

JOSHUA

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HIS LIFE AND TIMES

By
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Printed by:

Stallard & Potter

2 Jervois Street, Torrensville
South Australia 5031

for

Christadelphian Scripture Study Service

85 Suffolk Road
Hawthorndene
South Australia 5051



PREFACE

“And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as Yahweh commanded Moses” (Deut. 34:9).

For forty years the nation of Israel had depended upon the leadership of Moses. Although they had often murmured against him yet all knew that it was he that God had provided: Moses was the leader of the nation.

No-one could have been more appreciative of the lonely responsibility of leadership than Joshua, Moses’ deputy. When he watched the revered leader ascend the heights of Mt. Nebo he must have felt a deep sense of inadequacy for the great task of leading the people of God into the promised land. To whom could he now turn for advice and counsel? Would this troublesome people unite behind him to evacuate the Gentiles from the promised land?

The answer of assurance came from God; “as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land” (Josh. 1:5-6).

Joshua would perform this great work and Yahweh would be with him to ensure its fulfilment. The record tells of the accomplishment of the task; “There failed not ought of any good thing which Yahweh had spoken unto the house of Israel; **all came to pass** (22:45). In all his service Joshua responded faithfully to the favour of God, as it is written, “Israel served Yahweh all the days of Joshua” (24:31).

These references summarise the life and work of Joshua in such a praiseworthy manner as to emphasise how highly approved he was in the sight of his God. To study his book is therefore inspirational and the Committee have confidence that this commentary on “Joshua” will bring spiritual fervour to all who study its pages.

In more than one country Bro. John Ullman is connected in thought with Joshua for many have heard his enthusiastic addresses on this theme. Now, after years of labour and toil, often against adversity in health, this project is complete and the benefit of Bro. Ullman’s studies will be more permanently and more widely available.

May the spirit of Joshua live in our hearts as we await our entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Committee,
January, 1984.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

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FOREWORD

Our first in-depth consideration of the Book of Joshua began during the early 1970's. These studies continued over the course of some three to four years, to provide material for a once-monthly Study Class upon the subject.

We endeavoured to research our original material thoughtfully and with care, gaining both pleasure and profit from the undertaking. Subsequently, addresses upon the Book of Joshua have been given in various parts of the world, which often resulted in requests that we write a book upon the subject.

Adequate notes were preserved, and this present work has been written almost entirely from the original matter. However, in setting about the task of producing this book, we should state that it has been a great delight to once again retrace our steps through the pages of Joshua's Book, checking and confirming our original research. Needless to say, we have made additional thought-provoking and fascinating discoveries during the course of the preparation of this work.

All scriptural quotations are from the King James Authorised Version, unless otherwise stated. Where other renderings are given, the original text has been compared and we have endeavoured to present the version which, we believe, most faithfully represents the intent of the original text.

This sixth Book of the Bible is both profound and captivating, whilst at the same time containing powerful and compelling lessons for the people of God in every generation. Not without justification, it bears the name of one of the great warriors of the Faith who was a remarkable type of the Lord Jesus Christ.

John Ullman

Perth, Western Australia.

October, 1983.

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INTRODUCTION

Writing under divine inspiration, Joshua has produced one of the most exciting books in the Bible. There are illustrations of courage and faith, together with instances of agitation and fear which result from a failure to exercise trust in God. There are examples of fine military strategy and the volatile drama of Israel's battles against the Canaanites.

There is also romance and treachery; and the solemnity of a nation worshipping their God "in spirit and in truth" whilst others endeavoured to seek deliverance through deception.

Most importantly, every incident recorded in the book provides a particular exhortation to readers. In causing this book to be preserved, it is evident that Yahweh desired men and women to soberly consider its contents, not merely from a historical point of view, but that they might be strengthened and encouraged in their faith, learning the profound spiritual lessons which are revealed in the pages of the book.

Needless to say, ascendant over all — in lofty splendour, far exceeding the reach of mortal man — is the majestic presence of Yahweh and His angels; overseeing and directing the work of bringing God's people into their inheritance.

And across the broad panorama of the book — striding purposefully through its pages as a mighty warrior and leader — is the man Joshua himself. A man of enormous spiritual stature, the most important years of his life until this point had been lived in the shadow of his friend and mentor, Moses.

Understandably, in many respects his character is an extension of that of Moses. This is not uncommon in scripture, for a spiritually-minded man will learn from the example of his elders, who have also been his instructors in divine wisdom. For example, similarities between Nehemiah and Ezra are quite marked. It is evident that Nehemiah sat at the feet, as it were, of his trusted adviser, and learned from Ezra's words and actions. Nehemiah reflected the spirituality of Ezra; especially in the manner in which he determined to set about his responsibilities and face the problems which confronted him.

It was much the same with Joshua, as he endeavoured to follow in the footsteps of Moses.

Joshua was a man of faith and courage, an able military commander, determined and resourceful. Yet with these outstanding attributes of character, he never failed to listen — attentively and reverently — to the voice of Yahweh. Instructions which might have totally confused lesser men were accepted without question by Joshua — because he trusted Yahweh.

The life of Joshua reveals a complete absence of selfishness or personal ambition. He lived only to serve his God and his people — a wonderful attitude, worthy of emulation by all who wish to serve Israel's God.

Whilst Israel was encamped in the plains of Moab, Yahweh appointed him to succeed Moses (Num. 27:15-23).

There had been numerous instances in his life when he had demonstrated to God that he could become a dedicated and capable leader. He had led Israel's army in the warfare against Amalek at Rephidim (Ex. 17:8-16). As Moses' personal assistant he had ascended Mt. Sinai with Moses and the elders of Israel — and upon Moses' return, after an absence of forty days, Joshua remained the only faithful man, still awaiting the descent of Moses from the mount (Ex. 24:13; 32:17-18). Also, he had been placed in charge of the special tent which Moses had erected outside the camp of Israel (Ex. 33:11). Those who wished to seek the counsel of Moses came out to this tent; an activity in which Joshua would doubtless have taken some part. He had been numbered among the twelve spies who were sent to view the Promised Land. Joshua and Caleb were the only two men who submitted a report based upon faith in Yahweh's ability to give them the land (Num. 13:8; 14:6-8). Because Caleb and Joshua courageously opposed the faithlessness of the people, their lives were placed in jeopardy (Num. 14:9). Joshua was prepared to die rather than abrogate his faith.

No blemish is recorded against his character. This does not imply that he was a sinless man, but rather that his integrity was unimpeachable.

Little has been revealed concerning his genealogy. Born forty years after Moses, he was the same age as Caleb. At the age of eighty years he succeeded Moses. He died at 110, having led the people of Israel for 30 years.

Born into the tribe of Ephraim, he was the son of Nun, concerning whom no details have been recorded. However, in view of the high spiritual qualities manifested in his son, it may reasonably be concluded that Joshua had been well educated in the things of God. He had been given the name Oshea, which means "saviour". Significantly, the stress upon his change of name to Yahoshua (meaning "Yahweh saves") is inserted into the Biblical narrative in the context of the twelve spies going forth to inspect the Promised Land (Num. 13:16). Obviously, the Israelites were to learn something of importance from this. Neither Joshua nor any other man could bring the nation into their promised inheritance. Such was a work of God. Therefore, "Yahweh saves" — not man.

The name of Joshua's father signifies "continuing for posterity". When the meanings of the two names are joined, they provide an apt sentence which virtually epitomises the work of God which He will accomplish through the Greater Joshua: "Yahweh saves, continuing for posterity . . ." These words are rather similar to a statement which had been made by God earlier, when Israel received the Law at Sinai. The people were told that Yahweh would show "loving kindness unto thousands of generations, of them who love me and keep my commandments . . ." (Ex. 20:6, Roth.). He would punish the guilty, "unto the third and fourth generation" but His mercy was boundless. Throughout the ages of history, the way of salvation has been open — "continuing for posterity" — to all who "love" God and "keep" His commandments.

The change in Joshua's name also highlighted the limitations of the Mosaic Law. The Law could not bring salvation to men (Gal. 2:21; Heb. 7:19). In a figurative sense, the Law died with Moses, thus demonstrating that "Yahweh saves" — not law (Deut. 34:5-6). Fulfilling this typology, Joshua, as the instrument of God, did that which the Law could never have done: he led his people into their inheritance, thereby becoming a type of Christ.

Certain similarities between Joshua and the Greater Joshua (Jesus and Joshua are identical names in Hebrew) are evident. Joshua virtually began his ministry at the banks of Jordan. So did Christ (Mat. 3:13-17). Joshua chose twelve men to carry twelve stones. So did Christ (cp. Rev. 21:14). Circumcision was appropriately effected under Joshua's leadership rather than under Moses. Similarly, Christ taught that flesh can only be cut off through the exercise of faith, not law. Therefore, Yahoshua is the true circumciser (Rom. 2:29; Col. 2:10-11). Circumcision, originally, was related to faith, not law (Gen. 17:9-14; John 7:22; Gal. 3:18).

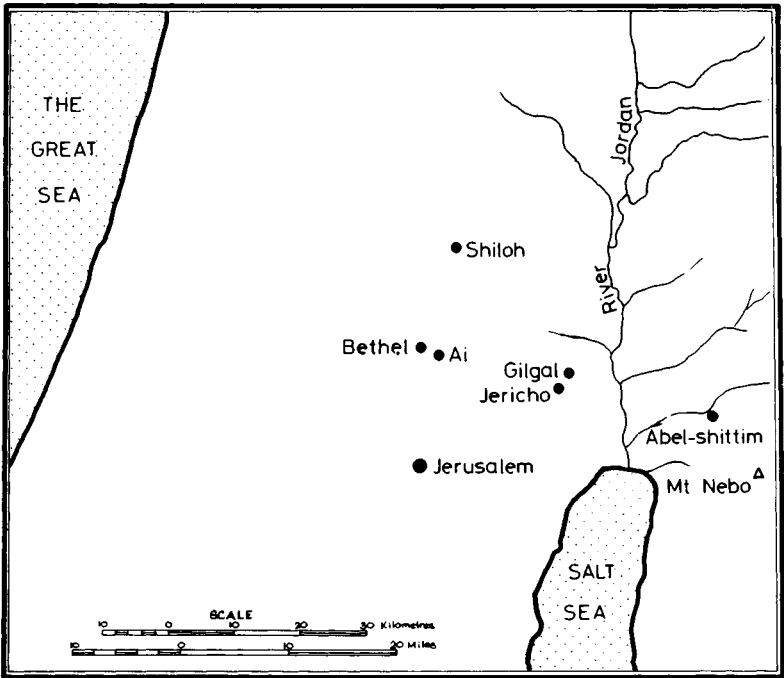
The theme of the book which bears Joshua's name is stated in the closing section of the book:

"The works of Yahweh, that He had done for Israel . . ." (24:31).

PART ONE

The Conquest Of The Land

CHAPTERS 1 - 12



CHAPTER ONE

Joshua Commissioned By Yahweh (Vv. 1-4)

“Moses my servant is dead. . .”

These were Yahweh’s words to Joshua after he had taken up his divinely-appointed role as leader of Yahweh’s people.

God’s words emphasised the reality of the situation: a vital period in Israel’s history — spanning the exodus from Egypt to their arrival at the Promised Land — had ended. The death of Moses marked the end of a relatively short era. The nation now stood poised at the beginning of a new and exciting period in their history.

There could be no question as to whether Yahweh would remain faithful. Whilst Israel had languished in the land of Egypt, God had said: “I am come down now . . . to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey. . .” (Ex. 3:8). Now, as the Israelites had been brought to the Promised Land, Yahweh challenged the nation to respond to His fidelity: “Arise! Go over this Jordan! Thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give them. . .”

Yahweh will command His servants and direct their ways — but they must respond with appropriate action. “Let us **labour**, therefore, to **enter** into that rest. . .” (Heb. 4:11). Those who so labour must do so under the guidance and wisdom of God. “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you . . .” (Mat. 7:7). Throughout his life, Joshua showed a ready inclination to conform to this principle.

Duly, God’s instruction would be repeated to the people: “Arise! Go over!” How would the people manage to fulfil this order? It was now the period of March/April. The Jordan was in full flood, a fast-flowing torrent. The Israelites, old and young, were to cross the river. But, how? They could not hope to do so in their own strength. The entire nation would be totally dependent upon the power and goodness of their God.

Aware of this, Joshua raised no objection concerning the apparent difficulties. His mind was clear. He would await the further counsel of Yahweh, and proceed accordingly, in faith.

Joshua was fully persuaded that God would “give” them “the land” which He had promised to their fathers — provided the people were obedient to God’s commands and proceeded in faith. The word “land” has been rendered from the Hebrew **eretz**, which means, quite

literally, “the earth” — the actual land itself. The word occurs no less than eight times in this first chapter. It occurs more than one hundred times throughout the book of Joshua. Even before Yahweh had promised the land to Abraham, that great man of faith was told: “Unto thy seed shall I give this land (**eretz**). . .” (Gen. 12:7).

The idea of literally inheriting the land of promise has been the joyous hope of the faithful since God made His covenant with Abraham. “Those that wait upon Yahweh, they shall inherit the earth (**eretz**). . .” (Ps. 37:9).

This particular word is most interesting in the way it repeatedly stresses the hope of all true Israelites: “Thou shalt dwell in the **land**. . . They shall inherit the **earth**. . . The meek shall inherit the **earth**. . . Such as be blessed of Him shall inherit the **earth** . . . The righteous shall inherit the **land** . . . Wait on Yahweh . . . and He shall exalt thee to inherit the **land**. . .” (Ps. 37:3, 9, 11, 22, 29, 34).

Moses’ final speech to the nation — the book of Deuteronomy — would have still been fresh in Joshua’s mind. How appropriate, then, that direct quotations from Deuteronomy are so richly interspersed throughout the first nine verses of the book of Joshua. Discovering and noting these repeated references to Deuteronomy will prove interesting and instructive.

Words from Deuteronomy would have proven most encouraging to Joshua. A man of faith, he would not readily dismiss from his mind thoughts of his friend and mentor, Moses. Understandably, the opening words of his book reflect the sombre sensitivity Joshua experienced at that time: “Now after the death of Moses. . .” Joshua would have known mixed feelings. His faithful friend dead — one to whom Joshua had given deference as being the Leader appointed by God — Joshua now found himself occupying the position of Leader of his people. The work before him was awesome, the responsibilities enormous. He recognised that his only hope of success lay in giving himself wholly to the work, and heeding and obeying the voice of Yahweh.

Joshua Assured That Yahweh Saves (Vv.5-9)

God set about preparing Joshua for the work which was before him by encouraging Joshua to understand that the meaning of his own name was indeed true: Yahweh saves. “There shall not any man be able to stand before thee. . .” he was told, in a direct quotation from Deut. 7:24 and 11:25. As God had been with Moses — and Joshua had witnessed the evidence of that — so He would be with Joshua. “I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee”, God assured him, with words taken from Deut. 31:6-8, an assurance to be later reiterated in the epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. 13:5).

Joshua was to have faith and confidence — not in himself, but in Yahweh. He was therefore told: “Be strong and of a good courage” or, “be firm and bold” (Roth.). The first word relates to seizing or fastening upon something, whereas the second word indicates a state of alertness. Hence, “Seize wholeheartedly upon the faith which will bring you through the coming trials and difficulties, and remain alert to see that your faith remains bright, so that you may be guided to do that which is right.”

To achieve this state of mind it would be necessary for Joshua to continually and consistently turn to the word of God for guidance. “Be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee. . .” The basic principle is clear: the only way to please God and to become successful in the warfare of faith is to obey Yahweh’s word. There is no substitute for this. Salvation cannot be attained by any other means.

“Turn not from it (the word of God)”, Joshua was warned, “to the right hand or to the left. . .” These words are quoted from Deut. 5:32. There can be no compromise with divine Truth. One may feel the urge to deviate, even from the loftiest of motives, but such action will not be tolerated by God.

If Joshua responded to this advice, he would “prosper” — a quotation from Deut. 29:9, which, significantly, had been addressed to the younger generation which, at that time, had been about to enter and take possession of the Promised Land. The word speaks of being “circumspect” and hence “exercising intelligence”. A sound and intelligent understanding of the Truth will, when put into practical application in the life of the individual, result in a form of God-manifestation. And this was Yahweh’s exhortation to Joshua.

“This book” which Moses had compiled under divine inspiration, was to become Joshua’s guide. By the time Moses’ life came to an end, a written “Bible” had come into existence for the guidance and instruction of Yahweh’s people (cp. Deut. 6:6-9; 31:24-27).

In view of the fact that there was in existence at this time only **one** copy of the Law — which had been placed inside the ark — the question arises: how was Joshua to gain access to “this book” that he might “meditate therein, day and night. . .”? There appears only one answer: it would be necessary for Joshua to approach the High Priest to seek temporary possession of the Scroll. Then, following the procedure which was to be established among the kings who would ultimately follow, he would have to carefully and laboriously make a copy for his own use (cp. Deut. 31:26; 17:14-20).

The lesson is clear: there is no substitute for the word of God. This is a particularly impressive lesson, since Joshua would receive, from time to time, direct instructions from Yahweh either through Urim and Thummim or by direct revelation from an angel (Num. 27:21; Josh. 9:14; 3:7; 4:1; 5:13-15, etc.). Despite various means of communication with the One Eternal Spirit, Joshua was still required to “meditate . . . day and night” upon the **word** of God. How much greater is this need to those who have no personal revelation from God? If an individual approaches the word of God “in spirit and in truth” God speaks to them and instructs them every time they open His word and concentrate their attention thereon.

Joshua was told clearly: “Meditate therein” — or, “thou must talk to thyself therein. . .” (Roth.). The latter rendering more literally follows the Hebrew text. Of this expression, Gesenius says: “Probably to speak with one’s self, murmuring in a low voice, as is often done by those who are musing.” Merely reading the Bible as an exercise in curiosity, is of little value: it is necessary to give intense concentration to such activity, endeavouring to attune the mind to the spirit of the word, striving to fully grasp and understand the significance of what God has caused to be written.

Like other men and women of faith, Joshua was required to indulge in this activity “day and night”. In other words, it is necessary for the word of God to be in the hearts and minds of men and women at all times (cp. Ps. 1:1-2; Prov. 2:1-5; Mat. 22:29; 1 Tim. 4:16).

In studying the five books of Moses, Joshua was to “observe to **do** all” that had been “written therein. . .” The expression “observe to do” occurs more than seventy times in the book of Deuteronomy, in various tenses. Obviously, these are key words in Moses’ final address to the nation, and understandably so. The “word” is “made flesh” — or, becomes flesh — when the intellect is enlightened with the divine will, and the flesh is then brought into submission to Yahweh’s will.

If Joshua submitted to this wise counsel, he would make his “way prosperous” — an expression which more literally means “to push forward”. Thus, he would “push forward” positively in spiritual development if he “talked to himself” day and night in the word of God, and “observed to do” that which it required of him.

The means by which men and women might be led to eternal redemption has not changed. They must listen to the word of God, heed its message attentively, and walk according to God’s will.

Thus Yahweh challenged Joshua: “Have not I commanded thee?” Certainly, He had. But the same question might be rightly directed to all believers, in every age: “Have not I commanded thee?” Every

individual who has learned the message of God's word is required to obey Him, and to honour Him accordingly.

The challenging question was balanced by a divine assurance: "Yahweh thy God is with thee, whithersoever thou goest. . ." This represented a firm promise to Joshua: he would remain in fellowship with Yahweh so long as he remained faithful to the precepts which had been set before him. And the same assurance applies to all God's servants, in every generation.

Preparation For Crossing Jordan (Vv.10-11)

Having been strengthened and encouraged by Yahweh, Joshua now assumed his responsibilities. With the attributes of a faithful leader, he began to instruct the people. In doing so, he emphasised the value and purpose of fellowship in the Truth.

He "commanded the officers of the people. . ." The word rendered "commanded" occurs more than two hundred times in the books of Moses. God's will must always be received as a "command" on the part of His people, who are required to respond in loving obedience.

The "officers" (Heb., **shoter**) were administrators who assisted Joshua in his work of managing the affairs of the nation. The word has been derived from a word meaning "to write" (see Ex. 5:6, 10, 14; Num. 11:16, etc).

These men were directed to "pass through" the encampment, and convey to all the instructions of Joshua.

In instructing the people, there was one key word: "Prepare!" No individual, or community of people, may embark upon the warfare of faith without due and adequate preparation (see Ezra 7:10; Prov. 24:27; Rev. 19:7).

They were told that they should prepare "victuals" — literally, "game". Which means that the manna was about to cease (cp. 5:12). It is not difficult to discern the spiritual lesson: all who would walk in the way of the Truth to the kingdom of God must be fortified with the "meat" of the word of God. This is the only "food" which will sustain men and women who are in pursuit of such a goal (cp. John 6:27).

The people were told: "Within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which Yahweh your God giveth you to possess it." This time period allowed for the absence and return of the two spies, who had already been sent out (cp. 2:1, where the phrase "Joshua . . . sent out . . . two spies") should be rendered in the past tense. Three days were also required to prepare the nation for their assembly at the bank of the river, ready to cross. This period of time

also provides an interesting type: having been put to death, it was on the third day that Christ rose from the tomb and made the “crossing” from Adamic nature — of which the Jordan was a type, as will be seen later — to receive his inheritance of divine nature.

The people were to take heart. No one knew how the crossing was to be effected, but they were to wait upon Yahweh. He “giveth you” the land, they had been told. They were to understand that the land did not belong to them through some inalienable right. An inheritance from God is a divinely-bestowed gift; it is not something earned upon the basis of merit. “For by grace are ye saved”, wrote Paul, “through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the **gift** of God. . .” (Eph. 2:8). An understanding of this principle should engender a spirit of humility within the hearts of those who seek the salvation which only Yahweh can provide.

The people were also to be impressed by these words for another reason: if it was God’s intention to “give” them the land, He would see that His purpose was brought to fruition. Yahweh would work; they could be sure of that. They had merely to exercise faith and patience, and meticulously perform everything that God asked of them.

Principles Of Fellowship Stressed (Vv.12-15)

The Israelites had earlier engaged in warfare against the Canaanites on the east of Jordan. Three of the tribes believed the land in that area admirably suited their needs, and decided to seek their inheritance there. These were the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh — although the latter tribe was later to receive additional territory on the west.

These tribes made their wishes known to Moses before his death (Num. 32:1-33). Their petition was granted, conditionally. Although victorious in the military campaigns on the east, these three tribes were not to rest from their labours, or bask contentedly in their newly-won inheritance. What of their brethren of the other tribes? The land on the west remained to be conquered.

They were to continue to support their brethren in their warfare to gain possession of the land on the west of Jordan. This provides a wonderful example of the responsibilities of fellowship in the Truth. God’s servants are not to become satisfied with their own attainments, whilst their brethren struggle on, sometimes against considerable odds. The warfare of faith is not easy for anyone. Yahweh’s people are required to help and support each other in a spirit of willing self-sacrifice and self-denial. Christ’s disciples are not to live individualistic lives, isolated from their brethren. Paul’s attitude toward the Corinthians is

representative of this ideal: "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved. . . ." And Peter wrote: "See that ye love one another. . . ." (2 Cor. 12:15; 1 Pet. 1:22).

Joshua reminded the three tribes of the undertaking they had given to Moses in this regard. They showed no reluctance to fulfil their promise. They understood that "rest" would come only when all the tribes had been brought into their inheritance. But the "rest" attained at that time was not sustained, as the people became rebellious, failing to honour their commitments to Yahweh. Yet, the "rest" which was accomplished in that generation was typical of that which is to come: the "rest" of 1,000 years, which will be granted to all true spiritual Israelites. Hence, "There remaineth therefore (in the future) a rest to the people of God. . . Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest. . ." (Heb. 4:9-11).

The three tribes were to be the first to cross Jordan; thus, possibly, placing their lives in greater jeopardy than those of their brethren. Again, the spirit of self-sacrifice was stressed.

They were to "pass before" their brethren, "armed". As the margin correctly indicates, the expression relates to a body of men proceeding in ranks of five. An identical instruction had applied when Israel had come out of Egypt (cp. Ex. 13:18). The terminology speaks of orderliness, discipline and organisation. In the Truth, individual and communal life should be like this. There is the need for the One Body of Christ to march forward "in step" in the Truth with everyone maintaining their rank (1 Thess. 5:14; Phil. 1:27). Harmonious co-operation is one of the most vital necessities in developing a profitable and contented Ecclesial environment.

"All the mighty men of valour" were to labour together, determinedly and courageously, for the good of all. And so it must be with all members of the Body of Christ: "For we are labourers together with God. . ." (1 Cor. 3:9). Also: "By love, serve one another. . ." (Gal. 5:13). On this same theme, Paul wrote: "There should be no schisms in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. . ." (1 Cor. 12:25-26).

With such a dedicated disposition, their ultimate reward was assured. "Until Yahweh have given your brethren rest, as he hath given you, and they also have possessed the land, which Yahweh your God giveth them: **then** ye shall return unto the land of your possession, and enjoy it. . . ."

Joshua's final words on this subject were intended to inspire the people to exalted heights of faithfulness. He set before them a principle which has existed since the creation of man: walk in faith before the Creator, according to His will, and no man will be the loser thereby. There is a sure reward for all who serve Yahweh "in spirit and in truth."

The People Encourage Joshua (Vv.16-18)

Having listened thoughtfully to Joshua's remarks, the people responded warmly. They displayed four powerful spiritual qualities: they said: "We will **do** . . ." — meaning that they would obey; they added: "Yahweh be with **thee** . . ." — showing that they would exercise faith and hope; they affirmed: "He that doth rebel . . . shall be put to death . . ." — indicating that they would repudiate sin; they encouraged Joshua: "Be strong, and of a good courage. . ." — showing that they would endorse sound leadership.

In this way, the people demonstrated that they were an "Ecclesia" united upon a sound basis. They were of one mind and one purpose (Acts 7:38; 1 Cor. 1:10; Rom. 15:6).

The attitude of the Israelites at this time was of a high spiritual calibre. Yet, without detracting from their single-minded dedication, it is noteworthy to consider their circumstances. Life in the Truth, in many respects, is much simpler and easier when conditions are most favourable. Strife or contention, strong opposition or fearful trials, can cause the attitude of individuals and communities to alter drastically. Faith must be perfected under trial. When pressures mount, faith is tested. Yet, faith provides the only effective counter to spiritual weakness or declension. "We must through much **pressure** enter into the kingdom of God. . ." (Acts 14:22, lit.).

Later, the people of Israel would face trials they had not previously known. Time and again they would find it necessary to draw heavily upon their spiritual resources. But what happens when spiritual resources are meagre or deficient? Faith may soon be driven from the mind, like chaff before the wind. From whence, then, will come the means by which the mind can be developed to think in harmony with God? Sadly, such an ability will be lacking if faith is abandoned.

When circumstances are comparatively tranquil and peaceful, it is vital that Yahweh's servants use such periods to build upon their faith, adding consistently to their understanding of divine things, and continuing unceasingly their search for divine wisdom. If this is not done, a great danger will continue to threaten the spiritual survival of the

individual or the ecclesia. There will exist a house-built-upon-sand situation, which could well end in disaster (Mat. 7:24-27).

“Faith” provides the victory which “overcometh the world” (1 John 5:4). Rather than being permitted to weaken, faith must continue to grow. The early development of faith is the beginning of a period of exhilarating spiritual growth and awareness. The challenge of life in the Truth is to continue to sustain such a disposition.

The people wisely assured Joshua of their continuing allegiance. “According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee. . .” This appears to be a reference to Deut. 29:1, which begins to detail the additional covenant which Yahweh made with the younger generation who were to enter the land. There appears no record of rebellion against Moses from that time onward, although that period would have been a short one.

Having promised to willingly respect their divinely-appointed leader, the people then added: “Only Yahweh be with **thee**. . .” This is a profound statement. It indicates an awareness of the fact that Israel could not place trust or confidence in flesh. Even Joshua, they acknowledged, would need the blessing of God, if their campaign to conquer and subdue the Promised Land was to succeed. “Except Yahweh build the house, they labour in vain that build it. . .” (Ps. 127:1). Total dependence upon God is necessary before anything worthwhile can be produced in His name.

The Israelites then affirmed that they would oppose any dissent against Joshua’s authority — a stand which they would soon be called upon to put into practice against Achan, who was put to death by “all Israel” (7:25; cp. Deut. 17:11-13).

Having acknowledged Joshua’s dependence upon Yahweh, the people now addressed words of a warm and personal nature to Joshua: “Only be strong, and of a good courage. . .” These were the very words with which Yahweh had encouraged Joshua. The people appreciated the difficult task which faced their leader, and the enormous responsibilities he would be required to bear. There existed therefore a remarkable state of fellowship between Joshua and his people. They were all at one, upon the basis of a mutual understanding and reverence for Yahweh and His word.

A wonderful state of communion exists when the flock of God endorses and supports wise and dedicated shepherds.

Yahweh had promised that He would be with Joshua. Now, Joshua was to act upon that promise — in faith.

CHAPTER TWO

Two Spies Come To Rahab (Vv.1-3)

The people of Israel had been spiritually prepared for the crossing of the Jordan. All that remained was the divine command to advance. In the meantime, Joshua, as an experienced and proven military leader, determined that he should know something of the conditions which his people could expect to meet once the crossing had been completed.

Accordingly, he sent “out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho.” Why two spies? And why were they sent “secretly”? To avoid the disastrous consequences which occurred when Moses, at the insistence of the people, sent out **twelve** spies from Kadesh-Barnea (Deut. 1:22). All the nation had known that twelve men had been sent out and the people had waited expectantly for their return and the report they would bring. Every tribe was given the opportunity to exercise faith but the influence of ten faithless spies virtually destroyed a generation.

Such a catastrophe was not to be repeated. Obviously, the two “young men” (6:23) were hand-picked by Joshua. He wanted men of faith for a task such as this and they would be chosen for their zeal and enthusiasm, their courage and agility.

However, Joshua would have been most careful in choosing the right men. (The word “men” has been rendered from the Hebrew **enowsh**, which means “to be frail, mortal, feeble, sick”.) Surely this was an unsuitable word to describe such men, who would have been robust, both physically and spiritually? By no means. The word expresses an acknowledgement on the part of both Joshua and the two men that the flesh was weak, and that only Yahweh could crown their mission with success.

The Israelites were camped at Abel-Shittim (“the meadow of acacias”). It was an area of lush rich grass in the northern area of the plain of Moab, about 14 miles from Jericho. It was an area ideally suited to the pasturing of sheep and cattle.

Joshua sent the two men out “silently” or “cunningly”, as the word also means. They were not sent on their way with a fanfare of trumpets and the shouts of the people. It is probable that only a few trusted people knew of this mission.

Exercising every care, and having swum the fast-flowing river Jordan, the men came cautiously to the city of Jericho. The name means “city of the moon” or “a place of fragrance”. It has been termed “the

city of palm trees” (Deut. 34:3; Judg. 1:16; 2 Chron. 28:15).

Of this ancient city, Stanley wrote: “Jericho stands at the entrance of the main passes from the valley of the Jordan into the interior of Palestine, the one branching off to the south-west towards Olivet, the other to the north-west towards Michmash, which commands the approach to Ai and Bethel. It was thus the key of Palestine to any invader from this quarter.” (“Sinai and Palestine”, p.305). Archaeologists have discovered that the city was of relatively small size, but of intense strategic importance.

Carefully disguised, Joshua’s two men entered the city. Well trained in their craft, they would doubtless firstly have noticed important details concerning the approach to the city, the defences, and other matters which would be of considerable interest to Joshua. They would also have been interested to learn the frame of mind of the people of Jericho; for news would have reached this city that the Israelites, in enormous numbers, were camped only a relatively short distance from them, on the other side of the Jordan. Were the men of Jericho confident, or were they fearful? All such information would be of value to Joshua and his people.

Seeking a sanctuary, they were granted an entrance into the house of Rahab, who was a harlot, and they “lodged” within her walls.

Of all the houses in Jericho, the two spies found themselves at Rahab’s door — the only woman in the city with the potential to exercise faith in Yahweh. How did this remarkable turn of events come about? There can be only one answer: the Hand of Providence. Sons and daughters of the Living God should be encouraged by this conclusion. In all the trials of life, God’s people must continue to remember His assurance: “Yahweh thy God, He it is that doth **go with thee**; He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. . .” (Deut. 30:6; Josh. 1:5; Heb. 13:5).

The name Rahab means “broad” or “wide” (Ges.). The word has been used to depict human pride and arrogance. Rahab, as a type of the Bride of Christ, typifies those who are walking after the flesh, on the broad, wide way which leads to destruction, until they are changed by the influence of God’s word (Mat. 7:13). See the occurrence of this word in Job 30:14; Ps. 119:96, etc. A similar word, derived from the one used here, was used to describe Egypt (Ps. 87:4; 89:10; Isa. 51:9).

Harlotry would not have been regarded as immoral by the people who inhabited the land of Canaan at this time. Not being worshippers of Israel’s God, they would be unaware of the moral standards demanded by Yahweh of His people. The Canaanites, generally, were

a depraved and degenerate people, so evil they were not fit to live (cp. Deut. 9:5).

Rahab was a member of an utterly immoral society. There can be no doubt as to the truth of her occupation. Because the blood of Rahab ran in the veins of the Lord Jesus Christ, numerous attempts have been made to cover up her immorality. Some have endeavoured to make her appear an “inn-keeper” or the suchlike— but ineptly. She is called “Rahab the harlot” in both the epistle of James and that to the Hebrews. The word harlot (**porne**), derived from **pornos**, means “to sell, to prostitute” (Jas. 2:25; Heb. 11:31).

Rahab had been a harlot whilst in ignorance of the Truth. In Rahab, we are taught the lesson that it is not what we **were** that is important to Yahweh; it is what we **are**. Through the influence of the word of God, Rahab’s entire way of life was to be completely changed. The Lord Jesus told the “chief priests and elders of the people” — who were regarded as being deeply religious — that “the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. . .” (Mat. 21:23, 31). Such people in the Lord’s time were looked upon as the dregs of society. Yet they were more amenable to receiving the true gospel than the religious leaders, who were so deeply entrenched in their philosophies and positions of power that they would not wish to submit to the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. Those who were regarded as being “respectable” were not interested in receiving true enlightenment and a changed way of life.

Paul wrote to the Corinthian Ecclesia concerning those who were fornicators, idolators, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, drunkards, revilers, extortioners. Whilst stressing that people who live such lives could not “inherit the kingdom of God”, he added: “And such **were** some of you. . .” but they had been “washed. . .sanctified. . .justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus. . .” (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

These words have a powerful application to one such as Rahab. She became “justified” on two counts: her faith and her works. Heb. 11:31 states that she exhibited faith “when she had **received** the spies in peace. . .” Jas. 2:25 says that she exhibited works “when she sent them out **another** way. . .” In faith she considered the risks of keeping the men in her house, yet disregarded the dangers and placed her **faith** in Yahweh. Faith must be manifested in the actions of life: she moved positively to preserve the lives of the two spies by showing courage and initiative in getting them safely out of her house.

Later, Rahab was to marry Salmon, who was the son of Nahshon. Nahshon was the head of the tribe of Judah. The lineage went back

from Nahshon to Amminadab, to Ram, to Hezron, to Pharez, who was the son of Judah by Tamar. Salmon was thus sixth in descent from Judah. Rahab married into the family lineage which would lead directly to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Nahshon, as Captain of Judah, was given the first place in marching, and in the camp, and in the offerings of the Princes (Num. 10:14; 2:3; 7:12, 17). His sister, Elisheba, was the wife of Aaron.

Rahab's marriage to Salmon resulted in the birth of Boaz; so Rahab ultimately received Ruth the Moabitess as a daughter-in-law. A wonderful fellow-feeling would have existed between these two women; both having renounced gentilism in favour of the hope of Israel. Such are the wondrous ways in which Yahweh can work in the lives of those who turn unto Him with all their heart.

The two spies came into Rahab's house and "lodged there". More literally, they "lay down" there; which means that Rahab was hiding them. But circumstances, overshadowed by the Hand of Providence, provided them with a relatively quick escape from the city (v.15).

The people of Jericho were in a state of fear and trembling (v.9); thus any strangers who might have been seen passing into the city would have been reported to the king. Someone reported the presence, within the walls, of two men who were unknown to the inhabitants. The city was immediately placed on alert. Aware that a great multitude of Israelites were camped just across Jordan, fear would have swept through the city at the news of unwelcome and unidentified intruders. It appeared obvious to the men of Jericho that the two strangers were spies, sent to "search out the country."

The two Israelites had not only been seen: they had been followed to Rahab's house. The king then "sent unto Rahab". It would have appeared that the two spies were in a hopeless position. But "there is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against Yahweh. . . There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of Yahweh, that shall stand. . ." (Prov. 21:30; 19:21).

God was at work in this matter, as well as man.

Rahab Shows Faith And Works (Vv.4-11)

Rahab "took the two men, and hid them". Previously, they had been hidden in a part of her house where discovery may have been imminent. A safer hiding place became a matter of urgency. She took them up "to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof". This was an act requiring outstanding faith and courage. Had her deception been

discovered, doubtless her own life would have been forfeited, together with those of the two spies.

Reference to the “stalks of flax” provides a wonderfully accurate link in the narrative concerning the crossing of Jordan. At this time the river was in flood. This would have been about March or April, at the beginning of barley harvest. And flax was reaped with the barley, at the beginning of the harvest (cp. 3:15; 4:19; 5:10).

Leaving the spies under cover of the flax, Rahab went to answer the summons of the king. “There came men unto me,” she admitted, but “I knew not from whence they were” (A.V. and Roth.). Then she added: “When it was dark, the men went out.” She appears to have remained calm and unruffled, although under great stress and pressure. Since the men had been traced to her house, wisely, she did not deny that they had entered her dwelling.

However noble her intentions, she lied. God never states that evil should be done that good might result. Yahweh could well have provided circumstances to favour the two Israelites, without Rahab’s lie. At the time, although she acknowledged the living reality of Israel’s God, and what He had done— and would yet do — for His nation, she would not have considered this behaviour to be wrong or sinful. Rahab had yet to learn to apply the moral principles of the Truth in her life.

It was dark. The torches of the fearful men, held aloft, would have cast eerie shadows and highlighted dark recesses. The flickering flames of the torches danced upon the walls and the strained faces of the men. Rahab would have sensed the atmosphere, realising that she held an advantage because of the fear that was in the city at that time.

The king’s men experienced a moment of doubt and indecision; then they set off in pursuit of the two spies. They went as far as “the fords” but no further. They were not sufficiently courageous or determined to go over the Jordan.

The “gate” to the city was “shut”. The men of Jericho were taking no chances. They remained uncertain and fearful.

Before the two men “were laid down” (“ere yet they slept” Roth.) Rahab sought a further conversation with them. It was as though she was so deeply moved by the developing crisis involving Jericho and the Israelites that she desired to confess her faith and try to save herself and her family.

The two spies listened patiently while she spoke. “I know”, she said, “that Yahweh hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you.” How did she know?

“Faith” comes “by hearing the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). No other formula is given within the Bible whereby faith might be found and developed. Obviously, Rahab knew something of the Truth. She knew the name of Israel’s God, and that He had told His people that He would give them the land of promise. She confessed that the people of Jericho were demoralised, and that they were “melting” (marg.) at the prospect of the Israelites invading the land (cp. Ex. 15:15-16; Deut. 2:25).

She had “heard” about Israel’s crossing of the Red Sea, which would indicate that the truth concerning these amazing incidents had been known in Jericho before the arrival of the two spies. The difference between Rahab and the other inhabitants of Jericho was that she believed implicitly in the Truth, whereas the others had either given up hope, or were placing their trust in some other means whereby they might find deliverance from the hands of the Israelites.

Rahab knew that Israel had been brought out of Egypt by Yahweh, and that they had been victorious in their warfare against Sihon and Og. The Canaanites throughout the land must have been tremendously impressed by these momentous victories against strong and established monarchs. Sihon and Og, she confessed, had been “devoted to destruction” by the men of Israel (v.10, Roth.). This was descriptive of a holy war, fought by Israel in the Name of their God, and as an offering unto Him (cp. occurrence in 6:21 and see also Ezek. 39:17).

Her unequivocal statement: “Yahweh hath given you the land” indicates that she must have had knowledge concerning the promises. She regarded God’s promise concerning Israel’s inheritance in the land as being as good as fulfilled. The extent of her understanding and faith, at this time, was remarkable.

Speaking of the people of Jericho in particular, she said: “And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you. . .” News of Israel’s march northward, through the plains of Moab, had been received in Jericho with fear and foreboding. Yet, the people of Jericho could have manifested the disposition and faith which had developed in Rahab. She confessed: “For Yahweh. . . He is God. . .” Others in Jericho could have made similar declarations. And when Rahab uttered these words, she was indicating — quite astonishingly — that she had now repudiated all other gods. It is not known whether Rahab had learned anything of the Law of Moses, but her confession at this time certainly is in harmony with that which the Law stated in Deut. 4:39: “Yahweh He is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else. . .”

A Covenant Is Made (Vv.12-21)

Realising the judgment which lay in store for the people of Jericho, Rahab sought an assurance of survival for herself and her family. "Swear unto me by Yahweh, since I have showed you kindness, that ye will also show kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token: and that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death."

She wished to bind the two spies to an oath. And she knew of none greater than Yahweh by which she could ask them to swear. "Give me a token of truth", she pleaded (lit. Heb.). She required a genuine pledge. She desired more than their word: "Give me a sure sign of this. . ." (J.B.).

To this proposition the two spies readily agreed. "If we do not, it is we, not you, who will deserve to die — unless you tell of our agreement. . ." (J.B.). They solemnly undertook to honour their word when Yahweh gave them the land — which indicates that they shared Rahab's faith. In effect, they were endorsing the assurance she had already expressed: "I **know** that Yahweh hath given you the land. . ." (v.9).

The two spies thoughtfully considered how they might best fulfil their obligation to Rahab. The window was an obvious choice. Anything placed therein would be prominently displayed. And such a choice would be apt, since it was the object through which she revealed her works of faith (Jas. 2:25). Surveying the contents of the room, the two men saw a brightly coloured object. Whatever it may have been, its crimson colour was immediately eye-catching.

The two men showed scrupulous care in regard to this matter. They realised the need to be honourable and generous — excellent spiritual qualities.

The Israelites told her what she must do. "When we are coming into the land, thou shalt place the **scarlet** of thine hope and **expectation** in the window. . ." (Lit. Heb.). It is unfortunate that the significance of these wonderful words has been lost in most renderings. The word **tiqvah** has been rendered as "line" in only two passages: here and in v.21 of this same chapter. Elsewhere, it has been translated "expected" (once), "thing that I long for" (once), "expectation" (seven times), and "hope" (twenty three times). The word "scarlet" has been rendered correctly. An associated word, used to define the crimson liquid produced from the cochineal worm (*Coccus ilicus*), has been aptly applied to the Lord Jesus Christ: "I am a worm. . ."

(Ps. 22:6). The word which occurs in this passage of Joshua has been used to describe the scarlet in the construction of the tabernacle (Ex. 25, 28, etc.). It occurs also in relation to the sacrifice of the red heifer (Num. 19:6). And it has been applied to sin: "Though your sins be as scarlet. . ." (Isa. 1:18). Scarlet was also used in the vestments of the high priest, and in the purification of the leper. Thus, this particular word (**shaniy**) and an allied word (**towla**) are related to sin, to sin-nature, and the sacrifice of Christ.

There is no evidence to suggest that Rahab was required to place some kind of cord or thread in her window. It is far more likely that the object was of more recognisable shape and dimension. Possibly a large robe or blanket. Something which would be readily discerned and identified when the Israelites came to surround the city of Jericho. Rahab was willing to openly declare her sinful state and need of redemption by exhibiting her faith in a coming deliverance, which would be accomplished through the mercy of Yahweh. This was shown in her compliance with the request of the two spies. Her faith and her needs were displayed before God and man.

The "scarlet" of her "expectation" typified the Lord Jesus Christ manifested in Adamic nature and giving himself as a sin-offering for the redemption of perishing humanity.

The two Israelites emphasised the terms of their agreement with Rahab. There was to be no misunderstanding. "Thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee. And it shall be that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him. And if thou utter this our business, then we will be quit of thine oath which thou hast made us to swear. . ."

At the appropriate time, Rahab's family was to be assembled in her house.

A "house" can symbolise Christ's Ecclesia, as it clearly does here (Heb. 3:6; 1 Tim. 3:15).

When the time came, none were to leave the haven of the home under any circumstances. The striking parallels with Noah and his family safe inside the ark, and the children of Israel assembled within their homes during Passover night, are worthy of note. The underlying principle in each case is clear: those who venture outside the limits which Yahweh has set for their protection and deliverance deny themselves the saving grace of God. "His blood shall be upon his

head. . .” Salvation is dependent upon conformity to the divine will (cp. Acts 27:31; 1 John 2:28).

How exquisite that the very means by which Rahab would aid the escape of the spies — her window — should also become the medium through which she would manifest before all, the token of her faith and works. The “scarlet of her expectation” testified to the fact that she exhibited faith when she “received” the spies into her house. And her works were in evidence when she “sent them out **another** way”: the way of the window. Thus that which she would display so prominently would testify to the inseparable qualities of faith and works. Such qualities combined can produce a disposition of humble submission to the divine will which is acceptable to God.

The spies enjoined three things upon Rahab: she was to openly display the scarlet; she was to remain within the house; and she was to maintain separateness from the ungodly (v.20). Thus, she heard “words” whereby she and her house might be saved (cp. Acts 11:14; Ps. 19:7; John 6:63).

These basic principles for salvation have remained virtually unchanged since Eden. It has always been necessary for man to exercise faith in God’s willingness and power to save; to separate from evil, and to dedicate one’s life to the service of Yahweh within the defined bounds of divine commandments.

Rahab listened intently to the terms of the covenant offered by the Israelites. She found the conditions eminently favourable and in harmony with her faith. “According to your words, so be it”, she acknowledged simply.

The spies had been under great pressure. Their conversation with Rahab was conducted in an atmosphere of tension and uneasiness. The seconds became minutes, as time went by — the lives of the three, engaged in intense discussion, increasingly endangered. The two Israelites could discern the faith and determination exhibited by this Canaanite woman whilst under stress.

The Spies Return To Joshua (Vv.22-24)

The two spies then “went”. Rahab manifested courage and initiative, because she was determined to live by “faith” and “works” in the eyes of Yahweh. The Hand of Providence was at work, overseeing the successful outcome of the spies’ mission.

Acting upon Rahab’s wise advice, the two men did not move directly towards Jordan. All paths leading east would be closely watched by the frightened men of Jericho. Instead, they crept away in the opposite

direction, and “came unto the mountain”. To the west, only a short distance from the site of Jericho, the limestone hills of Judea rise sharply to a height of 1,500 feet. The area is honeycombed with countless caves and hidden crevices.

It was night. Scampering quietly and stealthily from one rocky outcrop to another, gradually drawing further away from the city and gaining height, the two spies sought refuge from the enemy. Finally they found a cave to suit their purpose. There they remained hidden “three days” until they felt it was safe to move. It is not difficult to associate the number “three” with the Lord’s burial and resurrection. The type seems evident: those who manifest the faith and works of Rahab and the two spies will rise from the grave to the glorious inheritance of divine nature.

The men of Jericho did not quickly give up their search for the spies. “The pursuers sought them throughout all the way”. They considered it extremely important that the two men should be caught. But they “found them not”.

Why? Because “the angel of Yahweh encampeth round about them that fear Him, and **delivereth them**. . .” (Ps. 34:7; cp. Ps. 32:6-7).

“So the two men returned”. Probably during the darkness of the night, making their way carefully and guardedly; swimming the fast-flowing river, and coming eventually into the presence of Joshua.

They “told him all things that befell them. . .” What an exciting tale they had to tell. And with what eager zealousness they would have recounted their adventures to Joshua.

They ended their account with words which showed them to be ardent men of faith. “Truly”, they said, “Yahweh hath delivered into our hands **all the land**; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us. . .”

It is noteworthy that they did not boast in the success of their venture. The keynote of their message was that **Yahweh** would fulfil all that He had promised.

This responsible and dependable report, based upon faith in God, was in stark contrast to the account presented by the ten faithless spies in the wilderness of Paran (see Num. 13-14; cp. Josh. 1:9; 21:44-45). When the spiritual vision of men has become obscured, they are not moved to make decisions based upon faith. When faith is strongly operative, the odds in favour of failure are not taken into account. Humbly confessing their faith in the presence of Joshua, these two men recognised that through Yahweh’s power they could be given possession of the promised land. Upon the principle of faith they were

prepared to become “workers together with Him” — Yahweh (1 Cor. 3:9). The two spies returned to the camp enriched in faith. But they were also filled with a sense of excitement and expectancy. The prospect of becoming part of the dramatic events soon to unfold moved them emotionally and spiritually. They longed for the victory which can be brought to triumphant fruition through faith.

“All the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us” were words which represented the strong conviction of the two spies. Significantly, the word rendered “faint” is the same as occurs in Ex. 15:15 and Deut. 2:25. Without showing any disrespect toward their leader, it appears the two men were reminding Joshua of the words of encouragement which Yahweh had delivered to their nation in the wilderness. The venture of these two spies had been to discover the true feeling of the Canaanites concerning Israel. In this they had succeeded because the Hand of Providence had been with them, and because they had exercised the necessary elements of faith. Now, the faith and courage of these two men would radiate forth and provide the means of heartening and strengthening others. This would provide a complete contrast to the influence which the ten faithless spies had exercised upon Israel in the wilderness (Num. 13). See Prov. 25:13.

Joshua listened attentively, recognising not only the truth of the report but also the fervent spirit of faith which moved the two Israelites.

Thoughtfully, Joshua pondered what should be done next.

The first step was obvious: the Children of Israel must be safely guided across the Jordan.

CHAPTER THREE

“To The Banks Of Jordan” (Vv.1-6)

Once Israel’s course of action became clear, Joshua wasted no time. He “rose early in the morning”. There was to be no delay in advancing the warfare of faith. Surely there is an impressive exhortation in such an attitude. The pursuit of the Kingdom cannot be undertaken in a half-hearted manner. The people of Yahweh must be given sound, dedicated leadership. They should be encouraged to let nothing stand in their way, or retard their progress towards the kingdom. And they must respond accordingly.

Tragically, many will lose the kingdom because they will have treated the Truth lightly, or have been indecisive. Lingerer unnecessarily over matters or affairs unrelated to the kingdom of God may prove disastrous. “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. . .” (1 Cor. 9:24).

For about two months the Israelites had been encamped at Shittim, about eight miles from Jordan (cp. Deut. 1:3, 5, with Josh. 4:19). Now, the command was given to move. The final stage of their travels began. The sequence of events now begun would end with Yahweh’s people across the Jordan and in the Promised Land. The atmosphere among the people was tense. Emotions were running high, and the Israelites were borne along on a wave of expectancy.

With the wilderness wanderings at an end, the cry which would ascend as the encampment began to move would reflect a compelling and exciting earnestness: “Rise up, Yahweh! And let Thine enemies be scattered! And let them that hate Thee flee before Thee!” (Num. 10:35).

They “came to Jordan”. Before them stretched the Arabah, a flat depressed valley. Near its centre the Jordan snaked its way south into the Dead sea. For the first time, the people looked upon the Jordan in flood. At this time of year the river was a fast-flowing, raging torrent.

In this lower part of the Jordan its width varies, generally, from 30 to 70 yards. But during the season of flood a dramatic change takes place. The river spills its banks, and may become up to a mile wide. From the Sea of Tiberias to the Dead Sea, the fall of the Jordan is 610 feet — an average of a little over nine feet per mile. In mid-March when the river flowed at its strongest and most turbulent, the rushing force of the sweep of water would be an awe-inspiring sight.

How different was their attitude to that of their fathers, when ten faithless spies acquainted them with the difficulties associated with gaining access to the Land. Here, on the banks of the Jordan, no doubts were expressed as to how they might cross. The people calmly appraised the problem of the swiftly-flowing river, but made no attempt to seek a solution. They were simply prepared to await, in faith, Yahweh's instructions. This is borne out by the fact that, as Joshua supervised the transportation of the people and their goods in preparation for the crossing, not a single word of opposition was raised. No doubtful voice was heard to say: "We'll never make it!"

The nation waited.

It took "three days" to bring the people to a state of final readiness. The third day would have been the ninth day of Nisan (Abib). cp. v.5; 4:19.

When all arrangements had been completed, "the officers went through the host". The word "officers" is the same as in 1:10. These were key men who worked in close harmony with Joshua and under his direction. There, on the banks of the Jordan, these men moved amongst the people — doubtless in an organised way: tribe by tribe and clan by clan — encouraging them with forthright, virile and enthusiastic exhortation.

Here, indeed was "Ecclesial life" at its most inspiring: faithful leaders, giving responsible guidance and direction; and a flock of men and women eager to respond.

The people were told: "When ye see the ark of the covenant of Yahweh your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore."

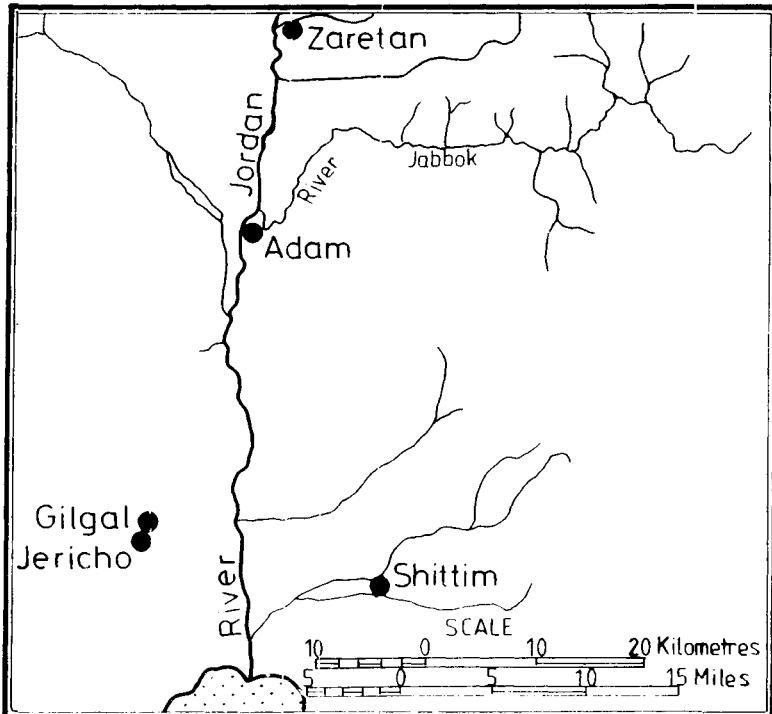
The ark was the symbol for Yahweh's presence amongst His people; thus Yahweh was to lead them forward, but would also be the last to cross (4:10-11). This action provided a type of the Lord Jesus Christ: "I am alpha and omega, the first and the last. . ." (Rev. 1:11, cp. v.17). These words have their foundation in the prophecy of Isaiah: "I the first one and the last **one**. . ." and "I, Yahweh, the first one and the last **ones**. . ." (44:6; 41:4, lit. Heb.). The significance of these verses will be considered in relation to the actual crossing of Jordan as detailed in chapter 4. The former of these verses emphasises the basic reality that the One Eternal Spirit is first and last in the unfolding of His purpose. The other reference from Isaiah illustrates the fact that the One Eternal Spirit purposes to be manifested in a multitude of men

and women whom He will redeem and glorify with His own incorruptible nature. Hence, the verses quoted from the Apocalypse show that the Lord Jesus Christ is the means by which Yahweh will bring His purpose to fruition.

As the Israelites were to “go after” the ark, so Christ’s disciples are to follow him. If they fail to do so, they will be lost eternally (cp. Heb. 6:20; 1 Pet. 2:21).

A distance of nearly half a mile was to separate the people from the ark.

This instruction was of considerable significance. Clearly, the people were being shown that Yahweh was so holy that the people were not to approach Him with an easy familiarity. “Come not near unto it.” In the first ritual which the Israelites were called upon to obey after coming out of Egypt, they learned that because of sin Yahweh held them at arms length (cp. Ex. 19:12, 21). The lesson is unmistakable: mankind must seek to carefully understand, and follow, the principles for divine worship as established by the Creator (cp. 1 Chron. 13:9-10; 1 Sam. 6:13-20).



In another respect, this instruction drew attention to the ark as a symbol for Christ. He has gone ahead of Israel — spiritual and natural — by the space of 2,000 years. Shortly, spiritual Israelites will follow him through the anti-typical Jordan: the “descender” — human nature — into their eternal inheritance. After the same pattern, natural Israel will be led into their inheritance by the greater Joshua, following the redemption of the true Saints.

Two strong themes of exhortation were spoken: “That ye may know the way by which ye must go. . .” The way leading to eternal salvation has been clearly defined. The terms and conditions for redemption have been revealed by Yahweh. It is the responsibility of humankind to “know the way” and to walk steadfastly therein. “I am the way, the truth, and the life”, said the Son of God.

Next, the people were instructed to “sanctify” themselves. The word presupposes a state of uncleanness, for it means “to be made clean”. The Israelites were to learn that it was pointless to become ceremonially “clean” without an accompanying inner state of moral cleanliness, effected through the influence of God’s word (see Ex. 19:10; cp. Eph. 5:26; John 17:17-19). The call to the Truth requires a special preparation. “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. . .” (John 15:3; cp. Phil. 2:12-13).

Joshua told the people: “Tomorrow Yahweh will do wonders among you.” The word rendered “wonders” has a notable meaning. The primary idea is that of “separating” or “distinguishing”. Thus, Joshua exhorted Israel to the effect that Yahweh would manifest His power to show that His people were a special people, separated from others because Yahweh had a special purpose in them. The line of demarcation between Israel and the world was thus clearly stressed (cp. Eph. 2:12). Man’s entire hope of eternal salvation is an Israelitish one. It is therefore necessary to repudiate gentilism in all its forms and embrace the “hope of Israel”, thereby becoming a member of “the Commonwealth of Israel” (Eph. 2:12).

Next, Joshua addressed himself particularly to the priests. They were to take up the ark and bear it forward. This was an astonishing instruction, as the Law required that the ark be carried by the Kohathites (Num. 1:50; 4:15). Why the dramatic change in what had been the established arrangement since the giving of the Law? There can be only one enlightening answer: the Israelites were about to learn that their hope of eternal salvation lay outside the Law of Moses (Gal. 2:21; 3:11, 18). Thus, as has been demonstrated earlier, it was necessary that Oshea’s name (“saviour”) be changed to Yahoshua (“Yahweh saves”). “For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works lest any man should boast. . .” (Eph. 2:8-9).

Joshua And The People Exhorted (Vv.7-13)

Having instructed the priests, the word of Yahweh came once again to Joshua. God encouraged His faithful servant, preparing him for the momentous events soon to unfold (cp. 1:1-9).

Further directions were then given to Joshua concerning the activities of the priests who were to carry the ark.

“When ye are come as far as the edge of the waters of the Jordan, in the Jordan ye shall stand. . .” (v.8, Roth.). Again, the lesson was clear: the priests were to move forward, believing that Yahweh would cause the waters to stop flowing. It was necessary that, once their feet entered the muddy waters of the river, they were to “stand still”. What had to be done was a work which could not be effected by flesh: only Yahweh could do it — “Yah saves”, not man. There appears here to be a remarkable parallel with the crossing of the Red Sea, when Israel had been taught a similar lesson: “Fear ye not! **Stand still!** And see the **salvation of Yahweh.** . .” (Ex. 14:13).

Joshua then explained to the people what was to happen. With knowledge of the Truth it is possible to exercise faith. “Faith comes. . .by hearing the word of God. . .” (Rom. 10:17). They would have to go forward in faith, recognising Yahweh’s hand in the miracle which was to be performed.

“The living Ail is among you”, said Joshua, with absolute conviction. The divinely-established basis upon which the nation would be delivered had been revealed through Moses (see Deut. 11:22-25). Yahweh is not a God of wood or stone, but a Mighty, Living Deity.

Making further reference to the Mosaic writings, the people were told that God would “without fail” drive out their enemies from before them (see Ex. 13:5, and note the marginal references against that verse).

The Great God of Israel could be fully trusted to keep His word. “We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work **Thou** didst in their days, in the times of old. How **Thou** didst drive out the heathen with **Thy** hand, and plantedst them; how **Thou** didst afflict the people and cast them out. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but **Thy** right hand and **Thine** arm, and the light of **Thy** countenance, because **Thou** hadst a favour unto them” (Ps. 44:1-3).

Those who today have embraced the Hope of Israel are required to exercise the same faith. Yahweh fulfilled His word to Israel of old. Why should twentieth century Believers not hold the same clear and fervent conviction? What Yahweh has done in the past, He will do again.

The seven major groupings of the Canaanites were then listed. "Seven" is the Biblical number to illustrate completeness. Thus, these seven nations — all descended from Ham and Canaan — typified the "completeness" of gentile opposition to Israel — an opposition which will be swept away in the establishment of the kingdom of God under the leadership of the Greater Joshua, at his second coming.

Israel's great undoing was that after they were put in possession of the Land, they failed to annihilate these nations — all of them hostile to Yahweh and His Truth (see Deut. 7:1-11; Josh. 18:1-3; Ps. 106: 34-36). In the Garden of Eden, God declared that there should be an unremitting enmity between the two opposing seeds, until the seed of the serpent should be finally and utterly exterminated from the earth. Manifesting and upholding the Truth of God requires a constant state of warfare on the part of those who would serve Yahweh. For disciples of Christ, the "weapons" of their "warfare" are not "carnal". Yet they must war the warfare of faith, that Christ's character might be developed in them, without any compromise to "the unfruitful works of darkness" (1 Cor. 10:3-6; Eph. 5:11). This disastrous failure on Israel's part provides a compelling and exhortatory lesson for all who would follow Christ in this present evil world. In this respect, see especially 2 Cor. 6:14-18, and compare with 1 Pet. 2:9.

The people were reminded that Yahweh was the Power directing all that was to unfold, to bring them into their inheritance. Joshua spoke of "The ark of Yahweh, the Lord of the whole earth. . ." (v.11, J.B.). The ark was the token of God's presence. Previously it had travelled at the centre of the marching tribes, with the pillar of cloud going before them, readily discernible in the sky. Now that was to change. No further mention is made of the cloud, implying that its function ceased once the people came to Jordan. Now, the ark was to lead them. Yet, it would unquestionably be out of their sight (v.4). Thus a deeper faith and conviction would be required of the Israelites. The visible evidence of Yahweh's miraculous presence — seen in the cloud and the fire — would be withdrawn. The circumstances of those times typify the conditions which have applied in relation to all true Believers since the Lord was taken up into heaven. No visible presence now exists; the "ark" has gone forward and for the time being remains out of sight. But those who would serve Yahweh must, themselves, continue to "go forward". Faith and hope propel them onward toward their promised rest and inheritance (cp. 2 Cor. 4:18; 5:7). Since it is true that "**all the earth** shall be filled with the glory of Yahweh" He is aptly described by Joshua as "the Lord of **all** the earth" a term which points forward to the ultimate divine purpose (Num. 14:21). His power and authority are not restricted to certain areas of the Middle East. The time will come

when the prayer of His faithful servants will be answered: “Arise, O God, judge **the earth**: for Thou shalt inherit **all** nations. . . Thou, whose Name alone is Yahweh, art the Most High over **all the earth**. . .” (Ps. 82:8; 83:18). Hence, “**The earth** is Yahweh’s, and the fulness thereof: the world, and they that dwell therein. . .” (Ps. 24:1).

Joshua further sought the co-operation of his people.

A representative was to be chosen from each tribe to fulfil a special commission, at the time of crossing Jordan. However, at this time the reason for such a selection was not explained.

Joshua then stated what was to happen: “As soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of Yahweh, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap. . .”

The people would know that a miracle had occurred. The statement is quite explicit: “The upper waters of the Jordan flowing down will be stopped in their course and stand still in one mass. . .” (J.B.). There was to be no mere easing of the torrent; the flow was to completely cease.

The waters would “stand in one mound” (Roth.).

A number of the Israelites would have recalled the crossing of the Red Sea. There is a certain similarity in the two events. The eldest among the younger generation would have been 57 years old when they crossed Jordan (Num. 14:29), and their memories concerning the miracle at the Red Sea would have remained vivid.

The Miracle Of Reversing Jordan’s Flow (Vv.14-17)

At the command of Joshua, the priests bearing the ark began to move forward. The great moment had come. Doubtless in silent wonder, the people thoughtfully observed the unhurried movement of the priests towards the river bank. They then watched the ark, borne by the specially chosen priests, turn to the right and move northward. Priests and ark disappeared into the thickly wooded forest of trees which lined the bank.**

The priests continued until they had covered the required distance of two thousand cubits.

The people waited. A wave of expectancy swept through their ranks. The priests bearing the ark came to the river’s edge. Resolutely, they entered the shallow water.

They stood, waiting. Their feet were ‘dipped in the edge of the waters’ (Roth.).

What followed was both breathtaking and spectacular. A deep resonant sound would have been heard, at first distantly, then increasing into a steady, rumbling roar. The earth began to shake and tremble. The ear-splitting sound of rock tearing from rock, earth heaving, the whole surface of the area coming alive with movement. Huge trees dancing and swaying; many uprooted and flung out of the earth. Everything moving.

“The sea saw it, and fled: Jordan was driven back. The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs. What aileth thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? Thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back? Ye mountains that ye skipped like rams; and ye little hills, like lambs? Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob; which turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters. . .” (Ps. 114:3-8).

The children of Israel faced west. To their north they saw the land and the river bed rise up as though some unseen hand was pushing it upward from beneath. Before they could fully comprehend all that was happening, suddenly the river was no longer there: only the course where it had run. The sight would have been overwhelming.

“The waters which were coming down from above stood, rose up in one mound, a great way off by the city Adam. . .” (Roth.). Nowhere else in scripture is this place mentioned. Reference to it here is profoundly significant. The Sea of Galilee represents living water. After sin entered into the world, God introduced a law under which mankind travels a downward path through Adam, leading from life to death. The living waters of the Jordan flowed through Adam, and became lifeless in the **Dead** Sea. Again, it should be noted that the name Jordan signifies “descender” and thus typifies man’s natural course from life to death. But now, a miracle occurred: the downward

******This appears to provide the only logical explanation for the manner in which the crossing was effected. The facts are: (1) The priests were to bear the ark, but were to proceed only until their feet entered the water; (2) The people were to begin to cross, but were not to venture within 2,000 cubits of the ark.

The possibilities are limited:

- (1) The priests moved 2,000 cubits up-river, so that the waters would bank up to the north of them, and the people would be free to move directly across the dry river bed.
- (2) The priests simply moved directly forward and into the water, whilst the people were required to march 2,000 cubits either to the north or south of the ark. That they should march northward appears quite illogical, as it was to the north that the waters banked. Similarly, there appears no reason why the entire nation should march 2,000 cubits to the south, only to have to completely reverse their direction once across the river, as they moved towards Gilgal.

All things considered, it is this present writer’s belief that the former of these two explanations is the most reasonable and likely. However, there is no intent to establish dogmatic assertion upon this point.

decline from life to death was arrested. Not only so: the process was reversed. The living water was turned backward, and “Adam” — being inundated with water — was immersed into a typical death.

The reader may ponder further the typical significance of these matters, and should find such meditative thoughts rewarding.

And so “the people passed over”. Meanwhile, the feet of the priests, earlier muddled in the swirling waters of Jordan, “stood firm on dry ground”.

The miraculous Hand of Providence had been revealed.

The priests bearing the ark were the last ones across. Then the limitless power of Yahweh was again unleashed: the roaring, tearing sounds of volcanic eruption; the earth shuddering and heaving, the ground shaking beneath the feet of every Israelite. Looking back, they saw that all was as before. The course of the river was as it had been previously. Once more the swirling mass of water resumed its downward race.

What now?

There could be no retreat. No going back. They had to go forward. Before them lay the Promised Land, with Jericho barring their entrance. The path to victory lay ahead, not behind. They were to advance, taking up the “weapons” of their “warfare” that they might fight the warfare of faith.

The Israelites, under the leadership of Joshua, typify all who would follow Christ “in spirit and in truth”. For Christ’s disciples, baptism marks the beginning of their warfare against the forces of sin, both within and without. There can be no turning back to the “beggarly elements” of the world, for “no man, having put his hand to the plough, and **looking back**, is fit for the kingdom of God . . .” (Lk. 9:62). To these challenging words might be added the sober exhortation: “Remember Lot’s wife” (Lk. 17:32). She **did** turn back. And lost everything. The warfare of faith is a struggle towards the perfection which is seen in the character of Christ. It is to be pursued without compromise until the victory is gained. See Rom. 6:13; mar.; 2 Cor. 10:3-5; 1 Tim. 1:18-19; 2 Tim. 4:7; Rev. 3:21; etc.

The nation of Israel, miraculously guided to the western side of Jordan, could follow only one course. No doubt many of them would have remembered the two words of instruction which they had received at the Red Sea, when they faced either defeat or triumph: “Go forward!” (Ex. 14:15).

Disciples of Christ face the same ideal and the same challenge.

CHAPTER FOUR

Twelve Men Given A Special Commission (Vv.1-9)

The twelve men who earlier had been chosen to represent the tribes were called forward to fulfil their special commission (3:12).

From the midst of Jordan they were to take twelve stones and carry them across to Gilgal.

What may appear to have been a rather puzzling and pointless exercise was shown to have profound significance. This place was still well known in the days of John the Baptist. John baptised at a place called Bethabara (John 1:28) which means “the house of passage” according to some authorities. However, **Beth** signifies “house” and **bara** means “create”. The name can therefore be understood as meaning “the house of the (new) creation. . .” The fact that John baptised at this very place provides an undeniable link between the crossing of Jordan in the days of Joshua and the preparation of the Jewish people to receive Christ.

The Hebrew word rendered “stones” has been used in numerous passages as a symbol for Christ (see Gen. 49:24; Ps. 118:22; Isa. 28:16. The equivalent Chaldean word occurs in Dan. 2:34, 35, 45).

Twelve stones obviously represented the tribes of Israel, though a deeper import will be appreciated when it is understood that “twelve” is the Biblical number to represent perfect government. The number must therefore be associated with the perfected spiritual Israel who will rule the earth with Christ (Gen. 17:20; 25:16; Num. 1:44; 1 Kings 10:18-20; 18:30-39; Matt. 19:28; Rev. 21:14; etc.).

Peter described true Believers as “living stones” (1 Pet. 2:5, lit. Gk.).

John the Baptist emphasised the deeper significance of what had been done at this place in the days of Joshua. Baptising at “the house of the (new) creation”, he addressed the ungodly with righteous indignation: “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” And he added: “God is able, **of these stones**, to raise up children unto Abraham!” (Lk. 3:3, 7, 8). In that particular place, the “stones” could only be those which Israel had taken from the Jordan in the days of Joshua. John was stating that his contemporaries who refused to submit to God’s truth vainly trusted in their fleshly descent from Abraham. They were not spiritual Israelites (cp. Rom. 2:29). John pointed to the stones because they typified the perfected Israel, to be manifested at the Lord’s second advent. Washed, shaped and smoothed by the waters of Jordan, these twelve stones

aply symbolised the perfected saints who will live and reign with Christ.

The twelve men each carried a stone to their “lodging-place” that night. The stones were set up at Gilgal, Israel’s first encampment in the land (v.20). A touching point is recorded in regard to this matter. Whilst the tribes had been invited to elect their own candidates for this duty, Joshua “prepared” them for that which they were to do. Rotherham renders: “the twelve men whom he had **made ready**. . .” The word suggests the idea of being “erect”, or “set up”. With characteristic spirituality, Joshua would have explained to the men concerning the significance of their action on this occasion. He would have “set them up” or “raised them up” in a spiritual sense. Joshua was not merely a leader and a military commander, he was a true shepherd of Yahweh’s flock.

He was also aware of the need to carefully instruct the generations which were to follow. “That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones? Then ye shall answer them. . .” Among the people of Yahweh, parents must be ever-aware of their responsibility to know and understand the Truth themselves, and to lovingly educate their children accordingly (see Deut. 4:9; 6:4-7; Ex. 12:25-27; 13:14; etc.). It is necessary to preserve a “godly seed” from generation to generation (Mal. 2:15). It is therefore obligatory for parents to be sound in their own knowledge of the Truth, and their way of life. Upon such a sound basis they will implant a similar spirit of zeal and dedication within their children. Where this is not done the Truth will fail to continue in a family from generation to generation. Curiosity and an eagerness to learn are precious faculties in children if directed into the right paths. Parents cannot be too generous towards their children in regard to these matters. It is necessary to manifest a loving sympathy for the spiritual needs of one’s children, and to evoke a warm response from them, thus drawing parents and children together in a mutual reverence for the word of God (cp. Lk. 2:46-47 with Eccles. 12:13).

In this respect, as in others, it is evident that Joshua was imitating the excellent example of his mentor, Moses.

“These stones shall be a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever”, Joshua told them.

But the exercise had not been completed. Joshua then “set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant stood: and they are there unto this day. . .”

These were twelve “**other** stones” (LXX., Vulg.). They were taken from the bank of the river, rough and unshaped. Beneath the torrent of water they would be hidden from view. But the living water, descending from the north, would continue to act upon them: washing, smoothing, cleansing. The lesson appears evident: The twelve washed and smooth stones at Gilgal would be a continual reminder that Yahweh would produce a perfected spiritual Israel as manifestations of Himself, to rule the earth. The twelve stones **beneath** the water would symbolically demonstrate that the developing of spiritual Israelites was a continuing process unperceived by the eye of flesh.

“The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are **not seen** are eternal. . .” (2 Cor. 4:18).

The People Pass Over (Vv.10-13)

With Joshua’s assistants exhorting and urging the people onward, they “hurried across” (v.10, J.B.). It would have taken considerable time and organisation to implement such an operation, hence the need for swift, prompt action. The entire nation was to be transported across Jordan in one day. There was no time to lose. Similarly, when given the opportunity to overcome obstacles standing in the way of eternal inheritance, men and women should be positive, and not indecisive. With an understanding of the Truth laid before them, they should go forward, unhesitatingly and wholeheartedly.

The narrative records that “**when** all the people were clean passed over, that the ark of Yahweh passed over, and the priests, in the presence of the people”. This statement stresses an important principle. Borne by the priests, the ark was **first** into the waters of Jordan, but was also **last** in completing the crossing. The people had earlier been told that “Yahweh thy God is He which goeth over before thee. . .” (Deut. 9:3). This was typical of Christ, who, as the “forerunner”, has entered into his inheritance first, providing the means whereby others might follow him (Heb. 6:20).

The same idea was expressed by Isaiah, and then conveyed through into the Apocalypse. “I, the **first** one, and the **last** one” wrote the prophet, of the One Eternal Spirit (44:6, lit. Heb.). In endorsing Isaiah’s concept that Yahweh is both first and last, the beginning and the ending of the divine purpose for the Ages, Christ told John: “I am the **first** and the **last**. . .” (Rev. 1:17)—thus showing that the Lord Jesus Christ is the means by which Yahweh will bring His purpose to fulfilment. The Deity must be first and last in bringing His purpose to fruition: “All the earth shall be filled with the glory of Yahweh. . .” (Num. 14:21).

But what of the multitude of Israelites who passed over Jordan? They typify those who will attain unto eternal redemption. Isaiah spoke of the One Eternal Spirit becoming manifested in a multitude: "I who will be the first one and the last **ones** . . ." (41:4, lit. Heb.). This prospect was also endorsed by the Lord Jesus: "That they (the redeemed) all may be **one** , as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be **one** in us. . ." (John 17:21).

Fulfilling the obligation to which they had committed themselves earlier, the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh passed over first. The A.V. states that they were "armed". The word literally means "by fives". There was no disorganised scramble to cross Jordan. The men were organised and marshalled in an orderly fashion. Although having been granted their inheritance on the east of Jordan, these tribes, as the first to cross, would understand that they would be the first Israelites to meet any opposition which might face them on the western side. The men of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh had to cross, in faith, believing that Yahweh would deliver "all the land" into their hands (2:24; cp. Ex. 13:18, marg.; Num. 32:1-33; Josh. 1:12-15).

Thus these tribes, without qualm or fear, passed over "in front of the Israelites" (v.12, J.B.).

The question of their numbers raises an important principle. Of these three tribes "about 40,000" made the crossing. However, Num. 26:7, 18, 34 records that their combined numbers were far in excess of this. About 70,000 from these tribes must have remained behind on the east, to guard and care for the women and children. Is there an anomaly in this? Why has this detail been recorded? To remind Yahweh's servants that He can save "by many or by few". "One" may chase "a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight". God's faithful servants must endorse the proposition: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (1 Sam. 14:6; Deut. 32:30; Rom. 8:31). In the warfare of faith, mere numbers have no correlation with the question of victory. "Yahweh your God is He that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies. . ." (Deut. 20:4).

In this instance, 40,000 was a suitable number to meet God's requirements.

Those who led the way, however, were to make themselves ready. They were "prepared" for war — a word which literally means "to pull off, or to strip". It was necessary that they should go forward, not only prepared to fight should the necessity arise, but also unencumbered with any paraphernalia which might impede their progress.

The spiritual lessons are readily discernible. "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. . ." (Heb. 12:1). Paul set forth his own example, exhibiting the need for eager dedication and spiritual fleetness of foot, in the struggle toward the kingdom: "All I can say is that I forget the past, and I strain ahead for what is still to come. I am racing for the finish, for the prize to which God calls us. . ." (Phil. 3:14, J.B.). And again, Paul's wise counsel: "Fight the good fight of the faith, and win for yourself the eternal life to which you were called when you made your profession and spoke up for the truth in front of many witnesses. . ." (1 Tim. 6:12, J.B.). When does a disciple of Christ "speak up for the truth"? When he makes his confession of the faith, and submits to the ordinance of baptism. From that time onward, he is totally and irrevocably committed to the warfare of faith. And nothing must hamper his progress.

Yahweh has provided the means whereby those who would serve Him may "pass over" into their inheritance. But any who would follow Christ must act. In this present dispensation, they must "go forward", "prepared", using only weapons which are not carnal (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

To become a skilful soldier a man requires seven basic qualities. He must be:

- Trained
- Self-disciplined
- Loyal
- Courageous
- Determined
- Obedient
- Enduring.

These distinguishing characteristics apply equally to those who fight a spiritual warfare. A disciple of Christ is "trained" through his understanding of the word of God; he becomes "self-disciplined" when he conditions himself to strictly conform to the training he has received; he will be "loyal" to his King if he learns to love and respect him, and will not betray his Master by turning aside to another; he will exercise "courage", not being readily diverted from those things his Lord requires of him, no matter how difficult the way may be at times; he will exercise "determination" in devoting himself to the cause of his King with single-minded dedication; putting aside all self-will and self-interest, he will be "obedient" to Christ's commandments; and he will patiently "endure" until the end, knowing that there is a glorious reward for all who remain faithful without wavering.

The time came for the men of war to go forward. The “forty thousand prepared for war” crossed the river, ahead of their brethren who were to follow. They found themselves in “the plains of Jericho”. They had arrived. In the land of promise. It is difficult to comprehend the feelings of the people at that time. Nothing that Yahweh had promised had failed. Exhilarated and elated, the Israelites would have known the joy of becoming a part of the fulfilling purpose of Yahweh.

Priests Follow The People (Vv.14-18)

“On that day Yahweh magnified Joshua. . .”. As their divinely-appointed leader, Joshua was vindicated by the events which occurred that day. Confidence in sound and able leadership is necessary if a body of people are to prosecute a war victoriously. In Joshua, they had such leadership. So also with those who follow the Greater Joshua, the Lord Jesus Christ. He has proven himself a faithful and trustworthy leader, and demonstrated that Yahweh was with him. Christ may be followed with the utmost confidence.

Yahweh then commanded Joshua that the priests should come up from the bed of the Jordan, bearing “the ark of the testimony”. This is the only place where this expression occurs in Joshua. The ark has also been termed “the ark of the covenant”. The former expression emphasised God’s faithfulness; the latter signified that Israel was joined to Yahweh upon the basis of a covenant (cp. Ex. 25:16, 21, 22).

The priests came up on the western side. The earthquake recurred. The Jordan resumed its previous course, almost as though nothing had happened.

It was the tenth day of the first month, four days before the slaying of the Passover lamb (cp. 5:10). The month was Abib, later to become known as Nisan (Neh. 2:1). The time was March/April. If it were not for the Hand of Providence overseeing all the details of Israel’s entrance into the land, it would seem an impossibility that events and dates occurred as they did. On the same day as they crossed Jordan, the Israelites reached their camp and selected their Passover lambs. The timing was perfect — because the Hand guiding Israel’s affairs was Providential.

Israel thus entered the Promised Land just four days short of exactly forty years from the night of their departure out of Egypt.

The significance of this should be understood and appreciated. God’s purpose unfolds exactly as He plans it. When it comes to the divine purpose, nothing is left to chance or caprice. “In faith we perceive that the ages have been so thoroughly adjusted by God’s

command, that not from things then manifest the things now seen have come to pass. . .” (Heb. 11:3, Diag.). This knowledge should generate a sensation of excitement among God’s people: knowing of a surety that the unfolding of history is in the Hand of Providence, and that all events are working — by divine design — towards the ultimate goal: “All the earth shall be filled with the glory of Yahweh. . .”

The Israelites Come To Gilgal (Vv.19-24)

The people of Israel came that day to their first encampment on the west of Jordan. The place was named Gilgal, which means “rolling”. At this place, Yahweh rolled away the reproach of Egypt from His people.

The day was brought to completion with a further exhortation from Joshua.

The adults were to anticipate questions from their children, and be ready to answer correctly and wisely.

The objective of disseminating knowledge upon these matters was not merely that the Israelites might maintain a comprehension of the divine purpose, but that “all the people of the earth might know. . .” How was that to be accomplished? Israel would have to publish abroad the attributes and aims of the God whom they worshipped. “All Thy saints shall bless Thee. They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power. To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom. . .” (Ps. 145:11-12). Similarly, those who would follow Christ have the same duty. They are to be “the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life. . .” (Phil. 2:15-16).

The day will dawn when the faithful testimony of Yahweh’s servants down through the ages will be vindicated. “All the people of the earth” will “know” that “the hand of Yahweh is mighty”. “The earth shall be filled with the **knowledge** of the glory of Yahweh, as the waters cover the sea. . .” (Hab. 2:14).

Gilgal remained an important place to succeeding generations of Israelites, because of its association with the establishment of the kingdom. Some 300 years after this event, Saul delivered Jabesh-gilead out of the hands of the Ammonites. At that time Samuel told the people: “Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and **renew the kingdom** there. . .” (1 Sam. 11:14).

Later, Gilgal was to become associated with the ultimate national tragedy, which will be considered in the next chapter. Yahweh had

“rolled” the reproach of Egypt from off His people; but later, with characteristic human perversity, they had persisted in rolling that reproach back upon themselves by defying the commandments and statutes of the Living God. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7).

The lessons of Jordan were to be learned. Jordan, as the “descender”, provided an apt symbol for corruptible human nature: making its way inevitably, through Adam, from life to death.

For man, eternal destruction may be avoided only if the downward rush toward oblivion can be arrested. As at Jordan, only Yahweh has the power to save mankind. Through that which has been accomplished in His Son, the way has been opened for men and women to “cross over” from the ways of Adam to a new life in Christ.

In addition to the miraculous power of Yahweh, the object which dominated the events of that day was the ark. The main features of the ark, and their symbolic relevance, would have impressed discerning minds: The **Mercy Seat** taught the Israelites that Yahweh would provide atonement for sins, and reconciliation. The **Cherubim** symbolised Yahweh manifested in a glorified multitude.

The ark contained Aaron’s rod which budded, a pot of manna, and the tablets of the Law. The typical significance of these three items spoke of “resurrection to eternal life, resulting from acknowledging and keeping the word of God, upon the basis of covenant-relationship with Yahweh”.

One of the grandest days of Israel’s history drew to a close, with the people making camp at Gilgal. It had been a momentous day. Many lessons had been taught and there was much to be learned. Faithful men and women would ponder deeply the events of that day, that they might develop toward a greater maturity in the Truth through a richer understanding of the God whom they worshipped.

CHAPTER FIVE

Circumcision Reinstated (Vv.1-7)

The massing of the Israelites upon the eastern bank of Jordan would have instilled fear into the hearts of the Canaanites. When the miracle occurred and the people of Israel were transported across to the western side of the river, the superstitious Canaanites would have become terrified.

It is likely that spies would have kept a discreet watch upon the progress of the Israelites as they neared Canaan. Reports would have been widely circulated concerning the overthrow of Og's kingdom by the Israelites, the kingdom of Bashan which incorporated more than sixty cities. The Israelites had also annihilated the kingdom of Sihon, which had extended from the river Arnon to the Jabbok in the north. The Canaanitish tribes on the west of Jordan were apprehensive at the prospect of a similar disaster befalling them.

They had good reason to fear. Thus, "their heart melted"; a reaction precisely predicted by Rahab (2:11). Doubtless under the guiding Hand of a Providential God, the Canaanites remained panic-stricken for a time and therefore did not immediately bring their combined forces together to attack Israel. Having just crossed Jordan, Israel would have been most vulnerable at that time. The respite gave them opportunity to consolidate their bridgehead in the land, to contemplate further strategy, and to fulfil the special commandment which Yahweh delivered to them shortly after they had passed over the river.

Joshua was commanded to make "sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel. . .".

At first consideration, under the circumstances, this appears to be a strange instruction. This was a time of great danger for the Israelites. From a natural point of view there could not have been a more inopportune time for such action. The Israelites may have been subjected to a concerted attack by the Canaanites at any moment. Yet, without any sign of rebellion the people submitted to Yahweh's decree, knowing that it would leave their fighting men virtually incapacitated for several days.

And since circumcision typifies the cutting off of flesh, this is precisely what Israel did at this time! Which is to say, it was necessary for them to trust entirely upon Yahweh, believing that He would protect them. They declined to trust in flesh, rendering it powerless for a time.

Joshua was instructed to “make” the necessary knives. Would the Israelites not have carried such utensils with them? Undoubtedly. What, then, was the special significance in this directive? Simply, the nation was to embark upon a new beginning. This period of history, in effect, marked the actual commencement of the kingdom of Israel in the land, with Yahweh as King.

The expression “sharp knives” should be literally rendered “knives of stone”. Why stone, when iron and other metals were well known (Gen. 4:22)? The answer lies in the significance of the word “stone” — the Hebrew, **T’zur**. Generally, the word has been translated as “rock”. It is one of the titles of Deity, and has been rendered “god” in Isa. 44:8 and Hab. 1:12. Constantly in the scriptures, Yahweh is represented by this word (Deut. 32:4, 15, 18, 30, 31; 1 Sam. 2:2; 2 Sam. 22:32, 47; etc.). The same word was used to describe the rock at Horeb, which typified Christ (cp. 1 Cor. 10:4). **T’zur** has been derived from a root which means “to confine, thus to besiege, or become an adversary”. The word thus represents Yahweh as an unchanging, immoveable rock, who is an adversary to sin. The lesson being taught was intended to impress succeeding generations with the fact that the only really effective “knife” for “cutting off the flesh” is the influence of Yahweh Himself. He will implant the impression of His truth in the minds of men and women who become susceptible to His word.

Circumcision became the token of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 17:9-14). Since it involved the cutting off of flesh, it represented a repudiation or disowning of the flesh (Deut. 10:14-16; Rom. 2:24-29), and it follows that it must also have signified a disowning of fleshly **descent**. Tragically, Israel failed to appreciate that circumcision brought them into covenant-relationship with Yahweh only because of His grace and mercy. Instead, they became filled with pride at what they considered to be their exclusive elevation as the “chosen” people. They refused to receive the constant exhortations of the prophets, that their call to separation from the nations also required their dedication to the word and will of Yahweh. Israel took pride in their privileges, but declined to acknowledge their responsibilities. “Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God”, wrote the apostle Paul (1 Cor. 7:19; cp. Jn. 8:31-47).

Circumcision, although incorporated into the Law of Moses, was so treated because it was “of the fathers” (Lev. 12:3; Jn. 7:22). Thus, whilst forming part of the Mosaic Law, circumcision remained a constant reminder — and endorsement — of the Abrahamic covenant, which took precedence over the Law of Moses (Gal. 2:21; 3:16-18). The ritual was intended to instil humility in men. How tragic that it produced so much pride.

By and large, history shows that the nation of Israel failed to learn a fundamental lesson: that flesh was to be cut off in a willing and voluntary submission to God, and that Yahweh would cut off all who failed to live according to this disposition (Gen. 17:14). A false sense of security, and an attitude of self-esteem developed among Jews who were sufficiently misguided to believe that the mere act of circumcision identified them absolutely with Abraham. Surely, time and again throughout their history God has demonstrated to Israel the fallacy of such self-confidence.

A national circumcision had taken place before Israel departed from Egypt, prior to their partaking of the very first Passover (Ex. 12:43-48). A further circumcision probably took place at Sinai, but as the number involved would have been relatively small the occurrence at Sinai was not regarded as being a national event (cp. Num. 9:1-5 with Ex. 12:48).

The mass circumcision now carried out under the direction of Joshua took place at Gibeah-orchal ("Hill of the foreskins") which must have been quite close to Gilgal.

A rather astonishing word has been recorded in the narrative in regard to this event: "And this is the cause why Joshua did circumcise: all the **people** that came out of Egypt, that were males, even all the men of war, died in the wilderness by the way. . . ." This is not a common word for "people" when the word is applied to Israel. It is, in fact, the word **goy** (plural, **goyim**) which, throughout scripture — and in the language of the Jews — is commonly applied to gentiles. Useage of the word here taught a profound truth: Israelites were no different to gentiles and, apart from circumcision and a repudiation of the flesh, had no relationship to the Abrahamic covenant insofar as it held promise of eternal life. The word **goy** has been used to describe Israel when in a state of alienation from God. "Sinful nation, a **people** laden with iniquity. . . ." (Isa. 1:4).

Thus, Joshua circumcised "all the people". Israel's hope of inheriting the land promised to Abraham was unmistakably linked with the spiritual significance of circumcision (cp. v.6). Reference here to the "land" which God had promised to the fathers of Israel linked circumcision with the Abrahamic covenant.

The first stage of Yahweh's covenant with Abraham was now about to be fulfilled (cp. Gen. 15:16 with Ex. 3:8, etc.).

The spiritual lesson to be learned from the act of circumcision is clearly implied in this chapter. Those who had perished in the wilderness failed to inherit the land "that floweth with milk and honey" — words quoted directly from Moses: Ex. 3:8; Lev. 20:24;

Num. 13:27; Deut. 26:9 — “because they obeyed not the voice of Yahweh”. Although circumcised “in the flesh” by a circumcision “made by hands”, they had not been touched in their hearts to comply with the requirements of the Truth. Inwardly, they had not “cut off” the evil ways of the flesh (Eph. 2:11; Deut. 10:16). Tragically, that generation was so lacking in spiritual discernment they concluded that ceremonial ritual could be substituted for intellectual conviction and moral disposition.

For them, the result was inevitable. May those who would strive to become faithful servants of the Deity in this present evil age appreciate the humbling lesson to be learned from the failure of the generation which perished in the wilderness.

Faith In Yahweh And Keeping The Passover (Vv.8-11)

The ceremonial ritual of national circumcision was completed. All “the people” — again, the word **goy** — were confined to the camp “till they were whole”. This is a remarkable expression. It incorporates the Hebrew word **chayah**, meaning “to live”. In Gen. 2:7, concerning the creation of man, it is recorded that “Yahweh Elohim . . . breathed into his nostrils the breath of **life**, and man became a **living** soul. . .”. The word **chay**, which occurs twice in Gen. 2:7, has been derived from the word **chayah**, which has been rendered “whole” in Josh. 5:8. The similarity of ideas being expressed is quite unmistakable. In the act of circumcision, the cutting off of flesh was to symbolise the beginning of a new life. The similarity to the symbolism represented in baptism is clear (cp. Rom. 6:3-4).

In His next words to Joshua, Yahweh alluded to the significance of what had been done: “This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. . .”. These words were spoken at Gilgal. The word “rolled” has been rendered from **galal**, from which **gilgal** has been derived. This is a work which only Yahweh can do. No man can “roll away” from his life the “reproach” which is brought upon him through sin and its effects. An illustration of this is shown in the life of the perfectly Godly man, Jesus Christ. Although a righteous man, he nevertheless recognised the need to submit to his Father in this way: “**He rolled** himself on Yahweh. . .” (Ps. 22:8, A.V. marg., the same word as occurs in Josh. 5:9, though the tense is different in the Hebrew). All who would follow Christ are urged to manifest a similar spirit: “**Roll** thy way upon Yahweh. . . **Roll** thy works unto Yahweh, and thy thoughts shall be established. . .” (Ps. 37:5; Prov. 16:3, A.V. marg.).

It should be observed that Israel’s “reproach” — or, disgrace—was

related to their association with Egypt. If those who have committed their way into the hands of Yahweh affiliate with spiritual Egypt (Rev. 11:8) they will become defiled through such an association, becoming identified again with “the house of bondage” (Ex. 13:3, 14; 20:2, etc.). It is through spiritual circumcision — now enacted through the act of baptism — that the “reproach” brought upon men through association with Egypt, may be “rolled away” (Rom. 6:18-22).

Through performance of this rite, with its numerous spiritual connotations, Israel were now to learn specific fundamental lessons: Their break with Egypt was to be final and complete; they were now dedicated to serving the God of Israel, and “Him only” (Matt. 4:10, cp. Deut. 6:13); and they were to resolutely set forth in the warfare against sin.

These are lessons which must be imprinted upon the mind of those who would enter the waters of baptism with the objective of becoming reconciled to God through the sacrifice of Christ.

The rites of circumcision having been completed, it was appropriate that the nation, almost immediately afterwards, partook of the Passover. Circumcision had been a necessary pre-requisite to the partaking of the Passover, since the Law expressly stated that “no uncircumcised person shall eat” of the Passover (Ex. 12:48). The lesson would be unmistakable to those who were spiritually-aware: there is little point in seeking covenant-relationship with Yahweh unless there is willing compliance with divine commandments and precepts. Thus, as with Israel of old, so with Believers of modern times: first, manifest a disposition which shows a willingness to cut off the flesh; then, embrace the blood of the Passover Lamb, the crucified Christ.

During the wilderness wanderings Israel had kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month, in the second year (Num. 9:1-5). There is no other record of the Passover having been kept during that period.

Now they kept the Passover for the first time in thirty eight years. They had crossed Jordan on the tenth day of Abib, and therefore had had to select and pen their lambs on the same day.

These two inter-related acts—national circumcision and the keeping of the Passover — signalled the opening of the campaign against the serpent-power of the gentiles. More than 400 years later Samuel certainly understood the significance of these events. After Israel’s victory over the Ammonites Samuel said, “Come, and let us go to **Gilgal**, and **renew the kingdom** there. . .” (1 Sam. 11:14).

It should be noted that whereas Gilgal was regarded as the place where the kingdom had formally commenced, it was to be, in effect,

the very place where the kingdom came to an end. In endeavouring to make his escape from the Babylonians, Zedekiah “fled” from Jerusalem, and went “by the way of the plain”. He headed south, perhaps intending to make a dash for Egypt. But the Chaldeans knew of the attempted escape and “pursued after” Zedekiah and his entourage. They caught the King of Judah “in the plains of Jericho”. Which is to say, in the general area of Gilgal (Jer. 39:4-5). No mere coincidence, surely. Certainly, a salutary lesson for all succeeding generations: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. . .” (Gal. 6:7). The kingdom ended where it began. It was just and fitting that it should be so, since the nation deserved only divine disapproval and censure for their rejection of Yahweh’s word.

Manna Ceases (v.12)

At Gilgal, the Israelites fed upon “the corn of the land” (Roth.). In that area the barley had ripened, but not the wheat (cp. 3:15 with 2:6). Often in scripture the eating of food is associated with spiritual blessings: “Trust in Yahweh, and do good. Dwell in the land, and **feed** on fidelity. . .” (Ps. 37:3, Roth.). “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. . .” (Matt. 4:4, cited from Deut. 8:3).

They ate “unleavened cakes”. The feast of Passover was associated with the Feast of unleavened Bread, first mentioned in Ex. 12:15. The Passover began on the fifteenth day of the month (Lev. 23:16), continuing for seven days. It has often been suggested that “leaven” is a symbol for corruption, and is therefore used in the Bible only in a bad sense. This is not altogether correct. Leaven is a term to represent whatever may promote the process of fermentation in dough. Leaven is symbolic for moral depravity and erroneous doctrine (Gal. 5:9; Matt. 16:6-12; Mark 8:15; Lk. 12:1). Whilst the term certainly symbolises the “spreading” of that which is ungodly, it is also used in a good sense (Matt. 13:33). However, generally, when leaven is referred to in the Scriptures, it is used in a bad sense.

Thus, the keeping of the Passover in Egypt, followed by deliverance therefrom, did not represent the finality of Israel’s calling. Every time the feast was kept — “at the beginning of months” (Ex. 12:2) — it was to mark a new “beginning” for Israel. There was to be a continual renewal and rededication on the part of all Israelites.

An understanding of this principle enhances the significance of the unleavened bread in relation to the Passover: Israel were to remain free from the moral and spiritual corruption of Egypt, or gentilism.

The present-day counterpart of these ideals is represented in the bread and the wine, which is to be partaken by Christ's disciples on the first day of each week. Such represents a renewal of their covenant, and a re-dedication of their lives to Yahweh.

Since the Israelites had now been brought into the Land of Promise where sufficient food would be available, the Manna ceased. Being the staple diet of the people during the wilderness wanderings, its regular availability had been vital to the survival of the nation. It is, however, relevant to note that God did not cause the Manna to cease until other adequate sustenance was available for His people. It has ever been so, in spiritual matters. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and **eat**. . . without money and without price . . ." God "**giveth** grace unto the humble. . ." (Isa. 55:1; Jas. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5). Yahweh's continuing provision for the spiritual needs of mankind may be summed up simply in the words of the Lord Jesus: "My Father **giveth** you the **true bread**. . . for the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and **giveth** life unto the world. . ." (John 6:32-33).

The fact that the "seed" of the "righteous" are not to be seen "begging bread" has both a literal and spiritual connotation (Ps. 37:25). In subsequent generations, faithful Israelites looked back to the days of Moses and Joshua, associating the provision of Manna with spiritual instruction: "Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not thy Manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst. . ." (Neh. 9:20). Such words epitomise Yahweh's purpose to ultimately redeem all His faithful servants. "They shall **hunger** no more, neither **thirst** any more. . . for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne will feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters. . ." (Rev. 7:16-17).

The Captain Of Yahweh's Army (Vv.13-15)

Joshua was a man of faith; he was also a man of initiative. Realising that the fortress-city of Jericho now barred the Israelites' way, he quietly and thoughtfully moved to a position from which he could observe the city.

He was not a man to minimise the difficulties. He faced the situation squarely, observing the city with the eye of a military leader and a man of faith. He could not help but be impressed with the apparent advantages which the people of Jericho enjoyed, insofar as their defences were concerned. Yet he remained quite confident that Yahweh would lead His people onward to victory until the land was conquered.

Meditating upon these matters, his attention was suddenly distracted. "He lifted up his eyes and looked" — an expression often used in the Bible to introduce an unexpected, impressive sight (cp. Gen. 18:2; 22:13; 1 Chron. 21:16, etc.). "Behold! There stood a man over against him! His sword drawn in his hand!"

Alerted at this unforeseen intrusion, Joshua reacted as might be expected of a military man: adopting a stance indicating that he was prepared to fight, he challenged the Stranger: "Art thou for **us**, or for our adversaries?" The question speaks eloquently of Joshua's uncompromising stand in relation to the Truth. In the warfare of faith he recognised only two sides: **them** and **us**!

The Stranger, unmoved and unafraid, gazed calmly at Joshua. "Nay", he replied, "but I, as prince of the host of Yahweh, have now come" (Roth.). The identity of this angelic being has not been revealed, but he was almost certainly the same angel who had earlier appeared to Moses at the burning bush. The similarity in language would indicate this (cp. Ex. 3:1-4). How apt were the words of Isaiah, to be written so long after the times of Joshua: "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old. . ." (Isa. 63:9).

As could be anticipated in a man who lived by faith, Joshua's reaction was immediate and appropriate. He "fell on his face to the earth". Then he asked: "What are my Lord's commands to his servant?" His first response was to show reverence; his second, to seek guidance and direction. Resolutely, and revealing an attitude of total submission, Joshua expressed — both in word and action — his willingness to conform to whatever was demanded of him. This prompt manifestation of faithful deference is indicative of a strongly disciplined spiritual life.

Joshua's disposition was not one of outward show. He exhibited the spirit required in one who would be faithful to Yahweh. "Rend your heart, and not your garments. . . Yahweh is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. . ." (Joel 2:13; Psa. 34:18).

Joshua was aware of that which the Law taught in regard to war between Israel and her enemies; and he would uphold the teaching of the Law in that regard as in other respects (see Deut. 20:1-4).

The angel responded to Joshua's humility. "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy . . ." Immediately, Joshua's thoughts would have gone back in time to the turning point in history, when an angelic being had uttered identical

words to Moses from the midst of the burning bush. At once, Joshua knew that he was prostrated in the presence of Elohim.

From this incident Joshua learned a compelling lesson which he was never to forget: as he meditatively viewed the city of Jericho and wondered how he would mount his military campaign against it, Yahweh's angel appeared to show him the way. Joshua, though a great and courageous spiritual warrior, still needed to be led and guided by Yahweh. So it must be with all who would become faithful servants of Israel's God. And Yahweh will always respond to the needs of His people, in His own way and in His own wisdom. "For He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee . . ." (Heb. 13:5; Deut. 31:6; Josh. 1:5).

Now that Israel had safely and miraculously crossed Jordan, they were to become a people at war. Yet, it was not **their** war: it was Yahweh's war. And therefore a holy war. So it is with God's faithful servants down through the ages; in every generation, they are a people at war against sin.

And by what means do they ultimately gain the victory? By doing precisely as Joshua did. Hearken submissively to the word and will of Yahweh, and heed faithfully His words of instruction. "Yahweh is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me? . . . if God be for us, who can be against us?" (Ps. 118:6; Rom. 8:31).

Joshua obeyed the voice of his heavenly visitor. He removed his shoes. And waited for the voice of instruction to continue.

CHAPTER SIX

Instruction From The Angelic Captain (Vv.1-5)

The city of Jericho stood five miles to the west of Jordan and 800 feet below sea level.

Its name means “place of fragrance” or “city of the moon”. It is called “the city of Palm trees” in Deut. 34:3.

Although covering an area of only six acres, the city presented an imposing challenge to any prospective aggressor. Its walls reared skyward to a height of thirty feet. Surrounded by a wall twelve feet thick, there was an additional outer wall six feet thick. The overthrow of such a city would appear an almost insuperable objective.

Ancient trade routes from the east crossed Jordan near Jericho, then branched northward, southward and westward. Any invading force holding Jericho could effectively divide the north from the south, and close off further advances from the east.

And this was precisely the operation the Israelites were about to mount.

With the allocation of cantonments to the tribes of Israel, Jericho came into the province of Benjamin (18:21).

Because of the presence of the Israelites on the western side of Jordan, “Jericho was shut up and barred” (Roth.). The inhabitants were alarmed and fearful. Before the Israelites had made any move against them, the people of Jericho had adopted a course of action appropriate to a city under siege.

The extent of their anxiety must have been considerable. Yet, within the walls of the city dwelt a woman who understood what was about to happen, and who had humbly pleaded for her life and the lives of the members of her family. Why did others in Jericho not do likewise? Simply, because they remained enshrouded in the darkness of their fleshly minds. They typify gentilism, in its ignorance and rejection of the word of Yahweh. Firm in their unbelief, they resisted the Truth. They therefore placed the seal upon their own fate.

The Captain of Yahweh’s army addressed himself to Joshua: “See, I have given into thine hand Jericho and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour . . .”.

Although it is clear the angel was speaking, he is termed “Yahweh”. This is a common scriptural idiom, as such an angel speaks in the Name of Yahweh and on behalf of the One Eternal Spirit (cp. Gen. 18:1-13; Ex. 3:1-4; 23:20-23, etc.).

The angel spoke confidently and with assurance: Yahweh would deliver the city into the hands of the Israelites. Joshua was to manifest an unshakeable faith that this would be accomplished. Success would be certain, if God's word was heeded and obeyed.

Those who today await the time when that "great city" — modern-day Babylon — will be brought crashing to the dust, must exhibit a similar faith. Yahweh has said that He can and will bring it about. Those who will inherit His kingdom must take Him at His word, and struggle onward in faith until that which has been promised becomes a reality.

Joshua was told that the army of Israel was to "make" a "circuit" around the city of Jericho, once daily for six days (J.B.) From the time the army began to compass the walls it would have taken less than one hour to complete the circuit.

The six days typify the six one-thousand-year "days" during which the saints of God have been engaged in the warfare of faith. "Six" is also the symbolic number to represent flesh (Gen. 1:26, 31; Rev. 13:18). On the seventh one-thousand-year "day" they will be given the victory, which will become a "sabbath" rest of 1,000 literal years.

Israel were being taught that it would take six days to bring down the power of flesh in its opposition to the will of God.

As a man of considerable military experience and ability, Joshua might well have been shocked at such instructions. He could have asked: "Why should we only march, and not fight? Why extend the campaign over seven days? Why the need to keep silence, shouting only on the seventh day?" He could have asked these and many other questions. But he did not do so. He received his strange orders in silence.

Thoughtfully, he cogitated upon the words he had heard. Unusual instructions these may have been; but they came from Yahweh, and would therefore be accepted without question by this man of faith.

In every generation all who would be pleasing to God must do likewise. Faith must be the dominant factor in the life of all God's servants.

Joshua was told: "Seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns . . ."

The number "seven" (Heb. **shibah**) has been derived from a word meaning "to swear an oath" (Heb. **shaba**). The root word occurs in such passages as Gen. 21:31; Ps. 110:4; 132:11, etc. Seven is also the prime covenant number.

As seven trumpets were associated with the bringing-down of the walls of Jericho, so in the Apocalypse seven trumpets are associated

with the destruction of latter-day Babylon. That the latter is based upon the typical significance of the former appears to be beyond doubt.

Each of the seven priests were to carry a **Shofar** trumpet, such as was commonly used for calling the nation to war and to announce the year of Jubilee (Judg. 3:27; Lev. 25:9). Significantly, the **Shofar** is referred to prophetically in relation to the future restoration of Israel, which will be effected after the destruction of latter-day Babylon (Isa. 27:13).

Joshua was instructed that the ritual of marching around Jericho each day was to be performed for six consecutive days, and on the seventh day they were to march around the city seven times. This injunction was astonishing, for it completely contravened the accepted laws concerning the sabbath! How could Israel follow this directive, whilst at the same time preserve the Mosaic ordinances concerning the sabbath day? It was not possible to do both (cp. Ex. 20:9-11).

What was to be learned from this apparent paradox?

The Israelites were being shown quite clearly that their hope of eternal salvation could not be attained through the Law of Moses. They were to understand that Yahweh would provide some other way quite apart from the Law.

The fact that they were to circle the city on seven successive days and then seven times on the seventh day, stressed the key to attaining redemption: “complete” dedication to Yahweh upon the basis of the Abrahamic “covenant”. If such dedication is consistently manifested by Believers, they must ultimately gain the victory: the forces of sin will be defeated; and the cities of the gentiles, which represent their power and their systems, will likewise be utterly demolished; and Christ and his victorious brethren will reign supreme and have “dominion” over all the earth (2 Cor. 10:4-5; Rev. 16:19; 18:2; Gen. 1:26; Ps. 8:6; Heb. 1:7-10).

On completion of the seventh circuit on the last day, the priests were to “make a long blast” with the ram’s horn. Such direction would remind the Israelites of their earlier assembly at the foot of Sinai, when the piercing sound of a similar trumpet signalled the awesome presence of Yahweh (Ex. 19:16).

At that point, all the people were to “shout”. This would be an act of triumph; a gesture indicating that a crushing victory had been gained. This was to be done in faith, for they were to give such an exultant shout **before** the walls of Jericho came down!

At every step of the events which were to bring Israel to triumph over Jericho, Yahweh demanded from His people only one thing: the exercise of faith.

If the people carefully followed Yahweh's instructions, He would at that moment reward their faith. "The wall of the city shall fall down under it", they were assured (Roth.). This statement suggests that the walls of Jericho would collapse from their foundations. Unquestionably, a miracle would be required to cause this to happen.

When this occurred, the army of Israel was to "ascend up" against the city, "each man going straight ahead" (J.B.). None were to pause or waver. It was not a moment for indecision. Those who would follow faithfully in the footsteps of Christ must develop this disposition. In the warfare of faith it is necessary to go "straight ahead". Yahweh's singular commandment to the Israelites who had stood petrified with fear at the edge of the Red Sea was: "Go forward!" Paul's attitude is worthy of emulation: "I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. . ." (Phil. 3:14).

Yahweh's Word Implemented (Vv.6-16)

Joshua assembled the priests to instruct them.

The order in which the people were to march was explained. The procession was to be headed by armed men, who would be followed by the priests with trumpets; then would come the ark, and finally the "rearguard" (v.9, Roth.).

Then "he said to the people, Forward!" (J.B.).

And so the great drama began.

They began to move without delay. As was demonstrated in Joshua's leadership at the crossing of Jordan, when embarking upon the warfare of faith there can be no lingering or turning back. Nothing must be permitted to hinder the prosecution of the "war". "Go forward!" must always be the exhortatory cry.

An additional instruction which was of considerable significance had been stressed: "Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout; then shall ye shout. . ."

As a means of building up morale prior to combat, no instruction could have been more extraordinary than this. Traditionally, soldiers are sent into battle screaming and shouting. This is a means of fortifying their own courage, and instilling fear into the hearts of the enemy.

An experienced military leader, Joshua may have considered such an order unreasonable. However, he was a man of faith; and his faith far outweighed any fleshly inclinations. He humbly accepted the instruction, and conveyed it to the people.

What were they to learn from this command?

This was a time for thoughtful meditation on the part of God's people. "He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction. . . a fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul. . ." (Prov. 13:3; 18:7). Job, when faced with the stark reality of his total dependence upon the power and the goodness of Yahweh, said: "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. . ." (Job 40:3-4).

The Israelites were not embarking upon a strictly military operation, but a religious one. The walls of Jericho were not to be brought down by the arm of flesh, but through the exercise of faith.

Silence was to be maintained "until the day" when victory became a reality (v.10). Herein is expressed a wonderful type. Throughout the ages, Yahweh's true saints press on towards the kingdom, quietly and patiently, accepting the trials and difficulties which are strewn along the way. But the day will come when their period of probation will come to an end; for their faith will have been proven under trial. In that day the saints will be "joyful" and will "sing **aloud**" because Yahweh has given them the victory over sin, and over all the forces of gentilism. God's saints shall "**shout** for joy. . ." (Ps. 149:5; 132:9). At that time, the beginning of the "seventh" one-thousand-year day, Babylon the great will be destroyed, together with all gentile systems associated therewith. Yahweh will say to His redeemed and immortalised saints: "Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. . ." Yahweh's "controversy with the nations" will result in the vindication of His saints, and the establishment of His kingdom upon the earth (Rev. 18:6; Jer. 25:31).

It is difficult to comprehend the extent of terror experienced by the people of Jericho. Anticipating a full-scale military operation on the part of the Israelites, the people would have lined the walls on the first day when news came to hand that the army of Israel was heading for the city. Expecting to receive the full fury of a strongly-mounted attack, the people of Jericho would have watched silently, in open-mouthed amazement, as the Israelites began to encompass the city. The Canaanites watched the processional march, noting the order: the armed men, the priests with trumpets, the ark, followed by the rest of the army.

The fact that the Israelites did not fight, but kept total silence as they marched in dignified procession, together with the presence of the ark, would have impressed the people of Jericho with one inescapable conclusion: the Israelites were engaged upon a religious ritual, the ark testifying to the “presence” of Israel’s God.

This is quite remarkable, for it provides an example of the “longsuffering” of God (Ex. 34:6; Num. 14:18; Rom. 2:4; 1 Pet. 3:20, etc.). During the six days the people of Jericho had ample time to observe the Israelites, and to reflect upon their own situation. They were granted six days during which time the people of the city could have emulated the faith of Rahab. But they remained stubbornly set in their ways, totally rejecting the longsuffering of Yahweh. Similarly, during six thousand years of human history, mankind has had opportunity to seek the God of Heaven, and submit in all humility to His word and His will. But with an obstinacy similar to that of the people of Jericho the majority of the human race have remained in their sins, reprobate and unrepentant.

Their activities for the first day concluded, the Israelites returned to their camp. What would have been their thoughts as they silently and soberly made their way back to Gilgal? It seemed apparent that they had achieved nothing. Jericho still stood; the people of the city were still entrenched. It seemed nothing had been accomplished to further Israel’s cause. This was not so. God’s instructions had been obeyed. That was the matter of prime importance at that time.

Day after day for six days it was the same. And the daily lives of God’s true saints follow a similar pattern: they struggle onward in the Truth, yet outwardly appearing to achieve little. The great and fearful system of latter-day Babylon remains as powerful and influential as ever. But those who walk before Yahweh “in spirit and in truth” are developing characters which are moulded by His word. They are increasingly becoming enriched in faith. Thus through God’s influence they are being developed, in preparation for the time when He will consider them worthy to be granted the final and ultimate victory.

Until that triumphant day dawns, God’s true saints throughout the six one-thousand-year “days” of human history humbly submit to the will of their God, assured that finally victory will be theirs if they “faint not”.

Throughout the seven days the Israelites remained enthusiastic, devoted to fulfilling Yahweh’s commands. The second day they “rose early”, which indicates the degree of their keenness. Day by day they “went on and on” with their activities, showing their unreserved commitment to this cause (Roth.).

On the seventh day, their patience and expectancy remained unabated. Again, they “rose early”.

Two significant expressions occur in v.15 in regard to the seventh day. It is recorded that they arose “as the dawn went up” (Lit., Heb.). And it will be at the dawning of the new millennial day that Christ and his glorified brethren will go forth to bring down the forces of latter-day Babylon, and shed abroad the “light” of a new era for the world. It is further stated that they set off from Gilgal “after the same manner”. This phrase, rendered from the Hebrew **mishpat**, literally signifies “a verdict” or “a judgment”. Thus, they went forth to pronounce the verdict and bring destructive judgment upon the city and people of Jericho.

This day they would understand why they had been told to follow such a strange pattern of activity during the seven-day period. They would learn more fully a wonderful divine principle which men and women of faith down through the ages have learned: “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. . .” (Isa. 55:9).

Throughout the remainder of their military campaigns against the Canaanites, the Israelites would remember not only their victory at Jericho, but the way in which it was attained. With sober clarity, the overriding lesson was set before them: it is Yahweh who gives the victory — in His own way and in His own time.

The cycle of seven days which resulted in the destruction of Jericho typified all the major military campaigns the Israelites were to fight against the Canaanites. Caleb indicated that the conquest of the land took seven years (14:7, 10). The seven days also typified the completion of Yahweh’s warfare against sin; for, at the end of the seventh one-thousand-year “day” Adamic nature will be finally abolished from the earth and God will become “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28).

Travelling along the plain, the high walls of Jericho once again came into the view of the Israelites. They approached the city.

To the consternation and puzzlement of the inhabitants, instead of making one circuit to which the people of Jericho had become accustomed, the Israelites now marched around the city seven times.

With the completion of the final circuit, the people were called upon to shout.

Joshua then delivered an exhortation.

Jericho Devoted And Destroyed (Vv.17-21)

“Shout!” cried Joshua, “for Yahweh hath given you the city!”

And shout they did, at the appropriate moment.

But they were to carefully respect some special instructions: "The city shall be devoted, or set apart", said Joshua (A.V. marg., Roth., J.B.). Which was to say, the city was to be treated as the "firstfruits" of conquest in the land, and that the city should therefore be entirely set apart and devoted to Yahweh (cp. Lev.27:21, 28, 29; Ezek. 39:17-19). There was to be only one exception: Rahab and her family. The reason? She had already **set herself apart** and **devoted** herself to Yahweh.

The men of Israel were to "beware of the ban" (J.B.), otherwise they, too, would become "devoted" to Yahweh and to destruction. Joshua pointed out that "the camp of Israel" could become "devoted" if this commandment should be disregarded. "Trouble" would come upon the nation — the word is **akar**, and it was soon to be repeated fearfully, as a result of the folly of Achan (7:25).

"All the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron are consecrated unto Yahweh", Joshua announced. "They shall come into the treasury of Yahweh."

Joshua concluded his exhortation, and the people shouted.

They could not have been prepared for the sight which met their gaze. The ground began to tremble beneath their feet. The eyes of every Israelite were directed towards the walls of Jericho. The ground began to heave. The walls shuddered and swayed. Jagged cracks appeared in the masonry and the walls began to split apart, falling outwards, hitting the earth with a shattering, thunderous roar which drowned the screams of the city's inhabitants. The air was filled with choking dust and fine dry particles of powdered rubble.

Joshua's record bluntly states: "The walls fell down flat". However, in Paul's comment upon that statement, his inspired wording is quite explicit: "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, **after** they were compassed seven days. . ." (Heb. 11:30). Which is simply another way of saying that the people were required to manifest faith before Yahweh would give them the victory. Such is an unchanging principle in God's dealings with men.

Shocked into immobility at the awesome power which Yahweh had unleashed, the Israelites remained transfixed for some moments. Then the full realisation of that which had occurred brought them to their senses. Rushing forward, the men of Israel unleashed their attack against the defenceless city.

What of the people of Jericho? There may be a tendency to experience an emotional pang of sympathy for the wretched inhabitants of the city, whose lives were forfeit.

Sympathy for them would be misdirected. It has been demonstrated that Yahweh allowed them six days in which they might have considered their position. They had declined to repudiate their Canaanitish ways. Doubtless they felt secure within their city walls. Flesh tends to imagine that its walls of protection are impregnable. But all defences of the flesh will always prove insecure when confronted with the power of Yahweh. Like all men of flesh, the people of Jericho rested their hopes upon unstable “foundations” — literally and metaphorically. Likewise, under the judgments of the Seventh Vial, when Christ and his saints “execute the judgements written” the nations will learn this, because “the cities of the nations” will fall (Ps. 149:9; Rev. 16:19).

Thus it was that the Israelites “utterly destroyed all that was in the city”. Such action was strictly in conformity with the requirements of the Law (Deut. 7:1-4). Similarly, those who would strive to serve Yahweh as members of the Body of Christ must “destroy” every vestige of gentile influence which could otherwise lead them from Yahweh. The lesson is clear! In serving Israel’s God, there can be no compromise with sin.

It should also be understood that the Canaanites were an evil people. In ordering their destruction Yahweh was demonstrating His judgment against the ungodly. Before Israel entered the land they had been told: “Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations Yahweh thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that He may perform the word which Yahweh sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” (Deut. 9:5).

So the men of Israel destroyed the people of Jericho “with the edge of the sword” — a symbol for the word of God, which is the basis of all divine judgment (Heb. 4:12; Eph. 5:17; John 12:48).

Rahab’s Faith Rewarded (Vv.22-25)

Before the Israelites commenced the last phase of their warfare against Jericho, Joshua had two men brought into his presence. These were the two spies whom Rahab had protected, at enormous risk to her own life. These two were appointed to deliver Rahab at the appropriate time. If Yahweh’s retribution is exact, how exquisite are His ways for rewarding faithfulness. The very men whom she had preserved were designated to fulfil the promise they had made to her.

Joshua had instructed them: “Go into the harlot’s house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye sware unto her. . .” Rahab’s house was “upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the

wall" (2:15). Which means that when all the walls of Jericho "fell down flat" there remained one sliver of wall intact! And prominently featured in that section of wall was Rahab's window: and in the window, for all to see, hung the "scarlet of her expectation. . .".

In the midst of a situation of such high tension and drama, what a sublime touch this picture adds to the scene. All the men of Israel were able to watch, transfixed, as the walls of the city came crashing down; and then to observe the one small section of wall which remained upright, unscathed, almost like a pole or stake lifted up — such as that upon which the Son of God died. And they saw the unmistakable blood-red scarlet in the window.

As all the rest of the walls were brought **down** by faith, so one narrow section remained **intact** through faith.

Joshua's command: "Bring her out!" was not unlike Christ's call to Lazarus: "Come forth!" There at Jericho, the scene of such devastation and destruction, deliverance came to Rahab and her family. Salvation out of the midst of death. An inspiring example of the goodness and mercy of Yahweh. One to sustain men and women of faith throughout history, until the coming of the Lord from heaven.

It should not be forgotten that the faith of Rahab ultimately brought about the deliverance of others: "Her father, and her mother, and her brethren. . ." Faith is expansive. A manifestation of individual faith may be disclosed to others, affecting them and drawing them to Yahweh.

However, although Rahab had displayed a wonderful trust in God, neither she nor the members of her family were yet ready for acceptance into "the hope of Israel". The lesson taught at this point was most profound: The two men who brought them down from the house were told to "set them **outside** the camp of Israel" (Roth.). The word is a strong one. It means "to sever or separate".

Among the Israelites, to be sent outside the camp signified a state of uncleanness (Lev. 14:40). Though delivered from Jericho, Rahab and her family were not permitted to enter the camp of Israel because they had not yet been confirmed into covenant-relationship with Yahweh. The males would require to be circumcised, and the entire family appraised of their newly-discovered responsibilities. Such principles were deeply respected by the people of Israel at this time (cp. Num. 5:2; 31:19). They would have avoided many pitfalls and tragedies had they continued to remain loyal to the twofold divine principle of separation and dedication.

After a short period, Rahab and her family dwelt among the Israelites. Because of her faith and works she was rewarded. Together with her family, she became “renewed” in “the spirit” of her “mind” through the influence of the Truth (cp. Eph. 4:22-24; Jas. 2:25-26).

Had Rahab failed to manifest such qualities as were pleasing to Yahweh, she would have perished with her contemporaries in the overthrow and destruction of Jericho.

Through faith, she became a recipient of the grace of God (Eph. 2:8). And so shall others who display a similar disposition.

Together with all who are to be accounted faithful, Rahab will yet benefit even more fully in the future at Christ’s coming; for the real “hope” of her “expectation” is yet to be realised.

Joshua Vindicated (Vv.26-27)

Setting a type for the coming destruction of all gentile power throughout the earth, Jericho was razed to the ground and “burnt” with “fire” — a symbol for divine judgment (Deut. 4:24; Heb. 12:29, etc.).

The city ceased to exist. And as the Israelites looked with awe upon the extent of Yahweh’s judgment upon that place, “Joshua imposed an oath” (Roth.). A curse was to come upon any man who attempted to rebuild upon this site. “He shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it. . .”. And so it was to be. With terrible fulfilment the curse came upon Hiel, a native of Bethel. Foolishly, he determined to rebuild Jericho in the days of Ahab, more than 600 years after Joshua. The result of his disregard for Joshua’s pronouncement proved disastrous (1 Kings 16:34). Jericho had been declared a city “devoted” to Yahweh. Any who chose to ignore this declaration would receive swift justice. To this day, the ruins of the city provide stark testimony to the truth of Joshua’s verdict upon it.

As a result of this astonishing victory, it was widely proclaimed throughout the camp of Israel that “Yahweh was with Joshua”. The Israelites learned the lesson which they were intended to absorb from the events which occurred at Jericho. All who wish to avoid eternal destruction must join themselves, willingly and submissively, to the Mighty God of Israel. Joshua had proven a faithful leader. Thus, “his fame was noised throughout all the country. . .”.

Those who earnestly desire to be found worthy of an inheritance in God’s kingdom will remain closely associated with the greater Joshua — the Lord Jesus Christ — who is able to develop within them a faith

which will “overcome the world” (1 John 5:4). In due time he will lead his faithful brethren to a glorious victory over the forces of darkness and sin, and bring them to absolute triumph over all the powers of gentilism. Yet, as at Jericho, the victory will really belong to Yahweh. And His Name will be vindicated above all others throughout the earth.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Defeat At Ai (Vv.1-6)

Elated at the great victory Yahweh had given them at Jericho, the Israelites turned their attention to the north-west. There, about fourteen miles from Jericho and close by Bethel, stood the city of Ai.

A very ancient city, it is mentioned in the Bible as early as Gen. 12:8. After the Babylonian captivity the city was still inhabited (Ezra 2:28).

Like Jericho, it was not large (v.3). Its real worth lay in its strategic importance.

The name Ai means "ruin" or "heap of ruins" (Ges.). And it very nearly brought ruin to Israel.

There is no record of Israel warring against Bethel. However, as these two cities were only a short distance apart, it was accepted that in the event of trouble the men of the two cities would support each other (8:17). There is no mention of Bethel being conquered during Joshua's campaigns. It was not totally subdued until after the death of Joshua (Judg. 1:22-26).

So it came about that Joshua sent men to spy out the land of Ai. "Go up and reconnoitre the country", he instructed the men (J.B.). This was a similar approach to that which he had made at Jericho.

But trouble lay ahead. "The children of Israel" had "committed a trespass" — a word which indicates some form of treachery or transgression. Interestingly, the word has been derived from another which means "to cover up". Thus, a sin had been committed which involved the entire nation. For this sin to be forgiven, it would, like all other sins, have to be brought to the light of day and repudiated.

Achan (his name means "trouble") had taken of "the accursed thing" — that which had been "devoted" to Yahweh. This he had done in defiance of Joshua's clear instructions (6:17-19).

It was no wonder that "the anger of Yahweh was kindled against the children of Israel".

Yet, with disaster pending, Joshua and his subordinates remained in ignorance of Achan's faithlessness.

The men fulfilled their commission and returned to Joshua. Almost too casually, they announced that Ai would present no problem to the Israelites. It is always unwise to be presumptuous, in spiritual matters. "Spare the whole people such a toil; the enemy are not many", the

spies advised (J.B.). No doubt they made their report from a standpoint which they would view as the exercise of faith. All well and good. But where do the elements of faith and over-confidence become confused?

Faith requires that men see the issues of life through the eyes of Yahweh. Self-confidence may result when some matters are taken for granted.

Joshua pondered the advice of his men, and acquiesced.

Three thousand men made the march to Ai. There they were defeated.

This younger generation had not known the horror of being vanquished by an enemy. In fear and terror "they fled before the men of Ai" who "chased the Israelites from the gate of their city to **Shebarim**", probably a stone quarry some distance from the city. The word signifies "the crushings" or "the ruins". The triumphant men of Ai drove the army of Israel "down" from their mountain heights.

Faith Without Works Is Dead (Vv.7-12)

Joshua was appalled. He "rent his clothes" — an expression of deep grief. He "fell to the earth", prostrating himself in abject humiliation. He and the elders of Israel "put dust upon their heads" — a symbolic gesture, indicating that they recognised themselves to be creatures of the earth and therefore unworthy before Yahweh. These things they did "before the ark" which was the symbol of God's presence among the Israelites.

Then Joshua prayed.

There is no record of him having sought a blessing upon the army before they marched off to Ai. Had he done so, it is evident that Yahweh would have spoken concerning the "trespass". The lives of thirty-six men may have been saved. Often, because of the inadequacies of human nature, Yahweh's servants have to learn the hard way.

In his misery, Joshua felt that perhaps Yahweh had withdrawn from His people entirely. "Wherefore", he prayed, "has Thou brought this people over the Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorite, to destroy us?" (Roth.).

Opposite: Looking from ruins of Jericho up to Hills of Judea.



Joshua well knew that there could be no continuing victories for the Israelites, unless Yahweh blessed them. In his anguish, this was an overwhelming sorrow which Joshua found utterly confounding. What had gone wrong? Where was Yahweh? Why had the Israelites failed such a comparatively easy mission?

He prayed, simply: "What shall I say?"

The army of Israel could become demoralised. The Canaanites would "hear" what had happened. The results could well prove calamitous. Joshua imagined the jubilation of the Canaanites: "Israel's Mighty God has deserted them!" And then combining to pulverise the Israelites into oblivion.

And what of the "Great Name" of Yahweh? Would it be ridiculed and held in contempt among these godless and degenerate gentiles?

Mourning and stricken, Joshua poured out his heart to God.

His prayer brought an immediate response.

"Get thee up! Wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?" Action was required. And that, without delay. Whilst he remained prostrate upon the earth Joshua was not moving to rectify the cause of the disaster which had struck Israel.

God then addressed a brief statement to Joshua, which turned his heart to ice: "Israel hath sinned. . .".

Joshua now knew the reason for their defeat at Ai. He listened fearfully, as Yahweh outlined what had been done contrary to His will. In effect, the nation was condemned on four counts: they had broken their solemn vow; they had seized that which was not theirs; they had acted deceitfully; they had taken possession of that which belonged rightfully to Yahweh.

These were the reasons for the "trouble" — and the trouble had been caused by Achan; although Joshua had yet to be enlightened as to the identity of the offender.

The nation had to learn that a profession of faith in God is not sufficient to please Him. Faith must be accompanied by works of obedience. Hence, they were soon to learn: "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. . ." (Jas. 1:22).

Having within their ranks a man who had blatantly defied Yahweh, Israel had, themselves, become "accursed" or devoted. There was only one thing they could do: they were to "destroy the accursed. . ." They learned that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump . . ." (1 Cor. 5:6, cp. Gal. 5:9).

Action was to be taken without delay.

The Nation Assembled—The Guilty One Revealed (Vv.13-18)

“Up! Sanctify the people!” Yahweh commanded. They had had to do this earlier (3:5), but perhaps now they would see a deeper significance in this. Ritual cleansing is pointless and without value, unless accompanied by an inner cleansing of the heart and mind.

Before the identity of the sinner was made known, his sentence was pronounced with chilling finality. “He that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath: because he hath transgressed the covenant of Yahweh, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel.”

With the declaration of this verdict, the lesson to be learned was pressed home unmistakably: even though the entire nation had become contaminated through the wickedness which had been perpetrated, ultimately the question of sinfulness must be faced by the individual. Achan had stolen that which had been “devoted” to Yahweh. He had committed sacrilege. Every Israelite would be called upon to repudiate the sin. And the sinner.

He was to be “burnt with fire” — a symbol for divine judgment (cp. 6:24). The nation was to graphically learn that “the wages of sin is death”.

The Law was quite specific in stating that “the fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin (Deut. 24:16). It follows, then, that Achan’s family were not only aware of his sin, but kept it hidden, as he had. Together with all their possessions, they were to be destroyed.

As is so often the case, Achan’s sin affected not only himself, but his family and the entire nation. He had, indeed, “wrought folly in Israel”. The word more literally means “foolishness” or “wickedness”.

And it had all begun with covetousness. He saw. . . he coveted. . . he took. . . (v.21). But Achan had gained no real pleasure from his wickedness. Perhaps a certain fleeting moment of triumph. But then? The need for continual deception; the necessity for furtively keeping the sin hidden; the constant fear of discovery and exposure. And finally, the horror of facing a violent death.

Had it been worth it? Sin never is.

“Early” in the morning the tribes were assembled. There was to be no delay in implementing Yahweh’s instructions for dealing with sin.



The atmosphere would have been tense. Uneasy, troubled, uncertain as to what would happen, the people anxiously awaited the outcome of the unfolding drama. They had been told “the tribe that Yahweh marks out by lot” and “the clan that Yahweh marks out by lot” would be the process of elimination whereby the offender would be revealed (J.B.).

The tribe of Judah was “taken”.

A hushed stir of disbelief and fear would have rippled through the ranks of the people of Judah.

From within the tribe, Yahweh’s “lot” fell upon the clan — or family — of the Zarhites. They were descended from Zarah, a son of Judah. He had been born of Tamar, the twin of Pharez (Gen. 38:30; Num. 26:13, 20).

At this point, observing the unerring accuracy of the Hand of Providence, Achan could well have come forward and admitted his guilt. That he failed to do so is indicative of his disposition: he persisted in his crime and remained hardened in sin. Right to the moment of disclosure.

Achan was without excuse. Only a matter of days before he had renewed the covenant and kept the Passover, together with the rest of Israel (5:2-9).

The house of Zabdi was “taken”. The avenue of guilt was narrowing. From this family, one contemporary name was called: Achan!

An icy hand clutched at the heart of Achan. The members of his family would have trembled.

What man possessing spiritual vision could hope to escape the piercing eye of Almighty God? “The eyes of Yahweh are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. . . For the eyes of Yahweh run to and fro throughout the whole earth. . .” (Prov. 15:3; 2 Chron. 16:9).

Of Israel’s God, the prophet Jeremiah soberly reflected: “Great in counsel, and mighty in work; for thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give everyone according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. . .” (Jer. 32:19).

Opposite: Valley of Achor (looking east down the valley towards the Jordan River and Jericho).

Fearful Consequences Of Covetousness (Vv.19-23)

With the guilty man standing before him, it would not have been surprising if Joshua had thundered forth in a blaze of anger. He refrained from doing so. As his eyes rested upon Achan, he saw a man condemned to death. He addressed him with words of tenderness, whilst remaining unsympathetic in view of Achan's wickedness against Yahweh.

"My son. . ."

The word **ben** signifies not merely a son, but a son "as the builder of a family name".

What had Achan "built" for **his** family name? Only a terrible infamy that left a stain upon his lineage throughout history.

Joshua said: "Give, I pray thee, glory to Yahweh Elohim of Israel, and make confession unto Him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me. . ."

How beautifully — even at this sobering moment — Joshua posed the age-old question: what is flesh? "The flesh profiteth nothing! Nothing!" taught the Son of God (Jn. 6:63, lit. Gk.). To which Paul added: "In me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth **no** good thing. . ."

(Rom. 7:18).

Joshua was saying, in effect, that when a man is faced with a revelation concerning his own sinfulness, only Yahweh is worthy of glory.

"What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" (Ps. 8:4).

Achan could no longer conceal his secret. His sin was known. To both God and man.

"Indeed", he confessed, "I have **sinned**. . ." The word is **chata**, "to miss the mark" — to fall below the standard of the perfection of the divine character.

Finally, out of his own mouth he stood condemned. "I have sinned", he said, "against Yahweh". He acknowledged that the One Whom he had offended was none other than Israel's God.

Achan admitted: "I saw. . .I coveted. . .and took. . .". That which had brought about the destruction of Achan had been the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.

There had been three stages in bringing his sin to completion: first, he saw; then he wanted; then he took (cp. 1 Jn. 2:16; Jas. 1:15; Colos. 3:5; 1 Tim. 6:6-8).

What were the things which had destroyed him?

First, “a fine robe from Shinar” (J.B.). The eyes of men may readily lust after the things of Babylon, but any such thoughts should be dismissed immediately. At that period of history, the Babylonians were regarded as the finest of weavers; so their cloth would be enthusiastically prized. In his comment upon this incident, Josephus states that this was “a royal garment, woven entirely of gold”. If such were the truth, it would have presented a dazzling prize. Obviously, Achan had been so spellbound at the prospect of possessing such a garment, he had been unable to resist the temptation, even though it meant sinning against Yahweh.

There had also been “two hundred shekels of silver”. This was approximately one hundred ounces, the value of which would have been a princely sum.

And there had been “a wedge of gold” — literally, as the A.V. margin: a tongue of gold. This would have been the equivalent of a present-day ingot, probably about twenty five ounces. Even in those days, such a “wedge” of gold would have been of enormous value.

Though these precious metals rightly belonged in the treasury of Yahweh (6:24), Achan had become obsessed in his lust to possess them. Such uncontrolled desire cost him his life, and the lives of his family.

Such a situation is described in Proverbs. “He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live” (Prov. 15:27). Achan “troubled” his own house because, dominated by evil motives, he had drawn himself — and therefore his family — away from the pathway of the Truth. Covetousness is one of the greatest destroyers of men, not only because it is evil in itself, but because it fills the mind with obsessive lust to the exclusion of divine wisdom.

He who despises the “gifts” which may be sought avidly upon the basis of fleshly lust, and seeks to walk before God in all integrity, will ultimately become richer than any man of the flesh.

Another Proverb states: “He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him” (Prov. 28:22). A man who is in a hurry to become rich must devote himself to that cause. An “evil eye” is not fixed upon Yahweh, but upon those things which captivate and ensnare the fleshly mind.

“Take heed! And beware of covetousness!” warned the Lord Jesus (Lk. 12:15). Greed can never bring eternal riches.

Finally, even though it may be at the end of his life, a man who has been dominated by a lust for material possessions will face the awful reality that he is left with nothing but poverty. For, he has not found God.

Such a man was Achan. He thought he had seized upon riches, but discovered that he was now about to lose everything — including his life.

He had hidden his stolen possessions “in the earth”, which was the most appropriate place for them. A man whose life is not ruled by the principles of divine Truth is purely earthy. Achan was “earthy, sensual, devilish”, not discerning “the wisdom that is from above” (Jas. 3:15-17).

Joshua sent men, who ran to Achan’s tent. They discovered the evidence which verified Achan’s confession—a confession which came too late to save him. The reality of his sin was proven beyond all doubt.

In a hushed atmosphere, the three items were brought before Joshua “and all the children of Israel”. They were laid out “before Yahweh”. This was, in effect, an uncovering of the sin. After David’s sin had been declared by the prophet Nathan, David humbled himself before God. “I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. . .” (Ps. 32:5). In a national sense, Israel was now doing this — revealing the sin to God, and repudiating it.

The Hebrew word, **yatsaq**, rendered “laid them out” in the A.V. is a word used to describe the “pouring out” of the blood of the sacrifices (Lev. 8:15; 9:9, etc.). The people of Israel handled Achan’s three stolen items as they would a sacrifice, symbolically “pouring” them out before Yahweh.

Yahweh’s Judgment Against Sin (Vv.24-26)

It is significant that the phrase “Joshua, and **all** Israel” occurs twice (Vv.23-24), and the words “**all** Israel” occur again in v.25.

This was a national rejection of sin, and its effects. The judgment required by the Law was about to be carried out (Deut. 17:2-7).

Achan and his family, and all their possessions, were brought to the valley of Achor — a place which must have been considered fitting, since its name means “Trouble”. The name may have been given subsequent to these events.

“And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? Yahweh shall trouble thee this day!” Sin brings trouble. And “the wages of sin is death . . .” (Rom. 6:23).

They were stoned to death, and then burned with fire.

The Israelites “raised over him a great heap of stones”. The last act performed for Achan was to afford him the burial provided for a common criminal (cp. 8:29; 10:26-27; 2 Sam 18:16-17).

Thus this nefarious man perished.

“So Yahweh turned from the fierceness of His anger . . .” This does not mean that God **changed**. He never changes (Mal. 3:6; Jas. 1:17). His wrath was turned away when Israel, nationally, repudiated sin. In other words, Yahweh’s attitude towards men is dependent upon their attitude towards Him. Thus the breach between God and the Israelites, brought about through the sin of Achan, was healed.

“The name of that place was called the valley of Achor unto this day” — a reminder that Yahweh will continue to “trouble” sin, until it has been finally and irrevocably destroyed.

In due time, the “**stone cut out without hands**” will come to punish the ungodly upon the earth — and he will bring with him the “fire” of divine judgment (Deut. 4:24; Heb. 12:29).

In the kingdom age, this valley will become known as Pethach Tiqvah — which means “doorway of hope”. The word **tiqvah** occurs only twice in Joshua, on both occasions in relation to Rahab’s “hope” of deliverance (2:18, 21). A link between Rahab and Achan is therefore clearly established. But why? This valley is said to be situated south-west of Jericho, and will therefore provide a main thoroughfare up to the Temple. Hosea wrote: “Then will I give to her (Israel) vineyards **from thence**, and the vale of Achor (‘trouble’) for a Door of Hope (Pethach Tiqvah), and she will respond **there, as in the days of her youth**. . .” (Hos. 2:15). There can be little doubt that the reference to the “days” of Israel’s “youth” relate to the response of the Israelites to Yahweh’s word, in the matter of the sin of Achan. As people pass through this valley travelling towards the Temple, they will be reminded of the original name of this place, and the reason for it being so named. They will also be taught the details of Rahab’s faith, in contrast to the faithlessness of Achan.

The mortals who pass that way will be taught the powerful lesson which provides the link between Achan and Rahab: The human race is “troubled” by sin — which, if not repudiated, will inevitably lead to everlasting destruction. Yahweh, in His mercy, has provided a “doorway of hope”, through which mortal man might be redeemed. Rahab strode purposefully towards that “doorway of hope” and died in faith, whereas Achan spurned the goodness and mercy of God, and paid a terrible price for his wickedness. Thus Isaiah wrote: “Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people **that have sought me** . . .” (Isa. 65:10).

“Thou art my hope (**tiqvah**), O Adonai Yahweh; thou art my trust from my youth . . .” (Psa. 71:5).

CHAPTER EIGHT

Joshua Reassured (Vv.1-2)

Having obtained a secure bridgehead west of Jordan, the time had come for the Israelites to mount a major offensive which would give them a secure hold upon the Promised Land. The campaign which Joshua would direct under Yahweh's guidance would bring the Israelites as far as Hebron, twenty miles west of Jordan and twenty miles south of Gilgal.

In effect, this campaign would give Israel control over the southern area of Canaan.

However, still somewhat troubled by the recent events involving Achan, Joshua needed encouragement and reassurance. Aware of this, Yahweh said: "Fear not, neither be thou dismayed. . ." God had addressed an almost identical message to Joshua at the commencement of his ministry (1:9).

Such words of warmth and comfort show that Yahweh is constantly aware of the needs of His servants. He "knoweth" their "frame". He understands the weakness and despondency which, at times, may be experienced by men and women of faith.

Showing great tenderness, Yahweh spoke with power and authority. He lifted Joshua to heights of renewed zeal and dedication.

Such can be the effect of the word of God: All who are striving to "grow in grace" and in "knowledge" will consistently turn to the pages of God's word for comfort and for spiritual reinvigoration.

The time had come for further action.

"Take all the people of war with thee", God commanded. "Go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his land."

A large army was to march. Not merely 3,000 as had been earlier despatched to Ai.

Was such a great number necessary to bring about the defeat of Ai? By no means. Yahweh can "save by many or by few" (1 Sam. 14:6). Why, then, did God require that such an army was to accompany Joshua? There are two likely reasons: firstly, this was to be a major offensive which would doubtless engage the services of many who were willing to fight the warfare of faith; and secondly, Yahweh wished to reassure **all** the nation that He was with them. With the initial defeat at Ai, "the hearts of the people" of Israel had "melted" and become "as

water”. Such a defeatist attitude was no longer to be manifested. Thus God would graciously remove the anxieties which were troubling His people.

Victory at Ai was now assured. “I have given into thy hand. . .” These were the same words as had been spoken concerning Jericho (6:2); but they had not previously been spoken concerning Ai.

There was to be an important difference between the defeat of Jericho and Ai. As Jericho had been the “firstfruits” of victory in the land, that city had been “devoted” to Yahweh. But not so with Ai. “The spoil thereof. . . ye shall take. . .” God told the people. However, the Canaanites themselves were still to be regarded as “devoted” and were to be put to death (Deut. 9:5; 20:16-17). “As regards booty, you may take the goods and cattle — no more” (J.B.).

The strategy to be employed was then alluded to: “Lay thee an ambush for the city, behind it. . .” Joshua would be advancing from the south-east. He would therefore march so as to be able to approach from the west (v.12). The inhabitants of Ai would not anticipate a move such as this.

Preparation for the Battle (Vv.3-9)

“Joshua arose, and all the people”. Chastened and sober-minded as a result of their experience with Achan, the Israelites threw off their dejection. With renewed confidence, they prepared for their next move. They had learned from Achan’s folly to place no confidence in the flesh, and to give unqualified obedience to the voice of Yahweh.

The lesson had been impressed upon them that God would only uphold their cause if they proved faithful to His word.

Joshua held a conference with his closest aides. The proposed tactics were carefully considered until all details were clarified and understood. Always a brilliant military leader, Joshua relied upon his faith in Yahweh. At the same time, he exercised wisdom, care and intelligence in the planning and execution of his military operations.

Thirty thousand men were chosen to go to Ai. They were sent off, silently, under cover of darkness. Their instructions were to lie in ambush “behind the city” but not “very far from the city”.

The element of surprise would be on the side of the Israelites. By moving such a large number of men at night, the deployment of such troops would be kept secret from the Canaanites.

Preparations for this large-scale operation would have been most thorough. In the darkness of night thirty thousand men had to be led through hills and valleys, and over rough and difficult terrain. It

would have been necessary to organise a special group to act as scouts and leaders. In effect, these key men would have had to know every inch of the ground to be covered by the massed army of fighting men. Acting with extreme care and stealth, such scouts would have spent many hours combing the area, learning the way until they could virtually “see” in the dark — thus providing safe and silent leadership for the army.

Thorough preparation, including the careful consideration of such vital matters as topography and logistics, is essential in the planning of a successful military offensive.

And so it is in the warfare of faith. No one will prosper in spiritual matters unless they are willing to give the time and effort to prepare themselves for the warfare before them. Ezra provides a fine example. He “**prepared** his heart to **seek** the law of Yahweh, and to **do** it, and to **teach** in Israel statutes and judgments. . .” (Ezra 7:10). A progression of development is set forth in these words, resulting in God-manifestation: the performance of Godly things, and the revelation of God’s truth to others. But the keynote is preparation.

A wise Proverb counsels: “**Prepare** thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thy house. . .” (Prov. 24:27). A wise builder does not simply order truckloads of various materials to be dumped upon a site, and then begin haphazard construction, hoping that he has the right materials and in sufficient quantities. He carefully draws up specifications, and thoroughly checks them, well in advance of the commencement of any activity on the building site.

It is prudent to make sound preparation. A spiritual “house” must be built according to these principles — and the building of such a “house” involves preparation for the warfare of faith.

Paul posed a penetrating question to the Corinthians, at a time when they were plagued by many doubts and fears, and when, in many respects, they lacked sound and virile leadership: “If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall **prepare** himself to the battle?” (1 Cor. 14:8). Quite so.

When the warfare is finally over, and all the redeemed have been rewarded with the gift of immortality, such an end will have been achieved because the Lamb’s “wife” will have “made herself **ready**. . .” (Rev. 19:7) — a word which has elsewhere been rendered as “prepare” (cp. Luke 22:8, 9, etc.).

There were three essential elements in Joshua’s strategy: the advantage of surprise on the part of the Israelites, the predictable reaction of

the Canaanites, and the Hand of Providence acting on the part of Israel.

Whilst the thirty thousand “mighty men of valour” had hidden themselves and waited in ambush overnight, Joshua remained in the camp at Gilgal. He “rose up early in the morning” and “mustered the people” (Roth., J.B.). He did not “number” them, as the A.V. indicates. In this regard it will be observed that the Elders of Israel worked in close harmony with their leader.

Soon after daybreak, Joshua set off for Ai with the remainder of the army which was to be involved in the battle. En route he detached a further five thousand men and sent them to the west of the city. It appears that the larger number hidden in ambush were near to the north-western corner of the city, whilst the smaller group were placed in close proximity to the south-western wall. This would indicate that at the appropriate time both groups were to converge on the main western gates of the city.

With the bulk of his army making an open, undisguised approach towards the city, Joshua had told his men: “We will flee before them. . . They will come out after us. . .”

Why should the men of Ai do this? Because in Ai the people were elated. They had inflicted the first defeat upon the Israelites, and would therefore be confident in their ability to repeat their triumph. Thus the over-confidence of the men of Ai would present Joshua with the very advantage he wanted.

Joshua understood human nature.

His force would draw the men of Ai out of the city, leaving it defenceless. Then, the Israelites hiding in ambush would emerge, rushing into the city and seizing it. “Yahweh your God will deliver it into your hand”, Joshua had assured his men.

His final command to them: “Ye shall set the city on fire” (cp. Deut. 7:1-2; 13:12-17).*

The Attack Upon Ai (Vv.10-18)

The entire terrain around Ai had been very thoroughly reconnoitred. Coming from the south-east, Joshua would have to by-pass

***AUTHOR'S FOOTNOTE:**

These verses (vv.3-12) present certain difficulties of a relatively minor nature. Texts and renderings vary concerning the actual numbers of men involved, and their deployment. Some suggest that the total number of men involved was 30,000. The LXX omits any reference to 5,000 men. We believe the explanation given here to be the most satisfactory. The question is of no major consequence, since it was Yahweh who gave Israel the victory.

the city before he could bring his men to pitch “on the north side of Ai”. There was a compelling reason for this. It led them through a valley which provided precisely the type of terrain the Israelites needed — not only to draw the men of Ai out of their city, but to ensure that they were trapped, without hope of escape, once Joshua’s army attacked from both ends of the valley.

The narrative contains an important detail: “There was a valley between them and Ai. . .” And that is why the Israelites were in that place.

With his two armies carefully hidden to the west — Bethel was about three miles west of Ai — Joshua “went that night into the midst of the valley”. Doubtless a great deal of “nervous” noise was made, to alert the people of Ai, who had the entire night to prepare to do battle against the Israelites at dawn.

So eager were the men of Ai, they did not wait for Joshua’s men to approach, but went directly to fight, by the morning light. Here was abundant evidence of their self-confidence.

There was, however, nothing haphazard about the action they initiated. They went out to battle “at a time appointed” — which means that they put into motion a planned and organised attack. They had decided to join the battle when **they** were ready. Such was their optimism. **They** would seize the initiative. As they had done earlier. So they thought.

The main flaw in their reasoning was that their confidence rested in flesh, and the fleshly mind — a recipe for disaster.

Sweeping out of the city, screaming their confidence to the skies, the army of Ai swiftly descended towards the Israelites, who were waiting “before the plain”. Which, at first consideration, appears odd. But Joshua knew what he was doing. At the end of the valley, away from the city gate, lay a plain. In ancient times an army which felt confident of victory liked nothing better than to fight in the open spaces of a plain. In such circumstances there was ample room for manoeuvrability. No doubt the king of Ai could hardly believe his good fortune. Those foolish Israelites were even more stupid than he had thought!

But in his exuberance “he wist not” that the tables were shortly to be turned. Such is flesh when guided only by the carnal mind. “The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken. Yahweh is known by the judgment which He executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. . .” (Ps. 9:15-16). Like the ungodly in the days of Noah, the people of Ai “knew not, until the flood came, and took them all away” — a type

of the divine judgments to come at Christ's return (cp. Mat. 24:38-39).

At exactly the right moment, Joshua's plan went smoothly into action. At first the men of Israel looked rather shaken, then they cowered in the face of the advancing Canaanites. Then, as instructed, they broke and began to flee.

Everything was happening as the men of Ai had planned. Earlier they had felt sure of themselves; now they thought themselves invincible. Shouting in triumph, they drove themselves forward in a frenzy, chasing wildly after the fleeing Israelites.

The people remaining in the city were so certain of victory that all able-bodied men "were called out to pursue them. . ." (Roth.).

Significantly, the narrative states: "There was not a man left in Ai or Bethel. . .". Which explains why Joshua made no attempt to take Bethel at this time. All the fighting-men of that city were destroyed together with the army of Ai.

Yahweh spoke to Joshua: "Stretch out the javelin that is in thy hand, toward Ai; for I will give it into thine hand. . ." (cp. Roth., J.B.).

And Joshua did so.

This was the signal to the Israelites hidden in ambush.

Quickly, they poured out of their hiding-places.

For the signal to be seen so promptly by the hidden Israelites, Joshua must have ascended high ground. In effect he was "placarded" before his people (cp. Gal. 3:1, Moff.). After Christ had been "lifted up" a "spear" was thrust into his side, as a result of which "there came out blood and water" — the blood of the sacrifice which signalled the Lord's victory over sin (John 3:14; 19:34). The symbolic similarities discernible in these two incidents are most apparent.

Confusion and Defeat of the Canaanites (Vv.19-29)

The men of Israel arose from their ambush and "entered into the city and took it. . ."

Their faith was rewarded. Yahweh gave them the victory.

In strict accordance with Joshua's instructions they "set the city on fire".

It all happened very quickly.

The attention of the men of Ai was focussed entirely upon Joshua's fleeing army. But suddenly their headlong rush down the valley was

thrown into confusion. Some had seen smoke, where no smoke of any consequence ought to have been seen.

“Fire!” they screamed. “The city! It is burning!”

Aghast, the Canaanites stopped and turned. Their shocked bewilderment turned into cold realisation.

This was the decisive moment of the battle. Joshua’s trump card was now played — by the Canaanites. For in this moment of awareness they became panic-stricken and leaderless.

What were they to do? Stunned and confused, they would not have known **what** to do. Some would have set off back towards the city. Still others would have seen the hopelessness of their situation, and looked around wildly for an avenue of escape.

In a moment, the initiative passed from the Canaanites to the army of Israel — although at no time had Yahweh and Joshua not been in complete control of the development of events.

Of the ungodly, it has been written: “Surely thou (God) didst set them in slippery places: thou castest them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. . .” (Ps. 73:18-19).

The Israelites who had waited in ambush had done their work thoroughly and quickly. “The smoke of the city ascended up to heaven. . .” — a remarkable type of the coming destruction of the most ancient citadel of gentilism: the Roman Catholic church system. For, “she shall be utterly burned with fire” and “the smoke of her burning” will ascend heavenward, as from a sacrifice (Rev. 18:8, 18).

At this moment of catastrophe for the Canaanites, flesh was suddenly revealed in its true state: “They had no power. . .” Or, “There was in them **no strength**. . .” (Roth.). The flesh “confers no benefit whatever” because in the flesh there is “no good thing” (John 6:63, Wey; Rom. 7:18, A.V.).

Awaiting the decisive moment, the army under Joshua’s leadership saw the men of Ai falter and fall into disarray. The Israelites turned and swiftly ran back towards the Canaanites.

In a state of dazed disbelief, the army of Ai suddenly found the Israelites were upon them.

This was only the beginning of the end for the Canaanites. Their initial work within the city accomplished, the other Israelites now poured out of the city and down to do battle with the rearguard of the Canaanites.

The army of Ai, together with the men of Bethel who had joined

them, were trapped.

As though held fast in the grip of some unseen force, the Canaanites could not manoeuvre.

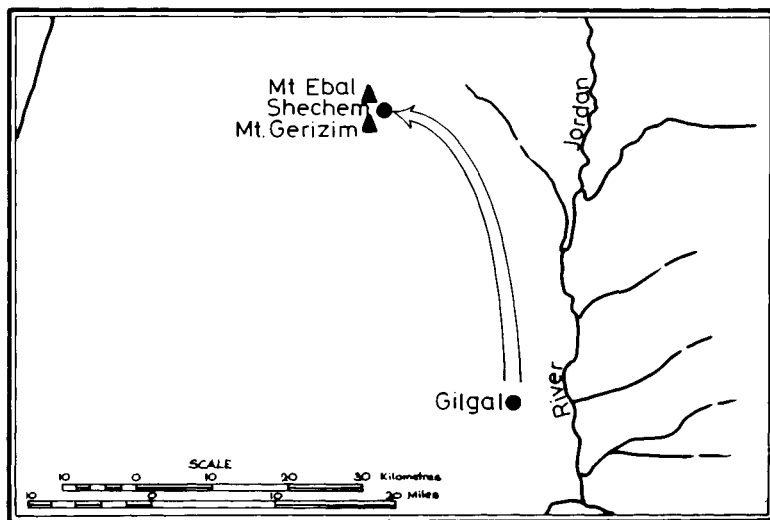
They were caught. And they died.

In accordance with the specific instructions given in Deut. 7:2, the Israelites — loyal and obedient soldiers of Yahweh — “let none of them remain or escape. . .”.

Throughout the ages Yahweh’s servants have not always found it easy to follow His “orders” in the warfare of faith. Yet, no matter how difficult, or how great the sacrifice, God’s saints must always remember that they do not have greater wisdom than the “Captain of their salvation” (Heb. 2:10). As with the army of Israel in their unswerving loyalty and obedience to Joshua, spiritual warriors in this present evil age must carefully and lovingly heed the commands of their Leader, if they wish to ultimately gain the victory over sin.

The Israelites totally annihilated their opponents, and then returned to complete the destruction of the city and its inhabitants. Their actions at this time were based upon the instructions recorded in Deut. 20:16-18.

“Joshua drew not his hand back, wherewith he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai.”



The way Joshua marched the people from Gilgal to Mts. Ebal & Gerizim.

Joshua had been raised up before his nation, as an “ensign” — after the manner of Moses, at Rephidim (Ex. 17:11-16). In this respect, both men typified Christ (cp. Ex. 17:15, where the word “nissi” is identical to the word which has been rendered “ensign” in such passages as Isa. 5:26; 11:10, 12; 18:3, etc. It is significant that this same word occurs twice in Num. 21:8-9, where it is recorded that Moses made “a serpent of brass, and put it upon a **pole**. . .”. Cp. John 3:14. Thus this word is used of Christ to represent him as the one great sacrifice to atone for sins, and also to describe him as being lifted up at the end of gentile times, as the mighty Warrior-King).

With the sparing only of the cattle and spoil, the complete destruction of Ai represents a total repudiation of flesh. The reader may benefit from a further consideration of Deut. 9:5-6 and 7:1-6. The Canaanites manifested all that the flesh can present, in opposition to the word and will of God. Had the main military power of the Canaanites not been destroyed, the Israelites would soon have fallen prey to the superior sovereignty and influence of the gentiles, and would then have become obliterated as a separate people. The wars against the Canaanites resulted in the preservation of the “seed” of Israel — and despite the ultimate spiritual failure of the Jewish nation, eventually blessings will come upon all mankind, resulting in no small measure from the establishment of the State of Israel under the leadership of Joshua.

It is necessary also, when studying the wars of the Israelites against the Canaanites, to constantly bear in mind the example of Rahab: she stands as a permanent reminder that the Canaanites could have turned unto Yahweh as that remarkable woman had done.

The king of Ai was taken captive. He typifies the “king of ruin” — which is sin (cp. Rom. 6:12, 16). It was necessary for **him** to be slain, and brought to “ruin”. Thus, Joshua “hanged” him on a “tree”. The type is clear: the flesh must be crucified (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 5:24). However, as soon as “the sun was down” the body was removed from the tree. Joshua was strictly following the requirements of the law (see Deut. 21:23).

The Journey to Ebal and Gerizim (Vv.30-35)

Having established a secure bridgehead which extended fifteen miles west of Jordan, Joshua proceeded without delay to implement a special instruction he had received from Moses.

He was required to march the people north, to Ebal and Gerizim.

In fulfilling this directive, the army would have returned from Ai to Gilgal, where the major task of preparing the people to move camp

would have been implemented. They would then have embarked upon a journey of nearly thirty miles through hostile territory.

Since this was to be purely a religious exercise, with no military confrontations envisaged, it would have required a remarkable display of faith on the part of the people.

Joshua led the people to the plain between Ebal and Gerizim.

Like Abraham before him, the first thing he actually built in the Promised Land was not a fortress, but an altar (Josh. 8:31; cp. Gen. 12:6-7). Faith in Yahweh provides man with a far more effective fortress than can ever be built with stones and mortar (Ps. 18:2; 31:3; 71:3, etc.).

Joshua built his altar on Ebal, very close to where Abraham had built his first altar, at Shechem (the name means “the hinder part of both shoulder blades”, and hence “the burden-bearer”). Shechem typifies the Son of God, who was the burden-bearer in “taking away” the sins of men (John 1:29; 1 Pet. 2:24).

Joshua carefully records that his altar was built in strict compliance with the instructions of Yahweh (see Ex. 20:24-26).

Upon the altar two types of sacrifices were offered: burnt offerings and peace offerings. When expressly joined in this way, these two sacrifices spoke of the willingness of the Israelites to **dedicate** their lives unto Yahweh, and to seek **fellowship** with Him. In doing this, they were to “rejoice” together. The manifestation of such a disposition serves as a reminder that man is greatly privileged to be given the opportunity of living **for** God — reaching out towards oneness and harmony with Him. Surely, this should cause the recipients of His mercy to “rejoice” together.

Jacob’s well was at Shechem, and no doubt as they gathered around the well the people of Israel thought soberly about the early days of their nation’s history. Shechem was later to become a city of refuge — again typifying the Lord Jesus Christ. Later still, it was to become the scene of Christ’s significant discourse with the woman of Samaria (Josh. 21:20-21; John 4:12).

As Shechem was the first place at which the Israelites assembled to witness a major religious ceremony — apart from the events which had occurred at Gilgal — so it was also the place at which, just prior to his death, Joshua made his final speech to the nation (Josh. 24:1).

Whilst at Ai, Joshua’s army was only five or six miles from Gibeon, which controlled the pass of Beth-horon. Of necessity, Gibeon would



have been the next stronghold the Israelites must attack. But instead of moving against Gibeon, Joshua had led Israel north to Shechem and the two mountains. Why did he act in this way, apparently contrary to Israel's most urgent interests? Obviously, spiritual commitments took precedence over the expediency of the moment, so far as Joshua was concerned. So it must be with all God's faithful saints: the seemingly apparent needs of the moment must never be given preference over unwavering obedience to the requirements of the Truth.

In Deut. 27 Moses recorded special instructions which were to be followed as soon as possible after the successful crossing of Jordan.

Having stressed the need for Israel to render unswerving obedience to the Law, Moses stated that they were to journey to Ebal (Deut. 27:4).

Gerizim was the mount of "blessing" (2,890 feet), and Ebal was the mount of "cursing" (3,085 feet). Why was the mount of cursing higher? To demonstrate that mortal man is always overshadowed by the curse of death, and therefore in need of redemption.

"On the day" they passed over Jordan, they were to make this journey. The phrase "on the day" can imply "at that time" (cp. Eccles. 12:3; Isa. 11:10, etc.).

Upon arrival, they were to set up "great stones" or "tall stones" (J.B.). They were to "coat them with lime" (J.B.) in order to provide a smooth white surface upon which they could write.

They were then to "write" upon the stones "all the words" of the "law". The wording was not to be chiselled into the stone. Thomson, in "The Land and the Book" states that he saw such specimens in the land, "certainly more than 2,000 years old, and still as distinct as when they were first inscribed on the plaster". Such a revelation is quite astonishing, and indicates that in ancient times there was considerable knowledge regarding the composition of inks and dyes.

But why should this have been done at Ebal, rather than Gerizim? Because the Law showed man to be a sinner, and therefore rightly related to death (cp. 2 Cor. 3:7-9; Gal. 2:21; 3:10, etc.).

The Israelites then fulfilled a special further instruction which Moses had recorded. Six tribes were to formally assemble upon Gerizim, with the other six upon Ebal.

Lessons of intrinsic value were now taught, demonstrating that Yahweh requires absolute fidelity from His people.

Opposite: Shechem, Mount Gerizim (left) and Mount Ebal (right).

The six tribes which stood upon Gerizim (for blessing) were all descended from the two **wives** of Jacob, Leah and Rachel; whereas the six tribes upon Ebal (for cursing) were the progeny of Zilpah (Gad and Asher), Bilhah (Dan and Naphtali), and Leah (Reuben and Zebulun). Reuben had lost the birthright, and as Zebulun was Leah's youngest son he was therefore furthest from the birthright.

The lesson is profound: divine "blessings" will only come upon those who are the seed of Israel in the fullest sense — which requires an understanding that "he is not a Jew which is one outwardly . . . but he is a Jew who is one inwardly. . ." (Rom. 2:28-29).

If the meanings of the names of the two groups of tribes are linked together, as they are recorded in the narrative, they form two sentences which add weight to the lesson referred to above.

SIMEON	"hearing"
LEVI	"joining"
JUDAH	"praise"
ISSACHAR	"reward"
JOSEPH	"adding"
BENJAMIN	"son of the right hand"
REUBEN	"see a son"
GAD	"a troop or company"
ASHER	"blessed"
ZEBULUN	"dwelling"
DAN	"judgment"
NAPHTALI	"wrestling"

Thus, the message from the names of the tribes on Gerizim indicates why the faithful will receive the blessing of eternal salvation: "Hearing the word of God, and joining to praise Him, they will receive the reward, thus adding themselves (or, being added) to the son of the right hand."

Of those who shall receive the "curse" of God, the names of the tribes on Ebal are saying: "Though seeing a son, as a troop or company they will not be blessed by Yahweh because they have not dwelt according to divine judgment, but have wrestled against God."

This solemn exercise proceeded towards its finality, as Moses had decreed. It would have been an impressive sight to see the tribes assembled in this way, seriously contemplating the significance of their actions. Moses had specifically stated that the people were to stand

“upon” the two mountains. But Joshua states that they stood “in front of” them (v.33, R.V., R.S.V., J.B.). This would indicate that the tribes were assembled in such a way that their numbers rose from the valley to the peaks — an awe-inspiring sight, as the voices of the Levites rang out clearly and the people said “Amen!”

They listened as Joshua “read. . .the blessings and cursings. . .”

Later, a greater than Joshua was to stand up in the midst of the nation and read “blessings and cursings”. The blessings are recorded in Matt. 5, and the cursings in Matt. 23.

Joshua fulfilled this commission in every detail (v.35). After a long and tiring journey this ceremony would have taken a considerable time, during which the people remained in their positions. There were no murmurings or complaints. The spirit of the people at this time shows that they appreciated the importance of that which they were engaged upon.

Their willing response to this demanding exercise would have been most pleasing to God.

“All the congregation of Israel” were assembled “with the women and the little ones”. Constantly the Old Testament scriptures indicate that divine worship, as practised by Israel in those early days, was very much a family affair. The Israelites recognised no such thing as a “generation gap”. Children and young folk were not separated from the body of the nation and treated as a separate class, entitled to particular privileges or treatment. The “body of Moses” was one; and one of the grand ideals of the Law was to unify the nation (cp. Gen. 18:19; Ex. 12:3, 25-27; Deut. 6:7, etc).

“The sojourners who were going on in their midst” were also present (Roth.). There is thus set forth a picture of Jew and Gentile joined together harmoniously, in the worship of Yahweh — a wonderful prefiguring of the kingdom age.

This incident provides a fine example of the spirituality of the nation of Israel at that period of history. It had been a courageous journey: from Gilgal to Shechem under conditions which were far from ideal. However, as with all sacrifices made in the service of Yahweh, there was something to be gained therefrom. Once again the people learned that Yahweh meets with His people upon the basis of covenant-relationship (Gen. 6:3; Deut. 10:12-13; John 14:15; 15:10; Rom. 2:7-8; 2 Cor. 10:5).

An earnest endeavour to walk in accordance with God’s revealed commandments is indicative of a willingness to become moulded by the Father, according to His purpose and in conformity with His own character.

Thus, the setting forth of the Law and the terms of the covenant at this time, emphasised that true religion requires a mature intellectual understanding of divine Truth, and a willing compliance therewith.

CHAPTER NINE

The Canaanites Prepare for War (Vv.1-2)

A confrontation between the Israelites and the inhabitants on the west of Jordan was imminent. Having driven a wedge deep into the land towards the west, two further major military campaigns were before the Israelites: first, they would neutralise the power of the peoples in the southern region, then they would march to meet the Canaanites in the north.

Israel's invasion of the land had been a whirlwind affair, from the time they had crossed Jordan. It is not difficult to imagine the fear and political chaos which would have been created "from Dan to Beersheba". During this brief but hectic interlude "all the kings" of the southern region had not been inactive. They had been feverishly conspiring to make mutual alliances in preparation for warfare with the Israelites.

Those who dwelt "in the hills" and in the "lowlands" (J.B.) became confederated in a defence pact. There was no avoiding the inevitable: the Israelites had to be faced and fought.

Hence these Canaanites "formed an alliance to fight together against Joshua and Israel" (J.B.). Their union caused them to come together with "one mouth" (see marg.). This does not mean that they spoke the same language, but that they were united against a common enemy, and spoke the same things against Israel. This is, and always has been, a basis for unity among Gentiles: a mutual hatred of Israel. Constantly throughout the book of Joshua the Canaanitish nations typify the Gentile powers which will arraign themselves against the Greater Joshua, when he comes to lead his disciples and his nation into their inheritance (cp. Ps. 2, etc.).

The Guile of the Gibeonites (Vv.3-13)

The Gibeonites were Hivites. They were a confederation of four cities, of which Gibeon was the chief. It was termed a "great city" (v.7, 17; 10:2).

After the division of the land among the Israelites, Gibeon belonged in the canton of Benjamin and also became a city of the Levites.

Like Jericho and Ai, Gibeon was of considerable strategic importance. Situated about seven miles north-west of Jerusalem, on the main route to the coast at Joppa, it presented a most commanding appearance. Set on a hill two hundred feet above the surrounding plain,

the city provided a formidable target to any invading army. The city boasted industrial and commercial areas. Archaeological discoveries have revealed that the Gibeonites were also traders in imported merchandise. This is not surprising, since the city was so close to numerous major trade routes, leading east and west, north and south. The prosperity of the Gibeonites adds emphasis to the extraordinary guile they manifested when they presented themselves to Joshua as a ragged bunch of down-and-out peasants, totally destitute and close to starvation.

At this hour of crisis the “inhabitants of Gibeon” acted quite differently from their fellow-Canaanites. Whereas the others were busy politicking and furiously preparing for war, the cunning Gibeonites purposed to make a study of the Israelites.

They learned of “the name of Yahweh” (v.9). And by some means they managed to discover some of the contents of the Law. They ascertained that the Israelites would show no mercy to the inhabitants of the Land of Promise, and that all such were to be destroyed (Deut. 7:1-2). But they also learned that “cities” which were “very far” away from the Promised Land would be treated differently. If such cities were disposed to accept “peace” with Israel, they would be spared death and become “tributaries” to the Israelites (Deut. 20:10-18).

The Gibeonites were not honest. They cared nothing for the morality of the situation. However, they were clever. They wished to survive; but they did not understand that men cannot gain salvation through cleverness.

With great subtlety and earnest endeavour they made their preparations. Using their guile rather than their brawn — like the serpent in Eden — they set their fleshly plan in motion.

“They decided to resort to trickery” (J.B.). So they “acted craftily” (Roth.).

Through deception they achieved a form of alliance with the Israelites, but not as Rahab had done. Their motives were wrong. Whereas Rahab had been willing to honour Yahweh and exercise faith in His word, the Gibeonites were concerned only for themselves. They selfishly devoted themselves to the cause of self-preservation, rather than self-sacrifice in the cause of God.

Perhaps some come into the Ecclesia of God with a similar motive. Such will be disappointed. God-manifestation, not human salvation, is the divine purpose for the ages.

In acting “craftily”, the Gibeonites provide an outstanding example of “the children of this world” being “wiser than the children of light” (Luke 16:8).

Needless to say, in the ultimate, their fraudulent dishonesty brought them nothing of permanent value. In fact, in effect they became “enslaved” to the ways of the flesh (v.23; cp. Rom. 6:16).

They sent a delegation to open negotiations with Joshua, purporting to be “ambassadors” from “a very far country”.

Considerable thought and care had gone into preparing the appearance and “props” of the Gibeonite representatives. Their objective was to convey the impression that they had travelled a long journey under considerable hardship. Not only did they hope to impress the Israelites, they also calculated that their general appearance of poverty and degradation would win them generous sympathy.

They carried “old sacks upon their asses”. They bore “old wineskins that had burst and been sown up again. The sandals on their feet were worn out and patched; the garments they wore were threadbare. The bread they took with them to eat was all dry and crumbling” (J.B.). The A.V. speaks of their bread being “mouldy” — a word which literally means “marked with spots” which implies that it was mildewed. They had gone to astonishing lengths to establish their case with the men of Israel. But it was all false. They were hypocrites. Much like the Pharisees and prominent religious leaders in the days of the Lord. They displayed “a sad countenance” and disfigured their faces, “that they might **appear** unto men to fast. . .” (Mat. 6:16; cp. Mat. 23:13; Mark 12:38-40).

Maintaining a dejected manner, they presented themselves to Joshua at Gilgal. Downcast and melancholy, they gave an impressive performance. And this was the point at which Joshua made two mistakes. Firstly, he passed judgment in this matter upon the basis of outward appearances — a common human failing. “Yahweh looketh on the **heart**” whereas man tends to look “on the outward appearance” (1 Sam. 16:7). Had Joshua and the elders of Israel acted wisely, searching questions would eventually have revealed the Gibeonites for what they really were. The second error was in failing to ask counsel “at the mouth of Yahweh”. The Israelites relied upon their own ability to reason upon the matter, rather than seeking the word of God. They judged “after the sight” of their eyes and ears (cp. Isa. 11:2-3). The one answer to this two-fold human weakness is to be able to say truthfully: “I have set Yahweh always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. . .” (Ps. 16:8). The word of God counsels: “In **all** thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths. . .” (Prov. 3:6).

With mock humility the Gibeonites came into the presence of Joshua, claiming to be “servants” to the people of Israel. Bemoaning

their state, they said: "From a very far country thy servants are come. . ." They had travelled only twenty miles.

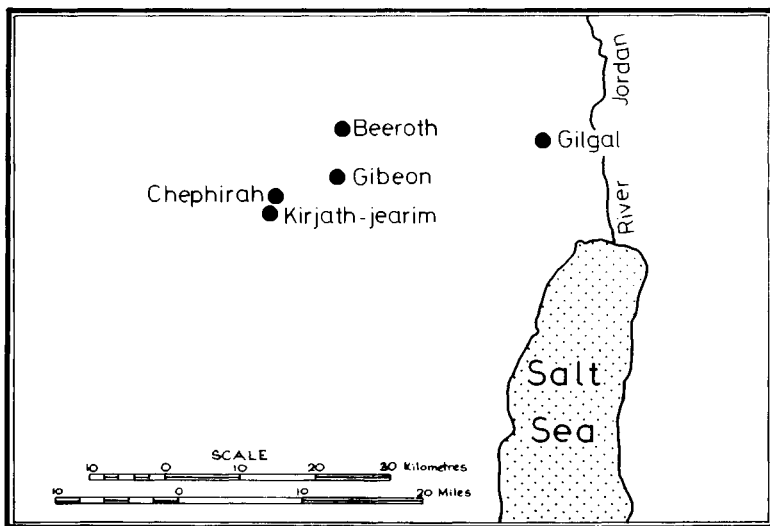
Twice they told their story. But Joshua's questions were not sufficiently searching.

Twice the Gibeonites asked the men of Israel to "make a league" with them, adding that they had come to Joshua "because of the name of Yahweh". The word rendered "league" (Heb., **berith**) means "cutting". Animals were slain and divided in two, and the parties making the covenant passed between the pieces. This solemn and binding ritual was followed by a feast, enjoyed together by both parties (Gen. 21:27-32; 26:27-31; 31:54; Jer. 34:18-20).

The Gibeonites considered that once they had established an irrevocable covenant with the Israelites, they would be safe from harm.

The Israelites were cautious. "It may be that you live in our neighbourhood", they challenged (J.B.). They were suspicious. "How shall we make a league with you?" They had in mind such instructions as recorded in Ex. 23:32; 34:12; Deut. 7:2.

"We are thy **servants!**" came the simpering response, as the Gibeonites deftly evaded this question. And here they exercised extreme cunning; for they did not plead for a covenant with Israel upon the basis of **equality**. To save their lives they were willing to acknowledge their subservience to the Israelites.



Region of the Gibeonites

Again, Joshua questioned them: "Who are ye, and from whence come ye?"

Once more, exercising elusive dexterity, the Gibeonites parried the first question and concentrated their efforts upon giving a convincing answer to the second. "From a very far country", they reiterated.

The Gibeonites would have impressed the men of Israel when they attributed Israel's mighty victories on the east of Jordan to the power of Yahweh. Yet, astutely, then remained silent concerning Israel's more recent victories: against Jericho and Ai. Comments upon those triumphs would have brought them perilously close to home!

They insisted that their long journey had resulted from a general appeal by all their people, prompted by great admiration for the Israelites and their God. Their adroitness in skilfully manipulating this interview to their own advantage is beyond dispute. They were extremely competent in convincing the Israelites of their unfeigned sincerity. Such is the ability of flesh to deceive even the people of God. One of the Lord's blunt warnings was, simply: "Beware of **men**. . ." Paul warned similarly: "Let no **man** deceive you with vain words. . ." And again: "Beware lest any **man** spoil you, through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of **men**. . ." (Mat. 10:17; Eph. 5:6; Col. 2:8).

The entire case of the Gibeonites stood upon a foundation of deliberate misrepresentation. Hence, lie followed lie, even down to the smallest details. "We started with fresh-baked bread. . . It was warm when we took it from home for our journey. . . These wineskins were new when we filled them. . . Our clothes and sandals are all worn out from travelling such a long way. . ." Such is the mind of the flesh: one sin leads to another; every falsehood requires further fraudulence to cover the previous one.

The Israelites Deluded (Vv.14-21)

Joshua and the men of Israel were finally persuaded. In their estimation of the situation, they implemented the instruction recorded in Deut. 20:10-18. And had the case of the Gibeonites been an honest one, this action on Israel's part would have been correct. It has sometimes been suggested that Joshua totally disregarded, or even defied, the teaching of the Law upon this question; but such was not the case. The Israelites consulted the Law and applied the instruction which they genuinely believed related to these circumstances. The fact that their judgment was wrong, and that they failed to seek counsel

“at the mouth of Yahweh” does not mean that they intentionally perverted the requirements of the Law.

Their decision made, the men of Israel “partook of the provisions they (the Gibeonites) offered. . .” This was a communal meal which celebrated the solemnity of sealing a covenant.

Failure to seek the wise counsel of Yahweh and act accordingly, can become a weakness which may well lead the people of God to disaster. “Woe to the rebellious children, saith Yahweh, that take counsel, **but not of me**; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin: that walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth. . .” (Isa. 30:1-2). “In **all** thy ways acknowledge Him” is a wise guiding principle, to cover all the affairs of life (Prov. 3:6).

Thus Joshua “made peace” with the Gibeonites who went on their way rejoicing that they had avoided warfare with Israel, smugly satisfied that they had succeeded in deceiving the men of Israel so thoroughly.

Three days later the Israelites received a rude awakening. To their amazement and chagrin, they learned that the Gibeonites came from a city only six miles south-west of Ai.

What could the men of Israel do?

The damage was done. Having become bound by a covenant there was no way whereby the Israelites could rectify the situation.

“Three days after the treaty had been made it became known that they were a neighbouring people whose home was in the midst of Israel. . .” (J.B.).

Thus, though clever deception might be practised, “the truth will out”. “The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment. . .” (Prov. 12:19).

Appalled to discover the magnitude of their blunder, the Israelites came to the four Gibeonites cities. There they were met by the smiling leaders of the Gibeonites, who extended the “right hand of fellowship” and said beatifically: “Why! Here are our **brethren**, the people of Israel!”

Doubtless the Israelites had spent the “three days” preparing for a major military campaign against the cities of the south. The cities of the Gibeonites were probably scheduled for destruction first. But now the Israelites could not touch them.

This state of affairs was not readily accepted by the rank and file in Israel. “The community grumbled at the leaders” (J.B.) Whilst there will always be murmurers and dissidents among the people of God, if

the leaders of Yahweh's flock desire to receive the wholehearted support and endorsement of those for whom they are made responsible, they must be prepared to act according to sound principles of divine wisdom. Having acted without sufficient caution and prudence, and having failed to consult Yahweh for special instructions, Joshua and the Elders had only themselves to blame for this reaction among the people. The word rendered "murmured" in the A.V. means "to complain in an obstinate manner". This means that the people did not readily accept the decision to preserve peace with the Gibeonites. They argued with their leaders about the matter. But what could be done? According to the Law, the Gibeonites should have been destroyed. Quite rightly, the people were striving to have this point of the Law upheld. But it was too late.

Deeply chastened, the princes answered the people, and said: "We have sworn unto them by Yahweh Elohim of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them". It was Yahweh's reputation which was at stake, and Joshua and the Elders understood this.

There is something to be said for the leaders, in this matter: they remained strictly men of their word. They may have reasoned that there were "extenuating circumstances" and that it would be in order for them to repudiate their covenant with the Gibeonites. That they did not do so is to their credit. One of the qualities of character which will gain men and women an eternal inheritance in God's kingdom is that of swearing to their own hurt and changing not (Ps. 15:4). To true servants of Yahweh, covenants are sacred. Such are men and women of their word, whose integrity remains unimpeachable. Commitments to God and man are not taken lightly; and trustworthiness is regarded as indispensable to a Godly way of life. After all, absolute fidelity is one of the basic attributes of Yahweh's own character. Should it not also be so with His sons and daughters? (Ex. 24:7; Deut. 7:8-11; Rev. 3:14, etc.).

Since they had already judged wrongly in making their covenant with the Gibeonites, the leaders knew that by breaking their oath they would only be adding folly to folly; and such action on their part could have resulted in divine judgment coming upon them. Hence, they insisted that the Gibeonites should "live".

Nevertheless, having practised such a reprehensible deception upon the Israelites, it was agreed that the Gibeonites be treated accordingly. They had come fawning over the men of Israel, declaring that they were "servants" to Israel (Heb., **ebed**, "bond-slaves"). Four times they stressed their humble station. Thus, bondmen they would become.

Deception Brings Judgment (Vv. 22-27)

It was declared that the Gibeonites should become “hewers of wood and drawers of water. . .” This was no idle or cynical decision. It was firmly based upon the teaching of the Law. The Law spoke of “the stranger that is within thy gates” (cp. Deut. 5:14, etc.). Obviously, the Gibeonites would have had to submit to the ordinance of circumcision, and agree to abide by the Law of Moses (Ex. 12:48-49). The Law also spoke of those who would become “the hewer” of “wood” and the “drawer” of “water” (Deut. 29:11). The Hebrew expressions are identical, in both Deuteronomy and Joshua.

The Gibeonites had voluntarily accepted a position of servitude (Josh. 9:8, 9, 11, 24); so servants they became, “as the princes spake unto them” (Roth.). The A.V. rendering: “as the princes had **promised** them” cannot be sustained.

Joshua then upbraided the Gibeonites for their treachery. “Wherefore have ye beguiled us, saying, we are very far from you; when ye dwell among us?” The word rendered “beguiled” in the A.V. is more closely related to the word “delude”, or “deceive” (Roth.). The Gibeonites had manifested the same characteristic as the serpent, who had “beguiled” Eve (Gen. 3:13; 2 Cor. 11:3).

“Now, therefore, ye are cursed”, said Joshua judiciously. “From now you are accursed, and you shall **never cease** being serfs. . .” (J.B.). In other words: “We will **literally** invoke and maintain the terms of the covenant, as **you** requested it!”

What a tragic contrast between the gains which the Gibeonites won for themselves through deceit, and the liberty which comes to those who embrace the true hope of Israel. “Ye shall know the Truth”, taught Christ, “and the Truth shall make you **free**. . .” That is, free from the shackles of sin and death. This blessed state is only for those who “continue” to walk according to Christ’s “word” (John 8:32, 31).

Ironically, the duties of the Gibeonites would be in relation to “the house” of Israel’s God. They remained bondslaves in connection therewith, in contrast to those who become the intimate “friends” of the Lord (John 15:15).

The Gibeonites revealed something of the extent of knowledge they had acquired concerning the Israelites and their God. “It was certainly told thy servants how that Yahweh thy Elohim 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 sore afraid. . .”

Unquestionably, the Gibeonites had learned important details concerning Israel and their God, prior to sending their emissaries to Joshua.

Their knowledge placed them in a similar situation to that in which Rahab found herself. But there the similarity ended. Whereas Rahab had submitted in faith to the power and the word of God, the Gibeonites exercised the mind of the flesh, with its wiles and inventiveness, to circumvent the divine purpose.

Confessedly, they had been "sore afraid". But they had sought an association with the Truth upon purely fleshly grounds. They feared Yahweh, but did not trust Him. They recognised His power, but refused to submit to it.

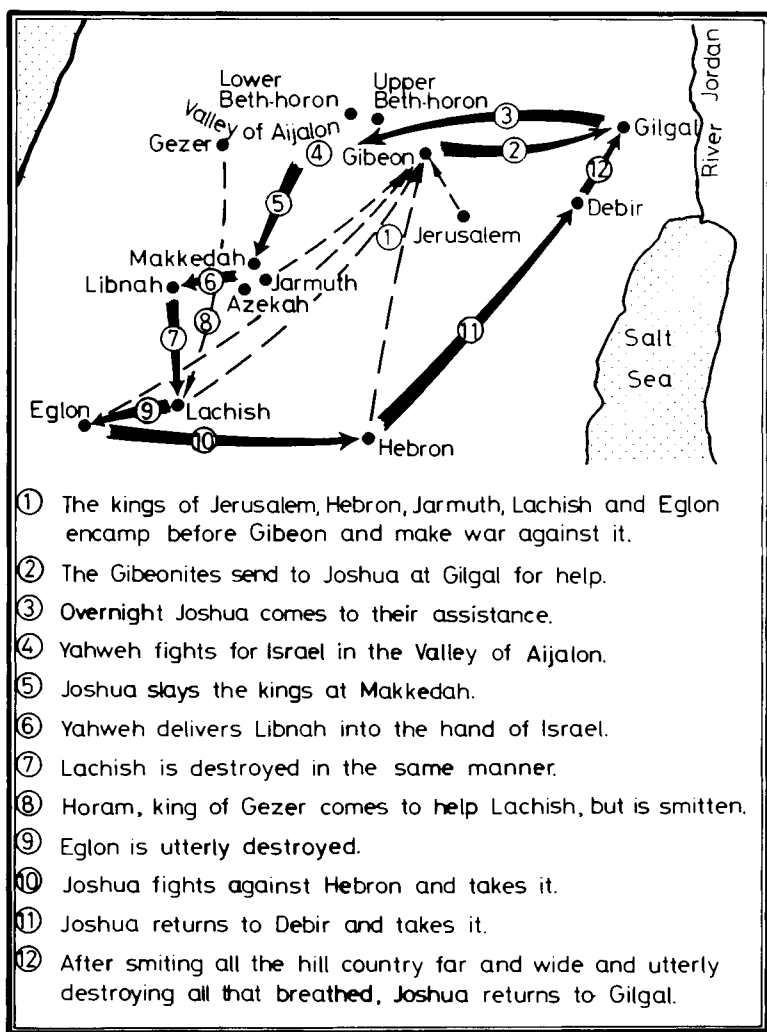
How could they receive the blessings of the Truth upon such a basis? Such was quite impossible, as they now discovered.

They said simply to the men of Israel: "We are in thine hand". And that was precisely their predicament.

"From that day forward, Joshua made them wood-cutters and water-carriers for the community, and bound them, down to the present day, to wait on Yahweh's altar wherever Yahweh might choose. . . ." (J.B.).

One advantage accrued to Israel as a result of the Gibeonites defecting from the southern confederacy of Canaanites. The four cities of the Gibeonites were strategically important, and no doubt when combined for war would have presented a formidable force. Their allegiance to Israel meant that there could be no total alliance between all the Canaanites of the south. In effect, by joining the invaders they gave Israel an added wedge into the land.

It is not without significance that, from this time onward, the Gibeonites are never again mentioned in scripture as a distinct people. They lost their national identity completely. This will prove to be the fate of all who strive to enter the kingdom of God unlawfully, or by means of deception, and from an ungodly motive.



Joshua's Strategy as Outlined in Chapter 10

CHAPTER 10

The Battle of Beth-Horon (Vv.1-14)

In considering “Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem” it is curious to compare Josh. 10:1 with Gen. 14:18.

The Genesis account speaks of Melchi-zedek, “king of Salem” coming out to meet the victorious Abraham, who had returned from defeating the confederacy of nations from Babylon. The title “Melchi-zedek” was almost certainly applied to Shem. Melchi-zedek was “the priest of the most high God”. The title means “King of righteousness”. In Joshua’s time, the king of Jerusalem had continued to retain, almost in its purity, the earlier title which had been attributed to a priest who had represented God. The title “King of righteousness” had been only slightly altered to mean “Ruler of righteousness”.

It is evident, then, that since the days of Shem the kings of Jerusalem had retained virtually the same title, almost unaltered.

Yet, the corruption of divine Truth had been complete among the Canaanites.

No longer could any godly “righteousness” be associated with the title.

Two remarkable comparisons may be made in regard to the deterioration of the Truth: the days of Melchi-zedek and the times of Joshua; and modern-day “christianity” in contrast to the purity of first-century apostolic teaching.

Adoni-zedek may be viewed as a type of the Roman Pontiff. He claims to be “Christ’s Vicar upon earth” and alleges that he is Head over “Christ’s church”; yet the papal system has so utterly corrupted the teaching of Christ and his apostles. Although he claims to uphold the name and title of Christ, the papal assertion is as false as that of Adoni-zedek, who had nothing in common with the faith or beliefs of the original Melchi-zedek.

Joshua, in going to war to destroy Adoni-zedek, is a type of Christ. At his second coming the Lord will wage ceaseless warfare against the papal system until it is utterly annihilated from the face of the earth (Ps. 2; Ps. 110; Rev. 17, 18).

In addition to seeing the stark reality of this symbology, Christ’s true brethren should be warned thereby. In the days of Melchi-zedek there was an “Ecclesia” of faithful brethren and sisters at Salem. What happened? After the death of their spiritually-strong Leader, the

truth gradually became corrupted — until, ultimately, it was lost entirely to the people of that city.

Such declension from the Truth does not occur overnight. Initially, a point of sound doctrine will be weakened and perhaps moral values may be permitted to degenerate. Such deviations will become apathetically accepted, because either no one really knows any better, or no one cares enough. No clear stand is made in defence of the purity of the Truth. The result? The Truth will be lost to such people.

This illustration contains an acute warning for true Believers in every age. Throughout history, many communities of people have lost the Truth. What of those who are the Light-bearers of divine Truth in the last days?

“Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem” took the initiative in endeavouring to unite the Canaanite tribes who dwelt in his region. The people of Jerusalem had “heard” how Joshua had taken Ai and destroyed Jericho. They also learned with incredulity and dismay that the Gibeonites had managed to contrive a peace agreement with the Israelites. This last piece of news came as a bitter blow, since it meant that Gibeon — which was a “greater” city than either Jericho or Ai — would provide no support for the beleaguered Canaanites. “There was consternation at this. . .” (J.B.). Here was a further fulfilment of that which Yahweh had promised: “This day will I begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations that are under the whole heaven, who shall hear report of thee, and shall tremble, and be in anguish because of thee. . .” (Deut. 2:25).

The defection of the Gibeonites appalled Adoni-zedek. Gibeon was “as important a town as one of the royal towns themselves. . .” (J.B.). Although, as stated earlier, the Gibeonites were a confederacy of four major cities, they were not ruled by a monarch. They were, however, renowned for their fighting qualities — just the kind of alliance Adoni-zedek needed, but which was now lost to him.

He was, however, quite determined that action should be taken. He sent first to “Hoham, king of Hebron” who was king of other cities as well as Hebron. His combined forces would have been numerous and powerful. Jarmoth — of which Piram was king — was apparently in the lowlands of Judah (cp. 15:35). Lachish was also in the Shephelah, and its king was Japhia. Lachish was possibly the strongest and most heavily fortified city in the entire land. Only of Lachish is it stated that Joshua “encamped against it” and took it on the “second day”. Lachish, in common with the other cities the Israelites had encountered up to this point, occupied a strategically important site. It was thirty miles south-west of Jerusalem and fifteen miles west of Hebron.

Eglon has been linked with Lachish (15:39) and was therefore almost certainly in the lowlands also, probably not far distant from Lachish. Debir was king of Eglon.

These kings undoubtedly typify King Sin. The meanings of their names convey an extraordinarily apt message. The first (Hoham) means "whom Yahweh impels" — the second means "a wild ass" — the third: "splendid" — the fourth: "sanctuary". Also, there was Adoni-zedek. Thus, a sentence may be formed: "Whom Yahweh impels, as a wild ass, they are splendid in their sanctuary believing themselves to be rulers according to their own standards of righteousness. . .". The words are highly descriptive of Flesh, enthroned in splendour in its own stronghold. But Yahweh — who cannot look upon sin — will "impel" flesh towards inevitable destruction, wherever flesh elevates itself in defiance of the One Eternal Spirit.

The names of the five cities are not without significance. Hebron means "a community or alliance" — Jarmuth signifies "elevation" or "height" — Lachish means "invincible" — Eglon means "calf-like" — and Jebus means "trodden down". Again, there is a message: "The combined communities of the Gentiles are allied together, believing that they attain to great heights and that they are invincible; whereas, in reality, they are as weak as calves in their opposition to Yahweh, and will be trodden down by Him".

With God's help, the Israelites were soon to demonstrate the significance of these two sets of names.

The king of Jerusalem sent forth his messengers. "Come up unto me", he said with authority, "that we may smite Gibeon".

Why Gibeon?

Because its people had betrayed their fellow-Canaanites, and because it guarded the pass of Beth-horon, a key strategic area which the Israelites must control in order to conquer the southern regions. Adoni-zedek's strategy was to attack their erstwhile friends at Gibeon, rather than make a direct attack upon Joshua's army. If the Canaanites could hold the pass of Beth-horon, they could provide a large measure of protection to those areas which were now under threat.

The four kings journeyed to Jerusalem for a conference with Adoni-zedek — even as the "kings of the earth" have constantly journeyed to Rome, to plan their intrigues (cp. Rev. 18:9).

They agreed as to what should be done. Assembling their forces as quickly as possible, they attacked the Gibeonites.

It was a brilliant move, unexpected by both the Gibeonites and the Israelites. And it may well have succeeded. However, three things

worked strongly against the Canaanite confederacy: the fighting prowess and courage of the Gibeonites; the wisdom and military tactics of Joshua; and the invisible, Elohist army which fought on behalf of Israel.

The scales were weighted heavily against the Canaanites.

The shocked Gibeonites immediately sent word to Joshua. "Come up to us quickly", they pleaded. The Gibeonites well understood the strategy being employed against them: the Canaanites from the Lachish region would move up through the Shephilah and attack from the south-west. The other group, from the area around Jerusalem, would travel through the hill country of Judah and come against the Gibeonites from the south-east. The Gibeonites would thus be caught in a pincer-movement. Whilst those advancing from the lowlands may well have seized the pass of Beth-horon, the other army would have joined battle with the Gibeonites from the opposite direction.

The Gibeonites were in deep trouble.

Joshua considered the report carefully, noted the manoeuvres of the Canaanite armies, and then acted.

Needless to say, because of their covenant with the Gibeonites the Israelites were duty-bound to go to the aid of their "brethren" at Gibeon. In all this, the Hand of Providence was mightily at work. The whole train of events was being directed by an Unseen Force.

It would have been swiftly apparent to Joshua that the strategy of the confederate armies was to halt the progress of the Israelites.

"So Joshua ascended from Gilgal". He took "all the fighting men and all the bravest of his army with him" (J.B.).

Yahweh encouraged Joshua. "Fear them not! For I have delivered them into thine hand! There shall not a man of them stand before thee!" With these words, Joshua was content.

He then initiated one of the most famous military manoeuvres in history. "Having marched from Gilgal throughout the night, Joshua caught them unawares. . ." (J.B.).

The Canaanites would have anticipated that the Gibeonites might receive assistance from Joshua. But seventeen miles separated the Israelites from Gibeon. The terrain was rugged and forbidding. Doubtless the Canaanites planned a fierce, all-out battle, hoping for a quick victory. They hoped to have the area secure, ready to face the advancing Israelites.

But it did not work out that way. Undeterred by the difficulties in their path, Joshua's army marched right through the night. No one complained that they were too tired. No one suggested they were in

need of a rest. As dedicated warriors in the warfare of faith, the men of Israel pressed forward without any thought of self-interest (cp. 2 Tim. 2:3; 1:8; 4:5).

Joshua's army came from the east.

By the light of the early morning, with the sun behind them, the Israelites were ready to attack.

This incident provides a remarkable type of impending activities among the nations by the Greater Joshua. At this present time, the sixth vial of the Apocalypse is being "poured out". One of the major accomplishments to be achieved through the sixth vial is that "the way of the kings who are from **a sun's risings** might be prepared. . ." (Rev. 16:12, John Thomas translation); or: "in order to clear the way for the kings who are to **come from the east**. . ." (Wey.). These kings are the immortalised spiritual Israelites who will go forth with Christ to conquer and rule the world (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 5:9-10; Ps. 82:8).

The Israelites mounted their attack with deadly speed. Taken unawares, the Canaanites would have looked upward, right into the blinding glare of the early morning sun. Suddenly, without warning, the Israelites were upon them.

The Gentiles were thrown into a state of terror and confusion.

Providence worked swiftly and smoothly. "Yahweh discomfited them" or "confused them" (Roth.). He "slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon". The invisible angelic army "drove them headlong before Israel, defeating them completely at Gibeon" (J.B.).

And this was only the commencement of the battle.

So it shall be in the day when the Greater Joshua confounds the nations — when he will "break them with a rod of iron" and "dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. . ." (Ps. 2:9; cp. Rev. 2:27).

The Israelites "chased them", with the result that their adversaries fled in total disarray before the onslaught.

The first enemy troops encountered by Joshua's men would have been those under the direct leadership of Adoni-zedek, who had come from the south-east. No doubt it was this army which was defeated "completely at Gibeon". The others, who had attacked Gibeon from the south-west tried to escape. But Yahweh "pursued them towards the descent of Beth-horon, and harassed them as far as Azekah, and as far as Makkedah. . ." (J.B.).

Beth-horon was known by two names: Upper Beth-horon, which stood at the top of the mount, and Lower Beth-horon, at the foot of the descent (cp. 16:3-5). This vital pass lay about 5 miles north-west of

Gibeon. The steep decline fell away sharply, and merged into the valley of Ajalon. The side of the mountain had a precipitous fall, dropping some six hundred feet. The descent is so steep that in later times steps were cut into the rocks to facilitate safer passage.

To add to the nightmare retreat of the Canaanites, as they tried desperately to escape from the pursuing Israelites "Yahweh cast down great stones from heaven". There was, quite literally, divine intervention at this time. And so it shall be in the day of victory for the Greater Joshua: "Yahweh shall cause His glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lighting down of His arm, with the indignation of His anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones. . ." (Isa. 30:30).

Thus Yahweh provided indisputable proof — both to the Israelites and their enemies — that this great victory belonged to Him and not to flesh. Hailstones destroyed more of the enemy than were slain by the men of Israel (v.11), fulfilling exactly and dramatically the promise which God had earlier made to His people: "Yahweh thy God doth drive them out from before thee. . ." (Deut. 9:4-5).

At this violent and turbulent moment, Joshua raised his voice in an urgent plea to Yahweh. This point in time was crucial.

What could Israel do? Joshua called upon Yahweh for a continuance of light to enable his army to complete the victory.

"Sun!" cried Joshua, in the sight of Israel, "stand thou still upon Gibeon! And thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon!"

The enemy were escaping down the steep slope of Beth-horon and along the valley of Ajalon. The terrain made speedy pursuit excruciatingly difficult.

Yahweh responded promptly to Joshua's prayer.

What a moment to witness. Thick black clouds scudding across the sky. Roll upon roll of almost deafening thunder. Lightning, so near and so devastating, flashing across the hills and valleys. Hailstones pouring down upon the desperate enemy. The wildness of the storm enshrouding the fleeing Canaanites.

The sun stood still. And the moon stayed. "Until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies".

An account of the happenings of that day had also been recorded in "the book of Jasher". Or, "the book of heroes" (Moff.). The word literally means "upright". The same book is mentioned in 2 Sam. 1:18. It has been described as "an ancient collection of poems, now lost" (footnote, J.B.). Though highly regarded, it was not one of the divinely-inspired books of scripture, otherwise it would have been preserved.

The name Gibeon means “the hill city” — perhaps typifying Rome. The sun symbolises the Lord Jesus Christ, and the moon typifies the Ecclesia. Interestingly, when this miracle occurred, the sun and moon were both in evidence in the heavens at the same time. Similarly, in the day of Christ’s manifestation to subdue the nations and establish God’s kingdom, he will share the political “heavens” with his glorified brethren.

Isaiah appears to allude to this awesome miracle, associating the lessons to be learned therefrom with the glory which is yet to be revealed and the greater victory which is to come: “Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: but Yahweh shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. . .” (Isa. 60:19).

In this incident, Joshua asked for continuing “light” that he might overcome God’s enemies. All Yahweh’s servants, in every age, must do the same. The enemy they strive to combat is sin. The “light” of the word of God is necessary, if the victory over sin is ultimately to be gained (Ps. 36:9; 119:105, 130; John 3:19; Eph. 5:8; 1 John 1:5, 7; etc.).

The fact that Joshua’s entreaty brought an immediate response from God indicates that Yahweh’s ear is ever-open to the prayers of His faithful servants. Their cries do not go unheeded, and He is able to accomplish all things on their behalf.

With a sense of overwhelming wonder, Israel learned that day that “Yahweh” had “fought for Israel” (cp. 2 Sam. 6:23; 2 Kings 6:15-18; 2 Chron. 20:17; Rom. 8:31; Lk. 18:7-8).

And He will do so again, when the time comes for Israel’s enlightenment and restoration (Zech. 14:1-3).

Joshua’s Captains and the Five Kings (Vv.15-27)

The A.V. states that following this momentous victory “Joshua returned. . . to Gilgal”. The LXX omits this verse, which may possibly be sound since it is stated that Joshua’s army were encamped at Makkedah (v.21). For some reason Joshua may have returned to Gilgal, but certainly the Israelites continued to pursue after the five kings who had escaped the field of battle. They sought refuge in a cave — “**the** cave” according to the LXX and the Masoretic pointing. Perhaps it was a well-known cave, suitable for just such an emergency as this. It would not have been well-known to the Israelites.

The cave was at Makkedah. This means that the five kings had retreated down to Lower Beth-horon and had fled along the valley of

Ajalon. They had then swept south, remaining on the lower ground near the edge of the Shephilah. A journey of some twenty miles brought them to Makkedah.

And “it was told Joshua”. Thus the Hand of Providence was at work, to ensure that divine judgment came upon these five evil rulers.

Some of the Israelites — probably those with strong physical endurance and fleetness of foot — kept track of the fleeing kings. Joshua arrived^d at the cave to be greeted with the news that the kings were hiding within.

Joshua realised that the kings were trapped, provided the cave was made secure. He ordered the cave entrance to be blocked with “great stones”, and set guards. He did not allow this added triumph to deter him from relentlessly pressing after the enemy. Victory, he realised, had to be total and complete.

“Stand not still!” he said to his men (lit. Heb.). He was exhorting them that life in the Truth is a continuing warfare against sin. No diversions must be permitted to detract the Believer from attaining his goal.

“Cut off their line of retreat and do not let them enter their towns”, counselled Joshua (J.B.).

The pursuit was thus resumed with great tenacity. Joshua’s men must have been extremely fatigued, but there is no record of any complaint or sign of rebellion against Joshua’s directives.

It was essential to pursue the enemy until they were destroyed. If they were permitted to “enter their towns” they would have had some defence against the Israelites. The record does not state how far Joshua’s army travelled in hunting down the last of the enemy forces. It simply states that they kept at their task until it was completed. They “made an end of slaying them with a very great slaughter, till they were consumed. . .” Those who managed to escape — apparently few in number — found hiding places in their “fortresses” (J.B.). These were the only places where they could hope to survive.

Joshua led a tired but victorious army back to their temporary camp, at Makkedah. At first consideration the wording appears rather strange: “All the people returned to. . .Makkedah, in peace. . .”. Why should the narrative add the words: “in peace”? They are most significant, serving as a reminder that lasting peace will only be established in the earth when flesh has been restrained and when righteousness prevails (Isa. 57:20-21).

Lasting peace will not come to individual servants of God until their warfare against sin has been won (Ps. 37:37; 119:165; Rom. 8:6).

Such an overwhelming victory having been gained, it is no wonder that throughout the regions now conquered “no one dared to attempt anything against the Israelites” (J.B.). The men of Israel were now held in awe and dread by the peoples of the areas where the battle had raged, and where the combined armies of the southern Canaanites had suffered such a crushing and ignominious defeat.

The five kings remained to be dealt with.

“Open the mouth of the cave”, commanded Joshua, “and bring out those five kings unto me. . .”.

They were to be arraigned for judgment, just as the “kings” and “nobles” of the Gentiles will be, at the hands of the Greater Joshua and his immortalised brethren (Ps. 149:8-9, etc.).

The kings of Jebus (Jerusalem), Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish and Eglon were brought before Joshua.

Then Joshua did a remarkable thing. He “called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war who had been with him, Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings. . .” (Roth.).

Why should he have done this? Because he saw in Israel’s great victory over the Canaanites a type of the fulfilment of Gen. 3:15. Several passages of scripture will make this abundantly clear.

God had promised that He would provide a “seed” of the “woman” who would conquer the power of sin, and make eternal salvation possible for all men. This “seed” would “bruise the **head**” of sin. Or, as Joshua saw it, he would “put his feet upon the **neck**” of sin, preparatory to crushing its head. In the most oft-quoted Old Testament verse to be cited in the New Testament, Yahweh is depicted as saying to David’s Lord: “Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy **footstool**. . .” (Ps. 110:1). In defeating the political power of the nations, God shall wound the **head** of His enemies. . .” (Ps. 68:21). Elsewhere, speaking in the spirit of Christ, the Psalmist wrote: “Thou hast also given me the **necks** of mine enemies; that I might destroy them that hate me. . .” (Ps. 18:40).

This symbolic terminology has been carried over into the New Testament. Paul wrote: “For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies **under his feet**. . .” (1 Cor. 15:25). By including the word “enemies” Paul linked together Ps. 8:6 and Ps. 110:1.

In comforting the Roman Believers by stressing the sure hope which lay before them, Paul wrote: “The God of peace shall bruise **the satan under your feet** shortly. . .” (Rom. 16:20 lit.). The allusion to Gen. 3:15 is too clear to be misunderstood. The word “shortly” sometimes

conveys more the idea of swiftness or speed rather than defining a near-at-hand period of time (cp. Lk. 18:8; Acts 12:7, etc., where this same word occurs).

Inevitably, those who remain faithful to Christ will gain the victory over all powers which are "adverse" to Yahweh — including total victory over the sin-prone nature which they bear. It must be so, for God has promised.

This would seem to be the mind of Joshua. Those who serve God will triumph over all their adversaries, if they remain steadfast and immovable in the way of Truth.

Yahweh had given Israel a great victory over the confederated nations of southern Canaan. Joshua desired that Israel should acknowledge this. But at the same time he wanted them to recognise this moment of triumph as a type of the coming fulfilment of Gen. 3:15.

How sublime that Joshua did not personally place his feet upon the necks of the adversaries. He invited his captains to do so. In this action, Joshua was looking beyond the triumph of the singular "seed of the woman" to the time when the singular "seed" would invite his faithful **brethren** to share in his victory over the forces of sin.

At this dramatic moment Joshua delivered an exhortation. "Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall Yahweh do to all your enemies against whom ye fight. . .".

With touching thoughtfulness, Joshua here used the same words Yahweh had addressed to him at the commencement of his ministry as Leader of God's people (1:9). Having faithfully learned from his own experiences that the Deity meant what He said, he desired to implant this same conviction in the hearts of his people.

An impressive point in the exhortation should be gleaned from his words: "Your enemies against whom **ye** fight. . .". Would it not have been preferable for Joshua to have said: "against whom Yahweh fights"? Not at this time. The people had learned that lesson well. What they were to remember at this time was important: Yahweh will fight for His people, and give them the victory — but they themselves must be totally dedicated to fighting the warfare of faith. In faith, God's servants must go forth to the battle. With wholehearted devotion to Yahweh's cause, they are to be "strong" and "of good courage".

"Let **us** labour, therefore, to enter into that rest" which Yahweh will provide for all who "love" Him and "keep" His "commandments" (Heb. 4:11; Exod. 20:6; John 15:14).

Having performed this ritual and having delivered his brief exhortation, Joshua now “smote” and “slew” the five kings.

Was this an action devoid of mercy?

Such could never be argued (Deut. 9:5; 32:4; Isa. 45:21; 1 Jhn. 1:9). Yahweh is perfectly just in all His dealings with men.

With the execution of these five Canaanite kings, Israel was being taught a salutary lesson: There can be no compromise in the warfare against sin. It is a fight to the death, neither party yielding until victory is attained by one or the other.

The extermination of the five kings also illustrates the chilling reality of a further lesson which the Gentiles will appreciate more fully after the establishment of Christ’s reign upon earth. The lesson is, simply, that this is the end in store for all Israel’s enemies. “I will curse them which curse thee!” (Gen. 12:3; cp. Ps. 2).

The bodies were hung on five trees. This was a typical “crucifying” of the flesh. The body of the Lord Jesus Christ was “lifted up” on the tree, that he might demonstrate that the flesh is rightly related to death (Jhn. 3:14; Gal. 3:13; 5:24).

The corpses were taken down at even, strictly in accordance with the requirements of the Law (Deut. 21:23). All who would strive to attain unto eternal salvation must reverence God’s commandments. Joshua’s scrupulous respect for the Law of God is consistently illustrated throughout this book which bears his name.

Makkedah to Kadesh-Barnea, and Back to Gilgal (Vv.28-43)

Joshua “that day” took the city of Makkedah. In appreciation of the great victory which Yahweh had given Israel, Joshua “devoted” the king of that city to God. It is a divine principle that men must either sacrifice to Yahweh, or else **become** the sacrifice (Ezek. 39:17; Mal. 4:1, etc.).

In strictly conformity with the requirements of the Law, upon seizing the city Joshua “let none remain” (Deut. 7:1-2).

The lesson learned in Israel’s dealings with the Gibeonites had been learned well. There would be no repetition of such folly as to be tricked into making further covenants with the inhabitants of the land.

The warfare continued unabated. From Makkedah the army of Israel moved south-west, to attack Libnah. Libnah was seven miles west and slightly to the south of Makkedah.

The peoples who dwelt in the central and southern areas of the land

were given no opportunity to regroup their forces. They had no means of either planning strategy or combining armies. In disarray, they found themselves unable to resist the onslaught of Joshua's army. With a suddenness which the Canaanites could not have anticipated, the Israelites thrust deeply into the land. At Libnah they were a mere sixteen miles from the Mediterranean Sea.

From there they swept due south — through the Shephilah, to besiege Lachish.

In effect, Israel was going from victory to victory, but in such a way that the battle was moving swiftly and gaining momentum. The Canaanites were fearful and bewildered, not knowing where the Israelites might strike next.

Lachish was ten miles due south of Libnah — which means that having conquered the centre of the land the Israelites were now sweeping the area of the Shephilah.

Lachish dominated the main highway from the Canaanite highlands to the Nile Valley. It was therefore of enormous strategic importance. Understandably, it was heavily fortified. As stated earlier, it was probably the most secure city in the entire land.

Its defences were so strong that Joshua found it necessary to encamp against it, and the city was not taken until "the second day". No special divine miracle was involved, as at Jericho and Gibeon. The Israelites were to fight valiantly, in faith, believing that the Invisible Army of Yahweh was there, helping them in the warfare. The fact that victory did not come easily would test their faith.

Their faith was rewarded.

Horam, king of Gezer, courageously decided that he would enter the fight on the part of Lachish. He was gallant, but foolish. Gezer was situated some twelve miles west and slightly south of Beth-horon. Horam would have travelled due south, through the Shephilah. He would have passed through the areas which had been devastated by the Israelites, Joshua's army having left behind them nothing but death and destruction. Only a foolhardy person, deficient in wisdom, would have followed such a course. As yet untouched by Joshua's army, Horam himself refused to believe the evidence of his own eyes. The Israelites were sweeping all before them; but Horam did not have the sense to acknowledge it. Like a knight in shining armour, he sallied forth to enter the fray. Common logic should have dictated that he throw in his lot with the northern kings, who had yet to meet the Israelites in battle.

Horam provides an apt example of the limited ability of mere flesh

to reason with discernment and acumen upon the question of self-preservation.

What happened to him?

“Joshua smote him and his people, until he had left none remaining.”

“A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this: when the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever. . .” (Ps. 92:6-7). “Every fool will be meddling. . .” (Prov. 20:3).

From Lachish, Joshua moved his army against Eglon, the site of which remains unknown, so far as we are aware. Obviously it must have been in the general area around Lachish. Perhaps a clue is provided when the narrative states that the army of Israel “went up from Eglon. . . unto Hebron. . .”. Possibly the army turned east again, or made a slight sweep to the south-east. Their intention was obvious: to make an encirclement of the central and southern regions of Canaan.

Hebron was twenty-two miles east of Lachish.

From Joshua’s account, Hebron did not fall easily. He says that the Israelites “fought against it”. But finally they “took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword. . .”.

Having taken Hebron, the Israelites then subdued all the surrounding “cities” which were associated with Hebron.

However, instead of completing the circle at this time by returning to Gilgal, Joshua led his army to an important southern fortress, thirteen miles south-west of Hebron. Joshua “turned” (lit.) to “Debir; and fought against it”.

With such rapid deployment of forces, and pursuing a strategy which the Canaanites could not follow, Joshua kept the enemy in a constant state of bewilderment and turmoil. Having seized the initiative at the commencement of this campaign, he never relinquished it for a moment.

“Thus Joshua subdued the whole land: the highlands, the Negeb, the lowlands, the hillsides, and all the kings in them” (J.B.). The Negeb included much of the desert regions of the south.

In fulfilling Yahweh’s command, they “utterly destroyed all that breathed” (cp. Deut. 20:16-17).

Joshua’s next move would have been as unpredictable to his enemies as his earlier manoeuvres. He marched his army seventy five miles south of Hebron, deep into desert territory, to smite Kadesh-barnea. Astonishing distances were covered on foot during the course

of this major offensive.

From Kadesh-barnea the Israelites marched almost thirty miles due north, to Gaza — a further move which would have been totally unexpected by the inhabitants of the land. This advance brought the army of Israel to within five miles of the Mediterranean Sea.

However, for some reason which remains unexplained, the Israelites did not take Gaza. They went “unto it” but that was all (cp. 11:22; 13:2-3). The Philistines remained a constant thorn in the flesh to Israel, until their power was finally broken in the days of David.

The phrase “all these **kings** and their land did Joshua take” could not have included Gaza, as the Philistines had no monarchical system of rule. Throughout his narrative, Joshua appears to be most circumspect in defining cities and areas which were ruled over by kings.

En route they smote Goshen — in the hill country, south-west of Hebron (cp. 15:51) — and came to the place where the campaign had begun: Gibeon.

Ultimately, the Israelites made their way back in a north-easterly direction to their original camp at Gilgal.

Joshua emphasises that “all these kings” and “their land” were taken “in one campaign” (J.B.). It is beyond dispute that this was an incredible feat.

How had it all been achieved?

“Because Yahweh. . . fought for Israel. . .”.

Under Joshua’s able and dedicated leadership, the people of Israel had responded by exercising faith and manifesting their faith through works. This required courage, and fearless determination.

Thus, whilst Yahweh “fought”, the army of Israel gave all their attention and effort to co-operating with their God, that His purpose might be brought to fruition.

In one swift, devastating offensive, the whole of southern Canaan had been delivered into the hands of Israel. “Yahweh brought the counsel of the heathen to nought!” (Ps. 33:10) in giving Israel the victory.

This military campaign changed the course of human history, by laying the land open to the children of Israel and placing them in possession of key strategic areas of the Promised Land.

The prophets who were to later write eloquently concerning the coming of Messiah and his glorious reign upon earth, considered the remarkable triumphs of Joshua as a type of that which is yet to come (see Isa. 60:12; Hab. 3:11-12, etc.).

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A Northern Confederacy Formed (Vv.1-5)

With a firm hold upon the centre of the Promised Land, and having summarily defeated the combined forces of the southern Canaanites, it followed that the Israelites would now turn their attention towards conquering the northern part of the land.

Again, any action which Joshua may have contemplated was pre-empted by the aggressive tactics initiated by the Canaanites.

Action eventuated because Joshua's hand was forced. But obviously the Hand of Providence was at work, developing a series of circumstances which would provide Israel with the victory they so clearly needed.

As Adoni-zedek of Jerusalem had been a key figure in the southern debacle, so a similar personality came to the fore in the north. He was Jabin, king of Hazor.

His name or title means "the wise". Hazor means "castle". Jabin therefore typifies the "wisdom" of the flesh, belligerently entrenched, prepared to oppose the things of God (cp. 1 Cor. 1:19; 3:19).

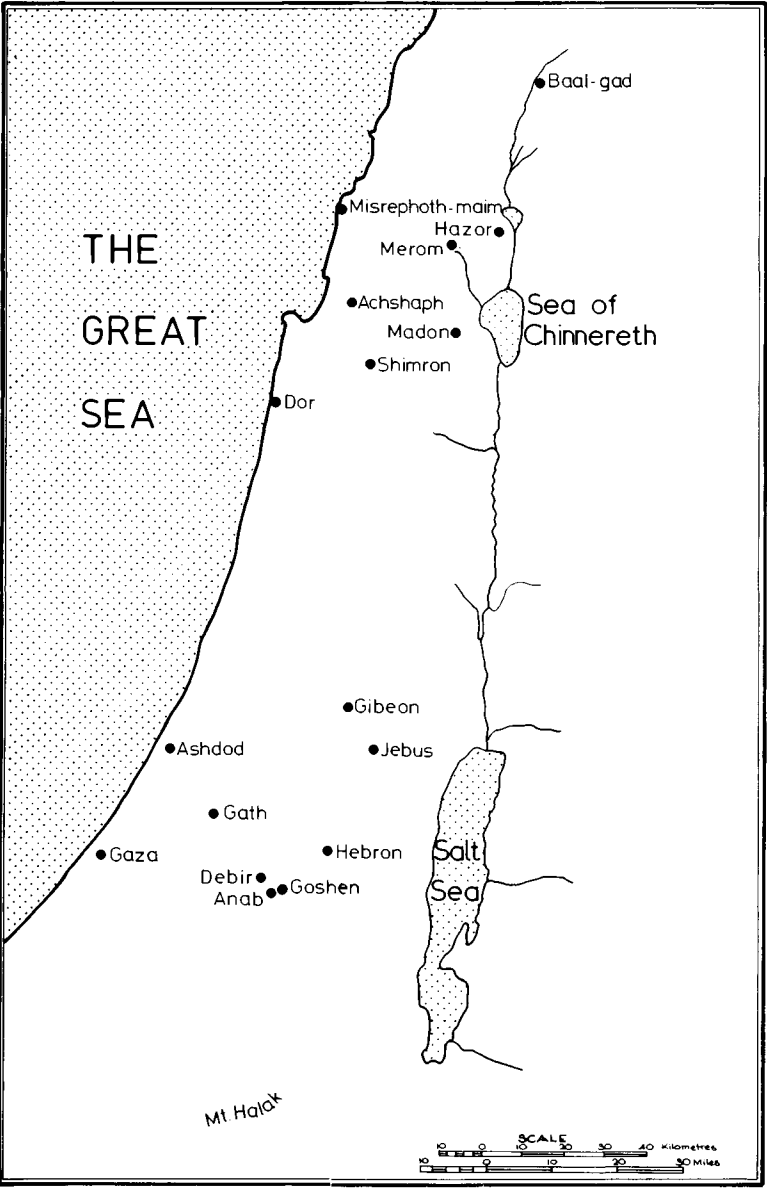
Hazor was eight miles north of Capernaum, near Lake Huleh. It was the most powerful fortress-city in upper Galilee — hence, perhaps, the meaning of its name.

Again, news had travelled fast. Jabin had "heard those things" concerning the astonishing victories which had brought Israel overwhelming supremacy throughout the southern regions of the land.

Jabin was stunned to learn that virtually all organised opposition against Israel had been crushed, from Jericho to Beth-horon, from the valley of Ajalon to Kadesh-barnea, and from Hebron to Gaza. Israel had swept all before them.

What would happen to the northern Canaanites? There was only one thing to be done: they must organise their forces and make ready for war.

Like Adoni-zedek, Jabin "sent" word to the kings throughout northern Canaan. His intention was to unite all those whom he considered would agree to become confederate with him. This alliance typifies the coalition of nations which will come from "the uttermost parts of the north" against the Greater Joshua, at Armageddon (Ezek. 38:6, R.V.).



The territory involved in the war of chapter 11.

The Gogian Leader at the time of Armageddon, having gained supremacy within his “castle” — the Kremlin — will be regarded by his followers as the “wisest” of men.

Jabin sent to “Jobab, King of Madon”. His name means “a howler, one who calls shrilly”. Madon means “strife, contention”. The kings of Shimron and Achshaph — unnamed — were alerted. The first of these names means “guardian” whilst the latter means “fascination”. Some interesting and instructive sentences may be constructed from these names. For example: “The **wisest** of men, in the ways of the flesh, will go forth from his **castle** against the Son of God. He will **howl** when becoming involved in **strife** from which he is unable to extricate himself; he will be destroyed whilst acting as **guardian** to those associated with him, who have become **fascinated** with the ideals of dominating the world through the arm and power of flesh.”

Jabin searched far and wide for allies. In taking this initiative, it is probable that he appreciated the extent of the crisis facing the northern Canaanites, more than other leaders in his region.

Madon was five miles west of what was later to become the city of Tiberias. Shimron, it has been suggested, was 19 miles west of the southern tip of the Sea of Galilee. Achshaph was situated two miles from the coast, five miles north of Acca. Jabin also sent to “the kings of the north. . .the plains south. . .in the valley. . .and the borders of Dor on the west. . .”. Dor was on the coast, 15 miles west of Megiddo. In other words, the call to arms went out from Hazor to every major city and to every town from which able-bodied men might be rallied to the cause, under the leadership of their respective kings.

But that was not all. The call went out to the “Canaanites on the east, and on the west, and to the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Jebusite in the mountains, and to the Hivite under Hermon in the land of Mizpeh.”

The summons from Jabin went forth to those dwelling in an area of three hundred square miles.

From this confederacy, according to Josephus, an awesome army was assembled. There were, claims the historian, 300,000 infantry, 10,000 cavalry and 20,000 chariots.

Almost certainly, such an army presented the most formidable opposition the Israelites had encountered.

The impending battle would present a great trial to the faith of Joshua and his men, yet events were to prove that their courage and their faith was more than a match for the armed strength of the Canaanites.

The lack of wise organisation among the Canaanites — both in the south and the north — is indicative of the divisive nature of life among these people. Lacking any pre-arranged cohesion, it would have been extremely difficult to arrange logistics and the marshalling of the armies to the best advantage. Needless to say, such a lack of co-ordination among the Canaanites gave the Israelites certain invaluable advantages.

It will be observed that in all his major campaigns Joshua struck against the enemy as quickly as possible, before the Canaanites had opportunity to plan effective, clear-cut strategy.

Israel Told to Prepare for War (V.6)

In language that is almost laconic, Joshua records simply: "And they went out. . . They and all their hosts with them, much people, even as the sand that is upon the sea shore in multitude, with horses and chariots, very many. . ." (v.4). He says nothing concerning the fearsome sight which the assembled enemy would have presented. The record is set down in terms which speak of a calm detachment, on the part of the writer. Joshua was not concerned at such an amassing of fleshly might. His trust was in Yahweh, Who had demonstrated to Israel time and again that He possessed Power against which flesh could not stand.

The Canaanites doubtless trusted in their strength and their numbers. To an eye-witness they looked, in number, like "the sand that is upon the sea shore". And so it shall be with Gog, and those who will be confederated with him. Yahweh has foretold: "I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company. . . Thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee. . ." (Ezek. 38:4, 9).

Communications between the northern Canaanitish kings were hastily established. Swiftly, messengers were sent back and forth. Expeditiously "these kings, having all agreed on a meeting place", planned their strategy (J.B.). It was agreed that their forces should assemble "at the waters of Merom, to fight against Israel".

Four tributaries come together to form the beginning of the river Jordan. The river then flows southward for seven miles before entering Lake Huleh. The "waters of Merom" have been placed eleven miles south-west of the southern tip of Lake Huleh. From there, a valley at the foot of high ground leads gently downward to the Sea of Galilee, a further ten miles to the south. In effect, it placed the Canaanite armies facing south, with the hill-country at their backs. Their

intention would have been to meet the Israelites head-on, and drive them down into the lower regions around the Sea of Galilee.

Of course, these kings knew their own territory only too well. It would have appeared that almost every advantage lay with them. And they were united in their objective: "to fight against Israel" (cp. Ps. 2:1-4; Isa. 26:10-11). This alliance of fleshly might epitomises Gentile opposition against Israel down through the ages; a philosophy which will culminate in Armageddon.

The strategy of the kings was sound. But not good enough.

They had no concept of the God whom they were fighting. Joshua would have had scouts spread throughout the land. Reports of the gathering hordes in the north would have been reaching Joshua. He was in need of special encouragement at this time. And Yahweh gave it to him.

"Yahweh said unto Joshua, Be not afraid because of them: for tomorrow, **about this time**, will I deliver them up all slain before Israel. . .".

Joshua was assured of victory. He had nothing to fear. Even the time of the victory was virtually stated.

When these words were spoken Joshua was in Gilgal. Such a great distance separated the opposing armies that for Israel to gain the victory within twenty four hours seemed almost impossible.

Unless. . . .

"Tomorrow, about this time. . .".

Joshua then understood what was required: a forced march, without delay, over a distance of nearly eighty miles!

Joshua considered the matter carefully. He pondered the words which had been spoken: "**I** will deliver them up, all slain. . .". Yahweh would do it.

In contrast to the Canaanites, the people of Israel were completely united. Speedily, Joshua sent his aides into action. The army was mobilised with the minimum of delay.

Thoughtfully, Joshua appraised the instructions which had come from Yahweh. "You shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots" (J.B.). This meant cutting the sinews behind the horses' hooves, rendering them useless. This could be accomplished with considerable speed, indicating once again the need for rapid manoeuvrability and swiftness in the attack.

The horse is a Biblical symbol for warfare (Ex. 15:1; Prov. 21:31; Isa. 43:16-17; Jer. 8:6, etc.). As such, it symbolises man's trust in the

arm of flesh. For this reason, Israel's kings were forbidden to "multiply horses" (Deut. 17:16). The nation and its leaders were to repudiate the flesh and trust only in Yahweh (Ps. 20:7; 147:10).

The "chariots" of the Canaanites were to be burned with fire. This was to signify total victory on the part of Israel, whilst at the same time disdainfully showing that Israel had no use for the chariots themselves.

These instructions were conveyed to the people. The army, hastily but efficiently prepared, was ready to move.

They marched northward to meet the enemy.

The Battle for Northern Canaan (Vv.7-17)

In effect, Joshua repeated the strategy he had employed successfully against the southern confederacy of Canaanites.

The enemy were organising and preparing. But they did not anticipate that the Israelites would attack so quickly.

Sending out advance scouts, the army of Israel advanced quietly and swiftly through the darkness of night. Their approach was unknown to their adversaries.

Jabin and his associates had chosen a battleground which suited them. Obviously there was sufficient space in the valley to manoeuvre 20,000 chariots, together with a huge mass of infantry.

Despite their attempts to prepare for the conflict, the Canaanites were taken unawares. Joshua has demonstrated the enormous advantages gained from a specific method of attack: take the opposition by surprise, and join the battle whilst the enemy is off-balance.

So "Joshua and all his warriors caught them unawares. . .". Or: "Joshua and all the army came in upon them by the waters of Merom, suddenly. . ." (J.B., Roth.).

Precise details concerning Joshua's tactics have not been recorded. Perhaps, as at Gibeon, they struck at dawn from the heights on the east. With the sun behind them, and the enemy not anticipating an attack from the east, the Israelites "fell upon them". This brief description indicates the swiftness and ferocity of the attack.

No doubt the Canaanite chariots were at the forefront of their ranks, ready to lead an attack, with the cavalry and infantry drawn up, prepared to follow the initial onslaught made by the chariots.

Whatever strategy they may have had in mind, the Canaanites were not given the opportunity to take the initiative.

Quickly the horses were immobilised, leaving 20,000 nonplussed charioteers horrified at the suddenness and devastation of the attack, and totally unprepared for the hand-to-hand fighting which would have followed.

The ranks of troops behind the chariots, probably “at ease” and relaxed, suddenly found their positions overrun by the Israelites. Obviously, the main thrust of the Canaanite armaments would have been pointing due south, ready to meet the advancing Israelites. This would have left their eastern and western flanks somewhat vulnerable.

Inevitably, there was a fearful slaughter.

“Yahweh delivered them into the hand of Israel, who smote them. . .”. The army of Israel “defeated and fell on them. . .” (J.B.).

Awesome things may be accomplished when men correctly harmonise faith and works, and the Hand of Providence adds a mighty blessing thereto. The Elohim manipulated the circumstances and the unfolding of events. Israel seized upon their opportunities and prosecuted the battle to the best of their ability. “We are labourers together with God”, wrote Paul (1 Cor. 3:9, cp. Mark 16:20).

As had happened at Gibeon, the enemy were thrown into confusion. They fled in terror before the swiftly moving, relentless Israelites. Joshua’s army of faithful men were “faint, yet pursuing. . .” (Judg.8:4). These valiant warriors typify those who, through their dogged persistence in faithfulness to Yahweh, will ultimately gain eternal salvation in God’s kingdom (2 Cor. 4:15-16; Gal. 6:9; Lk. 18:1).

The enemy was put to flight. Terror-stricken, the bulk of them remained together as a group, rather than scattering. They headed north-north-west towards “Great Zidon” — literally, Tzidon-rabba, which was the ancient name by which this large, wealthy city was known. It was the capital of Phoenicia, situated thirty miles from Lake Huleh. Tzidon had been the firstborn son of Canaan (Gen. 10:15); hence its history dates back to the founding of the degenerate Canaanitish nations.

The defeated armies also fled to Misrephoth-maim and the valley of Mizpeh. The former was on the coast, due west from the northern end of Lake Huleh, whilst the latter, it has been suggested, lay somewhere in Gilead. This means that as Joshua’s army pursued remorselessly after the retreating Canaanites, they fled in a north-westerly direction, but then turned south, then east. In their frenzy to escape the pursuit of the Israelites, the gradually diminishing army of the northern confederacy travelled almost full circle. Arriving eventually somewhere south of Lake Huleh, they may well have continued their flight northward, on the eastern side of Jordan.

The Israelites refused to give up. They continued to chase the fleeing Canaanites, knowing that the victory had to be complete, breaking once and for all the combined military strength of the northern inhabitants of the land.

Joshua's army pursued the Canaanites for more than one hundred miles. The chase would have been exhausting and hazardous. With little time for sleeping and eating, and requiring a constant state of alertness at all times, the enormity of the enterprise is not readily grasped. Only an army of men, totally dedicated to a cause, would expend themselves so fully.

They continued to hunt the petrified Canaanites "until they left none remaining. . .". The confused and terrified northern army was decimated.

Joshua ensured that the nation fulfilled their divinely-appointed commission, "as Yahweh bade him. . .". A simple statement, yet profound in principle. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. . ." (1 Sam. 15:22; cp. Ex. 19:5; Jer. 7:23).

The Israelites then moved against Hazor. This was a brilliant stroke of strategy. Hazor was the most heavily fortified city in the northern part of the land. It would present a greater challenge to Joshua's army than any other city in the region. No better move could have been made at that time than to attack the strongest city. The people of the city were in a state of turmoil at the devastation which has come upon their army and the other Canaanite armies within the alliance. Hazor, at this time, would have been unprepared to withstand a major attack. The majority of their fighting men were dead. Any who may have survived would have been dazed with shock, which would not have been conducive to a valiant defence of the city. Joshua held the advantage. He meant to use it as wisely as possible.

The city was taken. The king was destroyed, thus paying with his life for his rashness and conceit in daring to fight against Yahweh.

All the inhabitants of the city were put to death.

It has been recorded that Hazor "was the head of all those kingdoms" — which is to say that Hazor was the most powerful and influential of all the northern cities of the Canaanites. The word "head" has been rendered from the Hebrew, **rosh**, and, interestingly, is the same word rendered as a proper noun in Ezek. 38:2, 3; 39:1 (R.V.). Whilst the word means "head" it has also been used to describe one who is the "highest" or "supreme", also that which is "first and foremost". The word has also been used of a "poisonous plant", one which grows up quickly and luxuriantly, but has a bitter

taste (see Tregelles 'Gesenius' and 'Ezekiel's Prophecies of the Restoration', H.P. Mansfield, pp. 68-69). When used as a proper noun by Ezekiel, the word provides an apt and vivid description of the International Communist system, and its aims and objectives. Having developed from virtually nothing to a major world power in the space of a mere thirty years, and the most powerful confederacy of States (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) in the following thirty years, the history of the development of Communism is astonishing. It is a system which desires to become "head" of the world; its leaders wish to become "supreme" rulers over all nations, with Russia the "foremost". Like the poisonous plant which is identified by the same word, Communism has grown up quickly, and manifests a form of independence which appears to convey the idea of invincibility. But the nations of the earth — particularly those who have embraced the doctrinaire philosophy of the Marxist system — will ultimately find that its taste is "bitter".

Hazor provides an impressive type of the "Rosh" which is to come from the north, to do battle with the Greater Joshua at the time of Armageddon.

Hazor was destroyed and "burnt" with "fire".

But the Israelites failed to maintain their uncompromising attitude against their Canaanitish enemies. Two generations later, Hazor had been rebuilt, and had become so powerful that they were oppressing the Israelites! (Judg. 4:1-2). Apathy, indifference and self-indulgence robbed later generations of the zeal and dedication displayed by Joshua and his army. They failed to maintain the uncompromising stand taken by their Pioneers — and paid a dreadful price for such dilatoriness and lack of responsibility.

Having chased the main force of the Canaanites' army for more than 100 miles, the destruction of Hazor marked but the beginning of a major campaign against all the cities of the kings who had been confederate in their opposition to Israel. Relentlessly and courageously, Joshua's army maintained their onslaught against the Canaanites. They prosecuted their warfare upon the basis of the "commandments" of "Moses".

The name of Moses occurs fifty-seven times in the book of Joshua. The phrases "as Yahweh commanded Moses. . .", "the Law of Moses. . .", "Moses, the servant of Yahweh. . ." — or similar expressions, constantly recur throughout Joshua's record. This shows that not only did Joshua receive particular instructions from Yahweh at specific times, he also thoughtfully and thoroughly continued to study "the Bible" as it then existed: five books compiled by Moses

under divine inspiration. In other words, Joshua was a keen and dedicated Bible Student. Not content merely to receive instructions from Yahweh upon particular matters, he immersed himself in a study of the Law of Moses, so that he might know precisely what Yahweh expected both of Joshua and the people. He wished to be able to supply his nation with sound leadership, based upon a mature understanding of God's word. Joshua was a truly spiritually-minded man. His life developed into the pattern of all faithful servants of Yahweh; of one such it has been written that "he **prepared** his heart to **seek** the Law of Yahweh, and to **do it**, and to **teach** in Israel statutes and judgments. . ." (Ezra 7:10).

Although in this mortal life Joshua experienced few joys and many hardships, with much self-sacrifice and self-denial, he shall "receive a righteous man's reward" at Christ's coming. Joshua was one who firmly believed that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed" in all who remain faithfully dedicated to Yahweh throughout their time of mortal probation (Mat. 10:41; Rom. 8:18).

Moses had clearly stated that which Israel should do, at this point in history (cp. Deut. 7:1-11; 9:1-6; 20:16, etc.). Joshua's grand desire was to follow meticulously the instructions which he had received from Yahweh, through the writings of Moses.

The warfare continued unabated.

"Yet, of all these towns standing on their mounds, Israel burned none, apart from Hazor. . ." (J.B.). Doubtless these cities survived, as they would make suitable dwelling-places for the tribes of Israel, when they moved in to take their various tribal inheritances. Being built upon "mounds" these would all have been fortress-cities, and would thus have provided not only living-quarters but also a measure of protection for the Israelites. Yahweh later reminded the nation of the blessings they had received in this regard: "I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them. . ." (Josh. 24:13).

Hazor, however, was totally destroyed. It typified the combined power and strength of the Canaanites, and was summarily razed to the ground as a warning to the inhabitants of all Canaanitish cities in the north.

The spoil of these cities was shared among the Israelites, but every Canaanite was put to the sword.

Success followed success for the Israelites. Why? Because of Joshua's wholehearted desire to fulfil the will of Yahweh. "He set

aside nothing of all that Yahweh commanded Moses. . .” (Roth.). How, then, could he fail? “It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2). Joshua was such a man.

“So Joshua took all this land, the hill country and all the south, and all the land of Goshen, and the lowland and the waste plain, and the hill country of Israel and the lowland thereof: from Mount Halak that goeth up to Seir, even as far as Baal-gad, in the valley of the Lebanon, under Mount Hermon. . .” (Roth.).

This summarises the land spoken of in this and previous chapters. It does not signify the entire land of Canaan, for such a total conquest of the land was never achieved (Josh. 13:1; 18:2-3; cp. Ps. 106:34-38; etc.).

The Challenging Demands of a Protracted War (Vv.18-22)

Nevertheless, “Joshua made war a long time with all those kings. . .” (cp. Ex. 23:28-30). The initial warfare continued for a period of seven years (Josh. 14:7, 10) — an obvious type of the warfare against sin, which must be waged for seven one-thousand-year “days”. Sin will not be finally eradicated until Adamic nature has been effaced from the earth. This will occur at the end of the millenium — the seventh one-thousand-year “day”. Mortality and sin will then cease to exist, and “God” will be “all in all. . .” (1 Cor. 15:28).

Though these words are so positively descriptive of faithful men joining uncompromisingly in the warfare of faith, they also supply the seeds of Israel’s ultimate failure. The fighting was hard. The wars were protracted. Month after month, year after year, there was a constant need for alertness and vigilance. The prosecution of the war against the Canaanites demanded unremitting self-sacrifice on the part of the Israelites. They had to bear the rigours associated with war. The severe and harsh way of life, year after year required many sacrifices.

Ultimately, in the main, the Israelites grew tired of it.

They became fed up with war, and the demands of warfare. They faltered. They compromised. They gave up the struggle.

Peace from warfare, together with quietness and relaxation, became more desirable than pressing the offensive against the enemies of Yahweh.

They failed to appreciate that the warfare of faith can never be abandoned until the final victory is attained.

For true servants of Yahweh, there can be no compromise with that which is ungodly. "Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ", pleaded the apostle Paul (2 Tim. 2:3). "He who patiently endures **unto the end**, will be saved", said Christ (Mat. 24:13 Diag.; cp. Rom. 2:7; Mat. 10:22; Jas. 5:8-11).

Apart from the Gibeonites (Hivites) who had tricked the people of Israel, "there was not a city that made peace" with Israel. Once deceived, Joshua thereafter implicitly followed the requirements of the Law (Deut. 7:2; 20:16-18).

The "hearts" of the Canaanites were "hardened" in their opposition to Yahweh and His people. As in the case of Pharaoh — of whom the same word "harden" is used — Yahweh provided the circumstances which revealed the true character and extent of degeneracy apparent amongst the inhabitants of the land. "They hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of Yahweh: they would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. . ." (Prov. 1:29-31). They knowingly and accountably came "against Israel in battle". Thus, Yahweh determined to "destroy them utterly" at the hand of Joshua and his army.

The first of the two words rendered "destroy" (v.20) is the Hebrew **charam**, from which the word "accursed" (6:17-18) has been derived. The ungodly Canaanites were therefore offered, as has been demonstrated earlier, as sacrifices to Yahweh.

The Anakim were a hill-tribe of the Amorites, also known as "the children of Anak" (Num. 13:28, 33). The name means "long-necked" — perhaps related to their exceptional tallness. It had been these people in particular who had struck fear and terror into the hearts of the ten faithless spies (Num. 13:28, 32-33).

Most men, like the faint-hearted ten, judge according to what they see and hear, rather than upon the principle of faith. God's servants face many "giants" during their probationary walk. There are the giants of "temptation" and "anxiety" and "weakness of faith" and many others. It is not always remembered that Yahweh has a power which can overcome every "giant" which may appear to bar the way to the Kingdom. Joshua and Caleb had not been shaken at the prospect of facing "giants". They were ready to go forward, rich in faith, knowing that Yahweh would give them the victory. Joshua and Caleb endeavoured to counter the fear and faithless despondency which had engulfed the nation. To no avail. The people had refused to believe that their God could defeat all Israel's enemies. For such irreverence towards Yahweh, that generation paid with their lives. Their

“carcasses” fell in the “wilderness” (Num. 14:29).

The younger generation had not been so faithless. They had already met many of the Anakim in battle, and put them to flight (Josh. 10:3, 36-37). Later, as an exquisite reward for faithfulness, Caleb was to receive Hebron as his inheritance (Josh. 14). How sublime is the wisdom and goodness of Yahweh! How He inspires in His servants a deep sense of veneration for His perfect character! His judgments are beyond compare. His justice is unimpeachable. His mercy is upon “them that fear Him” (Ps. 33:18).

The real “giant” in the land was Yahweh — not the Anakim. Yahweh Elohim, the unseen Power which brought victory after victory to Joshua’s faithful army of valiant warriors.

The only surviving Anakim fled to the cities of the Philistines (cp. 1 Sam. 17:4; 2 Sam. 21:18-22; 1 Chron. 20:4-8). Gaza was a major stronghold of the Philistines; and together with Gath, Ekron, Ashkelon and Ashdod, constituted the five principal cities of the Philistines.

Joshua Victorious—But What of Israel (V.23)

“So Joshua took the whole land” — or, “Joshua mastered the whole country” (J.B.). This statement does not mean that Joshua was now in control of the entire land of Canaan, but rather that he had established an unquestionable military superiority throughout the land.

It should be understood that Joshua’s three major offensives were not designed to give Israel immediate and full occupation of all the territory which Yahweh had promised them. Rather, the purpose was to destroy all co-ordinated opposition to Israel. Joshua’s targets were the massive confederated armies and the key defended cities. The complete extermination of all the Canaanites was not Joshua’s mission (Deut. 7:22).

He had now achieved his major objective in three major military campaigns: the first against the centre of the land, the second in subduing the combined armies of the south, and, finally, in defeating the confederated forces of the northern kings.

With the conclusion of the third successful military campaign, “the land rested from war”. This was typical not only of the 1,000 years of “rest” which the earth will experience during the Kingdom Age, but points forward to the endless epoch of “rest” which will follow the

millenium. Then, a time “of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord” — ushering in an everlasting era of divine perfection and fulfilment. Then, there will be peace in the most complete and perfect sense. There will be “no more sea” — meaning mortality. And God will be “all in all. . .” (Rev. 22:1; 1 Cor. 15:28).

So far as conquest of the land was concerned, the rest would be up to the individual tribes. They were required to go in and seize their respective tribal inheritances from the Canaanites. Joshua had acted “according to all that Yahweh said unto Moses”.

But what would the tribes of Israel do?

In Joshua’s successes, all Israel was provided with ample proof that Yahweh could be fully trusted to keep His word.

Israel should have completed the work which had been commenced with such zeal and dedication.

The tragedy is, they failed to do so.

The principle of Deut. 7:1-2 should have been unremittingly pursued, until the work was finished. But the Israelites grew indifferent.

For all their early vigour and total commitment, they failed to continue the struggle to the very end.

It is lamentable that the incredible victories which had been achieved under the leadership of Joshua were virtually thrown to the winds. A form of spiritual sleeping-sickness descended upon the Israelites. Lethargy overcame them. Having attained a comfortable degree of peace, they became slothful. Indifference swept them into a vacuum of spiritual insensibility.

They drifted into a state of dispassionate unconcern (cp. 18:1-3).

The record of scripture provides stark proof concerning Israel’s failure. “The children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites: and they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods. . .” (Judg. 3:5-6).

Such declension from the Truth was clearly manifested by the generation following Joshua and the elders who outlived him (Judg. 2:7-13).

One of the most powerful criticisms directed against Israel by their God concerns this particular period of history: “They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom Yahweh commanded them: but were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them. . .” (Ps. 106:34-36).

Obviously there is a special warning in this, for those who would

become true spiritual Israelites. There can be no compromise with sin. There can be no ceasing from the struggle until final and complete victory is gained. This hour of triumph will come when the Approved Elect stand acceptably before the Son of God at his Judgment Seat.

Having received such blessings from Yahweh, Israel's ultimate failure should provide a sober lesson for God's people in every age.

The Truth may not be easily found — but it may be easily lost.

That which men love, they prize. And that which they prize, they will fight for, even though the “weapons of their warfare” may not be “carnal”.

If the Truth of God takes deep root in the hearts of men and women, they should increasingly love and prize it.

In apostolic times the Truth was lost to many. Though they may have understood its message intellectually, the power of God's word had not fully touched their hearts. The result? “They received not the **love** of the Truth. . .” (2 Thess. 2:10).

The “weapons” with which the warfare of faith has been fought down through the ages since the days of Abel have not been “carnal”. The real struggle for eternal salvation is waged in the mind, not with the sword. And faithful men and women have always known that the power of God's word in their lives is able to cast down “reasonings, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God. . .bringing into captivity every mind to the obedience of Christ. . .” (2 Cor. 10:4-5, see marg. and lit. Gk.).

“The entrance” of God's “word” gives “light”. The challenge to God's servants in every age is to keep that light burning within the innermost recesses of their intellect, and to continue walking in the way shown by God's light.

If they remain faithful, their reward is assured.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Kings Defeated East of Jordan (Vv.1-6)

A superficial reading of this chapter may leave the reader with the impression that it amounts to little more than a rather dull cataloguing of Israel's conquests.

Such a conclusion would be most unfortunate, and far from the truth.

A cursory reading of any chapter of the Bible will provide minimum enlightenment. The Bible has been authored and inspired upon the principle that "the glory of God is to **conceal** a thing, but the glory of kings is to **search out** a thing. . ." (Prov. 25:2, Roth.). To "search out" the deeper and more significant aspects of the divine revelation requires careful study, accompanied by thoughtful meditation.

This ideal applies to the twelfth chapter of Joshua, as much as to any portion of God's word.

The chapter provides a summary of Israel's conquests up to this time — but from a particular standpoint. Joshua does not endeavour to list **all** the cities and towns which had been conquered, but only the **kings** and their strongholds.

There is remarkable significance in this, which will be considered in due course.

Verses one to six list the kings on the east of Jordan who had been defeated by Israel. The rest of the chapter provides details concerning the kings who had been overcome on the west of Jordan.

Joshua's record, insofar as it goes, is meticulous. He mentions the region "from the river Arnon unto Mount Hermon, and all the plain on the east. . .". The last word has been rendered from the Hebrew **arabah**, which had a particular application to the depression of the Jordan Valley.

West of Jordan, Joshua has defined Israel's borders as from Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon to the bald mountain "that goeth up to Seir" (cp. 11:17 with 12:7). These details describe an area about 180 miles in length, and with a width varying from 40 to 70 miles. Comparing the vast areas of territory which have come under the dominion of various nations throughout the ages, down to our present times, the size of this area is not particularly impressive. Moreover, this relatively small area nowhere near compares with the inheritance promised to Abraham. It should be borne in mind, however, that this territory has been associated with the exercising of a phenomenal influence on the

course of world history, with which no other region could be compared. From within its borders the prophets of Yahweh forthrightly revealed the word of God. Over a period of one and a half millennia, the divine revelation to humanity was unfolded and recorded. Within this land, Yahweh made His covenants with Abraham and David, which were to guarantee the ultimate destiny of human history. From this land God's own Son spoke words of eternal life to all who would hear. He died there. And there he rose to life everlasting.

Although Israel has never yet possessed all the land promised to Abraham, it still remains the Land of the Book, and therefore the focal-point of the earth—the centre of civilisation to which, in due course, all men will be drawn to worship Israel's God (Zech. 14:16, etc.).

A consideration of some of the places mentioned in this chapter should assist the reader towards a clearer understanding of the extent of territory being referred to. For example, Sihon's kingdom extended from Aroer, near the River Arnon and fourteen miles east of the Dead Sea, to the Jabbok, fifty miles north of Arnon. Beth-jeshimoth was near the northern-most point of the Dead Sea. The Sea of Chinnereth was another name for the Sea of Galilee.

Ashdod-pisgah should be rendered "slopes of Pisgah". These were west of the plains of Moab—Nebo being the chief peak in this mountain range.

Og's kingdom was to the north of Sihon's. Bashan was an area east of Jordan, north of Gilead, and probably reached to the foothills of Hermon. Salcah marked the eastern boundary, one hundred miles from the Mediterranean Sea.

Joshua's reference to "the remnant of the giants" relates to a tribe of unusually tall people, like the Anakim. They occupied parts of Bashan and the northern part of Gilead (Gen. 14:5; 15:20; Deut. 3:13; Josh. 17:15).

Ashtaroth was one of Og's cities, thirty miles east of the Sea of Galilee. Nelson's "Atlas of the Bible" places Edrei four miles west of Lake Huleh.

The "border of the Geshurites" was in the north-east corner of Bashan, on Syria's boundary. It was also known as "Geshur in Syria" (2 Sam. 15:8).

Having recorded this information, Joshua then adds: "Them did Moses. . . and the children of Israel smite. . ." —which means that all these areas were attacked and subdued under the leadership of Moses, before Israel crossed Jordan.

Kings Defeated West of Jordan (Vv.7-24)

From the seventh verse, a list is provided of the kings who were defeated on the west side of Jordan.

Commencing with the king of Jericho, a total of thirty-one kings have been documented. The list begins with kings of relatively well-known cities: Jericho, Ai, Jerusalem, Hebron. Numerous of the other names are not so generally known. However, it is a worthwhile exercise to search for the names in a Concordance, note where they occur, and trace the names in the index and maps of a Bible Atlas.

Verses nine to sixteen list the kings who occupied areas between the centre and the south of the land. Verses seventeen to twenty-four record those in the northern areas.

In summarising the chapter, it is worthy of note that all these kings had been defeated and humiliated by the Israelites. The record shows that many of them were put to death. It is not improbable that all met the same fate.

In this respect, do not all these kings represent the world at large? Throughout the ages, the kings of the nations have held to their particular religious ideals and convictions. They have been associated with innumerable forms of personal or institutionalised beliefs and philosophies. In this regard, nothing has really changed; the world of gentilism demands “freedom of religion” to practise any form of rite or ritual toward which they may feel disposed. But, with few exceptions throughout history, all have remained in error. There is only one true God—the God of Israel. And He will be worshipped “in spirit and in truth” and upon no other basis (Jn. 4:23-24).

These kings typify those who will be ruling over the nations when the Greater Joshua comes to dispossess them from their seats of Power (Ps. 58:10-11; Ps. 149; Rev. 18:5-6; 19:19-21, etc.). The kingdom of God will not be established until current Gentile authorities and philosophies have been swept away. And Christ, together with his immortalised saints, will do precisely this (Dan. 2:44; Rev. 11:15; Isa. 28:16-17; 30:30). The “kings of the earth” have yet to acknowledge the truth concerning these matters (Ps. 2).

Final Summary of the Chapter’s Message

There is, however, a deeper significance in the listing of these kings. Two are recorded as having been defeated on the east of Jordan, and thirty-one on the west.

The total number of kings comes to thirty-three. Why this particular number? Because it typifies the number of years Christ unrelentingly fought his warfare against the forces of sin! Having attained the age of

thirty-three years he laid down his life. He had defeated sin, even as Joshua brought to fruition the warfare against the kings of the land. In their total number they typify King Sin (Rom. 6:12-16).

A similarity of principles between the number of kings recorded here and the purification of a woman after having given birth to a male child, is unmistakable (cp. Lev. 12:1-4). Following the birth, the woman was to remain “unclean” for seven days. On the eighth day the male child was presented to Yahweh through the ritual of circumcision. The eighth day symbolised the cutting off of flesh, and a new beginning. However, the woman’s purification was not completed until another thirty-three days had passed. During that time she was not permitted to enter the sanctuary. Similarly, it was not until the Lord’s thirty-fourth year that he was delivered from Adamic nature, and in the fulness of divine nature was able to pass literally into “the sanctuary” of his Father’s presence.

Thus this chapter provides a wonderful cameo which typifies Christ’s victory over sin. But, by implication, it does more than that. Yahweh established a way whereby mankind might draw near unto Him through the One whom He has provided. It follows that Christ is able to lead his brethren to victory, even as Joshua did in the battles which have been briefly alluded to in this chapter.

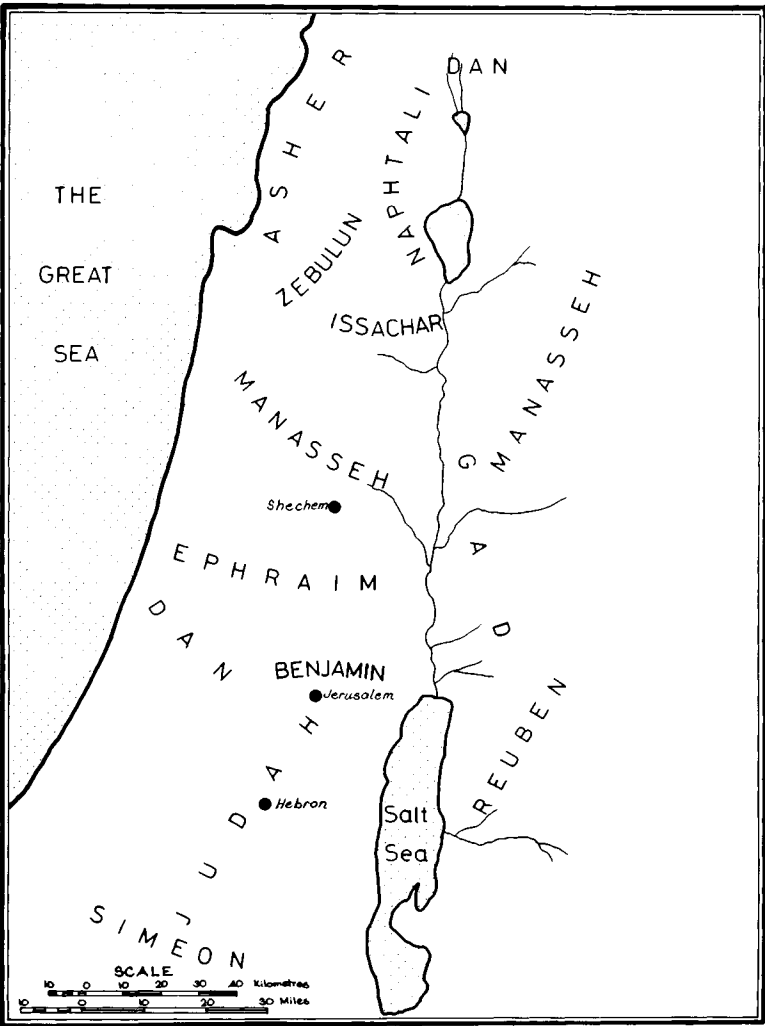
An army involved in combat can only settle their conflict in one of three ways: either they are defeated, or they compromise with their enemy, or they gain a complete and total victory. Those who wholeheartedly desire to follow Christ cannot permit themselves to be defeated by King Sin, nor can they conceivably waive the principles which Christ has taught them. If they remain faithful, their Lord will give them the victory over sin — even as Joshua led Israel to triumph over the kings of the Canaanites.

Part One of the Book of Joshua concludes at this point.

In reviewing the first twelve chapters it will be seen that three dominant principles have been set forth therein. Firstly, it was Yahweh who gave Israel the victory (5:14-6:2). The lesson is that flesh cannot overcome sin. Only the power of Yahweh and the influence of His spirit-word can achieve such an objective.

Secondly, mankind can only manifest righteousness when giving unqualified obedience to divine principles (1:7, 9, 10; 4:10; 8:27; 10:40; 11:12-15). Thirdly, the purpose of the warfare of faith is not merely the destruction of the ungodly, but the obtaining of **rest** for the people of God (11:23; cp. Heb. 4:9-11).

These principles provide great encouragement for all who would follow Christ, striving earnestly to remain faithful to his cause until he comes to claim his Bride.



Divisions of the Tribal Inheritances

PART TWO

The Division of the Land

CHAPTERS 13 - 22

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Joshua Aging — Much Land Yet to be Possessed (Vv.1-6)

Some time had now passed since the events described in the eleventh chapter. Joshua had become old and was “advanced in years” (J.B.).

His declining years would have been years of grace and dignity. “The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness. . .” (Prov. 16:31). In the case of Joshua, this would certainly have been so.

He appreciated that the end of his mortal life was drawing nearer. Like Paul, he would have said, simply: “I am now ready to be offered. . . I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. . .” He also knew that a “crown of righteousness” was “laid up” for those who look for the “appearing” of Israel’s Saviour and Messiah (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

However, although Joshua had fulfilled his ministry in accordance with Yahweh’s requirements, there still remained work for him to do. The lesson of Joshua’s life teaches that even in declining years God’s servants do not “retire” from an active life in the Truth.

During the final years of his life, Joshua desired to see his people established in their inheritance. He had in mind the welfare not only of that generation, but of those who were to follow.

The latter part of his life was, in measure, devoted to exhorting his people. “Much of the country still remains to be subdued”, Yahweh reminded him. Joshua well knew this. It was necessary that the people be reminded of their responsibilities. With Yahweh’s assistance, the victories gained under Joshua’s leadership had enabled the individual tribes to take up their respective areas of inheritance.

There is an important lesson in this. It may have been anticipated that, in the flush of a number of overwhelming victories, the warfare would be over. The work of subduing sin, however, is not accomplished through a few spectacular triumphs, attained during the course of a few years. The warfare must be continued with unabated dedication until God indicates that the final victory has been gained.

God’s people must remain positive in their attitude, ever alert, exercising faith and courageous determination. Those who do not remain conscious of their needs and their obligations will not come through the trials of life to final victory. Tragically, “the love of the many will cool”; but the joy promised to all who remain faithful is beyond

dispute: "He who **patiently endures to the end**, will be saved. . . ." (Matt. 24:13, Diag.).

Yahweh then described to Joshua the regions of the land which remained unsubdued. Areas specifically mentioned included "all the regions of the Philistines" (J.B., Lit. Heb., "the circle of the Philistines" — meaning their entire territory). The Sidonians in the north were mentioned, and the area between the Lebanon and anti-Lebanon mountains.

The places expressly mentioned are important. Geshuri was an area east of Jordan, between the Sea of Galilee and Lake Huleh. It formed part of the region allotted to the tribe of Manasseh.

Then God specifically mentioned: "From Sihor, which is before Egypt, even unto the borders of Ekron northward. . . ." This is a momentous statement. Sihor (the words "from Sihor" contain the definite article, and should be literally rendered "from the black river. . .") was a name applied to the Nile (Isa. 23:3; Jer. 2:18). These words therefore drew attention to the extent of the region covered in the Abrahamic promises — "from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates. . ." (Gen. 15:18).

Ekron, one of the five principal cities of the Philistines, lay 37 miles due west of Jericho, and nine miles east of the Mediterranean. It was the northernmost of the five Philistine cities. The linking of the Nile with Ekron appears to stress the importance of the one hundred miles of coastline and coastal plain between the two places. Israel had been victorious as far south as Kadesh-barnea, but that was about eighty or ninety miles from the Nile, and twenty three miles south-east from the nearest coast.

Yahweh's concern that Israel should be reminded of the Abrahamic promises is evident. And fully justified. In no sense was God blameworthy because the nation failed to secure and hold all the territory which had been promised. Yahweh will always do His part, according to His promise; but man must act in harmony with the divine will.

The "five lords of the Philistines" were singled out for particular mention. They are not described as kings, for the Philistines did not live under a monarchical system. On numerous occasions their rulers are termed **sarim** (Heb. for a ruling person, governor, master, etc.). The Philistines were already settled in the land in the times of Abraham (Gen. 21:32-34; 26:1, 8). It has been suggested that they originated from Caphtor, which has been identified by some as Crete. Gen. 10:14 states that they descended from Casluhim — a word which signifies "to emigrate", and thus speaks of a people who were

emigrants. However, elsewhere it is said that the Philistines were descended from Caphtorim (see Jer. 47:4; Amos 9:7; cp. Deut. 2:23). There are various ways of reconciling what appears to be a contradiction. Perhaps the most obvious is the suggestion of some scholars that the phrase “out of whom came Philistim” rightly belongs after Caphtorim rather than Casluhim (Gen. 10:14). There are other possibilities. Casluhim, a migratory people, may have intermingled with the Caphtorim. In any event, if the historical and archaeological evidence is considered, it appears relatively certain that the Philistines originated either from upper Egypt or Crete. It is noteworthy that Mizraim (Gen. 10:13) was the second son of Ham, thus clearly showing the Philistines to be of Hamitic origin. Frequently, in later times, Mizraim was identified with Egypt. It is thus possible to reconcile the Genesis account with later references which appear to differ with the detail recorded in Genesis.

At the time of Joshua, the Philistines inhabited all the Mediterranean coastal plain from Joppa to south of Gaza — an area about fifty miles long and fifteen miles wide.

Generation after generation, they remained a continuing thorn in the flesh to Israel. Almost completely defeated in the days of David, they were put under tribute rather than being totally annihilated. This proved to be a disastrous decision. Later they reasserted themselves and their power increased, particularly during the reigns of Jehoram and Ahaz.

Yahweh then mentioned the territory of the five principal cities of the Philistines, whose people should have been dispossessed of their land and destroyed. The Avites were also named. They were natives of the land, who had preceded the Philistines and been subdued by them. They have been identified as Hivites. The town of Ha-avvim was in the region occupied by the Hivites.

Mearah is difficult to identify; possibly twenty miles north-west of Shechem (Nelson's Atlas of the Bible). A further clue is provided in an alternate rendering: “The whole country of the Canaanites from Arah, **which the Sidonians hold**, to Aphekah and the boundary of the Amorites. . .” (J.B.).

Aphek was forty miles north of Sidon. The Giblites were inhabitants of Gebal, about ten miles north of Aphek — now known as Biblus.

Baal-gad lay at the foot of Mount Hermon, and Hamath was in the fertile, well-watered Orontes valley. Hamath was more than one hundred and sixty miles north of the Sea of Galilee. It was a significant place, in that it was described as being the northern frontier of the

Promised Land (Num. 34:8). It was a city of considerable power and influence. Shalmanezar claimed to have captured no less than eighty nine towns belonging to it.

Misrephoth-maim was on the coast, due west of Lake Huleh.

Mention of Sidon is of especial interest, in that certain portions of the Sidonian territory had already been taken. Obviously, the city itself remained unsubdued. The men of Asher — in whose allotment the city lay — should have taken it and destroyed its inhabitants. They failed to do so. The record in Judges confirms this (Judg. 1:31-32), adding that “the Asherites dwelt **among** the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: for they did not drive them out. . .”. This inaction on the part of the Asherites was in complete contrast to the teaching of the Law, and the principle set forth by the apostle Paul: “Be ye separate!” (2 Cor. 6:17 cp. Lev. 11:45).

The people of Yahweh never prosper when they flout divine principles.

The antiquity of Sidon, the oldest capital of the Phoenicians, dates back to Gen. 10:15. Descended from Ham, the Sidonians were worshippers of Baal and Ashtoreth. In common with their fellow-Canaanites, their religious rites were associated with the vilest, immoral and perverted practices. Because they were permitted to survive, their influence corrupted the Israelites (Ps. 106:34-36).

“Be ye separate!” is a demand which Yahweh has made upon His people since the dawn of history (Gen. 6:2-3). To ignore this commandment, or to treat it with disdain, is to gravely endanger one’s hope of eternal salvation. God’s words ring down through the centuries: “Separate yourselves. . . Depart from the tents of these wicked men. . . Separate yourselves from the people of the land. . . Forsake the foolish, and live. . . Depart ye, depart ye, go out from thence, touch no unclean thing. . . Flee out of the midst of Babylon. . .! Save yourselves from this untoward generation. . .! Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins. . .” (Num. 16:21, 26; Ezra 10:11; Prov. 9:6; Isa. 52:11; Jer. 51:6; Acts 2:40; Rev. 18:4).

Throughout the ages this plea has remained unchanged. Alas, Israel failed to recognise the importance of this message in the times of Joshua.

Yet, Yahweh would have provided the means for Israel’s success, had they responded to His commandments in the spirit of the Truth. “They will I drive out from before the children of Israel!” God’s people had merely to submit to His will and co-operate with His purpose. It could have been done. It simply required a humble and compliant

disposition on the part of the Israelites. They were to go forth to the battle, in faith. They were to be “labourers together with God. . .” (1 Cor. 3:9). They could not, however, expect Yahweh to act on their behalf whilst they remained inactive and faithless.

Commencement of the Dividing of the Land (Vv.7-13)

Joshua was then instructed to “divide this land for an inheritance” by “lot unto the Israelites. . .” Joshua was to become a type of Christ in this respect, giving “every man according as his works shall be” (Rev. 22:12). Apart from the gift of eternal life, the same reward will not be granted to all who are accepted at Christ’s judgment seat. “Have thou authority over ten cities. . .” “Be thou also over five cities. . .” (Luke 19:15-19). Similarly, the tribes were not all allocated inheritances of equal size. Their requirements differed, and the numerical variations among the tribes were also taken into consideration.

Other places mentioned here indicate the extent of land which remained unconquered. Medeba was eighteen miles east of the Dead Sea. Dibon lay in rich pastoral country, three miles north of the Arnon. The inhabitants of these areas still survived because the Israelites had not taken possession of these regions.

Heshbon was fifteen miles east of the Jordan at its entering into the Dead Sea. “The border of the children of Ammon” was to the east of the kingdom of Sihon. The statement indicates that the children of Israel should have pressed their advantage to an area at least twenty five miles east of the Dead Sea. They failed to do so.

Ashtaroth was thirty miles east of the Sea of Chinnereth, and Edrei has been placed four miles west of Lake Huleh. The “remnant of the giants” has been referred to in 12:4.

The seeds of future national disaster had been effectively sown, because of lethargy and indifference. “Nevertheless, the children of Israel expelled not the Geshurites, nor the Maachathites: but the Geshurites and the Maachathites dwell among the Israelites until this day. . .” This was a severe indictment upon God’s people. They were grossly at fault. Having begun their warfare of faith with such zeal and dedication, they had failed to maintain their faithfulness. Unchanging consistency is one of the most vital necessities in the warfare of faith.

They had forgotten the lessons Yahweh had endeavoured to teach them. “**Ye shall inherit their land, and I will give it unto you to possess it. . . I am Yahweh your God which have separated you from other**

people. . . Ye shall therefore put **difference** between clean beasts and unclean. . . And ye shall be holy unto me, for I Yahweh am holy, **and have severed you** from other people, that ye should be mine. . .” (Lev. 20:24-26).

Balaam’s prophecy no longer made any impact upon the people: “The people shall dwell **alone**, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. . .” (Num. 23:9).

Previously so eager to fulfil the will of their God, the Israelites now viewed the special instructions concerning the annihilation of the Canaanites apathetically and unresponsively.

Levi’s True Inheritance — A Type (V.14)

The tribe of Levi had been separated from the other tribes to become the priestly tribe. Thus, “unto the tribe of Levi He gave none inheritance; the sacrifices of Yahweh Elohim of Israel made by fire are their inheritance. . .” (cp. Num. 18:20-24). In the context of this powerful exhortation, in which the nation is urged to cast off their spiritual listlessness and indifference, the tribe of Levi is set forth as a type of what the entire nation should have been. The lives of the Levites were to be devoted to the offering-up of sacrifices to their God. This is no less a claim than Yahweh has made upon His people since the dawn of history. “Yahweh had respect unto Abel and to his offering. . . And Noah builded an altar. . . and offered burnt offerings. . . Abram . . . builded an altar unto Yahweh. . .” (Gen. 4:4; 8:20; 12:7).

Such exercises have taught spiritually-minded men and women the principles involved in offering their lives to God. In his epistle to the Romans, Paul drew out lessons which obviously contained strong Levitical overtones: “Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. . .” (12:1). Such spiritual lessons are presented repeatedly, in apostolic teaching. “Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? And they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?” (1 Cor. 9:13). In this present dispensation, the “temple” is the Body of Believers; the “holy things” speak of the responsibilities and obligations which are incumbent upon Christ’s brethren; and their “altar” is Christ (cp. Phil. 2:17; Heb. 10:20-22; 13:15-16, etc.).

Throughout the ages, faithful men and women have devoted their lives to the service of God in this way. Such people have developed a particular disposition. Rather than being dominated by self-interest, as, for example, the pursuit of wealth to provide easy and luxurious

living — such men and women are content with their lot in life, devoting their thoughts and energies to one purpose: the service and worship of Yahweh. “The sacrifices of Yahweh Elohim of Israel made by fire are **their** inheritance. . .”

As a reward for such selfless dedication, those of this disposition will ultimately rule the world with Christ.

Reuben, Gad, Manasseh—Inheritance on the East (Vv.15-32)

The inheritances of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh were then specifically mentioned. This section of Joshua's record provides an elaboration upon that which has been written in Num. 32:33-42. Mention is also made of the death of Balaam, who was slain by the Israelites when they destroyed the kings of Midian (Num. 31:8). His name means “wasting of the people”. He had been employed by Balak, king of the Moabites, to bring about the “wasting” of the people of Israel. He was a “soothsayer”. This is the only passage where the Hebrew word has been rendered as such. With only one exception, in all other places where the word occurs it is rendered “divination” or to “divine”. Significantly, the word is always used of false prophets. The primary idea of the word appears to be that of “cutting” or “comparing” (Ges.). That which such men “cut” or “compared” would have been the product of the carnal mind, since they knew or practised nothing else.

For his infamy, Balaam was slain ‘with the sword’, which is a symbol for the word of God (Heb. 4:12). As with Balaam, all who repudiate or reject God's principles of righteousness shall be judged according to God's word (Jn. 12:48). Balaam desired the reward which will be accorded a righteous man, but was not prepared to manifest Godliness in his life. He thus died the death of an unrepentant sinner (Num. 23:10).

The tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh had especially requested that their respective inheritances should be on the east of Jordan. The land was rich and desirable. But how much thought did they give to the long-term dangers which the possession of such territory might present? They would be living on the very borders of the Edomites, Moabites and Amorites; further east would be the Ammonites. To the north were the Amarites (Syrian-Assyrians); and in the far north the surviving and powerful kingdom of the Hittites.

Would not these three tribes face particular dangers, in being exposed to the temptations associated with the influence of these evil gentile nations?

They were ready to request the land they sought, but they failed to wisely assess the situation. In the warfare of faith, those nearest the foe must, of necessity, be the bravest and the most dedicated. The people of Yahweh always fare better when they remain aloof from the ungodly influences of gentilism.

Significantly, when the Assyrian took the ten tribes into captivity, the first tribes to go were those of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh. There is a lesson therein for the people of Yahweh, in every generation. Watch the enemies of God. Apart from preaching the word, do not associate with those who destroy the faith of God's people. Even in the work of preaching the gospel, restrictions are placed upon Christ's disciples: "Come **out** from among **them**, and be ye **separate**, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing . . ." (2 Cor. 6:17). Speaking of his disciples, Christ prayed: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world . . ." (John 17:14).

Without such a clear line of demarcation, the survival of God's people becomes gravely endangered. Do not form friendships or forge alliances with them. To "mingle" with them and to learn "their works" will lead to serving "their idols".

Had these three tribes left the choice of their inheritance to Yahweh's wisdom, they may not have become the first three tribes to be taken captive by the Assyrians.

On the east of Jordan, Reuben occupied the most southern area, Gad possessed the centre of the land, and Manasseh was in the north.

A Further lesson to be Learned from Levi (V.33)

The final words of the chapter direct the reader's thoughts back to the tribe of Levi.

"But unto the tribe of Levi Moses gave not any inheritance: Yahweh Elohim of Israel was their inheritance, as he said unto them. . ."

These words appear to be a repetition of the point made in the fourteenth verse. But is this so? A consideration of the text from verse fourteen onward proves most illuminating. This last verse in the chapter occurs **after** the details concerning the inheritances of the three tribes on the east have been recorded.

The tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh had **seen** the land. They had looked upon it, and based their request for this area upon the evidence of their eyes, not upon the basis of faith. Their special request for this territory was thus founded upon an element of covetousness.

The last verse in the chapter therefore contrasts the spirit of Levi — of whom it is said, simply, “Moses gave (to them) not **any** inheritance” — with the attitude displayed by the three tribes who received their inheritance on the east.

Which disposition is to be preferred?

Lasting inheritance, so far as the things of Yahweh are concerned, can never be measured in materialistic terms. Levi’s inheritance was spiritual, not carnal. “Yahweh Elohim of Israel was their inheritance. . .”.

Total dedication to Israel’s God will require the sacrificing of earthly things, and the repudiation of materialistic advantages. The spirit of a true Israelite has been stated in the Psalms: “God is the strength of my heart, and **my portion** for ever. . .” (Ps. 73:26). A genuine servant of Yahweh longs for nothing more than this.

True servants of Almighty God, like the Levites of old, will confidently leave the question of their inheritance in the hands of Yahweh. He knows what is best, and will never fail those who place their trust and confidence in Him.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Eleazar and Joshua to Divide the Land (Vv.1-5)

The time had come for the formal allocation of territory to the various tribes.

Eleazar, the high priest, is introduced into the narrative at this point. The first mention of his name occurs in Ex. 6:23. He and his brother Ithamar were the only two surviving sons of Aaron after Yahweh had destroyed Nadab and Abihu because of their evil, presumptuous conduct (Lev. 10:1-2).

Eleazar succeeded to the office of high priest upon the death of his father (Num. 20:28; Deut. 10:6).

He appears to have been a very spiritually-minded man. Following the destruction of Korah and his companions, Eleazar took up their censers and made them into plates to cover the altar of burnt offering. During the lifetime of his father he ministered as a priest. His son, Phinehas, showed courageous faithfulness in putting to death a particular male Israelite and Moabitess, thus staying the plague from the children of Israel (Num. 25).

When Joshua became Moses' successor, Eleazar presided over his induction into that office. No doubt, a friendship which had developed between Eleazar and Joshua over the years would have become thoroughly firm with Joshua's succession to the position of civil leader (Num. 27:18-23).

On the four occasions where Eleazar is mentioned as being associated with Joshua in the allocation of tribal territories, Eleazar is always mentioned first. This is not without significance. Clearly, the role of spiritual leadership took precedence. So likewise with God's own Son, who is to reign as a King-Priest over the nations. From the days of his mortal walk upon earth, his position as Saviour and Mediator has remained paramount above all other responsibilities he has borne.

Together, Eleazar and Joshua typify the two-fold work of Christ and his immortalised saints as "King-Priests" in the Kingdom Age (Zech. 6:13; Rev. 5:9-10).

In addition to Eleazar and Joshua, the "heads of the families of the tribes of Israel" were associated in the work of assigning the "portions" to the various tribes (J.B.). Remarkably, such family heads had all been **named** by Yahweh, prior to the death of Moses

(Num. 34:16-28). From the merely human standpoint such a foreshadowing of the future would be quite impossible. In the plains of Moab, who could have said with certainty that all these men would survive the wars against the Canaanites? No mortal man could have done so. The lesson is sublime. Yahweh gives a **guarantee of preservation** to all who remain faithful to Him throughout their warfare of faith. Ultimately, they may fall into the article of death before the second coming of their Saviour and King; but they will not remain forgotten in the dust of the earth. Such faithful servants of God will rest in “the **remembered** places” until the Lord’s return (John 5:28; lit. Gk.).

The division of the land was effected by means of a “lot”. The Hebrew word **goral** means “to be rough” — like a stone; hence, a pebble (cp. Rev. 2:17). Used in accordance with divine instructions, a pebble became symbolic for justice, judgment, and a divine verdict (Num. 33:50-56).

In this regard everything was done “as Yahweh commanded”; this being precisely as it should have been. The inheritance of God’s faithful saints should not be left to human judgment. Those who remain faithful to Israel’s God are content to leave their reward — whatever it might be — in the hands of the Most High. This means that His servants must calmly and in faith submit to His will (1 Sam. 3:18; Lam. 3:26; 1 Pet. 5:6).

Eleazar and Joshua and the Elders of Israel manifested a deep and mature sense of confidence in the Guiding Hand of Yahweh in these matters. They were effectively walking by faith. In the warfare of faith, and in the rewards which must subsequently accrue to the faithful, all decisions must be determined according to the will of Yahweh (Mat. 10:29; Jas. 4:8).

God’s servants disregard this principle at their peril. Numerous examples of such folly are to be found in scripture. Lot, Abraham’s nephew, provides a case in point. Instead of allowing Yahweh to guide him into a suitable inheritance, Lot “**chose him** all the plain of Jordan. . .”. Or: “So Lot chose **all** the Jordan plain **for himself**. . .” (Gen. 13:11, A.V. and J.B.). The catastrophic results from his fearful decision are well known.

The overriding principle is clear: “The **lot** is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of Yahweh. . .” (Prov. 16:33).

Further evidence concerning the spiritual state of the nation at this time is found in their general attitude towards the question of dividing the land. If there had been any matter over which the tribes might have squabbled, or shown greed or dissatisfaction, it would have been over this question. However, with the exception of one incident, which

involved the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh (ch. 17), the matters were determined without friction or discontent. From this it may be reasonably assumed that, by and large, the people of Israel were willing to allow “the whole disposing thereof” to the hand of Providence.

It is revealed later that the “lots” were drawn at Shiloh. This would have been because the tabernacle was there (18:10; 19:51). Shiloh remained the centre of divine worship from the time of the conquest of the land until the days of Samuel (Judg. 18:31; 1 Sam. 4:3) — a period of more than 450 years.

As has already been shown, the Levites received no land. Later, certain cities were to be designated priestly cities. These cities were also provided with “suburbs” — more correctly, “pasture lands” (Roth., J.B., cp. Num. 35:2-3).

Thus, “as Yahweh commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did, and they divided the land”.

Caleb — Privileged Among Judah (Vv.6-12)

With Caleb prominent among them, the tribe of Judah came to Joshua “in Gilgal” to discuss the matter of their inheritance, and that of Caleb in particular.

This incident provides a graphic example of the power of the Truth to influence and change people’s lives, at the same time illustrating the fickleness of human nature. In the wilderness, when Caleb had fearlessly expressed his faith in Yahweh’s ability to bring them into the Promised Land, his fellow Judahites had been intent upon stoning him to death (Num. 14:6-10). Now, Caleb’s faith was vindicated. And not only so: the sons of those who would have stoned Caleb in the wilderness, being more spiritually aware than their faithless parents, stood together with this great man of faith to endorse and applaud his faithfulness (cp. Rev. 3:9; Ps. 37:6).

This is the first occurrence of Caleb’s name in the book of Joshua, although he is mentioned prominently in the book of Numbers, particularly in relation to the rebellion which occurred in the wilderness of Paran (Num. 13, 14).

Caleb was of gentile origin, a Kenezite by descent. The Kenezites, or Kenizzites (the words are identical in the Hebrew, being patronyms from the name Kenaz) appear to be of two distinct origins. A tribe of Kenezites inhabited Canaan in the days of Abraham (Gen. 15:19). However, it is also recorded that a man named Kenaz, who was a grandson of Esau, was one of the dukes of Edom (Gen. 36:15, 42). The question as to whether Caleb was descended from Esau or the

early Canaanites is one which has never been satisfactorily resolved. Certainly, his family may well have been proselytised into Israel for many generations — there is nothing to suggest otherwise — and in view of the depth of Caleb's spiritual-mindedness, it would not be wise or prudent to identify his family with the "mixed multitude" of gentiles which came out of Egypt with the Israelites (Ex. 12:38).

Caleb's gentile origins are endorsed by the meaning of the name "Kenezite" or "Kenizzite". J.B. Jackson says the name is "gentilic, and patronymic of preceding". According to Gesenius and others, the name means "hunter" — but Gesenius adds: "Of a Canaanite nation. . ."

The meaning of Caleb's own name is somewhat obscure. In various quarters it has been accepted that his name means "dog", but this is by no means certain. Gesenius says: "**perhaps** a dog. . ." — thus showing his own uncertainty. Then, posing a question, he adds: "Rabid?" — a word related to rabies; or being zealous or fanatical. Perhaps from the former idea the meaning "dog" came to be accepted. Other authorities say the name can mean "wholehearted" or "hearty". Though of gentile origin, and therefore possibly known by a name which represented an unclean animal — a dog — Caleb was unquestionably "wholehearted" and "hearty" in his attitude towards the things of Yahweh. Certainly, Caleb provides a living proof of Paul's assertion: "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly. . . He is a Jew which is one inwardly. . ." (Rom. 2:28-29, cp. Rom. 4:12; Gal. 3:7).

No doubt because of his faithfulness Caleb had been appointed Judah's representative for the dividing of the land (Num. 34:19). It is, however, of significance that Caleb was not included in the general distribution of territory to his tribe. His was a special inheritance. He was a special person, in God's eyes. Moreover, Caleb was given first consideration, ahead of all others in the tribe of Judah. How exquisite are the judgments of Yahweh: always just, and always right.

Caleb addressed himself to his friend, Joshua, with whom he undoubtedly shared a bond of warm affection in the Truth. "Thou knowest the thing that Yahweh said unto Moses, the man of God, concerning me and thee in Kadesh-barnea. . ." (Num. 14:30; Deut. 1:36-38).

Indeed Joshua knew. He had not failed to remember. For forty five years these two men had retained in their minds the promise of Yahweh: "Doubtless ye (the faithless generation) shall not come into the land, concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save

Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. . .”.

Caleb had waited, in faith, for this moment to come. Needless to say, this is a patient, determined characteristic of all who will inherit the kingdom which is to come.

“Forty years old was I”, Caleb continued, “when Moses, the servant of Yahweh, sent me from Kadesh-barnea to espy out the land; and I brought him word again as it was in mine heart.” The word “old” has been rendered from the Hebrew, *been* — meaning, “a son, as a builder of a family name”. Literally, the expression should be rendered “the son of forty years, was I. . .”. The phrase indicates that for that length of time — his entire life until the display of national sedition at Kadesh-barnea — he had been a true “son” of God. This speaks of a sound upbringing in the Truth. It shows that from his youth Caleb had been educated to look forward to becoming a part of the “family” of Yahweh. It is not surprising, then, that upon his return from inspecting the Promised Land, he submitted a report “as it was” in his “heart”. Literally, the expression is: “as was **with** my heart. . .” (cp. Roth., marg.), meaning that his report was precisely in accordance with his personal conviction — a conviction based upon faith. Exercising his intellect, he had carefully weighed the evidence of his eyes and ears, comparing the known facts with that which Yahweh had promised. He became convinced that God would surely bring to pass all that He had promised. Like Abraham, Caleb simply “believed God” (Rom. 4:3).

Not so his brethren. With the sole exception of his friend Joshua, those who had gone with Caleb to view the land “made the heart of the people to melt . . .”.

It was not simply that the leaders lacked faith themselves: they “discouraged” the people (Num. 32:9). How did they do this? In effect, they claimed it was **too hard** to exercise faith in God. Any element of faith which may have existed within the nation-at-large “melted” away at this point.

From this it may be assumed that the people were simply unfortunate in having faithless leaders. Not so. Sound leadership was available to the Israelites: Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Caleb. However, the nation elected to reject their faithful leaders. For this folly, they paid with their lives. In every generation the flock of God has an obligation to provide sound leadership for themselves: hence, “there shall be, like people, like priest: and I will punish them for their ways

and reward them for their doings. . .” (Hos. 4:9).

Caleb had not lacked faith. “I have been fully after Yahweh my God”, he told Joshua (lit. Heb.). He had followed a line of belief and action which would have been in conformity with that which God would endorse. It was as though, in his journeying throughout the Promised Land, Caleb had followed in the footsteps of God. Through the eye of faith, he had seen Yahweh going ahead, as it were, leading the way and giving Israel the victory over the Canaanites.

How tragic that so few of Caleb’s brethren were of the same mind as this great man of faith.

His address to Joshua could never be described as boastful. He was, after all, repeating the words which Yahweh had uttered concerning him (Num. 14:24).

Caleb then reminded Joshua of the words which Moses had spoken to him: “Moses sware on that day, saying, Surely, the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children’s for ever, because thou hast wholly followed Yahweh my God. . .”. He was quoting the words recorded in Deut. 1:36. Caleb also appears to have in mind the words of Numbers 13:22. Hebron was the main stronghold of the Anakim. Caleb had refused to quail before the apparent might of these Canaanites.

Hebron was the place where the faith of the twelve spies had been especially tested (v. 13). At that place lay the bones of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob! There, the faith of Caleb and Joshua had shone brightly — as they remembered the promises made to the Fathers! The odds had appeared greatly against them, but faith had triumphed.

Caleb now learned that there is a reward for faithfulness.

As Caleb continued speaking, Joshua listened in silence, completely at one with the beliefs which Caleb expressed.

“Yahweh hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years. . . and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old. . . I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me. . .”.

How readily this man of faith acknowledged that God’s hand had been upon him, day by day, for forty-five years. Caleb was now eighty five years old. God had continued to sustain him until the time came for his faith to be rewarded.

Caleb claimed that he was still as “strong” as he had been on the day that Moses sent him out to reconnoitre the land of promise. The word **chazaq** means “firm, obstinate, hardened; strong, mighty. . .” (Ges.). It relates as much to a state of mind as to physical strength.

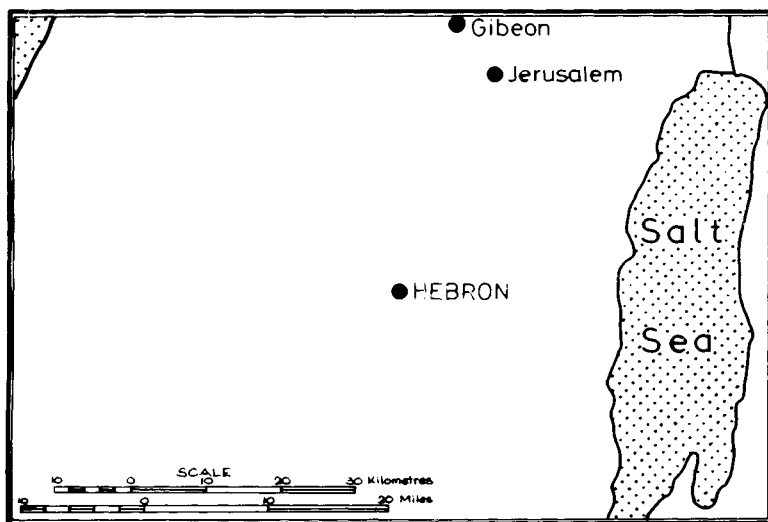
Caleb's attitude towards Yahweh and His Truth had remained unaltered throughout those years.

Hebron — Caleb's Inheritance (Vv.12-15)

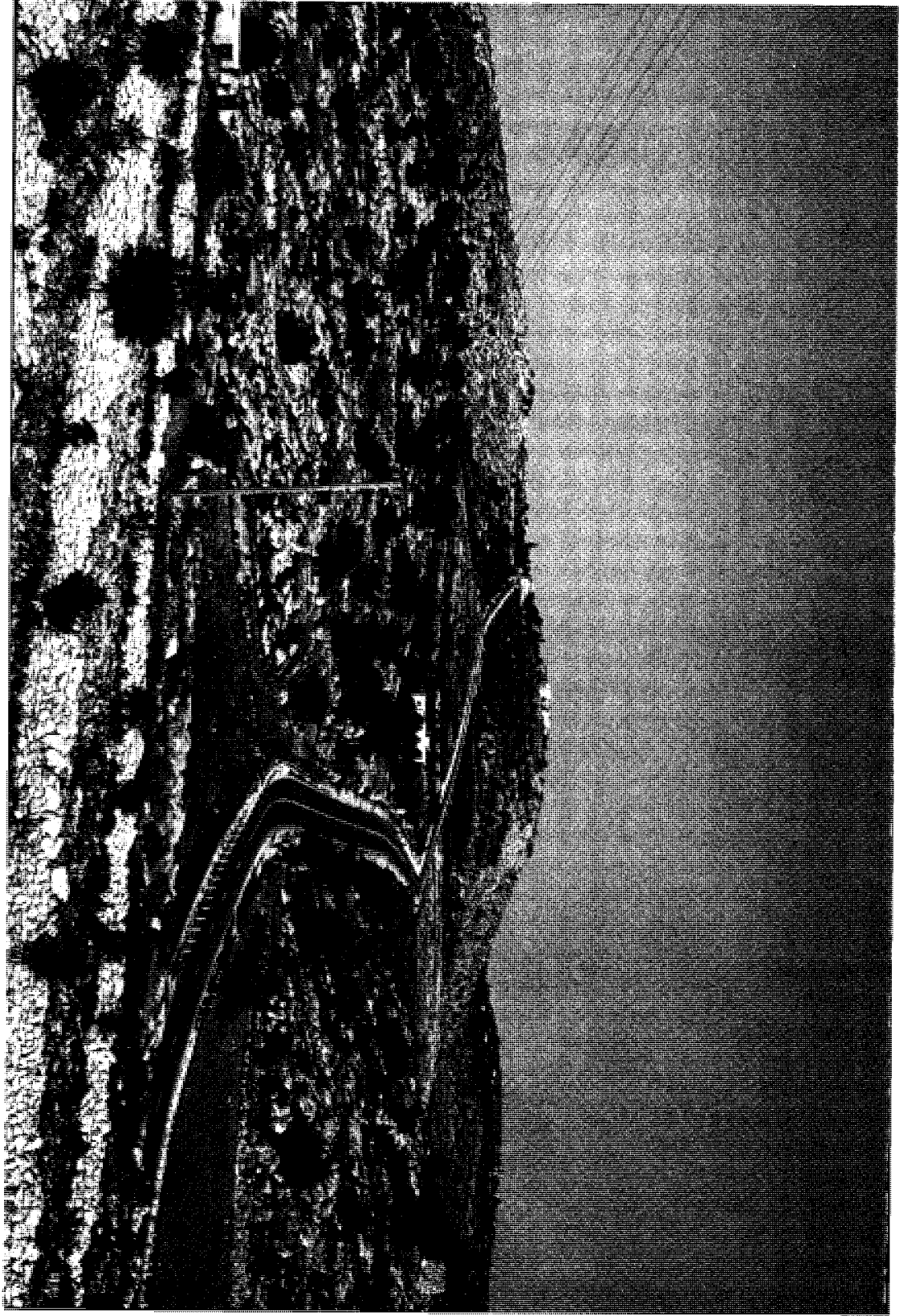
"Now therefore", Caleb said to Joshua, "give me this mountain, whereof Yahweh spake in that day. . . If so be Yahweh will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as Yahweh said. . .".

Hebron is 3,040 feet above sea level, and is the highest major town in the land once known as Palestine. The phrase "this mountain" is an apt description for Hebron and environs. The name means "conjunction" or "joining" and has been derived from a word meaning "fellowship" or "association" (Ges.). Considering the victory of Caleb's faith at this time, Hebron has great typical significance. Those who embrace the Truth, and remain faithful to its requirements through the trials and vicissitudes of life, will be rewarded through becoming eternally "joined" in "fellowship" and "association" with the Father and His Son.

To the very end of this experience in Caleb's life — which had been drawn out over some forty five years — he continued to show faith. He readily acknowledged that he would be "able to drive" the Canaanites "out", so long as Yahweh was "with" him. Throughout a



Caleb's inheritance at Hebron



lifetime in the Truth, Caleb had learned that it was impossible for anyone to gain the victory of faith through personal merit or individual strength. He placed no confidence in the flesh. Caleb's attitude was later to be echoed in many beautiful Psalms: "Not unto us, O Yahweh, not unto us, but unto thy Name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy Truth's sake. . . . Yahweh is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? Yahweh is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even my enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. . . ." (Ps. 115:1; 27:1-3).

The "giant" Anakim were barring the way to Caleb's inheritance. But who were they? They were merely flesh. Caleb did not hold them in awe.

Similarly, there are numerous "giants" of the flesh which would stand in the way of all God's faithful servants, striving to divert them from inheriting the kingdom. With Yahweh's strength and blessing, all such opposition to the Truth may be overcome.

Thus Joshua, as a type of Christ, "blessed" Caleb and directed him to his inheritance. This was a touching act on Joshua's part, one of warmth and benevolence, expressive of respect and affection. It is not difficult to see this delightful incident as typical of Christ rewarding his faithful brethren at the Judgment Seat.

Of all that the ten faithless spies had seen, nothing caused their hearts to be gripped with greater fear than the sight of the Anakim. "We were in our own sight as grasshoppers!" they had whimpered (Num. 13:28, 33). Despite such a report from the terror-stricken ten, Caleb had vigorously advocated a positive approach. From the purely human standpoint his reasoning was insensible and dangerous; but he based his conviction upon Yahweh's ability to overcome the Anakim and every other obstacle barring Israel's entry into the land (Num. 14:8-9).

Caleb was to be rewarded by being given the very place where his faith had shone so brightly. How exquisite is the justice of Yahweh! Caleb had shown his faith by his works. Now, he was to be recompensed accordingly.

Such is the absolute fidelity of Yahweh, Israel's God.

There is some significance in the fact that the earlier name of Hebron is mentioned at this point. Previously the city had been known

as Kirjath-arba, which means “city of Arba”. Arba was the father of Anak (cp. Gen. 23:2; 35:27; Num. 13:22). In the Kingdom Age, although previously having been trodden down by the gentiles throughout the ages, the immortalised saints will dispossess the gentiles of their power and their kingdoms. God’s kingdom will “break in pieces and consume” all the kingdoms of the nations. “The kingdoms of this world” will become “the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ” (Dan. 2:44; Rev. 11:15).

Arba had been regarded as “the greatest adam” of his day (lit. Heb.). A man of the flesh in every sense. In this chapter he is contrasted with Moses who is termed “the man of God” (Heb., *ish*, v.6, “a great or mighty man”).

The descendants of “the greatest adam” could not hope to withstand a man of faith of the calibre of Caleb. Rich in faith, he willingly went to war against the most aggressive people in the land. Caleb was not afraid. He was armed with the greatest weapon man can possess: implicit faith in Yahweh.

He went forth to battle, in the strength of Almighty God (v.12).

Then, “the land had rest from war. . .”.

The fruit of faith is rest and peace (Isa. 32:17).

During his life in the Truth, Caleb had shown himself to be a man of faith and action, and one who refused to compromise the principles of God’s word. Together with one other man, he had been prepared to stand aside from his disbelieving contemporaries and forthrightly proclaim that which his faith dictated. In the face of such a national panic which ten faithless spies had created, it would have taken enormous courage to be dominated by faith, rather than buckling under the compelling demands being made by the nation.

Caleb’s integrity was unimpeachable. He was a man who would fearlessly declare “**all** the counsel of God. . .” (Acts 20:27) — nothing more, nothing less. This was because he “wholly followed” Yahweh his God. Caleb displayed the same spirit as motivated the apostles. “And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. . .” (Acts 4:18-20).

Caleb provides a wonderful example to all who strive dauntlessly, in faith, to please Yahweh and gain the kingdom. “Therefore, my beloved-

ed brethren”, Caleb would have echoed with Paul, “be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. . .” (1 Cor. 15:58).

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The Borders of Judah (Vv.1-12)

Sections of the book of Joshua provide remarkable detail concerning the boundaries of the tribal territories. With an appreciable knowledge of the geography of the Holy Land these chapters should prove most interesting, and at times intriguing.

For those not so well advanced in their understanding of the topography of the Land, a careful study of these chapters is highly recommended.

It is a mistake to imagine that these sections of Joshua's record are rather dull and uninteresting. At times quite lively, they are always packed with interesting information; and it should be appreciated that a reasonable knowledge of the Promised Land provides a great aid to Bible study.

The relevant chapters should be studied with an adequate Bible Atlas readily at hand; especially helpful is one which features detailed maps of the various epochs of Biblical history. In this regard, Nelson's "Atlas of the Bible"—a comprehensive and generally reliable work — is especially recommended.

With the objective of gaining a better understanding concerning the geography of the Land, the student will become increasingly enthusiastic as places are pinpointed, their topography noted, their relevance to other towns and places identified, and major events associated with those places brought to mind.

A study of the natural features of the Land, its towns and cities, plains and mountains, rivers and valleys, helps to make the Bible "live" more clearly in the mind of the student. Events and personalities become more vivid when considered in relation to their relative environment.

Caleb, a man of outstanding faith and spiritual virtue, had been allotted his portion in the land. Now the time had come for the assigning of territory to the "families" (lit. clans) of the "tribe" of Judah. The word rendered "tribe" signifies "a branch" — as something extending. The word relates to something which is "stretched" or "spread out". In itself, the word (Heb., *mattah*) is strongly exhortational. It implies the development and expansion of the tribes of Israel. The ideal expressed at the time of creation: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. . ." (Gen. 1:28) has never changed in its spiritual concept. Yahweh desires the development of a "godly seed" from generation to generation (Mal. 2:15). The word "tribe" therefore

presents a challenge to the Israel of God: the purpose of Yahweh must continue unabated, the people of Yahweh labouring to “spread” and “extend” the work of the Truth, especially insofar as their own descendants are concerned.

The inheritance of Judah was to reach “unto the boundary of Edom, the desert of Zin southward, on the extreme south” (Roth.). The southern extremity was to be “at the end of the Salt Sea” (Roth.) from the “peninsula” (see marg.). Maaleh-acrabbim was between the Arabah and the hill country of Judea. Kadesh-barnea lay between the wilderness of Zin and Paran. The southern boundary would reach from “the Sea” unto “the end of Jordan” — that is, where Jordan emptied into the Dead Sea. These verses are referring directly to Num. 34:1-5. Subsequent verses in Joshua’s fifteenth chapter may be identified with the thirty fourth chapter of Numbers.

The eastern border was to be “the Salt Sea”, which is the Dead Sea. East of the Dead Sea, in the northern area, lay the inheritance of Reuben. South of Reuben was Moab, and further south, Edom.

Verses eight to eleven provide details concerning Judah’s northern border.

The eighth verse shows that the original city of Jerusalem was placed within the canton of Benjamin. David added to the original city, building towards the south. These additions were thus within Judah’s territory. For example, in the days of Hezekiah the Pool of Siloam was within the walls of Jerusalem (2 Chron. 32:30). This would not have been so in the days of Joshua. Ultimately, the city straddled the border, and therefore lay partly within the province of Benjamin and partly within Judah. However, from the times of David, Jerusalem was always identified with the tribe of Judah.

The northern border, in the region of Jerusalem, was carefully defined. The Valley of the son of Hinnom (v.8) reached from the southwest corner of Jerusalem — and slightly to the north, on the western side — dropping away toward the south, and the east.

The “Valley of the Giants” is a translation of the Heb., **emeq rephaim**, which means “the valley of Rephaim”.

This line took Judah’s northern boundary only as far as “the south side of the Jebusite”; or, literally, “the shoulder”, which indicates the slope of the hills upon which the city of Jebus stood.

From this point, Judah’s border swung north-west, to Kirjath-jearim, a little more than seven miles from Jerusalem in a north-westerly direction, and then “compassed” (“bent”, J.B.) “unto Mount Seir”. This was not the dwelling-place of Esau, but a range of

hills running south-west from Kirjath-jearim. In effect, at this point the border bent almost backward in a south-westerly direction.

The border continued in a south-westerly direction. Beth-shemesh lay nine miles in that direction from Kirjath-jearim. The line continued to "the side of Ekron". Once again the word rendered "side" should be, literally, "shoulder". This was one of the five great cities of the Philistines. All Philistine territory should have been subdued by Judah; and although Judges 1:18 indicates partial success in that regard, the Israelites did not control the Philistine cities for long (1 Sam. 4, 5).

From Ekron, the border turned northward, terminating at the Mediterranean Sea.

Caleb, Achsah and Othniel (Vv.13-19)

From all the clans in Judah's tribe, Caleb had been given a "portion" (J.B., Roth.) "in the midst of" the children of Judah (Roth.). This implies that a great honour had been heaped upon Caleb for his faithfulness. His reward had been "according to the commandment of Yahweh" — a warm and encouraging reminder to all God's servants that He may be fully relied upon to remain faithful to that which He has promised. Caleb had become a recipient of the gratuitous goodness of Yahweh because he had "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief" (Rom. 4:20).

Arba, an earlier name for Hebron, had been seized by Caleb despite the enormous strength and stature of its inhabitants. Faith is able to conquer the greatest of adversaries.

Joshua's record now makes mention of Anak and his three infamous sons. Anak means "long-necked" and was doubtless reflective of the great height of the Anakim.

Willingly and courageously, Caleb had gone to war against these powerful Canaanites. And had defeated them.

Caleb "drove thence" the sons of Anak. The Heb. word signifies "to take possession, to occupy, especially by force" (Ges.). Significantly, the same word occurs in relation to the future inheritance of God's immortalised saints. "What man is he that feareth Yahweh? . . . His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall **inherit** the earth . . .". "Those that wait upon Yahweh, they shall **inherit** the earth . . . The meek shall **inherit** the earth . . . Such as be blessed of Him shall **inherit** the earth . . . The righteous shall **inherit** the land (**eretz**), and dwell therein for ever . . ." (Ps. 25:13; 37:9, 11, 22, 29). Using the same word, Isaiah wrote: "He that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall **inherit** my holy mountain . . ." (Isa. 57:13). A correct understanding of the meaning of this word is most

advantageous. Its usage both in relation to Israel's inheritance under Joshua and the inheritance which awaits those who will establish the Kingdom of God under the direction of the Greater Joshua shows that, as with Caleb, the immortalised saints will not merely be "given" the land: they will take possession of their inheritance by force. As in the past, so in the future: the gentiles will be dispossessed. Those who offer opposition will be destroyed or rendered powerless. Their governments, armed forces, social, economic and religious systems will be overthrown (Dan. 2:44; 7:14; Rev. 11:15, etc.). In that day, "a king shall reign **in righteousness**, and princes shall rule in judgment . . . And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for the **olam**" — the hidden period of one thousand years (Isa. 32:1, 17, cp. Rev. 20:4, 6).

As was seen in chapter 14, Anak was the "greatest Adam" — or man of the flesh — in his area at this time. The names of his three sons (an unholy trinity, to be sure) are not without significance. The name of the first means "noble"; the second, "brother of the right hand"; and the third "bold". A sentence may be constructed from the three names along these lines: "The flesh thinks itself noble, and is pleased to be identified with the brother of the right hand of flesh, and is bold because of such fleshly pride and motivation." However, flesh is no match for Yahweh, nor for those whose trust and confidence rests in Him. Thus, through faith, Caleb and his clan triumphed over the Anakim.

Having stormed and taken Hebron, Caleb then moved his family-army on to Debir, which was twelve miles south-west of Hebron, on the edge of the Shephilah. There, he issued a challenge to the members of his clan. "He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher (Debir) **and taketh it**, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife . . ."

It should be observed that Caleb's invitation required not simply war against the ungodly, but a continuation of the fight until victory was attained. This attitude was typical of the man. His desire was to inspire sufficient faith amongst his kin that they would be united, under the leadership of a man of faith, striving together in the warfare against sin.

Othniel came forward to take up the challenge. It is difficult to establish his precise relationship to Caleb. The word rendered "brother" in the A.V. had "wider use among the Hebrews, and is used for any relative, kinsman" (Gesenius). The word has been used to describe a man of the same tribe, an ally, one confederate with another, any friend, or any Israelite. Perhaps the most accurate answer to this question is found in the Book of Judges, where it is

stated that he was “the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother . . .” (3:9). It appears, then, that Othniel was Caleb’s nephew. In this incident Othniel showed himself to be a dedicated man of faith; and such was the extent of his spiritual stature that he later rose to become a Judge in Israel (see again, Judg. 3:9).

His name means “Lion of Ail” (Gesenius). As such, he was a type of Christ: he won his bride through the exercise of faith and devotion to the cause of Yahweh.

As Caleb’s nephew, it is reasonable to assume that he was well acquainted with Achsah. To meet the standards of such a spiritually-minded man, Achsah must have been a woman of fine character and sound spiritual qualities. Her name means “an anklet” — typifying the spiritual beauty of Christ’s Bride.

Similar to Christ’s attitude towards his Bride, it is evident that Othniel had a deep love and affection for Achsah. Otherwise, why would he have risked his life in such a venture as Caleb had proposed? With Othniel, as a type of Christ, faith and love conquered fear and overcame the sin-power. In this incident, sinful flesh is typified in the Canaanitish inhabitants of Debir, who fell before the sword of Othniel and those who fought by his side.

Thus, Othniel “captured it” (the city of Debir) (Roth., J.B.). A simple, concise statement; yet one which speaks volumes. This result was not obtained through the exercise of fleshly ego, vanity or brashness. Great effort and determination would certainly have been manifested by Othniel and his men to achieve their objective; but the courage and wholehearted dedication they applied to this cause was motivated by faith in Yahweh’s ability to give them the victory. Similarly, those who attain to the great reward of ruling and reigning with Christ will not reach such a goal through fleshly means. Like Othniel, they must devote their lives to the warfare of faith, exercising courage and determination and continuing the struggle until Yahweh crowns their efforts with success.

True to his word, Caleb presented his daughter Achsah to Othniel, and she became his wife.

“And it came to pass, when she came unto him, that she moved him to ask of her father a field” (R.V.). Coming into the presence of her father, she “lighted off her ass” — an expression meaning “to alight, to cause to descend, to drive down”. Whilst obviously relating to her action, the word is expressive of her reverence for her father, and her humility. In her approach to her father, she combined the qualities of submission and confidence. Yahweh’s sons and daughters must approach Him in a similar manner.

Caleb asked her: “What do you want?” (J.B.).

She replied: “Give me a blessing”, indicating that she sought an additional gift.

She had considered the land which her father had offered, but realised that its water supply was inadequate. What was the advantage of possessing land which would prove unproductive? The earth must bring forth fruit to meet the needs of mankind. Similarly, in a spiritual sense, God’s servants must have the “water of life” if they are to produce “fruit” to the glory of Yahweh. It is evident that Achsah was petitioning her father in the same way and upon the same principle as God’s children make known their needs to their Heavenly Father.

“Thou hast given me a south land”, she acknowledged. The word **negev** means “to be parched or dry”. She therefore presented a line of reasoning which would have been difficult to deny. “Give me a present, for dry land hast thou given me, therefore must thou give me pools of water” (Roth.).

Caleb understood that her request was not unreasonable. Being a fair man, and having in mind the best interests of his children (a divine characteristic), he acquiesced. He displayed no selfishness; there was no friction or debate over the matter. This is indicative of a strong bond of love and unity within Caleb’s family. Caleb’s response also implies that his daughter had approached him in a proper and loving manner in regard to the question. Her attitude did not reveal any element of petulance or avarice. He was thus pleased to grant her request. “So he gave her upper pools and lower pools” (Roth.). In view of the conditions which were in evidence in that area, it is likely that these “pools” were wells which were fed from springs.

Achsah was very much like her father. Her ready acceptance of Othniel, together with her attitude towards her father, reveals qualities of integrity and spirituality. Like her father, she was zealous and quick to seize upon an opportunity. As a type of Christ’s Bride, Achsah sought from her father something which, apart from his graciousness, she was unable to attain. At the same time, she had sufficient confidence in her father that she did not hesitate to make her needs known to him in a correct and respectful way. She sought a greater inheritance — a total blessing — that her inheritance might be complete.

Such is the spirit which will be developed in all who will be numbered among the redeemed. “Shew us thy mercy, O Yahweh, and grant us thy salvation . . .” (Ps. 85:7). Of Christ it was prophesied: “Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my

salvation . . .” (Ps. 91:14-16). And Yahweh will exhibit these same qualities of character towards all His sons and daughters who follow in the footsteps of His greatest Son.

Othniel and Achsah provide wonderful examples.

Those who have been called to serve Yahweh cannot hope to justify their dismay and disappointment if, having manifested an unacceptable attitude, they find themselves rejected at the Judgment Seat. Slothfulness, apathetic disinterest in what God has to offer and in that which He requires from his servants, lack of zealous dedication, little appreciation of the Hope of Israel — these are weaknesses which can hardly be calculated to elicit Christ’s approval.

If men and women are not sufficiently interested in the things of the Kingdom of God, they should not be surprised if they are found unworthy to inherit it.

Following the example of Othniel and Achsah, it is necessary to “seek . . . **first** the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. . .” (Matt. 6:33). Those who do so, in spirit and in truth, will rejoice together, approved in the day of Judgment with those of like mind, who, down through the ages, have manifested a similar disposition.

Like Othniel and Achsah. And her father, Caleb.

Cities, Towns and Villages in Judah’s Portion (Vv.20-63)

From verse twenty to the end of the chapter the major towns and cities which were included in Judah’s inheritance are listed. All these towns and cities lay within the borders defined earlier in the chapter. With meticulous care, they are divided into four sections: the area of the “south” (Vv.21-32), the “valley” Lit., **shephilah**, Vv.33-47), the “mountains” (Vv.48-60) and the “wilderness” (Vv.61-62). In the final verse there is a special reference to the city of Jebus, later to become the city of David, and to become known as Jerusalem.

The word “towns” occurs three times: once in v.45 and twice in v.47. The Hebrew word **bath** literally means “a daughter” — the obvious implication being that such towns were regarded as “offspring” from the “parent” city. It is, in fact, the word used by Caleb, when he spoke of Achsah, my daughter. . .” (v.16, cp. occ. in v.17 also).

However, the manner in which the word has been used in this chapter is intriguing: it is used only of cities associated with the Philistines. Why should this be so? Since all Philistine towns and cities were included in the territory of Judah, it appears that the Philistines, above all others, typified “Mystery, Babylon the great, the **mother of harlots** and abominations of the earth . . .” (Rev. 17:5). In this

chapter, another curious feature involving the Philistines is that only three of the five principal cities are mentioned. There is doubtless a reason for the omission. Symbolically, the “three” cities typify the triune god of the latter-day “Babylon the great” who is indeed the spiritual “mother” of many “daughters” who worship the same trinitarian god.

The word “villages” occurs many times throughout the book of Joshua. It is generally used to describe relatively small hamlets, and thus defines much smaller settlements than those described as “towns”.

The final verse in the chapter highlights a sobering lesson. “As for the Jebusites the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah **could not drive them out**; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day.”

When this verse is compared with Judg. 1:8, 21 and 2 Sam. 5:6, it appears that the men of Judah subdued the lower part of the city only, but failed to drive the Jebusites from the heights of Zion and the northern part of the city — a task which was not accomplished unto the days of David.

The name Jebus means “trodden down, as a threshing-floor” (Ges.). But the men of Judah did not tread them down!

Why did the men of Judah fail? It is not without significance that the words “drive them out” are identical to the words used of Caleb, in regard to his **successful** warfare against the Anakim.

Caleb succeeded. But his brethren who attacked Jebus failed. Why? Simply, because their hearts were not really in that which they did. They lacked the faith and wholehearted dedication of Caleb.

There were not many in Judah like Caleb. Or Othniel. Or Achsah.

“So we see that they could not enter in because of **unbelief**. . .” (Heb. 3:19).

In contrast to faithless Israelites, Abraham is held forth as a great example. The same word is used of him: “He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith . . .” (Rom. 4:20).

Abraham’s example is the one to follow — not that of the faithless men of Judah who refused to believe that Yahweh could bring them through warfare to victory.

Trust in Yahweh’s ability and willingness to deliver and save is an absolute prerequisite to successfully pursuing the warfare of faith. The men of Judah who half-heartedly attacked Jebus in the days of Joshua failed to appreciate this need.

What of those who claim to fight the warfare of faith in “the last days”?

Will they fail to attain to the kingdom “because of unbelief”? Or will they display a similar disposition to that of faithful Abraham?

These questions are vital. And they must be answered. Sooner or later.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Inheritance of Ephraim (Vv.1-9)

Chapters sixteen and seventeen detail “the portion awarded by lot to the sons of Joseph. . .” (J.B.); that is, the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.

No tribe bore the name of Joseph. As Joseph received the birth-right, together with the traditional “double-portion”, his two sons became heads of tribes (Gen. 48:5).

Contrary to Joseph’s wishes, Jacob had blessed Ephraim first; thus, the area of inheritance allotted to that tribe has been detailed first.

Ephraim’s territory included Shiloh, which was to become the spiritual capital of Israel for approximately four hundred years — a remarkably long period of time, by human standards.

The first four verses describe Ephraim’s southern border. On the western side, Ephraim’s southern border joined that of Judah from the Mediterranean, eastward, for about ten miles approximately to Ekron. Dan and Benjamin were subsequently allotted the remaining area, between Ephraim and Judah.

“From Jericho onwards the boundary climbed the highlands to the wilderness of Bethel” (J.B.).

“From Bethel-luz” (J.B., the same place bore both names) the border passed to a place where “the Archites at Ataroth” dwelt. This was the name of a particular family.

“Lower Beth-horon” (J.B.) and Gezer (on the Shephilah, 18 miles north-west of Jerusalem) are also mentioned in relation to Ephraim’s territorial boundary.

The western boundary, in the north, “ended at the Sea” (J.B.).

Michmethah was near Shechem (cp. 17:7). From there the border “bendeth” (Roth.). It curved in a deflection until Taanath-shiloh. This place was 10 miles north and slightly east of Shiloh, and 5 miles east and slightly to the south of Shechem.

The Ataroth mentioned here lay 9 miles east of Shiloh. Thus, the border descended from the north as far as Jericho, then turned eastward to the Jordan.

The northern border is said to have reached from Tappuah (7 miles south and slightly to the west of Shechem) “to the wadi Kanah” (J.B.). A wadi is the dry bed of a winter torrent. In the summer it has the appearance of being merely a valley. This particular wadi runs

right through to the coast.

Having recorded the boundaries of Ephraim, Joshua then noted that certain cities within the province of Manasseh were set aside for the Ephraimites (cp. 17:9). This appears a most unusual decision and may well have been arrived at through mutual agreement between the two tribes. The two tribes descended from Joseph were closely allied at this time, and also appear to have established a link with Issachar and Zebulun. Geographically and numerically these four tribes entertained a certain fear of the prominence and strength of Judah. In some respects, the seeds of hostility which ultimately separated Judah from the northern tribes in the days of Rehoboam were sown very early in the history of the nation (Judg. 8-12; 2 Sam. 19:43).

Of the tribes on the west of Jordan, it is probable that only Judah and Manasseh occupied larger areas than Ephraim.

Compromise With the World Spells Disaster (V.10)

Having been presented with a wonderful blessing which could have ensured the well-being of the tribe for a long time to come, the Ephraimites did not realise the enormity of their blessing, and failed to take advantage of it. They became guilty of a monumental blunder: "They drave not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer: but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites unto this day, and serve under tribute. . .".

It has already been stated that Caleb — a man of no compromise, so far as the Truth was concerned — "**drove** thence" the Anakim. He would let nothing stand in his way in taking up the inheritance which Yahweh had graciously given him. The same word rendered "drove" or "drive" occurs in 15:63, where it is stated that the men of Judah "**could not** drive them out. . .". Here, then, were three separate incidents. Firstly, Caleb, totally dedicated to gaining the kingdom, fearlessly faced and defeated all opposition. Secondly, the men of Judah made an **attempt** to dislodge the Canaanites, but "could not. . .". Why should they have failed when Caleb succeeded? There can be only one answer: The men of Judah lacked the faith, courage and determination which was necessary to give them the victory.

Thirdly, the Ephraimites had become so slack in fulfilling divine commandments that they simply "drave not out" the Canaanites. They did not even make the effort. They totally ignored Yahweh's instruction: "Thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them. . ." (Deut. 7:2).

The men of Ephraim decided that they had had enough of fighting the enemy. They also decided that life would be much easier if they put the Canaanites to work and profited from their services. Thus the Ephraimites were more interested in the materialistic returns which could accrue from an advantageous business arrangement than in fulfilling the demands which Yahweh had made upon them.

After all, it was easier to make money out of the gentiles than fight them!

But what of the divine commandments? They were disregarded — with inevitably catastrophic results for the people of Israel. This attitude represented nothing more nor less than compromise with the world.

The foundation for the disastrous period of the Judges — and beyond — was now being laid. “They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom Yahweh commanded them: but were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them. . .” (Ps. 106:34-36). The Psalmist appears to allude to a direct commandment, given before the children of Israel entered the land: “And thou shalt consume all the people which Yahweh thy God shall deliver thee; thine eye shall have no pity upon them: neither shalt thou serve their gods; for that will be a snare unto thee. . .” (Deut. 7:16).

Compromise with the world must inevitably lead Yahweh’s people to ruin. Under such circumstances, they cannot avoid being influenced by the world. Their loyalties thus become divided; they become double-minded and therefore spiritually unstable (cp. Jas. 1:8). One thing leads to another. The downward spiral towards spiritual oblivion commences, and ends in catastrophe unless wisdom prevails.

If only the men of Ephraim had been fired by the spirit which motivated the apostle Paul. “Forgetting what lies behind me”, he wrote, “and straining to what lies before me, to press on to the goal for the prize of God’s high call in Christ Jesus. . .” (Phil. 3:13-14, Moff.).

These words portray a very special type of disposition: to serve God; to be moved by the hope which the gospel holds out to all who would remain faithful; to pursue a way of life which is unreservedly dedicated to the Hope of Israel, knowing that the ultimate prize cannot be measured in terms of fleshly values. This is the type of person who will inherit the wonder and glory of divine nature, and will live and reign with Christ upon the earth.

The men of Ephraim were no longer of this disposition.

Together with their fellow-Israelites, for many years they had “fought a good fight” in subduing the land. But instead of relentlessly pursuing their goal until final victory had been attained, they lost the zeal and fervour which had motivated them at the time they had crossed Jordan.

Sadly, the men of Ephraim typify the disciple who begins his race for the kingdom in a mood of fervent dedication. Initially zestful for the things of the Truth, he ultimately tires of the warfare of faith. Or other things capture his interest. His faith weakens. His zeal dissipates. He becomes a very casual worshipper of Yahweh. He begins to value the Truth less and less. The line of demarcation in spiritual values becomes indistinct.

The Ephraimites had reached such a state.

Their failure to fulfil Yahweh’s commandments and to manifest the faith and dedication He required of them should act as a salutary lesson to all who would serve their Heavenly Father and aspire to be granted an inheritance in the Messianic Kingdom to be established by the Lord Jesus Christ.

“If ye love me, keep my commandments. . . To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. . . He that endureth to the end shall be saved. . .” (John 14:15; Rev. 3:21; Matt. 10:22).

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Inheritance of Manasseh, And The Five Wise Virgins (Vv.1-6)

The portion allotted to Manasseh was divided among ten clans.

The first to be named is that of Machir. "To Machir, Manasseh's eldest son and father of Gilead, there fell, as was right for a fighting man, the country of Gilead and Bashan. . ." (J.B.).

In view of the excellent quality of this country, this allotment proved to be an outstanding reward.

Machir — who is mentioned in Gen. 50:23 — had undoubtedly been a man of excellent attributes. So much so, that his name continued to identify the descendants of his clan.

In his day, he had faithfully upheld the Truth. His name means "a seller" — that is, a merchant or a salesman. The meaning of his name has a particular spiritual application: "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. . . (Lit., 'do business'). . . And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, **to whom he had given the money**, that he might know how much every man **had gained by trading**. . ." (Lk. 19:12-15). Clearly, like the "ten servants" of the Lord's parable, Machir had not only been a "fighting man" for the things of Yahweh; he had also been a "seller" of the Truth. Fighting the warfare of faith and being involved in selling the message of the Truth are obviously outstanding qualities of character.

It comes as no surprise to learn that the descendants of this valiant man of God were given the magnificent country of Gilead and Bashan. Gilead was a hilly and mountainous region, east of Jordan. It extended from the northern end of the Dead Sea to the Sea of Galilee, an area about sixty miles long and twenty miles wide. Bashan was to the north. It stretched from Gilead to Hermon. Both areas were lush and fertile, with beautiful scenery and thickly afforested hills and valleys (cp. Gen. 37:25; Num. 32:1; Deut. 32:14; Ps. 22:12; Ezek. 39:18).

"And portions were also given to Manasseh's other sons, according to their clans" (J.B.).

The descendants of Abiezer are next mentioned. Interestingly, he was the founder of the family into which Gideon was later to be born;

a clan which continued to bear the name of Abiezer as a patronymic (Judg. 6:34; 8:2).

Helek, the next to be named, was the second son of Gilead. The others named at this time (v.2) were all sons of Gilead, Hephher being the youngest and the father of Zelophehad.

Zelophehad had died, leaving five daughters but no male heir (Num. 26:33).

Whilst the Israelites were still camped in the plains of Moab, the five daughters of Zelophehad had made an appearance before Moses and Eleazar and the princes of the congregation. They maintained that the name of their father would be “done away from among his family”, as he left no male heir to receive Zelophehad’s inheritance. They proposed that they should receive the family inheritance after Israel had taken possession of the land.

Not knowing how to answer them, Moses took the five sisters’ petition to Yahweh.

Yahweh decreed that the five daughters of Zelophehad had spoken rightly. He instructed Moses that these wishes should be carried out. Moreover, as a direct result of this incident, Yahweh commanded that an addition be made to the Law to cover any similar circumstances which may have arisen in the future (Num. 27:1-11).

A further addition to the Law resulted from this event. The “chief fathers” of the tribe feared the consequences of inheritances being passed down to daughters. They saw the possibility of inheritances being transferred from tribe to tribe, due to the marriage of such daughters to the men of other tribes. This could have resulted in a serious weakening of the strength and stability of some tribes. There was considerable wisdom in their logic. As a result, an addition was made to the Law which stipulated that in the event of inheritances passing to daughters, they were restricted to marriage only within their own tribe (Num. 36).

Thus the daughters of Zelophehad made quite a mark upon Israel’s history, and their circumstances resulted in the addition of prudent, practical and wise additions to the Law.

These five young women exhibited much of the strength of character and fortitude which was manifested by faithful Caleb. They **wanted** an inheritance in the kingdom, and were prepared to respectfully argue their case. They showed courage and earnestness; and they willingly conformed to the conditions which were required (Num. 36:10-12).

Most men in those times would have hung their heads in shame at

having produced daughters, but no sons. In fact, Zelophehad had been **blessed** with five daughters. "Five" is the Biblical number which symbolises grace and restoration.

In teaching the parable of the "five **wise** virgins" did the Lord have in mind the **five** daughters of Zelophehad?

The meanings of their names reveal a great deal. It becomes evident, in fact, that these five women typify the Bride of Christ.

Mahlah means "diseased" or "sick". Noah means "rest" or "comfort". Hoglah means "a partridge". (The Hebrew for partridge is **goreh**, 'a caller' — from its cry). Milcah signifies "a queen". Tirzah means "she is willing, delightful".

When linked together, the meanings of these names illustrate the way in which Yahweh will ultimately deliver and redeem all who remain faithful to Him: "Though they be sick and diseased (through the inherent weakness of human nature) Yahweh will be their rest and comfort, because they cry unto Him. Thus He will make them a queen, because they are willing, and delightful to Him. . .".

Thus it was that, at the appropriate time, when Manasseh's portion was to be divided amongst the various clans, the five daughters of Zelophehad "came near" before Eleazar and Joshua, and the princes, and besought them for the inheritance which had been promised.

Eleazar and Joshua were to pass judgment upon the matter. Once again, the reader should note the meticulous detail of the record: As the allocation of territory was primarily a spiritual exercise, Eleazar is always mentioned first. In these matters Eleazar's office took precedence over that of Joshua's (cp. 14:1). The Law itself had been expressly definitive in this regard: "These are the names of the men which shall divide the land unto you: Eleazar **the priest**, and Joshua the son of Nun. . ." (Num. 34:17).

With an attitude of confidence and faith, the five sisters came forward to press their claim. They believed that Yahweh would honour the commitment He had made, and that these two faithful men, Eleazar and Joshua, would endorse the declared will of Yahweh. They typify the spirit of those who will continue to reach forward — towards Yahweh and the Kingdom. "Let us therefore come boldly (lit., 'with confidence' — Diag.) unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. . ." (Heb. 4:16).

The spiritual goals which ultimately may be attained through the Truth are open equally to both men and women. This wonderful incident beautifully illustrates this fact. Apart from the reality that there will be gradings of rewards bestowed at the Judgment Seat (Lk.

19:12-27), during the Kingdom Age no immortalised saint will be bound by such limitations as are experienced in these present times. The full impact of Paul's words will become evident in that day: "There is neither male nor female: for ye are all **one** in Christ Jesus. . ." (Gal. 3:28).

Further Details Concerning Manasseh's Inheritance (Vv.7-11)

The boundary of Manasseh's territory on the west of Jordan is now given. The A.V. reading "coast" should be more correctly rendered "boundary" (Roth., J.B.).

The border of Asher provided Manasseh's north-western extremity. Michmethah was the southern border which Manasseh shared with Ephraim. It was near to Shechem (see comments on 16:6). En-tappuah was a fountain or spring, eight miles south and slightly to the east of Shechem.

The "boundary" (Roth., J.B.) then descended as far as the River Kanah. This has been described as "the wadi Kanah" (J.B.). (cp. comments on 16:8).

The "cities of Ephraim" mentioned here lay north of the wadi (see comments on 16:9).

"Southward it was Ephraim's, and northward it was Manasseh's, and the sea is his border" — "And they touched Asher to the north. . ." (A.V., J.B.). Eastward, the boundary joined with that of Issachar.

Joshua carefully recorded that Manasseh received certain towns in the territories of both Issachar and Asher. Bethshean was five miles west of Jordan, fifteen miles south of the Sea of Galilee. Ibleam lay eighteen miles north of Shechem, whilst Dor was on the coast, fifteen miles due west from Megiddo.

En-dor (well-known because of Saul's dealings with a witch from this place) was situated thirteen miles north-east of Megiddo, and four miles south of Tabor. Taanach was five miles south-south-east of Megiddo, in the territory of Issachar.

As expressed in the A.V. Joshua appears to make mention of "three countries" but this phrase should be more correctly rendered "the three heights" (Roth.). The reference is to En-dor, Taanach and Megiddo. The fact that they were on heights made them strategically important.

True Strength is Found in Faith, Not Flesh (Vv. 12-13)

A further sobering lesson is now stressed, concerning the exercise of faith, or the lack of it. Joshua records: "Yet the children of Manasseh **could not** drive out the inhabitants of those cities". This is the same wording as occurs in 15:63 and elsewhere. These words are expressive of the attitude of the men of Manasseh over a period of time. The Law required that the men of Israel should be consistently devoted to gradually taking control of the entire land, at the same time ridding the country of the Canaanites (cp. Ex. 23:29-33). The Israelites were expressly warned against making any covenants whatsoever with the Canaanites, who were enemies of Yahweh and of Israel, and should be treated as such. Tragically, these and other Israelites had lost their will to continue the warfare of faith, and to render faithful obedience to the demands which their God had made upon them (contrast Rom. 6:12-14). One reason for this failure on the part of Manasseh is clearly stressed in the next phrase: "but the Canaanites were determined to remain in this land" (Roth.), indicating that the Canaanites were more determined to stay in the land than the Israelites were to remove them!

Loss of faith or dedication on the part of God's people will soon permit the flesh to gain the ascendancy. The words "O, ye of little faith!" may be given as a warning; or, they may become a final pronouncement of rejection at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Having shown that the Canaanites possessed greater resolution and courage than the men of Manasseh, Joshua then recounts how the Israelites put the Canaanites to tribute "when the children of Israel were waxen strong. . .". This presents an ironical paradox. The men of Israel knew how to become "waxen strong" in the materialistic things of life, but failed abysmally to understand that real strength is only to be found in a rich and robust faith in Yahweh and His word. Such an attitude as manifested by these Israelites reveals not only lack of faith, it indicates a hopeless inability to get the priorities of life in the correct order. Such an imbalance has destroyed many a servant of Yahweh who has commenced life in the Truth with sound knowledge, zeal and faithful dedication.

Those who would seek eternal salvation must "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; and in nothing terrified by your adversaries. . ." (Phil. 1:27-28). Had the men of Manasseh been like Caleb, rich in faith and motivated by a robust spirit they would have stormed the Canaanite towns and cities, sweeping all before them, just as Caleb had done. That they failed to do so resulted in eventual disaster for the entire nation.

So the men of Manasseh were content to “put the Canaanites to tribute”. The word rendered “tribute” occurs only twice in the Book of Joshua: here and in 16:10. The word literally means “a burden”; hence: “they put the Canaanites to forced labour. . .” (J.B.). Sometimes the “tribute” was levied in gold, silver, or other commodities. On other occasions, doubtless depending upon the circumstances, the levy may have been exacted in the form of forced labour.

Thus the men of Manasseh, basking in their growing strength and taking pleasure in their growing materialistic advantages, decided that they would relax and luxuriate in their new-found benefits. They would make the Canaanites work, whilst the men of Manasseh would enjoy their leisure and the comforts of life.

In other words, they had opted out of the warfare of faith.

This was the very opposite attitude to that which Paul endeavoured to inculcate in the hearts of his brethren: “Take your share of hardships with me, as a true soldier of Christ Jesus. A soldier on active service, in his desire to please his superior officer, always avoids entangling himself in the affairs of ordinary life. . .” (2 Tim. 2:3-4, T.C.N.T.).

And what of the fine example of their previous Leader, Moses, who had led them to the very border of their inheritance: he had chosen “rather to suffer affliction with the people of God” than to “enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. . .” (Heb. 11:25).

Such examples of faithfulness to the things of Yahweh had become lost on many of the men of Israel. Circumstances had changed. Things were different. And their way of life and mode of thinking had changed accordingly. Disastrously so.

The First Discordant Note— Joseph’s Tribes Dissatisfied (Vv.14-18)

From the commencement of Joshua’s ministry no disagreeable atmosphere had been manifested between Joshua and the various tribes.

Now, for the first time, that sense of unity and common coalescence became blemished.

A deputation from the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh presented themselves before Joshua to express their discontent. “Why have you given me for inheritance only one share, only one portion, when my people are many because Yahweh has so blessed me?” (J.B.).

No doubt Joshua was deeply shocked at this approach. Such haughty dissatisfaction stemmed from the united numerical strength of these two tribes, but their petulant display of selfishness could not be excused. They were, in fact, the only two tribes to complain in this way.

Their objection could not be sustained. They had been allotted a very large area on the west of Jordan, and Manasseh had also been granted substantial territory on the east.

Their boast of numerical strength was far removed from the spirit of humility which a knowledge of the Truth should instil in men. They claimed to be a "numerous people" (Roth.) — an assertion that was not without foundation. In the census taken at Sinai (Num. 1) the children of Joseph outnumbered all other tribes, with the sole exception of Judah. But by the time the later census was taken in the plains of Moab (Num. 26), Joseph's descendants were greater in number than any other tribe. Manasseh was numerically stronger than Ephraim.

Although their numbers were certainly great, these two tribes showed considerable arrogance in pressing Joshua for further territory. Without doubt they had been generously provided for, and therefore should have humbly accepted the goodness of Yahweh and the wise leadership of Joshua.

In displaying such an overbearing attitude they were also showing a degree of cunning. Joshua himself was of the tribe of Ephraim (Num. 13:8), and they may have felt that Joshua would show bias towards the interests of his own tribe. Forlorn hope. By now they should have become aware that Joshua was totally dedicated to serving Yahweh and the best interests of **all** Israel. He was a selfless man; and they would have done well to have followed the fine example he set in this regard.

Failing to win his sympathy, perhaps they then felt they could "lean" on him a little. As a man of their own tribe, surely he could be made to see that he had an **obligation** to give preferential treatment to his tribe? No, he couldn't see that either.

Their final boast: "Yahweh hath blessed me. . ." was a rather rash assumption. Their pious words made no impression upon Joshua, because he was fully aware that they were not motivated by the spirit of the Truth. In their selfishness they ignored the terms of Yahweh's covenant with the younger generation (Deut. 29) which indicated that Yahweh's blessing upon the tribes was contingent upon their obedience.

These two tribes had made numerous foolish mistakes in their approach to Joshua. One of the greatest of their blunders was their imperious assumption that, because the father of their tribes (Joseph) had received the birthright, these two tribes should be exalted above their brethren. Such reasoning was not only false, it was God-dishonouring. It is not Yahweh's will that flesh should be elevated, but rather that men should be humbled in recognition of the perfection which emanates only from Yahweh Himself. God cannot be honoured when flesh is exalted. The leaders of these tribes should have understood this.

Joshua's caustic reply shows that he had no intention of becoming intimidated.

"If thou be a great people, then get thee up to the wood country, and cut down for thyself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the giants, if mount Ephraim be too narrow for thee. . .".

Joshua spoke of an area not far from mount Ephraim (cp. Judg. 17:15-18). It has been termed "the woodland region" (J.B.), and formed part of the central mountain range in Samaria. In effect, Joshua had given these tribes a stern exhortation: "If you say you are a great or numerous people, then let us see you all get to work in the Truth! Instead of complaining, it is time you showed some faith and works!"

Needless to say, this was the best advice he could have given them. Fault-finders and complainers, those who show bitter resentment, those who are constantly expressing grievances (real or imagined) add nothing to the strengthening and stabilising of an Ecclesia. On the contrary, they are a major liability within the Ecclesial environment. An Ecclesia is weakened and debilitated by brethren and sisters who habitually grumble and voice their displeasure at the way in which the affairs of the Ecclesia are conducted.

Joshua was well aware of these dangers. He wanted no voice of dissension raised which would divide the nation at this crucial time.

The Perizzites are first mentioned in Gen. 13:7. They had long dwelt in the land. The "giants" were the Rephaim (see marg.), whose antiquity was at least equal to that of the Perizzites. The Rephaim are first mentioned in Gen. 14:5. Having been deeply entrenched in the land before the days of Abraham, it is evident that they would not readily give up the land they possessed.

However, the sons of Joseph did not wish to fight against these Canaanites. What an intolerable situation confronted Joshua: these two tribes were demanding further grants of land when they had not as yet taken possession of the areas already allotted to them!

A profound spiritual lesson may be learned from this. Without the exercise of faith, Yahweh cannot be served. Where, then, is the exercise of faith when God's sons and daughters blanch at the prospect of fulfilling their responsibilities? Personal self-sacrifice is alien to the natural man; but such an attribute provides the means for the development of faith.

It is easy enough to choose the simplest and least challenging way in life, avoiding major responsibilities. But with such a disposition, how will faith be developed? Men and women can only have their characters developed by submissively accepting the trials and tribulations which the Father will permit to come upon them. In this, they can war the warfare of faith.

The sons of Joseph took the easy, negative course.

But Joshua would not permit them to avoid their responsibilities, and he encouraged them to exercise faith. "Get thee up. . .".

The sons of Joseph received Joshua's exhortation with total lack of enthusiasm.

"The Canaanites have chariots of iron!" they cried dejectedly.

They were critical of Joshua's verdict, yet failed to exercise faith themselves. They expressed dissatisfaction with their inheritance, but showed an unwillingness to remedy their situation. They failed to honour their responsibilities and failed to make the most of their opportunities.

It is evident that the men of Joseph had investigated their circumstances quite thoroughly, and had decided that the difficulties were too great for them. They make no mention of the fact that Yahweh is more powerful than the combined might of all the Canaanites, and could easily bring them into their inheritance provided they exercised faith and manifested the works of faith. Their minds were not upon Yahweh and His word, but upon themselves.

How many will find themselves excluded from the kingdom on these very grounds?

Joshua remained unimpressed. Their line of reasoning, he knew, ran counter to the principles of the Truth which they should have been applying.

Joshua answered them again. He told them plainly that they should go to work on their problem. They should labour diligently and fight hard. They should cut down sufficient numbers of trees to permit them to develop larger habitable areas. And at the same time they should dispossess the Perizzites and the Rephaimites. He even gave them permission to extend their borders further: "The outgoings of it

shall be thine. . .'. But **they** must act. They must apply themselves industriously, in faith, to fulfilling the will of Yahweh.

Did these two tribes — who had earlier fought beside their brethren of the other tribes with such worthy dedication — now expect an arm-chair ride into their inheritance? Such can never be so. "He who patiently endures **to the end** will be saved" (Mat. 24:13 Diag.).

Joshua's instructions were clear: Go to it, with a will, and in faith. "For thou shalt dispossess the Canaanites, though chariots of iron they have, and though strong they are. . ." (Roth.).

Joshua's spirit was in complete conformity with that of the Psalmist: "Yahweh is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? Yahweh is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. . ." (Ps. 27:1-3).

In reviewing this chapter, it will be observed that there are numerous lessons to be learned.

The sons of Joseph complained at their alleged lack of opportunity for development. They claimed to be in a stalemate situation. Many in the Truth do this. They fail to appreciate the wonderful opportunities which Yahweh makes available to **all** who have been called to become His sons and daughters. To each one He gives every opportunity to develop in such a way that he will be fitted to inherit His kingdom. It is so easy for God's servants — like the sons of Joseph — to ignore what they **should** be doing, and desire to do something else. Unfortunately, often they do not actually wish to "do" **anything**; sometimes they merely complain and "do" nothing (cp. Luke 19:12-27).

The sons of Joseph even used their circumstances of the moment as an excuse for doing nothing. Their attitude was: "When circumstances improve, or when someone does something to help us, then we will become active in the Truth". This is a fatal philosophy. There can never be any justifiable excuse for not doing **anything** in the Truth. Even an individual in poor health or with limited resources can be exercising his mind upon the words of God, drawing nearer to Him, and exercising faith.

Although the sons of Joseph were quite forthright in demanding more territory, they must have known that such a claim could only have been granted at the expense of one or more of the other tribes. Greed and selfishness are works of the flesh, and are the very opposite of the selfless and self-sacrificing principles which are taught in God's Truth.

Had Joshua acceded to the demands of these two tribes he would have been pandering to the weaknesses of character that were already so strongly in evidence. He would have thereby encouraged them in their indolence and arrogance. He was aware of this. Rather than gratifying their weaknesses, he endeavoured to turn them back into the way of the Truth. In this, the greatness of Joshua's own character is manifested.

Joshua's fine example as a servant of Yahweh could be seen in his deeds, not merely his words. To him, the Truth was a way of life. And it is evident from this encounter with the sons of Joseph that he required the same disposition to be manifested by the people whom he led. On the other hand, the sons of Joseph propounded words, but with an absence of deeds. They did nothing. They wanted superiority over their brethren, but revealed no spiritual qualities which would show them to be deserving of such prominence.

In his astonishingly perceptive exhortation to these two tribes, Joshua, as their wise leader, emphasised four great principles:

1. "Thou art a great people" — thereby stressing the great **position** enjoyed by Yahweh's people, if they be found walking in the way of the Truth.
2. "And has great power" — thus emphasising that the **power** of the word of God can transform men and women for an eternal inheritance in the kingdom which is yet to come.
3. "Thou shalt cut down" — indicating the way in which they could **labour** in the Name of Yahweh.
4. "For thou shalt drive out the Canaanites" — showing that men and women of faith must inevitably **triumph** over the flesh.

And so it shall be with all men and women of faith who will ultimately gain the kingdom: Yahweh gives them **position**, as sons and daughters of the Living God, when He draws them to His Truth; they are given His Word, which becomes the **power** by which they war the warfare of faith. With such an exalted position and being in possession of the power of the Word, they are enabled to **labour** in the Truth, that they might fulfil God's will in their lives. A proper application of these divinely-endowed gifts will bring them through to the **triumph** of victory over the flesh, and the immeasurable reward of eternal life, at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

"Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest. . ." (Heb. 4:11).

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Faith and Works Necessary to Ensure Receiving the Promised Reward (Vv.1-2)

The “whole congregation” (“ecclesia”, LXX., cp. Acts 7:38) was summoned to appear before Joshua. The purpose of this solemn gathering was to celebrate the erection of the Tabernacle at Shiloh.

Although no date or time of year is stated, it is highly probable that this important event would have coincided with one of the major feast-dates.

Gilgal had now ceased to be the assembly point for Israel. Shiloh became the principal centre. Shiloh was situated twenty miles north of Jerusalem and ten miles due south of Shechem. Its location is given in Judg. 21:19.

Shiloh was to become Israel’s centre of worship for a long period of time. The Tabernacle was to remain there for more than 300 years (1 Sam. 4:1-11).

The people were called together in the spirit of one united Ecclesia. “Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before Adonai Yahweh. . . How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. . .” (Ex. 23:17; Ps. 133:1).

Such gatherings were intended, in measure, to emphasise that the people of God were to be one unified Body under the Kingship and authority of Almighty God. Such assemblies, therefore, were of inestimable value (cp. Heb. 10:24-25; Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:27).

By means of such gatherings, Yahweh desired to teach His people to appreciate the advantages of unity. A body of people, united upon a sound spiritual basis, may mutually give and receive strength and comfort, encouragement and faithfulness. Yahweh will bless an Ecclesia which is united in the one true faith, manifesting zeal and dedication for the things of God, caring for and nurturing one another, doing all things “to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31; cp. Phil. 1:27; Eph. 4:31-5:2).

The name Shiloh means “tranquility, rest, place of rest” (Ges.). How did this place receive such a name? In all probability, it was so named by Joshua because of its association with the Messianic hope. “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, *until Shiloh* come; and unto him *shall the gathering of the people be*. . .” (Gen. 49:10).

Joshua was aware that Israel’s Messiah, when he appears in his

kingdom, will become the “place of rest” for the people of Israel (Matt. 11:28; cp. Ex. 33:14; Isa. 11:10).

With such thoughts in his mind, a vital principle was evident to Joshua: He saw the present conquest of the land only as a type of that which will be accomplished fully and more perfectly under the guidance and direction of a Greater Joshua — Israel’s Messiah.

Shiloh is here represented as a type of Jerusalem (“habitation of peace” or “foundation of peace”) in the Kingdom Age (cp. Deut. 12:5, 11, 14).

Shiloh thus now acquired a special significance. In calling the nation thither Joshua was reminding the people of the necessity of placing Yahweh first in their lives. The Ark, symbolising Yahweh’s presence in their midst, would provide a constant reminder that the nation could be assured of continuing “rest” so long as they honoured the terms of the covenant. Joshua had called them to worship at the Tabernacle; and such was highly desirable. But they were not to spend their lives sitting outside the Tabernacle, as the exhortation which followed shows. Through divine worship the people were to draw closer to Yahweh, and to become invigorated and encouraged in the Truth. Thus renewed, they were to manifest their faith by their works.

Much remained to be accomplished. Joshua was aware that many of the tribes had grown tired of war and had become indifferent and lethargic in regard to their responsibilities.

Although the record states that “the land was subdued before them” the statement means that all organised resistance on the part of the Canaanites had been crushed. However, as individual tribes and clans, the Canaanites were far from defeated at this time. “There remained among the children of Israel **seven tribes** which had not yet received their inheritance. . .”.

The tribes of Reuben, Gad, Manasseh, Judah and Ephraim had received their respective allotments, and, by-and-large, were in possession of them. But what of the others?

Why had the other seven tribes not acted? Obviously, they were passively apathetic. But what are the reasons for such slackness and lack of enthusiasm? Basically, they may be summarised under four headings:

1. **Satisfaction or compromise with existing conditions.**

Doubtless, many of the Israelites considered themselves satisfied with their achievements. They could see little point in further effort and sacrifice. They thought the future would take care of itself. This state of mind represents a grave danger to the people of God

in every generation. It is perfectly natural for the flesh to want to relax and put responsibilities to one side — especially when a great deal of effort and sacrifice has already been expended. But the saints of God in every age must never become **satisfied** with their present attainments or circumstances. Nothing will be fully right for the saints until the Kingdom comes. Therefore, the people of God must continue their struggle in the warfare of faith until either the Lord's return, or their lives of probation come to an end.

2. **Divided loyalties.**

It is easy enough to wish to be “in the Truth”, whilst at the same time being dominated by conflicting aims and objectives which demand our attention. In such a situation, almost certainly loyalty to the Truth will suffer. “No man can be the bondservant of two masters; for either he will dislike one and like the other, or he will attach himself to one and think slightly of the other. You cannot be the bondservants both of God and of mammon. . .” (Mat. 6:24, Wey., marg.). In this statement, why did the Lord not mention “many” masters? Why did he restrict the choice to only “two”? Simply, because in this life men have precisely such a limited selection. One may serve either King Yahweh or King Sin (Rom. 6:16). No other alternative exists. The individual who would serve Yahweh must make a clear and determined commitment to God and to His cause. The claims which Yahweh makes upon His servants have been spelt out clearly: “Thou shalt love the Yahweh thy God with **all** thy heart (the intellect, and therefore the mental processes), with **all** thy soul (the inner being, thus the affections), and with *all* thy mind” (the Hebrew of Deut. 6:5 has “might” — meaning all the actions of life; the Greek has **dianoia**, which relates primarily to the faculty of **exercising** the mind — thus, the ability to make sound and correct decisions based upon a proper understanding of the word — and therefore implies a way of life in harmony with the spirit of the Truth). “This”, the Lord added, “is the **first** and great commandment. . .” (Mat. 22:36-38). In serving Israel's God, where is the option for divided loyalties?

3. **Indolence.**

This is one of the most deplorable of human weaknesses, and one which may develop without becoming fully apparent to the hapless victim. It speaks of an aversion to activity: mental, moral or physical. It becomes a particular danger to God's people in an age of comparative peace and affluence. In effect, it amounts to simple laziness: a lack of sufficient zeal to arouse one's self to fulfil one's responsibilities and obligations. Yahweh was well aware that such a danger would confront the Israelites once they had entered the

Promised Land: “Beware that thou **forget not** Yahweh thy God, in not keeping His commandments, and His judgments, and His statutes, which I command thee this day: Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; then thine heart be **lifted up**, and thou **forget** Yahweh thy God which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. . . Who **led** thee. . . Who **fed** thee. . .” (Deut. 8:11-18). This form of weakness must never be overlooked or ignored by God’s people. Apathy and indifference may produce a state of spiritual torpor from which recovery may become well-nigh impossible.

4. **Lack of faith.**

This condition is closely allied to the three already mentioned. When faith has diminished through lack of consideration and meditation upon Yahweh’s word, or through alien pressures which have not been resisted, the mind becomes blinded to the reality of the things of God. “Where there is no vision, a people is let loose. . . The law is no more; her prophets also find no vision from Yahweh. . .” (Prov. 29:18; Lam. 2:9, Roth. A.V.). The exercise of faith requires not merely knowing and believing, but **performing** the will of Yahweh. “Exert **all** your strength in the honourable struggle for the faith; lay hold of the Life of the Ages, to which you were called. . .” (1 Tim. 6:12, Wey.). “Without faith it is **impossible** to please (God). . . So faith without works is dead. . .” (Heb. 11:6; Jas. 2:26).

An Exhortation Against Slackness (Vv.3-7)

Having spent many years wandering in the wilderness — during which time the older generation died — the younger generation of Israelites now found themselves on the western side of Jordan, in the Promised Land. Yet, despite years of privation and hardship, many Israelites were prepared to lightly cast aside their new-found inheritance.

Seven tribes indicated that they were tired of fighting. They had fought the Canaanites for seven years — a long and protracted war. Now, their earlier dedication had waned. Their faith in Yahweh and zeal for His cause had dissipated.

They had fought valiantly; and now — poised on the brink of final and complete victory — they had given up the struggle. They were “slack to go to possess the land”.

This was a tragic state of affairs: not merely because of the

inactivity of the people but because of their disposition.

At the Judgment Seat of Christ, how many will be found to have started out on their walk towards the Kingdom full of zeal and wholehearted dedication, fired by a love of Yahweh and His saving Truth — only to surrender to pressures from within and without, and never gain the final victory. Satisfaction or compromise with the existing worldly environment; divided loyalties; a general attitude of indolence, or lack of faith; are influences which may lead men and women of faith to desert the cause they have espoused, and fall by the wayside.

It comes as no surprise to learn that Joshua rebuked the seven tribes with a sharp exhortation. “How much more time will you waste before taking possession of the land?” he challenged them (J.B.). Having lost their “first love” they stood endangered of losing everything. They were now unwilling to further pursue the conflict against evil; yet, as Joshua indicated, they had no other course open to them but to continue the warfare. “For ours is not a conflict with mere flesh and blood, but with the despotisms, the empires, the forces that control and govern this dark world — the spiritual hosts of evil arrayed against us in the heavenly warfare. . .” (Eph. 6:12, Wey.).

Yahweh had made it possible for the tribes to go into the land and take up their respective inheritances; but many of them lacked the faith, courage, initiative and determination to finish the work they had begun in co-operation with their God (see Ps. 81:13-14; Deut. 5:29; 10:12-13; Isa. 48:18; Col. 3:23-24). Thus Joshua’s exhortation indicated that the only reason for lack of accomplishment lay with the people themselves: “How long are ye slack. . .” Action on the part of the tribes was all that was necessary to secure the entire land. The implication is that any assistance required from Yahweh would be readily forthcoming, provided the people went forward in faith.

Joshua moved the seven tribes to action.

“Give out from among you three men for each tribe: and I will send them, and they shall rise, and go through the land, and describe it according to the inheritance of them; and they shall come again to me.”

Plainly, none of these seven tribes had presented themselves before Eleazar and Joshua at the time when the solemn act of dividing the land had taken place (14:1-2). Now, these twenty one men were to journey throughout the land which had not yet been allotted, and to make a comprehensive survey as they travelled. This land would then be divided among the seven tribes.

The findings of these men were to be recorded in “a book” (v.9) —

the first geographical book of the Holy Land compiled by the Hebrews, and probably the first such book ever made.

This instruction was wise. The final report of the twenty one men, drawn equally from all seven tribes, would be above disputation.

Before the men departed on their journey, Joshua made it clear that the divisions of the land which had already been made would stand. The only alteration to this general principle was that eventually Simeon would inherit a portion initially associated with southern Judah.

Because there would be no redistribution of land already allotted to the other five tribes, the twenty one men from the remaining seven tribes were to be most circumspect in carrying out Joshua's instruction. "You are to survey the land in seven sections and bring your findings to me here. . ." (J.B.). This having been done, the actual inheritances of the seven tribes would be decided by lot. This portion of the narrative concludes with a further reminder to the tribes that "the Levites have no part among you; for the priesthood of Yahweh is their inheritance. . .". The profound significance of this, together with the lessons to be learned therefrom, have been considered in the exposition of the thirteenth chapter.

The Land Further Surveyed (Vv.8-10)

In view of the willing response to Joshua's exhortation, it is evident that his words were received by the people of the seven tribes. Despite their earlier indolence, they had been roused to positive activity. They had been prepared to "suffer the word of exhortation" (Heb. 13:22, Gk., in the Middle Voice: something one does for one's self — Lit., "to bear with", hence to hearken and accept submissively). Of the word rendered "exhortation" (**paraklesis**), Bullinger has stated that it means: "a calling near; a summons to one's side; hence an admonitory, encouraging and consolatory exhortation, invitation or entreaty". The word is expressive of the warmth and intimate fraternity which should bind together the Ecclesia of God. It speaks of unity, in a spirit of mutual submission; of a drawing together of the One Body; of a ready willingness to reciprocally encourage and console, that all things might be done to the glory of God, and for the well-being of all the Body.

This was obviously Joshua's motive, in this matter. He was a man of God and a man of faith; therefore his words and deeds were dominated by an understanding of the spiritual needs of the moment.

Hence, "the men arose, and went away. . .".

They departed with Joshua's final words of encouragement to speed them on their way: he would "cast lots" for their inheritances "before Yahweh in Shiloh". It is of interest to observe the historical and geographical accuracy of Joshua's account. Shiloh is here especially mentioned, as lots for the earlier inheritances had been drawn at Gilgal rather than at Shiloh. Why had this been so? Because on the earlier occasion Israel's headquarters were still at Gilgal; and the Tabernacle had not, at that stage, been erected at Shiloh (see 14:1, 6; cp. 18:1).

The twenty one specially chosen men fulfilled their duties with alacrity and thoroughness. And because of this, they were rewarded accordingly.

Yahweh always provides a reward for consistent faithfulness.

"Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before Yahweh. . .".

During the present dispensation, men and women of faith are able to "walk through the land" by means of the eye of faith, and through a consideration of the details to be found in God's word concerning those things He has promised. They must manifest an attitude of keenness and enthusiasm, longing for the coming of God's kingdom when once again the "land" will be "divided". The Greater Joshua, together with his immortalised saints, will re-establish God's kingdom, having restored Israel and conquered her enemies.

The Territory Allotted to Benjamin (Vv.11-28)

The area determined for Benjamin's inheritance provides an excellent example of the exercise of divine wisdom. A certain element of rivalry, or at the very least distrust, existed between the tribes of Judah and Ephraim. Benjamin's allotment, inserted carefully between those of Judah and Ephraim, was intended to act as a buffer between the other two; and perhaps Benjamin was expected to exercise the role of a stabilising and unifying influence.

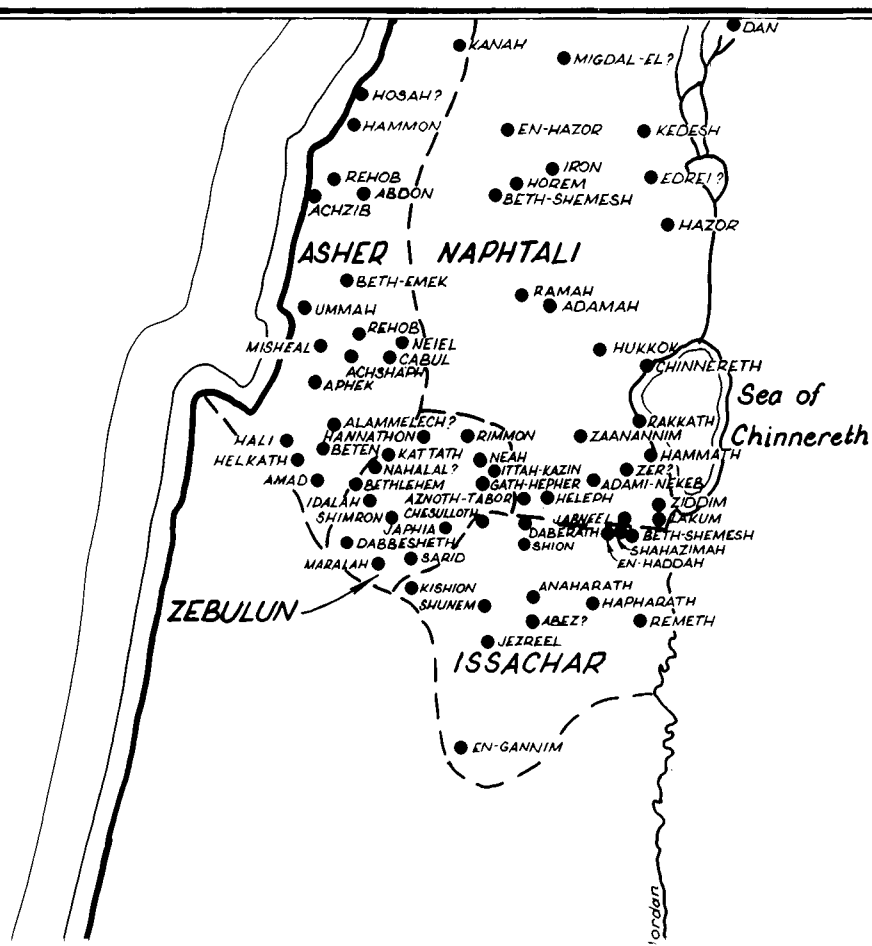
Benjamin's portion was not large, but their numerical strength was not great. At the first census the tribe numbered thirty five thousand four hundred, placing them eleventh in ranking among the tribes. At the second numbering they had increased to forty five thousand six hundred; however, this still left them in seventh position, numerically speaking.

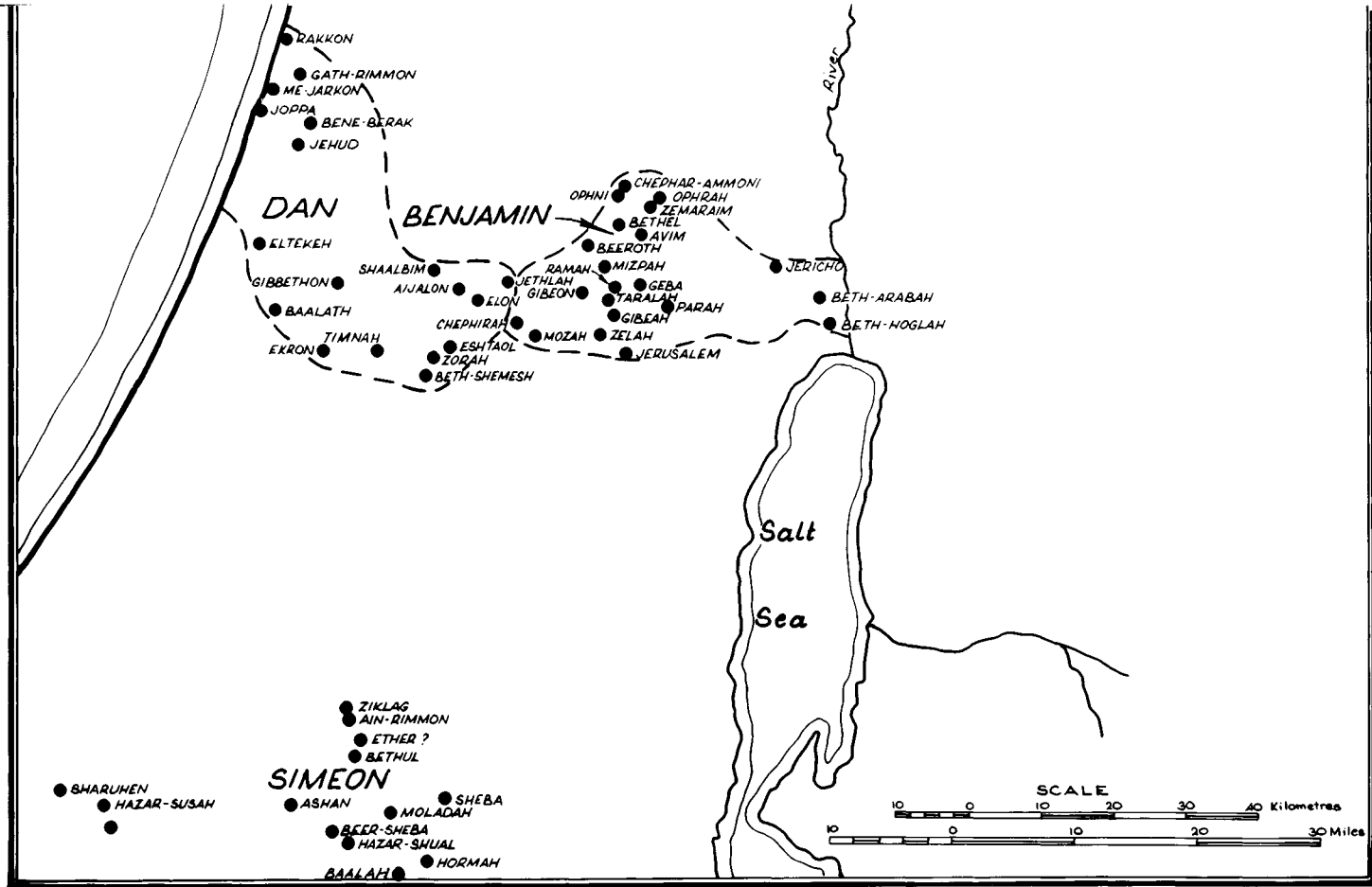
A consideration of these verses will show that their allotment reached from a little south of Beth-horon on the west, across to Jericho and the Jordan on the east. Across this east-west northern border their land went as far north as Bethel and Ai.

From near Beth-horon their border turned south-east to Kirjath-Jearim and Jerusalem, then bore north-east to Debir, south-east once again, then moved northward in an arc, plunging south-east for the third time to the head of the Dead Sea.

Benjamin's relationship to the city of Jerusalem has been commented upon in the section which outlined the inheritance of the tribe of Judah (see ch. 15).

THE
GREAT
SEA





The areas given to the 7 tribes of Joshua 18.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The Land Allotted to Six Tribes (Vv.1-48)

Benjamin was numbered among the seven tribes which had not yet taken up their inheritance. The area allotted to Benjamin has been described in the previous chapter. Now, Joshua records details concerning the lots given for the tribes of Simeon (vv. 1-9), Zebulun (vv.10-16), Issachar (vv. 17-23), Asher (vv. 24-31), Naphtali (vv. 32-39) and Dan. (vv. 40-48).

Simeon was given a portion of the land south of Judah, much of which had been originally included in Judah's allotment. At the last census it was revealed that Simeon was the smallest of the tribes, numerically. Thus, "the part of the children of Judah" which was "too much for them" was made available to Simeon. Judah must have willingly agreed to this change. There is no record of argument or debate over the question. A spirit of sacrifice prevailed among the people of Judah towards their brethren of the tribe of Simeon, which was highly commendable.

Zebulun was granted a land-locked area in lower Galilee. One of the smaller allotments, its southern border lay near the Carmelite mountain range and the valley of Jezreel, whilst its northern boundary was almost level with the northern extremity of the Sea of Chinnereth.

Issachar's inheritance reached from a point a little north of Mount Tabor in the north to south of Jezreel in the south, and thus included the magnificently fertile valley of Jezreel. Issachar's eastern border was the Jordan, whilst some fifteen miles distant the western boundary touched those of Zebulun and Manasseh.

The portion given to Asher stretched northward from Mount Carmel to Tyre and beyond. The average width of their inheritance was only about ten miles but it was more than forty miles in length. Whilst the entire western boundary was the Mediterranean Sea, on the east Asher met the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali. Needless to say, the "Hebron" mentioned (v.28) had no connection with the famous Hebron in Judah's territory. Asher's Hebron is better rendered Ebron or Abdon (Roth.).

Naphtali's southern border adjoined the portion allotted to Issachar. In the north the boundary was approximate to that of Asher. Asher lay to the west. In the south, the Sea of Chinnereth marked the eastern boundary. The border then gradually moved towards the west as it ascended northward, apparently narrowing finally to less than ten miles.

The final lot was given to the tribe of Dan. The boundaries have not been fully recorded; however, their territory lay between Benjamin and the Mediterranean, with Ephraim to the north and Judah to the south. This allotment was considered inadequate by the men of Dan. They turned their attention elsewhere. Travelling approximately one hundred miles north, and to the east of Naphtali's eastern border, they attacked a city known as Leshem, or Laish. That city was nearly twenty five miles north of the Sea of Chinnereth. The men of Dan captured it and subdued the surrounding areas, laying claim to the land thereabouts.

Dan never clearly established supremacy over all the territory originally allotted to them, between Benjamin and the Great Sea. Judah failed to fully press their claim westward, and this added to the discomfiture of Dan, and the instability of their southern border.

Joshua's Inheritance (Vv. 49-50)

It is typical of the man's faith and character, and his selfless devotion to the cause of Yahweh and his people, that Joshua asked nothing for himself. He became the last man in Israel to receive his inheritance.

Such is the spirit of the Truth working in the lives of men and women, preparing them for the Kingdom of God. "Trust in Yahweh and do good, dwell in the land and feed on fidelity; yea, rest thy delight on Yahweh, that He may give thee the requests of thy heart. . ." (Ps. 37:3-4, Roth.).

When all others had received their respective portions of the land, "the children of Israel **gave** an inheritance to Joshua the son of Nun among them. . .".

Upon Israel overcoming the combined military might of the Canaanites, Joshua could easily have used his position as leader of the nation to demand first choice. Had he been so minded, he would have been selfishly and politically motivated. In such an event he may well have insisted on receiving Shiloh (which was within the province of his own tribe, Ephraim). As Shiloh was to remain the spiritual capital of the nation for some centuries, Joshua could well have also made it the political capital, to his own personal advantage. Any number of possibilities had been open to Joshua when the time came to divide the land. He considered none of them. Self-interest found no part in his character.

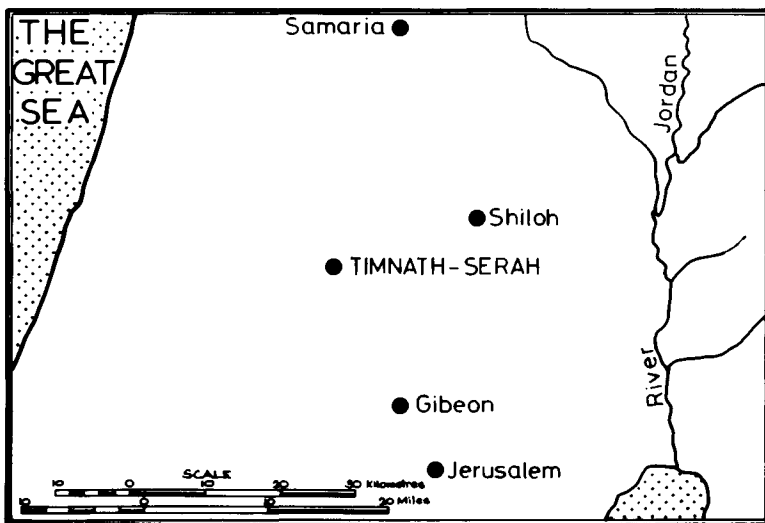
Finally, almost as an afterthought, representatives of the people asked Joshua to state his wish in regard to a personal inheritance for himself.

He requested the city of Timnath-serah. It has been suggested that this city lay eleven miles west-south-west from Shiloh, and seventeen miles south-west of Shechem.

Joshua's choice met with Yahweh's approval.

Timnath-serah means "portion of abundance". It was anything but that. Set on the bleak north side of the mountain of Gaash, it offered nothing that was particularly inviting from a fleshly point of view. However, although the meaning of the place appears to be something of an anomaly, such is not the case. Since Timnath-serah offered Joshua nothing of special value in this present mortal state, he must have seen in this inheritance a type of his future reward, which he will receive during the dispensation of Messiah's Kingdom. Then, he will truly receive a "portion of abundance" from the One who is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. . ." (Eph. 3:20).

This place, however, was later to become associated with the appalling apostasy which began to undermine the nation following Joshua's death. After his death, Joshua was buried at Timnath-serah. And although it is stated that Israel "served Yahweh all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua" the same narrative



Joshua's Inheritance (Ch. 19:50)

indicates that after the death of those elders “there arose another generation after them, which knew not Yahweh. . . and the children of Israel did evil in the sight of Yahweh, and served Baalim. . . and other gods. . . and Ashtaroth. . .”. In so doing, the extent of their apostasy is demonstrated in the fact that they changed the name of Joshua’s city from Timnath-serah — “portion of abundance” — to Timnath-heres, which means “portion of the sun”. In following false religions, the Israelites had become sun-worshippers (Judg. 2:7-13).

What a fearful and tragic state into which the nation descended. And in such a short space of time.

The Truth may be hard to win, but may be ever so easily lost.

Joshua’s closing days were not lived amidst a paradise, rich in beauty and fertility. This was of his own choosing. Instead of becoming captivated by the glories and richness of the present, he preferred to set his mind upon the future. He was, for example, familiar with the promise which Moses had given the nation: “Yahweh thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken. . .” (Deut. 18:15). He was also aware of the numerous encouraging prophecies which Moses had recorded under divine inspiration. “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. . . And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call to mind **among all the nations** whither Yahweh thy God hath driven thee (not merely Egypt — a later diaspora to come), and shalt return unto Yahweh thy God, and shalt obey His voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart and with all thy soul. That then Yahweh thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither Yahweh thy God hath scattered thee. . . All the earth shall be filled with the glory of Yahweh. . .” (Gen. 49:10; Deut. 30:1-3; Num. 14:21).

These and many similar prophecies would have gladdened the heart of Joshua, as they have done for men and women of faith down through the ages. As the effects of age began to tell upon him, and as he became aware that the days of his mortal existence were drawing towards a close, his mind would have returned to those words with which Yahweh had addressed him, at the commencement of his ministry: “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein (lit., talk to thyself therein) day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein:

for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. . .” (1:8).

Since leaving Egypt his life had not been easy. He had not experienced the comforts and contentments of a normal family existence. And since succeeding Moses as leader of the people he had experienced only the rough living and privations which are associated with a people who are constantly at war. He had, in other words, followed the example of Moses, his friend and mentor, “choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. . .” (Heb. 11:25).

Thus, ultimately, Joshua entered into his “rest” — a type of that which is referred to in Heb. 4:9, “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. . .”.

Like the apostle Paul, who was to follow him so many centuries later, Joshua had “fought a good fight” and had “kept the faith” (Heb. 4:7). He continued the warfare until no further fighting remained, so far as he, personally, was concerned. In this respect, he is set forth as an example of a true “soldier” of Christ.

It is most striking that, having completed the main feature of his divine appointment, Joshua did not receive any special reward, or elevation to special honours, or any of the glories which are usually heaped upon successful leaders and warriors. And that is as it should have been: his reward lay in the future, as he well understood.

The time will come when Yahweh will raise him to honour and glory, together with all who have remained faithful throughout the ages. “Commit thy way unto Yahweh; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment (vindication, Roth.) as the noonday. . .” (Ps. 37:5-6).

Division of The Land Concluded (v.51)

The final verse of the nineteenth chapter summarises all that had been done in regard to the distribution of the land among the tribes.

It is notable that both Eleazar and Joshua had willingly permitted the hand of Providence to guide and direct their actions in these matters. No attempt was made on the part of either man to usurp Yahweh’s authority, or to allow any principle of the flesh to dominate their decisions. They had solemnly followed the wise principle set forth in the book of Proverbs: “Trust in Yahweh with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths. . .” (3:5-6).

A wonderful sense of brotherhood and willingness to share had been manifested by the Israelites, in the dividing of the land — marred only by the complaint made by the sons of Joseph (17:14-18).

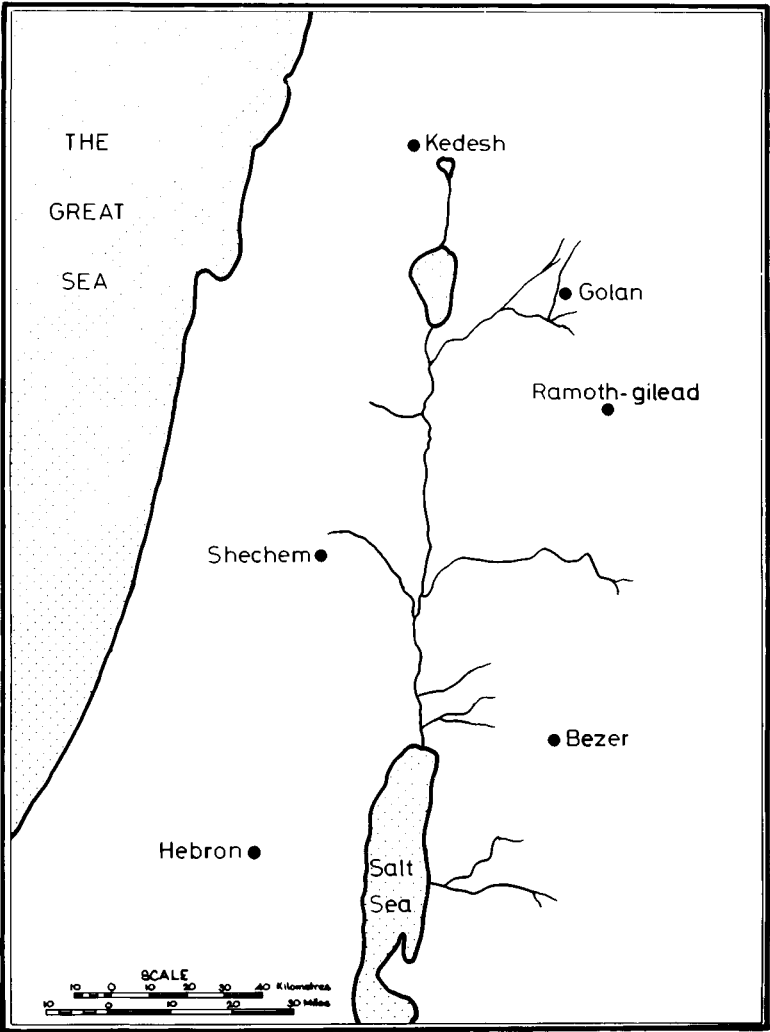
But brotherhood does not necessitate equality in all matters.

Some tribes received larger portions than others. The numerical strength of the tribes had to be taken into account. The tribes had varying needs; and some land was far more arable and fertile than other areas.

Amongst the brotherhood of God's people in every age, these principles must not be ignored. Individual members of the Body have varying needs, and are able to bear differing degrees of responsibility. Those whose needs are relatively simple should not envy others who receive special care and attention because of their circumstances. Those who have little zeal or ability to shoulder the heavier responsibilities within the community of believers should not manifest jealousy towards those who are often called upon — by virtue of their willingness and their ability in the word — to bear weighty and crushing burdens of responsibility.

For such lofty principles to effectively work within a community of fraternal brotherhood, there must be in evidence a spirit of mutual love and respect. All must develop a disposition in which tolerance, selflessness and a ready willingness to acknowledge and consider the needs of others become of paramount importance.

“Let brotherly love continue” is a wise maxim which will help to establish a foundation upon which the One Body can “grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the Body unto the edifying of itself in love. . .” (Heb. 13:1; Eph. 4:15-16).



THE CITIES OF REFUGE

CHAPTER TWENTY

The Cities of Refuge (Vv.1-6)

These verses should be considered together with Ex. 21:12-14; Num. 35:6-34; Deut. 4:41-43; 19:1-13.

Before Israel entered the Promised Land, Yahweh had given instructions concerning six cities which were to be designated to fulfil a special purpose. They became known as the cities of refuge.

There were to be three such cities on each side of Jordan. Those chosen on the west were Kedesh, Shechem and Hebron. On the east were Bezer, Ramoth and Golan.

This is the order in which the names are recorded in this chapter. And the order is not without significance. The meanings of the names illustrate this:

Kedesh	—“set apart” or “make holy”
Shechem	—Lit., “between the shoulders” — the part of the beast where the major weight was borne — thus “the burden-bearer” or “that which supports”
Hebron	—“join in fellowship”
Bezer	—“protect”
Ramoth	—“elevation”
Golan	—“deliver so as to cause to rejoice”

Together, the names form a sentence which reveals the typical significance of the cities of refuge: “Yahweh will set apart and make holy all who look for support to the burden-bearer (Christ Jesus) and will cause them to join in fellowship, protecting them, and elevating them to the glory of the kingdom age, thus delivering them from sin and death, causing them to rejoice. . .”.

The number of cities was most appropriate. It was the **sixth** commandment which said: “Thou shalt not kill”. Six is the Biblical number which symbolically represents man. He was created on the sixth day (Gen. 1:24-31). Also the “man of sin” can be recognised by the number “666”, which speaks of mankind in his most ungodly state (Rev. 13:18).

The reason for choosing “six” cities of refuge appears to have been to draw attention to man: to his needs; and to the hopelessness of his position, apart from the extension of divine mercy.

That the cities of refuge typify the Lord Jesus Christ, and his ability to save men from their sins providing they meet the terms and conditions which God has revealed, cannot be doubted.

Understandably, under the Law of Moses, the taking of human life was regarded with the utmost seriousness. There is a profound reason for this. Irrespective of whether the murdered person was of a godly character or not, a divine principle was irreversibly broken with the taking of a human life. Man had been created in the "image" and after the "likeness" of God. The reason for this was that man might learn to think and act in harmony with his Creator, thus becoming a manifestation of God's character. If this process is sufficiently developed in men and women, they will become manifestations of the One who has given them life and breath. Such men and women who respond to the guiding hand of their Creator will ultimately receive the priceless gift of divine nature. When an individual destroys a fellow human being, he effectively makes it impossible for that process to be developed or completed in the one whose life is taken. Hence, in Yahweh's eyes, one of the greatest crimes a man may commit is to destroy one of his fellows.

Because of this principle, the Law allowed no refuge for one found guilty of deliberate or premeditated murder. Such a killer was not fit to live, and his life was forfeit (Ex. 21:12; Num. 35:31).

However, the Law did provide an element of mercy because of the inherent weakness in human nature. If it were found that a manslayer had inflicted death upon his victim due to negligence, or through a genuine accident, he was to "flee unto one of those cities and live" (Deut. 19:5).

There, the manslayer was to remain for an indeterminate period of time. Why indeterminate? Because he could not depart from the city until the death of the high priest. So long as he conformed to this law, the next-of-kin of the deceased were not permitted to exact vengeance for the death of their relative. However, if the killer left the city before the death of the high priest, he would find himself totally at the mercy of the "avenger", who was empowered by the Law to exact retribution with impunity (Num. 35:26-28).

If the high priest was of advanced age, it was reasonable to assume that the manslayer might anticipate only a limited confinement within the city of refuge. But if the high priest was relatively young, the period of restriction might be of considerable duration. Yet, who could really tell? Whether young or old, every Believer must face the question: "What is your life?" — and must answer accordingly: "It is even a vapour. . ." (Jas. 4:14).

Such provisions in the Law showed that Yahweh would prefer men to exercise even-handed justice, rather than vengeance. And justice was to be blended with mercy. The carrying out of vengeance is a

divine prerogative, not a human one (Deut. 32:35, 41, 43; Judg. 11:36; Ps. 94:1; Rom. 12:19, etc.).

God revealed how such difficult matters were to be handled by the Israelites. “Yahweh spake”, reminding them of earlier instructions: that they were to “set out for you *the* cities of refuge” (Roth.).

The “manslayer” (Roth.) who had “accidently, unwittingly” taken the life of another (J.B.) was to “flee” to the nearest city of refuge that he might avoid the wrath of “the blood-redeemer” (Roth.). The Hebrew word was commonly used to define a redeemer (cp. occ., Ruth 4:4, four times; v.6, three times).

Arriving at the city, the “manslayer” was to “stand at the entering of the gate”. In other words, he had no automatic right of entry into the city. This was of profound significance. Firstly, it was necessary for him to “declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city. . .”. Similarly, all who seek “refuge” in Christ cannot “enter” without first pleading for entrance, through an adequate confession of the faith and by means of the waters of baptism.

Since all six cities of refuge were Levitical cities, it is implied that the elders would have been Levites; thus, the case of the “manslayer” was to be judged strictly in accordance with the principles of the Law (Lev. 10:11; Deut. 17:8-11; Mal. 2:7). The wisdom of the Word was to be the deciding factor in passing judgment upon the “manslayer”.

If the elders were satisfied that the appellant had smitten “his neighbour unwittingly” they would grant him an entrance into the city. However, the one seeking mercy had to face a further examination. Having persuaded the elders that he had presented a reasonable case, he was then to “stand before the congregation for judgment”. Such a trial would obviate any immediate swiftness of action, resulting from quickly aroused passions or emotions of the moment. The wisdom and fairness of such a procedure is obvious. Similarly, all who present their case for redemption before the Son of Man will be assessed upon the basis of a perfect balance between justice and mercy.

Once granted permanent sanctuary within the city, the “manslayer” was to remain confined there “until the death of the high priest”.

Names and Localities of the Six Cities (Vv. 7-8)

“So then they set apart Kadesh. . .” etc. (Roth.). The Hebrew word, **qadash** means “to make, pronounce or observe as clean (ceremonially or morally)” (Strong). The word commonly rendered “holy” in the A.V. has been derived from this word. An examination

of the Law of Moses will reveal that whenever ceremonial cleansing is alluded to, it is always typical of mental and moral cleansing. It is, therefore, appropriate that the six special cities which were to be associated with the means of saving and preserving human life should be designated as being especially “set apart” for that purpose.

The geographical significance of the siting of these six cities is worthy of consideration.

Kedesh was a city of Naphtali, west of Jordan and in the extreme north, four miles north-west of Lake Huleh. Shechem was near the border of Ephraim and Manasseh, within the tribal territory of Manasseh. It lay approximately twenty nine miles north of Jerusalem and fifteen miles west of Jordan. Hebron stood nineteen miles south and slightly to the west of Jerusalem, and seventeen miles west of the Dead Sea. Hebron lay in the Hill country of Judah.

On the east, Bezer was in the territory of Reuben, fifteen miles east of the northern tip of the Dead Sea. It was “on the tableland” (Roth., J.B.). Ramoth (or Ramoth-gilead) was to be found about 28 miles south-east of the southern-most point of the Sea of Chinnereth. Golan was placed twelve miles east of the Sea of Chinnereth (or, Galilee) on a level about half-way down the eastern bank.

A consideration of the geographical positioning of the six cities shows that they virtually formed a circle. This serves as a reminder that Christ possesses an all-encircling power to save all who would come “into” him. “Believe in God, believe also **into** me”, was his loving advice to his disciples (John 14:1, lit. Gk.).

Summary of Lessons to be Learned (V. 9)

Christ died to save men from their sins. Therefore, if Christ’s death was necessitated because of the sins of men, mankind is responsible for his death. All are therefore “manslayers”. The writer to the Hebrews describes Believers who “fall away” from the Truth as those who “continue to crucify the Son of God to their detriment” (*the New Testament: A Translation in the Language of the People*) or, “with their own hands they are crucifying again the Son of God. . .” (N.E.B., marg., Heb. 6:6).

Conversely, all mankind — with the sole exception of God’s Son — are being pursued by Sin (as though it were the “avenger”) to pay the wages which are due—death. The only hope, then, is to “flee” to the city of refuge.

Further, as the cities of refuge were placed where they could readily be seen and reached, so the Lord Jesus Christ is “the light of the

world". He may be sought without hindrance by all who so desire, and he will grant an "entrance" into the way which leads to eternal redemption to those who so seek him. The gospel of salvation has been set forth in the word of Truth, for all to see and act upon.

Confinement within the city of refuge taught the lesson that man can find forgiveness for his sins — but such forgiveness is not unconditional. Should the "manslayer" have been so foolish as to venture outside his city of refuge prior to the death of the high priest, the Law afforded him no protection whatsoever. His life was forfeit, should the "avenger" fall upon him. Those who are "in Christ" are in a similar position. Should they stray "outside" Christ, by disregarding his doctrine or the principles of his moral teaching, they may lose all hope of eternal salvation.

The fact that the "death" of the high priest brought release for the "manslayer" is so obviously related to the death of Christ to bring redemption for man, that it should not require further comment here (see Rom. 5:10; 6:3; Heb. 2:9, 14, etc.). However, a vital factor concerning the relevance of the high priest should not escape notice. The "manslayer" was guaranteed protection and life, **so long as the high priest lived**. This appears to be the main point at issue in Heb. 6:20 and 7:25, "Jesus made a high priest **for ever**. . . **He ever liveth** to make intercession. . .".

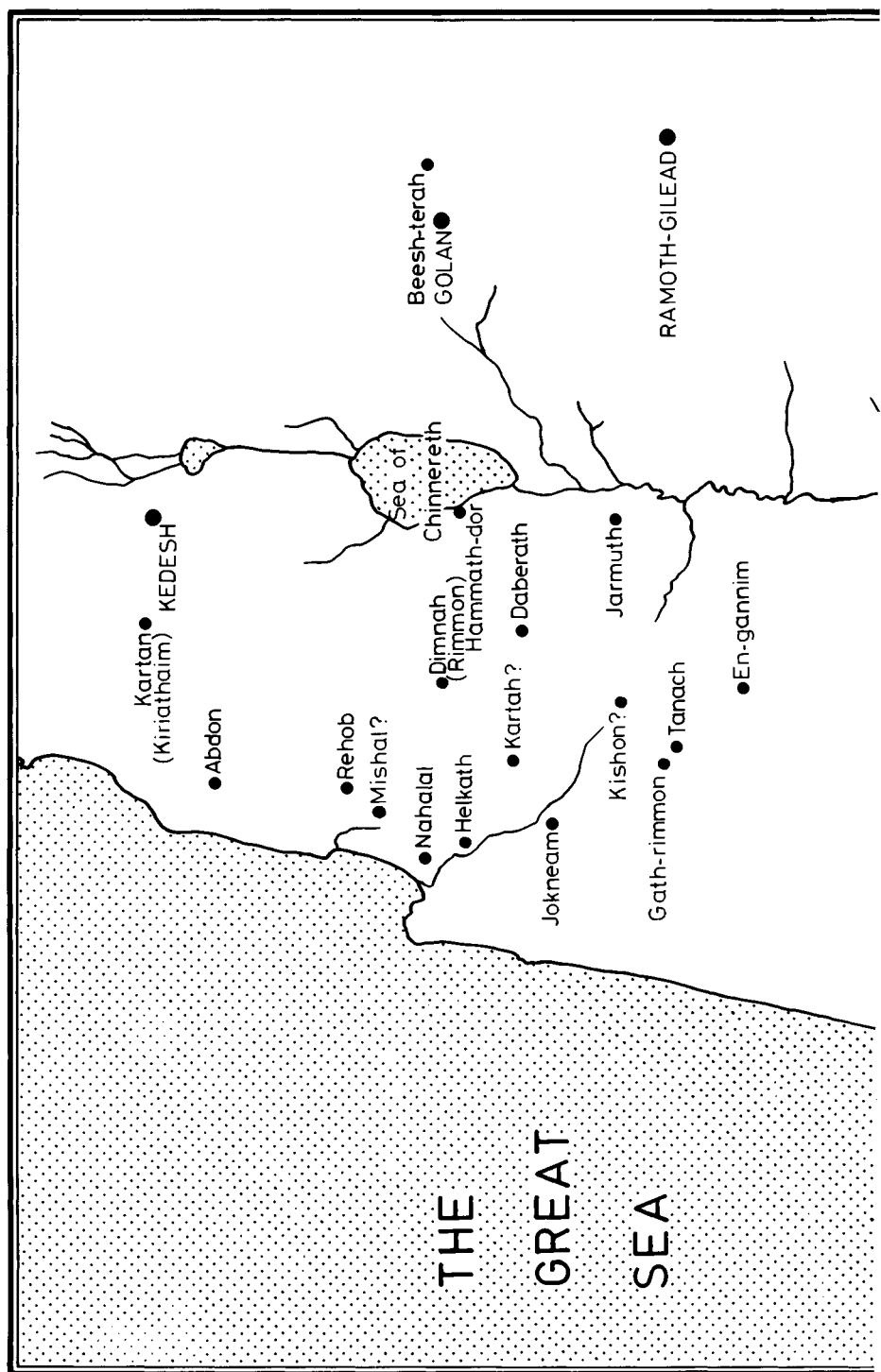
In relation to the cities of refuge, this principle stands out with crystal clarity. Since the Lord Jesus, as high priest, lives **for ever**, all who remain safely and faithfully "within" him, are assured of continuing protection "forever". The ultimate Manslayer — death itself — can never exact lasting vengeance upon such, for they trust in a high priest **who can never die**.

Thus, all sinners are counselled to "flee" to the "city of refuge" (cp. Ps. 61).

And there should be no delay in so acting, and in taking full advantage of the protection and assurance which Christ is able to offer. "Behold! **Now** is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). The way leading to the cities of refuge was to remain open and unobstructed (Deut. 19:3). Therefore, there can be no excuse for slothfulness or dilatoriness.

The way to Christ is readily accessible. Nothing in life can be more important than the refuge which he is able to provide.

"I am the way, the truth, and the life", said the Son of God (John 14:6). Such a warm and compelling invitation should not be ignored or treated lightly.



Beesh-terath
GOLAN

RAMOTH-GILEAD

Sea of
Chinnereth

Kartan
(Kiriathaim)
KEDESH

Abdon

Rehob

Mishal?

Nahalal

Helkath

Dimnah
(Rimmon)

Hammath-dor

Kartah?

Daberath

Jarmuth

Kishon?

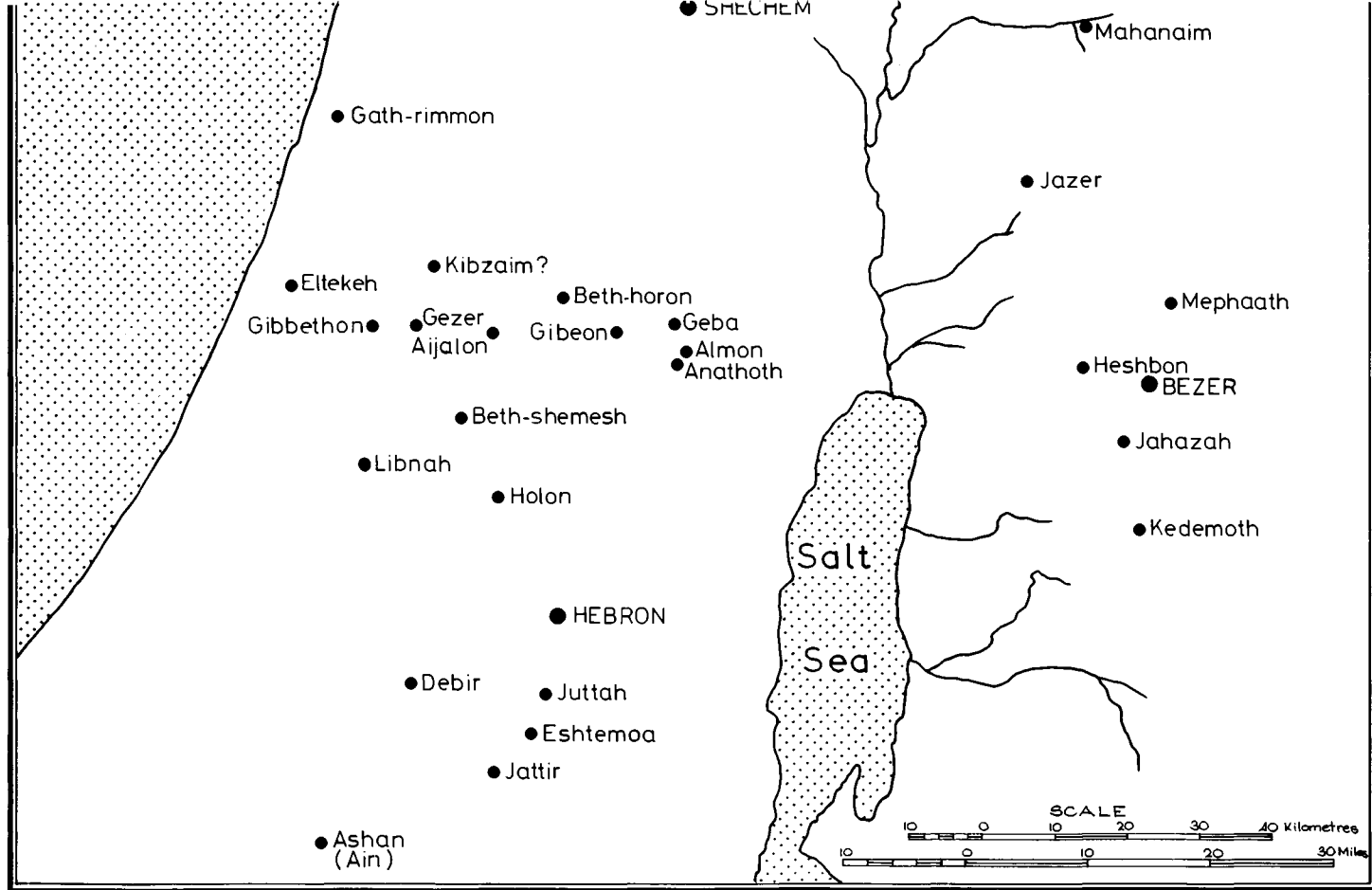
Gath-rimmon

Tanach

En-gannim

Jokneam

THE
GREAT
SEA



Levitical Cities (Josh. 21) Cities of Refuge shown in upper case.

CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

The Levites Request Cities (Vv.1-3)

Following the division of the land among the twelve tribes and the appointment of six cities of refuge, forty eight cities were allocated to the Levites, including the cities of refuge.

It was both reasonable and logical that such an apportionment should be made at this time. By this means the Levites were placed equitably and proportionately among the various tribes.

Although they did not either control or dominate such areas, the Levites were allotted houses and pasture-land in these cities and their environs. The Levites were well placed to exercise considerable influence of a spiritual nature amongst the Israelites. In this respect they typify the immortal king-priests of the Age to Come, who will perform similar duties on a world-wide scale.

The men of Israel could freely enter any of these forty eight cities to become educated in the things of the Law, and to have matters judged according to the Law (Lev. 10:11; Deut. 24:8; 17:9).

In view of the typical significance of the role of the Levites as depicted in this chapter, the importance of Biblical numerical symbolism should not be overlooked.

As stated, the Levitical cities numbered forty eight. This number can be comprised of various combinations, all having scriptural significance.

For example, 4×12 . Four is the number which represents the multitudinous Christ-Body, whilst twelve is the number which stands for perfect government. Thus, in this combination of numbers there is typified the glorified host who, with Christ at their head, will constitute the perfect government of the Age to Come.

The number forty eight can also be produced with a combination of 6×8 . Six is the Biblical number to represent flesh; whilst eight is the number which typifies the cutting-off of flesh. This combination of numbers, therefore, represents those of Adamic nature who have submitted to the influence of God's word, enabling them thereby to "cut off" the evil of the flesh.

Another combination of numbers equalling the number forty eight is 2×24 . The Apocalypse describes all the redeemed as "four and twenty elders" (4:4); and "two" is the Biblical number to represent "difference". The scriptures indicate that the immortal inheritors of the Kingdom will be drawn from both Jewish and gentile sources — hence, the "difference" (Zech. 4:1-3, etc.).

It should thus be evident that the choice of forty eight Levitical cities was not without symbolical significance. Such a consequential number points forward to the time when a glorified multitude of king-priests, bearing all the attributes of divine nature, will be dispersed among the nations, supervising the spiritual education and development of the mortal populace during the one thousand years of the Kingdom's existence.

The "heads of the fathers of the Levites" in the form of an organised deputation were sent to Eleazar and Joshua, who were still at Shiloh. The "heads" of the other tribes were also called upon to be present.

The Levites stated their case. They reminded their high-ranking listeners that Yahweh had "commanded" certain requirements concerning the placement and welfare of the Levites after Israel's occupation of the Promised Land (Num. 35:1-8). In addition to the Levitical cities, the Levites were also to receive "adjoining pasture land" for their cattle (v. 2, J.B.).

As might be expected under the circumstances, the Levites' request brought forth a prompt response. There was immediate acquiescence on the part of all concerned.

Appropriately, the decision as to which cities should become Levitical cities was decided by "lot". The matter was therefore resolved according to the determination of the Hand of Providence.

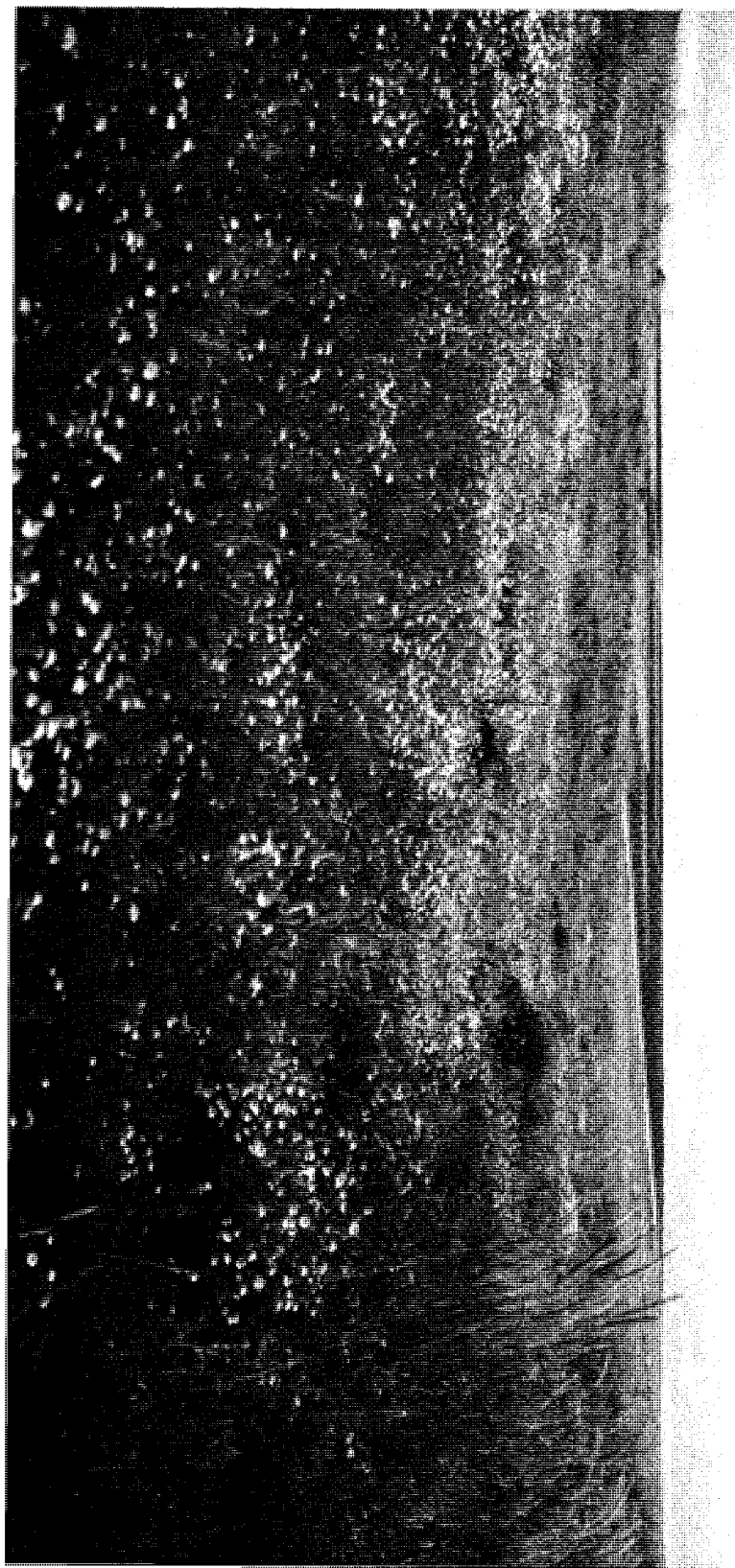
Forty Eight Cities Allotted to the Levites (Vv.4-42)

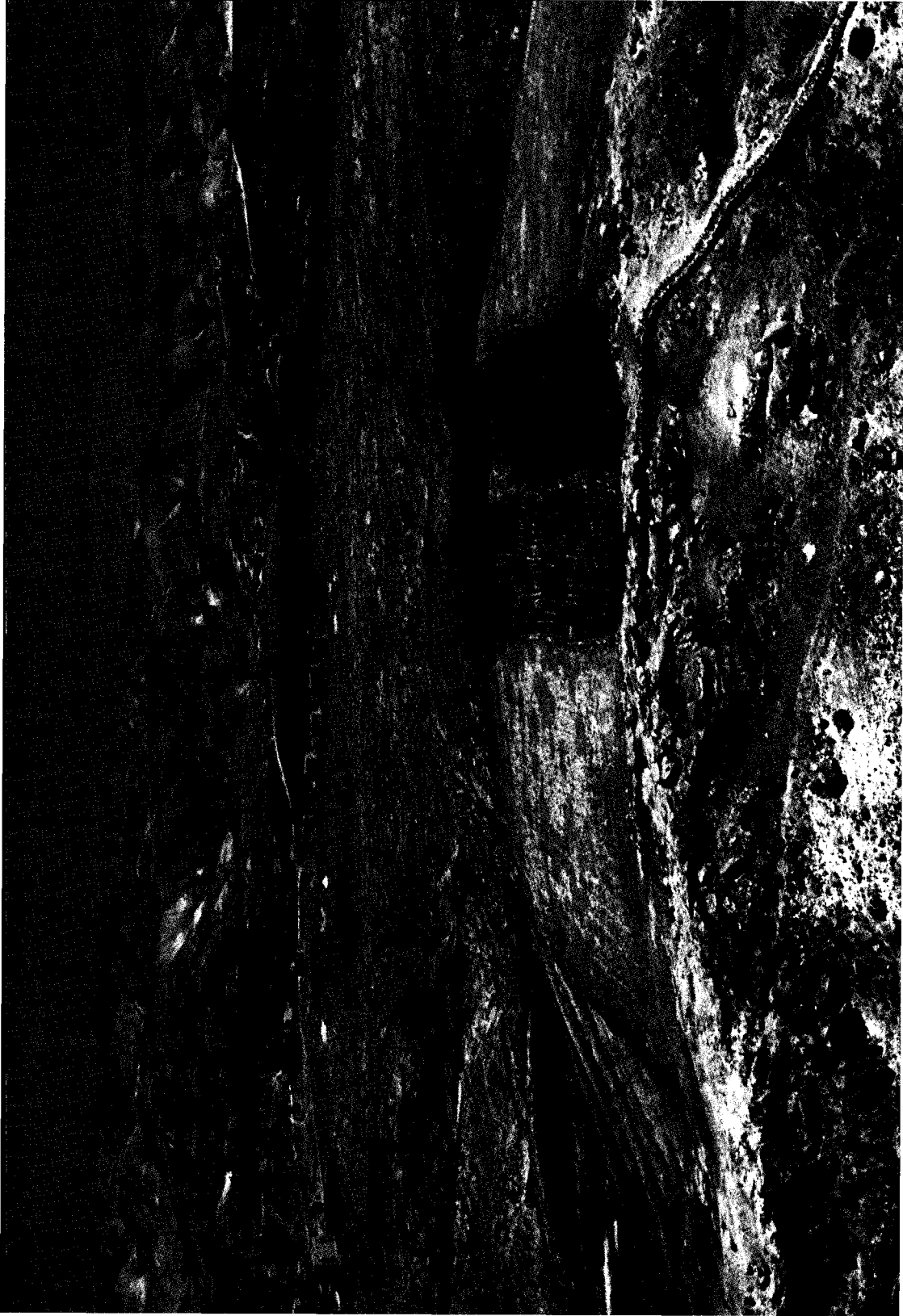
The Levitical cities were divided among the descendants of the three sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath and Merari. For, from these three men sprang the three-fold division of Levi's descendants (cp. Ex. 6:16-25).

The "first lot" was given to the Kohathites. This was not because they were the firstborn. On the contrary, they were descended from the second son of Levi (Gen. 46:11). However, it was through the line of the Kohathites that the priesthood was to continue. It was not without significance that all the cities allocated to the *priestly* branch of the family lay within the territories of Judah, Benjamin or Simeon, thus ensuring that they would remain in the south, and close to the city wherein the temple would eventually be built. Providence was thereby determining that, when division ultimately took place splitting the nation into two kingdoms, the priests would remain within the southern kingdom.

Overleaf: Left Hebron (cf. v.13)

Right Valley of Ajalon (cf. v.24)





In the verses which follow, Joshua meticulously recorded the names of the Levitical cities, and their respective divisions. Verses 9 to 19 list a total of thirteen cities allotted to the priestly Kohathites. The cities of the other Kohathites (who were not priests), totalling ten, are recorded in verses 20 to 26. The cities assigned to the Gershonites are listed in verses 27 to 33, the sum of which was thirteen. Merari's cities are given in verses 34 to 40, twelve in all. It will thus be seen that this section of Joshua's book shows that a total of 48 cities were carefully allocated to the three-fold descendant groups, whose common father was Levi.

Final Words of Exhortation (Vv. 43-45)

The details recorded in the chapter are brought towards a beautiful conclusion with impressive exhortatory words. "And Yahweh gave unto Israel **all the land** which **He** swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And **Yahweh** gave them rest round about. . ."

All the land which Yahweh had originally promised now lay within the reach of the tribes of Israel. Total possession of all that God had promised now depended upon the reaction of the tribes to that which Yahweh had provided for them. They were to continue the warfare of faith by going forward and fully seizing their inheritance. However, success or failure in this regard would depend upon the extent of dedication and faith manifested by the people.

Yahweh had done His part fully and faithfully. Now the people must wholeheartedly respond.

And has this not remained the unchanging principle of divine worship throughout the ages? Cain and Abel were required to offer a defined sacrifice before God. Abel responded; Cain refused to do so. Noah was called upon to separate himself from his contemporaries by proclaiming the way of deliverance, whilst at the same time warning of judgment to come. He rose to the occasion, whilst his fellows remained resolutely set in the way of evil, rejecting the message of God's word. Abraham was summoned by God to depart from Ur and go to a land which God would show him. He went out, "not knowing whither he went. . ." (Heb. 11:8). By contrast, even members of his own family remained unmoved by the divine invitation.

Such a catalogue of faithful men and women, contrasted with faithless ones, may be compiled from the Biblical record.

Yahweh provides the means by which men and women may gain an entrance into His Kingdom. But whether they finally attain to that glorious inheritance depends upon their response to the goodness and mercy of Almighty God. So it has ever been since the dawn of history.

The “rest” which God gave to the people of Israel was typical of the greater “rest” which the nation will experience under the reign of their Saviour and Messiah (cp. Heb. 4:8, where the Greek word is the same as occurs in the LXX of this passage. Possibly the writer to the Hebrews was referring directly to this verse in Joshua, v. 44).

The reticence displayed by so many of the Israelites in fulfilling God’s will in this matter remains inexcusable. Yahweh opened the way for them. Totally and unreservedly. “There stood not a man of all their enemies before them. . .” No man of Israel could ever suggest that Yahweh had failed them. Thus, as it has earlier been stated that some tribes refrained from “driving out” the Canaanites, whilst others “could not” drive them out, the entire blame lay with themselves. They proved deficient under trial because they lacked the faith, courage and determination to succeed in attaining the objectives which God had set before them.

The same weaknesses may become apparent in Yahweh’s servants in any generation, and in varying environmental situations. It is essential that the people of God be aware of these dangers, and refuse to allow themselves to either compromise on vital spiritual issues, or become diverted from the course which they should pursue unyieldingly.

As the word states, “there failed not ought of any good thing which Yahweh had spoken unto the house of Israel; **all** came to pass. . .”

The final statement in the chapter is deeply significant. The Hebrew is in the singular, and is better rendered “the whole came to pass. . .” (Roth.). This was precisely as Yahweh had promised when Joshua became elevated to the position of leader over God’s people (1:5-9). Concerning this period in history, the Psalmist wrote: “We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old. How **thou** didst drive out the heathen **with thy hand**, and plantest them; how **thou** didst afflict the people, and cast them out. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but **thy right hand** and **thine arm**, and the light of **thy** countenance, because **thou** hadst a favour unto them. . .” (44:1-3).

Throughout the book of Joshua, God has not merely spoken concerning His faithfulness: He has consistently proven His fidelity beyond even the slightest doubt.

In view of Yahweh’s proven faithfulness throughout the ages, His true servants will await, with absolute conviction, the fulfilment of the “exceeding great and precious promises” which remain to be consummated in all their fulness at some time in the future.

Summary of the Chapter

At the conclusion of this chapter a final lesson should be absorbed, based upon Yahweh's relationship to the tribe of Levi.

Levi received no inheritance in the land, in contrast to the other tribes. This highlights the spiritual ideal that true service to Yahweh must in no way be impeded by the seeking and achieving of temporal or materialistic aims or objectives. The Levites typified the true spiritual Israel of God — a term which may be used to identify all the Redeemed, whether of Jewish or gentile origin. In this respect it is noteworthy that the Levites were not physically separated from the rest of Israel; for, according to their cities, they were widely distributed among the various tribes. Similarly, Yahweh's true saints throughout the ages have had to live in the world whilst not being of the world. Concerning his disciples, the Lord prayed: "The world hath hated them, because they are not **out of** the world, even as I am not **out of** the world. . . ." To this statement he added a special plea to his Father: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. . . ." (John 17:14-15). The Levites were to be a separated people, in that their lives were devoted solely to the service of Yahweh; and as such, they were to be "blameless, harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom (they were to) shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life. . . ." (Phil. 2:15-16). Under these circumstances, they were to develop their own characters in harmony with the spirit of the Truth, whilst at the same time drawing others closer to God and setting a spiritual and moral example for others to emulate.

From these observations it will be seen that Yahweh so established the Levites among the tribes that the name "Levi" could be manifested in the fulness of its meaning. The name means "joining"; and it was God's purpose that this priestly tribe should not only act as His representatives to the people, but that the Levites should be employed in "joining" the nation as one: in unity of worship, walking in the way of the Truth, and dedicating their lives to Yahweh.

In all these respects, the Levites must be seen as typifying the true saints of God, both in their period of probation and when they become the immortalised priests of the Age to Come.

Whilst this twenty first chapter of Joshua gives a picture of the Levites labouring amongst the twelve tribes, the Reader should look beyond this. This chapter should be seen as typifying the work of the immortalised King-Priests in the Kingdom Age. In close proximity to

every settlement and village throughout the world, the glorified saints will move among the mortal populace, teaching them concerning those things which are divine, educating them in all things relative to human relationships; arbitrating in their differences. In other words, they will dispense divine wisdom and guidance, justice and mercy, for all the citizens of the Kingdom.

Such is the picture painted in the scriptures of Truth, concerning the Age of Messiah's reign. "Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment . . . And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever . . ." (Isa. 32:1, 17).

CHAPTER TWENTY TWO

The Three Eastern Tribes Sent To Their Inheritance (Vv. 1-6)

Before the death of Moses, the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh had favourably viewed the areas on the east of Jordan. Accordingly, they had requested that their tribal inheritances should be assigned them in the regions of their choice. Moses agreed to their proposal, conditional upon these three tribes agreeing to cross Jordan with the other tribes, to fight with their brethren on the west, in subduing the Canaanites. Having accepted these terms readily, and Yahweh having given their brethren rest in the land, the time had now come for the fighting men of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh to return to their respective inheritances (Num. 32, cp. Josh. 1: 12-15).

Joshua called ("summoned" — J.B.) the leaders of these tribes into his presence. This was the occasion for which these men had patiently waited for more than seven years.

The national leader addressed them with words of warm commendation. "Ye have kept all that Moses the servant of Yahweh commanded you, and have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you. Ye have not left your brethren these many days unto this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of Yahweh your God. . ." The J.B. renders portion of the above passage: "Despite the fact that the campaign has lasted such a very long time, you have never deserted your brothers; at every point you have obeyed the orders of Yahweh your God. . ." These unstinting words of approbation indicate not only that the men of these three tribes had exercised obedience to the commands of God, they had also manifested a wonderful spirit of true fellowship towards their brethren of the other tribes. During a long and arduous period, they had supported their brethren and had encouraged them by their own example of dedication to the cause.

For those who labour in the service of God, self-denial will inevitably bring its own reward. Christ made a special comment concerning the question of reward for those who sacrifice themselves for the benefit of their brethren: "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. . . And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his **reward**. . ." (Mat. 10:40, 42).

These men who now stood before Joshua, awaiting confirmation of their promised reward, had conducted themselves in a similar spirit to

that for which Paul commended the Philippians: "Let the lives you live be worthy of the gospel of the Christ, in order that, whether I come and see you or, being absent, only hear of you, I may know that you are standing fast, in one spirit and with one mind, fighting shoulder to shoulder for the faith of the gospel. Never for a moment quail before your antagonists. . ." (1:27-28, Wey.).

Soldiering is an arduous and demanding way of life; yet these men had continued to carry out their difficult and dangerous assignments faithfully. They typify the true spiritual Israelites, who will "soldier on" as "warriors" of the faith "patiently unto the end. . ." (2 Tim. 2:3-4; Mat. 24:13, Diag.).

The personal note introduced by Joshua reveals a great feeling of oneness and intimacy between Joshua and the men he led during those far-reaching major campaigns. He commended the men who stood before him, and those whom they represented, not only because of their loyal adherence to the terms which Moses had made with them, but also because they had "obeyed" the voice of Joshua himself. This means that they had wholeheartedly accepted Joshua as Moses' successor, and the authority which was associated with the office of national leader. All too easily they could have fretted to be made free from their obligation, which bound them to a hard and demanding way of life for so many years. But they had not done so. Even after the conclusion of the major campaigns they waited patiently for Joshua to release them, and to despatch them, with his blessing, to their promised inheritance.

The men of these three tribes had proved themselves outstanding examples in the areas of discipline, faithfulness, self-sacrifice and unreserved dedication to the cause of Yahweh. They had regarded their covenant with absolute integrity; they had shown consistent loyalty to their brethren of the other tribes; and they had honoured God's word by rendering obedience to His servants, Moses and Joshua.

Indeed, they had "kept the charge" to which they had committed themselves. Appropriately, this is a military term: "custody, guard" — and, by extension, "that which is observed, a law, a rite. . ." (Ges.). The terminology of this phrase appears to find its foundation in the book of Deuteronomy: "Therefore thou shalt love Yahweh thy God, and keep His charge, and His statutes, and His judgments, alway. . ." (11:1).

Joshua then reminded them that Yahweh had kept His word: "And now Yahweh your God hath given rest unto your brethren, as He promised them. . .".

It appears evident that the writer to the Hebrews had this passage in mind (ch. 4). However, there is a most intriguing aspect regarding the way in which the passage is used. In the LXX of Josh. 22:4, the translators have used the word **katepause**, meaning simply a rest, or place of rest. However, in Hebrews a different word has been used in several key passages. In Vv. 1, 3 (twice), 5, and 8 the writer has used a similar word, but with a subtle difference in meaning. The word used in those verses is **katapauoo**, which, whilst certainly alluding to the subject of "rest" implies a **final** and **lasting** rest. However, Joshua was not able to provide such a rest for the people of Israel; for, though a man of great faith and dedication, he was not the promised Messiah, nor was he the perfect sacrifice to take away the sins of the world.

Being aware of his limited mission in this regard, Joshua's final words to the three eastern-bound tribes were words of warning and exhortation. "But take **diligent heed** to do the commandment and the law. . ." This statement is taken from Deut. 4:9. However, the same word also occurs in Deut. 6:5, where it has been rendered as "might". The Hebrew word indicates strength, or force; it may also be associated with exertion, violence or haste. A highly expressive Hebrew word, it therefore has a strong relationship to the total effort and strength of dedication which God's saints must apply in striving to fulfil the will of Yahweh in their daily lives.

The verse (v. 5) contains a powerful exhortation. Joshua's obvious desire being to strengthen and encourage the men of these tribes as they took their departure from his presence. The key terms should be noted carefully: he counselled them to **love** Yahweh; **walk** in His ways; **keep** His commandments; **cleave** unto Him; and **serve** Him.

Additional to the references already made to the book of Deuteronomy, Joshua drew upon other Deuteronomic passages (see 10:12; 11:13, 22; 30:6, 16, 20, etc.).

Then, using the same words as occur in Gen. 2:24 in regard to the marriage state, he further exhorted the tribes to "cleave unto" Yahweh. This is an expression which speaks of the development of an intimate relationship between Yahweh and His people. This phrase has also been strongly implanted in the book of Deuteronomy (see 10:20; 11:22; 13:4; 30:20, etc.). It is the desire of Israel's God to be "married" to His people and to thereby become their "husband" (Jer. 3:14; Isa. 54:5).

This they were to do, serving God with "all" their "heart" and with "all" their "soul. . .". Again, the allusion to Deuteronomy is clear (6:5; 10:12; 11:1, 13; 30:6; etc., cp. Mat. 22:37). To the ancient

Hebrews, the “heart” represented the mental processes, and therefore the intellect; whilst the “soul” (life) signified the inner being, the true disposition of the individual. Joshua’s exhortation reminded the three tribes that a servant of Yahweh had to dedicate himself to his God, totally and absolutely. “Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times. . .” (Ps. 106:3).

Sharing The Spoils of War (Vv.7-8)

“So Joshua blessed them. . .”. A simple expression which conveys a great deal. Under such circumstances it signifies a warm sense of fellowship and mutual love. In like manner the Greater Joshua will “bless” those whom he will send into their eternal inheritance. Many will be sent to distant places, far and wide, to administer the Kingdom throughout the earth (Ps. 72:11).

In sending them away “unto their tents” (that is, to the places where they had left their women and children and brethren, on the other side of Jordan), Joshua saw that they received their fair share of the bounty. They divided “the spoil” of their “enemies”.

This is a type of the inheritance to be distributed among the immortalised saints. Spoils are divided after victorious warfare. “Therefore will I divide him (Christ) a portion with the great, **and he shall divide the spoil** with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death. . .” (Isa. 53:12).

The three tribes formally departed from Shiloh.

Eastern Tribes Build Altar By Jordan (Vv.9-10)

Curiosity may be aroused as to the reason for the inclusion of specific information concerning the place of their departure. Why Shiloh? Since it was the centre of worship for the Israelites, it is most probable that Joshua’s final exhortation to these three tribes was associated with a special religious ceremony, perhaps involving the offering of sacrifices at the Tabernacle.

Withdrawing towards the east, the three tribes came to Jordan. The river was to form the border between the tribes on the east and on the west.

There, as it might at first be found incredulous to believe, they “built” an “altar”.

Well aware that the centre of religious worship was at Shiloh where the Tabernacle had been erected, and that the only place where an

altar should be erected was at a "place" which Yahweh would choose (Deut. 12:5), this action, at first glance, appears beyond comprehension.

However, although their action in this matter was quite untenable, their objective and motive resulted from a high standard of brotherly goodwill. Ultimately they had to learn that their sincerity counted for nothing. God's servants have always to learn to do Godly things for Godly reasons.

What was the reasoning of the three tribes in this matter? They desired to erect an object of some permanence to symbolise the unity of the nation (Vv. 26-27). It was not their intention that their newly-built "altar" should be used for sacrificial purposes, thus competing with the divinely-ordained altar at Shiloh. Their motive was quite irreproachable, but in their zeal and enthusiasm, and possibly being carried away with emotion at this time, they failed to act according to the word of God (Ex. 20:24; Deut. 12:5, 11, 14, 18, 21, 26, etc.).

The result of their labours was "an altar of large dimensions" (Roth.), or, "an imposing altar of great size" (J.B.). Doubtless, the three tribes chose a prominent highly elevated site, so the structure could be seen from afar.

Reaction From Western Tribes (Vv. 11-12)

Word of that which had been done was quickly spread among the remaining tribes on the west of Jordan.

The western tribes were furious.

They were so angered at this apparent blatant wrong-doing on the part of the three eastern tribes that they were prepared to go to war over the matter.

They assembled their men at Shiloh, ready for action. All were quite united in their opposition to what had been done. Similarly, the Ecclesia of God, in every age, must share a common desire to see the Truth of God's word upheld without fear or favour, and without compromise. This necessitates not only sound knowledge and wisdom, but also the ability to see the issues clearly, and to make decisions accordingly.

It was to be expected that they would gather together at Shiloh. It had become the chief spiritual city of the Israelites, and therefore a rallying point for the nation, based upon mutual reverence for Yahweh and His Tabernacle.

As the western tribes saw it, their brethren who were to live on the

east of Jordan were guilty of a three-fold crime: Firstly, (they assumed) that in killing animals, the beasts would be taken to a strange altar rather than the Tabernacle at Shiloh; secondly, in the offering of sacrifices, the brethren on the east would be using for sacred purposes a site not either chosen or blessed by Yahweh; thirdly, the eastern brethren would have effectually set up a rival place of worship, thus bringing disunity to the nation, and sowing the seeds of deep animosity among the tribes (Lev. 17:3-4, 8-9; Deut. 12:20-25).

The Law decreed that the punishment for such large-scale apostasy should be death for those involved, and the destruction of all their property (Deut. 13:12-18).

This is why the western tribes were prepared to fight.

The western tribes were eager and zealous in this matter. They determined wholeheartedly to uphold the principles of the Truth. And these were most admirable characteristics. However, there remained a glaring paradox in regard to the dramatic unfolding of these events, which the western tribes should have considered with grave care. If there were any of the tribes who had provided ample evidence as to their loyalty, warm fellowship, self-sacrifice and dedication, they were the three tribes who had now departed eastward. How could they change so quickly? Why would they suddenly turn apostate?

The western tribes were prepared to act hastily, and with consequences which may well have proven irreparably disastrous for the nation. They had not, as yet, investigated the motives of their brethren east of Jordan. They may well have been stunned and bewildered; but the tribes on the west should have realised that unwise, precipitate action can develop into a major, uncontrollable catastrophe.

A Delegation Sent East (Vv.13-20)

However, with Yahweh's blessing upon them, sanity prevailed. Before sending an army to wipe out the tribes on the east, it was agreed that a special delegation be sent. This was a rational and spiritually-based decision, no doubt influenced strongly by the counsel of Eleazar and Joshua.

The deputation was headed by Phinehas, son of the high priest. This was most appropriate. It was the duty of the priest to interpret the Law and to deal with any breaches thereof. This man also had a reputation for being quite uncompromising in his attitude towards upholding divine principles. He had acted with great courage and zeal in bringing the Israelites to their senses in their involvement with the Moabites (Num. 25:7-8).

Phinehas was accompanied by "ten princes. . . one prince of an

ancestral house for each of the tribes of Israel. . .” (Roth.). These men would have been the heads of the tribes, thus giving the delegation a weighty and impressive appearance.

But why should the record carefully state that “ten” princes went with Phinehas? Obviously the son of the high priest would have represented the Levites; thus there appears to be one prince too many. This difficulty is removed when it is remembered that the tribe of Manasseh inherited areas on both sides of Jordan. Therefore the tenth prince represented those of Manasseh who were now allied with the western tribes because they had taken up their inheritance amongst them. It says a great deal for the men of Manasseh. Should it prove necessary, they were prepared to fight the brethren of their own tribe on the east.

If only all tribes had shown such unyielding zeal and dedication in destroying the Canaanites! This is one of the greatest ironies in this entire episode.

The deputation finally arrived in the presence of the three eastern tribes.

They plainly declared their case: “What trespass is this that ye have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following Yahweh, in that ye have builded you an altar, that ye might rebel this day against Yahweh?” Rotherham renders it more bluntly: “What is this act of treachery which ye have committed. . .” The Hebrew word rendered “trespass” in the A.V. is not the usual word associated with the “trespass offering”. The word more correctly describes faithless or deceitful action; thus Rotherham’s rendering should not be lightly disregarded. The phrasing is indicative of the fact that the delegation from the west did not mince matters. Whilst seeking an explanation, their opening remarks showed that they would not tolerate a repudiation of the Truth. To “turn away” and to “rebel” are descriptive terms to define any form of divine worship which is not in strict conformity with Yahweh’s revealed will.

Shocked and dismayed, the men of the eastern tribes listened in dumb silence to this stinging rebuke.

But the spokesman for the delegation — evidently Phinehas — had not finished. “Was the sin at Peor not enough, the sin from which we are not cleansed even now, in spite of the plague that ravaged the whole community of Yahweh?” (J.B.). The principle at stake — so far as the western tribes were concerned — was virtually identical to that which resulted in the dreadful events which had taken place at Peor. Both crimes were related to apostasy. And who was better equipped to speak of Peor than Phinehas, through whose courageous action the

implementation of divine judgment upon the entire nation had been arrested?

Phinehas endeavoured to point out to the eastern tribes that they had not learned the lesson of Baal-peor.

Then he added bleakly: "Tomorrow He (Yahweh) will be wroth. . .". This amounted to an open threat: The following day the combined army of the western tribes would march against their brethren on the east; but additional to this, there was the very real possibility of divine judgment falling upon the entire nation.

Phinehas had remembered the lesson which Israel had been taught concerning the events involving Achan (7:11).

In spite of their indictment upon their eastern-dwelling brethren, the tribes from the west were prepared, in the interests of national unity, to be conciliatory. "If the land of your possession be unclean, then pass ye over unto the land of the possession of Yahweh wherein Yahweh's tabernacle dwelleth, and take possession among us. . .".

This was a most generous offer. In using the words "pass ye over unto the land of the possession of Yahweh", the delegation implied that the three tribes on the east now considered themselves to be a separate people, residing in a different land with their own form of religious worship. Rather than see this appalling state of affairs divide the nation, those on the west of Jordan were prepared to make whatever sacrifices might be necessary to re-settle the eastern tribes with them on the west of Jordan. This would be a far better way out of the problem than having to fight the eastern tribes, and would ensure the unity and survival of the nation.

Further, reference to "the possession of Yahweh, wherein Yahweh's Tabernacle dwelleth" stressed the fact that there was only one place where God might be acceptably worshipped. This was an attempt to plead with the three tribes to once again respect sound principles of divine worship.

The spokesman for the delegation concluded his exhortatory appeal by reminding his hearers of the disaster which had come upon the nation through the sin of Achan. He drove the point home fully by stating: "and that man perished not alone in his iniquity. . .". These words referred not only to the members of Achan's family, whom he had involved in his evil actions, but to the thirty six innocent men who had died at Ai. The three tribes, it was argued, should consider their recent activities with deeper thought: it was not simply that they might bring judgment upon themselves; they were to realise that the entire nation might suffer.

Response From The Eastern Tribes (Vv. 21-29)

The men of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh had listened with horror to all that had been said.

Realising that they faced a momentous crisis which threatened the future stability of the entire nation, they implored their brethren from the west to understand that a grave misunderstanding had arisen.

They commenced their reply by appealing to Yahweh, that He might act as witness to the integrity of the three tribes. "Ail, Elohim, Yahweh", they said, in hushed tones of deep reverence. "Ail, Elohim, Yahweh", they repeated. (This is the order in which the words appear in the Hebrew text). Perhaps their minds dwelt upon the awesome words of Moses: "For Yahweh your Elohim is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great Ail, a mighty and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward. . ." (Deut. 10:17).

"**He** knoweth", they said solemnly, "and Israel, He shall know. . .".

It is notable that the three tribes replied in a manner which was not injurious to the spirit of the Truth. Their attitude was different from that shown by an earlier generation: "Who made **thee** a prince and a judge over us?" (Ex. 2:14).

Wounded feelings and offended pride may well have caused the eastern tribes to respond belligerently and arrogantly. But they did not do so. Respect for their western brethren and for their God caused them to speak cautiously.

Defending their integrity, they said: "If there has been defiance or treachery on our part against Yahweh, let Him not save us today; or if we have built an altar to turn away from Yahweh and offer holocaust and oblation and communion sacrifice on it, let Yahweh punish us for it!" (J.B.) Thus, respectfully, they protested their innocence — insofar as they understood their own motives.

Indeed, they had built an altar. And it must be conceded that rashness of thought and behaviour had been practised on both sides of the Jordan. If the tribes on the west were quickly incensed, to the point of immediately preparing an army for war, it must be admitted that the tribes on the east had acted with equal recklessness in assembling their altar without first consulting with their brethren on the west.

In attempting to serve the cause of Yahweh, it will almost certainly prove catastrophic if action is taken impetuously, or without due thought and consideration. "To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to Yahweh than sacrifice. . ." (Prov. 21:3). To correctly discern in such matters requires patience and mental application.

Returning to their inheritance on the east, the three tribes experienced a degree of fear, as they moved further away from their western brethren. They became apprehensive that, at some time in the future, the tribes west of Jordan might question the right of the eastern tribes to share equality with the other tribes. It was even feared that in some subsequent generation those on the west might use the natural barrier of the Jordan as a ground for disputation of all national rights on the part of the three tribes. Where, then, would be the unity of the nation? What would the future hold for the descendants of the three eastern tribes? Those on the west might say: "You have no share in Yahweh. . ." (J.B.).

It is doubtless commendable that the uncertainties felt and expressed by the three tribes resulted from a desire to preserve national unity, and an Israelitish heritage for their children. They expressed no wish for national prominence or power; nor was any reference made to wealth or materialistic advantages. All parents should remember that one of their most important priorities in life is to provide a sound spiritual heritage for their children. This is something which must be worked at constantly. Parents must continually advance in their own spiritual development. They must teach their children daily. And they must show by their own example that they value and prize the spiritual heritage which they desire to see passed on to their offspring.

However, it must be conceded that the doubts and fears expressed by the three tribes revealed a lamentable lack of faith. Had not Yahweh cared for them in the past? Had He not delivered them into their promised inheritance? Could He not be fully relied upon to remain faithful, so long as they manifested a similar disposition?

There appears to be little point in fretting over the welfare of future generations, if the present generation shows lack of faith in God's willingness and ability to care for His sons and daughters.

Such vital matters affecting the future must be understood and practised with correct balance.

Spokesmen for the three eastern tribes continued their explanation.

Feeling that the rights of their children to worship at the Tabernacle could be withdrawn by the other tribes (v. 25), they had built their "altar" as a "witness" between themselves and their brethren on the west of Jordan. They had no intention of erecting an altar to replace the one at Shiloh.

If challenged at some future time concerning their rights to worship at Shiloh, they could point to the "pattern of the altar of Yahweh" which they had erected as a "witness" for all twelve tribes. The word

rendered “pattern” (Heb. **tabniyth**) can simply have the meaning of “a structure” — but it is also expressive of the “**manner** of building, exemplar, model, image, likeness (of a thing)” (Ges.). The context in which the word is used appears to imply that the “altar” was made after the “pattern” of the altar in the court of the Tabernacle; except that the new altar was much larger: “an imposing altar of great size” (v.10 J.B.). The idea behind this was to remind **all** tribes of their rights and privileges and obligations in relation to worshipping at the true Tabernacle.

The spokesman for the three tribes concluded their explanation upon a note of positive and fervent loyalty. “Far be from us that we should rebel against Yahweh, or turn back today from following Yahweh, by building an altar for ascending-offering, or meal offering, or for sacrifice — other than the altar of Yahweh, which is before His habitation . . .” (Roth.).

With this declaration they provided a clear-cut unqualified answer in the hope that they would entirely dispel the anxieties which had been voiced by their brethren from the west.

The Dispute Concluded (Vv.30-34)

Phinehas and those with him had listened patiently to all that had been said in defence of the three tribes. And they were impressed. Undoubtedly they would also have been deeply relieved to learn that warfare against their brethren had been avoided. Thus, when they had “heard the words” which had been spoken, “it was well-pleasing in their eyes” (Roth.).

The matter was therefore settled to the complete satisfaction of all the tribes. No recriminations were laid. No bitterness remained. When Ecclesial investigations are carried out in this spirit, and when there is a basic desire to become reconciled upon sound principles of the Truth, there is every prospect of success. But when preconceived prejudices and bitterness are permitted to predominate — on the part of one or both parties — hopes of success will not be high. Both sides must manifest honesty and integrity, and there must be a mutual keenness to achieve oneness and harmony, without in any respect undermining or compromising divine Truth.

With a sense of solemn gratification, Phinehas pronounced: “Yahweh is among us . . .” He meant to convey to all present that God had overseen their endeavours to uphold His Truth, and had granted His blessing to lead the two factions to oneness of mind. Harmony had been restored, Phinehas believed, because of their mutual, respectful submission to the will of Yahweh.

But was such an assumption correct?

The chapter concludes with the words: "And the children of Reuben and the children of Gad called the altar Ed: for it shall be a witness between us that Yahweh is God. . .".

The word **Ed** occurs nearly seventy times, and has always been rendered as "witness" in the A.V. Strangely, the word does not occur in this final verse, other than where it has been rendered as "witness". It will be noted that the word **Ed** is in italics, and does not appear in the original text. Some versions render the phrase: "called the altar a witness" (see footnote, Roth.).

The obvious final point in this narrative, which cannot help but astound the Reader, is that the "altar" was permitted to remain where it was. There is not the slightest indication that it was destroyed.

Everything was done that should have been done, except this final action.

The very object which had nearly brought the tribes to a state of open warfare **became forgotten** as the cause of the trouble, once the subject itself had been resolved.

In other words, in their earnest zeal and enthusiasm to practise brotherly love, they forgot to obey Yahweh's commandments! This "altar" — although never intended for the offering of sacrifices — had no place or part in Israel. Yahweh had not been consulted in regard to its erection; and, in any event, the principle was very wrong. The basis for unity in the Truth cannot be founded upon man-made objects. Unity in the Truth comes about when there exists among brethren mutual sound knowledge of the truth and total respect for its wisdom and principles.

"Show me Thy ways, O Yahweh; teach me Thy paths. Lead me in Thy Truth, and teach me: for Thou art the God of my salvation; on Thee do I wait all the day. . . All the paths of Yahweh are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies. . ." (Ps. 25:4-5, 10).

PART THREE

Joshua's Final Speeches

Chapters 23 and 24

CHAPTER TWENTY THREE

Joshua's Impending Death And Its Special Significance (Vv.1-2)

Chapters twenty three and twenty four form the final part to the Book: Joshua's two final exhortations to the nation. "After these things" Joshua died (24:29).

This great man of faith and courage had served his God and his people well. Now, he was nearing the end of his days. He was well aware of this; and his great concern was that the nation might be encouraged to remain faithful to the terms of their covenant with Yahweh, so that God's blessing would continue to rest upon the nation.

In setting before his people this challenging and stimulating exhortation, Joshua informed his brethren that they must be on guard against three major dangers, any one, or all of which could result in the disintegration of the nation:

- **Turning aside from Yahweh's commandments** (v. 6);
- **Worshipping the gods of the gentiles** (v. 7);
- **Forgetting their need for separation from the gentile world** (v. 12).

Thus, "Joshua called for all Israel, and for their elders, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers. . ." This momentous gathering was called "a long time after Yahweh had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about. . .".

The record does not state where this great meeting took place. It may be assumed that Shiloh would have been the obvious place. But this is not necessarily so. As Joshua's last major meeting with the tribes took place at Shechem (24:1), it is readily acknowledged that this earlier gathering may certainly have been held at Shiloh. However, since the record does state that at this time Joshua had "waxed old" and was "stricken in age" (or, "far advanced in years" (J.B.), it is possible that the representatives were called before Joshua at his home in Timnath-serah (19:50)).

Aged and frail, Joshua's opening words were more dramatic than perhaps he himself realised. "I am old", he said, "and stricken in age. . .". Would his message have the full impact upon them, that he desired? In effect, Joshua was pointing out that his people would very shortly face the prospect of losing their leader. His presence, wisdom and guiding influence would be lost. Such a realisation should have jolted his hearers into an alert state of mind: they had to face the reality of the situation which confronted them. With the death of Joshua,

what would they do? A challenge of enormous magnitude faced them. Would Yahweh raise up another great leader to replace Joshua, as He had done prior to the death of Moses? Had such been the divine intention, surely they would have been informed accordingly. Would the remaining leaders continue to follow the wise direction which Joshua had given? Would they maintain the same standards which they had been taught by Joshua? Would they manifest sufficient spiritual stability that the people would follow them and respect their leadership?

These questions, and others like them, should have been dominating the minds of these men, as Joshua foretold his own impending death.

Ultimately, the book of Judges provides answers to what were, at this time, unanswered questions. "The people served Yahweh all the days of Joshua, **and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua**, who had seen all the great works of Yahweh, that He did for Israel. . . and there arose another generation after them **which knew not Yahweh**. . . and the children of Israel did evil in the sight of Yahweh, and served Baalim: and they forsook Yahweh Elohim of their fathers. . ." (Judges 2:7, 10-12).

Joshua's Powerful Exhortation (Vv.3-14)

Having warned the leaders of the nation that his death was near, he reminded them: "Ye have **seen** all that Yahweh your God hath done unto all these nations because of you; for Yahweh your God is He that fought for you. . .".

It was not necessary for Joshua to ask the leaders who were assembled before him to believe by faith all that God had done for the nation. They had seen with their own eyes. They had been eye-witnesses of Yahweh's mighty power unleashed against the Canaanites on behalf of His people.

These words therefore formed a formidable opening to his speech. His factual statement could not be gainsaid. In one succinct pronouncement he effectively unified his hearers, for none could contradict what he had said. All were immediately reminded of the abundant blessings which Yahweh had heaped upon the nation. Joshua, in his wisdom, desired to elicit in his audience an unequivocal response to the goodness and mercy of Yahweh, which they should acknowledge in all humility. In one brief utterance, Joshua had effectively reminded the leaders that their victories over the Canaanites had not been accomplished through the arm of flesh.

In itself, this opening statement provides an insight into the character of Joshua. He did not make mention of his own ac-

complishments. Although no doubt something of a national hero, Joshua was not interested in self-aggrandisement or elevation in the eyes of his people: He gave **all** the glory to Yahweh.

Joshua was a man of faith, not of the flesh.

However, certain Canaanitish nations still remained in the land. The tribes of Israel had still not destroyed them. This was a further reminder from Joshua that they had a solemn obligation in this regard (cp. 18:1-3).

"Behold," he said, "I have divided unto you by lot these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, even unto the great sea westward."

His usage of the personal pronoun "I" in this statement is set in a quite different context to the words expressed in v.3. There, giving all the glory to Yahweh, he had taken none for himself. But the subject of the following verse is somewhat dissimilar. Here, (v. 4) Joshua offers an emphatic, uncompromising definition of his own attitude in this matter. He had, in effect, set the entire nation a personal example. Joshua had insisted upon total, direct action against the Canaanites. He had not been prepared to make concessions; nor would he make truces with the enemy or accept an end to hostilities. He now virtually reminds them that had the entire nation followed Joshua's single-minded attitude the land would have now been totally subdued (cp. 6:21; 8:26; 10:28-40; 11:11, 14, 21, etc.).

Having stressed these points, Joshua again reminded the people that Yahweh was still willing and able to complete the task of subjugating the land. All that was lacking was faithfulness on the part of the nation. "Yahweh your God, **He will thrust them out** from before you", he told them unequivocally, quoting from Deut. 6:19 and 9:4 (see Roth.). The term is not a common Hebrew expression in scripture, but occurs in all three of these passages.

The ultimate outcome depended upon the attitude of the people.

"Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left." It is not difficult to imagine Joshua twice placing heavy emphasis on the word "ye. . .". Yahweh would certainly fight for them, but He required a faithful response from His people. And has it not ever been so?

The word "courageous" is the same as occurs in 1:6. However, in this context its origins lie in Deut. 31:6-7. It has been rendered "be very firm" (Roth.), thus indicating a total lack of compromise on the part of the people.

This disposition towards the Truth could only be developed if the nation was prepared to “observe and to do” all that had been written in the word of God (Roth.). With these words, Joshua reminded the people that the Truth must firstly be intellectually understood — correctly and maturely; it must be understood and believed, and then acted upon. The word of God cannot be tampered with. God is dishonoured if men sit in judgment upon His word, interpreting commandments to suit their own motives or ideals, reducing fundamental principles to matters of little import. The grave danger of teaching “for doctrines the commandments of men” is another pitfall which God’s people must avoid at all costs (Matt. 15:9, cp. Deut. 4:2).

There is a very simple (and yet difficult to perform) formula for faithfulness in the Truth: “To observe and to do all that is written in the book. . .”. Joshua had learned to live by this principle, and he was not calling upon his people to do anything that he had failed to do himself.

The observance of “all” the law necessitated total dedication to the word and service of Almighty God. Such an attitude of mind had provided the strength which Joshua had needed to sustain him during the course of a long and mostly difficult lifetime of service in the Truth. Now his appeal goes forth especially to those who will assume the responsibilities of leadership after his death, to uphold with the same unswerving loyalty the word of Yahweh.

They were to continue onward, refusing to become diverted from the path of the Truth. They should not turn aside either to the “right hand or to the left”. This is an expression taken from 1:7; but once again the origin of the phrase is to be found in the book of Deuteronomy (5:32).

Then followed a further warning concerning the danger of gentile influence: “Come not **among** 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 yourselves unto them. . .”.

God’s purpose is to “take **out**” of the nations “a people for His Name” (Acts 15:14; Isa. 43:7; Phil. 2:15; etc.). For this reason, Israel were to “come not among” the nations who knew not God. They were to remain completely separate.

Mere external separation was not the crux of the matter. Throughout the ages Yahweh’s people have had to maintain their distinctiveness, mentally and morally. “Be ye holy, for I am holy” was the guiding principle from Yahweh, established in the law and the prophets, and carried forward into the teaching of Christ and his apostles

(Lev. 11:44; cp. 1 Pet. 1:14-16; Neh. 9:2; Rom. 1:1; Matt. 5:20). Such a disposition must inevitably produce a form of physical, or external, separation: one which is based upon sound principles, a love of Yahweh and His Truth, and an earnest desire to fulfil His will to the honour and glory of His Name.

The answer to all the challenges which would face the nation from gentile sources was clearly set before them: "Cleave unto Yahweh your God. . .". Whilst the word rendered "cleave" is the same as that which appears in Gen. 2:24, it is clear that Joshua's words were quoted from Deut. 4:4; 10:20; 11:22; 13:4; 30:20. Yahweh desires the most intimate association possible, with His people; hence Moses' repetitive usage of the key word "cleave" from Gen. 2:24. The word represents warmth and oneness, spiritual union and unity of mind and purpose.

Joshua assured them that, should Israel continue to maintain such an attitude, Yahweh would never fail them. "One man of you shall chase a thousand: for Yahweh your God, **He** it is that fighteth for you, as He hath promised you. . ." (cp. Lev. 26:8; Deut. 32:30; 1:30; 3:22; 20:4). The people of Israel need not be concerned in regard to their chances of victory over the Canaanites. "Chance" did not enter into the matter, as Yahweh had given His word. The people had nothing to fear, but simply to go forward in faith.

"Take good heed therefore unto yourselves", continued Joshua, "that ye love Yahweh your God. . .".

Ah! If only the nation had continued to heed the counsel of this wise and Godly man! The first statement in this verse is taken from Deut. 4:9, 15, 23; 11:16; 12:30; the second from Deut. 6:5; 19:9; 30:6, 16, 20. This verse, in few words, highlights two aspects of life in the Truth. The first draws attention to the matter of individual responsibility to Yahweh. Christ used the same terminology: "Take heed to yourselves. . . lest . . . that day (of his second coming) come upon you unawares. . ." (Luke 21:34). Hence, Joshua addressed this personal message of warning to all assembled in his presence.

The key to their hope of future success lay in their relationship with their God. They were to "love Yahweh" their God. These words are taken from Deut. 6:5; 19:9; 30:6, 16, 20. When the ten commandments were given at Sinai, God emphasised the association He wished to enjoy with His people: He assured Israel that He would show "loving kindness unto thousands of generations of them who **love** me, and **keep** my commandments. . ." (Ex. 20:6, Roth.). Some are surprised to learn that the Law of Moses highlighted the fact that love rather than compulsion was to become the motive for giving obedience to God's commandments. Paul summarised the same message to the

Galatians: "In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by (lit., through) love. . .". Love comes from the heart, and is voluntary. It is the very opposite to coercion or force (Gal. 5:6).

To serve Yahweh merely out of a sense of duty is of little value. The only people who can serve God acceptably are those who have learned to love Him (cp. Hos. 11:1-4; Mal. 1:2; John 5:42; 1 Cor. 8:3).

Joshua then sounded a grave warning. "If ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you: know for a **certainty** that Yahweh your God will **no more** drive out any of these nations from before you. . .".

The phrase "go back" literally means "**turn back**" (see Roth., Young's Lit.). Thus, Joshua's caution was made clear: Under no circumstances were the people to "turn back" to the environment of the gentile world. They were not to entertain the philosophies, or forms of religious worship associated with gentiles. They could not make friendships, alliances, or marriages with them. Such were to be recognised as the enemies of Yahweh as well as representing a danger to Israel's survival.

The word rendered "cleave" is the same as that which occurs in v.8. Joshua pointed out that God's people could seek an intimate relationship with Yahweh, or with the world — but they could not expect to enjoy such a relationship with both. They must choose Yahweh, and give their loyalty to Him. Moses had told the people, as his own death drew near: "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore **choose life**, that both thou and thy seed may live. . . Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do all the words of this law. For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your **life**". . . (Deut. 30:19; 32:46-47).

Needless to say, as Joshua stresses here, marriage with the alien was categorically forbidden under the law. Such has been the case since the dawn of history (Gen. 6:1-3; Deut. 7:1-6; 1 Cor. 7:39, etc.).

Marriages made between Believers and unbelievers provide a most devastating ground for the breakdown of separation between those who are God's and those who are not. It is not difficult to understand why this principle has been rigidly maintained since its necessity became so glaringly apparent in the days of Noah.

What a fearful thing to "turn back" from the ways of Yahweh. For Israel, there would be no hope if they followed such a foolish course (Isa. 1:4; Ezek. 18:24). The influence of the gentiles, should Israel

“cleave” unto them, would become “a snare and a hook, and a goad in your sides, and thorns in your eyes. . .” (Roth.). Joshua used four dramatic similes: a spring net, a noose, a goad, and thorns. Joshua alludes to Num. 33:55. The threat was a very real one. The nations from whom Israel were to totally separate would become the peoples who would administer terrible judgments upon Israel, should they make the mistake of entering into unholy alliances with them (cp. Hos. 7:9; 8:7-8).

At this point in his address of warning and encouragement, Joshua returned to the theme of his opening remarks: “I am old and stricken in age. . .”. He now became more specific. “Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth. . .”. His own death was imminent, and it was important that there should remain no doubt upon this question in the minds of his hearers. Why? So that the heavy burden of responsibility which would now be transferred to their individual and collective shoulders should not leave them unprepared. It was vital that Joshua’s listeners should become fully aware of the dramatic changes which would take place, and how those changes should be met.

Although about to die, Joshua was a man who anticipated the coming of the Just One, who would raise him from the dead and reward him for his faithfulness. In his own mind, he felt at peace. He was ready for the Messianic kingdom.

It is characteristic of the man that, at the end of his life, he expresses no dissatisfaction at the harshness and hardness of the life he has lived. He expresses no regrets, no bitterness, no recriminations. He had devoted his life unstintingly to the service of his God and his people. Could any man of faith ask for more, from this present life? He recognised that it had been a humbling and rewarding privilege to have served as he had.

He was prepared to die as he had lived: rich in faith; leaving all his hopes and aspirations for the future in the hands of the Mighty God of Israel, in whom He had trusted for so long. And whose faithful servant he had been.

Yahweh’s Fidelity— Israel to be Compliant Or Perish (Vv.15-16)

Having told his hearers that his death was near at hand, he again reminded them of the faithfulness of Yahweh — a further evidence of the character of this great man of faith. “Ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which Yahweh your God spake concerning you: all are come to

pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.”

What an irresistible appeal! These men had been with Joshua during the wilderness wanderings; they had shared the trials and the triumphs; they had witnessed the awe-inspiring sight which resulted in the Israelites crossing Jordan. Together with Joshua, they had seen the hand of their God upon them; the way in which He had fought for them, giving them victory after victory as they stormed their way throughout the land, sweeping all gentile armies before them.

Here was a supplication which could hardly fail to arouse fervent dedication and faith within the hearts of Joshua's people. They stood silent and motionless, straining to hear his every word, deeply impressed not only by the power of his words but by the strength of his reasoning.

There remained to be delivered, in this speech, a final word of warning. Simply, Joshua reminded the people that, as Yahweh had blessed them, so He could as readily bring curses upon them. All would depend upon their attitude.

Final Admonition (Vv.15-16)

“As all good things are come upon you, which Yahweh your God promised you; so shall Yahweh bring upon you all evil things, until He have destroyed you from off this good land which Yahweh your God hath given you. When ye have transgressed the covenant of Yahweh your God, which He commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of Yahweh be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which He hath given unto you. . .”.

And there it was. Joshua concluded this discourse by drawing the attention of the people to the terms of the covenant under which they had relationship with Yahweh (Lev. 26: Deut. 28). Joshua's final words appear to be prophetic. The people remained faithful only during the generation which was contemporary with Joshua: “the elders that outlived Joshua” (Judges 1:7).

A generation later they had forgotten Joshua's words of warning. The stark admonition of v.15 was disregarded; and with what devastating accuracy was this prophecy fulfilled!

As God's promises of deliverance should be warmly embraced, so His warnings of punishment for the committing of evil should be just as highly respected.

Joshua warned the nation as to what they should anticipate “when” they had “transgressed”. This word (Heb. **abar**) conveys the idea of

“crossing over”. The significance of such a word, in this context, is quite startling. Abraham had become known as “the Hebrew” — a crosser-over — when he had turned his back upon the idolatrous darkness of Ur of the Chaldees. The spiritual implication here is clear. If the people of Israel were to depart from the way of the Truth, it would be tantamount to their reversal of the faithful action and dedication of Abraham. Symbolically, they would re-cross the Euphrates, thereby becoming, as this word implies, “crossers-over” — not as those who serve Yahweh, but as those who willingly return to the spiritual darkness and idolatry from which Abraham, the father of the nation, had departed in faithful obedience to Yahweh’s call.

In the event of such a fearful action taking place, the nation of Israel could only expect to “perish quickly”.

This is quoted from Deut. 11:17.

The word rendered “perish” is from the Hebrew, **abad**, which primarily means “to be lost, to lose one’s self, to wander away” (Strong, Ges.). When the meanings of the words “perish” and “transgressed” are used together, a vivid picture is portrayed of that which results when God’s servants depart from the way of the Truth. They “cross over” **back** into the world of gentile darkness, and in so doing they become lost, wandering aimlessly, without the guidance of the purity of God’s word.

How true is the proverb: “Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed; but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded. The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death. . .” (Prov. 13:13-14).

Yahweh’s people must learn to walk in harmony with their God, and to lean upon Him in all things. “Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, **if** thou continue in His goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. . .” (Rom. 11:22).

Thus the book of Joshua commences with Yahweh commissioning Joshua for the warfare of faith which lay before him, and it nears its conclusion with Joshua solemnly passing that commission on to those who would follow after him.

In essence, the exhortation contained in this second-last speech which Joshua made to the nation may be briefly summarised in retrospect. Having considered in some detail the address which Joshua delivered on this occasion, we may review his words from a purely positive standpoint.

Israel should:

1. Remain faithful and true to the teaching of God's word (v 6).
2. Appreciate the terrible effects of compromising the Truth (v 7).
3. Cleave unto Yahweh and continue to love Him, remaining separate from the world (v 8, 11, 12).

Yahweh would continue to fight for His people, after the death of Joshua. He would assure them of victory over their enemies, providing the people took courage, honoured God's word, obeyed His Law, separated from the gentiles, cleaving only unto Him (v 5, 8, 9, 10-14).

Either they would gain and maintain a continuing possession of the land, for themselves and succeeding generations; or they would be ejected from the land, incurring severe punishments for crimes of unfaithfulness and idolatry (Vv. 15-16).

The ultimate destiny of the nation depended upon only one thing: whether or not they would remain faithful to their God.

Finally in this chapter, there is the figure and character of Joshua himself. A towering giant of faith and spiritually-minded leadership, he was a living example of the things he preached. To his final days he remained an outstanding model of those qualities which go to make up a Godly man: faith, courage, obedience, determination, and whole-hearted dedication to the cause of his God and his people.

And in all this, he acknowledged the supreme need for total submission to the will of Yahweh, that He might be glorified in the work of His hands. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. . ." (2 Cor. 4:7).

CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR

All Tribes Summoned To Shechem (V.1)

Performing his last official act as leader over God's people, Joshua summoned all the appointed representatives of the tribes to gather before him at Shechem.

The importance and significance of Shechem has been considered earlier (see chapter 8). It is worthy of repetition to state here that the name signifies "the hinder part of both shoulder places, the part upon which a load was to be borne" — hence, "the burden-bearer" — a type of Christ. It was a city of refuge, and stood in the shadow of Mounts Ebal and Gerizim.

Why was Shechem chosen by Joshua for this final historical meeting between himself and his people? Because it was the site to which he had marched the nation for the most solemn ritual of renewing the covenant soon after their entrance into the land (8:30-35). Now, not long before his death, Joshua again assembled the nation at this place, that they might again renew the covenant.

It is not without significance to the modern-day Believer that the book of Joshua concludes by emphasising the need for repeated re-dedication to Yahweh.

In the present dispensation, all true Believers are required to present themselves before the Lord's table of remembrance each first day of the week. There, they assemble before their Heavenly Father and His Son. They gather together to be exhorted out of the word of God — as were these people; and to renew their covenant by partaking of bread and wine in memory of the death of their Lord. In all this, they are reminded of their deliverance from the darkness of spiritual Egypt; of passing through the waters (baptism), and of the blessings which Yahweh continues to provide, until finally He brings them into their inheritance.

Constant re-dedication to these principles and ideals is essential. Human nature is naturally prone to drift from the pathway of righteousness. Reverence for God's commandments, and obedience thereto must be continually brought to the mind of Christ's disciples. Unless Believers continue to consecrate and devote their lives submissively to Yahweh, their enthusiasm and zeal for the holy things of God will wane.

In the twenty third chapter Joshua warned against evil-doing and laxity, and impressed upon the people the need to maintain diligent faithfulness. Now, having prepared them with exhortation, and after

further exhorting them, he led them to a formal renewal of their covenant relationship with God.

This was certainly a more solemn and vital gathering than the one described in the twenty third chapter; although it is evident that the two gatherings were not unrelated: the former to prepare the people for the latter.

Here, at Shechem, the people would have been reminded of their earlier gathering at this place (8:30-35). But there was more for them to remember. It was at Shechem that Yahweh first spoke to Abram after he entered the land, and promised that his seed would inherit **this land** (Gen. 12:7). Here, Abraham had built an altar. Jacob, one of the patriarchs, had come to this place under most significant circumstances. Indeed, Shechem was rich in spiritual history for the people of Israel. Assembled as they now were, they were in an awesome place.

“They presented themselves before God”. This is an expression which would denote the presence of the Ark. And, if the Ark, why not the Tabernacle? It would have been a simple matter for the Levites to transport the Tabernacle, together with the various objects associated therewith, the ten miles from Shiloh. For such a solemn occasion, such action would not be at all unlikely.

The presence of the Tabernacle would add to the solemnity of the gathering.

In this final address to his people, Joshua emphasised that he was to convey to them a direct message from Yahweh: “Thus saith Yahweh Elohim of Israel . . .”

The words which were to follow were of divine inspiration; as, needless to say, is the entire scripture (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

Yahweh's Final Address Through Joshua (Vv. 2-13)

In addition to the direct usage of the Name and title — Yahweh Elohim — the last two words are of considerable significance: “of Israel . . .” These two words were intended to remind Joshua's listeners of the distinctive character and purpose of the One true God: He was **their** God, the God of Israel — in contrast to the multiplicity of gods associated with the gentiles, and the widespread practice of idolatry.

The entire hope of eternal redemption for the human race is an Israelitish one. God's plan for the deliverance of humanity from the

clutches of sin is “the hope of Israel”. This speaks of the “consolation” which is to come to “Israel”. Little wonder that Paul describes this as “the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers . . .”: the fathers of Israel. Inevitably, Paul speaks of those who are **without** hope as being “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise . . .” (Acts 28:20; Luke 2:25; Acts 26:6; Eph. 2:12).

It is necessary for all men and women, whether Jew or gentile, to become identified with these promises, if they desire a covenant-relationship with their Creator which can lead to their eternal salvation (2 Pet. 1:4).

In his opening remarks Joshua took the people of Israel back to the beginning of their nation. He emphasised the indisputable fact that, had it not been for the immeasurable mercy of Yahweh, they would not now exist as a nation.

“Your fathers”, he reminded them, “dwelt on the other side of the flood”; or, “Beyond the river dwelt your fathers . . .” (Roth.). The R.S.V. is more explicit: “Beyond the Euphrates . . .”

There, in Ur of the Chaldees, they lived in a state of spiritual ignorance, serving “**other** gods . . .” Such a concept of religion would be utterly abhorrent to a true Israelite. And justly so. However, Abraham, the man who was to become the father of the nation, knew no other way of life **until** God called to him. That was precisely Joshua’s point: Abraham turned his back upon such an apostate, pagan way of life. At the command of Almighty God he readily **separated** himself from his godless environment, and **dedicated** his life to the One True God. Here was a lesson for Israel to learn, that they might follow Abraham’s unswerving attitude. They were to learn the lesson of separation and dedication, and follow in the spiritual footsteps of their father, Abraham.

God intervened in the life of Abraham. How? “**I took** your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and **led** him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and **gave** him Isaac . . .”

Yahweh had done for Abraham what Abraham had been unable to do for himself. This is a principle of human redemption: Man cannot redeem himself. Only God is able to provide the means. Abraham was a man of faith. He had been willing to completely surrender his own will to the will and guiding hand of Yahweh. In other words, Abraham’s strength of faith was manifested in his surrender to God.

The process of salvation is entirely of Yahweh (Eph. 2:8). Man must absorb divine ideals and principles, and then give up his own self-will

that he might perform the will of God.

In the section, Vv3-13, Yahweh used the personal pronoun “I” no less than seventeen times, when repeatedly referring to the things which He had done for Israel.

Yahweh’s address to the nation, through the mouth of Joshua, now turned to the second and third generation following Abraham. Although continuing the same emphasis as in the previous verse, verse four establishes a significant principle: Jacob was separated from Esau. One was closely related to the unfolding of the divine purpose; the other was not. Israel were thus now being reminded of the principle of divine selection, to which they should have responded to Yahweh with an intense sense of humble gratitude.

The people were then reminded that their God had “plagued Egypt”. Could Israel have done this? Impossible. They were slaves without rights or privileges. Their deliverance from Egypt could only have been brought about by Yahweh. Again, their indebtedness to Him was illustrated — an indebtedness they could never repay.

The Egyptians “pursued after” the Israelites who came out of Egypt. What could the people of Israel do? Unarmed, no match for the trained charioteers of Egypt, mountains to the left and right and only the sea before them, they could not do anything. They were totally helpless in that horrifying hour of crisis. But Yahweh was not powerless. He had the might and the willingness to do for Israel that which they were unable to do for themselves. He acted. He “put darkness” between the Israelites and the Egyptians. And He “fought”.

During their passage through the wilderness, Israel came into conflict with the Amorites. What was the outcome? “I”, said Yahweh, “gave them into your hand . . .”

They were then reminded of Balak and Balaam, and their evil intentions towards Israel. The narrative states that Balak “arose and warred against Israel . . .” He did not literally do this; for, in fact, he greatly feared Israel. How, then, could it be said that he “warred” against Israel? In one sense only. He heeded the counsel of Balaam, which was, in effect: “Don’t fight them; corrupt them!” This Balak proceeded to do (Num. 25). In the eyes of Yahweh this action on Balak’s part was a form of warfare, because it was a warfare in which that which was at stake was the **faith** of the Israelites. Balak’s object, in any event, was the annihilation of Yahweh’s people; and with their destruction, the one true faith would be obliterated. This is the great objective of King-Sin. Do not yield “your members as **weapons** of un-

righteousness unto sin” was the uncompromising advice of Paul (Rom. 6:13 marg.).

Yahweh refused to be diverted by the wicked counsel of Balaam. He had determined that Israel should survive. He delivered them out of the hand of Balak, demonstrating that no power could frustrate His purpose.

Israel were to remember these things from generation to generation. They owed their survival to the goodness and mercy of their God. If this knowledge was constantly kept in mind, it would draw the people closer to God, and cause them to continually depend upon Him in all respects.

Bringing them up to date with more recent history, Yahweh told the people: “Ye went over Jordan . . .” What a tremendous display of divine might and power the Israelites had witnessed in the events which had brought them across the river. Again, reference is made to an accomplishment which they could never have engineered themselves. Paramount in this phrase is the allusion to the way in which Yahweh is able to work mightily for His people.

Having come over Jordan they “came unto Jericho . . .” And there “the lords (“men”, A.V.) of Jericho **fought**” against Israel (Roth.). The word rendered “men” is from the Hebrew **ba’al**, meaning “a master, hence a husband or an owner”. The word has been carefully chosen. Once again the might and pomp of flesh was raised in opposition to the purpose of Almighty God; and the flesh was defeated.

The word “fought” has been rendered from the same Hebrew word as “warred” in v.9. The lesson in the two verses is identical. No “lord” of Jericho actually “fought” or “warred” against Israel. It was therefore a spiritual warfare.

All seven Canaanitish tribes are then listed. Seven is the Biblical number to symbolise completeness. These godless gentiles typified the “complete” forces of the flesh raised in belligerent manifestation against the purpose and will of Yahweh.

All were defeated. What powers of flesh can stand against the mighty God of Israel?

Finally, Yahweh reminded His people concerning their inheritance in the land. Before the Israelites left Egypt, God had made it clear to them that He would achieve all things for them, providing they submitted to His will. Note, for example, the thrilling words of promise which occur in Ex. 6:1-8. In those eight verses, the personal pronoun “I” (Yahweh speaking of Himself) appears no less than eighteen times. **He** would do for Israel all the things **He** had promised. **He**

“gives” and shows grace, because He is a God of mercy and goodness. He does not act favourably towards a people because of any inalienable rights which mankind has; or because of any demands which may be made upon the Creator.

This verse (v 13) is quoted from Deut. 6:10-11. It is worthy of note that the context in Deuteronomy is immediately followed by a severe warning: “Then beware lest thou forget Yahweh, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage . . .” (Deut. 6:12). Thus, all men are dependent upon the “grace” of God to attain redemption and eternal salvation.

There is nothing that sinful man can **do** to **earn** blessings from God. By constantly reminding themselves of this fundamental principle concerning eternal salvation, God’s true saints are able to exercise a form of self-discipline which is based upon humble submission to the word and will of Yahweh.

“Beware lest thou forget Yahweh . . .”

Joshua’s Final, Personal Address and Challenge to the Nation (Vv.14-25).

At this point, having delivered a message to the people which he had received from Yahweh, Joshua now turned his personal attention towards the Israelites. He spoke to them in a most direct yet intimate way — his words unquestionably chosen under divine inspiration (2 Pet. 1:21).

His introductory remarks appear to be strongly based upon the context of Deut. 6, as referred to above. He took up the theme of the verses which followed those already quoted. His message in Vv 14-15 very closely followed the basic precepts set down in Deut. 6:11-14.

The most striking feature of his initial statement is that he offered his people no alternative to serving Yahweh. “Now, therefore”, he began, “fear Yahweh and serve Him . . .” The fundamental issue was presented clearly and concisely. Either the people were totally **for** Yahweh, or they were not for Him at all. Joshua offered no middle course. And of course there is none (Matt. 22:36-38).

From this point on, the word “serve” becomes the dominant word in the narrative. From v.14 to the end of the chapter it occurs in its various tenses no less than sixteen times. This provides a clear link with the book of Deuteronomy where the word was used by Moses thirty five times. The Hebrew word, **abad**, rendered “serve” primarily means “to labour, to work, to serve, to work for another, to impose labour or servitude”, etc. However, Joshua emphasised in this phrase

that God could only be acceptably served upon the basis of “fear” or “reverence” for Him. He was reminding the nation of the admonition which had come from Moses: “Thou shalt **fear** Yahweh thy God, and **serve** Him . . .” (Deut. 6:13).

Such a disposition was to be manifested “in sincerity and in truth . . .” Christ’s words to the woman of Samaria appear to be a direct reference to this passage (see John 4:23-24). The Hebrew word, **tamiym**, has been many times rendered as “perfect, upright, without blemish”. Gesenius gives its meaning as “perfect, complete, whole, entire, sound”. It will thus be readily observed that the word conveys a far wider range of meanings and applications than the single English word “sincere”. It describes the disposition of a person who is upright and blameless in his attitude before Yahweh, and whose life is dedicated fully towards walking before Him as a complete man or woman in the spirit of the Truth.

This word thus describes the grand ideal. It is representative of the Christ-character, towards which every son and daughter of the Living God must strive.

When the gentile nations are brought finally to their knees before the Son of God they will be counselled: “**Serve** Yahweh with **fear**, and rejoice with trembling . . .” (Ps. 2:11).

The word rendered “truth” (Heb., **emeth**) is also associated with the development of a Christ-like character. Whilst the word does mean “truth”, and has been so rendered many times, it also signifies “faithfulness, firmness, stability, trustworthiness” (Ges., Strong). These are all qualities of character which Yahweh wishes to see developed in His saints, as they endeavour to follow in the footsteps of their Lord and King.

Men and women who reveal the characteristics which are defined by these two remarkable words will have integrity in the eyes of Yahweh; and at the second coming of His Son He will reward them accordingly.

Joshua proceeded with his discourse.

He insisted that the children of Israel should “put away the gods” which their fathers “served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt . . .” They could not **serve** Yahweh and also **serve** other gods. “Ye **cannot serve** God and Mammon”, Christ admonished (Matt. 6:24). He did not suggest that such a course was inadvisable: He stated that it was impossible. God will not tolerate a double set of values on the part of those who claim to be His worshippers. Yahweh is a “jealous” God, and must be worshipped to the exclusion of all other gods. Idolatry, in its varying deceitful manifestations, has always pro-

ven to be one of the greatest dangers to face the people of God.

Thus, Joshua called upon the people to make a total commitment.

“But if you will not serve Yahweh, choose today whom you wish to serve, whether the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are now living . . .” (J.B.).

If they could see little point in worshipping Yahweh (“if it be a **vexation** in your eyes”, Roth.; the Hebrew word, **ra’a**, meaning, broadly, ‘to be good for nothing’ — that is, in this case, to see no point in giving their total loyalty to Yahweh) then they must choose from among the gods of the gentiles. The dominant proposition here was that a clear-cut choice, one way or another, had to be made.

It might be asked: why did not Joshua legislate to **force** the people to worship Yahweh, totally denouncing all gentile gods? The answer to this question is both compelling and humbling. It may be possible to “force” people to follow a form of worshipping Yahweh, but it is impossible to “force” men and women to worship Him “in sincerity and in truth . . .” If the worship of Yahweh is not the outworking of love and reverence for Him, it is not acceptable to Him.

Joshua appears to be alluding to Moses’ words, which he addressed to the people of Israel in the latter days of his life: “I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore **choose** life, that both thou and thy seed may live . . .” (Deut. 30:19).

In calling upon Israelites to give freely for the construction of the temple, David was calling upon them to manifest a similar spirit to that which Yahweh had required in relation to the building of the tabernacle in the wilderness: “Who then is **willing** to consecrate his services this day unto Yahweh?” (1 Chron. 29:5; cp. Ex. 25:1-2). Herein is revealed a disposition towards divine worship which is wholly approved by Yahweh.

The urgency of Joshua’s call should not be underestimated: “Choose you **this day** whom ye will serve . . .” The principle is clear. Decisions of this nature — involving eternal life or eternal death — are not to be trifled with. Divine matters are not to be treated lightly, or with off-handed indifference. In effect, Joshua was saying: “Choose **now**! You know the facts! In my final addresses to you I have set before you the basic issues. Do not delay your decision!” Language conveying a similar note of urgency is to be found in New Testament teaching. “Behold! **Now** is the accepted time! Behold! **Now** is the day of salvation!” (2 Cor. 6:2, quoted from the LXX of Isa. 49:8). Again: “Exhort one another daily, while it is called **today**! **Today**, if ye

will hear His voice . . ." (Heb. 3:13, 15).

What could the men of Israel say in favour of "the gods" which their fathers had "served, that were on the other side of the flood" (Euphrates)? These gods had been forsaken and repudiated by their father, Abraham! Would the Israelites return to worshipping such worthless deities? And what of the gods of Egypt and of the Amorites? These were the gods which had been powerless to help either the Egyptians or the Amorites! In opposition to the One True God, Yahweh, such gods of the gentiles had been proven useless.

Israel knew these truths, from their own experiences. How could they procrastinate in making a decision upon this matter?

Setting the example, as always, Joshua made his own loyalties clearly known: "As for me and my house, we will serve Yahweh . . ."

A sound example on the part of shepherds of Yahweh's flock should always prove an inspiration, and provide a stimulating incentive for God's people (1 Cor. 4:15-16; Phil. 3:17, etc.).

Joshua did not wait patiently upon the multitude's determination of the matter. Under no circumstances would he be swayed by a majority decision. He knew what was right; and he would resolutely uphold that which was correct and true. Earlier in his life, in the company of his friend Caleb, he had learned to follow unwaveringly such a course — even at the possible cost of his own life (Num. 14:6-10).

There is, however, something sublime and touching in this declaration which came forth from the lips of Joshua. At the end of his life he remained totally convinced that Yahweh could be completely trusted. He recognised a God of unswerving faithfulness Who could be fully relied upon to keep His word. This was the God of Joshua; and he would serve no other. "There is", Joshua declared, "no other course open to man, but to humbly worship Yahweh, in sincerity and in truth".

The phrase "me and my house" speaks of a family harmoniously united in regard to the truth concerning God and His word. There is no reference in scripture to Joshua as being married. From the genealogies recorded in Chronicles it would appear that Joshua was the last of his family lineage (1 Chron. 7:27). But his statement cannot be dismissed lightly; he may have been married. Certainly it appears he must have had relatives who would constitute the "house" he mentions. No doubt his servants also would have been embraced within this term.

In any event — remembering that he was a type of Christ — Joshua's "house" typified the "house" of God, "whose house are

we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end . . .” (Heb. 3:6).

Having listened respectfully to the message from Yahweh (Vv.1-13), and to the forthright and challenging words of Joshua, the people responded. They abhorred the thought of choosing any other god or gods other than Yahweh. However, it is evident that they failed to understand that idolatry is not merely the actual worship of strange gods. Stubbornness is idolatry, as is covetousness (1 Sam. 15:23; Colos. 3:5).

There can be little doubt concerning the sincerity of the people at this time; but sincerity is no substitute for walking faithfully in the way of the Truth, as Joshua was shortly to stress with sharp clarity.

In confessing their wholehearted allegiance to Yahweh, they declared that they understood the evidence of their own eyes, in beholding all that Yahweh had done for them.

Boldly, they proclaimed their fidelity: “We, too, will serve Yahweh, for He is our God . . .” (J.B.).

Words may flow very smoothly from the lips; but mere words, without appropriate actions and a matching disposition, are meaningless.

Joshua was quick to draw attention to this. He did not readily accept their protestations of undivided loyalty to Yahweh.

“Ye cannot serve Yahweh”, he countered. “He is an holy God; He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If ye forsake Yahweh, and serve strange gods, then He will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that He hath done you good.”

At this time the people were not lacking in sincerity. However, it was necessary that they should understand that the utterance of resolutions to uphold the Truth would not, in itself, transform men and women into acceptable worshippers of God. Throughout the ages, God’s true servants have found difficulty in establishing this principle deeply within the hearts of humankind. Paul summarised this long-standing national weakness: “For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God . . . But to Israel He saith, all day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people . . .” (Rom. 10:2-3, 21).

Being “a holy God”, Yahweh required the development of His own

characteristics in His people: “Be ye holy, for I am holy . . . As He which hath called you is holy, be ye yourselves **also** holy, in all manner of living . . . (Lev. 11:44; 1 Pet. 1:15, R.V.).

Constantly, the people of Israel failed to understand the significance of this requirement. They were content to boast: “We be Abraham’s seed” (John 8:33); and in this “knowledge” they remained largely satisfied.

What of those who claim to have found “the new and living way” and who maintain that they are true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ? Do they not face a similar danger? Is it not equally possible that they might take their “high calling” for granted, and lapse into a merely mechanical form of religious life wherein they feel they have an automatic status in the eyes of Almighty God? The lessons to be learned from Israel’s failures in this regard must not be lost on those who would follow Christ “in spirit and in Truth”.

Having, then, laid heavy emphasis upon the “holiness” of Yahweh, Joshua added: “He is a jealous God . . .” In the context of his remarks, this is an intriguing expression. So far as the gods of the gentiles were concerned, a man could serve any one or any number of them, without the attributes of “sincerity” and “truth” being required. Further, the exercise of these qualities would be meaningless and valueless, as such demands could not be made by a **lifeless** god, which would be completely unable to appreciate them. Only Yahweh, the One True, **Living** God could make such claims upon His worshippers, and actively show appreciation for the manifestation of such qualities!

This statement, however, has an even more direct meaning. Since He is “a **jealous** God” (a word in the Hebrew which means simply this, and no more; the only other occurrence of this word is to be found in Nah. 1:2) it is abundantly evident that He is not prepared to share with any other god or gods those things which are His due, alone. Again, there is a grave warning against the practising of all forms of idolatry.

If you dishonour Yahweh through idolatry, warned Joshua, “He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins . . .” The word rendered “transgressions” means “defection, rebellion”; hence, “a fault, a trespass” (Ges.).

“If you forsake Yahweh”, Joshua admonished, “and serve strange gods, then He will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that He hath done you good . . .”

This warning constituted a sober reminder that Yahweh does not

change (Mal. 3:6; Jas. 1:17). Because of the perversity of human nature, it is men who change. If they develop an attitude which causes them to turn away from God, they must expect to experience the consequences. As Yahweh can always be relied upon to be faithful, so His attitude towards those who claim to be His worshippers depends upon **their** attitude towards Him. Here, then, is a divine principle to be treated with gravity by God's people in every generation.

Once again the people had listened in silent respect to Joshua's response, even though he appeared to reject their earlier avowal of loyalty to Yahweh.

However, they would not be diverted from their stand.

They spoke again unto Joshua, "Nay; but we **will** serve Yahweh . . ."

Seeing that the people remained adamant, Joshua gave a final word of warning. Should they ultimately renounce their allegiance to Yahweh, they would receive the punishments due to them. The reality of this situation they readily accepted and acknowledged.

They were to remember that twice they had made a total commitment to Yahweh. They would do so a third time (v.24) — precisely as their forefathers had done at Sinai! (Ex. 24:7). How frighteningly that three-fold declaration of loyalty had ended in disaster for the generation which had come out of Egypt. Here, indeed, was a further warning for the Israelites of Joshua's generation, and beyond.

Joshua now revealed an astonishing anomaly in the behaviour of the people. "Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods **which are among you**, and incline your heart unto Yahweh Elohim of Israel . . ." Whilst the people twice affirmed most profusely that their loyalties lay with Yahweh, Joshua had been aware that they still harboured "strange gods" of the gentiles in their "midst"! (Roth.).

Their major problem had not been so much a lack of sincerity, but rather an inability to understand and discern what wholehearted dedication to Almighty God really required.

It is no wonder that Joshua displayed such a dubious attitude in response to their confessions of commitment to Yahweh.

From generation to generation, this weakness resulted in dreadful judgments being brought upon the children of Israel. "They (the Israelites) did not destroy the nations, concerning whom Yahweh commanded them: but were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them . . ." (Ps. 106:34-36).

The same potential disaster is an ever-present danger to those who would follow Christ. Hence, the clear warning from Paul: “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty . . .” (2 Cor. 6:17-18).

The people responded to Joshua’s unequivocal command. “Yahweh our God will we serve, and His voice will we obey . . .” The word “obey” is the same word as had been used by their forefathers at Sinai (Ex. 24:7). Mercifully, Joshua was not to know that this solemn promise was to be effectively invalidated by the next generation (Judg. 2:7-13). Such is the perversity of human nature. Disciples of Christ who are living at the epoch of Christ’s return, should absorb these lessons — because they deal with matters of life and death. Within the flesh “dwells no good thing” (Rom. 7:18). Therefore, total fealty to the word and will of Yahweh is the only means whereby the spirit of the Truth might be nurtured and sustained, and the battle against the weaknesses of human nature finally won.

With these principles in mind, Joshua “made a covenant with the people . . .” Nationally, this amounted to a renewal of the covenant, since they were already in covenant-relationship with their God. Similarly, those who are Christ’s true disciples repeatedly **renew** their covenant when they partake of bread and wine, on the first day of each week. In this way they remember the Lord’s death as the means by which they might attain to eternal redemption.

The word “made” has been rendered from the Hebrew, **karath**, which means “to cut”. Hence, literally, “Joshua **cut** a covenant with the people . . .” It is a most significant phrase. Sacrifices were offered, the blood being poured out as an offering to Yahweh (cp. Lev. 17:10-14). The sacrifices were then cut in pieces, the people solemnly passing between the pieces, proclaiming their covenant. This procedure is further emphasised in the word “covenant”. The Hebrew, **berith**, is “so called from the idea of cutting . . . since it was the custom in making solemn covenants to pass between the divided parts of the victims . . .” (Ges.).

This would have been a most serious and impressive ceremony. Those witnessing the unfolding events of this momentous day would not readily have forgotten the awesomeness of the occasion.

So Joshua “set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem”. A statute, in this context, is “that which is established or definite . . .” (Ges.). Thus it refers to the record of the details of the covenant which

Israel made at that time. The idea of the word rendered “ordinance” is more correctly related to “a verdict, favourable or unfavourable”. The usage of these two words provides an unmistakeable echo of Deut. 28 and Lev. 26. The terms of the original Sinaitic or Mosaic covenant were to the effect that if Israel honoured the terms of the covenant they would receive blessings from Yahweh; but any breach of the covenant, or repudiation thereof, could only result in divine judgment.

Solemnity of the Occasion Recorded (Vv.26-28)

Joshua now “wrote these words in the book of the law of God . . .” In regard to this somewhat curious statement, it may be profitably compared with Ex. 17:14, where the words “a book” should be more correctly rendered “**the** book. . .”. In passing, it is interesting to note that tablets found at Lachish and Tel-el-Amarna indicate that writing of a high order and intelligence was fully developed before the time of Moses. This is a matter of considerable importance. So-called “higher criticism” has held that the writing of the earliest Biblical books did not take place before the times of King Manasseh, or even as late as Ezra.

But the early books of the Bible clearly speak of a “book” which was regarded as “**the** book” of the words of God. There are four such clear references in the Book of Joshua alone: 1:8; 8:30-35; 23:6-7; 24:26. Joshua himself “wrote . . . in the book . . .” In doing so, he was not “adding” to the law of Moses, but continuing to “add” to the unfolding written revelation which God was providing for the benefit of His people.

Having, then, made this clear record concerning the renewal of Israel’s covenant with their God, Joshua “took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of Yahweh . . .”

A remarkable statement: these words are most revealing. The term “an oak” should be correctly rendered “**the** oak” (Roth., J.B., Young’s Lit., etc.).

Which oak? Obviously, it was an oak of particular significance.

When Abraham came into the land of promise, he came to “the oak” in “the place of Shechem” (Gen. 12:6, R.V.). There, he built his first altar to Yahweh after entering the land. At this same place Jacob later built an altar (Gen. 33:20).

It was “under **the** oak” which was by Shechem that Jacob “hid” all “strange gods” which had been accumulated by his people. These he insisted they abandon, the reason being that no idolatry should be in the land of promise.

How remarkable that there should now be a re-enactment of these incidents, at precisely the same place. Abraham, Jacob, Joshua: three great men of faith, all with unity of purpose and oneness of faith.

Having completed his writing, Joshua no doubt placed the documentation beneath the “great stone” which he placed “**in** the sanctuary” which had been established at that place (R.V. marg., J.B., Young’s Lit.); or, “in the holy place” (Roth. marg.). The word **miqdash** means “a holy thing, something consecrated, a sanctuary, a holy place” (Ges.). Joshua doubtless applied the word to the remnants of Abraham or Jacob’s altar, which were still in evidence at this time. Possibly, as subsequent generations of Israelites came to regard it as a holy place, they may have protected it with some form of simple yet effective covering.

Turning to the people with great solemnity, Joshua then pronounced: “This stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of Yahweh which He spake unto us: it shall therefore be a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God . . .”

This particular word for “stone” has been used in various ways in scripture, which point symbolically to the Lord Jesus Christ. It has been used for the “stones” which Jacob used for a pillow, and which on the following day he set up and anointed. This place he named Beth-el, meaning “House of Ail” (Gen. 28:11, 18). Jacob later used the word to describe “the shepherd, the ‘stone’ of Israel” (Gen. 49:24). Significantly, the word was used when Yahweh gave instructions concerning the making of an altar (Ex. 20:25). Isaiah used it to describe the “stone of stumbling” which would affect the house of Israel (Isa. 8:14, cp. 1 Pet. 2:8). The word was used by Isaiah again when he declared that Adonai Yahweh would “lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation . . .” (28:16). This is also the word used to describe “the stone which the builders refused . . .” (Ps. 118:22).

For Joshua to state that the “stone” had “heard” all the vital “words” which Yahweh had spoken, and to suggest that a “stone” could act as a “witness” would, in normal usage of language, be regarded as absurd. However, when it is appreciated that Joshua’s quite serious and earnest words are to be seen as symbolising the Lord Jesus Christ, “set up” in the midst of Israel, his words take on a deep and most significant meaning.

When Joshua stated that “it” (the stone) “hath heard all the words” he spoke as though he regarded the stone as a living creature. And this is undoubtedly his meaning. It is obvious that to Joshua, the

stone had become a symbol for the divine presence. That in due course the presence of Yahweh would be manifested through the Just One who had been promised to the nation, Joshua was in no doubt.

The moving ceremony was completed.

Joshua dismissed the people. The majority would never see him again during their mortal lives.

With what frame of mind did these men make their way back to their homes and communities: thoughtful, reminiscent, reflective, studiously-minded? As Joshua sent "every man unto his inheritance", there is typified a wonderful picture of the blessings which Christ will administer to the tribes of Israel, and to the surviving mortals at the commencement of the Kingdom Age. At that time all will have been brought into covenant-relationship with Yahweh through a sound knowledge of the Truth and a ready acknowledgement thereof (Gen. 12:3).

It is possible to ponder the symbolic implication found in this verse, and to reflect upon encouraging and stimulating aspects of life upon earth, after the Greater Joshua has dispensed his goodness and mercy amongst the nations.

Death And Burial of Joshua (Vv.29-30)

After these events "Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Yahweh, died, being an hundred and ten years old . . ."

Thus, in the meaning of these two names, the message given in the first verse of the book is re-stated at the conclusion: "Yahweh saves, continuing for posterity . . ."

A touching aspect of this verse is that Joshua is termed "the servant of Yahweh". Throughout the book, Moses had been described as the "servant of Yahweh" no less than seventeen times. However, it is only at the end of the book that Joshua, having proven himself faithful, and worthy of such a title, finally has it bestowed upon him. From the time he became the divinely-appointed leader of Israel, Joshua had striven to emulate the fine example which had been set before him by Moses. That he had done so to the satisfaction of Yahweh is established beyond all doubt by the usage of this term defining a faithful man of God. The Hebrew word rendered "servant" (**ebed**) signifies "one under bondage" or "a bond-slave". In this context it speaks of one whose life has been surrendered fully to Yahweh, denying self that only the will of God might be fulfilled. The word is descriptive of one whose life has been wholeheartedly dedicated to Yahweh.

"Joshua . . . the servant of Yahweh". This unstinting commenda-

tion was obviously added to the narrative by an inspired hand, other than that of Joshua, after his death.

“They buried him on the estate he had received for inheritance at Timnath-serah . . .” (J.B.). For details concerning the locality and significance of Joshua’s inheritance, see the final section of chapter nineteen.

Although Timnath-serah signifies “portion of abundance”, it was situated on a bleak and desolate part of the mountain of Gaash. The place could offer Joshua little in relation to this present mortal existence. It strongly illustrates that Joshua looked for nothing of real and lasting materialistic value in this present life: his hopes and aspirations were centred upon the “portion of abundance” which will be showered richly upon all who are found worthy of an eternal inheritance in the Kingdom which is yet to come.

His mortal life ended, Joshua, in company with all the faithful who have fallen asleep throughout the ages, rested in the sure and certain “hope of Israel” (Acts 28:20).

Israel Failed to Remain Consistent (V.31)

His influence upon the nation continued for some years after his death. “Israel served Yahweh all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua . . .” This provides an outstanding example of the power of personal influence (if exercised for good), and also the results which may positively accrue as the consequence of sound, dedicated leadership.

When sound leadership is no longer in evidence, and powerful examples for good no longer exist, disaster must surely follow. The prophet Micaiah spoke chillingly of the horrific outcome when the leaders of God’s people turn from the purity of His Truth. “I saw **all** Israel, scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd . . .” (1 Kings 22:17).

Peter’s exhortation to those given the responsibilities of leadership echoes down through the corridor of time: “The elders which are among you I exhort . . . Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock . . .” (1 Pet. 5:1-3).

Although spirit-gifted elders are no longer to be found among the ecclesiastical, the power and spirit of Peter’s inspired words remain.

The word rendered “feed” literally means “shepherd” (See Roth.). Bullinger’s comment upon the word is worthy of note: “To exercise

the whole office of a shepherd, which involves not merely the feeding on grass, but the entire leading, guiding, guarding, and folding of the flock . . .”

Joshua was a man of such disposition. His life had been devoted to serving his God and shepherding his people.

Significant Epilogue (Vv.32-33)

It is abundantly evident that Vv.29-33 form an epilogue to the chapter, dealing as they do with the death and burial of Joshua and matters subsequent to his death. However, the last two verses appear to be a special postscript, added, like the rest of the epilogue, by an unnamed inspired writer.

The last two verses of this Book contain a most appropriate message to draw the narrative to a fitting conclusion.

“And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground (‘in the portion of the field’, Roth.) which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor . . .”

With the performance of this action the return from Egypt was completed, totally and absolutely.

The nation’s three great patriarchs now rested in peace. Asleep in the one true Faith, they awaited the coming of the Just One who would raise them from the dead to life eternal.

But what of the nation in the days following the death of Joshua? They were to concentrate their spiritual aims upon the wonderful examples of faith which had been manifested by the fathers of the nation: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The people of Israel were to endeavour to walk before God as had the great patriarchs who had founded the nation under Yahweh’s guiding hand.

Subsequent to the demise of Joshua, “Eleazar died”. It is significant that this information should be included among the final words of the Book.

The Book of Deuteronomy concluded with the death of Moses; and therefore, in a figure, the Mosaic Law died also — a law which could not bring salvation because of the weakness of the flesh. Now, at the conclusion of the Book of Joshua, the student of scripture is faced with the death of the high priest. His death was a remarkable type of the death of Christ, the great High Priest who bore the name of Joshua (Yahoshua), through whom “Yahweh saves . . .” It is through the sacrificial death of the Greater Joshua that the true Israel of God may gain an entrance into their eternal inheritance. The

significance of this is sublime, profound beyond measure.

For all this, the closing words of the Book appear to be an anomaly. Whereas the book of Joshua had commenced upon a note of positive encouragement, it concludes with the emphasis laid upon three graves!

In view of all that had been accomplished during Joshua's ministry, why should the Book conclude upon such a sobering note?

Surely it is to highlight the fact that God's people can have "no confidence in the flesh" but only in Yahweh; for "Yahweh saves". Such a message burned brightly within the hearts of the three men whose graves are mentioned in the closing verses of the Book. Although recognising that by nature they were flesh, all three held a hope. That hope was the expectation of renewed life, for all eternity, when Israel's Saviour comes to reward his faithful servants.

The final message of the book shines forth in the meaning of the names of the three men who now rested from their labours. Joshua, Joseph and Eleazar, whose deaths and burials are mentioned in that order, provide all sons and daughters of Yahweh with a message to gladden and cheer them, on their often difficult pathway towards the kingdom: "Yahweh saves, adding (unto Himself all whom) **God** hath helped . . ."

The sentence formed by the meaning of the names of these three dead men provides an apt summary of the message of Joshua's Book, from beginning to end.

These three men had been living examples of the word of God manifested in the flesh, producing in man the type of character which is well-pleasing to Almighty God.

Joshua is dead; but his name lives on in the inspired Book which bears his name. More importantly, his name continues because his fine example of faithfulness and wholehearted dedication have been safely recorded within the oracles of God.

A true warrior of the faith, he rests from his labours awaiting the time when he shall be called forth from the dust of the earth to receive from his Lord and King a reward befitting such a man, who has been described as "the servant of Yahweh".

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us . . . **Thou** art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created . . ." (2 Cor. 4:7; Rev. 4:11).

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