

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY:

JOSHUA

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PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

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Duncan Heaster

JOSHUA CHAPTER 1

Jos 1:1 After the death of Moses the servant of Yahweh, Yahweh spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying-

I would consider the book of Joshua to have largely been written by Joshua, under Divine inspiration, although edited [again under Divine inspiration] for the exiles. And the book of Judges likewise. For the exiles too were set to reestablish God's Kingdom in the land and to inherit it again as the Israelites first did. The phrase "to this day" occurs several times in Joshua / Judges, and appears to have different points of historical reference (Josh. 4:9; 5:9; 6:25; 7:26; 8:28,29; 9:27; 10:27; 13:13; 14:14; 15:63; 16:10; 22:3; 23:8,9; Jud. 1:26; 6:24; 10:4; 15:19; 18:12). I would explain this by saying that the book was edited a number of times and the remains of those edits remain in the text. For God's word is living and made relevant by Him to every generation.

Jos 1:2 Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise-

The Messianic prophecy of Dt. 18:18 had a potential Messianic and primary fulfillment in Joshua: "I will raise them up [God 'rose up' Joshua- s.w. Josh. 1:2; 7:10,13; 8:1,3] a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee [Joshua's life was framed to be like that of Moses- e.g. he too was told to remove his shoe when on holy ground, also held his hands up whilst

Israel fought their enemies]; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him [Joshua is constantly presented as telling Israel what God commanded him- Josh. 4:8,10,17; 6:10; 8:8: “according to the commandment of the Lord shall ye do. See, I have commanded you”; Josh. 8:27]. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him”.

Go over this Jordan, you, and all this people, to the land which I give to them, even to the children of Israel-

This was a primary fulfilment of the promises to Abraham, and we too experience that. For the covenant is not only about 'jam tomorrow'. In a sense, the promises that the seed *would* inherit the land, and that God *would be* their God were fulfilled straight after God said them. He became Isaac's God (Gen. 31:42,53 refer to this), the God of Abraham's son. Time and again God reminds Israel that He *is* their God. And that land in a sense *was* given to the Jewish fathers (Gen. 15:18; Dt. 28:63; 30:5 NIV; Josh. 1:2-9; 21:43; 1 Kings 4:20,21). David could praise God simply because He was "my God" (Ps. 118:28)- an allusion back to the Abrahamic promise. Of course, the *main* fulfillment of this promise will be in the Kingdom; but in principle, the promise has *already* been fulfilled to Abraham's seed- i.e., us!

Jos 1:3 I have given you every place that the sole of your foot will tread on, as I told Moses-

This meant that according to their spiritual ambition, so would be their inheritance of the Kingdom, as Moses had told them (Dt. 11:24,25). The temptation for them, as for us, was to consider that once we have our small inheritance, our farmstead and secure land, as it was for them- then we need have no wider vision. For to go onwards from that parochial mentality and tread upon the entire land (:4) up to the Euphrates was a vision only worth pursuing if they had a vision of collective inheritance of the Kingdom. To seek to get others there is a call which few really perceive. See on Josh. 3:13.

Jos 1:4 From the wilderness, and this Lebanon, even to the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your border-

God's opening commission to Joshua was that the people were to possess the whole land promised to Abraham, right up to the Euphrates. But Joshua ended up drawing up the borders of the land far smaller than these; he didn't even seek to subdue the territory up to the Euphrates, even though God had promised him potential success and even commanded him to do so. See on :3,6,15.

Jos 1:5 No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not fail you nor forsake you-

But these very words are quoted in Heb. 13:5 as the grounds of our matchless confidence that the Lord God will be with us too! As He was with Moses- not just in power, but in wondrous patience and gentleness- so He will be with us too. Not only did God encourage Joshua to see himself as in Moses' shoes; He inspired Jeremiah likewise (Jer. 21:8 = Dt. 30:15,19), and Ezekiel (Ez. 2:3 = Dt. 31:27; Neh. 9:17; Num. 17:10); and He wishes us to also see Moses' God as our God. But if Moses' God is to be ours in truth in the daily round of life, we must rise up to the dedication of Moses; as he was a faithful steward, thoroughly dedicated to God's ecclesia (Heb. 3:5), so we are invited follow his example (1 Cor. 4:2; Mt. 24:45). Note that the promise of Moses that God would not fail nor forsake Joshua, but would be with him (Dt. 31:8) was similar to the very promise given to Moses which he had earlier doubted (Ex. 3:12; 4:12,15). Such exhortation is so much the stronger from someone who has themselves doubted and then come to believe.

We may boldly say that we will *not* be fearful, as Joshua was, because God has addressed to *us* the very words which He did to Joshua: “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5,6). In this especially, Joshua is our example. When Heb. 13:13 speaks of *us* going forth outside the camp, perhaps there is a reference to Joshua who dwelt with Moses outside the camp- thus making Joshua symbolic of us all.

Watch out for quotations and allusions within Scripture; there are connections not only between New and Old Testaments, but also (e.g.) between Paul's letters; Peter alludes to Paul's writings, Paul frequently alludes to the words of John the Baptist; Jeremiah often refers to Job's words and experiences. Note the context of the source quotation, because this often sheds light on the passage in which it is quoted. Be aware that many NT passages mix a number of OT passages in one 'quotation'; e.g. "The deliverer will come from Zion" (Rom. 11:26) is a conflated quotation of Ps. 14:7; 53:6 and Is. 59:20. And Heb. 13:5 combines quotes from Gen. 28:15; Josh. 1:5 and Dt. 31:16. Heb. 13:5 doesn't quote any of them exactly, but mixes them together.

Jos 1:6 Be strong and courageous; for you shall cause this people to inherit the land which I swore to their fathers to give them-

God's opening commission to Joshua was that the people were to possess the whole land promised to Abraham, right up to the Euphrates (Josh. 1:4). But Joshua ended up drawing up the borders of the land far smaller than these; he didn't even seek to subdue the territory up to the Euphrates, even though God had promised him potential success and even commanded him to do so. Joshua was to divide up the whole land promised to Abraham, amongst the tribes of Israel (Josh. 1:6). And yet in the extensive descriptions of Joshua dividing up the land, we don't find him dividing up that whole territory up to the Euphrates. He seems to have lacked that vision, and fallen into the mire of minimalism, just content with a utilitarian, small scale conquest, rather than seeing the bigger picture of the potential Kingdom which God wanted to give His people. See on :3,4,15.

Joshua is repeatedly made parallel with Israel; his victories were theirs; what he achieved is counted to them. In the same way, the people of the Lord Jesus are counted as Him. Joshua was to be strong and possess the land (Josh. 1:6), just as they had been told to do, using the same Hebrew words (Dt. 11:8). Indeed, Israel and Joshua are given parallel charges, to be strong and of good courage to take the land (Dt. 31:6,7). Both Israel and Joshua are given the same charge to keep the words of the covenant, that they might “prosper” (Dt. 29:9; Josh. 1:7).

Jos 1:7 Only be strong and very courageous to observe to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded you. Don't turn from it to the right hand or to the left-

Joshua is repeatedly made parallel with Israel; his victories were theirs; what he achieved is counted to them. In the same way, the people of the Lord Jesus are counted as Him. Joshua was to be strong and possess the land (Josh. 1:6), just as they had been told to do, using the same Hebrew words (Dt. 11:8). Indeed, Israel and Joshua are given parallel charges, to be strong and of good courage to take the land (Dt. 31:6,7). Both Israel and Joshua are given the same charge to keep the words of the covenant, that they might “prosper” (Dt. 29:9; Josh. 1:7). See on Is. 59:21.

As God charged him to be courageous and obedient to the book of the Law, so Joshua on his deathbed charged his people (Josh. 1:7,8 cp. 23:6). Joshua had faithfully followed, and now he became the leader who was to be faithfully followed. Likewise, he led the Israelites in battle whilst Moses stood on the hill with arms uplifted in prayer for his success. And in

capturing Ai, it was Joshua's turn to stand on a hill with arms uplifted [also in prayer?] whilst Israel fought.

That you may prosper wherever you go-

Joshua potentially could have been the Jesus-Messiah figure, leading Israel into what could have become the Kingdom of God. He could have given the people rest; but he didn't. Yet the possibilities and prophecies relating to Joshua were then reinterpreted and fulfilled in another 'Jesus', the Son of God. Solomon was another case of this. God's servant Joshua was intended to "prosper" (Josh. 1:7); but in the end it was the Lord Jesus through His death who was the servant who would "deal prudently" [s.w. 'prosper', Is. 52:13]. And so, in His foreknowledge, God spoke of "another day" when His begotten Son would give "rest", fulfilling what Joshua could potentially have achieved, and so much more (Heb. 4:8). The lesson for us is that so much has been potentially prepared for us to achieve. Our salvation may not necessarily depend upon achieving all those things, but all the same, so much potentially is possible which we refuse to reach up to, because we are petty minimalists, like Israel, satisfied with their little farm in the valley, rather than seeking to possess the fullness of the Kingdom prepared for them.

Jos 1:8 This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written therein. Thus you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success-

In Ps. 1:1-3, David makes several allusions to Joshua. He speaks of how the man who meditates in God's word day and night will prosper in his ways; and he uses the very same Hebrew words as found in Josh. 1:8 in recounting God's charge to Joshua. But David's point is that the man who does these things will not "walk in the counsel of the ungodly"- he won't give in to peer pressure. The fact that Joshua was wrongly influenced by his peers in later life would indicate that he didn't keep the charge given to him.

Try to memorize Scripture, run through verses as you go about life, play tapes of Bible studies or Bible reading in the background (instead of the mindless radio). Much of Scripture was probably memorized by various contemporary believers. "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth" (Josh. 1:8) presumably means that Joshua was commanded to keep reciting it to himself in daily life, so that he would be obedient to it. The way Jeremiah consciously and unconsciously quotes and alludes to Job would suggest that he had memorized that book. And many of the Psalms are written in such a way (in Hebrew) as to be easily memorized. David memorized God's law and meditated upon it (hardly the easiest part of Scripture to memorize, at least to Western eyes; Ps. 119:16). He recited it to himself in the night seasons.

As Joshua had been told to be strong and of good courage in order to take the land, so he had to tell others (Josh. 10:25).

This connection between Joshua and Israel is developed in Is. 59:21, which describes the new covenant which God will make with Israel in the Messianic Kingdom in terms evidently reminiscent of Joshua- as if the new covenant was made with him, thereby enabling him potentially to be part of a Messianic Kingdom even in his day: "And as for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord: my Spirit that is upon thee ["Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him" Dt. 34:9; Num. 27:18-23], and my words which I have put in thy mouth [Dt. 18:18- God's words were put in Joshua's mouth], shall not depart out of thy mouth ["this book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth", Josh. 1:8, s.w.], nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever".

Jos 1:9 Haven't I commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Don't be afraid, neither be dismayed: for Yahweh your God is with you wherever you go-

The idea being, as discussed on :3, that wherever they went, they would have victory and take the land for themselves. The various towns in our lives may be alcoholism, the struggle to forgive, gentleness, patience, or whatever seems so insuperable. It is God's eager desire that we should inherit the Kingdom, and so we need not fear (Lk 12:32). The command to be strong and courageous is understood by David as meaning "be of good courage, and He will strengthen your heart" (Ps. 27:4; 31:24). It is not so much a call for human strength and bravery, as to open our hearts to the strengthening of His Spirit.

Jos 1:10 Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying-

"Officers" is literally 'the scribes'. It could refer to those who had a record of the people from the latest census, and could therefore better organize them. But we wonder if it refers to those who had already been set up to keep copies of God's law and interpret it to the people. And yet their work was not academic, just as true Bible study can never be an academic discipline. They were to in practice prepare the people to enter the land and conquer Canaan.

Jos 1:11 Pass through the midst of the camp, and command the people, saying, 'Prepare food; for within three days you are to pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which Yahweh your God gives you to possess' -

The "three days" period sends the mind to the Lord's resurrection, which was what gives us ultimate entry into Canaan. Preparing food in advance was a new discipline for people who had lived for decades on the daily provision of manna by God every morning. That this need to "prepare food" should be recorded gives absolute circumstantial credibility to the record. Such a command would have been absolutely necessary. These things really happened. The exodus from Egypt had been in haste, so that they had no time to "prepare food" (Ex. 12:39). They had left Egypt because of push factors. Now, they were to be motivated by the pull factor of the Kingdom, and were not being thrust out in haste, but rather entering the Kingdom on their own terms.

These three days may be those of Josh. 3:1,2. The order to prepare food was given on 7th Nisan, as they crossed Jordan on the 10th. The spies would have been on their mission between the 5th and 8th Nisan.

Jos 1:12 Joshua spoke to the Reubenites and to the Gadites and to the half-tribe of Manasseh saying-

They had received their inheritance to the east of Jordan, because they were attracted by the rich pasture there for their many flocks and herds (Num. 32:16,24). This had been on the agreement that they would help the rest of Israel to inherit their inheritances too.

Jos 1:13 Remember the word which Moses the servant of Yahweh commanded you saying, 'Yahweh your God will give you rest, and will give you this land-

After the pattern of the Reubenites, we have been given the promised rest of the Kingdom here and now (Josh. 1:13 cp. Heb. 4:3); but we will, like them, only take possession of that inheritance after we have ensured that our brethren have received their possession (Josh. 1:15). Josh. 1:13,15 present a paradox: the Reubenites were given their "rest", but they would only get their "rest" once their brethren had. Those Reubenites really were symbols of us: for this passage is surely behind the reasoning of Heb. 4, where we are told that we have entered into rest, but that we must labour if we want to enter into it.

Jos 1:14 Your wives, your little ones and your livestock shall live in the land which Moses gave you beyond the Jordan; but all your mighty men of valour shall pass over before your brothers, armed, and shall help them-

This was no small sacrifice, because it left their much beloved flocks, as well as their women

and children, without protection. That is the significance of the agreement that "all" their soldiers were to pass over Jordan. And they were to be in the front line, "before your brothers", forming the vanguard. Further, their inheritances east of Jordan were huge, and included areas inhabited by giants and strong enemies. So the agreement required them to live by faith in God's protection far more than did the other tribes. Their attempted short cut to the Kingdom didn't work, it ended up with far greater challenge to their faith. And that is true to this day.

Jos 1:15 until Yahweh has given your brothers rest, as He has given you, and they have also possessed the land which Yahweh your God gives them. Then you shall return to the land of your possession and settle it, which Moses the servant of Yahweh gave you beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise'-

See on :13. Joshua didn't give the people rest (Heb. 4:8); but he said he had (Josh. 22:4). He failed to fulfil the potential of Josh. 1:13-15- that *he* would lead the people to "rest". The Messianic Kingdom could, perhaps, have come through Joshua-Jesus; but both Joshua and Israel would not. Dt. 1:38 states clearly that "Joshua... he shall cause Israel to inherit [s.w. possess]" the land. Yet by the end of Joshua's life, Israel were not inheriting the land in totality. He didn't live up to his potential. Note, in passing, that God's prophecy here was conditional, although no condition is actually stated at the time. See on :4,6.

Jos 1:16 They answered Joshua saying, All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go-

As noted on :14, the demands on them were a great test of faith. That they agreed and didn't seek to renege on the agreement is therefore the more commendable.

Jos 1:17 Just as we listened to Moses in all things, so will we listen to you. Only may Yahweh your God be with you as He was with Moses-

This was surely an exaggeration, as Israel had not been obedient to Moses "in all things".

Jos 1:18 Whoever rebels against your commandment, and doesn't listen to your words in all that you command him, he shall be put to death. Only be strong and courageous-

They now encourage Joshua themselves, perhaps sensing his weakness and nervousness. There is repeated encouragement to be strong and of a good courage and not be fearful (Dt. 31:23; Josh. 1:6,7,8,18). What does this imply about Joshua? He could perhaps have potentially been 'Jesus', as his name means, the Messiah figure. But he failed, perhaps because of his fear, and so this possibility was reapplied and rescheduled to the Lord Jesus. Hebrews effectively makes this point, saying that although Joshua gave the people "rest", in fact he didn't ultimately; and so his work was fulfilled only in the Lord Jesus.

Joshua had been charged to be strong, of good courage, not fearful nor be dismayed. Yet he had a tendency to forget those charges, the implications of his having been called by God for a purpose; and needed to be reminded of them as he forgot or lost faith in them. Perhaps this is why he is an otherwise surprising omission from the list of faithful men and women in Hebrews 11. And here of course is the challenge to us. We too have been given commissions and callings. Whether it be to raise a Godly family, to establish an ecclesia in a certain place, to overcome a specific vice...the obstacles will flee before us, every place where the soles of our feet rest, will be blessed...if we truly believe in God's purpose with us. Yet like Joshua, we usually fail to have a full faith in this. We get distracted by the views of others, peer pressure, worried by lack of resources, discouraged by setbacks; when it is belief in God's most basic initial promises to us that will overcome them. Joshua's fear is all the more reprehensible when we consider the testimony of Ps. 91. Here Moses speaks about Joshua,

the one who dwelt in the secret place or tabernacle of God (Ps. 91:1 = Ex. 33:11), and who therefore was miraculously preserved throughout the wilderness wanderings. Thousands of Joshua's generation died at his side from the various plagues which wasted out his generation during those wanderings; but they never came near him (Ps. 91:5-8). As a result of this, he was commanded by Moses to "not be afraid" (Ps. 91:5), perhaps Moses was thinking specifically about peer pressure, with the assurance that truly God would hear Joshua's prayers (Ps. 91:14,15). His amazing preservation during the wilderness years ought to have instilled a faith and lack of fearfulness within him; and yet the implication is that he did very often fall prey to fearfulness in later life. Just as with us, the circumstances of earlier life are controlled by the Father to give us faith with which to cope with later crises; but we don't always learn the lessons we are intended to.

JOSHUA CHAPTER 2

Jos 2:1 Joshua the son of Nun secretly sent two men out of Shittim as spies, saying, Go, view the land, including Jericho. They went and came into the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab, and slept there.

The spies were sent out "secretly". I'd argue that the sending out of the 12 spies about 40 years earlier was essentially a lack of faith- in the fact that God's Angel had gone ahead of them anyway to spy out the land, and Yahweh Himself had told Israel how good the land was. Likewise here- the spies actually achieved nothing in military terms, because God's strategy for taking Jericho didn't depend upon anything they did nor found out. But their weakness in undertaking the mission was used to save Rahab and her family, just as God works so often. They were instructed to "go see the land", but instead they "go ['went'] and came into the house of a prostitute". The planned reconnaissance didn't happen; the spies learnt nothing that influenced the strategy for taking Jericho. It could even be enquired whether in fact these two "young men" [Heb., LXX "youths"] simply went absent without leave from their mission, and went in to her brothel exactly in order to sleep with her. The missionaries away from home and out of sight of their elders... sleep with a whore [think of the origin of 'the missionary position']. Or try to. We will later note that the word used for 'slept there' has a distinctly sexual sense. In the natural order of things they would hardly have 'slept' much that nerve wracking night, if we take 'slept' as just referring to sleeping and nothing sexual. Perhaps the secrecy involved a sense that this was in fact not really a very spiritual decision and Joshua was somehow furtive about it. Israel had never known urban life nor perhaps even seen walled cities like Jericho. The spies entered the city at evening time, and the gate was shut. Strangers always attract attention in such places- let alone when the city was in the direct line of attack of the Hebrews. The language / accent of the two spies would've given them away. According to the record in Joshua 2, it seems they entered the city gates at dusk, the gates were shut, and they'd have perceived that they were being watched and had been noticed as suspicious strangers. And so they used some desperate initiative, and dived into a whorehouse nearby to the gate. This was the sort of place strangers would go to, as it would be today. We imagine them entering the house, and meeting the madame of the house. "What do you want?" was as dumb a question as the doctor asking the patient "How are you feeling today?". Rahab was a smart woman, accustomed to strangers, and knew what was going on. Within the first couple of sentences, she'd have figured who they were. And it seems they spoke for a short time, maybe an hour or so, realized they were busted, understood they were in a death trap within that walled city, and threw themselves on her mercy. And there, providence kicked in.

James 2:25 calls those men "messengers", with a message Rahab believed. They hardly had an hour to tell her the message, before men were knocking on the door enquiring what Rahab knew about the spies. In that brief time, she believed a very sketchy and incomplete Gospel of the Kingdom. And her works reflected that faith, in telling the men [whom local culture would've barred from entering the house of a single woman] that the spies had come and gone. "That was *quick!*", we can imagine the King's men joking. There was weakness and dysfunction all around this story. The men "lodged" with Rahab (Josh. 2:1)- but the Hebrew term is often translated "slept with..." in a sexual context. In fact, whenever the term is used in relation to a woman, let alone a prostitute, it implies intercourse. As a word it does mean simply to sleep... but it is strange that no other term for 'lodging the night' is used, and that the term in the context of a female or prostitute does usually carry a sexual meaning. Whilst I don't believe the spies did sleep with Rahab, it's strange that no other word for 'lodging' is used. The ambiguity is, I suggest, purposeful. But they and their message were 'welcomed in peace' by Rahab (Heb. 11:31), she 'received' their message and justified herself by works by protecting them (James 2:25). This would contribute to an overall theme in the book of Joshua of Israel's weakness- the land wasn't fully possessed, Joshua appears himself as weak in many ways, he didn't fully follow the admittedly hard-to-follow act of Moses, Rahab believed the very words of promise which Israel didn't believe, the spies were sent out secretly by Joshua with no command from God to do this, when God had promised to go before Israel and give them victory... and yet God worked through all this. Even to the extent of using the weakness of the spies in going in to a brothel and "sleeping" with the madame... in order to save that woman and her family, and the lives of the spies, all in a manner which through human weakness glorified the God of Israel. Rahab had an extensive knowledge of parts of Moses' words and law, and this was the basis for her faith. Yet where did she, a whore in Jericho, get that knowledge from? Presumably from her clients, who would've been travellers who had heard these things and passed them on to her. All this is wonderful encouragement for all sinners- that God has a way of working through sin to His glory, and He doesn't give up so easily with human weakness.

Mt. 1:4 records that Salmon married Rahab. Salmon was of the tribe of Judah, because this is the genealogy through Judah (Mt. 1:2). The two spies who had been faithful the first time when spies were sent out were Joshua and Caleb- of the tribes of Ephraim and Judah (Num. 13:6; Jud. 2:9). It seems a fair guess that when the two spies were sent out, they were from these same two tribes; see on :23. Salmon was a prince of the tribe of Judah- it's a fair guess that he was one of the two spies who went to Rahab, and he subsequently married her.

Jos 2:2 The king of Jericho was told, Behold, men of the children of Israel came in here tonight to spy out the land!-

Their dress would likely have been unusual, having worn the same clothes and shoes throughout the wilderness journeys. And they would maybe have asked a few people on the street for directions and their accent and language would have given them away. They would have been spotted going in to Rahab's house.

Jos 2:3 The king of Jericho sent to Rahab saying, Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered into your house; for they have come to spy out all the land- We have an example here of how a king's representatives are spoken of himself personally. This is why the Lord Jesus can be called "God" because he functions as

God's representative; but this doesn't make Him God Himself in person in a Trinitarian sense.

Jos 2:4 The woman took the two men and concealed them. Then she said, Yes, the men came to me, but I don't know where they came from-

There are times when circumstances do change the appropriacy of behaviour which in more normal life we should practice. Take lying as an example. To lie is wrong. We should be truthful. Of course. But think of Rahab. She lied- and her lie and acts of deception are quoted in the New Testament as acts of faith! Further, Rahab implied that the Israelite spies were her clients- "there came men unto me" (Josh. 2:4) appears to be a euphemism- and she gave the impression that of course, as they were merely passing clients, how did she know nor care who they were nor where they went? Her male interrogators would've found it hard to press her further for information after she said that. So she not only lied but she gave the impression that the messengers of the Kingdom of God were immoral- in order to protect both them and her. Of course the way she left a red cord hanging from her window, as if almost inviting people to imagine the spies had been let down over the wall from her home on the wall, was a tremendous act of faith and witness by her, but she presumably kept to her story that they were her anonymous clients. For she was still living in her home when the city was taken. Her witness was thus an indirect one to those who wished to perceive it, but it was made within the context of a major series of untruths. The Hebrew midwives lied to the Egyptians- and were blessed for it. And we could give other examples. If we probe further, and ask *why* such lies were acceptable and even required, we find that often those lies were connected with saving life. To do anything that would cause the loss of human life when it is in our power to save it is dangerously close to murder. If it is in the power of our hand to do good, surely we should. Otherwise we are likely to be saying "Be warmed and filled!", yet do nothing. We do of course emphasize the need for prayer- and we have arranged days of prayer and fasting for these cases. But this does not absolve us from the need for action. Rather, it seems, do those prayers open up ways practically for us to seek our brethren's good.

There are times when we marvel at God's way of working. Rahab as a prostitute was the only person who could say with credibility that yes, men came into my home- but I have absolutely no idea who they were or where they came from. And her male interrogators would have had to avert their eyes from her gaze and shrug and leave her. For they could say no more to that implied comment that "What? You ask me of all women that question?! In my profession you don't ask those questions, didn't you realize that...".

Jos 2:5 It happened about the time of the shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out. Where the men went I don't know. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them-

Here she moves into telling untruths; see on :3,4 for the discussion of that. For her lies are cited in Hebrews and James as an example of her faith and works in response to that faith. "Overtake" is the word for ability or possibility. She is implying that surely if they are true men, they will have the strength to chase after these spies and catch them. She was an expert in male psychology. And they obeyed her (:7).

Jos 2:6 But she had brought them up to the roof, and hid them under the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order on the roof-

We imagine the spies panicked once inside the walled city, with their clothing and

accent / language making it so obvious they were foreigners. With the Israelites only a short distance away across the river, everyone was fearful of spies. And they realized they had no way out. So they in desperation ran into a whore house. And it seems Rahab immediately perceived who they were, and figured they were in danger. For they were noticed entering her house in the evening (:3), and the gate was closed in the evening (:5,7), when the pursuers chased after the spies [as they thought]. So she hid them immediately they knocked on her door. Their desperate prayers for deliverance were heard in this unusual way. She would have heard of the Israelites and their God, perhaps from her clients who would have been travellers. And she desperately wanted to connect with their God. But she was stuck in Jericho, and stuck in a life of sin. It would have seemed impossible to make the connection with Him she so desired. But then two of His representatives came knocking on her door.

"The harvest" at this time was the barley harvest (Josh. 3:15), which was traditionally reaped on 10 Nisan; not the wheat harvest, which was at Pentecost seven weeks later (Ex. 34:22). We note that the barley and flax harvests were at this time, and the two crops were harvested at the same time (Ex. 9:31,33). This would explain why Rahab had flax stalks on her roof (Josh. 2:6). This is the kind of internal corroboration within the record which is to me the greatest proof of Biblical inspiration.

Jos 2:7 The men pursued them the way to the Jordan to the fords. As soon as those who pursued them had gone out, they shut the gate-

As discussed on :5, this had been her challenge to her own people, and they fell for it. They likely searched every house in Jericho for the spies. But not hers, or at least, not too thoroughly. Male awkwardness and embarrassment before a woman like her would have meant they accepted her word and she ceased from being a possible suspect.

Jos 2:8 Before they had lain down, she came up to them on the roof-

Rooftops were consistently associated with idolatry throughout the Hebrew Bible. But here, Rahab learns more of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, having quit idolatry. The spies are called "messengers" in Heb. 11 because they had a message for her; and their message were 'welcomed in peace' by Rahab (Heb. 11:31), she 'received' their message and justified herself by works by protecting them (James 2:25). But the nature of the situation was such that the "message" they declared to her must have been stated very quickly, before she hid them on the roof. She believed that message and showed her faith by the works of hiding them. So there was a very limited timescale for hearing the message and experiencing peace from believing it. The core of the Gospel is indeed simple.

Jos 2:9 and she said to the men, I know that Yahweh has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you-

See on Ps. 24:6. When she says that she was aware that God had "given you the land" (Josh. 2:9), she uses the same two Hebrew words used repeatedly in Deuteronomy regarding God's promise to give Israel the land of the Canaanites. "Your terror is fallen upon us" is likewise an allusion to Ex. 15:16; 23:27 [the same Hebrew word for "terror" is used by Rahab]. Rahab speaks of how her people are "fainting" in fear-quoting Ex. 15:15 about how the inhabitants of Canaan would "faint" (AV "melt away") because of Israel. Knowing all this, she has the ambition to request the

impossible- that *she* would be the exception, that with *her* a covenant would be made. When she says that "we *have* heard" about the Exodus (Josh. 2:10), she may be referring to the prophecy of Ex. 15:14: "The people *shall* hear and be afraid". In this case, her emphasis would have been upon the word "have"- 'yes, we *have* heard indeed, as Moses sung, and yes, we *are* afraid'. Seeking God's face is actually to strive for the unachievable in this life; but it's what we are to do. Spiritual ambition of the type Rahab had lifts us far above the mire of mediocrity which there is in all human life under the sun.

Jos 2:10 For we have heard how Yahweh dried up the waters of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt; and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond Jordan, to Sihon and to Og, whom you utterly destroyed-
This utter destruction was because Yahweh had hearkened to the voice of Israel (Num. 21:3 cp. Dt. 3:6 s.w.), and Rahab was attracted to a God who listened to prayers and responded so dramatically. Israel's enemies were to be 'utterly destroyed' which is defined as meaning that no covenant be made with them (Dt. 7:2). Rahab desperately wanted to enter covenant with Yahweh, but she saw she was doomed to 'utter destruction' because that was to be Jericho's fate (Josh. 6:21 s.w.). But her desire from the heart was read by God, and responded to in such a wonderful way, beyond any human device; hence in :12 (see note there) she asks for covenant relationship.

Jos 2:11 As soon as we had heard it, our hearts melted, neither did there remain any more spirit in any man because of you; for Yahweh your God-

When the earlier spies had spent 40 days looking around Canaan, they had reported that the people were strong, and they were despised by them, as if they were mere grasshoppers (Num. 13:33). The Canaanites represent all those things which appear insuperable to our inheritance of the promised kingdom. But behind those high walls, were people with melted hearts. But the ten spies perceived the people as so strong that they could never defeat them, whereas Joshua and Caleb perceived how things really were- which is how Rahab described it. The paradox is that the hearts of the Canaanites melted (Josh. 2:11), and this is the phrase used of how the hearts of the Israelites melted (Dt. 1:28). Both sides were scared of each other; but victory could have been with Israel. They wasted so much potential.

He is God in heaven above, and on earth beneath-

She is repeating Dt. 4:39 "The Lord, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below". This was the prophetic hope, that at the restoration (see on Josh. 1:1, where I suggest Joshua was rewritten for the exiles), the Gentiles would come to state that "Yahweh is God" as they had done at times historically (here and Ex. 18:11; Ps. 100:3; 1 Kings 8:60; 2 Kings 5:15; 19:19; Is. 45:14,15). Rahab was therefore set up as representative of the Gentiles at the time of the exile.

Jos 2:12 Now therefore, please swear to me by Yahweh, since I have dealt kindly with you, that you also will deal kindly with my father's house, and give me a true token-
Heb. 11:31 comments that "By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace". Rahab's faith was faith in God's grace. For Rahab was an Amoritess and according to the law of Moses there was to be no pity or covenant with them- only death (cp. Dt. 7:2). Rahab had the spiritual ambition to ask that they make a covenant with her- she requests *hesed*, the common term for covenant relationship ("deal kindly with me", Josh. 2:12 cp. 1 Sam. 20:8). See on :10. And the spies made a covenant with her. Grace, like love, finds a

way. Remember that she was also aware of what Israel had done to their enemies on their way to Jericho- and she appears to allude to Moses' commands to destroy utterly and *not* make covenant with the peoples of the land (Dt. 2:32-37; 7:1-5; 20:16-18).

The spies apparently didn't give her any token, apart from their word that their lives would be forfeit if hers was lost- if she continued faithful to the covenant (:14). Considering they were completely at her mercy, we wonder why they didn't make any token. Perhaps they had nothing material to give her apart from their word. But see on :18.

Jos 2:13 Please save alive my father, my mother, my brothers and my sisters and all that they have, and will deliver our lives from death-

Rahab apparently lived alone, with her family avoiding her for shame that she was a whore and her home was a brothel. They would have had to significantly humble themselves to accept the gospel of the Kingdom from her mouth, and to have entered into her home in order to be saved.

It seems from Josh. 6:23 that her family didn't include her own children. She had none. It was common for barren women to be divorced, shamed and have to turn to prostitution. Being unable to get pregnant meant there was no issue with contraception. And yet she became pregnant by a prince of Judah and thus an ancestor of the Lord. And so many any miserable, lonely loves have thus been used and transformed. Rahab who was on very periphery came to be "in the midst of Israel".

Jos 2:14 The men said to her, Our life for yours, if you don't talk about this business of ours; and it shall be, when Yahweh gives us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with you-

"Kindly and truly" is the language of covenant. Jericho was to be utterly destroyed which meant no covenant made with her inhabitants (see on :10,12; Dt. 7:2). Here they repeat that the covenant has been extended to her, if she doesn't betray them. We note the contrast between Gentile whore Rahab and respectable Israelite family man Achan. He broke covenant (Josh. 7:11), whereas she entered covenant and was faithful to it (Josh. 2:12-14). She took and hid the spies (Josh. 2:6), whereas Achan took and hid the spoil (Josh. 7:21,22). Rahab saved her family alive (Josh. 2:13,14; 6:22,23), whereas Achan destroyed his family (Josh. 7:25).

Jos 2:15 Then she let them down by a cord through the window; for her house was on the side of the wall, and she lived on the wall-

Heb. "in the wall" may mean her house was between the inner and outer walls. Perhaps the flax stems on her roof had been grown outside the city walls and she therefore had a rope to haul them up to her. This may have been a way of avoiding paying tax on them, which would have been required if they had been brought through the city gate.

Escaping out of a window down the wall was the experience of David and Paul (Acts 9:25). Paul describes it as one of the most humiliating things which happened to him (2 Cor. 11:32). The triple repetition shows the same Divine hallmark of His operation, in the lives of different men separated by centuries.

Jos 2:16 She said to them, Go to the mountain, lest the pursuers find you; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers have returned. Afterward, you may go on your way-

Rahab comes over as in command of the situation, even though she was a Gentile prostitute begging for God's grace. "Three days" may be a non literal period. Ex. 14:4,8 uses the same word for "pursuer" about the Egyptians likewise pursuing Israel in vain- also around the time of Passover.

Jos 2:17 The men said to her, We will be guiltless of this your oath which you have made us to swear-

The next three verses give the conditions for the covenant, but they say that Rahab had "made us swear". She had used her position of power over them to make them enter a covenant of Yahweh with her (see on :10,12).

Jos 2:18 Behold, when we come into the land-

LXX "If we succeed in penetrating into a part of the town".

You shall bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which you used to let us down. You shall gather to yourself into the house your father, your mother, your brothers and all your father's household-

See on :21. This line or rope may have been the "true token" of :12. It seems they gave her the scarlet thread. Perhaps they had worked this out in advance, entering Jericho with the aim of finding someone to believe their message. It was around Passover time, and so this may have been an invitation for Rahab to in essence participate in the Passover ritual, putting the symbol of blood on her house so that she might be saved whilst the rest of the world around her perished. She was being treated as one of the covenant people. Scarlet was associated with the removal of sin (Lev. 14:4,6,51; Num. 19:6) and the Passover blood (Ex. 12:7,13).

Heb. "the cord of this crimson thread" means that "this cord", the rope, was made of crimson thread. Possibly it was the sign she had on her door advertising her home as a brothel, rather like chemists and barbers have always had their specific trade signs. To hang out a red light or cord is a truly ancient tradition for brothels. She was told to display the cord when Israel came to take Jericho- maybe implying she was to take it down, to cease being a whore, but display it again when they returned. We see how God used the symbol of her sin to save both herself and His two men. His saving purpose is so intertwined with human sin and failure even in its worst forms. And that scarlet thread became to her as the blood of the Passover lamb. This thought becomes even more actual when we consider that there are several stories of brothels on walls, where the clients exited down a scarlet rope. The rope, the symbol of sordid, shameful, secret failure, became the path to salvation for the spies. Just as it was only because she was a whore that she was able to tell the men of Jericho that she didn't know the names of the spies nor where they were from. Only a whore could get away with saying that. And it was her lie, which of itself as an isolated event was a sin because lying is wrong- which came to be seen as an act of faith in Hebrews 11. All this came to its final term in the cross, the symbol of ultimate shame, "cursed is every one that hangs on a tree". But in Christ it became the symbol of ultimate salvation. God indeed doesn't turn away from sin in disgust, but works through and with us. This fits with the suggestion on :1 that the spies perhaps originally went into her house in order to sleep with her. God worked through so much weakness. And remember that Rahab did fall pregnant by a prince of the tribe of Judah.

Jos 2:19 It shall be that whoever goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood will be on his head, and we will be guiltless. Whoever is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand is on him-

This continues the allusions to the Passover legislation, although Rahab and her family were only able to keep the spirit and not the letter of it. As Rahab was a whore and her home a brothel, her family had to humble themselves to accept the Gospel and take refuge in it.

Jos 2:20 But if you talk about this business of ours, then we shall be guiltless of your oath which you have made us to swear-

Compare the evidence for Rahab's preaching the message of the spies, with the terms of the covenant thrashed out with her- if she were to "utter" (Heb. to preach, advertise openly] the "business" of the spies, then the covenant would be null and void. She did indeed do this, and yet the covenant still stood. Perhaps the agreement insisted upon by the spies was somewhat self-protective, without the ambition which Rahab had to bring others to throw themselves upon God's grace. This would only make her spiritual perception and ambition stand out the more. All this fits in with the overall theme of the book of Joshua- that Israel were given the land, Ephraim and Manasseh were allowed to return to their lot East of Jordan, despite the fact that they were disobedient and didn't drive out all the Canaanites as required by God. Taking the crossing of the Red Sea as a type of baptism, the wilderness walk as symbolic of our probationary lives now (1 Cor. 10:1-3), the entrance of the promised land speaks of our entrance to God's Kingdom- and this will likewise be by grace, in the face of all the mess ups, disobedience, failure to obey... which we're all so guilty of.

Jos 2:21 She said, According to your words, so be it. She sent them away, and they departed. She tied the scarlet line in the window-

Rahab was told to bind the scarlet cord in her window "when we come into the land" (Josh. 2:18). But Rahab bound it there immediately when they left- as if she recognized that her land was already in Israel's hands (Josh. 2:21). Considering the whole town was wondering how the spies had escaped, and she was under suspicion, to leave the escape rope dangling there, indeed to take it up and then place it there again immediately (so :21 implies), was really stupid. She didn't need to do that at that stage. But the joy of the Gospel should make us fools for Christ's sake. But does it, in our postmodern age? When was the last time the joy of the good news we know, lead you to do something humanly foolish? It could be gathered from Heb. 11:31 that Rahab preached to others the message she had received from the spies- for the inspired commentary there notes that Rahab did not perish with those "that believed not"- *apeitheo* suggesting disbelief, a wilful refusal to believe. What message did Jericho not believe? There was no particular message for them from the words of Moses or Joshua. The message was presumably an appeal from Rahab, to repent and accept the God of Israel as she had done- to cast themselves upon His mercy. And in any case, as a prostitute estranged from her family, either due to her profession or because estrangement from them had led her to it, she must have gone to her estranged family and preached to them, bringing them within her despised house. The question, of course, is: 'Why then was not Rahab killed by the people of Jericho if she openly preached to them about the God of Israel?'. The ancient law code of Hammurabi contains the following statute: "If felons are banded together in an ale-wife's [prostitute's or innkeeper's] house and she has not haled [them] to the palace, that ale-wife shall be put to death" (S.R. Driver and J.C. Miles, *The Babylonian Laws* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1956], 2:45). Perhaps she was so despised that she was untouchable, or treated as mad. Perhaps former clients of hers in the city's leadership decided it would be better to let her 'get religion' rather than spill any beans about

them. But it could be said that it was a miracle she wasn't murdered for her witness. She certainly ran the risk of it. If men and women with a far less complete understanding of the Gospel could risk their lives for it... what does our understanding and faith convict *us* to do for the sake of witnessing to it? Give money towards it? Risk our lives, health, convenience in travelling for it? Risk our embarrassment and loss of standing in the workplace or family by preaching it...? Our knowledge of the Gospel of the Kingdom is far more detailed than that of Rahab, who picked up snatches of it from her clients, and had at most an hour's pressured conversation with the spies before she had to show whether or not she believed it. If it motivated her to do all she did- what about us?

The book of Joshua was rewritten for the encouragement of the exiles (see on Josh. 1:1). Judah had gone into exile because they had acted like a prostitute, as the prophets make clear. This account of the salvation of a prostitute was therefore for their encouragement. Against all odds, they could be saved out of Babylon, a nation and city marked out for destruction by 'falling' as was Jericho.

Jos 2:22 They left and came to the mountain, and stayed there three days until the pursuers had returned. The pursuers sought them throughout all the way, but didn't find them-

Rahab appears to have knowledge and authority in all this, although she was the underdog. The pursuers and the spies are both presented as doing what she told them to do; as if she, the despised Gentile whore in a condemned city, was exalted to a position of power by her commitment to God.

Jos 2:23 Then the two men returned, descended from the mountain, passed over, and came to Joshua the son of Nun. They told him all that had happened to them-

"Returned and descended" is the very phrase used of how the faithful spies, Joshua and Caleb, had returned and descended to Israel with the news that they could easily conquer the land (Dt. 1:25). I suggested on :1 that there were distinct connections between those two faithful spies and the spies now being sent out. Israel were being bidden learn from their failure to believe the spies 38 years previously. The Bible continually bids us learn from recorded history.

Jos 2:24 They said to Joshua, Truly Yahweh has delivered into our hands all the land. Furthermore, all the inhabitants of the land melt away before us!

They had begun to melt away after the exodus (Ex. 15:15 s.w.), and the spies may be almost frustrated that Israel had wasted so much time before believing this. For nearly 40 years, the Canaanites had been in this 'melted away' mental state, and Rahab uses the same word to describe them (:9). The prophetic descriptions of hills [nations / cities] and 'the land' "melting" before God (s.w. Am. 9:5,13; Nah. 1:15) are therefore not to be read literally, but rather alluding to this state of mind amongst the peoples within the land promised to Abraham- in the shadow of latter day Divine judgment and the giving of their kingdoms to His people.

JOSHUA CHAPTER 3

Jos 3:1 Joshua rose up early in the morning-

In the days before alarm clocks, special note is taken of this feature of Joshua (Josh. 6:12; 7:16; 8:10). There is a much repeated characteristic of God's servants: that they 'rose up early in the morning' and did God's work. In each of the following passages,

this phrase is clearly not an idiom; rather does it have an evidently literal meaning: Abraham (Gen. 19:27; 21:14; 22:3); Jacob (Gen. 28:18); Job (1:5); Moses (Ex. 8:20; 9:13; 24:4; 34:4); Joshua (Josh. 3:1; 6:12; 7:16; 8:10); Gideon (Jud. 6:38; 7:1);). This is quite an impressive list, numerically. This can be a figure for being zealous (Ps. 127:2; Pr. 27:14; Song 7:12; Is. 5:11; Zeph. 3:7). God Himself rises up early in His zeal to save and bring back His wayward people (; Jer. 7:13,25; 11:7; 25:3,4; 26:5; 29:19; 32:33; 35:14,15; 44:4). Yet the above examples all show that men literally rose up early in their service to God; this was an expression of their zeal for God, in response to His zeal for us. I'm not suggesting that zeal for God is reflected by rising early rather than staying up late; but it wouldn't be too much to suggest that if we are men of mission, we won't waste our hours in bed. Get up when you wake up.

And they moved from Shittim, and came to the Jordan, he and all the children of Israel. They lodged there before they passed over-
Lodging in full view of Jericho would have been a tactical mistake, humanly speaking. Far better, surely, a quick attack by an advanced guard of soldiers, rather than taking the whole nation over Jordan in full view of their enemies waiting for them.

Jos 3:2 It happened after three days that the officers went through the midst of the camp-

The three days spent looking at Jordan was perhaps to encourage them to meditate upon the Red Sea deliverance and to help them make the move in faith. Humanly speaking, sitting there in full view of the men of Jericho was unwise. These three days may be those of Josh. 1:11. The order to prepare food was given on 7th Nisan, as they crossed Jordan on the 10th. The spies would have been on their mission between the 5th and 8th Nisan.

Jericho was protected from the oncoming Israelites by the Jordan river. Rahab mentioned to the spies that the men of Jericho were terrified at the way Israel's God had dried up the Red Sea (Josh. 2:10), implying that they believed Yahweh could likewise dry up the Jordan and take away their line of natural defence. Perhaps Joshua and Caleb envisaged the drying up of the Jordan as already in essence accomplished when they reasoned that their defence [the Jordan] was departed / held up / turned off from them (Num. 14:9). The whole situation was a purposeful repetition in essence of the Red Sea crossing. Circumstances repeat in life so that we learn faith from the previous incident, at least potentially. 1:11 had foretold they would pass over the river, but they had to go forward in faith not knowing how exactly that would work out in practice. Once they had gone over Jordan, they were entering a hostile country from which there would now be no retreat. This is hinted at in the descriptions of Israel not only passing over but totally passing over (3:17; 4:1). This is the way God works- if we go forward in faith, then the way back to the world is harder. Joshua therefore encouraged them that when God drove back the river it would be as if He had stretched out His hand to strike all the inhabitants of the land (Dt. 7:1). The wonder of our baptism implies that all future conflicts and obstacles to entry to the Kingdom will likewise be overcome.

Jos 3:3 and they commanded the people saying, When you see the ark of the covenant of Yahweh your God and the priests the Levites bearing it, then you shall move from your place, and follow it-

Instead of following the pillar of cloud and fire they had to follow only the ark. The

miraculous presence of the fire and cloud was now removed- that had trained them to follow God's leading even when now there was no miraculous sign. Ex. 15:15-17 had reasoned that a division of the waters immediately prior to Israel's entry into Canaan would make the Canaanites fear Israel. There was therefore the hint that a drying up of the Jordan would happen- Joshua seems to have imagined it would, but only the spiritually minded amongst Israel would've grasped the hint from Ex. 15:15-17. This is typical of how God works- those who love His word find hints and encouragements for their faith when facing specific obstacles. Those who are not sensitive to God's word or who are ignorant of it don't find this same encouragement. Hence when Is. 64:3 comments that God did great things for Israel which they "looked not for"- this is an expression of His grace towards the less spiritually perceptive. They should have 'looked for' this miracle- but even although they did not, God still did it. This is comfort, although not without limit, to those who still wonder how and whether they shall pass over to be in God's Kingdom.

Jos 3:4 Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure. Don't come near to it, that you may know the path to follow; for you have not passed this way before-

Two thousand cubits is nearly one kilometer. The ark was as it were able to protect itself, without the need of being guarded by soldiers- in fact it was the unguarded ark which was itself a guard to them. In this lies a caveat about 'apologetics' and the idea of defending God and His Truth. He doesn't need it, and so much damage has been done by those who think that somehow, His Truth and glory depends upon them to preserve it. The distance from the ark was to also focus their attention upon it as the means of their crossing over the river- just as our crossing into the Kingdom will be made with total focus on the person of Jesus as our Saviour. We need the appropriate distance from Him so that we may observe His path.

"Space" translates a word which is often used about time, s.w. "a great while to come". The physical distance between them and the ark looked ahead to how the ark, representing the Lord Jesus, was to enter into the rest before they did, but as the guarantee that they / we would follow. If we follow that "path". "The way" "passed" is a phrase often used about the wilderness wanderings (Josh. 24:17 and often in Deuteronomy). Some of the wilderness march was going over similar territory where they had been before; but the entrance to the Kingdom was to be of a totally different nature. On one hand, we are to live the eternal life now, acting now as we will in the Kingdom. But on another hand, the Kingdom life will not at all be what we have experienced in this life.

Jos 3:5 Joshua said to the people, Sanctify yourselves; for tomorrow Yahweh will do wonders among you-

This was calmly spoken in absolute faith. For there was no visible evidence that the Jordan would dry up. They were to sanctify themselves not so as to be worthy of God's gracious action, but rather because they were in the presence of it. These "wonders" are a hint that they are to enter covenant with God as at Sinai (s.w. Ex. 34:10). The command to sanctify themselves recalled the command as they entered covenant at Sinai (Ex. 19:10-15). "Tomorrow" would have been the 10th Nisan (Josh. 4:19), the day when they had taken to themselves a lamb for salvation (Ex. 12:3).

Jos 3:6 Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, Take up the ark of the covenant, and walk in front of the people. They took up the ark of the covenant, and walked ahead of the people-

This is now happening on the day following :5, the "tomorrow" there spoken of. It was the Angel and pillar of fire which had "walked ahead of the people" (s.w. Num. 14:14; Ex. 32:34). But now all focus was to be upon the ark, representing the Lord Jesus. The time of following Angels and seeing God's actions as solely through them needs to give way to perceiving His direct presence with us through the Lord Jesus, represented by the ark.

It was God's intention that Moses would go before the people and lead them into the land (Dt. 10:11), but Moses failed, and so it fell to Joshua. But it seems he was nervous, and so God used the ark rather than Joshua personally to 'go before the people' (s.w. Josh. 3:6). All the time we see God setting up potential programs which have to be amended because of human weakness.

Jos 3:7 Yahweh said to Joshua, Today I will begin to magnify you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that as I was with Moses, so I will be with you-

Just as Moses was given credibility before the people by the miraculous opening of the Red Sea (Ex. 14:31), so Joshua was given similar credibility. Moses achieved the miracle by his rod; Joshua did so by the ark of the covenant. Both times they passed over "on dry ground" (3:17). Clearly Joshua was not of the personality type which would naturally be found compelling as a charismatic leader. And so God gave this to him (Josh. 4:14 s.w.).

Jos 3:8 You shall command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant saying, 'When you come to the brink of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan'-

More commands to the priests resume in :13. "Stand still" recalls how at the Red Sea, Israel were to stand still and see the saving action of God in parting the water (Ex. 14:13 cp. 2 Chron. 20:17). Only the older ones would have remembered the Red Sea parting. They were all being shown that what was apparently merely Bible story time events were going to be repeated just as amazingly in their own experience.

Jos 3:9 Joshua said to the children of Israel, Come here, and hear the words of Yahweh your God-

This continues to allude to the covenant at Sinai. Although the date was here just before Passover, and Israel first entered into the covenant after Passover. God is not a literalist, and clearly the essence of the Passover and entry into covenant at Sinai were being repeated.

Jos 3:10 Joshua said, Hereby you shall know that the living God is among you- Heb. "in the midst of you". The God of the living ones, the cherubim which covered the ark and between which was the shekinah glory, was now revealed. For the ark was no longer hidden from view in the most holy place, but openly in view of all. And all Israel could look at it as they passed over. The Lord Jesus uses this phrase in speaking of His abiding presence in the midst of His people today (Mt. 18:20).

And that He will without fail drive out the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Hivite, and the Perizzite, and the Girgashite, and the Amorite, and the Jebusite from before you-

But they did not drive them all out. Here we have an example of a conditional promise, spoken of as a prophecy. They were made "to know" that surely they could inherit the entire promised land up to the Euphrates, and the seven nations are spoken of surely as a summary of all the tribes. But the experience of the miracle at Jordan

didn't have an abiding impression upon them. And so again we see that miracles don't in fact inculcate abiding faith. Pentecostalism needs to reconsider the role of miracles. For faith, according to Biblical history, is simply not predicated upon miracles. See on :16.

Jos 3:11 Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passes over before you into the Jordan-

It could be rendered "the ark of the covenant is called the ruler of the whole earth"- as if the ark is personified, encouraging us to see it as representative of a person (the Lord Jesus). Zech. 4:14 likewise associates the ark with "the Lord of all the earth"; and the *eretz* in view is the land promised to Abraham. The Israelites looked across Jordan to a land apparently not under their control. But they are invited to see Yahweh as enthroned between the cherubim, and therefore His entry into Canaan was as it were His taking control as Lord of His own territory. And they as His people were therefore assured of taking the land.

Israel had been taught throughout their wilderness journey that they were 'passing over', the word is used so often in Deuteronomy about their passing through various places on the journey. It is another allusion to Passover, which feast was about to begin. The fact God has brought us over so much day by day in this current journey means that our final crossing over at judgment day into God's Kingdom will just be another stage in the journey, seamlessly part of the process we are currently experiencing, and we should not therefore see judgment day as some huge unknown factor which lies inexorably ahead. They had been taught to speak to others of how they were to pass over Jordan (e.g. Dt. 2:29 "as the children of Esau who dwell in Seir, and the Moabites who dwell in Ar, did to me, until I shall pass over the Jordan into the land which Yahweh our God gives us"; see too Num. 33:51; 35:10; Dt. 4:22,26 "you shall pass over this Jordan"; 9:1; 11:31; 12:10 "when you pass over Jordan"; 27:2,4,12; 30:18; 31:13; 32:47). That's a total of 14 times that they were specifically told they were to pass over Jordan, corresponding to the endless Biblical encouragement we receive that really, we shall inherit the Kingdom. Even if like Israel the words can appear to just drone on in our ears. We too are to live with the full assumption [not presumption] that by grace we shall enter and inherit the Kingdom. The 'passing over' of the ark was to be seen by them as a guarantee that they too would pass over Jordan, just as we are to see in the resurrection of the Lord and His passing over into Divine nature the guarantee of our personal salvation. The Lord's resurrection thereby becomes utterly central to our assurance of salvation if we are indeed 'in Him'. The 2000 cubits distance may be a hint at the Lord 'passing over' 2000 years ahead of us doing so at judgment day. Note that the Hebrew for 'passed over' is also translated 'to carry over' (e.g. Josh. 4:3,8)- they were carried over by God just as we will be.

Jos 3:12 Now therefore take twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, for every tribe a man-

These men had to be appointed first, and were then used in the ritual of Josh. 4:2-4. They were to take stones with them, which all looked forward to the future reality of Rev. 21:14.

Jos 3:13 It shall come to pass, when the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of Yahweh, the Lord of all the earth, rest in the waters of the Jordan-

Israel had been encouraged in Josh. 1:3 that "I have given you every place that the sole of your foot will tread on". Wherever their foot stepped could be theirs. And this was now dramatically and visually taught to them. The waters represented the nations, and perhaps specifically their armies, as in later scripture. As soon as the soles of their foot stood in Jordan, then Jordan was theirs, and the flow of the water of the nations against them would be stopped. For Yahweh was Lord of all the *eretz* promised to Abraham, and they were His people.

The waters of the Jordan will be cut off. The waters that come down from above shall stand in a heap-

"Cut off" is a direct allusion to the crossing of the Red Sea (Ex. 15:8). But I suggested above that the waters represented the flow of nations against them. And those nations were to be "cut off" before Israel (Dt. 12:29; 19:1 and often).

Jos 3:14 It happened, when the people moved from their tents to pass over the Jordan, that the priests who bore the ark of the covenant walked in front of the people-

But at a distance of 2000 cubits, about 1 kilometer. There was a natural fear at who was to go first. God went first. It is a natural human fear and desire that someone leads, goes over first. And the Lord Jesus, represented by the ark, has done that. We are "like sheep", and God realizes that. We have the huge comfort that One has indeed gone ahead first, and we are to follow.

Jos 3:15 When those who bore the ark had come to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests who bore the ark had dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks all the time of harvest)-

Ps. 114:5 and Is. 43:2 reason that what God did at the Jordan He does in essence in *our* lives. God made the people cross Jordan at the time when it was widest- an example of how (at some times, in some ways) He purposefully tests faith. To cross the Jordan in flood was a heroic and very difficult act, according to 1 Chron. 12:15. Likewise God chose their crossing place as facing Jericho ("right against Jericho", :16)- the strongest opponent, whose spies no doubt were nervously watching the Israelites. Ps. 93:3,4 refer to how the floods lifted up their voice, but God's people walked through them- this is more relevant to the Jordan crossing than to the Red Sea exodus. Jordan is widest after the Spring snow melt in the Lebanon mountains ("the swelling of Jordan", Jer. 12:5; 49:19)- incidental proof that they crossed Jordan around Passover time, which is when they had crossed the Red Sea. "The harvest" was the barley harvest, which was traditionally reaped on 10 Nisan; not the wheat harvest, which was at Pentecost seven weeks later (Ex. 34:22). We note that the barley and flax harvests were at this time, and the two crops were harvested at the same time (Ex. 9:31,33). This would explain why Rahab had flax stalks on her roof (Josh. 2:6). This is the kind of internal corroboration within the record which is to me the greatest proof of Biblical inspiration.

God arranged circumstances so that they could see the similarities with the Red Sea crossing, and learn from that incident now that the circumstances were repeating. God does the same with us, daily; repeating circumstances, and trying to get us to see how in essence our experiences are repeating Biblical experiences. All the promises that Israel would enter Canaan actually implied this miracle- but it was for the thoughtful Israelite to perceive that.

Jos 3:16 that the waters which came down from above stood and rose up in one heap- Presumably they froze and congealed, as perhaps happened at the Red Sea. The

language of waters divided and gathered together recalls the language of creation (Gen. 1:6,9). Allusions to creation language are frequent in the Bible, to encourage us that what God did then and continues to do in creation, He does in our lives. The new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) involves the same expenditure of energy to create *ex nihilo* the spiritual person within us.

A great way off-

We see here God's sensitivity to human weakness. They were not asked to cross with a wall of water on one side of them, which they would have feared could come crashing down upon them. The water of Jordan fled backwards (Ps. 114:3), referring to this creation of a dry riverbed upstream of the crossing as well as downstream of it.

"Jordan" is literally 'the descender', and we see here God's power to arrest an otherwise apparently inevitable downward movement, and even reverse it. The water was not merely parted, but driven back upstream.

At Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan-

We naturally see the symbolism; the problem caused with Adam was arrested by God's action. "Zarethan", 'place of piercing', would then allude to the promised piercing of the serpent, the power of sin (Gen. 3:15). There is no city known as Adam, but probably Admah is in view (Gen 14:2). It is spelt "Adam" here in order to direct our attention to the symbolism.

And those that went down toward the sea of the Arabah, even the Salt Sea, were wholly cut off. Then the people passed over right against Jericho-

As discussed above, this was therefore in full view of the men of Jericho who for sure had been sent out to report on the Israelite movements. Tactically it would have appeared foolish. But this was an example of how we are "fools for Christ's sake". God works not through human wisdom but through the way of His Spirit. I suggested on :13 that the 'cutting off' of the waters represented the cutting off of all opposition to them. And therefore this miracle was the guarantee that they would successfully displace all the tribes in the land (:10).

Jos 3:17 The priests who bore the ark of the covenant of Yahweh stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan. Then, all the people of Israel passed over the Jordan on dry ground-

As discussed on :13,16, the cutting off of the waters represented the cutting off of all Gentile opposition to them. But this depended upon the priests 'standing firm' or "upright" (Heb.), so that all Israel could inherit the Kingdom. And Israel's history is full of evidence that the priesthood did not stand firm, and all Israel therefore lost the Kingdom because of it.

JOSHUA CHAPTER 4

Jos 4:1 When all the nation had completely passed over the Jordan, Yahweh spoke to Joshua saying-

It is stressed that they all passed over (Josh. 3:17). The salvation was complete.

Jos 4:2 Take twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man-

These twelve men and their stones looked forward to the final reality of Rev. 21:14. We are to see in them symbols of the 12 disciples upon whom the kingdom was to be built.

Jos 4:3 and command them saying, 'Take from out of the middle of the Jordan, out of

the place where the priests' feet stood firm, twelve stones, and carry them over with you, and lay them down in the resting place where you will rest tonight' -

The language of rest connects with the potential possibility that Joshua would bring the people to "rest". But Heb. 4:8 is clear that he didn't achieve this, and so all these things come to their ultimate term in a reapplied fulfilment in the work of the Lord Jesus.

Dt. 27:2-8 had commanded that "in the day" Israel passed over Jordan, they were to set up plastered stones with the law written upon them [perhaps just the ten commandments], and put them "in mount Ebal". The location was defined as near Gilgal (Dt. 11:30), where they camped after entering the land. Clearly enough, the ceremony of blessing and cursing ought to have been done immediately they entered the land. But they let secular concerns dominate their spiritual obligation to be thankful as God had asked. For when Joshua fulfilled it in Josh. 8:30, this was not "in the day" that Israel passed over Jordan. They had indeed taken stones with them from the Jordan, but had not used them as intended. They didn't plaster them nor write the law upon them. And so perhaps God amended His intention- which was initially that they would set those stones up in mount Ebal immediately. Instead, He sent the people against Jericho, and then against Ai. Perhaps an instant conquest of Jericho had been originally intended, so that they could proceed to mount Ebal immediately. For later in Joshua we will read of God giving His people unnaturally speedy progress against their enemies, all in the same day. Or maybe His intention was that firstly they ought to have gone to mount Ebal with the plastered stones, and only then attacked Jericho. But they didn't plaster the stones nor wish to proceed immediately to Ebal. And so He arranged the campaign against Jericho and then Ai. We see how God is so eager to accommodate His programs to the weakness of men.

Jos 4:4 Then Joshua called the twelve men whom he had prepared of the children of Israel, out of every tribe a man-

They had been "prepared" at the time of Josh. 3:12. They look forward to the 12 disciples whom the Lord Jesus likewise prepared to lay the foundations of His new kingdom (Rev. 21:14).

Jos 4:5 Joshua said to them, Pass over before the ark of Yahweh your God into the middle of the Jordan, and each of you pick up a stone and put it on your shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel-

We note that the two and a half tribes who had taken their inheritance east of Jordan were included in this. Always God was (and still is) careful to inculcate a spirit of unity amongst His people. The stones were not huge, they could each be carried upon a shoulder; God is not at all in the grandiose buildings such as Solomon's temple, but is memorialized in small things like this.

Jos 4:6 This will be a sign among you, that when your children ask in time to come saying, 'What do you mean by these stones?' -

These were probably the stones in view in Mt. 3:9, where John warned the people near the Jordan river that God was able "of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham". They represented Israel, but an Israel which could become living stones. The language here again recalls that of Passover (Ex. 12:26; 13:14), which they were about to keep. But the spirit of it was seen in the events they were experiencing.

Jos 4:7 then you shall tell them, 'Because the waters of the Jordan were cut off before

the ark of the covenant of Yahweh. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off". These stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever-

Here we have another example of where "forever" is not to be read as literal infinity. For the memorial has now vanished. The double emphasis upon the waters being cut off is because as noted on Josh. 3:13 the waters represented the flow of nations against them. And those nations were to be "cut off" before Israel (Dt. 12:29; 19:1 and often). And therefore this miracle was the guarantee that they would successfully displace all the tribes in the land (Josh. 3:10). This was to serve as encouragement to subsequent generations in their struggles against the local peoples of the land.

Jos 4:8 The children of Israel did as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones out of the midst of the Jordan as Yahweh spoke to Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel; and they carried them over with them to the place where they lodged, and laid them down there-

The stones were not huge, they could each be carried upon a shoulder (:5); God is not at all in the grandiose buildings such as Solomon's temple, but is memorialized in small things like this. The stones were carried, representing how God carried His people into the land. They apparently lodged at Gilgal (:20).

Jos 4:9 Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests who bore the ark of the covenant stood-

"In the midst of the Jordan" could be read as "from the midst...". But if we stick with "in the midst...", we are then to understand that there were two memorials. The twelve stones at Gilgal (Josh. 4:20) where they lodged that night (:8), and another 12 stones left in the midst of the Jordan river. This would then speak of how there was both a visible and invisible memorial to God's bringing His people into the land. Or it could be that the twelve stones were first set up on the dry river bed, and then removed from there to Gilgal. This would have visually symbolized the bringing of all twelve tribes from the river to dry ground.

They are there to this day-

I would consider the book of Joshua to have largely been written by Joshua, under Divine inspiration, although edited [again under Divine inspiration] for the exiles. And the book of Judges likewise. For the exiles too were set to reestablish God's Kingdom in the land and to inherit it again as the Israelites first did. The phrase "to this day" occurs several times in Joshua / Judges, and appears to have different points of historical reference (Josh. 4:9; 5:9; 6:25; 7:26; 8:28,29; 9:27; 10:27; 13:13; 14:14; 15:63; 16:10; 22:3; 23:8,9; Jud. 1:26; 6:24; 10:4; 15:19; 18:12). I would explain this by saying that the book was edited a number of times and the remains of those edits remain in the text. For God's word is living and made relevant by Him to every generation.

Jos 4:10 For the priests who bore the ark stood in the midst of the Jordan until everything was finished that Yahweh commanded Joshua to speak to the people, according to all that Moses commanded Joshua-

Joshua was very good at obedience to clear commandments (Josh. 4:10,17; 8:27; 10:40). But when he had to articulate his faith in God in unexpected situations, e.g. when the ambassadors from Gibeon arrived, or when the first attack on Ai failed, he seems to have performed poorly. Legalistic obedience is no use in those cases when

principles need to be applied. Josh. 5:13,14 can be read as a rebuke of Joshua, wanting to boil everything down to black and white, wanting to see God as either personally for him or against him; when the essence is to seek to discern and do God's will. He very strictly adhered to God's commandments with legalistic obedience, e.g., about how to approach and deal with Jericho, or how to cross the flooded Jordan and build an altar; and time and again, we read in Joshua of how he strictly relayed and obeyed the Divine commandments given by Moses (Josh. 8:31,33,35; 11:12,15,20; 14:2,5; 17:4; 21:2,8). Yet as with any literalistic or legally minded person, it was hard for Joshua to apply the principles behind the laws to situations which weren't specifically addressed by Divine revelation, where legalistic obedience wasn't what was required.

And the people hurried and passed over-

Their haste is understandable, as their eyes would have been toward the wall of water building up some distance from them upstream, fearful it could come surging towards them. But it may be mentioned to draw attention to the similarity with the first Passover and exodus (Ex. 12:39).

Jos 4:11 It happened, when all the people had completely passed over, that the ark of Yahweh passed over with the priests, while the people watched-

The phrase "completely passed over" is used several times. It looks forward to the total deliverance of God's people into His Kingdom. "All the people" excluded many of the two and a half tribes, but their representatives (:12) were counted as them. "The people watched" because they had never seen the ark before, as it was kept in the most holy place. God had as it were denuded Himself in this great work of salvation. He was enthroned in the shekinah glory between the cherubim. The idea was that it was the ark which had enabled them to pass over into the inheritance of the Kingdom. And God would not cease His working until all His people were in His Kingdom.

Jos 4:12 The children of Reuben, the children of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh passed over armed before the children of Israel, as Moses had spoken to them-

There was no small cost for taking their inheritance east of Jordan. Their soldiers were to all leave their families and flocks defenceless (humanly speaking) and to serve as the vanguard of the assault on Canaan, marching directly behind the ark but in front of the Israelites. Taking inheritance east of Jordan may have appeared initially as an easy way out of showing the faith required to dispossess the Canaanites west of Jordan. But God arranged things, as He does to this day, so that in fact there is no short cut to His Kingdom, no avoidance of showing faith. And in fact attempts to short cut often result in greater faith being required.

Jos 4:13 About forty thousand men prepared and armed for war passed over before Yahweh to battle, to the plains of Jericho-

"Thousand" is often not a literal number in the historical records; especially when used in the context of soldiers, it seems to refer to some military subdivision.

Jos 4:14 On that day, Yahweh magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life-

It could be that Joshua was a not very confident individual who needed constant encouragement not to fear or be discouraged, as given to him throughout Josh. 1. But God used such an uncharismatic figure, endowing him with respect, because that is His style of working.

Jos 4:15 Yahweh spoke to Joshua saying-

The style here constantly recalls how Yahweh had spoken to Moses and he relayed this to Israel.

Jos 4:16 Command the priests who bear the ark of the testimony, that they come up out of the Jordan-

David's bringing up / going up / ascending of the ark (2 Sam. 6:2) recalls how the ark did not go up into Canaan in Num. 14:44 (s.w.); for the land was not to be given to Israel. But when the time came, the ark was brought up into Canaan (Josh. 4:16,18 s.w.). David felt as if he was as Joshua reconquering Canaan in fulfilment of the promises; for Joshua had failed to bring the people into the promised rest as was potentially possible (Heb. 4:8). This may explain why Paul in Acts 13:21 parallels the 40 years wandering of Israel with the 40 year reign of Saul; and he may speak of Saul reigning 40 years because of this, even if it was not literally true. It creates big chronological problems if we read that 40 year reign of Saul literally.

The ark is described as "the ark of the testimony" because the tables of the commandments (Ex. 25:40) were "the testimony", and sometimes "the ark" is just called "the testimony". Although other things were in the ark, the tables of stone were paramount. The ark represented the Lord Jesus, who was "the word made flesh", with God's word within His heart as the word of God was within the ark. God's covenant word was of the essence in defining His presence amongst men.

Jos 4:17 Joshua therefore commanded the priests saying, Come up out of the Jordan!-

This phrase 'come up out of Jordan' is used of the priests, the ark (:18) and the people (:19). Clearly the people were to perceive that their coming through Jordan into the promised land was due to their identification with the ark. It all points ahead to our entry into the Kingdom because the Lord Jesus has enabled it, and has Himself entered in.

Jos 4:18 When the priests who carried the ark of the covenant of Yahweh had come up out of the midst of the Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up to the dry ground, that the waters of the Jordan returned to their place, and went over all its banks as before-

"Lifted up" is literally "plucked up". The Divine cameraman is zoomed in close up. Their plucked their feet up out of the mud onto more solid, dry ground. Once their feet were out of the mud, the waters started flowing back. We can imagine it made quite a sound.

Jos 4:19 The people came up out of the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, on the east border of Jericho-

The 10th Nisan (Josh. 3:5) was the day when they had taken to themselves a lamb for salvation (Ex. 12:3). It was when the firstfruits were to be offered (Lev. 23:9-15). But the grace of their salvation was impressed upon them; instead of their giving something to God, He gave them the great gift of salvation.

Jos 4:20 Joshua set up those twelve stones which they took out of the Jordan in Gilgal-

It seems those stones became abused into a form of idolatry, just as the brazen serpent was. And God particularly hated the sins which were therefore committed at Gilgal

(Hos. 4:15; 9:15; Am. 4:4; 5:5). It was there that Israel demanded a king, despite the clear message at this time that the ark was the presence of the "Lord of all the earth". Yahweh was their king who had saved them, memorialized by the stones; and there they demanded a king.

Jos 4:21 He spoke to the children of Israel saying, When your children ask their fathers in time to come saying, 'What do these stones mean?'-

Quoting / alluding to Moses- as Joshua often does. The need to teach their children about this great salvation is laboured here just as much, if not more, as is the Passover remembrance.

Jos 4:22 then you shall let your children know, saying, 'Israel came over this Jordan on dry land-

"This Jordan" implies that the question would be asked when the children enquired about the meaning of the stones, which were near the Jordan river and the river was in clear view of the questioners.

Jos 4:23 For Yahweh your God dried up the waters of the Jordan from before you, until you had passed over, as Yahweh your God did to the Red Sea which He dried up from before us, until we had passed over-

The Red Sea crossing clearly represented baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2), and the crossing of the Jordan is very similar- but it represents our entry into the Kingdom. We can therefore conclude that baptism is an entry in prospect into God's Kingdom; although we must stay the course through the wilderness.

Jos 4:24 that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of Yahweh, that it is mighty; that you may fear Yahweh your God forever'-

The miracle of crossing Jordan was to visually demonstrate the 'cutting off' of the waters of the nations before Israel (Dt. 12:29; 19:1 and often). See on Josh. 3:10. The whole action had been of God's grace, and therefore they were to fear or respect Yahweh. This will only happen in our experience if we perceive grace to be point of being utterly awed by it, rather than just admiring it in passing.

JOSHUA CHAPTER 5

Jos 5:1 It happened that when all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan westward-

"Amorites" seems a very general term; they were apparently on both sides of the Jordan. Perhaps they were the remnants of those slain during the battle with Sihon and Og, who had fled from Israel to the west bank of Jordan.

And all the kings of the Canaanites, who were by the sea, heard how that Yahweh had dried up the waters of the Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we had passed over, that their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more because of the children of Israel-

Everything about the battle plan was somehow humanly foolish- to yet again attempt to teach Israel, old and new, that victory comes from following God's way, and His way is humanly foolish. The warriors were circumcised before the battle (Josh. 5:2)- and we know from the Biblical record of Shechem how this would've weakened the men- for this was only a week or so before the battle. The manna wasn't phased out- it stopped abruptly just before the battle of Jericho (Josh. 5:12). The people would likely

have been short of food, and would've been dealing with the problems associated with a new diet- after 40 years! Walking around the city seven times, starting at dawn, would've made the people tired. There was no advantage of shock or surprise by doing this. Planning the final assault for late afternoon was hardly smart either- humanly speaking! But all this was- and is- to teach God's people that victory *His* way involves shedding our human strength, just as Gideon was likewise taught so dramatically.

As Israel were called to follow the Angel after their Red Sea baptism, so we too follow where the Angel leads.

Jos 5:2 At that time Yahweh said to Joshua, Make flint knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time-

"The second time" is omitted by some manuscripts, and some read "tomorrow". For surely a man cannot be circumcised a second time. There could be the implication that there had been a national circumcision of the nation some time previously, although unrecorded; and now this was to be done a second time.

Jos 5:3 Joshua made himself flint knives and circumcised the children of Israel at the hill of the foreskins-

Everything about the Jericho battle plan was somehow humanly foolish- to yet again attempt to teach Israel, old and new, that victory comes from following God's way, and His way is humanly foolish. The warriors were circumcised before the battle- and we know from the Biblical record of Shechem how this would've weakened the men- for this was only a week or so before the battle. See on :12. But the point was that they were to enter Canaan only because they were Abraham's seed, and therefore they must be circumcised.

Jos 5:4 This is the reason Joshua circumcised: all the people who were males who came out of Egypt, even all the men of war, died in the wilderness in the way after they came out of Egypt-

"In the way" confirms the impression we have of them being slain one by one at different places along the route. The "terror by night" and arrows in the day time (Ps. 91:5) consumed them, and their carcasses were left unburied in the scrub (Heb. 3:17). The wilderness journey was a living out of the condemnation of judgment day for those people.

The extent of spiritual despair and apostasy amongst the condemned generation cannot be overstated. They neglected the circumcision of the children born to them then, thus showing their rejection of the Abrahamic covenant. There is good reason to believe that Romans 1 is a description of Israel in the wilderness; notice the past tenses there. Rom. 1:23 charges them with changing "the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like... to four-footed beasts, and creeping things", clearly alluding to Ps. 106:20 concerning how Israel in the wilderness "Changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eats grass" by making the golden calf. The effective atheism of Rom.1 is matched by Ps. 106:21 "They forgot God their saviour". The long catalogue of Israel's wilderness sins in Ps. 106 is similar to that in Rom.1. "Full of envy" (Rom. 1:29) corresponds to them envying Moses (Ps. 106:16), "whisperers" (Rom. 1:29) to "murmurers" (Ps. 106:25), and "inventors of evil things" (Rom.1:30) to God being angered with "their inventions" of false gods (Ps. 106:29). Because of this "God gave them up" to continue in their sexual perversion and bitterness with each other even to the extent of murder (Rom. 1:27,29). A huge rabble of people living in moral anarchy with little law and order, driven on in their lust by the

knowledge that God had rejected them... is surely a frightening thing to imagine. The emphasis on sexual sin in Rom. 1 is paralleled by 1 Cor. 10 stressing the frequent failure of Israel in the wilderness in this regard. Against such an evil and God forsaking background that young generation rebelled, to become one of the most faithful groups of Israelites in their history. As such they set a glorious example to the youth of today in rebelling against a world that mocks any form of true spirituality.

Jos 5:5 For all the people who came out were circumcised; but all the people who were born in the wilderness by the way as they came out of Egypt had not been circumcised-

The commands concerning Israel's behaviour after they had settled in the land form a large chunk of the Mosaic Law, and thus these were only relevant to the younger generation and the Levites who were to enter the land of promise (note how only those who were numbered and over 20 at the time of leaving Egypt were barred from the land; the Levites were not numbered). This younger generation were in sharp contrast to those aged over 20 at the Exodus. The extent of spiritual despair and apostasy amongst the condemned generation cannot be overstated. They neglected the circumcision of the children born to them then (Josh. 5:5,6), thus showing their rejection of the Abrahamic covenant.

Jos 5:6 For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, even the men of war who came out of Egypt, were consumed; because they didn't listen to the voice of Yahweh. Yahweh swore to them that He wouldn't let them see the land which Yahweh swore to their fathers that He would give us, a land flowing with milk and honey-

Israel did not obey / hearken to the voice of Yahweh, and He did not hearken to their voice in prayer (Dt. 1:45; 9:23; 28:15; Josh. 5:6; Jud. 2:20; 6:10 cp. Dt. 8:20 s.w.). 2 Kings 18:12 states this specifically. God hearkened to Joshua's voice in prayer (Josh. 10:14) because Joshua hearkened to His voice. It was to be the same with Saul. He didn't hearken to God's voice (1 Sam. 15:19) and God didn't hearken to Saul's voice in prayer in his final desperation at the end of his life (1 Sam. 28:18). If God's word abides in us, then our prayer is powerful, we have whatever we ask, because we are asking for things according to His will expressed in His word (Jn. 15:7).

Jos 5:7 Their children whom He raised up in their place were circumcised by Joshua; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them on the way- See on :4. The new generation were raised up by God, not their parents, whom He slew in the desert. They were raised up "in their place" in that they entered the Kingdom which their parents had despised.

Jos 5:8 It happened, when they were done circumcising all the nation, that they stayed in their places in the camp until they were healed-

"All the nation" were circumcised, in that the men represented the women; just as all twelve tribes crossed Jordan, but only in that the soldiers of the two and a half tribes represented those who remained east of Jordan. It is this principle of representation which is hard to grasp for those raised in societies which glorify individualism over collectivism. But it is clearly a principle by which God works, coming to full term in our salvation "in Christ", on account of His representation of us in His representative sacrifice.

Jos 5:9 Yahweh said to Joshua, Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from

off you. Therefore the name of that place was called Gilgal to this day-

I would consider the book of Joshua to have largely been written by Joshua, under Divine inspiration, although edited [again under Divine inspiration] for the exiles. And the book of Judges likewise. For the exiles too were set to reestablish God's Kingdom in the land and to inherit it again as the Israelites first did. The phrase "to this day" occurs several times in Joshua / Judges, and appears to have different points of historical reference (Josh. 4:9; 5:9; 6:25; 7:26; 8:28,29; 9:27; 10:27; 13:13; 14:14; 15:63; 16:10; 22:3; 23:8,9; Jud. 1:26; 6:24; 10:4; 15:19; 18:12). I would explain this by saying that the book was edited a number of times and the remains of those edits remain in the text. For God's word is living and made relevant by Him to every generation.

Jos 5:10 The children of Israel encamped in Gilgal. They kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at evening in the plains of Jericho-

The Lord taught in Jn. 6 that the true manna was His flesh, which He was to give for the life of the world. Some have supposed from Josh. 5:10-12 cp. Ex. 16:35 that the manna fell for the first time on the eve of the Passover, thus adding even more poignancy to the Lord's equation of the manna with His death. Yet all this painstaking attempt to re-focus the crowds on the spiritual rather than the literal, salvation through His death rather than an immediate benefit for them, patient eating / sharing in His sufferings rather than a kingdom here and now... all this went so tragically unheeded. And it does to this day.

Jos 5:11 They ate unleavened cakes and parched grain of the produce of the land on the next day after the Passover, in that day-

They presumably stole this from the local population, who would have fled before them, back into the walls of Jericho.

Jos 5:12 The manna ceased on the next day, after they had eaten of the produce of the land. The children of Israel didn't have manna any more; but they ate the fruit of the land of Canaan that year-

The manna wasn't phased out- it stopped abruptly just before the battle of Jericho (Josh. 5:12). The people would likely have been short of food, and would've been dealing with the problems associated with a new diet- after 40 years! Walking around the city seven times, starting at dawn, would've made the people tired. There was no advantage of shock or surprise by doing this. Planning the final assault for late afternoon was hardly smart either- humanly speaking! But all this was- and is- to teach God's people that victory *His* way involves shedding our human strength, just as Gideon was likewise taught so dramatically. See on :3.

Jos 5:13 It happened that when Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked-

Lifting up the eyes to Heaven is an idiom for prayer. This seems likely in Num. 24:2; Josh. 5:13; Jud. 19:17 and 1 Chron. 21:16 among others. The simple implication of all this is that we should begin our prayers with a conscious imagination and personalization of the Father to whom we pray; "Our Father, *who is* in Heaven" says it all. "God *is in Heaven*, and you upon earth; therefore let your words be few (more often translated "little")" (Ecc. 5:2). Ezra, Nehemiah and Solomon all start their major prayers with a reference to the fact that God really *is* there in Heaven.

And behold, a man stood opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand. Joshua went to him and said to him, Are you for us, or for our adversaries?-

Perhaps this is a rebuke of Joshua, wanting to boil everything down to black and white, wanting to see God as either personally for him or against him; when the essence is to seek to discern and do God's will. Joshua was very good at obedience to clear commandments (Josh. 4:10,17; 8:27; 10:40). But when he had to articulate his faith in God in unexpected situations, e.g. when the ambassadors from Gibeon arrived, or when the first attack on Ai failed, he seems to have performed poorly. Legalistic obedience is no use in those cases when principles need to be applied. He very strictly adhered to God's commandments with legalistic obedience, e.g., about how to approach and deal with Jericho, or how to cross the flooded Jordan and build an altar; and time and again, we read in Joshua of how he strictly relayed and obeyed the Divine commandments given by Moses (Josh. 8:31,33,35; 11:12,15,20; 14:2,5; 17:4; 21:2,8). Yet as with any literalistic or legally minded person, it was hard for Joshua to apply the principles behind the laws to situations which weren't specifically addressed by Divine revelation, where legalistic obedience wasn't what was required.

The Angels formulate their plans perhaps without knowing whether we will respond suitably to enable the plans to go ahead, or maybe they arrange circumstances whether they know we will obey or disobey, so that we always have the encouragement that if we obey and do our part we will have the pre-arranged workings of the Angels behind us too. The entrance of Israel to Canaan shows this. God had promised in Ex. 33 to send an Angel before them which would drive out the tribes from Canaan; the 'Hornet'- a result of Angelic activity- was sent before them to do the same. Dt. 9:3 describes this: "Yahweh your God is He which goes over (the Jordan) before you; as a consuming fire (the language of Angels- Ex. 24:17) He shall destroy them (the nations)... so shall you drive them out". Thus when Joshua approached Jericho to attack it "there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand... and He said... As captain of the host of the Lord (Angels) am I come" (Josh. 5:13,14). So in prospect the Angels drove out every tribe that was in the land; the people of Israel had to just go in and possess the work which the Angels had done. So when they failed to drive out certain tribes, this was an example of human failing to be "workers together with God". Thus in prospect, the Angels led them to the promised "rest"- Dt. 25:19; Josh. 1:13; Is. 63:1 N.I.V.; although in practice they did not enter that rest because of their faithlessness (Heb. 3:11-4:11), despite the Angel promising He would lead them there- "I will give you rest" (Ex. 33:4). Was this due to the Angel over-estimating the spiritual strength of His charges? See on Rev. 21:12.

Jos 5:14 He said, No; but I have come now as commander of Yahweh's army. Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshipped and said to him, What does my lord say to his servant?-

As Israel were called to follow the Angel after their Red Sea baptism, so we too follow where the Angel leads. The conquest of Jericho is a classic example of following the Angel. Josh. 5:13 speaks of the Angel who was the commander of *Yahweh's* army appearing to Joshua, the commander of God's human army on earth, and standing "over against him", i.e. dead opposite him. Clearly enough, Joshua was being shown that he had an opposite number in Heaven, a representative there before the throne of God- just as each of us do. Note in passing how the Angel answers Joshua's question- 'Are you for me, or against me?'. God has no interest in taking sides in human arguments, demonizing the one side and glorifying the other. The

response was simply that the Angel stood for God and was His representative (Josh. 5:14). Religious people so easily fall into this trap of demonizing their enemies, on the basis that "God is with me, and therefore, not with you my opponent, in fact, He hates you because I hate you". The true God and His Angelic servants are far above this kind of primitive, binary dichotomy.

Jos 5:15 The prince of Yahweh's army said to Joshua-

The same phrase is found in Dan. 8:11, where the army is the host of God's people and their representative Angels

Take your shoes off of your feet; for the place on which you stand is holy. Joshua did so-

This is evidently reminiscent of the command to Moses in a similar situation.

Shouldn't Joshua have perceived this, seeing his life was so clearly framed after that of Moses? For we note he had to wait to be asked to do this.

JOSHUA CHAPTER 6

Jos 6:1 Now Jericho was closely shut up because of the children of Israel. No one went out, and no one came in-

The gates which we saw shutting at dusk every day in Josh. 2 were now shut permanently. But the idea may be that God had shut them in; He was the one who closed that gate (s.w. Gen. 7:16; 19:10).

Jos 6:2 Yahweh said to Joshua, Behold, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and the mighty men of valour-

The idea may have been that the king and his mighty soldiers were much feared in the area. But they were to be overcome without any fighting by Israel. The reference is to Dt. 7:24, "He will deliver their kings into your hand and you shall make their name perish from under the sky; no man shall be able to stand before you, until you have destroyed them". But this was conditional upon them not being afraid (Dt. 7:21), and believing that God had already softened them up by "the hornet" (Dt. 7:20). This is why Joshua was encouraged constantly not to be afraid (seven times in Josh. 1). It seems that he finally came to the level of faith required, although it's unclear whether Israel did. But thanks to his faith, Jericho and its king was given into the hand of Joshua personally.

Perhaps the Lord had this scene in mind when He spoke of the strong man guarding his palace, and being overcome by one stronger than himself, i.e. the Lord Jesus, who was represented by Joshua (Lk. 11:21,22). We are those who then spoil his palace, making the nervous Israelites representative of us all, and making the victory over Jericho solely due to Joshua's faith; see above.

Jos 6:3 All your men of war shall march around the city, going around the city once. You shall do this six days-

Jericho was to be circled for six days before victory on the seventh (Josh. 6:3-5). This recalls Naaman's cure on his seventh dipping (2 Kings 5:10), and the way Elijah was only answered at his seventh prayer (1 Kings 18:43). The intention was that through the six times performing something which had no immediate answer, faith, hope and humility were elicited.

Jos 6:4 Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark-

LXX and :8-14 show that this was to be done on each of the six days. These trumpets

were to be blown each day (:13). Literally, "trumpets of Jubilee". The allusion may simply be to the length of the blast made; or the idea may be that these were the trumpets used to announce the year of Jubilee on the day of atonement (Lev. 25:9)- announcing freedom for the slaves and landless, which is who Israel were. It could be that the trumpet blasts were to be understood by the people of Jericho as a call to repentance, which they ignored (Am. 3:6; Is. 18:3). This would then explain why the city was devoted to Yahweh in destruction which was the punishment for a city which turned away from Yahweh (Dt. 13:12-14).

On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets-

To enter covenant was literally 'to be seavened' (Gen. 21:28,30). The city was to enter covenant- through those who didn't want to be in the covenant being destroyed. Rahab wanted to be in the covenant (see on Josh. 2), and was brought into it through the city's destruction.

Jos 6:5 It shall be that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout-

This was the victory shout. They were being asked to believe that what was promised had indeed come true, in the spirit of Mk. 11:24. They were asked to believe that they had won- before they had. And therefore by faith, the walls of Jericho fell down, so says Heb. 11:30.

The wall of the city shall fall down flat-

"Flat" can simply mean 'from beneath', or the idea may have been that the rubble would be 'flat' enough for the Israelites to advance over it into the city, straight before them. The same word is used for how Achan hid the silver under or beneath the garment he stole (Josh. 7:21,22). "Fall down flat" is the phrase used of enemies falling down beneath a victorious Israel (Ps. 18:38; 45:5). The mighty wall represented the Canaanites. The same language of a mighty wall falling is used of the destruction of latter day Babylon (Jer. 50:15; 51:44; Ez. 38:20). Joshua clearly represented the Lord Jesus and His conquest of all opposition to Him in the land of the last days.

There are archaeological claims to have unearthed a wall laying flat on one of the levels of excavation. But surely a wall built from flimsy cement would have not fallen down "flat" but would have disintegrated on impact. Our faith is purely in God's word, rather than hinged solely on questionable archaeological evidence. The evidence for the city having been burnt is more solid, and indeed corroborates the later statement that Jericho was burnt.

And the people shall go up every man straight before him-

Following the Angel is the theme that lies behind God's statement that because He had already given Jericho to Israel, therefore they should arise and take it. So many victories have been prepared for us in prospect- against addictions, engrained weaknesses of character, habits, impossible situations. Israel had to follow the ark, where the Angelic presence of God was (Josh. 6:2 cp. 6:8). The people were to go up into Jericho "straight before them" (Josh. 6:5,20), just as the Cherubim-Angels have "straight feet" (Ez. 1:7,9,12). They were to follow in the Angel's steps.

It is unclear whether "the people" refers to the "armed men"; or to the ordinary unarmed people, as I prefer to think. For it would fit the whole theme of a victory being granted to the weak. If there were unarmed people in the mass of Israelites around the city, this would be another example of the strategy being very weak militarily. For masses of unarmed civilians could easily be attacked and panicked. Perhaps they are the "rearguard" of :13.

Jos 6:6 Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of Yahweh-

Upon the ark was the "mercy seat", imagined as the throne upon which Yahweh was enthroned as king, perhaps with the shekinah glory visible between the cherubim which were over it. The trumpets going before it were therefore proclaiming or heralding Him as king; hence the usage of the phrase "Lord of all the earth" in connection with the ark (Josh. 3:11,13). The idea is consistently that Canaan was being claimed as His Kingdom, with Himself as King.

Jos 6:7 They said to the people, Go, march around the city, and let the armed men pass on before Yahweh's ark-

See on :13. We note that the focus of the description is upon the ark. The armed men went before it, followed by the priests and only then the ark. But the description begins with the ark, for this was the central point of the procession. The archaeological excavations reveal Jericho to have only been of 600 meters circumference. The people would have spent the rest of the day looking at the walls, meditating upon them. This was all intended to pique their faith in God, compared to the height of the obstacle. They were being set up to undo the mistake of the previous generation, who had considered the walls of the Canaanite cities an insuperable obstacle.

Jos 6:8 It was so, that when Joshua had spoken to the people, the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns before Yahweh advanced and blew the trumpets; and the ark of the covenant of Yahweh followed them-

See on :7. This is rather similar to how the ark stood in the Jordan riverbed until the people had passed over, and then followed them. This recalls how the Angel [who was perhaps dwelling over the ark in the shekinah glory] "went behind" [s.w. "followed"] at the exodus (Ex. 14:19). The word is also used in Dt. 23:14, where Israel are warned that if they are unclean, then Yahweh will no longer follow them. They of course were bidden follow Him, but He is also presented as following them. And thus God's people hear His voice behind them, urging them to choose the right path (s.w. Is. 30:21); for He is not only their vanguard, but also their rear guard following them (Is. 52:12; 58:8). This indicates not only the mutuality between God and His people; but the sense that we are both following and being followed by Him, as it were sandwiched by His presence.

Jos 6:9 The armed men went before the priests who blew the trumpets, and the ark went after them. The trumpets sounded as they went-

"Armed men" is s.w. Josh. 4:13, and could possibly refer specifically to the men of the two and a half tribes who were to be the vanguard for the Israelite army. See on :8.

Jos 6:10 Joshua commanded the people saying, You shall not shout, nor let your voice be heard, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I tell you 'Shout!' Then you shall shout-

The command to "shout" was a reflection of the belief Israel were to have in the fact that God *had already* given them the city- for the Hebrew for "shout" usually refers to a shout of victory. The word is translated "... will I triumph" in Ps. 60:8; 108:9. The same idea of shouting in victory over a city which has been given to God's people

recurs in Ps. 47:3,5; Jer. 50:15- "Shout against her round about [cp. compassing the walls of Jericho]... her foundations *are* [present tense] fallen, her walls [cp. Jericho's] *are* thrown down". And this speaks of our latter day victory against Babylon- thus making the whole account of earnest relevance to us who live in the last days, and who will see Babylon fall by faith. Notice how literal Babylon fell by the water of the river being dried up, and the walls being opened- just the same sequence of events that occurred at Jericho. Likewise 1 Cor. 3:12-15 likens all the faithful to material which can pass through the fire of judgment- and this surely is a reference to the way that Jericho was burnt with fire, and only the metals along with Rahab and her family came through that fire to salvation. Thus according to the allusion, Rahab and her family represent all the faithful.

Heb. 11:30 associates the circling of the walls with faith: "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been circled seven days". 2 Cor. 10:3-4 is perhaps an allusion to the way that Jericho was taken with such a humanly weak battle plan: "for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ". The point of the allusion is for us to see ourselves as those nervous Israelites desperately clinging on to their faith in God's victory rather than human strength. And we each have our Jerichos- habits, life-dominating patterns of thinking, that seem so impossible to shift.

The deliverance at the Red Sea had been intended to teach Israel these very lessons. And the account of the fall of Jericho is recorded in similar language, in order to teach the same lesson. Rahab's house had to be identified by a scarlet cord- like the blood of the Passover lamb sprinkled on the two doorposts and lintel of the Israelites' homes in Egypt. The silence demanded of the people in Josh. 6:10 was surely to recall Ex. 14:14, there the people standing before the Red Sea were assured: "The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent". Compare the command to keep silent whilst *Yahweh* fought, with the common practice of yelling war cries as an ancient army approached their enemy. All human convention, wisdom and strength, was placed in purposeful opposition to what seemed quite counter-instinctive- to be utterly silent whilst *God* did the fighting.

Jos 6:11 So he caused the ark of Yahweh to go around the city, going about it once. Then they came into the camp and lodged in the camp-

There's a distinct theme in the record that actually, God's people didn't do according to His ideal plan, and yet still He gave them the victory. One wonders whether the comment that "So the ark of the Lord compassed the city" (Josh. 6:11) could imply that the entire fighting force of Israel didn't bother doing as commanded on the first circuit of the city- possibly they just sent the ark around it. See on :20.

Jos 6:12 Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of Yahweh- Joshua was characterized by rising early (Josh. 3:1; 6:12; 7:16; 8:10). This is a much repeated characteristic of God's servants: that they 'rose up early in the morning' and did God's work. In each of the following passages, this phrase is clearly not an idiom; rather does it have an evidently literal meaning: Abraham (Gen. 19:27; 21:14; 22:3); Jacob (Gen. 28:18); Job (1:5); Moses (Ex. 8:20; 9:13; 24:4; 34:4); Gideon (Jud. 6:38; 7:1). This is quite an impressive list, numerically. This can be a figure for being zealous (Ps. 127:2; Pr. 27:14; Song 7:12; Is. 5:11; Zeph. 3:7). God Himself rises up

early in His zeal to save and bring back His wayward people (Jer. 7:13,25; 11:7; 25:3,4; 26:5; 29:19; 32:33; 35:14,15; 44:4). Yet the above examples all show that men literally rose up early in their service to God; this was an expression of their zeal for God, in response to His zeal for us. I'm not suggesting that zeal for God is reflected by rising early rather than staying up late; but it wouldn't be too much to suggest that if we are men of mission, we won't waste our hours in bed. Get up when you wake up.

Jos 6:13 The seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of Yahweh went on continually and blew the trumpets: and the armed men went before them. The rear guard came after the ark of Yahweh. The trumpets sounded as they went-

This rear guard could have just been ordinary unarmed people, as discussed on :5. The restoration prophets may allude to this in saying that Yahweh would be Israel's rear guard (Is. 52:12), and Yahweh's glory would be their rear guard (Is. 58:8)- manifest in unarmed, ordinary people. The tribe of Dan was the rear guard of the camp when it was usually on the move (Num. 10:25).

Jos 6:14 The second day they marched around the city once, and returned into the camp. They did this six days-

Verse 10 implies that the people maybe didn't know the battle plan- each day they would've walked around the city in silence, and nothing happened. They were kept on the tip toe of faith and obedience throughout those six days, and may well have wondered whether this was not just some bizarre ritual which would make no dent in the walls of Jericho. The command to "Shout!" didn't come- for six days. The whole exercise was surely to develop their faith. Again, this was the most crazy of battle plans, in human terms.

Jos 6:15 It happened on the seventh day that they rose early at the dawning of the day, and marched around the city in the same way seven times. Only on this day they marched around the city seven times-

As noted above, they would have been exhausted by the end of this. The battle plan was God's and was against all human wisdom, which would have wanted an early morning surprise attack, with troops at their most fresh. Rather than an exhausted group of soldiers later in the day, in full view of the enemy, having given the defenders every warning that a major attack was coming.

Jos 6:16 It happened at the seventh time, when the priests blew the trumpets, that Joshua said to the people, Shout, for Yahweh has given you the city!-

The command to "shout" was a reflection of the belief Israel were to have in the fact that God *had already* given them the city- for the Hebrew for "shout" usually refers to a shout of victory. The word is translated "... will I triumph" in Ps. 60:8; 108:9. The same idea of shouting in victory over a city which has been given to God's people recurs in Jer. 50:15- "Shout against her round about [cp. compassing the walls of Jericho]... her foundations *are* [present tense] fallen, her walls [cp. Jericho's] *are* thrown down". And this speaks of our latter day victory against Babylon- thus making the whole account of earnest relevance to us who live in the last days, and who will see Babylon fall by faith. Notice how literal Babylon fell by the water of the river being dried up, and the walls being opened- just the same sequence of events that occurred at Jericho.

Jos 6:17 The city shall be devoted, even it and all that is in it, to Yahweh. Only Rahab the prostitute shall live, she and all who are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent-

"The prostitute" is emphasized. Those within her house, a brothel, sound like they were her clients; although we know they were her family. But the language is used like this to emphasize her low moral situation. Her salvation was a strong lesson to Israel. Those whom they would otherwise despise as the lowest of the low, a Gentile prostitute, were to be welcomed into the covenant.

Jos 6:18 But as for you, only keep yourselves from the devoted thing, lest when you have devoted it, you take of the devoted thing-

This was precisely what Saul did (1 Sam. 15:3). Like so many, he failed to learn from Biblical history. Whether we have a mean or generous spirit will affect our whole life- an evil [stingy] eye means our whole body is full of darkness. Just let this sink in. If we are materialistic, our whole life will be filled with darkness, whatever our external pretensions may be, and there is a definite link to be made here with the "darkness" of rejection. The riches of Jericho are described with a Hebrew word which means both a curse, and something devoted (to God; Josh. 6:18). This teaches a powerful lesson: such riches of this world as come into our possession will curse us, unless they are devoted to the Father.

Understanding God as creator, in its true, deep and thought-through sense, leads to an understanding of grace. That all we have, are, were, shall ever be, is purely His gift. Likewise, to take for ourselves what is God's is to play God. Materialism and selfishness are in this sense playing God. This was Achan's sin- to take what was devoted to God for himself. And this was why he is described as having 'stolen'. But from whom? From God (Josh. 6:18; 7:11). The fact God owns everything means that there can be no distinction between what is ours and what is God's. To think like that is to steal from Him. And hence the power and force of Mal. 3:8: "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me". Have we robbed God in this way, especially in our attitudes and perceptions?

That would make the camp of Israel accursed-

"Accursed" is s.w. "devoted". Jericho and its wealth was to be sacrificially devoted to Yahweh. If Israel took that wealth to themselves, then they too would have to be handed over to Him in destruction.

And trouble it-

Ahab's denunciation of Elijah as "he that troubles Israel" (1 Kings 18:17) effectively accuses Elijah of being like Achan, the troubler of Israel (Josh. 6:18). As Achan brought about Israel's defeat at the hand of her surrounding enemies, so latter-day Israel will blame their similar defeats and the strange drought which will afflict them, upon Elijah. Elijah's response to Ahab's accusation is typical of his theme of the need to throw off the worship of Baal and the other local gods, for that of Yahweh: "I have not troubled Israel, but you... in that you have... followed Baalim" (1 Kings 18:18). The stress upon this may indicate that the latter-day Elijah will seek to turn Israel away from a devotion to Islam - the idol of the surrounding nations.

Jos 6:19 But all the silver and gold, and the vessels of brass and iron, are holy to Yahweh. They shall come into Yahweh's treasury-

The same phrase "of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass" is used of the vessels taken from the Gentile world and dedicated to the tabernacle (Ex. 11:2; 12:35;

Josh. 6:19; 2 Sam. 8:10; 1 Kings 7:51). The generosity of others in Biblical history, their right perspective on the wealth taken from this world, was to inspire other believers in later history. And this is how the body of Christ should function today, with members inspiring others to spirituality.

Jos 6:20 So the people shouted, and the priests blew the trumpets. It happened that when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted with a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him; and they took the city-

See on :5,11; Rev. 21:12. For "flat", see on :5. Yet according to Heb. 11:30, "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down ...". Whose faith? What faith? Was Joshua-Jesus' faith counted to the people? Or was their very weak, hope-for-the-best faith all the same accepted as faith by God's grace?

The people were to shout when the trumpets sounded (Josh. 6:10). But in reality, like a Sunday School play gone wrong, the people shouted, the trumpets sounded, and then the people again shouted (Josh. 6:20). See on :11.

Jos 6:21 They utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, both young and old, and ox, sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword-

"Destroyed" is the word for "devoted". But actually not all was devoted; Achan stole some of it. So this is an example of where the Bible records things as they appeared to men, without as it were adding footnotes to clarify. Just as the language of demons is used in the New Testament, although they do not in fact exist.

The animals aren't recorded as being destroyed in later conquests. It's as if God recognized that the totality of devotion to Him which He so desired was just not going to be forthcoming from His people. And so He asked for less, and allowed them keep the cattle, which clearly they were tempted to covet. Yet we need to learn from this, and be inspired to at least try to rise up to total devotion.

Jos 6:22 Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, Go into the prostitute's house, and bring out from there the woman and all that she has, as you swore to her-

Hebrew tenses are vague, unlike tenses in Greek or English. The idea is that Joshua "had said" this to the two men. Artists have done us a great disservice by presenting the walls of Jericho as having fallen, apart from the section where Rahab's house was. She had already been brought out- perhaps by using the scarlet rope to descend the walls, bringing her into full fellowship with the experience of the spies. But the emphasis is that the spies 'brought her out', and entered her house.

Jos 6:23 The young men who were spies went in, and brought out Rahab with her father, her mother, her brothers, and all that she had. They also brought out all her relatives, and they set them outside the camp of Israel-

The family had been warned that they must remain within the house, as if they were keeping Passover (Josh. 2:19 = Ex. 12:22). They were "brought out" as Israel were then brought out from Egypt, the "house" of bondage (s.w. Ex. 20:2). The king of Jericho had used the same phrase in ordering that the spies be brought out from her house (Josh. 2:3). But it was all turned the other way around, which is typical of God's style of working. We see something of God's radical inversion of values in that the sanctuary of refuge in this case was a brothel. Those within it were her family, who swallowed their pride and reconciled with Rahab enough to come within her home;

and presumably any others there were her former clients. There would have been a strange compulsion in the witness of a repentant prostitute, warning of judgment to come and salvation within her house. We wonder if some refused to accept her preaching because they couldn't humble themselves to enter within her home. Their concern about appearances was absurd in that the society whose views they so cared was about to be obliterated. We can easily translate these things into modern relevance.

As the city was closed (:1), the spies would have entered her home at some point before the walls were destroyed. We presume they did this using the red rope hanging from her window, and that she and her family and converts used that same rope to come to salvation / safety. But red / scarlet is the colour of prostitution, and to this day, 'red light areas' refer to prostitution. The scarlet rope would have been on one hand the sign of her prostitution. And yet she was asked to use this as the sign of her commitment to the covenant, the equivalent of painting blood on the doorposts of the homes in Egypt. And it was through using that rope that those in her house were saved. Whilst of course her sin is not at all justified, the point is that it was through her sin that she had come to hear the Gospel, and she was inviting others to associate with her confession of sin in order to be saved.

Jos 6:24 They burnt the city with fire, and all that was in it-

Insofar as Israel followed their Angel, they had success. We repeatedly read that the cities they conquered were 'sent up in flames' (Jud. 1:8; Josh. 6:24; 8:8; 11:11), surely because they were following the Angel who was himself as a devouring pillar of fire (Dt. 9:3). Yet quite naturally we balk at the height of our calling, to follow the Angel.

Only they put the silver, the gold and the vessels of brass and of iron into the treasury of Yahweh's house-

1 Cor. 3:12-15 likens all the faithful to material which can pass through the fire of judgment- and this surely is a reference to the way that Jericho was burnt with fire, and only the metals along with Rahab and her family came through that fire to salvation. Thus according to the allusion, Rahab and her family represent all the faithful. And she was a whore, and her family had to humble themselves to reconcile with her and come within her brothel in order to be saved.

Jos 6:25 But Rahab the prostitute, her father's household, and all that she had-

Family, however estranged from them she must have been, were "all that she had", and in a secular sense that is true for even the wealthiest people.

Joshua saved alive. She lived in the midst of Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers, whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho-

I would consider the book of Joshua to have largely been written by Joshua, under Divine inspiration, although edited [again under Divine inspiration] for the exiles. And the book of Judges likewise. For the exiles too were set to reestablish God's Kingdom in the land and to inherit it again as the Israelites first did. The phrase "to this day" occurs several times in Joshua / Judges, and appears to have different points of historical reference (Josh. 4:9; 5:9; 6:25; 7:26; 8:28,29; 9:27; 10:27; 13:13; 14:14; 15:63; 16:10; 22:3; 23:8,9; Jud. 1:26; 6:24; 10:4; 15:19; 18:12). I would explain this by saying that the book was edited a number of times and the remains of those edits remain in the text. For God's word is living and made relevant by Him to every generation. Here, it seems that the record is being written whilst Rahab was still alive, and so "to this day" was only a relatively short time after the events.

Again we see the spies described as messengers; and Heb. 11:31; James 2:25 say that she believed them. They preached the gospel of the Kingdom and she had faith in it.

I suggested earlier that the prince of Judah whom she married (Salmon) was in fact one of the spies, as the two spies would have reflected the tribes of the faithful spies of 38 years before, Ephraim and Judah (Joshua and Caleb). But Rahab reasons in Josh. 2 as if she herself first became interested in Yahweh when she heard of what He had done at the Red Sea and to Egypt, informed of it by her clients. She would surely have been a teenager at this time. Now, around 40 years later, she would have been at least in her 50s. And it went with the territory of being a prostitute in Jericho that she would have had a number of children, abortions, miscarriages etc. That she could bear a child at this age and after that kind of lifestyle was clearly only possible with God's help; and we see again how fragile are the human threads through which God has worked out His purpose over the generations.

Jos 6:26 Joshua commanded them with an oath at that time, saying, Cursed before Yahweh is the man who rises up and builds this city Jericho. With the loss of his firstborn shall he lay its foundation, and with the loss of his youngest son shall he set up its gates-

The idea was to build it in the sense of fortifying it; for the city was inhabited for quite some time before this curse came true. Was this unnecessarily extreme? However it was fulfilled at the time of Ahab in 1 Kings 16:34: "In his days Hiel the Bethelite built Jericho: he laid its foundation with the loss of Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates with the loss of his youngest son Segub, according to the word of Yahweh, which he spoke by Joshua the son of Nun". To even attempt to rebuild Jericho meant a studied disregard of God's word, considering Biblical records of Joshua's words to be merely the words of men. Hiel was from Bethel, where the golden calf was. Jericho had been inhabited after Joshua's time (Jud. 3:13; 2 Sam. 10:5). So this was a conscious rebuilding of the walls with gates in defiance of Yahweh's word. And his sons died during the building work, perhaps 'at some time between the beginning, in laying the foundations, and the ending of the project, in hanging the gates'. After Abiram died laying the foundations, we would rather imagine that Hiel might have learned the lesson. But he didn't, such was his desire to defy God's word. And so his youngest son died when the project was almost completed and the gates were being hung. The desire to rebuild the settlement as a walled, gated city could have been because of its strategic position near the crossing of the Jordan river. Jericho was on the border of Ephraim but belonged to Benjamin (Josh. 16:7; 18:21), so it seems Ahab had taken it, and wanted to have the city and fortify it as a boundary against the two tribe kingdom.

Jos 6:27 So Yahweh was with Joshua; and his fame was in all the land-

The *eretz* promised to Abraham is the land / earth which the Bible focuses upon. "The LORD was with Joshua; and his fame was *noised* throughout all the country" (Josh. 6:27), the *eretz*. Clearly the whole planet didn't know Joshua had invaded Canaan. Many times in Joshua and Judges we read of the people of the *eretz*: "For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the *land* [*eretz*] shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the *earth* [*eretz*]" (Josh. 7:9). Here the Israelites feared being cut off from their place in the *land*. They perceived the world / earth to them as the land where their enemies lived. In Josh. 12:1,7 we meet "the kings of the earth", i.e. of the land, and this must surely be the basis of how we are to understand

the references to “the kings of the earth” in Revelation. Dt. 13:7 defines “the peoples which are round about you” [Israel] as being “from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth” (RV). Those peoples which bordered with the Israelites were “the earth” / *eretz*.

JOSHUA CHAPTER 7

Jos 7:1 But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the devoted things; for Achan, the son of Carmi the son of Zabdi the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of the devoted things-

The words for "devoted" and "destroyed" are the same. The wealth of Jericho was to be destroyed in that it was devoted to God. Therefore Achan had to be destroyed, because he had associated himself with that which was to be destroyed / devoted. We too must understand that all things are God's. To keep wealth as it were for ourselves will lead to our destruction; we are to devote it to God.

Therefore Yahweh's anger burned against the children of Israel-

The gods of the nations were also understood as getting angry with their people but for whimsical, irrational reasons; or without any explanation. Yahweh is presented as a God of consistent, passionate love for His people; but whose wrath burns because of their moral sin. Such a conception of 'God' was unknown to the surrounding world.

Jos 7:2 Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth Aven on the east side of Bethel, and spoke to them saying, Go up and spy out the land. The men went up and spied out Ai-

Joshua had himself received that command 40 years ago, and had done so in faith. And clearly that was what he expected of these spies; but as noted on :3, they had more arrogance than the confidence of faith.

Jos 7:3 They returned to Joshua and said to him, Don't let all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and strike Ai. Don't make all the people to toil there, for there are only a few of them-

Shouldn't Joshua have led them into battle in person (Josh. 1:5); he did the second time they attacked Ai (Josh. 8:15). And the spies appear over confident. There were 12,000 men of Ai slain (Josh. 8:25). To assume that they could so easily overcome with an inexperienced force a fraction of their size... indicates arrogance. So the sin of Achan was worked through by God, in a multi faceted way. For they needed the defeat in order to make them more humble. The spies' comment that not all the people needed to "toil" or "labour" to capture Ai betrays a wrong idea that victory was through their labour, rather than God's grace (Josh. 7:3). And so Josh. 24:13 uses the word in saying that Israel were given a land for which they did not "labour" (s.w.). They were taught through Achan's sin that they were not defeating the Canaanites by their strength, but by God's undeserved grace.

Jos 7:4 So about three thousand men of the people went up there, and they fled before the men of Ai-

Apparently the ark wasn't taken with them (:6); another indication of assuming they would win, rather than going in faith. For the ark had been central to the victory over Jericho. The record consistently places it as the central point of the victory.

Jos 7:5 The men of Ai struck about thirty-six of them, and they chased them from

before the gate even to Shebarim, and struck them at the descent-

"About 36" reads strangely, as we would expect a round number to follow the word "about". But it's likely from archaeological evidence that the peoples of Canaan were using the sexagesimal system; and 6 x 6 would therefore mean 'a large number', or maybe one hundred, according to the decimal system [i.e. $6 \times 6 = 10 \times 10$].

The hearts of the people melted and became like water-

This was just how the hearts of the Canaanites had been, according to Rahab's words; and it was how Israel's hearts had been when they were first rejected from the land. They were as if they had never conquered Jericho. All they saw was the result of sin; they didn't apparently think of the reason for the judgment. Like the peoples around them, they were thinking of Yahweh as if He were one of the standard deities, who got angry with his people for no reason. They were failing to perceive that Yahweh was only angry with His people if they sinned; and therefore, they had sinned.

Jos 7:6 Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of Yahweh until the evening, he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads-

This was all a sign of grief, but not necessarily of repentance. As discussed on :6, the obvious conclusion was that they had sinned and were therefore not experiencing Yahweh's blessing. For to flee before enemies was a curse for not remaining obedient to the covenant. But Joshua focuses only upon the judgment, rather than the underlying reason for it. He comes over as distinctly lacking in spiritual perception at this point.

Jos 7:7 Joshua said, Alas, Lord Yahweh, why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to cause us to perish? I wish that we had been content and lived beyond the Jordan!-

He lost faith in the promise of Josh. 1:5-7,9. It is similar to the language of Num. 14:3, the faithless complaint of Israel in the wilderness to the effect that God had cruelly brought them over the Red Sea [cp. over Jordan] just to kill them. And as Israel wished they had remained in Egypt, so Joshua wishes the people had remained east of Jordan. His faith was in tatters. And yet he ought to have had the humility to perceive what had happened- Israel had taken of the devoted thing. He may well have guessed so, but Joshua probably thought that such grabbing of a bit of spoil was to be expected, and was surely not such a big item. But it was. And the lesson is that any assumption that we can 'rob God', by assuming our wealth is "ours", is extremely serious to Him.

Jos 7:8 Oh Lord, what shall I say, after that Israel has turned their backs before their enemies!-

Joshua lamented how Israel had fled before their enemies the first time they attacked Ai, alluding back to the curses for disobedience which Moses had recently pronounced to them. Therefore the second time they attacked Ai, Joshua and his people purposefully fled before their enemies; as if recognizing that the curses for disobedience were justified for them. But by doing this, they ended up chasing their enemies, just as Moses had said they would if they were faithful. No wonder that after the victory, the whole of Israel recited the blessings and cursings (Josh. 8:5,20,33-35 cp. 7:8)!

Jos 7:9 For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it and will

surround us, and cut off our name from the earth. What will You do for Your great name?-

This seems a half hearted attempt to follow the logic of Moses when he was told that God intended to destroy all Israel because of the sin with the golden calf. But Joshua sounds like faithless Jacob, fearful that the surrounding nations will cut him off- as if he considered God's promises about his seed as somehow nullified (Gen. 34:30).

"The earth" here is specifically the *eretz* promised to Abraham; the peoples of that earth / land would surround Israel. In Josh. 12:1,7 we meet "the kings of the earth", i.e. of the land, and this must surely be the basis of how we are to understand the references to "the kings of the earth" in Revelation. Dt. 13:7 defines "the peoples which are round about you" [Israel] as being "from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth" (RV). Those peoples which bordered with the Israelites were "the earth" / *eretz*.

Jos 7:10 Yahweh said to Joshua, Get up! Why are you fallen on your face like that?-

He is being reminded not to just see himself as part of a community, but to remember his personal relationship with God, and not to have such a low self image. He ought to have perceived why Israel had turned their backs to their enemies; it was because they had broken covenant with God through sin. What God now spells out to Joshua, he really ought to have perceived and stated to God. "Like that" suggests Joshua was fallen on his face not in repentance, as he ought to have been, but just in grief for the Divine judgment which had come.

Jos 7:11 Israel has sinned. Yes, they have even transgressed My covenant which I commanded them-

See on :10. In the same way as Daniel, Isaiah, Ezra, Israel at the time of Achan etc. were reckoned as guilty but were not personally responsible for the sins of others, so the Lord Jesus was reckoned as a sinner on the cross; He was made sin for us, who knew no sin personally (2 Cor. 5:21). He carried our sins by His association with us, prefigured by the way in which Israel's sins were transferred to the animal; but He personally was not a sinner because of His association with us.

Yes, they have even taken of the devoted things, and have also stolen and also deceived. They have even put it among their own stuff-

Understanding God as creator, in its true, deep and thought-through sense, leads to an understanding of grace. That all we have, are, were, shall ever be, is purely His gift. Likewise, to take for ourselves what is God's is to play God, and therefore to steal from Him. Materialism and selfishness are in this sense playing God. This was Achan's sin- to take what was devoted to God for himself. And this was why he is described as having 'stolen'. But from whom? From God (Josh. 6:18; 7:11). The fact God owns everything means that there can be no distinction between what is ours and what is God's. To think like that is to steal from Him. And hence the power and force of Mal. 3:8: "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me". Have we robbed God in this way, especially in our attitudes and perceptions?

Jos 7:12 Therefore the children of Israel can't stand before their enemies. They turn their backs before their enemies, because they have become devoted for destruction. I will not be with you any more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you-

If Canaan is seen to represent the Kingdom, the things which are stopping us entering the Kingdom are our sins. In prospect, Jesus, the antitype of the great Angel which lead Israel into the land and drove out the enemies in prospect, has vanquished all our sins. When Israel sinned, the help the Angels were giving Israel to help them possess

what they had already prepared for them, was taken away. Thus with the first attack on Ai, the Angels had in prospect driven out the people of Ai, but the realization of that was conditional on Israel's obedience. Just as Israel in the wilderness were threatened with the withdrawal of the presence of the Angel, so here.

Jos 7:13 Get up!-

God was displeased with Joshua moping around on the floor. Joshua needed to recognize Israel had sinned, and had taken things devoted to Yahweh- and devote those things to Yahweh by destroying them.

Sanctify the people and say, 'Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, because Yahweh the God of Israel says, There is a devoted thing in the midst of you, Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the devoted thing from among you- This is not the same as guilt by association. The situation here has been misinterpreted by some to mean that we therefore cannot associate with sinners of the Achan category, lest we become defiled by association with them. But the point is that all the community of believers are in a sense considered at fault because of the failings of some of them. So if there is guilt by association, then it cannot be avoided by not associating with sinful people within the community. For the people of God, the community, is indivisible. We are in it and cannot quit it, if we wish to remain God's people. And in fact the Lord Jesus time and again turned all this around to the opposite- by willingly seeking association with sinners, eating with them, touching the leper etc. He was not thereby condemned, but rather sought to highlight His association with unclean people of God. It was through that willing association that we are saved.

Jos 7:14 'In the morning therefore you shall be brought near by your tribes. It shall be that the tribe which Yahweh selects shall come near by families. The family which Yahweh selects shall come near by households. The household which Yahweh selects shall come near man by man-

This was presumably achieved by the flashing out of yes / no answers from the urim and thummim in the breastplate (Num. 27:21; 1 Sam. 14:42). The long drawn out process (requiring Joshua to rise early, :16) was surely to elicit repentance and confession from Achan. But instead he hoped against hope that he would somehow not be found out. His lack of immediate confession reflects his impenitence.

Jos 7:15 It shall be, that he who is taken with the devoted thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of Yahweh, and because he has done a disgraceful thing in Israel'-

"All that he has" could mean all his possessions, or it could also include his family. Because surely they knew of his sin, seeing he buried the loot in the tent. And the long drawn out process of :14 had given them all plenty of opportunity to confess what had happened.

Jos 7:16 So Joshua rose up early in the morning and brought Israel near by their tribes. The tribe of Judah was selected-

Joshua was characterized by rising early (Josh. 3:1; 6:12; 7:16; 8:10). This is a much repeated characteristic of God's servants: that they 'rose up early in the morning' and did God's work. In each of the following passages, this phrase is clearly not an idiom; rather does it have an evidently literal meaning: Abraham (Gen. 19:27; 21:14; 22:3); Jacob (Gen. 28:18); Job (1:5); Moses (Ex. 8:20; 9:13; 24:4; 34:4); Gideon (Jud. 6:38;

7:1). This is quite an impressive list, numerically. This can be a figure for being zealous (Ps. 127:2; Pr. 27:14; Song 7:12; Is. 5:11; Zeph. 3:7). God Himself rises up early in His zeal to save and bring back His wayward people (Jer. 7:13,25; 11:7; 25:3,4; 26:5; 29:19; 32:33; 35:14,15; 44:4). Yet the above examples all show that men literally rose up early in their service to God; this was an expression of their zeal for God, in response to His zeal for us. I'm not suggesting that zeal for God is reflected by rising early rather than staying up late; but it wouldn't be too much to suggest that if we are men of mission, we won't waste our hours in bed. Get up when you wake up.

Jos 7:17 He brought near the family of Judah; and he selected the family of the Zerahites. He brought near the family of the Zerahites man by man, and Zabdi was selected-

"Man by man" refers not to all the men, but to the heads of families.

Jos 7:18 He brought near his household man by man, and Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was selected-
We note that none of his ancestors had God's name within their names.

Jos 7:19 Joshua said to Achan, My son, please give glory to Yahweh the God of Israel, and make confession to Him. Tell me now what you have done! Don't hide it from me!-

Give glory-

He correctly perceives that repentance is a giving of glory to God's Name. And one is tempted to think that Joshua's appeal to Achan to properly confess his sin was meant to give him the chance of avoiding the 'definite' condemnation promised. However it could be that Joshua accepted Achan had to die, but he urged his repentance because he understood that there would be a future day of resurrection and judgment; and if Achan was repentant, then he would then be saved.

Jos 7:20 Achan answered Joshua and said, I have truly sinned against Yahweh the God of Israel, and this is what I have done-

The summary of his sins, and his appreciation of the psychological processes behind them (:21), is very thorough. But it was only made after the long process of exposing him had finished. All through it, and it would have taken some time (therefore Joshua arose early that morning, :16), Achan could have volunteered his confession. But he didn't; and like the drug addict who completely understands his situation but won't break free, so Achan perceived exactly the process of temptation and sin, but wouldn't really repent.

Jos 7:21 When I saw among the spoil a beautiful Babylonian robe-

This could have been a pagan priestly robe which was attractive to Achan as an idolater. Or since "robe" is that used for the kingly robe of Jon. 3:6, it was perhaps the robe of the king of Jericho. To steal it, when it could never be worn or sold easily, is therefore typical of how the lust of the eyes leads to stealing of wrongly obtaining things which have no practical value.

Two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, then I coveted them and took them. Behold, they are hidden in the ground in the middle of my tent, with the silver under it-

James 1:13-15 uses a family analogy- a man and "his own lust" beget a child, called

sin; and sin, in due time, gives birth to death. Strange, surely, how James makes no mention of a personal Devil or demons as having any part at all to play in this process. It's quite possible that James' language is alluding to a classic example of the thought-lust-temptation-sin-death process which we have in the record of Achan in Josh. 7:20,21: "I *saw* two hundred shekels of silver, I *coveted* them, and *took* them... I *sinned*"- and so he was executed.

Jos 7:22 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent. Behold, it was hidden in his tent, with the silver under it-

The speed was appropriate because they realized that they as a nation were defiled by having material which was God's still amongst them. It's all a powerful lesson for us; for all we apparently own is not ours. Ownership, especially in its capitalist sense, is an illusion; all is God's. The Lord's parable of hidden treasure appears to allude to this scene, in an inverse sense. The true treasure we are to find and hide is that of the Gospel, as opposed to material things.

Jos 7:23 They took them from the middle of the tent, and brought them to Joshua and to all the children of Israel. They laid them down before Yahweh-

"The middle of the tent" could imply that the entire family were guilty and complicit in what he did, which would explain why they also were slain. "Laid them down" suggests the weight of the wealth stolen. We note too that "Joshua", like the Lord Jesus his namesake, was "Yahweh" in a functional sense, although not of course God Himself in person. The material was laid down before Joshua, i.e. before Yahweh, seeing Joshua was His representative. Failure to appreciate this has led to all manner of Bible verses being misinterpreted as proof texts for the mistaken dogma of the Trinity. Likewise "all the children of Israel" surely means their representative elders, and LXX here gives "elders".

Jos 7:24 Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the robe, the wedge of gold, his sons, his daughters, his cattle, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, and all that he had; and they brought them up to the valley of Achor-

We see here how the record was written at some point afterwards, for the valley "of Achor" was named after Achan, who is called "Achor" in the Chronicles genealogies. Although the judgment was to be by burning, it was also by stoning- so that all Israel would have a hand in it. The destruction of all he had would be a lesson that the rich man who tried to get richer was being judged by losing absolutely all he ever had. We also learn from this that the people crossed Jordan along with a fair number of animals, and perhaps they also had flocks with them in the wilderness journey.

Jos 7:25 Joshua said, Why have you troubled us? Yahweh will trouble you this day. All Israel stoned him with stones, and they burned them with fire and stoned them with stones-

Ahab's denunciation of Elijah as "he that troubles Israel" (1 Kings 18:17) effectively accuses Elijah of being like Achan, the troubler of Israel (Josh. 6:18). As Achan brought about Israel's defeat at the hand of her surrounding enemies, so latter-day Israel will blame their similar defeats and the strange drought which will afflict them, upon Elijah. Elijah's response to Ahab's accusation is typical of his theme of the need to throw off the worship of Baal and the other local gods, for that of Yahweh: "I have not troubled Israel, but you... in that you have... followed Baalim" (1 Kings

18:18). The stress upon this may indicate that the latter-day Elijah will seek to turn Israel away from a devotion to Islam - the idol of the surrounding nations.

It was Achan who was stoned with stones. The "them" burned with fire could refer to his family, or to his possessions. Perhaps his family were brought close to observe his death, just as the families of those who committed atrocities in the holocaust were made to watch the hanging of their guilty relatives.

Jos 7:26 They raised over him a great heap of stones that remains to this day- I would consider the book of Joshua to have largely been written by Joshua, under Divine inspiration, although edited [again under Divine inspiration] for the exiles. And the book of Judges likewise. For the exiles too were set to reestablish God's Kingdom in the land and to inherit it again as the Israelites first did. The phrase "to this day" occurs several times in Joshua / Judges, and appears to have different points of historical reference (Josh. 4:9; 5:9; 6:25; 7:26; 8:28,29; 9:27; 10:27; 13:13; 14:14; 15:63; 16:10; 22:3; 23:8,9; Jud. 1:26; 6:24; 10:4; 15:19; 18:12). I would explain this by saying that the book was edited a number of times and the remains of those edits remain in the text. For God's word is living and made relevant by Him to every generation.

Yahweh turned from the fierceness of His anger. Therefore the name of that place was called The valley of Achor to this day-

This turning from fierce anger recalls how Yahweh likewise did so earlier- because of the intercession of Moses. Here He turned from His anger because of repentance; but earlier He had done so because of the prayer of Moses, which was therefore counted as if Israel had repented at the time of the golden calf. This raises deep questions as to whether our prayers and intercessions can save the impenitent; see on Mk. 2:5. Ezra 10:14 speaks of God's wrath turning away because those who had married Gentile women divorced them. God's wrath is also turned away by the death of the sinner- the heads of the sinners in Num. 25:4 were to be 'hung up' before the Lord so that His wrath would turn away. A similar example is to be found in Josh. 7:26. Jeremiah often comments that God's wrath is turned away by the execution of judgment upon the sinner (e.g. Jer. 30:24). In this sense His anger and wrath are poured out or 'accomplished', i.e. they are no more because they have been poured out (Lam. 4:11). The fact that men such as Moses and Jeremiah (Jer. 18:20) turned away God's wrath without these things happening, or simply by prayer (Dan. 9:16) therefore means that God accepted the intercession of those men and counted their righteousness to those from whom His wrath turned away. We shouldn't assume that these righteous men merely waved away God's wrath. That wrath was real, and required immense pleading and personal dedication on their behalf.

JOSHUA CHAPTER 8

Jos 8:1 Yahweh said to Joshua, Don't be afraid, neither be dismayed. Take all the people of war with you and arise, go up to Ai. Behold, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, with his people, his city, and his land-

Chapter 7 has presented Joshua as having been so "dismayed" that he lost faith in the promises and encouragement of Josh. 1:3,9. God now continues to encourage him. Although the victory was given into their hand, that was still potential. For obedience was still required.

Jos 8:2 You shall do to Ai and her king as you did to Jericho and her king, except its spoil and its livestock, you shall take for a plunder for yourselves-

God told Israel to totally destroy the spoil from the cities they attacked. But when they failed to do this with Jericho, God told them that with Ai, the next city on the agenda, they were allowed to keep the spoil (Josh. 8:2); even though Dt. 20:14-16 said that this was how they should treat their distant enemies, but *not* cities like Ai which were part of their inheritance. This was an undoubted concession to human weakness. The same concession to human weakness applied to other cities apart from Ai; it became a general policy that "all the spoil of these cities... the children of Israel took for a prey unto themselves"; and yet following straight on from this we are told that Joshua "left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses" (Josh. 11:14,15). God accepted those concessions to human weakness, this living on a lower level, as total obedience. The grace of all this is marvellous.

Set an ambush for the city behind it-

Some human strategy was now used to take Ai, whereas the strategy used to take Jericho had been foolishness in secular terms, and was completely Divine, requiring absolute faith. God is coming down a level, in order to meet His weak people and work with them. Although on another level, we can understand that in working with God, often the initiative is with us. All this means that *how* we plan to preach and care for others *does* need to be considered. Time and again, God works through humanly devised good strategies (Josh. 8:1,2; Neh. 4:9 etc.). But I love the way Derek Kidner puts it: "Scripture approves of strategy when it is a tool rather than a substitute for God".

Jos 8:3 So Joshua arose-

"Arose" is s.w. 'raise up'. The Messianic prophecy of Dt. 18:18 had a potential Messianic and primary fulfillment in Joshua: "I will raise them up [God 'rose up' Joshua- s.w. Josh. 1:2; 7:10,13; 8:1,3] a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee [Joshua's life was framed to be like that of Moses- e.g. he too was told to remove his shoe when on holy ground, also held his hands up whilst Israel fought their enemies]; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him [Joshua is constantly presented as telling Israel what God commanded him- Josh. 4:8,10,17; 6:10; 8:8: "according to the commandment of the Lord shall ye do. See, I have commanded you"; Josh. 8:27]. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him".

And all the people of war, to go up to Ai. Joshua chose thirty thousand men, the mighty men of valour, and sent them out by night-

This was ten times the number which the spies had originally suggested in their arrogance and lack of true faith. However we note that in :12, five thousand were set in ambush. 30,000 is a large number of men to hide in order to set an ambush, although the term "thousand" when describing military matters rarely means literally 1000, but rather refers to some military division. Perhaps there were two ambushes set (see on :14), or there were a total of 30,000 troops but 5000 used in the ambush. My personal preference is to believe that he set out with 30000 but like Gideon, the numbers were reduced to 5000. For "Joshua chose" 30000 men, to fight against 12000 (:12,25), as if to assure victory by reason of numbers rather than faith; so perhaps God therefore chose 5000.

Jos 8:4 He commanded them, saying, Behold, you shall lie in ambush against the city, behind the city. Don't go very far from the city, but all of you be ready-

"Behind the city" meant on its west side (:9). The specific commands are from Joshua

as the general; perhaps they were his interpretation of the command to set an ambush (:2). How that was to be fulfilled was left up to Joshua. The fact he built into the battle plans a retreat before enemies (:5) is therefore a commendable example of humility, recognizing that they deserved defeat for breaking the covenant, but believing that God's grace would turn that into victory, thereby making it an example of what Buechner called "the magnificent defeat".

Jos 8:5 I, and all the people who are with me, will approach to the city. It shall happen, when they come out against us, as at the first, we will flee before them- Joshua had lamented how Israel had fled before their enemies the first time they attacked Ai, alluding back to the curses for disobedience which Moses had recently pronounced to them. Therefore the second time they attacked Ai, Joshua and his people purposefully fled before their enemies; as if recognizing that the curses for disobedience were justified for them. But by doing this, they ended up chasing their enemies, just as Moses had said they would if they were faithful. No wonder that after the victory, the whole of Israel recited the blessings and cursings (Josh. 8:5,20,33-35 cp. 7:8)! Fleeing before their enemies was perhaps a recognition of the truth of Dt. 28:25.

Jos 8:6 They will come out after us, until we have drawn them away from the city; for they will say, 'They flee before us, like the first time'. So we will flee before them- Joshua explains to his people the mind of the people of Ai. They would assume that nothing had changed in Israel between the first attack and this second attack. But what had happened was that Israel had repented, and the things as it were stolen from God had been given to Him. This was the difference, and so Ai were to be defeated because they failed to recognize that.

Jos 8:7 and you shall rise up from the ambush, and take possession of the city; for Yahweh your God will deliver it into your hand- The possession of the city was not because of the clever strategy, but because of God's deliverance of it into the hand of Israel. And yet He gave them the strategy, and encouraged Joshua to develop it. This is typical of the way He works, a kind of symphony between Divine sovereignty and human volition.

Jos 8:8 It shall be, when you have seized on the city, that you shall set the city on fire. You shall do this according to the word of Yahweh. Behold, I have commanded you- see on :3; Jud. 1:8. The very receipt of a command should strengthen our brave obedience to it (Josh. 1:9; 2 Sam. 13:28). But our attitude to God's word determines our obedience to it. This is one dimension of believing that the Bible is indeed written by Divine inspiration.

Jos 8:9 Joshua sent them out; and they went to prepare the ambush, and stayed between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of Ai; but Joshua stayed among the people that night-

Again "the people" are put for the soldiers; see on :11. The Divine command to set an ambush (:2) was obeyed very carefully by Joshua, as so emphasized (s.w. :4,7,9,12,14,19,21). I discuss on :27 how Joshua was very good at obeying clear commands, but tended to fail when he had to resolve questions on his own initiative.

Jos 8:10 Joshua rose up early in the morning, mustered the people, and went up, he

and the elders of Israel, at the head of the people to Ai-

Joshua was characterized by rising early (Josh. 3:1; 6:12; 7:16; 8:10). This is a much repeated characteristic of God's servants: that they 'rose up early in the morning' and did God's work. In each of the following passages, this phrase is clearly not an idiom; rather does it have an evidently literal meaning: Abraham (Gen. 19:27; 21:14; 22:3); Jacob (Gen. 28:18); Job (1:5); Moses (Ex. 8:20; 9:13; 24:4; 34:4); Gideon (Jud. 6:38; 7:1). This is quite an impressive list, numerically. This can be a figure for being zealous (Ps. 127:2; Pr. 27:14; Song 7:12; Is. 5:11; Zeph. 3:7). God Himself rises up early in His zeal to save and bring back His wayward people (Jer. 7:13,25; 11:7; 25:3,4; 26:5; 29:19; 32:33; 35:14,15; 44:4). Yet the above examples all show that men literally rose up early in their service to God; this was an expression of their zeal for God, in response to His zeal for us. I'm not suggesting that zeal for God is reflected by rising early rather than staying up late; but it wouldn't be too much to suggest that if we are men of mission, we won't waste our hours in bed. Get up when you wake up.

Jos 8:11 All the people, even the men of war who were with him, went up and drew near to the city, and encamped on the north side of Ai. Now there was a valley between him and Ai-

As often in Joshua, "the people" are paralleled with "the men of war". The idea may be that ordinary unarmed civilians also accompanied them; or that the "men of war" were representative of the people. For it was to be their conquest. The land was to be taken by "them", the people, and not simply due to military actions.

Jos 8:12 He had set about five thousand men in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of the city-

Verses 12 and 13 appear to be a recapitulation of the situation. This position was that once occupied by Abraham (Gen. 12:8; 13:3), and was clearly chosen to remind the people of their being the children of Abraham and in his position as he first entered the land.

Jos 8:13 So they set the people, even all the army who was on the north of the city, and the ambush on the west of the city; and Joshua went that night into the midst of the valley-

The idea is that they *had* set the people in these positions; verses 12 and 13 appear to be a recapitulation.

Jos 8:14 It happened, when the king of Ai saw it, that they hurried and rose up early, and the men of the city went out against Israel to battle, he and all his people, at the time appointed, before the Arabah; but he didn't know that there was an ambush against him behind the city-

"The time appointed" is in some manuscripts "the place appointed"; and "the Arabah" is in some "the ambush". In this case there would be the idea of two ambushes, one before and one behind the city. This would explain the two different numbers given for the troops involved in the ambushes; see on :3.

Jos 8:15 Joshua and all Israel made as if they were beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness-

"The way of the wilderness" is the very phrase used of the route taken by Israel after they had been barred from entering the land nearly 40 years previously (Dt. 1:40; 2:1). Joshua was acceptant of the fact that they did not now deserve to enter the land, and

was fleeing before his enemies, knowing this was the curse for disobedience to the covenant. He was therefore appreciating that their entrance to the Kingdom was now by grace alone. And so victory was given, and thus in human terms this was all part of the strategy for taking Ai.

Jos 8:16 All the people who were in the city were called together to pursue after them. They pursued Joshua, and were drawn away from the city-

We note that Joshua personally was with the group who fled before their enemies, purposefully accepting that they had broken covenant and were worthy of the condemnation which that involved- of fleeing before enemies.

Jos 8:17 There was not a man left in Ai or Bethel who didn't go out after Israel. They left the city open and pursued Israel-

This suggests that the people of Bethel had come to support Ai, perhaps in the gap between the two attacks upon Ai.

Jos 8:18 Yahweh said to Joshua, Stretch out the javelin that is in your hand toward Ai, for I will give it into your hand. Joshua stretched out the javelin that was in his hand toward the city-

The javelin would have reflected the rays of the sun and thereby given a message to the ambush to now rise. However there is no doubt that God meant Joshua to imitate the victories of Moses on account of his staff. We see here a mixture of working through human strategy, and yet being given the victory as a result of Divine operation. This was not the optimal way to operate; for before Achan's sin, the 'strategy' for taking Jericho had been complete nonsense in military terms, and had been designed to demonstrate absolute trust in Yahweh for victory. It seems this sign of the javelin was not explained to Joshua ahead of time. He may have wondered how to inform the ambushers of the optimal time to attack; and God now gave him the answer. Or perhaps the exact timing of the signal was from God. And this helps us understand the apparent gaps in God's revealed strategy with us; they are there so that we live by faith.

Jos 8:19 The ambush arose quickly out of their place, and they ran as soon as he had stretched out his hand, entered into the city and took it. They hurried and set the city on fire-

The burning of the cities was because of their uncleanness. And yet Jerusalem was to be burned with fire in the end (Jer. 21:10; 32:29). She was going to be proven no better than the idolatrous cities of the Canaanites, whose gods Israel eagerly worshipped. See on :22.

Jos 8:20 When the men of Ai looked behind them, they saw, and behold, the smoke of the city ascended up to heaven, and they had no power to flee this way or that way. The people who fled to the wilderness turned back on the pursuers-

Having no way to flee is typical of the experience of condemnation which is to come upon both Israel and the Gentiles (Jer. 25:35 etc.). Again, as noted on :19,22 etc., we see the destruction of these Canaanite cities as being the prototype for the later destruction of Israel, seeing they proved no better than the Canaanites but in fact worse.

Jos 8:21 When Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city, and that

the smoke of the city ascended, then they turned again, and killed the men of Ai-
The smoke signal was clearly planned in advance, as in Jud. 20:38. We note the very secular strategy employed in contrast to the humanly foolish strategy in taking Jericho. God perceived Israel's low level of spirituality, and worked with them according to that level. The image of the smoke of a burning city ascending is used of latter day Babylon's destruction at the hands of the Lord Jesus (Rev. 18:18). The conquests of Joshua point forward to that of his namesake; but insofar as he could have given the people "rest", but he didn't. And so his work was reapplied and rescheduled to the Lord Jesus.

Jos 8:22 The others came out of the city against them, so they were in the midst of Israel, some on this side, some on that side. They struck them so that they let none of them remain or escape-

But in the end, the same judgment was to come upon an apostate people of God. They too would be left with none to remain nor escape (Jer. 42:17; 44:14). We noted on :19 that Jerusalem was to be burnt for her filthiness, just as the cities of Canaan were at this time. God's people were to be judged as Canaanites. See on :23.

Jos 8:23 They captured the king of Ai alive, and brought him to Joshua-
"Ai" means 'heaps', and the word is used of how Jerusalem was to become heaps (Jer. 26:18). Her king too was captured alive and brought to the leader of the attacking armies. See on :19,22.

Jos 8:24 It happened that when Israel had made an end of killing all the inhabitants of Ai in the field, in the wilderness in which they pursued them, and they had all fallen by the edge of the sword until they were consumed, that all Israel returned to Ai and struck it with the edge of the sword-

The soldiers are described as "all Israel", just as in Joshua the armed men are several times termed "the people". The idea is that the soldiers were seen as representative of the people. For the whole people were as it were to be involved in the conquest.

Jos 8:25 All that fell that day, both of men and women, were twelve thousand, even all the men of Ai-

Initially the Israelites nonchalantly thought only two or three thousand men were needed to destroy them. But then after the defeat, Joshua took 30000 men to deal with them, and it seems God reduced that number to 5000; see on :3. This wavering in faith and confidence has the ring of psychological credibility to it.

Jos 8:26 For Joshua didn't draw back his hand with which he stretched out the javelin, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai-

Given the similarities with the battle against Amalek, were his arms held up in fervent prayer? This is a common association with upholden arms. Moses held his hand up, and Joshua led the army into battle, succeeding because Moses had his hands held up in prayer (Ex. 17:10). Now, Joshua is the one holding his hands up in prayer, whilst Israel are in battle. Lesson: We go through experiences which later repeat; and we are in the position of those who had before prayed for us, and are expected to replicate their examples.

When Joshua was leading the Israelite army, he was given victory because Moses kept his arms outstretched in prayer. Later, circumstances repeated, so that Joshua had the opportunity to make the same effort for others as had been made for him. For

Joshua had to keep his hand stretched out, until his men had destroyed all the men of Ai (Josh. 8:26). And throughout life, this occurs for us- a situation wherein we were shown grace repeats, in essence, so that we have an opportunity to show the same grace to others which we received.

"Utterly destroyed" is the word used for destruction or devotion to Yahweh. It seems that all the Canaanites had the opportunity for repentance. The trumpet blasts were to be understood by the people of Jericho as a call to repentance, which they ignored (Am. 3:6; Is. 18:3). This would then explain why the cities were devoted to Yahweh in destruction, which was the punishment for a city which turned away from Yahweh (Dt. 13:12-14).

Jos 8:27 Only the livestock and the spoil of that city Israel took for prey to themselves, according to the word of Yahweh which He commanded Joshua- Joshua was very good at obedience to clear commandments (:31,35; Josh. 4:10,17; 8:27; 10:40). But when he had to articulate his faith in God in unexpected situations, e.g. when the ambassadors from Gibeon arrived, or when the first attack on Ai failed, he seems to have performed poorly. Legalistic obedience is no use in those cases when principles need to be applied. Josh. 5:13,14 can be read as a rebuke of Joshua, wanting to boil everything down to black and white, wanting to see God as either personally for him or against him; when the essence is to seek to discern and do God's will. He very strictly adhered to God's commandments with legalistic obedience, e.g., about how to approach and deal with Jericho, or how to cross the flooded Jordan and build an altar; and time and again, we read in Joshua of how he strictly relayed and obeyed the Divine commandments given by Moses (Josh. 8:31,33,35; 11:12,15,20; 14:2,5; 17:4; 21:2,8). Yet as with any literalistic or legally minded person, it was hard for Joshua to apply the principles behind the laws to situations which weren't specifically addressed by Divine revelation, where legalistic obedience wasn't what was required.

Jos 8:28 So Joshua burnt Ai and made it a heap forever, even a desolation, to this day-

I would consider the book of Joshua to have largely been written by Joshua, under Divine inspiration, although edited [again under Divine inspiration] for the exiles. And the book of Judges likewise. For the exiles too were set to reestablish God's Kingdom in the land and to inherit it again as the Israelites first did. The phrase "to this day" occurs several times in Joshua / Judges, and appears to have different points of historical reference (Josh. 4:9; 5:9; 6:25; 7:26; 8:28,29; 9:27; 10:27; 13:13; 14:14; 15:63; 16:10; 22:3; 23:8,9; Jud. 1:26; 6:24; 10:4; 15:19; 18:12). I would explain this by saying that the book was edited a number of times and the remains of those edits remain in the text. For God's word is living and made relevant by Him to every generation.

Jos 8:29 He hanged the king of Ai on a tree until the evening, and at the sundown Joshua commanded, and they took his body down from the tree and threw it at the entrance of the gate of the city-

We see here that one dimension of crucifixion on a tree was public shame and public instruction. These were all aspects of the Lord's death. Dt. 21:23 had commanded this taking down bodies of criminals from the tree where they were exhibited, by evening; even condemned criminals were to be shown some respect. For after dark wild animals and birds would have eaten them. We see here reflected how God truly takes

no pleasure in the death of the wicked. We need not unduly fear condemnation, for God doesn't want to condemn people.

And raised a great heap of stones on it that remains to this day-

This was perhaps intentionally to reflect the fate of Achan. He loved the things of the Canaanites, and apparently stole the royal robe of the king of Jericho. So he met the same end as the kings of Canaan, buried beneath a heap of stones. The raising of the stones over the corpse may have been through all Israel as it were stoning him.

Jos 8:30 Then Joshua built an altar to Yahweh, the God of Israel, in Mount Ebal-

Dt. 27:2-8 had commanded that "in the day" Israel passed over Jordan, they were to set up plastered stones with the law written upon them [perhaps just the ten commandments, or the lists of blessings and cursings], and put them "in mount Ebal". They were to do this immediately they passed over Jordan so that they might enter further into the land (Dt. 27:3); and the location was defined as near Gilgal (Dt. 11:30), where they camped after entering the land. Clearly enough, the ceremony of blessing and cursing ought to have been done immediately they entered the land. But they let secular concerns dominate their spiritual obligation to be thankful as God had asked. For when Joshua fulfilled it in Josh. 8:30, this was not "in the day" that Israel passed over Jordan. They had indeed taken stones with them from the Jordan, but had not used them as intended. They didn't plaster them nor write the law upon them. And so perhaps God amended His intention- which was initially that they would set those stones up in mount Ebal immediately. Instead, He sent the people against Jericho, and then against Ai. Perhaps an instant conquest of Jericho had been originally intended, so that they could proceed to mount Ebal immediately. For later in Joshua we will read of God giving His people unnaturally speedy progress against their enemies, all in the same day. Or maybe His intention was that firstly they ought to have gone to mount Ebal with the plastered stones, and only then attacked Jericho. But they didn't plaster the stones nor wish to proceed immediately to Ebal. And so He arranged the campaign against Jericho and then Ai. We see how God is so eager to accommodate His programs to the weakness of men.

Jos 8:31 as Moses the servant of Yahweh commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of uncut stones, on which no man had lifted up any iron. They offered burnt offerings on it to Yahweh, and sacrificed peace offerings-

Joshua comes over as exactly obedient to specific laws, but see on :27. Ex. 20:25 says that the use of any tool upon an altar would defile it (also see Dt. 27:5). This is how strongly God despises chic externality, and wants us to offer to Him as we are, uncut stones. He wants us, as we are, and not covered by cosmetics. In this we see the deep unspirituality of the altars in the temple, as designed by David and Solomon. I have suggested that although Solomon claims all this was commanded by God, in fact that was merely His assumption. Solomon attempted to get around this law by ensuring that the stones were cut away from the temple construction site (1 Kings 6:7). But this surely was breaking the spirit of the law.

Jos 8:32 He wrote there on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel-

Which law commanded to Moses isn't stipulated; perhaps it was the list of the blessings and cursings, or the book of Deuteronomy (Dt. 31:9,24,26) or the ten

commandments. We assume from the record that Joshua was literate, a skill perhaps learned from Moses whilst being his personal servant in the wilderness years.

Jos 8:33 All Israel, their elders and officers and their judges, stood on both sides of the ark before the priests the Levites who carried the ark of Yahweh's covenant, the foreigner as well as the native. Half of them stood in front of Mount Gerizim, and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of Yahweh had commanded at the first-

Shechem was between Ebal and Gerizim, and perhaps whilst there, they buried the bones of Joseph in the grave of the Abraham family which was there in the area (Gen. 33:19; Ex. 13:19). There is perhaps no mention of Shechem here, because the record wishes to focus upon the solemnity of what was being done in accordance with Dt. 27:2-8, rather than the geography. We note that "the foreigner" was also blessed, and encompassed by God within the term "the people of Israel".

For the blessing of the people of Israel-

Both blessing and cursing was read (:34), but clearly we are to understand that the focus of the Divine record is upon God's desire to bless the people. The whole ceremony is called "the blessing". And the simple takeaway from this is that God wishes our salvation and blessing, far more than His cursing of the disobedient.

Jos 8:34 Afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the book of the law-

This suggests that the law which was written on the stones was just the blessings and curses, which were read out at the time. See on :33.

Jos 8:35 There was not a word of all that Moses commanded which Joshua didn't read before all the assembly of Israel, with the women, the little ones, and the foreigners who were among them-

Joshua comes over as exactly obedient to specific laws, but see on :27. "The foreigners" appear to refer to a distinct category of people who were "among them" but not fully integrated.

JOSHUA CHAPTER 9

Jos 9:1 When all the kings who were beyond the Jordan, in the hill country, and in the lowland, and on all the shore of the great sea in front of Lebanon, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, heard of it- Gen. 15:16 summarizes all these kings as the "Amorites", and says that Israel would possess their land when the time of their iniquity [or judgment for their iniquity] was fulfilled. Israel's victories against them were therefore a judgment upon these kingdoms for their sins. The fact Israel themselves had with them the idols of Egypt when they crossed the Red Sea, and so quickly accepted the Canaanite gods, therefore made Israel the more culpable for Divine judgment. For they had judged others for what they themselves did.

Jos 9:2 they gathered themselves together with one accord to fight with Joshua and with Israel-

Their "one accord" clearly excluded the elders of Gibeon (:3). It would seem there was group think going on here, and Gibeon are presented as being saved because they dared to go against the view of the majority. We note that :1 lists six kings, rather than

the usual group of seven kings or kingdoms which are associated with the tribes in Canaan. The Gergashites of Josh. 3:10 are omitted. They may refer to the Gibeonites, or it could be that they too were not of "one accord". The gathering of the local peoples of the land against Joshua-Jesus is clearly going to happen in the last days as well (Ps. 83). The supporters of the latter day beast are likewise gathered with one mind (Rev. 17:13), and I suggest that these also refer to the local peoples within the land of Israel.

Jos 9:3 But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and to Ai-

According to :17, "Gibeon" was a group of towns, not just one city. We note that they are not recorded as having a single king (:11), unlike the other kingdoms listed in :1; rather it seems they were governed by a group of rulers, who came to Joshua clearly with the authority to make decisions on behalf of the whole group of towns.

Jos 9:4 they in their turn resorted to a ruse, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks on their donkeys, and wineskins, old and torn and bound up-

"In their turn" could mean that having heard of the ambush of Ai, they in their turn thought they could be deceptive. For the news of Ai's destruction was very fresh in their minds. If nothing more, we learn that experience of deception inspires us to deceive. And we have to break that cycle. One wonders if "deceiving and being deceived" makes some kind of allusion to this situation (2 Tim. 3:13). But they will go on to quote the words of Rahab, so we wonder whether "in their turn" means that they like Rahab told lies in order to enter into covenant with Yahweh and be saved from destruction.

Jos 9:5 and old and patched shoes on their feet, and wore old garments. All the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy-

There is great detail provided as to their appearance. We are invited thereby to stand with Joshua and the Israelite elders, looking these people up and down, observing everything about them.

Jos 9:6 They went to Joshua to the camp at Gilgal and said to him and to the men of Israel, We have come from a far country. Now therefore make a covenant with us-

It is possible that there were two places known as Gilgal at the time, and this may be the Gilgal in the center of the land, rather than the camp first made at the Gilgal by the Jordan.

Jos 9:7 The men of Israel said to the Hivites, What if you live among us. How could we make a covenant with you?-

We get the sense that the Gibeonites' deception was somehow guessed by the elders of Israel, but against their better judgment they disregarded the telltale signs (Josh. 9:7). Or Amasa, taking no heed to the sword in Joab's hand... against his better judgment, surely (2 Sam. 20:10). This is a feature of human nature, to know on one level but not on another; and the contradictions evident in the Jesus : Judas relationship and the Samson : Delilah relationship are only explicable by realizing this. The whole thing is an eloquent essay in the Lord's humanity and the depth of His 'in-loveness' with Judas the traitor.

Jos 9:8 They said to Joshua, We are your servants. Joshua said to them, Who are you? Where do you come from?-

We notice that the Gibeonites try to avoid lying. They skip the key questions by saying they come from far away, and immediately go on to use Rahab's words about the wonder of Israel's God and their desire to fear Him and enter covenant. I will argue on :9,10 that they were to some degree sincere in this. So their attempt to minimize the amount of lies they told could therefore be seen as a reflection of their sincerity in spiritual terms.

Jos 9:9 They said to him, Your servants have come from a very far country because of the name of Yahweh your God; for we have heard of His fame, all that He did in Egypt-

'Coming from a far country for the sake of the name of Yahweh' is the very phrase used in 1 Kings 8:41 in a positive sense, of genuine proselytes who were to be welcomed into Israel and relationship with Yahweh. It seems this is a recognition that indeed there was something genuine about these Gibeonites. They wanted relationship with Yahweh but saw no way to get it apart from being deceitful as they were. See on :10. We note they say nothing about the miracle of the crossing of Jordan or fall of Jericho. They were repeating almost verbatim the words of Rahab, and we wonder whether in fact she had got word to them, or at least they had heard about her and wished to emulate her.

Jos 9:10 and all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon and to Og king of Bashan who was at Ashtaroth- These are the words of Rahab. As noted on :9, they were apparently in the same situation as she was. They wanted to accept Israel's God, but saw no way in which they could, without being deceitful. Their imitation of her is perhaps developed by the way in which they too lie in a blessed way, just as she did to the men of Jericho.

Although context is indeed important, it isn't *always* so. The New Testament writers so often quote the Old Testament *without* (apparently) attention to the context of the words they are quoting. And this is indeed the approach of the Rabbis, who tend to expound each Bible verse as a separate entity. But all the same, in seeking to understand a verse, attention should be paid to the context. Because a word or phrase means something in one context doesn't mean it *always* means this in *any* context. Thus "leaven" can be a symbol of both the Gospel and also sin. And the eagle is a symbol of several quite different enemies of Israel, as well as of God Himself. Another simple example is in Dt. 3:20; the land "beyond Jordan" refers to land on the West of the river; but in Josh. 9:10 the same phrase refers to land on the East. That same phrase "beyond Jordan" means something different in different contexts. We can't always assume, therefore, that the same phrase *must* refer to the same thing wherever it occurs.

Jos 9:11 Our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spoke to us saying, 'Take provision in your hand for the journey and go to meet them, and tell them, We are your servants. Now make a covenant with us'-

No mention is made of their king; see on :3. The "ambassadors" (:4) from Babylon also came from a "far country" (s.w. 2 Kings 20:14) to apparently make a covenant with Hezekiah. He ought to have learned from the mistake of Joshua, but instead he liked to reason that these men were like the Gibeonites and should be accepted. Hence

he twisted this historical incident into a precedent for wrong behaviour and choices; as we see so often in religious people. See on :18.

Jos 9:12 This our bread we took hot for our provision out of our houses on the day we went out to go to you; but now, behold, it is dry, and has become mouldy-
"Behold" implies they invited the princes to test the bread, which they did (:14).

Jos 9:13 These wineskins which we filled were new; and behold, now they are torn. These our garments and our shoes have become old because of the very long journey-
The obvious contrast was with the way that the garments and shoes of Israel had not worn out after a far longer journey of 40 years. God's actions in our lives are always multi faceted. This was more than a test of their humility, to what extent they would trust their own native judgment of truth as opposed to turning to God's word. It was also a reminder of His gracious provision for them throughout the wilderness years. His actions in our lives are likewise multi dimensional.

Jos 9:14 The men examined their provisions, and didn't ask counsel from the mouth of Yahweh-

"The mouth of Yahweh" implies they had prophets amongst them, or at least God's word expressed through the yes / no decisions of the Urim and Thummim (Num. 27:21). It seems Joshua delegated the examination of their integrity to the princes, who were deceived by the old bread. "Examined" could mean "tasted", as if they ate the old bread and confirmed it was indeed old. Truth can never be arrived at by delegating the examination of it to others. And Joshua and the princes were clearly wrong in not asking for God's counsel in a situation which was clearly not clearly covered by Mosaic legislation.

David apparently learned the lesson from all this. For he did ask counsel of Yahweh when not knowing how to act (s.w. 2 Sam. 5:23); whereas Israel didn't (s.w. Is. 30:1; Hos. 4:3).

Jos 9:15 Joshua made peace with them, and made a covenant with them to let them live. The princes of the congregation swore an oath to them-

Joshua was very good at obedience to clear commandments (Josh. 4:10,17; 8:27,31,35; 10:40). But when he had to articulate his faith in God in unexpected situations, e.g. when the ambassadors from Gibeon arrived, or when the first attack on Ai failed, he seems to have performed poorly. Legalistic obedience is no use in those cases when principles need to be applied. Josh. 5:13,14 can be read as a rebuke of Joshua, wanting to boil everything down to black and white, wanting to see God as either personally for him or against him; when the essence is to seek to discern and do God's will. He very strictly adhered to God's commandments with legalistic obedience, e.g., about how to approach and deal with Jericho, or how to cross the flooded Jordan and build an altar; and time and again, we read in Joshua of how he strictly relayed and obeyed the Divine commandments given by Moses (Josh. 8:31,33,35; 11:12,15,20; 14:2,5; 17:4; 21:2,8). Yet as with any literalistic or legally minded person, it was hard for Joshua to apply the principles behind the laws to situations which weren't specifically addressed by Divine revelation, where legalistic obedience wasn't what was required.

Jos 9:16 It happened at the end of three days after they had made a covenant with them that they heard that they were their neighbours, and that they lived among them-

"Three days" in the Bible is often not a literal period of 72 hours, and we must remember this when attempting to work out the chronology of the Lord's "three days" in the tomb.

Jos 9:17 The children of Israel travelled and came to their cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath Jearim-

The ark was to be kept here for 20 years (1 Sam. 7:2), confirming the impression that these people were in fact sincere.

Jos 9:18 The children of Israel didn't strike them, because the princes of the congregation had sworn to them by Yahweh, the God of Israel. All the congregation murmured against the princes-

The obvious question was as to whether the oath to the Gibeonites was binding seeing they had lied; and because Yahweh had commanded them to destroy the inhabitants of Canaan. I suggested on :11 that this incident with the Gibeonites was abused by Hezekiah to justify his acceptance of the ambassadors from Babylon. And I would now further suggest that it was abused by Saul when he slew the Gibeonites. He would have argued that the princes had been wrong to make this covenant, and therefore it was null and void. But God was extremely angry that he thought that and punished the land because of it, indicating the common people had agreed with him (2 Sam. 21:1-9). That later judgment confirms that the princes, although unwise, did the right thing by upholding the covenant. And the subsequent faithfulness of the Gibeonites within Israel was evidence that God worked through human unwisdom in order to save people. For the salvation of the people of Canaan was important to Him, and it could be argued that the six days march and blowing of trumpets around Jericho had been an invitation for their repentance.

Jos 9:19 But all the princes said to all the congregation, We have sworn to them by Yahweh the God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them-

David appears to allude to the incident, in an oblique criticism of Saul's murder of the Gibeonites, by commending the man who swears to his own hurt but doesn't change (Ps. 15:4). See on :18,26.

Jos 9:20 This we will do to them, and let them live; lest wrath be on us, because of the oath which we swore to them-

This indicates some morality amongst the princes, although they may well have been living in some superstitious fear of consequences for broken oaths, as the Mosaic law doesn't specifically legislate about the situation they were in.

Jos 9:21 The princes said to them, Let them live, so they became wood cutters and drawers of water for all the congregation, as the princes had spoken to them-

It seems this group became the Nethinim, the given / devoted ones; and were consistently faithful within Israel and the temple service, far more so than the Israelites themselves (1 Chron. 9:2; Ezra 2:43-54,58,70; 8:20). See on :23. Wood cutters and drawers of water were specifically mentioned in Dt. 29:11 as the lowest rank of society, and yet able to enter covenant relationship with Yahweh.

Jos 9:22 Joshua called for them, and he spoke to them saying, Why did you deceive us by saying, 'We are very far from you', when you live among us?-

"Among us" could be read as an expression of faith that Israel were already occupying the land and were the dominant group there.

Jos 9:23 Now therefore you are cursed, and some of you will never fail to be bondservants, both wood cutters and drawers of water for the house of my God-
I have suggested on Josh. 1:1 that these records were rewritten [under Divine inspiration] for the exiles. Hence the reference to the house of God, which didn't then exist. This would confirm the idea that the Gibeonites became the Nethinim who served in the temple; see on :21,27.

Jos 9:24 They answered Joshua and said, Because your servants were certainly told how Yahweh your God commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you, therefore we were very afraid for our lives because of you, and have done this thing-

As noted above, this was again an allusion to the words of Rahab- who had lied to her own people in order to avoid destruction and enter covenant with Yahweh. They certainly did have a good knowledge of Israel's history, and far more than the average Canaanite, they believed that these stories they had heard were true. Their knowledge of the commandment to destroy the inhabitants of Canaan is another hint that they had received some kind of word from Rahab or had heard the words she had used. The only way to avoid that destruction was to repent and join Israel and accept their God; and this was what they wanted to do.

Jos 9:25 Now, behold, we are in your hand. Do to us as it seems good and right to you to do-

See on :26. The "good and right" thing was clearly not to slay them. Israel had been told by Moses that their doing what was "good and right" was required for them to possess the land (Dt. 6:18; 12:28). The Gibeonites use the same phrase in appealing for Joshua to do what was "good and right" (Josh. 9:25) in not slaying them but accepting them into covenant relationship with Yahweh. The people generally didn't want to do this (Josh. 9:26). It seems God's providence used Joshua's initial unwisdom in order to give Joshua a chance to do what was "good and right", so that Israel could indeed possess Canaan. We marvel at how God works through human unwisdom and dysfunction, in order to achieve His final purpose of giving His people His Kingdom.

Jos 9:26 He did so to them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, so that they didn't kill them-

This implies that the thing which was "good and right" (:25) was not to kill them, although the people generally wanted to do so. See on :18,19. For all his unwisdom, Joshua comes over as having absolute integrity in this matter, and doing the right thing after having made a mess and not inquired of Yahweh as he should have done.

Jos 9:27 That day Joshua made them wood cutters and drawers of water for the congregation and for the altar of Yahweh, to this day, in the place which He should choose-

I would consider the book of Joshua to have largely been written by Joshua, under Divine inspiration, although edited [again under Divine inspiration] for the exiles. And the book of Judges likewise. For the exiles too were set to reestablish God's Kingdom in the land and to inherit it again as the Israelites first did. The phrase "to this day" occurs several times in Joshua / Judges, and appears to have different points

of historical reference (Josh. 4:9; 5:9; 6:25; 7:26; 8:28,29; 9:27; 10:27; 13:13; 14:14; 15:63; 16:10; 22:3; 23:8,9; Jud. 1:26; 6:24; 10:4; 15:19; 18:12). I would explain this by saying that the book was edited a number of times and the remains of those edits remain in the text. For God's word is living and made relevant by Him to every generation.

I have suggested on Josh. 1:1 that these records were rewritten [under Divine inspiration] for the exiles. Hence the reference to the Gibeonites serving in the place Yahweh would choose, which didn't then exist. This would confirm the idea that the Gibeonites became the Nethinim who served in the temple; see on :21,23.

JOSHUA CHAPTER 10

Jos 10:1 Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem heard how Joshua had taken Ai, and had utterly destroyed it; and that as he had done to Jericho and her king, so he had done to Ai and her king; and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel, and were among them-
Adonizedek King of Jerusalem was the counterpart of Melchizedek. He falsely claimed to be 'Lord of righteousness'. He looks ahead to the latter day antiChrist figure in Jerusalem who will mimic the Lord Jesus, a fake or 'anti' Christ, who is lord of the kings of the earth / land, to be destroyed by the latter day Joshua-Jesus. For it is the Lord Jesus who is to be declared lord of the kings of the earth, and not Adonizedek. In Rev. 17:18 the harlot Jerusalem reigns of the kings of the earth / land in the last days. And this was typified in this history of Adonizedek.

Jos 10:2 The people of Jerusalem were very afraid, because Gibeon was a great city, as one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all its men were mighty-
Their humility before Yahweh, as explained on Josh. 9, was therefore the more commendable, seeing they were known as the strongest of the Canaanite cities.

Jos 10:3 Therefore Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem sent to Hoham king of Hebron, to Piram king of Jarmuth, to Japhia king of Lachish and to Debir king of Eglon saying-
Hoham means "Jehovah of the multitude", and adds to the body of possible evidence that some tribes had begun claiming Yahweh as their God. This gives significance to the title "Yahweh, God of Israel", not the god of a similar name claimed by some of the Canaanites.

Jos 10:4 Come up to me and help me, and let us strike Gibeon; for it has made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel-
There is a parallel between Adonizedek asking others to "come up to *me* and help *me*", and Gibeon in response asking "Come up to *us*... and help *us*" (:6). The theme is developed that all concerned were weak and in need of external help. And the only ultimate external help was in God.

Jos 10:5 Therefore the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish and the king of Eglon, gathered themselves together and went up, they and all their armies, and encamped against Gibeon and made war against it-

God worked through Joshua's un wisdom about the Gibeonites in order to gather together the Canaanites and destroy them. If Joshua had been proud and impenitent about his mistake with the Gibeonites, who would have killed them or not gone to rescue them. But he was humble enough to continue going along with God's program after his un wisdom, and God in turn worked through this- by gathering together the Canaanites and giving Joshua a great victory over them.

Jos 10:6 The men of Gibeon sent to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal saying, Don't abandon your

servants! Come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us; for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the hill country have gathered together against us-

By treating the Gibeonites as Israel, Joshua was led to a great victory over the Canaanites. Had he ignored their plea for help, this would not have been granted perhaps in the dramatic way it was. The way of love and integrity often leads us to further blessing, within God's wider plan. See on :4.

Jos 10:7 So Joshua went up from Gilgal, and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valour-

There appears to be a difference between the mighty men of valour, and the "people of war". Perhaps the vanguard refers to the men of the two and a half tribes, who were to go in advance into battle. Or the idea may be that "all the people" were strengthened with bravery / valour, hence LXX "he and all the people of war with him, every one mighty in strength". We note a difference in the attitude now, and that after the victory at Jericho, where the Israelites considered that just two or three thousand of them could overcome the 12,000 men of Ai. Now Joshua takes his entire fighting force with him.

Jos 10:8 Yahweh said to Joshua, Don't fear them, for I have delivered them into your hands. Not a man of them will stand before you-

The continual reassurance of Joshua could imply he struggled to maintain faith in the promises of God which meant he should not fear (Josh. 1:5).

Jos 10:9 Joshua therefore came on them suddenly-

It shouldn't just be the nearness of the Lord's return that makes us urgent. Our decisions to give over each part of our lives, radically, to Jesus should be made not just because life is short and the Lord is at the door; but also because it might otherwise be too late to undo the damage a self-engrossed life has already caused, to the self and to others. Rebekah responded immediately to the call to go marry Isaac, in a story which is clearly to be read as an acted parable of the search for a bride for Jesus. Her 'quick' response is one of her characteristics (Gen. 24:18,20,26,46,64). Abraham likewise "rose up early" after his night time vision, requiring him to offer his son to God (Gen. 22:1,3). Joshua "therefore" started to attack the confederacy of local kings, in the middle of the night, immediately after God had assured him of victory (Josh. 10:9). David could write: "I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments" (Ps. 119:60). We cannot be passive on receiving the opportunity to serve God. We will urgently seek to do something with what we have been enabled to do for the Lord: "The servant who got five bags *went quickly* to invest the money and earned five more bags" (Mt. 25:16 NCV).

He went up from Gilgal all night-

From Gilgal to Gibeon was about 20 miles, so they marched all night.

Jos 10:10 Yahweh confused them before Israel, and He slew them with a great slaughter at

Gibeon, and chased them by the way of the ascent of Beth Horon, and struck them as far as Azekah and Makkedah

We note the confusion between what Yahweh did and what Israel did; because so clearly He was with them giving the victory. It is typical of the victories God won for His people that He uses some elements which could only have been from Him. Here, the mental confusion from Him, and later the hailstones. This was because He so dislikes any boasting in human strength. The ascent of Beth Horon would refer to "Upper Beth Horon", about four hours march away from Gibeon.

Jos 10:11 It happened that as they fled from before Israel, while they were at the descent of Beth Horon, that Yahweh cast down great stones from the sky on them to Azekah, and they died. There were more who died from the hailstones than those whom the children of Israel killed with the sword-

The seventh vial records the destruction of Babylon, who receives "the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath" in the form of huge hailstones (Rev. 16:19,21). This equates the nations who are gathered to Armageddon with Babylon, which we will see is primarily a symbol of the powers within the land promised to Abraham, based upon this historical situation. The cup of the wrath of God alludes to Zech. 12:2,3, where the surrounding nations also are "gathered together" and have burdened themselves with Jerusalem are made to drink "a cup of trembling" by reason of doing so. The punishment with giant hailstones recalls how Israel's local enemies were destroyed in the time of Joshua/Jesus.

Jos 10:12 Then Joshua spoke to Yahweh in the day when Yahweh delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel; and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand still on Gibeon! You, moon, stop in the valley of Aijalon!-

This reflects amazing spiritual ambition and faith in prayer; he commanded things to happen, so sure of the prayer being heard. However, I suggest on :15 that :12-15 are a citation from the poetic book of Jasher. This would explain the usage of poetic language in an otherwise literal, factual account. This is not to say that we cannot read it literally, although there are many problems with that.

The Amorites fled to the south-west, so Joshua was west of Gibeon at this point. The sun would be in the east over Gibeon, and the moon in the west over the valley of Ajalon. This would only have been the situation before noon, quite soon after dawn, with the moon still not set in the west. So we assume the battle and this prayer were in the early morning; Joshua and his men had marched from Gilgal through the night to launch a dawn attack (:9).

Jos 10:13 The sun stood still and the moon stayed, until the nation had avenged themselves of their enemies-

Samson took vengeance on the Philistines (Jud. 15:5; 16:28), when the Law taught that Israel were not to take vengeance (same word) *on each other* (Lev. 19:18), but could do so on their enemies (Num. 31:2; Dt. 32:43 cp. Josh. 10:13).

Isn't this written in the book of Jasher?-

See on :12,15. It has been suggested that this was a book of poems (2 Sam. 1:18), and therefore the language of the sun delaying to go down is therefore to be read poetically. And indeed it is so that figurative language is used, with stars fighting (Jud. 5:20) and the heavens being bowed down (Ps. 18:7-17). But I consider that to be an attempt to water down the miracle, and the context here is simply not that of such poetic language. Hab. 3:11 appears to consider this literal. And we are only eager to do that because it requires less faith to believe. There are a number of references in Scripture to books like the book of Jasher (e.g. Josh. 10:13) which we no longer have available to us. Whether they were inspired or not, we don't know; but the point is, they are no longer available to us because God knows that we do not need them. By contrast, the elaborate rituals of the Mosaic Law *have* been preserved for us; God would not have inspired and preserved books like Leviticus unless they were important for us.

The sun stayed in the midst of the sky and didn't hurry to go down about a whole day-

I have no problem in understanding this in literal terms, although there is another approach to :12-15. See on :12,15. It could even be that the sun returning by ten degrees (2 Kings 20:10) was a correction or compensation for this in the universe. But the sun literally staying still in the sky would have meant the entire solar system, perhaps the entire cosmos, was affected. By the prayer of a man here on earth.

But the comment that so much was achieved "at one time" (Josh. 10:42) may hint at a compression of time to enable it. "The sun stood still" may well be intended to teach that the meaning of time was collapsed by God, rather than that the sun literally stood still (Josh. 10:12,13). And the sun standing still over Gibeon is mentioned in Is. 28:21 as typical of the time when Yahweh will do "His strange work, and bring to pass his act, his strange act" in the last days. The same may be true when the shadow went back for Hezekiah. The movement of the planets need not have been altered; the meaning of time was simply suspended. Rev. 8:12, also speaking of the last days, says that "the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise". Could this mean that one day and one night last only two thirds of their usual length, whilst the judgments of the fourth Angel are poured out upon the land? I would suggest that the Lord had in mind the suspension of time when he asked that "the hour might pass from him" in Gethsemane (Mk. 14:35); rather than asking to escape the cross in this request, he was perhaps asking for it all to happen in only a moment of real time. Babylon is to be punished with famine in one day; yet famine is a process (Rev. 18:8). In one day her judgments come, and yet also in one hour (Rev. 18:10). Surely the lesson is that time is compressed. The events around Christ's return were prefigured by those at the time of Joshua's conquest of the land. Some of the records of his campaigns require a huge amount to have been achieved by his soldiers within around 36 hours.

Jos 10:14 There was no day like that before it or after it, that Yahweh listened to the voice of a man; for Yahweh fought for Israel-

Israel did not obey / hearken to the voice of Yahweh, and He did not hearken to their voice in prayer (Dt. 1:45; 9:23; 28:15; Josh. 5:6; Jud. 2:20; 6:10 cp. Dt. 8:20 s.w.). 2 Kings 18:12 states this specifically. God hearkened to Joshua's voice in prayer (Josh. 10:14) because

Joshua hearkened to His voice. It was to be the same with Saul. He didn't hearken to God's voice (1 Sam. 15:19) and God didn't hearken to Saul's voice in prayer in his final desperation at the end of his life (1 Sam. 28:18). If God's word abides in us, then our prayer is powerful, we have whatever we ask, because we are asking for things according to His will expressed in His word (Jn. 15:7).

For the scope of the miracle, see on :13.

Jos 10:15 Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp to Gilgal-

This seems out of place, for Joshua would hardly have received the long day as answer to his prayer, and returned to Gilgal. Surely he would have immediately continued chasing the Amorites, as described in the following verses. It could be a conclusion of the matter, repeated in :43, and then the next verses explain how the conclusion was reached. That sort of thing happens often in Biblical narrative. But there is the possibility that this :15 concludes a quotation from the book of Jasher (:13). This would then support the argument that the language of the sun and moon standing still is part of a more figurative, poetic account which is being cited from the book of Jasher, a book of songs and poetry. This would help explain why we have an apparent interjection of poetic language in the midst of an otherwise factual narrative.

Jos 10:16 These five kings fled and hid themselves in the cave at Makkedah-

The account of conquest has many connections with Abraham's arrival in the land; for the Israelites were Abraham's seed. Kings fleeing and dying recalls the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fleeing and perishing in Gen. 14:10.

Jos 10:17 Joshua was told saying, The five kings are found, hidden in the cave at Makkedah-

This may have been a specially fortified cave, with food inside it. Some of the caves were like small palaces.

Jos 10:18 Joshua said, Roll large stones to the mouth of the cave, and set men by it to guard them-

The scene recalls that at the Lord's burial. They were pronounced as it were already dead and buried. There may be an allusion or word play upon the fact that through circumcision, God had rolled [away] the reproach of Egypt (s.w. Josh. 5:9). These are the only usages of the word for "roll" in Joshua. If indeed Joshua is making such a word play, then his point is that circumcision, covenant relationship with God, is related to victory over their enemies. See on :19.

Jos 10:19 but don't stay-

The sense of urgency and not wasting time on anything is repeated by the Lord Jesus when sending out His people to preach.

Pursue your enemies, and attack their rearguard. Don't allow them to enter into their cities; for Yahweh your God has delivered them into your hand-

"Pursue your enemies" is a quotation from the blessings for obedience to the covenant (Lev. 26:7,8). See on :18. Joshua had purposefully fled before the men of Ai in recognition that Israel deserved defeat, as they had broken covenant. But he is also confident that by grace, undeservedly, they were receiving the blessings for obedience to it.

Jos 10:20 It happened, when Joshua and the children of Israel had finished killing them with a very great slaughter until they were consumed, and the remnant which remained of them had entered into the fortified cities-

Joshua's enthusiasm of :19 had apparently not been shared by all the people. For Joshua had urged the soldiers to chase the Amorites so that they didn't enter fortified cities.

Jos 10:21 that all the people returned to the camp to Joshua at Makkedah in peace. None moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel-

Not moving the tongue against a man is language appropriate to dogs. The Canaanites are likened to dogs, now scared of the humans who are now amongst them. The implication may be that there were Gentiles living in Makkedah who weren't destroyed at that time (:28), but who said nothing against the Israelites. But the LXX gives another perspective: "And all the people returned safe to Joshua to Makeda; and no one of the children of Israel murmured with his tongue". There were no complaints against Joshua [cp. the murmuring of the people against Moses], because there was not a single Israelite casualty.

Jos 10:22 Then Joshua said, Open the mouth of the cave, and bring those five kings out of the cave to me-

This may connect with the way the Canaanites were scared to open their mouths against the Israelites (:21). But the Israelites opened the mouth of the cave and brought out the Canaanite kings. The impression is that Israel were so much in supremacy. There may also here be the intentional modelling of the future resurrection from the tomb / grave, to face judgment- and then to die the second death, represented by their bodies returning to the cave- see on :27

Jos 10:23 They did so, and brought those five kings out of the cave to him: the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon-

Joshua could have been the Messianic king who was to triumph over the kings of the earth / land promised to Abraham. But his victories weren't permanent, and so his potential could have been fulfilled at the restoration, and so the images of being "terrible to the kings of the earth" (Ps. 76:12) and "treading upon princes" (Is. 41:25) are taken from Joshua's work and used by the restoration prophets. But the restoration from Babylon also failed to fulfil all the prophetic potential; and so these things were reapplied and rescheduled to the future work of the Lord Jesus. In this sense Joshua appears to be a type of the Lord Jesus, his namesake.

Jos 10:24 It happened that when they brought those kings out to Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said to the chiefs of the men of war who went with him, Come near, put your feet on the necks of these kings. They came near, and put their feet on their necks-

Joshua's conquest of the Canaanite tribes inevitably looks forward to the work of his greater namesake at the second coming. See on :22 for how this came about. Adoni-Zedek, king of Jerusalem, is replete with reference to the latter day anti-Christ figure who will rule there in the last days. He leads a confederacy of Arab nations against Joshua-Jesus, and is destroyed with hailstones (Josh. 10:11)- an event which is the basis for the latter day prophecy of Rev. 16:21. We think too of the "five kings" who fell before the Lord Jesus at the point of Rev. 17:10. Joshua's men placing their feet upon the necks of their enemies is the prototype of all enemies being subdued under the Lord in the last day; and the way "the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel" at this time (Josh. 10:42) is the basis of many latter day statements to the same effect.

Jos 10:25 Joshua said to them, Don't be afraid, nor be dismayed. Be strong and courageous, for Yahweh will do this to all your enemies against whom you fight-

As Joshua had been told to be strong and of good courage in order to take the land, so he had to tell others. As God charged him to be courageous and obedient to the book of the Law, so Joshua on his deathbed charged his people (Josh. 1:7,8 cp. 23:6). Joshua had faithfully followed, and now he became the leader who was to be faithfully followed.

Jos 10:26 Afterward Joshua put them to death, and hanged them on five trees. They hung on the trees until the evening-

The Lord's crucifixion had this public element to it. His victory over sin, as a result of His temporary death, was publically and openly proclaimed on the cross. Our preaching of the cross therefore carries with it, axiomatically, this sense of public, open proclamation. For the idea of a body hanging on a tree was of public proclamation.

Jos 10:27 It happened at the time of the going down of the sun that Joshua commanded, and they took them down off the trees-

We see here that one dimension of crucifixion on a tree was public shame and public instruction. These were all aspects of the Lord's death. Dt. 21:23 had commanded this taking down bodies of criminals from the tree where they were exhibited, by evening; even condemned criminals were to be shown some respect. For after dark wild animals and birds would have eaten them. We see here reflected how God truly takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. We need not unduly fear condemnation, for God doesn't want to condemn people.

And threw them into the cave in which they had hidden themselves, and laid great stones on the mouth of the cave-

This was how things had been before they were taken out of the cave to face judgment. I suggested on :22 that this was all a consciously acted parable of resurrection, judgment and then returning to the grave in the second death.

Which remain to this very day-

I would consider the book of Joshua to have largely been written by Joshua, under Divine inspiration, although edited [again under Divine inspiration] for the exiles. And the book of Judges likewise. For the exiles too were set to reestablish God's Kingdom in the land and to inherit it again as the Israelites first did. The phrase "to this day" occurs several times in Joshua / Judges, and appears to have different points of historical reference (Josh. 4:9; 5:9; 6:25; 7:26; 8:28,29; 9:27; 10:27; 13:13; 14:14; 15:63; 16:10; 22:3; 23:8,9; Jud. 1:26; 6:24; 10:4; 15:19; 18:12). I would explain this by saying that the book was edited a number of times and the remains of those edits remain in the text. For God's word is living and made relevant by Him to every generation.

Jos 10:28 Joshua took Makkedah on that day and struck it with the edge of the sword, with its king. He utterly destroyed them and all the souls who were in it. He left none remaining. He did to the king of Makkedah as he had done to the king of Jericho-

See on :21. The people of Makkedah were terrified of the Israelites, they were as dogs too scared to even open their mouths against them (:21).

"Utterly destroyed" is the word used for destruction or devotion to Yahweh. It seems that all the Canaanites had the opportunity for repentance. The trumpet blasts were to be understood by the people of Jericho as a call to repentance, which they ignored (Am. 3:6; Is. 18:3). This would then explain why the cities were devoted to Yahweh in destruction, which was the punishment for a city which turned away from Yahweh (Dt. 13:12-14).

Jos 10:29 Joshua passed from Makkedah, and all Israel with him, to Libnah, and fought against Libnah-

"All Israel" could suggest that the ordinary people accompanied the soldiers. Or as often in Joshua, "the people" are paralleled with "the men of war". The idea may be that ordinary unarmed civilians also accompanied them; or that the "men of war" were representative of the people. For it was to be their conquest. The land was to be taken by "them", the people, and not simply due to military actions.

Jos 10:30 Yahweh delivered it also, with its king, into the hand of Israel. He struck it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls who were in it. He left none remaining in it. He did to its king as he had done to the king of Jericho-

See on :29. The comment of Josh. 24:13 is that the Israelites lived in such cities, in houses which they had not built. We wonder whether they simply picked up the idols they found there and began worshipping them.

Jos 10:31 Joshua passed from Libnah, and all Israel with him, to Lachish, and encamped

against it, and fought against it-

The very same phrase is to be used of how the Assyrians "encamped against" these very same cities and fought against them (2 Chron. 32:1; Is. 37:8). And it was Yahweh who "encamped against" them (s.w. Is. 29:3), manifest in the Assyrians. The Assyrian and Babylonian campaigns against Israel were therefore conscious inversions of Joshua's victories at this time. The obvious reason for it was that God's people had become like the Canaanites, and were being judged as they were.

Jos 10:32 Yahweh delivered Lachish into the hand of Israel. He took it on the second day, and struck it with the edge of the sword, with all the souls who were in it, according to all that he had done to Libnah-

Striking a city with the edge of the sword and completely destroying all life within it was what Israel did to the cities of Canaan (Josh. 10:32 etc.). But the phrase is that of Dt. 13:15, about what should be done to an apostate Israelite city who turned to idolatry. This explains why the account of Joshua's campaigns list cities like Libnah and Lachish, against which the Assyrians "encamped" and fought against them (2 Chron. 32:1; Is. 37:8 = Josh. 10:31). Israel were judging the Canaanite cities for their idolatry; the fact they committed the same meant that they were more than hypocritical. They had done that which they had judged. And they thereby become a warning for us.

Jos 10:33 Then Horem king of Gezer came up to help Lachish; and Joshua struck him and his people, until he had left him none remaining-

God continues His style of bringing the Canaanite kings into engagement with Joshua. Clearly it was His will that Israel should assume full control of Canaan. Lachish has been the subject of extended archaeological research, and all the evidence is that at the time of the conquest, it was heavily supported by Egypt and had many indications of Egyptian presence and culture. Perhaps the shedding of so much blood was psychologically necessary for Israel to feel they were taking vengeance upon Egypt.

Jos 10:34 Joshua passed from Lachish, and all Israel with him, to Eglon; and they encamped against it and fought against it-

The repeated references to Joshua and the people 'passing' from town to town (:29,31,34) are another of the many connections with Abraham when he first entered the land. For he too "passed through the land... and the Canaanite was then in the land" (Gen. 12:6 s.w.). Israel were being taught that they were indeed the seed of Abraham, and were to have his faith. Circumstances are at times arranged in our lives, so that we too may perceive the similarities between ourselves and Biblical characters whose faith we are to follow.

Jos 10:35 They took it on that day, and struck it with the edge of the sword. He utterly destroyed all the souls who were in it that day, according to all that he had done to Lachish-
"On that day" contrasts with taking Lachish on the second day (:32). The idea is that there

was no lengthy siege, but the cities fell almost immediately. If indeed literally all the inhabitants were slain (but see on :39), then the amount of blood shed was huge. This was genocide on a scale perhaps unequalled in Biblical history. Every few days the Israelites were personally slaying thousands of people. The psychological trauma on the murderers would have been huge. For they likely had no very advanced weapons capable of killing large numbers of people very easily. See on :33.

Jos 10:36 Joshua went up from Eglon, and all Israel with him, to Hebron; and they fought against it-

Joshua took Hebron but Israel did not follow up his victory, and the local inhabitants returned; Caleb then took it (Josh. 15:13), but again, by Samson's time, the Philistines were back. See on :37. It's rather like the constant cycle of purges of idolatry throughout Israel's history. The victories of a few great individual reformers failed to touch the people. And that is perhaps the abiding tragedy of God's people.

Jos 10:37 They took it, and struck it with the edge of the sword, with its king and all its cities, and all the souls who were in it. He left none remaining, according to all that he had done to Eglon; but he utterly destroyed it, and all the souls who were in it-

I suggest on :39 that "none remaining" may not be literally true. For Hebron was soon in Canaanite hands again (Josh. 15:39) and was again in Samson's time. The victories of Joshua were simply not followed up by Israel, and this becomes the tragedy of how the victory of the Lord Jesus is also not followed up by us as it should be.

Jos 10:38 Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to Debir, and fought against it-

Again, as lamented on :37, Joshua's victory against Debir wasn't followed up by God's people; for we find the Canaanites again living there soon afterwards (Josh. 11:21; 15:15). Israel were too easily satisfied with a parcel of land to call their own; and that is the danger in modern society too. All wider vision of God's Kingdom and the potential possible is subsumed beneath the mire of mediocrity.

Jos 10:39 He took it, with its king and all its towns. They struck them with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed all the souls who were in it. He left none remaining. As he had done to Hebron, so he did to Debir and to its king; as he had done also to Libnah and to its king-

"He left none remaining" may not mean that literally everyone was killed. For the phrase is used by Jeremiah of how "none escaped nor remained" in Jerusalem as a result of the Babylonian invasion (Lam. 2:22). And yet clearly some did (see on :35). There was in fact a 'remnant' which remained although in a broader sense 'none remained'.. This would explain why there were still Canaanites who remained after Joshua's campaigns, and who grew up again to be thorns in Israel's side, especially in the period of the Judges.

Jos 10:40 So Joshua struck all the land, the hill country, the South, the lowland, the slopes, and all their kings. He left none remaining, but he utterly destroyed all that breathed, as Yahweh the God of Israel commanded-

Joshua was very good at obedience to clear commandments (Josh. 4:10,17; 8:27; 10:40). But when he had to articulate his faith in God in unexpected situations, e.g. when the ambassadors from Gibeon arrived, or when the first attack on Ai failed, he seems to have performed poorly. Legalistic obedience is no use in those cases when principles need to be applied. Josh. 5:13,14 can be read as a rebuke of Joshua, wanting to boil everything down to black and white, wanting to see God as either personally for him or against him; when the essence is to seek to discern and do God's will. He very strictly adhered to God's commandments with legalistic obedience, e.g., about how to approach and deal with Jericho, or how to cross the flooded Jordan and build an altar; and time and again, we read in Joshua of how he strictly relayed and obeyed the Divine commandments given by Moses (Josh. 8:31,33,35; 11:12,15,20; 14:2,5; 17:4; 21:2,8). Yet as with any literalistic or legally minded person, it was hard for Joshua to apply the principles behind the laws to situations which weren't specifically addressed by Divine revelation, where legalistic obedience wasn't what was required.

Jos 10:41 Joshua struck them from Kadesh Barnea even to Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even to Gibeon-

This marks the extent of the conquered territory; from Gibeon on the east to Gaza / Goshen in the south west, on the border of Egypt; to Kadesh Barnea in the south east. It would have been strange for Joshua to return to Kadesh Barnea, from where he had been sent out as a spy 40 years previously. "Goshen" could be the town in Judah of Josh. 15:51, but "the country of Goshen" could also refer to the area where the Israelites had lived in Egypt.

Jos 10:42 Joshua took all these kings and their land at one time, because Yahweh, the God of Israel, fought for Israel-

See on :12. The comment that so much was achieved "at one time" may hint at a compression of time to enable it. The reference appears to be to the effects of this one day, rather than a general statement. For overall, God did not give Israel the land "at one time" in the sense of an extended period, but rather drove the nations out relatively slowly (Dt. 7:22). Or perhaps God's ideal intention for Israel wasn't fulfilled, and therefore according to some later plan of action, He gave Israel the land "at one time" (Josh. 10:42).

Jos 10:43 Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal-

This repeats :15; see note there for why this is.

JOSHUA CHAPTER 11

Jos 11:1 It happened that when Jabin king of Hazor heard of it, that he sent to Jobab king of Madon, to the king of Shimron, to the king of Achshaph-
"Jabin" was the generic name for kings of Hazor, like "Pharaoh". The title means "the wise", and we recall Paul's description of how the wise of this world shall fall before the Lord Jesus. After the summary of the southern campaign in Josh. 10:41, we now read of the northern territories. Hazor was in Galilee, Madon is LXX Maron near mount Lebanon, Achshaph is near Tyre .

Jos 11:2 and to the kings who were on the north, in the hill country, in the Arabah south of Chinneroth, in the lowland, and in the heights of Dor on the west-
Dor was in Asher (Josh. 11:1,2; 12:23; 17:11; Jud. 1:27,28). Taanach was within either Issachar or Asher (Josh. 17:11,12,25; Jud. 5:19). But these towns were also given to Ephraim (1 Chron. 7:29). As each Israelite was promised some personal inheritance in the land, rather than some blanket reward which the whole nation received, so we too have a personal reward prepared. But the precise nature of that reward is as it were negotiable by us now, according to our spiritual ambition. Just as Caleb chose Hebron and secured it for himself.

Jos 11:3 to the Canaanite on the east and on the west, and the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite and the Jebusite in the hill country, and the Hivite under Hermon in the land of Mizpah-

There were four places called Mizpah in the Bible. This Mizpah is in northern Israel, and is not the Mizpah in Judah (Josh. 15:38) nor that in Benjamin (Josh. 18:26).

Jos 11:4 They went out, they and all their armies with them, many people, even as the sand that is on the seashore in multitude, with very many horses and chariots-
They are presented as a fake seed of Abraham, as the sand on the seashore. It is this fake seed of Abraham which will likewise engage with the true seed of Abraham in the battle for the land in the last days. This victory of Joshua was to be an encouragement for those of later times likewise surrounded by armies like the sand of the sea (Jud. 7:12; 1 Sam. 13:5). This is the purpose and power of Biblical history- to inspire later readers or hearers.

Jos 11:5 All these kings met together; and they came and encamped together at the waters of Merom, to fight with Israel-

Horses and chariots were mentioned in :4 for the first time. They gathered at the flat land around Merom (now known as the Huleh lakes) as this was where the chariots could best operate.

Jos 11:6 Yahweh said to Joshua, Don't be afraid because of them; for tomorrow at this time, I will deliver them up all slain before Israel. You shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire-

It had taken two days to take Lachish, so this victory over such a huge force within 24 hours... could only be due to direct Divine engagement with the enemy. We note that the idea of "tomorrow at this time" meant that Joshua was already on the march toward this formidable foe. He had gone forward in faith, and God now confirms him in it, after he has started off on the journey. The "iron chariots" of Josh. 17:18 could be burned with fire (Josh 11:6) because they were wooden but with iron wheels.

Jos 11:7 So Joshua and all the people of war with him suddenly came against them by the waters of Merom, and fell on them-

The element of surprise attack was used by Joshua. He uses human military strategy, unlike the taking of Jericho which was achieved purely by God's tactics, which made no sense in the eyes of the world. For they gave the defenders full notice of their presence and intentions, walked six times around the perimeter of the city in one day before attacking when therefore tired. And the men had just been circumcised and were weak from that, and the manna had just stopped so they had food supply issues. But that weakness was required for God's strength to be made manifest. But after the failure of Achan, God as it were compromised with Israel's weakness, and gave them battle strategies and tactics which were wise in secular terms. He does likewise with us, in accordance with our faith.

Jos 11:8 Yahweh delivered them into the hand of Israel, and they struck them and chased them to great Sidon, to Misrephoth Maim and to the valley of Mizpeh eastward. They struck them until they left them none remaining-

"He left none remaining" may not mean that literally everyone was killed. For the phrase is used by Jeremiah of how "none escaped nor remained" in Jerusalem as a result of the Babylonian invasion (Lam. 2:22). And yet clearly some did. There was in fact a 'remnant' which remained although in a broader sense 'none remained'.. This would explain why there were still Canaanites who remained after Joshua's campaigns, and who grew up again to be thorns in Israel's side, especially in the period of the Judges.

The chasing of the enemy was done in an organized way; to the north west (Sidon), south west (Misrephoth) and east (Mizpeh). As noted on :7, strategy was being used, under God's control. Misrephoth Maim means "the salt-pits" and again we see the similarities with Abraham's earlier conquest of the land (Gen. 14:10). The people, as Abraham's seed, were being encouraged to walk in the steps of faith of Abraham, just as we are. Awareness of Abraham's life is therefore of especial importance to all today who are baptized and thereby become his seed.

Jos 11:9 Joshua did to them as Yahweh told him. He hamstrung their horses and burnt their chariots with fire-

This was quite an act of faith, because such military technology was much sought after and considered invincible. The king of Israel had been commanded to not have horses and chariots by the law of Moses (Dt. 17:16), and Joshua is being treated as the effective king of Israel on God's behalf. This lesson was learned by David in his earlier life (Ps. 20:7), but totally not learned by his son Solomon.

Jos 11:10 Joshua turned back at that time and took Hazor, and struck its king with the sword: for Hazor used to be the head of all those kingdoms-

He turned back from the pursuit in order to deal with Hazor. He saw it as particularly significant, because he didn't burn the other cities (:13).

Jos 11:11 They struck all the souls who were in it with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them. There was no one left who breathed. He burnt Hazor with fire-

See on Jud. 1:8. By Jud. 4:1 there was a powerful Canaanite king there, about 130 years after the death of Joshua. Again Israel did not follow up his victory. It's rather like the constant cycle of purges of idolatry throughout Israel's history. The victories

of a few great individual reformers failed to touch the people. And that is perhaps the abiding tragedy of God's people.

Jos 11:12 Joshua captured all the cities of those kings, with their kings, and he struck them with the edge of the sword and utterly destroyed them; as Moses the servant of Yahweh commanded-

Joshua was very good at obedience to clear commandments (Josh. 4:10,17; 8:27; 10:40). But when he had to articulate his faith in God in unexpected situations, e.g. when the ambassadors from Gibeon arrived, or when the first attack on Ai failed, he seems to have performed poorly. Legalistic obedience is no use in those cases when principles need to be applied. Josh. 5:13,14 can be read as a rebuke of Joshua, wanting to boil everything down to black and white, wanting to see God as either personally for him or against him; when the essence is to seek to discern and do God's will. He very strictly adhered to God's commandments with legalistic obedience, e.g., about how to approach and deal with Jericho, or how to cross the flooded Jordan and build an altar; and time and again, we read in Joshua of how he strictly relayed and obeyed the Divine commandments given by Moses (Josh. 8:31,33,35; 11:12,15,20; 14:2,5; 17:4; 21:2,8). Yet as with any literalistic or legally minded person, it was hard for Joshua to apply the principles behind the laws to situations which weren't specifically addressed by Divine revelation, where legalistic obedience wasn't what was required.

Jos 11:13 But as for the cities that stood on their mounds, Israel burned none of them, except Hazor only; Joshua burned that one-

The comment of Josh. 24:13 is that the Israelites lived in such cities, in houses which they had not built. We wonder whether they simply picked up the idols they found there and began worshipping them.

Jos 11:14 The children of Israel took all the spoil of these cities, with the livestock, as spoils for themselves; but every man they struck with the edge of the sword, until they had destroyed them. They didn't leave any who breathed-

God told Israel to totally destroy the spoil from the cities they attacked. But when they failed to do this with Jericho, God told them that with Ai, the next city on the agenda, they were allowed to keep the spoil (Josh. 8:2); even though Dt. 20:14-16 said that this was how they should treat their distant enemies, but *not* cities like Ai which were part of their inheritance. This was an undoubted concession to human weakness. The same concession to human weakness applied to other cities apart from Ai; it became a general policy that "all the spoil of these cities... the children of Israel took for a prey unto themselves"; and yet following straight on from this we are told that Joshua "left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses" (Josh. 11:14,15). God accepted those concessions to human weakness, this living on a lower level, as total obedience. The grace of all this is marvellous.

Jos 11:15 As Yahweh had commanded Moses His servant, so Moses had commanded Joshua. Joshua did so. He left nothing undone of all that Yahweh commanded Moses- See on Josh. 8:5; Dt. 18:18. The 'likeness' between Moses and the prophet like unto him was in that the prophet would also speak God's words in a similar way. Josh. 11:15 therefore significantly comments: "As the Lord commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua: and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all that

the Lord commanded Moses". Joshua was a potential Messiah, although his native fearfulness seems to have meant he didn't fulfil the role as he could have done.

Jos 11:16 So Joshua captured all that land, the hill country, all the South, all the land of Goshen, the lowland, the Arabah, the hill country of Israel, and the lowland of the same-

We have here a summary, effectively stating that Joshua took all Canaan, and then in :18 we have the comment as to how this was achieved- by making war "a long time" with them.

Jos 11:17 from Mount Halak that goes up to Seir, even to Baal Gad in the valley of Lebanon under Mount Hermon. He took all their kings, struck them and put them to death-

"Baal Gad" suggests that Baal was worshipped through the worship of Gad, another god (Is. 65:11). Baal, we thereby learn, was worshipped through the worship of other gods. And this was exactly Israel's problem; they justified the worship of Baal by saying that it was a form of Yahweh worship. In various forms, this has been the abiding temptation for God's people of all ages. To worship their own idols in the name of worshipping Yahweh, to mix the flesh and the spirit, to mix paganism with true worship.

Jos 11:18 Joshua made war a long time with all those kings-

Perhaps five to seven years (Josh. 14:7,10). Joshua was there saying that at the point of Josh. 14:10, he has been subduing Canaan for a period of five to seven years [if we include parts of years as a year, as was the Hebrew style of reckoning, or if we consider the wilderness journeys to have been 38 and not 40 years].

Jos 11:19 There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, except the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon. They took all in battle-

This could imply that after what happened with the Hivites, there was the opportunity to make peace with Israel, by entering covenant with Yahweh. The destruction of the Canaanites was therefore because they had refused to accept this, and they are therefore the more culpable for it. I suggest on :21 that even Jericho had the opportunity to surrender and accept Israel's God as Rahab had done.

Jos 11:20 For Yahweh hardened their hearts, to come against Israel in battle, that He might utterly destroy them, that they might have no favour, but that He might destroy them, as Yahweh had commanded Moses-

There are a number of passages which mention how "it was of the Lord" that certain attitudes were adopted by men, resulting in the sequence of events which He desired (Dt. 2:39; Josh. 11:20; 1 Sam. 2:25). It is tempting to read Jud. 14:4 in this context, meaning that God somehow made Samson desire that woman in order to bring about His purpose of freeing Israel from Philistine domination.

Jos 11:21 Joshua came at that time and cut off the Anakim from the hill country, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the hill country of Judah, and from all the hill country of Israel: Joshua utterly destroyed them with their cities-

"Utterly destroyed" is the word used for destruction or devotion to Yahweh. It seems that all the Canaanites had the opportunity for repentance. The trumpet blasts were to be understood by the people of Jericho as a call to repentance, which they ignored

(Am. 3:6; Is. 18:3). This would then explain why the cities were devoted to Yahweh in destruction, which was the punishment for a city which turned away from Yahweh (Dt. 13:12-14).

Jos 11:22 There were none of the Anakim left in the land of the children of Israel. Only in Gaza, Gath and Ashdod did some remain-

Samson went to Gaza conscious that his people had failed to drive out the tribes (Josh. 11:22). Judah had captured it in Joshua's strength (Jud. 1:18), but had let the Philistines return. So Samson chose Gaza from spiritual motives; and yet he schemed out his plan to enable him to gratify his flesh.

We see here how absolute terms are used, "none of the Anakim...", when in fact this was not literally the case. This is a feature of Semitic writing. Thus "all" Jerusalem were baptized by John the Baptist, but not literally all of them.

Jos 11:23 So Joshua took the whole land-

However, the land was not taken up to the Euphrates. Clearly God had recalculated the possibilities of Israel, and focused instead on giving them the land between the Jordan and Mediterranean, with a little bit to the east of Jordan. Although it seems even that was not His intention. He recalculated "the river" as not Euphrates, but Jordan. He saw how weak they were. And He does likewise with us in our weakness, recalculating at times what He expects from us, bearing in mind our weakness in not rising up to our potentials.

According to all that Yahweh spoke to Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes-

But according to Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4, much land was still not possessed; does 11:23 therefore imply that the land had been possessed only in the perceptions of Israel? How responsible was Joshua for this? Or perhaps we are to see a difference between the fact Joshua "took" the land, and the way that Israel failed to "possess" it. This looks ahead to the way the Lord Jesus "took" the Kingdom for us, but so many fail to possess it.

The land had rest from war-

There is a strong Biblical connection between the land and people of Israel (e.g. "the land rested from war", Josh. 11:23, means the people did). The utter moral defilement of the people may therefore be physically expressed in the state of the land. Thus Ezekiel's descriptions of a fertile and prosperous land are in the context of this being the outcome of a *spiritual* revival of Israel. The 'blossoming' of Israel's land since 1948 is not, therefore, a fulfilment of such prophecies (unless there has been an unperceived repentance of a minority).

JOSHUA CHAPTER 12

Jos 12:1 Now these are the kings of the land whom the children of Israel struck, and possessed their land beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise, from the valley of the Arnon to Mount Hermon, and all the Arabah eastward-

These "Kings of the land" form the basis for the 'kings of the earth' [same Hebrew phrase] of later Biblical prophecy. The reference is to the Canaanite rulers, those who rule in the land promised to Abraham, who are in conflict with Israel- rather than to literally every king of the planet. uses upon. "The LORD was with Joshua; and his fame was *noised* throughout all the country" (Josh. 6:27), the *eretz*. Clearly the whole planet didn't know Joshua had invaded Canaan. Many times in Joshua and Judges we read of the people of the *eretz*: "For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the *land* [*eretz*] shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the *earth* [*eretz*]" (Josh. 7:9). Here the Israelites feared being cut off from their place in the *land*. They perceived the world / earth to them as the land where their enemies lived. In Josh. 12:1,7 we meet "the kings of the earth", i.e. of the land, and this must surely be the basis of how we are to understand the references to "the kings of the earth" in Revelation. Dt. 13:7 defines "the peoples which are round about you" [Israel] as being "from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth" (RV). Those peoples which bordered with the Israelites were "the earth" / *eretz*.

Jos 12:2 Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon and ruled from Aroer, which is on the edge of the valley of the Arnon, and the middle of the valley, and half Gilead, even to the river Jabbok, the border of the children of Ammon-

The chapter describes the conquest of two kings (Sihon and Og) to the east of Jordan, and 31 to the West (12:24), making a total of 33 victories against the kings of Canaan- perhaps looking forward to the 33 years of Christ's life in which He overcame every potential obstacle to our inheriting the Kingdom. Their territory is mentioned in such detail in 12:2-5 because the victory against the King of the area meant that Israel were to now go and possess his territory- but they failed to do so fully.

Jos 12:3 and the Arabah to the sea of Chinneroth, eastward, and to the sea of the Arabah, even the Salt Sea, eastward, the way to Beth Jeshimoth; and on the south, under the slopes of Pisgah-

This describes the east side of the Jordan valley. Beth Jeshimoth was where they had encamped in the wilderness (Num. 33:49). Some of the places they had known in their wilderness journeys (cp. our life now after baptism, which is like crossing the Red Sea, 1 Cor. 10:1,2) were revisited and taken by Joshua (Josh. 12:3), and incorporated into God's Kingdom. Perhaps situations and places we know in this life will then become eternally ours when we possess them in God's Kingdom.

Jos 12:4 and the border of Og king of Bashan, of the remnant of the Rephaim, who lived at Ashtaroth and at Edrei-

Ashtaroth was the capital of Og. We have another example of what was noted on :3. As noted in Num. 21:33; Dt. 3:4,10, some of the places they had known in their wilderness journeys

(cp. our life now after baptism, which is like crossing the Red Sea, 1 Cor. 10:1,2) were revisited and taken by Joshua (Josh. 12:4), and incorporated into God's Kingdom. Perhaps situations and places we know in this life will then become eternally ours when we possess them in God's Kingdom.

Jos 12:5 and ruled in Mount Hermon, and in Salecah, and in all Bashan, to the border of the Geshurites and the Maacathites, and half Gilead, the border of Sihon king of Heshbon- Geshur was still under local control at the time of David (2 Sam. 13:37). And the other areas listed here also remained the long term homeland of the Moabites and Ammonites. The amazing victories of Joshua personally were simply not possessed or made good by the Israelites, and this was their undoing. It all speaks of the failure of probably trillions of human beings in not making good on the personal conquests and achievements of the Lord Jesus. This wasted potential is one of the most tragic features of human spiritual experience since the Lord's death. He as it were bound the strong man, and we His people are to take the spoils. But most haven't done so.

Jos 12:6 Moses the servant of Yahweh and the children of Israel struck them. Moses the servant of Yahweh gave it for a possession to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh-

We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Jos 12:7 These are the kings of the land whom Joshua and the children of Israel struck beyond the Jordan westward, from Baal Gad in the valley of Lebanon even to Mount Halak that goes up to Seir-

Note the parallel between Joshua and his people: "Joshua and the children of Israel struck". It looks forward in type to the victory of Jesus against all those obstacles which stand between us and possession of the Kingdom. Cities, confederacies, giants, military power... all these things crumbled before Joshua-Jesus. But tragically, despite all these victories, Israel did not make good on them, and did not possess what Joshua had enabled them to through his victories.

Eph. 1:14 speaks of our having received a guarantee of the "inheritance... of the purchased possession", language which is very much taken from these records of the conquest and possession of Canaan as Israel's inheritance (see too Col. 1:12 "the inheritance of the saints in light", "you shall receive the reward of the inheritance", Col. 3:24). The Abrahamic promises of possessing the gate of Israel's enemies had an initial fulfilment in these conquests of Joshua, just as in a sense we have in Christ already "obtained an inheritance" (Eph. 1:11), by turning to Christ we "receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith" (Acts 26:18), "an inheritance among all them that are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). Note that the inheritance is 'among' other believers, just as Israel received an 'inheritance among' their brethren (Num. 26:62; 27:7; 33:54; Dt. 18:2; Josh. 14:3; 16:9; 17:4,6; 19:49 etc.). This emphasis upon 'inheritance among' our brethren shows that the experience of salvation is not a totally personal matter. Salvation is collective, the body of Christ has been saved, and our salvation is by reason of being amongst that body. 1 Pet. 1:4 Gk. speaks of our perpetual ['that fades not away'] inheritance being given to us at Christ's return, although it is now 'reserved in Heaven' for us (note too Heb. 9:15 "the promise of eternal inheritance"). All this is the language of Gen. 17:8 and the Abrahamic covenant.

Joshua gave it to the tribes of Israel for a possession according to their divisions-

Each tribe was divided into divisions, and each division was given a specific land inheritance within the tribal area. But it would seem they generally did not inherit as God intended. Hence Ez. 47:29 uses the same Hebrew words to describe how in the intended establishment of the Kingdom after the return from exile, the land would be "divided by lot unto the tribes of Israel for inheritance, and these are their portions [s.w. 'divisions']". This is how God works- His word comes true, even if His people fail to fulfil His intentions in one generation. His people in Ezekiel's time also failed, and so in essence the intention will still come true in that each of the new Israel will receive a specific, personal inheritance in God's Kingdom. That specific inheritance is *analogous* to the specific land inheritances intended for each division of Israel's tribes, but in reality the inheritance is redefined in the New Testament [see above] in terms of forgiveness, sanctification etc. This is not to say that we shall not inherit the earth, and specific parts of it [five cities, two cities, in terms of the Lord's parable], but the essence of inheritance is far more than mere land.

Jos 12:8 in the mountains, and in the lowland, and in the Arabah, and in the slopes, and in the wilderness, and in the South; the Hittite, the Amorite, and the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite-

The idea is that Joshua secured all the land, of whatever terrain and difficulty, and all the tribes which had been there. That he secured the "mountains" is significant, because it was here to where the local population retreated, and the Israelites allowed them to remain there. They didn't follow up the victories of Joshua, just as we fail to capitalize on those of the Lord Jesus. Seven nations were to be destroyed (Dt. 7:1), but Josh. 12:8 lists six as having been defeated. The Girgashites are omitted from the list there. So it seems that only the Girgashites

were completely destroyed as was potentially possible. The remaining six were defeated by Joshua, but remained in the land, to be thorns in the flesh for Israel.

Jos 12:9 the king of Jericho, one; the king of Ai, which is beside Bethel, one-

These kings are listed in the order in which they were defeated: Jericho first (Josh. 6:1) then Ai (Josh. 7:2) etc. There is archeological evidence for the destruction of Jericho and Ai at this time, but not for the rest of the cities mentioned here. This was surely because Israel didn't follow up on the victories Joshua won in battle against their kings. The territory described in this chapter 12, which is a summary of Joshua's campaigns, excludes the territory of the Arameans, Moab, Amalek and Philistia, which were still part of the land promised to Abraham. God as it were reduced the territory He gave to His people because He knew they couldn't cope with it all, and that those nations were too strong for Israel. But still, they failed to inherit all the land, as Judges makes clear. Just as God makes concessions to our weaknesses, giving us what He knows we can conquer, even though we have failed to live up to our maximum potential.

Jos 12:10 the king of Jerusalem, one; the king of Hebron, one-

But Jerusalem was firmly in the hands of the Jebusites by the time of Saul and David. In some areas, the Israelites followed up on Joshua's conquest, e.g. Hebron; but in others, like Jerusalem, they didn't.

Jos 12:11 the king of Jarmuth, one; the king of Lachish, one-

"Jarmuth" is 'elevated place'. This is significant, because it was to the uplands to where the local population retreated, and the Israelites allowed them to remain there. They didn't follow up the victories of Joshua, just as we fail to capitalize on those of the Lord Jesus.

Jos 12:12 the king of Eglon, one; the king of Gezer, one-

"Eglon" is literally 'the place of the calf', and the same word is used of Jeroboam's golden calves (1 Kings 12:28). Clearly he was mixing Yahweh worship with that of the local paganism which had never been totally eradicated. And this is the abiding temptation for God's people. To worship their own idols in the name of worshipping Yahweh, to mix the flesh and the spirit, to mix paganism with true worship.

Jos 12:13 the king of Debir, one; the king of Geder, one-

"Geder" is LXX "Gerar", again associating the conquest of the land with the earliest presence of the patriarchs there.

Jos 12:14 the king of Hormah, one; the king of Arad, one-

Zephath ['watchtower'] was renamed Hormah ["devoted"] (Jud. 1:17). They were supportive of David when on the run from Saul (1 Sam. 30:30). What was taken from the world was

devoted to Yahweh by the faithful Israelites involved in this area. And that is an abiding principle.

Jos 12:15 the king of Libnah, one; the king of Adullam, one-

Adullam was overlooking the valley of Elah, which was in Philistine hands by the time of Saul (1 Sam. 17:19). The history of these towns is a sad testimony to Israel's failure to make good on Joshua's victory.

Jos 12:16 the king of Makkedah, one; the king of Bethel, one-

Bethel reminds us again of the early days of the patriarchs in the land of promise (Gen. 28:19); Israel were being bidden follow in their footsteps.

Jos 12:17 the king of Tappuah, one; the king of Hephher, one-

"Hephher", 'place of shame', was likely renamed that after being conquered by faithful Israelites, who perceived the Biblical connection between "shame" and idolatry.

Jos 12:18 the king of Aphek, one; the king of Lasharon, one-

"Aphek" means 'strong fortress'. The conquests of Joshua look ahead to the conquest of the Lord Jesus over all things which are humanly high and strong (2 Cor. 10:5).

Jos 12:19 the king of Madon, one; the king of Hazor, one-

One reason we have this list of towns and kings conquered by Joshua might be that his conquest of the land was typical of that to be achieved by the Lord Jesus in the last days. And perhaps then, these places shall have significance. For Jerusalem is to fall and Israel overrun, however briefly, by her enemies- and then reconquered by the return of the Lord Jesus.

Jos 12:20 the king of Shimron Meron, one; the king of Achshaph, one-

We naturally enquire why so much detail is given of towns which are sometimes hard to locate. Perhaps it was to encourage Israel to make good on the victories of Joshua, and to remind them for all time that these towns had indeed been overcome, and they could do likewise in later times.

Jos 12:21 the king of Taanach, one; the king of Megiddo, one-

The victories by Joshua only opened up potentials, because by Jud. 1:27 this was back in Canaanite hands. Israel let the ball drop. As have the body of Christ in many aspects of His victories.

Jos 12:22 the king of Kedesh, one; the king of Jokneam in Carmel, one-

A number of these towns like Kedesh were Levitical cities and some were cities of refuge, perhaps this explains why their conquest is mentioned here.

Jos 12:23 the king of Dor in the height of Dor, one; the king of Goiim in Gilgal, one-
Dor was in Asher (Josh. 11:1,2; 12:23; 17:11; Jud. 1:27,28). Taanach was within either Issachar or Asher (Josh. 17:11,12,25; Jud. 5:19). But these towns were also given to Ephraim (1 Chron. 7:29). As each Israelite was promised some personal inheritance in the land, rather than some blanket reward which the whole nation received, so we too have a personal reward prepared. But the precise nature of that reward is as it were negotiable by us now, according to our spiritual ambition. Just as Caleb chose Hebron and secured it for himself.

Jos 12:24 the king of Tirzah, one: all the kings thirty-one.
Tirzah became the early capital of Jeroboam and the ten tribes.

JOSHUA CHAPTER 13

Jos 13:1 Now Joshua was old and well advanced in years. Yahweh said to him, You are old and advanced in years, and there remains yet very much land to be possessed-
We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

The first half of Joshua describes his conquest of the land, and chapters 13-24 the division of the land amongst God's people.

Jos 13:2 This is the land that still remains: all the regions of the Philistines, and all the Geshurites-

These areas had had their kings slain by Joshua, but Israel had failed to possess the territory; see on :1. The Hebrew for "remains" is literally 'to swell up', and the idea may be that despite Joshua's victories, the local population in these areas had swollen up strongly again.

The theme of Canaanites 'remaining' is a major one. Joshua left 'none remaining' in many areas. But in the few areas where some did remain, the Canaanites re-established themselves. The theme was to be inverted; the majority of the people of Judah were killed or removed

into exile, and only a few 'remained' (2 Kings 24:14; 25:11; Jer. 39:10). And those who went into captivity are likewise described as a remnant (Ezra 9:8; Neh. 1:2 etc). The word is often used in this context. But they were intended to re-establish themselves and take over the land again, inverting what the Canaanites did.

Jos 13:3 from the Shihor, which is before Egypt, even to the border of Ekron northward, which is counted as Canaanite; the five lords of the Philistines; the Gazites, and the Ashdodites, the Ashkelonites, the Gittites, and the Ekronites; also the Avvim-
"Sihor", 'black stream', is a name for the Nile or the "brook of Egypt" which formed the southern border of the land promised to Abraham. But there is no mention of the Euphrates, which was to form the eastern border of that territory. Clearly God had recalculated the possibilities of Israel, and focused instead on giving them the land between the Jordan and Mediterranean, with a little bit to the east of Jordan. Although it seems even that was not His intention. He recalculated "the river" as not Euphrates, but Jordan. He saw how weak they were. And He does likewise with us in our weakness, recalculating at times what He expects from us, bearing in mind our weakness in not rising up to our potentials.

Jos 13:4 on the south; all the land of the Canaanites, and Mearah that belongs to the Sidonians, to Aphek, to the border of the Amorites-
"On the south" is LXX "from Teman". Aphek is modern Afka, near Beirut in Lebanon, on the far northern border of Israel. This was a huge swathe of land which had not been possessed.

Jos 13:5 and the land of the Gebalites, and all Lebanon, toward the sunrise, from Baal Gad under Mount Hermon to the entrance of Hamath-
The land of the Gebalites was around Tyre in the far north (Ez. 27:8,9). "Baal Gad" suggests that Baal was worshipped through the worship of Gad, another god (Is. 65:11). Baal, we thereby learn, was worshipped through the worship of other gods. And this was exactly Israel's problem; they justified the worship of Baal by saying that it was a form of Yahweh worship. In various forms, this has been the abiding temptation for God's people of all ages. To worship their own idols in the name of worshipping Yahweh, to mix the flesh and the spirit, to mix paganism with true worship.

Jos 13:6 all the inhabitants of the hill country from Lebanon to Misrephoth Maim, even all the Sidonians; them will I drive out from before the children of Israel: only allocate it to Israel for an inheritance, as I have commanded you-
Misrephoth Maim means "the salt-pits" and again we see the similarities with Abraham's earlier conquest of the land (Gen. 14:10). The people, as Abraham's seed, were being encouraged to walk in the steps of faith of Abraham, just as we are. Awareness of Abraham's life is therefore of especial importance to all today who are baptized and thereby become his seed.

Jos 13:7 Now therefore divide this land for an inheritance to the nine tribes and the half-tribe

of Manasseh-

It has been pointed out that there is no such surviving detailed geographical description of any contemporary nation. This reflects the extreme importance of the land of Israel to God. For it was and is to be His Kingdom, and has a special significance to Him.

Jos 13:8 With him the Reubenites and the Gadites received their inheritance which Moses had given them beyond the Jordan eastward, even as Moses the servant of Yahweh gave them:

The boundaries of Gad appear to in practice encroach upon that given to Manasseh (1 Chron. 5:11 cp. Josh. 13:8,7,11,25,30; Dt. 3:10-13). But the tribe of Manasseh had extended their borders northward (1 Chron. 5:23). The territory was given to Israel as their intended inheritance in the Kingdom of God; but God was open to some flexibility about this. We think of Caleb and Othniel asking for territory as an inheritance. And so it is with our dialogue with God's and His eternal intentions for us.

Jos 13:9 from Aroer, that is on the edge of the valley of the Arnon, and the city that is in the middle of the valley, and all the plain of Medeba to Dibon-

The earlier victories in these areas (Num. 21:30; 32:3,34) had simply not been built upon. The land had soon reverted to the local population, just as the reforms of the kings of Judah so quickly were undone. And just as some of our apparent spiritual victories can be revealed in time as the building of the man who built on sand, with only apparently, surface level progress. The city in the middle of the valley was Ar of Moab.

Jos 13:10 and all the cities of Sihon king of the Amorites who reigned in Heshbon, to the border of the children of Ammon-

It is often not appreciated that the extent of the area given to the two and a half tribes on the east of Jordan, as defined in Josh. 13:10-12, was roughly the same as the entire territory given to the nine and a half tribes on the west of Jordan. The two and a half tribes saw good pasture land and wanted it there and then, as a king of short cut to the Kingdom of God. But there are no short cuts to the Kingdom. The conditions they were given demanded even more faith from them. Their men had to leave their flocks and families unprotected on the east of Jordan whilst they fought in the front line vanguard of Joshua's army to secure the territory on the west of Jordan. And the territory they were asked to possess was huge, far larger than the pasture lands they initially coveted, and inhabited by giants (see on Josh. 13:30)- which they probably didn't realize at the time.

Jos 13:11 and Gilead, and the border of the Geshurites and Maacathites, and all Mount Hermon, and all Bashan to Salecah-

This was a huge area; see on :10.

Jos 13:12 all the kingdom of Og in Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth and in Edrei (the same

was left of the remnant of the Rephaim); for Moses attacked these, and drove them out-
"Drove out" here and in :13 is s.w. "possessed" in :1; see note on :1. This was a huge area; see on :10.

Jos 13:13 Nevertheless the children of Israel didn't drive out the Geshurites nor the Maacathites: but Geshur and Maacath dwell in the midst of Israel to this day-

I would consider the book of Joshua to have largely been written by Joshua, under Divine inspiration, although edited [again under Divine inspiration] for the exiles. And the book of Judges likewise. For the exiles too were set to reestablish God's Kingdom in the land and to inherit it again as the Israelites first did. The phrase "to this day" occurs several times in Joshua / Judges, and appears to have different points of historical reference (Josh. 4:9; 5:9; 6:25; 7:26; 8:28,29; 9:27; 10:27; 13:13; 14:14; 15:63; 16:10; 22:3; 23:8,9; Jud. 1:26; 6:24; 10:4; 15:19; 18:12). I would explain this by saying that the book was edited a number of times and the remains of those edits remain in the text. For God's word is living and made relevant by Him to every generation.

Jos 13:14 Only He gave no inheritance to the tribe of Levi. The sacrifices of Yahweh the God of Israel made by fire are his inheritance, as He spoke to him-

The Levites had no material inheritance because "the sacrifices of Yahweh the God of Israel... are his inheritance... Yahweh God of Israel was their inheritance" (Josh. 13:14,33; Num. 18:20; Dt. 10:9; 18:2). Notice how "Yahweh" is put for what is sacrificed to Him. His very existence is an imperative to sacrifice to Him, despising all material advantage in doing so. Job comments that to make gold our hope and wealth our confidence is to deny "the God that is above" (Job 31:24,28). To trust in material wealth is effectively to proclaim ourselves atheists. We are described as the new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5), so all that was true for the Levites becomes true for us. We are not to seek material inheritance. God will provide for us in ways other than our possessing land and leaving an inheritance to our children. The wonder of serving Him is to more than compensate for this.

Jos 13:15 Moses gave to the tribe of the children of Reuben according to their families-

The law of Moses reasons as if each family of Israel had a specific inheritance which was not to be sold or moved outside the family. Hence the sin of Ahab in obtaining Naboth's vineyard. It would seem that there was some unrecorded list made of each family and which land they were to be given. This looks forward to our very personal and unique inheritance in God's Kingdom, possibly based around spiritual family units.

Jos 13:16 Their border was from Aroer that is on the edge of the valley of the Arnon, and the city that is in the middle of the valley, and all the plain by Medeba-

The city in the middle of the valley was Ar of Moab.

Jos 13:17 Heshbon, and all its cities that are in the plain; Dibon, Bamoth Baal, Beth Baal Meon-

"Bamoth Baal" is 'the high places of Baal', and we note how often the term "Baal" occurs in the place names. There is no record at all of Israel's obedience to the commands to destroy the local idols of the land, although the change of name of Kiriath Baal (Josh. 15:60; 18:14) is evidence enough that there was some local attempt to stamp out the name of Baal in that case. Instead the historical record is full of evidence that they worshipped these gods. Although the name of Baal Meon had been changed in Num. 32:38, by the time of Josh. 13:17 the old name was still being used. Clearly Israel did not detest idolatry as they ought to have done. Just as the names of idols should not have passed the lips of Israel, so for us, the things of sexual impurity are not to be named amongst us (Eph. 5:3). The allusion shows how Paul understood such things to be the equivalent of idolatry in his day, and that remains a fair interpretation even in our age.

Jos 13:18 Jahaz, Kedemoth, Mephaath-

Kedemoth was given to the Levites (Josh. 21:37) but was in fact a town which had not been captured from the local population (Josh. 13:18). They failed to learn the principle of 2 Sam. 24:24, that we are not to apparently sacrifice to God that which cost us nothing.

Jos 13:19 Kiriathaim, Sibmah, Zereth Shahar in the mount of the valley-

Zereth Shahar is "the Splendour of the Dawn / sun", surely another name connected with idolatry. See on :17.

Jos 13:20 Beth Peor, the slopes of Pisgah, Beth Jeshimoth-

Josh. 12:8 says that all the slopes were secured by Joshua, but the study of these names indicates that what he won in victory was simply not possessed by Israel. This unwillingness to possess what we have been potentially given by the Lord Jesus... is the greatest tragedy in spiritual life. Every addiction and weakness which might stop a man inheriting the Kingdom has been overcome. It needs to be possessed and lived in, rather than left as a mere on paper victory.

Beth Peor was where Israel had been on their wilderness journeys (Dt. 3:29), and it clearly had not been renamed. The name of the idol Peor remained; see on :17.

Jos 13:21 all the cities of the plain, and all the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites who reigned in Heshbon, whom Moses struck with the chiefs of Midian, Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the princes of Sihon, who lived in the land-

The idea is "all the other cities of the table-land, and all the kingdom of Sihon, as far as it extended over the plain".

Jos 13:22 The children of Israel also killed Balaam the son of Beor the soothsayer with the sword, among the rest of their slain-

This Kedesh is called Kishon in Josh. 21:28. We last hear of Balaam returning to

Mesopotamia, but clearly coveting the wealth offered him if he succeeded in cursing Israel. We can deduce from this that Balaam returned to the Midianites, and advised that if they could make Israel sin by worshipping Baal-Peor, then Yahweh would curse them. And he was destroyed with the Gentiles whose presence he clearly preferred to that of God's people. Balaam was a prophet of Yahweh, and yet felt saddled with His truth when he instead preferred the way of the flesh. And so he came to his end and condemnation, and is set up in the New Testament as a warning to us.

Jos 13:23 The border of the children of Reuben was the bank of the Jordan. This was the inheritance of the children of Reuben according to their families, the cities and its villages- For "families", see on :15. According to Lev. 25:31, "cities" referred to any walled settlement, and "villages" to unwalled settlements.

Jos 13:24 Moses gave to the tribe of Gad, to the children of Gad, according to their families- The law of Moses reasons as if each family of Israel had a specific inheritance which was not to be sold or moved outside the family. Hence the sin of Ahab in obtaining Naboth's vineyard. It would seem that there was some unrecorded list made of each family and which land they were to be given. This looks forward to our very personal and unique inheritance in God's Kingdom, possibly based around spiritual family units.

Jos 13:25 Their border was Jazer and all the cities of Gilead, and half the land of the children of Ammon, to Aroer that is before Rabbah- The cities of Gilead had belonged to the kingdom of Sihon and were given to Gad; the northern part of Gilead was given to the half tribe of Manasseh. So we can note that different difficulties and struggles are given to different members of God's people.

Jos 13:26 and from Heshbon to Ramath Mizpeh, and Betonim; and from Mahanaim to the border of Debir-

Ramath Mizpeh, where Jacob and Esau made their mound of stones, and Mahanaim (Gen. 32:2) are rich in association with the patriarchs. In our lives too, we are constantly pointed back to the patriarchs as our spiritual fathers, and in essence our lives, as those of Israel at this time, repeat their experience. A study of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is one of the most relevant Old Testament studies for a Christian today.

Jos 13:27 and in the valley, Beth Haram, Beth Nimrah, Succoth, and Zaphon, the rest of the kingdom of Sihon king of Heshbon, the Jordan's bank, to the uttermost part of the sea of Chinnereth beyond the Jordan eastward-

"The valley" refers to the Jordan river valley. The Sea of Chinnereth is the sea of Galilee. Succoth features in the account of Jacob; see on :26.

Jos 13:28 This is the inheritance of the children of Gad according to their families, the cities and villages-

The law of Moses reasons as if each family of Israel had a specific inheritance which was not to be sold or moved outside the family. Hence the sin of Ahab in obtaining Naboth's vineyard. It would seem that there was some unrecorded list made of each family and which land they were to be given. This looks forward to our very personal and unique inheritance in God's Kingdom, possibly based around spiritual family units.

Jos 13:29 Moses gave an inheritance to the half-tribe of Manasseh. It was for the half-tribe of the children of Manasseh according to their families-

The words for "tribe" here are different. Some would see in this evidence that the Divinely inspired compiler was bringing together different existing records, giving us the Divinely inspired product of the synthesis.

Jos 13:30 Their border was from Mahanaim, all Bashan, all the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, and all the towns of Jair which are in Bashan, sixty cities-

These are the 60 cities of "Argob" (Dt. 3:4), which is "called the land of giants" (Dt. 3:13). The two and a half tribes saw good pasture land and wanted it there and then, as a king of short cut to the Kingdom of God. But there are no short cuts to the Kingdom. The conditions they were given demanded even more faith from them. Their men had to leave their flocks and families unprotected on the east of Jordan whilst they fought in the front line vanguard of Joshua's army to secure the territory on the west of Jordan. And the territory they were asked to possess was huge, far larger than the pasture lands they initially coveted, and inhabited by giants.

Jos 13:31 Half Gilead, Ashtaroth, and Edrei, the cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan, were for the children of Machir the son of Manasseh, even for the half of the children of Machir according to their families-

Machir was a very large clan of seven families within Manasseh (1 Chron. 5:24) and were given a large inheritance.

Jos 13:32 These are the inheritances which Moses distributed in the plains of Moab, beyond the Jordan at Jericho, eastward-

The land east of Jordan was far harder to possess and the two and a half tribes faced far more opposition there than those on the west of Jordan. We conclude that our inheritances in the Kingdom, and our paths there, are all tailored according to our personality types. But the half tribe of Manasseh east of Jordan initially prospered through all this. For when David was crowned at Hebron, western Manasseh sent 18,000 men, all Ephraim only 20,800, but the two and a half tribes east of Jordan sent 120,000.

Jos 13:33 But to the tribe of Levi Moses gave no inheritance. Yahweh, the God of Israel, was their inheritance, as He had told them-

See on :14.

JOSHUA CHAPTER 14

Jos 14:1 These are the inheritances which the children of Israel took in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers' houses of the tribes of the children of Israel, distributed to them-

"Distributed" is s.w. "inheritance" or "inherit", and also "possessed". I have noted elsewhere the difference between Joshua slaying the kings, and Israel possessing or inheriting the land- which they generally failed to do. But here we read that Joshua also 'inherited' it to them. So much was done for them. We note too the king-priest association, again looking ahead to the work and dual office of the Lord Jesus.

Jos 14:2 by the lot of their inheritance, as Yahweh commanded by Moses, for the nine tribes, and for the half-tribe-

See on :5. Joshua was very good at obedience to clear commandments (Josh. 4:10,17; 8:27; 10:40). But when he had to articulate his faith in God in unexpected situations, e.g. when the ambassadors from Gibeon arrived, or when the first attack on Ai failed, he seems to have performed poorly. Legalistic obedience is no use in those cases when principles need to be applied. Josh. 5:13,14 can be read as a rebuke of Joshua, wanting to boil everything down to black and white, wanting to see God as either personally for him or against him; when the essence is to seek to discern and do God's will. He very strictly adhered to God's commandments with legalistic obedience, e.g., about how to approach and deal with Jericho, or how to cross the flooded Jordan and build an altar; and time and again, we read in Joshua of how he strictly relayed and obeyed the Divine commandments given by Moses (Josh. 8:31,33,35; 11:12,15,20; 14:2,5; 17:4; 21:2,8). Yet as with any literalistic or legally minded person, it was hard for Joshua to apply the principles behind the laws to situations which weren't specifically addressed by Divine revelation, where legalistic obedience wasn't what was required.

Jos 14:3 For Moses had given the inheritance of the two tribes and the half-tribe beyond the Jordan; but to the Levites he gave no inheritance among them-

The Levites had no material inheritance because "the sacrifices of Yahweh the God of Israel... are his inheritance... Yahweh God of Israel was their inheritance" (Josh. 13:14,33; Num. 18:20; Dt. 10:9; 18:2). Notice how "Yahweh" is put for what is sacrificed to Him. His very existence is an imperative to sacrifice to Him, despising all material advantage in doing so. Job comments that to make gold our hope and wealth our confidence is to deny "the God that is above" (Job 31:24,28). To trust in material wealth is effectively to proclaim ourselves atheists. We are described as the new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5), so all that was true for the Levites becomes true for us. We are not to seek material inheritance. God will provide for us in ways other than our possessing land and leaving an inheritance to our children. The wonder of serving Him is to more than compensate for this.

Jos 14:4 For the children of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim: and they gave

no portion to the Levites in the land, except towns to dwell in, with their suburbs for their livestock and for their property-

The idea is that the number 12 was significant to God, and therefore to replace the tribe of Levi, the tribe of Joseph was split into two tribes.

Jos 14:5 The children of Israel did as Yahweh commanded Moses, and they divided the land-
The division by lot (:2) presumably meant that the tribal areas were defined and then distributed by lot. And then within those areas, each family was given a specific inheritance.

Jos 14:6 Then the children of Judah drew near to Joshua in Gilgal. Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, You know the thing that Yahweh spoke to Moses the man of God concerning me and concerning you in Kadesh Barnea-

Caleb was head of a household within the tribe of Judah. It could be argued that he was directly related to Judah through Hezron and Pharez (1 Chron. 2:5,18,25). But "Kenizzite" (also Num. 32:12) could refer to the Gentile tribe of Gen. 15:19; or to a man called Kenaz, memorialized by Caleb naming his son with that same name (1 Chron. 4:15). And Jud. 1:13 could mean that Caleb's father was called Kenaz. Caleb means "dog", and this is apparently alluded to when he is commended for faithfully following Yahweh, as a dog would follow its master (:8; Num. 14:24). The genealogies are constructed in such a way that they don't preclude Caleb having been a Gentile who was fully accepted into the tribe of Judah.

Jos 14:7 I was forty years old when Moses the servant of Yahweh sent me from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land. I brought him word again as it was in my heart-

We love Caleb for this. He was utterly persuaded, as he beheld the high walled cities, that it was absolutely possible for Israel to take the land- with God's help. LXX "I returned him an answer according to his mind" suggests that his mind / heart and that of Moses were united; they were both equally confident the land could be taken. But their heart / mind is contrasted with that of the people (:8). It was all a matter of the mind, and we see again the huge importance which the Bible attaches to the heart, spiritual mindedness.

Jos 14:8 Nevertheless, my brothers who went up with me made the heart of the people melt-
Yet the same phrase is used by Rahab of how the hearts of the Canaanites melted at this time. They were both scared silly about each other. The apparently insuperable obstacles to inheriting the Kingdom were shown to be nothing at all- if approached in faith.

But I wholly followed Yahweh my God-

See on :6. Joshua and Caleb were earlier characterized by the comment that they "wholly followed the Lord" when they went to spy out Canaan (Num. 14:24; 32:11,12; Dt. 1:36; Josh. 14:8,9,14), and urged Israel to go up and inherit it. This refers to the way that the Angel had gone ahead of them, and they faithfully followed where the Angel had gone, and believed that Israel could follow that Angel wherever it led. When Israel finally did go into the land, they were told that Joshua would 'go before' them, and they were to follow him and thereby

inherit the land (Dt. 31:3). From this we see that circumstances repeat in our lives. As Joshua had been told to be strong and of good courage in order to take the land, so he had to tell others (Josh. 10:25). As God charged him to be courageous and obedient to the book of the Law, so Joshua on his deathbed charged his people (Josh. 1:7,8 cp. 23:6). Joshua had faithfully followed, and now he became the leader who was to be faithfully followed. Likewise, he led the Israelites in battle whilst Moses stood on the hill with arms uplifted in prayer for his success. And in capturing Ai, it was Joshua's turn to stand on a hill with arms uplifted [also in prayer?] whilst Israel fought. However, Joshua seems to have somehow gotten out of synch with the Angel when he meets Him in Josh. 5:14 and asks Him whether He is for or against Israel. We must walk in step with the Spirit / Angel in our lives; and yet no matter how much we've walked in step with Him, we can always allow pressure of circumstances to let us fall out of step with Him.

Jos 14:9 Moses swore on that day saying, 'Surely the land where you walked shall be an inheritance to you and to your children forever, because you have wholly followed Yahweh my God'-

But "forever" was conditional. For Hebron was in due course to be captured by Gentile powers. Just as the promise of eternity for us is conditional.

Jos 14:10 Now, behold, Yahweh has kept me alive as He spoke these forty-five years, from the time that Yahweh spoke this word to Moses, while Israel walked in the wilderness. Now, behold, I am eighty-five years old today-

Comparing with :7, Joshua is saying that at this point, he has been subduing Canaan for a period of five to seven years [if we include parts of years as a year, as was the Hebrew style of reckoning, or if we consider the wilderness journeys to have been 38 and not 40 years]. This was the "long time" of Josh. 11:18.

Jos 14:11 As yet I am as strong today as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now for war, to go out and to come in-

Caleb is confident that he is still strong enough to fight the Canaanites living in Hebron and secure it. We might prefer however if he had spoken more of God's blessing than of taking the inheritance in his own strength. The first word for "strong" is different to that translated "strength". It seems to refer to mental strength and the determination of faith. And it was this which gave him his physical strength.

Joshua appears to have been only one of a group of Moses' "young men", who moved around the camp running his errands (Ex. 24:5; Num. 11:27,28); as a similar group did for Nehemiah and Paul years later. The young men of the New Testament were also characterized by their love of the word (1 Jn. 2:14). Moses would have had a special fondness for this generation who were to enter the land. A large part of the Law was concerned with Israel's behaviour after they had settled in the land; these would only have been relevant to that younger generation. It is fitting that both Moses and Caleb (and Joshua?) maintained their youthful vigour right up to their death (Dt. 34:7; Josh. 14:11).

Jos 14:12 Now therefore give me this hill country, of which Yahweh spoke in that day-
Although not recorded in Num. 14:24; Dt. 1:36, it appears Caleb was specifically promised Hebron at that time. Caleb had explored that area as a spy (Num. 13:22) and taken a special liking to it. We see therefore his spiritual ambition; 'this shall one day be mine'. And we can do the same, as we in this life spy out our future inheritance.

For you heard in that day how the Anakim were there, and great and fortified cities-
Caleb seems to have wanted to make a point; that even the fortified mountain lair of the giants could be taken, even by an 85 year old. See on :15.

It will surely be that Yahweh will be with me and I shall drive them out, as Yahweh spoke-
"Drive them out" is s.w. "possess"; see on Josh. 13:1. Examples of spiritual ambition are inspirational; just as soldiers inspire each other by their acts of bravery. Achsah followed her father Caleb's spiritual ambition in specifically asking for an inheritance in the Kingdom (Josh. 14:12; 15:18); and this in turn inspired another woman to ask for an inheritance soon afterwards (Josh. 17:4). And so it ought to be in any healthy congregation of believers. Ponder the parallel between Is. 51:1 and 7: "Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord...hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness". To know God's righteousness is to seek / follow it; of itself, it inspires us to ambitiously seeking to attain it.

Caleb was a Gentile who became adopted into the tribe of Judah and became a leader of the tribe. Yet he was graciously given an inheritance in the land of Israel. By his spiritual ambition, he was granted Hebron as his inheritance. He went up there and drove out the tribes with a faithful zeal unmatched in Israel. And yet, he gave away that city- for Hebron became a priestly city for the Levites to live in. He gave his place in the Kingdom to others (Josh. 14:12)- that was the level of love this great man reached.

Jos 14:13 Joshua blessed him; and he gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for an inheritance-

On one level, we can quite rightly ask for material blessing, and the Father is pleased that we should. But there is a higher level we can live on, where requesting physical blessings doesn't figure so largely. We can be like Caleb, who conquered Hebron (his part in the Kingdom) for himself and then gave it to others (Josh. 14:12-14; 21:11). Many mature brethren realize that their prayers place decreasing emphasis on requesting physical blessing from God; be it safe-keeping, health etc.

Jos 14:14 Therefore Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day; because he wholly followed Yahweh the God of Israel-

He zealously followed the Angel which went before him, and therefore he obtained his inheritance which in prospect the Angel had prepared for him.

I would consider the book of Joshua to have largely been written by Joshua, under Divine inspiration, although edited [again under Divine inspiration] for the exiles. And the book of

Judges likewise. For the exiles too were set to reestablish God's Kingdom in the land and to inherit it again as the Israelites first did. The phrase "to this day" occurs several times in Joshua / Judges, and appears to have different points of historical reference (Josh. 4:9; 5:9; 6:25; 7:26; 8:28,29; 9:27; 10:27; 13:13; 14:14; 15:63; 16:10; 22:3; 23:8,9; Jud. 1:26; 6:24; 10:4; 15:19; 18:12). I would explain this by saying that the book was edited a number of times and the remains of those edits remain in the text. For God's word is living and made relevant by Him to every generation.

Jos 14:15 Now the name of Hebron before was Kiriath Arba, after the greatest man among the Anakim. The land had rest from war-

As noted on the force of "For..." in :12, Caleb seems to have wanted to make a point; that even the fortified mountain lair of the giants, even the greatest giant, could be taken- even by an 85 year old.

JOSHUA CHAPTER 15

Jos 15:1 The lot for the tribe of the children of Judah according to their families was to the border of Edom, even to the wilderness of Zin southward, at the uttermost part of the south-
The division by lot presumably meant that the tribal areas were defined and then distributed by lot. And then within those areas, each family was given a specific inheritance.

Jos 15:2 Their south border was from the uttermost part of the Salt Sea, from the bay that looks southward-

This implies detailed geographical knowledge of the southern part of the Dead Sea. It is doubtful anyone knew that area, and so we have here the direct transmission of fact from God to man through His word.

Jos 15:3 and it went out southward of the ascent of Akrabbim, and passed along to Zin, and went up by the south of Kadesh Barnea, and passed along by Hezron, went up to Addar, and turned about to Karka-

AV "Fetched a compass to Karka", literally "was deflected in the direction of Karka". This implies a birds eye perspective, looking at lines on a map. The perspective is clearly God's heavenly one.

Jos 15:4 and it passed along to Azmon, went out at the brook of Egypt; and the border ended at the sea. This shall be your south border-

It has been pointed out that there is no such surviving detailed geographical description of any contemporary nation. This reflects the extreme importance of the land of Israel to God. For it was and is to be His Kingdom, and has a special significance to Him.

Jos 15:5 The east border was the Salt Sea, even to the end of the Jordan. The border of the north quarter was from the bay of the sea at the end of the Jordan-

The idea is that the northern border of Judah started from the point where the river Jordan entered the Dead Sea.

Jos 15:6 The border went up to Beth Hoglah, and passed along by the north of Beth Arabah; and the border went up to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben-

We note that the stone of a Reubenite was the boundary marker between Judah and Benjamin (Josh. 18:17). We have here a typical example of how despite the division of the tribes, with the intention that the people remained within their given family inheritances, people were dissatisfied with what God gave them; or for whatever reason moved away from them, perhaps in search of something better. And yet the gift of the inheritances was clearly meant to be by God.

Jos 15:7 The border went up to Debir from the valley of Achor, and so northward, looking

toward Gilgal, that is over against the ascent of Adummim, which is on the south side of the river. The border passed along to the waters of En Shemesh, and ended at En Rogel-
"Looking toward..." and similar language suggests the author was there looking at the various towns and geographical features. The whole perspective is God's bird's eye view of the land.

Jos 15:8 The border went up by the valley of the son of Hinnom to the side of the Jebusite southward (the same is Jerusalem); and the border went up to the top of the mountain that lies before the valley of Hinnom westward, which is at the farthest part of the valley of the Rephaim northward-

‘Gehenna’ is the Aramaic equivalent of the Hebrew ‘Ge-ben-Hinnon’. This was located near Jerusalem (Josh. 15:8), and at the time of Christ it was the city rubbish dump. Dead bodies of criminals were thrown onto the fires which were always burning there, so that Gehenna became symbolic of total destruction and rejection.

We note that the *Rephaim* or "giants" had children like other human beings (2 Sam. 21:16,18; Dt. 3:11), inhabiting an area known as the valley of Rephaim (Josh. 15:8). The "giants" of Gen. 6:2-4 were therefore humans and not celestial beings.

Jos 15:9 The border extended from the top of the mountain to the spring of the waters of Nephtoah, and went out to the cities of Mount Ephron; and the border extended to Baalah (the same is Kiriath Jearim)-

The old name included the name Baal, and was renamed by faithful men who wished to not hear the name Baal. There is no record at all of Israel's obedience to the commands to destroy the local idols of the land, although the change of name of Kiriath Baal to Kiriath Jearim (Josh. 15:60; 18:14) is evidence enough that there was some local attempt to stamp out the name of Baal in that case. Instead the historical record is full of evidence that they worshipped these gods. Although the name of Baal Meon had been changed in Num. 32:38, by the time of Josh. 13:17 the old name was still being used. Clearly Israel did not detest idolatry as they ought to have done. Just as the names of idols should not have passed the lips of Israel, so for us, the things of sexual impurity are not to be named amongst us (Eph. 5:3). The allusion shows how Paul understood such things to be the equivalent of idolatry in his day, and that remains a fair interpretation even in our age. See on :15.

Jos 15:10 and the border turned about from Baalah westward to Mount Seir, and passed along to the side of Mount Jearim on the north (the same is Chesalon), and went down to Beth Shemesh, and passed along by Timnah-

"Beth Shemesh", house of the sun, was a name rooted in idolatry which wasn't changed; see on :9.

Jos 15:11 and the border went out to the side of Ekron northward; and the border extended to Shikkeron, and passed along to Mount Baalah, and went out at Jabneel; and the goings out of the border were at the sea-

Ekron was a major Philistine city. "The side of Ekron" suggests God again recalculated the

inheritance to save them from having to attack and possess this city; although it was God's initial intention that they take it. Such is His desire to give us the Kingdom that He graciously makes such concessions to inexcusable weakness. "Baalah" was a name rooted in idolatry which wasn't changed; see on :9.

Jos 15:12 The west border was to the shore of the great sea. This is the border of the children of Judah according to their families-

The law of Moses reasons as if each family of Israel had a specific inheritance which was not to be sold or moved outside the family. Hence the sin of Ahab in obtaining Naboth's vineyard. It would seem that there was some unrecorded list made of each family and which land they were to be given. This looks forward to our very personal and unique inheritance in God's Kingdom, possibly based around spiritual family units.

Jos 15:13 To Caleb the son of Jephunneh he gave a portion among the children of Judah, according to the commandment of Yahweh to Joshua, even Kiriath Arba, named after the father of Anak (the same is Hebron)-

Joshua had taken Hebron (Josh. 10:36) but Israel had not followed up his victory, and the Philistines had returned; Caleb then took it (Josh. 15:13), but again, by Samson's time, the Philistines were back.

Jos 15:14 Caleb drove out the three sons of Anak: Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmi, the children of Anak-

"Drove out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus and Caleb; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

"Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmi, the children of Anak" are spoken of as having been present there 45 years previously when Caleb first spied out the land. Perhaps they were now elderly, or they refer to family divisions rather than individuals.

Jos 15:15 He went up against the inhabitants of Debir: now the name of Debir before was Kiriath Sepher-

"Debir" is the word usually translated "oracle", referring to the sanctuary, which was centered around the word of God in the ark. The previous name also means something similar, 'Place of the scroll / books'. It's as if faithful Caleb renamed an idol shrine to a more Yahweh centered name. This confirms the suggestion made on Josh. 15:9,10 that the names associated with pagan worship were renamed by the faithful, but not renamed by the unfaithful.

Jos 15:16 Caleb said, He who strikes Kiriath Sepher and takes it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter as wife-

We wonder why Caleb himself didn't take Kiriath Sepher. Perhaps, at 85 years old, the strength he had boasted of was not quite as he had imagined, and he was exhausted or weak after the conquest of Hebron. Or maybe he wished to ensure his daughter married someone who had the same spiritual ambition and faith which he had. And such men were apparently in deficit, as Othniel his brother (Josh. 15:17) was the only one to come forward for the challenge. As Caleb was then 85, Othniel would unlikely have been a very young man, looking to marry a young woman.

Jos 15:17 Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it-

Caleb was head of a household within the tribe of Judah. It could be argued that he was directly related to Judah through Hezron and Pharez (1 Chron. 2:5,18,25). But "Kenizzite" (also Num. 32:12) could refer to the Gentile tribe of Gen. 15:19; or to a man called Kenaz, memorialized by Caleb naming his son with that same name (1 Chron. 4:15). And Jud. 1:13 could mean that Caleb's father was called Kenaz. Caleb means "dog", and this is apparently alluded to when he is commended for faithfully following Yahweh, as a dog would follow its master (Num. 14:24). The genealogies are constructed in such a way that they don't preclude Caleb having been a Gentile who was fully accepted into the tribe of Judah. Perhaps the note at Jud. 1:16 about the descendants of the Kenites coming to live with Caleb's family is included to clarify the point that Caleb was a Kenite or Kenizzite.

And he gave him Achsah his daughter as wife-

As noted above, Caleb was then 85, so Othniel was not a young man at all; and Achsah was presumably a virgin. So valiant young, faithful men were apparently not to be found. For surely they were the kind of candidate Caleb was looking for.

Jos 15:18 It happened that she came to ask her father for a field. She got off her donkey, and Caleb said, What do you want?-

The Hebrew implies she got "him", her husband Othniel, to ask Caleb. And this is the sense given in Jud. 1:14. Examples of spiritual ambition are inspirational; just as soldiers inspire each other by their acts of bravery. Achsah followed her father Caleb's spiritual ambition in specifically asking for an inheritance in the Kingdom (Josh. 14:12; 15:18); and this in turn inspired another woman to ask for an inheritance soon afterwards (Josh. 17:4). And so it

ought to be in any healthy congregation of believers. Ponder the parallel between Is. 51:1 and 7: "Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord...hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness". To know God's righteousness is to seek / follow it; of itself, it inspires us to ambitiously seeking to attain it.

Jos 15:19 She said, Give me a blessing. Because you have set me in the land of the South, give me also springs of water. He gave her the upper springs and the lower springs-

The idea of being given a blessing is of receiving an inheritance, as in Josh. 14:13 AV: "And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb... Hebron for an inheritance". "A south land" presumably refers to Debir, which was apparently without a good water supply. Debir is on a hill, and there is a valley at the foot of the hill with springs. The territory made presumably been conquered by Caleb and was his own- but he gave away what he had conquered.

Jos 15:20 This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Judah according to their families-

For "families", see on :12.

Jos 15:21 The farthest cities of the tribe of the children of Judah toward the border of Edom in the South were Kabzeel, Eder, Jagur-

The towns are listed in four groups, corresponding to the division of Judah into the Negev / south country; "the valley" or "the plain", "the Shephelah"; "the mountains" and "the wilderness".

Jos 15:22 Kinah, Dimonah, Adadah-

Kinah could mean 'place of the Kenites'; see on :17. Perhaps this is the equivalent of the note at Jud. 1:16 about the descendants of the Kenites coming to live with Caleb's family is included to clarify the point that Caleb was a Kenite or Kenizzite.

Jos 15:23 Kedesh, Hazor, Ithnan-

This Hazor is not the same as the one in northern Israel.

Jos 15:24 Ziph, Telem, Bealoth-

Bealoth means 'possessors', perhaps named by some who faithfully perceived the truths of :14.

Jos 15:25 Hazor Hadattah, Kerioth Hezron (the same is Hazor)-

There were two towns called Hazor, but they were distinguished by words added to them, Hadattah and Kerioth.

Jos 15:26 Amam, Shema, Moladah-

Moladah was given to Simeon (Josh. 19:2,3). Yet presumably that was not God's original

intention, as here it is a town of Judah. We see how He is open to some recalculation of His purposes with us.

Jos 15:27 Hazar Gaddah, Heshmon, Beth Pelet-

None of these places has been very confidently identified. We have here an example of where the Biblical record is preserved, even though it had far more meaning for the immediate audience that it has ever had for the millennia of believers who have subsequently read these words. This in turn opens up the wider debate as to which parts of Biblical writings are preserved as historical record, for our general learning; and which are specifically commandments to us. As examples, I would argue that baptism was not just a command for the first century but for us too- because of the context and reasoning behind the command. Whereas the commandments about head covering in Corinth would appear from the context to be a historical account of a specific situation in that church at that time.

Jos 15:28 Hazar Shual, Beersheba, Biziothiah-

Beersheba became effectively the southern border of Judah, hence the common phrase "from Dan [in the north] to Beersheba [in the south]". But this was not at all the southern border promised to Abraham, which was the "river of Egypt". God effectively recalculated the boundaries for Israel, as He came to realize that they simply didn't have the spiritual ambition to go and possess the full extent of the land promised to Abraham. Thus "the river" on the eastern boundary effectively was recalculated as the Jordan and not the Euphrates; and likewise the southern border shifted northwards from the brook of Egypt to Beersheba. God has a similar flexibility with us too.

Jos 15:29 Baalah, Iim, Ezem-

For the retention of "Baal" in place names, see on :60.

Jos 15:30 Eltolad, Chesil, Hormah-

These were all given to Simeon (Josh. 19:4). Yet presumably that was not God's original intention, as here it is a town of Judah. We see how He is open to some recalculation of His purposes with us. .

Jos 15:31 Ziklag, Madmannah, Sansannah-

Ziklag had been passed from Judah to Simeon (Josh. 15:31; 19:5) and then passed to the Philistines (1 Sam. 27:6)- because if we don't want the kingdom, it will be lost to us.

Jos 15:32 Lebaoth, Shilhim, Ain, and Rimmon. All the cities are twenty-nine, with their villages-

The total comes to 36. The difference may be because of the definition of a "city", and some

were listed but not counted as a city. And it seems that in some cases, the same city was called by two names.

Jos 15:33 In the lowland, Eshtaol, Zorah, Ashnah-

Zorah, Samson's home town, was originally Judah's inheritance (Josh. 15:33-36), but they spurned it, and passed it to Dan (Josh. 19:41), who also weren't interested; for they migrated to the north and too over the land belonging to the less warlike Sidonians (Jud. 18:2,7-10). Their selfishness is reflected by the way they chide with him: "What is this that thou hast done *unto us*?" (Jud. 15:11). "They had become reconciled to the dominion of sin since it did not appear to do much harm. They could still grow their crops etc."

Jos 15:34 Zanoah, En Gannim, Tappuah, Enam-

"Zanoah" is the word for being 'cast off' or rejected, and all 20 occurrences of it in the Bible are translated that way. 'Place of rejection' sounds a strange name for a city- unless it was to celebrate the rejection of idolatry there.

Jos 15:35 Jarmuth, Adullam, Socoh, Azekah-

We have to observe that the majority of these place names merely reflect the topography or geographical features of the area. They may have been no more than landmarks. We also note that the name of God or spiritual things was not introduced into them. When there is a regime change, it is typical that names of towns and streets are renamed, but there is little evidence that Israel generally did this.

Jos 15:36 Shaaraim, Adithaim and Gederah (or Gederothaim); fourteen cities with their villages-

Many versions give 15 cities by this point, but LXX omits Gederothaim.

Jos 15:37 Zenan, Hadashah, Migdal Gad-

"Gad" was the god of fortune, and the tower ["Migdal"] of Gad was surely a reference to idolatry. But the name was apparently not changed; see on :60.

Jos 15:38 Dilean, Mizpeh, Joktheel-

Mizpeh means a watchtower, but as noted on :37, it typically is associated with something else- the tower or watchtower *of* some idol, typically. It could be that this is a commendable example of where the name of an idol or god dropped out of a place name; see on :60.

Jos 15:39 Lachish, Bozkath, Eglon-

"Eglon" is literally 'the place of the calf', and the same word is used of Jeroboam's golden calves (1 Kings 12:28). Clearly he was mixing Yahweh worship with that of the local paganism which had never been totally eradicated. And this is the abiding temptation for

God's people. To worship their own idols in the name of worshipping Yahweh, to mix the flesh and the spirit, to mix paganism with true worship.

Jos 15:40 Cabbon, Lahmam, Chitlish-

"Cabbon", a heap of stones, was a reference to early altars. See on :43,60.

Jos 15:41 Gederoth, Beth Dagon, Naamah, and Makkedah; sixteen cities with their villages-
Beth Dagon means 'house of Dagon', and is another example of local preexisting paganism continuing in the nomenclature of the land; see on :43,60.

Jos 15:42 Libnah, Ether, Ashan-

"Libnah", place of poplar trees, has definite pagan associations; the same word is found in Hos. 4:13; Gen. 30:37. See on :43,60.

Jos 15:43 Iphtah, Ashnah, Nezib-

We lament that the place names reflect local idolatry or purely secular points of topographical interest, and there was little renaming of cities from a spiritual viewpoint. When the Soviets established their power in the republics of the USSR, they renamed towns, cities and streets in the name of Marxist-Leninist leaders and philosophies. "Leninogorsk", "Karl Marx Prospekt" and the like replaced names which reflected local history and culture. We would expect to have seen Israel doing this when they took Canaan, but they generally didn't.

Jos 15:44 Keilah, Achzib, and Mareshah; nine cities with their villages-

Mareshah was where the prophet lived who criticized Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 20:37), and it seems it is the Moresheth Gath of Mic. 1:14,15. Two prophets came from the same small settlement. We reflect that local groups do tend to hold on to the things of God's truth, often more effectively and for longer periods than larger communities, such as that based around the Jerusalem temple.

Jos 15:45 Ekron, with its towns and its villages-

I noted on :11 that the border is there stated to be "the side of Ekron", suggesting God again recalculated the inheritance to save them from having to attack and possess this city; although it was God's initial intention that they take it. Such is His desire to give us the Kingdom that He graciously makes such concessions to inexcusable weakness.

Jos 15:46 from Ekron even to the sea, all that were by the side of Ashdod, with their villages-
The Philistine areas now listed were never really permanently taken by the Israelites. We note again the curious phrase "by the side of Ashdod"; see on :45.

Jos 15:47 Ashdod, its towns and its villages; Gaza, its towns and its villages; to the brook of

Egypt, and the great sea with its coastline-

Judah would have heard or read these descriptions and thought "no, too hard, not for me". And we must be challenged by their wrong attitude, as we too survey the Kingdom that is so very possible for us.

Jos 15:48 In the hill country, Shamir, Jattir, Socoh-

Jattir was given to the priests (Josh. 21:14). Although the choice of priestly cities was supposedly taken by lot, it is significant that many of them were in territory such as this Philistine territory which was never really subjugated by Israel. They failed to learn the principle of 2 Sam. 24:24, that we are not to apparently sacrifice to God that which cost us nothing.

Jos 15:49 Dannah, Kiriath Sannah (which is Debir)-

"Debir" is the word usually translated "oracle", referring to the sanctuary, which was centered around the word of God in the ark. The previous name also means something similar, 'Place of the scroll / books'. It's as if faithful Caleb renamed an idol shrine to a more Yahweh centered name. This confirms the suggestion made on Josh. 15:9,10 that the names associated with pagan worship were renamed by the faithful, but not renamed by the unfaithful.

Jos 15:50 Anab, Eshtemoah, Anim-

Eshtemoa was a priestly city; it would seem the priests were largely supportive of David when on the run from Saul, perhaps due to Samuel's influence (1 Sam. 30:28; Josh. 15:50; 21:14).

Jos 15:51 Goshen, Holon, and Giloh; eleven cities with their villages-

Holon was given to the priests (Josh. 21:15). Although the choice of priestly cities was supposedly taken by lot, it is significant that many of them were in territory such as this Philistine territory which was never really subjugated by Israel. They failed to learn the principle of 2 Sam. 24:24, that we are not to apparently sacrifice to God that which cost us nothing.

Jos 15:52 Arab, Dumah, Eshan-

"Arab" is the usual word for "ambush", and may be one of the few name changes which reflects how Israel captured it in the first place. See on :43.

Jos 15:53 Janim, Beth Tappuah, Aphekah-

The walls of an Egyptian temple at Medinet Habu have a list of cities that Rameses II (1304-1238) considered to be enemy cities. They are depicted as shields, within which are the names of the towns; and these include Janim and Aphekah as well as Hebron (:54).

Jos 15:54 Humtah, Kiriath Arba (the same is Hebron) and Zior; nine cities with their villages-

"Kiriath Arba" is literally 'the city of the four [giants]', which was taken by Caleb and renamed Hebron; see on :43.

Jos 15:55 Maon, Carmel, Ziph, Jutah-

Maon was a mile north of Carmel, and they are mentioned together in 1 Sam. 25:1. The complete geographical and historical agreement of the books of the Bible, clearly written at different times, is such that there must have been a higher, singular hand behind them all. And that hand was that of God, through His inspiration of the entire volume.

Jos 15:56 Jezreel, Jokdeam, Zanoah-

Not to be confused with the Jezreel in the plain of Esdraelon.

Jos 15:57 Kain, Gibeah, and Timnah; ten cities with their villages-

Timnah is the place of Gen. 38:12. The parable of Lk. 19:10 describes the reward of the faithful in terms of being given ten or five cities. This idea of dividing up groups of cities was surely meant to send the mind back to the way Israel in their wilderness years were each promised their own individual cities and villages, which they later inherited. The idea of inheriting "ten cities" occurs in Josh. 15:57; 21:5,26; 1 Chron. 6:61 (all of which are in the context of the priests receiving their cities), and "five cities" in 1 Chron. 4:32. As each Israelite was promised some personal inheritance in the land, rather than some blanket reward which the whole nation received, so we too have a personal reward prepared. The language of inheritance (e.g. 1 Pet. 1:4) and preparation of reward (Mt. 25:34; Jn. 14:1) in the NT is alluding to this OT background of the land being prepared by the Angels for Israel to inherit (Ex. 15:17 Heb.; 23:20; Ps. 68:9,10 Heb.). We must be careful not to think that our promised inheritance is *only* eternal life; it is something being personally prepared for each of us. The language of preparation seems inappropriate if our reward is only eternal life.

Jos 15:58 Halhul, Beth Zur, Gedor-

At this point LXX adds: "Theca, and Ephratha, (that is, Bethlehem), and Phagor, and Etan, and Kulon, and Tatam, and Thebes, and Karam, and Galam, and Thether, and Mancho".

Jos 15:59 Maarath, Beth Anoth, and Eltekon; six cities with their villages-

Beth Anoth, house of answers / witness, has religious overtones. If they reflect Yahweh worship, then His Name would likely have been included. So we conclude that this is likely yet another pagan name which was left unchanged; see on :60.

Jos 15:60 Kiriath Baal (the same is Kiriath Jearim), and Rabbah; two cities with their villages-

There is no record at all of Israel's obedience to the commands to destroy the local idols of the land, although the change of name of Kiriath Baal (Josh. 15:60; 18:14) is evidence enough that there was some local attempt to stamp out the name of Baal in that case. Instead the historical record is full of evidence that they worshipped these gods. Although the name of Baal Meon had been changed in Num. 32:38, by the time of Josh. 13:17 the old name was still being used. Clearly Israel did not detest idolatry as they ought to have done. Just as the names of idols should not have passed the lips of Israel, so for us, the things of sexual impurity are not to be named amongst us (Eph. 5:3). The allusion shows how Paul understood such things to be the equivalent of idolatry in his day, and that remains a fair interpretation even in our age.

Jos 15:61 In the wilderness, Beth Arabah, Middin, Secacah-

Beth Arabah was a small settlement right out in the desert (Josh. 15:61; 18:22), therefore also called Arabah (Josh. 18:18). From such a poor and obscure place there arose a man who was attracted to David's cause (2 Sam. 23:31), just as the Lord calls all manner of unusual people to Himself today.

Jos 15:62 Nibshan, the City of Salt, and En Gedi; six cities with their villages-

"The city of salt" was in the area of Sodom (Gen. 19:25) and may be another name for Zoar where Lot initially fled to.

Jos 15:63 As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah couldn't drive them out; but the Jebusites live with the children of Judah at Jerusalem to this day-

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess"; see on :14. I would consider the book of Joshua to have largely been written by Joshua, under Divine inspiration, although edited [again under Divine inspiration] for the exiles. And the book of Judges likewise. For the exiles too were set to reestablish God's Kingdom in the land and to inherit it again as the Israelites first did. The phrase "to this day" occurs several times in Joshua / Judges, and appears to have different points of historical reference (Josh. 4:9; 5:9; 6:25; 7:26; 8:28,29; 9:27; 10:27; 13:13; 14:14; 15:63; 16:10; 22:3; 23:8,9; Jud. 1:26; 6:24; 10:4; 15:19; 18:12). I would explain this by saying that the book was edited a number of times and the remains of those edits remain in the text. For God's word is living and made relevant by Him to every generation.

JOSHUA CHAPTER 16

Jos 16:1 The lot came out for the children of Joseph from the Jordan at Jericho, at the waters of Jericho on the east, even the wilderness, going up from Jericho through the hill country to Bethel-

Significantly, the road to Jericho which features in the parable of the good Samaritan was the very dividing line between Judah and Ephraim (Josh. 16:1). The significance of this may be in the implication within the parable that Israel fell among thieves, needing the Messianic grace and rescue, as a result of their division into two kingdoms. And so many other spiritual lives have been shipwrecked over the rocks of division. Indeed, the Greek words for "division" and "stumbling block" are related; divisions are a stumblingblock to so many, even if they externally remain within their faith communities.

Jos 16:2 It went out from Bethel to Luz, and passed along to the border of the Archites to Ataroth-

Although Luz was called Bethel (Gen. 35:6; Jud. 1:23), Josh. 16:2 implies a difference between them. Perhaps Luz was the city, and "Bethel" refers specifically to the altar of Jacob there. But Keil suggests Bethel refers to the "southern range of mountains belonging to Bethel, from which the boundary ran out to the town of Luz, so that this town, which stood upon the border, was allotted to the tribe of Benjamin (Josh. 18:22)".

Jos 16:3 and it went down westward to the border of the Japhletites, to the border of Beth Horon the lower as far as Gezer; and ended at the sea-
The sea is the Mediterranean.

Jos 16:4 The children of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, took their inheritance-
There was a difference between Joshua capturing land by defeating local kings, and the people actually taking it for inheritance, or possessing it. Here it is stated by grace and imputed righteousness that Manasseh and Ephraim took their inheritance, they did actually possess the inheritance; although we learn from Judges that there were areas where they failed to. And see on :10.

Jos 16:5 This was the border of the children of Ephraim according to their families. The border of their inheritance eastward was from Ataroth Addar to Beth Horon the upper-
The law of Moses reasons as if each family of Israel had a specific inheritance which was not to be sold or moved outside the family. Hence the sin of Ahab in obtaining Naboth's vineyard. It would seem that there was some unrecorded list made of each family and which land they were to be given. This looks forward to our very personal and unique inheritance in God's Kingdom, possibly based around spiritual family units.

Jos 16:6 The border went out westward at Michmethath on the north. The border turned

about eastward to Taanath Shiloh, and passed along it on the east of Janoah-

Is. 60:2 speaks of the sun rising upon Zion- as if Zion was the whole earth to God. Ps. 89:12 shows how God reckons the points of the compass with reference to Jerusalem: "The north and the south thou hast created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice". Likewise "the sea" is often used to show that the west is intended, the Mediterranean being to the west of Jerusalem (Num. 2:18; Josh. 16:5,6; Ez. 42:19). "The east" is put for Persia, Media and the lands east of Jerusalem (Ez. 25:4; Mt. 2:1); "the south" for Egypt, south of Canaan (Jer. 13:19; Dan. 11:5), or for the Negev, the hill country south of Jerusalem (Gen. 12:9; 13:1,3; Ez. 20:46,47). God reveals Himself as being centered in His orientation around His people.

Jos 16:7 It went down from Janoah to Ataroth, to Naarah, reached to Jericho, and went out at the Jordan-

Their border "went down" due to how it descended down the slopes towards the Jordan valley. This is another example of how these divisions of land were clearly written from God's bird's eye perspective, and could not have been written by man at that time, lacking satellite imagery.

Jos 16:8 From Tappuah the border went along westward to the brook of Kanah and ended at the sea. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Ephraim according to their families-

This describes the western half of the northern border, which ended at the sea between Joppa and Caesarea.

Jos 16:9 together with the cities which were set apart for the children of Ephraim in the midst of the inheritance of the children of Manasseh, all the cities with their villages-

This is another example of where the inheritances were recalculated. This could have been for many reasons. The lack of living room perceived by some of the tribes was unnecessary- had they driven out the Canaanites and cleared the land (:10). But God makes concessions to human weakness, and allowed them to inherit in other areas. He is similarly flexible with His people today.

Jos 16:10 They didn't drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwell in the midst of Ephraim to this day, and became servants to do forced labour-

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land

(Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

The whole of Solomon's kingdom was built on the backs of slave labour- firstly, of the Gentiles in the land (2 Chron. 8:8 RV), and then later of God's own people. The Gentiles should either have been put to death, or welcomed into the brotherhood of Israel- but to put them to slave labour was only repeating a classic mistake and sin of his forefathers (Josh. 16:10 RV). There was something rotten about all his achievements from the very beginning.

I would consider the book of Joshua to have largely been written by Joshua, under Divine inspiration, although edited [again under Divine inspiration] for the exiles. And the book of Judges likewise. For the exiles too were set to reestablish God's Kingdom in the land and to inherit it again as the Israelites first did. The phrase "to this day" occurs several times in Joshua / Judges, and appears to have different points of historical reference (Josh. 4:9; 5:9; 6:25; 7:26; 8:28,29; 9:27; 10:27; 13:13; 14:14; 15:63; 16:10; 22:3; 23:8,9; Jud. 1:26; 6:24; 10:4; 15:19; 18:12). I would explain this by saying that the book was edited a number of times and the remains of those edits remain in the text. For God's word is living and made relevant by Him to every generation.

JOSHUA CHAPTER 17

Jos 17:1 This was the lot for the tribe of Manasseh, for he was the firstborn of Joseph. As for Machir the firstborn of Manasseh, the father of Gilead, because he was a man of war, therefore he had Gilead and Bashan-

The giving of land by "lot" was clearly overruled. Because it is here noted that Gilead and Bashan, wild territory inhabited by wild people, was given to a warlike man to inherit. The nature of our calling to service in this life, and the nature of our eternal inheritance in the Kingdom, is personally tailored to suit our unique personality. We shall be given a name written which nobody knows apart from our Lord and ourselves (Rev. 2:17).

Jos 17:2 So this was for the rest of the children of Manasseh according to their families: for the children of Abiezer, for the children of Helek, for the children of Asriel, for the children of Shechem, for the children of Hepher, and for the children of Shemida: these were the male children of Manasseh the son of Joseph according to their families-

The children of Manasseh through Machir inherited east of Jordan (:1), and the rest of his clans listed here inherited west of Jordan.

Jos 17:3 But Zelophehad, the son of Hepher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons, but daughters: and these are the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah-

The fact God allows His children to live His truth on different levels needs to be grasped firmly by us, lest we become discouraged that others live on an apparently lower level than we do in some aspects of life. Being surrounded by 'lower levels' ought to inspire us to the higher levels. Zelophehad had only daughters; usually, in his context, a man would have taken concubines in order to produce sons. The record of his only having daughters is presented in the context of genealogies which show that many Israelite men had more than one wife (1 Chron. 7:15). But Zelophehad wasn't dragged down by this; God inspired him to maintain the higher level which he had chosen to live by. He didn't use the principle of Jephthah's vow. And his daughters likewise refused to be limited by their status as females, but obtained an inheritance amongst their brethren (Num. 27:1-7)

Jos 17:4 They came near before Eleazar the priest and before Joshua the son of Nun and before the princes, saying, Yahweh commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brothers-

Examples of spiritual ambition are inspirational; just as soldiers inspire each other by their acts of bravery. Achsah followed her father Caleb's spiritual ambition in specifically asking for an inheritance in the Kingdom (Josh. 14:12; 15:18); and this in turn inspired the daughters of Zelophehad to ask for an inheritance soon afterwards (Josh. 17:4). And so it ought to be in any healthy congregation of believers. Ponder the parallel between Is. 51:1 and 7: "Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord... hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness". To know God's righteousness is to seek / follow it; of itself, it inspires us to ambitiously seeking to attain it.

Therefore according to the commandment of Yahweh he gave them an inheritance among the brothers of their father- Joshua was very good at obedience to clear commandments (Josh. 4:10,17; 8:27; 10:40). But when he had to articulate his

faith in God in unexpected situations, e.g. when the ambassadors from Gibeon arrived, or when the first attack on Ai failed, he seems to have performed poorly. Legalistic obedience is no use in those cases when principles need to be applied. Josh. 5:13,14 can be read as a rebuke of Joshua, wanting to boil everything down to black and white, wanting to see God as either personally for him or against him; when the essence is to seek to discern and do God's will. He very strictly adhered to God's commandments with legalistic obedience, e.g., about how to approach and deal with Jericho, or how to cross the flooded Jordan and build an altar; and time and again, we read in Joshua of how he strictly relayed and obeyed the Divine commandments given by Moses (Josh. 8:31,33,35; 11:12,15,20; 14:2,5; 17:4; 21:2,8). Yet as with any literalistic or legally minded person, it was hard for Joshua to apply the principles behind the laws to situations which weren't specifically addressed by Divine revelation, where legalistic obedience wasn't what was required.

Jos 17:5 Ten parts fell to Manasseh, besides the land of Gilead and Bashan, which is beyond the Jordan-

These ten parts may refer to specific inheritances defined for each family within the tribes. They are the reference of the frequent comment that the tribes received an inheritance "according to their families". The law of Moses reasons as if each family of Israel had a specific inheritance which was not to be sold or moved outside the family. Hence the sin of Ahab in obtaining Naboth's vineyard. It would seem that there was some unrecorded list made of each family and which land they were to be given. This looks forward to our very personal and unique inheritance in God's Kingdom, possibly based around spiritual family units.

Jos 17:6 because the daughters of Manasseh had an inheritance among his sons. The land of Gilead belonged to the rest of the sons of Manasseh-

Manasseh's inheritance was split into ten parts (:5); five for the five sons of Gilead (Abiezer, Helek, Asriel, Shechem and Shemida); and five for the five daughters of Zelophehad.

Jos 17:7 The border of Manasseh was from Asher to Michmethath, which is before Shechem. The border went along to the right hand, to the inhabitants of En Tappuah- Asher doesn't refer to the tribe of Asher but to a town east of Shechem.

Jos 17:8 The land of Tappuah belonged to Manasseh; but Tappuah on the border of Manasseh belonged to the children of Ephraim-

The latter "Tappuah" must refer to the town of that name.

Jos 17:9 The border went down to the brook of Kanah, southward of the brook. These cities belonged to Ephraim among the cities of Manasseh. The border of Manasseh was on the north side of the brook, and ended at the sea-

This is another example of where the inheritances were recalculated. This could have been for many reasons. The lack of living room perceived by some of the tribes was unnecessary- had they driven out the Canaanites and cleared the land. But God makes concessions to human weakness, and allowed them to inherit in other areas. He is similarly flexible with His people today.

Jos 17:10 Southward it was Ephraim's, and northward it was Manasseh's, and the

sea was his border. They reached to Asher on the north, and to Issachar on the east-
"The sea" is the Mediterranean.

Jos 17:11 Within the territories of Issachar and Asher, Manasseh possessed Beth Shan and Ibleam, along with their surrounding towns, as well as Dor (the one on the coast), Endor, Taanach, Megiddo, and their surrounding towns-

Dor was in Asher (Josh. 11:1,2; 12:23; 17:11; Jud. 1:27,28). Taanach was within either Issachar or Asher (Josh. 17:11,12,25; Jud. 5:19). But these towns were also given to Ephraim (1 Chron. 7:29). As each Israelite was promised some personal inheritance in the land, rather than some blanket reward which the whole nation received, so we too have a personal reward prepared. But the precise nature of that reward is as it were negotiable by us now, according to our spiritual ambition. Just as Caleb chose Hebron and secured it for himself.

Jos 17:12 Yet the children of Manasseh couldn't drive out the inhabitants of those cities; but the Canaanites continued to dwell in that land-

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Jos 17:13 It happened that when the children of Israel had grown strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labour, and didn't utterly drive them out-

One reason why Israel failed to drive out the tribes, and thereby lost the Kingdom, was simply because they wanted to take tribute from them (Josh. 17:13). Ez. 7:19 defines "silver and gold" as Israel's stumblingblock- moreso than idols. They just so loved wealth. The men of Bethshemesh looked into the ark to see if there were any more jewels left in it (1 Sam. 6:19 cp. 6,15); they trampled upon the supreme holiness of God in their crazed fascination with wealth.

Jos 17:14 The children of Joseph spoke to Joshua saying, Why have you given me just one lot and one part for an inheritance, since I am a great people, because Yahweh has blessed me so far?-

Ephraim and Manasseh demanded more land at the time of Josh. 17:14, but their argument was weak because they had been given ample land, but they refused to drive out the Canaanites or clear the forests (Josh 17:15). Their combined population was about that of the single tribe of Judah according to the census of Num. 26. The amount of land they had per head of population was roughly that of the other tribes,

and much of it was exceptionally fertile. They claimed they deserved it because they had been "blessed". By saying this they were twisting scriptures which speak of their blessing (Gen. 48:20; 49:25,26; Dt. 33:13), and therefore demanding more territory which was easier to live in. But the promised "blessing" didn't require they be given more land, and the other tribes were also "blessed". This is typical of how people take one verse here or there to justify their own secular claims.

Jos 17:15 Joshua said to them, If you are a great people, go up to the forest, and clear land for yourself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the Rephaim; since the hill country of Ephraim is too narrow for you-

Joshua himself was from Ephraim, so he was careful not to show any bias towards them. "If you are a great people" could sound sarcastic, as if he didn't rate the spirituality of his own tribe. As explained on :14, he could have answered them with statistics, proving their claim wrong. But as so often in the Bible, men are answered out of their own mouths (Lk. 19:22). The wrong ideas and claims of men are for a moment accepted as true, and then turned against them.

When "the children of Joseph" complained that they didn't have enough territory, Joshua could've told them to go and drive out Canaanites and take their territory- this was clearly God's ideal intention. Instead, Joshua said they could go to some virgin forest and cut down trees to provide more territory for themselves. This was itself a concession to human weakness.

Jos 17:16 The children of Joseph said, The hill country is not enough for us. All the Canaanites who dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, both those who are in Beth Shean and its towns, and those who are in the valley of Jezreel-

They are presented as typical of so many who complain they need more, when arrogance, lack of faith and laziness are their real problem. They had not tried clearing the hill country, but they complain it was in any case not enough for them. And they have evaluated at great length the obstacles, the nature of the chariots, and where the Canaanites were located.

Jos 17:17 Joshua spoke to the house of Joseph, even to Ephraim and to Manasseh saying, You are a great people, and have great power. You shall not have one lot only-

This appears almost sarcastic, in response to their insistence that they are such a great people. "The hill country" was not an additional lot; they had already been given it. They are being told to make it "yours" (:18) in practice by cutting down the trees there. Again we see the difference between actual possession, and merely being assigned territory.

Jos 17:18 but the hill country shall be yours. Although it is a forest, you shall cut it down, and it shall be yours from one end to the other; for you shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have chariots of iron, and though they are strong-

The closer one looks, the more conditional prophecies and Divine statements there are. "You shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they are strong" was in fact conditional on their effort and faith- although it doesn't sound like that in the positive way it is spoken. Daniel understood that after 70 years Jerusalem must be restored; but he earnestly prayed for their forgiveness *so that* this would happen (Dan. 9:2 cp. 19). Perhaps he opened his window and prayed towards Jerusalem exactly because he wanted to fulfil 2 Chron. 6:37,38: "If they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn, and pray unto thee...

toward their land... and toward the city which thou hast chosen". He knew that repentance was a precondition for the promised restoration to occur.

The "iron chariots" could be burned with fire (Josh. 11:6) because they were wooden but with iron wheels or perhaps scythes fitted to the wheels. If they cleared the wooded area of the hill country, they could live there without fear of chariots, as chariots could only operate in flat areas.

JOSHUA CHAPTER 18

Jos 18:1 The whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled themselves together at Shiloh and set up the Tent of Meeting there. The land was subdued before them-

The later context here is the setting up of the tabernacle at Shiloh, and "the land" in view could be the area around Shiloh.

The command to subject the animals in Eden [the land promised to Abraham?] corresponds to later commands to subject the tribes living in the land (Gen. 1:28 = Num. 32:22,29; Josh. 18:1). The "fear and dread" of humans which fell on the animals after the flood is clearly linkable with the "fear and dread" which was to come upon the inhabitants of Canaan due to the Israelites (Gen. 9:2 = Dt. 1:21; 3:8; 11:25). This all suggests that Eden is to be understood as the land promised to Abraham; for that is the focus of the Biblical record, right from early Genesis.

But the Hebrew for "subdued" specifically means to be put under tribute. One reason why Israel failed to drive out the tribes, and thereby lost the Kingdom, was simply because they wanted to take tribute from them (Josh. 17:13). Ez. 7:19 defines "silver and gold" as Israel's stumblingblock- moreso than idols. They just so loved wealth. The men of Bethshemesh looked into the ark to see if there were any more jewels left in it (1 Sam. 6:19 cp. 6,15); they trampled upon the supreme holiness of God in their crazed fascination with wealth.

Jos 18:2 Seven tribes remained among the children of Israel, which had not yet been assigned their inheritance-

Those tribes had settled down where they found good land and were lazy to go any further in possessing the Kingdom. Perhaps the reference here is not to be read as meaning that their actual territory wasn't defined, but rather that the individual families within their tribes hadn't been assigned their inheritances- because the tribes just hadn't taken or even moved into their territory.

Jos 18:3 Joshua said to the children of Israel, How long will you delay possession of the land, which Yahweh the God of your fathers has given you?-

Ecc. 9:20 teaches the sober fact that in the grave there is nothing, nothing at all, no work, no thought; and so now is the day in which to labour with all our heart in the thing we put our hands to. We may apprehend all this intellectually, and yet there is an inherent, clinging laziness which lurks within our nature. One simple reason why Israel failed to inherit the Kingdom in the time of Joshua / Judges was that they were simply "slack" (AV), lazy, to drive out the tribes (Josh. 18:3; the same word is used in Ex. 5:8 regarding how the Egyptians perceived them to be lazy; and also s.w. Prov. 18:9). See on :25. They were happy to receive tribute from them (see on :1), and to enjoy what blessings they received. They were satisficers, not men of principle or mission; not real bond slaves. And for this, God rejected them and they never really inherited the Kingdom prepared for them.

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Jos 18:4 Appoint for yourselves three men from each tribe. I will send them, and they shall go through the land, and describe it according to their inheritance; and they shall come to me-

This could be read as a lack of faith in the promise that the Angel had brought Israel "forth out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had espied for them" (Ex. 20:6). Or perhaps this sending out of spies was another concession to human weakness, in God's eagerness that they should by all means come to possess the Kingdom.

Jos 18:5 They shall divide it into seven portions. Judah shall live in his borders on the south, and the house of Joseph shall live in their borders on the north-
The points of the compass were relative to where they then were at Shiloh.

Jos 18:6 You shall survey the land into seven parts, and bring the description here to me; and I will cast lots for you here before Yahweh our God-

Here again we see God recalculating the inheritance He had originally planned for them, because they lacked the faith or interest to take what had been made potentially possible for them. But God makes concessions to human weakness, and allowed them to inherit in other areas. He is similarly flexible with His people today.

"Before Yahweh" may refer to the tabernacle which had been set up at Shiloh.

Jos 18:7 For the Levites have no portion among you; for the priesthood of Yahweh is their inheritance. Gad, Reuben, and the half-tribe of Manasseh have received their inheritance beyond the Jordan eastward, which Moses the servant of Yahweh gave them-

The Levites had no material inheritance because "the sacrifices of Yahweh the God of Israel... are his inheritance... Yahweh God of Israel was their inheritance" (Josh. 13:14,33; Num. 18:20; Dt. 10:9; 18:2). Notice how "Yahweh" is put for what is sacrificed to Him. His very existence is an imperative to sacrifice to Him, despising all material advantage in doing so. Job comments that to make gold our hope and wealth our confidence is to deny "the God that is above" (Job 31:24,28). To trust in material wealth is effectively to proclaim ourselves atheists. We are described as the new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5), so all that was true for the Levites becomes true for us. We are not to seek material inheritance. God will provide for us in ways other than

our possessing land and leaving an inheritance to our children. The wonder of serving Him is to more than compensate for this.

Jos 18:8 The men arose and went. Joshua commanded those who went to survey the land saying, Go walk through the land, survey it, and come again to me. I will cast lots for you here before Yahweh in Shiloh-

When Joshua told the spies "Go and walk through the land..." (Josh. 18:8), they ought to have perceived that he was asking them to walk in the faith of Abraham- to believe that this land truly had been promised to them, as his seed.

Jos 18:9 The men passed through the land, and recorded it by cities into seven portions in a book. They came to Joshua to the camp at Shiloh-

See on Ex. 32:32. To be blotted out of the book God had written may have been understood by Moses as asking for him to be excluded from an inheritance in the promised land; for later, a 'book' was written describing the various portions (Josh. 18:9). The connection is made explicit in Ez. 13:9: "...neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel". To be blotted out of the book meant to not enter the land (surely Ezekiel is alluding to Moses' experience). If Israel were to be blotted out there and then in the wilderness, then Moses wanted to share this experience.

Jos 18:10 Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before Yahweh. There Joshua divided the land to the children of Israel according to their divisions-

We wonder however whether this idea actually worked. For he was seeking to encourage them to possess the Kingdom on the basis of encouraging descriptions of the land. But detailed knowledge will not of itself motivate. A love of God and desire to manifest Him is what will motivate us to enter the Kingdom, and not merely detailed knowledge about it.

"Shiloh" means "rest", and we therefore see here how Joshua attempted to give Israel "rest". But Hebrews is clear that he didn't succeed in giving them "rest" as intended, and the potentials were all transferred and reapplied to the Lord Jesus (Heb. 4:8).

Jos 18:11 The lot of the tribe of the children of Benjamin came up according to their families. The border of their lot went out between the children of Judah and the children of Joseph-

The law of Moses reasons as if each family of Israel had a specific inheritance which was not to be sold or moved outside the family. Hence the sin of Ahab in obtaining Naboth's vineyard. It would seem that there was some unrecorded list made of each family and which land they were to be given. This looks forward to our very personal and unique inheritance in God's Kingdom, possibly based around spiritual family units.

It has been suggested that "there were probably two urns, one of which contained the names of the seven tribes, and the other that of the seven portions".

Jos 18:12 Their border on the north quarter was from the Jordan. The border went up to the side of Jericho on the north, and went up through the hill country westward and ended at the wilderness of Beth Aven-

Beth Aven, house of iniquity, is the same as Bethel, which became Beth Aven in prophetic thought after Jeroboam had set up the calf there. The use of this name

therefore suggests the book of Joshua was edited, under Divine inspiration, at some far later point- probably during the captivity (see on Josh. 1:1).

Jos 18:13 The border passed along from there to Luz, to the side of Luz (the same is Bethel) southward. The border went down to Ataroth Addar, by the mountain that lies on the south of Beth Horon the lower-

Although Luz was called Bethel (Gen. 35:6; Jud. 1:23), Josh. 16:2 implies a difference between them. Perhaps Luz was the city, and "Bethel" refers specifically to the altar of Jacob there. But Keil suggests Bethel refers to the "southern range of mountains belonging to Bethel, from which the boundary ran out to the town of Luz, so that this town, which stood upon the border, was allotted to the tribe of Benjamin (Josh. 18:22)".

Jos 18:14 The border extended, and turned around on the west quarter southward, from the mountain that lies before Beth Horon southward; and ended at Kiriath Baal (the same is Kiriath Jearim), a city of the children of Judah. This was the west quarter-

There is no record at all of Israel's obedience to the commands to destroy the local idols of the land, although the change of name of Kiriath Baal (Josh. 15:60; 18:14) is evidence enough that there was some local attempt to stamp out the name of Baal in that case. Instead the historical record is full of evidence that they worshipped these gods. Although the name of Baal Meon had been changed in Num. 32:38, by the time of Josh. 13:17 the old name was still being used. Clearly Israel did not detest idolatry as they ought to have done. Just as the names of idols should not have passed the lips of Israel, so for us, the things of sexual impurity are not to be named amongst us (Eph. 5:3). The allusion shows how Paul understood such things to be the equivalent of idolatry in his day, and that remains a fair interpretation even in our age.

Jos 18:15 The southern side began at the outskirts of Kiriath Jearim. The border went out westward, and went out to the spring of the waters of Nephtoah-

The description here matches that of the northern border of Judah (Josh. 15:5-9). The boundaries of the seven tribal cantons now being discussed may have been slightly recalculated, but the basic definitions were as God had originally intended.

Jos 18:16 The border went down to the farthest part of the mountain that lies before the valley of the son of Hinnom, which is in the valley of the Rephaim northward. It went down to the valley of Hinnom, to the side of the Jebusite southward, and went down to En Rogel-

'Gehenna' is the Aramaic equivalent of the Hebrew 'Ge-ben-Hinnon'. This was located near Jerusalem (Josh. 15:8), and at the time of Christ it was the city rubbish dump. Dead bodies of criminals were thrown onto the fires which were always burning there, so that Gehenna became symbolic of total destruction and rejection.

We note that the *Rephaim* or "giants" had children like other human beings (2 Sam. 21:16,18; Dt. 3:11), inhabiting an area known as the valley of Rephaim (Josh. 15:8). The "giants" of Gen. 6:2-4 were therefore humans and not celestial beings.

Jos 18:17 It extended northward, went out at En Shemesh, and went out to Geliloth, which is over against the ascent of Adummim. It went down to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben-

We note that the stone of a Reubenite was the boundary marker between Judah and Benjamin (Josh. 15:6). We have here a typical example of how despite the division of

the tribes, with the intention that the people remained within their given family inheritances, people were dissatisfied with what God gave them; or for whatever reason moved away from them, perhaps in search of something better. And yet the gift of the inheritances was clearly meant to be by God.

Jos 18:18 It passed along to the side over against the Arabah northward and went down to the Arabah-

The boundary of Benjamin is that of the northern border of Judah described in Josh. 15:5-9. But the description there moves from east to west, but here from west to east.

Jos 18:19 The border passed along to the side of Beth Hoglah northward; and the border ended at the north bay of the Salt Sea, at the south end of the Jordan. This was the south border-

"Bay" is 'tongue', and the Dead Sea is described as having such a tongue at each end of it, thus forming bays. It has been pointed out that there is no such surviving detailed geographical description of any contemporary nation. This reflects the extreme importance of the land of Israel to God. For it was and is to be His Kingdom, and has a special significance to Him.

Jos 18:20 The Jordan was its border on the east quarter. This was the inheritance of the children of Benjamin, boundary by boundary all around, according to their families-

The law of Moses reasons as if each family of Israel had a specific inheritance which was not to be sold or moved outside the family. Hence the sin of Ahab in obtaining Naboth's vineyard. It would seem that there was some unrecorded list made of each family and which land they were to be given. This looks forward to our very personal and unique inheritance in God's Kingdom, possibly based around spiritual family units.

Jos 18:21 Now the cities of the tribe of the children of Benjamin according to their families were Jericho, Beth Hoglah, Emek Keziz-

The cities are described in two groups; 12 to the east, 14 to the west.

Jos 18:22 Beth Arabah, Zemaraim, Bethel-

Beth Arabah was a small settlement right out in the desert (Josh. 15:61; 18:22), therefore also called Arabah (Josh. 18:18). From such a poor and obscure place there arose a man who was attracted to David's cause (2 Sam. 23:31), just as the Lord calls all manner of unusual people to Himself today. Zemaraim was in the territory assigned to Benjamin (Josh. 18:22), but is located "in the hill country of Ephraim" in 2 Chron. 13:4.

Jos 18:23 Avvim, Parah, Ophrah-

Avvim may be Ai, called Aiath (Is. 10:28) and Aija (Neh. 11:31). Ophrah is not that associated with Gideon, This was not the Ophrah of Gideon, but the Ophrah which fell into Philistine hands of 1 Sam. 13:17. The history of so many of these places reflects how the huge potential possession was not realized by Israel, and wasted spiritual potential is one of the most tragic features of the entire Divine-human encounter.

Jos 18:24 Chephar Ammoni, Ophni, and Geba; twelve cities with their villages-
Geba is not the Gibeah of Saul as some suggest because this one is on the east (:21). Meaning "height", Geba was a common name.

Jos 18:25 Gibeon, Ramah, Beeroth-

Beeroth was one of the Gibeonite towns which made peace with Israel, but here Benjamin is encouraged to possess it. The Gibeonites had agreed to be servants to the Israelites, and by all accounts they kept that agreement. But they remained living in their towns, such was the laziness of Israel to possess what had been given to them. See on :3.

Jos 18:26 Mizpeh, Chephirah, Mozah-

Mizpeh was to become a significant holy place and point of gathering for Israel (Jud. 20:1-3; 1 Sam. 7:5,6; 10:17; Jer. 40:6).

Jos 18:27 Rekem, Irpeel, Taralah-

These places are at best obscure or unknown to us today. We wonder why we have these records. None of these places has been very confidently identified. We have here an example of where the Biblical record is preserved, even though it had far more meaning for the immediate audience that it has ever had for the millennia of believers who have subsequently read these words. This in turn opens up the wider debate as to which parts of Biblical writings are preserved as historical record, for our general learning; and which are specifically commandments to us. As examples, I would argue that baptism was not just a command for the first century but for us too- because of the context and reasoning behind the command. Whereas the commandments about head covering in Corinth would appear from the context to be a historical account of a specific situation in that church at that time.

Jos 18:28 Zelah, Eleph, the Jebusite (the same is Jerusalem), Gibeath, and Kiriath; fourteen cities with their villages. This is the inheritance of the children of Benjamin according to their families-

Benjamin's inheritance was roughly 26 miles in length by 12 in breadth. But the small size was because of the huge fertility of the land and its strong topographical nature. And likewise there is in all God's gifts, in this life and eternally, a kind of compensation and equality.

JOSHUA CHAPTER 19

Jos 19:1 The second lot came out for Simeon, even for the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families. Their inheritance was in the midst of the inheritance of the children of Judah-

The boundaries of the promised land and indeed the individual possessions of the tribes were changed by God in accordance with the weakness of Israel to actually drive out the tribes and take the inheritance (consider how the inheritance of Simeon and Judah was merged because of this inability to expel the Canaanites, Josh. 19:1). He "changed the portion of my people" (Mic. 2:4). Yet God worked with them in this progressive lowering of levels.

Jos 19:2 They had for their inheritance Beersheba (or Sheba), Moladah-

Beersheba became effectively the southern border of Judah, hence the common phrase "from Dan [in the north] to Beersheba [in the south]". But this was not at all the southern border promised to Abraham, which was the "river of Egypt". God effectively recalculated the boundaries for Israel, as He came to realize that they simply didn't have the spiritual ambition to go and possess the full extent of the land promised to Abraham. Thus "the river" on the eastern boundary effectively was

recalculated as the Jordan and not the Euphrates; and likewise the southern border shifted northwards from the brook of Egypt to Beersheba. God has a similar flexibility with us too.

Jos 19:3 Hazar Shual, Balah, Ezem-

Balah is a form of Baal. There is no record at all of Israel's obedience to the commands to destroy the local idols of the land, although the change of name of Kiriath Baal (Josh. 15:60; 18:14) is evidence enough that there was some local attempt to stamp out the name of Baal in that case. Instead the historical record is full of evidence that they worshipped these gods. Although the name of Baal Meon had been changed in Num. 32:38, by the time of Josh. 13:17 the old name was still being used. Clearly Israel did not detest idolatry as they ought to have done. Just as the names of idols should not have passed the lips of Israel, so for us, the things of sexual impurity are not to be named amongst us (Eph. 5:3). The allusion shows how Paul understood such things to be the equivalent of idolatry in his day, and that remains a fair interpretation even in our age.

Jos 19:4 Eltolad, Bethul, Hormah-

Presumably this was not God's original intention, as in Josh. 15:30 they are towns of Judah. We see how He is open to some recalculation of His purposes with us. "Bethuel, Hormah, Ziklag" (1 Chron. 4:30) were towns were all associated with David, and he sent presents of the Amalekite spoil to them (1 Sam. 30:26-31). It seems he wanted them under the control of Judah not Simeon. .

Jos 19:5 Ziklag, Beth Marcaboth, Hazar Susah-

Ziklag had been passed from Judah to Simeon (Josh. 15:31; 19:5) and then passed to the Philistines (1 Sam. 27:6)- because if we don't want the kingdom, it will be lost to us.

Jos 19:6 Beth Lebaoth, and Sharuhem; thirteen cities with their villages-
Beth Lebaoth is Beth Biri in 1 Chron. 4:31.

Jos 19:7 Ain, Rimmon, Ether, and Ashan; four cities with their villages-

These are listed in 1 Chron. 4 as belonging to Judah. The implication could be that David tended towards a policy of 'Judah for the men of Judah', and the agreement that Simeonites could live in Judah was then not honoured. This was to come to full term in the tragic division of the kingdom in the next generation.

Jos 19:8 and all the villages that were around these cities to Baalath Beer, Ramah of the South. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families-

The law of Moses reasons as if each family of Israel had a specific inheritance which was not to be sold or moved outside the family. Hence the sin of Ahab in obtaining Naboth's vineyard. It would seem that there was some unrecorded list made of each family and which land they were to be given. This looks forward to our very personal and unique inheritance in God's Kingdom, possibly based around spiritual family units.

Jos 19:9 Out of the part of the children of Judah was the inheritance of the children of Simeon; for the portion of the children of Judah was too much for them. Therefore the

children of Simeon had inheritance in the midst of their inheritance-

"The portion of the children of Judah was too much for them" (Josh. 19:9) almost implies God made an error in allocating them too much; when actually the problem was that they lacked the faith to drive out the tribes living there. See on :47. Even when God punished Israel, He seems to later almost take the blame for their judgments; thus He says that He left some of the Canaanite nations in the land to teach Israel battle experience (Jud. 3:2 NIV). His grace is so positive about them in the way He writes about them.

Jos 19:10 The third lot came up for the children of Zebulun according to their families. The border of their inheritance was to Sarid-

For "according to their families", see on :8.

Jos 19:11 Their border went up westward, even to Maralah, and reached to Dabbesheth. It reached to the brook that is before Jokneam-

The brook is probably the Kishon.

Jos 19:12 It turned from Sarid eastward toward the sunrise to the border of Chisloth Tabor. It went out to Daberath, and went up to Japhia-

Daberath was to be given to the Levites (Josh. 21:28; 1 Chron. 6:72), but Zebulun had not even taken this town, let alone given it to the Levites. Although the choice of priestly cities was supposedly taken by lot, it is significant that many of them were in territory such as this Philistine territory which was never really subjugated by Israel. They failed to learn the principle of 2 Sam. 24:24, that we are not to apparently sacrifice to God that which cost us nothing.

Jos 19:13 From there it passed along eastward to Gath Hopher, to Ethkazin; and going on to Rimmon it bent toward Neah-

"Bent toward" is AVmg. "which is drawn"; see on :14. Gath Hopher was the birthplace of the prophet Jonah (2 Kings 14:25).

Jos 19:14 The border turned around on the north to Hannathon; and it ended at the valley of Iphtah El-

Literally "and the border went round it (Neah) northward to Hannathon", thought to be Cana. We are reading here a bird's eye description, as if someone is writing this with a detailed map. Clearly the perspective is God's, as given the lack of maps and overall topographical knowledge, no single man could have written these descriptions.

Jos 19:15 It included Kattath, Nahalal, Shimron, Idalah, and Bethlehem: twelve cities with their villages-

Only five names are given, but that is no contradiction; seven were not listed. The Bethlehem mentioned here is not the same as Beth-lehem Ephratah in Judah.

Jos 19:16 This is the inheritance of the children of Zebulun according to their families, these cities with their villages-

For "according to their families", see on :8.

Jos 19:17 The fourth lot came out for Issachar, even for the children of Issachar according to their families-

For "according to their families", see on :8. Although the inheritances for the location

of the tribal cantons were drawn by lot, it is clear the hand of God was in it. For the inheritances were appropriate to the people given them. Issachar's lot for possession of the land was next to Judah and Zebulun (Josh. 19:17), with whom Issachar had lived and journeyed side by side during the wilderness years (Num. 2:5; 10:15). This opens up the question as to whether we should also draw lots in this age. For God worked through them clearly enough in Joshua's time.

Jos 19:18 Their border was to Jezreel, Chesulloth, Shunem-

Issachar's borders begin to be described, but are not continued. We are just given names of towns which were to be theirs. We have here another indication that the extent of inheritance in the Kingdom, both then and now, is to some degree open to recalculation. Those like Caleb who wanted specific things were given them. This flexibility of God is hard for the legalistic mind to understand. But He is so open to relationship with us, and is willing to recalculate His intentions for us according to our own vision and desires for His Kingdom.

Jos 19:19 Hapharaim, Shion, Anaharath-

The king of Hapharaim had been slain by Joshua (Josh. 12:17); but Issachar did not possess his territory. In the type, the Lord Jesus has overcome all obstacles to our inheritance of the Kingdom; but we are often slow to do our part in making this good by possessing it.

Jos 19:20 Rabbith, Kishion, Ebez-

These places are at best obscure or unknown to us today. We wonder why we have these records. None of these places has been very confidently identified. We have here an example of where the Biblical record is preserved, even though it had far more meaning for the immediate audience that it has ever had for the millennia of believers who have subsequently read these words. This in turn opens up the wider debate as to which parts of Biblical writings are preserved as historical record, for our general learning; and which are specifically commandments to us. As examples, I would argue that baptism was not just a command for the first century but for us too- because of the context and reasoning behind the command. Whereas the commandments about head covering in Corinth would appear from the context to be a historical account of a specific situation in that church at that time.

Jos 19:21 Remeth, Engannim, En Haddah, and Beth Pазzez-

Ramoth in 1 Chron. 6:73 is called Jarmuth in Josh. 21:28,29, and perhaps Remeth in Josh. 19:21. Anem of 1 Chron. 6:73 is En-gannim in Josh. 19:21; 21:29.

Jos 19:22 The border reached to Tabor, Shahazumah, and Beth Shemesh. Their border ended at the Jordan: sixteen cities with their villages-

Tabor here is not the mountain, but a town which was supposed to be given to the Levites (1 Chron. 6:77). See on :12. So many of the Levitical cities were in mountains or less desirable areas- so that we wonder whether really the "lot" used to distribute them was fair, because it seems many of them were cities which the tribes didn't want or own anyway.

Jos 19:23 This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Issachar according to their families, the cities with their villages-

For "according to their families", see on :8. It is tragic that they were so lazy to inherit their portion, because Gen. 49:14,15 had prophesied that "seeing that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant, bowed his shoulder to bear...". But they didn't. This was a conditional prophecy. The land was good, as the spies had said when they first viewed Canaan, just as the Kingdom is "good"; but it failed to motivate those who were satisfied with what was immediately before their eyes at this moment. And this is just why people today fail to respond to the Gospel of the Kingdom.

Jos 19:24 The fifth lot came out for the tribe of the children of Asher according to their families-

Asher bordered Naphtali, and they also marched side by side with them through the wilderness. Although the inheritances for the location of the tribal cantons were drawn by lot, it is clear the hand of God was in it. For the inheritances were appropriate to the people given them. This opens up the question as to whether we should also draw lots in this age. For God worked through them clearly enough in Joshua's time. See on :17,32.

Jos 19:25 Their border was Helkath, Hali, Beten, Achshaph-

Helkath was to be given to the Levites (Josh. 21:31). Although the choice of priestly cities was supposedly taken by lot, it is significant that many of them were in territory which was unattractive to the tribes, such as in the mountains, or on the very edge of their tribal canton, or in territory which was never really subjugated by Israel. They failed to learn the principle of 2 Sam. 24:24, that we are not to apparently sacrifice to God that which cost us nothing.

Jos 19:26 Allammelech, Amad, Mishal. It reached to Carmel westward, and to Shihorlibnath-

Mishal was to be given to the Levites (Josh. 21:30). But it was not possessed by Asher, and was on the mountainous edge of their territory; see on :25.

Jos 19:27 It turned toward the sunrise to Beth Dagon, and reached to Zebulun, and to the valley of Iphtah El northward to Beth Emek and Neiel. It went out to Cabul on the left hand-

We note the retention of the old pagan name, 'house of Dagon'. There is no record at all of Israel's obedience to the commands to destroy the local idols of the land, although the change of name of Kiriath Baal (Josh. 15:60; 18:14) is evidence enough that there was some local attempt to stamp out the name of Baal in that case. Instead the historical record is full of evidence that they worshipped these gods. Although the name of Baal Meon had been changed in Num. 32:38, by the time of Josh. 13:17 the old name was still being used. Clearly Israel did not detest idolatry as they ought to have done. Just as the names of idols should not have passed the lips of Israel, so for us, the things of sexual impurity are not to be named amongst us (Eph. 5:3). The allusion shows how Paul understood such things to be the equivalent of idolatry in his day, and that remains a fair interpretation even in our age.

Jos 19:28 and Ebron, Rehob, Hammon, and Kanah, even to great Sidon-

"Ebron" is Abdon in some manuscripts. This again was a town they were intended to give to the Levites (Josh. 21:30). We get the impression that most of Asher's border towns were supposedly taken by lot to be given to the Levites, but we wonder whether that lot wasn't interfered with; for it was towns on the very edge of their inheritance,

as yet untaken from the local people, which Asher dedicated to the Levites. See on :25.

Jos 19:29 The border turned to Ramah, to the fortified city of Tyre; and the border turned to Hosah. It ended at the sea by the region of Achzib-

Asher never made any effort to take these major Phoenician cities (Jud. 1:31). They would have heard of their possible inheritance in the Kingdom, and shrugged it off as too difficult; and got on with farming what bit of land they then had. So much potential was and is wasted.

Jos 19:30 Ummah also, and Aphek, and Rehob: twenty-two cities with their villages- There are not 22 cities listed, but that is no contradiction. Some are listed, some aren't.

Jos 19:31 This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Asher according to their families, these cities with their villages-

For "according to their families", see on :8. "The Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites" (Jud. 1:32), they made no real effort to inherit the Kingdom. They were one of the largest tribes at the census of Num. 1 at Sinai; but were given a small area, and they became so small they are not listed amongst the tribal rulers in 1 Chron. 27:16-22. Yet out of such spiritual indifference came the faithful Anna (Lk 2:36), just as we can rise up far above our unspiritual environment and background.

Jos 19:32 The sixth lot came out for the children of Naphtali, even for the children of Naphtali according to their families-

For "according to their families", see on :8. Naphtali marched in the wilderness side by side with Dan and Asher (Num. 2:25-31), and now they are chosen "by lot" to again be near them. See on :24.

Jos 19:33 Their border was from Heleph, from the oak in Zaanannim, Adaminekeb, and Jabneel, to Lakkum. It ended at the Jordan-

The northern border is unclear. Because according to the promise to Abraham, the territory of Israel could have extended far to the north, to the sources of the Euphrates. We are just given names of towns which were to be theirs. We have here another indication that the extent of inheritance in the Kingdom, both then and now, is to some degree open to recalculation. Those like Caleb who wanted specific things were given them. This flexibility of God is hard for the legalistic mind to understand. But He is so open to relationship with us, and is willing to recalculate His intentions for us according to our own vision and desires for His Kingdom. See on :18.

Jos 19:34 The border turned westward to Aznoth Tabor, and went out from there to Hukkok. It reached to Zebulun on the south, and reached to Asher on the west, and to Judah at the Jordan toward the sunrise-

"Judah" is used because the sixty cities of Havoth-jair (Num. 32:41) were counted as belonging to Judah. God effectively recalculated the boundaries for the tribes, as He came to accept that they simply didn't have the spiritual ambition to go and possess the full extent of the land promised to Abraham. Thus "the river" on the eastern boundary effectively was recalculated as the Jordan and not the Euphrates; and likewise the southern border shifted northwards from the brook of Egypt to Beersheba. God has a similar flexibility with us too.

Jos 19:35 The fortified cities were Ziddim, Zer, Hammath, Rakkath, Chinnereth-
Hammath was a "fortified city" (Josh. 19:35), fortified by the local population and considered too strong for Naphtali to take. But it was given by them to the Levites (Josh. 21:32). As noted elsewhere, the tribes "gave" to the Levites the cities which were on the very edges of their cantons, or held by the enemy, or in mountainous, remote areas. I therefore suggest that the process of distributing the priestly cities by "lot" was interfered with. They failed to learn the principle of 2 Sam. 24:24, that we are not to apparently sacrifice to God that which cost us nothing.

Jos 19:36 Adamah, Ramah, Hazor-

The mighty king of Hazor had been destroyed by Joshua (Josh. 11:1). It is so tragic that that amazing victory had not been followed up by the Israelites, just as the victory of the Lord Jesus is likewise not personalized by so many.

Jos 19:37 Kedesh, Edrei, En Hazor-

"Kedesh" is 'the holy place', and is another example of the spiritually disappointing retention of pagan names; see on :3.

Jos 19:38 Iron, Migdal El, Horem, Beth Anath, and Beth Shemesh; nineteen cities with their villages-

Migdal El is the Magdala of Mt. 15:39.

Jos 19:39 This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Naphtali according to their families, the cities with their villages-

For "according to their families", see on :8. Asher bordered Naphtali, and they also marched side by side with them through the wilderness. Although the inheritances for the location of the tribal cantons were drawn by lot, it is clear the hand of God was in it. For the inheritances were appropriate to the people given them. This opens up the question as to whether we should also draw lots in this age. For God worked through them clearly enough in Joshua's time. See on :17,32.

Jos 19:40 The seventh lot came out for the tribe of the children of Dan according to their families-

For "according to their families", see on :8. Naphtali marched in the wilderness side by side with Dan and Asher (Num. 2:25-31), and now they are chosen "by lot" to again be near them. See on :24.

Jos 19:41 The border of their inheritance was Zorah, Eshtaol, Irshemesh-

Zorah, Samson's home town, was originally Judah's inheritance (Josh. 15:33-36), but they spurned it, and passed it to Dan (Josh. 19:41), who also weren't interested; for they migrated to the north and took over the land belonging to the less warlike Sidonians (Jud. 18:2,7-10). Their selfishness is reflected by the way they chide with him: "What is this that thou hast done *unto us*?" (Jud. 15:11). "They had become reconciled to the dominion of sin since it did not appear to do much harm. They could still grow their crops etc."

Jos 19:42 Shaalabbin, Aijalon, Ithlah-

Shaalabbin, "the place of foxes", may have been named in memory of Jud. 15:4, which incident occurred in this area.

Jos 19:43 Elon, Timnah, Ekron-

The aim of Samson's marriage was to dispossess the Philistines and take their possession for Israel. It seems no accident that he chose Timnath, 'a portion assigned'- to Israel. This was part of the land promised to Dan, but which they had allowed the Philistines to overrun (Josh. 19:43,47). And Samson would have seen himself as 'Samson-of-Zorah', the hornet- symbol of the Egyptian tribes which drove out the Canaanites in preparation for Israel's later victories (Dt. 7:20; Josh. 24:12).

Jos 19:44 Eltekeh, Gibbethon, Baalath-

"Baalath" is another example of the spiritually disappointing retention of pagan names; see on :3.

Jos 19:45 Jehud, Bene Berak, Gath Rimmon-

Gath Rimmon was given to the Levites (Josh. 21:24). Although the choice of priestly cities was supposedly taken by lot, it is significant that many of them were in territory which was unattractive to the tribes, such as in the mountains, or on the very edge of their tribal canton, or in territory which was never really subjugated by Israel. They failed to learn the principle of 2 Sam. 24:24, that we are not to apparently sacrifice to God that which cost us nothing. See on :47.

Jos 19:46 Me-Jarkon and Rakkon, with the border over against Joppa-

We wonder why Joppa itself isn't recorded as being Dan's, although the suburbs around it were. Perhaps here again we have an example of there being great fluidity in the assignment of areas, with some tribes taking areas which the other tribes didn't want, often from fear of the local inhabitants.

Jos 19:47 The border of the children of Dan went out beyond them; for the children of Dan went up and fought against Leshem and took it, and struck it with the edge of the sword and possessed it and lived therein, and called it Leshem Dan after the name of Dan their father-

2 Chron. 2:14 says "Hiram" was "son of a woman of the daughters of Dan", whereas 1 King 7:14 says he was "the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali". Dan may refer to the town called Dan or Laish which was in the territory of Naphtali, but inhabited by Danites (Josh. 18:27; 19:47; Jud. 18:7). Here we see how an apparent discrepancy on a surface level reveals a deep evidence of the way the records do not contradict but dovetail perfectly, as we would expect of a Divinely inspired writing. But this is only apparent to those who respectfully search the entire scriptures, rather than bandying around a surface level contradiction with an eagerness which speaks more of their own fears the Bible is inspired than of deep factual persuasion.

God here speaks so positively about spiritually weak Dan. See on :9. "The coast of the children of Dan went out too little for them" (Josh. 19:47), although actually "The Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain: for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley" (Jud. 1:34). When Dan fought against Leshem, this one act of obedience is so magnified in Josh. 19:47 to sound as if in their zeal to inherit their territory they actually found they had too little land and therefore attacked Leshem. But actually it was already part of their allotted inheritance. Yet God graciously comments: "all their inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel" (Jud. 18:1).

LXX adds: "The children of Dan did not drive out the Amorite who afflicted them in the mountain; and the Amorite would not suffer them to come down into the valley, but they forcibly took from them the border of their portion". If Dan didn't have in their possession their border towns, and yet these were supposedly given by them to the Levites, then this 'gift' was meaningless. See on :45.

Jos 19:48 This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Dan according to their families, these cities with their villages-

For "according to their families", see on :8. LXX adds: "The Amorite continued to dwell in Edom and in Salamin: and the hand of Ephraim prevailed against them, and they became tribute to them". This shows the weakness of Dan in even deeper emphasis; for Ephraim subdued those in their area whom they wouldn't.

Jos 19:49 So they made an end of distributing the land for inheritance by its borders. The children of Israel gave an inheritance to Joshua the son of Nun in their midst-
The inheritance was ultimately given by God. So Israel 'gave' it to Joshua in that what would otherwise have been their inheritance because theirs. I have suggested on :8 that each family was given a specific inheritance which they were to build up; and Joshua set the parade example to his people in doing this (:50).

Jos 19:50 According to the commandment of Yahweh, they gave him the city which he asked, even Timnathserah in the hill country of Ephraim; and he built the city, and lived there-

This was an example of spiritual ambition. Perhaps like Caleb he had noticed this city whilst spying out the land 40 years before, and was given his request. There is an element to which our experiences in this life lead us to desire or request things which we shall receive in the Kingdom.

Jos 19:51 These are the inheritances, which Eleazar the priest, Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers' houses of the tribes of the children of Israel, distributed for inheritance by lot in Shiloh before Yahweh, at the door of the Tent of Meeting. So they made an end of dividing the land-

LXX "and they went to take possession of the land". Again we note that being "before Yahweh" doesn't mean being in Heaven itself; for His representatives are spoken of as Him, and therefore coming before Him meant coming before them. It could be that the Angel of Yahweh dwelt over the mercy seat of the ark, in the shekinah glory between the cherubim; and this therefore made coming before the tabernacle a coming before Yahweh.

JOSHUA CHAPTER 20

Jos 20:1 Yahweh spoke to Joshua saying-

Having given the people their inheritances, they are now asked to set some aside as cities of refuge. But as noted several times in Josh. 19, some of these cities they had not even taken from enemy hands.

Jos 20:2 Speak to the children of Israel saying, 'Assign the cities of refuge, of which I spoke to you by Moses-

"Assign" is the usual word for "give". The tribes were to give these cities. But several of them they had not even bothered to take from the local inhabitants.

Jos 20:3 that the manslayer who kills any person accidentally or unintentionally may flee there. They shall be to you for a refuge from the avenger of blood-

We are all in the position of the man who unintentionally committed manslaughter and must therefore die. We are under sentence of death by reason of being human, as well as for our actual sins. The avenger of blood could be seen as God, for it is He alone who has the right to execute judgment for sin. And we must note that the word *ga'al* translated "avenger" is also that translated "redeemer" or 'ransomer'. The cities of refuge are therefore understood in Heb. 6:18 as looking ahead to refuge in the Lord Jesus: "Who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us". The allusion is to how the person who found they had committed a sin worthy of death, yet without as it were wishing to have done so, could flee to a city of refuge and be saved there by the death of the high priest. The curse upon Levi was that the members of this tribe were to be scattered in Israel (Gen. 49:7). However, this resulted in the cities of the Levites being scattered throughout the land, thus providing accessible cities of refuge to all who wished to escape the consequences of sin. Those cities were evidently symbolic of the refuge we have in Christ. Again and again, the curses and consequences of human sin are used by the Father to mediate blessing. It is the sure hope before us which is our refuge. "Hope", *elpis*, is a confident knowledge of a future reality, rather than a hoping for the best. We should be confident in our salvation. The 'guilty' person was made free totally through the death of the High Priest, clearly looking forward to the significance of the death of the Lord Jesus.

LXX adds: "until he have stood before the congregation for judgment". In this case we note that the person was to be assumed innocent until proven guilty- a principle to always live by.

Jos 20:4 He shall flee to one of those cities, and shall stand at the entrance of the gate of the city and declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city. They shall take him into the city with them and give him a place, that he may live among them-

The cities of refuge represented salvation in the Lord Jesus (Heb. 6:18). But most of them were situated in remote or mountainous areas, Hebron being an exception. The idea was that those wishing for salvation from sin they had unintentionally committed must make quite some conscious effort and choice to get there, as is true today. And more such cities were promised, but Israel didn't take up that offer. This would have made salvation more easily accessible, as it were, had they done so.

Jos 20:5 If the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver up the manslayer into his hand; because he struck his neighbour unintentionally, and didn't hate him beforehand-

This is assuming that the elders find the man's case consistent and genuine. They were to judge that according to whether he 'hated him in time past' (Dt. 19:6). We note that hatred of a neighbour was to be the reason for death. John appears to have this in mind when he reasons that hatred of our brother is effectively a living death sentence (1 Jn. 2:11; 4:20). It was to be that "whoever hates his brother is a murderer", not a manslaughterer (1 Jn. 3:15). And that hatred can be in someone's heart, even if they have not killed the object of their hatred. This is the principle which is taught here.

Jos 20:6 He shall dwell in that city until he stands before the congregation for judgment, until the death of the high priest that shall be in those days. Then the manslayer shall return, and come to his own city, and to his own house, to the city he fled from'-

The death of the High Priest was paralleled with a man standing before the judgment for his

crime in Josh. 20:6 RV. This surely prefigured how Christ's death was and is effectively our judgment. Further connection between the cross and the judgment is found in considering Zech. 12:10, which states that men would look upon the pierced (i.e. crucified) Saviour, and mourn in recognition of their own sinfulness. This verse is quoted as having fulfilment both at the crucifixion (Jn. 19:37) and also at the final judgment (Rev. 1:7). There is strong connection between these two events.

Jos 20:7 They set apart Kedesh in Galilee in the hill country of Naphtali, Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and Kiriath Arba (the same is Hebron) in the hill country of Judah- But Kedesh was listed in Josh. 19 as a city not yet taken by Naphtali; yet it was commanded to be given by them to the Levites as a city of refuge (Josh. 20:7). So their refusal or 'being slack' to take the city meant they had no wider vision, of providing a place of refuge for the needy within Israel as a whole. And there is no real evidence that this wonderful system of salvation and justice ever really worked in practice.

Jos 20:8 Beyond the Jordan at Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness in the plain out of the tribe of Reuben, Ramoth in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh-

But Ramoth Gilead passed in and out of Israelite possession; and it is doubtful whether Manasseh ever bothered securing Golan from the local inhabitants. The cities were generally in the wilderness or mountainous areas; perhaps the idea was that they should not be used casually, but the person had to make quite some effort to get there.

Jos 20:9 These were the appointed cities for all the children of Israel, and for the alien who lives among them, that whoever kills any person unintentionally might flee there, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood, until he stands before the congregation-

Again we note that the person was to be assumed innocent until proven guilty- a principle to always live by. The cities were "appointed", this gracious system of salvation was carefully worked out in practice for the people. But the cities were not all "given" by the people, so the system didn't work in practice.

JOSHUA CHAPTER 21

Jos 21:1 Then the heads of fathers' houses of the Levites came near to Eleazar the priest, to Joshua the son of Nun and to the heads of fathers' houses of the tribes of the children of Israel-

They would have listened to all the descriptions of the cantons of the other tribes, and would have been deeply aware that they had not been provided for by their brethren.

Jos 21:2 They spoke to them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan saying, Yahweh commanded Moses to give us cities to dwell in, with their suburbs for our livestock-

This implies that the Levites had livestock with them when they entered the land, and we assume that they also had animals with them on the wilderness journey. Hence we are told that Achan had his own flocks of animals at the time when they first crossed the Jordan and entered the land. The manna was clearly supplemented by their own food products taken from the animals they had with them. They did this to satisfy their craving for meat in addition to manna, which had nearly led to their destruction. We wonder whether the Levites

ought to have had such livestock in the desert, or whether they ought to have been satisfied with the manna.

Jos 21:3 The children of Israel gave to the Levites out of their inheritance, according to the commandment of Yahweh, these cities with their suburbs-

I pointed out throughout Josh. 19, and later here in this chapter, that many of the Levitical cities were 'given' to them by the tribes, when they had not driven out the tribes. Although the choice of priestly cities was supposedly taken by lot, it is significant that many of them were in territory which was unattractive to the tribes, such as in the mountains, or on the very edge of their tribal canton, or in territory which was never really subjugated by Israel. So this 'giving to the Levites' was giving in word but not in deed.

Jos 21:4 The lot came out for the families of the Kohathites. The children of Aaron the priest, who were of the Levites, had thirteen cities by lot out of the tribe of Judah, out of the tribe of the Simeonites, and out of the tribe of Benjamin-

I will suggest later in this chapter, as on :3, that the tribes tended to give the Levites the cities which they didn't really possess or which were unimportant to them. It could mean that the "lot" was therefore interfered with. However, it could be that the tribes decided which towns they were going to "give", and the lot was not to decide which towns were given, but to which of the three families of the Levites the towns were to be given, i.e. the Gershonites, Kohathites and Merarites.

Jos 21:5 The rest of the children of Kohath had ten cities by lot out of the families of the tribe of Ephraim, out of the tribe of Dan, and out of the half-tribe of Manasseh-

The parable of Lk. 19:10 describes the reward of the faithful in terms of being given ten or five cities. This idea of dividing up groups of cities was surely meant to send the mind back to the way Israel in their wilderness years were each promised their own individual cities and villages, which they later inherited. The idea of inheriting "ten cities" occurs in Josh. 15:57; 21:5,26; 1 Chron. 6:61 (all of which are in the context of the priests receiving their cities), and "five cities" in 1 Chron. 4:32. As each Israelite was promised some personal inheritance in the land, rather than some blanket reward which the whole nation received, so we too have a personal reward prepared. The language of inheritance (e.g. 1 Pet. 1:4) and preparation of reward (Mt. 25:34; Jn. 14:1) in the NT is alluding to this OT background of the land being prepared by the Angels for Israel to inherit (Ex. 15:17 Heb.; 23:20; Ps. 68:9,10 Heb.). We must be careful not to think that our promised inheritance is *only* eternal life; it is something being personally prepared for each of us. The language of preparation seems inappropriate if our reward is only eternal life.

Jos 21:6 The children of Gershon had thirteen cities by lot out of the families of the tribe of Issachar, out of the tribe of Asher, out of the tribe of Naphtali, and out of the half-tribe of Manasseh in Bashan-

As explained on :3,4, the Levites were 'given' these cities only in theory. They did not at that time 'have' them, as several of them were not even in Israelite hands.

Jos 21:7 The children of Merari according to their families had twelve cities out of the tribe of Reuben, out of the tribe of Gad, and out of the tribe of Zebulun-

The law of Moses reasons as if each family of Israel had a specific inheritance which was not to be sold or moved outside the family. Hence the sin of Ahab in obtaining Naboth's vineyard. It would seem that there was some unrecorded list made of each family and which land they were to be given. This looks forward to our very personal and unique inheritance in God's Kingdom, possibly based around spiritual family units.

Jos 21:8 The children of Israel gave these cities with their suburbs by lot to the Levites, as Yahweh commanded by Moses-

In other words, Joshua ensured that there was a strictly legal granting of these cities to the Levites. But as explained on :3, the spirit of all this was rather lacking seeing that several of the cities were not even possessed by the Israelites at this time. Joshua was very good at obedience to clear commandments (Josh. 4:10,17; 8:27; 10:40). But when he had to articulate his faith in God in unexpected situations, e.g. when the ambassadors from Gibeon arrived, or when the first attack on Ai failed, he seems to have performed poorly. Legalistic obedience is no use in those cases when principles need to be applied. Josh. 5:13,14 can be read as a rebuke of Joshua, wanting to boil everything down to black and white, wanting to see God as either personally for him or against him; when the essence is to seek to discern and do God's will. He very strictly adhered to God's commandments with legalistic obedience, e.g., about how to approach and deal with Jericho, or how to cross the flooded Jordan and build an altar; and time and again, we read in Joshua of how he strictly relayed and obeyed the Divine commandments given by Moses (Josh. 8:31,33,35; 11:12,15,20; 14:2,5; 17:4; 21:2,8). Yet as with any literalistic or legally minded person, it was hard for Joshua to apply the principles behind the laws to situations which weren't specifically addressed by Divine revelation, where legalistic obedience wasn't what was required.

Jos 21:9 They gave out of the tribe of the children of Judah, and out of the tribe of the children of Simeon, these cities which are mentioned by name-

"Mentioned" is literally to call out, as if the names of the cities were read out, along with the result of the lots, i.e. to which clan of the three sons of Levi they should be given.

Jos 21:10 They were for the children of Aaron, of the families of the Kohathites, who were of the children of Levi; for theirs was the first lot-

The Kohathites had their cities in Judah and Ephraim, which were not neighbouring tribes. This fulfilled the promise that Levi was to be scattered in Israel, although this curse was intended to turn out as a blessing, in that the knowledge of God would be further spread amongst the people.

Jos 21:11 They gave them Kiriath Arba, named after the father of Anak (the same is Hebron), in the hill country of Judah, with its suburbs around it-

Joshua had taken Hebron (Josh. 10:36) but Israel had not followed up his victory, and the Philistines had returned; Caleb then took it (Josh. 15:13), but again, by Samson's time, the Philistines were back. A study of these place names reveals the tragic weakness of God's people.

Jos 21:12 But they gave the fields of the city and its villages to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for his possession-

Perhaps rather speculatively, Kiel concludes from this "that the Levites only received as many houses in the cities assigned them, as their numerical strength required, and that it was these which remained in their hands as an inalienable possession".

Jos 21:13 To the children of Aaron the priest they gave Hebron with its suburbs, the city of refuge for the manslayer, Libnah with its suburbs-

We are all in the position of the man who unintentionally committed manslaughter and must therefore die. We are under sentence of death by reason of being human, as well as for our actual sins. The avenger of blood could be seen as God, for it is He alone who has the right to execute judgment for sin. And we must note that the word *ga'al* translated "avenger" is also that translated "redeemer" or 'ransomer'. The cities of refuge are therefore understood in Heb. 6:18 as looking ahead to refuge in the Lord Jesus: "Who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us". The allusion is to how the person who found they had committed a sin worthy of death, yet without as it were wishing to have done so, could flee to a city of refuge and be saved there by the death of the high priest. The curse upon Levi was that the members of this tribe were to be scattered in Israel (Gen. 49:7). However, this resulted in the cities of the Levites being scattered throughout the land, thus providing accessible cities of refuge to all who wished to escape the consequences of sin. Those cities were evidently symbolic of the refuge we have in Christ. Again and again, the curses and consequences of human sin are used by the Father to mediate blessing. It is the sure hope before us which is our refuge. "Hope", *elpis*, is a confident knowledge of a future reality, rather than a hoping for the best. We should be confident in our salvation. The 'guilty' person was made free totally through the death of the High Priest, clearly looking forward to the significance of the death of the Lord Jesus.

Jos 21:14 Jattir with its suburbs-

Jattir was given to the priests but was in Philistine territory (Josh. 15:48 and context). Although the choice of priestly cities was supposedly taken by lot, it is significant that many of them were in territory such as this Philistine territory which was never really subjugated by Israel. They failed to learn the principle of 2 Sam. 24:24, that we are not to apparently sacrifice to God that which cost us nothing.

Eshtemoa with its suburbs-

Eshtemoa was a priestly city; it would seem the priests were largely supportive of David when on the run from Saul, perhaps due to Samuel's influence (1 Sam. 30:28; Josh. 15:50; 21:14).

Jos 21:15 Holon with its suburbs, Debir with its suburbs-

"Now the name of Debir before was Kiriath Sepher" (Josh. 15:15). "Debir" is the word usually translated "oracle", referring to the sanctuary, which was centered around the word of God in the ark. The previous name also means something similar, 'Place of the scroll / books'. It's as if faithful Caleb renamed an idol shrine to a more Yahweh centered name. This confirms the suggestion made on Josh. 15:9,10 that the names associated with pagan worship were renamed by the faithful, but not renamed by the unfaithful.

Jos 21:16 Ain with its suburbs, Juttah with its suburbs, and Beth Shemesh with its suburbs; nine cities out of those two tribes-

In the Hebrew text of 1 Chron. 6:55-60 we have eleven names of priestly towns, but thirteen towns are stated as having been 'given' in 1 Chron. 6:60. Juttah and Gibeon were promised (Josh. 21:16,17), but were not possessed. But as also experienced in 1 Chron. 6:81, and as often happens with God's people, they do not take all the blessing that God promised and intended for them.

Jos 21:17 Out of the tribe of Benjamin, Gibeon with its suburbs, Geba with its suburbs-

The Gibeonites had made peace with Joshua and by all accounts remained faithful to Yahweh for generations, as the Nethinim. It was appropriate that Gibeon be made a priestly city. But see on :16.

Jos 21:18 Anathoth with its suburbs, and Almon with its suburbs; four cities-

Anathoth was the birthplace of Jeremiah, and means 'place of answers', perhaps because the prophetic word was given there. Almon was only one mile from Anathoth, so we get the impression the tribes were just trying to make two priestly cities out of one; which fits with the theme of them giving the Levites marginal towns or those they didn't possess.

Jos 21:19 All the cities of the children of Aaron, the priests, were thirteen cities with their suburbs-

This sounds a large number of towns for this group, given their population at the time. But many of the "cities" were tiny settlements like Almon (see on :18).

Jos 21:20 The families of the children of Kohath, the Levites, even the rest of the children of Kohath, had the cities of their lot out of the tribe of Ephraim-

The children of Kohath (i.e. here those apart from those of the priestly order), were give four cities in Ephraim, four in Dan and two in Western Manasseh. This fulfilled the promise that

Levi was to be scattered in Israel, although this curse was intended to turn out as a blessing, in that the knowledge of God would be further spread amongst the people.

Jos 21:21 They gave them Shechem with its suburbs in the hill country of Ephraim, the city of refuge for the manslayer, and Gezer with its suburbs-

The cities of refuge were generally in the wilderness or mountainous areas; perhaps the idea was that they should not be used casually, but the person had to make quite some effort to get there. See on :13.

Jos 21:22 Kibzaim with its suburbs, and Beth Horon with its suburbs; four cities-

Kibzaim is Jokmeam in 1 Chron. 6:68. Any student of the Hebrew text will soon perceive that proper nouns can be expressed in various ways, and that people and towns often had more than one name. It is nothing but intellectual desperation which would try to forge from this a claim that the record contradicts itself. Such differences surely reflect the fact that these records were written by different people at different times, and yet don't contradict because the records are all inspired by the same Spirit of God.

Jos 21:23 Out of the tribe of Dan, Elteke with its suburbs, Gibbethon with its suburbs-

These cities were in Dan (Josh. 21:23,24), but were given by Ephraim to the Levites (1 Chron. 6:66,69). This continues the theme that the tribes of Israel may have somehow manipulated the lots so that they gave less valuable cities to the Levites, or even cities which weren't theirs, thereby breaking the foundation principle of 2 Sam. 24:24.

Jos 21:24 Aijalon with its suburbs, Gath Rimmon with its suburbs; four cities-

Gath Rimmon was one of the towns which Dan didn't take (Josh. 19:45). Although the choice of priestly cities was supposedly taken by lot, it is significant that many of them were in territory which was unattractive to the tribes, such as in the mountains, or on the very edge of their tribal canton, or in territory which was never really subjugated by Israel. See on :23.

Jos 21:25 Out of the half-tribe of Manasseh, Taanach with its suburbs, and Gath Rimmon with its suburbs; two cities-

In the list of cities given to the Levites, this is called "Bileam". "Bileam" means 'not of the people', called Ibleam, Jud. 1:27; 2 Kings 9:27, and in Josh. 21:25, Gath-rimmon. Perhaps it is called "Bileam" in 1 Chron. 6:70 because it continues the theme that the tribes of Israel may have somehow manipulated the lots so that they gave less valuable cities to the Levites, or even cities which weren't theirs, thereby breaking the foundation principle of 2 Sam. 24:24.

Jos 21:26 All the cities of the families of the rest of the children of Kohath were ten with their

suburbs-

For "ten cities", see on :5.

Jos 21:27 They gave to the children of Gershon, of the families of the Levites, out of the half-tribe of Manasseh: Golan in Bashan with its suburbs, the city of refuge for the manslayer, and Beeshterah with its suburbs; two cities-

Golan was one of the cities of refuge on the east of Jordan. Those cities of refuge could have been increased in number (Dt. 19:9), thereby making salvation that much 'easier' or accessible; but there is no evidence Israel availed themselves of this.

Beeshterah is Ashtaroth in 1 Chron. 6:71, a shortened for of 'house of Ashtaroth'. We note the retention of the old pagan name. There is no record at all of Israel's obedience to the commands to destroy the local idols of the land, although the change of name of Kiriath Baal (Josh. 15:60; 18:14) is evidence enough that there was some local attempt to stamp out the name of Baal in that case. Instead the historical record is full of evidence that they worshipped these gods. Although the name of Baal Meon had been changed in Num. 32:38, by the time of Josh. 13:17 the old name was still being used. Clearly Israel did not detest idolatry as they ought to have done. Just as the names of idols should not have passed the lips of Israel, so for us, the things of sexual impurity are not to be named amongst us (Eph. 5:3). The allusion shows how Paul understood such things to be the equivalent of idolatry in his day, and that remains a fair interpretation even in our age.

Jos 21:28 Out of the tribe of Issachar, Kishion with its suburbs, Daberath with its suburbs-
This is called Kedesh in Josh. 13:22.

Jos 21:29 Jarmuth with its suburbs, En Gannim with its suburbs; four cities-

Ramoth in 1 Chron. 6:73 is called Jarmuth in Josh. 21:28,29, and perhaps Remeth in Josh. 19:21. Anem of 1 Chron. 6:73 is En-gannim in Josh. 19:21; 21:29.

Jos 21:30 Out of the tribe of Asher, Mishal with its suburbs, Abdon with its suburbs-

Mishal was in the mountains on the very edge of Asher's inheritance, which they had not possessed (Josh. 19:25). See on :31; and for Abdon, on Josh. 19:28.

Jos 21:31 Helkath with its suburbs, and Rehob with its suburbs; four cities-

Helkath was in the mountains on the very edge of Asher's inheritance (Josh. 19:25). Although the choice of priestly cities was supposedly taken by lot, it is significant that many of them were in territory which was unattractive to the tribes, such as in the mountains, or on the very edge of their tribal canton, or in territory which was never really subjugated by Israel. They failed to learn the principle of 2 Sam. 24:24, that we are not to apparently sacrifice to God that which cost us nothing.

Jos 21:32 Out of the tribe of Naphtali, Kedesh in Galilee with its suburbs, the city of refuge

for the manslayer, Hammothdor with its suburbs, and Kartan with its suburbs; three cities- Hammath was a "fortified city" (Josh. 19:35), fortified by the local population and considered too strong for Naphtali to take. But it was given by them to the Levites (Josh. 21:32). As noted elsewhere, the tribes "gave" to the Levites the cities which were on the very edges of their cantons, or held by the enemy, or in mountainous, remote areas. I therefore suggest that the process of distributing the priestly cities by "lot" was interfered with. They failed to learn the principle of 2 Sam. 24:24, that we are not to apparently sacrifice to God that which cost us nothing.

Jos 21:33 All the cities of the Gershonites according to their families were thirteen cities with their suburbs-

The children of Gershon had thirteen cities, two in Eastern Manasseh, four in Issachar, four in Asher and three in Naphtali. This fulfilled the promise that Levi was to be scattered in Israel, although this curse was intended to turn out as a blessing, in that the knowledge of God would be further spread amongst the people.

Jos 21:34 To the families of the children of Merari, the rest of the Levites, out of the tribe of Zebulun, Jokneam with its suburbs, Kartah with its suburbs-

The law of Moses reasons as if each family of Israel had a specific inheritance which was not to be sold or moved outside the family. Hence the sin of Ahab in obtaining Naboth's vineyard. It would seem that there was some unrecorded list made of each family and which land they were to be given. This looks forward to our very personal and unique inheritance in God's Kingdom, possibly based around spiritual family units.

Jos 21:35 Dimnah with its suburbs and Nahalal with its suburbs; four cities- Rimmono and Tabor in 1 Chron. 6:77 are in Josh. 21:35 as Dimnah and Nahalai.

Jos 21:36 Out of the tribe of Reuben, Bezer with its suburbs, Jahaz with its suburbs-

Jahaz, like Heshbon, Jazer and Mephaath, was taken by the Moabites and was in their long term possession (Is. 15:1-9; 16:1-14; Jer. 48:21,34). This continues the impression that the cities given to the Levites were often in marginal areas which were liable to attack and loss to Gentile powers. See on :37.

Jos 21:37 Kedemoth with its suburbs and Mephaath with its suburbs; four cities-

Kedemoth was given to the Levites (Josh. 21:37) but was in fact a town which had not been captured from the local population (Josh. 13:18). They failed to learn the principle of 2 Sam. 24:24, that we are not to apparently sacrifice to God that which cost us nothing.

Jos 21:38 Out of the tribe of Gad, Ramoth in Gilead with its suburbs, the city of refuge for the manslayer, and Mahanaim with its suburbs-

But Ramoth Gilead passed in and out of Israelite possession. The cities of refuge were generally in the wilderness or mountainous areas; perhaps the idea was that they should not be used casually, but the person had to make quite some effort to get there.

Jos 21:39 Heshbon with its suburbs, Jazer with its suburbs; four cities in all-
See on :36.

Jos 21:40 All these were the cities of the children of Merari according to their families, even the rest of the families of the Levites. Their lot was twelve cities-

The children of Merari has twelve cities, four in Zebulun, four in Reuben, four in Gad. This fulfilled the promise that Levi was to be scattered in Israel, although this curse was intended to turn out as a blessing, in that the knowledge of God would be further spread amongst the people.

Jos 21:41 All the cities of the Levites in the midst of the possession of the children of Israel were forty-eight cities with their suburbs-

The idea was that the Levites would live "in the midst" of the people, teaching them God's way. But Israel's apostasy is often blamed upon the failure of the priesthood; and yet that in turn was partly due to Israel not providing for the Levites.

Jos 21:42 Each of these cities included their suburbs around them. It was this way with all these cities-

"Suburbs" is translated by some as "cattle drives".

Jos 21:43 So Yahweh gave to Israel all the land which He swore to give to their fathers. They possessed it, and lived in it-

The Lord gave them the land, i.e. potentially, but they failed to possess it; the language here is that of potential achievement by Joshua, rather than by Israel in practice. "Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly

encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

But Joshua's achievements are presented as a primary fulfilment of the promises to Abraham. In a sense, the promises that the seed *would* inherit the land, and that God *would be* their God were fulfilled straight after God said them. He became Isaac's God (Gen. 31:42,53 refer to this), the God of Abraham's son. Time and again God reminds Israel that He *is* their God. And that land in a sense *was* given to the Jewish fathers (Gen. 15:18; Dt. 28:63; 30:5 NIV; Josh. 1:2-9; 21:43; 1 Kings 4:20,21). David could praise God simply because He was "my God" (Ps. 118:28)- an allusion back to the Abrahamic promise. Of course, the *main* fulfillment of this promise will be in the Kingdom; but in principle, the promise has *already* been fulfilled to Abraham's seed- i.e., us!

Jos 21:44 Yahweh gave them rest all around, according to all that He swore to their fathers- Heb. 3:8 is clear that Joshua did not give them "rest" as intended, and so his work was reapplied and rescheduled to his namesake the Lord Jesus. So the language here is that of potential achievement by Joshua, rather than by Israel in practice.

Not a man of all their enemies stood before them. Yahweh delivered all their enemies into their hand-

But their enemies did stand before them, they didn't possess all the land. Yet God puts it over so positively, as if it's a story with a happy ending- when actually it's a tragedy. Even when rebuking them, God sees Israel as in some ways " perfect" (Is. 42:18-20). Israel were like Sodom, and yet they weren't treated like Sodom (Is. 1:9,10). They were Jeshurun, the upright one, but they kicked at God (Dt. 32:15). See on Josh. 19:9.

Jos 21:45 Nothing failed of any good thing which Yahweh had spoken to the house of Israel; all came to pass-

Literally, 'a word from all the good word'. Every word of promise concerning every town, field, cattle drive and suburb didn't fail. God's prophecies do not fail of themselves; it is human weakness which fails to realize the prophetic potential. Indeed as concluded in Josh. 24:18 "Yahweh drove out from before us all the peoples". But Israel failed to make good on that, for they didn't drive out all the peoples. This all speaks of the tragic wasted potential which there is in all that the Lord Jesus achieved. He won the victories over every aspect of sin, every obstacle between us and possessing the Kingdom. But we are slow and lazy to believe and act upon that. See on Josh. 24:15.

JOSHUA CHAPTER 22

Jos 22:1 Then Joshua called the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh-
Clearly Joshua called the representatives of those tribes. This is a major theme in the Bible- that the representative of a person or entity is spoken of as being that person. Understanding this helps us easily understand the verses wrested to support the mistaken doctrine of the Trinity.

Jos 22:2 and said to them, You have kept all that Moses the servant of Yahweh commanded you, and have listened to my voice in all that I commanded you-

Moses had told the Reubenites and Gadites that they could return to their possessions when “the Lord have given rest unto your brethren, and they also possess the land” (Dt. 3:20). But Joshua tells them to go to their possessions simply because their brethren were now at “rest” (Josh. 22:4). He significantly omits the proviso that their brethren must also possess the land- because much of the land wasn’t possessed. Was this Joshua getting slack, thinking that the main thing was that people were living in peace, even though they weren’t possessing the Kingdom? Or is it a loving concession to human weakness? Indeed, the conditions of Dt. 3:20 were in their turn an easier form, a concession to, the terms of the initial agreement in Num. 32:20-32.

Joshua didn’t give the people rest (Heb. 4:8); although he potentially enabled it (Josh. 22:4; 23:1). He failed to fulfil the potential of Josh. 1:13-15- that *he* would lead the people to “rest”. The Messianic Kingdom could, perhaps, have come through Joshua-Jesus; but Israel would not. And so his work was rescheduled and reapplied to the Lord Jesus, who does give “rest” to the true people of God (Heb. 4:8). See on Josh. 21:43,44; 23:4; 24:14,23. Or is all this rooted in his love for them, not seeing iniquity in Jacob?

Jos 22:3 You have not left your brothers these many days to this day, but have performed the duty commanded by Yahweh your God-

I would consider the book of Joshua to have largely been written by Joshua, under Divine inspiration, although edited [again under Divine inspiration] for the exiles. And the book of Judges likewise. For the exiles too were set to reestablish God's Kingdom in the land and to inherit it again as the Israelites first did. The phrase “to this day” occurs several times in Joshua / Judges, and appears to have different points of historical reference (Josh. 4:9; 5:9; 6:25; 7:26; 8:28,29; 9:27; 10:27; 13:13; 14:14; 15:63; 16:10; 22:3; 23:8,9; Jud. 1:26; 6:24; 10:4; 15:19; 18:12). I would explain this by saying that the book was edited a number of times and the remains of those edits remain in the text. For God's word is living and made relevant by Him to every generation.

Jos 22:4 Now Yahweh your God has given rest to your brothers, as He spoke to them. Therefore now return and go to your tents, to the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of Yahweh gave you beyond the Jordan-

This is a timeless principle- that our own inheritance of the Kingdom requires our efforts to help our brethren inherit it also. For in a sense, salvation is collective; the body of Christ

receive His resurrection life, the Israel of God inherit Canaan. Whilst relationship with God is ultimately personal, the essence of that relationship is love. And love in its ultimate term is the desire to eternally save others.

Jos 22:5 Only take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of Yahweh commanded you, to love Yahweh your God, to walk in all His ways, to keep His commandments, to hold fast to Him and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul-

If we love the Lord Jesus Christ, we will keep His words (Jn. 14:15,21; 15:10). This is evidently alluding to the many Old Testament passages which say that Israel's love for God would be shown through their keeping of His commands (Ex. 20:6; Dt. 5:10; 7:9; 11:1,13,22; 30:16; Josh. 22:5). Israel were also told that God's commands were *all* related to showing love (Dt. 11:13; 19:9). So there is a logical circuit here: We love God by keeping His commands, therefore His commands are fundamentally about love. Thus love is the fulfilling of the law of God; both under the Old and New covenants (Rom. 13:10). It is all too easy to see our relationship with God and Christ as a question of obedience to their words, as if this is somehow a test of our spirituality. This is to humanize God too far, to see God as if He were a fallible man; for if we were God, we would institute some kind of written test for our creatures: 'Do this, and if you don't, then I know you don't love me'. The God of glory is beyond this kind of thing. He is His word. If we love Him, we will be eager to know His words, we will dwell upon them, we will live them out in our daily experience as far as we can.

Yahweh was to be loved with all the heart, soul and mind (Dt. 6:5). This is understood by Joshua as meaning that those who loved Yahweh would not "mix with" and intermarry with the nations and accept their gods (Josh. 23:11,12,16). "Love" for God was not therefore a feeling; Joshua said that they must "take good heed therefore to yourselves, that you love Yahweh" (Josh. 23:11). This is the love of conscious direction of the mind, the love which is a choice rather than an emotion.

Jos 22:6 So Joshua blessed them and sent them away; and they went to their tents-

The agreement in Josh. 1:14 had been that "Your wives, your little ones and your livestock shall live in the land which Moses gave you beyond the Jordan; but all your mighty men of valour shall pass over before your brothers, armed, and shall help them". This was no small sacrifice, because it left their much beloved flocks, as well as their women and children, without protection. That is the significance of the agreement that "all" their soldiers were to pass over Jordan. And they were to be in the front line, "before your brothers", forming the vanguard. Further, their inheritances east of Jordan were huge, and included areas inhabited by giants and strong enemies. So the agreement required them to live by faith in God's protection far more than did the other tribes. Their attempted short cut to the Kingdom didn't work, it ended up with far greater challenge to their faith. And that is true to this day.

Jos 22:7 Now to the one half-tribe of Manasseh Moses had given inheritance in Bashan; but

to the other half gave Joshua among their brothers beyond the Jordan westward. Moreover when Joshua sent them away to their tents he blessed them-

Division between brethren is not God's ideal intention. We wonder whether this arrangement was God's curse, if that is not too strong a word, upon Manasseh's desire for the immediate inheritance east of Jordan. We note that Dan also, a tribe associated with much spiritual failure, was likewise given two areas of inheritance, one in the south and one in the north.

Jos 22:8 and spoke to them saying, Return with much wealth to your tents, with very much livestock, with silver, gold, brass, iron and with very much clothing. Divide the spoil of your enemies with your brothers-

The enemies of Israel west of Jordan were still their enemies, and they were to divide the spoil they had taken there with their brothers east of Jordan. Although God arranged their disunity in response to their wish (see on :7), He also worked to minimize it.

Jos 22:9 The children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh returned, and departed from the children of Israel out of Shiloh which is in the land of Canaan to go to the land of Gilead, to the land of their possession which they owned, according to the commandment of Yahweh by Moses-

"Which they owned" is a reminder that God accepted the situation, as discussed on :6,7. He had given them their inheritance as they requested, even if it was not His idea intention. But He didn't wish for that to be revisited and caviled against by the other tribes. This was legitimately their inheritance. After less than ideal behaviour from others, we need to move on, the lines remain drawn where they have been- but we must move on with our brethren and not seek to endlessly revisit the issue.

Jos 22:10 When they came to the region about the Jordan, that is in the land of Canaan, the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh built there an altar by the Jordan, a great altar to look at-

This altar was right on the edge of their territory, and was not therefore intended as a central place of worship. It was perhaps built opposite the altar that been built when Israel first crossed the Jordan. See on :11. Their desire to settle east of Jordan meant they would be separated from the sanctuary by the river Jordan. The law required that three times / year their men were to appear at the sanctuary. We recall from Josh. 3:15 that the Jordan was very hard to cross at the time of Passover. So their decision was going to make spiritual devotions and obedience to the law far harder to keep. But God went along with their request, as did the Father of the prodigal son. And as He did with Israel's request for a human king and a temple- even though those things made devotion to Him that much harder to achieve.

Jos 22:11 The children of Israel heard a report that the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh had built an altar in the forefront of the land of Canaan, in the region about the Jordan, on the side that pertains to the children of Israel- Or "at the passage of the children of Israel". This would confirm the suggestion on :10, that it

was built opposite the altar that been built when Israel first crossed the Jordan. And this too would be the sense of "the forefront of the land of Canaan". For Israel had first entered Canaan at this point, in the plains opposite Jericho, and they considered that area to be the 'forefront' of Canaan.

Jos 22:12 When the children of Israel confirmed this, the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered themselves together at Shiloh, to go up against them to war-

We have the impression that they did the right thing on hearing a report (:11); they confirmed it to be true by investigation. But then they fail completely in going to war against their brethren who only recently had been fighting for them in the vanguard of the Israelite army, in order to secure their inheritance west of Jordan. There were clearly underlying jealousy and personality issues. They were twisting the Mosaic commandment of Dt. 13:12-16 about investigating whether or not idolatry was being committed in a city, and if it was, then attacking and destroying the city. As often happens in these kinds of controversies, there is a semblance of obedience to Divine commands [they confirmed that an altar had been built], but not in fact. For no idolatry was being committed upon the altar which had been built. They found no evidence of that but still wanted to attack and destroy their brethren. The scenario has repeated countless times within the body of Christ. And the western tribes could hardly consistently claim such a scrupulous level of obedience to Divine law, when they had not driven out the Canaanite tribes and were starting to worship their gods. They were transferring their own guilt onto others. This is why brethren guilty of a certain sin will zealously accuse others [even falsely] of that very sin, and seek to punish them for it. This is not simply a case of hypocrisy. It is psychological transference of their own sin onto others, and seeking to punish them with the judgment they themselves deserve.

Jos 22:13 The children of Israel sent to the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead. They sent Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest-

Phinehas had become well known for saving Israel by murdering the apostates (Num. 25:7). But as explained on :12, here he was going too far. He was assuming the existence of idolatry, when in fact there was none. He was of the personality type which was judgmental, and had made his name, as it were, from this. But on this occasion he was allowing the natural human desire to be judgmental to consume him, when he ought to have controlled it. There are so many people like him in the body of Christ today. See on :17.

Jos 22:14 and with him ten princes, one prince of a fathers' house for each of the tribes of Israel; and they were each one of them head of their fathers' houses among the thousands of Israel-

This would have included a prince for the other half of the tribe of Manasseh which was west of Jordan. We wonder how enthusiastic he really was, or like many a member of committees of brethren who are directed to attack other brethren... he maybe secretly disliked this

direction, but succumbed to group pressure. Or perhaps the western half tribe were jealous of the apparently better possession which the eastern half apparently had.

Jos 22:15 They came to the children of Reuben and to the children of Gad and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, to the land of Gilead, and they spoke with them saying-

Gilead was the very area where Jacob and Laban had built a mound of rocks to symbolize their separation from each other, although with Yahweh watching between them (Gen. 31:23,25). It was also the area where Esau came to slay his brother Jacob, but was stopped in his tracks by God, and by Jacob's repentance. Perhaps something like that was going on here. The eastern tribes may well have had something to repent of; and the hypocritical western tribes were acting as Esau rather than Jacob. Perhaps the eastern tribes, despite fighting for their western brethren against the Canaanites, had fallen out with their brethren. And they had built this altar in the spirit in which Jacob and Laban had built their altar in the same area. But division between brethren is not the same as idolatry, in this context. The fact brethren are separated doesn't make one party idolatrous. Gilead had been specifically given to Machir son of Manasseh in Num. 32:40, so it was quite wrong for the eastern tribes to imply this land was unclean (:19), and that the eastern tribes ought to come and live with the western tribes- with such "unity" enforced at sword point! Terrible abuse has been performed by Christians in the name of "unity within Israel", and we see it all prefigured here.

Jos 22:16 Thus says the whole congregation of Yahweh, 'What trespass is this that you have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following Yahweh, in that you have built yourselves an altar, to rebel this day against Yahweh?'

They considered themselves as those on the west of Jordan to be "the whole congregation of Yahweh". They considered geographical issues, and the unwise choices of seven years previously, to have cut off the eastern tribes from Yahweh's congregation. This is typical of the kind of wrong reasoning which goes on within the body of believers to this day; considering that they alone are the body of believers, and reasoning onwards further from that false assumption and perspective. We also note that half of the tribe of Manasseh were also west of Jordan. So by reasoning like this, they were pitting brother against brother. See on :18.

Jos 22:17 Is the iniquity of Peor of little consequence for us, from which we have not cleansed ourselves to this day, although there came a plague on the congregation of Yahweh-

Phinehas is alluding to how he had saved Israel from destruction at that time by destroying the apostates (see on :13). He implies that although he cleansed Israel at the time, they were still unclean from it in that idolatry was still ongoing. But his hypocrisy is in the way that he is ignoring that the idolatry was not simply in the eastern tribes; it was clearly amongst his own western tribes, as indicated by later commentary upon their spiritual state. Defending the fait against perceived possible idolatry can become obsessive- exactly because it appeals to the flesh. Otherwise fairly lax believers eagerly get caught up in a feeding frenzy of judgment

against their own brethren, because it is all a transference onto others of their own weakness and liability to judgment.

Jos 22:18 that you must turn away this day from following Yahweh? It will be, since you rebel today against Yahweh, that tomorrow He will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel-

Their logic is wrong all the way through. They had just reasoned that they alone were the congregation of Israel (see on :16). But now they reason that if those in the congregation east of Jordan sin, then they on the west of Jordan will be punished for it, because all the congregation will suffer together. Yet they have just reasoned that those on the east were not in the congregation of Yahweh. This is the kind of serious error in logic found in nearly all division and aggression within the body of believers today. These ancient records speak so relevantly to our day, for God's word is in this sense a living word.

Jos 22:19 However, if the land of your possession is unclean, then pass over to the land of the possession of Yahweh, in which Yahweh's tabernacle dwells, and take possession among us; but don't rebel against Yahweh, nor rebel against us, in building an altar other than the altar of Yahweh our God-

Clearly the western tribes considered the land east of Jordan to be unclean. They were ignoring the fact God had given the eastern tribes their inheritance there, calling it the "good land", and defining clearly their borders and cities, even asking for cities of refuge and priestly cities there. They were reasoning in a very parochial way. For the land right up to the Euphrates had been promised to them; indeed the majority of the land promised to Abraham was east of Jordan. God had made a concession to their weakness by recalculating "the river" as the Jordan rather than the Euphrates. They were psychologically transferring their perception [that the land east of Jordan was unclean] onto these people. Likewise they equate rebelling "against us" with rebellion "against Yahweh". They were playing God, assuming that anyone not with them was against them and thus against God. It was just this mentality amongst His followers which the Lord rebuked sternly in Lk. 9:50. See on :31.

As we will see on :29, this is very similar to the exaggerated challenge made by Joshua to the hypocritical western tribes in Josh. 24:15 "If it seems evil to you to serve Yahweh...". Joshua was speaking to the western tribes as they had spoken to the eastern tribes- and accusing them of idolatry, as they had [perhaps falsely, but hypocritically] accused the eastern tribes. The western tribes were being made to feel how they had made the eastern tribes feel; and were being reminded of their own idolatry. God likewise works with men today, often confronting those who confront their brethren, and trying to help them perceive their hypocrisy and repent.

Jos 22:20 Didn't Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the devoted thing, causing wrath to fall on all the congregation of Israel? That man didn't perish alone in his iniquity'- Again, Biblical precedent is being used wrongly, in order to justify participation in a feeding

frenzy of judgmentalism. In the same way as Daniel, Isaiah, Ezra, Israel at the time of Achan etc. were reckoned as guilty but were not personally responsible for the sins of others, so the Lord Jesus was reckoned as a sinner on the cross; He was made sin for us, who knew no sin personally (2 Cor. 5:21). He carried our sins by His association with us, prefigured by the way in which Israel's sins were transferred to the animal; but He personally was not a sinner because of His association with us.

This is no evidence for guilt by association. The situation here has been misinterpreted by some to mean that we therefore cannot associate with sinners of the Achan category, lest we become defiled by association with them. But the point is that all the community of believers are in a sense considered at fault because of the failings of some of them. So if there is guilt by association, then it cannot be avoided by not associating with sinful people within the community. For the people of God, the community, is indivisible. We are in it and cannot quit it, if we wish to remain God's people. And in fact the Lord Jesus time and again turned all this around to the opposite- by willingly seeking association with sinners, eating with them, touching the leper etc. He was not thereby condemned, but rather sought to highlight His association with unclean people of God. It was through that willing association that we are saved.

Jos 22:21 Then the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh answered and spoke to the heads of the thousands of Israel-

The style of the record is very slow and deliberate, to focus our attention upon the words spoken, and to perceive for ourselves where truth really lay in this matter.

Jos 22:22 The Mighty One, God, Yahweh, the Mighty One, God, Yahweh, He knows; and Israel shall know if it was in rebellion, or in trespass against Yahweh (don't save us this day)-

The repeated usage of the covenant Name is to show that they were faithful to Yahweh and had not at all turned away to idols; and therefore the harnessing of Dt. 13:12-16 to slay them was quite inappropriate. Their argument in :22,23 seems appropriate to those who are genuinely taken aback by a false accusation of idolatry. They seem to be saying that God knows, and He will judge- and these incensed brethren ought to leave it to Him, and not act for Him. And that is really all we can say to people who are utterly obsessed with finding fault with us and condemning us.

Jos 22:23 He knows whether we have built us an altar to turn away from following Yahweh; or to offer burnt offering or meal offering, or sacrifices of peace offerings-

As discussed on :33, the altar they had built was symbolic and not for actual usage in worship.

Let Yahweh Himself decide-

"Decide" is the word for searching of requiring. The judgment will be the time when God 'requires' of us our behaviour. And yet the Hebrew word is used about our enquiring /

searching to God in prayer now (Gen. 25:22; Ex. 18:15; Dt. 4:29; 12:5; 1 Kings 22:5), as well as His 'requiring' / searching of us at the last day (Dt. 18:19; 23:21; Josh. 22:23; 1 Sam. 20:16; 2 Chron. 24:22; Ez. 3:20; 33:6,8). There is a mutuality between a man and his God. We must keep and *seek* for His commandments and He will *seek* / *search* our hearts in response (1 Chron. 28:8,9- the same original words are used). The wicked don't *seek* for God because they don't think He will *require* their deeds of them; but because He will *require* them, we should *enquire* / *seek* for Him (Ps. 10:4,13,15- the same word occurs three times). We enquire of Him and He enquires of us, both now and in the last day. This entering into 'enquiry' with our God is what goes on in prayer. In it we have a foretaste of judgment to come.

Jos 22:24 if we have not out of concern done this, and for a reason, saying, 'In time to come your children might speak to our children saying, What have you to do with Yahweh, the God of Israel?'

The eastern tribes had already effectively started to say this, by implying that the eastern tribes were living in an unclean land and were not part of the congregation of Yahweh; see on :16,19.

Jos 22:25 For Yahweh has made the Jordan a border between us and you, you children of Reuben and children of Gad. You have no portion in Yahweh'. So your children might make our children cease from fearing Yahweh-

Yahweh had indeed established the Jordan as a border between the tribes of Reuben and Gad. Eastern Manasseh didn't have the Jordan as a border. We note the absolute internal consistency of the records. "No portion" is the term often used of how the Levites had "no portion", no tribal canton allotted to them. The eastern tribes foresaw that the western tribes were reasoning toward a position whereby everything east of the Jordan was not the inheritance of Yahweh; see on :19. By so doing, they were totally overlooking the Abrahamic covenant promise of all the land east of Jordan up to the Euphrates. The western tribes were only harnessing a few scriptures out of context, and were overlooking the overall tenor of scriptural teaching.

Jos 22:26 Therefore we said, 'Let's now prepare to build ourselves an altar, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice-

They stress that like the altar built opposite on the other side of Jordan to commemorate the crossing of Jordan, and like the altar built by Jacob in this place, they intended just a memorial and not an active functioning altar. See on :27.

Jos 22:27 but it will be a witness between us and you, and between our generations after us-

This continues the allusion to the altar made by Jacob and Laban in the same area, as a "witness" of their positions (Gen. 31:48), just as the altar built on the western side of Jordan was likewise intended as a teaching tool and witness (Josh. 4:6,7).

That we may perform the service of Yahweh before Him with our burnt offerings, with our sacrifices and with our peace offerings;’ that your children may not tell our children in time to come, ‘You have no portion in Yahweh’-

So they appear to mean in :26 that they did not then at that time intend to use it, but they would use it if later their descendants were banned from worshipping at the sanctuary to the west of Jordan. The idea would be that the altar was a witness of their intentions, and this is another example of the language of inanimate objects speaking and witnessing. This is not literally true, just as demons don't exist, yet the New Testament uses the language of demons as then understood.

Jos 22:28 Therefore we said, ‘It shall be, when they tell us or our generations this in time to come, that we shall say, Behold the pattern of the altar of Yahweh, which our fathers made, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice-

We note their calm response to monstrous false accusation- that they were already using the altar for idol worship and therefore must be violently destroyed by their brethren. In fact the altar's meaning [at least, as they explained it] was the very opposite of what the ten tribes had willfully misinterpreted it to mean. LXX "Behold the likeness of the altar of the Lord" suggests they intentionally copied the altar before the tabernacle, because they wanted this altar to be used for sacrifice if they were denied access to that in the sanctuary west of Jordan.

But it is a witness between us and you’-

See on :27.

Jos 22:29 Far be it from us that we should rebel against Yahweh, thus turning away this day from following Yahweh to build an altar for burnt offering, for meal offering, or for sacrifice, in competition with the altar of Yahweh our God that is before His tabernacle!-

The accusation was that they had rebelled against Yahweh (:16,18,19). The western tribes claimed they had evidence for this, and they use the words of Joshua himself found in Num. 14:9 "Only don't rebel against Yahweh". But that verse continues: "Neither fear the people of the land; for they are bread for us. Their defence is removed from over them, and Yahweh is with us. Don't fear them". But the western tribes did fear the Canaanites, and did not drive them out of their territories. So again we see how they justified their jealousy of the eastern tribes by grabbing half of a Bible verse out of context. The rest of that verse shows that it was they who were the rebels against Yahweh. Indeed all Israel were rebellious against Yahweh from the day He knew them (Dt. 9:24), and Nehemiah 9:26 specifically states that after entering the land, they "were disobedient and rebelled against You". Josh. 24:23 is specific that there was idolatry going on amongst the western tribes at this time, so their attempt to exterminate the eastern tribes for unproven accusations of idolatry is to be seen as hypocritical.

These are pretty much the words of the western tribes in Josh. 24:16. The western tribes were hypocritical in implying that they were so totally devoted to Yahweh alone that they had to slay their eastern brethren because of their possible idolatry. In Josh. 24, they are effectively accused of idolatry by Joshua in the same way as they accused the eastern tribes of it. And

they are answering in the same way- even though they were guilty of idolatry themselves, and needed to "put away" their idols (Josh. 24:14). Phinehas (:30) is revealed here as somewhat hypocritical, for surely he was aware of the situation in Israel. For Joshua himself clearly knew that idolatry was widespread amongst them, as his speech in Josh. 24 makes clear.

Jos 22:30 When Phinehas the priest, and the princes of the congregation, even the heads of the thousands of Israel that were with him, heard the words that the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the children of Manasseh spoke, it pleased them well-

What "pleased" or 'was good in the eyes of' the elders was likewise 'good in the eyes of' the peoples of the western tribes (s.w. :33). Major decisions about the fate of many people, going to war or not, were based upon what seemed good in the eyes of 11 men. I suggest on :32 that there must have been other issues going on here beneath the surface.

Jos 22:31 Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said to the children of Reuben, to the children of Gad, and to the children of Manasseh, Today we know that Yahweh is in the midst of us, because you have not committed this trespass against Yahweh. Now you have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of Yahweh-

Yahweh's hand was not against the tribes east of Jordan. The hand that was against them was the hand of the western tribes, motivated by personal dislike and jealousy. Again they make the mistake of playing God, assuming that their positions are God's; see on :19. And Phinehas offers no apology for his wrong assumption that the altar was idolatrous; he seeks to save face by implying they had in fact repented, and thereby saved the rest of Israel from being punished by Yahweh. Again we note the contradiction in logic. The western tribes had just reasoned that they alone were the congregation of Israel (see on :16). But now they reason that if those in the congregation east of Jordan sin, then they on the west of Jordan will be punished for it, because all the congregation will suffer together. Yet they have just claimed that those on the east were not in the congregation of Yahweh.

Jos 22:32 Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and the princes, returned from the children of Reuben, and from the children of Gad, out of the land of Gilead, to the land of Canaan, to the children of Israel, and brought them word again-

We see here the fickleness of people. One moment they were intent on destroying their brethren, claiming to have researched the matter and found them guilt of idolatry. And now they are all "pleased" with the words of the men of the eastern tribes. Given the massive problem with idolatry throughout Israel at this time, one suspects that some unrecorded deal was cut between the two sides, and that there were ulterior motives for wanting to fight against the eastern tribes.

Jos 22:33 The thing pleased the children of Israel; and the children of Israel blessed God, and spoke no more of going up to destroy in warfare the land in which the children of Reuben and the children of Gad lived-

Israelites from the western tribes were later to be persecuted for their faithlessness and

crossed the Jordan into the territory of Gad (1 Sam. 13:7). This is fair commentary upon the situation in Josh. 22:19,25, where the Israelites accused Gad of falling away from Yahweh worship, and the people of Gad explained that they feared that the other Israelites would make the Jordan a boundary which they would use to exclude them from Yahweh worship. All these fears and speculations about the future are here shown to be inappropriate. Actually the very opposite worked out. And this is the problem with so many divisions between brethren; they are based upon fears of possible futures, and the passage of time often shows the opposite working out.

Jos 22:34 The children of Reuben and the children of Gad named the altar 'A Witness Between Us that Yahweh is God'-

The implication of course was that "We will serve Yahweh alone". If Yahweh is God, which the Bible states on about every page of the Old Testament in the phrase "Yahweh God", then it is axiomatic that we are to serve Him with unique loyalty.

JOSHUA CHAPTER 23

Jos 23:1 It happened after many days, when Yahweh had given rest to Israel from their enemies all around and Joshua was old and well advanced in years-

Joshua didn't give the people rest (Heb. 4:8); although he potentially enabled it (Josh. 22:4). He failed to fulfil the potential of Josh. 1:13-15- that *he* would lead the people to "rest". The Messianic Kingdom could, perhaps, have come through Joshua-Jesus; but Israel would not. And so his work was rescheduled and reapplied to the Lord Jesus, who does give "rest" to the true people of God (Heb. 4:8). See on Josh. 21:43,44; 23:4; 24:14,23.

Jos 23:2 that Joshua called for all Israel, for their elders, their heads, their judges and for their officers and said to them, I am old and well advanced in years-

He invited "all Israel", but it seems from :4 that only those west of Jordan came. Already the unwisdom of settlement to the east of Jordan was apparent. They put secular advantage before spiritual fellowship, and suffered for it.

Jos 23:3 You have seen all that Yahweh your God has done to all these nations because of you; for it is Yahweh your God who has fought for you-

Nehemiah 9:26 specifically states that after entering the land, they "were disobedient and rebelled against You". Given the very quick descent into idolatry we read of in Judges, it is clear that Yahweh fought for Israel because of Joshua's faith and His loving grace towards them- and not because of their spirituality.

Jos 23:4 Behold, I have allotted to you these nations that remain to be an inheritance for your tribes, from the Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, even to the great sea toward the going down of the sun-

The Lord Jesus may allude here in saying that He has appointed unto us a Kingdom (LK. 22:29). Joshua enabled the Kingdom, overcame all obstacles to it, and appointed it to Israel. But he couldn't drag them in to possess it and experience it, and neither will the Lord Jesus do. Joshua seems here to be addressing the western tribes- for he speaks of inheritance from the Jordan to the Mediterranean. See on :2.

Jos 23:5 Yahweh your God will thrust them out from before you, and drive them from out of your sight. You shall possess their land, as Yahweh your God spoke to you-

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land

(Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Jos 23:6 Therefore be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that you not turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left-

See on Josh. 1:7,8. Because God gave them the land of Canaan, a land for which they did not labour, didn't do any 'work' to receive, but were given because "You did a favour unto them" (Ps. 44:3)- *therefore* they were to keep the law (Dt. 26:15,16; 29:8,9; Josh. 23:5,6). David said that he loved keeping the law *because* God's testimony to him was so miraculous (Ps. 119:129 Heb.). There is an awesomeness to God's grace in all this. Hence the paradox of Ex. 20:20: "Fear not... that the fear of God may be before your faces". We are not to fear Him, for such perfect love casts out fear... yet it is exactly because of the wonder of all this that we live life in some fear / awe of misusing and abusing that grace.

As Joshua had been told to be strong and of good courage in order to take the land, so he had to tell others (Josh. 10:25). As God charged him to be courageous and obedient to the book of the Law, so Joshua on his deathbed charged his people (Josh. 1:7,8 cp. 23:6). Joshua had faithfully followed, and now he became the leader who was to be faithfully followed.

Jos 23:7 that you not mingle with these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow down yourselves to them-

Yahweh repeatedly forbade His people to mention the name of other gods. In the Ancient Near East, all conflict between peoples and nations was seen as conflict between gods. The role of prophets or priests on either side was to bring curses upon the other gods. And so they repeated the names of the other gods in incantations supposed to bring curses upon those gods. This however is forbidden to God's people. They instead were to focus upon the Name of their God Yahweh. And we see in this a pattern for ourselves; to focus upon the ultimate truth and truths of the one true God, and not be caught up in wishing cursing upon those who believe otherwise. To focus upon the positive, which is the source of all victory, rather than going on the defensive against other views by cursing them.

'Don't even make mention of their gods' is alluded to in Eph. 5:3; Paul understands idolatry in our age as referring to the perversions and pleasures of the world around us.

Josh. 23:7 made a concession regarding the nations left in the land. The ideal standard was to destroy them. But the concession was made that they should not socialize with them or worship their gods. But inevitably they did mix with those nations and learned their religions. Likewise the early Jewish Christians were allowed to keep the Mosaic law (in concessions to human weakness like that of Acts 15), but this really implied a lack of faith in Christ's

sacrifice, with the result that many of them seem to have drifted back to Judaism. Concessions to human weakness [we think of God allowing them to have a human king and a temple, which were not His will, and His permission for the eastern tribes to settle far from His sanctuary] are made because God wants by all means to continue relationship with us; but they actually make the path to relationship with Him more difficult.

Jos 23:8 but hold fast to Yahweh your God, as you have done to this day-

We wonder whether this was really true. "Hold fast" is the word for "cleave" used of marriage (Gen. 2:24). Israel's faithfulness to God's covenant is likened to marital faithfulness. Their associations with other gods were therefore adultery. It rather seems that Joshua's faith had led to blessing for the people. For they very soon turned after the gods of the land. I would consider the book of Joshua to have largely been written by Joshua, under Divine inspiration, although edited [again under Divine inspiration] for the exiles. And the book of Judges likewise. For the exiles too were set to reestablish God's Kingdom in the land and to inherit it again as the Israelites first did. The phrase "to this day" occurs several times in Joshua / Judges, and appears to have different points of historical reference (Josh. 4:9; 5:9; 6:25; 7:26; 8:28,29; 9:27; 10:27; 13:13; 14:14; 15:63; 16:10; 22:3; 23:8,9; Jud. 1:26; 6:24; 10:4; 15:19; 18:12). I would explain this by saying that the book was edited a number of times and the remains of those edits remain in the text. For God's word is living and made relevant by Him to every generation.

Jos 23:9 For Yahweh has driven great and strong nations out from before you. But as for you, no man has stood before you to this day-

And yet even at this time, Israel felt the nations to be too strong for them (Jud. 1:1); despite every evidence that they would win if they tried to fight them. Likewise the Lord Jesus, the greater Joshua, has won every victory, and therefore anything that appears an obstacle between us and possession of the Kingdom is going to soon crumble. If we fight it. But like Israel, we tend to not even seriously try.

Jos 23:10 One man of you shall chase a thousand; for it is Yahweh your God who fights for you, as He spoke to you-

Joshua is recalling the reversal at Ai, when Israel had been chased by their enemies for disobedience to the covenant. And likewise he recalls how it was God who had fought for Israel during the multiple victories against the Canaanites.

Samson is to be read as a symbol of Israel: "Be therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses... that you come not among these nations, these that remain among you (true in Samson's time)...but cleave unto the Lord your God... no man has been able to stand before you (this was Samson)... one man of you shall chase a thousand (cp. Jud. 15:16): for the Lord your God, He it is that fights for you (this was exactly true of Samson in Jud. 15:18)... take good heed unto yourselves... else if you do at all go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and

make marriages with them (as Samson did), and go in unto them, and they to you (cp. Jud. 15:1; 16:, where Samson went in to the Philistine women): know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you (cp. 16:20); but they shall be snares and traps unto you (Delilah!)... and thorns in your eyes, until you perish" (Josh. 23:6-13). This passage would associate Samson's God-given strength and victory over the Philistines with his obedience to God's word.

Jos 23:11 Take good heed therefore to yourselves, that you love Yahweh your God- Yahweh was to be loved with all the heart, soul and mind (Dt. 6:5). This is understood by Joshua as meaning that those who loved Yahweh would not "mix with" and intermarry with the nations and accept their gods (Josh. 23:11,12,16). "Love" for God was not therefore a feeling; Joshua said that they must "take good heed therefore to yourselves, that you love Yahweh" (Josh. 23:11). This is the love of conscious direction of the mind, the love which is a choice rather than an emotion.

Jos 23:12 But if you do at all mix with and hold fast to the remnant of these nations, even these who remain among you, and make marriages with them, and go in to them and they to you-

In this context of marriage out of the Faith, we read that God will destroy "him that hates Him" (Dt. 7:2-11), and repay him to his face. On the other hand, not marrying Gentiles was part of *loving* God (Josh. 23:11,12). Joshua's warning that those who married the surrounding tribes would find them "a snare and a trap for you... thorns in your eyes" (Josh. 23:12,13 RSV) was fulfilled in Samson being tied up and blinded by Delilah; and yet it also had an element of fulfillment with his first wife. The similarity is such as to suggest that Samson's marriage out of the Truth was definitely wrong because it was a fulfillment of the words of Josh. 23. But God worked through it, so eager is He to work with less than ideal choices of His children.

Jos 23:13 know for a certainty that Yahweh your God will no longer drive these nations from out of your sight; but they shall be a snare and a trap to you, a scourge in your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good land which Yahweh your God has given you-

This is explicit that it was because of marriage out of the faith that Israel lost their inheritance in the Kingdom, and the Gentile nations there remained a thorn in their eyes. Because of the seriousness of it, the prohibitions against intermarriage are often accompanied with an unmistakable threat of judgment: "The Lord will cut off the man that doeth this" (Mal. 2:11); "destroy them... (the Lord) will not be slack...he will repay him to his face" (Dt. 7:2,10); "know for a certainty... that God will expel you from the land" if you intermarry (Josh. 23:12,13); "him shall God destroy" (2 Co. 6:14-16 cp. 1 Cor. 3:13). If we deny our covenant with God by marrying into the world, we have effectively cut ourselves off from Him.

We are to be renewed in knowledge, finding full assurance of our salvation in *understanding* (Col. 2:2; 3:10). The Hebrew word for “understanding” is also that for “certainty”- e.g. Josh. 23:13 “Know for a *certainty*...” [s.w. “understanding”]. To understand is to be sure, in God’s language. Understanding, “being filled with the knowledge of his will”, *does* have a place in determining our daily walk in Christ. What and how we understand, and thereby what we believe, *does* therefore matter.

Jos 23:14 Behold, today I am going the way of all the earth. You know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which Yahweh your God spoke concerning you. All have happened to you, not one thing has failed of it-

Literally, 'not a word from all the good word'. Every word of promise concerning every town, field, cattle drive and suburb didn't fail. God's prophecies do not fail of themselves; it is human weakness which fails to realize the prophetic potential. Indeed as concluded in Josh. 24:18 "Yahweh drove out from before us all the peoples". But Israel failed to make good on that, for they didn't drive out all the peoples. This all speaks of the tragic wasted potential which there is in all that the Lord Jesus achieved. He won the victories over every aspect of sin, every obstacle between us and possessing the Kingdom. But we are slow and lazy to believe and act upon that. See on Josh. 24:15.

Jos 23:15 It shall happen that as all the good things have come on you of which Yahweh your God spoke to you, so Yahweh will bring on you all the evil things until He has destroyed you from off this good land which Yahweh your God has given you-

Joshua alludes to how they had read the blessings and cursings at mount Ebal. As it happened, Israel did worship other gods consistently. And yet it took centuries before God removed them from the land. His patient grace was wonderful. Likewise the experience of "good things" was by God's grace, giving the rewards for obedience to those who were disobedient. Much of it was achieved by Joshua, and this, it seems, was counted to the people.

Jos 23:16 if you disobey the covenant of Yahweh your God which He commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down yourselves to them. Then the anger of Yahweh will be kindled against you, and you will perish quickly from off the good land which He has given to you-

Joshua is making the same point time and again. He obviously sensed the tendency towards idolatry, which makes the apparent zeal of the western tribes to destroy the eastern tribes in Josh. 22 so deeply hypocritical.

JOSHUA CHAPTER 24

Jos 24:1 Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and called for the elders of Israel, for their heads, their judges and their officers; and they presented themselves before God-

"Before God" means before Joshua or before the tabernacle. This is a major theme in the Bible- that the representative of a person or entity is spoken of as being that person. Understanding this helps us easily understand the verses wrested to support the mistaken doctrine of the Trinity.

Jos 24:2 Joshua said to all the people, Thus says Yahweh the God of Israel, 'Your fathers lived of old time beyond the River, even Terah the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor: and they served other gods-

The meanings of Abraham's immediate ancestors all have associations with idolatry, confirming the note here that Abram and his ancestors were idolaters. Out of that background, God chose a man who had the potential to be different. Another reading of "Terah" is that it means "One who tarries / remains", which would fit with his remaining in Haran and not going further towards Canaan.

Jos 24:3 I took your father Abraham from beyond the River, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac-

Note that God took Abram, when Abram had been asked to leave of his own volition. He didn't do this, and so God as it were muscled in and dragged him out. God made him obedient to the call. Gen. 20:13 LXX has "when God brought me forth out of the house of my father"; we see the emphasis upon God bringing him out to separation from his relatives, rather than his obedience to the call to do so. By saying this, he would be growing closer to appreciating grace; that God caused him to be obedient when he of himself was not. This is the same work of the Spirit which continues in our days. The Gentile believers are in this sense 'made obedient' by the Spirit's work (Rom. 15:18; 1 Pet. 1:2). Truly our salvation is not of works of obedience, lest any man should boast (Eph. 2:9).

Our own calling out of this world is likewise a matter of God's grace; He wishes to save us, and leads us out of situations and into new ones, when we ourselves ought to have made the moves of our own volition. He makes us wander from our father's house (Gen. 20:13). This is all part of the "blessing" to Abraham, which involves turning us away from sin (Acts 3:25,26). God was the one who brought about Abraham's obedience. "From thence [Haran]... God removed him into (Canaan)" (Acts 7:4 R.V.).

Jos 24:4 I gave to Isaac Jacob and Esau. I gave to Esau Mount Seir, to possess it. Jacob and his children went down into Egypt-

We note the stress is on how Isaac was given children, the seed; whereas Esau was given possessions. This is a difference between the believer and the world. Esau as the direct grandson of Abraham could have had the promises of inheritance of the ertz relevant to him; but he chose to go out of that land. Mount Seir was just outside the promised land (Josh.

15:10). And so God accepted that and gave him an inheritance in Seir, although without the promises of eternal inheritance and of the saviour seed. He wanted a possession immediately in this life, and God gave Esau what he really wanted. And this is part of a big theme, both in the Bible and in life- that we get what we truly want. And so what is so critical is a spiritual mind that wants the things of the Kingdom above all.

Jos 24:5 I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt according to that which I did in its midst: and afterward I brought you out-

The idea is that this was all done by God with a view to bringing His people into Canaan, and their serving Him exclusively, with no worship of other gods. The plaguing of Egypt is mentioned in this context; for the plagues were each one targeting a specific idol (Ex. 12:12). And it seems from Josh. 24:14 that Israel had taken those gods with them, and were worshipping the very idols which Yahweh had plagued. This points up the hypocrisy of the western tribes in appearing so hyper zealous to destroy the eastern tribes because of their suspected, although unproven, idolatry.

Jos 24:6 I brought your fathers out of Egypt: and you came to the sea. The Egyptians pursued after your fathers with chariots and with horsemen to the Red Sea-

They were brought out of Egypt just as Abraham was "taken" from Ur (see on :3). This was all by grace. Although the pursuit of Israel by the Egyptians was a historical act at a specific time, caused by God's direct action upon the hearts of the Egyptians (Ex. 14:8), the pursuit and their destruction is described as ongoing "to this day" (Dt. 11:4). God's word and His actions according to that word are somehow alive to this day. This is the unique nature of Biblical history. All the incidents within it speak to us of later generations. And so in Josh. 24:6 and often, Israel are bidden understand their history as speaking directly to them, to perceive God's grace to them in history, and respond now. Ps. 114:5,6 RV describes the Red Sea as even now fleeing before God's people. And thus because of the records of God's past activities, we should be motivated in our decisions now. Josh. 24:13,14 reminds Israel of the record of their past history with God, and then on this basis exhorts them: "Now therefore fear the Lord and serve Him..." .

This Divine speech relayed by Joshua is clearly repeating the argument and some phrases from Dt. 11:2-9, which climaxes in the appeal to not serve idols but obey Yahweh exclusively. This was to be the power of history in human life. Yet human nature has a tendency to declare history as bunk, reflecting our preference to live for the immediate present and disregard the past.

Jos 24:7 When they cried out to Yahweh, He put darkness between you and the Egyptians and brought the sea on them, and covered them; and your eyes saw what I did in Egypt; and you lived in the wilderness many days-

Darkness was believed to be somehow demonic and under the control of the gods. But those gods didn't exist, and therefore they should not worship them. For the darkness was controlled by God. "Your eyes saw..." could suggest that Joshua was particularly addressing the generation who were under 20 when they had left Egypt. But still they were worshipping

the idols of Egypt (:14), and at least one of them was the god of darkness, whom Yahweh had targetted in the plague of darkness, and shown His supremacy over at the Red Sea crossing.

Jos 24:8 I brought you into the land of the Amorites that lived beyond the Jordan; and they fought with you; and I gave them into your hand. You possessed their land; and I destroyed them from before you-

This conflict had been intended as a foretaste of their far larger scale victories against the Canaanites, and possession of Canaan. God gently leads us through one experience to prepare us for the next, larger one. AV "That you might possess their land". "Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Jos 24:9 Then Balak the son of Zippor king of Moab arose and fought against Israel. He sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you-

This conflict with Balak, and their salvation from him and Balaam by grace, had been intended as a foretaste of their far larger scale victories against the Canaanites, and possession of Canaan. God gently leads us through one experience to prepare us for the next, larger one.

Jos 24:10 but I would not listen to Balaam; therefore he blessed you still. So I delivered you out of his hand-

Balaam, in his heart, didn't want to bless Israel; he wanted to curse them so he could get his hands on the riches Balak promised him if he did so. Balaam knew if God had told him to bless Israel, there was no way of changing things. But God says that He refused to hear Balaam's prayer to curse Israel. It seems that Yahweh read Balaam's latent, unexpressed desires as prayer to Him. It is our dominant desire which is read as prayer. For otherwise the efficacy of prayer would be related to how good we are at verbalizing things, and not everyone is good at that. Our innermost desires are read as prayer; hence Elijah was understood as praying *against* Israel in his heart, and God refused to hear that too (Rom. 11:2). There is another example of this kind of thing in :11.

Jos 24:11 You went over the Jordan and came to Jericho. The men of Jericho fought against you, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Girgashite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite; and I delivered them into your hand-

There is no record of the men of Jericho fighting against Israel; perhaps their intention to do so was read by God as if they had done it. Shutting the gates against Israel and not submitting to the call to repentance which was implicit in the jubilee trumpet blasts was perhaps read as actively resisting Israel. For passivity can also be a form of 'fighting against' in aggression. This continues the theme discussed on :10, that internal attitudes are read by God as far more than that.

We note there are typically seven nations listed as dwelling in the land, as here. This sets up the basis for understanding the 'kings of the earth / land' in later Biblical prophecy as referring to leaders within the *eretz* promised to Abraham.

Jos 24:12 I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out from before you, even the two kings of the Amorites-

The fear amongst the Canaanites prior to Israel's approach and the weakness of those nations was due to "the hornet" being sent before Israel (Dt. 7:20; Josh. 24:12); it would seem that this is a reference to the Angels softening up the Canaanite tribes, perhaps through inciting the Egyptians to raid them and ruin the economy. And specifically, the two kings of the Amorites attacking the other Canaanites. "The hornet" could also refer to the Phoenician raiders, who had hornets as totems; they too weakened Canaan before the Israelites arrived, and would have been manipulated to do so by an Angel. In Ex. 23:27 God says He will "send My fear before you, and will destroy all the people to whom you shall come". Jacob likens his guardian Angel to "the God before whom my fathers walked" (Gen. 48:16), who is called "the fear of Isaac" (Gen. 31:42,53) when Jacob describes the personal presence of God in his life. So the "fear of God" is associated with an Angel; God sent His fear, an Angel, before Israel into Canaan, as promised explicitly in Ex. 23. "The hornet" could have referred to literal hornets, used by God to destroy the nations of Canaan. For they were indeed a problem in the land; "Zorah" in Judah means "place of hornets". But I prefer the idea that the Angel manipulated Gentile nations to soften up the Canaanites before Israel's arrival. The same figure is found in Is. 7:18, where God whistled for the "fly that is in Egypt and the bee that is in Assyria". We note that this was all built in to God's wider plan; for had Israel entered Canaan 40 years before they did, they would've found the Canaanites that much stronger than they were after "the hornet" had weakened them for 40 years. It's as if God recalculated the program according to the great weakness of Israel. They didn't enter when they could have done, and so He used the period of their wilderness wanderings to make their entrance to the land that much easier than it would otherwise have been.

Not with your sword, nor with your bow-

"Bow" and "sword" often occur together as almost an idiom for human strength (Gen.48:22; Josh. 24:12; 2 Kings 6:22; 1 Ch. 5:18; Hos. 1:7). Right at the very end of Jacob's life, he lets

slip a comment which would seem more appropriate to his earlier life: "Shechem... which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with *my* sword and with *my* bow" (Gen. 48:22). The wrongness of this attitude seems to be alluded to in Josh. 24:12, which says that God drove out the tribes "but not with your sword, neither with your bow". And Ps. 44:3,6 also: "They got not the land in possession by their own sword... I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me". So Jacob, right at the end of his life, still hadn't completely overcome that besetting weakness of self-reliance. This is, of course, a dangerous road to go down. In no way can we be complacent about our urgent need for spiritual growth. But on the other hand, we will never reach the stature of Christ without righteousness being imputed to us.

Jos 24:13 I gave you a land whereon you had not laboured-

The spies' comment that not all the people needed to "toil" or "labour" to capture Ai betrays a wrong idea that victory was through their labour, rather than God's grace (Josh. 7:3). And so Josh. 24:13 uses the word in saying that Israel were given a land for which they did not "labour" (s.w.). They were taught through Achan's sin that they were not defeating the Canaanites by their strength, but by God's undeserved grace. Their inheritance of the Kingdom was not according to works.

And cities which you didn't build, and you live in them. You eat of vineyards and olive groves which you didn't plant-

This continues the repeated reminder that they had been shown grace and a place in the Kingdom not according to works. This emphasis upon grace now leads up to the appeal to quit any other gods (:14)- because Yahweh alone is the God of grace. The other gods had no concept of this; it was unique to Yahweh. And true grace is likewise the unique feature of true Christianity.

Jonah 2:8 reflects Jonah's understanding of this: "Those who regard lying vanities forsake their own mercy". This is a profound truth; true grace ["mercy" is *hesed*] and salvation is only found in Yahweh the God of Israel. To forsake Him is to forsake our own access to mercy and grace. Jonah was surely reflecting upon how the sailors had begged their idols and gods for salvation, and not found it. Only Yahweh had provided such saving grace, both to them and to Jonah. This reflection was surely to motivate Jonah to now go and try to persuade the Ninevites of Yahweh's grace. Jonah is constantly quoting from the Psalms, and here he may have in mind Ps. 31:6: "I have hated them that regard lying vanities". But now Jonah doesn't hate the idolaters personally, but rather perceives the tragedy of the fact that they are rejecting their own access to Yahweh's grace. Yahweh is all about mercy, or grace; again, Ps. 59:17 "the God of my mercy" is in mind. But we preclude His grace if we trust in the lying vanities of this world.

Jos 24:14 Now therefore fear Yahweh, and serve Him in sincerity and in truth-

God's living word places us in their position; for the appeal to serve Him in "sincerity and in truth" applies to us (1 Cor. 5:8; 2 Cor. 1:12; 2:17).

Put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve Yahweh-

See on :13. Compare Joshua's earlier over positive statements. Now it seems he came to a final sense of realism about sin, obedience and Israel's failure. They had taken the idols of Egypt with them (Ez. 20:6-8 also mentions this), even though God had judged those idols (:5). They worshipped that which had afflicted them, and they were to continue worshipping the idols of their enemies. Acts 7:43 speaks of them carrying another tabernacle with them through the wilderness, and the star of Remphan along with the standards of the tribes. This is the idiocy of idol worship; but when it comes to spiritual matters, we act without attention to even basic logic.

Jos 24:15 If it seems evil to you to serve Yahweh-

As we will see on :16, this is very similar to the exaggerated challenge made by the hypocritical western tribes to the eastern tribes in Josh. 22:19 "However, if the land of your possession is unclean, then pass over to the land of the possession of Yahweh". Joshua was speaking to the western tribes as they had spoken to the eastern tribes- and accusing them of idolatry, as they had [perhaps falsely, but hypocritically] accused the eastern tribes. The western tribes were being made to feel how they had made the eastern tribes feel; and were being reminded of their own idolatry. God likewise works with men today, often confronting those who confront their brethren, and trying to help them perceive their hypocrisy and repent.

Choose this day whom you will serve-

Elijah uses the same logic in 1 Kings 18:21, offering Israel an 'all or nothing' choice between total devotion to Yahweh, and idolatry.

Whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell-

Joshua asks them to make two choices. Firstly, to decide whether they want to serve Yahweh exclusively, and any other choice apart from that would be "evil". And then, if they did choose other gods, they were to decide which of them they preferred, and serve them exclusively- either the gods of Abraham's family, or those of the land of Canaan. This second choice was surely sarcastic, but it was inviting them to see the seriousness of the situation. Israel however were to be characterized by serving many gods of many nations, whereas as the prophets point out, a nation usually only served one set of gods and didn't change their gods unless they were forced to by domination by other nations. But Israel were, as Hosea says, like a sexually addicted woman, ever seeking new religious experiences. See on :19.

As for me and my house, we will serve Yahweh-

Joshua perhaps feels that he and his family alone have chosen to exclusively serve Yahweh. In the context of his argument in this verse, any other choice apart from total devotion to Yahweh is "evil". This is the logic of total commitment to the things of Yahweh. Joshua appears to be alluding to Gen. 18:19, as if raising a family devoted to Yahweh is the sign of being a true seed of Abraham. I will note on :19 that as in :15, Joshua almost encourages

Israel not to try serving Yahweh whilst worshipping idols; and is perhaps implying that God's purpose with His people can continue through him and his family, as God had once offered to do with Moses.

Jos 24:16 The people answered, Far be it from us that we should forsake Yahweh to serve other gods-

These are pretty much the words of the eastern tribes in Josh. 22:29 (see on :15). The western tribes were hypocritical in implying that they were so totally devoted to Yahweh alone that they had to slay their eastern brethren because of their possible idolatry. They are effectively accused of idolatry by Joshua in the same way as they accused the eastern tribes of it. And they are answering in the same way- even though they were guilty of idolatry themselves, and needed to "put away" their idols (Josh. 24:14).

Jos 24:17 for it is Yahweh our God who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and who did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way in which we went, and among all the peoples through the midst of whom we passed-

The people repeat the words of Joshua, as if they assent to all he has said, and recognize Yahweh's grace and care toward them. And yet there is no evidence that they actually quit their idols, as demanded in :14. We expect and hope to read that they offered up their idols to Joshua and he destroyed them. But nothing like that happens; there is just an intellectual assent to being Yahweh worshippers, and an acceptance of His power in history. But they failed to translate that into present reality. And so it can easily be, as week by week God's people sing words and assent to such statements; and yet keep their idols.

Jos 24:18 Yahweh drove out from before us all the peoples, even the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve Yahweh; for He is our God-

See on :18. They insist that Yahweh "is our God"; not "will be". They are arguing that Yahweh has always been their God and still is, and by implication, they have not wickedly departed from him, and are all set to continue with Him. They seem to be saying that they believe in His existence and in His historical actions for His people, but we expect to read a heartfelt repentance in response to the demand in :14 that they quit their idols. But that is not forthcoming. They refuse to engage with Joshua's accusation against them. What they say is disappointing for what it doesn't say. Their words therefore become nothing but a cultural and historical acceptance of "Yahweh", whilst refusing to engage with His demands upon His people. It was mere religion, and not spirituality.

Jos 24:19 Joshua said to the people, You can't serve Yahweh-

The Lord Jesus alludes to this in Mt. 5:24, warning His followers that they "cannot serve" God and mammon. He thereby interprets idols as "mammon", wealth and the good life. We will read in :31 that they did "serve Yahweh", but Joshua here says that they could not do so acceptably, unless they ditched their idols. Which they didn't. The people understood serving

Yahweh as doing the rituals of His religion, whereas Joshua understood it as serving Him exclusively with no place in their hearts for any idolatry.

For He is a holy God. He is a jealous God. He will not forgive your disobedience nor your sins-

As in :15, Joshua almost seems to be encouraging them to devote themselves to their idols, and to stop claiming to be Yahweh's servants. This presumably was because he understood the principle that knowledge brings responsibility. They would be terribly punished if they continued to claim to serve Him and yet served idols; it were better for them in the long term to accept how they were, and to leave Him. Joshua seems to imply in :15 that God's purpose with His people can continue through him and his family, as God had once offered to do with Moses.

Joshua alludes to the words of warning to Israel in Ex. 23:21. The jealousy of God is a natural result of the depth of His love and unique commitment to His people, as the prophets often state. Israel's adultery was going to provoke His jealousy and anger with them. And yet although the things stated here about God are absolutely true on one level, the passages which speak of God as the betrayed lover (Jer. 2, Ez. 16,23 and all Hosea) reveal that *despite this*, He so loves Israel that He wants to save them and love them all the same. This is the inexplicable paradox of God's love for His people.

Jos 24:20 If you forsake Yahweh and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you evil and consume you, after He has done you good-

As discussed on :19, this was true, and yet God's love was such that He ever sought their return, and in wrath He remembered amazing mercy. Joshua also states things in rather too simple terms here, as if they would be consumed if they were to serve other gods. The reality was that they were serving foreign gods then at that time, just as they had in Egypt and throughout the wilderness journeys (:14). And still God had given them the Kingdom, and amazing victories against their enemies. He did eventually turn and consume them (Is. 63:10). "After He has done you good" was a reminder that no matter how much blessing they had received at that point, it is never a case of 'once saved always saved'. Despite all that, He could still destroy them.

Jos 24:21 The people said to Joshua, No, but we will serve Yahweh-

We expect to read a heartfelt repentance in response to the demand in :14 that they quit their idols. But that is not forthcoming; there is no word of repentance or regret, no admission of wrongdoing. They refuse to engage with Joshua's accusation against them. What they say is disappointing for what it doesn't say. Their words therefore become nothing but a cultural and historical acceptance of "Yahweh", whilst refusing to engage with His demands upon His people. It was mere religion, and not spirituality.

Jos 24:22 Joshua said to the people, You are witnesses against yourselves that you yourselves have chosen Yahweh, to serve Him. They said, We are witnesses-

"You have chosen Yahweh" in the context means that out of the range of gods in their possession, they had chosen Yahweh. This is why Joshua goes on :23 to beg them therefore to put away their idols. "Witnesses against yourselves" suggests Joshua was confident, perhaps by Divine revelation, that they would not be uniquely loyal to Yahweh, and would suffer for it. There would be a future day of judgment, and they would be the witnesses called up to testify against them.

Jos 24:23 Now therefore put away the foreign gods which are among you-

See on :22. This is specific that there was idolatry going on amongst the western tribes at this time, so their attempt to exterminate the eastern tribes for unproven accusations of idolatry is to be seen as hypocritical (Josh. 22).

And incline your heart to Yahweh, the God of Israel-

This shows that the essence of idolatry, as well as service of God, is the heart. They were asked to make a conscious mental effort to incline their hearts to God, but Solomon prays that God will do this to His people (1 Kings 8:58 s.w.). God is capable of working directly on the human heart and we can ask for His Holy Spirit to effect this; to give us a heart for Him, to incline our hearts to Him. And yet the same phrase is used of how Solomon's wives inclined his heart to idols (1 Kings 11:2,4,9). Although God will work upon our hearts and deepest psychology, He will not force us, and will allow us to allow others to also incline our hearts away from Him.

Jos 24:24 The people said to Joshua, We will serve Yahweh our God, and we will listen to His voice-

Again, we are disappointed by their lack of engagement with the call to put away their gods (:14,23). We expect to read their words of repentance, and pulling out their idols and burning them. But they instead just state that they will serve Yahweh and respect His word. This can be what His people say today, in the words of songs sung, liturgies recited, and loyalty to the church proclaimed. Whilst we are totally refusing to engage with the call to quit our idolatry.

Jos 24:25 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem-

The covenant on Sinai (Ex. 19:20) was reaffirmed in the plains of Moab (Dt. 29:1) and on Joshua's death (Josh. 24:25), and was to be reaffirmed every seven years (Dt. 31:9-11,25,26). It is this reaffirmation of covenant relationship which we make in the breaking of bread service.

Jos 24:26 Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a great stone, and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of Yahweh-

The oak in Shechem (:1) was that of Gen. 35:4, at which the sons of Jacob / Israel had reaffirmed their covenant with God and had buried their idols. We eagerly hope to read that Israel likewise buried their idols there. But there is no word of that. They reaffirm the

covenant, but don't ditch their idols. And this has poignant warning for we who regularly reaffirm the covenant through the breaking of bread service. The question is, have we buried our idols, or are we just reaffirming a covenant in words only?

Jos 24:27 Joshua said to all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us; for it has heard all the words of Yahweh which He spoke to us. It shall be therefore a witness against you, lest you deny your God-

Some of the Bible's language refers to pagan superstitions which are evidently untrue; thus stones listen (Josh. 24:27), trees talk (Jud. 9:8-15), corpses speak (Is. 14:9-11). These ideas are clearly nonsense. And yet they are picked up and used by the Spirit in order to express God's word to people in contemporary terms. The language of demons is used likewise in the New Testament.

Jos 24:28 So Joshua sent the people away, every man to his inheritance-

The law of Moses reasons as if each family of Israel had a specific inheritance which was not to be sold or moved outside the family. Hence the sin of Ahab in obtaining Naboth's vineyard. It would seem that there was some unrecorded list made of each family and which land they were to be given. This looks forward to our very personal and unique inheritance in God's Kingdom, possibly based around spiritual family units.

Jos 24:29 It happened that, after these things, Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Yahweh, died, being one hundred and ten years old-

Numbers and ages in Hebrew literature are not necessarily to be taken literally. This was the age at which Joseph is recorded as reaching (Gen. 50:26), and we will read in :32 of the burial of Joseph's bones at Shechem, at the same time as Joshua is buried. We are clearly invited to see a connection between the two men, both of them maintaining spirituality and hope in the Kingdom whilst surrounded by unspirituality and terrible failure by God's people to realize their potential.

Jos 24:30 They buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathserah, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, on the north of the mountain of Gaash-

"In the border" may mean that they believed even then that one day he would be resurrected, and then immediately enter into his eternal inheritance. LXX adds: "There they put with him into the tomb in which they buried him, the knives of stone with which he circumcised the children of Israel in Galgala, when he brought them out of Egypt, as the Lord appointed them; and there they are to this day".

Jos 24:31 Israel served Yahweh all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work of Yahweh that He had worked for Israel-

This serving of Yahweh is not to say that they served Him exclusively. The idea may be that they did His "service" as required by the law of Moses in the sanctuary. Joshua in :19 had

said that they could not 'serve Yahweh' acceptably, unless they ditched their idols. Which they didn't. The people understood serving Yahweh as doing the rituals of His religion, whereas Joshua understood it as serving Him exclusively with no place in their hearts for any idolatry.

Jos 24:32 They buried the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, in Shechem, in the parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for a hundred pieces of money. They became the inheritance of the children of Joseph-

See on :29. Like Jacob, Joseph's heart was in the land of promise. Joseph's bones were 'carried up' with them when Israel left Egypt. The New Testament emphasizes the paradox: that the patriarchs bought land in the land which was their eternal inheritance. They couldn't bury their dead nor pitch their tent without having to realize that the land wasn't theirs. The same paradox was taught in Jacob having to call Esau his "lord", the younger serving the elder; but in faith that things would not eternally be that way. Joseph's bones were buried here later (Josh. 24:32), which suggests that Jacob bought it with a view of it becoming a burial place and Israelite sanctuary. Yet Acts 7:16 says that Abraham bought this land as a burial place; perhaps the paradox deepens in that they were deceived out of their "own" land and had to pay for it twice, even though it was eternally theirs.

We note that Joseph's bones were finally buried in Shechem (Josh. 24:32), the specific inheritance given to him by Jacob. Yet it was from Shechem that the 17 year old Joseph had gone to "seek" his brothers. And finally he returns there. It's as if his amazing work in seeking and saving his brothers was finally fulfilled; for their names will be written on the new Jerusalem, and we can assume that his work in seeking and saving them, through so much hurt, grace, wisdom, patience and forgiveness, was finally done and achieved.

Jos 24:33 Eleazar the son of Aaron died. They buried him in the hill of Phinehas his son, which was given him in the hill country of Ephraim-

LXX adds: "In that day the children of Israel took the ark of God, and carried it about among them; and Phinees exercised the priest's office in the room of Eleazar his father till he died, and he was buried in his own place Gabaar: but the children of Israel departed every one to their place, and to their own city: and the children of Israel worshipped Astarte, and Astaroth, and the gods of the nations round about them; and the Lord delivered them into the hands of Eglom king of Moab and he ruled over them eighteen years".