

A NEW JOB FOR JOSHUA

Isaiah 28:21 reads, "For the LORD will rise up as at Mount Perazim, He will be angry as in the Valley of Gibeon - that He may do His work, His awesome work, and bring to pass His act, His unusual act." In the Valley of Gibeon God displayed His "awesome work" and "unusual act" - we studied it last week in Joshua 10.

It's not everyday the sun and moon stand still in their march across the sky. God may've worked by His own hand to produce the phenomena. Or He might have employed celestial mechanics - a planetary fly-by, or a comet sweeping through the earth's atmosphere. Either way it was an awesome work, an unusual act. Imagine God grabbing an aimless comet out of deep space,

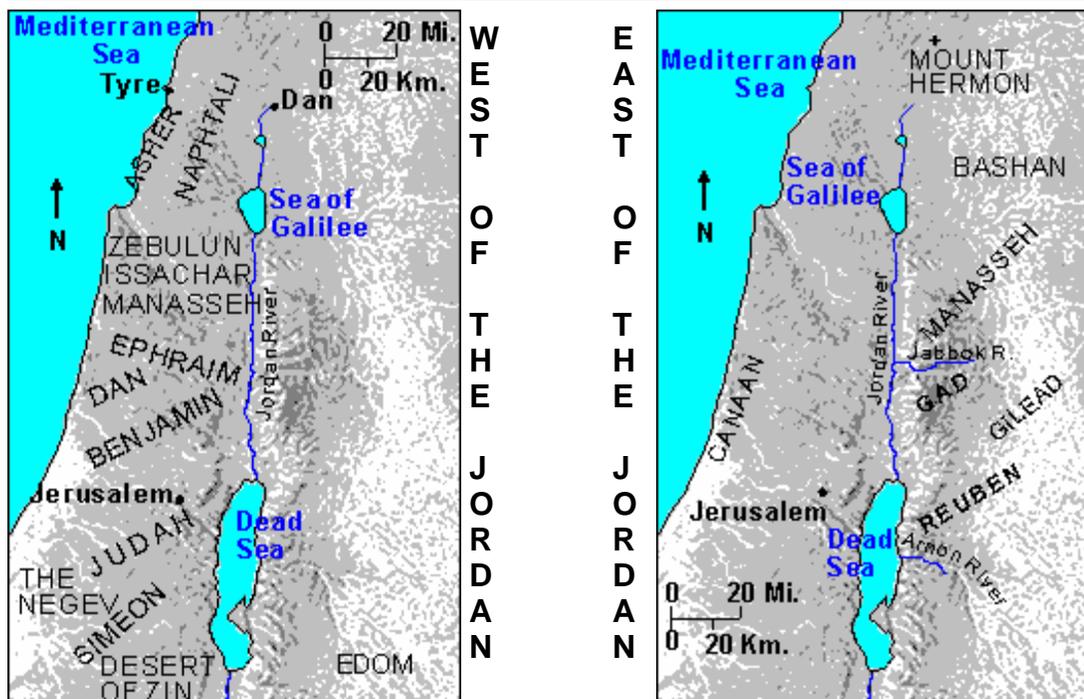
then directing its trajectory to reach earth at the exact moment to coincide with Joshua's prayer.

Indeed, the miracle above Beth Horon was an awesome work - an unusual act.

Tonight's chapters detail a more *normal work* - a very *common act*. General Joshua leaves behind his thrilling battles, daring maneuvers, and stupendous triumphs - and embroils himself in a more mundane work. He picks up his transit and range rod, and goes out to do the routine job of a surveyor.

Joshua's job in chapters 13-24 is to divide the land among the tribes of Israel.

TERRITORIES OF THE TRIBES OF ISRAEL



POSSESSING YOUR POSSESSIONS

God says to Joshua in 13:6, "divide it by lot to Israel as an inheritance, as I have commanded you." The land was Israel's inheritance. God promised Abraham and his descendants a chunk of land. It was God's gift to them.

It's the sad tale of Hebrew history that they never fully possessed the land God promised them. Complete occupation is still future. In fact, there's a prophecy in Obadiah 17 that says, "The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions."

I think though that's a good motto for the

Christian life. Do we fully possess our possessions?

We've been given in Christ all that pertains to life and godliness, yet are we possessing all our possessions? If we are, why does our life lack power over temptation - boldness in our witness - joy in our disposition? Most of us are living far below our privileges. Like Israel of old, we need to rise up in faith and possess our possessions - lay hold of every blessing that's ours in Christ!

The Courage of Caleb

In Chapter 14 the allocation of the land west of the Jordan takes place. It was done through the casting of lots. It was a righteous raffle. A land lottery.

The tribe of Judah is first to receive their allotment... and guess who steps out of the crowd to take possession of the first parcel? Joshua's old friend, Caleb.

Of the 2-3 million Hebrews who crossed over the Jordan, Joshua and Caleb were the only members of the generation that left Egypt who were allowed to enter the Land of Promise. They were among the 10 men at Kadesh, who Moses sent to spy out the land. Joshua and Caleb were the only two who brought back a positive report.

Both were men of faith. Men willing to take possession of the promises of God. Three times in chapter 14 we're told Caleb "wholly followed the Lord". There was no compromise with Caleb. No partial obedience. No half-hearted devotion.

Caleb has waited 45 years to receive his inheritance. Now he's first in line.

And guess what he asks for his possession? Forty-five years earlier he told his brothers God would give victory over the giants in the land. Now he still wants to fight those giants. He asks Joshua for Hebron, home of the Anakim, or the giants.

He's 85 years old, and look at what he says in verse 11-12, "As yet I am as strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me; just as my strength was then, so now is my strength for war, both for going out and for coming in. Now therefore, give me this mountain of which the LORD spoke in that day; for you heard in that day how the Anakim were there, and that the cities were great and fortified. It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the LORD said." Rather than ask to be put up in an assisted living home – Caleb wants to fight a few giants! In 15:14 he drives out 3 sons of Anak - 3 giants - to possess the mountain the Lord gives him. Caleb loved a challenge.

It's been said of Caleb, "A faith that never wavered produced a strength that never weakened." Caleb was a feisty ol' cuss until the very end! When we get to heaven we'll probably see Caleb and John Wayne duking it out just for fun!... Ol' Caleb might still be looking around for a giant or two to fight.

Devotion Box - The Danger of a Rumor?

In chapter 22 a misunderstanding almost erupts into an east – west civil war.

When the 2½ tribes cross the Jordan they build an altar on it's banks. Now on the surface this was blatant violation of God's law. Remember in Deuteronomy 12 Moses told Israel that they were to worship God in a designated place. The one centralized place where sacrifices could be offered was the Tabernacle in Shiloh.

So what are these tribes doing erecting an altar on the banks of the Jordan?

In 22:12 we're told the reaction of the 9½ tribes, "the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered together at Shiloh to go to war against them." It's a good thing cooler heads prevailed. Before brother starts slaughtering brother someone suggests the two sides have a conversation. *Why is it we always want to fight before we talk?* Phinehas, the priest, goes down to the Jordan to find out what's going on.

It doesn't take long to clear up the matter. The 2½ tribes assure Phinehas they have no intention of offering sacrifices on their altar. In fact, they feared that their location might some day prohibit them from returning to Israel. They were afraid someone might view the Jordan as a dividing line, and not allowed then to return and offer their sacrifices to God. They built the altar as a witness that they too are part of the nation Israel. In verse 28 they call it, "a witness between you and us."

Phinehas accepts their explanation, and a disaster is averted.

Remember though how it all started, back in verse 11, "Now the children of Israel heard someone say..." They got all heated up over hearsay! The nation almost goes to blows – a bloody war almost erupts – over a stinkin' rumor.

Guys, this is how civil war starts among friends, and in churches – someone hears someone else say... They take it to heart without checking it out. We blow up over hearsay, and misunderstandings. How many church splits have been the result of misunderstandings that could've been avoided had both sides just talked.

"Handle a rumor like a check, never endorse it until you know it's genuine."

So You Want More Land ?

Chapter 16 lays out the boundaries for the tribe of Ephraim. Chapter 17 marks out the territory of the half tribe of Manasseh that crossed over the Jordan.

Ephraim possessed two famous cities, Shiloh and Bethel. The Ark rested in the Tabernacle at Shiloh for nearly 350 years. Manasseh was given Samaria, and the lower Galilee - including the Valley of Jezreel, and the city of Megiddo.

But it was said of both tribes they didn't drive out the Canaanites. Rather than rise up and make an all out effort to rid themselves of their enemies, they were content to co-exist. They tolerated a partial victory. They lacked courage.

In chapter 17 Ephraim and Manasseh complain about their allocation. They've not been a territory commiserate with their exalted status. In verse 15 Joshua answers them a little sarcastically, "If you are a great people, then go up to the forest country and clear a place for yourself there in the land of the Perizzites and the giants, since the mountains of Ephraim are too confined for you." Hey, if they want more land, then why not take a little for the Perizzites and the giants.

Why would God give them more land when they're not possessing all the land He's already given them? Guys, we can be just like Ephraim and Manasseh.

We want more opportunities to serve the Lord when we're not taking advantage of the opportunities we've been given. We think we're a great people!

Oh, I've got talent – and I'm not getting the opportunities to minister that my talent deserves. I should be leading worship instead of Kevin. I should be teaching instead of Sandy. But hey, you could be teaching Sunday School, or singing songs to the kids. If you really wanted to serve the Lord you could come up on Saturdays and help clean - or serve as an usher or greeter – or go to the homeless shelter...

Don't ask for more territory until you fully possess all that you've been given. When there are no more giants in the land you currently occupy, then we'll talk about expanding your territory. Faithfulness to God begins right where you're at!

Israel's Cities of Refuge

In 20:2-6 the Lord tells Joshua, "Appoint for yourselves cities of refuge, of which I spoke to you through Moses..."

The Law of Moses provided protection for the person guilty of an accidental murder. In Numbers 35 the Lord told Moses when Israel enters the land they're to set up certain cities as safe-havens for the manslayer. These cities were called "cities of refuge". There were a total of six – scattered strategically throughout Israel to provide easy access – 3 were west of the Jordan, and 3 were east.

When a manslayer arrived at a city of refuge he reviewed his case with the city elders. If they believed his crime was unintentional they took him in. As long as he stayed in the city he was safe. If he went outside city limits he was fair game for an avenger. His dilemma continued until the death of the High Priest. Whether the priest lived to be 35 or 95 the slayer could return home, only upon his death.

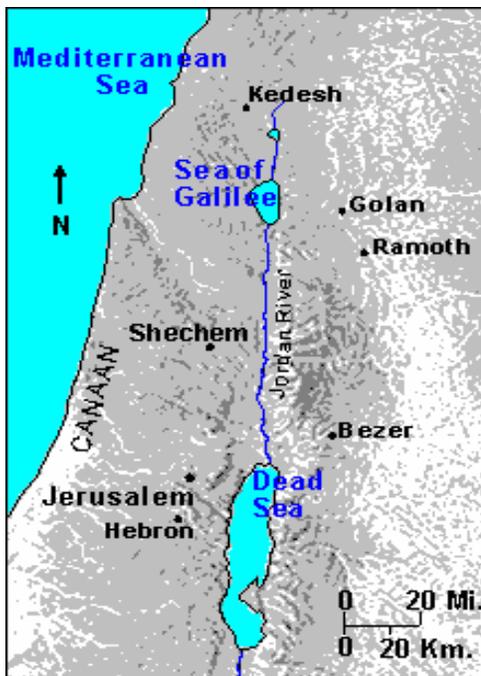
All this seems an archaic rule with little relevance for you and me... until we study this provision as a type of Christ. Guys, when you get lost trying to decipher a passage of Scripture always look for Jesus. In Hebrews 10:7 Jesus said, "In the volume of the Book it is written of Me." Jesus is on every page of this Book.

In a sense, all sin is murder. The wages of sin is death. When you sin you take your own life. You initiate a slow suicide. We need a place to run when we sin where we can find a safe-haven, and avoid the consequences of our sin.

Jesus is that place of refuge. As long as we're in Christ we're forgiven – we're safe from judgment. When we sin we need to run to Jesus as fast as we can.

According to Jewish tradition the roads leading to the cities of refuge were kept cleared and passable. Bridges remained open. Signs with large letters which read, "Miklac", or "refuge", marked the way. Everything was done to make it as easy as possible for the guilty to find their way to a place of safety and refuge.

This is our job. God wants us to make it as easy as possible for people to come to Christ. Our job is to keep the road cleared of misconceptions, the bridges of understanding open. Our lives should be road signs pointing to Jesus.



How 'Bout Them Hornets

In 24:11 Joshua recounts the battle of Jericho, and he sums up their victories over the Amorites. In verse 12 he says, "I sent the hornet before you which drove them out from before you, also the two kings of the Amorites, but not with your sword or with your bow."

The Hebrew word translated "hornet" means "stinging wasps". Some Bible scholars interpret this as a poetic way of describing the panic that prevailed among the Amorites, when the Hebrews began their invasion. But why doesn't it mean literal hornets? God may've sent a plague of pests on the enemy. Imagine trying to fight after you've been stung by a swarm of hornets. Any Georgia Bulldog can tell you it's no fun to be stung by a Yellow Jacket!

We noted last week the parallels between Joshua and Revelation. Here's another – the 5th trumpet judgment in Revelation 5 predicts a 5 month plague of stinging locust. I believe a swarm of hornets helped Joshua in his conquest.

Devotion Box - God's Elbow Grease, not Yours

Joshua 24:13 sums up God's blessing on Israel, "I have given you a land for which you did not labor, and cities which you did not build, and you dwell in them; you eat of the vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant."

This can be said of the blessings you enjoy in Christ. Jesus paid the price for you to be forgiven. He did the work. The joy, and power, and peace, and victory, and hope, and satisfaction you enjoy today is the result of His elbow grease, not yours.

Jesus and the Cities of Refuge

There are at least 9 other parallels between Christ and the cities of refuge...

The gates were never locked, and the way to Jesus is never barred.

As long as you were inside the city you were safe, if you left you were on your own. The same is true with Jesus. We need to continue to abide in Christ Jesus.

You had to pick up and leave all your possessions to come. Likewise, to follow Jesus you have to leave behind anything that rivals your devotion to Him.

Refuge was available, but you had to come. The same is true with Jesus.

Once inside the city there were plenty of provisions. Likewise, all that a human heart might need is found in fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ.

The cities of refuge were established beforehand. Likewise Jesus was slain before the foundation of the world. He, too, was chosen beforehand.

According to Numbers 35:15, strangers and Gentiles, as well as Jews, were welcomed to come to the cities of refuge – as they are in Christ.

The death of the High Priest granted total freedom. And it's because of the death of our High Priest, Jesus Christ, that we've received a permanent pardon.

And finally, the names of the cities all speak of the blessings of Christ – Kadesh means holiness – Shechem means shoulder and Jesus shoulders our burdens – Hebron means fellowship – Bezer means fortified place – Ramoth means exaltation – Golan means joy. *All the above is found in Christ Jesus!*

Bible Scan - Joshua 13-24

Calvary Chapel

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - sandyadams@calvarychapel.org

Calvary Chapel Announcements - December 12, 1999

- 12/15 HS Impact 7:00 PM
Café 7:30 PM-Bible Study: Pastor Randy and Special Music: Jonathan Moore
- 12/17 Horizons 7:30 PM-Meets at Steve Lee's Home
- 12/19 Worship & Bible Study 9:30 AM & 11:15 AM
Mission Incredible: Christmas Production 6:30 PM
- 12/22 Café will not meet
- 12/24 Christmas Eve Services 6:00 PM & 7:45 PM
- 12/26 There will be no evening service or Middle School Youth Bible Study

Next Bible Scan - January 9 - Judges 1-12

**"But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."
- Joshua 24:15**

Bible Scan Memory Verse

SNARES AND TRAPS

Joshua can foresee the day when *toleration* will become *socialization*, and *socialization* will become *assimilation* – and the Hebrews will begin to intermarry the pagans around them, and be drawn into their idolatry. Joshua warns Israel that the little pockets of paganism they've allowed to remain in their midst will become "snares and traps to you..."

Guys, we too have to be on guard against the danger of assimilation.

"We are in the world, but not of it." Too much exposure to godless philosophies and secular values can draw us into its web. We can forget the God who fights for us, and end up serving at the altar of materialism, humanism, and hedonism.

We're like Noah's Ark. God fashioned the Ark to float on the water. The Ark in the water was no problem. But if the Ark had started taking on water – if water had gotten into the Ark - it would be a different story. The same is true with a Christian. We are designed by God to overcome this world, and be a witness. The Christian in the world is no problem. The danger is when the world gets into the Christian.

God wants us to be separate – holy – to reserve our minds and thoughts and hearts for godly influences and healthy preoccupations. *Beware of the snare.*

Devotion Box - A Special Inheritance

Joshua 13:33 tells us, "But to the tribe of Levi Moses had given no inheritance; the LORD God of Israel was their inheritance..." When Israel sinned at Mt. Siani by worshipping the golden calf the tribe of Levi was quick to repent and side with the Lord. As a result, the Lord blessed them with a special privilege.

The other tribes inherited a parcel, Levi inherited a privilege. They were allowed to help the priests in the worship of the Tabernacle. In other words, they were allowed close to God – to hang out in His holy precincts.

The beauty of holiness – the magnificence of God's glory – offered far more stimulating views than the highest mountain, or the greenest valley. The Levites had the better deal. Are you enjoying the beauties and glory of God? Why not explore all that's available to us in Christ Jesus?

Devotion Box - Joshua's Challenge

As for you and your family... are you determined to serve the Lord?

There are times when I'll put my foot down about an activity in which my kids want to participate, or I'll cut out a television show they really wanted to see, and they'll complain, "Ah dad, everybody else is doing it."

Hear what Joshua is saying! His decision isn't based on what everybody else does. Everybody else might choose to go to hell in a hand basket, but Joshua knows what he is determined to do - how he's going to live. He's made his choice. "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

I hope you have the same conviction. Joshua says, "choose for yourselves this day". You have to choose.

Devotion Box - God is faithful

Joshua says in 21:45, "Not a word failed of any good thing which the LORD had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass." God is faithful. His Word fails not.

It's been said: "God never makes a promise too good to be true."