



PT Butler

Bible Study Notebooks

Study of Joshua

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

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JOSHUA 1:1---5:15

Courage is not innate in the human psyche! We are born helpless, dependent, on the defensive, scared by every noise, sudden movement and stranger we meet. Courage has to be taught, nurtured, practiced, and constantly reinforced. Joshua had seen the courage of Moses; he had gone through circumstances that put his own courage to the test; he had seen how God had been with the Israelites providentially, miraculously and had kept all his promises. Still, God had to encourage Joshua to be courageous! Courage is essentially the execution of one's duty in spite of the consequences it may incur. Godly courage is planted in the human soul by faith that God will keep his promises based on an historical record that God has kept his promises! Courage is not necessarily abandonment of reason to act only on emotions. Courage is not foolhardiness. In fact, courage that produces good results demands reasoning, planning, preparation, and faith based on evidence. This is the kind of courage Joshua had. But God had to keep reminding him to exercise it. The first disciples of Jesus had courage, but Jesus had to constantly remind them to exercise it (e.g. Jn. 16:33). Even the great apostle Paul had to have his "courage" encouraged (Acts 28:15). See also Num. 13:20; Deut. 31:6,7,23; Josh. 2:11; 10:25; 23:6 2 Sam. 10:12; 13:28; 1 Chr. 19:13; 22:13; 28:20; 2 Chr. 15:8; 32:7; Ezra 10:4; Psa. 27:14; 31:24; Isa. 41:6; Amos 2:16. The epistles of the New Testament (especially the book of Revelation) were written to encourage (i.e., bolster the courage of Christians) to "keep the faith" by exercising their Christian duties in spite of their circumstances (deprivation, persecution, etc.).

Joshua was about to become the leader of the entire Israelite nation of some 3 million people! There would be extremely crucial judgments he would have to make. There would be commands he would have to give. His behavior would be the "role-model" for the nation. He would have to accept the responsibility of ordering other people to commit their lives and families and properties to certain dangers and circumstances. He would have to be prepared to be criticized and disobeyed. IS IT ANY WONDER THAT THE LORD TOLD HIM, "BE CAREFUL TO DO ACCORDING TO ALL THAT IS WRITTEN IN THE LAW OF MOSES?"

Only the divinely revealed, inerrant, word of God could guide Joshua in this tremendous task! That has always been Almighty God's ordinance for those who propose to be leaders of people (especially, leaders of God's people). See Deut. 17:14-20; 1 Sam. 10:25; 2 Sam. 23:1-7). Even heathen kings were expected to give heed to as much as they knew about the One True God (see Dan. 2,4, 5:17-28). BUT IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT THOSE WHO WOULD LEAD GOD'S KINGDOM (THE CHURCH) TODAY BE CAREFUL TO DO ACCORDING TO ALL THAT IS WRITTEN IN GOD'S WORD, ESPECIALLY THE NEW TESTAMENT. That means there are certain qualifications for leadership in the New Testament church (Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus for leadership qualifications for preachers, elders, deacons, teachers—plus Paul's statement of his example for leadership in Acts 20:17-38). The only sanctioned "book" for direction for leaders in the church is the Bible! No other book is needed! When human beings meet the qualifications and take the directions for leadership in the

church that are in the Bible, they can figure out the methods on their own—they don't need the writings of secular, humanistic, and unbelieving "experts" to guide them.

Joshua told the Israelites to "prepare provisions" (1:11) because God doesn't work constantly through miracles to carry on his work and/or sustain life in this universe. The only time God ever continually worked one miracle right after another in this cosmos was at creation! Of course, God upholds the universe by his word of power (Heb. 1:2), and all things "consist" (i.e., hold together) in him (Col. 1:17). God is immanently involved and working every day in history (Jn. 5:17). But God does most of his "work" sustaining creation and humankind by what we call "laws of nature" (Rom. 1:18-21; Psa. 19:1-6; 104:14-30; 119:89-92). Occasionally, God works today through what we call providence (exercise of divine intervention beyond "natural law"). Miracles were above and beyond "providence and natural law" exclusively for substantiating God's word as divinely revealed (Jn. 20:30-31; Heb. 2:2-4). So, human beings were created in the very beginning to labor with their hands to provide for themselves (Gen. 1:28). God never intended for human beings to sit completely idle, inert and immobile while he fed them, clothed them, and sheltered them with one miracle after another!

These Israelites were going into a land which they would be commanded, in effect, to destroy (Jericho, etc.). They were to slay the Canaanite people, tear down their idolatrous buildings, and, through warfare (probably) destroy a lot of crops. They would need to "provide" for themselves in a ravaged land. Christians today are told they must work with their hands to "prepare provisions" while on earth (1 Thess. 4:10-12; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; 1 Tim. 5:8, etc.). Christians also need to "prepare spiritual provisions" to sustain them in a world that is hostile toward God (Rom. 8:5-8) and one that is "subjected to futility and decay" (Rom. 8:18-23). We must also "work" to "lay up treasures in heaven" for our "going over Jordan" to the next life (Matt. 6:19-21; 1 Cor. 15:58, Rev. 14:13, etc.).

Rahab, although a Canaanite, had seen the miraculous signs that an Almighty God was working among the Israelites and for the Israelites (Josh. 1:8-14). God's existence and his almighty power are even seen in things that have been made (Rom. 1:18-21) so that no heathen is without excuse for not fearing him! Rahab also had a conscience (Rom. 2:12-16) which held her accountable for right and wrong. Humanity had known from the days of Noah that it was wrong to practice idolatry and kill innocent people and engage in promiscuous sex (Gen. 9:1-7). The fact of human conscience told Rahab that an idol was not a god! So, Rahab exercised her faith with courage and kept the Israelite spies in her home—and the Israelite spies were glad to take advantage of Rahab's faith and courage! Rahab became, in fact, a great heroine of the faith from God's perspective (Heb. 11:31) and was an ancestress of God's "Anointed" (Messiah) Jesus Christ by flesh and by faith (Matt. 1:5). One would assume that once Rahab became a "proselyte" of the Israelite faith, she would have repented of and given up her vocation of harlotry—lest she be stoned to death according to the law of Moses! Bad people can become "good" by faith in the grace of God—YOU DID!

Yes! Rahab should have lied to save the lives of the Israelite spies! God said in James 2:25 she was "justified by works" when she hid the spies and helped them

escape certain death at the hands of her Canaanite countrymen had they known of their presence. In God's hierarchical system of what is "right and good" and what is "wrong and evil" in this fallen world, human life takes precedence over any "right" evil people might have to the truth about persons or property in order to do harm. If Rahab and the spies had lived in a perfect world, where no one would take the truth and destroy life, she and the spies could have revealed their presence—BUT THEIR WORLD, LIKE OURS, WAS NOT PERFECT (i.e., SINLESS). It was just as "right" for her to deceive her countrymen as it was for Joshua, by the direction of the Lord himself, to deceive the inhabitants of the city of Ai (Josh. 8:1-35). Rahab's actions were just as "right" as David's deceptions of king Saul when he was being pursued in the wilderness. Rahab's actions were as "right" as Jesus' actions in refusing to go before Herod when he was summoned. In a fallen world, the forces of "relative-righteousness" must resort, at certain times and under certain circumstances, to deception, secrecy, withholding of all truth, spying, intelligence-gathering, "under-cover" work, etc. in order to sustain law and order in society! Police, CIA, FBI, military intelligence agencies, corporate businesses, etc., do it constantly to keep the forces of evil and anarchy from enthroning themselves over human society. IF THEY DIDN'T WE'D ALL BE ENSLAVED TO TYRANTS AND DICTATORS AND CRIMINALS!

No! The "ark of the covenant" was not a "lucky charm" for a superstitious people. It contained the tables of stone upon which the very finger of God had written the 10 commandments; it contained a pot of the miraculous "manna" bread that had been supplied directly from heaven; it contained Aaron's rod (dead stick) that had miraculously budded. There was no superstition connected to it at all—IT WAS ALL FACTUAL—MIRACULOUS! It was a vivid, extremely significant, visible, extension of the supernatural power and presence of God with Israel (Josh 3:7-13)! In other words, in that "ark" were actual objects which had been miraculously created. There was no doubt about it! These things were not "traditional" myths handed down through generations of tales and stories! THEY WERE REAL! So, it WAS where the absolutely holy presence of God dwelt! GOD WAS THERE—INVISIBLE, BUT REALLY THERE! That is why the Israelites were ordered to stay over 1000 yards away from it. Only priests were sanctified and sanctioned to carry it with rods placed through rings on the "ark." NO ONE WAS PERMITTED TO TOUCH IT (as Uzzah would discover, 2 Sam. 6:6-11). The "ark" was placed in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle and temple. It was called the "throne of God." God said he would dwell above it between the seraphim. GOD WANTED THE PEOPLE TO KNOW THAT HE WAS ABSOLUTELY HOLY AND THAT UNHOLY HUMANS COULD NOT "TOUCH" HIM WITHOUT BEING ABSOLUTELY CLEANSED OF SIN! The "ark of the covenant" was also a guide to lead the people where God wanted them to go in the land of Canaan, since they had never gone through the land themselves (Josh. 3:1-4).

The 12 stones (for 12 tribes) taken out of the Jordan River were stacked up beyond the Jordan (4:1-7). They were to be a perpetual "sign" to attract the attention of generations of Israelites. When Israelite children should ask, "What do those stones mean to you? the Israelite elders were to reply, "This is where the Lord God parted the waters of the Jordan River to allow us to enter the Promised Land." Those stacked up stones were "to be to the people of Israel a memorial for ever" (4:7). Human beings are

forgetful! Human beings constantly, in every generation, build enormous, costly, and ornate secular and historical “memorials” (e.g., Washington monument, Jefferson, Lincoln, Robert E. Lee, U. S. Grant, Pershing, the faces of the 4 presidents in the mountain side), battlefields, national parks named after people, ad infinitum—just to “remind” themselves of their heritage and blessings. People write themselves notes (grocery, shopping, meetings, appointments, etc.) to “remind” themselves of significant events. People write history books to “remind” themselves of significant events and persons of the past.

IS IT ANY WONDER THAT GOD KNOWS HE MUST ORDER HUMAN BEINGS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT TO INSTITUTE CERTAIN OBJECTS IN HIS KINGDOM (AS THEY WORSHIP AND SERVE HIM) TO REMIND THEM OF THEIR HERITAGE AND BLESSINGS?! That is one of the main purpose of such “observations” in the New Testament church (i.e., baptism—the death, burial and resurrection of Christ—our own death to sin by faith in him; the Lord’s Supper, the death and resurrection and second coming of Christ—our own self-examination; singing, praying, giving—all “memorials” to remind us of our heritage and blessedness). How soon we would forget if we didn’t have the weekly reminder of the Lord’s Supper! How soon we would forget if we didn’t sing songs which have scriptural admonitions in them. How soon we would forget how blessed we are if we did not pray every day giving thanks, asking the Lord for blessing, confessing our dependence upon him. Paul was right on target when he wrote, “let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another...” (Heb. 10:24-25). Peter knew that people needed to be “reminded” and made able to “recall” what they knew about Christ (2 Pet. 1:12-21). The New Testament church must make these “memorials” so significant in its daily ministry that children will ask, “What do these things mean?”—and then the church (every member) must be prepared to give an understandable and attractive answer!

As Joshua points out (Josh. 5:5) all the Israelites who had been born in Egypt and came out in the “exodus” had been circumcised. Those who had not been circumcised, apparently, were those who had been born after the exodus—in the wilderness wanderings of 4 years! “They had not be circumcised on the way” (Josh. 5:7). All that can be speculated is that during those 40 years in the wilderness, circumcision had been simply neglected. That would involve an estimated 1,000,000 men! The law of circumcision was an inviolable commandment! If Joshua were to keep the law of Moses as God wanted, it was necessary that those still uncircumcised be circumcised! Males were not allowed to eat the Passover until they were circumcised (Ex. 12:48). A whole generation of males had been rejected and died “on the way in the wilderness” because they had not been circumcised (Josh. 5:4-6). Things had not gone “well” with those who rejected circumcision—they perished (see Num. chs. 19-20). Joshua circumcised the children of this disobedient, uncircumcised generation that had walked in the wilderness without being circumcised. Those who rejected circumcision had plenty of places and times to perform this obligatory ritual operation. During their 40 years in the wilderness, there were some 41 different places where they stopped for an average of one year per stop.

We do not actually know how long the Israelites had occupied the land of Canaan at the time they were encamped at Gilgal and kept the Passover on the 14th day of the month in the plains of Jericho. Joshua writes in 5:6 that the Lord “gave them a land flowing with milk and honey.” That may infer that the grain (“produce”) of the land from which they made “unleavened cakes and parched grain” (5:11) was grain from fields already sown and grown by the Canaanites who fled their lands before the majestic, miraculous entrance of the Israelites into the land (Josh. 5:1). Or, it is possible that some of the Israelites had possessed the land for more than a year and they had crops from which they could eat which they had “produced” themselves! Whatever, the case, they would not be stealing the grain. If God gave them the land, he had to take it from the Canaanites—so they would not be “stealing” anything—it would be merely the “spoils of war” (see Gen. 14:13-24 where Abram took the “spoils of war” and gave them to Melchizedek, the high priest of God). While New Testament believers are not to forcibly take anyone else’s property, and are to work with their own hands to support themselves, they do need to understand that God has providentially made accessible (through prayer and hard work) “all” things in this world—life, death, the present and the future (1 Cor. 3:21-23).

The “man” who stood with a sword in his hand was the “captain of the Lord’s host” (Josh. 5:15). He was an angelic being! He was a leader of the Lord’s angelic army (see 1 Kings 22:19; Psa. 103:21; 148:2). God sent angels to minister to his people at numerous times in the Old Testament (Abraham, David, Daniel, Zechariah). God also sent angels to minister to the coming of his Anointed One, Jesus Christ, his ministry on earth, and to the early church in the book of Acts. We are promised in Hebrews 1:14 that God continues to send forth ministering spirits (angels) to serve for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation! Through the appearance of this “angel” God was saying to Joshua that there was a “heavenly army” available for access to assist Joshua and the Israelites to occupy the land he had promised them. The same is true of the Christian today! We need only to ask in faith and commit ourselves to doing the revealed will of the Lord, and we will be supplied with divine assistance every day of our warfare as we strive to enter the Promised Land called “heaven.”

JOSHUA 6:1—10:43

Au contraire (“to the contrary”)—IT ACTUALLY HAPPENED EXACTLY LIKE THE BIBLE SAYS IT DID! In 1929-36 Dr. John Garstang, Dir. Of the British School of Archaeology in Palestine, excavated the ruins of Jericho and found pottery and scarab evidence that the city had been destroyed about 1400 B.C. (fitting the time of Joshua) and other evidence confirming in overwhelming detail the Biblical account of the fall of Jericho. He found that the wall did actually fall down flat. The city had two walls, the outer wall fell outward, and down the hillside, dragging the inner wall and houses with it. Dr. Garstang believed he found evidence that the walls were shaken down by an earthquake (traces of which may be seen), a method which God could have used as easily as any other. He also found evidence that “they burnt the city with fire” (Josh 6:24) finding great layers of charcoal and ashes and wall ruins reddened by fire. That all of the Israelites except Achan did “keep themselves from things devoted to destruction” (Josh. 6:18) was also substantiated by Dr. Garstang when he found under the ashes and fallen walls, in the ruins of storehouses, an abundance of food stuffs, wheat, barley, dates, lentils, etc., turned to charcoal by intense heat, untouched and uneaten. See Halley’s Bible Handbook on Joshua ch. 6. Yes! dear friend, the Bible is absolutely trustworthy in its claim to be historically accurate. What the Bible says historically throughout (from Genesis to Revelation) has been confirmed over and over and over by archaeology and extra-Biblical history!

They didn’t march around Jericho 7 times in one day because God didn’t tell them to do it that way! Joshua had learned from his experiences under the tutelage of Moses that God means what he says! GOD WANTS THINGS DONE HIS WAY BECAUSE HE IS ALL WISE AND ALL POWERFUL AND ALL LOVING. God knows what is best for doubtful, forgetting, and impotent human beings. God knows when it is best for human beings to receive his providential care and help! Daniel had difficulty understanding why God was not “restoring” Jerusalem and the Jews immediately to their former glory after the exile (Dan. 9:1-19). The answer came back to Daniel (9:20-27) that the “glory” God had in mind to “restore” to the Jews was to come through their Messiah and it would come 490 years after they first returned from their exile! There were numerous occasions where Jesus’ twelve apostles (in the Gospel accounts) wanted to “run ahead of God” in carrying out Jesus’ mission. But the main problem Jesus’ disciples had was with his continual predictions that he was going to die on a cross for the sins of the world (e.g. Matt. 16:21-28). They wanted him to be their Messiah “their way” not God’s way! CHRISTIANS TODAY MUST CONSTANTLY REMIND THEMSELVES TO LOOK IN THE BIBLE TO FIND HOW GOD WANTS THINGS DONE AND DO THEM HIS WAY! No Christian can buy into the philosophy of the song made popular by Frank Sinatra... “I Did It My Way!” For every Christian, it has to be done Christ’s way!

It was from God the Israelites got the idea that certain things “devoted” should

be destroyed! God had revealed it earlier in Lev. 27:28-29. The Hebrew word for “devoted” is *cherem* and means “to cut, tear off; shut up, prohibit.” The LXX (the Greek translation of the Hebrew O.T. called the Septuagint) translates the Hebrew *cherem* into Greek *anathema* or “accursed.” God declared that certain things were to be destroyed, and certain other things were to go into the treasury of the Lord (Josh. 6:18-19). **BOTH WERE “ACCURSED” AS FAR AS THE ORDINARY ISRAELITE WAS CONCERNED—NO ISRAELITE WAS TO TAKE OR KEEP ANY OF THE CHEREM.** What is set aside by the Lord in his word, whether for destruction or for his own service, is wholly consecrated to God! No human has a right to take that or keep that for himself! That goes for the NT as well as the OT (as Ananias and Sapphira discovered, Acts 5:1-6). Christians today should be careful not to take what “belongs” to the Lord and use it for selfish purposes as Achan and Ananias and Sapphira tried to do!

Joshua did not know that Achan had taken from the “devoted” things for himself (Josh 7:1-5). When Israel was defeated before the city of Ai, Joshua thought the Lord had “gone back” on his promise to give Israel the victory (7:6-9) so Joshua besought the Lord in prayer. The Lord didn’t condemn Joshua for praying and seeking an answer—**BUT GOD DID GIVE JOSHUA THE ANSWER!** It was that Israel (notice that all Israel was held responsible for Achan did) had sinned. They had not kept their part of the covenant with the Lord, so he was not obligated to keep his part of the covenant! Israel, because it had sinned by taking Canaanite things which God had prohibited them from taking, had become themselves “a thing for destruction” (7:12). The implication may be that Joshua and the rest of Israel which had NOT taken any “devoted” things **SHOULD HAVE BEEN MORE RESPONSIBLE AND ALERT TO ENFORCE GOD’S PROHIBITIONS AGAINST TAKING “DEVOTED” THINGS!** God certainly held the whole nation responsible! When there is “sin in the camp” it is not a time to be on one’s knees praying—it is a time for taking action to purge the congregation of wickedness (see 1 Cor. 5:1ff about the arrogance of the Corinthians with blatant sin continuing within their congregation and the apostle’s strong admonitions to them). One has only to read the records of Christian churches of early America to see that certain sins tolerated today in Christian Church congregations were not tolerated 150-200 years ago! There was no dearth of Christian Church congregations 150-200 years ago—in fact there were more than there are today! When the church becomes like the world it loses its attraction to those who are longing for truth and salvation!

Coveting is not simply the urge to acquire (which is a God-given urge)—coveting is wanting what someone else has because someone else has it. Coveting is envy, born of greed. Coveting is wanting “more” than is enough—it is the child of dissatisfaction and discontent. The Bible says “covetousness is idolatry” (Col. 3:5). It was not a question of whether any human would miss what Achan took of the “devoted” things—**THE PROBLEM WAS THAT GOD WOULD MISS IT!** It belonged to God to do with as he determined! God determined some of it should be destroyed and some of it should be put exclusively to God’s service in the tabernacle! **NONE OF THE CANAANITE “THINGS” SHOULD BE KEPT BY ANY ISRAELITE.** In fact, no Israelite was to even “desire” (i.e., “covet”) to have what God prohibited! True, God made us to “want” certain things—air, food, procreation, shelter, etc., etc. **BUT THERE ARE**

OTHER THINGS GOD MADE US TO ABHOR. That has been true even from the Garden of Eden. How do we know the difference? THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE—KNOW WHAT GOD’S REVEALED WORD SAYS ABOUT “THINGS.” God has not left us in the darkness, to guess or speculate, or even rationalize about what is evil and what is good. There are “things” and there are “thoughts” and there are “principles” around which God has drawn prohibiting parameters—those are clearly delineated in his written word, the Bible. Achan knew (along with all the other Israelites) where God’s “parameters” were concerning the Canaanite “things.” IT WAS A TEST OF THEIR FAITH IN GOD! God does not deceive us—he does not prohibit certain things just to tease us or lure us into sin—HE DOES IT TO TEST OUR TRUST AND LOVE FOR HIM! God puts our faith to the test in these prohibitions so we can develop righteousness by choice—not by force! He wants us to be like Christ (Rom. 8:29).

“Let him who is without sin cast the first stone” is not a part of the Bible! The best and most ancient Greek manuscripts do not contain the English text of John 7:53—8:11 (see *The Gospel of John*, by Paul T. Butler, 1960, College Press, comments on John 7:53—8:11 for critical discussion of this matter). IT WAS GOD WHO GAVE JOSHUA THE COMMAND TO STONE ACHAN TO DEATH, ALONG WITH HIS FAMILY AND HIS HERDS, AND TO BURN THEM WITH FIRE (Josh. 7:10-26). God is totally, absolutely SERIOUS about SIN! GOD CANNOT TOLERATE SIN! God made eternal torment in hell as punishment for impenitent sinners (Lk. 16:19-31). It is always the “criminals” who are caught who do not want to suffer the penalty for their crime. Sinners are “criminals” in relationship to God—they are law-breakers, rebels, at enmity (war) against God (Rom. 8:5-8; Jas. 4:1-10). Physical punishment, no matter how severe, is not too severe for an enemy of God! Separation from God forever is the most severe punishment God can mete out to incorrigible sinners—AND THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT JESUS, THE PERFECT HUMAN, SUFFERED ON THE CROSS FOR THOSE WHO WILL REPENT (2 Cor. 5:21—“Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in him.”)

We repeat our answer which we made to question #5 in the Lesson text of Joshua 1:1—5:15, about Rahab’s lying to the Canaanites concerning hiding the Israelite spies. You will notice with the case of Joshua deceiving the citizens of the city of Ai that THE LORD, HIMSELF, gave the instructions: “lay an ambush against the city, behind it” (Josh. 8:2). Joshua told his soldiers they would be “doing as the Lord has bidden” (8:8). Again, the Lord instructed Joshua in the details of military tactics (8:18) in the taking of the city of Ai. There were 12,000 people of Ai slain in that battle, and the Israelites burned the city and made it a heap of ruins and hanged the king of Ai on a tree until evening. The cattle and the spoil of that city Israel took as their booty “according to the word of the Lord which he commanded Joshua” (8:27). THE AMBUSH, THE SLAUGHTER OF MEN, WOMEN & CHILDREN, THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CITY BY FIRE, WAS ALL PLANNED AND COMMANDED IN DETAIL BY THE LORD, HIMSELF! Joshua and his soldiers were merely the “servants of God executing God’s wrath on wrongdoers” (see Rom. 13:1-7). In a fallen world where there are people who plot and scheme about dethroning God and righteousness from the control of society, it is right and proper that the forces of right and good should use deception

and force to combat the evil! God sanctions the use of spying, under-cover intelligence gathering, deceptions, ruses, and other “necessary evils” to keep society from becoming anarchistic. The apostle Paul appealed to the Roman government (a heathen and oppressive government if ever there was one) for protection against the evil and injustices the Jews wanted to do to him.

One group of the Canaanites (Hivites) known as the “Gibeonites, knew the only hope they had for survival was to make peace with Joshua. These people and Rahab are the only ones we find throughout the entire length and breadth of the land who made an effort to save themselves from the destruction which was coming upon them. Joshua and the elders acted very ill-advisedly in not doing the Lord’s will as to what to do about these Canaanites. Joshua and all Israel knew what the Lord wanted—he wanted the Canaanites slain or totally driven out of the land. The Gibeonites deceived Joshua and the leaders of Israel into “making a covenant” with them that they should be spared. THIS IS A CLASSIC EXAMPLE OF THE LEADERSHIP OF GOD’S PEOPLE LETTING THEIR EMOTIONS SUPERCEDE WHAT THEY KNEW THE WILL OF GOD WAS! Even after the “covenant” was made, Joshua and the elders could have honorably broken the covenant and driven them from the land because the covenant was agreed to on the basis of pretense and false evidence. The nation of Israel would later rue the day they allowed some Canaanites to remain in the land and intermarry with God’s people and seduce them into idolatry and bring the wrath of God down upon Israel in its exile 700 years later! (e.g., Judges 19:12ff; Hosea 9:9; 10:9). The New Testament church is solemnly warned by God (2 Cor. 6:14—7:1; Rev. 18:4ff) to “come out of her (the heathenism of the world), my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues...” THERE MUST BE MORE PREACHING AND TEACHING AND DEMANDING IN THE CHURCH FOR HOLINESS! GOD IS SERIOUS ABOUT IT!

Joshua and the Israelite leaders probably should have slain these Canaanites. But they “goofed”! They had not tried to find out what the will of God was—they just took matters into their own hands. Once the “covenant” was made (and sealed, especially by eating together), to break it with such drastic measures as slaying the Gibeonites would have caused irreparable damage! It could have caused a war, a guerilla-war, ruined the reputations of the Israelite leaders as men of integrity among their own people and the nations around them. So, essentially, Joshua and the elders “followed their own heart” rather than the commandments of the Lord which they were specifically told not to do (Num. 15:39-41). We repeat, it is a classic example of God’s people letting themselves be guided by their “feelings” rather than the explicit commandments of God in his Word! Too often the people of God and their leaders have been afraid of the consequences of following God’s Word and have taken the easy way! BUT BE WARNED, O CHURCH OF GOD—“NARROW AND DIFFICULT IS THE WAY THAT LEADS TO LIFE AND FEW THERE BE THAT FIND IT—BROAD AND EASY IS THE WAY THAT LEADS TO DESTRUCTION AND THOSE WHO ENTER BY IT ARE MANY!” (Deut. 30:19-20; Jer. 6:16; Matt. 7:13-14; Lk. 12:23-24; Acts 14:22; Jn. 14:6). It is also a classic lesson that even the children of God should not be hasty in making promises (taking oaths).

The “standing still of the sun in the midst of heaven for about a whole day” was not done by God for the purpose of defeating the Amorites, Israel’s enemies—that had already been accomplished when the Lord “threw them (Amorites” into a panic” and “threw down great hailstones” killing more of them than Joshua and his soldiers killed (10:9-11). The miracle of the sun and moon “standing still” was undoubtedly to validate and confirm that the Lord was with Johsua and the Israelites and that the people of the land of Canaan could not possibly stand in the way of Israel occupying the land of Canaan! Numerous miracles of Jesus Christ make no sense (i.e., the withering of the fig tree, the casting of demons into 2000 swine which ran down into the Sea of Galilee and drowned, etc.) except to validate his claims that he was God in the flesh among men. Jesus worked all his miracles, primarily, to prove that he had supreme and sovereign “authority on earth to forgive sins” (Mk. 2:8-12). God worked no miracles capriciously or indiscriminately—they all had a purpose and the main point in each miracle was to prove the faithfulness of ALL HIS REVEALED WORD!

JOSHUA 11:1—14:15

The kings of the North should have been able to see that it was fool-hardy, and a losing cause, to fight against the Israelites. They should have fled the land to save their necks! All their neighbors to the south (the king of Jebus, i.e., Jerusalem; the king of Hebron and the king of Jericho) had been utterly overthrown (either displaced or destroyed). But the “kings of the North” formed an alliance—as if that could stand in the way of God! They looked at their alliance and troops “in number like the sand that is upon the seashore, with very many horses and chariots” and rationalized that they were invincible in the face of these nomadic, recently-escaped-slaves from Egypt. This “alliance” worshiped the god of human power just as Egypt had done (see Isa. 31:1-5). Some of us are old enough to remember the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). It was an “alliance” (forced upon east European countries by Russia) of Russia and Poland and East Germany and the Balkans. It was the great “Red-threat” to the whole world. BUT WHERE IS THE USSR TODAY IN A.D. 2001?! In a survival mode! THIS HAS BEEN THE HISTORY OF “ALLIANCES” SETTING THEMSELVES AGAINST GOD AND HIS CHURCH! It was Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome—and they all have perished as “allied-empires” while the church of Christ continues to expand into the far corners of the earth (the gates of Hades shall not stand against the church of Christ—see the books of Daniel and Revelation for predictions that it would be so!). Heathen powers, blinded by sin, cannot see what is happening all around them in relationship to the “kingdom of God.” They move blindly on to their own destruction—just like the Canaanites!

This does not teach that God took away the freedom of choice from these northern Canaanites. But God, through much evidential demonstration, had brought them to the point where they had to make a decision for or against his will concerning the land of Canaan. They had been given repeated opportunities to make the “right” decision, but each time they rebelled against it and decided to oppose God’s will. Repeated confrontations and opportunities to choose the “right” while continuing to choose the “wrong” developed into a hardening of their mind-set and will (heart) against the truth. Looked at from God’s perspective, he hardened their hearts—looked at from the human perspective, they hardened their hearts! THAT’S THE WAY GOD’S BUSINESS OF “SOUL-MAKING” IN A SIN-FALLEN WORLD WORKS. CONTINUAL REJECTION AND OPPOSITION TO THE TRUTH INEVITABLY HARDENS THE MIND-SET AND WILL AGAINST THE TRUTH! The more truth is resisted and opposed, the harder the mind is set against it! Remember Jesus’ parable of the four types of soil? (Matt. 13, Mk. 4; Lk. 8). The “seed” which is the word of God must fall upon “honest and good hearts that will receive it, understand it, and hold it fast” if it is to produce a “good crop.” Two famous 20th century people are classic illustrations of the hardening of the heart against God’s truth—Madalyn Murray and Bertrand Russell (both now deceased).

The Anakim (“im” is a plural suffix on Hebrew words) were descendants of Anak, one of the original inhabitants of the land of Canaan. The Israelites first met them when the spies went into the land (Num. 13:22,33). In Nu. 13 the statement is made that these sons of Anak came “of the giants. Elsewhere the giants are called “Nephilim” (ASV Josh. 11:21 & Gen. 6:4). In the reference to the “giants” in Gen. 6:4 it is said that these were “mighty men which were of old, men of renown.” Whether they were large in stature or great in reputation and ability is a question hard to determine. The fact that the spies (Num. 13) said they felt like grasshoppers in their sight and that these men looked upon them in the same way does not give the full answer. The ten spies brought up an evil report. It was quite evidently exaggerated. Nevertheless, these people were to be dealt with, and Joshua went against them without hesitation. They centered their activities in the south near Hebron, Debir, and Anab, points in the mountains of Judah and Israel. Joshua utterly destroyed these people leaving only a few in Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod which were in the plain later known as the Philistine Plain. They would not be hard to deal with in the open territory of the seacoast of the Mediterranean Sea, and Joshua evidently felt that it was sufficient to drive them out of the center of the land of Canaan.

In Joshua’s day, he wanted his people to know that TRUTH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS WILL ALWAYS TRIUMPH and God showed it to Israel through physical battles and conquests! God also wanted his people to be militant, aggressive, and zealous in cooperating with him in the triumph of truth and righteousness! God does not want his people to be “whimps,” cowards and failures. He wants them to be courageous, brave, hard-working, industrious, as “fighters” for truth and righteous. That is true of the New Testament church, as well, in the “spiritual” sense. Of course, the church has no command of Christ to physically conquer, subdue or coerce anyone into becoming a Christian. BUT HE DOES WANT HIS CHURCH TO BE MENTALLY, SPIRITUALLY, VERBALLY MILITANT IN SPREADING THE GOSPEL. To prove this just go to the prophecy in Amos 9:11-12 and see its fulfillment in Acts 15:16-17. Amos, the prophet, predicted that God’s New Testament church would be militant in taking the Gospel to the Gentiles and “conquering them spiritually in the name of Christ.” The N. T. declares in a number of passages that the Christian life and experience of proclaiming the gospel is like a war in which the church is to be militant in spreading the word (Gal. 5:16-26; Eph. 6:10f; 2 Tim. 2:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:11; Jude 3; and the whole book of Revelation). Perhaps the most succinct statement that the Lord wants militant evangelism by the church is what Paul wrote, “For though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war, for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ....” (2 Cor. 10:3-5). The church cannot just sit within its “castle” (the church building) and hope its “enemies” will come to the church-building and surrender. THE CHURCH HAS TO GO ON THE MARCH, GO OUT INTO THE HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS, TAKING THE “SWORD OF THE SPIRIT” (THE WORD OF GOD) AND MILITANTLY, AGGRESSIVELY, ZEALOUSLY, PROCLAIM, PREACH AND TEACH IT SO THAT “EVERY THOUGHT IS TAKEN CAPTIVE TO OBEY CHRIST!”

In the conquest led by Moses earlier, the Israelites conquered the lands of the

Amorites and the land of Bashan, east of the Jordan (where modern Jordan and Amman exist today). Under Joshua Israel conquered all the land of Palestine (Canaan) west of the Jordan from the Lebanon Mountains in the north to Mt. Halak in the territory of Edom in the south. Essentially, it was the land God had promised to Abraham. But the promises God made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and Joshua that they should occupy that territory had conditions! The conditions for their continued occupation of that land were faith in and obedience to the commandments God gave them in the law! **THEY NOT ONLY DID NOT KEEP GOD'S LAW, THEY THREW IT AWAY—LOST IT, DESTROYED IT!** So God gave them up to their enemies and cast them out of that land into exile in 700 B.C. and 606 B.C. to 586 B.C. They were taken as POWs to Assyria, Babylon and Persia. They continued to be successively under the Greeks and Syrians until about 164 B.C. until the Maccabees (Hasmoneans) threw off the Syrian oppression. But Israel again came under the oppressive rule of the Roman Empire about 60 B.C. until A.D. 70 when God, "completely" (see 1 Thess. 2:13-16; Lk. 19:41-44; Matt. 23:34-39; 24:1-35; Mk. 13:1-31; Lk. 21:1-33, etc.). Daniel predicted that the Jews would destroy Jerusalem themselves (Dan. 9:24-27) along with the Romans when they "cut off" their own Messiah. **THE JEWS HAVE NOT ONE IOTA OF A BIBLICAL "MANDATE" TO OCCUPY THE LAND OF PALESTINE TODAY!** The Jews have occupied the present land of Palestine by diplomatic intrigue and by force—not by Biblical mandate. Modern Israel is in no way the kind of Israel God wanted in the O.T. It is a secular state (oppressive and discriminatory against other religions). Most modern Jews in Israel do not believe the O.T. to be divinely inspired nor do they obey it as it requires. Jesus made it plain in his statements and so does the rest of the NT epistles, that God sees his kingdom today not as a piece of land but as a spiritual "body" made of all Christians all over the world, with many different languages, tongues, nationalities, and cultures.

Joshua was "old and advanced in years" when he finally conquered the Promised Land. But God had promised the land to Abraham's posterity some 600 years earlier (about 2000 B.C.). The Israelites spent over 400 years in "slavery" in Egypt from the days of Jacob until Moses and the exodus. **WHO KNOWS WHY GOD TAKES SO LONG TO DO ANYTHING?** As the apostle Paul wrote the Corinthians, "For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" (1 Cor. 2:16). Or as Isaiah the prophet wrote, "Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, as his counselor has instructed him?" (Isa. 40:13; see Rom. 11:34). Sometimes the Lord acts before human beings expect him to do so (Ezek. 12:26-28). God has a purpose in everything he does and in the "time" in which he does anything. Job had the same problem we have, when he said, "Why are not times of judgment kept by the Almighty, and why do those who know him never see his days?" (Job. 24:1). Even though Job had difficulty waiting for the Lord, he is the one who said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him" (Job 13:15). David, the "sweet singer of Israel," when he was being hunted by king Saul, and had to wait upon the Lord for deliverance, wrote, "Behold, I will bless the Lord at all times..." Psa. 34:1 and "Trust him at all times, O people pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us" Psa. 62:8. From God's perspective, "For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven" Eccl. 3:1-9 and God makes everything beautiful in its time; also he has put eternity into man's mind (Eccl. 3:10-11). **SO LET US NOT BE WEARY IN DOING GOOD KNOWING THAT ULTIMATELY AND**

INEVITABLY GOD WILL REWARD FAITH AND RIGHTEOUS OBEDIENCE TO HIS WORD!

Levi was given an inheritance! His inheritance was that in serving the Lord “full-time” he would be supported by “the offerings by fire to the Lord God of Israel” (13:14). Levites were totally occupied with the services at the Tabernacle (which were many), so the Lord provided that they should be housed, fed and clothed by the offerings of all the other tribes of Israel. God did not “slight” the Levites. In fact, they probably fared better than many of the other Israelites who brought their offerings to the Tabernacle. Many of the priests and Levites could not handle the temptations such affluence brought their way by this arrangement and became corrupt, covetous, greedy, and criminal in the way they administered the “in-take” of the Tabernacle and later the Temple. One has only to read the prophets, from Isaiah to Malachi to learn that, far from being slighted, the priests and Levites had so much “income” they surrendered to the temptation to abuse, misuse and personally profit from what they should not have touched!

What seems repetitious to human beings is deemed necessary by God! Clearly, the reason God repeats himself is that he knows human beings have a bent to forget! David, in the Psalms, keeps vowing again and again that he will not “forget” the mercies of the Lord! Jesus kept warning those who heard him preach to “let these words sink into your ears.” God holds human beings responsible for hearing, heeding, and obeying his word! So, God wants to make sure his word is plain, repeated, and understood. IT IS FOR EMPHASIS! If God says something more than once, he intends that human beings understand that what has been repeated is IMPORTANT, SERIOUS, CRUCIAL, to eternal life! Whatever God’s purpose was, he wanted his his instructions for dividing the land followed “to the T.” God deemed it necessary that he decide how the land should be parceled out—not the Israelites. Human beings are too self-centered to do God’s work without God’s instructions! That was true even in the Garden of Eden where God gave implicit instructions about Adam and Eve’s life there before sin ever came upon the scene! Boring or not, if you want to go to heaven, you’d better read the repetitious word of God, especially that in the New Testament, and obey it!

Caleb was not really “tooting his own horn” (14:6-12). Caleb was recounting what the Lord had done through him! There is a difference! Caleb was encouraging his countrymen to “wholly follow the Lord” (14:8,9) as he had done. Caleb was “volunteering” even though he was 85 years of age, and had been in the battle from “day one,” to continue to do as much as he could to occupy the Land of Promise. Evidently what Caleb was doing was not disapproved by the Lord for “Joshua blessed him” (14:13) and Caleb still had to drive the Anakim out of their great fortified cities. The struggle for the Promised Land never ceases for the Christian. It requires being “faithful unto death” to receive the “crown of life.” The Lord never disapproved of the many times the apostle Paul recounted how he had suffered for the sake of Christ (e.g. 2 Cor. 11-12). Neither Caleb nor Paul were braggarts! For some believers to “give recognition” of other believers who have labored long and faithfully in the Lord’s vineyard is encouraged in the scriptures (Ro. 16:1-16; 1 Cor. 16:15-18). It needs to be

done more often today!

Joshua was not being more “partial” to Caleb than he was to the other Israelites as he (Joshua) divided up the land. Joshua apparently cast lots to know what land to give Caleb just as he had done for all the rest of the Israelites (15:1ff). The Lord gave Joshua divine assistance in all that he did in partitioning the Promised Land—Caleb’s case was no exception to that. In fact, if anyone had deserved “special” treatment in receiving his portion of the land, it would be Caleb. He alone, of all the spies who had gone into Canaan (endangering life and limb) to spy out the land, came back with faith in the Lord in his heart and advise that the Israelites could take the whole land because God was with them. The other spies were the ones who said the men of Canaan were like giants and the Israelites were like “grasshoppers” in comparison. Caleb seems to indicate that the “Lord” spoke “on that day” (i.e., the day Caleb spied out the very land he was asking to receive) and told him which would be his land (14:12).

JOSHUA 15:1—22:34

People did many things in Caleb's time and Caleb's culture that we would not do today! One of them was that every father considered it not only his prerogative, but his duty as a father (usually by consultation with another "father" who had a son) to choose who his daughters would marry. If he had sons, other fathers would consult with him and arrangements would be made as to who his sons would marry. **IT WAS A CULTURAL THING—PRACTICED DUE TO THE EXIGENCIES OF THE TIMES.** Living nomadic, clan-ish lives there was not much opportunity for a young lady to be "courted" by just anyone! If they had any social life it was almost always limited to their immediate families. Women had little opportunity to go out among the public and evaluate who would make the best husband for them, so it was up to the "father" to make that decision. Besides, how successful has the "modern Western" process been in selecting the right mate? What do youngsters know about the right values and behavior to look for in a prospective mate? And even when they do, they usually let their testosterone and hormones over-rule their minds and reasoning processes! Caleb wasn't "bartering" his daughter! He was testing the young males of his "clan" (territory) to see which would have enough faith in God, be courageous enough, and have enough "moxie" to carry out a task or challenge as he gave it! **THAT WOULD BE THE YOUNG MAN FOR HIS DAUGHTER!** Caleb didn't want some coward and dummy for a son-in-law! We sometimes wonder if it wouldn't be better to go back to that custom (at least in Christian homes) where the parents (fathers & mothers) consulted with one another and had the "power" (because they earned it) to select the brides and grooms for their own children! **JUST A THOUGHT!**

We do not know precisely why the Israelites failed to do as God commanded (Num. 33:50-56) and "drive out" all the inhabitants of the land of Canaan. But we do know that God's promise, "if you do not drive out eh inhabitants of the land from before you, they those of them whom you let remain shall be as pricks in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall trouble you in the land where you dwell. And I will do to you as I thought to do to them" **CAME TO PASS!** We can speculate that the Israelites became too preoccupied in the settling of the land to carry out God's command to the letter; or they thought they ought to extend mercy where God had commanded it not be extended; or the Canaanite culture, religion, and depravity attracted the Israelites; or all these together probably caused them to think they knew better than God! That has been the downfall of human beings ever since the Garden of Eden—they think they know better than God about how to live their lives! Eventually, a Canaanite woman, Jezebel, became queen of the northern kingdom under Ahab the king and seduced practically the whole northern kingdom to practice idolatry and other despicable things. Jezebel's and Ahab's daughter, Athaliah, became queen of Judah (843-837 B.C.) 2 Chron. 22:10—23:21 and seduced Judah into idolatry. **JUST AS GOD HAD WARNED ALL ISRAEL** (Num. 33:55-56) this "remnant" of Canaanites that Israel allowed to remain in the land blinded them and wounded them until God had to **DRIVE ISRAEL**

OUT OF THE LAND, not once, but twice! GOD MEANS WHAT HE SAYS, AND SAYS WHAT HE MEANS—AND HE IS ABSOLUTELY SERIOUS IN WHAT HE SAYS! This goes for the New Testament church and its occasional need to “drive out” those incorrigible, impenitent members who continue, blatantly and arrogantly, in sin (Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:1ff; Titus 3:10; Rev. 2:20, etc.). To do what God says, in the way God says it, takes strong, courageous, scripturally wise, and loving leadership.

Zelophehad was a descendant of Manasseh (Manasseh was a son of Joseph, one of the “twelve” sons of Jacob). He had no sons to inherit his land. Manasseh’s heirs petitioned Moses concerning this matter (Num. 36:1-4). Moses and the elders of Israel decided that it was proper for daughters to inherit the land as long as they married men who were members of their own tribe (Num. 36:5-13). This became a statute in Israel. Such a statute prevented the woman’s inheriting land in her tribe and her husband’s inheriting land in another tribe. At the same time it gave recognition to the woman as an heiress. The five daughters are named here and in Num. ch. 36. The Old Testament was not cruel toward women! There is nothing in the O.T. that would allow women to be treated as “second class” citizens as they are treated in Islam, Bhuddism, Hinduism, or any other “ism.” AND THE NEW TESTAMENT MAINTAINS THAT SAME HIGH ELEVATION OF GODLY WOMANHOOD! After all, man is “incomplete” without woman (Gen. 2:18-19).

Willard W. Winter writes in his commentary on Studies in Joshua, Judges and Ruth, College Press, 1969, p. 226: “During World War II, sugar was rationed in the united States. A preacher told about asking for a little more sugar for his coffee as he at lunch in a restaurant. The waitress’ curt reply was, ‘Stir what you have.’ This is what Joseph told Ephraim and Manasseh to do. They were complaining that they needed more land. Joshua told them to make better use of what they had. Christians should use their talents to the fullest of their ability instead of complaining because they do not have more talents.” The Bible places no premium on idleness, laziness or dilatoriness! Those who believe in the One, True God are expected to “earn their living by the sweat of their brow.” Jesus taught that human industry as virtue in many of his parables (esp. Matt. 25:14-30; Lk. 19:11-27). The apostle Paul also said that human diligence and enterprise are required of the Christian (1 Thess. 4:10-11; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; 1 Tim. 5:8, etc.). Paul practiced what he preached! He worked with his hands as a tent-maker as his major financial support for doing the Lord’s work. That would not work, of course, in most places in America today so the teaching of the apostle in 1 Cor. 9 that those who “preach the gospel should live from the gospel.”

Joshua made clear (Josh. 18:3) why some had not received their allotment of land—THEY HAD BEEN “SLACK” IN GOING IN AND TAKING POSSESSION OF THE LAND WHICH GOD GAVE THEM! It cannot be repeated too much that as members of God’s New Testament kingdom we shall be held accountable to serve with diligence, ingenuity, hard work and integrity as Christ’s stewards of the Gospel! That includes accountability before God at the judgment for why, how and what we used of every iota of physical blessings (lands, houses, families, etc.) with which we have been entrusted! COULD IT BE POSSIBLE THAT THE CHURCH OF THE 21ST CENTURY IS NOT CONQUERING THE TERRITORY OF OUR ENEMY (SATAN) AS THOROUGHLY AS

SHE OUGHT BECAUSE SHE IS “SLACK” IN HER WARFARE?????? Remember what we have learned earlier about the need for God’s people to be a militant kingdom!

The people of Israel were not being partial to Joshua when they gave an inheritance (the city, Timnath-serah, which he asked) to him. IN FACT, Joshua was humble enough to wait until LAST to receive his rightful portion of the land. He had a right to some portion. And, according to his faithfulness and sacrifice and service to all the rest of Israel, he should have had his portion first and he should have any portion which he wished. That is the way the unbelieving world awards its heroes. But God has different ways of rewarding his servants (Matt. 20:1-16)! With God, the “last shall be first and the first last!” AND WHAT HUMAN BEING HAS THE RIGHT OR AUTHORITY TO DISAGREE WITH THE WAY GOD REWARDS???? What Joshua did in waiting until the last is a great example for the leadership of God’s New Testament church today! God’s people will be rewarded! As C. S. Lewis once wrote, “The promise of glory (God’s promise to the faithful) is the promise, almost incredible, and only possible by the work of Christ, that some of us, that any of us who really chooses, shall actually survive that examination (the judgment), shall find approval, shall please God. To please God...to be a real ingredient in the divine happiness...to be loved by God, not merely pitied, but delighted in as an artist delights in his work or a father in a son—it seems impossible, a weight or burden of glory which our thoughts can hardly sustain. But so it is!” That is exactly what Paul the apostle wrote in 2 Cor. 4:16-18. The reward to a faithful Christian is going to be “beyond all comparison.” DID YOU GET THAT? IF YOU THINK GOD’S PEOPLE WERE EXORBITANT IN REWARDING JOSHUA—WAIT UNTIL YOU GET TO HEAVEN!

The Israelites cast sacred lots (undoubtedly using the Urim and Thummim) to partition the land. Joshua, himself, was commissioned as leader of Israel with the Urim before the Lord and was invested with some of the authority of Moses (Nu. 27:18-23). They were not “gambling”—they were seeking the will and guidance of the Lord! The task before Joshua and Israel in “dividing” up the land of Canaan without partiality was mind-boggling! No human could have done it as it should have been. They cast lots seeking divine intervention in the way the “lots” would fall, so that their task could be done “decently and in order.” Doing things “decently and in order” is a principle which has always been applicable to God’s work. God is a Creator of order—not chaos (Isa. 45:18-19). The church must do its work “decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:33,40). This cannot be over emphasized in the 21st century. There is a tendency in our “post-modernist” world that there should be no order, no discipline, no decency—whatever the individual “feels” is right. Gambling, while not explicitly condemned in the Bible (i.e., there is no scripture that says, “Thou shalt not gamble”), is condemned by the principles of work, decency, “the laborer is worthy of his hire,” being dependent on no one, and by the commandments against greed, thievery, indolence, wastefulness, etc.

Cities of refuge were established for the protection of those causing accidental death. These “refuges” were provided to keep to a very minimum the possibility of “blood-feuds” between families and relatives or friends of those who might be accidentally caused to die! Moses, himself, began the establishment of such cities (Deut. 4:41-43). Joshua set aside three more such “cities of refuge” (Num. 35:1-6).

CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT KIND OF SOCIETY WOULD RESULT WHERE NO PROTECTION COULD BE AFFORDED THOSE WHO ACCIDENTALLY CAUSE THE DEATH OF OTHERS???? It would be a society where the individual who had “the fastest gun” would mete out vengeance—there would be “citizen vigilante” mobs running down everyone merely “suspected” of a crime! Throughout the history of mankind (Gen. 9:3-6; Ex. 21:12-14; Acts 25:11; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17) God has made it clear that a murderer should not go unpunished. The arrangements made in Joshua 20 followed the clear principles of God set forth for maintaining law and order in a “fallen” world—murderers should be executed, those who cause death “accidentally” (without intention to do harm) should have a refuge to which to flee until they can be examined and judgment made!

Joshua writes, “Not one of all the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass” (Josh. 21:45). **THE UTTER, ABSOLUTE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD TO KEEP HIS WORD (PROMISES) IS THE BASIS OF THE REGENERATION OF HUMAN NATURE!** Now that is an unequivocal statement, but please read 2 Peter 1:3-4. Only “through” a human’s complete trust in the precious promises God has granted to us may he escape the corruption that is in the world because of human passion (i.e., hedonism, worldly-mindedness) and become a partaker of the divine nature. Furthermore, according to Peter, God’s faithfulness to keep his promises provide the motivation for the human being to add to his character all the virtues listed by Peter in 2 Pet. 1:3-11. But the scripture text that is most significant for the Christian (and even for the saints of the OT) is that in 2 Cor. 1:20, “For all the promises of God find their Yes in him (Christ).” In other words, God’s promises of forgiveness and redemption and glory in heaven have ALL been authenticated, guaranteed, proved to be **FACTUAL** in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God put his “Amen” on all his promises in the historical deeds accomplished in Christ and the apostles and the New Testament scriptures. **THERE CAN’T BE A MORE EMPHATIC, INVIOLEATE, CERTAIN, INEXORABLE “COVENANT” SEAL THAN THE HISTORICAL DEEDS JESUS DID IN TIME, AS A HUMAN, IN HISTORY!**

The tribes east of the Jordan River build their own altar. To the rest of Israel that appeared to be a direct disobedience of the law of Moses that only ONE altar should be used for worship and sacrifice to the Lord. The eastern tribes explained their rationale (Josh. 22:22-29). They denied that they were trying to be disobedient to the law of Moses. They denied they were going to use their “eastern” altar to offer sacrifices to false gods. They said they were afraid that the rest of Israel (those tribes west of the Jordan) would exclude the eastern tribes from participating in the nation’s government, economy, fellowship and worship! The eastern tribes were afraid they would “have no portion” in the Lord! What they did nearly caused a civil war in the new nation of Israel! What the eastern tribes did may have seemed reasonable to them, but it was extremely unwise! It violated numerous principles of Christian behavior delineated in the New Testament: (a) avoid the very appearance of evil; they erected an altar which, at the very least, had the appearance of, if not actually being, a violation of the law of God (given to Moses); the apostle Paul admonishes Christians that they should avoid the very appearance of evil (2 Thess. 5:22)—in every aspect of life the Christian must be

careful of the appearances he makes; (b) zeal without knowledge is dangerous; Phinehas aroused the western tribes to go to war against the eastern tribes; without making full investigation into the matter the 10 princes who were with Phinehas were “flying off the handle!”; the accused the eastern tribes of motives that those tribes did not have; the zeal of Phinehas and the western tribes to do what they believed was right is admirable, but when zeal is based on insufficient evidence or inaccurate information, dangers of all kinds arise. Clearly these two principles of behavior need to be learned and practiced by Christians in the kingdom of God today! Paul’s admonition to Timothy that he and other Christian leaders should “never admit any charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses...” and “Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor participate in another man’s sins...” (1 Tim. 5:17-22) are applicable today. So are the instructions of Jesus about disciplining sinning members of the body in Matt. 18 and Paul’s instructions in 2 Cor. 2:5-11 and Gal. 6:1-5, etc.

JOSHUA 23:1—24:33

The philosopher George Santayana (1863-1952) said, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” How true that has been. English Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain forgot, in 1939, that evil tyrants cannot be appeased or trusted to keep their word when he tried to appease Adolph Hitler by signing a treaty allowing Hitler to occupy Austria, etc. As a result Hitler instigated a holocaust (World War II) that eventually brought about the deaths of 50 million people! The lessons of history must not be ignored—they must be taught to each generation, again and again! The very essence of “history” is that of a record of Almighty God working out his scheme of redemption through the cooperation or opposition of human beings reacting to his revealed will! **THAT’S WHAT HISTORY IS ALL ABOUT!** It was altogether proper, in fact, it was an obligation that Joshua gather Israel (many of whom who had not experience all he and his contemporaries had in the exodus and the occupation of Canaan) and teach them what they had inherited and what that heritage had cost and how active God had been in keeping his promises! **THE HISTORY OF THE HERITAGE WHICH 21ST CENTURY CHRISTIANS NOW ENJOY IS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND EXTRA-BIBLICAL HISTORIES OF THE CHURCH!** This is especially true of and significant for “Restoration Movement” Christian Churches today! **THE HISTORY OF THE “RESTORATION MOVEMENT” NEEDS TO BE TAUGHT OVER AND OVER IN CHRISTIAN CHURCHES TODAY!** Many things “change” but the will of God as revealed in the New Testament and as documented in history never changes!

Moses gave the Israelites the same imperative, solemn, urgent, unequivocal admonition that they must keep God’s commandments if they expected God’s promises to belong to them (Deut. 4:28-33). The Lord told Moses, “Oh that they (Israel) had such a mind as this always, to fear me and to keep all my commandments, that it might go well with them and with their children for ever!” Joshua (Josh. 23:6-8) reiterates what Moses had said. Why would God be so rigid and imperious as to demand that Israel do all his commandments, “turning aside from it neither to the right hand nor to the left”? **BECAUSE GOD IS OMNIPOTENT, OMNISCIENT AND OMNI-PRESENT!** God is **ABSOLUTELY** wise, holy, pure, true, faithful and loving. His word is immutable and unalterable. His word is constant, permanent and indestructible (Psa. 119:89-92; 119:160; Isa. 40:8; Matt. 24:35; 1 Pet. 1:23-25). **THEREFORE, IT WELL BEHOOVES ALL HUMAN BEINGS TO “BE CAREFUL TO DO AS THE LORD YOUR GOD HAS COMMANDED YOU; YOU SHALL NOT TURN ASIDE TO THE RIGHT HAND OR TO THE LEFT.”** In the New Testament Jesus repeatedly said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (e.g. Jn. 13:34-35; 14:23; 15:10, etc.). The Johannine epistles repeat the same admonition, “All who keep his commandments abide in him...” (e.g. 1 Jn. 2:23; 3:22-24; 5:3, etc.). While the O.T. law of Moses is fulfilled in Christ and his New Testament, and while Christians are under the obligation of grace instead of law, it does not release the Christian from keeping the commandments of Christ—IN

FACT THE MOTIVATION CHRIST'S LOVE GIVES US SHOULD HAVE MUCH MORE POWER TO RESTRAIN THE CHRISTIAN FROM EVIL AND IMPEL HIM TO DO GOOD (2 Cor. 5:14-21).

Joshua was not a "racist"! Joshua was a believer in God! God is the one who gave the Israelites the commandment that they should not marry any of the foreign, idolatrous people of the land of Canaan (Josh. 23:11–13)! Race had nothing to do with Joshua's warning---religion had everything to do with it! Moses married a Midianite. Certainly, Rahab must have married an Israelite. Joseph married an Egyptian priest's daughter! Boaz would marry a Moabitess, Ruth. But all these "foreigners" were believers in the One True God! God's restriction that the Israelites not be "mixed" with any of the Canaanites they had not drive out of the land was to make it less likely that the Israelites would serve Canaanite gods (idols). BUT THE DAMAGE HAD BEEN DONE WHEN THE ISRAELITES HAD NOT DRIVE EVERY CANAANITE OUT OF THEIR LAND! Eventually, Israelites began to think they saw some rationale for worshiping the idols of their heathen neighbors—and that led to them becoming worse than the heathen around them (see Jer. 2:10-13; 18:13-17, etc.). The same principle holds true for the Christian today. It is not another race but another religion the Christian must not "mix" with (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

The Lord promised Israel (Josh. 23:15-16) that if they deviated from his commandments to worship false gods he would destroy them! AND GOD KEPT THAT PROMISE! Read the O.T. prophets, and Jesus' pronouncement of doom upon the Jews in Matt. 23 and 24. The same promise holds true in the New Testament! Those who worshiped idols, whether they had been heathen or Christian, in the times predicted in the book of Revelation (A.D. 100-500) WERE DESTROYED. Anyone who "worship the beast—false prophet—and harlot" suffered the judgment of God then, and forevermore (if they did not repent) (see Rev. 9:20-21; 14:9-12; 18:1-24; 19:17-21; 20:1-10; 22:18-19, etc.). Those who attempt to be justified before God through any system, religion, process OTHER THAN FAITH IN CHRIST AND OBEDIENCE TO HIS APOSTOLIC COMMANDMENTS (IN THE NEW TESTAMENT) are "worthless and their end is to be burned" (Heb. 6:1-8). Anyone who has spurned the Son of God, and profaned the blood of the covenant (New Covenant) by which he was sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace" falls into the hands of the living God and a fearful prospect of judgment and a fury of fire which will consume the adversaries (Heb. 10:26-31).

One of the most moving poems in the English language is Rudyard Kipling's "Recessional." It was written for the second jubilee of Queen Victoria. Everyone expected a poem of praise for the Queen. Instead, Kipling called the nation to remember things forgotten. He wrote, "Lo all of our pomp of yesterday is one with Nineveh and Tyre." In every stanza the same refrain is repeated, "Lest we forget! Lest we forget!" Some sage has said, "A man's real possession is his memory. In nothing else is he rich; in nothing else is he poor." GOD WANTS HIS WORD TO BE REMEMBERED. THE BEST WAY TO MAKE IT REMEMBERED IS TO REPEAT IT! God told the Israelites, "And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down,

and when you rise” (Deut. 6:4-9). ISRAEL DID NOT PRACTICE THIS URGENT PLEA FROM GOD, AND THEIR CHILDREN TURNED INTO IDOLATERS! There are numerous admonitions in the New Testament that Christians should teach, teach, teach, and teach again the doctrines of Christ and the apostles. Paul admonished Timothy and Titus to give themselves to the study of God’s word (1 Tim. 4:6; 4:11-16; 6:2-21; 2 Tim. 2:1-19; 3:14-17; 4:1-5; Titus 2:1-10; 2:15; 3:8-14, etc.). When the intelligence gathering ship, the USS PUEBLO was captured by North Korea, the crew was imprisoned. The North Koreans would not permit their captives to have Bibles. The men of the PUEBLO put together a Bible from memory. Each recalled what verses he could. They wrote them on bits and pieces of paper. If your only Bible consisted of the verses you can remember, how much would you have? The very essence of teaching to learn is repetition! Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote, “Men get opinions as boys learn to spell; By reiteration chiefly.”

Joshua told the people of Israel, “And if you be unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether they gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Josh. 24:15). THE BIBLE CLEARLY AND REPEATEDLY TEACHES THAT HUMAN BEINGS HAVE THE AWESOME POWER OF CHOICE! Nowhere does the Bible teach that any human being is predetermined to be saved or lost against their willing choice! Nowhere does the Bible teach that the Holy Spirit and the grace of God are irresistible! THE VERY FACT THAT GOD HAS REVEALED HIS WILL IN THE BIBLE AND IN IT ADMONISHES HUMAN BEINGS TO KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS PROVES THAT HUMAN BEINGS HAVE THE INVIOABLE POWER TO CHOOSE WHETHER TO DO SO OR NOT! God is really going to give us what WE choose—eternal life or eternal death! THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE THE CHOICE IS SUPPLIED BY GOD—THE RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE THE CHOICE BELONGS TO THE HUMAN BEING! God not only supplies the opportunity (in the redemptive work of Christ) for human beings to choose eternal life, he also gives the motivation—his love as manifested in Christ’s death and resurrection (2 Cor. 5:14-21). We find out how to serve him and which choices to make in ONLY ONE PLACE—HIS ETERNAL WORD, THE BIBLE!

Indeed, a father can choose for the rest of the family—if the rest of the family has been nurtured, taught the word of God, disciplined, and most of all, loved! A family so loved and cared for and wisely guided will willingly allow the father to make the final choices for it! It is always wise for a father to consider any and all other opinions offered by the mother and children old enough and educated enough to have serious opinions. BUT ULTIMATELY IT IS THE FATHER’S RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE THE CHOICES FOR THE FAMILY! This has always been the structure for the home from the very beginning in the Garden of Eden. One major reason for the fall of mankind is that after Eve made the first bad decision in the family in Eden, Adam, the husband, did not overturn her rebellious decision—he went along with it! 1 Corinthians chapter 11 is the apostolic doctrine on the proper structure for the family! It is the father’s God-ordained responsibility to make final choices for the family. He will be held accountable before God as to whether he has fulfilled his obligation or whether he has defaulted on it! America in the 21st century is reaping a whirlwind of harvest from the wind of “one-

parent” families it has sown! Fathers are not to be tyrannical. They should now “brow-beat” or abuse their families in assuming leadership. They must be leaders in the spirit of Christ—loving, firm, wise, godly, and role-modeling (i.e., practicing what they preach). **THEN THEY WILL HAVE NO PROBLEM BEING THE “DECISION-MAKER” FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!**

Joshua is not being sarcastic by saying, “You cannot serve the Lord; for he is a holy God”! He qualifies this statement with his next statement, “he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins...If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods then he will turn and do you harm and consume you, after having done you good.” (Josh. 24:19-20). They still had foreign gods among them (24:23). With that evidence staring Joshua in the face, it was pretty clear to him that Israel was in no state of mind to serve the Lord! He must impress upon them that they cannot serve two masters—they must repent and cast out their false gods and cast off their impenitent attitudes. Joshua is telling the people that they **MUST BE HOLY THEMSELVES** if they expect to serve Jehovah, for **HE IS A HOLY GOD!** They must separate themselves from all around them that is contrary to God’s law! Ungodliness and depravity may be all around them but they must not, for one moment, indulge in it or covet it! They must abhor the very appearance of evil. They must consecrate and dedicate and commit themselves to knowing, loving, and doing what God has laid down in his revealed law! Twice the Israelites **VOW** to Joshua that they will not forsake Jehovah to serve other gods (Josh. 24:16,21). Joshua’s statement is a warning that they have **VOWED** to consecrate themselves exclusively to Jehovah and they shall be “witnesses against themselves that they have chosen the Lord to serve” (24:22).

Yes! Almost 100 years after the exodus from Egypt some of the Israelites still had “foreign gods” (idols). Why? The stark reality of the unyielding, uncompromising **TRUTH OF ALMIGHTY GOD** is unpalatable to the flesh! The fleshly nature of the human being is bent toward indulgence, pampering, perpetuating itself. “For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, indeed it cannot; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:7). Ever since Eve “set her mind on the flesh” (Gen. 3) her progeny have been born into circumstances and surroundings that the devil uses (through the fear of death) to bring them into bondage to the fleshly mind-set (see Heb. 2:14-18). There has only been **ONE HUMAN BEING** who has lived in these earthly circumstances who has been able to conquer the power of the devil and set his mind totally on things of the Spirit. That **ONE** is Jesus Christ. He turned human nature around for us! He offers that redeemed human nature to us by grace. We may become partakers of the divine nature and escape the corruption that is in the world by trusting in his precious promises, loving them, and obeying his commandments. **THAT IS THE ONLY ESCAPE FROM IDOLATRY AND HOSTILITY TOWARD THE LAW OF GOD—FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST AND LOVING OBEDIENCE TO HIS COMMANDS.** “The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.” These Israelites vowed, but they broke their vow, because they neglected the law of God through which the Spirit of God works on the human mind and heart to turn it from fleshly hostility to spiritual surrender (see Col. 2:20—3:17).

Joshua clearly “added” his book of the history of Israel’s occupation of Canaan

to the “law” of God. The “law” of God is not restricted to Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. According to David, the O.T. prophets, Jesus and the apostles, the “law” of God includes the entire Old Testament scriptures as we know them today in the “Protestant” Bible. Jesus summed up the entire Old Testament in Luke 24:44 when he said, “These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.” Paul calls “law” what Isaiah wrote in Isa. 28:11-12 (see 1 Cor. 14:21). So, the “statutes and ordinances” Joshua “wrote in the book of the law of God” (Josh. 24:25-26) were sanctioned by God as part of his “law” for the Old Covenant—even though much of it was simply history! God’s “law” beyond that written by Moses in the Pentateuch had to do with what God had commanded them about driving out the Canaanites, their not taking any of the devoted “things,” their dividing up of the land, etc. Actually, the “law” of God for Israel was not completed until Malachi wrote his book of prophecy (the last book of the O.T.). And the “law of Christ” (see 1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 2:3) was not completed until John wrote the book of Revelation. **BUT WITH THE WRITING OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION, GOD’S “LAW” FOR ALL HUMANKIND, FOR ALL TIME, IS THE “FAITH ONCE FOR ALL DELIVERED UNTO THE SAINTS”** (Jude 3). No additions or subtractions from the completed “faith once for all delivered” are now allowed by God (see Rev. 22:18-19).

Introduction to Paul T. Butler Th.D

Paul was born in Springfield Missouri and graduated from Conway High School prior to enlistment in the US Navy. He began serious bible study with correspondence courses from San Jose Bible College. He later enrolled in Ozark Bible College and acquired his Bachelor of Theology degree June of 1961. He received a Master of Biblical Literature degree from Ozark in May of 1973. He received a Doctorate of Theology from The Theological University of America in October of 1990.

Paul taught at Ozark Christian College from 1960 to 1997. He also served many years as registrar for the college.

Introduction to the Sound Bible Study project.

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