to guess how my story might end up. What might happen from here? Where might we go next? If anything, Joshua 13 is an encouragement to me as I am reminded that ultimately, my story isn't about me. My story is about God's faithfulness and goodness made known to me in Jesus. Instead of focusing in on my story, I want to focus more on how my own small, insignificant tale is a tiny part of His bigger story of faithfulness. My earthly story will end one day, yes. But God's story continues on forever, and our small stories get to be a part of this majestic story—when we will dwell in His land, in His presence. When the true enemy, sin, will be forever conquered and we will be set free from the dominion of sin and death. Our stories will continue on in the new Jerusalem, where we will forever live in the resolution of God's faithfulness.

Friday, February 2 | Joshua 14 | Amy Jackson

This section of Joshua begins the account of the land distribution west of the Jordan—the land of Canaan given to the Israelites. We see Caleb in this chapter as a picture of the fruits of faithfulness: many years before, Caleb had shown faith in the face of the giants and had trusted that the Lord would give this land into their hands. Joshua 14:8-15 give us a picture of Caleb receiving the rewards promised to him long ago. While the account of Caleb is fascinating, I have to admit that I was really interested in the comment about the land being awarded by "lots" or by "allotment." Apparently this was quite a common practice in the Ancient Near East. People would draw lots and believed that the outcome of the drawing was divinely appointed. I remember "drawing straws" a lot in school when people would be arguing over who got to do something. The teacher often did this as a way to show that he or she wasn't showing favoritism and to make the scenario as fair as possible, so I can imagine there were probably some benefits to Joshua portioning out the land this way—certainly no one could complain that one tribe was being favored over another if lots were drawn!

Regardless of how the land was received and the method that was used, one thing we can be certain of is that the Lord determined the lots and put His people where He willed for them to be. Now, we don't receive land by lot today, but I think the same point is still applicable. The places we live, the neighbors we have, the jobs we enjoy, the coworkers we serve alongside, and the church where we worship—none of these things are random. The Lord has specifically appointed these places and these people in your life.



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Often, it's easy for us to look over at someone else's lot with jealousy. I'm sure that happened from time to time with the Israelites too—they might have looked over and saw that another tribe had a better view, or more fruitful soil, or more access to natural resources. When we are tempted to envy, we must remind ourselves of God's good plan and He has chosen this lot—this place, these relationships, and these responsibilities—for us in these specific days. As you pray today, take some time to read over and pray Psalm 16, especially verses 5-6:

"The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; You hold my lot. The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed I have a beautiful inheritance" (Psalm 16:5-6)

This psalm has been a helpful antidote for me when I find myself being tempted to envy and doubt. *Oh Lord, help us to trust and believe that You have given us Your best—You have determined our lots and hold our stories in Your hands. Help us to be faithful stewards of the places, relationships, and resources you have given us, for Your glory!*

Saturday, February 3-Sunday, February 4 | Joshua 10-14

Reread Joshua 10-14 over the weekend. Reflect on all that God has been saying to you through His word this week.



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WEEK FOUR: JOSHUA 15-19 FEBRUARY 5-11

Monday, February 5 | Joshua 15 | Wayne Splawn

Joshua 15-19 is a section of Scripture many of us find difficult to comprehend and apply to our lives.¹ This is certainly understandable. The verses address the disbursements of the Promised Land to various tribes of Israel and both the names of those mentioned and the geographical markers seem obscure to those of us living in 2018. However, for the people involved in receiving the land, these records serve as a reminder of God's faithfulness to His people. For the most part, their ancestors had forfeited their right to inherit the land due to their sin and disobedience. Despite this truth, God did not give up on His people. After a period of punishment, God remains faithful to His promise to provide the people a land in which to dwell.

As you read Joshua 15 today and chapters 16-19 over the course of this week, reflect on ways that you have experienced God's faithfulness despite the effects of your own past sinful actions or the sinful actions of others that have negatively affected your life. Take the time to thank God for how you have seen Him work in the past and ask Him to give you faith to believe that God will continue to be faithful to you in the days ahead. Finally, remember that God's provision for us has been most fully realized through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Because of who we are in Jesus, we now are assured that we have been given an eternal inheritance and God will make sure we receive it, not because of our ability to take possession of it, but because of God's faithfulness to give it to us. God is faithful and in that truth, we rejoice.

Tuesday, February 6 | Joshua 16 | Wayne Splawn

I have a large pine tree in my front yard. In recent days, a few of the limbs have broken off from the trunk of the tree. Thankfully, the limbs have not landed on my house and have been more of an inconvenience than anything else. My neighbor walked by one day as I was cleaning up one of the limbs and we talked about the health of the tree. He has a background in forestry and he informed me that trees will often take the path of least resistance when funneling nutrients from the soil to the branches. When this happens, the lower branches receive the majority of the nutrients because it takes less effort to supply those limbs with nourishment than it does to transport nutrients to the branches at the top of the tree. As a result, many of the limbs located higher up the tree trunk become weak and eventually break and fall.

I am certainly no forestry expert and I cannot comment on the validity of my neighbor's theory, but it did get me thinking about my own life and the lives of others I know. We are tempted to take the path of least resistance in many areas of life and for a time we do not notice the impact of such decisions. However, over time weaknesses develop and the effects of taking the easy path begin to show.

¹In preparing these devotions, I relied on Dr. Kenneth A. Mathews's commentary on Joshua in the *Teach the Text Commentary Series*. I would commend it to you if you are looking for a good commentary to use in understanding the book of Joshua for either personal devotions or Bible studies. This commentary and several other resources on Joshua are available in our church library.



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In Joshua 16, the author notes that the people did not drive the Canaanites out of the land fully as they had been commanded. Instead, they allowed them to remain in the land as slaves. Rather than be completely obedient to the Lord, the Israelites chose the path of least resistance. Eventually, this failure to obey had negative consequences for the people in the land. Kenneth Mathews notes, "This concession leads to assimilating Canaanite religion (Judges 2:1-3). The consequence is their own undoing because they chose ease over obedience."² Sometimes God calls us to do hard things and as we contemplate how we will respond, we are tempted to choose ease over obedience. Eventually, such decisions will come back to haunt us. Ask God to show you areas of your life in which you are prone to choose ease over complete obedience. Ask God to help you believe that fullness of joy will only be found in walking in His ways and to empower you to choose obedience so that God will be glorified in your life.

Wednesday, February 7 | Joshua 17 | Wayne Splawn

Faithfulness sometimes requires courage. In Joshua 17:3-6, we read about the actions the daughters of Zelophehad took to secure their families land allotment. Zelophehad did not have any sons and it was the sons who customarily were given possession of their family's inheritance. In a male dominated society, it most certainly would have been tempting for Zelophehad's daughters to be intimidated by the disbursement process, but they did not sit on their hands and hope things would turn out their way. Instead, they exhibited bold and courageous faith by reminding Eleazer, Joshua, and the other leaders of the decision that Moses had handed down regarding their right to inherit their father's land. As a result of their bold faith and the Lord's faithfulness, subsequent generations would enjoy the blessing of the land.

There will be times in all of our lives that will require us to show boldness and courage in order to remain faithful to God's mission in our lives and bless future generations. Ask the Lord to give you the courage you will need to remain faithful to Him in situations in which you might be tempted to shrink back in fear.

Thursday, February 8 | Joshua 18 | Wayne Splawn

Going to an estate sale is a humbling and clarifying experience. During the sale, people make their way through a person's home, looking for something they think is of value. The contents of the home are items the members of a person's family have already decided are of relatively little value to them. They are willing to part with them for a price. Take a walk around your own home or apartment. What are some things you value that you suspect would be left behind were you to have an estate sale tomorrow? Participating in such an exercise helps one to clarify what they own of lasting value.

In Joshua 18, the leaders continue to distribute the land to the people. However, in verse 7, we read, "The Levites have no portion among you, for the priesthood of the Lord is their heritage." This same truth is communicated in a slightly different way in Joshua 13:33 where we read, "But to the tribe of Levi Moses gave no inheritance; the Lord God of Israel is their inheritance." While other tribes received parcels of land, the Levites are said to have the Lord God of Israel as their inheritance. If we thoughtfully reflect on these verses, we are reminded that God is the only thing we will ever have that is of lasting, eternal value. Our

²Kenneth A Matthew, *Joshua in the Teaching the Text Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016), 135.



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most prized possessions will tarnish, wear out, and rust. One day, not even our closest family will desire most of what we have worked so hard to obtain. But, long after we have passed from this earth, those of us who are in Christ, will enjoy God's presence forever. As you go throughout your day today, consider how this truth should impact how you steward the resources God has entrusted to you in this life.

Friday, February 9 | Joshua 19 | Wayne Splawn

It seems that good models of leadership are often difficult to find in our day. Unfortunately, we are all painfully aware of the ways in which leaders often use their positions of authority for selfish gain rather than stewarding their influence to meet the needs of others. And we can all identify at least one leader who has fallen due to a lack of accountability.

Here in Joshua 19:49-51, the section of Joshua that provides an account of the distribution of the Promised Land concludes with details about Joshua's approach to leadership that are instructive to us today. First, we notice that Joshua receives his inheritance last. Though he was the appointed leader of God's people, Joshua did not insist on going first. He ensured those placed under his authority were taken care of before turning his attention to his own interests. Second, we notice that Joshua did not oversee the disbursement of the land alone. Instead, Eleazar, the priest, also participated in the allotment of the land, ensuring things were done with equity.

If you are a leader, you would do well to learn from Joshua's example. Rather than ask how you will benefit from your position, ask God to show you how you can serve those God has placed under your authority. Also, do not isolate yourself from others. We all need godly friends and associates who will hold us accountable and ensure that we are making decisions and taking actions that are honoring to the Lord.

Saturday, February 10-Sunday, February 11 | Joshua 15-19

Reread Joshua 15-19 over the weekend. Reflect on all that God has been saying to you through His word this week.



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WEEK FIVE: JOSHUA 20-24 FEBRUARY 12-18

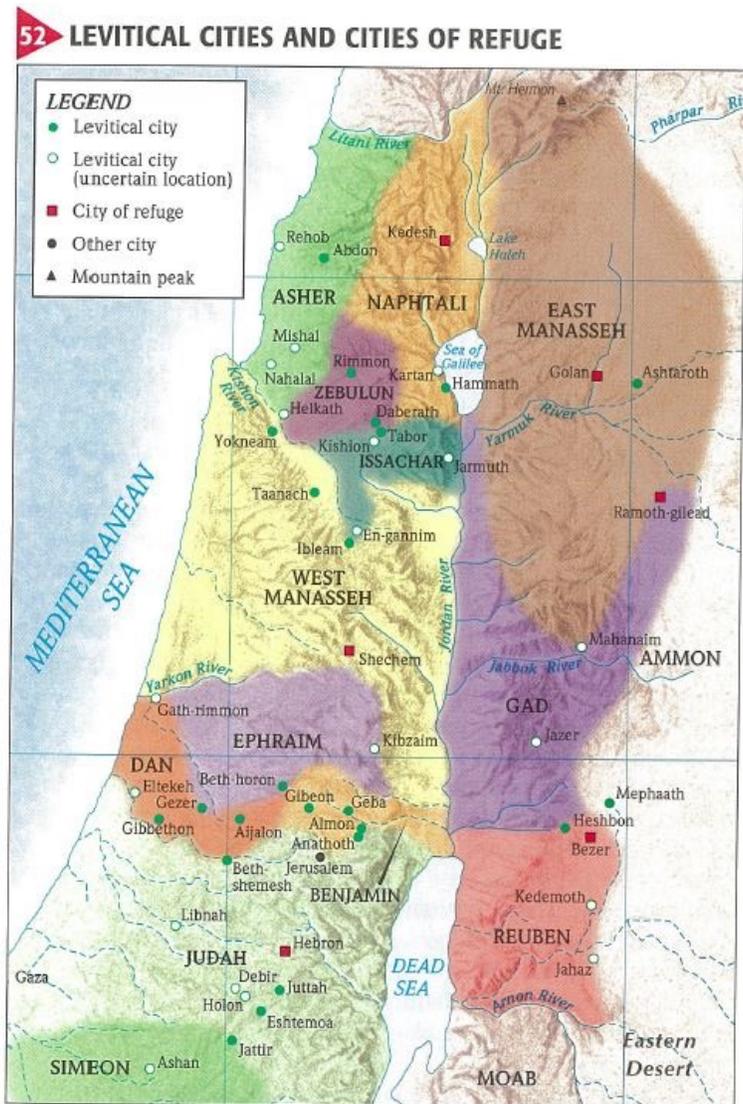
Monday, February 12 | Joshua 20 | Mary Splawn³

When Wayne and I were younger, we took a road trip to Boston. In preparation for our trip, we asked AAA to make us a TripTik, which was a series of maps bound together that would help us navigate our way up the eastern coast. I wish I had a picture of our faces when we finally arrived in the downtown of Boston for the first time. We had no idea how to handle the intense traffic and horn blowing!

These days, maps seem a little irrelevant. With smartphones, we can map our trip in minutes and have access to information about all stopping points along the way. But, that wasn't the case in 1998, and it definitely wasn't the case in ancient Israel.

In this passage, God designates cities of refuge as safe places for people who have accidentally killed another person. If something tragic like this were to happen, the person who unintentionally killed another would have a place to run to for shelter. If we go back to verses 7-8 and track the names of the cities of refuge on the map provided on the right, we can glean a little more from this passage.

We see that the safe places are evenly dispersed throughout the land. They are described from north to south on the west side of the Jordan River starting with Kedesh in the northern region of Galilee and going south to Shechem and then down to Hebron. Then, south to north on the eastern side of the Jordan River, starting with Bezer in the desert and moving north to Ramoth-gilead and on up to Golan. There were six cities of refuge, mentioned in a way



³ To help me prepare this week's devotionals, I listened to Jen Wilkin's teaching on Joshua. You can find the audio teaching series at www.jenwilkin.net.



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that would provide an mental map for someone who might need help knowing which way to run. The point I don't want us to miss is that if someone needed refuge, refuge could be found within a reasonable distance.

The concept of cities of refuge is applicable for our faith today. We need refuge from our sin and we find that sanctuary in Christ. God has made a provision for our sin, whether intentional or unintentional. We stand secure in Christ who provides safety from eternal punishment for sin. As it says in 1 Corinthians 5:21, "God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."

We know that we are guilty of sin and we are called to confess our sin to the Lord. But, sometimes even after we've brought our faults to the Lord, the world continues to attacks us. At other times, our own minds constantly remind us of our past sins. On top of that, the evil one constantly seeks to remind us of our failures and berates us with accusations. The feeling can be overwhelming and the noise deafening. In those moments, remember Scripture's promises, which become a map for believers! The Bible teaches us that God has made a way for us to come to refuge in Him, through Christ who is our righteousness. Cling to

Him and find hope that He has already declared you innocent by His blood. And then, help others find that same safe place in the arms of Jesus.

Tuesday, February 13 | Joshua 21 | Mary Splawn

Joshua 21 is one of those passages that no one wants to read aloud. Who can pronounce all the names of the lands allotted to the Levites? Whew...

If you're like me, you can get lost in the details of this passage but if we look to the map (like yesterday) we can see beautiful truth. All of the towns allotted for the Levites are peppered throughout the land so that a Levite territory was close by to all the towns of Israel. Remember, the Levites were the priestly tribe who had been given the charge to teach the rules of faith and the law of God (Deuteronomy 33:10). In God's perfect planning, they were dispersed throughout Israel, which made finding a priest possible for anyone in the land.

This makes me think about Christians today and how we are called to be a royal priesthood. We are positioned by Christ in our neighborhoods and towns for His purposes. 1 Peter reminds us that we are "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light" (1 Peter 1:9).

Did you catch that last phrase? As the priests of our day, we are given the charge to declare the praises of Christ. He has rescued us from darkness and has provided us with abundant life! As we think about where the Lord has placed us physically today, let us ask God for help in reflecting His love and grace to those who are in our midst.



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Wednesday, February 14 | Joshua 22 | Mary Splawn

The chorus from one of my favorite VBS songs says, "Sin messed everything up, everything up. OH NO! Sin messed everything up, everything up." This chorus is the message that Phinehas and the tribal chiefs aim to remind the eastern tribes of Israel.

You will remember that the armies from these eastern tribes were called upon to help with the conquering of the land on the western side of the Jordan. They helped for years and have now been blessed by Joshua to return home. In his farewell speech to them, Joshua challenges them to love and serve the Lord always (see verse 5). The eastern tribes return to their land with lots of riches, but on their way home they do something curious. They construct an altar. It is like the altar constructed in the tabernacle which would have been for sacrifices to God.

The problem with this curious act is that the Israelites are supposed to sacrifice only in one place ... wherever the tabernacle rests ... in contrast with the other religions that make high places and worshiping spots in all kinds of locations. This matter of the devoted place for worship is mentioned in Deuteronomy 12.

So, when the eastern tribes construct the altar, the other tribes are furious. They assume the eastern tribes are making their own place of worship in direct disobedience to the commands of God. So they send a delegation to straighten all of this out.

When Phinehas and the tribal leaders approach the people of Reuben, Gad, and half-tribe of Manasseh (the eastern tribes), they remind them of what our kids learned in Vacation Bible School - sin messes everything up! They remind them of the sin at Peor (see Numbers 25), where Israelite men were being lured into pagan religions by Moabite women and how God was angered at the entire congregation because of the sin. They also mention Achan, who took things from the plunder of war that should have been devoted to the Lord (see Joshua 7) and how his sin had ripple effects in all of Israel. They make a huge point that is still valid today. Our sin impacts more than just us and frankly it messes stuff up!

When the men are finished with their plea to correct the error of altar building, the eastern tribes respond, explaining that there has been a big misunderstanding. They have built the altar as a witness, a monument, and a reminder of the one true God. They want their children to remember that worship that must be devoted to God alone!

Whew ... it was just a big misunderstanding. Because they feared that they might be cut off from worship in the Tabernacle (because of the geographical divide of the Jordan River), they made an imposing structure to remind themselves that serving the one true God was their purpose, identity, and calling.

As I read this text, I am reminded of the gift we have in Jesus. Because Jesus' spirit lives within His followers, we can worship anywhere. We are no longer bound to take sacrifices to one location. He is our



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once-and-for-all sacrifice! And, although it is still very much true that our sins have real—and often devastating—consequences, God has made a way for us to be free from the eternal punishment of sin through Jesus! As the VBS song says in the final verse, “So the one and only Father gave his one and only Son. It’s the one and only way to save each and every one! He gave us a chance at a brand new start. He’s a great big God with a great big heart.”

Thursday, February 15 | Joshua 23 | Mary Splawn

I love to play the piano duet of “Heart and Soul” with my dad. Neither of us are good piano players, but we’ve memorized this tune and the timing of the piece. And, on almost every occasion we get together we end up playing this little duo to the delight (maybe?) of our family! We know the piece by heart. You know the tune, don’t you? Or if you don’t, google “Heart and Soul Piano Duo.” Okay, that’s not the point.

The reason I mention this song is because in verse 14 of this chapter, Joshua reminds the people of something they can know in their “hearts and souls.” In other words, every ounce of their being can know it. What can they know by heart? They can know that “not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled.” What wonderful news! The promises of land and nation given to Abraham way back in Genesis are fulfilled. The promise that God would not forsake them if they followed Him is fulfilled, and the promise to give them rest in the land is fulfilled!

God’s promises to us stand secure as well. The one caution I would give us is that not all promises in Scripture are for us. Some promises are for a specific time and place and others have conditions attached to the promises. Also, as with Proverbs, all statements aren’t as much promises as they are general principles. Yet, there are many promises in Scripture that we can take to heart! One of my favorite promises for all believers is that God will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5)!⁴

What promises of God do you stand on today? Why not memorize one of them so that you can replay it often in your heart?

Friday, February 16 | Joshua 24 | Mary Splawn

At a wedding I recently attended, I heard these vows, “I did, I do, and forever, I choose you.” As the bride and groom said these words, I was reminded that in all relationships, we choose. We choose how we act; we choose how we serve; we choose how we love. As in our relationship with a spouse, loving God is a daily choice.

⁴ For more on the promises of God, see Jen Wilkin’s article, “Which Promises Are for Me?” on The Gospel Coalition website. Some of Jen’s favorite Biblical promises include James 1:5, 1 Corinthians 10:13, John 10:28-29, Philippians 1:6, and Luke 12:40.



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I believe Joshua has this in mind when he says, “Choose this day whom you will serve.” His statement is not so much to draw a line in the sand as to say, “This is your only shot, and you only choose once.” Rather, he gives more of a plea for continued choosing!

He wants the people to choose serving God instead of being lured into idolatry by the pagan peoples in the land. And, to remind them of why they should choose God, Joshua has given the Israelites a SparkNotes version of the books of Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, and Joshua to remind them of God’s faithfulness. Joshua recounts God’s presence with the people in the hard times (Egypt) and His faithfulness to them in the good times (when they settled in the promised land). In light of all the ways God has been faithful to Israel, he encourages them to “therefore fear the Lord and serve Him” (see verse 14).

It is interesting that even when the Israelites say they will serve God alone, Joshua immediately knows they won’t choose Him daily. Maybe experience has taught Joshua that eventually someone will be distracted by other false gods and fall away from the covenant made with the one true God on that day.

And, honestly I can identify with them in this predicament. As much as I desire to choose to follow God, I often fail. As Paul says, “For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing” (Romans 7:19). Things like my love of self, laziness, pride, unkind speech, and love of stuff often get in the way of me serving God.

And, when idolatry starts to creep into my heart, I must choose to work! Just as with marriage and other relationships, our choosing to serve the Lord takes daily work. We must battle sin and idolatry as we choose to follow in God’s ways.

And as we battle sin, we have great hope knowing that God has chosen us in Christ! In Jesus, He chooses us, once and for all. And, He hasn’t given up on us. In fact, Jesus sits at the right hand of God interceding on our behalf (Romans 8:34). He is choosing to battle for us.

Renew your vows to the Lord this morning. Tell Him of your desire to serve Him alone. Choose to serve Him today and ask Him to help you honor Him in the ways that you act, serve, and love.

Saturday, February 16-Sunday, February 17 | Joshua 20-24

Reread Joshua 20-24 over the weekend. Reflect on all that God has been saying to you through His word this week.