

A Practical Study of JOSHUA

“The Path of Obedience Leads to Victory”

Study Number Twenty-Four – Joshua 24:1-33

There’s a book on leadership called *Excellence in Leadership* by John White. He’s written a lot of great books and this one is a great one on Nehemiah. He says this:

(Excellence in Leadership by John White)

Nehemiah was human. We need not speculate on his weaknesses for we have our own. Rather we must be grateful for what we have learned from him. The fact that he was shaped from ordinary clay to become the leader he was should surely encourage us.

He has shown us the worthwhileness of waiting on God in prayer and that all real planning begins in God’s presence. His example has made it clear that true leadership must be consistent with an ongoing servanthood. We have seen that his concern for God’s priorities and for the people of Jerusalem determined his leadership style. He taught us the value of keeping ultimate goals always in mind and rebuked us with his attitude to money. We have watched him move from stress to stress and from strength to strength as he walks through the doors of fear to ultimate triumph.

And finally we have seen that he continued to run as well in the closing laps of the race as he had in the opening. The

same faith and obedience that led him to take huge risks in the presence of King Artaxerxes continued to motivate him toward the close of his life.

It is time now for us to bid him farewell. We may not play so important a role in history as he. But we can run as well as he did. It is imperative that we, like Paul in 2 Timothy 4:7, be able to say one day, “I have fought the good fight, *I have finished the race.*”

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There were some references in Hebrews 11—that great Hall of Faith—about Joshua’s time, but we didn’t find Joshua. Listen to these verses:

Hebrews 11:30, 31

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been encircled for seven days. By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.

Now Joshua’s name is not mentioned, but servants really don’t care because they’re in the business of glorifying somebody else and so it doesn’t make any difference to Joshua. Some of the major events of his life certainly are recorded there, but his name does not appear.

Now as we come to the end of the book of Joshua, let’s be reminded in brief survey form of where we’ve been.

In the first five chapters—THE INVASION OF THE LAND.

Chapter 1, Joshua's commissioned to take Moses' place.

Chapter 2, Rahab meets the two spies who are sent by Joshua to spy out Jericho.

Chapter 3, they cross the river.

Chapter 4, they set up the memorials—one in the river and one at Gilgal.

Chapter 5, we have the cleansing of the people in anticipation of going now into conquest. They reinstate the right of circumcision, which is the mark of the Abrahamic covenant, and they celebrate the Passover for the first time in many, many years.

And then there is the visit from the angel of the Lord of hosts before the battles take place.

Then when we get to part 2 of the book—THE SUBJECTION OF THE LAND.

And that involves seven years. It's literally a Vietnam conflict. In those seven years:

In chapter 6 we have the battle of Jericho.

In chapter 7 we have the defeat at Ai because of the sin of

Achan.

Chapter 8, the victory at Ai.

Chapter 9, the treaty with the Gibeonites.

Chapter 10, they flow south in the southern campaign.

Chapter 11, they come back north.

And then in chapter 12 we have the Baskin Robbins' list of thirty-one kinds that lost their lives in the battle of the entire period of subjection.

When we get to chapter 13, then we come to THE DIVISION OF THE LAND. That's where we've been focusing most of the time in this study.

In chapter 13 it's the two and a half tribes that settle on the east side of the river.

In chapter 14, Caleb gets his.

In chapter 15, the tribe of Judah gets theirs.

In chapter 16, the tribe of Ephriam.

And in chapter 17, Manasseh.

Then there is a change. They move from Gilgal up to Shiloh.

And in chapter 18, Benjamin gets his.

And in chapter 19, the other six tribes plus Joshua gets theirs.

In chapter 20, the six cities of refuge are outlined—and we’ve studied those together.

In chapter 21 the Levitical cities.

And in chapter 22, we talked about that dangerous situation that arose when they built that altar of witness.

In chapter 23 and 24 we have two messages by Joshua.

In chapter 23 his focus is upon SEPARATION.

In chapter 24 it’s on SERVICE.

Now let’s just pretend that they’ve lived there now in the land for 20 years. Okay? And we have a handle on the situation.

These people are so excited about the fact that they’re in the land that they’ve forgotten to do what they’re supposed to do. After they got their inheritance, they were supposed to drive out the rest of the enemy. And they’ve been so excited about enjoying the vineyards and everything that’s there in the land, they’ve forgotten to do what they need to do. And so a lot of these tribes have not done that.

And so Joshua's heart-cry in chapter 23 is "Don't join with these people! Don't intermarry with them! Don't associate with their gods!" And so his whole plea is separation.

And now when he comes to his final message he is going to talk primarily on SERVICE. And if there was ever a man that should lead a summit on service, it ought to be the greatest servant—Joshua himself. What a servant he has been.

Now let's go over a little outline to the passage so it'll be easy for us to get into it. We call it THE SHECHEM SUMMIT ON SERVICE—just to give us a title for it.

It happens at Shechem. It's a summit of the nation coming together and the subject is service.

Point #1—we have THE GATHERING in verse 1.

Point #2—THE GENEROSITY in verses 2-13.

Point #3—THE GRATITUDE—verses 14-24.

Point #4—THE GUARANTEE—verses 25-27.

Point #5—THE GRADUATION—verses 28-33.

Now as Joshua then takes over he's going to be giving this magnificent address. And what a swan song it is.

Let's get to THE GATHERING before us in verse 1.

v. 1 Then Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem. He summoned the elders, leaders, judges and officials of Israel, and they presented themselves before God.

“Then Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem. He summoned the elders, leaders, judges and officials of Israel, and they presented themselves before God.”

This man has had a rough life, if we want to get a handle on it. He’s lived 110 years and he’s 110 years old as he’s speaking.

He’s lived 40 years in slavery in Egypt, he’s lived 40 years in the wilderness wandering around with the generation in unbelief. And now 30 years have transpired since he’s taken the mantle from Moses and led the people into the land, and all of these things that have transpired since that time.

So as we come to this, he’s 110 and he’s a man who’s really had a tough, tough life when we just look at it on the surface.

Now the thing that comes to mind is why did he choose Shechem for this meeting?

It is believed that he probably gave the address in chapter 23 at Shiloh, which is “the place of the tent of the meeting.” Now he moves to Shechem. Why?

Timnath-Serah, where he lives, is only 19 miles away from Shechem. Shiloh is 11 miles away from Timnath-Serah where he lives. And Shechem is about 10 miles north of Shiloh.

Why doesn't he choose for this meeting to be at Shiloh where the Tabernacle and the Tent of Meeting is located?

There's just not any happenstance about when we schedule a meeting where we're going to have it. And they've chosen to have it at Shechem.

Now we already know about Shechem. It is one of the cities of Refuge. It was a Levitical city. It means "shoulder." It's the "place of burdens and blows." And this is the city that's chosen now for this.

Now there are four passages of scripture where Shechem occurs that would give us some kind of thinking and the mentality of General Joshua as he chooses this city for his final message to the people.

Number one, very interestingly, Abraham was in Shechem when he received the message from the Lord that says, "To you and your offspring I will give this land." (see Genesis 17:8) So that's way back when it all began. And bowing out, it would be nice to go back to that place of the promise to wrap it up with the people.

Secondly, in Genesis 35 there is a very important thing that happens for Jacob as he's taking his family to go up to Bethel

to meet God. And Jacob says, “Bring your gods to me. We’re going to cleanse ourselves and go have a meeting with the Lord.” And that happens at Shechem.

Third, in Joshua 8, after they have victory at Ai, Joshua takes everybody to Shechem.

Now in Shechem we have Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. And he got all the people down in the middle and there were the blessings and the curses in typical fashion, as the Law was read and recorded there at Shechem. And of course, Joshua 24—this passage right here—makes Shechem the most significant because Joshua is now giving his farewell address.

If we were to summarize all those things about what happens at Shechem, we could say:

Shechem is a place for RENUNCIATION and DECISION.

And we have come to that hour. They need to get rid of some things in their lives and they need to make a decision—and this is the perfect place.

Now let’s read Genesis 35 because Genesis 35 must be in Joshua’s thinking and it’ll color our thinking as we listen to the speech that he’s getting ready to give.

Genesis 35:1-4

Then God said to Jacob, “Go up to Bethel and settle there, and

build an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau.”

So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, “Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you, and purify yourselves and change your clothes. Then come, let us go up to Bethel, where I will build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone.” So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had and the rings in their ears, and Jacob buried them under the oak at Shechem.

Okay, now just put that on the back burner and keep it in mind because some of the statements that are made by Joshua now have reference back to what took place at this time.

Now that’s THE GATHERING. Notice we have leaders, we have judges and we have elders. They have formed their city governments. They now are organized nationally and they’ve had 20 years to do it and they’ve pretty well gotten themselves settled in.

This is THE GATHERING—the summit at Shechem. The subject is SERVICE.

Now the first thing he does is he received a message from the Lord for the people. And we’ve called this:

THE GENEROSITY.

Now the reason we have said that is not just to stay with the

G's. If we want to go with GRACE that would be just as good. This is God communicating with them how generous and gracious He's been to them through all of their history.

Listen, if we want to delight the heart of God we just go home and sing "Count your many blessings, name them one by one" and then start naming a few of them.

It delights God for us to remember what He's done for us. We never can get over Jesus in the Upper Room breaking the bread and handing them the cup and saying, "This do in remembrance of Me." (see Luke 22:19)

And so it's fitting that as the Lord has a message for the people in Joshua's demise, that message would have to do with God's generosity to the nation. And he goes right back just like Stephen did in Acts 7 to Abraham. He starts right in with that and walks through this.

v. 2 Joshua said to all the people, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'Long ago your forefathers, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the River and worshiped other gods.'

"Joshua said to all the people, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'Long ago your forefathers, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the River and worshiped other gods.'"

He starts way back there at the very beginning.

v. 3 But I took your father Abraham from the land beyond the River and led him throughout Canaan and gave him many descendants. I gave him Isaac,

“But I took your father Abraham from the land beyond the River and I led him throughout Canaan and I gave him many descendants. I gave him Isaac,”

There is absolutely nothing negative in this message from the Lord.

Now for some reason right now we are saturated with the negative. We’re getting it from the press, we’re getting it from our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ. We are just so down it’s hard to be up. And there are so many exciting, positive things to talk about.

If it’s negative and it’s crummy and it’s trashy, it’s from the evil one. If it’s up and it’s positive and it’s exciting, it’s from the Lord. So we need to get our eyes on him and off of all this stuff. It just seems like we have to watch the tube to see what other exciting developments are in the trash instead of getting excited about the Lord.

And here is a message from the Lord. The Lord doesn’t say one thing about the trash. Okay?

He says, “I gave him Isaac.” He doesn’t say anything about

Sarah getting impatient at about year ten and sending Hagar in there and getting Ishmael into the deal. He doesn't even mention that. Just block it out.

Someone might be living in horrendous guilt or something happened in our life 30 years ago, and we can't forgive ourselves and God has already forgiven us. And when God forgives, He loves us unconditionally, He forgot it. He doesn't even remember it and it doesn't even come out in the record.

All the way through here it's going to be the same song about the sixth verse when we get done here because of the stuff that he left out. Just look at it. It is all beautifully positive.

v. 4 and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. I assigned the hill country of Seir to Esau, but Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt.

“and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. I assigned the mountains of Seir to Esau, but Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt.”

Well he leaves out that whole mess in Jacob's life about Rachel and Leah and all the babies that were born, and the selling of the birthright and the getting of the blessing by deceiving Isaac. Just leaves all that out of there.

v. 5 “Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I afflicted the Egyptians by what I did there, and I brought you out.

“Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I afflicted the Egyptians by what I did there, and I brought you out.”

v. 6 When I brought your fathers out of Egypt, you came to the sea, and the Egyptians pursued them with chariots and horsemen as far as the Red Sea.

“When I brought your fathers out of Egypt, you came to the sea, and the Egyptians pursued them with chariots and horsemen as far as the Red Sea.”

v. 7 But they cried to the Lord for help, and he put darkness between you and the Egyptians; he brought the sea over them and covered them. You saw with your own eyes what I did to the Egyptians. Then you lived in the desert for a long time.

“But they cried to the Lord for help, and he put darkness between you and the Egyptians; he brought the sea over them and covered them. You saw with your own eyes what I did to the Egyptians.”

Look at this next statement:

“Then you lived in the desert for a long time.”

Isn't that great? That's just so cool. We just can't believe how positive God is about it.

We know what happened up there. They formed a committee, went in there and nobody wanted to go in. So God says, “Alright, this generation isn’t going to go in” in judgment. So the Lord just says it, “I put you out there in the desert. You lived out there for a long time. You had to learn your lesson out there.” He just makes it so positive and firm and so beautiful.

v. 8 “I brought you to the land of the Amorites who lived east of the Jordan. They fought against you, but I gave them into your hands. I destroyed them from before you, and you took possession of their land.

““I brought you to the land of the Amorites who lived east of the Jordan.”

Now we’re getting into the book of Joshua.

“They fought against you, but I gave them into your hands. I destroyed them from before you, and you took possession of their land.”

See he doesn’t talk about two and a half tribes that decided to settle over there on the east side. He doesn’t say anything about that.

v. 9 When Balak son of Zippor, the king of Moab, prepared to fight against Israel, he sent for Balaam son of Beor to put a curse on you.

“When Balak son of Zippor, the king of Moab, prepared to fight against Israel, he sent for Balaam son of Beor to put a curse on you.”

v. 10 But I would not listen to Balaam, so he blessed you again and again, and I delivered you out of his hand.

“But I would not listen to Balaam, so he blessed you again and again, and I delivered you out of his hand.”

What doesn't he talk about here? The fact that a bunch of those Israelites got involved with those Moabite women and 24,000 of them died in the battle over that whole thing. Just leaves all that out.

v. 11 “Then you crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho. The citizens of Jericho fought against you, as did also the Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Gergashites, Hivites and Jebusites, but I gave them into your hands.

““Then you crossed the Jordan and you came to Jericho. The citizens of Jericho fought against you, as did also the Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Gergashites, Hivites and Jebusites, but I gave them into your hands.”

He doesn't talk about the sin of Akin. He doesn't talk about the defeat at Ai. He doesn't talk about the treaty with the

Gibeonites. All of it left out. Just one victory right after the other. And he's strangely silent about all the rest of it.

Is that just by happenstance that happens? No. He has said that our sins are cast into the depths of the sea. They're thrown behind His back. They are as they never happened.

Isaiah 1:18

Come now and let us reason together. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.

He's giving us a clean, white slate. Now believe it!

The Prodigal Son had that same experience in Luke 15. He has his little speech all prepared when he's coming to the father and he can't even get any words out of his mouth:

Luke 15:22-24

But the father says, "Quickly bring out the best robe, put it on him, put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fatted calf, kill it, let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found." And they began to be merry.

God recognizes that the minute we come. He knows we've come to our senses. He knows the price of sin. He knows what's happened in the process and He is ready to forgive and to restore the relationship and to get on with the rest of our

lives.

v. 12 I sent the hornet ahead of you, which drove them out before you—also the two Amorite kings. You did not do it with your own sword and bow.

“I sent the hornet ahead of you, which drove them out before you—also the two Amorite kings. You did not do it with your own sword and bow.”

v. 13 So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant.’

“So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and you eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant.””

And Moses really talked about that down on the plains when he gave his speech. In Deuteronomy 6:10-12 this is what he says:

Deuteronomy 6:10-12

When the Lord your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you—a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not

plant—then when you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the Lord, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

And they're right there. They've been enjoying it for 20 years and they're forgetting the God that brought them out. And so God is calling to remembrance everything He has done in grace for them, in His generosity toward them, so that they might be motivated to move out and do what needs to be done. The ball's in their court. The next decision is theirs to get on with the task.

Know what we did with this? We just took all the verbs out of here. The verbs have a way of just making us appreciate all that God did.

Now let's jump back in the passage and read the verbs, for the sake of getting the feel of it.

I TOOK,

I LED,

I GAVE,

I ASSIGNED,

I SENT,

I AFFLICTED,

I BROUGHT,
I PUT DARKNESS,
I GAVE,
I DESTROYED,
I WOULD NOT LISTEN,
I DELIVERED,
I SENT.

God has done everything that's necessary. That's:

Ephesians 3:20

He does exceeding abundant above all that we could ask or think.

Now there's a transition at verse 13.

In those first verses we have God's gracious **GENEROSITY**.

Then at verse 13 we have Joshua coming in now with a message of **GRATITUDE**.

And here is basically expressing to God our gratitude by our

cooperation with what God wants us to do—verses 14-24.

We have what the Lord has done in 2-13, now it's what they need to do, and the message from Joshua in verses 14-24.

We've considered:

I. The GATHERING,

II. The GENEROSITY,

and now the transition into:

III. The GRATITUDE—verse 14.

Now this gnarled old soldier has been used to barking commands and he does it again. He just steps in there and he starts talking and he just tells them how the cow eats the cabbage. He has some things he wants them to do right away and he starts right in barking commands here.

v. 14 “Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.

“Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.”

Talk about a man who served the Lord faithfully. He sure has a right to speak here, doesn't he?

God just wants two things in us:

1. He wants OBEDIENCE and
2. He wants FAITHFULNESS.

Not obedience when it's convenient, but obedience all the time. The faithful heart that always ends up being obedient so we can hear "well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Well Joshua hasn't lost any of his steadfast determination to finish well either and he just starts by issuing a series of commands here in his last address. Let's look at them a little closely:

1. "Fear the Lord"

What does that mean? Does that mean get scared of Him?

No, that word communicates respect—worship Him, praise Him for who He is and what He's done. As we look back on all this message from the Lord, fear Him by counting our many blessings and respect Him and thank Him for the marvelous things He has done for us.

2. "Serve Him with all faithfulness"

2 Timothy 4:1, 2

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

Oswald Chambers in *My Utmost for His Highest* says this:

(My Utmost for His Highest by Oswald Chambers)

Many of us suffer from the morbid tendency to be instant out of season. The season does not refer to time but to us. Be instant in season, out of season, whether we feel like it or not. If we do only what we feel inclined to do, some of us would do nothing forever and ever. There are unemployables in the spiritual domain—spiritually decrepit people who refuse to do anything unless they are supernaturally inspired. The proof that we are rightly related to God is that we do our best, whether we feel inspired or not.

(source unknown)

And that's what he's saying. "Y'all get on with it. Serve Him with all faithfulness. Get rid of these foreign elements that are here."

And that leads us to:

3. "Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond

the river and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.”

“Make your choice. Y’all get rid of those things.”

By the very fact that he makes that negative statement, there are some gods and idols among the people and he knows it. Over the 20 years some of this has surfaced and he’s concerned about it so he tells them to get rid of it.

Alan Redpath in *Victorious Christian Living* says:

(Victorious Christian Living by Alan Redpath)

Augustine once said, as a principle of his life, “To myself I will show a heart of steel, to my fellow-man a heart of love, and to my God a heart of flame.” This is the quality of service and life for which God is calling from each of us, His children. That is the service and the experience offered to you, based on the revelation of the Book.

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Now when he comes to verse 15, he is making a major confrontation of the people to lead, follow or get out of the way. He is telling them to MAKE A DECISION. And this is what he says.

v. 15 But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in

whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”

“But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”

“Y’all need to make up your mind what you’re going to do. But I’m going to tell you what we’re going to do. We’re going to serve the Lord.”

Meyer said:

“Choose you this day!” Time hastens on—
You cannot neutral be;
To serve the world or Christ the Lord,
Choose now which it shall be.
(*Our Daily Bread*, February 26, 1987)
(original source unknown)

Lewis Smedes has written a lot of books. He’s the one that wrote that little book *How Can it be Alright When Everything’s All Wrong*. It’s a book that we can easily relate to. Then he’s written a larger work called *Forgive and Forget: Healings for the Hurts We Don’t Deserve*.

But in his book *Choices* he has this statement which is really loaded:

(Choices: Making Right Decisions in a Complex World by Lewis B. Smedes)

We have all lost a lot of moral energy, just as some of us have lost our moral map. And we have followed a lot of destructive inclinations alien to our true natures. But this is a failure in the way we have handled our lives; it is not a failure in the design.

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He's saying there are a lot of decisions we ought to be making but we're not because of the complexity of the society we're living in. We're being called to conform rather than make choices and to stand up for what we believe.

And that's what Joshua's saying. "Look! Demonstrate your moral health by making some choices! Purpose in your heart and throw away these idols of these foreign gods."

v. 16 Then the people answered, "Far be it from us to forsake the Lord to serve other gods!"

"Then the people answered, 'Far be it from us to forsake the Lord to serve other gods!'"

v. 17 It was the Lord our God himself who brought us and our fathers up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and

among all the nations through which we traveled.

“It was the Lord our God himself who brought us and our forefathers up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we traveled.”

v. 18 And the Lord drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the Lord, because he is our God.”

“And the Lord drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the Lord, because he is our God.”

Boy doesn't that just bring goosebumps? Just thrills us to the boot straps that they're making such an incredible commitment.

There's a whole lot of lip and very little life and there's a whole lot of creed and not very much conduct.

And they're coming across this way to Joshua right now. They know too much and they're crossing their T's and dotting their I's—just too cool. And it's kind of hypocritical. The old General suspects that. That's the only way we can understand that next statement in verse 18.

v. 19 Joshua said to the people, “You are not able to

serve the Lord. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins.

“Joshua said to the people, ‘You are not able to serve the Lord. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins.’”

v. 20 If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you.”

“If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you.”

What Joshua really wants from them is a real revival. And the way we can tell when the Holy Spirit is really working, there'd be some real things that would start to happen in some lives.

For instance, when old Jacob preached to his family he said, “Y'all bring your idols.” What'd they do? Man they went and got their stash. They got their idols. They brought their earrings—brought them.

Well, that's very up to date isn't it?

Remember when Paul preached in Ephesus and he had a revival in Acts 19? This is what we read:

Acts 19:18-20

Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices. And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of all; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.

That's what a revival does. If we had a real revival today, we'd have drug paraphernalia and raunchy music and all this trash and pornographic literature piled up and we'd have a big bonfire. Everybody would be saying, "Hey y'all must really have something over there." Because finally we're getting down to where we really live and we're getting honest and we're getting rid of all the trash and we're really getting serious about our walk with God. We're cleansing our hearts.

And Joshua, as he got ready for his last message, he just had a vision that this is what's going to happen. The people are going to bring it! And just like in Shechem of old, we're going to have a revival and these people are going to go on and drive out the enemy and they're going to possess the land and it's going to be a utopia.

But look, the people are arguing with him—verse 21.

v. 21 But the people said to Joshua, "No! We will serve the Lord."

“But the people said to Joshua,”

“Okay if y’all feel that way about it. I’ve warned you. I’ve said all I’m going to say.”

“No! We will serve the Lord.”

**v. 22 Then Joshua said, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the Lord.”
“Yes, we are witnesses,” they replied.**

“Then Joshua said, ‘You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the Lord.’ ‘Yes, we are witnesses,’ they replied.”

Well not to decide is to decide, isn’t it? And they decided. They said we are going “to serve the Lord.” We’re ready for it.

Now notice what Joshua says to them then—verse 23.

v. 23 “Now then,” said Joshua, “throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel.”

“Now then,’ said Joshua, ‘throw away the foreign gods that are among you”

He comes right back at it again.

“and yield your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel.”

We have a NEGATIVE and a POSITIVE there.

NEGATIVELY—“throw away” the stuff that’s cluttering up your life.

POSITIVELY—“yield your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel.”

2 Corinthians 7:1

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

“throw away” and then “yield.”

Don Anderson shared his testimony:

I’ve got some very fond memories of a junior camp when I was about twelve years old. I was already a believer, had been a believer six years, but I made a real decision to yield my heart and my life at that junior camp to the Lord Jesus to do whatever He wanted with me.

And I will always remember, because we were singing:

Living for Jesus a life that is true,
Striving to please Him in all that I do;
Yielding allegiance, glad-hearted and free,

This is the pathway of blessing for me.

O Jesus, Lord and Savior,
I give myself to Thee,
For Thou, in Thy atonement,
Didst give Thyself for me;
I own no other Master,
My heart shall be Thy throne;
My life I give, henceforth to live,
O Christ, for Thee alone.

That was a major decision. I always remember it because a stake was driven at that camp, the decision was made.

I “throw away” and I “yield.”
(Don Anderson’s personal salvation testimony)

Dwight L. Moody had an incredible experience with the Lord of His presence. Went out, his message wasn’t any different, but people came to know Christ from that man’s message at that point in an incredible way.

David Brainerd, the same way, recorded in his biography, was wet with sweat as he met before the Lord and pled for the American Indians. Thousands came to know the Lord.

Hudson Taylor, the very same thing. He constantly talked about an adequate Christ. And it was no longer I but Christ who is living in me. And he’s the one that wrote:

Jesus I am resting, resting
in the joy of what Thou art.
I am finding out the greatness
of Thy loving heart.
(source unknown)

Frances Roberts in *Come Away My Beloved* says this:

(Come Away My Beloved by Frances J. Roberts)

I want your life and character and personality to be as beautiful and lovely as I visualized it to be when I created you. Much has not developed perfectly. Some early beauty has been marred. *Live close to Me*, and let Me re-mold and re-create until I see in thee the image of all I want thee to be.
p. 151

That's Joshua's plea. Throw it away and yield.

Now notice what the people say in verse 24.

v. 24 And the people said to Joshua, "We will serve the Lord our God and obey him."

"And the people said to Joshua, 'We will serve the Lord our God and obey him.'"

Now we see in those two verses the four words to a legitimate commitment:

1. “throw away,”
2. “yield,”
3. “serve,” and
4. “obey.”

When we put those together, we have a genuine commitment. If we want four words to test our commitment to the Lord, there they are.

1. “throw away,”
2. “yield,”
3. “serve,” and
4. “obey.”

Now Joshua realizes that they’ve said some pretty great things. And he wants a guarantee.

When we have a summit, we always sign a treaty. Right? And he’s going to have the Shechem treaty right here. And he is going to get a guarantee from them that all of this commitment has been made before the Lord and it is clear.

v. 25 On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he drew up for them

decrees and laws.

“On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he drew up for them decrees and laws.”

v. 26 And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the Lord.

“And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak”—wonder if it was the oak that Jacob experienced that with earlier—“near the holy place of the Lord.”

v. 27 “See!” he said to all the people. “This stone will be a witness against us. It has heard all the words the Lord has said to us. It will be a witness against you if you are untrue to your God.”

“See!” he said to all the people. “This stone will be a witness against us. It has heard all the words the Lord has said to us. It will be a witness against you if you are untrue to your God.”

Imagine every time they passed that rock, they’re straightening up. If they’re thinking some bad thoughts or they’re guilty of something, they really get their act together when they come by that rock. They just remember what old Joshua said when they pass that spot.

Now this brings us to the fifth part of our study. This is the fifth and final part.

Now we have called this:

V. GRADUATION

The book of Joshua opens with a graduation service as Moses dies. And it ends with three funerals really, because we're going to bury the bones of Joseph here at Shechem—and that by the way might be another reason why they chose Shechem because this was the burial place for that family. And we're also going to bury Eleazar the priest and our beloved Joshua the son of Nun.

And so when we get to verse 28 it's an emotional time.

“See!” he said to all the people. “This stone will be a witness against us. It has heard all the words the Lord has said to us. It will be a witness against you if you are untrue to your God.”

v. 28 Then Joshua sent the people away, each to his own inheritance.

“Then Joshua sent the people away, each to his own inheritance.”

Saying goodbye to him for the last time, they walk away.

v. 29 After these things, Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of a hundred and ten.

“After these things, Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of a hundred and ten.”

Who lived to be 110? That’s exactly the age of Joseph when he died. He lived 110 years.

We each need to be asking the Lord to make us like both of them, let us live that long. Hang around that long and have a chance to serve him for that many years.

Notice something so incredible in that verse. Look at that statement. Now let’s read it again slowly.

“After these things, Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of a hundred and ten.”

What’s different about verse 29 than any of the other references to Joshua?

He got his title when he died. He’s always been Joshua the son of Nun. But in his death he got his title.

“Moses, the servant of the Lord.” (Joshua 1:1)

Joshua the son of Nun took over, but now at his death he gets the thing he’s famous for. He’s “the servant of the Lord.”

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Are we going to be called that when we walk in? “Well done thou good and faithful servant.” Have we learned by now that the greatest joy we can have is in giving not in getting? And it is making others happy by learning to serve them and to meet their needs.

In William P. Barker’s book *Savior for All Seasons* there was a sports story from the winter Olympics in 1964:

(Savior for All Seasons by William P. Barker)

In the Olympics, sports figures are preoccupied with winning. Winning is often driven by vanity and the will to dominate. Occasionally, competitors infringe on the rules in order to go for the gold. Occasionally, however, a chivalrous gesture takes place that causes everyone to pause in wonder, as in the 1964 Winter Games at Innsbruck, Austria.

Eugenio Monti, the Italian bobsled champion, had successfully bobbed through all the heats, eliminating all rivals except one. His last descent had been particularly fast. Then the announcement was made that further competition in the event would have to stop because Monti’s only remaining competitor—his most dangerous rival—had broken part of his bobsled and had no replacement part. Monti’s fans cheered, confident their hero was assured of the gold medal.

Monti hurried to his own sled, removed the identical part that was broken on his rival’s bob, and sent the part to his competitor. The opponent installed Monti’s part, made a last descent—and took the Olympic medal. Observers agreed that

if medals had been awarded for sacrifice, Eugenio Monti would have carried them all away. Sometimes, the greatest victories appear to be defeats!

Those who sacrifice to be second fiddles have written the glorious story of our faith in their blood. They seem to live and die in obscurity, but what a debt we owe them!

p. 109

Here's one. He's a man who's spilled his blood, in slavery in Egypt, in slavery in the wilderness—literally. And for 30 years a servant of the people in giving them the land that was promised them through the Abrahamic covenant.

Does he have a right to lead a Shechem summit on service? You better believe it. The Lord indicates that in the title that's given to him here in conclusion.

The word “serve” and “served” is used 14 times in this chapter. And he did hear, “Well done thou good and faithful servant.”

That goes against our nature. Remember when the disciples got all upset and made a power play and James and John wanted to sit on the right and the left in the kingdom? What did the Lord come back with? Listen to this:

Matthew 20:26-28

It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did

not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

“Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, dies at the age of a hundred and ten.”

v. 30 And they buried him in the land of his inheritance, at Timnath Serah in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.

“And they buried him in the land of his inheritance, at Timnath Serah in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.”

v. 31 Israel served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had experienced everything the Lord had done for Israel.

“Israel served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had experienced everything the Lord had done for Israel.”

They obviously walked beside the stone often and kept their lives clean and open before the Lord during their lifetime.

v. 32 And Joseph’s bones, which the Israelites had brought up from Egypt, were buried at Shechem in the tract of land that Jacob bought for a hundred pieces of silver from the sons of Hamor, the father

of Shechem. This became the inheritance of Joseph's descendants.

“And Joseph’s bones, which the Israelites had brought up from Egypt, were buried at Shechem in the tract of land that Jacob bought for a hundred pieces of silver from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem. This became the inheritance of Joseph’s descendants.”

v. 33 And Eleazar son of Aaron died and was buried at Gibeah, which had been allotted to his son Phinehas in the hill country of Ephraim.

“And Eleazar son of Aaron died and was buried at Gibeah, which had been allotted to his son Phinehas in the hill country of Ephraim.”

Dr. Campbell says this about these three burials:

(No Time for Neutrality by Donald K. Campbell)

... it seems a strange way to end the Book of Joshua! But these three peaceful graves testify to the faithfulness of God, for Joshua, Joseph, and Eleazar once lived in a foreign nation where they were the recipients of God’s promise to take His people back to Canaan. Now all three were at rest within the borders of the Promised Land. God kept His Word to Joshua, Joseph, Eleazar—and to all Israel. And by this we are encouraged to count on the unfailing faithfulness of God.

p. 142

There will not be a promise that is left unfulfilled. We can stake our life on it.

We have the following lessons from our passage:

Lesson #1: Have you made a commitment to be a servant of Jesus Christ?

That's the beginning of a fruitful, meaningful life when we make that decision.

Lesson #2: It is good for us to remember our blessings and count them one by one.

We just start now and pretty soon we'll start singing and praising the Lord. It just happens every time. And He loves it.

Lesson #3: How gracious God is to forgive and to forget our failures of the past.

Oh what a beautiful thing that is and the Lord's message to them.

Lesson #4: Are you serving the Lord with all faithfulness?

Lesson #5: Are there some idols that you need to throw away at this time?

Lesson #6: Have you made your decision to serve the Lord

with all your heart?

Lesson #7: The four key words to a commitment are: “throw away,” “yield,” “serve” and “obey.”

Lesson #8: It is good to drive a stake or set up a stone to mark the decisions that have been made.

Whenever someone accepts Christ, they need to drive a stake or set up a stone to mark when that decision was made.

Lesson #9: Joshua got his title in his death.

“The servant of the Lord.”

Joseph Bailey, a man who was used of God in a mighty way, suffered a lot in his lifetime. He wrote several books. One of them was *Christian View from a Hearse*. He lost several of his children to a rare blood disease. When he died, at his funeral they had a huge tapestry hanging there that just simply said, “The servant of the Lord.” And of course that’s the title that’s given to Joshua on this occasion.

Lesson #10: Will you hear “well done, thou good and faithful servant” when you enter the Lord’s presence?

W. Phillip Keller is a layman but he’s blessed us with his pen. He’s a prolific writer, has written so much Christian truth from nature and from his experiences. His book on Psalm 23, *A Shepherd Looks at the 23rd Psalm* is a classic. He has

written a book on Joshua and in it he says this:

(Joshua: Man of Fearless Faith by W. Phillip Keller)

Reflecting quietly upon the life of Joshua, there sweeps into my own spirit an enormous longing to become a man somewhat of his caliber. And it is my ardent hope that the same may be true to some degree of you the reader.

We live in a day, when as of old, God is looking for men and women of fearless faith, who will step out to achieve great things for Him. God has not changed since the time of Joshua, nor does He honor faith less now than He did then. It is simply a case of coming to a place where we will walk with Christ by faith rather than by sight.

As we open our lives to the unrestricted incoming of His presence, it is possible for us to know all the wondrous fullness of God's gracious Spirit. As we permit Him to exercise His wondrous control of our careers we, too, can fully expect to see remarkable results in our day-to-day experiences. Yet over and beyond all of this, there will go on the beautiful transformation of our characters into the likeness of our Lord.

p. 179

As we close this series of studies on the life of Joshua, we can sing this hymn:

To God be the glory, great things He hath done,
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son,
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
And opened the Lifegate that all may go in.

O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood!
To ev'ry believer the promise of God;
The vilest offender who truly believes,
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

Great things He hath taught us,
great things He hath done,
And great our rejoicing thro' Jesus the Son;
But purer and higher and greater will be
Our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see.
(source unknown)

Yeshua—Savior—Jesus our Savior in the New Testament.

Father, we thank You for the fact that as we look into Your Word and study it and mull over it and chew on it and read about it, that You by Your Spirit lead us into truth. Thank You that we do not come on our own merit. We come on the shed blood of Christ and we have access as sons and daughters because we've received You as Savior. Please minister to these dear people in an effective and meaningful way in the days that are ahead. May Your Spirit prove to bring the word of truth to them and may they understand better their Savior Jesus Christ because of the Spirit's activity in their lives. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

A Practical Study of JOSHUA

“The Path of Obedience Leads to Victory”

Study Number Twenty-Four – Joshua 24:1-33

NOTES

v. 1 Then Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem. He summoned the elders, leaders, judges and officials of Israel, and they presented themselves before God.

v. 2 Joshua said to all the people, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘Long ago your forefathers, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the River and worshiped other gods.

v. 3 But I took your father Abraham from the land beyond the River and led him throughout Canaan and gave him many descendants. I gave him Isaac,

v. 4 and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. I assigned the hill country of Seir to Esau, but Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt.

v. 5 “Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I afflicted the Egyptians by what I did there, and I brought you out.

v. 6 When I brought your fathers out of Egypt, you came to the sea, and the Egyptians pursued them with chariots and horsemen as far as the Red Sea.

v. 7 But they cried to the Lord for help, and he put darkness between you and the Egyptians; he brought the sea over them and covered them. You saw with your own eyes what I did to the Egyptians. Then you lived in the desert for a long time.

v. 8 “I brought you to the land of the Amorites who lived east of the Jordan. They fought against you, but I gave them into your hands. I destroyed them from before you, and you took possession of their land.

v. 9 When Balak son of Zippor, the king of Moab, prepared to fight against Israel, he sent for Balaam son of Beor to put a curse on you.

v. 10 But I would not listen to Balaam, so he blessed you again and again, and I delivered you out of his hand.

NOTES

v. 11 “Then you crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho. The citizens of Jericho fought against you, as did also the Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites and Jebusites, but I gave them into your hands.

v. 12 I sent the hornet ahead of you, which drove them out before you—also the two Amorite kings. You did not do it with your own sword and bow.

v. 13 So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant.’

v. 14 “Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.

v. 15 But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”

v. 16 Then the people answered, “Far be it from us to forsake the Lord to serve other gods!

v. 17 It was the Lord our God himself who brought us and our fathers up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we traveled.

v. 18 And the Lord drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the Lord, because he is our God.”

v. 19 Joshua said to the people, “You are not able to serve the Lord. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins.

v. 20 If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you.”

v. 21 But the people said to Joshua, “No! We will serve the Lord.”

v. 22 Then Joshua said, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the Lord.” “Yes, we are witnesses,” they replied.

NOTES

v. 23 “Now then,” said Joshua, “throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel.”

v. 24 And the people said to Joshua, “We will serve the Lord our God and obey him.”

v. 25 On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he drew up for them decrees and laws.

v. 26 And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the Lord.

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v. 33 And Eleazar son of Aaron died and was buried at Gibeah, which had been allotted to his son Phinehas in the hill country of Ephraim.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Joshua 24:1-33 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What does Joshua do in verse 1?

3. Who is Joshua speaking for, according to verse 2?

4. What has the Lord done for them, according to verse 13?

5. What is Joshua's challenge to them in verses 14 & 15?

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6. How do the people respond, according to verse 16?

7. How do the people respond in verse 24?

8. What is said about the history of Israel following the death of Joshua in verse 31?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Have you made a commitment to be a servant of Jesus Christ?

LESSON #2: It is good for us to remember our blessings and count them one by one.

LESSON #3: How gracious God is to forgive and to forget our failures of the past.

LESSON #4: Are you serving the Lord with all faithfulness?

LESSON #5: Are there some idols that you need to throw away at this time?

LESSON #6: Have you made your decision to serve the Lord with all your heart?

LESSON #7: The four key words to a commitment are: (1) throw away; (2) yield; (3) serve; and (4) obey.

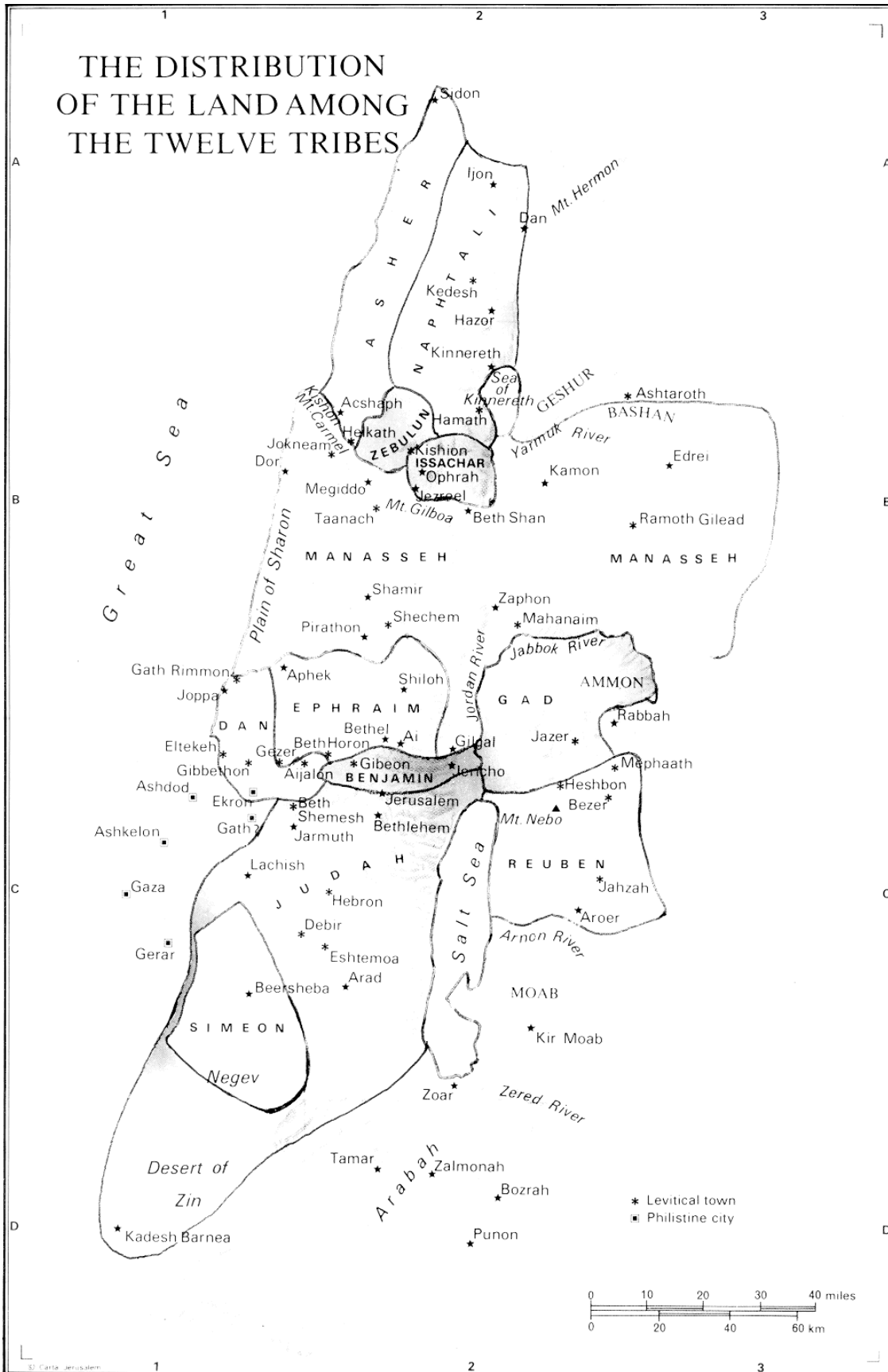
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LESSON #9: Joshua got his title in his death, “The Servant of the Lord.”

LESSON #10: Will you hear “well done, thou good and faithful servant” when you enter the Lord’s presence?

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